

BULLETIN OF THE
SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



January

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NESTING STUDY - A Cooperative Research Project

Cooperative research projects have been undertaken by many organizations such as ours. A nesting study is one such project which may be readily accomplished with a minimum of individual effort and yet yield results of basic scientific importance. The method of obtaining data is simple. A form (see the enclosed sample) is filled out when evidence of nesting is obtained. The accumulation of these records in quantity is what makes such a study of value. From these records the periods of building, laying, and fledging of young may be determined. Second nestings in certain species will show up as a double-humped (bimodal) curve when a graph is constructed. You may think that such things are well-known. As a matter of fact we do not have adequate information of this sort for any of our local species. True, we can say in a general way when the various species nest and how many eggs they lay---but the information is not precise and there is much to be learned about these problems.

The enclosed form is for convenience and uniformity. Enter the name of the species of bird on the first line and the date of the observation following it. The locality need be only approximate, for example, "2 miles north of Milpitas, Santa Clara Co., Calif.". In checking the items under "Stage of Nesting" fill out a form for each date upon which a nest is observed. If a single nest is checked upon several occasions fill out up to four forms indicating the dates of the four successive stages, (1) building (2) eggs (3) young in nest (4) young being fed out of nest. These four reports may then be treated as if they pertained to different nests.

The important thing is to get large numbers of such records. The commoner species are the more desirable since we should be able to obtain more records of them, but all species are to be included. In addition, look back through your notes and fill out blanks for nest records of previous years---they are equally valuable.

The nesting season is already under way! The eggs of the Anna Hummingbird have been found in December and the Horned Owl begins nesting in January. Bush-tits and Allen Hummingbirds begin in February. The success of such a project depends upon the sustained interest and cooperation of all of the membership. Let's make it a friendly contest (as well as a research project) to see who can record the largest number of nests this coming year. Also---who will find the first nest of the season?

Send a postal card or 'phone ELgato 4-1429 for a supply of blank forms.

Charles Sibley

FIELD OBSERVATIONS (Send your records to the Editors)

Road-runner, Aug. 30, Alum Rock Park; Dusky Orange-crowned Warbler, Nov. 24, San Jose; and first White-crowned Sparrow of the fall migration, Sept. 11, San Jose. M.L. Seibert
White-tailed Kite, 19 on Sept. 14 near Milpitas; 5-7 frequently from mid-Aug. to late October. Al Wool.

Canada Goose, at Crystal Springs Reservoir, first seen Oct. 15; Nov. 7, 15 present and about 100 in 2 flocks on Dec. 13. Roberta Wright.

Robin, very large flock ("hundreds") on Dec. 1 and during preceding week at Mt. Hermon. Mrs. Adist Boylan.

Lawrence Goldfinch, 5 on Dec. 10 and seen frequently during fall near Los Gatos. Mrs. Juliet Jones.

Cedar Waxwings, estimated 1000 eating Madrone berries Dec. 15, Sta. Cruz Mts. M.E. Shore.
Horned Owl, Dec. 15. Strong territorial response to imitations of their "song";
Belted Kingfisher daily since Dec. 9 in oak wooded canyon, apparently attracted by fish ponds in neighborhood. Near Los Gatos. Charles Sibley

C A L E N D A R F O R J A N U A R Y

THE THIRD AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR comes Thursday evening, January 3, with Laurel Reynolds presenting her new film "Western Discovery." Mrs. Reynolds, whose home is in Piedmont, is known to many of us as a delightful speaker (it was Mrs. Reynolds who presented "Fun with Birds" in our first series of Audubon Screen Tours four years ago). "Western Discovery," with the Pacific Coast as its setting, pictures such interesting animals as elephant seals, killer whales, and porpoises; the rarely seen murrelets and auklets—birds that nest on islands off the coast of Mexico; migrating shore birds in the San Francisco Bay area; the many kinds of birds which congregate in a waterfowl refuge; and young Canada Geese at play on the Reynolds' ranch in Washington.

The Screen Tour will be presented at 8 p.m. in Montgomery Theatre, San Jose Civic Auditorium. There will be no matinee in the afternoon. Tickets are 74 cents (students 50 cents) and can be had at the door. This Screen Tour promises much human interest and delightful humor.

JOINT TRIP WITH MONTEREY PENINSULA AUDUBON SOCIETY will be taken Saturday, January 12, to Moss Landing, with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Anderson as leaders. At this time of year Whistling Swans are likely to be seen in this area, and also other interesting winter visitant water birds. The meeting place will be on the construction road north of the cement bridge over Elkhorn Slough (the construction road leads out to dunes), and the time, 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch.

THE REGULAR JANUARY MEETING will be held Monday, January 14, at 8 p.m. in Room 210 of the Science Building, San Jose State College. After reports of bird observations by the members, Dr. Charles Sibley will speak on "Nesting Behavior of Birds." Following the formal meeting, we will have the opportunity and privilege of examining the W. E. Unglish bird collection which was recently given to San Jose State College by Mr. Unglish of Gilroy. It is hoped that Mr. Unglish will be present at the meeting.

Grace Brubaker, Program Chairman.

A MIDWEEK BIRD TRIP will be taken Wednesday morning, January 16, to Alum Rock Park, with Mrs. Grace Brubaker as leader. Meet at 9 a.m. at corner of Alum Rock Ave. and Miguelito Ave. The Linda Vista bus runs out Alum Rock Ave. as far as Miguelito. There are sure to be empty seats in some one's car for those who come on the bus.

ALL-DAY FIELD TRIP TO CASTLE ROCK AND THE SUMMIT ROAD will be taken Sunday, January 20 (not on the 27th, as was announced in the September Bulletin), with Mrs. Donna McBryan as leader. Summit Road follows the crest of the Santa Cruz Mts., which separates Santa Clara Co. from Santa Cruz Co., and affords scenic views. There will be a short hike to Castle Rock, and perhaps to other points off the road. Meet at Saratoga Gap (junction of Highways 9 and 5) at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch.

A SECOND MIDWEEK BIRD TRIP will be taken Wednesday morning, January 30, to Searsville Lake, with Miss Emily Smith as leader. Meet in Palo Alto at the S. P. Station at 8:30 a.m. or at Searsville Lake at 9.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

LOS BANOS GAME REFUGE, November 4, 1951. The day was clear and warm as thirty-four birders entered the Los Banos refuge. After receiving instructions from Mr. Wattenbarger, the refuge manager, we drove slowly along roads that led to willow-bordered ponds and reedy sloughs where the waterfowl were concentrated.

Two or three times when we stopped at a pond or slough we saw hundreds of White-fronted Geese and a smaller number of Snow Geese go up as we approached. At one of these stops a bird of prey perched low in a small lonely willow proved to be a Horned Owl on closer observation.

We ate lunch by a large pond at the south end of the refuge, and were thrilled to see several small flocks of Sandhill Cranes fly by, giving their peculiar rolling call. After lunch we drove around the south end of the largest body of water on the refuge. After parking our cars we approached the pond, keeping behind a clump of willows. We could see before us a 60-acre "resting pond" with thousands of waterfowl on it. We roughly estimated that there were 300,000 birds there, the majority of them Baldpates, Shovellers, Mallards, Pintails, and Green-winged Teal. At various intervals thousands of birds would rise from the water with a roar of wings and settle again. Here indeed was sight and sound to thrill all birders. On our way out of the refuge we saw 30-40 cranes on the ground, and later saw at least 500 fly over in flocks of varying sizes.

Our list for the refuge included many species besides waterfowl: Eared Grebe (or was it a Horned Grebe?), Pied-billed Grebe, White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, American Egret, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, American Bittern, White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Mallard, Gadwall, Baldpate, American Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Shoveller, Ring-necked Duck, Canvas-back, Ruddy Duck, Red-tailed Hawk, Marsh Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sandhill Crane, Florida Gallinule (22, most of which were across the road from the refuge), American Coot, Killdeer, Greater Yellow-legs, Least Sandpiper, Dowitcher, Avocet, Ring-billed Gull, Horned Owl, Red-shafted Flicker, Black Phoebe, Violet-green Swallow, Long-billed Marsh Wren, Robin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Water Pipit, Loggerhead Shrike, Audubon Warbler, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird (20 adult males in flock of Redwings, across road from refuge), Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer Blackbird, American Goldfinch, Savannah Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow.

Al and Dorothy Wool.

HALL'S VALLEY AND SMITH CREEK. Remember how it rained the morning of December 1? You thought no one in his right mind would go on a field trip on such a morning. But the leader of an Audubon field trip must be at the meeting place whatever the weather, and so Clyde and I started out with damp enthusiasm. We found one car already arrived—from Salinas!—and soon another car came. There were five of us in all, but the wind was terrific and the street a river; and so we decided not to go up the mountain to Hall's Valley and Smith Creek.

However we have a report of the scouting trip we took November 9, with the Goldsmiths and Emily Smith. We didn't arrive in Hall's Valley until after eleven o'clock and we scouted only the Grant Ranch Reser-

voir and the adjoining field. With the help of Clyde's 'scope we identified the following species: Eared Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Red-head, Ring-necked Duck, Canvas-back, Scaup Duck (species?), American Golden-eye, Ruddy Duck, White-tailed Kite, American Coot, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Black Phoebe, Yellow-billed Magpie, American Crow, Loggerhead Shrike, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer Blackbird, House Finch, Savannah Sparrow.

We spent less than an hour at Hall's Valley and then went on to Smith Creek Ranger Station, where we listed the following birds: Red-tailed Hawk, California Quail, Belted Kingfisher, Acorn Woodpecker, Black Phoebe, Steller Jay, Scrub Jay, Yellow-billed Magpie, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Plain Titmouse, Bush-tit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Bewick Wren, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Western Bluebird, Golden-crowned Kinglet (at least one in a flock of Bush-tits and other small birds), Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Hutton Vireo, Audubon Warbler, Townsend Warbler, Brewer Blackbird, Purple Finch, Spotted Towhee, Brown Towhee, Oregon Junco, Golden-crowned Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Song Sparrow.

We recommend Hall's Valley and Smith Creek for an Audubon field trip, especially in November when the cottonwoods, willows and black oaks are yellow and orange against a blue sky.

Agnes Prusman

TOO LATE FOR THE FIRST PAGE. As I was cutting my half of the stencils for this Bulletin, with my typewriter out on the porch this 20th day of December, I heard three thrashers singing. The singing lasted only ten minutes or so, but the birds seemed to be singing at each other. Later one of them—the scraggly-tailed one that has spent the fall in and about our garden—picked up a dead twig from the ground and carried it into the shrub where he roosts at night. Can it be that thrashers are already beginning to feel the urge to stake out claims to territory for nesting?
E.S.

NEW MEMBERS. The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society welcomes the following new members who have joined during the last month.

Dr. and Mrs. Victor Burke, Piedmont Rd., Rt. 1, Saratoga
Mr. E. M. Combs, 53 Brooklyn Ave., San Jose
Dr. and Mrs. H. B. Humphrey, 715 W. Fremont Circle, Mountain View
Mr. Marius A. Robinson, General Delivery, Stanford

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Branch of NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Corr. Sec. -- Miss Eva Allen, P.O. Box 772, Los Gatos
Treas. ----- Mrs. Eva McRae, San Jose State College, San Jose
Editor ----- Charles G. Sibley, Rt. 1, Box 241, Los Gatos
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Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month, alternately in San Jose and Palo Alto. Guests are always welcome.