



BULLETIN OF THE  
SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

April 1952

SCRUB JAYS CACHE FOOD FOR LATER USE

When we were surrounded by vacant lots and there were no fences, we used to see Scrub Jays carry off sunflower seeds which we put out for the birds. When many sunflower plants came up on the empty lots, we wondered whether the jays had found any of the seeds which they had flown off with and cached.

Now that we have a fence around our property and the lots are built on, jays do some of their caching in our yard. One midafternoon in late February we noticed a jay fly off our food tray with a piece of bread in its bill, alight on the lawn, and poke the bread down in the grass. It then picked up a dry leaf and tucked it in with the bread, then a bit of bunched dry grass, and finally a second leaf on top of the bit of grass. The next morning we happened to see a jay hop along the lawn, seemingly looking for something. Finally, at the spot where the bread was concealed, it flicked off the leaf and ate two pieces of bread. Before flying away, it again covered the spot. We investigated immediately and found a third piece of bread under a leaf. Some hours later when we looked again, that piece was gone.

Since then we have seen a jay cache bread or suet in the grass repeatedly, have marked the spot with a stick, and have found that in most cases the cached food was gone within a few hours. However, on one occasion a piece of bread which a jay had jabbed into the grass and covered at 1:30 p.m., was still there the following morning. We decided not to put food on the feeder that morning, hoping the jay would be hungry enough to look for its cache. Sure enough, at 9:45 a jay came and got the piece of bread—found it so easily that we felt sure it was the same jay which cached the bread. Now we are of the opinion that jays must, in some way, know where they cache food and return to it if they need it.

Elizabeth and Charles Mueser.

Editor's Note: Mr. and Mrs. Harold Michener (Condor, 47:206) watched Scrub Jays in their yard in Pasadena in 1943. The birds hid walnuts, sunflower seeds, and bread in the same way Mr. and Mrs. Mueser have described above. The Micheners also discovered that the jays found only a part of the food which they buried---sunflowers came up all over their neighborhood too! It seems probable that the instinctive behavior pattern involved in food caching includes the placement of covering objects (leaves, rocks, etc.) in such a manner that the jays recognize such coverings as cache sites, rather than that they "remember" specific caches. An experiment to test this hypothesis by placing simulated cache coverings in the area would be of interest. If the jays respond to the simulated caches by digging under them we would have evidence that they do in fact recognize the pattern of covering objects as a cache. Another experiment would be to remove the covering leaves, rocks, etc. from caches placed by the jays and watch to see if they could then find the hidden food.

C.S.

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JAY'S PET AND GARDEN SHOP (formerly Bachrodt's) 668 Lincoln Ave., San Jose, has a good wild bird mix at 6¢/lb. or \$4.00 for a 75 lb. sack. (This is a special price to Audubon Society members.) The seed is mostly "water-grass" seed obtained from the "screenings" of the rice harvest. While at JAY'S be sure to look at the interesting collection of exotic caged birds.

## FIELD OBSERVATIONS

The most interesting part of the avian annual cycle has again arrived. Migrants are arriving; territorial song is increasing daily, and another nesting season has begun. The long period of cold, rainy weather in March had a noticeable retarding effect on nesting activities.

Mrs. Edith Buss and Miss Lynn Robbins were the first to find nests. Miss Robbins found an Anna Hummingbird nest containing two young on Feb. 24 in Los Altos. In Palo Alto, Mrs. Buss found a Bewick Wren building on Feb. 27 and the nest contained two eggs on Mar. 26. Mr. T.T. Tourtillott reports (Mar. 24) a Horned Owl on a nest in a pine near Evergreen which has been sitting at least since Feb. 28 when the nest was found. Near Los Gatos, Charles Sibley found a just-begun Bush-tit nest, Mar. 23; a female Green-backed Goldfinch gathering cobwebs, Mar. 27, and a pair of Chestnut-backed Chickadees digging rotten wood out of an old woodpecker hole on Mar. 29. The same chickadees were lining the nest with willow down on Apr. 5. Emily Smith found a Song Sparrow building on Mar. 25 near Los Gatos. On Mar. 28 the bird carried nesting material to the nest 36 times in one hour! Les Sleeper found a half-completed Black Phoebe nest at the Hoover Ranch, Waddell Creek, Santa Cruz Co., Mar. 29. Frank Sturges and Bob Golden found a Salt Marsh Song Sparrow nest (3 eggs, Apr. 4) and a Savannah Sparrow nest (empty Apr. 4, one egg Apr. 5) near Alviso. Barn Swallows were building under a culvert near Alviso (carrying mud and grass) and Cliff Swallow nests in all stages of completion were seen on the Alviso water tower on Apr. 5.

### Migrant Arrivals.

Violet-green Swallow. Near Milpitas, Mar. 1-5 (Dorothy Wool); Mar. 2, Gilroy (C. Sibley)  
Orange-crowned Warbler. Los Gatos, Mar. 7 (Emily Smith) and Mar. 9 (C.S.)  
Tree Swallow. Near Niles, Mar. 18 (Milton Seibert)  
Cliff Swallow. Mar. 22-23, Saratoga (Frances Sibley) and Silver Creek Hills (M. Seibert)  
Bullock Oriole. Menlo Park, Mar. 23 (Nell Sleeper); San Jose, Mar. 30 (The Zwaal's).  
Pileolated Warbler. Woodside, Mar. 23 (Roberta Pleas); Waddell Creek, Santa Cruz Co., Mar. 29 (E. Smith); Mar. 30, Los Gatos (C. Sibley).  
House Wren. Mar. 24, Silver Creek Hills (Eva McRae).  
Western Flycatcher. Los Gatos, Mar. 28 (C. Sibley); Mar. 29 (Eva McRae).  
Warbling Vireo. Los Gatos, Mar. 28 (C. Sibley); Mar. 29 (Eva McRae).  
Black-throated Gray Warbler. Mar. 29, Aldercroft (Angelina Snow).  
Barn Swallow. Mar. 29, Waddell Creek, Santa Cruz Co. (S.C. Valley Aud. Soc.).  
Texas Trilling Nighthawk. Apr. 4, Alviso (Bob Golden).

Who has seen Black-headed Grosbeaks and Solitary Vireos?? Watch for other arrivals in April----and send your records to the Editor.

### Winter Visitants.

Townsend Solitaire. One still present at Miss Gladys Record's house in Los Gatos on Mar. 30 (since Feb. 5). Milton Seibert saw one in Alum Rock Park on Mar. 14 and Bob Golden saw one there on Apr. 1. Bob Golden and Tom Rycraft saw solitaires in the northern Santa Lucia Mts., Monterey Co. on Mar. 20 and 22. Near Los Gatos, Charles Sibley has found them on Mar. 9 (specimen), Mar. 13 (two individuals), Mar. 15, 18, 25, 28, 29, and 31. Some of these are probably the same individual. At the April Cooper Club meeting in Berkeley, Mrs. Junea W. Kelly reported one at Smith Creek on Apr. 2 and Alden H. Miller reported one in Wildcat Canyon, Contra Costa Co. on Mar. 21.

Evening Grosbeak. Milton Seibert saw two in his yard in San Jose, Mar. 22 and 6 flying over, Mar. 24. Ernst Pflock saw two to five in a box elder on S. 11th. St., San Jose, Feb. 22, 23, and Mar. 2 and 5. The Zwaals have banded 35 and unbanded birds were still coming to their feeding tray on Mar. 30.

Band-tailed Pigeon. Flocks have been seen near Los Gatos since Mar. 15. E. Smith saw 2-300 in eucalyptus trees there on Apr. 1. Other reports have come from Los Altos and Palo Alto.

The White-crowned and Golden-crowned sparrows are showing conspicuous pre-nuptial molt through March. Fox Sparrows still present Apr. 5 (C.S.). Keep daily records on Hermit Thrush, "crowned" sparrows, Audubon Warbler, and other winter visitants so we can determine their departure dates. Send last dates to the Editor.

REPORT OF FIELD TRIP TO STEVENS CREEK RESERVOIR, March 16, 1952.

After postponement seemed inevitable because of bad weather, we were surprised at starting time to count 14 cars in the group. In spite of wind and intermittent sunshine we were rewarded by seeing many birds. The reservoir was full to overflowing but water birds were few: a Red-breasted Merganser in nuptial plumage, 2 Double-crested Cormorants, and 2 Red-throated Loons in winter plumage. The brushy slope of the dam, however, furnished many birds. During our half hour on the path across the dam we listed, in addition to the 3 water birds, the following: Great Blue Heron, Killdeer, Anna Hummingbird, Belted kingfisher, Red-shafted Flicker, Black Phoebe, Violet-green Swallow, Scrub Jay, Bushtit (flock), Wren-tit (singing), Bewick Wren (singing), California Thrasher (singing), Robin, Hermit Thrush, Pine Siskin (flying across reservoir), Green-backed Goldfinch, Spotted Towhee (singing), Brown Towhee, Oregon Junco (singing), White-crowned and Golden-crowned sparrows (singing).

Continuing on around the reservoir, we found a parking area where we could leave our cars, to walk along a side road by a wooded creek, through an orchard, and across a field. Along this road we added to our list: Turkey Vulture, Cooper Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, California Quail, Yellow-bellied (Red-breasted) Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Steller Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Plain Titmouse, Varied Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet (singing), Orange-crowned Warbler (singing), Brewer Blackbird (males displaying), Purple and House finches (singing). A pair of Bushtits were collecting nesting material.

Above the reservoir we took the Mt. Eden Rd. and made one stop—by a neglected orchard where there were several Orange-crowned Warblers foraging in the fruit trees and down in the mustard, with only occasional song. At this stop we added 8 more species to our bird list for the morning: Sharp-shinned Hawk, Allen Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker, Western Bluebird, Loggerhead Shrike, Hutton Vireo, Audubon Warbler, Western Meadowlark. Then we heard the call of the Hungry Bird, "Where do we eat?" The Paul DeWolfs' ranch near Cupertino proved a delightful place to lunch, with Anna and Allen hummingbirds buzzing about red feeders and chickadees coming to our hands for walnut meats.

Bernice and George Bottini

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NEW MEMBERS. The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society takes pleasure in welcoming its new members.

Mrs. Edith Glidden, 709 Howard Ave., Menlo Park  
Dr. Malcolm R. Miller, Dept. of Anatomy, Stanford University  
Mr. John F. Nelson, Rt. 1, Box 210-A, San Marco Rd., Saratoga  
Miss Norma E. Northberg, 309 Pope St., Menlo Park  
Mr. Jene E. Pankow, 277 E. San Fernando St., San Jose 12  
Miss Lynn Robbins, Dept. of Anatomy, Stanford University  
Dr. O. R. Tanner, 1480 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto

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A SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE of the National Audubon Society has been opened in Room 201, at 693 Sutter St. (California Teachers Association Building). Miss Mary Jefferds, the manager, invites the "14 branches and 10 affiliates in California" to make use of the services offered at the office. There are supplies of publications of the National Society, recommended nature books, bird and flower cards, and much other nature material. Visitors are welcome from 9:00 a.m. to noon, and again in the afternoon between 1:00 and 5:00, Mondays through Fridays.

## C A L E N D A R   F O R   A P R I L

A SPECIAL MEETING on Tuesday, April 8, was announced several days ago by postcard. Don't forget this important meeting—Room 210, Science Building, San Jose State College, at 8:00 p.m. Mr. John H. Baker, President of the National Audubon Society (of which our Society is a Branch), will give us the latest news on wildlife conservation. Good attendance at this meeting will stimulate the Society's interest in the Audubon cause. Come if you can. Because of this special meeting, the regular April meeting in Palo Alto has been cancelled.

A WILD FLOWER FIELD TRIP will be taken on Saturday, April 12, with Dr. Carl Sharsmith, of the San Jose State College Science Department, as leader. Many of us know Dr. Sharsmith better as Ranger Naturalist at Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park. Dr. Sharsmith can tell us all the names, and many interesting things about plant growth and the relation of wild flowers to their environment. Meet at San Jose State College, at corner of E. San Carlos and 5th Streets, in time to start at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch. Dr. Sharsmith will probably take us into the hills south of San Jose—wherever the flowers are best.

MIDWEEK BIRD TRIP will be taken on Wednesday morning, April 16, to the Paul Dewolfs' ranch on Regnart Rd., where chickadees come to your hand for walnut meats and, at this time of year, 3 species of hummingbirds buzz about the feeders. Trip will start at 8:30 a.m., at junction of Prospect Rd. with the Saratoga-Sunnyvale Rd., about halfway between Saratoga and Cupertino.

THE SHOREBIRD FIELD TRIP will be taken on Saturday, April 19, to the Alviso and Dumbarton Bridge areas, with Charles Sibley as leader. The spring migration will be at its peak at this time and maximum numbers of shorebirds will be present. Meet at the Alviso School in time to start at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, and a scope if you can get one.

THE SAN ANTONIO VALLEY FIELD TRIP, scheduled as an overnight trip, has been changed to a Sunday trip only, on April 27. Mrs. Caroline Davis, who will lead the trip, is planning to go by way of Mt. Hamilton and return through Arroyo Mocho and Livermore—about 100 miles round trip from San Jose. On this trip we should see Phainopeplas and other interesting birds of the drier Coast Ranges; and there should be fine displays of wild flowers. Meet in east San Jose, at corner of Alum Rock Ave. and Mt. Hamilton Rd., in time to start at 6:00 a.m. Bring a lunch which includes a midmorning snack, because we start so early. If April is rainy, check with C.L. Sleeper, Menlo Park; or Emily Smith as to state of road back of Mt. Hamilton and possible change of plans.

MIDWEEK BIRD TRIP will be taken on Wednesday morning, April 30, to the Ransom Davises' garden in Menlo Park where bird boxes, bird feed, and water attract birds. Mrs. Davis also has in mind a short walk in the vicinity of her home. Meet at the Davises' home, 1140 San Mateo Dr., just off Santa Cruz Ave., at 8:00 a.m.

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SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Branch of NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY  
President --- Albert J. Wool, Rt. 2, Box 728, San Jose  
Corr. Sec. -- Miss Eva Allen, P.O. Box 772, Los Gatos  
Editor ----- Charles G. Sibley, Rt. 1, Box 241, Los Gatos  
Assoc. Ed. -- Miss Emily Smith, Rt. 1, Box 387, Los Gatos  
Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month, alternately in San Jose and Palo Alto. Guests are always welcome.