



BULLETIN OF THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

September 1952

LUNAR ORNITHOLOGY

"Bird! -- seven-thirty to two-thirty--good focus--two Tycho-- moderate speed--wingbeat visible." At least 14 members of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society will know exactly what that cryptic sentence means. The observation of migrating birds seen through a telescope as they pass in front of the moon has proved to be an exciting and instructive phase of bird study. At times the frequency of avian silhouettes flashing across the bright disc of the moon has reached one per minute---several times two and even three birds have crossed simultaneously, and on three occasions flocks of from 7 to 30 ducks have been seen.

On Sept. 1 the moon-watchers gathered at the Prusman home near Los Gatos. Between 8:00 p.m. and midnight 94 birds were seen. The night of Sept. 2-3 was chosen for an all-night vigil. The hourly count was as follows: 8-9:31; 9-10:24; 10-11:12; 11-12:10; 12-1:8; 1-2:2; 2-3:3; 3-4:2; 4-5:3. Fog obscured the moon at 5:00 a.m. The same pattern of "flight density" held on Sept. 3. Clouds restricted our observations on the 4th. and 5th. It is apparent, even from these few observations, that most birds make their nocturnal migratory flight in the hours before midnight, then drop back to earth.

The moon-watchers will again be at work on the nights of October 1 to 5. Everyone can participate---and it is fascinating to see the forms of the migrants projected by the moon's light. Next month we hope to have several stations in operation so as to compare the numbers of birds relative to different topographical situations. One will be in Los Gatos, another in the East Foothills, another in the center of the Valley. How about Palo Alto? -- or the Alviso area -- or the top of Mount Hamilton -- or the crest of the Santa Cruz Mts. -- or the shoreline of the Pacific ??? The number of stations will depend upon the amount of help. (In addition to the moon-watching there are coffee and donuts--and lots of conversation).

Contact Emily Smith if you can be with us.

Charles Sibley

* * * * *

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

PINTAIL. Aug. 5 and 8, during early evening, 7 flocks following the same route as the Southwest and United air liners through the pass between Los Gatos and Santa Cruz. Mary Ellen Shore. Many other reports of flocks since early August.

RUDDY DUCK. Sept. 1, seven half-grown young on pond at Wool's Ranch, east of Milpitas. Albert Wool.

CALIFORNIA QUAIL. Aug. 12, 24 "thumb-size" chicks at Wool's Ranch. Sept. 7, 56 quail in covey at same place. Al Wool reports good build-up of quail population at his place this season.

CASPIAN TERN. Aug. 26, 13 at Calero Reservoir. One seen carrying fish to 8 birds resting on far shore. Could not be sure if feeding took place. Emily Smith.

MOURNING DOVE. Aug. 14, 2 nests with eggs in grain field near Milpitas. Al Wool.

BLACK SWIFT. Sept. 5, 3 or 4 in flock of about 30 swallows near Cupertino. E.S.

VAUX SWIFT. Sept. 6, 7 dropped into chimney in Los Gatos at roosting time. E.S.

ALLEN HUMMINGBIRD. Aug. 24, at feeder near Cupertino. Lucia DeWolf.
 ACORN WOODPECKER. Aug. 22, 2 fledglings fed at tray, Aldercroft. Lina Snow.
 WESTERN FLYCATCHER. Aug. 26, flycatching, silent, near Morgan Hill. Gladys Record.
 WOOD PEWEE. Aug. 18, 2 fledglings fed near Saratoga. E.S. Aug. 26, flycatching
 and silent, near Morgan Hill. G.R.
 OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER. Aug. 22-28, fledglings being fed, Santa Cruz Mts. M.E.S.
 CLIFF SWALLOW. Aug. 19, nestlings in only occupied nest on Alviso water tower. E.S.
 BARN SWALLOW. Aug. 19, fledgling fed in the air, Bonnie Doon Road, Santa Cruz Co.
 near the coast. Fanny Zwaal.
 PIGMY NUTHATCH. Aug. 28, one of 3 fledglings fed from tray, Aldercroft. L.S.
 MOCKINGBIRD. Aug. 8, arrived for winter season in Glen Una District near Los Gatos,
 has been seen daily since that date. E.S.
 CALIFORNIA THRASHER. Banded male showing molt on nape July 25 and in molt through
 Aug. Seemingly fully in new plumage by Sept. 2. Singing on Sept. 1. E.S.
 SOLITARY VIREO. Sept. 5, singing quite persistently near Boulder Creek. E.S.
 ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER. Aug. 18, singing quite persistently near Saratoga. E.S.
 YELLOW WARBLER. Aug. 26, singing near Morgan Hill. G.R. and E.S.
 TOLMIE WARBLER. Santa Cruz Mts., present on Sept. 7. M.E. Shore.
 WESTERN Tanager. Aug. 23, large fledgling fed by female, Los Gatos. G.R.
 BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK. Food calls of fledglings heard frequently until Aug. 29
 near Los Gatos. E.S.
 HOUSE FINCH. Sept. 1, pair showing breeding behavior. Santa Cruz Mts. M.E.S.
 GREEN-BACKED GOLDFINCH. Sept. 4, fledgling fed by male near Cupertino. E.S.
 BROWN TOWHEE. Banded female fed fledglings of second brood until Aug. 15, near
 Los Gatos. E.S.
 OREGON JUNCO. All juveniles apparently in first winter plumage by Aug. 31, near
 Los Gatos. Eva McRae.
 SONG SPARROW. Signs of annual molt on July 20. One seen to pick up and drop a
 beakful of nesting material on Aug. 29. On Sept. 5 two males were singing at each
 other, apparently in territorial dispute. Near Los Gatos. E.S.

The occurrence of autumnal song will be noted in several of the species in the
 above list. Wren-tits, California Thrashers, Song Sparrows, and Mockingbirds are
 especially vocal in the fall.

Of special interest at this time of year is the passage of fall migrants. Keep
 a record of the dates of occurrence of summer visitant and transient species so that
 the last date of occurrence may be determined.

* * * * *

"MUSIC IN NATURE"

Four 12" unbreakable phonograph records with over 50 bird songs and other animal
 sounds. This popular talk by Dr. Loye Miller, Emeritus Professor of Zoology, is
 again available. Dr. Miller imitates the calls and songs and explains them in
 musical terms. Especially suited for all grades of classroom instruction.

Price: \$7.50 plus 3% Calif. Sales Tax. Order from Cooper Ornithological Club,
 Dept. of Zoology, Univ. of Calif., Los Angeles 24, Calif.

* * * * *

SCREEN TOURS

The first Screen Tour will be on October 31. Keep the date open. Details and
 complete schedule will appear in the October Bulletin.

* * * * *

Although anytime is a good time to obtain new members---this is an especially
 good time because our "dues year" begins in October. When you send in your dues
 (notice will be enclosed with next month's Bulletin) include a proposal for a new
 member.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

TO MOSS LANDING, August 16, 1952. At this season when shorebirds are migrating south, there is always the possibility of seeing an unusual transient. This happened at Moss Landing when members of both the Santa Clara Valley and Monterey Peninsula Audubon Societies met on the construction road which skirts the north arm of Elkhorn Slough. Among the waders on a mud bar on the north side of the road was a Lesser Yellow-legs, with the more common Greater Yellow-legs nearby for comparison!

Least Terns were the only birds we observed during the trip which were still caring for young. Several of these pretty little terns were fishing in the slough and carrying their catch over the dunes which lie west of the road. We knew that earlier this summer Least Terns had nested on these dunes, along with Snowy Plovers and Killdeer (see Field Observations in July-August Bulletin). After a brief visit to the marshes across the highway from the construction road, our trail took us over the dunes to the beach where a dozen Least Terns, both adults and fully grown immatures, were resting. One of the immatures was brought a 3-inch fish which it swallowed whole, after "shaking the wiggle out of it!" The highlight came when 2 downy chicks, running on the sand, were caught and held in gentle hands until everyone had an opportunity to see them. When the chicks had been set down on the sand and were running again, each in a different direction, two adults came and claimed them.

Birds listed included:- Brown Pelican, Brandt Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Pintail, White-winged Scoter, Coot, Snowy Plover, Ringed Plover, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Hudsonian Curlew, Willet, Greater Yellow-legs, Lesser Yellow-legs, Least Sandpiper, Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Sanderling, Avocet, Northern Phalarope, Western Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Heermann Gull, Forster Tern, Least Tern, Caspian Tern, Black Phoebe, Barn Swallow, Long-billed Marsh Wren, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer Blackbird, American Goldfinch, and House Finch.

Charlie and Viola Anderson, Leaders.

TO HALF MOON BAY, August 31, 1952. The route was up King's Mountain Rd. and down to the coast by way of Tunitas Creek Rd. Although no stop was made on the narrow road up the mountain, a Hermit Thrush was recorded, as it flew across the road in front of the lead car. On the west side of the mountain, where redwoods give way to farm lands on the coastal plain, the caravan found a stopping place beside the Tunitas Creek. Here a company of talkative Pigmy Nuthatches and Pine Siskins were busy in tall eucalypts. Both species were seen pecking into the woody fruits of these trees. Other birds seen at this stop: Sparrow Hawk, California Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon (small flock), Anna Hummingbird, Western Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher (at least 2, one singing occasionally), Violet-green Swallow, Steller Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Wren-tit (fine song), Brown Creeper, Russet-backed Thrush, Hutton Vireo (brief song), Pileolated Warbler, House Finch, Purple Finch (fed fledgling), American Goldfinch (followed by fledgling, calling for food), Brown Towhee, Oregon Junco, White-crowned Sparrow (2 immatures), Song Sparrow.

At the coast the sky was clear and the day pleasantly warm. An early lunch hour was spent at Miramar Beach on Half Moon Bay. There were no shorebirds on the steep, sandy beach, but two 'scopes showed water birds off shore. Among them was the thrill for the trip—a "first" for every one present—two Marbled Murrelets swimming abreast, close together! Other birds out on the water included: Red-throated Loon, Western Grebe, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, Western Gull, Heermann Gull, a tern (Forster?), and other birds whose identification we couldn't agree on. A school of porpoises, each showing a back fin as it came gracefully to the surface for air, proved as interesting as the birds.

Emily Smith, Leader.

C A L E N D A R F O R S E P T E M B E R

FIELD TRIP TO ALVISO AND DUMBARTON BRIDGE, Sunday, Sept. 14. This date is in the period when most of the rare transient species of shorebirds recorded for the San Francisco Bay region, have been found. The trip will be a joint one with the Golden Gate Audubon Society, with Charles Sibley as leader. Meet at the Alviso Grammar School at 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch.

REGULAR SEPTEMBER MEETING in Palo Alto on Monday, September 15, in the Junior Museum, Palo Alto Community Center, at 8:00 p.m. There will be a short time for the exchange of field observations of birds by members. As speaker of the evening, Dr. Malcolm Miller, Department of Anatomy, Stanford University, will speak on "The Birds of Byxbee Park" (Palo Alto Yacht Harbor). His talk will be illustrated with Kodachrome slides. Dr. Miller, who is a member of our Society, has been making a special study of the birds of that area. Guests will be welcome.

MIDWEEK BIRD TRIP to Searsville Lake on Wednesday morning, September 17. The lake with its attendant cattail marsh, willow thicket, and nearby chaparral and wooded areas, is a good place to bird at any season. Charles and Elizabeth Mueser will lead the trip. Meet at the entrance gate to Searsville Lake at 8:30 a.m.

FIELD TRIP TO ALUM ROCK PARK and, if the road is good, to Cherry Flat Reservoir, Saturday, September 27. The first of the winter-visitant land birds from the north should be here by then, increasing the interesting bird population in the park. Grace Brubaker will lead the trip. Meet in the foothills east of San Jose, at the corner of Alum Rock Ave. and Miguelito Ave. (by San Jose Country Club), at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch.

* * * * *

ANOTHER NATURE FILM BY WALT DISNEY. If you have not seen "Water Birds" you will want to. Palo Alto members who saw it when it was shown in their area, were most enthusiastic. Don't miss it.

* * * * *

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Branch of NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

President --- Dr. H. B. Humphrey, 715 Fremont Ave., Mountain View
Vice-Pres. -- John P. Harville, 576 Lassen St., Los Altos
 Mrs. Esther Ollis, P.O. Box 786, Los Gatos
Rec. Sec. --- Mrs. Bernice Bottini, 918 Sunset Dr., Santa Clara
Corr. Sec. -- Miss Eva Allen, P.O. Box 772, Los Gatos
Treasurer -- Mrs. Eva McRae, San Jose State College, San Jose 14

Editor ----- Charles G. Sibley, 15880 Ravine Rd., Los Gatos
Assoc. Ed. -- Miss Emily Smith, 19651 Glen Una Dr., Los Gatos

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month (except July and August), alternately in San Jose and Palo Alto. Guests are welcome.