

BULLETIN OF THE
SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

May

1953

CALENDAR FOR MAY

Field Trip This Coming Sunday, May 3, to Al and Dorothy Wool's ranch in foothills east of Milpitas. The Tricolored Blackbirds are nesting in the cattails around the lake, and Coots and a Mallard have already brought off their young. Two Florida Gallinules and a Virginia Rail have been seen at the lake this month, as well as Pied-billed Grebes and Ruddy Ducks. After lunch there will be a side trip to Calaveras Reservoir, for those who wish to go. Meet in Milpitas at 8:00 a.m., on Calaveras Road at its junction with Highway 17. Bring lunch, and a cup for coffee which Dorothy will have for us.

Field Trip to Portola State Park, Saturday, May 9, with Malcolm Miller and Lynn Robbins as leaders. There is sure to be a Water Ouzel and Winter Wrens will be singing. Many of the small flowers in a redwood region have an interesting association with the tall redwoods. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on the Skyline Boulevard (Highway 5) at its junction with the Alpine Road. Bring lunch.

Regular May Meeting in Palo Alto on Monday, May 11, at 8:00 p.m. in the Junior Museum at the Community Center. Dr. Charles Danforth, Professor Emeritus of Anatomy at Stanford University, will discuss "Variety and Causation of Colors in Feathers," and will illustrate his talk with actual feathers. Dr. Danforth can tell us why, when a hummingbird turns its head, the brilliant color of its gorget changes to velvety black, and why the blue feathers of the Lazuli Bunting are not blue at all. Guests will be welcome.

Wednesday Morning Bird Trip on May 13. Clyde and Agnes Prusman will again lead a trip into the beautiful grounds of Villa Montalvo, near Saratoga, where the many birds are undisturbed. Meet at main gate on Saratoga-Los Gatos Road at 8:30 a.m.

Field Trip to Pilarcitos Reservoir, Sunday, May 17, with Les and Nell Sleeper as leaders. This reservoir was included in the Crystal Springs Lakes trip of last January, and at the time it was agreed that Pilarcitos merits an all-day trip--and so this is it. The Pilarcitos Creek, lined with alders and maples, will be interesting to explore, and near the reservoir are groves of fine Douglas Fir and Madrone. Meet in Palo Alto at S. P. Station in time to start promptly at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch.

Field Trip to Fremont Peak State Park will be taken on Saturday, May 23 (not Sunday, May 17, as scheduled in April Bulletin). Charles and Viola Anderson will lead this scenic trip. There will be unusual trees, shrubs, and flowers; and the birds will be many at this time of year (but, with due respect for the Sunset Magazine, do not expect to see a Calliope Hummingbird). Meet at 8:30 a.m. at junction of Monterey Highway (101) with San Juan Highway, about nine miles south from Gilroy. Bring lunch.

Wednesday Morning Bird Trip on May 27, to Searsville Lake. This will be another repeat trip, by request--the April trip was so much enjoyed. Sidney and Grace Carr have agreed to plan the May trip. Meet at entrance to Searsville Lake at 8:30 a.m. Both the Wednesday morning trips and the all-day field trips are planned for every member of the Society who cares to come. The trips are informal and friendly and one can come and go as he pleases. Emily Smith is field trip chairman and will be glad to answer questions about the trips--possible transportation, how far we walk, etc. Her address is 19651 Glen Una Dr., Los Gatos, and her phone number, EL 4-2494.

Dr. Humphrey and other botanically-minded members are planning an all-day trip, probably on May 20, to Chews Ridge in Santa Lucia Mts, Monterey Co., to see the beautiful Santa Lucia Fir which is endemic to those mountains. If you are interested in joining the group, phone Emily Smith.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Wildflower Trip, April 11, 1953. The trip's objective was the rocky, serpentine hills south of San Jose where, after winter rains, dainty spring annuals blossom briefly. The soil is thin and soon dries out, and so these wildflowers must grow quickly and produce their seeds before the ground is too dry. After the abundant rains of last year, the Senter Road hills were thickly carpeted with flowers, but this year the flowers were fewer and the plants dwarfed. However there were enough Goldfields, Tidy-tips, gillias of several kinds, and collinsias to make nice splashes of color. The California Poppy, with its thick perennial root, made a finer show this year than last. This was true also of the Bitter-root *Lewisia*, which grows on the rockiest part of the hill. It was while we were enjoying the rose-colored flowers of the *Lewisia* that we heard the song of the Horned Lark, coming "from heaven or near it," and saw the bird "spring higher still and higher" between each song, and then its belt back to earth.

At lunch time Mr. Ted Tourtillott welcomed us to the picnic tables at his home, "Coon Hollow," near the upper end of Metcalf Road, where feed trays and water attract many birds. Although it was midday, when birding is not supposed to be good, we soon had a good list of birds to round out the day: Turkey Vulture (10), Red-tailed Hawk (pair), California Quail, Anna Hummingbird, Nuttall Woodpecker, Black Phoebe, Western Flycatcher, Steller Jay, Scrub Jay, Crow, Bushtit, Wren-tit, House Wren, Bewick Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Bullock Oriole (pair), Black-headed Grosbeak (pair), House Finch, Green-backed Goldfinch, Spotted Towhee, Brown Towhee, Oregon Junco, White-crowned Sparrow (1), Golden-crowned Sparrow, Fox Sparrow (2 at tray), and Song Sparrow.

Shorebird Trip, April 19, 1953. The trip got a good start at Alviso, in spite of wind, dark clouds, and threats of rain. There was plenty of mud for shorebirds to probe in, for the tide was well started on its way out. Just east of Alviso, from the Los Esteros Road where it makes its first turn, we saw countless small sandpipers. There were six flocks of them in flight at one time over the marsh, and the birds feeding on the exposed mud of the shallow slough, were crowding each other. Those close enough to the road to be identified proved to be mostly Western Sandpipers. Among the small sandpipers, where there was still a little water, were 39 Avocets, many Willets, and perhaps 100 Dowitchers. Other species of shorebirds in this area (we did not go beyond the bridge at the second turn in the road) were present in small numbers only. A dozen or so Forster Terns were fishing in a deeper slough. Twice we saw a tern carry its catch away; and then we discovered the reason for it when one alighted on a fence in the marsh and gave its fish--a token of regard?--to an adult tern already perched there.

On the diked pond just northeast of Alviso we found a concentration of ducks. We estimated that there were 1000 Scaups, 50 Shovellers, and 100 Ruddy Ducks. Among the ducks were four Bonaparte Gulls in full nuptial plumage. At the Leslie Salt ponds west of Alviso, there were as many Avocets as there had been on the slough east of Alviso. Several of them yelped when we walked out on one of the dikes, but we did not go as far as their usual nesting site.

The rain held off until midmorning when it was time to move on to the Sunnyvale dump. There in the rain we found Dr. Miller and Lynn Robbins, who had been scouting the marsh near the dump, in anticipation of our coming. They reported that the marsh was completely drained and no longer were there Green Herons, rails, and other marsh birds there. And so the trip ended with a bird list for Alviso only: Great Blue Heron, American Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Pintail, Shoveller, Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Turkey Vulture, Clapper Rail, Coot, Snowy Plover (4 on dike west of Alviso), Ringed Plover, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Willet, Greater Yellow-legs, Least Sandpiper, Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Avocet, California Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Bonaparte Gull, Forster Tern, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Savannah Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. (We missed the 2 Black-necked Stilts which Etta Smith saw the day before. She also saw a pair of Cinnamon Teal farther out on the Los Esteros Road.)

Emily Smith.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

- Common Loon. An adult in nuptial plumage, with an immature (?) bird, Bear Gulch Reservoir, Apr. 21 and two preceding weeks; heard calling. Roberta Wright.
- Great Blue Heron. Two sitting on nests, 3 standing on other nests, all 5 nests in two adjacent cottonwoods in grove near Searsville L., Apr. 22; 3 other birds seen in flight from nest trees. Charles Mueser.
- Osprey. One seen catch a fish and carry it off, Searsville L., Apr. 21. E. Smith.
- Mallard. Duck with 12 downy ducklings, Searsville Lake, Apr. 20, Curt Dietz.
- Wood Duck. Two pairs, pond at Los Trancos Woods, Apr. 19. Lynn Robbins.
- Coot. Two downy chicks with parents, Searsville L., Apr. 22. Elizabeth Mueser.
- Roadrunner. One, Ridgecrest Ave., near Los Gatos, Apr. 26. Rachel Miller.
- Ash-throated Flycatcher. First report of arrival, Apr. 17, foothills east of Milpitas. Al Wool. Pair investigating an old flicker hole which was occupied by Ash-throats last year, Los Gatos, Apr. 23. Gladys Record.
- Western Flycatcher. Nest under roof of porch apparently finished on Apr. 9, but bird still incubating 4 eggs on Apr. 29, Los Gatos. Nell Hamsher.
- Western Wood Pewee. First reported by Eva McRae, Apr. 23, near Los Gatos.
- Olive-sided Flycatcher. First report from Lina Snow, Apr. 13, Santa Cruz Mts.
- Tree Swallow. Nest-building in hole in tree, Searsville L., Apr. 21. E. Meuser.
- Purple Martin. Two males in dispute and 1 female, Searsville L., Apr. 21. E. Smith.
- Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Nestlings being fed, Apr. 24, Alum Rock. J. Harville.
- Bushtit. Pair feeding fledglings, Apr. 19, near San Jose. Grace Brubaker.
- Bewick Wren. Nest-building in bag on porch, Mar. 17, Mt. Hermon. Adist Boylan.
- Mockingbird. Feeding 2 recently fledged young, Apr. 25, San Jose. Fanny Zwaal.
- California Thrasher. Two adults trying to get 4 recent fledglings (down still on their heads) out of sight, Apr. 17, Stanford campus. Pat Donaghey.
- Robin. Shaping mud cup in nest, Apr. 12, Glen Una Dr. (near Saratoga). E. Smith.
- Hermit Thrush. Last day seen by Eva McRae, Apr. 24, near Los Gatos.
- Yellow Warbler. Arrival dates: Apr. 4, near Los Gatos (E.S.); Apr. 11, San Jose (Manette Wittgenstein). Female nest-building, Apr. 25, near Los Gatos (E.S.).
- Audubon Warbler. One singing, Apr. 24, near San Jose. Grace Brubaker. Female carrying nesting material, Apr. 23, Santa Cruz Mts. Mary Ellen Shore.
- Tolmie Warbler. First seen, Apr. 5, and regularly since, Santa Cruz Mts. M.E.S.
- Hooded Oriole. A male seen feeding at Abutilon flowers, Apr. 1, and frequently since then, near San Jose; female seen about Apr. 10. Grace Brubaker.
- Brown-headed Cowbird. A pair showing courtship behavior, Apr. 11, Coyote Cr. in San Jose, where Yellow Warblers were singing. Audubon Field Trip.
- Western Tanager. First report from Eva McRae, Apr. 25, near Los Gatos. A male was seen in business district of Los Gatos, Apr. 27, by Mary Ellen Shore.
- Black-headed Grosbeak. First report of arrival, Apr. 1, one male on feed tray; two on tray next day, without scrapping, and afterwards for 11 days; female not seen until Apr. 15. Lina Snow, Aldercroft Heights in Santa Cruz Mts. Al Wool's first date, Apr. 5, foothills east of Milpitas. A male singing on nest while incubating, Apr. 25, Alum Rock Park, John Harville.
- Lazuli Bunting. First report, Apr. 25, singing, near Los Gatos. Emily Smith.
- Purple Finch. Female nest-building in Monterey Pine, Apr. 20, in Los Gatos. E. Smith.
- Harris Sparrow. Still coming to Grace Brubaker's feed tray (hills east of San Jose) and showing prenuptial molt; at last report, Apr. 29, it was singing a little, along with a Golden-crowned Sparrow.

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