

BULLETIN OF THE
SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

July-August

1953

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE FOR AUGUST

Sunday, August 16, to Big Basin Redwoods State Park, the first of California's redwood parks (purchased in 1902 "to preserve a body of redwood trees from destruction and maintain them for the honor of California and the benefit of succeeding generations"). This will be a trip to enjoy the redwoods and their associates, along trails away from campers and picnickers--a walk of two or three miles, or as long as you want to make it. Emily Smith, who will lead the trip, suggests an early start and early return. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Saratoga Gap, where Big Basin Road (#9) crosses the Skyline Boulevard (#5). Bring a picnic lunch. If you plan to camp in Big Basin Saturday night, meet the group at the Ranger Station in Big Basin at 8:15 Sunday morning.

Wednesday Morning, August 19, to Alviso to see migrating shore birds, which have been arriving from the far north since early in July. Etta Smith, who often starts a busy day with two hours of early morning birding at Alviso, will lead the trip. Meet at the Alviso Grammar School at 8:00 a.m. If you have a spotting scope, bring it along.

Saturday, August 22, the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society has a trip scheduled for Moss Landing, which Charles and Viola Anderson will lead. Members of our Society are invited to join the Monterey Society. Moss Landing is an excellent area for observing both shore and water birds, and it is an area which the Andersons know well. Meet at Moss Landing at 9:00 a.m., on the construction road which branches off toward the dunes from Highway #1, about half a mile north of concrete bridge over Elkhorn Slough. Bring a picnic lunch.

Saturday, August 29, to various mud flats, marshes, and salt ponds in the Dumbarton Bridge area. Here is another trip for the shore bird enthusiasts. It is during the fall migration that the rarer transient species of shore birds are usually recorded. And for the beginner, any shore birds, probing for food in the mud or resting on a dike, are easy to see and enjoy. Les and Nell Sleeper are planning the trip. Meet in Palo Alto at the S. P. Station at 8:00 a.m. Bring a picnic lunch.

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HELP! HELP!

The Junior Museum being readied in Alum Rock Lodge needs volunteers now

1. to assist in making display materials
2. to do simple carpentry
3. to take photographs of work being done.

Audubon Society members are asked to help. Some one is at the Lodge on weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to tell you where and how you can be of help in this interesting project.

Whenever you can, won't you go out and offer your services? If you want more information, call Mr. Sam Smoker, CYPRESS 3-8509 (evenings) and he will tell you what kind of help he needs. Let's give the Junior Museum a boost. The enclosed white sheet tells what the Junior Museum hopes to do. (The material on the green sheet was sent out by the California Office of the National Audubon Society in June.)

Elsie Hoeck

SEASONAL BIRD OBSERVATIONS

Some Nesting Records. White-throated Swifts, which usually nest in crevices in vertical cliffs, were feeding nestlings in under tiles on the roof of the San Francisco Water Tower at Sunol on June 6 (the day the Audubon Society field trip to Mt. Diablo ended in rain at the checking station; but we found good birding at the Water Tower). On the June 10 Wednesday morning bird trip to Castle Rock in the Santa Cruz Mts. a female Golden-crowned Kinglet was observed pulling lichen off an oak limb and carrying it into thick foliage at end of a Douglas Fir branch. There she worked it into a nest already well along, while the male sang close by. Three members, who returned to Castle Rock on June 14, found the Kinglet still nest-building; but on later visits, July 4 and 5, when parent birds should have been feeding nestlings, there was no sign of Golden-crowned Kinglets. On the June 14 visit a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches were found feeding nestlings in a hole in a half-dead Black Oak. This brood was successfully fledged between June 23 and 26, and were seen with their parents on July 4, not far from the nest hole.

A letter from June Miller tells of seeing a hard-working Song Sparrow feeding two fledglings, one a foster cowbird. That was on June 30, near Los Altos. Later Mrs. Miller reported that the cowbird was fed several days after the young Song Sparrow was apparently on its own. After the cowbird was "weaned" it stayed around a week or so, "fluttering and sputtering when food (a fig) was held toward it, just as it had when its foster parent brought it food. It often came so near it seemed as though it could have been taught to take food from the hand." Margaret Cramer reported another Song Sparrow, in Campbell on July 28, feeding a well-developed young cowbird which demonstrated on a feed tray and down on the lawn that it could find food for itself.

Molting Time. Although it is now August, the food calls of young birds out of the nest are still heard: Wood Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Black-headed Grosbeak on Aug. 9 near Saratoga. Aug. 3, in San Jose, Fanny Zwaal heard food calls of a young Mockingbird and saw a well-developed youngster chase after an adult Mockingbird. With many birds, however, the nesting season is over and now it is time for the annual postnuptial molt, which will be complete, down to the last feather, for every bird. On the feed tray today (Aug. 9) a banded Brown Towhee, which successfully raised two broods out of three nestings this season, showed signs of molt. In her tail there were only two old feathers left and where the feathers had been shed, one or two at a time, darker new ones were growing out. Also the back of her head looked a bit ragged and pin feathers were visible. Young birds which hatched this season must also undergo molt. Young Spotted Towhees these days are taking on a patchy look, as black and rufous body feathers replace the streaked, brownish ones which gave the towhees a sparrowlike look when they left the nest. Apparently the tail and wing feathers of their juvenal plumage will do until the annual molt next summer, for wings and tail look trim. But young Wren-tits are molting tail and all!

Migrating Shore Birds. During July Etta Smith made four pre-breakfast trips to Alviso, when the tide was low enough, to check on the arrival of shore birds from the far north. She made her observations just east of Alviso, where the Los Esteros Road makes its first turn to the right. On July 9 there was a scattering of small sandpipers, perhaps 100, but none close enough to identify; 5 Long-billed Curlews; about 75 Willets; 8 Dowitchers; and 1 Marbled Godwit. On the same mud flat the next morning the number of small sandpipers had greatly increased and they were feeding in compact flocks. The "peeps" close enough to be identified proved to be mostly Western Sandpipers, with only a few Least Sandpipers. The Willets had tripled their number, and there were at least 100 Dowitchers. In addition to 3 Long-billed Curlews and a Marbled Godwit, there were 2 Greater Yellow-legs. On July 21, 10 Black-bellied Plovers, some still wearing the handsome black of their breeding plumage, had arrived

and, a little apart from them, 57 Ringed Plovers. On July 26 the count was 1 Ringed Plover, 12 Black-bellied Plovers, 4 Hudsonian Curlews, 39 Willets, 14 Dowitchers, 7 Yellow-legs, and scattered "peeps."

On one of the Leslie Salt ponds, on the other side of Alviso, there was a flock of about 150 Northern Phalaropes on July 21. On July 26 the phalaropes numbered at least 5000. At 6:30 a.m., soon after sunrise, the birds were gathered in close company near a dike where myriads of tiny flies floated on the water. Looking across the glass-smooth pond, with the sun at our backs, the graceful birds seemed to sparkle in the soft light as they dabbled, this way and that, for the flies. Later, when approached along the dike, they spread out over the pond and made it possible to estimate their number.

Emily Smith

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NEW MEMBERS. The Society takes pleasure in welcoming its new members

Mrs. Florence Heckel, 18860 Loree, Cupertino
Mrs. Philip D. LaRiviere, 453 Tennessee Lane, Palo Alto
Mr. Ray R. Wilson, 460 So. 16th St., San Jose 12

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SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Branch of NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

* * * "PROWLERS OF THE EVERGLADES," another film in Walt Disney's * * * True Life Adventure Series, is being shown just now with "The Band Wagon in San Jose. The reviews in Natural History Magazine are enthusiastic.