

THE AVOCET

Bulletin of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, CaliforniaPRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On November 14, the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum in Alum Rock Park celebrated the completion of its first year of service to the children of Santa Clara Valley with a Members' Day. Although it rained and part of the program had to be changed, a large audience was present. One of the events was the dedication of the \$750 specimen showcase presented to the museum by San Jose State College. In this case, one Diorama was specifically dedicated with the following words:

"To these inspired teachers, and former members of the Natural Science Faculty of San Jose State College, their former students, colleagues and friends affectionately dedicate this bit of nature. Miss Emily Smith, P. Victor Peterson, Carl D. Duncan, Karl Hazeltine, Gayle Pickwell, Fred Buss."

The members of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society are proud of their association with these people who have always helped us by being our friends and teachers.

It is notable that during the first ten and one half months of service, the Junior Museum was visited by 245 school classes on scheduled field trips, and by 109 non-school groups, to total over 10,000 children who were conducted through the museum and live animal room.

The San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum conducted field trips and demonstrations away from the museum for 47 groups which included over 3,500 children.

It loaned animals to more than 800 children and teachers; its program was featured in a Universal-International Newsreel and the Saturday Evening Post. (June 26, 1954)

The museum's services were opened to more than 70,000 persons during the year, and its regular program was augmented by a summer program which featured special assistance to local day camps, and conducted field trips through Alum Rock Park.

The Junior Museum and the Audubon Society have similar aims. It seems that there are two concrete ways in which each of us could help the Junior Museum. First by becoming a contributing member; second, by offering personal services to help with field trips. Larry Moitozo, director, says it is fun. (Address: 16260 Alum Rock Avenue, San Jose)

Elsie D. Hoeck

DECEMBER CALENDAR

MEETINGS:

Board Meeting, Tuesday, December 7, at 8 p.m. in the Science Building at San Jose State College. Details of incorporation to be discussed.

Regular Meeting, Monday, December 13, at the Palo Alto Junior Museum at 8 p.m. Come prepared to discuss your seasonal observations and other interesting things you have seen.

FIELD TRIPS:

Wednesday, December 8, a visit to Mrs. Ransom Davis' garden where birds are

more plentiful this year than ever before. Meet at Mrs. Davis' house, 11140 San Mateo Drive, Menlo Park, at 9 a.m.

Saturday, December 11, a trip to see the waterfowl on the Crystal Springs Lakes. As permission to enter the property of the San Francisco Water Company at this location is regrettably denied even to birdwatchers, because of necessary regulations and policy, our observations will have to be made from the highway and old county road beside the lake. Be sure to bring field glasses, there should be a good show of ducks, geese and other winter visitors. Meet the leader, Mrs. Doe, at the water tower on La Canada Rd., a couple of miles north of Woodside, at 9 a.m. Bring lunch if desired.

AUDUBON CONFERENCE:

Members interested in attending the spring Audubon Conference will wish to mark the date, for future reference. The branch societies voted to return to Asilomar at Pacific Grove, for their 1955 spring conference. The dates are from Saturday, April 2, to Tuesday, April 5.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:

Our twenty-fourth annual Christmas bird count will be taken on Sunday, January 2, 1955. Groups of bird-watchers in all parts of the country are choosing one day during Christmas week to count birds. Aside from its scientific value, a bird count is lots of fun, a sort of game to see how many species of birds and how many individuals of each species can be recorded in one day in a given area. The rules of the count specify that the area must lie within a circle fifteen miles in diameter. The center of our count area is a short distance northeast of San Jose, at the junction of Capitol Ave., and Mabury Road. We need lots of help to cover this area, so plan to participate this year. You don't have to be an expert--novices can help as checkers and drivers. If you can't go on the count, you can help by counting the birds in your neighborhood that day--provided you live in the area. (See inclosed sheet which gives instructions for the count.) If you know where an owl roosts in the count area, or where there are unusual numbers of birds, let the leaders know. They are listed on the inclosed instruction sheet. The meeting place for the count will be in San Jose at the corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Sts., by San Jose State College campus, at 7:30 a.m. Bring lunch.

NEWS NOTES

At the October meeting of SCVAS it was voted that the society shall incorporate. Mr. Hill is to be requested to proceed with the necessary steps to achieve this purpose.

It was also decided that when special interest programs of the society fall too close to regular monthly meetings, the special meeting shall take the place of the regular meeting for that month.

BIRD NOTES

Lynn Robbins reports that several people have seen hermit thrushes right in Palo Alto, and early, this year.

Fanny Zwaal, from San Jose, writes that on a birding trip about Nov. 10, her group observed three flickers picking at something in an old asphalt paved roadway. It looked as if at least half the bills of the flickers disappeared into the ground. When the party went to the spot, they found small holes in the pavement and soon saw termites come crawling out of the holes. Deduction - the flickers had been feeding on the termites.

Lillian Gorham, of Los Gatos, sent us this bird story. Recently she has been observing a red-breasted sapsucker diligently making holes and drinking sap from a neighbor's elm tree. One day, while she was watching the sapsucker, she noticed an Anna's hummingbird perched on a twig nearby. When the sapsucker left, the hummingbird darted from hole to hole, drinking the sap. Another hummingbird arrived and tried to get in on the treat. While they were quarreling, an Audubon's warbler flew in and chased both of them away. The warbler then made frequent stops, clinging to the bark and drinking sap from different holes. This exclusive state of affairs was of brief duration. In a few moments, two ruby-crowned kinglets joined the sap party. The Audubon's warbler did his best to discourage the intruders, but he was outnumbered. While he chased one kinglet, the other one always managed to get a feed.

All of this performance was a great surprise to Miss Gorham, she said, and made her wonder just how many birds are sap drinkers. She would be interested in knowing if other bird watchers have had similar experiences to record (Ed. note: So would we!)

FIELD TRIP REPORT for Nov. 6th, 1954

About a score of Audubonites from the Santa Clara Chapter gathered at Santa Cruz to observe the bird life. Meeting at Natural Bridges State Park the walk began through a grassland-type area where Savannah sparrows, an American goldfinch, linnets and a Say phoebe were observed.

One of the small 'darter' hawks scattered a flock of linnets and then lit in a small willow where the members could see its barred, narrow tail. It was either a male Cooper or a female sharpshinned hawk.

In other small willows bordering a dry pond chickadees, bush-tits, and a ruby-crowned kinglet were seen. In the dry pond bed four traps set by a local bird bander were examined. Ahtoughh the bander had hoped for at least three species, all traps contained golden crowned sparrows. These were examined then released unhurt.

Exploring the small canyon further the group saw a few late monarch butterflies clustered on the weeping branches of eucalyptus. A last season's American goldfinch nest was investigated and found to contain an unhatched cowbird egg. An owl pellet was found and inspected. Contained in the pellet were skulls and other bones of small rodents.

At about 11 a.m. the group journeyed to Twin Lakes where glasses were trained on various waterfowl. Both male and female bufflehead ducks were seen at good range. Ruddy ducks, mallards, pintails, lesser scaup, shovelers and one baldpate were seen. Some ducks were feeding; others sleeping.

The feeding ducks were doubtless responsible for the Audubonites change of interest for most of the party decided they had watched ducks long enough and it was time for us to feed. Lunch was enjoyed at the picnic tables at New Brighton Park.

Following lunch various shore and water birds were watched from the cliffs above the beach. Hudsonian curlews, sanderlings, marbled godwits and willetts were seen at the shore line. A large group of western grebes was sleeping a little ways offshore.

Most of the members departed for home from New Brighton but a few went on to Seacliff Park where black-bellied plover, Bonaparte gulls, murrees and loons were watched.

Grassland, eucalyptus woodland, pond, ocean shore and sandy beach produced an even fifty species. In addition to those mentioned above the following were seen or heard: Heermann gull, black phoebe, redthroated loon, pelican, Brewer black-bird, yellowlegs, Marsh hawk, sparrow hawk, white-crowned sparrow, double-crested cormorant, Meadowlark, Flicker, Audubon warbler, Anna hummingbird, Ring-necked pheasant, hermit thrush, killdeer, pipit, surf scoter, Hutton vireo, Bewick wren, coot, snowy egret, western gull, ring-billed gull, in order of writing-down.

Hope the birds enjoyed the beautiful weather and pleasant companionship as much as I did and hope you will send another delegation to check our birds again soon.

Ken Legg

QUILLS AND PINFEATHERS

An attractive brochure has arrived from the National Audubon service department. Listed are gift suggestions ranging from bird song records and Christmas cards, to books, binoculars, ornaments and children's games. Look it over--perhaps it will answer that "what to give this year" problem.

A fine set of 50 slides titled "Attracting Birds to the Garden," with a commentary by Charles E. Mohr, is available from the Photo and Film Department at Audubon House. Rental is \$6 per week. The set may also be purchased for \$30. (Allow 60 days for delivery on this.) Garden Club members might enjoy an illustrated talk on "Landscaping for Birds."

Several articles appeared in national magazines recently, which are of especial interest to Audubon members. "National Geographic Magazine's" 40 page article, "Saving Man's Wildlife Heritage," by John H. Baker, president of Audubon Society ran in the November issue. "The Ducks are Flying South," is an 11 page feature of "Sports Illustrated" for November 15, which includes articles by Florence Stumpf, of the University of California, and by Scott Young, as well as a six page color foldout showing the major flyways and the ducks that use them. The October issue of "Holiday" carried an article by Donald Culross Peattie on "The Audubon Society."

Conservationists are interested in recent developments of the Butano Forest situation. Will Luick's report is included in this month's AVOCET. Also, Aubrey Drury, administrative-secretary of the Save-the-Redwoods-League, has made an appeal for cooperation in saving the second unit of the Avenue of the Giants near Dyerville. Contributions may be sent to the office of the treasurer, Dr. Robert G. Sproul, 250 Administration Building, Berkeley, California.

OFFICERS

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Conservation Warning -

Recently Newton B. Drury, chief of the state division of beaches and parks, reported that the state had met an impasse in negotiations with the Pacific Lumber Company for some 1,040 acres of Butano Forest in San Mateo County for development as a state park. The stand of redwoods is sought to be preserved by state and county officials, as well as individuals and organizations interested in conservation.

Some \$1,000,000 has been accumulated from various sources for the proposed Butano development as a state park. The sum includes state matching funds for county allocations, plus donations by public-spirited citizens and societies.

Action has been taken to commence condemnation proceedings against the lumber firm.

It is suggested that you keep informed on current and future developments with reference to Butano Forest, so that if public pressure becomes necessary it will be forthcoming when needed.