

# The Avocet

Volume III Number 5

September-October 1956

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Saludos Amigos! And a very special welcome to the new members who joined us this summer. Angelina Snow, Chairman of the Membership Committee, informs me that they are: Mrs Arthur Furst, Mr. Michael Fry, Mr. George M. Gaul, Mr. and Mrs G. W. Martin, Miss Viola Barak, Mrs Florence Anderson, and Mr. and Mrs Sam Day.

We're happy to report that most of our committee chairmen from last year, will continue to serve the Society. Some changes, however, should be noted. Although asked to be relieved of their co-chairmanships of the Field Trip Committee, Manette Wittgenstein and Dorothy Smith will continue to serve on the committee. Frank Goraj has assumed the chairmanship, and as always, Emily Smith continues to serve the committee well. Eva McRae will continue on the Publicity Committee, but asked to be relieved as Chairman. Jane Goraj (who brings rare talent to the Society) will be Chairman of the Publicity Committee. She has a very ambitious program in mind---lets back her 100 percent. A more complete listing of the committee chairmen and their committee members will appear in a later number of The Avocet.

The huge job of posting our new cooperative wildlife sanctuary off Dumbarton Bridge is finished. Thanks are especially due to: Frank and Jane Goraj who had major responsibilities in the overall planning of the posting expedition; Ann Peterson and her committee who did a wonderful job on the lunch, including the cake complete with ducks and bluebirds; Clyde Prusman who took a beautiful series of pictures, some of which have already been used for publicity purposes (Did you see the San Jose News of August 23?). Larry Moitozo and the half-dozen boys from the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum who contributed "man power" throughout the program; and to Mr. Woods of the Palo Alto Junior Musuem, who also joined the force. To all who helped throughout the program -- THANKYOU.

Dorothy Wool

## COMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

### Meetings:

Sep 17 8:00 p.m. Regular meeting at San Jose State College  
Oct 15 8:00 p.m. Regular meeting, Palo Alto Junior Museum

### Screen Tour:

Oct 9 8:00 p.m. "Land of the Scarlet Macaw"

### Field Trips:

Sep 9 8:30 a.m. Salt Marsh Sanctuary  
Sep 19 8:30 a.m. Alum Rock Park  
Oct 6 8:30 a.m. Hidden Villa Ranch  
Oct 17 9:00 a.m. Searsville Lake  
Oct 21 9:00 a.m. Portola State Park  
Oct 31 9:00 a.m. Montalvo



SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER CALENDAR

## MEETINGS

- Regular Meeting: Monday, September 17 at 8:00 p.m., in Room S210, Natural Science Building, San Jose State College. Dr. John P. Harville, our junior past president, will provide the program. (Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m.)
- Regular Meeting: Monday, October 15 at 8:00 p.m., at the Palo Alto Junior Museum. Dr. Henry Weston, vice-president and program chairman will introduce and present his own program. (Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m.)

## FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, September 9, to that portion of the salt marsh sanctuary which our Society recently posted, and to other places in the Dumbarton Bridge area where birds may be congregated. The sanctuary is east of the Bridge, in the vicinity of Newark Slough. Meet Frank and Jane Goraj at 8:30 a.m., at Hiller's Helicopter Plant, on Willow Road (west approach to Dumbarton Bridge). Anyone coming from east side, phone leaders in Palo Alto (DAvenport 5-8847) as to where group can be met on east side of bridge. Bring lunch.

Wednesday Morning, September 19, to Alum Rock Park, in foothill canyon east of San Jose, to look for fall migrants, among other things. Meet Emily Smith at 8:30 a.m. on Alum Rock Avenue at Miguelito Road. (Near SJ Country Club)

Saturday, October 6, to Hidden Villa Ranch, in hills west of Los Altos. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Duveneck have been adding to their ranch many acres of untouched woodland and chaparral, to preserve them in their natural state. They are glad to have such groups as ours use the trails they are building. To reach ranch, take first railroad crossing south of Los Altos, at El Monte Avenue. Follow signs to Adobe Creek Lodge. The ranch is about a mile further, on same side of Moody Road, with high iron gate and olive grove. Meet there 8:30 a.m. and please be prompt. Bring lunch.

Wednesday Morning, October 17, to Searsville Lake, west of Stanford University. Harriet Masson and Edith Buss will lead this trip which is always a favorite. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at entrance gate, near junction of Sandhill and Portola Roads.

Sunday, October 21, to Portola State Park, among redwoods on the headwaters of Pescadero Creek. This trip has been much enjoyed in the spring and should prove interesting in the fall. Meet Herbert and Manette Wittgenstein at 9:00 a.m. on Skyline Blvd. (About 6 miles from Saratoga Gap, and 7 miles from the La Honda Road crossing.) Bring lunch.

Wednesday Morning, October 31, to Montalvo with Bill and Jo Ouder Kirk. Before then our signs will be posted which will help set aside the beautiful Montalvo grounds as a sanctuary. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the parking area inside the grounds. The entrance gate is on Saratoga-Los Gatos Road, about half a mile from Sartoga.

Frank H. Goraj  
Chairman, Field Trip Committee

## SEASONAL OBSERVATIONS

In August there are signs that the nesting season is over for most birds. The resident birds which will spend the fall and winter in flocks, have been gathering together, and now flocks of House Finches and Green-backed Goldfinches can be seen feeding in weedy fields gone to seed. But some still have family cares. A young House Finch was being fed on August 20, and on the same day two young Green-backs were following an adult with plaintive food calls. Lina Snow reports that a flock of Pygmy Nuthatches are back at her feeder. Most of the year the Pygmies are regular visitors, but when nesting time comes they always disappear. The first one noticed back this year, July 8, brought two fledglings and fed them bits of bread spread with peanut butter. After being shown about feeders, the youngsters, then nearly grown, were soon picking up the new food for themselves. In a few days there were more Pygmy Nuthatches. And as late as August 2, Mrs Snow saw two very young fledglings perched on the rim of the feeding tray, waiting to be fed.

After the nesting season every adult bird must undergo a complete molt, their annual postnuptial molt--a gradual replacement of worn feathers by new ones. A color-banded Spotted Towhee, which claims our garden as his nesting territory (but who lost his mate last April, and for whom no amount of singing would bring another) was looking unkempt, when he visited my feeder on August 12, and showed definite molt in his tail. Only three tail feathers were left, each tipped with a large white spot, and between them the new feathers had grown out an inch or so.

Following are some interesting bird observations from our Audubon Society members: Pied-billed Grebe nest, in clear view, apparently floating on shallow water of a reservoir. Nest found by Etta Smith, June 18, when scouting for field trip on cattle ranch west of Gilroy. Only two eggs visible because nest was partly covered with pulled-up aquatic plants. On the field trip, two days later, nest was again covered when visited early in the morning, the sun shining brightly. At noon the covering had been removed and seven eggs, somewhat discolored, were seen. Soon after, on way back to cars, we stopped for a last look and saw a grebe on the nest, pulling the wet blanket up over the eggs again. A home-made incubator? Sparrow Hawks, probably a pair, flying at dusk, August 17, over Dorothy Smith's home near center of Los Gatos, not far from Los Gatos Creek. "In flight," Mrs Smith said "they alternated very rapid wing strokes with sailing and some soaring. Then from high up, they would dive down to top of a tall tree. After a few minutes they would take off again--for pure enjoyment, say what you will."

Northern Phalaropes, "many hundreds, possibly two thousand," July 29, on a Leslie Salt evaporating pond, west of Dumbarton Bridge, reported by Les and Nell Sleeper.

Caspian Terns, among many Ring-billed Gulls, fishing over Chesbro Reservoir (Magas Creek, west of Morgan Hill) August 14, reported by Gladys Goodwin. At the reservoir, August 19, most of the birds were found loafing together near a posted sign: "Powered Boats Not Allowed on Reservoir." Eleven Caspian Terns and 57 Ring-billed Gulls, the latter all showing a terminal black band on the white tail (none in full adult plumage). Also two much larger, very dark first-year gulls (Herring or Western?) were present. At Calero Reservoir, the same morning, seven Caspian Terns but no gulls.

Mourning Doves, seen **this** season in unusual numbers in the fields south of Stanford University, were counted the evening of July 21, by Harriet Masson's son, as they flew by in groups, apparently on their way to a roost in the hills. They added up to 502, plus others in at least one group which got by without being counted.

A dead Flicker, with wing and tail feathers very yellow underneath, was found by June Miller, August 7, in Palo Alto, but the head was missing. This is the second report within the year of a possible hybrid flicker in Palo Alto (see Jan-Feb issue of The Avocet, page 3). During April of this year, Manette Wittgenstein saw frequently, at her home near Los Gatos, a male Red-shafted Flicker showing clearly the red nuchal stripe of a Yellow-shafted Flicker.

Cliff Swallows, "Two or three hundred," strung on telephone wires, July 21, in Los Gatos, reported by Belknap Goldsmith. These were probably, for the most part the adults and their young of a colony which nest thickly under the eaves of an apartment house by the Los Gatos Creek. Later colonies unite for the big migration south. Not until midwinter will the postnuptial and post-juvenal molts take place.

Purple Martin, at least 10 (2 families?), the young birds on telephone wire being fed, with much twittering, July 21, at Frances Dieterich's cabin on top of mountain which overlooks Los Gatos. Miss Dieterich also reports a male Hermit Warbler, August 12, in grove of planted conifers near her cabin.

Hooded Oriole, a bright orange male, clinging to flower stalk of Red-hot-poker (Tritona) and obviously getting nectar from the tubular flowers, July 14, in South Palo Alto garden of Harriet Masson. Next day Edith Buss phoned Mrs Masson that a bright yellow male Hooded Oriole was doing same thing in her garden, three blocks away. (According to Dawson's "Birds of California" in male orioles of this species "advancing age is betokened by increase of the orange element in yellows.")

Emily Smith  
Seasonal Observations Editor  
19651 Glen Una Drive  
Los Gatos, California

#### DR. APPLGARTH ANNOUNCES AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR SCHEDULE

Once again it is time to inform ourselves about the colorful and interesting Audubon Screen Tours for the '56-'57 season. I am sure the lectures and their interesting subjects will appeal to all of you.

The first lecture will be on Tuesday evening, October 9th. Naturalist Ernest P. Edwards will give us some of the springtime color and variety of Mexico -- "Land of the Scarlet Macaw." With a motion picture camera he will take you on an exotic journey deep into hidden valleys, to village market places, to cool mountain heights. You will learn about brilliant birds, beautiful flowers, and colorful people.

On Tuesday evening, December 11th., Alexander Sprunt, Jr. will present "Cypress Kingdom." You will surely enjoy this visit to the watery wilderness of the cypress swamps of the south. This is the home of Seminole Indians, the cotton mouth, lettuce lakes, beautiful ibises, snake birds, egrets, herons, ospreys, alleigators, miniture orchids, and other living things of the Cypress Kingdom.

On Tuesday evening, January 15th, Howard Cleaves brings us a new kind of film -- "Animals at Night in Color." You will be thrilled to get acquainted with the animals of the night shift. This is an amazing revelation of the nocturnal activities of varied wildlife in full natural color.

Then on Tuesday evening, February 12th, Robert C. Hermes takes us to the in-between world -- "Between the Tides." Here between the land and the sea is an endless strip where endless numbers of interesting creatures live. This is a special part of the world--between the tides.

Finally on Wednesday evening, March 13th, Fran William Hall will give us the 5th program in our season series, "Hawaii, U.S.A." He will take you far away in the blue Pacific to the Hawaiian Islands--land of enchantment. His colorful pictures of people, places, beautiful flowers, and interesting birds of the Pacific will be a rich experience.

This year we have good news for all of you. You can get a book of ten (10) family season tickets for only \$5.00. The tickets can be used for any of the Screen Tours. We sincerely hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity. For those who wish to be Patrons of the Audubon Screen Tour Series, we are offering a Patron's Season Ticket for \$10.00. A Patron's Season Ticket will reserve a center section seat for you at each Screen Tour Program until 8:15 p.m. Adult single admission tickets will be \$0.90. Student single admission tickets will be \$0.50, and student season tickets will be \$2.00.

Everyone will profit by getting his tickets early. I sincerely hope that each member will participate in all phases of the Audubon Society's program. Bring your friends along and get them acquainted with the activities of the Audubon Society. Have a fine season!

Arnold G. Applegarth  
Chairman, Audubon Screen Tours

#### PUBLICITY IS LIFE FOR AUDUBON

With a fine schedule of Audubon Screen Tours, interesting field trips, a new sanctuary posted, and work to be done on another wildlife area -- Montalvo -- we have a full year ahead of us. To make more people aware of these opportunities to enjoy nature and to be aware of sound conservation practices, we are planning some publicity. Don't be afraid of this word, please -- it simply means letting people know what we are doing; so that (a) they can join in or (b) they can get some general conservation ideas percolating in their minds. Preferably both because now is the time for conservation education and practice -- while there is something to conserve.

Using the word "publicity" in this light, I now make an appeal to you to help the publicity committee, which so far consists of Mrs. McRae and myself. This is the help we need: in every community which has a newspaper, radio, or television station, we need someone to take material to those staffs occasionally -- when we have some important news or some human interest story they may be able to use; and we need at least one person, preferably more, to read the newspapers and listen to the broadcasts and watch the TV programs, after publicity material has been given to those staffs. These people should be on the look-out for Audubon material; if they find any used, then they should telephone or write whoever used it and thank them. This is

kind of fun, as you can see. So is taking the opportunity to see and/or hear the material presented. So please ask yourself if you can possibly help us in this regard. We also need ideas! And contacts at these various communications businesses. We need a bigger committee, because we can't do publicity with just two of us---at least, not the kind the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society would like and should have. There's a lot of territory in the county, and a growing population. They can use Audubon ideas. Hope I'll see you at the next meeting--or drop me a card and say you're willing.

Jane Goraj  
Chairman, Publicity Committee  
675 Florales Drive, Palo Alto  
DAvenport 5-8847

### SOME GOOD PUBLICITY

Following is a digest of two stories carried on the editorial page of the Daily Palo Alto Times of August 11 and 14, 1956. The original stories were not only entertaining to read, but also really informative. Try them for size. Editor

EVC at bat  
Godwit and God wot what

By Elinor V. Cogswell

Out on the mudflats near the Dumbarton railroad bridge in southern San Mateo County, on Saturday, August 11, a few men and a lot of boys put up welcome signs for migratory birds. The womenfolk took the lunch. The birds got the leavings, if any.

The birds are not expected to read the signs, but the hunters are. They declare some 150 acres of salt marsh a wildlife sanctuary in which hunting and fishing are prohibited. Nothing, however, is said about prohibiting reclamation of the marshes and construction of industries, but the establishment of the sanctuary is expected to accomplish that--at least for some years. The land has been leased from the Leslie Salt Company and the Ideal Cement Company, which have the right to cancel the arrangement at any time.

I visited the scene the previous Thursday with Frank and Jane Goraj of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. When I asked what birds were expected to use the refuge, they said all the migratory shore birds. I named the Avocet, which gives its name to the Santa Clara Valley Society's bi-monthly bulletin and whose handsom black-and-white wings are easy to spot. I mentioned egrets, because some of them were walking around in plain sight. I managed to remember herons, curlews and sandpipers. From a poem I delight in, I recalled the Marbled Godwit, which is nothing but a sandpiper for all its fancy name. My hosts said yes to all of them.

Hunters are not interested in these birds, but in the ducks that come in with them. Some duck hunters have blinds in this selfsame area through some informal arrangement with somebody or other. However, the Audubon Societies of the Bay Area, the Sierra Club, and the National Audubon Society have formal and legal arrangement with the owners. On Saturday,

when the 23 workers (which also included personnel from the Palo Alto and the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museums) installed the 28 posts and signs, they encountered two very unhappy duck hunters. They were repairing a blind in preparation for the coming season. One of them said he'd been hunting there for 20 years and that a lot of work had gone into preparing the hunting area. Dr. John Harville of San Jose State College, past-president of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, explained the reasons for the sanctuary and the hunters took their bad luck with good sportsmanship. It really is bad luck for those hunters, for there are not many places now for the "independents" who do not belong to duck clubs. If plans under discussion are carried out, the ban on shooting will be enforced during the duck season by a deputized warden borrowed from one of the big wildlife sanctuaries in the Southwest.

#### OFFSHORE TRIP FROM SANTA CRUZ

A letter from Viola Anderson invites members of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society to participate in an offshore trip with the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society on Friday, September 14. She points out that on June 19, eight members of our society were in attendance on such a trip when they fed 31 Black-footed Albatrosses around the boat.

The boat will leave Nicholl's Landing on the Santa Cruz Wharf at 7:00 a.m. Adult tickets are \$1.50 and tickets for children accompanied by adults, \$0.75. For further information and tickets call President Dorothy Wool at Cypress 5-9333.

---

#### Officers and editorial staff:

President: Mrs Al J. Wool, Route 2, Box 728, San Jose. Cypress 5-9333  
 Vice-president: Dr. Henry G. Weston, 283 Richlee Drive, San Jose.  
 Franklin 8-3836  
 Secretary: Miss Elsie D. Hoeck, 55 South 6th. San Jose. Cypress 5-1410  
 Treasurer: Mrs Charles J. Zwaal, 478 Clifton Avenue, San Jose.  
 Cypress 2-2060  
 Editor: Dr. L. Richard Mewaldt, 4150 Golf Dr. San Jose. Clayburn 8-7491  
 Seasonal Observations Editor: Miss Emily Smith, 19651 Glen Una  
 Drive, Los Gatos. ELgato 4-2494  
 Field Trip Reports Editor: Miss Mary L. Meehan, 1014 Clark Avenue  
 Mountain View. Whitecliff 8-4949  
 Circulation Manager: Mrs Lester H. Brubaker, 191 Mountain View  
 Avenue, San Jose. CLayburn 8-2289

---

Are you aware of the continent-wide bird-banding program carried on by cooperators of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service? Do you ever find dead birds with U.S.F.& W. bands on their legs? If you do, and are not certain what to do with the recovered bands, contact Miss Emily Smith or your editor.

Wednesday, May 9, to the home of John and Virginia Harville on Ravine Road.

It was a chill, damp, drizzly day in the foothills of the Coast Range, but a few of the more "rugged" ones, led by the indomitable Emily Smith, turned out for an extremely interesting and delightful morning, in spite of oaks dripping down our necks and heavy fog overhead! Around 8:30 a.m. Emily Smith, Marie Machin, Marjorie Malin and Virginia Harville met at the road in front of the John Harville home and began their wet but inspiring walk up the lovely tree-lined, semi-wild road of the fabulous old Cohn estate. In the past ten years this has become an unofficial refuge for wildlife, due to the protection afforded by interested residents and to fairly dense, uncultivated foliage surrounding the few homes in this area. On such a dismal, "gray day", we at first had some difficulty spotting the numerous birds, which we knew were in residence, but after Emily Smith "perched" a little stuffed owl on the low, overhanging limb of a bay tree, so many varieties of bird swarmed and fluttered around to scold the "oblivious owl" that we could have spent several hours observing them and taking notes. Among those who "mobbed the owl" were--Anna's Hummingbird; Allen's Hummingbird; Chestnut-backed Chickadees; Bush-tits; Wren-tits; Solitary Vireo; Orange-crowned Warbler; Pileolated (Black-cap) Warbler; Purple Finch; Spotted Towhee; Brown Towhee; Oregon Junco; and a Song Sparrow.

Also observed throughout the sunless morning were a pair of California Quail; a pair of Band-tailed Pigeons, one in flight; a Western Flycatcher; a Western Wood Peewee; an Olive-sided Flycatcher; a pair of Violet-green Swallows; a California Scrub Jay; a Plain titmouse; California Thrasher; a pair of Robins; Russet-backed Thrushes were sighted and the song and call note heard.

On a pre-scouting trip on May 6 a flock of about 50 Cedar Waxwings were sighted; Hutton's Vireos were heard singing; as were Warbling Vireos; Yellow Warblers; and Black-throated Gray Warblers. Also seen were a Cowbird; a Black-headed Grosbeak incubating; a Western Tanager, singing; a Purple Finch, singing; a House Finch; and a Green-backed Goldfinch, incubating. This all-morning, rather damp field trip, was very rewarding and much enjoyed by all of us "hardy ones."

Virginia Harville