

The Avocet

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November-December 1956

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Dumbarton Bridge and Greco Island Sanctuaries are a reality with the arrival of friendly Warden John O. Larson, Jr. The effectiveness of our postings and the efforts of Warden Larson are being put to their first real test with the opening of the duck hunting season October 20. Good Luck, John, we're behind you. Mr. John Baker, President of the National Audubon Society was present Oct 3rd to help with the formal launching of the Warden's patrol boat into San Francisco Bay. Warden Larson will have been with us only three months when he and his charming wife and son will return to his regular post in Texas.

Jane Goraj and her publicity committee have done very well. To all who had part in one of the finest Audubon Screen Tour turnouts (October 9) the local Society has ever had, we extend our sincere thanks. The many hundreds of people who came, were visibly pleased with the "Land of the Scarlet Macaw" presented by Ernest P. Edwards. Be sure to come see and hear "Cypress Kingdom" presented by noted writer and ornithologist, Alexander Sprunt, Jr., on Tuesday, December 11. Attendance was also most gratifying at the regular meeting on October 15, when Vice-president Dr. Henry Weston gave us the very interesting story behind "bird names".

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!! The Christmas Bird Census will carry on -- come fair weather or foul -- on Sunday, December 23. We were flooded out last year, Remember? Frank Goraj has plans "abrewing" that will make this event a must on your calendar. We urge you -- don't miss it!

Dorothy Wool

COMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Meetings:

- Nov 19 8:00 p.m. Regular meeting at San Jose State College
- Dec 10 7:30 p.m. Board meeting at the Wools' Ranch

Screen Tour:

- Dec 11 8:00 p.m. "Cypress Kingdom"

Field Trips:

- Nov 3 9:00 a.m. Crystal Springs Lakes
- Nov 14 9:00 a.m. Huddart Park
- Nov 18 9:30 a.m. Searsville Lake
- Dec 9 10:00 a.m. Los Banos Refuge
- Dec 12 9:00 a.m. Alum Rock Park
- Dec 23 7:30 a.m. Christmas Census



NOVEMBER--DECEMBER CALENDAR

MEETINGS

- Regular Meeting: Monday, November 19 at 8:00 p.m., in Room 55, Little Theater, Main Building at San Jose State College. A colorful travelogue in motion and sound with Hawaii in sharp focus is planned. (Board meeting at 7:00 p.m.)
- Board Meeting: Monday, December 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of President Dorothy and Al Wool.
- Screen Tour: Tuesday, December 11 at 8:00 p.m., in Morris Dailey Auditorium, San Jose State College. Alexander Sprunt, Jr. will take us on a tour of the "Cypress Kingdom." A rare opportunity to meet such creatures as the Ibis, the cottonmouth, and the Water Turkey in the swamp home of the Seminole. (This will replace the regular December meeting.)

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, November 3, to Crystal Springs Lakes in San Mateo County. Meet the leader, Les Sleeper (DA3-9370) at 9:00 a.m. at the Pulgas Water Temple on Canada Road, about six miles north of Woodside. Bring lunch.

Wednesday Morning, November 14, To Huddart Park, where there should be autumn color of the California variety. Mrs M. R. Kirkwood and Mrs J. W. McBain will again plan the trip to this attractive San Mateo County Park. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in Woodside, at Caldwell's Store, at corner of Woodside and Canada Roads. (No trip if it rains, but if in doubt, phone Mrs. Kirkwood in Palo Alto, Davenport 3-7395.)

Sunday, November 18, to Searsville Lake. Harriet Mundy will lead the trip. The trip will be cancelled if it rains - call Harriet at Davenport 5-1192 if in doubt. Meet at the entrance gate on Sandhill and Portola Roads at 9:30 a.m. Bring lunch if desired. A small charge is required to enter.

Sunday, December 9, to Los Banos Waterfowl Refuge with the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society. Charles Anderson suggests that the Sandhill Cranes and Whistling Swans should be present. Meet at TINY'S CAFE in Los Banos on Highway 152. Be ready to leave TINY'S at 10:00 a.m. sharp. Bring lunch.

Wednesday Morning, December 12, to Alum Rock Park in the hills east of San Jose. This San Jose City Park, along Penitencia Creek, is especially attractive after the first rains. Mrs Langford W. Smith and Miss Emily Smith will lead the trip. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Junior Museum in the Park. (For any information about the trip telephone Mrs Smith, ELgato 4-4674.

Sunday, December 23, is our annual Christmas Bird Census. See page 33 for details. In over-all charge is Mr. Francis Goraj DA 5-8847.

THE 1956 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, Sunday, December 23

MEETING PLACE. In East San Jose, at the home of Frances and Dick Mewaldt, 1130 Golf Drive. Be there at 7:30 a.m. Bring lunch. Tally of the count will be at 4:30 p.m. at the Mewaldts. Refreshments will be served during the tally.

COUNT AREA. Same as in past years, a circular area, 15 miles in diameter, the center northeast of city limits, at junction of Mabury Rd. and Capitol Ave.

SECTORS. The count area will be divided into five sectors, as follows:

- A. Alviso Sector, bounded on east by State Highway 17 (old Oakland Highway) and on south by Bayshore Highway. Bayshore Highway inside this sector.
- B. Southwest Sector, bounded on north and east by Bayshore Highway. Bayshore Highway, south of Alum Rock Ave., inside this sector.
- C. Evergreen Sector, bounded by Bayshore Highway, Alum Rock Ave., and Mt. Hamilton Road. Mt. Hamilton Rd. inside this sector.
- D. Alum Rock Sector, bounded on south and west by Mt. Hamilton Rd., Alum Rock Ave. and Bayshore Highway; on north by Capitol Ave. and Sierra Road. Alum Rock Ave., Bayshore and Oakland Highways, and Capitol Ave. are all inside this sector.
- E. Calaveras Sector, bounded by Sierra Rd., Capitol Ave., and old Oakland Highway. Sierra Rd. and Oakland Highway inside this sector.

SECTOR LEADERS. Alviso (A) Francis Goraj, 675 Florales Dr., Palo Alto, Davenport 5-8847; Southwest (B) Mrs Homer E. Peterson, c/o Commercial Solvents Corp., Agnew, Cypress 3-1077; Evergreen (C) Mr. and Mrs Clyde Prusman, 15961 Shannon Rd., Los Gatos, Elgato 4-9914; Alum Rock (D) Jim Peterson, P.O. Box 462, San Jose, Andrews 9-1820; Calaveras (E) Albert J. Wool, Rt. 2, Box 728, San Jose, Cypress 5-9333.

Each leader is responsible for planning the itinerary within his sector. (If you know where there is good birding in a sector, let the leader know.) At the meeting place, on the day of the count, the assembled bird counters will divide into groups and go with whichever sectors they wish. If you know now which sector you want to join, phone or drop a card to the leader. It will be a big help in planning the itinerary if the leader knows beforehand how many observers (and cars) he can count on for his sector.

Records. One person in each group will act as scribe, to record the counts of each species of wild bird positively identified. In making estimates of large numbers, indicate the probable error, for example: Coot, 2000±300. If unable to estimate degree of accuracy, record estimate as : Coot, 2000 est. In adding estimates to actual counts, in final tally, indicate accuracy in this way: Coot, 2137 (2000±300, 173). This shows that of the total number of Coots reported (2173), 173 were actually counted and the rest estimated.

Record hours and milage spent on foot and by car by each group in sector. As weather conditions can effect results, keep record of weather (minimum and maximum temperature, wind direction and approximate velocity, cloud cover, etc.). Because habitats are important in evaluating species counts, record habitats visited (salt marsh, canyon stream, oak woodland, grassland, golf course, etc.) and percentage of time spent in each habitat.

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs Irving W. Snow reports that thirteen persons have joined the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society in the past two months. We welcome you all and urge you to come to our meetings, field trips, screen tours, and other activities. These new members are:

Mrs Park Chamberlain
Mr and Mrs Carl Miesche
Miss Mildred King
Mrs A. D. Curtner
Mr Lucius Johnson
Mrs Hazel V. Brown

Mr Robert C. Wood
Mrs Ernest C. Ebert
Sister Mary Victoria
Mrs W. V. Chatterton
Miss Vivian E. Warren
Mrs G. A. Jacobs

HAWAII BIRD TOUR

The Honolulu Audubon Society invites us to a Hawaii Bird Tour which features personally guided trips during eight adventurous days on Oahu. This is a packaged trip starting December 22. Anyone interested? If so, call Frank Goraj, our own field trip chairman, at Davenport 5-8847 before the middle of November.

SALT MARSH SANCTUARY TOURS

John O. Larson, Jr., the warden of the San Francisco Bay Audubon salt marsh sanctuaries (Greco and Dumbarton areas) says he can take one or two Society members at a time on some of his rounds by boat. This is an excellent opportunity to learn more about your local sanctuaries. Write or call Mr Larson at Travelers Motel, 2041 El Camino, Mountain View with telephone YOrkshire 7-9885.

AUDUBON SCHOLARSHIPS ARE USEFUL

The recipient of our 1956 Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society scholarship to the Audubon Cam of California writes as follows to Past-president John P. Harville:

"Dear Dr. Harville,

I want to thank you and the Audubon Society for the scholarship to Audubon Camp.

Now that my summer work as nature counselor is drawing to a close, I find that I feel just as I did when I left Audubon Camp earlier this summer. It was a wonderful and interesting learning experience. Besides the "warm glow" Bill Goodall guaranteed, it offered a valuable program which stressed ecological relationships and conservation.

Audubon Camp has helped me greatly in formulating and reorganizing my nature program this year, especially in regard to my objectives and approach.

I sincerely hope the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society will continue to offer scholarships to Audubon Camp so that others may also benefit by having the experience of attending and sharing in their program.

Very truly yours,

/S/ Anastasia Conomos"

SEASONAL BIRD OBSERVATIONS

"By September, the day breaks with little help from the birds. A song sparrow may give a simple half-hearted song, . . . but few birds have anything to say or sing about." (This from Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac," written on a Wisconsin farm.) Here in California we are fortunate in having more birds which sing a little in September, some quite a little. Soon after the nesting season, in the foothills on both sides of Santa Clara Valley, thrashers can be frequently heard singing, sometimes quite vigorously. California Thrashers are permanently resident birds and tend to remain paired for life, if the story of two color-banded thrashers in our garden is typical. Late summer song of thrashers, even before the postnuptial molt is finished, may be in defense of their territory, warning neighboring or wandering thrashers to keep out.

Our garden was part of the territory which belonged to the color-banded thrashers, mentioned above. These two thrashers were already paired when banded in February, 1952. The male ("Stump-leg") was lost in late August, 1955. His mate continued to hold their territory, with vigorous song, until the middle of October, when she, too, disappeared completely. The garden was vacant, so far as thrashers were concerned, until August 9 of this year, when a new thrasher was singing from Stump-leg's favorite perch. He was not entirely new to this territory, because a band on his leg identified him as the bird which was a persistent but unsuccessful intruder during the winter of 1954. Well, to make a long story short, the newcomer soon acquired a mate (she now wears one of my bands) and the two birds have successfully established their ownership of the territory which includes our garden.

The first report this fall of the arrival of a White-crowned Sparrow in our area, came from Frances Mewaldt; one on September 13, in the Mewaldts' garden near the foothills east of San Jose. It was three days later before I saw one in our yard, near Saratoga, along with one Golden-crowned Sparrow. Not until September 20 did I see more than one Golden-crown on the lawn, where I scatter baby chick scratch. One of the Golden-crowns, wearing a band, wandered into my trap. My records show it was banded in December 1952 and has returned to our lawn every year since then. Other regular winter visitants to our place have been later this year than usual: Townsend Warbler, September 23; Hermit Thrush, October 15 (three days earlier at the Ouderkirks across the road); Ruby-crowned Kinglet, October 20; Fox Sparrow, October 21 (three at Searsville Lake, October 17); Red-breasted Sapsucker, October 21. Two less regular visitors were Red-breasted Nuthatch, September 12, and Lincoln Sparrow, October 3.

The Francis Gorajs first saw Audubon's Warblers on October 4, feeding in maple trees along their street in East Palo Alto. There were two or three of them, but within a week a dozen or more were darting about. Les Sleeper, who commutes to San Francisco by way of the Crystal Springs Reservoir, saw a flock of 25 or 30 Canada Geese at the reservoir, for the first time this season, on October 14, 15.

An interesting observation of Greater Yellow-legs catching newts was reported by Al Wool at the October meeting of our Audubon Society. While watching nine of these shore birds feeding at the edge of Frog Pond, a spring fed pond not far from Calaveras Reservoir, Mr. Wool saw them catch

several Pacific Coast Bewts (commonly called "water dogs") and, even more surprising, manage to swallow them! It was at this same pond that Mr. Wool watched garter snakes prey upon the newts in the spring of 1955.

A card from Lynn Robbins, postmarked in Freiburg but picturing Rothenburg ob der Tauber, says "This old town has been one of the highlights of our trip--truly beautiful. Saw a Black Redstart on the old town wall! Today still greater thrills--three Dippers, with very white chests, on a little stream in the Schwarzwald; and the first Stork's nest as we entered Freiburg!"

Emily Smith

NEW POSITION OPEN ON PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

The Publicity Committee is grateful to all the helpful people who clip articles or mentions of the Audubon Society out of their newspapers and send them to us. Quite a few people are doing this, and our scrapbook is filling up nicely. Our meetings are filling up a little more too--which is what we want. This gives more interested people the chance to learn more about, and come closer to the natural world around them.

We very much need one more committee member. He or she would send a copy of our monthly Field Trip schedule to the Club Editor of each newspaper (14 altogether). If you can type and can devote a couple of hours a month to an Audubon Project, won't you get in touch with me? This is a most rewarding kind of work, because you are doing a real service and you see results. Hope to hear from you very soon.

Jane Goraj, Pub. Chmn
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BARGAIN TRAILER: A few big books of ten (10) family season tickets for only \$5.00 are still available for the four remaining Audubon Screen Tours. All ten tickets could be used for the same showing. Bring your friends. Tickets may be obtained at Room 100, Science Building, San Jose State College. Include remittance with your ticket request. Tickets will also be available on the night of the performance at Morris Dailey Box Office.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

On Sunday, June 10, our Society met the Santa Cruz Bird Club at the Salinas River bridge near Salinas. A late nesting in the Allen Hummingbird habitat was checked. The two young viewed in the nest at eye level appeared to be newly hatched.

At 9:45, the group arrived at the William Hatton Ranch in Calera Canyon. Mr. and Mrs. Hatton extended a welcome, the guest book was signed and the trip was off to a wonderful start. On a leisurely walk along the ranch road, the birds of the stream and the chaparral were listed.

The following 45 birds were identified during the two-hour walk:--Turkey Vulture; Red-tailed Hawk; Calif. Quail; Mourning Dove; Barn Owl; Anna Hummingbird; Allen Hummingbird; Red-Shafted Flicker; Acorn Woodpecker; Nuttall Woodpecker; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Black Phoebe; Western Flycatcher; Wood Pewee; Violet-green Swallow; Steller Jay; Scrub Jay; Crow; Chestnut-backed Chickadee; Plain Titmouse; Bubhtit; Wrentit; House Wren; Bewick Wren; Calif. Thrasher; Russet-backed Thrush; Hutton Vireo; Solitary Vireo; Warbling Bireo; Orange-crowned Warbler; Pileolated Warbler; Bullock Oriole; Brewer Blackbird; Black-headed Grosbeak; Lazuli Bunting; Purple Finch; House Finch; Am. Goldfinch; Green-backed Goldfinch; Lawrence Goldfinch; Spotted Towhee; Brown Towhee; Oregon Junco; Chipping Sparrow and Song Sparrow.

Viola and Charles Anderson

Although not a scheduled trip, several members enjoyed L.M. McQuesten's "Albatross Expedition" on June 19. The boat left Santa Cruz and traveled twelve miles out. Here three Black-footed Albatrosses were found on the water. Anchovies were tossed and the big chocolate-brown birds floated over. Their high-pitched peeps apparently attracted others for thirty-one were finally counted astern--some within three feet.

The trip on Sunday, June 24, featured nesting birds at Point Lobos State Park. The trail in the morning skirted the northern edge of the Reserve where Western Gulls and Baird's Cormorants, each with young, could be observed at close range. Pigeon Guillemots were constantly flying in and out of their nesting crevices.

After lunch a trip was taken to watch a large colony of Brandt's Cormorants nesting on Bird Island. Here a number of Brown Pelicans could be seen but two nests were hidden behind the rocks. According to James Whitehead, Superintendent of the Park, a downy white chick was in one of the nests. This is reported to be the most northern breeding grounds of the Brown Pelican.

Birds listed in the Park included:--Brown Pelican; Brandt's Cormorant; Baird's Cormorant; Oyster Catcher; Western Gull; Pigeon Guillemot; Mourning Dove; White-throated Swift; Anna Hummingbird; Violet-green Swallow; Cliff Swallow; Steller Jay; Scrub Jay; Chestnut-backed Chickadee; Wrentit; Bewick Wren; Purple Finch; House Finch; Spotted Towhee; Oregon Junco; White-crowned Sparrow; Song Sparrow.

Viola and Charles Anderson

Fifteen members met at the foot of Fremont Peak on Sunday, July 1, expecting to explore the summit and bask in the sunshine. The ascending road was banked with chamise in full bloom and many other components of the chaparral at their best. The mist observed from the base became more dense and the summit was encased in a cloud. It was decided to find a more suitable area. Seventeen birds were identified en route.

Birds identified included:--Turkey Vulture; Red-tailed Hawk; Mourning Dove; Black Phoebe; Scrub Jay; Wrentit; Canyon Wren; Calif. Thrasher; Western Bluebird; Brown-headed Cowbird; Brewer Blackbird; House Finch; Green-backed Goldfinch; Brown Towhee; Spotted Towhee; Oregon Junco and Song Sparrow.

Lunch was enjoyed in the picnic area near the Old Caves in Pinnacles National Monument. The afternoon netted warmer weather and seventeen additional birds.

The following birds were seen in the Monument:--Turkey Vulture; Calif. Quail; White-throated Swift; Downy Woodpecker; Wood Pewee; Violet-green Swallow; Scrub Jay; Plain Titmouse; White-breasted Nuthatch; House Wren; Canyon Wren; House Finch; Green-backed Goldfinch; Lawrence Goldfinch; Black-headed Grosbeak; Brown Towhee and Oregon Junco.

Charles and Viola Anderson

FIELD TRIP TO THE NEW SALT MARSH SANCTUARY--DUMBARTON--On Sunday, Sept. 9, 29 people (including Diana Martin, age six months) assembled to visit the new salt marsh sanctuary. We caught a glimpse of a Clapper Rail as we crossed the Dumbarton Bridge. (The new sanctuary is one of the last two known breeding grounds for the Clapper Rail.) After we had parked our cars at the western edge of the sanctuary and were walking along the cat-walk toward the R.R. tracks, we saw hundreds of Avocets. They were the dominant theme of the day. From the R.R. embankment everyone had a good view of the new sanctuary and was pleased. From here we drove to the Newark side, near Beard Creek, and saw the most dramatic sight of the day: first 23 white pelicans flying in single file; then hundreds of them, wheeling and gliding, with the sun flashing on them as they turned. Unforgettable. The final stop was at the KGO transmitter station, where we had our lunch. A most satisfying day. ~~Although, altogether~~ Altogether 31 species recorded. White Pelican; Double-crested Cormorant; Great Blue Heron; American and Snowy Egret; Black-crowned Night Heron; Pintail; Marsh Hawk; clapper Rail; Ringed Plover; Killdeer; Black Turnstone; Long-billed and Hudsonian Curlew; Willet; Greater Yellowlegs; Western Sandpiper; Marbled Godwit; Avocet; Northern Phalarope; Forster's Tern; Mourning Dove; Belted Kingfisher; Barn and Cliff Swallow; Loggerhead Shrike; Western Meadowlark; Brewer's Blackbird; House Finch, Savannah and Song Sparrow. Also-- Harbor Seal or Small Sea Lion, and Ground Squirrel.

Jane and Frank Goraj