

# The Avocet

Volume V Number 2

February, 1958.

## SEA OTTER KILLINGS ALERT FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

California's beautiful sea otter, once considered extinct, now numbers some 614 by recent count. In 1900 they disappeared after relentless fur hunting, but in 1936 five animals were discovered near Monterey. Under complete legal protection, and tender care by the Department of Fish and Game, they returned to grace the California coast south of Monterey.

These amusing and interesting mammals shun the land and live their entire lives in kelp beds--usually on their backs, preyed upon only by an occasional killer whale or by an ignorant man. According to Dr. Richard Booleotian, UCLA zoologist (Western Tanager, January, 1958), "...their food consists of sea urchins, abalones, black mussels, and clams. To crack shells, the otter brings up a rock from the ocean's bottom, lies over on its back, ...placing the rock on the fat pad on its chest... and grasping the mussel in its front paws, bangs away on the rock until the shell is cracked. Otters, though they have two front paws and two back flippers, do not use these in swimming. Instead they move through the water by muscular undulation. Baby sea otters spend many months cradled on mamma's broad bosom, comfortable and secure."

The San Jose Mercury-News for January 5, 1958 reports that the otters are being killed by irresponsible youngsters--ten dead so far. Captain Howard Shebley of the Monterey branch, Department of Fish and Game, wants the otter to grow in abundance and reminds local parents that killing them is a felony punishable by state prison confinement. In the sea otter refuge along Highway 1, it is a violation of the law to carry firearms. He emphasizes the conservationist's view that living things must not be used for target practice.

Though we wonder why this crack-down seems to have been delayed, we trust it will be effective. Careless use of guns is a problem that has many other than legal aspects.

----Manette Wittgenstein and Joyce Todd

## COMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

### Regular Meeting:

None in February. Come to the Screen Tour instead!

### Board Meeting:

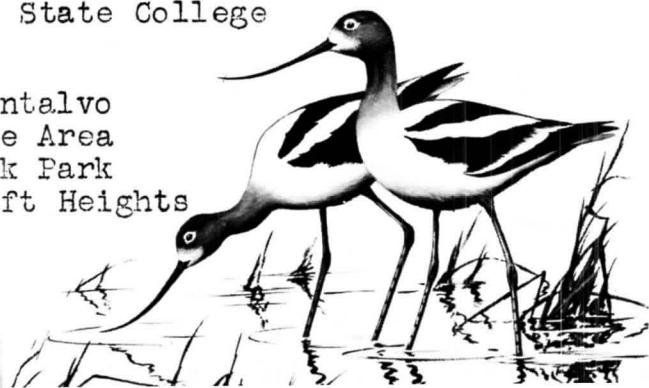
None in February.

### Screen Tour:

Tues. Feb. 18 8:00 p.m. San Jose State College

### Field Trips:

Sun. Feb. 9	10:00 a.m.	Villa Montalvo
Wed. Feb. 14	9:00 a.m.	Westridge Area
Wed. Feb. 26	9:00 a.m.	Alum Rock Park
Sat. Mar. 1	9:30 a.m.	Aldercroft Heights



FEBRUARY CALENDAR

## Regular Meeting:

None in February because of proximity of meeting and screen tour dates.

## Board Meeting:

None in February unless called by special notice.

## Screen Tour:

Tuesday, February 18, at Morris Auditorium, San Jose State College, at 8:00 p.m., Dr. Clin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. of Wayne, Maine, will present Penguin Summer. This noted ornithologist-author-photographer has produced an epoch-making color film of the faraway Falkland Islands, off the southern tip of Argentina, where penguins and people live fascinating lives. These comical seabirds invariably bring a smile, for their upright position, deliberate behavior and awkward movements are like caricatures of dinner-jacketed men.

## Filed Trips:

Sunday, February 9, to Villa Montalvo. The estate is about one-quarter mile from Saratoga on the Saratoga-Los Gatos Highway. We will explore and enjoy the various trails of the Wildlife Sanctuary. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the parking lot to the right of the villa, inside the grounds. Bring lunch--and interested friends. Leaders: Frank and Jane Goraj (DA5-8847).

Wednesday Morning, February 14, to Westridge area. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Portola Valley School on Portola Road (1½ miles from the intersection of Alpine and Portola Roads). Be prepared for wet and muddy feet. Leaders: Admiral and Mrs. Charles Williams (DA3-0787).

Wednesday Morning, February 26, to Alum Rock Park, in the hills about seven miles east of San Jose. To reach the park, drive east on Alum Rock Ave. Meet in the park at 9:00 a.m. at the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum. Leader: Mrs. Langford Smith (EL4-4674).

Saturday, March 1, to vicinity of Aldercroft Heights. Meet at 9:30 a.m. in front of the Lyndon Hotel in Los Gatos. Bring lunch--and anyone who would like to come. Leader: Mrs. Angelina Snow (EL4-1811).

NEW MEMBERS

Membership is joint with the National Audubon Society and includes a subscription to Audubon Magazine. Regular, \$5; Sustaining, \$10; Active, \$25; Supporting, \$50; Student, \$2.

We welcome these four new members and hope to meet them soon:

Mr. Richard H. Flower	345 Burnett Ave.	Santa Clara
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald A. Tanner	25 Bayview Drive	San Carlos
Mrs. M. Jaten	15 El Cerrito	San Mateo

---Mrs. Irving Snow, Membership Chairman

1957 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society made its annual bird count on Sunday, December 29, 1957. Officially designated the "San Jose, Calif." count, its codirectors were Emily Smith and Francis Goraj. L. Richard Mewaldt was the compiler.

As is now tradition, the count was made in a 15-mile diameter circle centering at Capitol Ave. and Maybury Rd. in East San Jose. Familiar landmarks included in the area are Alviso, Claveras Reservoir, Alum Rock Park, Hall's Valley, Evergreen, and parts of Campbell and Santa Clara. Estimates of time spent by the 34 observers in their 12 parties follow: grassland and pasture 22%, deciduous orchard 18%, canyon stream 12%, salt-water marsh 10%, fresh-water reservoirs 7%, chaparral 7%, formal parks 7%, oak woodland 6%, town suburbs 5%, cultivated croplands 4%, fresh-water marsh 2%. The count was made from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The sky was overcast, and fog was moderate to heavy in some areas, especially in the mountains. The temperature varied from 50° to 57°, and the wind was from 0 to 5 m.p.h. from the SW. All habitats were in normal winter condition; precipitation was near normal.

The 115 species recorded compares well with the 107 in 1956 and 114 in 1954. Similarly, the 45,512 individual birds counted may be compared to 24,364 in 1956 and 39,489 in 1954. The increased number of birds may be attributed, at least in part, to the greater number of participants in this year's count --- 34 as compared to 25 in 1956 and 29 in 1954. What happened in 1955? The floods dominated all sectors that year.

The 1957 sector leaders and their observers were as follows:

Alviso: Henry G. Weston, Joyce Todd, and John Todd.

Southwest: Angelina Snow, Esther Ollis, Elsie D. Hocck, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd N. Case, Fanny Zwaal, Charles Zwaal, Caroline Kavis, and Philip Haims.

Evergreen: Emmanuel Taylor, Mary Taylor, Emily Smith, Eva McRae, Florence Durfee, Francis Goraj.

Alum Rock: Grace Brubaker, James Peterson, Guinevere Ramsey, D.W. Gossard, Anne Peterson, Homer Peterson.

Calveras: Albert J. Wool, Bob Wood, Ernest Woon, Les Sleeper, Nell Sleeper, Neil Dickinson, Mark Massie, Lynn Robbins, Bill Mewaldt, and L. Richard Mewaldt.

A summary of the count by sectors follows:

Species	Alviso Sector	Southwest Sector	Evergreen Sector	Alum Rock Sector	Calveras Sector	All Sectors
Eared Grebe	195	-	4	-	2	201
Pied-billed Grebe	-	-	2	1	4	7
Great Blue Heron	1	-	1	-	2	4
Common Egret	10	-	-	-	-	10
Snowy Egret	2	-	-	-	-	2
Canada Goose	-	-	-	-	188	188

Species	Alviso Sector	Southwest Sector	Evergreen Sector	Alum Rock Sector	Calveras Sector	All Sectors
Mallard	-	-	-	-	14	14
Pintail	-	-	-	70	-	70
American Widgeon	-	-	-	13	-	13
Shoveler	439	-	6	2	-	447
Wood Duck	-	-	-	-	42	42
Ring-necked Duck	-	-	12	-	-	12
Canvasback	-	-	7	-	-	7
Lesser Scaup	22	-	-	-	-	22
Common Goldeneye	-	-	-	-	1	1
Ruddy Duck	945	-	151	15	17	1128
Common Merganser	-	-	12	-	-	12
Red-breasted Merganser	-	-	3	-	-	3
Turkey Vulture	-	-	-	1	-	1
White-tailed Kite	6	1	-	-	3	10
Sharp-shinned Hawk	-	1	1	3	-	5
Red-tailed Hawk	2	-	2	8	18	30
Marsh Hawk	1	-	-	-	-	1
Kestrel	35	4	25	1	46	111
California Quail	-	31	25	8	91	155
Ring-necked Pheasant	3	-	-	-	-	3
Clapper Rail	1	-	-	-	-	1
Common Gallinule	-	-	-	-	1	1
American Coot	757	-	208	-	20	985
Ringed Plover	1	-	-	-	-	1
Killdeer	103	5	14	-	15	137
Black-bellied Plover	2	-	-	-	-	2
Common Snipe	2	-	-	-	-	2
Long-billed Curlew	69	-	-	-	-	69
Willet	82	10	-	-	-	92
Greater Yellowlegs	8	-	5	1	1	15
Unidentified Sandpiper	50	-	-	-	-	50
Least Sandpiper	126	-	-	-	-	126
Dunlin	175	-	-	1	-	176
Short-billed Dowitcher	377	-	-	-	-	377
Western Sandpiper	110	-	-	-	-	110
Marbled Godwit	30	-	-	-	-	30
American Avocet	113	-	-	-	-	113
Glaucous-winged Gull	25	-	-	-	-	25
Herring Gull	1060	-	-	-	17	1077
California Gull	350	31	-	-	-	381
Ring-billed Gull	488	-	131	-	2250	2869
Bonaparte Gull	378	-	-	-	-	378
Unidentified Gulls	2700	20	-	125	-	2845
Band-tailed Pigeon	-	-	-	44	122	166
Mourning Dove	6	-	27	6	26	65
Great Horned Owl	-	-	-	-	1	1
Burrowing Owl	1	-	-	-	3	4
White-throated Swift	-	-	-	3	42	45
Anna Hummingbird	3	4	2	1	1	11
Belted Kingfisher	-	-	3	1	-	4
Red-shafted Flicker	4	22	32	9	36	103
Acorn Woodpecker	3	5	13	19	19	59
Lewis Woodpecker	-	-	-	-	2	2

Species	Alviso Sector	Southwest Sector	Evergreen Sector	Alum Rock Sector	Calveras Sector	All Sector
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	-	2	1	6	5	14
Hairy Woodpecker	1	1	1	1	-	4
Downy Woodpecker	-	-	2	-	3	5
Nuttall Woodpecker	-	-	3	2	4	9
Black Phoebe	3	2	7	2	9	23
Say Phoebe	2	1	6	-	7	16
Horned Lark	28	-	2	-	43	73
Stellar Jay	-	-	-	30	21	51
Scrub Jay	-	23	39	45	52	159
Yellow-bellied Magpie	3	-	9	6	98	116
Common Crow	-	6	2	5	56	69
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	-	4	50	36	7	97
Plain Titmouse	-	4	25	36	7	72
Common Bushtit	12	5	76	129	15	237
White-breasted Nuthatch	-	-	-	4	4	8
Brown Creeper	-	-	-	2	-	2
Wrentit	-	2	1	6	1	10
Dipper	-	-	-	1	-	1
House Wren	-	-	-	1	-	1
Winter Wren	-	-	-	-	1	1
Bewick Wren	-	1	1	3	7	12
Canon Wren	-	-	-	2	2	4
Rock Wren	-	-	1	-	-	1
Mockingbird	13	43	25	16	20	117
California Thrasher	-	2	-	10	3	15
Robin	16	1074	633	312	682	2717
Varied Thrush	-	1	-	12	35	48
Hermit Thrush	-	5	12	34	48	99
Western Bluebird	-	11	14	25	74	124
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	7	7	40	18	74
Water Pipit	33	1	8	-	15	57
Cedar Waxwing	-	242	20	53	38	353
Loggerhead Shrike	12	10	29	5	34	90
Hutton Vireo	-	1	1	3	1	6
Myrtle Warbler	-	-	-	-	1	1
Audubon Warbler	32	77	168	14	169	460
House Sparrow	338	231	143	12	176	900
Western Meadowlark	403	44	156	11	197	811
Redwinged Blackbird	985	165	1500	13	1323	3986
Brewer Blackbird	1469	1300	3000	247	7000	13016
Brown-headed Cowbird	125	-	-	-	1	126
Purple Finch	1	8	8	4	22	43
House Finch	335	218	895	40	452	1940
American Goldfinch	-	17	2	-	83	102
Lesser Goldfinch	192	359	259	5	227	1042
Lawrence Goldfinch	50	-	-	-	-	50
Rufous-sided Towhee	-	4	7	12	18	41
Brown Towhee	4	69	57	26	30	186
Savannah Sparrow	45	-	-	-	139	184
Lark Sparrow	-	2	139	-	86	227
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	-	-	-	1	4	5
Oregon Junco	6	72	188	126	174	566

Species	Alviso Sector	Southwest Sector	Evergreen Sector	Alum Rock Sector	Calveras Sector	All Sector
Harris Sparrow	-	-	-	-	1	1
White-Crowned Sparrow	48	227	1201	423	713	2612
Golden-crowned Sparrow	12	66	455	845	251	1629
Fox Sparrow	-	-	-	-	3	3
Lincoln Sparrow	1	-	-	-	-	1
Song Sparrow	24	23	8	15	4	74
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Total number birds	12,880	4,464	9,847	2,953	15,368	45,512
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Total number species	65	48	63	62	78	115
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----L. Richard Mewaldt, Compiler

#### AUDUBON FIELD NOTES

All persons wishing to compare our Christmas Bird Count with counts in other parts of the United States and Canada should subscribe to Audubon Field Notes. A standard subscription may be purchased for \$3.00 per year from the National Audubon Society, 1130 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, N. Y. I highly recommend it to the interested field ornithologist whether amateur or professional. It is published in collaboration with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

----L. Richard Mewaldt

#### WE NEED MORE AUDUBON JUNIOR CLUBS

With this issue of the Avocet you will find a copy of the Audubon Junior Club folder describing one of the most vital programs of your National Society. At the recent meeting of our Branch Representatives, the need for bringing this important resource to the attention of persons directly in contact with our boys and girls was stressed. While this is a year-round program, the fact that Spring is on the threshold makes it particularly intriguing to all who must plan outdoor activities and studies.

Therefore, it is the hope of your Board of Directors and the staff of the Pacific Coast Office of the National organization, that you, personally, will make every effort to place this information where it can be used. Teachers in the elementary schools, youth and church leaders and "that neighbor down the block" who encourages after school and week-end nature programs will thank you for introducing them to Audubon Junior Clubs, for this material will enrich and vitalize their own nature and conservation interests. When you have placed this ONE FOLDER and you discover others who would like to receive it, have them write immediately to: AUDUBON CENTER, 1000 North Durfee Avenue, El Monte, California. Thank you for "joining the team" in this campaign.

----Dorothy Wool, President

GRECO ISLAND FIELD TRIP--JANUARY 4, 1958

Skipper Bill Clarke and his Redwood City Sea Scouts were our crew, the Fury, our craft, and the channels of Redwood City Harbor, our highway to Greco Island (one of the Audubon Society's San Francisco Bay sanctuaries--Ed.). Due to the very high flood tides we were able to circle the island counter-clockwise close enough to observe this great marsh awash with the waters of the Bay. An unusual number of clapper rails (6) were noted and hundreds of black-crowned night herons. We wondered if the roosts off Howard Street in San Carlos, which normally accommodate some 250 herons in the daytime, were occupied. Ducks were "spooky"--the stupid and unwary had already been gunned out of the sky.

From the inner channel we observed, disquietly, a power boat cruising the channels of Greco. Ducks, rafted in black masses, rose uneasily as we drove into the open bay, presumably to the disgust of the occupants of the skiffs skulking cautiously into the flocks in hope of a quick shot or two. After an abortive attempt to moor in the strong tide racing by the pier at one end of Greco, we returned to a berth at the dock of the inner channel to disembark upon the board walk which runs the length of the Island.

But not for long. We watched with our binoculars the power boat still combing the channels of Greco trying to flush stray ducks out of the marsh. Occasionally loud laughter floated across to the board walk where we stood. Evidently the boat occupants were enjoying our helpless discomfiture. Then, as the boat dashed forward under power, a shot patterned the water around a hapless scaup struggling for altitude. Following this the crippled bird was chased under power to the edge of the Island before being captured and beaten to death.

We were soon back in Redwood City Harbor where John Larson, his son, Bookie, and the writer set out in the Audubon patrol boat to intercept the trespassing hunters in the open bay. John stated the charges --hunting in a duly posted sanctuary and shooting from a power boat under way--and secured names and addresses from licenses. Citations will issue from the appropriate California state game official.

All members can take great pride in the competent, objective, and firm manner in which John handled a potentially messy situation. John assures me that there was nothing unique in this violation--same old story--except that it was the first time he has had the members of an Audubon Society as witnesses to a violation. (At the January 13 Audubon meeting, Mr. Larson reported both men were convicted and each fined \$25; further, that one, a teacher, was reprimanded by his principal, and the other by his boss--a devoted Audubon member. \_\_\_\_\_ J.T.)

Bird list for the day: horned, eared and western grebes; white pelican; double-crested cormorant; great blue heron; American and snowy egrets; black-crowned night herons; pintails; cinnamon teals; shovellers; canvasbacks; lesser scaups; buffleheads; surf scoters; red-tailed and marsh hawks; clapper rails; coots; long-billed curlews; willets; avocets; Bonaparte, California and ring-billed gulls; Forster's terns; yellow-throat; savannah and song sparrows.

EDITOR'S NOTES

According to the Palo Alto Times for January 9, 1958 thousands of Florida birds are facing starvation because of the state's unusually cold winter. The Florida Audubon Society is asking householders to put food near shrubs and trees where birds, including the thousands of winter visitors from the North, can take refuge.

Details of the final steps toward establishment of a Richardson's Bay Wildlife Refuge and of the beginning negotiations for a Moss Landing sanctuary will appear in the next issue. We owe our fellow conservationists our gratitude and full support in these invaluable projects.

The Maricopa Audubon Society (Phoenix, Arizona) received a message at Christmas from Toronto, Canada reporting the presence of (of all birds!) a Western Tanager. After considerable excited planning, he was to be sent, via United Airlines to Phoenix, where he will rest up in a nearby Tempe member's flight cage before being released.

-----J. T.

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY INC.\*BRANCH OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

President.....	Mrs. Albert J. Wool...	Rt. 2 Box 728, San Jose	AM2-2577
Vice-Pres.....	Dr. Henry Weston...	349 N. Richlee Dr., Campbell	FR8-3836
Secretary.....	Mrs. R. Wesley Wright,	540 Atherton Av., Atherton	DA3-3809
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Editor.....	Mrs. John E. Todd...	912 Roble Ridge, Palo Alto	DA2-1787
Circulation Mgr.	Miss Elsie Hoeck,	1311 Cristina, San Jose	25 CY3-5668
Membership Chmn.(S)	Mrs. Irving Snow,	21441 Roaring Water Way, Los Gatos	EL4-1811
Membership Chmn.(N)	Mrs. Marion K. Kirkwood,	249 Lowell Ave., Palo Alto	DA3-7395