

The Avocet

Volume VI Number 1

January, 1959

Facts about the Imported Fire Ant

The imported fire ant reached Alabama by unknown means prior to 1920. It spread slowly and attracted attention primarily by its burning sting inflicted on laborers working in heavily infested areas. Major facts uncovered in studies by the Alabama Polytechnic Institute Agricultural Experiment Station, begun in the late 1940's, are these:

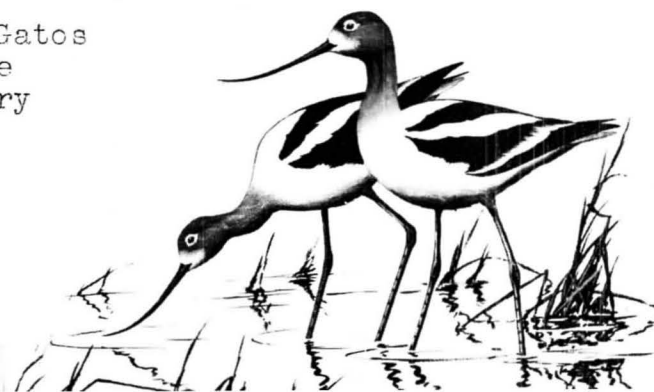
1. Habits. Their food consists principally of insects, stung and devoured. One laboratory colony killed and consumed 20 adult boll weevils within 2 hours. They have been observed eating house fly larvae, boll weevil grubs, cutworms, and other destructive insects in the field. Damage to plants in general is rare, except that resulting from building mounds. Captive laboratory colonies become cannibalistic rather than feed on growing plants they supposedly relished.
2. Damage. The mounds interfere with operation of mowers and other farm machinery. Ants sting laborers working in heavily infested areas. There is no severe or prolonged pain, except in rare allergic reactions.
3. Control. Effective control for 3 to 5 years is possible with chlordane (4 lbs. per acre), dieldrin (2 lbs. per acre), or heptachlor (2 lbs. per acre). No injury to vigorous cattle or sheep resulted from winter application of poisons for ant control.
4. Effects on wildlife. Heavy infestation of fire ants has not reduced quail productivity. Broadcast applications by plane of the poisons above mentioned caused heavy mortality to wildlife. Near Camden, all resident quail disappeared, and autopsies attributed their death to the insecticide. There was heavy mortality among 41 other species of animals exclusive of fish. Snipes, rails, cardinals, mockingbirds, foxes, rabbits, frogs were among the dead.

Research is continuing on the biology, ecology and food habits of the pest. Quite promising is the possible use of baits for control. These lure the fire ant to his last meal without endangering wildlife.

---Highlights of Agricultural Research, Vol. 5, No. 4,
Winter, 1958. Alabama Polytechnic Institute.

COMING EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Mon. Jan. 12	8:00 pm	Art Assoc. Bldg., Los Gatos
Wed. Jan. 14	9:00 am	Las Pulgas Water Temple
Sat. Jan. 17	Early am	South S.F. Bay Sanctuary
Wed. Jan. 28	9:00 am	Alum Rock Park
Sat. Jan. 31	9:00 am	Los Altos Hills



January Calendar

Regular Meeting: Monday, January 12, John O. Larson will present slides of the Green Island Sanctuary. He is currently patrolling our local San Francisco Bay sanctuaries. The meeting is at 8:00 p.m. at the Art Association Building, Los Gatos, which may be found halfway between Saratoga and Los Gatos on the main highway between them. From Saratoga turn right on Austin Way at Fire Station. Building stands alone on left about a block beyond.

Field Trips:

Wednesday Morning, January 14, to the Crystal Springs Lake area. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Las Fulgas Water Tower, a little more than five miles north of Woodside, on the Canada Road.
Leader: Mrs. R. Wesley Wright (DA 3-3809).

Saturday, January 17, to the South San Francisco Bay Sanctuary with John C. Larson, Sanctuary Warden. Reservations will be necessary for this trip as it is by boat and limited to 25 persons. Call Emmanuel Taylor, 14311 Quico Road, Saratoga, (FR 8-3219) for reservations and time and place of meeting. Bring lunch.

Wednesday Morning, January 28, to Alum Rock Park, about seven miles east from the center of San Jose, out Alum Rock Avenue. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the Park at the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum. Leader: Mrs. Langford W. Smith (EL 4-4674).

Saturday, January 31, trip into the hills of Los Altos with Mr. and Mrs. Howard Wolcott. Meet at Los Altos Rancho Shopping Center on Fremont Avenue at 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch.

---Emmanuel Taylor,
Field Trip Chairman

President's Message

In the past two months your Board has had under discussion the following:

1. What should be done about Student Membership? -- The National Audubon Society has given up Student Membership because they felt there were too few to justify the cost of maintaining a department and the Student Magazine, Outdoors Illustrated. Therefore, we must handle this problem on the local level.

If there are teenagers who show a great interest in becoming members, they certainly should be encouraged. Six and a half dollars for a membership can be a problem for many of them. Two suggestions have been made: (1) That a local membership be given, and adults who do not care to keep their Audubon Magazine should pass it on to the Society, which in turn would give the magazine to those in the student group; (2) That the student pay \$3.00 and the Society pay the remaining \$3.50. Each applicant must prove in some way that he or she is genuinely interested. This second suggestion is the way in which St. Louis, Mo. has met the problem. Any suggestions from the membership at large will be greatly appreciated.

2. Also under discussion is our manner of handling scholarships we grant to the Audubon Camp. Should there be an application form? Should the application be submitted to the Board for approval and screening? Should there be more publicity, with the scholarships presented as something worth working for and greatly desired?

3. Capt. Nesbit of the Palo Alto Yacht Harbor has suggested to the Board that the Society maintain a permanent bulletin board at the Yacht Harbor, showing the species present during the winter and summer months. Inquiry is being made concerning cost of materials and the up-keep of such a board. This could be a worthwhile project, both in education and in bringing the name of Audubon to the attention of the public.

4. Other items on the agenda have been the purchase of a slide projector, the adoption of a set of Working Rules, and the proposed changes in the By-Laws. The report from the Education Committee shows much progress.

Last January Bill Goodall of our National Office in Berkeley announced the formation of two special committees: (1) The California Legislative Information Committee. Mr. Edwin R. Pickett of Sacramento will act as our coordinating chairman. In this way information on all proposed legislative action of interest to us will be called to our attention before it is too late to take action. (2) Mr. Fred Evenden, also of Sacramento, is our coordinating chairman for the "California Public Outdoor Recreation Plan." This is a state planning committee, and the Audubon Society was asked along with other groups to participate. We certainly are indebted to Mr. Pickett and Mr. Evenden for the time and effort spent on our behalf.

Remember the Audubon Workshop on Saturday, January 10, at Mills College from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. A number of us are planning to attend. If you would like to go and need transportation, call WH 8-2335 or drop me a card to 25441 Crescent Lane, Los Altos. Coffee and sweet rolls are served on our arrival, and it is pleasant to chat with others who have common interests. Lunch is \$1.50 and reservations should be in by January 5th.

---Charlotte McBride

California Predator Control

There have been many requests for information regarding predator control. While most are concerned with the use of poison, others wish to know about paid hunters and trappers. Many state and federal agencies are involved, so this memo will try to outline the duties and methods employed by the various agencies so that any requests for corrective practices can be directed to the proper authorities.

California Fish and Game: The operational manual reads as follows:

Control of Predatory Animals with Poisonous Materials

It shall continue to be the policy of the California Department of Fish and Game that no poisonous materials, including "coyote getters", shall be used by personnel of this Depart-

ment in the control of predatory animals, without specific written authority from the Director to cover a particular situation which cannot be handled by other methods.

In the past, the Department has conducted a few experiments with poison, but no use has been authorized in recent years. Department predator control officers operate almost entirely on State Game Refuges or in areas where game management is considered necessary.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: This agency is in charge of predator control activities on public lands, federal refuges and on private range land when requested to act by the Department of Agriculture. This latter action is the matter of standing agreement between the two departments.

Department of Agriculture: Most of the predator control is in the hands of this Department, acting through the County Agricultural Commissioners. They have charge of all "pest" control (this includes rodents, birds, insects, etc.). Most all of the programs using poison such as 1080 are carried out by this Department. Agriculture must also institute plague control when requested to do so by the Department of Public Health. Also, most of the small animal control is handled by hunters who are employees of the various counties and operate under the direction of the Agricultural Commissioners.

There are other agencies involved, such as the Forest Service, but those mentioned above are by far the most important. As stated in the last memo, the Department of Fish and Game tries to have observers on hand during any large scale program such as the mouse poisoning last winter. Their duty is to protect wildlife as far as possible. Their investigation last year showed that dogs and coyotes were highly susceptible to 1080, but that gulls, vultures and hawks did not seem to be affected.

---Edwin R. Pickett, Sacramento

New Members

Mr. Robert M. Row	Box 2416	Stanford
Mr. & Mrs. Carl F. Mieshe	2320 Moorpark Avenue	San Jose 28
Mr. Wm. R. Ouderkirk	13,571 Beelecourt Drive	Saratoga
(Changed from local to national membership.)		
Mr. Raymond M. Lockwood	639 Arboleda Drive	Los Altos
Mrs. O. R. Tanner	1480 Hamilton Avenue	Palo Alto
Mrs. Carl A. Wirtanin	Lick Observatory	Mt. Hamilton
Dr. Amy R. Stannard	1018 Fulton Street	Palo Alto
Mrs. Frank R. Lind	P.O. Box 107	Milpitas

---Mrs. Erving Snow, Membership Committee

Western Nature Photographs To Be Displayed at Asilomar Convention

Photographs must be submitted by each Society on or before March 1, 1959, to

National Audubon Society Asilomar Convention
2426 Bancroft Way
Berkeley 4, California

Each Audubon Branch and Affiliate in the Western States may enter one photograph in each of ten designated categories. A winner will be selected in each of these, and in addition there will be three Grand Prizes. Call the President (WH 8-2335) or Editor (DA 2-1787) for any more information you may need. ---J.T.

Statement of Policy of the National Audubon Society on the
Hunting of Mourning Doves

The policy of the National Audubon Society with regard to hunting has long been, and is now, that the Society recognizes the recreational value of field sports, legally pursued; also the validity of the law of supply and demand and the consequent need of regulation of deliberate take in order that an adequate breeding stock may be preserved. This policy applies to all game species currently subject to an open season. This has been basic Society policy whenever it has volunteered or been requested to express its views, whether with regard to hunting of waterfowl, doves, pheasants, rabbits or game of any kind.

By the terms of the Migratory Bird Treaty with Great Britain and Canada, and that with Mexico, doves are designated as game birds; and in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, doves are game species and the Department of Interior is charged with the responsibility of determining insofar as the United States is concerned, when, within certain date limits, and under what conditions, mourning doves may be taken.

Any state may take more restrictive action concerning migratory birds, but it cannot legally provide more hunting opportunity than the Federal government permits.

The National Society's policy is to recommend to the Federal government regulations that reduce hunting opportunity wherever and whenever dove populations are found to be declining. Were the Society to adopt a prohibitionist attitude with regard to hunting where dove populations are not declining, and maybe increasing, its so doing would be utterly inconsistent with its policy and representations with regard to other game species. Were the Society to do that, it would, in our opinion, promptly lose influence to damaging degree with relation to hunting regulations affecting species of game birds that are in far more need of greater protection at this time.

Now, there is a northern tier of states in which there has been no open season on mourning doves for some time, if ever. In some of those states there is currently heated argument, since some people would like to see hunting of mourning doves legally authorized there. The policy of the National Audubon Society is that even if it be known that the population of mourning doves in such states is not declining, or, in fact, is increasing, nevertheless the Society would oppose the opening of a season if it is convinced that the great majority of the citizens of that state are opposed.

The National Society conceives its primary responsibility to involve recommendation to federal agencies in the national capital. It

looks to its branches and affiliates to assume responsibility at the local level, whether in state, county or town.

---John H. Baker, President
National Audubon Society

Notes from Afield

First, some field trip reports. The trip to Santa Cruz on November 23 saw a total of 60 different birds. Some of the highlights were Pygmy Nuthatch, Redhead, Bufflehead, Snowy Plover, and Say's Phoebe. Clyde and Agnes Prusman report that the December 3 trip to Los Gatos Park and Vasona Dam listed 28 species of birds, including Audubon's Warblers and Plain Titmice that were feeding on insects attracted to sap where a sapsucker had been working. The annual trip to the refuge at Los Banos on December 7 produced a list of 45 birds. Included were Whistling Swan, White-fronted and Snow Goose, Sandhill Crane, and Common Gallinule, birds that we don't regularly find in the Bay Area. Some of them do turn up occasionally, though. Catherine Lintott found five swans (4 adults, 1 immature) on Vasona Reservoir on November 30, and Roberta Wright saw two on November 23 and 25 on Bear Gulch Reservoir. Virginia Bothwell reports a single Snow Goose on Felt Lake west of Stanford on November 19.

This is the time of year to be on the lookout for Starlings. Flocks of them are becoming common in the Sacramento Valley during the winter months, but they are seen in this area only occasionally. The Freemans of Los Gatos report seeing six of them in a flock of Brewer's Blackbirds on November 15 and 17 on a dairy farm east of San Jose. On December 20 I saw numerous small flocks of Starlings along the highway near the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge and found their skulls in nearly all of a score of owl pellets picked up on the refuge. The pellets were presumably from Short-eared Owls as several were flushed from willows under which the pellets were found.

Charlotte McBride writes about a Ruby-crowned Kinglet that battled its reflection in a window for five days so that she had to keep her drapes pulled. Evidently these birds consider others of their kind as rivals even at this time of the year. At Alum Rock Park on December 21 I saw a male Ruby-crown chasing another, both with their scarlet crown patches erected and seemingly covering the whole top of their heads. Mrs. McBride also reports a large concentration of at least 300 Common and Snowy Egrets on November 19 in the fields east of Bayshore Highway and south of the Hillside turn-off; also a White-tailed Kite in the vicinity of Alviso Road and Bayshore on December 2.

Emily Smith reports an unusually late lingerer, a male Western Tanager, that she heard and then saw on December 11 at her home in Los Gatos and heard again on the 15th. She mentions having more Fox Sparrows this winter than usual around her place and that one sang occasionally each day up until December 10, usually early in the morning and again late in the afternoon. White-throated Sparrows have been seen by several persons. Manette Wittgenstein in Saratoga has had one at her feeding tray during November and December, and Juliette Jones saw one at her bird bath near Los Gatos on November 30 and again several days later. Better check your flocks of White- and Golden-crowns.

---Robert Wood, 1007 Los Trancos Rd., Menlo Park

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

BRANCH OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

President: Mrs. J. L. McBride, 25441 Crescent Lane, Los Altos, WH 8-2335
Vice-President: Mr. Robert Wood, 1007 Los Francos Rd, Menlo Park, UL 1-1237
Secretary: Mrs. R. Wesley Wright, 540 Atherton Av. Atherton DA3-3809
Treasurer: Mrs. Chas. J. Zwaal, 478 Clifton Av., San Jose 28 CY 2-2060
Membership Chmn: (S) Mrs. Irving Snow, 21441 Roaring Water Way, Los Gatos
EL 4-1811
Membership Chmn: (N) Mrs. Marion K. Kirkwood, 249 Lowell Av., Palo Alto
DA 3-7395

EDITORIAL STAFF - THE AVOCET

Editor: Mrs. John E. Todd, 912 Roble Ridge, Palo Alto DA 2 1787
Notes From Afield: Robert Wood, 1007 Los Francos Road, Menlo Park UL 1 1237
Circulation Mgr: Miss Elsie Hoeck, 1311 Cristina, San Jose CY 3 5668
Mimeographers: Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel Taylor, 14311 Quito Road, Saratoga
FR 8 3219
Typists: Mrs. Jane R. Castner, Miss Carol C. Rulofson
112 Murray Court, Redwood City EM 6 2514