

The Avocet

Volume VII Number 1

January, 1960

Will Wildlife Get Water at Klamath-Tule Area?

Controversies now shaping up in Oregon and California can have a profound effect upon Pacific Flyway water fowl and, more particularly, may give an indication as to whether or not wildlife water needs are to be given due recognition in competition with irrigation interests.

A possible solution might be a test in the courts of this question: has not in fact the historic utility of the Klamath Marsh for waterfowl production, benefitting the entire Pacific Flyway, established a prior beneficial use superior in right to the recent irrigation diversions? In acquiring the Marsh, the Fish and Wildlife Service is acting under authorization and direction of the Congress. Such a court test also might help determine if important conservation programs of the Federal Government must "knuckle under" to state water laws. This in itself currently is an issue before Congress in legislation which would require federal observance of state water law.

Tule Lake is a natural sump for Lost River and provides fabulous hunting--when the water is kept at a normal level. Commercial interests, though, have moved into the picture. "Western Outdoor News", published in Costa Mesa, Calif., describes the situation:

"The usually good opening weekend sport here (Tule Lake) was mired down in a civil war, matching Federal refuge personnel and the town's merchants versus the Tule Lake Irrigation District."

In this water-shortage year, the TLID directors deliberately pumped unneeded waste water out of the Tule Lake sump into Lower Klamath Lake, from which it continued to flow as waste to the sea. As a result, water levels have been kept more than six inches below normal, rendering huge areas of the Marsh inaccessible and of no value to waterfowl.

"The Irrigation District for years has been trying to eliminate the refuge and open its plush acres to homesteading," Western Outdoor News charged. "When the opportunity came, the irrigation directors didn't pass up the chance to vent their spite."

A low Tule Lake has more implications than reduced hunting success. Waterfowl crop depredations in California's Central Valley are big problems. When Tule Lake holds more birds, through wide water areas, there are fewer crop losses. Smaller numbers of waterfowl also reduce hunter spending and tourism in the Tule Lake area, adversely affecting merchants. Loss of waterfowl to botulism also is greatest when the lake level is low.

The legal situation with regard to operation of the Tule Lake pumping system now is being examined. ----Conservation News, Nov. 15, 1959.



Coming Events at a Glance

Mon. Jan. 11 8:00 P.M. Palo Alto Jr. Museum
 Sat. Jan. 16 9:00 A.M. Villa Montalvo
 Wed. Jan. 20 8:00 P.M. Morris Dailey Auditorium
 Wed. Jan. 27 9:00 A.M. Alum Rock Park

January CalendarRegular Meeting

Monday, January 11, at 8:00 P.M. Palo Alto Junior Museum, Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. A film of vital interest will be shown - either "An Island in Time" (the Pt. Reyes Area) or "Wilderness River Trails" (Dinosaur Park).

Filed Trips:

Saturday, January 16, to Villa Montalvo, Saratoga. Meet at parking lot of the Villa at 9:00 A.M. Bring lunch. Leader: Tom Harvey (CH 3-6956).

Wednesday Morning, January 27, to Alum Rock Park, about seven miles east from the center of San Jose, out East Santa Clara Street and Alum Rock Avenue. Meet at 9:00 A.M. in the park at the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum. Leaders: Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Prusman (EL 4-8191).

Screen Tour:

Wednesday, January 20, 8:00 P.M., Morris Dailey Auditorium, San Jose State College. Howard L. Orians presents The Land the Glaciers Forgot. The setting....Wisconsin, a fourth of which strangely, the glaciers by-passed. Howard L. Orians of Madison, Wisconsin, combines fascinating geology with birds and animals in an unusual color film documentary. In their native habitat and in action: deer, beaver, bear, 'possum, porcupine, otter, fox, raccoon; many species of birds. Highlight: the Bird Bathing Beauty Contest....warblers competing with scarlet tanagers....delightful, colorful, amusing. Tickets are available at the door.

New Members

We cordially welcome the following new members:

Miss Carole Brost
24481 Summerhill Road
Los Altos, California

Mr. and Mrs. Fred W. Trumbull
P.O. Box 325
Los Altos, California

---Mrs. Irving Snow,
Membership Chairman

Magazine Article Exposes Water Pollution Problem

The January issue of Good Housekeeping magazine, reaching newsstands Dec. 17, contains a shocking, fact-filled report which should serve as an urgent warning to communities throughout the nation about a serious problem--the growing contamination of drinking water supplies. The article, "Danger in Your Drinking Water", endorsed by U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Arthur S. Flemming, vividly reveals that water purity cannot be taken for granted.

Water Americans drink today, the article points out, may contain higher-than-natural levels of radioactive material, disease-bearing wastes and many other contaminants which cannot be removed by conventional treatment.

Authored by Alvin B. Toffler, the article is expected to make a particularly strong impact upon women's groups, which must consider this thought: "Every time you turn on a faucet, you are committing an act of faith. You believe that the water you give your child to drink, the water with which you cook and wash your dishes is fit for human use.....Don't take it for granted!"

Notes From Afield

First, an omission from last month's Avocet. Manette and Herbert Wittgenstein had the good fortune to see a Tropical (Couch) Kingbird in Moss Landing on Construction Road on November 1. They watched it catching insects and could see that its brownish tail lacked a white edging, distinguishing it from the Western and Cassin Kingbirds. The Wittgensteins also report a few Elegant Terns still present at Wood's Lagoon in Santa Cruz on October 25.

Another report that also slipped by last time is from Grace Brubaker. On October 4 for an hour before sunset she watched a variety of birds mobbing a Great Horned Owl near her home in San Jose. A dozen Scrub Jays, four or five Mockingbirds, a Flicker, and a Sparrow Hawk all took turns at the owl, finally pestering it into flight. She mentions also seeing a male Hooded Oriole at her birdbath on October 28.

Humans aren't the only creatures who "set the table" for other folk. Anna Richardson of Palo Alto tells about the sapsucker that

drills so industriously into ~~her~~ Chinese elm with such copious results that an unusual variety of diners is attracted to the sap - ants, bees, flies, wasps, Anna Hummingbirds, Audubon Warblers, and even a mourning cloak butterfly.

Just because the Robins that come to my place pick but don't eat the cotoneaster berries (as reported last month), apparently is no reason to expect similar behavior elsewhere. Harriet Mundy reports that she watched a Robin swallow whole three cotoneaster berries in succession and, another time, she saw a Robin eat five berries while dropping four although she claims that two of those dropped were due to clumsiness and not from any dislike for cotoneaster fruits. Perhaps the Mundy cotoneasters are a different variety from the Wood cotoneasters. (Or could it be the Robins?)

No reports yet of Varied Thrushes. A couple of White-throated Sparrows have appeared again this fall. Catherine Lintott of Los Gatos saw hers first on October 30 and another has been at the Ben Lomond home of Ernest Woon all fall.

Earl Albertson writes that on December 13 he saw ten Whistling Swans near the south end of Crystal Springs Reservoir and a male Barrow and a male Common Goldeneye at the Palo Alto duck pond near the yacht club. This last record continues an interesting problem. For the past several winters male goldeneyes have been present irregularly at the duck pond that have the typical Barrow crescent before the eye and, on at least one occasion seen with the aid of a telescope in good light, the typical purplish head. But - not one of these Barrow-like individuals has had the proper black and white pattern on its sides, the pattern always agreeing quite closely with that of the Common which is often present at the same time and affording a handy comparison. Emily Smith has suggested the possibility of a Common x Barrow hybrid. Whatever the case may be I will appreciate hearing promptly from anyone who sees one of the birds and I'll rush out there on my lunch hour.

Emily Smith reports several interesting returns of birds banded previously at her Saratoga home. She recently trapped a Golden-crowned Sparrow that she had banded in December 1953 and a Fox Sparrow banded in October 1954. She also tells of a Mockingbird, first banded in the fall of 1956, that each winter claims as its own a large cotoneaster shrub and defends it, with varying success, from the Waxwings and Robins. The Waxwings, having exhausted the supply of mistletoe berries, are contesting the Mockingbird's claim. Miss Emily passes on several other notes - Dick Mewaldt's capture (for banding) of a female Hermit Warbler on November 1 in San Jose and the Wittgenstein's Red-breasted Nuthatch coming to a suet feeder on December 13 in Saratoga.

Thanks to you who sent in field trip reports. I will include them next time.

---Robert Wood
1007 Los Trancos Road
Menlo Park
ULmar 1-1237

Editor's Notes

A State Park At Little Sur. State Senator Fred Farr will introduce a bill in the 1960 Legislature for a special appropriation to buy Little Sur for a state park. The Senator says he does not like special appropriations, but, because of the cutbacks in state tidelands funds for state park acquisition, there is only \$450,000 available for land purchase in Monterey County and this is earmarked for buying Salinas River Beach and the enlargement of Big Sur State Park. Little Sur not only includes the beach, but the forested banks of the stream for several miles inland. The Lobos League urges quick action in this region because the owners of the land are preparing to start lumbering operations.

--The Carmel Pine Cone
October 29, 1959

Warden Tom C. Harrison of the Blythe area is still scratching his head over a recent case.

He cited truck driver Almer L. Watson of Covina for having a turkey vulture in his possession. Vultures are protected species.

What puzzled the warden is not the fact that Watson shot the bird, but that he had picked and cleaned it and was taking it home to Covina to cook.

The defendant said he didn't know what kind of bird it was, but "it was a nice big one and looked delicious after I picked it"

Watson forfeited \$25 bail.

--The Observer
Sacramento Audubon Society 12/59

The present status of the Albatross problem on Sand Island in the Midways is that the Navy has agreed to try phase 2 recommended by the Fish and Wildlife Service, namely to bulldoze down the vegetation on the nexting sites along the runways. It is expected that this will eliminate or at least minimize the updrafts of air and thus encourage the birds to go elsewhere. This is a serious problem with many interests involved and we can only hope that a peaceful co-existence for birds and man will result from the proposed effort.

--Whittier Observer, 12/59

The Western Bird-Banding Association had a meeting at Miss Emily Smith's home in Los Gatos on November 15th. The Harry Smiths, Viola Washburn, Florence Haas and the Ray Hunts attended. There was an excellent demonstration of mist netting on a hillside by Dr. Richard Mewaldt of San Jose and his team. It was most reassuring to the neophytes to see how skillfully and gently the birds were handled, and how little it seemed to disturb them.

--The Albatross
Santa Cruz Bird Club, 12/59

Chemicals and the Cranberry Crisis. Wildlife conservationists who have been crying in the wilderness against indiscriminate use of pesticide and herbicide chemicals until they are proven to be safe found a powerful weapon in the current "cranberry crisis".

Action by Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Arthur S. Flemming to declare cranberry production in some areas contaminated because of the use of a weed-killing chemical known to cause cancer in rats stirred up one of the biggest news stories of the year. The action, taken just prior to the traditional Thanksgiving observance featuring cranberries, hit producers in the pocketbook. Resulting protests, highly publicized by all news media, probably awakened the general public as never before to the dangers of improperly-used chemicals.

Conservationists, realizing damage to wildlife and fish populations and suspecting dangers to humans, have been calling for: 1.--additional research into all effects of pesticide and herbicide compounds; 2.--additional investigation to discover selective chemicals which will solve particular problems without danger to valuable resources; 3.--less emphasis on broad spectrum chemicals; and 4.--additional safeguards against indiscriminate or improper use of dangerous chemicals.

---Conservation News, Dec. 1, 1959

The County Supervisors of Santa Barbara County have received notice from the Santa Maria Valley Sportsmen's Assn., that it is cancelling its contract with the County whereby its members receive \$1.00 for each coyote and bobcat killed, 50¢ for each weasel and 15¢ for each crow.

According to the association secretary, Mr. Paul Sword, the group is ending its ten-year hunt for predators because "killing them is not considered good conservation practice". Predators, explained Mr. Sword, "can be counted on to wipe out the weak and sick game".

---Western Tanager, Nov. 1959

A beautifully illustrated new book, companion volume to "All the Plants of the Bible", is "All the Birds of the Bible" - Their Stories, Identification and Meaning, by Alice Parmelee. \$4.95. Harper & Brothers

National Audubon Society is offering for sale at \$50 a set the last 100 remaining sets of Mary Vaux Walcott's original and Monumental five-volume work on wild flowers. "North American Wild Flowers" was published in 1925-1929 by the Smithsonian Institution at \$150. Eventually it should increase in value to rival the current offers for first edition Audubon: "Birds of America".

---J.T.

Watch for the Sierra Club's most important publication, This is the American Earth, by Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall. The book is to be published in January and proceeds will be allocated to the publishing of other important conservation subjects. Photographers in the book include, besides the authors, Werner Bischoff, Margaret Bourke-White, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Edward Weston and many other masters of the art. Don't miss it!

---J.T.

The European starling is on its way to becoming the most damaging bird to enter California in 20 years, according to agricultural experts. They not only attack crops, but become a menace in cities because of their noise and messy roosting habits. Dr. Walter E. Howard of the University of California at Davis states that unless many of them are destroyed, they can become a very serious problem in 5 to 10 years.

---Palo Alto Times 12/28/59

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
Branch of National Audubon Society
1959 - 1960

PRESIDENT: Mrs. John L. McBride (WH 8-2335)
25,441 Crescent Lane
Los Altos

VICE-PRESIDENT:
Dr. H. T. Harvey (CH 3-6956)
716 Garner Court
Santa Clara

SECRETARY: Miss Lola Erickson
95 Duane St., Apt. 3
San Jose 10, Calif.

TREASURER: Mrs. Chas. J. Zwaal (CY 2-2060)
478 Clifton Ave.,
San Jose 28

DIRECTORS, in addition to officers above:

Miss Harriet Mundy
Dr. S. C. Woodward
Mr. W. R. McCann
Adm. Charles Williams
Mr. Emmanuel Taylor

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMEN:

(S) Mrs. Irving Snow (EL 4-1811)
21441 Roaring Water Way
Los Gatos

(N) Mrs. R. Wesley Wright (DA 3-3809)
540 Atherton Avenue
Atherton, California

The Avocet

Editor: Mrs. John E. Todd (DA 2-1787)

Typists: Mrs. Jane R. Castner
Miss Carol C. Rulofson (EM 6-2514)

Circulation Manager:
Miss Elsie Hoeck (CY 3-5668)

Mimeograph: Mr. and Mrs. Emmanuel Taylor (FR 8-3219)

National Audubon Society
Conservation Resource Center
2426 Bancroft Way
Berkeley 4, California
TELEPHONE: Thornwall 8-4042