

# The Avocet

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## Now Man Can Talk to the Birds

Bird-calling is a sport in its infancy, a hobby born of electronics and a recently developed science called biological acoustics. It offers a new dimension in nature study. Even the rankest amateur can summon to his window sill birds he would rarely if ever see. Moreover, they identify themselves: only an ovenbird will come to the ovenbird's call, a phoebe to the phoebe's call. All the beginner needs is a record player and one or two albums of bird songs.

The man who pioneered bird-song recording is Peter Paul Kellogg, professor of ornithology and biological acoustics at Cornell University. As a young instructor some 30 years ago he felt the need for capturing bird songs, both for teaching and research.

His first records, made with cumbersome equipment, were dismal: faint chirps engulfed in a roar of static. No matter how careful he was, some extraneous sound would spoil a take: the rustle of leaves, or dogs barking, or crickets humming, or roosters crowing. Once when, to Kellogg's delight, a bird hopped up on the mike and began to sing, the song was ruined by the shuffling of the bird's feet!

Slowly, though, he got down a few calls. Then he built a "parabolic reflector", a saucer-shaped ear three feet across that caught and focused distant bird songs onto a microphone the way a burning glass focuses the sun's rays. He could even suspend the reflector on a silken thread high overhead to catch the songs of birds like chimney swifts and woodcock, which sing best on the wing.

It was a couple of years later, when Kellogg was playing a mockingbird song while visiting in Florida, that an excited mockingbird appeared at the window and even tapped on the glass. Kellogg was puzzled. Could the bird actually be mistaking the recording for the song of a real bird? He set up the speaker outdoors beside a perch with a microphone. As soon as the sound came on, the bird walked around the speaker, looking for his rival, then exasperated, he hopped onto the perch and tried ousting the intruder. It dawned on Kellogg that here was a way of getting perfect recordings!

Exciting as recorded calls are to the average person, to the scientist they may well be the Rosetta Stone to understanding bird language. Some birds have a big vocabulary. The more sociable the bird, the greater his vocabulary. Birds that live alone except during mating have only a few calls. Scientists are putting the recordings to a variety of uses. Prof. Cliver Hewitt of Cornell used the willow ptarmigan call to take a census of that bird in Newfoundland. The best time to call birds is in early spring, preferably before noon. Repeat a species for five minutes or so. If the birds are within hearing, they'll come. About the only exception is the robin, which seldom responds. Some birds, like blue jays and owls, may come at any time of the year. When birds are nearby, keep the volume low. Also, keep your bird feeder well filled so that the singers may have a reward.



Coming Events at a Glance

Sat. Nov. 5	9:00 a.m.	Alum Rock Park
Wed. Nov. 9	8:30 a.m.	El Sereno Ridge, Saratoga
Mon. Nov. 14	8:00 p.m.	Rosegarden Branch Library, San Jose
Sun. Nov. 20	9:30 a.m.	Los Banos Game Refuge
Wed. Nov. 30	9:00 a.m.	Hidden Villa Ranch
Fri. Dec. 2	8:00 p.m.	Morris Dailey Auditorium, San Jose
Sun. Dec. 4	9:00 a.m.	Calaveras Reservoir

November CalendarRegular Meeting:

Monday, November 14, at 8:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Rosegarden Branch, San Jose Public Library. The Library is on the southeast corner of Dana and Naglee Avenues, diagonally across from Municipal Rose Garden and one long block west of Rosicrucian Park and Museum at Park and Naglee Avenues. Mr. Earl Heusser, a 7th - 8th Grade science teacher at Black Junior High in Saratoga will present an illustrated lecture-demonstration in falconry, including the following: 1) brief history of falconry; 2) flight demonstration with trained birds; 3) legal requirements of falconry as a sport; 4) falconry as a teaching aid in fostering conservation of all raptorial birds and learning more about the dynamic balance in Nature.

Screen Tour:

Friday, December 2, at 8:00 p.m. Morris Dailey Auditorium, San Jose. Tickets are available at the door for Designs for Survival, by William A. Anderson. Mr. Anderson of Homestead, Florida, has produced a striking film which reveals the wisdom of Nature's intricate balance in equipping animals to cope with their particular environments in order to survive. Designs for feeding, movement, protection and reproduction in nature are well illustrated in a beautiful film in natural color. This superbly photographed and entertainingly narrated film presents pathos and comedy blended in designs for survival.

Field Trips:

Saturday, November 5, to Alum Rock Park. Drive east through San Jose on Santa Clara Street and Alum Rock Avenue. Meet at the San Jose-Santa Clara County Junior Museum at 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch. Leader: Grace Brubaker (CL 8-2289).

Wednesday Morning, November 9, to Boy Scouts Camp Stuart on El Sereno Ridge, back of Saratoga. The camp is near upper end of Bohlmann Rd., just 3 miles from Saratoga library at corner of Oak St. and Saratoga-Los Gatos Rd. (Bohlmann Rd., winding but paves all the way, begins where Oak St. ends.) If you want to go in a caravan meet at 8:00 a.m. in parking area back of old Catholic church, corner of Big Basin Way and 6th St. Meeting time at camp will be 8:30 a.m. Claude Smith, who is in charge of Camp Stuart, will be leader. For any further information phone Emily Smith (EL 4-2494).

Sunday, November 20, we join with the Santa Cruz Bird Club for a visit to the Los Banos Game Refuge. Meet at Tiny's Restaurant in Los Banos at not later than 9:30 a.m. as we must enter the Refuge not later than 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch. Leader: Emmanuel Taylor - (DR 9-3424).

Wednesday Morning, November 30, to the Hidden Villa Ranch of Frank and Josephine Duveneck in the hills southwest of Los Altos. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at entrance to the ranch on Moody Rd. To find Moody Rd. turn off Fremont Ave. at So. El Monte Ave. (first railroad crossing south of Los Altos) and follow the signs to Adobe Creek Lodge on Moody Rd. Hidden Villa Ranch is less than a mile farther, on same side of the road. Leader: Mrs. Virginia Bothwell (DA 2-1209).

Sunday, December 4, to the Calaveras Reservoir area. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Calaveras Road and Oakland Highway 17 in Milpitas.

Christmas Bird Count, 1960

It is now time to begin thinking and preparing for this annual event which takes place all over the United States and Canada. Would all who are interested and wish to join in the count please phone or drop a card to:

Emmanuel Taylor, Field Trip Chairman  
14311 Quito Road  
Saratoga, California  
Phone: DR 9-3424

New Members

We are glad to welcome the following new members:

Miss Barbara Worl	2141 Mills Ave., Menlo Park
Mr. David N. Brader	4464 Bucknell Rd., San Jose 30
Mrs. Lucille Coldren	460 Channing Ave., Palo Alto

Two members were reinstated.

---Mrs. Irving Snow,  
Membership Chairman

NATURE-ly XMAS GIFTS  
available

National Audubon Society  
Conservation Resource Center  
2426 Bancroft Way, Berkeley.

OPEN:

Mondays through Fridays: Noon until 5 p.m.  
SATURDAYS: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
( until Xmas )

---Bill Goodall

NOTES FROM AFIELD

From Anna Richardson in Palo Alto comes the earliest date to be received of the arrival of White-crowned Sparrows, September 20. She comments that this is her earliest date in seven years. More White-crowns appeared on the 26th while her first Golden-crown came on the 28th. Joyce Todd had her earliest Golden-crown on the 25th at her home in Barron Park. Two weeks later she heard again a Golden-crown with a unique four-note call, the third consecutive year it has appeared. On October 15 a Yellow-breasted Sapsucker visited her apricot trees.

Earl Albertson's regular monthly report of his birding activities includes several items worth passing on. On September 11 he saw 40 Elegant Terns near the toll plaza of the San Francisco Bay Bridge. More than a hundred White Pelicans were visible from the east end of Dumbarton Bridge on October 9. The ducks have arrived at Crystal Springs Reservoir, Earl having seen a large number of Shovelers, with some Mallards, Pintails, American Widgeon, Gadwalls, Redheads, 1 Ring-neck, and 55 Canada Geese on October 16.

Emmanuel Taylor's check-list for the October 9 field trip to Santa Cruz and Wood's Lagoon lists 39 species. The group saw all three cormorants, Black Turnstone, White-throated Swift, and Audubon's Warbler.

---Robert Wood  
1007 Los Trancos Road  
Portola Valley  
ULmar 1-1237

#### Editor's Notes

All bird recordings mentioned in the lead article are available from Cornell University Records, 124 Roberts Place, Ithaca, N.Y. Most useful in bird-calling are "American Bird Songs", Volumes 1 and 2. Each is a 12-inch, long-playing record containing the songs and calls of some 50 birds common to much of the United States, and costs \$7.75. Ficker Recording Services, Old Greenwich, Conn., sells three albums at \$7.95 each. Just on the market is an album of 300 calls (Houghton-Mifflin, \$10.95) which is keyed to Roger Tory Peterson's best-selling bird guide.

---J.T.

Members who want to report violations of the fish and game laws (illegal taking of hawks, nests and eggs, hunting in sanctuaries, shooting songbirds, etc.) should contact

Mr. Bill Dillinger  
State Dept. of Fish and Game  
Ferry Building  
San Francisco (GARfield 1-8800 Ext. 433)

Marin Coastal vistas were never more beautiful than on September 4, when Carl Buchheister visited the County. On a hasty trip with Marin Audubon members over the Panoramic Highway, stops were made at Tamalpais State Park for Mr. Buchheister to enjoy the remarkable beauty and vista of Mt. Diablo, Richardson Bay, San Francisco Bay, and the Pacific Ocean. They stopped for an overlook of Stinson Beach and Bolinas Lagoon areas, and the Egret and Heron Rookery - then on past the sawmill and devastated areas in parts of the proposed National Seashore. From a high point near the entrance to Tomales Bay, a view along the 10-mile beach extending to Point Reyes on the Pacific Ocean side, brought forth exclamations of deep appreciation from Mr. Buchheister on this, his first trip. Mr. Buchheister is intensely interested in the proposed Ft. Reyes National Seashore.

---Redwood Log, October 1960

The detailed story of the present status of the Trumpeter Swan, largest waterfowl in the world, and an account of its come-back from near-extinction, are related in the National Geographic Magazine for

July, 1960. The author and photographer, Frederick Kent Truslow, also took the photos for the article on Whooping Cranes in the same magazine for November, 1959.

---J.T.

Dedication of The Avenue of the Giants Parkway, Humboldt Redwoods State Park, on August 27, 1960 was a milestone in the Save the Redwoods program. Threats to its beauty by freeway construction were averted through the united efforts of the state park authorities, the Save the Redwoods League and other conservation groups. The new U.S. #101 freeway has been constructed on the edge of the cathedral-like groves in the flats, instead of plowing through them as originally proposed. At no point does it involve the wholesale destruction of giant Redwoods and of landscape beauty that would have accompanied heavy freeway construction on the existing line.

---J.T.

A great benefactor of the Redwoods, Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., passed away May 11, 1960. His contributions to scenic conservation were an example and an inspiration to other private donors and to the appropriating bodies of the nation and the states. All parts of the nation benefitted from Mr. Rockefeller's vision. Among the projects for which he donated many millions were the Sugar Pines addition to Yosemite; interpretive museums at Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, and the Mesa Verde; lands at Colonial National Park, Acadia National Park, Grand Teton National Park and Jackson Hole; Great Smokies and Shenandoah. There were many others, such as the superb historical re-creation at Williamsburg, Virginia. Through the Save the Redwoods League in 1927 and following years he gave \$2,000,000, which together with state appropriations and other private gifts made possible the purchase of the outstanding redwood forest on Bull Creek in Humboldt Redwoods State Park. After many years his friends finally persuaded him to allow 10,000 acres that he preserved to bear the name of Rockefeller Redwood Forest. In 1954 the State of California after 30 years of effort finally acquired the Calaveras South Grove of Big Trees, and it was the Rockefeller gift of \$1,000,000 that determined the fate of this project.

---J.T.

Robert Stroud, "Birdman of Alcatraz", now in a Springfield, Mo. prison, is at 70, a prison librarian and the library bookbinder. Life magazine took up his fight for freedom in the April 11, 1960 issue: "Prodigious Intellect in Solitary". His life is becoming a motion picture with Burt Lancaster as lead, despite opposition of the Federal Prison Bureau.

---J.T.

"I will not kill or hurt any living creature needlessly, nor destroy any beautiful thing, but will strive to save and comfort all gentle life, and guard all natural beauty upon earth." John Ruskin

A zoo where scientists will be able to study animals, birds and fish under nearly natural environmental conditions is to be established by the University of California. Main features of the installation will be much more room for the animals than is found at an ordinary zoo, and although it will be secluded, it will be but a 15-minute drive from the Berkeley campus. Its enclosures and a dozen buildings

will occupy about seven acres of a 20-acre tract owned by the university. Construction will be financed by a \$367,700 grant from the National Science Foundation. It will be staffed by scientists from the university faculty. Dr. Frank A. Beach, professor of psychology, who played a large part in planning the installation, said its main use would be to permit study of animal behavior in close-to-natural conditions. Dr. Beach said no other field station in the world is fitted to handle the variety of animals that will be available here. Graduate students and scholars from abroad will have access to it, he added.

---Palo Alto Times, 10/12/60

A Federal demand that Fort Funston be developed for homesites was turned down by another city agency yesterday. The Supervisors' Public Buildings, Lands and City Planning Committee joined the City Planning Commission and the Recreation and Park Commission in recommending that the wind-swept 116 acres be developed as a park.

Franklin G. Floete, chief of the General Services Administration, insisted he would not sell it for recreation. At least part of it, he said, must be sold to private developers. But private developers apparently are not interested. Not a home builder showed up at the hearing to endorse a residential program. The Planning Commission believes "this is our last opportunity to build a coastal park in San Francisco". Author Harold Gilliam said San Francisco "is one of the five most densely populated cities in the United States" and "behind most western cities in park acreage". Businessman Joseph Cowan blamed San Francisco's loss of population in the past decade on "a search for the amenities, which means space to breathe in". "One of the greatest fictions fostered by public officials is that putting additional residential property on the tax rolls means a gain in tax revenues", Cowan said. "It means a net loss that must be made up by the mercantile and industrial taxpayers."

---San Francisco Chronicle 10/26/60