

The Avocet

Volume XIV, Number 9

November, 1967

NOVEMBER MEETING

Monday, November 13, 8:00 p. m.

Rose Garden
Library

Naglee & Dana Streets
San Jose

The program will be two Sierra Club movies in color, "The Grand Canyon" and "Island in Time". Both are beautiful and tell a conservation story. Come enjoy it with your fellow members.

Field Trips

Natural Bridges & West Cliff Drive - - - - - Sunday, Nov. 5, 9:00 a. m.
Meet in parking area of park. Fee 50¢. Follow Highway 1 marked Half-Moon Bay to small sign on highway indicating park. Bring lunch. We will also bird along West Cliff Drive.
Leader, Lloyd Case

Los Gatos Creek - north of Vasona Dam - - - - - Wednesday, Nov. 8, 8:30 a. m.
Meet in parking area in front of Assembly of God church on Lark Avenue, east of Winchester Boulevard -- west of Highway 17 off-ramp at Lark.
We will divide the group in two. Starting at the bridge on Lark Avenue one group will go north on the creek, the other one to the south. Therefore, anyone coming late can follow up either group.
Leaders, Mary Rugh
Catherine Lintott

Merced Wildlife Refuge - - - - - Saturday, Nov. 18, 9:00 a. m.
Meet at 9:00 a. m. at road to refuge, a few miles north of El Nido on route 59 which connects route 152 out of Los Banos to Merced. We will meet where refuge road meets route 59 (on refuge road). We expect to see Snow, Canada, White-fronted and probably Ross' Geese (maybe Blue), Whistling Swans, Sandhill Crane, and possibly Rough-Legged and Ferruginous Hawks, and Mountain Plovers.
Leaders, Joe, Doug, and Russ Greenberg

Stanford Campus - - - - - Wednesday, Nov. 29, 9:00 a. m.
Meet at Museum Way in front of the Stanford Museum. For information, call leader Virginia Bothwell, 854-6458.

Audubon Wildlife Film, "Mexican Adventure" - - - - - Monday, November 20
by
C. P. Lyons
at
Palo Alto High School Auditorium - 4:00 p. m.
Morris Daily Auditorium,
San Jose State College - 8:00 p. m.



THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE: It is early on a beautifully clear morning, and, as I write this, our Saratoga hills are beautiful, standing sharp and clear in the soft light of dawn, with the sunlight just beginning to wash the skyline, serrated with our tall and handsome redwoods. But it is a Sunday morning; people will soon be leaving the cities for recreation and fresh air in the "open spaces"; that yellow-brownish ribbon that lies in the air over the highway down the center of our valley will expand, grow thicker and wider as the hundreds, if not thousands, of automobiles add their individual contributions to the smog that pollutes our air. The hills will fade, and may even entirely disappear behind the yellowish curtain. I have watched it happen, time after time.

This should alarm us! It is a warning that while we are concerning ourselves with the conservation of our wildlife, areas of natural beauty, scenic highways, green foothills, baylands, and numerous other projects, we must also concern ourselves with this vitally important problem of air pollution -- particularly the smog which slowly but steadily increases.

In a thoughtful analysis which goes back to the basic source, this problem, like many of the others which give concern to conservationists, is due to the rapid increase of our population: we have more and more people, so we need more and more of everything; we have more and more automobiles, so we pour more and more smog into our air! This problem, of increasing population, unlike many of the others, cannot be solved by legislation or action of government agencies. We, of the Audubon Society, who are interested in conservation, often give active support to organizations that are engaged in specific projects. In order to strike at the basic source of all of these problems, we can possibly do no better than to support the program of "Planned Parenthood".

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, at their October meeting, regretfully accepted the resignations of Evelyn (Mrs. Joe) Hester as Field Notes Compiler, and of Dr. Howard Shellhammer as a Director. The appointment of Doug Greenberg as the new Field Notes Compiler, was approved by the Board, which also elected Nancy (Mrs. Peter) Holmes to finish out the remainder of Dr. Shellhammer's term as Director.

CONSERVATION CHAIRMAN: Tony (Mr. Claude A.) Look, of Los Altos, has accepted the appointment as Conservation Chairman, and will keep us informed of important conservation projects and pending legislation, through our Avocet. We know, of course, that this only provides us with the information; Tony's efforts will be in vain unless we, as individuals and citizens with the right to express our opinions, follow through, and write letters to support the conservation projects of which he will inform us.

NEW MEMBERS: It is gratifying to see the lists of New Members every month. These indicate that people are interested in the things which we are doing, and the objectives and goals which we are trying to achieve. We hope that these New Members will find pleasure in participating in our monthly meetings, our field trips, the screen tours, etc., and particularly in assisting in the program of one of our several Standing Committees: Conservation, Education, Membership, Program, Publicity, Wildlife Screen Tours, the Palo Alto Yacht Harbor Bulletin Board, the Historian's Committees for displays at the monthly meetings -- oh, we have numerous activities in which our New Members can participate. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of the Society officers will be published in each Avocet, and the same information about Chairmen of the various committees will be included as frequently as space permits.

NOT ONLY NEW MEMBERS, BUT EVERY MEMBER can, by participating in the activities, help to make our Society more interesting and stimulating. We do not operate a "Draft System"; we depend on Volunteers, and -- believe me -- enlistments will be cheerfully accepted.

(The President's Page, continued)

Do we have any member(s) belonging to the Legal Profession? Not that we are contemplating, or anticipating, any law suits -- but we would like to know of whom we might occasionally ask questions like: "Since we are recognized as a non-profit corporation, if we acquire land to be held as a 'Natural Area' or a Wildlife Sanctuary, will that property be tax-exempt?" (We would really like to know.)

Join us on our Field Trips -- and send in your own sightings of unusual or "first-of-the-season" sightings to our Field Notes Compiler... you may have something of interest to the rest of us!

OUT HISTORIAN for this year is Mr. Warren Turner. Mr. Turner accepted the job, but with strings attached: He requires that I help him form the two committees that provide the displays at the monthly meetings, in the southern and the northern areas, respectively. I accepted the conditions immediately, for that is a small price to pay for his services!

For the information of our newer members, Mr. Turner and his wife, Rebecca, are both long-time members of S. C. V. A. S. He is a former president of the society, and it was he who wrote the "History of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society", which is available (\$1.25) at each meeting of the Society. Mr. Turner has always taken a leading and active part in the Society, and if any one man is entitled to the title of "Mr. S. C. V. A. S.", it is Mr. Warren Turner.

The committees referred to above are each to consist of three members who shall plan a series of varied and interesting displays, one for each of the regular meetings in their area. Since meetings are alternately in the northern and southern areas, with no meeting in December, and none in June to be provided for, these committees never find themselves engaged in a "crash" program.

Any member who is interested in participating in this activity is invited to get in touch with either Mr. Turner (646 Alvarado Row, Stanford, Calif. 94305) or with Lloyd N. Case (20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga, Calif. 95070).

"Good Birding"

- Lloyd N. Case

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A LOOK TOWARDS CONSERVATION

The role of the conservationist in our present day society could remind one of a salmon facing the newly finished dam on the Feather River at Oroville for the first time. Is there another way around the dam or must he stay in the pool where his way has been blocked?

If we can leave the salmon to ponder his problem for a moment, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to add a few conservation thoughts to the pages of The Avocet.

Returning to the plight of our poor fish, I would say we conservationists are like the salmon in one way because he talks to other salmon who are also keenly interested in the very same dam problem. We are constantly talking to ourselves about our problems. What we must do, and the fish cannot, is practice talking to people who are not sympathetic to conservation. We must talk to those who would sacrifice open space for industrialization, who would fill in the baylands with the resulting loss of marine life and the natural baylands,

(Conservation continued)

and would sacrifice our natural environment for quick profits.

Becoming better informed so one can feel at ease when talking to such people is both a gradual and sometimes discouraging procedure. By reading conservation magazines, like "Cry California", "Audubon Magazine", "National Wildlife Magazine" to name a few, is one method. Another would be to attend the Conservation Workshop which will take place on Saturday, November 4th at the Wilbur Junior High School, 480 E. Meadow Drive, Palo Alto. The workshop will begin at 9:30 a. m. and continue during the day. The first session will cover present conservation projects and how people became interested in them. The second will deal with Conservation Education and Ecology as subjects for school curriculums. Dr. Lawrence Swan and Dr. Tom Harvey will present their views on these subjects. The third and final session of the day will cover the do's and don't's of appearing before political committees, hearings, and making protests on important matters. Senator Alfred Alquist and Mr. Walter Hays, both of San Jose, will cover these subjects. For the people who cannot appear in person, they will cover the art of writing letters for the records of these committees. The Conservation Workshop is sponsored by the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club, the registration fee is \$1.00. You are cordially invited to attend and a phone call to Tony Look, 968-8878, would be appreciated if you plan to do so. Coffee will be served, but you should bring your own lunch.

Several important conservation landmarks have been noted these past few weeks. The open orchard burning of agricultural waste is now to be controlled by the Bay Area Pollution Control Board for the first time since the Board was formed 14 years ago. Burning will be regulated to occur only during the months between December and April inclusive. No burning can occur on days when the inversion layer is low enough to cause a smog problem.

Increased marine life has been noted in the South Bay where pollution is gradually being controlled. This is a long, unending battle, but progress is being made.

The City of Mt. View is developing final plans for completing Stevens Creek Parkway within their city limits. This will be a natural area with a walking trail and a few planted areas to match the existing natural stream-side plant life. It will be a small oasis for birdlife in an area where trees have been crowded out by urban congestion. The City Planner, Mr. Lawrence, has asked for help from all conservation organizations in the initial plantings and development of this walking trail within a city. I am certain that younger groups, like the Scouts and Church Youth Groups, would enjoy this type of work and would also learn from us something about the habits of birdlife along Stevens Creek.

- Claude A. Look
411 Los Ninos Way, Los Altos
Work phone 968-8878

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FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Dumbarton Bridge - September 23 - Leader, Les Sleeper

About 27 members assembled on this serene, overcast morning. After birding a short time at the meeting place, we proceeded to the KGO tower which the Sequoia Audubon group was just leaving. We took a long leisurely walk south of the tower and enjoyed watching the good fishing the many minnows provided for the Forster's Terns, Bonaparte and Ring-billed Gulls, and White Pelicans. The highlights of the trip were a group of about 30 preening Elegant Terns on the mud and an albino Western Sandpiper. Thirty species were tallied, including one Brown Pelican which had wandered in from the coast. (E. C.)

(Field Trip Reports continued)

Palo Alto Yacht Harbor - September 27

Palo Alto's Duck Pond, replete with Mallards, Coots, Pied-billed Grebe, Black-crowned Night Herons, and a majestic American Egret, was the starting point of a trip that produced 33 people to view 35 species. The tide was low enough for the bands of spartina, salicornia, and salt grass to show distinctly. In the shallow pond near the berthing area, an apparently sick and feeble but squawking immature Caspian Tern was watched over by an adult one. Here Kay McCann noted a Lesser Yellowlegs, while a warm discussion beside the Frontage Road pond resulted in the identification of a Greater Yellowlegs also.

This certainly was a rewarding morning for the novice leaders because of their responsive and enthusiastic followers. - N. Holmes and F. LaRiviere

Elkhorn Slough & Salinas River Mouth - October 7 - Leader, Viola (Mrs. Charles) Anderson

A larger group than usual, including several of our new members, enjoyed this field trip. The day was sunny, but cool, and without the unpleasant wind that so often prevails in these areas. Visibility was excellent, birds were numerous, with enough "puzzling" individuals to arouse considerable interest and discussion in their identification.

After a couple of hours or so of birding along Jetty Road, Mrs. Anderson led us to a vantage point from which we spent some twenty minutes or so, watching a pair of pink flamingos (!) feeding in one of the distant salt-ponds. Obviously, these are escapees from some zoo or similar unit, but just the same, it was much more fun to see them there, free, and in natural surroundings, than to view them at closer hand in captivity.

Our next stop was a most interesting innovation: the Marine Biology Laboratory at the west end of the one-way bridge over to Moss Landing. The Director was not there, but we were made at home, and enjoyed the privilege of seeing the nature of the work being done at the lab. A couple of young students gave us very interesting explanations of some of the work. While the flamingos were probably the highlight of the trip, the Laboratory was certainly a worthwhile feature. (We recommend a visit when you are next in that area.)

We lunched near the mouth of the Salinas River, and spent more time inspecting the gatherings of shorebirds along the banks of the lagoon.

Birds for the day included: Willets, Greater Yellow Legs (1), Black-bellied Plover, Avocets, Northern Phalaropes, Dowitchers, Marbled Godwits, Long-billed Curlews, Forster's Terns, Common Terns, Elegant Terns, Heerman's Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, Western Gulls, Least Sandpipers, Western Sandpipers, Dunlins, Brown Pelicans, Sanderlings, Barn Swallows, Kingfisher, Meadowlarks, Savannah Sparrows, Ruddy Ducks, Coots (of course), Sparrow Hawk, Horned Grebe, Great Blue Heron, American Egret, Killdeer, Red-shafted Flicker, Pied-bill Grebe, Brandt Cormorant, Gadwell, Pintail, Calif. Gull, Redwing, House Finch, White-crowned Sparrow, and the two-who-had-no-right-to-be-there: the Pink Flamingos. - (LNC)

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA FIELD NOTES

This is a column devoted to reporting any interesting or unusual birds that are seen in Northern California during each month. California has proven itself to be quite an exciting place for birds, and each year more and more species are being added to the list of birds seen in our state. Its varied habitat, large size, and huge regions of unspoiled wilderness make California the home of a very high number of breeding birds, many of which are difficult or impossible to find anywhere else in the world. But in recent years, the attention of birders throughout the state has shifted away from these resident or breeding birds and

N. C. Field Notes continued)

has focused upon those rare, off-course, and out-of-place wanderers that we call vagrants. As more and more people search for these rarities, more and more are found. It is always a thrill to spot, study, and identify one of these vagrants, even if it is one seen as regularly as the American Redstart or European Widgeon.

So in this column we will try to tell you all we can about these vagrants, and about anything else that you or we may find significant regarding Northern California birds. We cannot do this alone. We need your observations. Something you may not think is a good find may truly be worth mentioning. Too many of us are unaware of just what is rare and what is common. So send us your observations, we'd really like to hear from you.

Although the numbers of pelagic birds seen were disappointingly low, the Golden Gate Audubon Society boat trip on October 7 produced one real rarity, a Wilson's Petrel, the fifth time it has been seen in California waters.

A Harlequin Duck, unusual even during the winter, was reported summering on Monterey Bay. Another scarce winter visitor, a Ferruginous Hawk, showed up somewhat early at Pt. Reyes on October 8. A Reddish Egret turned up at Moss Landing in late September and remained there at least through October 7. This is the farthest north this wanderer from Baja, California has ever been seen in California.

Ted Chandik found a Solitary Sandpiper at Pt. Reyes on September 16. Three Pectoral Sandpipers, always scarce, were found by Chandik and Hans Meinhardt at our own Palo Alto Yacht Harbor on September 20.

Red Phalaropes were surprisingly common offshore during late August.

Elegant Terns came northward in very low numbers this year, but our Santa Clara Audubon field trip to Dumbarton on September 23 produced thirty of these Mexican birds, an unusual sighting for the area.

One of the most exciting birds of the fall was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Pt. Reyes, which stayed from August 19 until around Sept. 9 at the RCA Communications Center. John Ralph and Natalie Mestechin of Point Reyes Bird Observatory found this bird, a real rarity. Rich Stallcup found two Eastern Kingbirds at Point Reyes in late September.

Red-eyed Vireos were seen at Point Reyes on two separate weekends in September, on the 23rd and again on the 30th. This bird is seldom seen in California. Even more unusual was a Philadelphia Vireo seen by Rich Stallcup near Eureka in mid-September.

A Chestnut-Sided Warbler was seen at San Gregorio by Dave DeSante on September 13. A Blackpoll Warbler, no longer considered rare, was seen at Pt. Reyes on Sept. 16, and two were there on October 7. A Prairie Warbler was seen at Pt. Reyes on September 30. Phil Lenna of Point Reyes Bird Observatory had reported one a few days earlier, probably the same bird. Three of another of our more "common" rarities, the Palm Warbler, showed up at Pt. Reyes on September 30, along with an equal number of American Redstarts, which certainly must be considered a regular migrant along the coast each fall. Dave Gaines reported a Northern Waterthrush plus a Redstart near Santa Cruz around the first of October.

A Blue Grosbeak at Pt. Reyes on September 30 was far out of its normal Central Valley range.

As winter approaches, look for waxwings, sparrows, and ducks to be arriving in the Bay Area. For those who wish to search for winter rarities, Eureka, Monterey, and Tule-Klamath are excellent areas. A trip to one of the waterfowl refuges can also be interesting. But rare birds can turn up anywhere. The important thing is: Keep looking.

One more thing. When we hear about rare birds seen, we will try to give credit where it is due. Sometimes this is difficult or impossible, because it isn't clear just who

(N. C. Field Notes continued)

found some of the birds that are seen.

Other Reports:

Kay McCann reported a Lesser Yellowlegs at the P. A. Baylands on September 27. An excellent description accompanied her report.

Alan Walther saw an early White-Crowned Sparrow on September 16.

Eve Case found her first Golden-Crowned of the season on October 1. (overall, these sparrows seemed to arrive a bit late this year. -- D. G.)

- Doug and Russ Greenberg

Welcome to NEW MEMBERS:

Zelda Glaze, 1711 Warburton Ave., Apt. 1, Santa Clara, California 95050
 Mr. James D. Hammond, 55 Ranch Road, Woodside, California 94061
 Mr. and Mrs. Dan W. Rehor, 2577 Louis Road, Palo Alto, California 94303
 Wm. E. & Letha Schmidt, 138 Bolivar Lane, Portola Valley, California 94025
 Mr. and Mrs. Willis W. Snyder, 21767 Terrace Drive, Cupertino, California 95014
 Miriam Soomil, 2479 Alpine Road, Menlo Park, California 94025
 Mr. and Mrs. John S. Warriner, 170 Golden Oak Drive, Menlo Park, California 94025
 Mrs. A. C. Winch, 705 Curtis Way, Apt. 5, Menlo Park, California 94025

- Membership Chairman, (Mrs.) Caroline Davis

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FILM AVAILABLE

We would like to show the Save San Francisco Bay Association's film, "San Francisco Bay", to as many voters as possible in this area. It is also valuable and enjoyable for children over the fourth grade. If you can use the film, or know of a group that would be interested, make arrangements for it by calling Education Committee Chairman Nancy Holmes at 948-1854.

CONTRIBUTIONS REQUESTED

Pictures or other display features (fade-proof ones, if possible) are needed for use on the Audubon bulletin Board at the Palo Alto Baylands. If you have anything to donate, or even if you just have suggestions, please call Mrs. Holmes, 948-1854.

A NEW ACTIVITY IS PLANNED

Are you interested in forming and participating in a "Bird Discussion Group"? If so, please come and join us for coffee at my home at 10:00 a. m. on Tuesday, November 14th. New members are especially welcome. Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga. Telephone 867-4748.

"Slim birds stalking on the mud beyond the ditch,
And one fevered female guessing wildly which is which,
Nine Dunlin, then a Sanderling, two Reeves, a Spotted Shank,
But what's that funny wader? Then more faces on the bank,
And dim dames damming in a most almighty flap,
And a feeling that our sewage farm at last is on the map!
More blighters bounding up the wall like mountain goats,
With their mammoth field-glasses from their navel to their throats,
And the twin Miss Buddles, whom no bird can ever flummock,
Are lying as at Bisley, prone upon their ample stomachs,
Strong prisms straining through the grasses and the mist,
At a bird that very likely isn't on the British List!
Damp George growling, "It's a (slightly loosened) Knot,"
And Emma Warter wanting us to wire for Peter Scott.
One last lingering watcher comes and takes a hurried look,
At the bird and then his Birdman's Pocket Book,
Is it Calidris? or Tringa? Is it Micropalma?
Is it Baird's or is it Armstrong's? Yes, it is, it must, Hurrah!
Damp George insists it can't be! Yes, it could be and it is,
From its lores and its flanks and its eyestripe and what Percy calls its "jiz"
Jane Buggles is in ecstasy, her aging heart athump,
With doubts about its primaries, the streaking on its rump,
But she lies beside the Brigadier, whose eyes suffuse with hope,
For who among us dares to doubt his whopping telescope?
Shall we keep it dark as darkness? or alert the B. B. C. ?
And risk a crowd of charabanks? No, let's go home to tea,
Time to catch the post to London, ere the hour of sunset chimes,
Gloria in paladibus, for the bird in each of us,
British Birds won't care a cuss, so let's send it to the Times!"

from "PUNCH"

S. C. V. A. S. OFFICERS & CHAIRMEN 1967-68

President - Lloyd N. Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga 95070	867-4748
Vice President - Diane (Mrs. Norman) Conradson, 4337 Miranda Ave., P. A. 94306,	941-2102
Secretary - Edna (Mrs. Del) Wininger, 7400 Tiptoe Lane, San Jose, 95129	252-3796
Treasurer - Joyce (Mrs. John) Todd, 945 Matadero Avenue, Palo Alto 94306	326-6904
Conservation: Claude A. Look, 411 Ninos Way, Los Altos,	968-8878
Education: Nancy (Mrs. Peter) Holmes, 843 Moana Court, Palo Alto 94306	948-1854
Field Trips: Dr. J. Greenberg, 270 Kellogg Avenue, Palo Alto 94301	327-0329
Wed. Trips North: Kay (Mrs. Walter) McCann, 783 Garland Drive, Palo Alto	327-4138
Wed. Trips South: Mrs. Catherine Lintott, 17150 Buena Vista Avenue, Los Gatos	356-4264
Field Notes Compiler: Doug Greenberg, 270 Kellogg Ave., Palo Alto 94301	327-0329
Membership: Mrs. Caroline Davis, 104 Winslow Court, Campbell 95008	378-1603
Program: Kay (Mrs. Walter) McCann, 783 Garland Drive, Palo Alto 94303	327-4138
Registrar: Fannie (Mrs. Charles) Zwaal, 478 Clifton Ave., San Jose 95128	292-2060
Publicity: John Brokenshire, 102 S. 23rd Street, San Jose 95116	293-6289

AVOCET

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Circulation:	Miss Elsie Hoeck, 1311 Christina, San Jose	293-5668
Mimeographing:	Mr. & Mrs. Emmanuel Taylor, Rt. 1, Box 116A, Morgan Hill	779-9097