

The Avocet

Volume XV, Number 2

February, 1968

POINT REYES BIRD OBSERVATORY & FARALLON ISLANDS

Monday, February 19, 8:00 p.m.

Rose-Garden Library

Dana & Naglee, San Jose

Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory is the only one of its kind in the U.S. We are fortunate to have some of our own members active in it and to have it so near. Dr. Richard Mewaldt, president of the Observatory, will show slides and speak on "The Week at the Pt. Reyes Observatory and Farallon Islands".

Also, a no-host dinner at 6:00 p.m. will be held before the general meeting at the Garden City Hofbrau, 51 S. Market St. (corner of Post & Market). We shall be honoring Dr. and Mrs. L.R. Mewaldt as well as Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ross. Mr. Ross is the naturalist and warden at Richardson's Bay. Anyone interested in attending please contact Kay McCann, 783 Garland Dr., Palo Alto 94303, 327-4138. We are reserving a table and hopefully a room.

FIELD TRIPS

Lake Merritt - - - - - Saturday, Feb. 10, 9:00 a.m.

Located in Oakland. Meet at the Nature Center. Possibility of Barrow's Goldeneyes reported Jan. 10. Leader, Joe Greenberg

Coyote Creek County Park - - - - - Wednesday, Feb. 14, 9:00 a.m.

Take Hellyer Ave. Exit from Bayshore, follow sign to the Velodrome to the park. Meet at main gate. Leader, Fanny Zwaal

Cowell Redwoods State Park - - - - - Sunday, Feb. 18, 9:00 a.m.

Leave Hwy 17 and go through Mt. Hermon to Felton. Turn left and follow signs to park. Enter park and meet at main parking area beyond Ranger Station. Leaders, Lloyd & Eve Case

Alpine Inn Area - - - - - Wednesday, Feb. 28, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at Alpine Inn (formerly Risotti's) at corner of Arastradero and Alpine Roads. Leader, Virginia Bothwell

Honey Lake - - - - - Sat. & Sun. March 2 & 3

This advance notice for this weekend trip for booming Sage Grouse, Northern Shrikes, Golden & Bald Eagles, Prairie Falcons, Rough-legged Hawks - maybe, Harris & Tree Sparrows. Allow about seven hours travel - motels available at Susanville. Meeting place to be announced in March issue. Leader Joe Greenberg

Audubon Film by Eben McMillan - Feb. 15

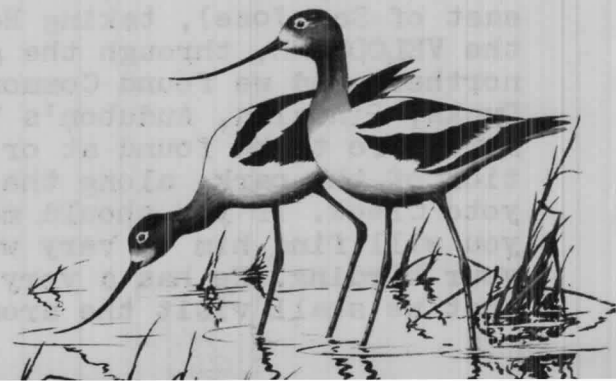
8:00 p.m.

at

Morris Daily Auditorium, San Jose

Bird Discussion Group - Feb. 13 10:00 a.m.

At home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane
Saratoga, Tel. 867-4748



THE PRESIDENT REPORTS:

THE CHRISTMAS COUNT was very successful this year, in spite of the heavy fog which greatly reduced visibility during the forenoon. A record number of 71 observers were able to count a total of 144 species and 78,558 individuals, plus one additional individual of a different species which was seen during the count period, but not on the count day. We wish to express our thanks to Will Luick for the job he did in getting the teams co-ordinated and organized, to the Sector-leaders and the members of the separate teams, to John Brokenshire for the publicity, and to the members who so quietly, but effectively, provided the delightful refreshments. Special thanks for a particularly tedious job goes to Dr. Henry Weston, who made the final tabulations and sent our report to National Audubon Society. Participation in the Count is always a rewarding experience; members should make a notation on their next November calendars, now, reminding them to send in the application form for participation in the Dec. 1968 count. Let's find 150 species next December!

ANNUAL DUES will be increased, effective March 31, for individual memberships. They will be raised to \$10.00 instead of the current \$8.50, but all other classes of memberships will remain as they are at present. Our Branch shares will be increased in all classes: Regular individual memberships, to \$4.00; Family, to \$6.00; Sustaining, to \$12.50, etc. I would like to call attention to the fact that by taking out a family membership at an additional cost of \$2.50, we would be adding \$2.00 to the amount received by our S.C.V.A.S.; in other words, 80% of this additional \$2.50 is returned to our own Branch.

The additional revenue is to be used to help finance three new Field Representatives, in areas which do not presently have any: Southwest, Northern Midwest, and Central Midwest. The raise may be an inconvenience, but its purpose is commendable.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, at its regular meeting, elected Ralph Trullinger to be one member of the Nominating Committee (see your last issue of the Avocet). At the regular meeting in Palo Alto on Monday, Jan. 8, the members present designated Howard Woolcott, with Dr. Tom Harvey as alternate.

THE NATIONAL AUDUBON WESTERN CONFERENCE to be held at Asilomar on April 6, 7, 8 and 9th, is described in the January Avocet. These conferences are always tremendously interesting and stimulating, including discussions of issues and problems particularly important to our area. Members are urged to send in Registration Forms as soon as possible.

THE COYOTE CREEK COUNTY PARK is an area which seems to have received scant, if any, attention from our birders, prior to the visit to the area by one of our counting teams; many of us were probably unaware that it even really exists. But it does! On two consecutive days, we have found it to be an area of very good birding. It can be reached by driving south on Bayshore Highway to Hellyer Ave., where the Bayshore crosses Coyote Creek (about six miles south of the Alum Rock Overpass, east of San Jose), taking Hellyer Ave. Exit and following the sign to the VELODROME, through the gate into the park. On a small pond at the northern end we found Common Golden-Eyes, Buffleheads, Snipe, Ruddy Ducks, Pintails, Audubon's Warblers and even a Myrtle Warbler. Many more were to be found at or near the bigger pond in the southern portion of the park, along the trails that follow along the banks of Coyote Creek. If you should meet Bill Charlson, the Senior Park Ranger, you will find him to be very willing to help you and very interested in your birding. He has a very high opinion of Audubon members and hopes that we shall visit the area as often as possible. I hope that many of

us will, because the more we show our interest in one of our County Parks, the more our Supervisors may be inclined to provide improvements.

Lloyd N. Case, President

California Birds

The closing weeks of 1967 proved to be extremely eventful and exciting for birders, as many birds that normally would have wintered either far South or even farther north of California somehow decided to show up in places where eager birders could add them to their life lists or California state lists. The determined armies of observers that participated in the many Christmas Bird Counts managed to find many of these "lost" birds, making this one of the most successful years ever for Christmas Counts in California.

San Diego set a new national record of 209 species on its count, which featured such unusual birds as Lesser Nighthawk, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Black-and-White Warbler, Palm Warbler (4), Wilson's Warbler (6), MacGillivray's Warbler, American Redstart, Swamp Sparrow and Northern Waterthrush.

California's second highest count, Tomales Bay, netted around 194 species, including Least Bittern, Yellow-billed Loon (second state record), Mountain Chickadee, Swamp Sparrow, and Yellow-shafted Flicker (2). It appears that this count, which each year attracts from seventy-five to one hundred participants, will have to settle for a permanent second-place ranking in the state, as a much smaller and less highly organized group at San Diego appears to be improving its already astronomical count each year. It also seems probable that Allan D. Cruickshank's own Cocoa, Florida count will be given a tough battle each year by San Diego for the national number one spot, long claimed by the Floridians without a serious challenge from anyone.

On the relatively new Drake's Bay Count, invasions of Red Crossbills and Swamp Sparrows were overshadowed by the appearance of an adult Emperor Goose at Limantour Spit. The Crossbills were everywhere in the Olema area, even out in the marshes that surround Tomales Bay. Six Swamp Sparrows were seen on the count, two of which were captured and banded. Swamp Sparrow was formerly considered a rare bird in California.

An enthusiastic group in Monterey compiled a count list of over 170 species. Highlights included an American Redstart, two White-throated Sparrows, a Dickcissel (the same one that has been at a feeder for over a month), an Orchard Oriole, a Glaucous Gull, and best of all, a Broad-winged Hawk, the second state record for this bird.

Our own San Jose count failed to produce an impressive number of species, but still turned up several good birds for the area. One adult and two immature Bald Eagles at Calaveras Reservoir raised a few eyebrows, and nearly as impressive was a female Peregrine Falcon at Sunol Park. Don McLean banded two White-throated Sparrows, a welcome addition to the Count list. The best birds of the Count were, however, a Solitary Vireo and a Western Tanager.

Other Christmas Count birds seen in the state were a Coues' Flycatcher in Palos Verdes, near Los Angeles, and a Hepatic Tanager in Los Angeles itself.

Not all good birds, however, were seen on Christmas counts. A Brown Thrasher at Cabrillo Beach (sixty miles south of Los Angeles) has now stayed for a month. Tree Sparrows, almost unheard of in coastal California, appeared in two places: Guy McCaskie found one at the mouth of the Klamath River, in the Eureka area, and Dave Gaines found another during the first week of January at the Santa Cruz sewage plant.

Locally, Lloyd and Eve Case reported that a female Yellow-Shafted Flicker was at a bird bath at their home in Saratoga during early January. Also, Emelie Curtis found 85 Whistling Swans on Anderson Reservoir near Morgan Hill on December 14.

As the halfway mark of winter is passed, bird populations will tend to stabilize. This means that more waxwings, zonotrichia and other wintering birds will be moving into the Bay Area in search of food. So watch those berry bushes for Bohemian Waxwings and those feeders for Harris Sparrows and possibly other goodies. But look quickly, for before long (in fact, at this very moment), you will find the Great Horned Owls and the Anna's Hummingbirds nesting once again, reminding us that spring is indeed on its way in California.

Doug and Russ Greenberg

Field Report

Monterey, January 13 - Leaders, Bill Reese and Alan Baldrige

The warm, calm weather brought pleasure, but little bird activity. At Pt. Pinos we were entertained by a small raft of Sea Otters, one of which proceeded to hammer open his lunch quite audibly on a rock poised on his tummy, while Gray Whales spouted and sported farther off shore. Here also were two Surfbirds, a first for many. At Monterey Harbor, of note were Arctic Loons, Rhinoceros Auklets and White-winged Scoters. And at Carmel River Mouth there was one Snow Goose with some Canadas, and only the hope of a Broad-winged Hawk found there on the Christmas Count. (E.G.C.)

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

- Mr. John Ballantine, 1340 Greenwood Ave., Palo Alto, Cal. 94301
- Mrs. Nora A. Barry, 125 Marvin Ave., Los Altos, Cal. 94022
- Master Arthur Jones, 554 Anza St., Mtn. View, Cal. 94040
- Elizabeth Paschal, 569 Patricia Lane, Palo Alto, Cal. 94303
- Mr. Ronald E. Stecker, 5357 Rimwood Dr., San Jose, Cal. 95118
- Mrs. Joan Phenix Striebel, 3193 Ramona, Palo Alto, Cal. 94306

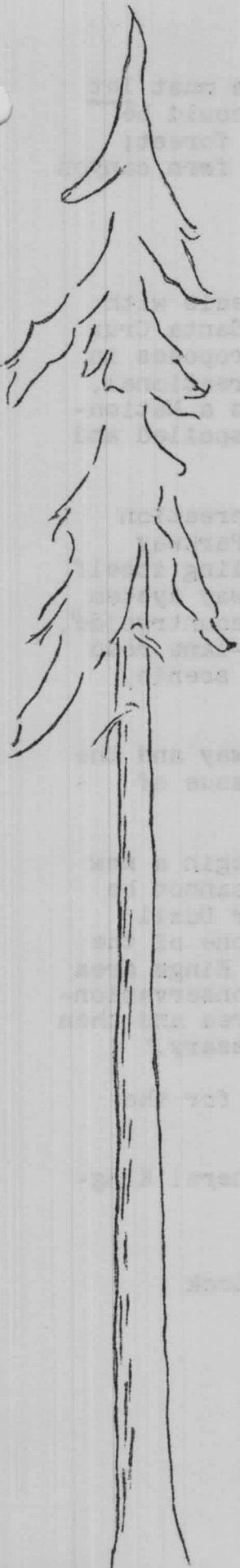
Membership Chairman, Mrs. Caroline Davis

AUDUBON CAMP OF THE WEST - Dubois, Wyoming

It is not too early to make plans and reservations for AUDUBON CAMP OF THE WEST in the Wind River Range of Western Wyoming for this summer. There are four two week sessions:

- Session #1 June 23 - July 5
- Session #2 July 7 - July 19
- Session #3 July 21 - August 2
- Session #4 August 4 - August 16

Write: Director, Audubon Camp of the West, P.O. Box 3666,
El Monte, California 91733



I always stand awe struck in the realm of infinite beauty of an intact redwood forest. The sight is unmatched in the storehouse of Mother Nature's beauty to me. A stream of crystal clear water winds its way between the mossy banks with oxalis for a ground cover and the huckleberry and brittle brush forming unique forms for the undergrowth. All of this covered by the green canopy of 300 foot giants of the ancient forest.

The road you will want to travel for your view of the finest redwood forest on the north coast is the Howland Hill Road in Jedediah Smith State Park just northeast of Crescent City.

To leave such beauty and travel a few miles away you can discover the absolutely devastated ruins of a once proud forest. This is a journey from complete tranquility to the pathway of confusion.

Confusion exists in the north-coast region of Northern California. A Redwoods National Park is to be forged from a combination of pristine beauty and logging waste. The resulting two-pronged park will run north and south from the Klamath River. Hearings are to be held by the House Interior Committee during the coming spring. Before the hearings have even had a chance to be held trees that could form an expansion unit as allowed by the Senate version (S.2515) are being cut by the Georgia Pacific Lumber Co. These trees are in the Emerald Mile of primeval giants just upstream from the Tall Trees Unit on Redwood Creek.

We spent a few days during the latter part of December touring some of the boundaries and creek drainages of the proposed park. We walked a trail to see the World's tallest trees on Redwood Creek only to discover that across the stream the lumber company had routed a road through cut-over lands to let their visitors travel by car for the same view. Ours was the more inspirational way of travel because of the changing life zones and habitats we experienced in the drop of 2,000 feet to reach the alluvial flat where the Tall Trees stand on Redwood Creek.

If you have the opportunity to travel this area by all means visit the Gold Beach of Prairie Creek State Park. The 12 miles of natural beach-lands is an extreme in itself but the major feature is the grotto of Fern Canyon. A short walk off the road will lead you to a small creek that twists between vertical banks covered almost entirely with the plant life of 5 different species of ferns. The only parts of the walls not covered is where dripping water courses down the sedimentary layered walls. This canyon would be a jewel in any National Park.

The decision for a Redwoods National Park rest with an

REDWOOD CONSERVATION continued

of us, not just the Senate and House of Representatives. We must let them know that people care about the trees being cut which could be included in a park; about a clear stream running through a forest; about a complete redwood forest and about the beauties of a fern canyon.

Two Encouraging Notes on the Skyline Parkway

Senator Kuchel has introduced a bill into the Senate that deals with the noble highway that winds its way down the spine of the Santa Cruz Range. The Skyline National Parkway Bill (S. 2616) that "proposes in essence an elongated park embracing features of scenic, recreational, and historical interest. Its development and maintenance as a National Parkway would preserve this wonderful area from being despoiled and overrun by indiscriminate urbanization."

The other action is by the State of California Parks and Recreation Department in a preliminary report on the development of a Parkway system for the Legislature. Quoting from the report "Traveling itself is becoming more of a chore and less of a pleasure. A Parkway system would take the motorist off choked freeways and into scenic countryside". The Department's definition of a Parkway is generally a two-lane road called a "ribbon Park" leading from highways to nowhere but scenic, historical, and recreational sites.

This State report most certainly describes the Skyline Highway and the North Coast Scenic Highway #1 we discussed in the January issue of the "Avocet."

There are many problems facing the conservationists as we begin a new year. The solutions are all in the future, but the future cannot be postponed for an indefinite time. Secretary of the Interior Udall stated, when he signed the necessary papers that dissolved one of the last obstacles to the Disneyland development of the Mineral Kings area east of Sequoia National Park, something like this - "the conservationists, if they had cared enough, could have protected this area and then my actions in signing these papers would not have been necessary."

Are we guilty of not doing enough or is progress too strong for the resistance we do put up?

A Redwoods National Park; a Skyline Parkway; a natural Mineral King-of course - if we all want them bad enough to act now!

Conservation Chairman - Tony Look

SOME NOTES ON NESTING GOLDEN
EAGLES BY EMELIE CURTIS

Feb. 22, 1967 - Arrived at nest site at 10:30 a.m. One eagle was circling above ridge; soon joined by another. One continued circling while other made two deep, graceful dives. He flapped hard during the sharp ascent, folded wings against body just before apex, inertia carrying him the last few feet, then bullet-shaped body tilted slowly at apex and plummeted straight earthward, wings still folded tightly against body. The great wings opened into a sail not very far above the treetops, and ascent began again. After second dive, circling bird landed on grassy open slope near top of ridge - other bird followed. They faced each other for 3 or 4 minutes. One walked uphill a few feet, the brown "pantaloon" brushing the grass; the other followed and they stood side by side another 3 or 4 minutes. Then one hopped atop the other for about 10 seconds - wings slightly spread. Then both birds stood side by side on the grassy slope and surveyed the valley far below for 20 minutes. Both flew up-canyon. While they were gone, I climbed the shaly slope to the nest tree, a Digger Pine. From a point on the ridge just above the nest, I was able to look into the nest forty feet away and see one egg. I left almost immediately. Departed from area at 1:10 p.m. (A 15 power scope was used to view copulation, 7x35 binoculars for nuptial dives.)



DELIGHTFUL MOMENTS by Rebecca and Warren Turner

Bird watching has such charming moments, especially when something new is discovered. We experienced such moments while camping in a desert "wash" in early November, 1967. The sun was still hot and the days cloudless. We were camped in the extreme southeastern corner of Calif. in the Sonoran Desert and close to the Imperial Dam and Wildlife Refuge. Yuma, Arizona, was 20 miles due south. In the flat, wide wash were lovely green mesquite and palo verde trees interspersed with ocotillo and creosote bush. Brown hills border the park-like area.

In one of the mesquite trees that shaded our trailer was a beautifully woven bird's nest. It was shaped like a coconut and the same size. "Ah," we said when we first saw it; "a wren's nest." Or was it? It was not the nest of a Cactus Wren, nor a Canyon Wren. Most other wrens nested in tree openings made by woodpeckers.



Late, the second day after our arrival, we were scolded by a tiny, restless bird flitting among the lower branches of a creosote bush. We could see traces of yellow in the head and shoulder and the tail was held in a horizontal position; obviously not a wren. The professional birder of the family searched her books with furrowed brow. Soon a smile replaced the frown and she announced with triumph: "It's a Verdin, that's what it is!"

The third day at supper time, as the sun was setting, we were roundly scolded again. The little Verdin cautiously approached the mesquite tree where the nest was. We moved away from the nest and watched discreetly. Ever closer the little bird came toward the nest, scolding all the time. There was a dead twig near the entrance. From the twig there was one swift swoop into the nest; like a swift ball going into a catcher's mit. We saw it happen and danced with pleasure.

Once inside the little Verdin must have felt safe and comfortable, for it never reappeared. Only twice did we see it come out in the morning about 7 a.m. Occasionally we saw it carry something to the nest in the daytime. For 25 days we watched the evening arrival and toward the end there was no scolding.

Well, somehow, we must go back to our campsite next year to see our little friend.

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AVOCET

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