

The Avocet

Volume XVI, Number 1

January, 1969

"Isle Royale National Park"
Thursday, Jan. 16, 8:00 pm

Homestead High School
Room 5, Bldg. C

Homestead Ave.
Cupertino

Lloyd Case will show pictures he took on his trip to Isle Royale in Lake Superior. For background material, do review his fine write-ups in the November and December "Avocets". Between the two we should get a real taste of the "North Woods" without the discomfort of a single insect welt. Come see what you've been reading about!

FIELD TRIPS

Bird Discussion Group Tues. Jan. 7, 10 am
The three species of goldfinches will be our topic. Meet at Mrs. Eve Case's, 20537 Verde Vista Ln., Saratoga 95070, Tel. 867-4748.

Montalvo Wed. Jan. 8, 9:30 am
Meet at first parking lot. Winter birds. Leader, Catherine Lintott

Bodega Bay Sun. Jan. 12, 10 am
Meet at U.C. Marine Biological Station. Mostly to see Rock Sandpipers. Also sea ducks in bay. Leaders, Dr. J. Greenberg, Russ G.

"Migration Mysteries" Mon. Jan. 13, 8:00 pm
Walter Breckenridge probes various migration patterns showing such species as Manx Shearwater, Laysan Albatross, Eider Duck and Lesser Sandhill Crane. This is our 3rd Wildlife Film of the season at Morris Daily Aud., San Jose State College.

Coyote Hills Regional Park Wed. Jan. 22, 9:30 am
Head east on Dumbarton Bridge, after passing through toll plaza, turn left at Jarvis Ave., turn left at first traffic light onto Newark Blvd. After 1 mile turn west at Stanford Research Inst. (SRI) sign onto Patterson Ranch Rd. The SRI sign is small, there is no street sign. If you cross the concrete bridge over Alameda Cr., you've gone too far. First parking lot is about 1.5 miles from turnoff and several hundred yards on near side of SRI Lab. Meet here at Parking Lot 1. There are tables available for lunch if you care to stay.
Leader, Les Sleeper 323-9370

Monterey . . Sat. Jan. 25, 9:00 am
Meet at Coast Guard Pier.
Leaders, Alan Baldrige & Bill Reese

BOARD MEETING Tues. Jan. 14, 7:45 pm
Meet at home of Diane Conradson,
4337 Miranda, Palo Alto.



Thanks to the Good Earth

There is great satisfaction in having your hands in the earth. There are times when the soil smells sweet, when it oozes through your fingers, when it's moist and breaks up easily; then the soil is right for planting. What fun it is to put your hands in the peat moss, break up the lumps and add it to your planting mixture. Then you must add some well aged manure. Reach 'way down into the pile and feel its warmth. Scoop out what you need with your hands rather than a shovel, for that way you discover its wonderful soft texture, its variant colors and decaying odors. Then, if necessary, add a little sand to your garden mix. But do not go about it too hurriedly. Stop long enough at each of your piles to be aware of their individual qualities. Maybe we've outgrown the sandbox, but should we ever outgrow the sandpile?

For a little variety in your life construct a path of creek rocks. Walk over them in your bare feet when you are lonesome for a river. Hear the crunching of the stones against one another. Turn on the garden sprinkler and suddenly you find yourself near a creek.

Take time to sit under a tree. Notice the dryness of the upper layer of fallen leaves. Then start uncovering the layers. The change from leaf to dirt takes many seasons. Yet this spectacle can be seen where trees grow unmolested.

Scuffle your feet through the leaves that pile up on the lawn or sidewalk to get the full measure of their existence. Let your hands be submerged as far as possible; what if they do get dirty? Someday someone may discover that dirt has healing qualities for both the body and the mind --

Thanks to the good earth.

Howard Wolcott, President

FROM CALIFORNIA HUNTING REGULATIONS -- 1968

Hunters should familiarize themselves with the following information:

Fully Protected Birds and Mammals: California Condors, Bald Eagles, White-tailed Kites, Trumpeter Swans, mountain sheep, sea otters, sea elephants, Guadalupe fur seals, and ringtailed cats may not be taken or possessed at any time.

Raptors: All raptors (hawks and owls) are protected birds.

Protected non-game birds: All birds occurring naturally in California which are not resident game birds, migratory game birds, non-protected birds, or fully protected birds, are protected non-game birds.

Non-protected birds and mammals: English Sparrows, American or Black-billed magpies, Crows, California or Scrub Jays, Steller's or crested Jays and Starlings; moles, opossums, coyotes, weasels, skunks, cougars, bobcats and rodents including ground squirrels, rats, mice, gophers and porcupines (but not including tree squirrels, flying squirrels, muskrats and beavers) are not protected by law or regulation and may be taken at any time.

Other Birds and Mammals: All other resident birds and mammals are protected from being taken, except those which may be taken as provided in Hunting Regulations established by the Fish and Game Commission.

A LOOK TO CONSERVATION

Quarry slated for Apperson Ridge

The thunderous noise of a dynamite blast may soon echo through the hills of Southern Alameda County. It would signal the beginning of a Texas size quarry.

The Utah Construction Company has applied to the Alameda County Planning Commission for a permit to mine five hundred million cubic yards of basalt (for concrete) from this ridge which overlooks and protects Sunol Regional Park.

Such an operation would involve an area approximately one mile wide, two miles long and would lower the elevation of the ridge by 500 to 600 feet. This would become an around-the-clock operation for the next 50 years - to the year 2018!

Any mining operation of this magnitude running on such a schedule will lead to severe ecological changes in the Sunol Regional Park, not to mention air pollution, water pollution, erosion, traffic congestion and many other irrevocable problems. This will be another of man's imprint from his mighty earth moving machines digesting and extruding great amounts of the natural California scene.

Your protest against such scarring should go to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and also to the East Bay Regional Parks and the San Francisco Water Department. The last two are the adjoining property owners to the Apperson Ridge. The final hearing on this permit will be held in early February, 1969.

Conservation Education:

California schools must now incorporate Conservation as a part of the curriculum for grades 1 to 12. The provisions of SB #1, Sections 8503, 8551-C and 8571-B require that "protection and conservation of resources" and "man's relations to his human and natural environment" must be included in such courses.

With the many schools in Santa Clara County that fall in the range of the grade requirements, it seems that the people interested in conservation matters must be prepared to lend whatever assistance possible to the teachers and administrators.

Unfortunately, we are not always easy to locate. Teachers and others who do not belong to an established conservation group may experience great difficulty in finding the proper person to supply the resource material, the film or whatever may be required. While we may be very well known to many sections of the community, we must make a greater effort to become better acquainted in the school sector.

Films, slides and talks by Audubon members would be very stimulating for school children as well as adult groups. The work done by Audubon members in maintaining bird sanctuaries and establishing protected waterfowl environments would certainly be interesting to a youngster who has just finished the study of "the protection and conservation of resources".

A future solution to the availability of resource material and conservation organizations would be for the several conservation organizations in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties to establish a Conservation Center. One of its purposes could be to act as a link in the most important task of teaching conservation to the generations of our children who must face the problems we created and left unsolved.

WELCOME to New Members!

Mr. & Mrs. Wade H. Shorter Jr., 20301 La Paloma Ave., Saratoga 95070
Dr. Robert E. Ward, 730 Frenchman's Rd., Stanford 94305
Peter L. Uhry, 147 Wilder Ave., Los Gatos 95030
Billy Prior Bates, 841 Bruce Dr., Palo Alto 94303
C.F. Borman, 463 Lytton Ave., Apt. 8, Palo Alto 94301
Debasis & K.J. Sen, 1030 Cowper St., Palo Alto 94301
Mr. & Mrs. James M. Gwynn, 425 Bell Ave., Livermore 94550
Mrs. Wesley L. Linfoot, 77 Los Trancos Rd., Portola Valley 94025
George T. McNary, 1031 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto 94301
Fred McPherson, Box 544, Boulder Creek 95006
Mrs. John F. Putnam, 837 Live Oak Ave., Apt. 3, Menlo Park 94025
June A. Roller, 975 Florence Lane, Apt. 8, Menlo Park 94025
Jacqueline D. Soubirou, 216 Univ. Dr., Menlo Park 94025
Mr. & Mrs. Bostwick F. Wyman, 1055 Blackfield Way, Mtn. View 94040

Caroline Davis, Membership Chairman

Memorial Fund

The November meeting of the Board of Directors approved the establishment of an Audubon Memorial Fund in order to carry on a more extensive program of conservation. Persons wishing to help the conservation cause and at the same time give a tribute in the name of a friend or loved one who has passed away may do so by contributing to this fund.

When contributions are received an appropriate card will be sent to the person designated, stating only the donor's name, not the amount of the gift, and the name will be inscribed in our permanent records.

Funds derived from these contributions will be used exclusively for the conservation of our natural resources, bird sanctuaries and the training of people in the area of ecology.

All funds donated to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and send to Mrs. Joyce Todd, 945 Matadero, Palo Alto, California 94306.

Antarctic Program - Our Harriet Mundy is showing her interesting and exciting slides on her trip to the Antarctic to the Los Altos Camera Club at 8 pm on January 23rd at Hillview School, Hillview Ave., Los Altos. Those of you who missed her program for us last May are welcome to attend this showing.

FIELD REPORTS

GreyLodge - Nov. 17 - Leaders Dr. Joseph Greenberg & Russ G.

About 20 people made the trip to GreyLodge Water Fowl Management Area on an overcast but almost ideal birding day. It was warm and windless, and the overcast served to cut the glare. There were thousands of geese and ducks - a spectacular display of slightly nervous waterfowl. Seventy-six species of birds were seen (according to the leader and his assistants) on the refuge and, in the afternoon, along the base of the Buttes, which were beautifully clear and etched. The most noteworthy birds were a flock of about 12 Yellowheaded Blackbirds, 150+ Black-crowned Night Herons, six American Bitterns, many Ross' Geese

among Snows and White-fronted; about 50 Whistling Swans; 6 Mountain Bluebirds; grazing Gallinules; a flock of 15 Vesper Sparrows; thousands of Mallards, Widgeons and Pintails and many, many Gadwalls.
(J.G.)



Rodeo Lagoon - Dec. 8 - Leaders, Dr. Joseph Greenberg & Russ G.

This field trip was disappointing because of the weather and, because of the weather, the small turnout - six people, including the leaders. (But these are the nicest kinds of trips anyway!) There was nothing of note at Rodeo Lagoon - a few Brown Pelican, many Brandt's, Cormorants, and Western Gulls, and the usual rafts of Western Grebes offshore. But then we went to a new lagoon settlement near Lucky Drive (first before Richmond Bridge turnoff) where JG had seen Hooded Mergansers before - last year. And sure enough there were two female Hooded Mergansers in the lagoon and five female Redbreasted Mergansers in the adjacent lagoon; you could have both in sight at the same time. The birds were tame and the light was excellent, so everybody got good looks. And a bonus! - a female Barrow's Goldeneye in one of the lagoons.

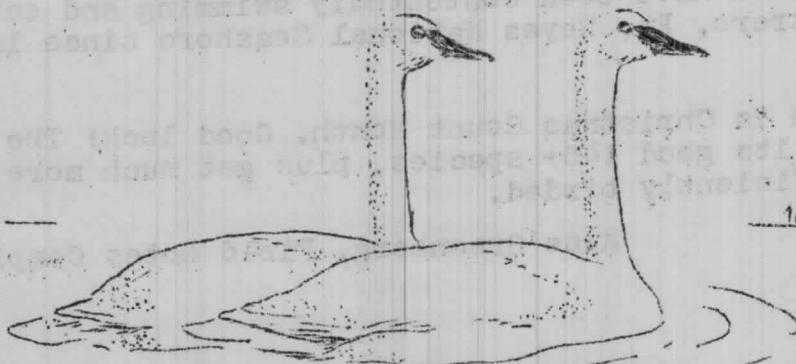
Then someone wanted to see Wood Ducks, so we went to Chain of Lakes in Golden Gate Park and saw 3 drakes and 2 female Wood Ducks (they're always there). We suggested we look for last year's European Widgeon in the Park; and it was there! A beautiful tame male, probably the same bird as last year. Now, how come? Birds are creatures of habit. At any rate, there was a total of 55 species, the most interesting or exciting of which have been described.

(J.G.)



Searsville Lake - Nov. 20 - Leaders, Rebecca & Warren Turner

There was a fog overhang all morning at Searsville Lake. A Green Heron was the prize bird. We were surprised that so few ducks were in as yet. Of the 32 people on the trip most were from Palo Alto. The bird list included those seen on the scouting trip on Nov. 19 and amounted to 37 species among which were: Ring-necked, American Widgeon and Gadwall Ducks, Townsend Warbler, Hutton's Vireo, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Red-breasted Nuthatch.



CALIFORNIA BIRDS

This last month was marked by the stabilization of certain populations like *Zonotrichia* and Gulls; and the erratic movements of waxwings and waterfowl.

The Waxwings, already arrived in large numbers, formed large flocks and flock movements. But "rare bird" hunters found Bohemian Waxwings, not in these large flocks of Cedars, but where few if any Cedars were present. On November 24 a small flock of eight was present at Shuhone and Thanksgiving week-end forty-two were present at nearby Death Valley. One was banded on the Farallons and one was seen at Morongo Valley.

Other birds found at Death Valley include: 1 Olivaceous Flycatcher (1st state record), 1 Bay-breasted Warbler, 1 Rusty Blackbird and two Snow Geese dodging golf balls on the Furnace Creek Course. Interesting sparrows found there were 2 immature Harris Sparrows present for two week-ends in November, and a Gray-headed with 3 Slate-colored Juncos. Elsewhere, a Gray-headed and 2 Slate-colored Juncos with White-throated Sparrows were present at Imperial Dam. A Tree Sparrow at the south end of the Salton Sea and Brady had one at his motel on Tomales Bay. Two Harris Sparrows were present at feeders in the area, one at Bill Reese's in Pacific Grove and one in Santa Rosa. A Harris Sparrow, Tree Sparrow and Blackburnian Warbler flew into the nets on the Farallons the same day in November. The only Red-throated Pipit of the year was also caught that day.

The best bird of the fall was most assuredly the adult Little Gull found by Gene Cardiff near the north end of Salton Sea. The bird stayed in the Fishery Ponds near Mecca with 8 Bonaparte's for four days.

A Harlan's Hawk was reported at Los Banos. Many times hawks other than Harlan's can be best identified by shape and size. This is especially good on Swainson's Hawk for they have such variable plumages.

Those attending the field trip to Gray-Lodge were rewarded for braving the cold with good looks at Snow and Ross' Geese, comparing head shape, bill and size; with many swans and cranes; and Vesper Sparrows along Sutter Buttes.

The rainy, wet Rodeo Lagoon trip produced little. But those ardent birders attending birded some lagoons at San Rafael and found 2 female Hooded Mergansers (3 males arrived the next week) and a female Barrow's Goldeneye. At Golden Gate Park Wood Ducks and a European Widgeon were seen close enough to pet.

Two Emperor Geese have been contentedly swimming and eating grass around Limatour Estrero, Pt. Reyes National Seashore since last Thursday, December 12.

The next month is Christmas Count Month. Good luck! The San Jose Count can maintain its good 140+ species, plus get much more if it continues to be efficiently birded.

Russ Greenberg, Field Notes Compiler

A Study of the Molt in the Golden Eagle (Part 1)

by Dr. Walter R. Spofford

The molt in the Golden Eagle is not a simple annual renewal of all feathers. On the contrary, the molt is prolonged, protracted from one year to the next, and only a part of the feathers, particularly the flight feathers (rectrices and remiges) are renewed in one year. Briefly, the molt starts at middle of tail, molting outward, several feathers a year, and at the innermost primary, molting outward several feathers a year. The second year of molt starts again at the same places, but the old molt also continues; -hence a "wave" starts out across the primaries, gets less than half way, then a second wave; -and before the first reaches the outermost feather two years later, the third has begun at the innermost. It is rather the same in the tail, but the outermost tail feather also is dropped first year, - then only irregularly after that.

Thus it seems clear that all white may disappear at the end of the first molt in the wing (not in tail) if only the first 3 or 4 primaries have white at bases; - but if the first 6 have white and only 4 molt, then there will be a spot of white for another year.

Also, the amount of white in wing (also tail) varies, and while all juvenile birds (hence in juvenal plumage) show white in wing from below, some show no white from above, because the dark greater upper coverts may cover the white bases.

Juvenile birds (to 1 year) have all feathers of same age, so a kind of uniformity in, not color, but "freshness" of feathers. After that the feathers are of different ages, and a 6 or 8 year "adult" eagle has variously old and newer and new feathers scattered throughout its plumage. The last white to go is a spot on each side of tail near base and not extending to side of tail!

Note that when speaking of a young bird before its first molt, it is "juvenile" but the plumage itself is called "juvenal". This is a long accepted custom in plumage and molt description.



I believe that most flight feathers may be molted about every 3 years, but with some irregularity both in the time of replacement and the order of replacement. Some account of this is given in a note by Spofford (Auk, 1946) and a much fuller account by Jollie (Auk, ?). Jollie's studies suggested an irregular molt and spread most of the year, and incomplete. Spofford suggested protracted molt, and that the feathers present at any one time could be recognized as either recently renewed, a year old, and two years old, with corresponding differences in appearance, the latter fading to pale brown and even cream colored or whitish.

Further study (unpublished) by Spofford revealed that the molt is not really irregular during the first several molts at least, but the apparent irregularity is due to a combination of a 3-year protraction of the molts and followed at yearly intervals by second and third molts overlapping the first. By the time a number of molts (years) have gone by the molt appears, and in a sense is, quite irregular.

The molt status of an eagle may be determined by examination of its flight feathers and one can note that some feathers are new and dark and glossy with a faint purplish gloss...others are still dark, but not as fresh appearing, others are faded, frayed and one can make a survey of each wing and tail with attention to an estimate of progress of the molt.

(First of a series written especially for the "Avocet" by Dr. Spofford, authority on the Golden Eagle, Upstate Medical Center, Syracuse, N.Y. - Editor's Note)

The Confessions of a Nuthatch Avider - By Ogden Nash

Bird watchers top my honors list.
 I aimed to be one, but I missed.
 Since I'm both myopic and astigmatic,
 My aim turned out to be erratic,
 And I, bespectacled and binocular,
 Exposed myself to comment jocular.
 We don't need too much bird lore, do we,
 To tell a flamingo from a towhee;
 Yet I cannot, and never will,
 Unless the silly birds stand still.
 And there's no enlightenment in a tour
 of ornithological literature.
 Is yon strange creature a common chickadee,
 or a migrant alouette from Picardy?
 You rush to consult your Nature guide
 and inspect the gallery inside,
 But a bird in the open never looks
 Like its picture in the birdie books--
 Or if it once did, it has changed its plumage,
 And plunges you back into ignorant gloomage.
 That is why I sit here growing old by inches,
 Watching the clock instead of finches,
 But I sometimes visualize in my gin
 The Audubon that I audubin.

Submitted by Warren Turner

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AVOCET

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