

The Avocet

Volume XVI, Number 3

March, 1969

Fall Colors in the North Woods Thursday, March 20, 8 pm

Homestead High School
Room 5, Bldg. C

Homestead Ave.
Cupertino

Les Sleeper will take us on a trip he and Mrs. Sleeper made last fall from the north rim of Grand Canyon, through Bryce Canyon, and the Navaho Reservation to the north woods of Minnesota where the fall colors were in full glory. Anyone who is unfamiliar with this area will have a rare opportunity to consider taking such a fall vacation. Come meet a kindred soul or two, and let them meet you.

Harriet Mundy, Program Chairman

Calendar

Bird Discussion Group

Tues., Mar. 4, 10:00 am

The topic will be juncos, with the accent on the Oregon Junco. Meet at Mrs. Eve Case's, 20537 Verde Vista Ln., Saratoga 867-4748.

Stanford Campus

Sun., Mar. 9, 9:00 am

For passerine birds at last. Meet at Hoover Tower.

Leader, Dave De Sante

Board Meeting

Mon., Mar. 10, 7:45 pm

At home of Harriet Mundy, 757 Tennyson, Palo Alto.

"Death Valley - Land of Contrast"

Tues., Mar. 11, 8:00 pm

Kent Durden presents our 4th Audubon Screen Film featuring 40 species of animals, including ringtail cat, desert bighorn sheep, Prairie Falcon, kit fox, Avocet, and Golden Eagle. At Morris Daily Auditorium, San Jose State College. Take a friend and support your Society Canyon Drive, Saratoga

Wed., Mar. 12, 9:00 am

Meet at 6th and Basin Way.

Leader, Catherine Lintott

11th Biennial Wilderness Conference

Mar. 14, 15, & 16

At San Francisco Hilton Hotel. See page 20 for details.

Isenberg Ranch

Sat., Mar. 22, 9:00 am

At 19500 Skyline Blvd. Take Page Mill or Saratoga Gap Rd to Skyline, turn right, go 3 miles to dirt road on left marked with Isenberg Ranch signs. Follow signs to parking area.

Leaders, Howard Wolcott & Carl Isenberg

Duveneck Ranch

Wed., Mar. 26 9:00 am

Go west on El Monte Rd. from either Foothill Expressway or Junipera Serra Fwy Rte 280. This intersects Moody Rd. just past Foothill College. Go on Moody Rd past Adobe Creek Lodge. Duveneck R. is next property. Meet inside gate. Leader, Courtney Dawson-Roberts 327-5746

Duveneck Ranch - Sat., Mar. 29, 9:00 am

Open to the public to see spring flowers and birds. See directions for Wed. trip.

Leaders, Ray & Kay McCann

327-4138



Our Cities as Wildlife Sanctuaries

This past year Saratoga, Los Gatos, Cambell and Palo Alto have passed resolutions declaring that each city is a wildlife sanctuary. Congratulations to our members who have had a part in getting their cities to take this constructive position. A sanctuary is a place of refuge, a reservation where non-destructive animals or birds are protected. While most cities have laws against shooting birds and animals within city limits, a sanctuary is more than that. It is a place where the citizens actually look out for and take tender care of these birds and animals. There is a change in attitude. One sees that these creatures have a right to be in the trees, bushes, lawn and moist earth.

As we watch around our home, we become acquainted with many birds who have had a proud heritage of living in this very area for centuries. Our Scrub Jays must be descendants of those that arrived in Palo Alto long before Portola. Is there any reason that we should disturb this chain with the past? Rather, wouldn't it be more gratifying to see it continue or perhaps encourage it. Some people feed birds with seeds or suet, especially in winter. Others plant bushes that produce fruits, berries or flowers that birds like. The U.S Dept. of Agriculture publishes a pamphlet called "How to Attract Birds to Your Back Yard." It is available from the Superintendent of Documents for 20 cents.

For the past month we have been enjoying Robins that come for breakfast on the pyracantha just outside our bedroom window. Hummingbirds take great delight in the red salvia and fuchsias. Some days when I sit under our oak and hear the Scrub Jays screeching I wonder if they are trying to tell me that they laid claim to this territory first. They still have a pretty good reign over the back yard and perhaps it should stay that way. Yet sharing his territory is the Rufous-sided Towhee, a frequent visitor, and the pert Plain Titmouse who has a nest nearby. The many transient visitors are too numerous to mention. It's quite a thrill to spot a Black-headed Grosbeak or a flock of Band-tailed Pigeons on the back of the lot.

Our children once thought it strange that we should be so occupied with observing birds but now they are beginning to take to the field glasses and spend some time enjoying the same activities. We like to think that they too are developing a reverence toward the coexistence of nature and man. This spirit can be caught by their friends and acquaintances. As others develop this appreciation of nature there will be less shooting with slingshots, B-B guns, and rocks, and more shooting with cameras, binoculars and telescopes.

It is hoped that the citizens within each of these newly created sanctuaries will have the appreciation of the birds and animals brought more closely into focus and thus make their preservation more desirable.

Howard Wolcott, President

"Of all things, birds are the most fascinating!"

"Wonderful that there could be in life such beauty and wild softness as made the heart ache with the delight of it."

from "The Dark Flower" by John Galsworthy

WELCOME

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. R.L. Dewing, 1311 Hillcrest Dr., San Jose 95120
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur E. Bryson, 761 Mayfield Ave., Stanford 94305
Mrs. Yvonne Kartum, 557 Maybell Ave., Palo Alto 94306
Mr. Donald Corbett Smith, 3337 Forbes Ave., Santa Clara 95051
Mrs. Robert H. Perry, 34 Linden Ave., Atherton 94025
Mr. & Mrs. Jay Andree, 125 Radoyka Dr., Saratoga 95070
Roberta H. Gumpart, 883 Bruce Dr., Palo Alto 94303
Mr. & Mrs. James C. Kennedy & Family, 954 Terra Bella, San Jose 95125
Caroline Davis, Membership Chairman

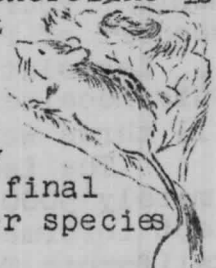
A LOOK at Conservation

The home of the Red-bellied Harvest Mouse, placed as it is in the marshes of San Francisco baylands, does not appear to be of great importance to the population of the Bay Area. The nesting places of the Calif. Clapper Rail and the Black Rail also occupy some of the marsh land areas. The importance of these wildlife species and that of the White-tailed Kite and the Salt Water Marsh Song Sparrow is that they are all rare and endangered wildlife species occurring in the environment of San Francisco Bay.

In the United States there were millions of bison, Passenger Pigeons, fur seals, sea otters, Whooping Cranes, Trumpeter Swans and others. In the span of time since the discovery of San Francisco Bay these species have either disappeared or are about to disappear from their homes and our land.

1969 is the year of the Bay - San Francisco Bay. The Plan for San Francisco Bay, prepared during the past 3 years of study and public deliberation by the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Com. B C D C, is to be considered by both the Governor and the legislature this year. BCDC is only a temporary body and permanent legislation must be approved and signed by the Governor in order for bay fill and increased development to be controlled or stopped.

"San Francisco Bay is an irreplaceable gift of nature that man can either abuse or ultimately destroy, or improve and protect for future generations." Thus starts the Plan for BCDC. The Bay, consisting of open waters, mudflats and marshlands, is a complex biological system, in which all parts live in delicate balance and any seemingly minor change, like fill or dredging, can have a destructive effect. For most of the population of the Bay Area, the Bay is almost inaccessible. Probably less than 5 percent (about 14 miles) of the 276 mile shoreline is permanently open to the public now. The Bay Plan urges that highest priority be given to immediate recreational development. The Year of the Bay could determine your environmental future. The Bay is our single web of aquatic beauty, open space and natural resource. Any shift in the naturally balanced ecology of the Bay or marshlands could lead to the final extinction of the Red-bellied Harvest Mouse and all the other species in such tender balance along our Bay.



It is important that we join the battle of the Bay on the side of the mouse. We must write letters, talk to friends and neighbors about the plight of the Bay. The legislators and the Governor must know of our feelings in this matter. You can play an active roll by joining the Save the Bay Association. Use the enclosed envelope! They will thereby gain support and supply you with timely information on bills before the legislators. If you are already a member, be sure to pass it on to a friend. If you need more membership envelopes, write to Dr. Tom Harvey, 716 Garner Ct., Santa Clara Ca. 95050. He will be happy to supply them.

While the mouse, the kite, the rails, and the sparrows may be of little consequence to most people, remember they still cling to a mantle of distinction - a mantle easily removed - that of being a rare and endangered species. With your help they can hold their place in our ecological system. like the Condors and the Whooping Cranes.

1969 - the Year of the Bay - and the Red-bellied Harvest Mouse.

Tony Look, Conservation Chairman

The founding gift to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Memorial Fund was made in January by President Howard Wolcott. It is in memory of Mr. Peyton Spence of Los Altos, whose wife, Jocelyn, was advised of the gift.



The Wildlife Refuge - On Monday March 24th at 1:30 pm the San Jose City Council will decide the fate of the South San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in this area. The membership of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon is cordially invited to attend! The meeting will be held in the Council Chamber, San Jose City Hall. See you there! In the meantime, letters urging approval of the Refuge should be sent to the San Jose City Council, c/o the City Clerk, 801 No. 1st St., San Jose, Calif. 95110. Please, please write.

Gift of Bird and Insect Slides - The Education Committee wishes to thank Miss Mary Rugh for her generous donation of over forty garden bird and insect slides. These are lovely slides, and we needed them! Don't hesitate to call me to use them if you have a receptive audience, children or adults.

Nancy Holmes, Education Chairman

Free BCDC Film Available! - A 13½ minute BCDC film narrated by Don Sherwood is available free of charge from Association Films Inc., 25358 Cypress St., Hayward, Phone 783-0100.

Planning and Conservation League

The future of California as a pleasant, attractive and livable state hangs today in the balance. If our environment is to be saved from the destructive results of haphazard development and exploitation of resources, prompt legislative action is needed in Sacramento - legislation to ensure sound planning and conservation. Only by expert, consistent lobbying can the needed legislation be enacted. The PCL was formed to provide this essential lobbying service.

1968 was PCL's most successful year! - with 23 victories in Sacramento. Fourteen bills and six resolutions were passed with the active support of PCL and its members and member groups. Many originated in its Legislative Workshop. Others, consistent with this program, deservedly received their support. Additionally PCL actively opposed 3 bills All three were defeated.

The League is supported by dues from 66 organizations and approximately 5000 individuals. During the legislation sessions members are kept informed of the progress of important issues by the PCL bulletin-"California Today!"

If you wish a more comprehensive description of the contents of a any measure, write or phone their office at 127 Montgomery St., San Francisco 94104, phone (415) 392-1870.

The 11th Biennial Wilderness Conference, sponsored by the Sierra Club and the Sierra Club Foundation, will be held Mar. 14, 15, & 16, 1969, at the San Francisco Hilton Hotel. This year's theme is: "Wilderness; the Edge of Knowledge." As in the past, this conference will feature nationally-known speakers. One-half of the program will be devoted to the problems of wilderness and wildlife in Alaska, one session will cover the relationship between world wildlife and wilderness, and there will be another session on wilderness planning and people.

For more details write: Sierra Club, Mills Tower, San Francisco, 94104.



"Two kippered herons, a flock of pot-headed hippies, a turtle-necked singlet, a seamless stockingbird, several chocolate chip-its, a bird with a harsh, scratchy voice -probably a sandpaper, an exorbitant lightbill and a flock of western teenagers making a great clamor. (When alone this bird utters a plaintive cry "Gimme, gimme! Also the tiniest of birds, the haffinch, 9 imported flycatchers in the baseball park, a Wilson's wobbler and a small bird Prof. Peckham said was always the last one to arrive in spring, - the also wren" from Seattle Audubon Soc. "Notes", Jan., 1969

California Birding

This winter once and for all should dispel the myth that winter is a boring time to bird. It clearly is not. The number of rarities produced by diligent birders was phenomenal.

One reason was the cold weather north of California. This probably is the cause of the Bohemian Waxwing invasion into Southern Calif. There have not been the same substantial numbers in Northern Calif., but 250 were seen in Humboldt County and one in San Francisco. Possibly they move through the great basin and into the deserts down south.

Cold northern weather may have driven all the Yellow-billed Loons into Monterey. The author and Russ Griswold found one two days after the Christmas Count there. It became sick and died. Alan Baldrige scoped one at Pacific Grove and it was very fortunate that the Santa Clara group was able to see the bird, making the Pacific Grove trip very successful. The Greenbergs found one in Moss Landing Harbor and many others including Dave DeSante, Pierre Develliers, and Alan Baldrige found a Yellow-billed Loon without a yellow bill! Yellow-billed Loons can be readily distinguished by their 'straight' upper mandible making the bill look upturned, extensive white in face, and general tar appearance. A small chestnut ear patch is probably diagnostic.

Monterey produced other notable rarities: a Rock Sandpiper, a probable Coues' Flycatcher, and an immature male Rose-breasted Grosbeak with distinct red underwing, all at Christmas time. And the Santa Clara group was shown thousands of Kittiwakes, a Glaucous Gull, and a Wandering Tattler (always hard to find in winter) when there, by Alan Baldrige and Bill Reese. But the most fantastic bird was the Galapagos Petrel (look that one up) found in Pacific Grove. Normally this small notch-tailed, white-rumped storm petrel would be a definite identification problem; but this bird was found in a resident's front yard, reported to the museum, and brought in alive. This first record would not be surprising, for the Galapagos Petrel ranges to central Mexico (Baja: 1 record), but this is thought to be the southern race ranging not further north than Columbia.

A flood tide, higher than any in ten years, sent many on pilgrimage to the Palo Alto Baylands in search of rails. All observers found several Clappers, and Virginia; but only Kay and Ray McCann saw the elusive Sora. The author later found these three species plus a dead Black Rail in that area. A Blue-winged Teal has been present among the Cinnamon at the Yacht Harbor. Dave DeSante and the author feel that there are two Cinnamon Blue-winged Hybrids (looking intermediate). Other local rarities include: Gray-headed Junco near the Amphitheatre on the Stanford Campus, seen by Mike Perrone, once in Dec. and once in Feb.; a White-throated Sparrow and Slate-colored Junco present from Jan. on; 8 Golden Plovers through Jan.; and a Sharp-tailed Sparrow and several Glaucous Gulls, and a Black Rail seen by Rich Stallcup while working for Dr. Cogswell in the south bay. A Gull-billed Tern was reported by Scott Terrell from the Berkeley Marina.

Southern California has too many rarities to go into in detail, but in passing some should be noted. Three Red-breasted Geese at Salton Sea (probably escaped), a Ruff at San Diego were noteworthy. But Newport Back Bay gets full honors: 1 Common Teal, 5 European Widgeon, and a Falcated Duck (possibly escaped). The Red-breasted Geese and Falcated Duck are very impressive looking Siberian birds. The duck has been reported from Alaska.

Feb. and Mar. are good times to take advantage of road conditions to travel. There are many areas of the state where birding, skiing, and sight-seeing can be combined. A trip to the Great Basin or the Humboldt Coast would be very interesting, weather conditions allowing.

Field Trip Reports

Coyote Hills Park - Jan. 22, Leader, Les Sleeper

63 species were tallied. Of special interest were the 42 White-throated Swifts, all in one group, feeding over the water and swamps, and two Great Horned Owls. Others of note were: American Bittern, Bufflehead, Redhead (4), Canada Geese (4), Snow Goose, Cooper's Hawk, Marsh Hawk (7), White-tailed Kite (4), and a Yellowthroat.

Monterey Trip - Jan. 25, Leaders, Bill Reese & Alan Baldrige

The weather was overcast and threatening, but neither cold nor windy. It was a great trip because we saw almost all the rock birds and hundreds of Black-legged Kittiwakes and, streaming by, flying seaward, hundreds of Rhinoceros Auklets. Most people, I think, got to see, though far offshore, a Yellow-billed Loon. And everybody saw a Glaucous Gull! Alan Baldrige and Bill Reese were most helpful and knowledgeable leaders. (It was hard to count the people because they kept joining and leaving the group). About 60 birds were seen by the group in the morning; 74 were seen by those who continued onto the afternoon and to other points. (J. Greenberg, Field Trip Chairman)

Santa Teresa Park - Feb. 12, Leader, Margaret Henderson

About twelve people showed up for a beautiful day of hiking and birding to record 28 species. The highlight of the day were the Rock Wrens which were found at the top of the hill, naturally in the rocks. Others were: Say's Phoebe, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Turkey Vulture, White-tailed Kite, and Red-tailed Hawk.

Banding Clinics at PRBO

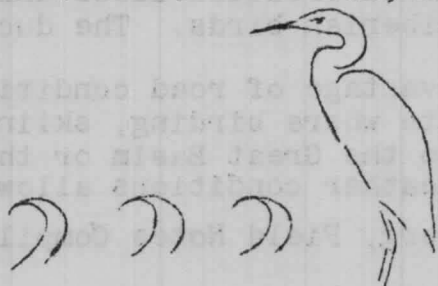
Point Reyes Bird Observatory is pleased to announce two series of banding clinics beginning March 15 and April 5 for those interested in participating in the PRBO program.

PRBO's primary purpose is to study birds: their ecology, population dynamics and the impact of man's activities on their natural environment. The underlying aim of PRBO is, of course, to supply information to aid and support general conservation efforts.

Volunteer help has been an invaluable aid to the entire Observatory program. Capturing and banding birds and the associated record keeping is the heart of Observatory activity and has been accomplished largely by volunteer help. No previous knowledge of bird identification or banding is necessary. The opportunity to learn more about birds while contributing to our knowledge, and thus advance conservation efforts generally is open to all interested people.

The first banding clinic will be on Sat., March 15, 22, and 29. The second series will be held on April 5, 12, and 19. These sessions will concentrate on general netting and banding techniques in the general vicinity of the Observatory, and are a must for those interested in participating in the Observatory program. The sessions will be conducted by a variety of instructors including Dr. L.R. Mewaldt, Mr. John Ralph, and Mr. Robert Stewart. Each clinic will begin at 9 a.m. and continue to about 3:30 in the afternoon.

If you are interested in participating in the Observatory program in this way, write for further information to: Banding Training Program, PRBO, Mesa Road, Bolinas.



"Like a wave crest
Escaped and frozen,
One white egret
Guards the harbor mouth."
Japanese (Kenneth Rexroth)

A Study of the Molt in the Golden Eagle (Part 2)

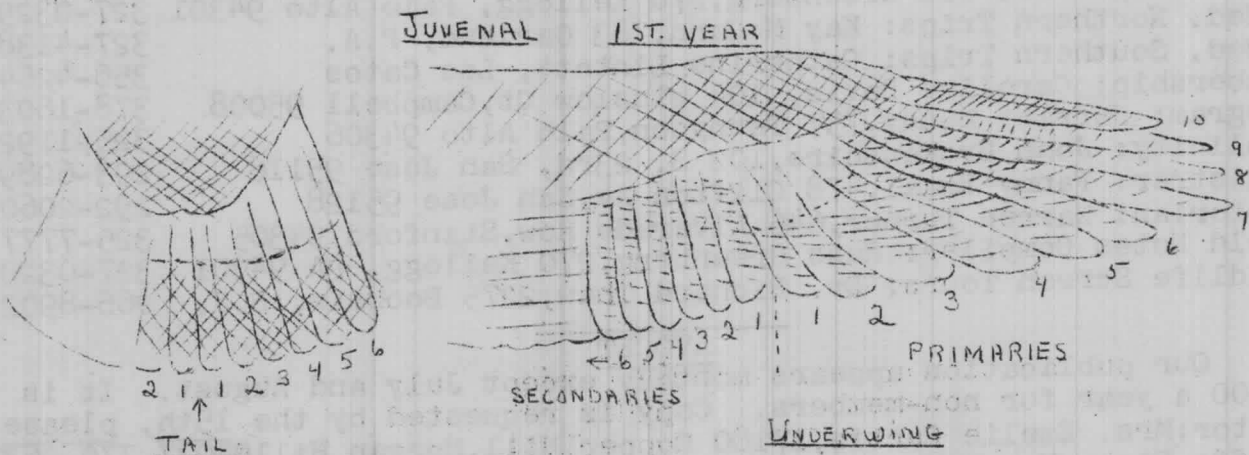
by Dr. Walter R. Spofford


The estimate of age of an eagle may be made with some degree of accuracy up to about 7 years of age. After 7 years, and perhaps earlier, all feathers may be of the 'adult' or 'definitive' type; that is, the feathers are all dark, no white at base of tail or at base of inner primaries and outer secondaries. The white bases of tail and inner primaries are due to absence of pigment in the vane of the feather, and in no wise to unshed down. When a flight feather with a white base (1st generation feather) is shed, it is replaced by a feather either without a white base (particularly in the inner primaries and outer secondaries) or a feather with less white (a tail feather). It is the amount and distribution of feathers with white bases that give one an opportunity to estimate age.

The bases of the tail feathers are whitish on first generation (juvinal) feathers, as are primaries 1-2-3-4 counting from inside outwards. There may be less white further out, such as on secondaries 1 to 6 or 7 or so. The white can about always be seen from below, but since the extent of white varies with different eagles, the amount of white seen from above varies. Not all eagles show white on wing from above, but about all do on tail from above. In some eagles, the extent of white at the bases of the primaries is less and the upper primary coverts (dark) overlay the primary bases sufficiently to cover the white.

I will now give an outline of molt of one eagle kept for a number of years. The first year (juvinal) eagle has all feathers of one age, relatively uniform plumage, very dark glossy brown, almost blackish especially when an eagle is indoors as in a zoo where not exposed to sun. At about 1 year of age the eagle may molt from several "molt-centers": the innermost primary on each side and the middle pair (no. 1 pair) of rectrices drop, also pair of secondaries at about #4 or #5. During the first summer, he may renew the first inner 4 (even 5 or 6) primaries. The new ones may have no white, so by his second winter all or close to all white is gone on the wings. Now the very closest base of all these feathers may show some light, so an indication of light may appear on inner wing area even in older birds; but the glaring white patch disappears by second (or third in some cases) winter.

Not so the tail. At end of first year the summer molt may renew the middle "deck" pair, no. 1 on each side, and maybe pair 2 or 3, and pair 6, hence skipping pair 3, 4, 5. The replacements have less white, and the feather now has not only a dark terminal, maybe less extensive than first generation, but now with another bar, dark gray-brown, and an intervening lighter gray bar, then a white base.



When two years old, during second summer, this molt may continue. Actually, the molt may continue through winter, but very slowly, an occasional feather. So the next year the primaries 5, 6, 7, 8 may drop, and tail may lose #3 and possibly #4. This is just a continuation of the first molt, protracted into second year. BUT, a true second molt now begins all over again at the inner primaries, #1, 2, 3 dropping and being replaced, and the tail dropping #1 and maybe #6. The new third generation tail has a second subterminal bar, like this . So that at end of third year, the eagle has no white in wing to speak of (and my eagle Kanchen had no white in wing after the first summer's molt at age 1 1/2 yrs.), but the tail at end of second molt, 2 1/2-3 yrs. old, has darker center tail, and somewhat darker outer tail, but more white on sides of tail. Note that in fall of 3rd year, age 2 1/2, he has third generation mid-tail, and perhaps lateral tail, but close to middle at 2 and 3, he will have 2nd generation, more white than center feathers, while 4 & 5 are still juvenal feathers with full white base.

The third summer of molt goes farther: the "first molt" continues on outer wings to drop #9 & 10, and maybe tail #4 & 5. The second molt continues by dropping 5, 6, 7 primaries, and 3 on tail again; and the third molt starts all over again by dropping 1, 2, 3 primaries, and #1 and maybe (getting truly irregular) #6 tail. So by this time the immature or sub-adult eagle has tail and wing feathers of three different generations, juvenal, immature, and sub-adult, carrying these in different places at the same time! So you see that ageing now is tricky even if all molted alike, which they don't. Some move faster, others slower; and now real irregularities may occur, dropping feathers out of any true sequence, as if the bird said, what the heck, why bother with counting, here we go! etc. This is the kind of irregularity Jollie ('46 Auk) mentions, but it just may be true that the apparent irregularity hides an actual regularity but the protracted and overlapping of molts hides this.

(Editor's note - This concludes the article begun in the January Avocet.)

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- Pres: Howard Wolcott, 1030 Parkinson, Palo Alto 94301 321-6694
 - Vice-Pres: Kay McCann, 783 Garland, Palo Alto 94303 327-4138
 - Secty: Diane Conradson, 4337 Miranda, Palo Alto 94306 941-2102
 - Treas: Joyce Todd, 945 Matadero, Palo Alto 94306 326-7482
 - Conservation: Claude Look, 411 Los Ninos, Los Altos 94022 948-6790
 - " Lloyd Case, 20537 Verde Vista, Saratoga 95070 867-4748
 - Education: Nancy Holmes, 843 Moana Ct, Palo Alto 94306 948-1854
 - Mrs. Mark Hopkins, 1185 Ruth Dr, San Jose 95125 264-5076
 - Field Trips: Dr. Joe Greenberg, 270 Kellogg, Palo Alto 94301 327-0329
 - Wed. Northern Trips: Kay McCann, 783 Garland, P.A. 327-4138
 - Wed. Southern Trips: Catherine Lintott, Los Gatos 356-4264
 - Membership: Caroline Davis, 104 Winslow Ct, Campbell 95008 378-1603
 - Program: Harriet Mundy, 757 Tennyson, Palo Alto 94306 325-1192
 - Publicity: John Brokenshire, 102 S. 23rd, San Jose 95116 293-6289
 - Registrar: Fanny Zwaal, 478 Clifton Av, San Jose 95128 292-2060
 - Historian: Warren Turner, 646 Alvarado Row, Stanford 94305 325-7777
 - Field Notes Compiler: Russ Greenberg, 270 Kellogg, PA 94301 327-0329
 - Wildlife Screen Tours: Dr. Richard Thaw, 2275 Booksin, S.J. 266-8902

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 Editor: Mrs. Emelie Curtis, 17180 Copper Hill, Morgan Hill, 95037 779-2637
 Staff: Elsie Hoeck, Mr. & Mrs. E. Taylor, Carol Rulofson, Mr. & Mrs. C. Zwaal