

The Avocet

Volume XVI, Number 4

April, 1969

Coastline California
Thursday, April 17, 8 pm

Homestead High School
Room 5, Bldg. C

Homestead Ave.
Cupertino

Our own Al Wool will show his latest film, "Coastline California". Those of us who have seen his past films, notably "Ranch and Range", know what a treat is in store. All his old friends will want to be there and new ones will be well rewarded. Both these films have been on the Screen Tour circuit. Harriet Mundy, Program Chairman

Calendar

- Bird Discussion Group Tues. Apr. 8, 10:00 am
The topic will again be juncos. Meet at Mrs. Catherine Lintott's, 17150 Buena Vista, Los Gatos - near Villa Felice, off Winchester Rd.
- Board Meeting Tues. Apr. 8, 7:45 pm
At home of Dr. Joe Greenberg, 270 Kellogg St, P.A.
- Palo Alto Children's Library Meeting Wed. Apr. 9, 7:45 pm
At 1276 Harriet St. for P.A. Auduboners! Books, birds, & ecology will be exhibited. A good time to get acquainted with those of like interest in your area. Emphasis will be on local problems.
- Canyon Drive, Saratoga Wed. Apr. 9, 9:00 am
Meet at 6th & Big Basin Way for early migrants. Ldr-Mrs. C. Lintott
- Audubon Canyon Ranch Sat. Apr. 12, 9:30 am
Rte. 1 between Stinson Beach & Bolinas. There will be no leader as trails are well marked & Mr. Zumwalt, the naturalist, will be on duty at the look-out. Picnic area at the Ranch for those who wish to lunch.
- Napa River Cruise Sun. Apr. 13,
Geo. Treichel & Howard Cogswell, Commentators. For information contact San Mateo Jr. Museum, Coyote Point, S.M. Tel 344-9911, Cost-\$5.00
- "Outback Australia" Mon. Apr. 14, 8:00 pm
Eben McMillan brings us glimpses of this vast & mysterious portion of the land "down under" with Jabiru Stork, ibis, spoonbill, honeyeater lorikeets, red kangaroo & koala Bears. At Morris-Daily Auditorium, San Jose State College. Our last Aud. Wildlife Film of the season.
- Scott's Valley Sun. Apr. 20, 9:30 am
To the home of Mrs. Ralph Wallace in Scott's Valley, Santa Cruz Mtns. This is for wildflowers & ferns, following up her Mar. program for the Soc. There are also many birds of open chaparral, redwood canyons, & running creek. Come & spend the day. Bring your lunch; she will provide coffee and hospitality. Leaders: Mrs. Wallace, Tom Harvey, Harriet Mundy, & Greenbergs
- Pilarcitos Lake Wed, Apr. 23, 9:00am
Meet at Pulgas Water Temple in Woodside on Canada Rd. between Edgewood & Ralston Rds north of Woodside. All day field trip. Bring lunch. You cannot return before 3 pm as you will be locked in miles from the gate. For spring wildflowers & birds. Leader: Kay McCann 327-4138

Yosemite . . Sat, June 7, 6:30 am
At Bridlevail Campground entrance for Great Gray Owls & many more. Leaders: Dr. Joe & Russ Greenberg



WEEDS ARE FOR THE BIRDS

Do you have to battle the weeds? This is the time of year the gardener looks out and sees that he either has to get with it and rid the garden of weeds or give in to them. In many places it is against the law to have weeds on your property, especially in parkways and vacant lots. City dwellers are usually trained that weeds are bad and that every effort must be taken to eradicate them. One simple solution is to asphalt or cement your yard. Another is to lay down tar paper and cover it with bark or gravel. If you want a few flowers around, get a few pots with plastic flowers. When they get dusty, just wash them off. Some say there is nothing to having geraniums (plastic) all year around. In addition, the plastic variety doesn't freeze.

Yet most of us want to be living with something alive. Perhaps we start with a house plant. A succulent is simple. It may need water only once a week. It grows and blooms, but one is not enough. We get another and yet another. Before long we are out in the patio installing planters and then revising what garden areas we may have. Every year much of the old must be taken out and replaced with new. If your wife has a green thumb, encourage her to put it in the soil and bless the good earth.

When planting fever is caught little can be done to stop it - until one runs out of room. Even then one can make more room by digging up one of the older beds and replanting it.

In a live garden, weeds - those plants we have not invited - are forever appearing saying "see, there is room for me too." They do not seem to realize our culture does not approve of their appearance in or manicured terraces. But year after year they keep trying. Could they know that man may someday stop his weeding efforts and this land may return to weeds again? Is this a better choice than total defoliation? When we lived in the hills we had a beautiful garden. After we moved away,

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it took but a year or two for most everything to disappear and the weeds to return.

Perhaps at this time an appreciation of weeds can only occur where there is open space, where there is room for selected sets of grasses to mature and develop through out the growing season. How delightful it is to walk through such open fields and find something blooming almost any time. Birds seem to be able to discover food among these weeds throughout the year. Could these weeds be better bird feeders than our cultivated plants?

Our cultivated society says that man's goals come first. So we must return to our weeding to keep our garden respectable. We grow plants that will attract the birds. During the off-season we dole out welfare grain to make up for destroying the weeds that might otherwise provide the food they need. We hope our welfare grants are sufficient to replace nature's normal diet so the birds can return next year to sing us songs at weeding time.

Howard Wolcott, President

WELCOME - NEW MEMBERS!

- Mrs. Jenifer Angel, 678 Tennyson,
Palo Alto 94301
Mrs. Alvin Bromm, Apt 8, 1940 MT. Vernon
Mt. View 94040
Keith Clark, 963 Moreno Ave.,
Palo Alto 94303
Mrs. H. B. Crittenden, 117 Heather D
Atherton 94025
Dr. & Mrs. L. M. Faike, 849 Almaden Av #5
San Jose 95110
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Sunnyvale 94086
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Palo Alto 94306
Mrs. Elizabeth Thiermann, 1441 Dana A
Palo Alto 94301
Gershon Wheeler, 469 Casita Way
Los Altos 94022

Caroline Davis, Membership Ch.

A LOOK AT CONSERVATION

Be An Active Conservationist-

The year of decision for San Francisco Bay is 1969. It is also the time of decision for many other conservation issues. The pace quickens each year as the pressures of urban sprawl becomes more intense. In order to stay abreast of the many conservation issues it will be necessary to have an active Conservation Committee of interested Audubon members working to bring the issues before the Executive Committee.

All members of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon are welcome to attend and participate in the conservation meetings which will be held bi-monthly beginning in April, 1969. If you would like to be an active conservationist in your Audubon Society please send me your name, address and telephone number. My address is 411 Los Ninos Way, Los Altos 94022. You will be notified of the place and time of the first meeting.

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It is interesting to note the many items concerning conservation that appear in the daily press. This month we will begin a new feature of printing a short review of some of these items. We hope you will clip similar copy from your newspaper and send to us. Please place the date and news source on each clipping. They can be returned to you if you desire.

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Sacramento Bee, 2/28/69

Miami (AP)-Poachers, fearful of proposed federal legislation, have begun an all-out massacre of Florida's dwindling alligator population, says an old poacher.

The poacher said the slaughter quickened after newspapers carried stories last week about a bill to provide federal protection for alligators and other threatened wildlife.

New York Times, 2/20/69

Wash, (UPI)-Under Secretary Russell E. Train endorsed today legislation to help protect such creatures as the alligator from extinction. Mr. Train testified at a hearing by the House Fisheries Comm. on a bill sponsored by Rep Garmatz, D-MI.

Sacramento Bee, 2/19/69

Washington Calling- Marguis Childs- Hardly two weeks after being sworn in, Hickel finds himself in the middle of a raging controversy. The massive mess from Union Oil Co.'s exploding offshore well polluted 40 miles of California's most beautiful beaches.

The controversy is not of his making. The man who preceded him in Interior, Stewart Udall, announced in a boastful press release just a year ago oil companies had bid \$603 million for the right to exploit federally-owned offshore oil sites.... In view of the protest of conservationists over the risks involved what Udall said then has today a strange ring:

"Successful development of these leases in the relatively protected Santa Barbara Channel would represent technological achievement that can be perfected and adapted to less favorable conditions. This is the kind of pioneering that will help us to a better understanding and ultimate mastery of the vast area of our continental shelf and its suspected but as yet unmapped resources.

DESPOIL- The tragic business with the despoiling of some of the most beautiful shoreline in America is easily oversimplified as no more than the familiar quarrel between conservationists and exploiters. In fact, it reaches into all aspects of the protected, privileged position the oil producers enjoy, and not the least Hickel's own deep involvement with both Union and Marathon Oil Co. in the recent past...

The Evening Bulletin, 2/7/69

Editorial-Santa Barbara's Oil Disaster- The oil pollution disaster now being visited upon Southern Calif. beaches, waters and wildlife raises the most serious questions.

These are questions of direct concern to the entire nation. These are questions as to past, present, and future.....

In view of the nature of this accident, the most careful geological studies of all underwater drilling should be barred.

The Santa Barbara desecration is not as bad as the Torrey Canyon tanker episode off Britain; there,

The Evening Bulletin (continued)
5 million gallons of crude were loosed, while the emission in Calif is currently at about a quarter of a million gallons....

The Government clears about \$1.5 billion a year in rentals and royalties from oil lands. What price clear ocean water, birds, clean white beaches?

SO. SAN FRANCISCO BAY NAT. WILDLIFE REFUGE

The San Jose City Council will decide on the Refuge proposal on Monday, April 7, not on March 24 as stated in last month's Avocet. The meeting begins at 1:30 pm in the Council Chambers at 801 No. First St. You may want to call the City Hall to verify the agenda before you attend or call Nancy Holmes at 948-1854, or Florence La Riviere at 327-2854.

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors will review the Refuge plan on Wed., April 9, at 2pm Board Chambers, 70 W. Hedding. Since this will come before the Supervisors so soon you should write or phone your Supervisor at once.

Every Santa Clara Valley Aud. member could certainly write one brief letter to the County Board of Supervisors. Your attendance at these meetings and your letters do make a difference, in fact the difference might be having a Wildlife Refuge in the South Bay or not having one!

Very soon brochures on the Refuge will be mailed to members, if you have suggestions for getting them to other groups, schools, libraries and such please call or drop a note to Nancy Holmes, 843 Moana Ct., Palo Alto 94306.

Recommended Timely Reading-Urgent!

BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE BAY by Harold Gilliam
Paperback- \$2.95 - Buy copies for your friends, read it yourself, and pass it on! Remember- Year of Decision for San Francisco Bay.



This is How it Really is
With Western Robin, "Cuesta I"

Turdus migratorius propinquus
(fastigium) subspecies.

by Guy M. Goodlander

Early Thursday morning, 23 January 1969, I noticed from my north window an apparent field difference on a Robin, listening and busily digging worms. For sake of identification, this species is 'dubbed' Cuesta. It had a bright yellow-orange wing bar on cm. long at the 'bend of wing' bilaterally.

Four more Cuesta Robins were noticed on our north lawn as scores of the birds searched for red, ripe pyracantha berries to sustain them in their migration to nesting sites. The 1969 severe winter north had driven the migrants in early.

Jan. 26, 1969, on my way to Sacramento I spotted two more Cuesta Robins on the south lawns one-half mile west on Cuesta Dr. from Miramonte Av. Now, in early March, my friend 'Robin Cuesta I' has chosen our south garden for home. He likes the ripe fruit we have unharvested on the Olive tree as well as the worms. His contemporaries have long since cleaned up all the berries and moved on. The distinguishing wing bars have grown to one and one-quarter cm. long. The color has dulled somewhat; visible to the naked eye it is a lighter tone between the charcoal-gray coat and the brick-red breast.



Grizzly Off Extinction 'Fear' List

The Grizzly bear is no longer threatened with extinction and has been crossed off its list of "rare and endangered species". However, a newcomer has been added to the list; the Amer. Peregrine Falcon. Also 3 exotic birds previously believed to be extinct have been added: the Molokai Creeper, found on Molokai, Hawaii, the Maui Nukupuu on Maui, and the Puerto Rican Plan Pigeon.

CALIFORNIA BIRDS

The month of March has been the beginning of the end of a winter of many strange (if not tragic) phenomena, witness the oil slick off Santa Barbara and the mud slides near Los Angeles. But even as this winter is ending, we face the worst of disaster and that is the melting of the hundreds of inches of Sierran snow. So it is on a more frivolous scale, with California birding. The winter is coming to an end. With it goes all the Bohemian Waxwings, Yellow-billed Loons, and many other rarities that came down, and we now must observe with patience the trickle of spring migrants that will reach flood stages later in May and June.

As always, the first of the migrants was the Rufous Hummingbirds in Feb. These harbingers of Calif. spring were shortly followed by Allen's Hummingbirds, Orange-crowned Warblers, and all five common swallows. Mike Perrone carefully searched Stanford during March and was able to show our field trip a male Phainopepla, always rare on the peninsula, and an Osprey. He also saw a Peregrine Falcon and an early Chipping Sparrow during the same time.

All over northern Calif. the various species of water and shorebirds began moving to their summer homes. For instance Knots became more common in our area and Avocets began to leave for the Arctic. Ducks and geese dispersed and migrated through most of northern Calif.

The European Widgeon at Golden Gate Park was last reported from the middle Chain of Lakes in early March and one was also seen up on Humboldt Bay by Stan Harris. The Greenbergs saw a drake European Teal a few miles away near the famous Arcata sewage pond. Two dark phase Blue Geese were seen at Klamath in with large masses of migrating White-fronted, Ross', and 'white-phased' Blue (Snow) Geese.

Bald Eagle reports were scarce this winter with conspicuous absences from Calaveras Res. and Tomales Bay, one bird from each. Birds were reported from Honey Lake and the Klamath Basin in fair numbers, including one very aberrant individual with a lot of white on its back and breast. The Greenbergs saw

35-40 Rough-legged Hawks in the Surprise Valley-Klamath Basin area and a black Harlan's Hawk near Honey Lake.

The great flight of Bohemian Waxwings in the state took good form in Mar. in Coastal Calif. with as many as 450 birds seen up at Humboldt Bay by Wes Hettrick, and 40 birds around Ken Jewitts house in Santa Rosa; also hundreds in Klamath Falls, Ore, 60 near Hallelujah Junction, Lassen Cy. by Joe Greenberg, and 35 or so seen near Alturas by Russ Greenberg. As of the time of writing, none had been seen in Palo Alto. Keep looking!

Many Lapland Longspurs were seen near Honey Lake and on the Klamath Nat. Wildlife Refuge, many in good spring plumage. But the best Longspur as far as rarity was the McGowns found up near Honey Lake by the Greenbergs, Charlie Wellinger, and Russ Griswold. Two Tree Sparrows were seen nearby by Russ Greenberg and one at the Klamath Basin by the Greenbergs in with Oregon and Slate-colored Junco.

Other interesting birds in the Basin were: 2 Pigeon Hawks (Merlin) 10 Sage Grouse (near Honey Lake), 20 Prairie Falcons, and 8 Northern Shrikes. There were unconfirmed reports of Redpolls near Reno.

Trumpeter Swan reports on the coast may turn out to be a real hassle. One immature bird was reported by the Greenbergs on the basis of bill shape at Humboldt Bay, and four birds were found again at Santa Rosa this year by Gordon Bolander on the basis of the grin line. Whether either of these marks are good is still being debated.

A belated winter comment: Myrtle Warblers are not a rare bird in the bay area. On the contrary at times it far outnumbers Audubons. If the birder is familiar with the white in the collar (not just the throat) and the softer call as field marks he should be able to find many during the course of a winter's day.

A Peale's Peregrine Falcon and several Glaucous Gulls were seen at the Hayward dump in the past few weeks; but I can't stress too much the difficulties involved with the identification of any

California Birds (continued)

gull particularly Glaucous. The 1st year bird is probably paler than first year Glaucous-winged and has a distinctly bi-colored bill, the base being sharply cutoff pink. The 2nd year bird is very white, and has a bill similar to a year Glaucous-winged only has a sharp cutoff between the black and pink. The tail feathers are finely mottled.

As spring comes brthward you have two choices in your birding. You can stay around here and wait for the first spring migrants of each species to fly into your favorite birding spot or you can drive down to the deserts of southern Calif. and meet it halfway. Either way it should be an exciting spring before the birds and people settle down to domestic occupations.

Russ Greenberg,
Field Notes Compiler

FIELD TRIP REPORTSTomales Bay, 2/16/69

Threats of a coastal storm kept all but eight people away from what turned out to be a pleasant day. Tomales Bay was calm and almost windless. And it appeared that the hunters (Brant) on the west side drove the birds to the east (bird-watcher's) side. So we saw rafts of Scoters, mostly Surf, a few White-winged, and one pair of Common; Greater Scaup, Buffleheads, Goldeneye, Ruddies and an unusual number of Red-throated Loons; and one hundred Black Brant. After lunch we visited Grace Miller's feeders, which are fabulous, and saw Townsend's, Orange crowned Warblers, Anna's & Allen's Hummingbird, a Slate-colored Junco, Pygmy Nuthatches and much else. The afternoon trip to McClure's Beach was a nice walk - no Harlequin Ducks. Anyway, the sight of thousands of cormerants and hundrad of loons moving up and down Tomales Bay was worth the trip. Seventy species of birds were seen.

Leader, Dr. Joe Greenberg

Field Trip Reports (continued)Calaveras Reservoir- Feb. 8

At the very first stop were two families of American Mergansers each drake having 6 or 8 hens; they put on a great show for us. Also at the little lake west of t the golf course were many Coots, 8 Ruddies and 2 pair of White-tail Kites. Next stop by Air Point school a family og nearly mature Black-crowned Night Herons was flushed right over our heads. Several types of hawks high in the a air were showing mating manuvoers. At Calaveras Res. we found a Golden Eagle, large group of Ring-necked Duck, Lewis Woodpecker, & many Canada Geese. (65 species)

Leader, Les Sleeper

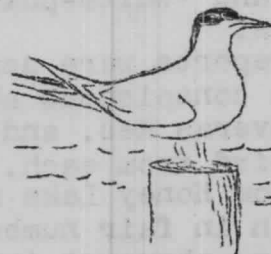
Isenberg Ranch- Mar. 22

The sun broke through the fog for lunch and the weather cleared to make a beautiful day. It was still too early for wildflowers except Indian Warrior. Forty persons saw such species as: Barn, Violet-green, Rough-wing Swallows, Cooper's, Sharpshinned, Red-tail Hawks, Lark Sparrow, and Bufflehead.

Leaders, Howard Wolcott &
Carl Isenberg

Santa Cruz Albatross Expedition

Annual 4-hour boat trip on June 16. A Stagnaro Sport Fishing Boat will leave the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf at 7:30 am. Send stamped envelope with reservation - \$2.00 - to Leavitt McQuesten, 120 Otis St., Santa Cruz, Ca. 95060. Boat holds 50 Observers; reservations should be made early.



Everglade Kites Are Unkitelike

On a recent visit to Florida, Feb. 11, I visited the south-of-Okeechobee Lake area and was surprised to see two Everglade Kites; first a male and then a female. This was pure luck and coincidence.

An illustrated sign on a storeroom door, at a small general store, warned, "Don't shoot the Everglade Kite. Only 20 left alive." The man in charge, a boy of about 18, said, "Yes, you might be lucky enough to see one or two if you would walk down that levee for a mile or so, and wait quietly. I see them regularly when I'm out in a boat."

Confession: I was unaware that the Everglade Kite is unkitelike in its flight pattern. So I stood for an hour or so, using 7-power binoculars, seeing only Coot, Common Gallinule, grackles, an occasional teal, and some raptors in the distance (2/3 mile), which I thought at first might be Black Vultures; but soon ruled this out. When I was about to give up, one of the birds in the distance flew within 200-300 ft., coming in quite low, and slow - - -, and calmly picked a snail out of the water using both feet. Within about 100-150 ft., this bird, a male Everglade Kite, raised its talons and transferred the snail to its beak. It landed on some tules and appeared to grasp several tule stalks and perch at an angle, somewhat as does a Yellow-head or Red-wing. Its back was turned, and the distance too far to observe the fate of the snail.



Within three to five minutes a female Everglade Kite repeated the same snail pickup, in almost precisely the same location, also shifting the snail to the beak after takeoff.

On the basis of subsequent discussion with personnel at the refuge, and the next day with the chief biologist at the Everglades National Park, 80 miles south, I surmise the four or five birds I saw in the distance over the marsh earlier were all kites. The flight is low, and nothing like the White-tailed Kites we know here. Nor should it be mistaken for the Marsh Hawk whose flight pattern is different.

Drainage of the Everglades is killing off the snail on which the Everglade Kite feeds, thus threatening it with extinction. Pesticides in the water are said not to be a factor.



A New Member

"The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature, - of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter, - such health, such cheer, they afford forever!" Thoreau

"I feel the flesh of the mountain move on its bones in the wet darkness."

Robinson Jeffers

Carry On, Ladies!

In case you wondered about the group of ladies in old clothes and hiking shoes wandering near Lexington Reservoir, they were members of the Itty Biddy Bird Watchers Club on their monthly bird count. Wanda Zinn, Bertha Zortch, Maud Flerb, Henrietta Took, and Ima Peach spent several hours on the hill above the reservoir perched in the low hanging boughs of a Sumac bush observing their feathered friends. Because of the rain and cold, refreshments consisted of a gallon jug of martinis and a large bottle of olives. The ladies were pleased to report that they were able to identify a Hairy-chested Corn-husker, a Tufted Baldpate, a Nutty Woodpecker, a Teaspoonbill, an Eskimo Curfew, a Huffin Puffin, a slightly Sooty Tern, and old Coot who came up and said didn't they see the no-trespassing sign. Ima Peach claims to have identified a Black King Vulture which is a native of the coastal region of Peru, but due to the fact she was in charge of refreshments this has not been verified. Because she wears bi-focals it may have been a Red-winged Blackbird or a large buckwheat fly, depending on the perspective. More power to you, ladies. We need more sorties like this to add to ornithological science.

Anonymous (Little wonder - Ed.)

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AVOCET

Our publication appears monthly except July and August. It is \$2.00 a year for non-members. If you belong to N.A.S. and have indicated Santa Clara Aud, Soc. on your application slip to them, you automatically become a local member and will receive the "Avocet" free. Copy is requested by the 15th of each month.

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