

# The Avocet

Volume XVI, Number 6

June, 1969

## ANNUAL MEETING

Original Bird Songs - sung by Keith Clark

Wednesday, June 4th

At Holbrook-Palmer Park, 150 Watkins Avenue, Atherton

Mr. Keith Clark, a member of our Society, teaches creative writing at Palo Alto High School and Foothill College. His lyrics have been put to music by Royal Stanton, Peter Seeger, B. J. Maus and his son K. C. Clark. Some of the songs that will be sung by Mr. Clark, who accompanies himself on the guitar, are about the Water Ouzel, the Chickadee, the Roadrunner, the Zic-Zac, the Ostrich, and the Teetertail! Mr. Clark has presented his original historical ballads extensively in the Midwest. This will be his first program devoted to his bird songs. It will be a fun evening.

The grounds will be open to us at 5:30 pm for those who wish to birdwatch and bring a picnic supper. There are no facilities for cooking, but coffee and cookies will be available for all. The annual meeting will start at 7:30 pm. To reach the Park turn West off Middlefield Road just south of the Marsh Road approach to Bayshore Highway. Come and bring guests!

Harriet Mundy, Program Chairman

## CALENDAR

Yosemite . . . . . Sat., June 7, 6:30 am.

Meet at entrance of Bridleveil Fall Campground on Glacier Pt. Road.  
Leaders will wait until 8:00 am. Chance to see Great Gray Owl etc.  
Leaders, Dr. Joseph Greenberg & Russ G.

Castle Rock . . . . . Wed., June 11, 9:00 am.

For nesting birds. Meet at Saratoga Gap, where Rte. 9 & Skyline cross.  
Leaders, Margeret Henderson & Catherine Lintott

Ranch Life & Wildlife . . . . . Sun., June 15, 8:00 pm.

Film by Al Wool at Foothill College. Admission \$1.00, children \$.50

Al Wool Ranch . . Sun, June 15, 9:00 am

Meet at Dawz Restaurant in La Honda.  
Leader, Al Wool

Mt. Pinos State Park- Sat, Aug. 2, 8:00 am

For Condors. Meet in parking lot  
at top of Mt. Pinos.  
Leaders, Dr. Joseph Greenberg & Russ G.



LET'S PUT OUR BIRD BRAINS TO WORK!

How nice it is to take to the hills in the spring, to find a quiet meadow, - - to sit and relax. Allow the quiet to overcome you and perhaps a bird will glide by, capture your spirit and take you on a skyward flight.

He will show you where he likes to perch and sing or look out upon the world. He will take you on his search for food. You will be surprised to find that he does not spend all his time looking for food, but that there are games to play and social calls to make.

If you are lucky he will even take you to his nest and show you just what kind of a housekeeper he is. Try not to judge all birds by the way one keeps house. After all "there are birds and there are birds." It would be nice to know just what housekeeping duties he has to perform. He needs no kitchen or books on nutrition. The bathroom facilities are not what we would expect, but he will show you his discreet method of expelling excreta.

His dressing room can be any number of places, usually a place in the sun on a perch where each feather can be neatly combed. He has no need for a hair stylist, manicurist or even a department store. No need to waste time in shopping for things he really does not need. His bathing needs are simple. There's no need for swimming pool or ocean beach. Just a fine spray from the garden hose or a shallow pond is ample. Patience will reward you with a view of just how to take a bath. If you prefer a dust bath, a dusty county road may be just the thing. Dare you try it for yourself and compare to Yardley's dust!

His dining room is usually where he finds his food. He will show you just which bugs and berries and worms he likes and may even tell you why. No need to go to the grocery store, shop for frozen foods that must thaw before they are cooked. No need to fill the cupboard every weekend. No consulting Adele Davis. In fact no decision as to what to eat except to know what tastes best today. And sometime during the day he may demonstrate his flighty love and care and training of his young.

It seems a happy life, but he'll show you problems too. That poison spray you use.

It tastes no good; and birds may die and bugs mutate to resist and live to infest and eat again. He'll let you know that he has enemies too, - those that would encroach upon his area. If you stay long enough he'll give you lessons in self-defense, methods that have worked for centuries. But he'll tell you he has not learned to defend himself against the new hazards that man has created. He is worried about smog, about increased radiation, and pollution of water. What would he think if he knew about the Bomb? Do we expect birds to solve these ills? What can we do to counterbalance these new hazards? We cannot expect the birds with their "bird brains" to solve these problems.

Come, let's return from our flight and face these imperative problems for "birds' sake" and for our sake!

Howard Wolcott, President

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WHAT TO FEED BABY OWLS?

Chicken hearts cut in half, in lengths, all the fat taken off. For Dwarf Owls and for the sick cut them in two. Do NOT give them hamburger or ground round and never fat. This applies to hawks as well. That meat must be raw; no garden produce. Try dipped meat in bonemeal and calcium mix, to strengthen the growing legs. And when older it can eat chicken necks whole, fat off, but skin left. An owl must have fur or feathers occasionally. I like chicken heads from meatshop with the chicken beak cut off and throw in the whole head. In this way he gets the necessary feathers. Do NOT give the owl a meal of poodle hair as a substitute. This has been tried - and killed the owl.

from "Wren-tit", Pasadena

MOSQUITOES? Play it cool, take a vitamin B-12 capsule every 24 hours when they're around. Old time campers say this works every time. Wandering Tattler



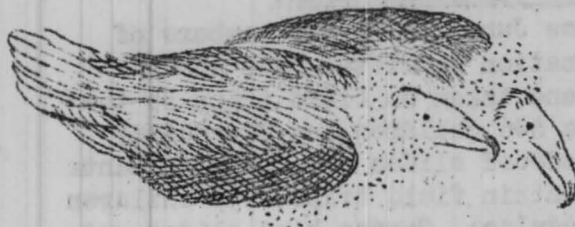
TURKEY VULTURE NESTLINGS

Imagine yourself riding on horseback, and then suddenly, without warning, from a hole in an oak not more than six feet away, a full-grown Turkey Vulture should come flying past your head, causing your horse nearly to jump from under you. Such was the experience encountered by J.B. Parks on the morning of June 15, 1931, as he was riding after cattle in the Mt. Hamilton Range. Mr. Parks stated in colorful cowboy language that he was so startled it did not occur to him to look into the tree. However, on his return in the evening, he looked into the hole and discovered two young Turkey Vultures.

The oak tree in which the nest was located is a large and evidently very old Valley Oak on the Oak Ridge Range. The trunk is approximately four feet in diameter and is entirely hollow from the ground up to a distance of eight feet. The opening, made by the falling of a huge limb, is six feet from the ground and measures two feet across and four from top to bottom. The nest, if such it can be called, was evidently any spot on the ground at the bottom of the hole, for there was no evidence of grass, twigs, nor any other nesting material.

The young Vultures, when first seen on June 15, were about the size of a small turkey, and were covered with dark brown feathers on the back, wings, and tail, with a white ruff around the neck and white down on the breast. Their heads were black and bare.

The behavior of the young birds was extremely interesting. When we approached the tree the night of July 8 they hissed long and loud like Barn Owls. When they became accustomed to our presence the hissing practically ceased, except when they were especially agitated. The odor that arose after the hissing was nauseating. One of the Vultures was quite spunky and frequently, when a sudden noise was made, spread its wings, hissed, and jumped six or eight inches in an effort to strike us although we were six feet above it. The other was less bold and crouched under a projection on the inside of the trunk.



After many pictures were taken of the birds in the nest, they were snagged by the feet with a hooked wire and taken out and placed on the ground. They resisted very little and made no effort to strike the person holding them; instead, one of them regurgitated large pieces of partially digested meat which gave a tremendously offensive odor. As soon as they were released they crawled under a log. Later they tried to crawl down squirrel holes, and when they could get no further than their heads they stood there quite contentedly their heads in the ground and the remainder of their bodies exposed, like the proverbial ostrich.

After a short while the young Vultures were put back into their nest in the hollow tree, and apparently they suffered no ill effects from their first appearance in public.

Henry G. Hill

Editor's Note: The above has been reprinted from the bulletin (Vol 3, No 3, July, 1931) of our own Santa Clara Audubon Society.

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OUR LAST LOCAL BATTLE (we hope)

The National Wildlife Refuge for the South San Francisco Bay will come before the Redwood City Council on Mon. June 9, at 7:30 pm. If you live in Redwood City, can urge friends in Redwood City or if any of you can move there for a short time, write the City Council and urge their support of the Refuge. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and the Menlo Park City Council have approved of it and if we can win in Redwood City all we have to do is win the United States Congress! But considering what wonderful things have been accomplished in just one year, we can do that too! Take a Brochure with you on your trips across the U.S. and send them to friends. The Wildlife Brochures are available from Nancy Holmes 948-1854 & F. LaRiviere 327-2854.

Nancy Holmes



EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Since June, 1968, the members of the Education Committee have shown slides and taken on field trips to the Baylands 806 children and 92 adults; shown Redwood slides and taken on Santa Cruz Mountain field trips, 193 children and 16 adults; Garden bird slides and trips were for 171 adults and 66 children; and films and Bay slides without field trips for 155 adults. Our hard-working veteran members of the committee Mrs. Florence La Riviere, Mrs. Fanny Pargot, Mrs. Lili Estrada, Mrs. Caroline Zabel, and Ted Wassam were joined this year by Mrs. Yvonne Kortum and Mrs. Dorothy Love. My sincerest thanks to all of them.

Nancy Holmes, Education Chairman

THE BROWN PELICAN-WHAT IS HIS FATE?

Nesting results are not ideal throughout the west, however, as a recent letter from Alan Baldrige points out: "The discovery on Mar. 19 & 20 by Dr. Robert Risebrough of the University of Calif., Berkeley, and others of massive nesting failure of Brown Pelican on Anacapa Island off Santa Barbara caused by pesticides, principally DDT. This may well signal the approaching disappearance of the species as a breeding bird in the state and subsequently in Western Mexico. Of 298 fresh nests only 12 contained intact eggs, the remainder containing shell-less or thin eggs or their remains. The bird apparently has not laid eggs at Pt. Lobos, formerly the northernmost breeding location on the Pacific Coast since 1959." As the birds

that visit the Oregon and Wash. coasts in summer probably come from the northernmost breeding colonies of the Brown Pelican, which is Anacapa, it may well be that if these nesting failures continue unchecked, the species may not only be extirpated as a breeding bird in North America, but also become extinct as a summer visitor to our coastline.

It may only be coincidental but in the same letter Mr. Baldrige relates a condition that he found in his home city of Monterey late this winter.

"The Brandt's Cormorants were first seen carrying nesting material at Pacific Grove on Feb. 20 but soon after dead and dying birds began to be found. 15 Cormorants were found Mar. 1 along with over 35 Western Grebe. Another check on the area on Apr. 1 found over



50 Western Grebe, 4 White winged Scoter, 10 Surf Scoter, 19 Brandt's Cor., and 6 Eared Grebe. These birds were found along a

mile of beach, all were un-oiled and several dying birds exhibiting symptoms of pesticide poisoning. At the time of writing, analysis for residues has not been completed." It is of interest to note that Brown Pelicans winter in good numbers in Monterey Bay and many remain throughout the year in that area. It is further noted that all of the species involved with this die-off are primarily fish-eaters, as are the pelicans, and that this outbreak occurred about a month prior to the nesting period. Anacapa Island is the southernmost island of the Channel Is. group and is about 250 miles from Monterey Bay. Birds are usually very flexible and if this outbreak is of a local and minor nature and is quickly controlled, most species will quickly bounce back. It is unfortunate that the Brown Pelican is becoming involved with pesticides, as the species is already very much reduced over much of its range and could very well spell the end of the line. . . . .

From "Audubon Warbler", Portland, Ore.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

Patric Lewis, 620 Teresi Ln, Los Altos  
 Mrs. M. Terrass, 770 Holly Oak, Palo Alto  
 Henry Dieckman, 330 E. Reed St, San Jose  
 The John Skewis', 2427 Alvin, Mtn View  
 Mrs. E. P. Beckwith, P.O. 1013, Boulder Cr.  
 France Allen, 4298 Wilkie Way, Palo Alto  
 Wm. H. Crim, 14221 Paul Av, Saratoga  
 The B. R. Allisons, 169 Spruce Av, Atherton  
 Mrs. C. D. Ellis, 2244 Wellesley, Palo Alto  
 Mrs. Elsa Forsbald, 338 Cuesta D, Los Altos  
 Mrs. J. Halfkenschiel, 380 Golden Oak, Port. V.  
 Lois Hogle, 2000 Page Mill, Palo Alto  
 Katherine McMillan, B. 6891, Stanford  
 Mrs. E. Morgan, 2300 Page Mill, Palo Alto  
 Mrs. P. D. Perham, P.O. 232, Los Altos  
 The E. Sevans, 210 Crest Rd, Woodside  
 Given Ellis, 2244 Wellesley, Palo Alto

Caroline Davis, Membership Chairman



## "BIRDS by Aristophanes

"Dim creatures of earth, who attain unto birth like leaves, in blind fecundation,  
 Ye men of a day, frail figures of clay, mere phantoms in wild agitation,  
 Ungifted with wings, poor suffering things whose life is a vision diurnal.  
 I beg you, attend unto us, the unending, the truly and only eternal,  
 Who airily fly, and the years defy, whose thoughts are the thoughts of the ages.  
 From us you may learn high wisdom, discern the transcendent lore of the sages - -  
 How Erebus, Space, the Olympian race, the birds and the streams were created.  
 Thereafter, when Prodicus bores you, by God you can tell him his Science is dated!"

THE POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS, A WORLDWIDE MENACE

Much to our sorrow and horror, we have discovered in recent years that the ecosystems of the world are thoroughly contaminated with biocides, particularly with chlorinated hydrocarbons such as DDT and its residues. These biocides are found from the Arctic to the Antarctic and from the ocean deeps to the High Sierra. Animals throughout the world have become contaminated with these poisons; and, as a consequence, species such as the Peregrine Falcon, Osprey and Bald Eagle may face early extinction.

Now, we are told, still another global contaminant threatens life on earth. In a recent paper in Nature (Vol.220, No 5172, Dec 14, 1968) Risebrough, Rieche, Peakall, Herman and Kirven reported on the menace of polychlorinated biphenyls. Polychlorinated biphenyls are industrial compounds used in insulators or as extenders in plastics and surface coatings. Much of the world is now contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls - put in the air and water when manufactured products containing them were junked and then incinerated at dumps.

Studies have shown that following ingestion by animals polychlorinated biphenyls are concentrated in the adipose (fat) tissues of the body along with the chlorinated hydrocarbons. Both the polychlorinated biphenyls and chlorinated hydrocarbons are powerful inducers of hepatic (liver) enzymes. Once formed these hepatic enzymes degrade various products including sex hormones. In birds, the degradation of sex hormones leads to aberrations in calcium metabolism. If they do breed, females then lay eggs with thin shells.

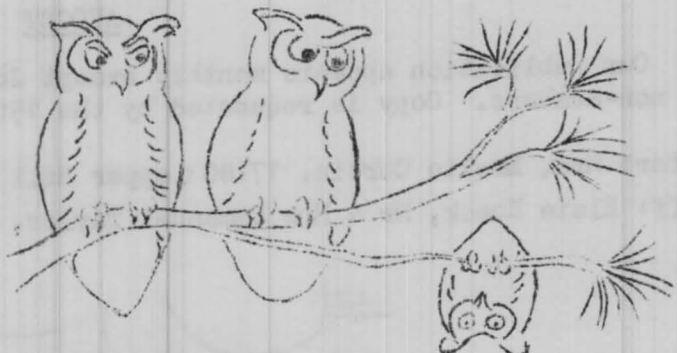
Worldwide, many species of raptors are showing the chlorinated hydrocarbon - polychlorinated biphenyl syndrome. With destruction of sex hormones, few adults breed. Those that do, lay thin-shelled, often nonviable, eggs; and experience limited reproductive success.

Raptors are sensitive indicators of environmental contamination. Their plight portends ours. Let us heed Aristophanes' BIRDS - "attend unto us" Man, too, is becoming increasingly contaminated with chlorinated hydrocarbons and polychlorinated biphenyls. We, too experience the degradation of sex hormones and other products, natural and artificial, in our bodies. Unfortunately, our politicians and industrial leaders could care less about the sublethal effects of environmental contaminants on man. Why worry? After all, the short-term gains of environmental contamination are spelled out in dollar bills which plainly state, "In God We Trust."

Fred Ryser, Ph.D.

from "The Pelican", Lahontan Aud. Soc.

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"Let's face it. You may be wise and I may be wise, but we have a stupid child!"

(The following report came in just at press time. We had our choice between printing it or leaving this space blank. We tossed a coin and you lost. -Editor.)

The Itty Biddy Bird Watcher's Club was out in force again Thursday. The group was joined this time by Helen Trzzzx. Actually, Helen was in the entourage last month but somehow the typist spelled her name wrong and it came out Smith. Each of the girls was in such a hurry to leave the house and the housework Thurs. that she forgot to pack lunch, so the group stopped into Joe's Bar & Grill at noon time. Joe did not have any food but he provided enough alcoholic refreshments to last them all afternoon, and then some. The following account of bird sightings is taken from Susan Smirk's notebook, verbatim: One Pigeon-toed Widgeon, one Clay Pigeon, & one Least Smidgen. On the far side of Snyder's Swamp the girls were sure they

had discovered a Great-horned Something-or-other, but upon approaching closer they found that it had too many legs to qualify and it was declared to be a brindle cow. At another time Loise Limkin, who was going forward with her binoculars to her eyes, made a spectacular announcement. This was duly recorded in the log only to be erased a bit later when it was found to be merely an exclamation Loise made when she stepped into a gopher hole. This is just as well, as it could not have been printed anyway. A little later, the group came upon a flock of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers sitting in a Manzanita tree. Some controversy arose among the ladies as to identification, so Agnes Scruggs who used to be on the Milpitas Girls' Baseball Team killed several of the birds with a well-thrown stick. One of the bodies was later sent off by parcel post to Roger Tory Peter's son, who sent back an answer that yes it was. On the way home the girls were accosted  
(No more space. Sorry. Editor)

#### Remember, This Is Your Publication!

This is the last issue until September. Your editor would appreciate any comments on desired articles in the "Avocet." We wish to reflect the ideas of our members and would greatly appreciate receiving copy on various subjects of natural history. Also, please keep track of dates of bird nestings as we plan to publish old records from 1930 for comparison. Let us hear from you before Aug. 15 deadline!

President	Howard Wolcott	Field Trips North	Kay McCann
Vice-President	Kay McCann	Field Trips South	Catherine Lintott
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Treasurer	Joyce Todd	Program	Harriet Mundy
Conservation	Claude A. Look	Publicity	John Brokenshire
"	Lloyd Case	Registrar	Fanny Zwaal
Education	Nancy Holmes	Historian	Warren Turner
"	Mrs. Mark Hopkins	Field Notes	Russ Greenberg
Field Trips	Dr. Joseph Greenberg	Wildlife Screen Tours	Dr. Richard Thaw

#### AVOCET

Our publication appears monthly except July and August. It is \$2.00 a year for non-members. Copy is requested by the 15th of each month.

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