

# The Avocet

Volume XVII, Number 1

January, 1970

## What We Can Do For The Environment

Wednesday, January 21

Homestead High School  
Room 5, Bldg. C

8:00 pm

Homestead Road  
Cupertino

The KQED film, "Inherit The Earth", is to be shown and should be quite good. Tony Look will talk for a short time on "Legislative Issues", and Howard Wolcott will say a few words about what we can do for the environment.

Your Program Chairmen wish you a Happy New Year and ask you NOW to make a note of meeting dates for 1970. Due to conflict with Screen Tour dates, the SCVAS will meet the second Wednesdays, Feb. 11 and Mar. 11. The April meeting is canceled due to the fact that the National Convention will be in Seattle the previous weekend and we hope that as many as possible of our members will go and perhaps take in pre- and post- trips or just take a little holiday at that time. The annual meeting will be early in June as usual.

Harriet Mundy & Phyllis Klein

### Calendar of Events

- Board Meeting - - - - - Wed., Jan. 7, 7:45 pm  
At home of Phyllis Klein, 4264 Newberry Court, Palo Alto.
- Bird Study Section - - - - - Thur., Jan. 8, 9:30 am  
Subject: Bay Ducks, p. 50, and Marsh & Pond Ducks, p.59, in Peterson's Field Guide to West. Birds. At Phyllis Klein's, 4264 Newberry Ct., P.A., tel 327-4278.
- Tubbs Island - - - - - Sat., Jan 10, 9:00 am  
Rescheduled because of Rolling Stones Snafu! May the new decade begin with a sunny Sat. Directions, time - everything same as planned for Dec 6th in Dec. Avocet. Come rain or shine. I have checked with the Raceway and they assure me nothing will be going on! Harriet Mundy 325-1192
- Bird Discussion Group - - - - - Tues., Jan 13, 10:00 am  
Subject: Winter Birds in your Garden. At home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista, Saratoga, 867-4748.
- Los Gatos Creek - - - - - Wed., Jan 14, 9:30 am  
Meet in parking area in front of Assembly of God on Lark Ave. east of Winchester Blvd., west of Hwy 17 off ramp at Lark. Leader, Mary Rugh
- "The Shandon Hills" - - - - - Wed., Jan 14, 8:00 pm  
Eben McMillan of Cholame brings us the 3rd of our Audubon Wildlife Films. Golden Eagles, Roadrunners, Prairie Falcons and Nighthawks will help tell of the interrelationship of life throughout the four seasons. At Morris-Daily Auditorium, San Jose State College.
- General Meeting (see above) - - - - - Wed., Jan 21, 8:00 pm
- Palo Alto Baylands - - - - - Wed., Jan 28, 9:00 am  
Meet at Duck Pond at end of Embarcadero Rd.  
Leader, Kay McCann 327-4138



Previous net worth (see above)

\$4,173.06

Present Net Worth at May 31, 1969 (see above)

Statement of Savings Account

Balance June 1, 1968

\$2,426.76

Add interest for the year

124.42

Withdrawals

\$2,551.18

Balance May 31, 1969

Note: Included in Savings Account \$179.70 in Library Fund and \$94.00 in a building Fund.

Statement Audubon Screen Tours

Cash Balance at San Jose State College May 3, 1968

486.66

Sale of Tickets

1,768.93

Expenses

1,302.49

\$953.10

Cash Balance at San Jose State College May 22, 1969

Warren Turner, Auditor

Audubon Center of Southern California Seeking New Location

Wanted in area of Los Angeles County: a suitable undeveloped area of 200 acres or more with as much diversity of vegetation as possible, and hopefully with a stream or pond or opportunity to create a water area.

Existing center at El Monte will be closed next June 30.

If any of our members know of a suitable area, please let Paul Howard know at our western headquarters office in Sacramento.

Field Trip Report

Searsville Lake, November 19, 1969

Participants consisted of 12 members plus group from A.A.U.W. Weather was sunny, clear and cool. Bird of the day was a Green Heron. Included among the 51 species seen were: Bufflehead, Gadwall, Mallard, Pintail, Ringneck, Ruddy, Scaup, and Blue-winged Teal; immature Gallinule; Cooper's, Red-tailed, and Sparrow Hawks; Audubon and Townsend's Warblers; Hutton's Vireo, Pine Siskin, Downy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Leaders, Kay McCann and Roberta Wright

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Stray Field Notes

October 28 - Yellow-breasted Sapsucker (red race) at home of Monica Smith Homestead Rd., Santa Clara.

Dec. 2 - Two Whistling Swans at Anderson Reservoir.

Dec. 9 - Black Merlin (Pigeon Hawk)

"At Calaveras Reservoir, near gate at dam. The very first unusual thing I noticed about this small raptor was that it did not fly from its perch when I stopped the car about 100 ft. distant. Just putting a car in low gear will usually put the wary Kestrel to flight. The other unique characteristic of this bird was its blackness. Its back was a rich black except for a few white spottings at the base of the primaries; no hint of gray or brown as in the Merlins I've seen in the east. Evidently he was of the dark western race, *Falco Columbarius Suckleyi*, which is supposed to breed in British Columbia. His silhouette also differed from the Kestrels in that the shoulders were broad and slimmed abruptly; not so plump as the Kestrel. His head was rounded like the Kestrel but the bill seemed proportionately smaller. There was no mustachio. He very obligingly hopped about on the limb and presented a fine front view of the heavily streaked breast. For good measure he then fanned his tail to display the wide black and gray bars and stretched one wing to show the slender pointed falcon appendage. At one point he managed to turn his head directly backwards and remained in that ludicrous position for nearly a minute. As is true with most boreal birds, he was not wary of man and remained unconcerned on his perch for at least ten minutes, sailing skulkily off in his own good time and melting into the low brush."



E. Curtis

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Convention News - from Seattle Audubon "Notes"

"... We re-routed our Trans-Cascade tour to visit the Turnbull Wildlife Refuge near Spokane and return over Snoqualmie Pass rather than down through Richland and home via the Columbia and Vancouver. We visited Turnbull and found it a most beautiful place and teeming with birdlife during the fall migration. There are some 210 species counted in the spring, 100 of which nest there. The manager, Mr. Malcolm, said they would roll out the red carpet for our Convention visitors.

Members Sylvia and Burt Jahn of Ephrata met with us and helped us map out our route through the Dry Falls area, with which they are thoroughly familiar. Of our three trips, this promises to be the 'Birder's Bird Trip'."

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"To a person uninstructed in natural history, his country or seaside stroll is a walk through a gallery filled with wonderful works of art, nine-tenths of which have their faces turned to the wall."

Thomas Carlyle

### Save California's Biotic Communities

A conference on the above will be held early next year at the Oakland Museum and will be co-hosted by the California Native Plant Society and the Oakland Museum Assoc. Natural Sciences Guild.

Dr. G. Ledyard Stebbins, President of the California Native Plant Society, spurred by Mr. John Olmsted of the California Institute of Man In Nature, with the cooperation of Dr. C. Don MacNeill, Associate Curator II of the Natural Sciences Div. of the Oakland Museum, organized the calling of such a conference.

The concern which prompted this is the vital need to search out and inventory as quickly as possible what remains of California's exceptionally varied ecological areas, with special emphasis on preservation of these biotic communities.

The goals which have been set for the conference are:

1. Compiling as complete a list as possible of existing areas with significant biotic communities already under public or private dedication in Calif.
2. Developing an "action" acquisition list for significant areas not yet protected
3. Setting up a policy for use of such lands.

The conference will be chaired by Mr. Don Greame Kelley. Contributions to implement the urgent work of this Committee will be welcome. Donations may be sent to the Treasurer of the Steering Committee, Mrs. Joyce E. Burr, Save Calif.'s Biotic Communities, 7817 Terrace Dr., El Cerrito, Ca. 94530.

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### A Tale of Extinction

"The Heath Hen, or Eastern Prairie Chicken, was once plentiful throughout the East, but by 1839 it existed only on Martha's Vineyard. For a century then it was protected from hunters by law on several occasions and was given total protection in the early 1900's.

In 1908, less than 60 birds were still alive, but this number had increased to perhaps 2000 in 1916 when a great fire swept the plain in the spring, catching the females on their nests. In retrospect, it is clear that this fire destroyed all chance for survival of the species.

Accurate counts of the birds were aided by its spring mating habits. In April and May, the male Heath Hens gathered in certain open areas on the plain to feed, dance, posture and make the incredible sounds that stirred the imagination and pens of those who were fortunate enough to hear him.

About the size of a Ruffed Grouse, the Heath Hen often made a mournful hooting a sound one observer said might be duplicated by blowing across the open mouth of a small vial. When flying, it often gave vent to what sounded, when heard in the early morning mists or in the failing light of evening across the vast, storm-buffeted plain, like a burst of demonic laughter.

By 1929 only one bird survived - a male. It came alone to a field on the farm of James Green in West Tisbury and went through an abbreviated version of the usual mating ritual. In 1930 it appeared again, but omitted any courtship maneuvers and uttered no sound. It came to the same spot once more in the spring of the following year and then was seen no more.

I spent many hours . . . . hoping to see or hear the bird whose race had already vanished from the earth. . . . . The goblins of the enchanted plain were gone forever and the world was poorer than a boy could know."

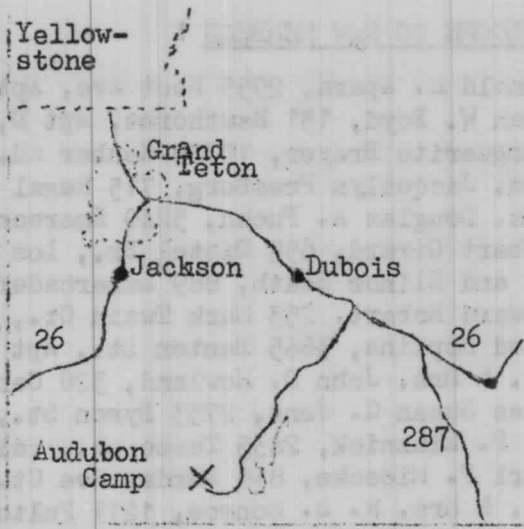
by Nelson Bryant - New York Times

Audubon Camp of the West

The National Audubon Society operates this camp near Dubois, Wyoming. This field training center is especially designed for adults with a professional or hobby interest in nature. The 1970 season has four two-week sessions scheduled, with the first one beginning June 28 and the last one ending August 21. University credit is optional and persons wishing to attend may select from four choices.

The camp provides first-hand experience with nature through an integrated sequence of daily field trips. Emphasis is on ecological relationships, rather than classification, identifications or characteristics. Morning and afternoon field trips, the majority in groups of not more than 14 persons with a leader, together with the evening programs are carefully planned throughout each session. Camp station wagons are used to reach many field trip areas for it is not the intent of the program to stress hiking or distance.

If you are interested in attending any session of the summer Camp, you should inquire early. For full information write to: Mr. Paul Howard, Camp Director, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, Calif. 95825.



Predators vs Trappers - again!

"Press releases on a renewed "Wild Animal Control.." program for Alameda and Contra Costa County raised another storm of protest from local conservationists. We immediately contacted the Alameda County Agency involved and the federal Div. of Wildlife Services furnishing the professional trappers. They emphasized that their trapping was done only in response to specific complaints of predatory animal depredations from ranchers and by request of county and state health authorities. It was claimed that without this service ranchers would go all out with traps and poisons. The skunks, foxes and some other small predators were taken to secure samples of the incidence of rabies in these counties, which was significant. Concerned Audubon members may request exact figures on this.

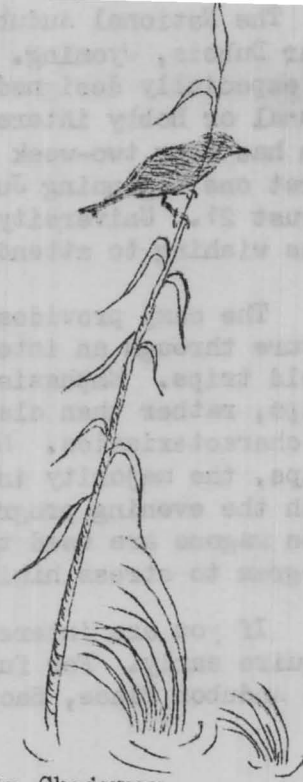
Complete extermination of ground squirrels - an apparent objective of other animal control teams in Contra Costa County and elsewhere - might result in extermination of our last Golden Eagles in the same areas, asserts Chris Nelson and his East Bay Regional Park District naturalists. It is feared that loss of this favorite food might drive the eagles to taking poultry, which would insure their destruction!"  
- by Paul Covel from "The Gull"

Furry Thoughts

"What a pitiful business is the fur trade, which has been pursued now for so many ages, for so many years by famous companies . . . unweariedly pursuing and ferreting out small animals by the aid of all the loafing class tempted by rum and money, that you may soon rob some little fellow-creature of its coat to adorn or thicken your own, that you may get a fashionable covering in which to hide your head . . . Regarded from the philosopher's point of view, it is precisely on a level with rag and bone picking in the streets of the cities."

H. D. Thoreau

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Caroline Davis, Membership Chairman

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AVOCET

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