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# The Avocet

TIME VALUE

Volume XVIII, Number 7

September, 1971

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sept. 12 -- Palo Alto Baylands Field Trip, Sunday, 8 a.m., meet at Duck Pond across from Palo Alto Yacht Club, end of Embarcadero Road. Shorebirds, ducks & gulls. Leader: R. Jay Andree, 257-2038.
- Sept. 14 -- Board of Directors' meeting, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., at the home of Ken Kidd, 4062 Keith Dr., Campbell, 379-6498. Meeting open to all members.
- Sept. 17 -- Bird Discussion Group, No. County, Friday, 9:30 a.m., at the home of Kay McCann, 783 Garland Dr., Palo Alto, 327-4138. Any member welcome! Topic: "Summer sightings".
- Sept. 22 -- General Meeting, Wednesday, 8 p.m., Homestead High School, Rm. C-5, (see program and meeting information on page 3). Public invited.
- Sept. 25 -- Dumbarton Bridge Field Trip, Saturday, 8 a.m., meet at south-west end of bridge. Leader: Al Jamieson, 327-8310.
- Sept. 29 -- Palo Alto Baylands Field Trip, Wednesday, 9 a.m. meet at Duck Pond across from Palo Alto Yacht Club, end of Embarcadero Rd. Shorebirds, ducks & gulls. Leaders: Dorothy Taylor, 322-0120, and Martha Wilbur 324-4873.
- Oct. 1 -- "Refashion Show", Friday, 10 a.m., United Methodist Church, Magdalena Avenue and Foothill Exp., Los Altos, to benefit proposed Regional Park and Open Space District in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. For information & reservations contact: Claudia Salquist, 465 Cavalier Ct., Los Altos, 94022, 948-5490, or Marilyn Chambreau, 941-1276.
- Oct. 5 -- Bird Discussion Group, Tuesday, 9:30 a.m., at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga, 867-4748. Any member welcome! Topic: "Most interesting bird seen this summer".

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS, 1971-71

Audubon Wildlife films will be shown in both San Jose and Palo Alto again this season. However, the schedules are not the same for both places.

The San Jose series of four films will be shown at 8 p.m. in Morris Dailey Auditorium on the San Jose State campus. Admission will be \$1.25 for adults. San Jose will not offer season tickets this year.

The San Jose film schedule is:

Oct. 13, Wednesday--Wilfred Gray--BRITISH COLUMBIA-MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA  
Nov. 9, Tuesday--John Pauling--FILMING IN NO-MAN'S LAND  
March 1, Wednesday--Bower Rudrud--TREASURE OF EAST AFRICA  
April 6, Thursday--Robert Davison--JOURNEY IN TIME

For further information about San Jose showings, contact Galen Bull, 294-6414 ext. 2851 or 2821.

The Palo Alto series of five films will be shown at 4 p.m. in the Palo Alto High School Auditorium, 50 Embarcadero Road (across from Town and Country Village). Plenty of off street parking is available.

Tickets may be obtained from the Auditor's Office, Palo Alto High School, 50 Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto 94301. Please buy tickets in advance, even for single shows. Make checks payable to Palo Alto High School Biology Club, and enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Tickets will be sold at the door also.

Season tickets are \$5. Single admissions are: Adults - \$1.25; Students with student body card - 75 cents; Elementary school students - 50 cents.

The Palo Alto film schedule is:

Oct. 12, Tuesday--Wildred Gray--BRITISH COLUMBIA-MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA  
Nov. 11, Thursday--John Pauling--FILMING IN NO-MAN'S LAND  
Jan. 25, Tuesday--Lyle Moss--MULE DEER COUNTRY  
Feb 22, Tuesday--Bower Rudrud--TREASURE OF EAST AFRICA  
March 21, Tuesday--Robert Davison--VANISHING SEA

For further information about Palo Alto showings, contact Kay McCann 327-4138

Program brochures will be mailed soon. The Palo Alto brochures are sent only to North County residents unless requested.

*Help*

Do your share of helping educate the public about Audubon and conservation. Telephone Nancy Holmes, 948-1854 or 948-3262, and offer your help in conducting field trips and slide shows for children and beginning adult birders.

CALIFORNIA'S ANO NUEVO ISLAND

Sept. 22, Wednesday, 8. p.m.  
Public invited--no charge

Homestead High School  
Room 5, Building C

Right on our doorstep is one of the unusual coastal areas of the Pacific Ocean. Ano Nuevo Island, on the San Mateo County coast, is the northern-most rookery for Elephant Seals, and the southern-most rookery for Steller Sea Lions. It is also the home of a large population of California Sea Lions and many Harbor Seals. Fur Seals are occasional residents, too. Here is the one place in the whole world where these animals come together in large numbers.

Mike Peterhans will introduce us to this unique island and its marine mammals. He will show color slides taken over a five-year period while he was associated with Stanford Research Institute in a study of the general behavior and social dynamics of the sea lion and seal populations on Ano Nuevo Island.

RESERVE THE FOURTH WEDNESDAY

Our general meetings resume on September 22, and with two exceptions, will continue on the fourth Wednesday of each month thru May. This is a change from previous years during which we met on the third Wednesday. The fourth Wednesday has been selected in hope that there will be less conflict with meetings of other organizations.

The two exceptions are: (1) the February meeting will be on the 16th (3rd Wed.) because our meeting place is not available on the fourth Wednesday; and (2) there is no meeting in December so that preparations may be made for the Annual Bird Count.

Please note these days on your calendar now so you won't forget:  
Sept. 22, Oct 27, Nov. 24, Jan. 26, Feb. 16, March 22, April 26, May 24.

Meetings will be in the same place (Homestead High School, Room C-5) at the same time (8 p.m.) and are open to the public without cost. Homestead High is located between Cupertino and Sunnyvale at the intersection of Mary Avenue and Homestead Road. There is ample parking on the west side of the campus. A walk leads directly from the parking lot to the inner quadrangle and room C-5.



CHURCHILL ON THE HUDSON BAY by Emelie Curtis

During the last two weeks of June, with Eve and Lloyd Case, I had the good fortune to make a long-dreamed-of trip to Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, located on the western shore of the Hudson Bay. This is North America's southernmost arctic tundra, a transition zone between two major biotic provinces, boreal forest and tundra, where a diversity of bird life from both areas intermingle in exciting numbers--a true birding Mecca.

With the impetus of Eve's enthusiasm and Lloyd's skilled travel arrangements, we found ourselves comfortably quartered on the Canadian National R.R. from Winnipeg to Churchill. For two nights and one and a half days we haltingly swayed our way through subarctic forests of black spruce and tamarack and on/in hummocky, oozing muskeg. Occasional complete halts in the midst of this vast "Christmas tree farm" would focus our attention on the beautiful yellow lady slippers ensconced in the omnipresent sphagnum moss which encroached to within feet of the very rails. Ravens and Yellow shafted Flickers were among the few birds we were able to distinguish from the countless bird-shaped "top-knots" which characterize the black spruce. Every promising "top knot" had been blearily and hopefully examined for a possible but elusive Hawk Owl...sadly, to no avail. A wraithlike movement with a long tail had to be discounted as inadequate as a "lifer". Finally we descended the gradual 1000 foot slope to Churchill, our engine snaking out from the last of the trees onto the grand expanse of pond-studded arctic tundra-at last.

A lone Willow Ptarmigan in his bi-colored summer plumage was an appropriate arctic greeting to the tundra. The sharp, steady, cold wind (about 48°) upon debarkation was another. A pair of Stilt Sandpipers announced their presence as they dropped into the tiny rill back of our motel. With such encouragement, we donned all available woolens, leaned into the wind and headed for the nearest pond. A number of distinguished-looking Hudsonian Godwits dominated the shallow water and a confiding Least Sandpiper fluttered and fed within five feet. Plump, freshly-painted Semi-palmated Plovers agitated and scurried until we found the mottled eggs of one paid in a scraping of bare dirt. Northern Phalaropes twirled as they fed and red-billed Arctic Terns gracefully scythed the sky above us. All the while, amidst the many breeding songs we'd come so far to hear, was the haunting winnowing of the Common Snipe. He made great circles as he slip up and down his shallow roller coaster, his tail feathers spread stiffly with each downward thrust, producing the eerie vibrations as the air was forced through them.



Cape Merry - bergs + rocks



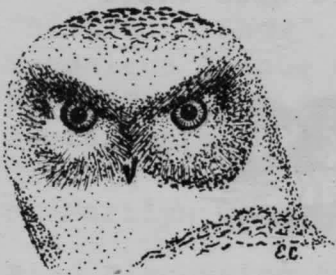
On our first calm morning we went out to Cape Merry, a nearby point of land jutting out into the bay at the mouth of the Churchill River. The shore is Precambrian Shield, some of the oldest rock in the world. It is a vast ledgelike expanse of smooth gray and red slabs. Grand to walk on! The crevices are resplendent with moss and tiny arctic plants and flowers. Clear, dark-bottomed miniature tarns dot the great ledges. I walked out as far as I possibly could. The steel-gray water, which was calm and benign, lapped gently beside my feet; an ice floe nudged my rock; and, as I nudged it back, I was very tempted to board it and float away. Great swooshes resounded as the bergs broke and crashed into the water. There were no waves; it was very like a great friendly bathtub, quiet and very intimate. I lay down in a crevice of rock with my body hidden and my eyes almost level with the vast platform of water. A raft of Old Squaws gabbled companionably just 200 feet out. They looked oversized at eye-level; could see their yellow eyes and the delicate gold edging on the black back feathers - a fine looking bird. Overhead, Parasitic Jaegers chased an Arctic Tern and Redthroated Loons trafficked back and forth, while Goldeneyes whistled their progress and Surf and Common Scoters strung their black chains along the water's surface. A rare Harlequin male and a Black Guillemot, both at close range, cheered our morning even more. Alone on the point, we all three drifted apart and enjoyed the vastness of rock and bergs, water and sky, in welcome solitude - hallmark of the north.



Old Squaw ♂



Golden Plover



Snowy Owl

(Continued in next issue)

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