

The Avocet

TIME VALUE

Volume XVIII, Number 8

October, 1971

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct. 5 -- Bird Discussion Group, Tuesday, 9:30AM, at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga, 867-4748. Any member welcome. Topic: "Most interesting bird seen this summer".
- Oct. 9 -- Coyote Hills Regional Park Field Trip, Saturday, 8:30AM. Meet at the 1st parking lot in the park. Leaders: Mr. & Mrs. Les Sleeper.
- Oct. 12 -- Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday, 7:30PM at the home of Mrs. Nancy Holmes, 843 Moana Ct., Palo Alto, 948-1854. Meeting open to all members - please phone in advance if you plan to attend.
- Oct. 12 -- Palo Alto Audubon Wildlife Film, Tuesday, 4PM, Palo Alto High School Auditorium, 50 Embarcadero Rd. "British Columbia - Mountains to the Sea." See Sept. issue for additional information.
- Oct. 13 -- San Jose Audubon Wildlife Film, Wednesday, 8PM, Morris Dailey Auditorium, San Jose State College campus. "British Columbia - Mountains to the Sea". See Sept. issue for additional information.
- Oct. 13 -- Field Trip South - Isenberg Ranch, Wednesday, 9AM. From the north take La Honda Road to Skyline Blvd., turn South (left) on Skyline about 4 miles to the Isenberg Ranch sign near the nursery. Turn right and continue to the end of the road about 2 miles to the ranch.

From the south the turnoff is about 8 miles north on Skyline from Saratoga Gap. Leader: Frank Farran, 252-3874.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS (Cont'd)

- Oct. 15 -- Bird Discussion Group, North County, Friday, 9:30AM. Meet at Barbara Allen's home, 1181 Greenwood Ave., Palo Alto, 326-0521 for an all day trip to the coast. All members welcome; bring a lunch.
- Oct. 23 -- Sunol Regional Park Field Trip, Saturday, 8:30AM. Leader: Mr. Frank Farran, 252-3874.
- Oct. 27 -- General Meeting, Wednesday, 8PM, Homestead High School, Rm. C-5 See notes on page 3 on "Clean Bay, Inc." Public invited.
- Oct. 27 -- Field Trip North, Wednesday, 9AM. Meet at the entrance to Foothill Park on Page Mill Road, Palo Alto. Leader: Kay McCann, 327-4138.

BOARD NOTES

Discussed possible TV spots advertising Audubon Wildlife Films for 1971-72.

Discussed the possibility of setting up a typing pool to help with SCVAS correspondence.

Motion made and seconded to have the Avocet printed in 8 pages at the discretion of the Editor.

Motion made and seconded to have the new members names printed in the Avocet.

NATIONAL DUES INCREASE

Last year National Audubon had an operating deficit in excess of \$500,000. To cover this deficit it was deemed necessary to increase dues effective September 1. Henceforth the individual membership is raised from \$10 to \$12; and family membership from \$12.50 to \$15. For the full story see page 90 in the July issue of AUDUBON.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Herb Grench has been appointed to the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission. Herb is a Past-President of SCVAS, and he and his charming wife, Norma, have been in the forefront in the battle to conserve open space in this area.

"CLEAN BAY, INC."

Oct. 27, Wednesday, 8PM
Public invited -- no charge

Homestead High School
Room 5, Building C

The fact that major oil spills are occurring with increasing frequency all over the world was vividly demonstrated to Bay Area residents earlier this year when two Standard Oil of California tankers collided in the Golden Gate.

After that devastating spill it was apparent to many that other oil spills in the Bay are likely and that advance preparation should be made for prompt action in cleaning up the oil to minimize damage. Since then, Standard Oil and five other companies have announced the formation of CLEAN BAY, INC. to handle the cleanup of future oil spills.

Mr. Forrest Smith, Executive Vice-President and Manager of CLEAN BAY, INC. has accepted our invitation to come to our meeting on October 27 and tell us about the company and its plans for promptly controlling and cleaning up an oil spill, thereby minimizing any adverse effect on wildlife in the area.



A CHANGE

Beginning with the October trip, Field Trips Wednesday South will be planned by Mr. Frank Farran, 20682 Scofield Drive, Cupertino, 252-3874.

Our thanks to Mrs. Catherine Lintott for her past work in planning Field Trips South.

NATIONAL AUDUBON WESTERN CONFERENCE - ASILOMAR 1972

Now, after four years, the Western Regional Office cordially extends an invitation to attend a renewal of the popular Asilomar Conferences. The challenging theme for the conference is: "Golden Opportunities in Conservation", with emphasis being placed on WHAT'S NEW IN '72? Please mark well and SAVE the dates MARCH 25, 26, 27, 28, 1972 (Sat.-Sun.-Mon.-Tues.)

Should you desire to receive priority program information and registration and trip reservation forms, simply MAIL a postcard with your name, and address and zip to: AUDUBON CONFERENCE, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, California 95825. Materials will be sent to you in October before the general mailing.

SUMMER, LIKE OPEN SPACE, IS FADING AWAY by Tony Look

Returning home from a summer hiking trip into the gorgeous Beartooth Primitive Area of Montana's Custer National Forest abruptly places one in the middle of an overwhelming mob of people, cars, and buildings. From the rolling green hills of the Big Sky Country, where neighboring farms are measured in miles, to the top of Sundance Peak, the highest on our route, the vistas of open space seem to stretch forever.

But an end must come to a hiking trip and summer vacation, and this meant a return to the congestion left behind many days before. Our awareness of the confinement is more acute now, and also our realization that the few acres of open space left in the foothills of Santa Clara Valley and the shoreline of the South Bay must somehow be preserved for public use.

Are the chances to save these precious bits of open space fading away or have the recent set-backs been only temporary? To find the answers to these questions we asked two ladies who so capably handled the many details of the two projects involved with conserving open space in this area.

First, Mrs. Hanko of Palo Alto, who represents the Mid-Peninsula Regional Park District. She hurriedly assured me the adverse vote of the San Mateo Supervisors was not the deathnote of the District. While it was a set-back in the time schedule, a heavier concentration of effort must now be placed on the hearing before the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors on October 27th.

The San Jose Mercury, in an editorial of September 9th, urges people to bring forth good ideas before the Supervisors sampling of public opinion on the District's formation can be heard.

We ask more than that of Audubon members - telephone chains can be organized, literature and conversation needs to be circulated in campaign style, and your presence must be felt at the Board of Supervisors Chambers on the morning of October 27th (45 West Hedding St., San Jose). If you also brought your neighbor who helped you campaign for the Park District we could almost fill the available seats.

Mrs. Hanko can give you help in organizing your telephone chains, campaigns, and other information - call her mornings at 325-4576. Her last words of caution to me were: "Open space in both Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties can become part of the Mid-Peninsula Park District by an affirmative vote of the Supervisors on October 27th." Will you do your part in assuring 3 yea votes?

Equally important and much longer overdue for action is the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge as proposed by Senator Cranston's Bill # SB 2241 due to be heard by the Commerce Committee, and Rep. Edward's Bill # HR 111, due to be heard by the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. Action by you should be in the form of letters to the Committee Chairman to assure the bill's being heard in this session. Mrs. Nancy Holmes, Palo Alto, can give you full details - her phone is 948-3262.

Another summer may come our way but we cannot say that about open space. We will never have more than we have today.

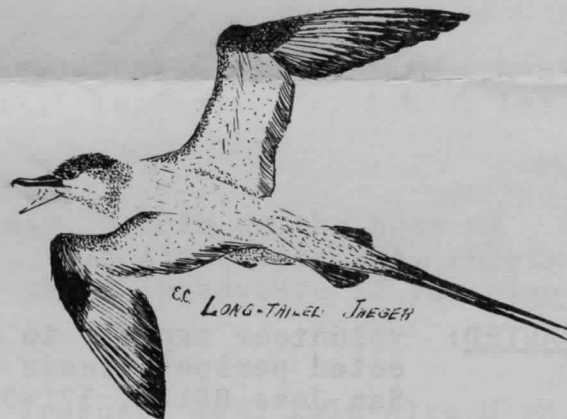
Part 2



The tundra is even more beautiful than I had anticipated. Miniature bushes of rhododendron and willow, flattened and interlaced, meld harmoniously with tiny pristine flowers and varied mosses into a grandiose plush carpet. With each bouncing step we sink six inches or so, and with a backward glance we catch the little leaves and mosses already recovering. Even the rounded rocks, scattered throughout, are gardens of varicolored lichens. Occasional forests of 4 to 6 dwarf spruce relieve the long flat line of the arctic horizon. And it is atop these rare perches that we find a Tree or White Crowned Sparrow, or a handsome Smith's or Lapland Longspur, each singing to the welkin.

When we flushed a dressy Golden Plover from her nest and approached the area with confidence, it took all three of us a testy 3 minutes to spot her mottled khaki eggs tucked snugly in the moss. We looked odd indeed, in awkward sprattled-legged stances, afraid to move for fear of stepping on her eggs. She chided us softly all the while and spread her magnificent gold-speckled wings, incredibly long and slim, in an effort to draw us away. It is hard to realize that those same slim wings had carried her 4,200 miles and back again. Even as we moved away, she eased back onto her eggs and melted into her vast world.

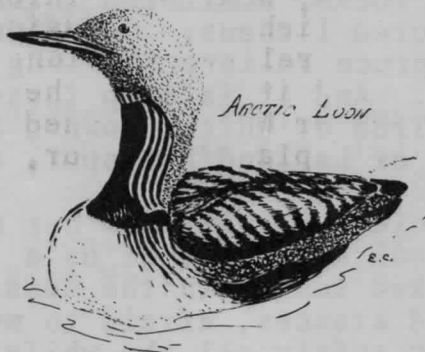
We soon learned that sedge grass meant standing water, and moss meant only moisture, and rocks meant dryness. So we weaved, bounced and meandered, no fixed direction in mind, for wherever we were, we wished to be; more nests, more Whimbrels, or Lesser Yellowlegs, or Hudsonian Godwits. Look up - a prized Long-tailed Jaeger, or an exciting flood of white as a Snowy Owl labored from one rock and glided to another, those great upholstered feet thrust forward in landing. An insouciant turn of the head, a slow wink over yellow orbs, and an arctic master surveys his cupboard.



With the use of a rented car, we radiated to greater distances, crossed the treeline and explored the muskeg, then the wet forests of black spruce and tamarack, and finally the well drained ridges of white spruce and balsam poplar. It was a thrill to be in the home of these arctic denizens and to see them in their breeding plumage and hear their seasonal singing; to feel the warm sun in the shelter of the woods; to stubbornly ignore the buzzing mosquitos; to smell the fragrant firs and warm earth - simply, to be there. Common Redpolls; Bohemian Waxwings feeding young; arrow-straight flights of Merlin; Osprey with fish (head first) in talons; Rusty Blackbirds; fantastically pale Short-eared Owls; confiding, clucking, near invisible Willow Ptarmigan; a honey and white Ermine with black shining eyes in hesitant, inquiring surveillance; shreeing Pine Siskin; melodious Fox Sparrow; Arctic Loons with luminous pate; vivid and huge -- Harris's Sparrow -- singing and displaying. All so memorable.

CHURCHILL ON THE HUDSON BAY (Cont'd)

And all discussed and reviewed at start and end of day in the only decent restaurant where hungry birders and natives convene. Somehow the birders have no trouble recognizing each other, even sans binoculars! We three tallied 81 species of birds, a good list being 85, and a superior list being 90. For the indefatigable birder, the evening hours can be utilized for there is no darkness there and the birds continue to hunt, feed young, and sing the entire 24 hours.



More data on Churchill is available in "Birds of the Churchill Region, Manitoba", by Joseph Jehl, Jr., and Blanche A. Smith, Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Help

WANTED: volunteer typists to help get out SCVAS correspondence. Interested persons please contact Pres. Bob Hassur, 14875 Cole Dr., San Jose 95124, 371-0273.

SHOREBIRD CENSUS OF CALIFORNIA

Will members interested in assisting State Fish & Game Department members in their Shorebird Census of California please contact Mr. Ron Jurek, California Department of Fish & Game, Special Wildlife Investigations, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento 95814.

This involves being able to identify species of shore birds in a given area and count the number of each species. This investigation has been underway for two years and is continuing. A census is taken every two weeks, year round, and many eyes make light work!

The Avocet is published monthly, except July and August. Copy deadline, 2 days after the published date set for the Board of Directors Meeting. Editor: Dick Knoetzsch, 1193 Somerset Dr., San Jose, Calif. 95132. Staff: Flora Hoek, addressing; Charles and Fanny Zwaal, mailing