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# The Avocet

TIME VALUE

Volume 19, Number 3

March, 1972

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Mar. 1 -- San Jose Audubon Wildlife Film, Wednesday, 8 p.m., Morris Dailey Auditorium, San Jose State College. "Treasure of East Africa" by Bower Rudrud. See Sept. 'Avocet' for more information.
- Mar. 7 -- Bird Discussion Group, South County, Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga, 867-4748. Any member welcome. Topic: "California Thrasher."
- Mar. 8 -- Field Trip South- Regnart Canyon, Wednesday 8:30 a.m. West off of Saratoga-Sunnyvale Rd. onto McClellan Rd. (McClellan is  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of Stevens Crk. rd. in Cupertino); one mile on McClellan to Bubb Rd.;  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile south on Bubb Rd. to Regnart Rd. Meet at corner of Regnart and Bubb. Leader: Jo-Ann Gholson, 252-3606.
- Mar. 14 -- Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday, 8 p.m. at the home of Bob Hassur, 14875 Cole Drive, San Jose, 371-0273. Take Camden Ave. off Highway 17 to Cole Dr. Meeting open to all members. -- Please phone in advance if you plan to attend.
- Mar. 17 -- Bird Discussion Group, North County, Friday, 9 a.m. at Barbara Houghton's residence, 650 Gerona, Stanford University Campus, 327-2186. Any member welcome. Birds of the area will be seen. Refreshments will be served.
- Mar. 18 -- Palo Alto Flood Basin Field Trip, Saturday, 8 a.m. Meet at the entrance to the flood basin property. Those wishing to tour the flood basin facilities after the tour should bring a lunch. Leaders: Bob and Carol Yutzy, 968-8804.

- Mar. 21 -- Palo Alto Audubon Wildlife Film, Tuesday, 4 p.m. Palo Alto High School Auditorium, 50 Embarcadero Road. "Vanishing Sea" by Robert Davison. See Sept. "Avocet" for more information.
- Mar. 22 -- General Meeting, Wednesday, 8 p.m., Homestead High School, Rm. 5, Building C. See notes on page 3 on "Ecology of the California Brown Pelican".
- Mar. 22 -- Field Trip North - Palo Alto Baylands, Wednesday, 9 a.m. Meet at the duck pond at the end of Embarcadero Road. Leader: Harriet Mundy, 325-1192.
- Mar. 26 -- Alum Rock Park Field Trip, Sunday, 8 a.m. Meet in the parking lot in front of the Junior Museum. Leader: Betty Burge, 253-3545.

#### BOARD NOTES

The Board heard a presentation by Dr. L. R. Mewaldt of San Jose State College on the bird transactions he has been running on the Wool Ranch above Milpitas. The Ranch is to be put up for sale, and Dr. Mewaldt would like to have the ranch set aside as a refuge and migratory bird research station. Dr. Mewaldt was asking for reactions and support from the Board on his proposal. The Board authorized him to develop a pictorial information portfolio to help in his campaign to secure funds to obtain the ranch.

The Board authorized an expenditure of up to \$50 to help finance an educational cruise for SCVAS members on the floating oceanographic laboratory ship, "Inland Seas". The cruise will be scheduled for sometime later this year. Detailed information concerning the cruise will appear in "The Avocet" when it is available.

#### ANNUAL YOSEMITE FIELD TRIP

This year's annual field trip to Yosemite National Park will be held the weekend of June 3rd. Those interested in attending should plan their reservations now. For more information contact Joe Greenberg at 328-7647.

#### ELKHORN SLOUGH

The Nature Conservancy has announced plans to purchase 116 acres of "choice marsh" in upper Elkhorn Slough. According to William H. Pentony, Elkhorn Slough Project Chairman, the Conservancy has already received \$50,000 from a pioneer Carmel family. An Additional \$100,000 must be raised to complete the purchase.

Elkhorn Slough, just inland from Moss Landing in Monterey, is one of the few remaining salt marshes along the California coast. If you would like to see it saved from the dragline and bulldozer, mail your tax deductible contribution to: The Nature Conservancy, Western Regional Office, 215 Market St., San Francisco, California 94105. Be sure to write "Elkhorn Slough Project" on your check. For further information, call (415) 989-3056.

ECOLOGY OF THE CALIFORNIA BROWN PELICAN

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

Homestead High School  
Room 5, Building C

Much has been said and written about the recent decline and possible extinction of the Brown Pelican. But is it all true? Is the Brown Pelican disappearing from its breeding colonies in the Santa Barbara Channel Islands? What is the actual status of the Brown Pelican?

Form your own conclusions after you have heard the findings of Dr. J. Gordon Edwards and Mr. Richard E. Main. They will illustrate their talk with color slides of the pelican colonies on the Channel Islands, including the rookery on San Nicolas.

Dr. Edwards is Professor of Entomology and Chairman of the Entomology Area, San Jose State College. He is a member of Audubon Society, Sierra Club, and American Alpine Club.

Mr. Main is Curator of the Entomological Museum, San Jose State College, and is a member of Audubon Society and the Explorers Club.

This promises to be a highly interesting and perhaps controversial program. There will be a question and answer period at the end of the presentation.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Frank Farran reports that Montalvo Arboretum was fogged in, but inspite of the fog the group identified 20 species of birds including a Townsend's Warbler; Varied Thrush; Hutton's Vireo; and Red-tailed Hawk.

Frank also reports that it was a good time to visit Coyote Hills Park. The rains had flooded the marshes and they were filled with waterfowl. A total of 50 species of birds were identified in marsh, field, and bay including 10 species of ducks. The more interesting birds seen were Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal; Gadwall; Bufflehead; Great Blue Heron; March, Sharp-shinned, and Red-tailed Hawks; Kite; White-throated Swift; and Great Horned Owl.

HELP NEEDED! 1

Youth Science Institute is seeking volunteers to assist in a public interpretive program at Alum Rock Park this spring and summer. Persons with a knowledge of California natural history, some experience in meeting the public, and a desire to assist the public in appreciation of our California heritage are asked to contact Aletha Powers, 2854 Ponderosa Way, Santa Clara, 95051 (243-3416). Volunteers will be asked to serve an occasional week-end on a rotating basis.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS!!

The 1971 Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 26, 1971 between 4:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Sector leaders were Al Wool, H. T. Harvey, Betty Lou Burge, Mike Brady, and Jerry Balistreri. A total of 129 species was recorded during the count day. Total individuals numbered 38,703. Constant winds between 25-35 mph undoubtedly helped to keep the total numbers low this year. Forty-five observers participated in 17 parties. Total party hours was 118 (81 on foot and 37 by car) with total party miles 399 (67 on foot and 332 by car). The count as a whole was not one of the better for the Santa Clara Valley. The weather, the date of the count, and this being my first time as coordinator and compiler all probably had a negative effect on the count. Regardless of these items, and from talking to many past participants, I got the feeling that enthusiasm for this particular count was at an all time low. Granted, the Santa Clara Valley Count is not in the same class as Point Reyes, San Diego, or Monterey, but it is nevertheless a major count and has the potential of being one of the top five in the state. So, how can it be improved to make it so?

First of all I feel the count center can safely be moved a little to the NW without sacrificing any important parts of other sectors. This would extend the Alviso sector to include more salt marshes and mudflats; habitats which are decreasing each year in the Bay area and particularly in the Alviso sector. Secondly, I would suggest that each of the five sectors be divided into 3-5 new sectors. This would allow more people to actively participate and assume responsibility in addition to assuring more thorough coverage of the sectors. Also, planning for the count should start in September to allow more and better publicity. Field trips could be arranged at this time to introduce new sector leaders and participants to their count areas. Lastly, the success of the count is directly related to the number and enthusiasm of the birders participating. We had some highly qualified participants this year; we just needed more of them. All of the above would help to regenerate the enthusiasm this count needs. A special committee has been formed to evaluate these and other suggestions on improving our Christmas Count; we would more than welcome any ideas you have.

Following are the results of the count.

Ed. Note: SCVAS extends its thanks to all those who participated in the count; and especially to Bob Gill, whose workload on the count was enormous.

Species	Alviso	Evrgrn	Calvrs	SoWst	Alum Rk	Total
Eared Grebe	301	0	9	0	0	310
Pied-billed Grebe	1	1	7	0	0	9
Double-Crstd Cormorant	10	0	11	0	0	21
Great-blue Heron	1	1	0	0	0	2
Common Egret	1	0	0	0	0	1
Snowy Egret	5	0	0	0	0	5
Bl-crowned Night Heron	72	0	0	0	0	72
American Bittern	2	0	0	0	0	2
Canada Goose	0	60	607	0	19	686
Mallard	12	0	22	0	4	38
Pintail	300	0	36	15	0	351
Green-wgd Teal	2	0	70	0	0	72
Cinnamon Teal	8	0	0	0	0	8

Species	Alviso	Evrgrn	Calvrs	Sowst	Alum Rk	Total
American Widgeon	0	0	0	0	1	1
Shoveler	1600	0	0	0	0	1600
Ring-necked Duck	0	6	7	0	0	13
Canvasback	48	0	0	0	0	48
Greater Scaup	130	1	0	0	0	131
Lesser Scaup	2	0	0	0	29	31
Common Goldeneye	0	0	0	0	2	2
Bufflehead	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ruddy Duck	617	3	15	0	200	835
Common Merganser	0	0	3	0	8	11
Turkey Vulture	0	2	0	0	0	2
White-tailed Kite	5	0	3	0	0	8
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	2	2	1	5	11
Cooper's Hawk	0	2	3	0	1	6
Red-tailed Hawk	3	23	12	4	34	76
Golden Eagle	0	2	6	0	5	13
Bald Eagle	0	0	0	0	1	1
Marsh Hawk	7	0	0	0	0	7
Peregrine Falcon	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sparrow Hawk	11	14	10	6	13	54
California Quail	96	95	59	38	55	343
Ring-necked Pheasant	13	1	0	0	0	16
California Clapper Rail	1	0	0	0	0	1
American Coot	601	34	320	0	13	968
Killdeer	51	2	10	8	6	77
Common Snipe	9	0	1	0	0	10
Long-billed Curlew	72	0	0	0	0	72
Whimbrel	1	0	0	0	0	1
Spotted Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	1	1
Willet	423	0	0	0	0	423
Greater Yellowlegs	24	0	0	0	0	24
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	0	0	0	0	1
Least Sandpiper	320	0	0	0	0	320
Dunlin	50	0	0	0	0	50
Short-billed Dowitcher	180	0	0	0	0	180
Long-billed Dowitcher	15	0	0	0	0	15
Western Sandpiper	405	0	1	0	0	406
Marbled Godwit	6	0	0	0	0	6
American Avocet	500	0	0	0	0	500
Black-necked Stilt	155	0	0	0	0	155
Glaucous-wgd Gull	12	0	0	0	0	12
Western Gull	2	0	0	0	0	2
Herring Gull	1525	0	0	0	0	1525
California Gull	7	0	0	50	63	120
Ring-billed Gull	154	0	78	0	550	782
Bonaparte's Gull	304	0	0	0	0	304
Gull sp.	4000	0	0	260	135	4395
Band-tailed Pigeon	0	0	64	9	9	82
Mourning Dove	91	83	4	9	13	200
Barn Owl	0	0	0	0	8	8
Screech Owl	0	0	0	0	3	3
Great Horned Owl	0	0	2	0	9	11
Burrowing Owl	1	0	2	1	0	4
Long-eared Owl	0	0	2	0	0	2

Species	Alviso	Evrgrn	Calvrs	SoWst	Alum Rk	Total
Short-eared Owl	0	0	1	0	0	1
White-throated Swift	0	0	12	0	35	47
Anna's Hummingbird	1	9	3	3	17	33
Belted Kingfisher	0	0	0	0	3	3
Red-shafted Flicker	7	68	37	18	76	206
Acorn Woodpecker	0	3	10	2	43	58
Yellow-bel. Sapsucker	0	4	0	0	1	5
Hairy Woodpecker	0	1	0	0	1	2
Downy Woodpecker	0	2	0	0	2	4
Nuttall's Woodpecker	0	3	6	1	7	17
Black Phoebe	0	8	3	0	4	15
Say's Phoebe	0	5	1	0	0	6
Steller's Jay	0	25	8	0	142	175
Scrub Jay	7	63	36	25	286	417
Yellow-billed Magpie	0	37	218	0	30	285
Common Crow	0	167	19	8	76	270
Chestnut-bak. Chickadee	1	21	6	5	29	62
Plain Titmouse	0	32	19	10	227	288
Common Bushtit	15	63	75	35	365	553
White-brst. Nuthatch	0	2	6	2	3	13
Red-brst. Nuthatch	0	0	0	0	2	2
Brown Creeper	0	0	0	0	3	3
Wrentit	0	3	7	0	20	30
Dipper	0	0	0	0	3	3
Bewick's Wren	0	2	2	0	3	7
Long-bl. Marsh Wren	30	0	0	0	0	30
Canon Wren	0	0	0	0	4	4
Mockingbird	22	17	0	37	31	107
California Thrasher	0	0	0	0	11	11
Robin	1	14	4	148	102	269
Varied Thrush	0	0	6	0	75	81
Hermit Thrush	0	1	0	0	26	27
Western Bluebird	0	6	13	0	59	78
Ruby-crw. Kinglet	0	11	5	2	52	70
Water Pipit	112	2	18	18	0	150
Cedar Waxwing	30	250	0	10	146	436
Loggerhead Shrike	9	13	4	1	5	32
Starling	5500	38	51	500	524	6613
Hutton's Vireo	0	2	0	0	1	3
Myrtle Warbler	0	4	0	0	0	4
Audubon's Warbler	8	50	1	6	21	86
House Sparrow	80	25	6	34	73	218
Western Meadowlark	168	142	390	22	78	800
Red-winged Blackbird	208	1267	12	155	2	1644
Tricolored Blackbird	3	0	0	0	0	3
Brewer's Blackbird	140	135	260	2150	576	3261
Brown-headed Cowbird	9	0	0	0	0	9
Purple Finch	0	2	10	3	0	15
House Finch	762	597	126	125	252	1862
American Goldfinch	0	2	0	1	35	38
Lesser Goldfinch	52	287	22	58	223	642
Lawerence's Goldfinch	0	25	0	0	0	25
Rufous-sided Towhee	2	85	19	0	31	137

(Cont'd. on page 7 )

Species	Alviso	Evrgrn	Calvrs	SoWst	Alum RK	Total
Brown Towhee	11	0	39	44	94	188
Savannah Sparrow	35	0	53	0	0	88
Lark Sparrow	0	20	185	0	3	208
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	0	0	8	0	0	8
Oregon Junco	14	223	525	7	230	999
Chipping Sparrow	0	0	5	0	0	5
White-cr. Sparrow	600	350	38	200	322	1510
Golden crn. Sparrow	37	404	300	50	191	982
Fox Sparrow	0	0	3	0	1	4
Song Sparrow	79	0	4	6	10	99
Total:	20,102	4,826	3,942	4,087	5,745	38,704
No. of species:	78	63	71	41	75	129

Bob Gill

MORE ON PALO ALTO BLACKBIRDS

The "blackbird" roost in the Stanford Industrial Park (Feb. Avocet) represents a fantastic gathering of European Starlings. When I censused this roost in mid-January it contained approximately 7,000 birds. These should gradually disperse until most or all are gone by March. The spectacular aerial display described by Mrs. Whipple represents a departure from former Starling behavior in this area and may be evidence that the local wintering population is now sufficient for initiation of displays similar to those found at European roosts.

European Starlings were first introduced into the United States about 1900 and wintering flocks had reached the Santa Clara Valley by 1952. The first Starling nesting may have occurred here by 1957 or 1958. At first the local Starling roosts were small and aerial displays did not occur.

It is fairly easy to distinguish the roosting behavior of Starlings from that of other "blackbirds". The Brewer's Blackbirds' roosts are locally fairly small (less than 1,000 birds/roost) and this species sits on wires or nearby shrubbery making a fantastic racked before retiring. On the other hand, Redwing Blackbirds approach the roost area in groups of 10 to 35 and tumble immediately into the roost like falling autumn leaves. The Starling's flight pattern is direct or gliding and their wings and body resemble a drawn bow and arrow.

At this roost they silently circle in changing aerial display until the wheeling circle contains all 7,000 birds. Then precipitously, like a tornado funnel, they enter the roost and set up a horrendously noisy good-night chorus.

Ruth Troetschler

A CHANGE

Joyce Todd, Treasurer of SCVAS has changed her phone number to 493-7893.

## WILDERNESS WORKSHOP - MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA

The Wilderness Workshop, an informal nature study session, will be held June 19 thru 29, 1972. Directors for the Workshop will be Ginny Hill Wood, co-owner of Camp Denali, Mrs. Pat Pyne, hiking guide, Louise Potter, author of "Wildflowers Along the Mt. McKinley Park Road", and Celia Hunter, also of Camp Denali management, who will assist in program presentations. Since 1961, this ten day workshop has attracted nature lovers from all parts of the U. S.

The program features daily field trips into varied terrain and habitats, with the hiking geared to the ability of those participating. Late June in the McKinley Park country is the time of maximum nesting activity for waterfowl and tundra species, and is likewise the time of most luxuriant wildflower blooming. Those who call tundra bleak and barren have never examined closely the ground under their feet in June: the variety of plant life in one square foot of tundra is incredible.

One of the highlights of the workshop experience is the three-day campout at Igloo Creek in McKinley Park. This area offers delightful hiking to magnificent view spots, along routes that assure each workshopper they can "make the top", and share the thrill of viewing vast expanses of landscape with perhaps a band of Dall sheep perched on rocky spires nearby.

The Workshop draws in visiting research people to explain their projects in the park; people like Gordon Haber, the "Wolf Man", who described his observations of wolf family relationships to us during the 1971 workshop.

For information write to Camp Denali, Box D, College, Alaska 99701.



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