

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Inc.

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# The Avocet

TIME VALUE

Volume <sup>20</sup>~~19~~, Number <sup>1</sup>~~10~~

January, 1973

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- January 9 Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday, 8:00 pm at the home of Harriet Mundy, 757 Tennyson Avenue, Palo Alto, 325-1192.
- January 9 Bird Discussion Group, South County, Tuesday, 9:30 am at the home of Kathrine Lintott, 17150 Buena Vista Avenue, Los Gatos, 356-4264. Topic: "Inside Birding from the Window"
- January 10 Field Trip South, Mount Hermon, Wednesday, 9:00 am. Highway 17 to Mt. Hermon Road. Turn off. Right on Mt. Hermon Road 2 miles. Left at Mt. Herman sign where new road continues on to right. One mile to parking lot at left. On a recent scouting trip Crossbills were seen. Leader: Fannie Zwaal, 292-2060.
- January 13 Coyote Hills Regional Park, Saturday, 9:00 am. East across Dumbarton Bridge. Left on Jarvis Road. Left on Neward Bluv. about one mile. Left at sign to park. Meet at first parking lot on left. Trip open to public. Leaders: Mr. and Mrs. Les Sleeper, 323-9370.
- January 17 General Meeting, Wednesday, 8 pm, Homestead High School, Room 5, Building C. Dr. Howard Cogswell, Professor of Biology at California State University Hayward, will discuss "Movements of Bayland Birds." See Program Note on page 3.
- January 18 Bird Discussion Group, North County, Thursday, 9:30 am at the home of Polly Cooperrider, 1153 Santa Cruze Avenue, Menlo Park, 325-1852. Polly will show slides of her Audubon African Safari. Bring Binoculars.
- January 21 Joice Island Refuge, Sunday, 10:00 am. Interstate 80 to West Texas Street turn off at Fairfield. State 12 east out Fairfield. Right on Grizzley Island Road. 4.5 miles to meeting place at the Joice Island turn off on right. About 85 miles from San Jose. Leader: A member of the Fish and Game Department Staff.

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- January 23 Audubon Wildlife Film, Palo Alto High School, Tuesday, 4 pm. Robert Fultz's film "Sky Island: Arizona's Chiricahua Mountain Range" will be shown. Tickets available at the door.
- January 24 Field Trip North, Palo Alto Baylands, Wednesday 9 am. Meet at duck pond at end of Embarcadero Road. Leader: Kay McCann, 327-4138.
- February 4 Monterey--Pacific Grove, Sunday, 9:30 am. Meet at Coast Guard pier on south side of Monterey Harbor. Leader: Bill Reese (Monterey Audubon Society), 375-2740.

Car Pool Coordinators

North County: Alice Oberg 326-8794  
South County: Nanette Whittgenstein 354-9420

U.C. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT STUDY PROGRAM

"Birds of the San Joaquin Valley" and "Birds of Prey" are two weekend courses announced as part of the University of California Extension's spring natural environment study programs.

The Los Banos Wildlife Area will be the site of the San Joaquin Valley course, scheduled for Saturday-Sunday, March 3-4, with an introductory evening lecture Wednesday, February 28, at the UC Extension Center in San Francisco. The course, offered in cooperation with the State Department of Fish and Game, will give participants an opportunity to observe the migratory behavior of birds and to study flight patterns and routes, waterways, and the functions of wildlife refuges. James P. Mackey, professor of biology at California State, San Francisco, is the instructor.

Extension and the San Francisco Zoological Society are cooperating in the "Birds of Prey" course, to be held Friday evening, March 16, at the Extension Center and March 17-18 at the San Francisco Zoo. It will provide a study of the raptorial birds and will give some emphasis to their relationship with man--in falconry, and today in the problems of threatened habitats and pesticides. Zoologist Paul D. Maxwell, other staff members of the zoo, and additional authorities make up the course faculty.

Enrollment in the San Joaquin Valley course is limited. Further information about the content of the two courses, optional academic credit, registration fees, and enrollment procedures is contained in Extension's spring natural environment brochure, which also describes a wide variety of other activities, including overseas ecology study-tours to the Amazon Basin, the Galapagos Islands, and East Africa. To receive a copy write to University of California Extension, Natural Environment Studies, 2223 Fulton St., Berkeley, California 94720.

PROGRAM NOTE

Wednesday  
January 17, 8 pm

Homestead High School  
Building C, Room 5

MOVEMENTS OF BAYLAND BIRDS

Dr. Howard Cogswell, Professor of Biology at California State University, Hayward, has been studying bayland birds for many years. With three major airports fronting on the bay, and many dumps attracting birds in the same vicinity, his knowledge of the movements of bayland birds is essential to the survival of both birds and people on planes. Dr. Cogswell's program, "Movements of Bayland Birds," will cover local area movements, day to day movements, and daily movements. Where are those shore and water birds at high tide, at 10:00 am on the second Wednesday morning of February, or whenever else you want to see them? Dr. Cogswell will tell all at the January General Meeting.

BOARD NOTES

Motion carried to authorize Nancy Holmes to spend \$34 for printing of Tide Lands Profile Brochure for the SCVAS Education Program.

Motion carried to contract with the Peninsula Conservation Center for library space and cataloging reviews for our library display space, and phone services for one year from the opening date of the center.

Motion carried to give proper recognition for any and all illustrations or material from other publications used in The Avocet.

FEDERAL EAGLE PROTECTION BILL

Passed by the 92nd Congress was the bill increasing the penalties for killing or molesting bald or golden eagles and plugging loopholes in the old law. For a first offense of "knowingly" or "with wanton disregard" causing the death of an eagle, there can now be a fine of up to \$5000 and/or a year in jail--and double that for a second offense. Offenders' grazing permits can be revoked . . . Meanwhile, legal action on the 1971 shootings is moving slowly ahead. Court action against a helicopter operator on a Colorado charge of eagle shooting began this month, and a major trial in Wyoming is expected to begin in December.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

North County Areas

Mr. Ronald B. Arps	Box 6702	Stanford, California 94306
Mrs. Osmon C. Fox	1990 Channing Avenue	Palo Alto, California 94303
Barbara Locke	14405 DeBall Drive	Los Altos Hills, Calif 94022
Mr. Michael Manson	Dept. of Biological Science	Stanford, California 94305
	Stanford University	
Caroline Peck	73 Erstwild Cite	Palo Alto, California 94303
Mr. Walter H. Saenger	998 Bonneville Way	Sunnyvale, California 94087
Mrs. James G. Sharp, Jr.	850 Webster Street #280	Palo Alto, California 94301
Joanne Smith	924 East Evelyn Avenue	Sunnyvale, California 94086
Nanci Anderson	3418 Rainbow Drive	Palo Alto, California 94306
Mr. & Mrs. Richard H. Price	810 Garland Drive	Palo Alto, California 94303
Jane A. Anderson	457 Wilton Avenue	Palo Alto, California 94306
Merritt A. Alden	1523 Woodland Avenue	Palo Alto, California 94305
Mr. John Barrows Jr	2236 Oakwood Drive	East Palo Alto, Calif 94303
Mr. & Mrs. G. Brumfield	734 San Fafael Place	Stanford, California 94305
Richard A. Cox	1077 Arquew Avenue	Sunnyvale, California 94086
Mrs. Zella Cushman	Stevenson House C235	Palo Alto, California 94306
	455 E. Charleston Road	
Mrs. R. D. Muril	24011 Jahil Lane	Los Altos Hills, Calif 94022
Michael J. Pearson	2171 Via Escalera	Los Altos, California 94022
Mr. R. Polhman	P.O. Box 11223	Palo Alto, California 94306
Ted Porter	P.O. Box 7821	Stanford, California 94305
Mr. John S. Schroeder	396 Van Buren Street	Los Altos, California 94022
Mr. Thomas F. Slick	811 Seale Avenue	Palo Alto, California 94303
John L. Thompson	1175 Altamead	Los Altos, California 94022
	Miramonte School	
Carl VanDuyne	Escondido Village	Stanford, California 94305
	116 Quillen	
Marvin L. Yates	1075 Syracuse Drive	Sunnyvale, California 94087

South County Areas

Mr. Jim Dunn	12810 Woodmont Drive	Saratoga, California 95070
Jean & Ronald Estey	3448 Woodside Lane	San Jose, California 95121
Dr. & Mrs. Gene Medinnus	1195 Clark Way	San Jose, California 95125
Mrs. Frans Ludding	1189 Lynbrook Way	San Jose, California 95129
Myrtle Lytle	2349 Shibley Avenue	San Jose, California 95123
Mr. Stan Nicholas	1827 Dalton Drive	Milpitas, California 95036
Miss Paula Pennington	7453 Heatherwood Drive	San Jose, California 95129
Katherine Price	1902 Dry Creek Road	Campbell, California 95008
Mr. Edward Ramsay	784 Aurora Avenue	San Jose, California 95129
Mr. Peter J. Snider	5760 Park Manor Drive	San Jose, California 95118
Mr. Howard A. Stapleton	1076 Terra Noble Way	San Jose, California 95132
John M. Vancil	1084 Belvedere Lane	San Jose, California 95129
Mrs. Sol Van Praag	1139 Beno Oak Court	San Jose, California 95129
Mrs. William Wood	1515 Alpine Avenue #1	Santa Clara, California 95051
J. Casaretto	2820 Almaden Road	San Jose, California 95125
Mrs. Dwight Caswell	15095 Fruitvale Street	Saratoga, California 95070
Mr. Franklyn Clerk	12150 Country Squire Lane	Saratoga, California 95070
Margaret Ingebretson	1185 Hampton Cite	San Jose, California 95120
Connie King	1487 Mt. Hamilton View Drive	San Jose, California 95116

Mr. John S. Merrhennet	20200 Lucille Avenue #84	Cupertino, California 95014
Kathleen Rickert	1035 Steinway Avenue	Campbell, California 95008
Ms. M. Rose	560 Park Cite	Santa Clara, California 95050
Mr. Gary Seghi	1253 South 7th Street #97	San Jose, California 95112
Dr. Ronald R. Uyeyama	175 North Jackson Avenue	San Jose, California 95116

Out of County

M. S. Garbowitz	Redwood Open School 18335 Big Basin Way	Boulder Creek, California 95006
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FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Kay McCann states 28 birders showed up for the November trip to Foothill Park. Of the 23 species observed Townsends Warbler, Red-Breasted Sapsucker, Huttons Vireo, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet were very much in evidence.

Frank Farran Reports on the following trips:

Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory: Robert Steward of the staff lead us through his routine of netting, examining, banding, and releasing birds. Noteables on hand for the show were several Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, a Wrenit, a Hermit Thrush, and a Clay-colored Sparrow. The Clay-colored Sparrow is rare in California. It was a most interesting morning. In the afternoon a group of us went to Limantour Lagoon.

Sunol Regional Park: It was a gloomy morning--not really good birding conditions, but we saw thirty species including Kingfisher, Hermit and Varied Thrushes, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Black and Say's Phoebes, and Western Bluebird.

Palo Alto Baylands: Forth four species were seen including a great many Black-crowned Night Herons, a close up look at a Virginia Rail, 9 species of ducks, a White-tailed Kite, and Yellowthroat. The high point of the day was a male European Widgeon in with several American Widgeon.

Frank Farran reports for the October Isenberg Ranch trip that the early fall rains had washed down the woods and turned the dry fields green again. It was a nice day to be in the country. In all, 33 species of birds were seen including Townsend Warbler, Ban-tailed Pigeon, Varied Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Creeper.

After lunch a small group went across the pasture to see what might be found on a little lake. There wasn't much at the lake, but on the way a large bobcat was spotted several hundred yards off. He must have seen the bobcat watchers, but seemed little concerned. After grooming himself, he walked slowly off into the chaparral.

At about the same time a small flock of Ravens came over. All of the birds seemed in a playful mood, but one had a special talent. He was carrying a small stick which he repeatedly transferred in flight from bill to talons and back. Finally the branch fell from his grip and dropped to the ground.



REMEMBERING MISS EMILY

As mentioned in last months Avocet, Emily Smith, a founder of SCVAS, spent many hours in the Big Basin area. The following article appeared in the March 1928 Condor and describes Miss Smith's observations of Black Swifts in the Berry Creek Falls area of Big Basin Redwoods State Park . . .

BLACK SWIFTS NESTING BEHIND A WATERFALL  
by Emily Smith

Finding nests of Black Swifts (*Cypseloides niger borealis*) behind a waterfall in a not very remote canyon of the Santa Cruz Mountains last summer was an exciting surprise. Many visitors to Berry Creek Falls have told of seeing the dark, long-winged birds dart in through the falling water, but I had not dreamed there were nests there.

The nest I first saw, however, was not behind the falls, but a little to one side in a niche twenty feet above the pool which lies at the base of the sheer seventy-foot cliff. It was disclosed by the bird flying to it to feed its sitting mate. Although there were fifty persons moving about in full view and within seventy feet of the nest, it had flown straight to a point just below the niche, and flat against the wall had fluttered up to the nest. The feeding was quickly done, and the bird was soon streaking down the canyon. That was July 16. Three days later I returned to look more carefully at the nest. I could not get closer than the edge of the pool, but from there the nest thirty feet away was in plain view, a thick, round mat of moss and possibly some mud, set in an almost square little niche in the rock wall. The wall roundabout, covered with mosses, five-fingered ferns, and other moisture-loving plants, was dripping wet. The early morning sunlight slanting in on the nest showed the outer side to be hoary with fine drops of water. For an hour the sunlight, coming through the redwoods, passed on and off the bird sitting on its damp nest.

July 27 Mr. A. G. Vrooman of Santa Cruz accompanied me to the nesting site and assured me that I had not made a mistake. The egg had hatched, and there was a surprisingly large, downy gray bird sleeping on its mat of moss. While we watched, a swift sped over our heads and in through the falls fifty feet above the pool. Dimly through the falling water we could see it flutter its wings and then disappear into a niche. Mr. Vrooman suggested the possibility of a nest there behind the falls, but we could see nothing.

Three weeks later (August 16) in the middle of the afternoon I again saw a swift go in behind the falls in the same place, and soon afterwards, another dive in much lower down. Twenty minutes later a third swift appeared, and twittering, joined the second bird. Then, after reaching a better vantage point for observing, I saw, indistinctly, three birds and a nest behind the falls, only eight feet above the pool. Two heads were bobbing together, a young bird being fed by one of its parents, presumably the father, while the other parent looked on. The feeding was accompanied by a clicking sound, which I only faintly heard in the noise of the falls. After the father had left, the mother crept up onto the nest, and humping herself over the young bird hovered it, one long wing drooping over the side of the nest. She was still hovering when I left at six o'clock.

The next morning when the early sunlight penetrated the falls (the falls face southeast) I could see plainly the nest, hardly more than ten inches back from the main stream of the falling water. Some of the moss of which the nest was constructed appeared green

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and living, given the nest a cushiony look. The young bird was snuggled down in it, and suggested a fat little mouse until it stretched a wing showing short quills. The sunlight also revealed a nest where Mr. Vrooman had suggested there might be one. The young bird in the third nest was preening itself in the filtered sunlight, and appeared, with its long, white-tipped wing quills, to be as old as the first young bird, now more than three weeks old. Although there were droppings in several places on the cliff, I could not find any more nests.

During my visits with the Black Swifts I noted down everything I observed, but it did not take a large notebook to hold all my observations. As was Mr. Michael's experience while observing nesting Black Swifts in Tenaya Canyon, there were long hours when nothing happened. My observations concerning the appearance and behavior of the young birds correspond so perfectly with those recorded by Mr. Michael in his article in the CONDOR for March 1927 (xxix, p. 89) that it would be only repetition to record them here.

Mr. Michael's conclusion that "the young birds can, and do, go long hours without food" was corroborated by observation of the young birds at Berry Creek Falls. On each visit my chief interest was in finding out how often and when the young birds were fed. Unfortunately, I was not able to spend a whole day with the swifts until August 25, and then the youngest bird was more than two weeks old. I had not seen Primus (so named because he was the first discovered) fed during my four previous visits with him. I had, however, seen Secundus fed at about four o'clock in the afternoon, and again the next morning at half past nine. I suppose being a very young bird he was fed more than once on each of these two days. But August 25 they all were fed only at nightfall. That day my sister and I managed to cover the four and half miles from camp to the falls before a quarter past five o'clock in the morning. As we approached we heard soft, low cheeping notes, and then in the dim light saw birds circling and darting about in the small amphitheater in front of the falls. It was impossible for the eye to follow them or count them, they flew so swiftly and the light was so faint. One could be seen chasing another, and then we could see several fluttering up the cliff and disappearing behind a long, and almost immediately half a dozen swept by us. By half past five, before it was light enough to see clearly, every bird had left. From then until sunset not one of the swifts returned.

Just before sunset Primus backed out of his nest, and clinging to the threshold of the niche, exercised his long wings. Seven times he vibrated them, with short intervals of rest during which his wonderful wings were stretched wide against the rock. Suddenly a swift, surprisingly light gray in color, "plastered" itself against the wall below Primus, and motionless watched us for fifteen minutes. Primus, seeing no reason for concern about us, scrambled back onto the nest and waited patiently for his meal. Finally the old bird fluttered up and for two minutes in the fading light we could see it feeding the young one by regurgitation. Then the other bird arrived, darker and seemingly larger, and immediately we guessed it was the mother. She fed the young bird for four minutes with only very short pauses, while the father was going on in the nests behind the falls. Soon swifts were rapidly circling and darting about in the dim twilight. We saw Primus' father slip away from the nest and swerve by us. Then we saw swifts settling here and there on the wet rock wall, some starting up again for one more turn. But as was the case in the dim morning light, we could not count the birds. Possibly there were only six outside of the nests. When we left shortly before seven o'clock we could still see the faint forms of Primus and his mother on the nest in their little niche.

We nature guides in Big Basin consider these nests, and any eggs or nestlings they may ever contain, as our prize exhibit; and also, by right of discovery, our private property. We want everyone to see nesting Black Swifts at Berry Creek Falls, And so, hands off, please, Mr. Egg Collector!

The following article was submitted to The Avocet by Ron Jurek, California Department of Fish and Game, as General Information and a request for information useful in the Department's shorebird studies . . .

MOUNTAIN PLOVERS IN CALIFORNIA

The mountain plover doesn't live up to its name: it doesn't live in the mountains. Furthermore, you won't normally find this little shorebird near the shore.

This brown-backed plover is essentially a resident of the plains. It nests on the grasslands and semidesert areas east of the Rockies from Montana to New Mexico. The wintering grounds are primarily in the southwest states and in Mexico.

Each year a segment of the mountain plover population flies west from the breeding areas to winter in California, where the birds are present in large flocks from about September through March. In central California they occur in the Central Valley south of Marysville; important areas are the southwest portion of San Joaquin Valley and many of the valley plains in the Central Coast Range. In southern California large numbers winter in Imperial Valley. Occasionally these birds are sighted on the coastal plains of southern California, where the species was abundant before urbanization.

Mountain plovers inhabit grassy or nearly barren areas where brush or other tall vegetation is sparse or absent and where terrain is flat or gently rolling. In agricultural areas the birds may feed in newly plowed fields. Flocks sometimes follow planting, disking or harvesting equipment, feeding on organisms dislodged from the soil. Insects and other invertebrates in or on the soil constitute the entire diet of the mountain plovers.

Department of Fish and Game requests information on mountain plover sightings in California. Such information is needed to help us determine the current status of the species in our state. We urge bird watchers to report past or current observations. Whenever possible the following information should be given:

1. Date of sighting
2. Specific area
3. Number of mountain plovers observed
4. Type of habitat bird was using
5. Name of observer

Also, look for colored leg bands on mountain plovers. Color banding is being done in conjunction with a breeding population study in Colorado.

Please report observations and color band information to Ron Jurek, Department of Fish and Game, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, California 95814.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION  
(Cut out and send with remittance)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: (Please check)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$12 individual

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 family

Please remit proper amount with application

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 Drive, San Jose, 95132. Staff: Elsie Hoeck, addressing; Charles and Fanny Zwaal, mailing, 476 Clifton Avenue, San Jose, 95128. Please notify the Zwaal's in writing if your address has or will change.