

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Inc.

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SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA 95128

AUDUBON SWITCHBOARD: 321-6008

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# The Avocet

TIME VALUE

Volume 20, Number 3

March, 1973

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March 6 Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday, 7:30 pm at the home of R. Jay Andree, 12579 Radoyka Drive, Saratoga, 257-2038.
- March 6 Bird Discussion Group, South County, Tuesday, 9:30 am at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga, 867-4748. Topic: "Comparison of Purple and House Finches."
- March 11 Owling Trip, Sunday morning, 4 am. Meet in lot across from Roberts General Store in Woodside. Hope to get Pygmy, Saw-whet, Screech, Horned, Barn, Short-eared and Burrowing Owls. Leaders: Bob Yutzy (968-8804), Ted Chandik, and Bob Dyer.
- March 14 General Meeting, Wednesday, 8 pm, Homestead High School, Room 5, Building C. Dr. Howard Shelhammer, Professor of Zoology, San Jose State University, will discuss "Wildlife Survival During Desert Summer." See Program Note on page 3.
- March 14 Field Trip South, Stevens Creek Park, Wednesday, 8:30 am. Stevens Creek Blvd. west to Foothill Blvd. Left on Foothill about two miles. Meet in parking lot at dam. Leader: Helen Stack, 245-1591.
- March 22 Bird Discussion Group, North County, Thursday, 9:30 am at the home of Louise Blakey, 625 Tereat Lane, Los Altos, 948-8930. Topic: "Show and Tell something of bird or nature art which delights you--painting, carving, ceramics, books, etc."
- March 23-25 Pinnacles National Monument. We have reservations for Group Camp No. 15 for Friday and Saturday nights. See article on page 2. Leader: Frank Farran, 252-3874.

(Cont'd on page 2)

- March 28 Field Trip North, Daveneck Ranch, Wednesday 9 am. Interstate 280 to Moody Road. West on Moody about 2 1/2 miles. Left at "Hidden Villa" sign about 1/2 mile. Leader: Carol Zabal, 948-5671.
- April 3 Audubon Wildlife Film, Tuesday, Palo Alto High School Auditorium, 50 Embarcadero Road, Palo Alto, 4 pm. Tom Sterlings' "Twentieth Century Wilderness"--depicting wilderness areas throughout the USA.
- April 6-9 Morongo Valley Field Trip. See article on page 7. Leader: Frank Farran, 252-3874. This trip will include a 4 day weekend--Friday through Monday.
- April 15 Duveneck Ranch, Sunday, 9 am. Interstate 280 to Moody Road (Foothill College) turn off. West on Moody about 2 1/2 miles. Left at "Hidden Villa" sign about 1/2 mile. Park near corrugated iron barn. Leader: Ruth Troetschler, 948-4142.

Car Pool Coordinators

North County: Alice Obseg 326-8794  
South County: Manette Whittgenstein 354-9420

HELP! -- A RIDE NEEDED

SCVAS member Mrs. Eugene Riebe, would like to go birding if she can find someone to drive her. She will share expenses. Mrs. Riebe would like to make arrangements with someone living in Los Altos. If you are interested please phone 948-8649.

PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT WEEKEND FIELD TRIP

The salient geological feature of the Pinnacles National Monument is the spectacular eroded volcanic rock formations. These areas provide a nesting habitat for Ravens, White-throated Swifts, Rock and Canyon Wrens, and until recently Peregrine Falcons. However, the area is, in the main, quite typical chaparral habitat with such birds as Rufous-crowned, Sage, and Black-chinned Sparrows, California Quail, Scrub Jays, and Wren-tits.

Plans will be tailored to the desires of the members on hand; but will likely include an early morning walk, a hike to the interior of the park, and a night walk for owls and raccoons.

To get to the Pinnacles take State 25 south from Hollister for 31 miles. Turn west at the sign and proceed about 4 miles to the park (it is about 75 miles from San Jose.) Tell the Ranger you are going to Group Camp No. 15. The group camping fee is 75¢ per night per person 16 years and older, to be paid to the trip leader at time of arrival. You may camp with us either or both nights. Since space is very limited, reservations with the trip leader are mandatory.

If you are not a camper, you may make a day trip of it, either Saturday or Sunday. Meet us at Group Camp No. 15 by 9:30 am. The entry fee for day use is \$1 per car. There is one possible, but unlikely, problem with a day visit. When all parking spaces in the park are taken, visitors must park outside the gate and walk in.

Frank Farran  
252-3874

PROGRAM NOTE

Wednesday  
March 14, 8 pm

Homestead High School  
Building C, Room 5

WILDLIFE SURVIVAL DURING DESERT SUMMER

After the rains of winter, what better place to spend a vacation than in the desert? The birds, the kangaroo rat, the tortoises, and insects are at their spring best. But how do they survive summer, when the ground surface temperature is 150°F., the air too hot to breathe, and water is a mirage?

Learn how at our March general meeting. Many of you have had the fun and pleasure of knowing our speaker from your participation in Field Studies. He is Dr. Howard Shellhammer, Professor of Zoology at San Jose State University, who will tell you of some of the marvelous ways animals are adapted to survive in the desert. You too may survive better, knowing how other species live. Dr. Shellhammer's slides and explanations of what you'll see, and how it all works will make your trips much more pleasurable.

OIL SUMPS--THE DECEPTIVE KILLERS

Phillip P. Schaeffer, Western Regional Office, National Audubon Society, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento 95825, has recently completed a study of oil sumps in the San Joaquin Valley. Following are some of the findings and remarks from his study:

"From an airplane flying low over California's southern San Joaquin Valley, one can look out and see hundreds of tiny ponds dotting the arid earth below. They reflect, like jewels, the blue and white of the sky and clouds above.

Walking across this featureless landscape, broken only by the steel framework of the equipment used to draw and process the vast reserves of oil from beneath the Valley floor, the ponds in the distance still appear jewel-like. But as one gets closer the reflections give way to a new recognition; a thick coating of oil covers their surface. Even closer now, dark objects are seen to litter this oil surface. Those dark objects are the birds, the reptiles, and the animals of the San Joaquin Valley . . . dead and dying. These are not just ponds, these are oil sumps.

Union Oil's Santa Barbara spill caused the loss of approximately 3,500 birds; Standard Oil's San Francisco Bay spill resulted in the destruction of some 7,000 birds. Contrast those catastrophies with the losses incurred in the oil sumps; based on California Department of Fish and Game statistics, approximately 50,000 waterfowl die in these sumps each year. Losses of shorebirds, songbirds, and raptors can be conservatively estimated at over 100,000 birds each year. Add to that the unknown numbers of mice, rabbits, snakes, squirrels, gophers, coyotes, deer, and even domestic sheep and dogs who become trapped and die in the oil sumps. The much publicized spills pale in comparison to the magnitude of this tragic situation virtually unnoticed and unattended to for over seventy years.

In 1967 the Department of Fish and Game issued a progress report on the problem which stated:

The cooperation of most oil companies in preventing losses of wildlife in oil sumps has been outstanding. The oil industry is to be commended for its excellent attitude in dealing with this problem.

This viewpoint was reiterated in each semi-annual progress report issued on this problem from 1964 to 1971. G. Ray Arnett, Director of the California Department of Fish and Game and a former official of the Atlantic-Richfield Oil Company, at a staff meeting in early 1971 praised the efforts of the major oil companies to clean up the sumps.

However the glowing praise was, if not totally undeserved, at least premature. The Department's own survey in 1971 indicated an estimated 1,500 oil sumps still existed causing a continued significant loss in wildlife.

According to the Department's estimate, it took the oil industry seven years to eliminate only 200 of these killer sumps.

By 1971 the National Audubon Society, provided with information on this disaster by some of its members, began its own intensive investigation. In an effort to determine the degree of industry awareness of the situation, the executives of the individual oil companies were asked what their view of the problem was concerning wildlife losses. Some interesting responses were garnered: --While admitting to having a voluntary sump elimination program, a vice-president of Getty Oil stated, "Contrary to your suggestions (on the destruction of wildlife in oil sumps) we feel our practice in field operations reflects. . . protection for wildlife."

A Department of Fish and Game one-day survey of just three of Getty's oil sumps revealed they contained 154 dead birds.

--The manager of field operations for Atlantic Oil Company observed, "I have been in these fields since 1938 and have never seen a waterfowl on an oil sump." Three days after his reply was made, two Atlantic sumps were found to contain dead waterfowl.

--Another operator, Emjay Oil Company, replied, "There has been no loss of wildlife in several years in the 20 sumps we operate. We cannot suggest any remedial measures that might be taken as no problems in our area appear to exist." A check of one of these twenty sumps, subsequently to this reply, uncovered the bodies of 300 birds.

At a meeting between National Audubon Society and oil industry representatives it was revealed that in 1971 there were not 1500 oil sumps but in fact over 6,000. As a result of their accelerated clean-up program, however, there will only be 1,500 open oil sumps left by mid-1973.

The regulator of the oil industry in California, the Division of Oil and Gas, is a specially funded agency based on revenues from the operations of the industry it regulates. Charged by the state legislature in 1970 with responsibility for protecting the environment from oil and gas operations, the Division has instituted a "get tough" policy with recalcitrant operators. One year after the implementation of this policy a National Audubon Society survey revealed that there were still 1,500 open oil sumps in the San Joaquin Valley.

The ineffectiveness of the state agencies stands in sharp contrast to the action taken by the federal Bureau of Land Management. Under J. R. Penny, Director of BLM for California surface management requirements for all oil operations on their holdings have been revised. The oil leases on these federal lands require that on issuance or renewal, "All sumps or tanks must be covered or screened in such a manner as to prevent loss of bird and all other forms of wildlife." While oil leases on BLM land in the San Joaquin Valley are minimal, this action is applauded by the National Audubon Society for the direction it provides in solving this wildlife problem.

Considering the international status of the waterfowl which are being destroyed in tremendous numbers, the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has been strangely silent until questioned by the National Audubon Society on their position. Without referring to the International Bird Treaty signed by the United States, Canada, and Mexico, John Findlay, Regional Director for the Bureau, commented on the current status of the problem, "Some gains have been made, but the magnitude of the improvements is relatively small when looking at the total ecological scope. Based on recent aerial information we believe the rate of improvement is not fast enough and could be expediated."

It is not just the conservationist who should be concerned over this destruction but the hunter as well. Their money, consolidated through the California Duck Stamp program and by membership in groups such as Ducks' Unlimited, is devoted to purchasing habitat areas, for example, to insure a sustained waterfowl population. The significant amount of good for wildlife accomplished by the Duck Stamp program and the activities of Ducks' Unlimited and other similar organizations is, in good part, offset by the casual loss of wildlife, particularly waterfowl, to the killer sumps.

Because this disaster does not occur on the beaches of Santa Barbara or under the heavily trafficked Golden Gate Bridge there have been no cries of public indignation. Through the efforts of the National Audubon Society, a program of public information has been launched to provide the facts on this problem. This program is national in scope because the problem is national in scope. It is not unique to California, but also in every other oil producing area of the country. In Texas, Louisiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Pennsylvania birds have been found trapped and killed in oil sumps. The newest expansion of this problem is reflected by a Wildlife Manager of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife in Alaska, "Oil waste ponds exist in the new North Slope oil fields and they are trapping birds."

Meanwhile, until firm action is taken by the oil industry, preferably voluntarily, but mandated if necessary, the birds and animals will continue to be lost.

#### PENINSULA CONSERVATION CENTER

Peninsula Conservation Center (See January Avocet) is the nerve center of all unified efforts--individual and group--to protect the Peninsula's ecological balance. Since founding in 1971, PCC has been a rallying point in every major Peninsula conservation issue.

PCC serves as an ever-present check-and-balance against well-organized, well-funded efforts to capitalize on the Peninsula's natural resources without regard for ecological impact. Legislative processes in Sacramento are constantly monitored by PCC. Each day PCC lends aid--and encouragement--to conservationists, legislators and attorneys seeking sound environmental controls at local, state, and federal levels. Each day PCC counsels scores of individuals confronted by "backyard" environmental problems.

PCC publishes reports on environmental impact studies, issues press releases, conducts seminars, trains teachers, visits classrooms, and maintains a speakers bureau.

For more information contact: Peninsula Conservation Center  
1176 Emerson Street  
Palo Alto, California 94301  
415-328-5313

#### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

William P. Van Lindt	1125 Minnesota Avenue #11	San Jose, Calif. 95125
Mrs. Virginia H. Walker	226 Edelen Avenue #8	Los Gatos, Calif. 95030
Lesley Whitaker	122 Towne Terrace #5	Los Gatos, Calif. 95030
Mr. D. Webb	248 D Calle Marguerita	Los Gatos, Calif. 95030
Ms. Pamela Wilmoth	485 East Williams	San Jose, Calif. 95113

#### Out of County

Beverly Pleis	178 Graduate Hall UC Davis	Davis, California 95616
Ranger Donald G. Patton	Redwood State Park	Big Basin, California 95006
Gary & Maureen Stebbins	8969 Lompico Road	Felton, California 95018

### FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Les Sleeper reports 36 birders for the January trip to Coyote Hills. It was foggy early in the morning and they could hear but not see the ducks on the flooded fields. As the fog lifted, hundreds of Pintails, Mallards, and Shovelers came into view. Most seemed to have paired off for the journey north.

Continuing around the park, 55 species were observed, including a few Gadwall Ducks, unexpected for that area. A Great Horned Owl was seen above the picnic tables.

Kay McCann reports 30 species sighted by the 26 people who attended January's Palo Alto Baylands trip. Highlights of the trip were Great Blue Heron, American and Snowy Egrets, and European Widgeon. Cackling Geese, the smallest species of Canada Geese, were on the duck pond. Many species of shore birds were seen on the mudflats beyond the Interpretive Center.

Bob Clement, Morgan Hill, spotted a lone White Pelican flying the area of Coyote Creek and Metcalf Road at Highway 101 on New Years Day. He says this was the first one he's seen in Santa Clara County, although he has seen them around Los Banos in the past.

Betty Kaiser and Tom Myers report seeing a small flock of White Pelicans flying over the Dunbarton Bridge Audubon Sanctuary on December 22. Also on New Years Day they report a Bald Eagle seen on Mt. Hamilton Road.

### BAY AREA AUDUBON COUNCIL MEETING

Items of particular interest to SCVAS members discussed at January's BAAC meeting were:

South Bay Refuge: Mr. Bergeron reported that Walter Steiglitz has been appointed as manager, a man of vast experience. There is continuing trouble with acquisition of the bayside flats due to controversy over whether the lands have historically been in public use. Statements from anyone who has used them in the past are badly needed. See February Avocet.

Garbage Disposal: Mr. Beyer reported on a San Francisco proposal to create the world's largest garbage dump in Solano County. Mr. Hurd reported a similar problem exists in Santa Clara County, where San Francisco wants to fill a marsh.

Mr. Howard pointed out that it is now reported to be both technological and economically feasible to process all waste for reuse rather than using it for landfill. Two contracts for such projects have recently been let in Chicago and New Orleans.

Oil Sumps--Mr. Schaeffer reported that aerial surveys of the San Joaquin Valley show the oil dangers to birds to be as severe, or worse, as they were a year ago despite many assurances of cooperation and clean-up by the oil industry. Therefore there will be a massive nationwide publicity campaign to arouse public demand for controlling legislation. A slide show is being prepared and a report will be sent to all chapters. See article elsewhere in this issue.

DINNER GUEST

The Avocet received the following note recently and found it entertaining:

Dear Editor,

One Saturday morning at the end of September, I poked my head out through the sliding glass doors that face our yard and fishpond. With a loud flapping of wings, a Great Blue Heron arose from the pond and flew into a nearby tree. A few minutes later, while I stood gawking, he left, with many squawks for having been disturbed. On close inspection of the pond, I discovered all my large expensive goldfish had been gourmet fare for the heron! I thought it quite fantastic that the heron had spotted our tiny (6' by 10', 18" deep) pond and dropped in to dine, although I mourned briefly for my unfortunate fish!

Since then the heron has been back at least three times that we know of. We've gotten his picture, and have the camera ready and waiting for the next visit. What I'm wondering is . . . has anyone else had a heron for a dinner guest?

Mrs. James Wayne  
405 Laurel Glen Road  
Soquel, California 95073

MORONGO VALLEY FIELD TRIP

Morongo Valley, which we will visit Saturday, is the best area in Southern California for Spring migrant birds. In addition, Vermilion Flycatchers, Summer Tanagers, Verdins, Gambel's Quail, and Costa's Hummingbirds nest there. On the way down, on Friday, we will look for Condors. On Sunday we will go to Indian Canyon (typical lower desert oasis) in the morning; and Mt. San Jacinto Tram (high mountain birds) in the afternoon. All those planning to go contact Frank Farran at 252-3874.

AUDUBON NATURE TRAINING

ANT has become popular as a fresh approach for adults, young and old, who are interested in observing, enjoying, and interpreting the natural processes of living things.

Together a class explores a backyard, schoolyard, city park, vacant lot, to find out what nature is doing. ANT "discovery" teaching approach stimulates awareness, curiosity, questioning, and the appreciation of nature--thus giving students the desire, the ability and the pleasure of thinking ecologically.

A course meets for four, six or eight weekly sessions. Each session includes at least one hour out-of-doors. These outdoor explorations are supplemented by indoor discussions, demonstrations, and displays.

Audubon Nature Training originated at Berkeley's Nature Center in Aquatic Park; classes now are held throughout the entire Bay Area.

For spring 1973 dates, locations, fees, and enrollment information please contact:

Audubon Nature Training  
Golden Gate Audubon Society  
2840 College Avenue  
Berkeley, California 94705

AUDUBON LEADER REPORTS

The January 26 issue of Audubon Leader notes:

WE'RE OPTIMISTIC \* 140 nations are coming to an intergovernmental conference hosted by the U.S. in Washington February 12 - March 2 to perfect and sign an international endangered species treaty. Nat'l Audubon had recommended that the Stockholm Conference not attempt to sign a treaty because earlier drafts had some basic flaws that needed to be remedied. Optimistic that the new draft will result in an "excellent" treaty if accepted, Nat'l Audubon has worked with the U.S. and other governments as well as non-governmental inter-nat'l bodies and other private conservation organizations in the preparation of the working paper which has been circulated by the U.S. as the basic text for the conference.

The Convention on International Trade in Threatened Species of Wildlife, many years in the making, would bar most trade across international boundaries of animals and plants now threatened with extinction. A stringent system of controls would be set up to regulate the limited exceptions to the pact. Protected would be those species which are threatened with extinction and those which are not yet so threatened but are in danger of reaching that point. A further provision ensures that the treaty will not pre-empt stronger national laws and allows nations to list other species they wish to be protected under the treaty. It thus basically adopts the principles of the U.S. Lacey Act, which we had feared would be undercut by the earlier drafts. The Lacey Act prohibits imports of wild animals or their skins if taken or shipped contrary to the laws of another nation.

The Society has been invited to attend the Washington conference as an observer and will be represented by Chaplin B. Barnes, director of our new office of international activities, who commented for us on the working paper (which incorporates several of the Society's suggestions).

LATE BULLETIN FROM MIAMI. IN A SURPRISE 4-3 VOTE THE METRO COMMISSION, RULING BODY OF DADE COUNTY, FLA., REJECTED THE PROPOSED JETPORT SITE THAT HAD WON THE APPROVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND AN INDEPENDENT STUDY GROUP (LEADER, 1/12/73), THUS REOPENING THE QUESTION OF AN 'EVERGLADES JETPORT' AND THE TRAINING STRIP NOW THERE.

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 Hoek, 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.