

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Inc.

Chapter 0515 of the National Audubon Society
1176 Emerson Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301
Telephone: (415) 328-5313

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 1290
San Jose, Calif.

The Avocet

TIME VALUE



HARRY V LATHAM
1085 394 TASMAN DR
SUNNYVALE CA 94086

Mailed: 3-28-75

Volume 22, Number 4 (2900 copies)

April 1975

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Apr 6 Field Trip, Sunday, 8:00 A.M. Bird banding and watching at the Cheeseman's in Saratoga. Sunnyvale-Saratoga Rd. or Los Gatos Saratoga Rd. to Saratoga. West on Big Basin Way, meet by Saratoga Theater parking lot on left just past Third Street. We will car pool from here to Cheeseman's so be on time. Leaders: Gail & Doug Cheeseman 867-1371
- Apr 8 Bird Discussion Group Tuesday, 9:30 A.M. at the home of Catherine Lintott, 17151 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos., "In Quest of Double-Crested Cormorants"
- Apr 9 Field Trip South, Canyon Drive, Saratoga, Wednesday, 8:30 A.M. Saratoga-Los Gatos Rd. to Belle Ct. (about 1 mile from Saratoga or 3 miles from Los Gatos). Park near 15355 Belle Court. Leader: Manette Wittgenstein, 354-9420.
- Apr 12 Field Trip, Coe Park Back Pack, Saturday and Sunday. South on 101 to
13 Morgan Hill, east on Dunne Ave. across Anderson Reservoir & up into the hills. Dunne becomes Mineral Springs Road; and after 10 miles or so of mountain driving the road ends at park headquarters. Be there by 8:00 A.M. Saturday. There is a fee for park use. The trip is designed so that those who do not wish to spend the night may start out with us on Saturday & return after lunch. These day hikers should bring lunch & water & be prepared for a strenuous hike. All backpackers must sign up by phone with the trip leader. Backpackers MUST be equipped with hiking boots, light weight packs, down sleeping bags, dried food, pack stove, water purification tablets and a tarp or pack tent. With proper selection of gear and food a pack should weight about 20 pounds for an overnight trip. If you aren't in good shape or don't have previous backpack experience, please don't attempt the trip. Leader: Diana Matthiesen, 867-5363 or 227-2336 (days)

- Apr 14 Board of Director's Meeting, Monday, 7:30 P.M. at the Peninsula Conservation Center (address above AVOCET logo). Members are welcome.
- ✓ Apr 16 General Meeting, Wednesday, 7:30 P.M. at the Palo Alto Baylands Interpretive Center (east end of Embarcadero Rd. in Palo Alto). The program: "Rare Birds of Central California" with Mr. Bob Yutzy (please see note in this AVOCET).
- Apr 23 Field Trip North, Wednesday 9:00 A.M. to San Francisco Watershed. We'll drive to Pilarcitos Lake, park there, bird below the lake, eat a sack lunch, and return to the cars. Or a group may hike 2-4 miles to Stone Dame if they desire. ALL must stay until about 3:30 P.M.; we will be behind locked gates. NOTE -- we can only take 7 cars in so contact leader first for arrangements. Directions: Drive North on 280 and leave at the Millbrae exit. Drive North on the road that parallel 280 for about 1 1/2 blocks to a Chevron gas station. Park there and car pool. Bring sack lunch and water for the trail. PLEASE contact leader: Kay McCann, 327-4138 or Carol Zabel, 948-5671.
- Apr 27 Pajaro Dunes Field Trip, Sunday, 9:00 A.M. South on Route 1 from Santa Cruz to vicinity of Watsonville, right on Riverside Drive, right almost immediately again at gas station, left at first stop sign and go toward beach on beach rd. The Pajaro Dunes Gate House is at end of Beach Rd. You will be directed from there. Leaders: Ricky and John Warriner, (415) 851-1936
- Apr 30 Bird Discussion Group, Wednesday, 9:15 A.M. at the home of Yvonne Weiberg, 138 Cervantes Road, Portola Valley (Westridge), 854-6230. Topic-Bring your favorite bird and/or nature books for sharing and discussion. Also bring binoculars. (Note day and date change -- I'm going to New Orleans!) Ione Bradley, 327-5973
- May 11 Seielstad Ranch Field Trip, Sunday, 8:30 A.M, LaHonda Rd. to Skyline Blvd. right on Skyline to Bear Gulch Road on left. Left on Bear Gulch Rd., keep to right on Bear Gulch Road for about 3 1/2 miles to a gate. You will be met here by the trip leader. Leader: Howard Wolcott, 321-6694
- May 12 Board of Director's Meeting, Same Time, Same Station.
- May 14 Field Trip South, Chesbro Reservoir, Wednesday 9:00 A.M. Almaden Expressway South to McKean Rd., left on McKean (which becomes Uvas Rd.) and south 11 1/2 miles. Meet at corner of Uvas and Oak Glen Ave. Hope to see Great Blue Heron Rookery, Wood Ducks and a surprise rarity. Leader: Rae Schmuck, 356-4362

ALTERED STATES OF AWARENESS

"He who has once seen the intimate beauty of nature cannot tear himself away from it again. He must become either a poet or a naturalist and, if his eyes are good and his powers of observation sharp enough, he may well become both."

Konrad Lorenz, King Solomon's Ring

THE APRIL GENERAL MEETING (Wednesday, April 16th)

As mentioned in our Calendar, this month's program is titled "Rare Birds of Central California", and the speaker is THE AVOCET'S own Field Notes Editor, Bob Yutzy. Bob is a birder par excellence, and his slide/talk show will certainly reflect his avocation. He spends many, many long hours at his hobby, plus more time researching who-saw-what-where-when -- his Where It's At Column shows this very well. Were Bob Yutzy forced to give up birding, he might well suffer withdrawal symptoms . . .

Our General Meetings are held at the Palo Alto Baylands Interpretive Center (east end of Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto) and are open to the public. We start at 7:30 P.M. with a short "social", a very brief business meeting about 8:00, and Mr. Yutzy should begin about 8:15. By the way, our Meetings are co-sponsored by the City of Palo Alto Nature & Science Dept. Why not join us with your friends and meet some of the "Rare Birds of Central California"?



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Moss Landing and Zmudowski State Beach -- Twenty people took part in the Wednesday morning trip. Overcast skies and light winds and a high tide at Moss Landing. Forty-three species were seen. The bird of the day was undoubtedly the immature Little Gull, feeding and flying among the numerous Bonaparte's Gulls at Zmudowski on the slough near the parking lot. Three white-tailed kites at Moss Landing with some rivalry displaying were a welcome sight as they have been rare here in previous years. The two resident flamingos across Highway 1 on the salt ponds were also observed. Species seen included Eared, Horned, Western and Pied-billed Grebes; Common and Snowy Egrets, Cinnamon Teal, Shovelers, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, white-winged and Surf Scoters, Ruddy Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Turkey Vultures, Marsh Hawks, Coots, Semi-Palmated Plovers, Willets, Dunlin, Western Sandpipers, Sanderlings, Marbled Godwits, Gulls, including Herring, Heerman's and Ring-billed, Forster's Terns, Anna's Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Violet-green and tree Swallows, Crows, Loggerhead Shrikes, Starlings, Western Meadowlarks, Redwinged Blackbirds, Brewer's Blackbirds, and Savannah, White-Crowned and Song Sparrows.

Esther Ollis

Thirty persons attended the Feb. 26th walk on the Stanford Campus led by Barbara Houghton. Notable among the 28 species of birds seen were purple finch and yellow-bellied sapsucker (red race).

C. Zabel

During the first half of March there was only one day of super bird-watching weather. That was the day 38 of us found 38 species of birds plus some early wild-flowers at Stevens Creek Park, March 12th. The birds seemed to enjoy it as much as we did. Orange-Crowned Warblers and Hutton's Vireos posed endlessly for us. Among the more notable sightings were White-Throated Swift, Red-Breasted Sapsucker, Caspian Tern, Kingfisher, Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, and Brown Creeper. Frank Farran identified the call of a Pygmy Owl. The STAR goes to Barbara Allen for finding the little Anna Hummingbird on her nest.

Jean & Bruce Vesey

April is the time for spring pelagic trips, last looks at many waterfowl species, and the year's first looks at many spring migrants (& vagrants too, of course), though the main tide of spring migration must wait until late April or early May. Keep an eye and ear peeled for breeding birds who are starting to get into it (this is not the time for sex education). The site guide is replaced this month by some field notes on some larger migrant shorebirds. A good choice for sites would be either Point Reyes (see Nov., 74 AVOCET) or Monterey (see May 74 AVOCET) for migrating birds.

What has been labeled by some as the "birding event of the century" has hit the Massachusetts coast. A bird rarely seen even in its own habitat, a winter plumaged adult Ross' Gull was first seen on Jan. 12th and was unheralded. Then on March 2nd and for many days thereafter (it could still be there) it was seen by many (with a cas of thousands). This gull is a high-artic species nesting in river valleys and deltas of N. & N. E. Sibéria. It can sometimes be seen in late Sept. & Oct. at Point Barrow, Alaska-tho many have tried while few succeeded. There is no record in our other 49 states or in Southern Canada. It feeds extensively on insects in summer and small fish and crustaceans in winter. Imagine possibly seeing Ross', Black-headed, Little and Iceland Gulls - all at once! The gull was named after Sir James Clark Ross, a polar navigator and explorer born in 1800. Other important sighting were/are: A Smew (an Arctice/European Merganser) in Southern British Columbia very near Washington. A White-wagtail was only briefly sighted near the Pajaro Rivermouth for the third CA record. The Rusty Blackbird was in Carmel through February. The Bewick's Swan may have been the same bird found last year in Oregon (for first N.A. record). Very few Bewick's are kept in the U. S. and consensus seems to be that this is a wild bird and, therefore, a genuine record. The Little Gull has not been reported since early March and the Ruff has not been seen recently either. The Broad-winged Hawk was seen through the end of February in Monterey.

A Cattle Egret was in Monterey where, from Pt. Pinos, a Black-footed Albatross was seen from shore probably blown inland by the stormy weather. The three Ross' Geese at Crystal Springs Reservoir in mid-January are generally rare away from the Central Valley. An Oldsquaw was in Bodega Harbor, while up to six have been in the Pt. Reyes area. Approximately 100 Mt. Plovers were still in Panoche Valley. An interesting early event was the flushing of a Poor-will along Gazos Creek Road in mid-January in S. M. Co. An albino Ruby-crowned Kinglet (Europe's similar species is called Firecrest - how about American Firecrest) was studied in Tilden Park. A female Williamson's Sapsucker, seldom seen out of the high mountains, was reported visiting a feeder in Los Altos. Did you know that the male and female were once considered two different species (sexual dimorphism)? Many Harris' Sparrows have been at feeders in the Bay Area. Up to four Swamp Sparrows were still at Olema Marsh with a recent individual also at Coyote Hills.

Spring pelagic trips (generally calmer than Fall ones) are cropping up here and there. An exciting field trip to Santa Barbara Island, one of the Channel Islands, is set for May 29 from Oxnard. Write to Lee Jones, Dept. of Biology, Univ. of Cal., L.A. 90024. Some interesting news from Arizona is that a pair of Rivoli's Hummingbirds, five inches of fantastic colors, successfully endured snow and 15° temp. through the Xmas season near Tucson. On the Nogales Xmas Count was a male Coppery-tailed Trogon (the only U. S. Trogoniformes). There are normally only a few pair as summer residents there. Also a female Varied Bunting was in the area. From friends in eastern Massachusetts comes news of their unusual winter layovers: Sandhill Cranes, White Pelican, Northern Three-toed Woodpecker, a pair of Western Tanagers, Varied Thrush, and a Black-headed Grosbeak (as we had a Rose-breasted in Santa Rosa).

Near Woodland sixteen Fulvous Tree Ducks were seen flying over. Los Banos had a male Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal (hybrid). San Luis N. W. R. had a dark phase Swainson's Swainson's Hawk; this species is regular there in summer. Among the regular good

birds at or near Honey Lake was a dark phase Rough-legged Hawk, Townsend's Solitaire, 50+ Pinyon Jays, 10+ Redheads, and one partial nuptial (breeding) plumage Chestnut-collared Longspur with a few of the usual drab ones. Four Snow Buntings were in Del Norte Co., and Brant with Black Brant (they are probably conspecific - same species) at Humboldt Bay. There were also four Oldsquaws, two Common race Green-winged Teal, a Yellow-billed Loon, and both a Tennessee Warbler and Harris' Sparrow at a Glendale feeder. From So. CA comes news that their regular male Tufted Duck wintered, a Ruff (approximately 18 records in CA) was seen in a very emaciated condition and was found dead a week later. There were some 40 Stilt Sandpiper sightings at various places and times this Fall near the So. end of the Salton Sea (very few ever show up in No. CA)

Field Notes on some larger pure transient (migrant) shorebirds. The Red Knot, Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers are usually with us only from April to early May in spring and from July to October in the fall. Red Knots are fairly large with a body size and shape more similar to Surfbirds or Black-bellied Plovers than most sandpipers. It has a fairly short sandpiper bill, stocky body and short legs. The pale gray rump and tail and the white line in the wing are some flight marks. They are often seen in small numbers in tidal flats and shores, especially near inlets. We seldom see the red nuptial plumage; the even gray coloration of the winter plumage is our normal faire. Baird's Sandpiper is a slightly large darkish legged Least Sandpiper. It has a clay-colored appearance, especially the head and breast are very buffy. Birds we see usually have a scaly appearance to the back. The best mark on this bird is that the wing tips (primaries) extend beyond the tail, giving the bird a somewhat longer, slimmer profile than it's relatives. If one studies the Baird's these wing tips are clearly noticeable. These birds are seen both coastally and inland (as is the Knot) preferring slightly drier areas, often only a few feet from Least and Westerns. Ano Nuevo, Pescadero, Carmel and Salinas river mouths are good coastal locations, while the Dumbarton is a good inland locality. Pectoral Sandpiper (or "Grassbird") is a larger peep with heavy breast streaking which ends abruptly and evenly as a straight bib next to a white belly. It has a rather dark reddish-brown back with fine light streaks and a generally longer necked feel than similar peeps. The yellowish-green legs and bill are reasonably good marks. This bird has a definite affinity for fresh water areas (often grassy ones). Pescadero and Carmel rivermouths, Woodland Sugar Ponds and Martinez are good spots. It's voice is heavier, hoarser and more snipe-like than the notes of other medium to small shorebirds. Both Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers are often in small groups.

Here is a free bonus: the pink labial stripe sometimes mentioned as a diagnostic field mark of a Trumpeter Swan is not to be trusted as many Whistler's have it too.

Spring hath Sprung,

Bob Yutzy

Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond;
cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.
—Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar.

A THANK YOU FOR THE OLD AVOCETS

Last month we ran a small note requesting AVOCETS from 1973 for the Colorado State University Library. We received far more than enough to "fill the order". Thank you to all those kind people who took the time and trouble to help us and that library out.

WATER, WATER, WATER

"Our Water Resources are for the Birds and People"

In spite of the high degree of urbanization on the valley floor, Santa Clara County has a great variety of wildlife, including game animals, hundreds of nongame animals, shore birds and songbirds, fish and various marine organisms.

This series of articles will deal with the dependence of the wildlife on the water resources as well as the recreation potential of some of the natural stream beds running from the mountains to San Francisco Bay. Material is taken mostly from "A Plan for the Conservation of Resources - An Element of the General Plan of Santa Clara County" adopted by the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors, June 27, 1973. Water has been a dominant factor in the geological and topographical development of the County. "From the mountains to the 'Bay Mud' which forms the surface deposits in portions of the valley floor, the County's geomorphology is largely a result of water action".

There are five important sources of water as used in Santa Clara County. These are (1) local surface runoff, (2) ground water, (3) raw water from South Bay Aqueduct, (4) treated water from the Aqueduct and (5) water imported by the San Francisco Water Department.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District is the dominant water agency in the County, having been formed to perform necessary work to reduce flood hazards and to insure an adequate supply of water always will be available.

The County has 13 major reservoirs, eight of them operated by the Santa Clara Valley Water District, representing a total storage capacity of about 156,000 acre feet. The 13 reservoirs drain a tributary area of 510 square miles.

It is interesting to note that three of the major policies of the resources element of this General Plan concern themselves with the natural streams of our Valley. #6 - A program of mapping of designated floodways and protecting them with appropriate flood plain zoning regulations should be aggressively pursued by local government. #7 - continued study should be made of ways to achieve reduction of flooding risks without impairing the natural qualities of streams and #8 - the recreation and open space potential of all water features should be fully developed, including watersheds, reservoirs, natural streams and other waterways.

During this series on water resources we will be dealing more directly with major streams but for now it is important to list their locations in relationship to the reservoirs they fill. Alamitos Creek drains into Almaden and Calero Reservoirs; Coyote Creek drains into Coyote and Anderson Reservoirs. Calaveras Creek into Calaveras Reservoir, Chesbro is filled by Llagas Creek, Elsmar by Los Gatos Creek which also supplies Lexington and Vasona Reservoirs. Guadalupe River fills the Guadalupe Reservoir, Pacheco is filled by the North Fork of Pacheco Creek, Stevens Creek, which has a water yield of 1,200 acre feet per year, drains into Stevens Creek Reservoir and Uvas Creek with 4,700 acre feet of run-off annually, fills Uvas Reservoir. All of the streams mentioned continue their natural courses into San Francisco Bay.

The lakes, bays, reservoirs and natural streams are very important for the habitat of birds and wildlife of the Santa Clara Valley. While we may consider urban development for legitimate human needs a necessary and justified modification of nature, many of our development practices, however, are needlessly destructive of wildlife habitats. As we proceed further with this series we will identify the habitat areas together with the potential of the recreational features remaining along the natural water courses of the streams that drain Santa Clara Valley.

Tony Look, Conservation Chairman

ARIZONA DISASTER!

Southeastern Arizona is known by many birders as one of the best areas to observe "speciality birds." Major habitat destruction is proposed for the near future by the Bureau of Reclamation project. The Bureau of Reclamation has proposed a project which will include four dams (Charleston Dam, Hooker Dam, Orme Dam, and Buttes Dam) in southwestern Arizona. The last remaining river bottom lands of the Salt, Verde, San Pedro, and Gila Rivers are now slated for damming or drastic alteration as a result of the massive \$2.1 billion Central Arizona Project (CAP) -- a project which will pump water uphill from the Colorado River into the interior of Arizona. This project will destroy or seriously degrade most of the last remaining fragments of riparian (streamside) habitat associated with the major watercourses of the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. In the process it will probably account for the extirpation of the Gray Hawk from the U. S. as a breeding species -- and a potentially dangerous reduction in the nation's Black Hawk and Zone-tailed Hawk populations. These few remaining portions of once heavily-forested rivers of the Upper and Lower Sonoran Zones of the Southwest should be classified as endangered habitat. Segments of these watercourses, with their valuable cottonwood, willow and mesquite stands which have already been eradicated or seriously degraded as a result of extensive damming, impoundment, channelization, tree and vegetation clearing, and agricultural overpumping next to stream channels.

Specifically . . . The outrage of Charleston Dam will be the extermination of the five pairs of Gray Hawks now nesting on the San Pedro, pushing to the brink of extinction in the U. S. a species which, optimistically, numbers 25 pairs in Arizona, and one pair in New Mexico. This dam is not even needed as part of the project to pump water uphill from the Colorado River into Central Arizona. It is one of these incredible extras.

Hooker Dam will destroy miles of walnut, sycamore and cottonwood vegetation on the Upper Gila River in New Mexico, which presently provides nesting sites for a number of Zone-tailed and Black Hawks. Also, Hooker Dam personifies the wilderness-be-dammed attitude of the Bureau of Reclamation planners, for this dam backs up its waters into six miles of pristine river bottom in the Gila Wilderness of New Mexico. The Gila Wilderness--the first U. S. Wilderness area set aside in 1924 by Federal Act -- was there long before the Central Arizona Project.

Orme Dam, the largest of the four dams of the CAP and situated at the confluence of the Salt and Verde Rivers, will inundate 25 miles of some of the finest desert stream-side habitat in the Southwest. That this about-to-be-flooded stretch of river bottom is outstanding wildlife habitat is demonstrated by the three pairs of Bald Eagles, the Zone-tailed Hawks, Black Hawks, and Ospreys which nest there. The Bald Eagles of the Orme Dam site are a unique population. They are the only desert-nesting Lower Sonoran Zone Bald Eagles in the Southwest.

A recently formed local organization, the C. C. A. P. (Citizens Concerned About the Project) -- not associated with any national organization or conservation group, but supported by local Audubon Chapters (Maricopa-Phoenix, Northern-Sedona, Tucson, Huachuca-Sierra Vista, Southwestern New Mexico) -- has organized to defeat the proposed Bureau's 4 dam projects. They are asking for financial contributions. We felt that many of the members of SCVAS would like to know about and to aid in this campaign as Southeastern Arizona is an outstanding birding area and many of us visit there. If you would like to contribute and obtain more information, please write and make checks payable to: Committee to finance the CCAP, P. O. Box 15102, Phoenix, Arizona 85060.

Betty and John MacDonald

HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS

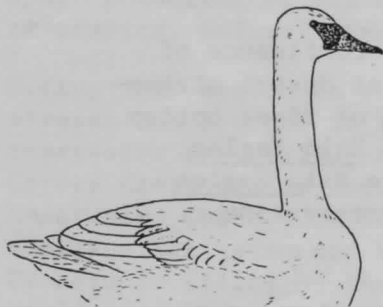
We received the following note from Louise Blakey, our local Hummingbird Expert. We thought you should see it:

WARNING - to all those having or contemplating the purchase of the Perky-Pet "Four Fountains" hummingbird feeder. If this feeder is not cleaned properly dangerous mold and filth can accumulate. Unfortunately no specific instructions come with the feeder and almost 100% of its users are unaware of how to do so adequately. Be sure when cleaning it that you remove the red disc into which you screw the bottle. This looks like an integral part of the bottom "bowl". It isn't! There are two raised guide lines inside, and the words "this side out" on the disc. Pull upward with your finger inside the hole, just to the left of the two raised guide line projections. It will be difficult to remove at first. This feeder can never be cleaned adequately without removing this disc. The flowers that slip over the four upward slanting tubes are also a potential hazard. This is because they catch and hold syrup and debris and mold can develop here too. The flowers are unnecessary. Bee guards on this feeder have proven effective and in other respects it is a very good feeder.

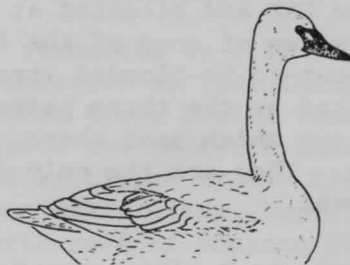
BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOTES FOR MARCH, 1975

1. Frank Farran reported that the nominating committee had made the following selections: Directorships -- Florence LaRiviere, Tony Look and Phyllis Swanson. Vice President -- Florence LaRiviere. Other Officers -- Individuals presently serving.
2. Bob Yutzy moved and R. J. Andree seconded a motion that SCVAS go on record that no motorized vehicles be allowed in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin outside of the frontage road. The motion was approved unanimously.

Trumpeter swan, adult



Whistling swan, adult



THE AVOCET is published every month except July and August. It is sent without additional charge to members of the National Audubon Society who live in this area. Subscription for non-members is \$2.00 per year, payable to the Treasurer. The Editor: David Nauer, P. O. Box 4501, San Jose, Ca., 95126, Telephone: (408) 259-1283 Changes of address should be sent to: Mrs. Horton at 390 N. Winchester Blvd., Building 2, #4H, Santa Clara, Ca 243-6384

