

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Inc.

Chapter 0515 of the National Audubon Society
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The Avocet

TIME VALUE

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December 1975

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Dec. 2 Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday, 7:30 PM, as noted last month, our Board Meetings are now held on the first Tuesday of the month at the Peninsula Conservation Center (address above AVOCET logo).
- Dec. 7 Field Trip, Sunday 9:00 AM, Lake Merritt, Oakland. Meet at the Rotary Natural Science Center. Take the Oak St. exit off the Nimitz Freeway (Route 17), drive east on Oak St., which shortly become Lakeside Dr., which shortly become Harrison St., take a right turn on Grand Ave. and another right turn shortly on Bellevue Ave. to the meeting location. To look for such uncommon ducks as, Redhead, Barrow's Goldeneye, and Hooded Merganser, as well as many common species of water birds. Leaders: Bob and Carol Yutzy, 968-8804.
- Dec. 9 Bird Discussion Group, Tuesday at 9:30 AM at home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga Topic: White-crowned Sparrows.
- Dec. 10 Field Trip South, Central Coyote River Park, Wednesday 8:30 AM, south on U. S. 101 past Capital Expressway to Hellyer exit. Meet in parking lot by lake in Hellyer Park. We'll caravan south from here to the largest fresh water marsh in the county. Leaders: Ted Graf and Manette Wittgenstein 354-9420
- Dec. 21 Christmas Bird Count, Sunday. This year marks the National Audubon Society's 76th annual Christmas Count. Our local count is scheduled for this day; please see note in this AVOCET.
- Dec. 25 Christmas Day, Thursday, all day and may we say with Scrooge: "A Merry Christmas, Bob!"
- Jan. 1 New Year's Day, Thursday, all day with Scrooge once more: "I will live in the Past, Present and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall stive within me."

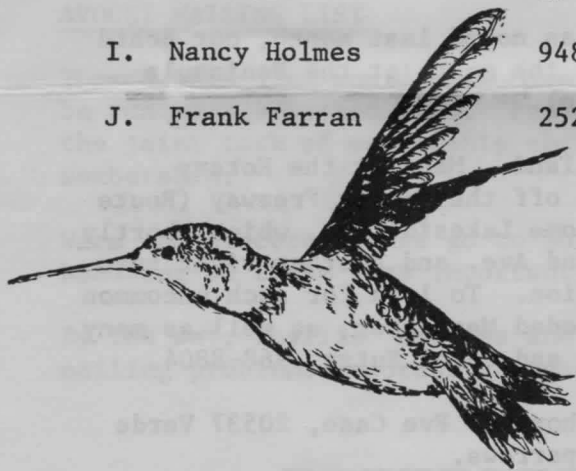
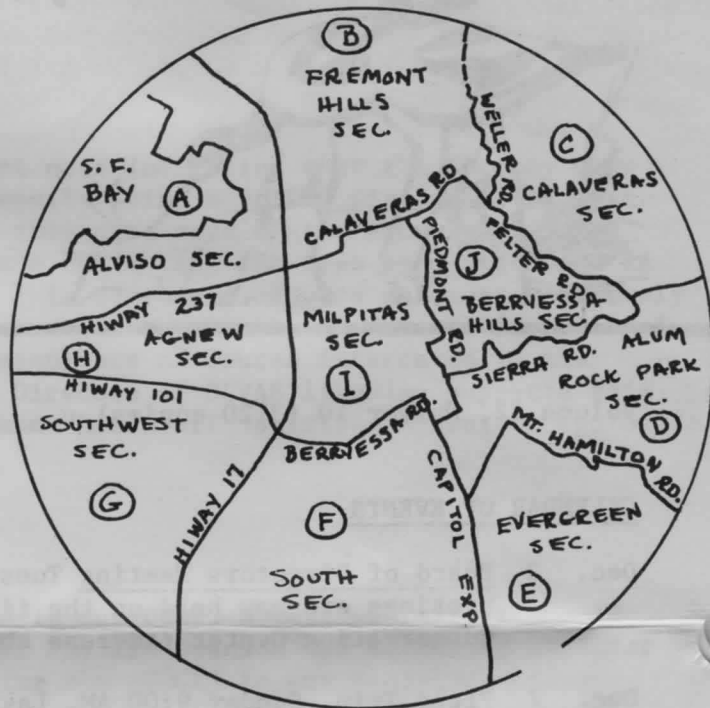
FIELD TRIP REPORT

On Oct. 22, 23 birders visited Foothills Park and noted 35 bird species. A flock of immature yellow rumped warblers, a hermit thrush, a fox sparrow and a hairy woodpecker were among those sighted.

Barbara Allen

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT '75

- | | |
|-----------------|----------|
| A. Cathi Osugi | 792-0222 |
| B. Ted Chandik | 493-5330 |
| C. Dick Mewaldt | 258-7491 |
| D. Jim Rosso | 258-4322 |
| E. Marty Wade | 739-7977 |
| F. Mike Rigney | 277-3023 |
| G. Mike Brady | 998-3159 |
| H. Jim Hale | 294-2625 |
| I. Nancy Holmes | 948-1854 |
| J. Frank Farran | 252-3874 |



Annual Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Sunday, December 21, 1975. Interested persons are asked to choose a likely looking section from the above map and contact the Section Leader. Meet at 7:00 A.M. at a pre-arranged spot on the day of the Count with the Section Leader for assignment to an area within the section. Then go on out and scout up all the birds you can!

Final tally will be immediately following the Count at the Count Compiler's house (address below) and will include supper for all Count participants and interested friends.

Though avid birders tend to get carried away looking for rare birds, it is most important that we also have a working knowledge of the numbers of usual species seen in the area. Feeder watchers within the designated count area (see map above) are urged to contribute their results to the totals so that the Count will reflect all the habitats of the Santa Calra Valley.

For further general information or any questions

Count Compiler
 Phyllis Swanson
 2862 Scottsdale Dr., San Jose, Ca 95122
 274-2349

A GLORIOUS OPPORTUNITY

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society is seeking donations of native plants. Thanks to a very gracious and generous San Jose lady and her concern for wild areas, we are supervising the planting of a couple of acres of a dry, previously ranched, western-facing slope in the low foothills of the Mt. Hamilton range. One day this land will belong to our Society.

Part of the land is thickly grown oak hillside adjoining a creek where we hope to establish a Redwood and Douglas fir grove. In another area we envision a fresh water pond with Alders and Sycamores. A rocky outcropping among native wildflowers will contain such plants as Sticky Monkey Flower, Buckwheats, Bush lupine, California sages, and Sedum.

We presently need native plants that we can transplant this fall. In the conifer region, we will be able to use pines (Digger, Coulter, Torrey) and Cypress (Monterey, McNabb). Especially useful would be chaparral plants -- various Prunus species, Ceanothus, Toyon, Red Berry, Redbud, Garrya, Fremontia, Manzanita, Zauschneria, and others.

If you are able to make any plants available for this exciting project, or if you are able to volunteer labor for planting, please drop me a note or call.

Florence LaRiviere
453 Tennessee Lane, Palo Alto, Ca 94306
493-5540

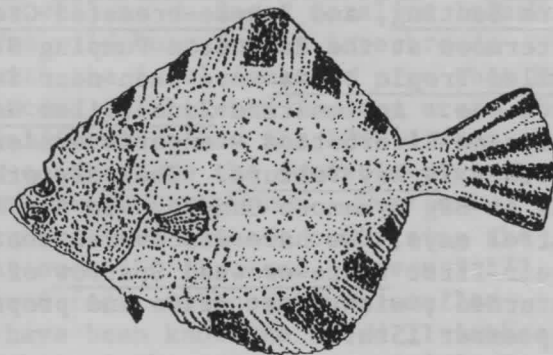
CONSERVE ENERGY.

STARRY FLOUNDER -- by John Walton

Starry flounders (Platichthys stellatus) are flatfish commonly found in the San Francisco Bay. They live in coastal waters, bays, sloughs, and even fresh water delta areas, in depth from a few inches to 900 feet. Their range extends from Point Arquillo northward around the rim of the Pacific Ocean to Japan and Korea. They can be easily identified from other flatfish by the black bands on their dorsal and anal fins and a striped black tail fin. Starry flounders average 16 inches long and weigh around 2 pounds. They are reputed to reach 3 feet and 20 pounds. Like other flatfish the young are born with eyes on each side of their heads. As they mature, one eye "migrates" to the opposite side and the fish begins its

bottom dwelling existence, feeding on worms and small crustaceans. Adults feed on clams, crustaceans, and fish. Starry flounders are given their name for a series of starlike scales found along the base of the fins. They are an excellent food source and are the most common flatfish caught by sportfishermen in the San Francisco Bay.

(Source: John L. Baxter, Inshore Fishes of California)



WHERE IT'S AT -- December '75

December brings Christmas Counts, ducks, geese and wintering hawks, shorebirds, and landbirds. Also watch for the beginning of the southerly Gray Whale migration.

Christmas Counts offer opportunities for novice and expert alike to learn more about birds, have fun, and help gather winter bird population data. Please check for the dates of Christmas Counts elsewhere in this issue. I think it most enjoyable to do a smaller local count such as our own San Jose Count and possibly one of the larger ones, like Point Reyes.

Bay area Birds to look for are: Coastally - Thick-billed Murre, Black Scoter, Red-necked Grebe, N. Fulmar, Oldsquaw, Rock Sandpiper (Bodega Head), Golden Plover in fields. Inland - Barrow's Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser (Lake Merritt in Oakland), European Wigeon (one already in P.A. Floodbasin), Swamp Sparrows (4 already in Olema Marsh), Longspurs (Hall Ranch and Honey Lake), Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks. Fairly complete totals for Bay Area eastern-vagrant or rare migrant warblers include: 11 Black and White, 1 Prothonotary (4th N. Ca. record), 25 Tennessee, 2 Virginia's, 2 N. Parula, 9 Magnolia, 2 Cape May, 10 Black-throated Blue, 6 Blackburnian, 12 Chestnut-sided, 3 Bay-breasted, 56 Blackpoll, 32 Palm, 1 Mourning (9th State record), 1 Connecticut Warbler, 6 Ovenbirds, 7 N. Waterthrush, 44 Am. Redstarts, and a Partridge in a pear tree. There is a pattern to the more common of these birds and that is: Redstarts predominate in early September, by the middle of the month Blackpolls take over, with Palms being by far the most common near the first of October. A Tree Sparrow was banded at Point Reyes Bird Observatory, 16 Cattle Egrets and 2 Bald Eagles were near Bolinas Lagoon. Feeder birds include a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Millbrae, a Brown Thrasher in Oakland, and the return of a Harris' Sparrow in Berkeley. Canada Warblers were seen at Battery Wallace and in Santa Cruz. An Eastern Phoebe and a Prairie Warbler were in Carmel, while Monterey had at least 4 Ferruginous Hawks. Tule Lake had two Tree Sparrows (also Arcata). Two Snow Buntings were in Fairhaven (another in Arcata) and a Laysan Albatross was seen in Humboldt Bay. Active coverage of the Santa Cruz area by a birding friend of ours produced 24 species of warblers including Black and White, Redstart, Tennessee, Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, Palm, N. Waterthrush, and first county records of Virginia's, Magnolia, Cape May, Blackburnian, Ovenbird, and Canada. He also found a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Fulvous Tree Duck and first county records of Bobolink and Lapland Longspur.

In Southern California some of Death Valley's best includes: 2 Scarlet Tanagers (fairly rare), 2 Rusty Blackbirds, Philadelphia Vireo, a Hooded and 3 Black-throated Green Warblers (far more regular in S. Cal. than in N. Cal.), and these fringillids = 8 Harris', 3 Swamp, 6 Tree, 4 White-throated Sparrows, Chestnut-collared and Lapland Longspurs, Dickcissel, Lark Bunting, and 3 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. California Condors can be seen in late afternoon at the Edmonston Pumping Station, east of the town of Grapevine. Four Red-billed Tropic birds were seen near San Clemente Island, California is normally lucky to have one. An immature Zone-tailed Hawk (regular in Arizona and Texas) was seen in the Tiajuana Riverbottom - experts wonder how many of these birds are passed off as just another Turkey Vulture. The only other Connecticut Warbler (other than our Farallon bird) was at Big Sycamore Canyon. In Los Angeles Audubon Society's Western Tanager Shumway Suffel says, "We have discovered that everyone's favorite bird (discounting 'lififers' is their first White-crowned Sparrow of the winter. Many say, 'MY White-crowns have just returned', with great pride and proprietary interest." They reported their first ones on September 15th.

Good Counting and may your
Christmas Bird be a Lifer
(no you can't count Turkey),
Bob Yutzy

NEW IDEAS

With this issue of the AVOCET, we are initiating a new series of natural history vignettes featuring various California flora and fauna. Subject areas will include land mammals, birds, fish and aquatic invertebrates, marine mammals, insects, and wildflowers. (Are there other topics you would like covered?)

This month we are pleased to offer notes by the following authors:

JIM HALE received his B.A. degree in Zoology from San Jose State University and is currently working on his M.A. in Zoology at the same institution. He is a specialist in California vertebrates, particularly the wild boar and mountain lion, and has recently participated in various projects for the State of California Department of Fish and Game and the Federal government.

MICHAEL RIGNEY holds a B.A. degree in Liberal Arts from San Jose State and has been an active bird bander for the past three years. He is coordinator of the Montebellow Ridge Banding Station and was co-leader of the Point Reyes Banding Project this past fall. His special interest is the chaparral community and resident populations of avifauna found there.

JOHN WALTON is currently a naturalist for the City of Palo Alto. He has a B.S. degree from Sacramento State University in Environmental Resources and is presently working on his Master's in Natural Sciences at San Jose State. His primary interests include fish of the South San Francisco Bay, Pliocene mammals of Nevada, various aspects of geology and paleontology, and Indian uses of local native plants and animals.

Natural History Editors, Bob and Carol Yutzy

EUROPEAN WILD BOAR -- by Jim Hale



Truly one of California's most unique faunal members is the wild bear (Sus scrofa). A native of the Old World, wild boar were first introduced into California as a big game animal at Carmel Valley in Monterey County during 1925 and 1926. Other notable introductions have occurred in San Benito, San Luis Obispo, and Tehama counties as well as on Santa Catalina Island. The wild boar freely interbreeds with the feral domestic pigs that have become established in some areas of California since the 1800's when they

escaped from or were abandoned by early settlers. In contrast to the domestic pig, the wild boar is primarily nocturnal, due mostly to severe hunting pressure. They are omnivores with acorn mast, shoots, bulbs, roots, mushrooms, and insects comprising the majority of their diet. An adult male boar may weight over 660 lbs. and be over 3 1/2 feet high at the shoulders with a total length of over 6 feet, although much smaller individuals are more common. The lower canine tusks have been known to exceed 11 inches in length in Europe. In California, the razor blade sharp tusks rarely exceed 6 inches. The longitudinally striped piglets are born 6 to 12 per litter after a 4 month gestation period. Man is the boar's major enemy although mountain lions, golden eagles, and coyotes occasionally may take a few young. This ferocious and cunning creature is undoubtedly the most dangerous of California's mammals when wounded, cornered, or accompanied by young. In recent years, hunting pressure has greatly reduced the range and numbers of this animal. Their last great stronghold is in the rugged Los Padres National Forest south of Carmel Valley.

WRENTIT -- By Michael Rigney

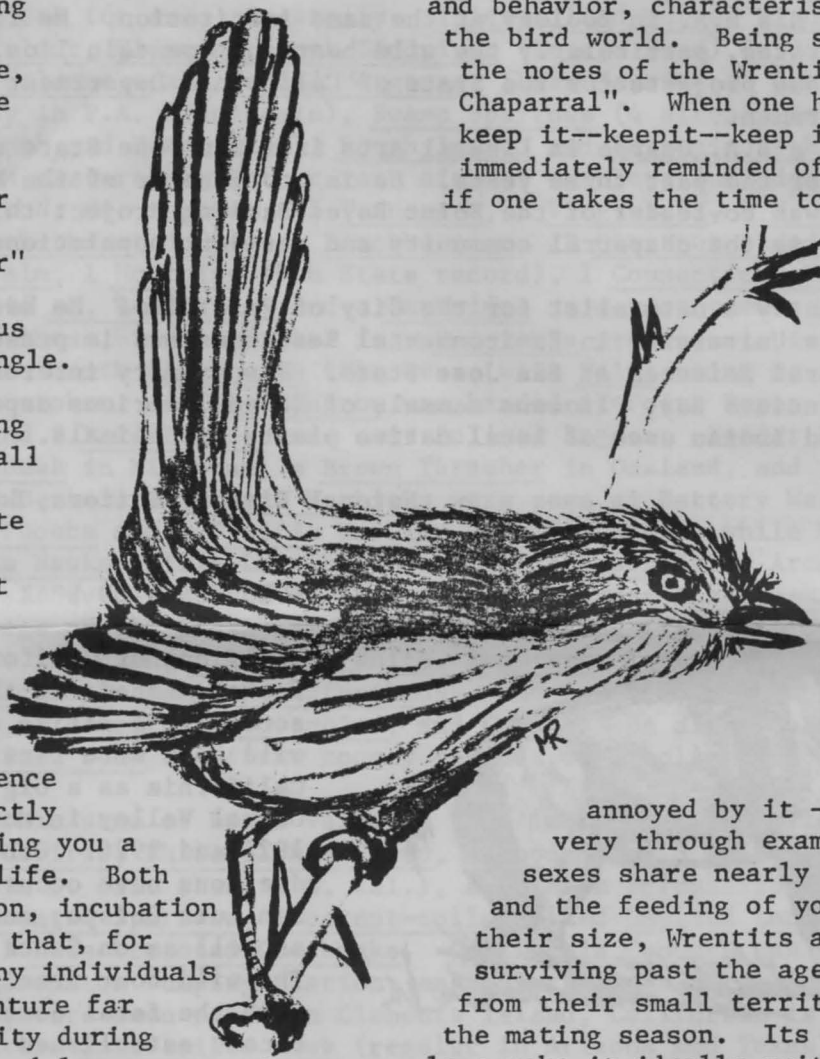
Every year hundreds of avid birders from the U. S. and abroad "flock" to the Santa Clara Valley in hopes of glimpsing a small, drab colored bird which frequents the poison oak ridden Chaparral so common to our area. Rarely seen, but often heard, the Wrentit, Chamaea fasciata, is the only species within the family Chamaeidae, which also happens to be the only family of birds idigenous to the contiguous United States. It is this distinction which attracts out-of-state and foreign bird watchers.

Unfortunately, these visitors rarely have the time to enjoy the pleasantries of song and behavior, characteristic of this animated rarity of the bird world. Being so much a part of the chaparral scene, as the "Song of the Wrentit one is keep-keep-keep-pong ball. However brush a curiously hushed "prrr, prrr-prrr" may often be heard coming from various places with the tangle.

At times, one may glimpse the flitting silhouette of a small brownish-gray bird with a glaring white eye and a long ragged tail held at a sharp angle above the body.

You can be sure this inquisitive bird is well aware of your presence -- possibly distinctly that he/she is giving you a probably mate for life. Both of nest construction, incubation studies have shown that, for long lived with many individuals Wrentits rarely venture far with extreme ferocity during beak, short wings and long brown underbrush of the chaparral. Although not a spectacularly brilliant bird in appearance, its uniqueness and character make the Wrentit one Santa Clara Valley resident in which we can take a great deal of pride.

visitors rarely have the time to enjoy the and behavior, characteristic of this the bird world. Being so much a part of the notes of the Wrentit have been described Chaparral". When one hears the "Keep-keep it--keepit--keep it" strains of the immediately reminded of a bouncing ping-pong ball if one takes the time to sit down near dense



WRENTIT

annoyed by it -- and furthermore, very through examination. Wrentits sexes share nearly equally the task and the feeding of young. Banding their size, Wrentits are exceptionally surviving past the age of ten. Adult from their small territory which is defended the mating season. Its drab color, curved legs make it ideally suited for the dense

the mating season. Its drab color, curved legs make it ideally suited for the dense

BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOTES - November 4, 1975

1. Board voted \$250 to Nicholas Rosa, writer and oceanographer, in order that he might attend the National Whale Symposium in Bloomington, Indiana, in November.
2. Board voted \$250 to Daryle Seil and Joan Combs, to be used to publicize the environmental play, "Do You Remember Martha?" The board endorsed the play as a useful adjunct to environmental education.
3. Board voted to contribute \$300 to Nature Conservancy, for their proposed purchase of Mile High Ranch in Arizona.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS IN OTHER PLACES

Since Bob Yutzy mentioned Christmas Bird Counts in his "Where It's At" column, we'll list a few other dates for you:

Pt. Reyes Peninsula, Dec. 20
Oakland, Dec. 21
Santa Cruz Bird Club, Dec. 21
Palo Alto, Dec. 23

Marin, Dec. 27
Fresno, Dec. 29
Monterey Peninsula, Dec. 30
Los Banos* Dec. 30

*We received a short note from N. King Huber with reference to the Tuesday, Dec. 30 Los Banos Count. These folks would like a little help with their count since their group tends to be quite small. Tuesday is probably a "no" day for some of us, but with waterfowl hunting on weekends, the Count has to be held on a week-day. People who might be interested can contact N. King Huber, 220 Diablo Ave., Mt. View, Ca 94303 (notice, that's a local address!) or call 968-5475.

THE BIRDS OF SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

The AVOCET received the following note from Mildred Comar of the Peninsula Conservation Center:

The Peninsula Conservation Center Gift Shop (address under AVOCET logo) now has offset printed copies of The Birds of South San Francisco Bay Region by Charles G. Sibley. They are \$2.50 a copy (add 75¢ for mailing, third class). This is a 54 page booklet packed with birding information of the highest quality. It's author, Dr. Charles Sibley, is an outstanding research ornithologist and geneticist. Although published in 1952, the material is still pertinent. In the few instances where species and area data have undergone change, the birder can bring his own observations, records and expertise into play. This historical information alone is worth the price -- it is full of such tidbits as, under Pacific Artic Loon, "one was found in a vacant lot in Gilroy, October 19, 1937, and was released in Soap Lake." The dedicated birder will enjoy incorporating this rich localized information into his or her personal pleasure while birding the south San Francisco Bay area.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS

Join the Committee for Green Foothills (CGF) by Christmas and you'll receive a free packet of wildflower seeds. In 1976 Green Foothills will be the only local conservation group with regular paid representatives at all meetings of San Mateo and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commissions. These observers will represent a 2-way communications system, taking CGF ideas to meetings and bringing back reports and alarms to the membership. Here are the facts about membership:

Basic Family membership for 1 year - \$10

Student Membership - \$5

Other categories available, phone CGF at 328-5313 for details on this or anything else.

Think it over; CGF membership is a good step for the environment.

A THANK YOU FROM YOUTH SCIENCE INSTITUTE

Back in October of this year our Board of Directors voted \$300 to help the Youth Science Institute (YSI) with an influx of sick waterfowl this fall. For a 4-week period in September YSI treated some 229 cases of avian botulism. These birds included Shovelers, Pintails, Green-wing Teals, Avocets, Dowitchers, and even a Cattle Egret --- a total of 15 species in all. Most of these birds came from the Palo Alto marshes, and much of the help was volunteer. Recovery rate was about 67%, and birds were released either at Hellyer Park or just let free to fly away from YSI. All in all the program was a success and YSI says thank you!

EGG ON OUR FACE

In our Board Notes for October there was a short note indicating that the Society made a \$350 grant to Mr. Richard Vessel, who is presently doing a Belted Kingfisher project at Oregon State University. We also stated in this same note that the Oregon Fish & Game Commission "contends that the Kingfisher are decimating the fish population and is contemplating a project to remove the birds". This statement of ours was most definitely in error, and we apologize for it. Mr. Vessel assures us that the Commission's official policy is "hands off", though they (the Commission) are of course interested in the outcome of Mr. Vessel's project. The Board of Directors of SCVAS likewise supports this research, and in fact made the grant in this same "hands off" spirit. Again, we apologize for our statement.

AVOCET MAILING LIST

Though this item could well have been mentioned in our Board Notes, we felt it should be run as a separate item. Present Board Member Phyllis Swanson has agreed to shoulder the joint task of membership chairman and mailing the AVOCET to our ever-increasing membership.

Warm and sincere thanks go to both Ken Kidd and Mrs. C. V. Horton, for their splended handling of these very important and time-consuming chores in the past.

By the way, Phyllis' address and particulars are shown on the back of the AVOCET; all mailing problems, address changes, etc. are now her baby. We wish her well



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: Ms. Phyllis Swanson, 2862 Scottsdale Dr., San Jose, Ca. 95122, 274-2349.

