

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 1980

MONO LAKE

A crude nest of plants and debris, set in a rocky depression, contains three brownish grey eggs and a mother California Gull. She is content to sit and wait the allotted time, secure on this tiny island, for the island has no predators.

Suddenly, without warning, a coyote approaches. Frightened, our mother gull leaves the nest; the sleek coyote gobbles the three eggs and turns to look for another nest. Before morning he will find many.

Dear Auduboner,

By now you've probably recognized the above scenario as fact, not fiction, and placed it geographically--Negit Island, Mono Lake, California.

How predators invaded the island has a very simple answer. Negit Island is no longer an island. It has become instead a peninsula, connected to the mainland by a narrow finger of land--an area covered by water until 1979. The continuing water diversion from the Eastern Sierra creeks, which normally feed the lake, has now lowered the water level to expose a land bridge.

For hundreds, perhaps even thousands of years, Negit Island has hosted the great annual nesting of the California Gull. Approximately 25 percent of the total California Gull population nests at Mono Lake.

Now the lake is drying up, and the gulls' habitat is threatened. Without water from those Eastern Sierra creeks, the salinity is increasing constantly and the entire ecology of the lake is changing. Soon the salinity will exceed tolerable levels for the brine shrimp, eliminating the primary food source for breeding gulls and millions of migrating grebes and phalaropes.

I'm sure many of you have visited Mono Lake, and like us are very distressed by what is happening there. Mono Lake is a challenge none of us can ignore.

In May 1979, National Audubon Society filed suit against Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to stop diversions. Since that time the San Francisco law firm of Morrison and Foerster has provided all legal services at no cost. However, these free services will soon be exhausted. The firm generously will continue providing legal counsel for one-half the normal fee. But it is estimated that the National Audubon Society must raise \$100,000 to continue litigation through June 1981. This lawsuit is essential; our support is crucial.

Your chapter Board of Directors is enthusiastically behind the effort to save Mono Lake, and has endorsed a campaign to raise \$12,000 to support the lawsuit. To launch the campaign, your board voted to contribute \$8000 from the habitat preservation fund. Individual board members have donated an additional \$875.00 personally. Checks totalling \$210 from other members leave only \$2915 needed to reach our goal of \$12,000.

PLEASE JOIN US IN OUR EFFORTS. TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. THE GULLS, GREBES, AND PHALAROPES ARE DEPENDING ON US. PLEASE SEND YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF \$25, \$50, \$100 OR MORE TODAY. EVERY GIFT WILL HELP SAVE MONO LAKE. AN ENVELOPE AND REPLY CARD ARE INCLUDED IN THIS AVOCET.

FOR THE GULLS, GREBES AND PHALAROPES OF MONO LAKE, HERE IS MY CONTRIBUTION OF

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Please make your check payable to: N. A. S. - Mono Lake.
Contributions are tax-deductible. Mail to:
NAS-Mono Lake, 1719 Christina Drive, Los Altos, 94022.

Jim Liskovec

Sue Liskovec

David Mauer

Shyllis Swanson

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Dec. 6 Field Trip, Sat., 8 AM, Alum Rock Park. From Hwy. 101 or Hwy. 680 take Alum Rock Ave. east to its end. Meet in the last parking lot, in front of the Youth Science Institute. Good chance for Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Dipper, Canyon Wren, and Golden Eagle. Leader: Jim Russo (251-2582).
- Dec. 7 Boat Trip, Sun., 7:45 AM - 3 PM, Monterey Bay Pelagic Excursion. Cost \$19 per person. Trips leave from Sam's Fishing on Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey. Reserve with check payable to Debi Love Millichap, 302 Oxford Way, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for confirmation. December trips often have Manx Shearwaters, Fulmars, Kittiwakes and lots of Alcids. For more information call Debi (408) 425-8111. Leaders: Jeri Langham and Alan Baldrige.
- Dec. 7 Field Trip, Sun., 1 PM, Gull identification at Menlo Park Sewage Ponds. From Hwy. 101, take Marsh Rd. east to its end. Proceed to the dump entrance, then take access road to ponds. Learn to identify adult gulls; puzzle over immatures. Eight species are likely, including Thayer's Gull. Leader: Bill Bousman (322-5282).

- Dec. 9. Bird Discussion Group, Tuesday, 9:30 AM, at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga, CA. The topic: "Waxwings"
- Dec. 10 Field Trip South, Wed., 9 AM, Los Gatos Creek County Park (Campbell Perculation Ponds). Take Winchester to Hacienda (from Los Gatos--right turn, from Campbell left). Turn left on Dell and right at park entrance bordering large pond. Meet in small parking lot. Restrooms and picnic tables. Good walk for seniors and non-hikers. Excellent birding for wintering waterfowl, Herons, kingfishers, Spotted Sandpiper, Grebes, etc. Call Joan Priest, leader, for further info, 264-0542.
- Dec. 10 Evening Program, Wed., 7:30 PM, Christmas counts and winter bird identification. See note in this AVOCET.
- Dec. 13 Field Trip, Sat., 9 AM, Calaveras Reservoir. Meet at Ed Levin Park. From Hwy 17 or 680 in Milpitas, take Hwy. 237 east to the park (it becomes Calaveras Rd.). Due to limited parking, carpooling is a must. We will look for Bald Eagle and Golden Eagles. Bring lunch. Leader: Don Schmoltdt (251-6133).
- Dec. 14 Field Trip, Sun., 9 AM, Christmas count preliminary. Meet at the Alviso marina. From Hwy. 237 turn north on Gold St. At end, go left on Elizabeth, then 1st right on Hope St. to the parking lot. For many birders Christmas counts are the highlight of the year. In this all-day trip we will cover Christmas count procedures, try out counting techniques on land and water birds, and go over identification of difficult common birds, such as gulls, Scaup, peeps, Dowitchers, and sparrows. Bring lunch, as we will bird Alum Rock Park in the afternoon. Leaders: Mike Rigney (867-7459) and David Houle (856-1069).
- Dec. 21 San Jose Christmas Count, Sun. See all kinds of notes in this AVOCET.
- Dec. 25 Christmas! Thursday, all day! Please have a very Merry One . . .
- Jan. 1 New Year's Thursday, all day! Please have a prosperous one . . .
- Jan. 3 Boat Trip, Sat., 7:45 AM - 3 PM, Monterey Bay Pelagic Excursion. Gray Whales should be migrating. For details, see Dec. 7 Boat trip. Leaders: Ted Chandik and Alan Baldrige.
- Jan. 10 Field Trip, Sat. 9 AM. Rare bird trip. Meet behind Denny's at the end of Hwy. 17 in Santa Cruz. Take the Central District exit. Denny's is on the right. Christmas counts always turn up rare birds. We will look for a few of the best in the Monterey Bay area. Leader: David Houle (856-1069).
- Jan. Whale Trips, 7:45 AM - 2 PM. Monterey Bay Pelagic Excursions is offering these four trips for those who are primarily interested in seeing Gray Whales. Dates and leaders: Jan. 10, Sat. Rod Norden; Jan. 17, Sat. Rod Norden; Jan. 18, Sun. Don Robertson; Jan. 31, Sat. Alan Baldrige. Cost is \$19 per person. See Dec. 7 Boat trip for reservation information.
- Jan. Three Pelagic Boat Trips, 7:45 AM - 3 PM. These trips are designed to see Gray Whales in migration as well as other marine mammals. There may even be a bird or two! Dates: Jan. 3, 17, 31. Place: Monterey. Cost: \$22. Reservations

must be made by contacting the leaders, Doug & Gail Cheeseman, 996-4657 or 4525 (work) or home 867-1371.

- Jan. 21 Mono Lake General Meeting, Wednesday, 7:30 PM. We are hoping that Mr. George Peyton, a member of the Board of Directors of the National Audubon Society, will be our guest for a slide presentation and update on the whole Mono Lake dilemma. This month's Conservation article gives some background on Mr. Peyton's considerable Audubon activities, and we'll let our members know for certain in January's AVOCET. The program would be at the Lucy Evans Interpretive Center in Palo Alto.
- Jan. 24 Condor Conference, Sat., 9 AM - 3:30 PM at Foothill College. We hope to bring together National Audubon's Condor Naturalist John Borneman and Jerry Emory, Executive Director of Golden Gate Audubon for a discussion of this critical issue. We invite anyone to attend and we hope for informed spokespersons from other interested groups to produce more light (but less heat) about the Condor plight. The fee for this affair is \$3; please make your checks payable to SCVAS and mail to: Sue Formenti, 16675 Buckskin Ct., Morgan Hill, CA 95037; phone is 779-8694. Details are sketchy at this early date, but more info in Jan. AVOCET.
- Feb. 7 Field Trip, Sat., Panoche Valley; save the date!
- Feb. 21 Boat Trip, Sat. Monterey Bay Pelagic Excursion. See Dec. 7 boat trip for details. Leaders: Ted Chandik and Arnold Small.



INTRODUCTION TO THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Have you ever wondered why normally sane nature lovers seem to lose what common sense they have left during the Christmas season and partake of a strange masochistic ritual known as the CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. Ever wonder what you're missing?

You lucky individuals who have known the thrill of an all-day bird count must certainly have come away with a not-unjustified sense of satisfaction and probably a few unanswered questions.

Questions like:

What's it all for?

Who's going to make sense of it all?

Do I count Pigeons, House Sparrows and Starlings?

How do you count shorebirds when you can't see the shore for the birds?

How many Least Sandpipers does it take to make a Dunlin?

Was that just an odd looking Redtail or was it a _____?

Did you see all those #\$\$&! gulls at the dump?

These and many other (more important) questions will be answered at a seminar entitled INTRODUCTION TO THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. The event will be divided into two parts. On Wednesday, December 10, at the Lucy Evans Interpretive Center in Palo Alto, a seminar will be held to discuss the rationale behind the CBC, techniques for counting birds, and locations of other counts in the Bay area. Also on that evening Ted Chandik will provide a slide show and instruction on the field methods for identifying similar species of birds.

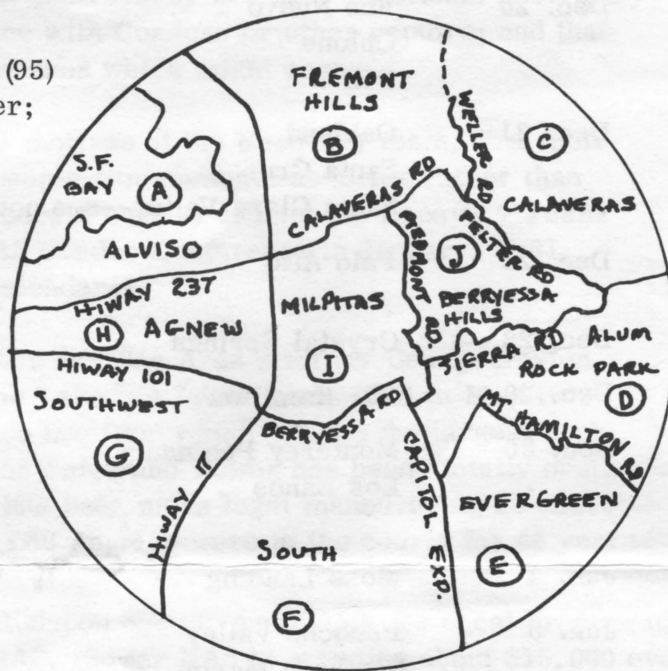
The following Sunday, December 14, all that you learned the previous Wednesday will be practiced in the field. Ted Chandik and David Houle will lead a field trip which will cover a variety of habitats likely to be encountered during the course of local bird counts.

THE 1980 SAN JOSE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

As the date for the San Jose Christmas Bird Count approaches (December 21) we would like to take this opportunity to encourage all S. C. V. A. S. members and interested non-members to contact one of the section leaders to volunteer their services for this important Audubon function.

Last year we had a record number of participants (95) and at least one record sighting (Pectoral Sandpiper; officially the latest record for this species in the state). This year, with your help, we'll do better. But please, if you have a favorite section you would like to count, contact one of the leaders below as soon as possible. If you don't have any preferences as to where you count call any one of the section leaders or count coordinators; we'll find a place for you.

If you have never taken part in a Christmas Bird Count before please plan to attend the introductory seminar and field trip led by Ted Chandik December 10 and 14. **LET'S MAKE THIS ANOTHER RECORD YEAR!**



COUNT COORDINATORS

Jim Liskovec Mike Rigney
 (415) 969-5542 eves. (408) 867-7459

SECTION LEADERS

Section A	Suzie Formenti	(408) 779-8694
Section B	Dave Moore	(408) 293-7124
Section C	Bob Garcia	(408) 730-1234 (eves.)
Section D	Dave Johnston	(408) 258-4322 (Days)
Section E	Kep Stone	(408) 251-2186 (eves.)
Section F	Vicki Silvas-Young	(408) 293-7124 (eves.)
Section G	Mike Newcomer	(408) 736-4176 (eves.)
Section H	Craig Kuziel	(408) 446-9147 (eves.)
Section I	Terry Hart	(408) 245-2673 (eves.)
Section J	Frank Farran	(408) 252-3874 (eves.)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Noted SCVAS President Phyllis Swanson lives! Everybody who knows Phyllis knows that, but very few know she has moved to: 1899 Mountain Creek Court, San Jose 95148 . . . same phone, 274-2349.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS AROUND THE WORLD

THE AVOCET generally runs a list of CBC's that maybe of interest to our readers. The following list is in no way complete, but it could keep even the most avid birder busy. We don't necessarily plug for any particular Count, but some are well-established whereas others are just starting to fly. As, for instance, the 13th annual Los Banos Count generally needs outside help. We received a kind note from Nick Story requesting assistance. Nick guarantees some good birds plus the compilation dinner at one of Central California's finest Basque restaurants (affordable too!). Why not contact him: Nick Story, 1191 Santa Fe Ave., Albany, CA 94706--or phone at (415) 642-5038 (work) or (415) 525-6405 (home). Anyway, here's the list we had at press time.

Dec. 20	Ano Nuevo	Frank Allen	(415) 344-9339
	Ohlone	John Giguette	(415) 537-9105
	*PRBO	Jules Evans	(415) 868-1221
Dec. 21	Oakland	Doug Gomke	(415) 885-1480
	Santa Cruz	Bruce LaBar	(408) 476-7583
	Santa Clara Valley--see note in this AVOCET		
Dec. 22	**Palo Alto	Clark Blake	(415) 948-6058 H 323-8111 X 2221 W
Dec. 28	Crystal Springs	Frank Allen	(415) 344-9339
Dec. 29	Mt. Hamilton	Don Schmoldt	(408) 251-6133
Dec. 30	Monterey Peninsula	Bill Reese	(408) 375-2740
	Los Banos	Nick Story	(415) 525-6405 H 642-5038 W
Jan. 1	Moss Landing	John & Ricky Warriner	(408) 722-5589
Jan. 3	Panoche Valley	Carolyn Frederickson	(408) 228-9516
	Southern Marin	Diane McClung and Courtney Buechert	(415) 388-8679 435-9536
Jan. 4	Arroyo Novato "Cheap Thrills"	Dave Shuford	P. O. Box 385 Inverness, CA

* Fabulous Dinner after Count at Red Barn

** Super high tide--possible Black Rail, Sharp-t. Sparrow

CONSERVATION

BY Allen Royer

Towards the end of October, the Western Regional Office of NAS held an Officer Training Session for Audubon officers from all over Northern California. John Borneman gave an update, as well as historical perspective, on Calif. Condor research and NAS board member George Peyton spoke about the continuing legal battle to save Mono Lake.

The Calif. Condor Program--John Borneman traced the history of Condor field work from Koford and Harrison through the current joint effort of NAS and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The specifics of the current controversy surrounding the death of a Condor chick last summer were summarized in THE AVOCET for September 1980.

Mike Weinstein has been hired as habitat specialist and is doing research into the effects of rodent poisons on the Condor habitat. The Condor Recovery Team has worked on new guidelines

to be used if nests are ever visited again. Two people, including a Senior Biologist, would have to be at any nests visited and visits would be limited to 15 minutes. A veterinarian would also be on hand.

John Ogden and Noel Snyder have returned from South Africa where they observed and worked with Lappet-faced, Cape, and White-backed Vultures. Ogden and Snyder also went to Peru to work with Andean Condors. Six captive-reared Andean Condors from U.S. Fish and Wildlife were released into the wild Peruvian populations of Andean Condors. Five birds were assimilated, but one bird wanted to continue being fed by people.

Borneman continued by pointing out that the current controversy is a very emotional one. Many of the severest critics are people without experience with Condors or other raptors; and that some are looking for someone to blame for any mistakes which might occur.

In summary Borneman asked the public to trust the motives of the Recovery team, that their goal is the maintenance of a wild population, that people communicate as allies rather than enemies, and that rather than relying on rumors, people need to contact the Recovery Team with specific concerns they might have. The SCVAS Condor Conference in January, 1981, should support these goals. (Editor's note: see Calendar!)

Mono Lake--National Audubon Society Board Member and Bay Area attorney George Peyton, gave an update on the legal battles to preserve Mono Lake. A lawsuit was filed in May 1979 with a donation of free legal time by a San Francisco law firm which may be the largest such donation in U.S. history. The Los Angeles Dept. of Water and Power has been "totally obstinate and is doing nothing to preserve the lake." There has been more legal maneuvering as court dates approach. Supposedly the last people to sue Los Angeles were in the courts for 45 years!

At first, the Mono Lake Committee, Los Angeles Audubon Society and NAS were equal proponents of the suit. Now the responsibility is solely with NAS. So far NAS is spending about \$15,000 over contributions. The budget should be about \$100,000 to cover suit expenses through June 1981. The S. F. law firm will continue the suit on a 50-50 fee split with NAS. Calif. needs to raise most of the \$100,000 needed. The Mono Lake Committee will continue to handle public relations and education in both Lee Vining and Los Angeles.

On June 11 of this year, State Senator John Garimeadi and Mono Lake Committee leader David Gaines spoke to the Los Angeles City Council asking them to implement in part the recommendations of the State Inter-agency Task Force. The Council voted 15-0 against their suggestions. In the past, the Dept. of Water and Power has made gifts to the Los Angeles general budget. Last year the budget gift was forty-four million dollars! George Peyton concluded by saying that he feels the lawsuit is the single most important item in the fight for Mono Lake preservation.

1080

1080 and San Jose Airport--In early November, the Mercury News reported several incidences of collisions between airplanes and birds of prey at the airport. The airport's solution was to kill the ground squirrel population at the airport with sodium fluoroacetate (1080). 1080 is an odorless, tasteless salt which dissolves in water and is slow to deteriorate. The poison acts on the central nervous systems, produces violent convulsions, and vomiting. The animal usually dies thirty minutes to two hours after ingesting the poison. The poison also remains active in the carcass and is equally lethal to whatever carrion feeder eats the carcass. At the San Jose Airport this includes other ground squirrels, hawks, burrowing owls, and loose household pets.

A meeting was held on Veteran's Day between SCVAS, the Santa Clara County Humane Society, and San Jose Vice-Mayor Jerry Estruth. All of those present were concerned about finding alternatives to 1080. Estruth expressed concern over the possible long-term effects of 1080. It was mentioned that San Mateo County does not allow 1080 and that Santa Clara County may be one of the largest users in the state. Alternatives to 1080 might be diphacinone, an anti-coagulant, said not to be toxic to secondary prey species, trapping, or controlling agriculture to limit the food source of the squirrels. Roger Bibb of the County Agricultural Commission feels that in many cases, diphacinone and zinc phosphide, are just as effective as 1080, and are not as dangerous. Dennis Porter of the County Parks and Recreation Department feels that "nothing works" for ground squirrels, but feels that letting grass grow tall discourages them. Mr. Estruth said that those people concerned about the use of 1080 at the airport should express their concern to San Jose City Manager Francis Fox. Mr. Fox's office refers calls to the City Director of Aviation, Raul Regalado. Mr. Regalado's office refers calls to his Assistant Director of Aviation, Chuck Foster. Mr. Foster went home at the end of the day without returning the call, but when contacted the next day said that he was "not acquainted with reactions to 1080."

National Audubon Society Membership Application

YES, I want to join the National Audubon Society. I understand I will receive a subscription to AUDUBON, which will come to me six times a year, and that my membership fee will be used to support the Society's fight to protect and preserve our natural environment.

Name _____
(Please print)
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- Individual Membership (\$20) Please bill me
 Family Membership (\$25) Please renew my membership
 Student Membership (\$13.50)

Please affiliate with Chapter 0515
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

*Why not join the National Audubon Society? It's simple! Just fill out the coupon & mail check to:
950 Third Ave.,
New York, N.Y.
10022 --- You will also receive THE AVOCET.*

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& Mike Rigney (867-7459)



The AVOCET is published monthly except July and August and sent to NAS members in this area. Nonmembers can subscribe, at \$5.00 for the calendar year. Send changes of address and subscription requests to Kristi Wiley, 1200 Woodland Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025.

DEADLINE for input to the AVOCET: 10th of the month.