

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Inc.

Chapter 0515 of the National Audubon Society
1176 Emerson Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301
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The Avocet

TIME VALUE

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3538 FARM HILL ELVD #4
REDWOOD CITY CA 94061

Volume 28, Number 7

September 1981

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sept. 1 Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday, 7:30 PM at the home of Betty Wyatt, Recording Secretary. Betty is found at 5524 Bigoak Dr., San Jose 95129 (255-6091).
- Sept. 8 Bird Discussion Group, Tuesday, 9:30 AM at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga. Topic: "Summer Bird Experiences."
- Sept. 12 Birdwalk for Beginners. Saturday, 9:00 AM, Grant Ranch. From 101 take Alum Rock Ave. to Mt. Hamilton Rd. or Tully Rd. exit to Quimby Rd. Meet just south of the junction of Mt. Hamilton and Quimby Roads at the entrance to Grant Ranch Park. Families encouraged. Bring lunch and drinking water. For more details call Russ and Marilyn Fowler - 356-7758.
- Sept. 12 Annual Goal-setting Workshop. Saturday, 9-4:30. Anyone interested in SCVAS future, please call Phyllis Swanson at 274-2349. Please bring your own lunch, and we'll provide beverages. The place is Hidden Villa Ranch; take Highway 280 to El Monte Rd. at Los Altos, go west on El Monte past Foothill College. Where the road ends at a "Y"--take the left fork a mile or so.
- Sept. 13 Birdwalks for Beginners. Sunday, 9:00 AM, Palo Alto Baylands. Take Embarcadero exit east from Bayshore Freeway (101) to end and follow signs to the Baylands. Bring lunch and water. Meet at the Palo Alto Duck Pond. Leader: Bruce Barrett - 268-7097
- Sept. 16 Field Trip. Wednesday, 9:00 AM, Mt. Madonna Park sign on the right-hand side of the road. Turn right and meet in parking lot across from ranger station. Bring lunch and drinking water. Leader: Emelie Curtis - 779-2637.

- Sept. 16 General Meeting, Wednesday, 7:30 PM, Lucie Evans Baylands Interpretive Center at the east end of Embarcadero Rd. in Palo Alto. Our speaker is Mr. Mike Rigney on "The Birds of Bair Island"--please see Mike's article in this AVOCET entitled "A Mono Lake of the North?"
- Sept. 19 Field Trip. Saturday, 8:30 AM, Coyote Hills Regional Park. From the peninsula, east across Dumbarton Bridge, left at the small sign for the park. Or take 17 north to Jarvis and turn right to Newark. Meet at the first parking lot on the right. Good time for migrating tanagers, warblers, and flycatchers. Leader: Phil Hand - 851-2623.
- Sept. 19 Boat Trip. Saturday, 8 AM, Monterey Bay. Depart from Fisherman's Wharf, return 3 PM. \$22 per person. Reserve with check payable to Debbi Shearwater, 362 Lee Street, Santa Cruz, Ca. 95060. (408) 425-8111. Enclose self-addressed, stamped envelope for confirmation. Leaders: Ted Chandik and Alan Baldrige.
- Sept. 20 Boat Trip. Sunday. See Sept. 19 for details. Leaders: Steve Bailey and Don Roberson.
- Sept. 23 Field Trip North. Wednesday, 9:00 AM, San Francisco National Wildlife Refuge. Route 101, then east across Dumbarton Bridge. Entrance and parking lot are on the right just beyond the toll plaza. Part of the trip will be with Refuge personnel. For information call Dolores Norton - 941-1666.
- Sept. 25 Brown Bag Bird Bunch. (Formerly the No. County Bird Discussion Group.) Friday, 9:00 AM. Meet at Stevens Creek Dam. Carpool upstream; bring lunch. Questions: Eleanor - 968-9073.
- Sept. 27 Field Trip. Saturday. Point Reyes Peninsula to look particularly for vagrants and rarities. Call the leader soon for details. Leader: Peter LaTourrette - 961-2741.
- Sept. 27 Boat Trip. Sunday. See Sept. 19 for details. Leaders: John Luther and Joe Morlan.
- Oct. 3 Field Trip. Saturday, 8:00 AM, Marin Headlands. Meet in the parking area near the headquarters north of Rodeo Lagoon. From 101, take the Alexander Ave., Sausalito exit. Go downhill, then left through tunnel entrance to Port Cronkhite. At Rodeo Lagoon turn right across bridge between lagoon and pond. Vagrants, migrating hawks, including possibility of Broad-winged Hawk. Leader: Don Schmoldt - 251-6133.
- Oct. 4 Boat Trip. Sunday. See Sept. 19 for details. Leaders: Alan Baldrige and Howard Cogswell.
- Oct. 10 Boat Trip. Saturday. See Sept. 19 for details. Leaders: Ted Chandik and
Oct. 11 Boat Trip. Sunday. See Sept. 19 for details. Jeri Langham.
- Oct. 14 Field Trip. Wednesday, 9:00 AM, Palo Alto Baylands. Take 101 to Embarcadero Rd., east exit and follow it to the end. Meet at the parking lot in front of the duck pond. Leader: Kay McCann - 327-4138.

ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society is looking for a person to work 1/2 time at the Peninsula Conservation Center (address above AVOCET logo). The job will take good phone and clerical skills, and most certainly a sense of humor. Duties will include some/all of the following: membership, corresponding secretary, sorting, answering, and distributing mail, setting up Board Meeting agendas, filing, and certainly typing, including (perhaps) typing the AVOCET. You'll need to attend Board Meetings, keep our SCVAS calendar up-to-date (that's fun), keep an eye on costs (that's easy, they're all too high!). You certainly need not be a superb birder, a John Muir, or even a Machiavellian type. But when you get a phone call about (1) "My duck laid an egg; what'll I do?" or (2) "A gray bird with black spots and red eyes (probably a junkie) is chasing my cat!" or, (3) "What are you people doing about the Medfly?" or (4) "Back in 1958 I went on an Audubon-sponsored field trip to southeastern Arizona (we saw trogons!); the leader was a dark-haired gentleman with horned-rim glasses. Could I please have his phone number?" Starting pay will be \$5/hr. subject to review in 3 months; may include some benefits (Librium?). Please contact Phyllis Swanson (274-2349) and send resume, vitae, or whatever to Phyllis; her address is 1899 Mt. Creek Ct., San Jose, CA 95148.

SCVAS GRANTS PROGRAM

By Kep Stone

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) is continuing its program of providing grants to studies and projects that advance the knowledge, appreciation and protection of wildlife and its habitats. Proposals for grants will be accepted through October 21, 1981, for consideration in the fall funding cycle. Proposals approved by the SCVAS Grants Committee and Board of Directors will receive funding about December 1, 1981.

Applications for grants must be submitted on a "Grant Request Form," which may be obtained by writing to:

SCVAS Grant Committee
c/o Keppler Stone
2526 Amaryl Drive
San Jose, CA 95132

Each completed request form must be accompanied by a proposed budget and schedule for the study or project. Recipients of grants will be asked to provide a program for a SCVAS general meeting or an article for the SCVAS "Avocet" after completion of the funded activity.

Grants were awarded to Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Bay Adventure Seminars, and Southwest Research Station as a result of the Spring, 1981, funding cycle.

AUDUBON NATIONAL CONVENTION

By Phyllis Swanson

Remember when the word "birdwatcher" brought to mind a Mr. Milquetoast in tennis shoes? Well, Mr. Milquetoast has evolved into a hawk with strong talons. National Audubon Society President Russell Peterson, critical of the Reagan administration for trying to "circumvent the environmental laws of the land," urged 1200 delegates at the National Convention in Estes Park this summer: "It is time for us to fight!" Auduboners at the Convention took Peterson at his word. When John Crowell, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment accused Audubon of attacking the administration's environmental policies "for the purpose of raising money from a loyal and unquestioning membership," the audience erupted with boos and hisses.

Keynote speaker Governor Bruce Babbitt of Arizona gave a brief history of the Sagebrush Rebellion, a movement by a "handful of stockmen, aided by a few politicians," whose ultimate goal is to sell BLM and National Forest land into private ownership. Babbitt asked for Audubon's help in countering the rebellion.

The Sagebrush Rebellion was one symptom of "Pressures on the Land," the theme of the convention. A Utah farmer, "Don Coyote of the Desert," spoke eloquently about the disastrous MX missile system proposal. Mono Lake was offered as an example of what massive water diversions can lead to. Nor was wildlife forgotten; the problems of eagles in Alaska and the Rockies were explained and the Condor issue brought up to date.

I have yet to be disappointed with an Audubon conference and the National Convention was no exception. I feel better informed on the critical environmental problems facing us. My sincerest appreciation to all of you for sending me. (Besides, where can you see a White-tailed Ptarmigan within ten feet of a Brown capped Rosy Finch?)



A MONO LAKE OF THE NORTH?

Mike Rigney

The next time you're driving down Highway 101 heading for "the City", as you pass the Harbor Blvd. exit in Redwood City glance quickly to your right. Beyond the slough which borders the freeway, beyond the marina and emerging industrial concrete cocoons, you will notice a vast expanse of seemingly barren open space, nearly 3000 acres in all, which stretches as far as your fleeting glimpse will allow. This area is known as Bair Island. A battle is developing over the fate of this island which in many respects is not unlike the battle to save Mono Lake.

In both cases the antagonists are conservationists and established organizations with massive financial resources (substitute the Mobil Oil company for the Los Angeles Dept. of Power and Water). Both battles are being waged to halt the permanent destruction of vital wildlife habitat. To the uncaring, Mono Lake and Bair Island appear to be inhospitable places better suited for practical application--Mono Lake, to supply the thirst of Los Angeles, Bair Island, to supply the thirst for housing and industrial space. On closer examination, it can be seen that both areas serve as important wintering grounds for many species of birds and breeding grounds for several important species. Mono Lake contains the largest breeding colony of California Gulls in the state. Bair Island contains the largest breeding colony of Caspian Terns in the state as well as the second largest colony of California Least Terns in the Bay area, and the second largest colony of herons and egrets in the Bay area.

The continued existence of these nesting colonies on Mono Lake and Bair Island is largely dependent upon the stability of the surrounding ecosystem and isolation from natural predators. The continued draining of Mono Lake has caused severe problems with the food source of the Gulls (brine shrimp) and provided access to the colonies for mammalian predators. According to a plan now in its final stages of approval, the Mobile Oil Company plans to develop the 1/2 to 2/3 of Bair Island which it owns. This development would provide for the construction of millions of square feet of industrial units and several thousand multiple and single-family dwellings. The final phases of Mobils development would forever destroy thousands of acres of potentially restorable marshland and bring people and predators to within a few hundred feet of one of the most important avian breeding grounds in northern California.

If we have learned any lessons from Mono Lake, clearly one of the most fundamental must be that massive public pressure must be applied to governing bodies early enough to prevent such situations from recurring. The Peninsula Conservation Center has formed a coalition of organizations including Santa Clara Valley Audubon and Sequoia Audubon which plan to lobby against this development. Funds are desperately needed as are willing workers.

If you would like to experience the magnitude of this issue first hand (via a slide show and lecture) and gain more information as to what can be done to prevent the destruction of yet another avian breeding ground, plan to attend the September general meeting on September 16. Can we afford a Mono Lake of the North?

baac

BAY AREA AUDUBON COUNCIL MEETS IN ALVISO

On July 18, representatives from six local Audubon chapters got together with Dan Taylor and Glenn Olson from the Western Regional Office of the National Audubon Society. The BAAC meeting was held at the Environmental Education Center of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The agenda covered presentations by Mike Boylan on the resources available at the Center; Meryl Sandove told us about programs at the Whittell Education Center in Tuburon and Mike Rigney informed the Council of the problems facing Bair Island in San Mateo. Ohlone Audubon Society's Bill Quirk chaired a concurrent session on Audubon and energy. The BAAC meetings are one way we exchange information, ideas and issues with other local chapters. We were pleased to have hosted such a productive meeting.

FIELD NOTES

By Bill Bousman

What do I mean by "uncommon to rare" and what happens to all these observations? Uncommon to rare refers to the category of birds on the Santa Clara County Checklist that are least often seen--the rare birds of our local area. The most recent version of the checklist is dated 1975, and Dave Nauer has recently printed up a bunch more copies. The Naturalist in Menlo Park is selling them and Dave tells me that they will soon be at the PCC. By all means obtain one as this is the yardstick that determines whether a bird is common, uncommon, rare, or has never been seen. So what happens if you call me up or write me a letter about a rare bird you saw? First, I'll want to know who saw it, where it was, and when it was seen. Then I'll write these details in a species log. When the AVOCET press time approaches, I'll go through this log and write this column based on the observations I've received. But there's more to come. Four times a year I submit my observations plus the log entries to the Middle Pacific Coast Region editors of American Birds. This is the single most important repository for information on the distribution of North American birds. Any sighting you provide me will be passed on to them with credit to you. They in turn record this information in their log and undertake the massive project of writing up the most important sightings from Northern California. But there's more. At irregular intervals, I'll take the Santa Clara Co. records and add them to the historical records I have for the county. This is the material that can eventually be used for a new version of the checklist. The San Mateo Co. records I'll send to Peter Metropulos who is responsible for that county's checklist.

This was a very interesting summer with a lot of new information on breeding birds of the area. Particularly interesting was the Palo Alto Breeding Bird Census which Dave Houle organized. Eight Eared Grebes at Moffett Field 2 June may have been late migrants, but one there 7 July was overwintering. First returning pelicans of the summer were an adult Brown Pelican and 5 White Pelicans at Charleston Slough 25 June (Charleston Slough Project--CSP). A Little Blue Heron has returned to Charles Slough with reports on 11 and 17 July. A White-faced Ibis on Crittenden Marsh 8 May is apparently a second county record (Rare Bird Alert-RBA). Blue-winged Teal were reported with two on the Palo Alto BBC 31 May, and a male at Charleston Slough 25 June (CSP). The last Redhead of the season was a male at Charleston Slough 26 May (CSP). Breeding Lesser Scaup were found in the Palo Alto FCB with two hatches reported (Joe Marlan, Ted Chandik). These are first breeding records for the county. A Snowy Plover was found at Charleston Slough 2 July, and Ruddy Turnstones were seen there from 17 June to 2 July (CSP). Both species were attracted by the exposed mudflats due to lowering of the water. Three Lesser Yellow-legs were in the north pond in the Palo Alto FCB on 31 July. A juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper was reported from Mountain View's Shoreline Park 25 July (RBA). This is a second county record of a species very difficult to identify. The ornithological event of the summer was a Curlew Sandpiper at Ano Nuevo SR 1 Aug. (Don Schmoltdt). This is only the seventh record for California of this Asiatic species. Least Terns returned to Charleston Slough 15 July with 21 adults and 17 juveniles counted (CSP). Sightings of Black Skimmers at Moss Landing, 2 on 17 May (Don Osterbrook) and 1 on 27 July (Pauline Smith) are further evidence of range expansion for this species which was first recorded in Santa Clara Co. in 1978. Two juvenile Pygmy Owls were found in Monte Bello OSR 25 July. More surprising were 2 Short-eared Owls found in the Palo Alto FCB 5 July (Dick Stovel), and Saw-Whet Owls at Mt. Madonna CP 6 June and Smith's Creek Ranger Station 20 June (Dave Moore and Vicki Silvas-Young). Migrating Black Swifts were found in flocks of 10-12 along Skyline Boulevard from 27 to 31 May (Houle). Four in Monte Bello OSR 27 May constitute the first county record for this species. Possibly nesting in the same area were a pair of Vaux's Swifts that were seen from 25 May to 15 June. A Purple Martin was also along Skyline on 30 May (Houle), and two at Pescadero Marsh 17 July (Chandik). A Red-breasted Nuthatch found calling in the pines at Skyline and Page Mill 30 May (Houle) was still calling 26 June, but no evidence of breeding was obtained. Black-throated Gray Warblers have been found May through July in many of the OSR's including Los Trancos, Monte Bello and Rancho San Antonio. It may be a more common species than past records indicate. Singing MacGillivray Warblers were found this summer with 5 along Langley Hill Rd. on 30 May (Houle) with at least one still singing 26 June. Others were found in Monte Bello OSR. Western Tanagers were reported from Hidden Villa and Monte Bello OSR; although it is likely they bred no breed evidence was obtained. Another new record for the county was a male Indigo Bunting found by Phyllis Browning in Palo Alto on 15 July (Chandik). Although this species is one of the more common eastern vagrants along the coast, there are few inland records. Lawrence's Goldfinches were found in large numbers--33 on the Palo Alto BBC, and in a number of locations including Foothills OSR, Monte Bello OSR and the intersection of Skyline and Page Mill Rd. where they were building nests 31 May (Houle). A Grasshopper Sparrow was singing off Langley Hill Rd. 26 June. They should be looked for along Monte Bello Ridge next year. A single, singing male Black-Chinned Sparrow was at Loma Prieta 30 May. Two or three Sage Sparrows were found in the Foothills OSR 3 July (LaTourvette). Good numbers of Chipping Sparrows were found in Monte Bello OSR and along Skyline in May and June--16 were counted on the Palo Alto BBC 31 May. A Lincoln's Sparrow along the bay 31 May must have been a very late migrant (Rigney vide Houle).

If you see an "uncommon to rare" call or drop a note to Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025 (322-5282).

EXTREMELY BRIEF CONDOR UPDATE

Just recently the California Fish and Game Commission granted permission for three California Condors to be taken this year for captive breeding and two more birds may be fitted with telemetry devices. Anything above and beyond this would go back to public hearings with the Fish and Game Commission. Needless to say, more information will be forthcoming.

help acr

A LETTER FROM AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

Our 1,000-acre ranch is a wildlife sanctuary and center for nature and conservation education on Bolinas Lagoon in Stinson Beach, 25 miles north of San Francisco on the Coast Highway. The large breeding colony of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets, excitingly visible from the heronry overlook, is well known to visitors from all over the west.

Our Directors include the Presidents and two appointees each from four Bay Area Audubon societies: Marin, Golden Gate, Sequoia and Madrone. This working board supervises the education programs and the running of the ranch; legal, fund-raising, bookkeeping, architectural and general administrative skills are contributed without charge. Last year the cost of our fund-raising was only 2.3% of the money raised! Our employees are five: a manager, a chief and an assistant naturalist, a secretary and a maintenance person. ACR depends upon volunteers. Our 100-member Volunteer Council runs the day program: 5,000 children a year, mostly from urban centers, come by bus to visit and learn about the overlook, the marshes and woodlands of the ranch. Our Ranch Associates assist the teachers in the sixth-grade overnight program. The bookshop, visitors' center, overlook and trails are volunteer-staffed.

Over 20,000 people visited the ranch without charge during the nesting season, March 1 to July 4 this year. If you have never been to ACR, please plan to come next May or June to visit the overlook, picnic and walk on our miles of green trails.

For twenty years we have used a group of beat-up old farm buildings as our headquarters. Some are in bad repair or unsafe; all are badly lighted and heated, unsuited to meet our needs.

We have just received a heaven-sent, two-year capital grant from the San Francisco Foundation for the repair, remodelling or replacement of these old buildings, a one-time opportunity to bring them up to high standards of usefulness and safety. BUT, to receive the grant, we must match it dollar for dollar!--\$73,000 this year and \$73,000 next!

We ask and hope that all our Audubon friends will help us generously in our campaign to raise these vital funds. Every dollar given in 1981 and every dollar pledged for 1982 will bring matching dollars from the Foundation? Please send this coupon back with a check and a pledge for next year. And please be our guest at the ranch next spring. With best wishes,

gratefully,
Tom Price, Chairman

Dear Friends at ACR: I enclose \$ _____ and pledge to give \$ _____ in 1982 as matching funds against the San Francisco Foundation grant.

Make checks payable to Audubon Canyon Ranch, P.O. Box 2113, San Francisco, CA 94126.

Contributions to Audubon Canyon Ranch are tax deductible.

CLASSES AND ALL THAT

Everybody must know by now that Doug and Gail Cheeseman lead trips to Africa. Some people have the idea that the Cheesemans lead trips in perpetuity--to Africa. This is not true; 1982 is the last chance for Africa, at least for a while; probably Australia, will be the place in 1983. Next summer's trip to Africa is about 1/2 full. Here's the shortest blurb on such a trip you will ever see:

Ecology of Tanzania, Seychelles and Kenya, June 25-July 22, 1982 with Doug and Gail Cheeseman. Land Costs \$3000, airfaire about \$1750. 867-1371. Call right away if interested. Taking 13.

You may also go to Africa without really leaving the Santa Clara Valley. If you feel the above is a bit much just to escape the Medfly, you may go (indoors!) with Doug at DeAnza College:

Photographic presentation with discussion of the Ecology of Tanzania, Seychelles, and Kenya. Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22 at 8:15 - 10:15 PM, SLS 90 De Anza College. Cost \$4.00. Contact SLS 90 office 996-4673 or Instructor Doug Cheeseman 996-4657 or 867-1371.

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

OFFICERS

| | | |
|----------------------|---|----------|
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