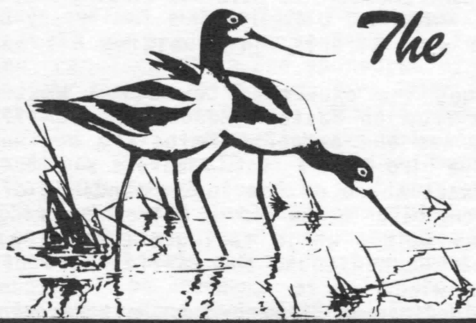


SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

Chapter C14 of the National Audubon Society
2253 Park Boulevard, Palo Alto, CA 94306
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The Avocet

MR ALAN M EISNER
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REDWOOD CITY, CA 94061
2020

Volume 31, Number 7

September 1984

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

On all field trips, CARPOOL and share expenses. Bring binoculars, field guides, lunch (optional on half-day trips), and liquids. For carpooling arrangements call Dolores Norton (415)941-1666 or Manette Wittgenstein (408)354-9420.

Field Trip Coordinator for September - Richard Jeffers (415)325-9675

- Sept. 9 **Cascades Ranch**, Sunday, 9 a.m. Meet at dirt pull-off at the entrance to Ano Nuevo State Park on Hwy 1. We will caravan from here. Come join us for the first trip of the year and one to a new area. Call Lynn Tennefoss at (415)329-1811 for arrangements. Leader: Allen Royer (408)251-6133.
- Sept. 11 **Bird Discussion Group**, Tuesday, 9:30 a.m., at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga. Topic: Summer Bird Experiences.
- Sept. 12 **Field Trip South**, Alviso Slough Trail. Wednesday, 9 a.m., half day. Meet at the Alviso Marina. Take Highway 237 W from 17 or E from Lawrence Expressway. Turn toward the Bay on Gold (at stoplight). Stay on Gold to Elizabeth, left on Elizabeth, then right on Hope to Marina. For information call Linda Hagelin (408)867-3046.
- Sept. 19 **General Meeting**, Wednesday, refreshments at 7:30 p.m., program at 8. THIS MEETING WILL BE AT PALO ALTO BAYLANDS, NOT AT THE CULTURAL CENTER. San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory will discuss their research, environmental monitoring, educational programs, and plans for the future. There will be slides, and several speakers, including Kathy Hobson (SFBBO Director).
- Sept. 22 **Point Reyes**, Saturday, 8 a.m. Meet at Pt. Reyes seashore HQ. Bring warm and waterproof clothing. Migrants and vagrants! Call if raining. Leader: Pete LaTourrette (415)961-2741.
- Sept. 26 **Field Trip North**, Charleston Slough. Wednesday, 9 a.m. Meet at the east end of San Antonio Rd. off Hwy. 101. Leaders: Dolores Norton (415)941-1666 and Rose Lind (408)736-8207.
- Sept. 29 **Moss Landing, Jetty Rd.**, half day Saturday, 9 a.m. Meet at Marina parking lot near one-lane bridge in Moss Landing. From Hwy 1 in Moss Landing turn right just after PG&E plant. Follow the road to the right and park just before the bridge. Informal carpooling from 280 and Page Mill Rd. at 7:30 a.m. Possible pelagics, Elegant Terns, and shorebirds. Leader: Don Starks (408)371-9720.
- Oct. 6 **Birdwalk for Beginners, Rancho San Antonio O.S.P.**, half-day Saturday, 8 a.m. Meet at last parking lot at end of Cristo Rey Dr. Take 280 to Foothill Expwy, S to Cristo Rey Dr. Leaders: Jim and Sue Liskovec (415)969-5542.

LEAST TERNS ON BAIR ISLAND

California Least Terns arrived at their Bair Island nesting site a full month later than last year. San Francisco Bay is at the northern edge of the endangered Least Tern's breeding range. Historically, Least Terns have nested at Bair Island, and in Alameda and Oakland. Cats and avian predators destroyed most of the nests in Alameda this year, leading us to suspect that the late nesting birds at Bair Island came from Alameda.

Only seven adults came to Bair Island this year, and they established only two nests. Two chicks hatched in one nest on July 30. Eggs from the second nest were due to hatch sometime between the 5th and 8th of August. Members of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory will continue to monitor these birds as long as there is activity in the colony.

Peter Perrine





WOOD STORK ENDANGERED

The Wood Stork has been added to the endangered species list by the Fish and Wildlife Service. An estimated 4,500 breeding pairs remain, mostly in Florida. The species' decline can be attributed to habitat destruction. Even in Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, site of the largest stork rookery in the country, developments elsewhere have affected water levels, cutting into breeding success. Fish and Wildlife did not recommend designating any areas as critical habitat for the stork, saying that because the birds change their colonial nesting and feeding sites, no areas could be singled out for protection.

-Audubon Leader

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

Thanks to Ameet Zaveri for the following contribution to the collection in the PCC Library: An African Zoo in the Family by Joan Taylor, Menagerie Manor by Gerald Durrell, Two in the Bush by Gerald Durrell, First Catch Your Tiger by Oliver Graham-Jones, The Great Chain of Life by Joseph Wood Krutch, The Forest by Roger Caras, and The Ecology of the Timber Wolf in Algonquin Provincial Park.

Homes for Birds, Conservation Bulletin 14, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, is a new purchase.

Two site guides have been added to the SCVAS collection at the PCC Library, A Guide to Bird Finding in Washington by Wahl and Paulson and Birding Oregon by Ramsey. These two fine guides complement our large collection of Lane Guides, and other regional site guides, and members are encouraged to browse through the Library while planning summer vacations. We also have site and identification guides for other countries.

Thanks to Sue and Jim Liskovec for donating The Bird Book by Richard Shaw to the Library. The Audubon Land Bird Guide by Richard Pough for East and Central North America has also been added to the collection.

CRUISE TO ALASKA FOR MONO LAKE

Brochures are now available for the Mono Lake Committee's 12-day cruise to Alaska via the Inland Passage. Fares are 86% of the regular tariff, and 12% of the fare is a tax-deductible donation to help save Mono Lake. The luxurious TSS Fairisky will sail through the Golden Gate to Vancouver, Ketchikan, Juneau, Sitka, Prince Rupert, and Victoria on June 14th. Space should be reserved before December 1 to get the best price. Fares per person range from \$1967 to \$2589. For full details, send a stamped, self-addressed 4" x 9 1/2" envelope to ALASKA '85 c/o M. Bennett, 2719 Marin Ave., Berkeley, CA 94708.

OUR TRIP LEADER

For the Tucson-Aleutians field trip, our leader will be Buff Lugnut. Buff has been a birder for as long as he can remember (as have his birding brother and sister, Rufus and Olive). Buff's family say his first word was 'lifer!', on beholding his bath ducky.

Buff has the expertise to tell a Western Meadowlark from an Eastern Meadowlark at fifty paces, yet has the patience to help a beginner distinguish a bird from a bat. Admirers say he can tell the exact shade of the lower mandible of a four-inch long bird in the top of a tree two ridges away at twilight - while facing the other way. Others swear he can count the tailfeathers of a swift on the wing.

Buff's dedication is renowned. He takes every bird seen down to subspecies and race, and ages them within a month and a half - guesses their weight, too! His life list (North American) is rumored to be in four digits.

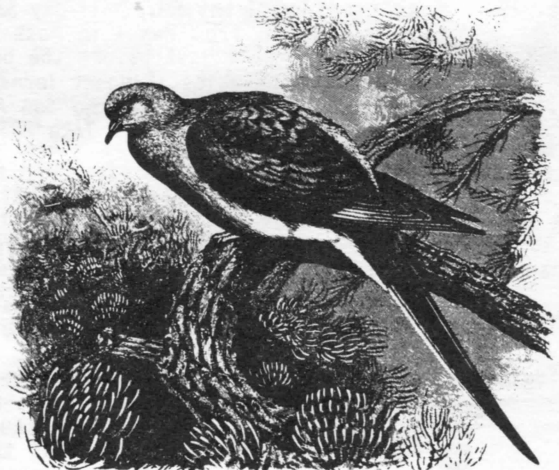
Buff will be able to beguile the trip's long bus rides with his store of bird lore - the color of a puffin's tongue, the innermost thoughts of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker - and nature lore - the habits of Yetis, how to attract killer bees, the hallucinations you get from breathing marsh gas.

If you've never met Buff, you'll be amazed by his rapport with nature. Trogons perch on his shoulder, Black Rails come to nestle at his feet. He can 'spish' an eagle out of the sky. Marbled Murrelets nest in his backyard.

Buff will cover birding by sound and birding by smell, as well as his famous specialty, birding by helicopter. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have obtained Buff's services for this field trip. Don't miss it! It's your opportunity to watch one of America's top bird watchers watch birds from sunrise past sunset every day for ten days in a row, and ask yourself, "What kind of hobby is this?"

©1984 by S. J. McCarthy

S. J. McCarthy



THE AVOCET

The Avocet welcomes material (written or drawn) from readers. Send contributions to Susan McCarthy, Avocet Editor, 475 S. 12th St., San Jose, CA 95112.

CLASSES, TRAVEL, AND EVENTS

The Farallon Island Lecture Series will include a lecture Sept. 6 on the whales found around the Farallones, and a lecture Oct. 4 on the elephant seals and sea lions of the Farallones. The lectures cost \$3 and are from 6 to 8 p.m. at Fort Mason in San Francisco. They are sponsored by the Oceanic Society and the Point Reyes Bird Observatory. Reservations recommended. Call (415)474-3385.

The Trail Information and Volunteer Center is having a TRAIL FAIR on Saturday, Sept. 8 at Los Altos High School. The fair will go from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will include commercial exhibits on running, hiking, bicycling, camping and equestrian wares. Trail maps and information about public park lands will be abundant, as will food, soft drinks, slide shows, and book signings. Free blood pressure checks will be given and carriage rides will be available. For more information contact the Center between 1 and 5 at (415)324-8482.

Among fall events offered by Nature Explorations-Tuleyome are Birding and Whaling from Bodega Bay to Cordell Banks on Sept. 16 (\$40), and a Hawk Walk in the East Bay's Briones Regional Park Oct. 7 (\$9 adult, \$5 child, \$22 family). For details, call Nature Explorations at (415)324-8737.

Point Reyes Bird Observatory's Natural Excursions offers programs based on the Observatory's scientific work. Sept. 8 there will be an in-depth field and lecture survey of Bolinas Lagoon. Sept. 29 and 30 Rich Stallcup will lead a trip exploring Monterey Bay, from land and by boat. The emphasis is on birds, with whales, sea otters, and porpoises among added attractions. Oct. 26 (eve.), 27 & 28, zoologist Walt Koenig will lead field sessions and discussions on woodpeckers and magpies in Carmel Valley, with emphasis on their social adaptations. For information on these programs contact PRBO, 4990 Shoreline Hwy, Stinson Beach, CA 94970 (415)868-1221.

The Fremont Adult School is offering a one-day birding trip to Pescadero on Sept. 22. Participants will observe migrating, resident, and wintering marsh, shore, and sea birds along the San Mateo County Coast. The trip will be led by Alice Hoch. Students must pre-register by September 18 by mail or in person. The cost of the class is \$10.50. Alice Hoch and the Fremont Adult School also offer a six-week Birding Field Trips class starting Sept. 11, designed for both beginning and experienced bird-watchers. For more information on either class, call the Adult School at (415)791-5841 or Alice at (415)657-0475.

Doug Cheeseman will present a 9-session Short Course on the Natural History of E. Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Galapagos, Ecuador, Peru and the Antarctic. Lecture time 8:15-10:15 p.m. on 9 successive Thursdays starting September 27. Cost \$35.00. Contact De Anza College Short Course Office: (408)996-4673 or Doug at (408) 996-4657.

Doug and Gail Cheeseman will be leading a 34 day trip to New Guinea and Australia July 24 through Aug. 27, 1985. Local leaders will be used throughout. Land Cost \$4200 + \$2200 Air. Call (408) 867-1371 for more information.

Don Starks will be teaching a Beginning Birdwatching class for the Santa Clara Unified School District starting Sept. 12. It will meet Wednesday nights from 7-9 p.m. for six weeks with two field trips included (3 more to be optional at extra cost). Senior citizen discount. Call (408)984-6220 for more information.

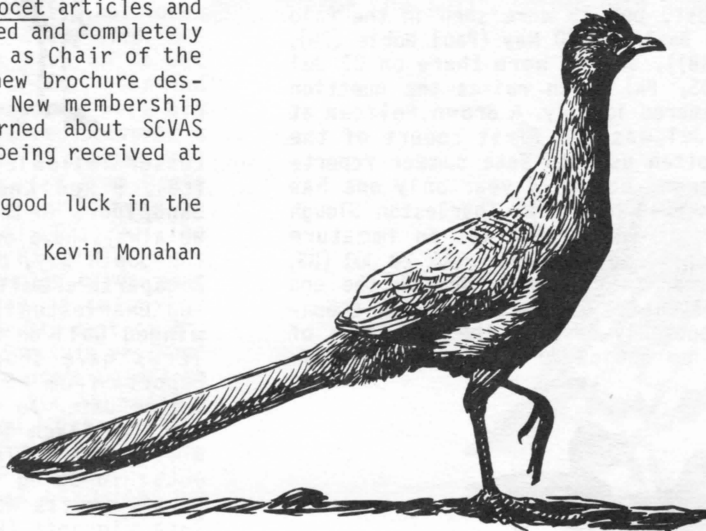
San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory offers a course on Identification of Birds for BirdBanders. Lectures and lab sessions will cover capture techniques, identification, aging and sexing of California birds. It will be taught by Dr. L. Richard Mewaldt. Cost is \$20 for SFBBO members, \$35 for others. For information phone (408)946-6548.

WE'RE SORRY TO SEE THEM LEAVE

During the summer two members of the Board of Directors, Betsy Blais and Linda Wills, submitted letters of resignation. We regret the loss of these fine volunteers and wish them the best in their new activities. While they served on the Board, Betsy and Linda worked on major (and successful) projects. Betsy, as you will remember from Avocet articles and from the May General Meeting, revised and completely edited our Chapter Bylaws. Linda, as Chair of the Membership Committee, produced a new brochure describing SCVAS and its activities. New membership applications, from people who learned about SCVAS through this brochure, are already being received at the office.

Thanks, Linda and Betsy, and good luck in the future.

Kevin Monahan

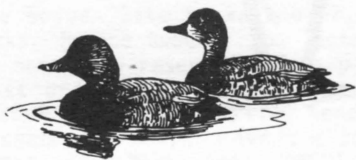


FIELD NOTES - Bill Bousman

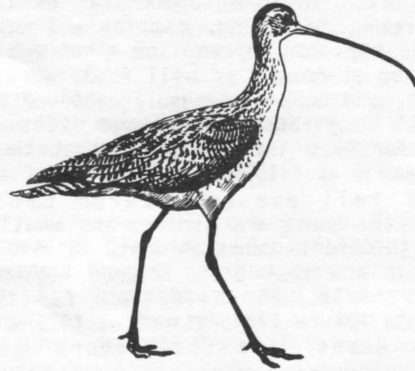
Each year gets more interesting as I am able to put together the observations that people so generously send me. At the bottom of this column it says if you see something "uncommon to rare", please send it in. If you have ever wondered exactly what that means, I'll explain. "Uncommon to rare" refers to the definition of abundance used in the 1975 Santa Clara County Checklist. Of course very rare birds, accidentals, and unlisted species are even more interesting. But also interesting are out of season birds, early arrivals or late departures of migrants, summer residents, and winter residents. Exceptional numbers are interesting, and so are birds out of habitat. Escaped birds are not of interest unless they are able to establish a breeding population. If you think something might be of interest, but you are unsure send it in anyway. Even if I don't put it in this column I'll still write it in my notebooks, and it will undoubtedly be useful at some time. How much description should you provide? It depends upon what you see. If you are reporting a flock of Am. White Pelicans then it's sufficient to say that you had a "good view". (Have you ever noticed how hard it is to separate the two pelican species when they are backlit at dawn?) If you are reporting an Ash-throated Flycatcher in December then you need to have a very detailed description indeed. Part of your description should include how you separated the bird from similar species. It should be based on written notes taken at the time of the sighting. If you think all this detail is silly then you really shouldn't be sending me anything.



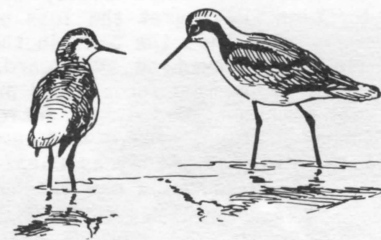
We didn't have a repeat on **Eared Grebes** nesting at Moffett Field this year, but 4-5 birds apparently overwintered and were recorded on 8 Jun and 24 Jul. **White Pelicans** usually come back to the South Bay in late July and August, but 15 were seen in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin on 20 May (Paul Noble (PN), Ginny Bechhine (GB)), and 65 were there on 21 Jul (David Suddjian (DS, PN) which raises the question of whether any summered locally. A **Brown Pelican** at Moffett Field 3 Jul was the first report of the season. We have gotten used to late summer reports of **Little Blue Heron**, but this year only one has been reported, a single bird over Charleston Slough 30 Jun (DS, PN). Most intriguing was an immature **Green-backed Heron** along Matadero Creek 20 Jul (DS, PN). Adults were seen in this area through the end of April and the potential of nesting exists. Green-backed Herons undoubtedly nest on the east side of the valley, but I am not aware of any records any-



where in the county since 1969. Overwintering **Blue-winged Teal** were found in Charleston Slough with two birds there 15 Jun, and singles on 29 Jun and 10 Jul (Chris Benesh (CB)). Two **Redhead** were still in the FCB 20 May (PN, GB). A female **Bufflehead** at Baylands 30 Jun (PN, DS) was unusual. We have had 1-3 overwintering birds for the last three summers. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was along Matadero Creek 21 Jul (PN, DS). There have been more observations in the



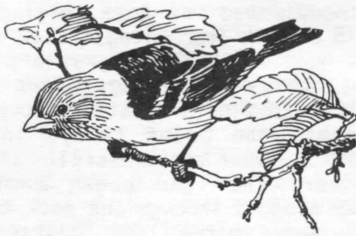
last year away from the edge of the foothills. Some late departing shorebirds included: two **Spotted Sandpipers** along San Francisquito Creek 9 May (Betty Groce fide Phyllis Browning (PB)) and two at Moffett Field 12 May; and about 10 **Red-necked Phalarope** at the Sunnyvale treatment ponds 6 May (April Durran). A number of shorebirds overwintered: a **Black-bellied Plover**, 3 **Long-billed Curlew**, and 70 **Marbled Godwit** at Charleston Slough 15 Jun. Some early returning shorebirds were: Four **Semipalmated Plover** at the Mountain View Forebay 29 Jul (PB); a **Greater Yellowlegs** at Charleston Slough 29 Jun; a **Whimbrel** and 4 **Sanderling** at Charleston Slough, 19 Jul; and 5 **Wilson's** and about 10 **Red-necked Phalarope** at Moffett Field 6 Jul. Unexpected was a very early



Lesser Yellowlegs in Charleston Slough on 11 Jul (CB), 9 **Red Knots** there 19 Jul, and 4 **Baird's Sandpipers** in the Mountain View Forebay 29 Jul (PB). We always have overwintering **Ring-billed Gulls** in the South Bay, but less expected were reports of **Bonaparte's Gulls** on 6 and 19 Jul at Moffett Field and Charleston Slough and an immature **Glaucous-winged Gull** on 29 Jun at Charleston Slough. **Least Terns** have shown up at Charleston Slough with reports from 15 Jun to 29 Jul (PB) with 5 on the latter date. No juveniles have been seen this summer. Two **Black Swifts** along Langley Hill Road 9 Jun were probably late migrants, but may have been a local foraging pair (Ed Gustafson et. al.). Two **Vaux's Swifts** at Stevens Creek CP 19 May were also late migrants (PB). One of the most unusual late spring birds was a vagrant male **Costa's Hummingbird** in Stevens Creek CP 19 May (PB, PN). Many other vagrant Costa's were found along the coast during

FIELD NOTES

that same week. About 3 singing **Horned Larks** were found on the Palo Alto Breeding Bird Count 9 Jun along Russian Ridge OSP. Their numbers seem to be decreasing in recent years. The last report of a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** from last winter and spring's incursions was of a single bird in Los Altos 12 May - very late (PN). Summer records of **Am. Dipper** are very rare so a bird along Stevens Creek 19 May was of interest (PB, PN). They've nested there in the past. A single **Cedar Waxwing** at Smith's Creek 3 Jun was late for the area. A male **Phainopepla** at Rancho San Antonio 19 May (Lynn Hassler) was unexpected for this rare resident of the Mt. Hamilton Range. Interestingly, this is the third May or June record in the last four years for the eastern edge of the Santa Cruz Mts. A male at Smith's Creek 3 Jun was in more typical location. We are used to the **Western Tanager** as an uncommon spring migrant, but it is also a rare local breeding species. A female was found feeding young along Stevens Creek on 19 May



(PB, PN). A male **Indigo Bunting** was found singing S of Langley Hill Road in competition with **Lazuli Buntings** from at least 20 May to 3 Jun (Bill and Jean Clark). It was well-studied and its song recorded. This appears to be only the second San Mateo County record for this eastern vagrant. The **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** is an uncommon breeding species in the Mt. Hamilton Range, but isn't expected from the Santa Cruz Mountains. However, two were found singing in Permanente Quarry in late March (Clark Blake) and two were singing along Old La Honda Road on 9 Jun. They are considered accidental in San Mateo County. **Black-chinned Sparrows** were well-reported this spring with 3 singing at Loma Prieta 10 May where they are found each year and individuals in 2 locations on the east side of Mt. Hamilton 3 Jun where they are not usually reported. The **Sage Sparrow** is a fairly common resident of the Mt. Hamilton Range, but rare in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Loma Prieta is a typical location for them and 4 singing 10 May is expected. One in the upper portion of Foothills Park on 21 Jul (DS, PN) appeared to be at the edge of their chamise chaparral habitat. **Grasshopper Sparrows** were big news in the county this spring. I've rediscovered a former colony south of Jackson Oaks, in Morgan Hill on 15 Apr, and a new colony was reported from Monte Bello OSP with reports of singing birds from at least 23 May to 30 Jun (Carol Zabel, DS, PN). The colonies north along the Russian Ridge OSP were active on 9 Jun, and individual singing birds were as far north as Old La Honda Road. A colony of **Tricolored Blackbirds** along Arroyo Bay east of Mt. Hamilton 3 Jun was the only report for this vagabond species. Speaking of vagabonds, **Lawrence's Goldfinch** turned up in a number of places. Six at Smith's Creek 3 Jun is a regular location, but 3 along Langley Hill Road in early June (Peter LaTourrette et. al.), more in Monte Bello OSP on 30 Jun (DS, PN), and in Foothills Park 30 Jun to 4 Jul (DS, PN) were unexpected spots.

If you see an "uncommon to rare" please drop me a line or call: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025 (415/322-5282).

THE BACK YARD BIRDER

In springtime birds are singing constantly and are easier to spot in leafless or lightly-foliaged trees. During summer and fall, not only is birdlife quieter but more frustrating to find in thick vegetation. An old trick to draw shy birds into view is to use a method of oral bird calls called "pishing" (or spishing). I find the word not only descriptive but hilarious. This is a hissing or shushing sound which is uttered in a pulsating rhythm. Among the more curious species, such as titmice, chickadees and Wrentits, this sound is nearly irresistible. Other types of birds may be tempted to investigate because the sound resembles the alarm calls of many species and may elicit a mobbing response from all birds within hearing range. According to Christopher Leahy in *The Birdwatcher's Companion*, "Sustained and aggressive pishing seems to work best and it is not unusual during migration to be able to attract dozens of individuals of many species." You may not wish to try pishing in public or among non-birders. We get plenty of odd stares from people who can't fathom our habits of staring at the sky with rapturous expressions or slogging through marshes for glimpses of birdlife!

In John K. Terres' *Songbirds In Your Garden*, he describes his method of "squeaking up" birds. His suggestion that you be partly concealed in shrubs and that you sit quietly and comfortably is a good one. It may take some time to perfect the technique, which he describes as sucking on the back of your hand. In the privacy of my own yard I attempted following his instructions to no avail. Apparently I'm in good company since some well-known ornithologists are incapable of producing these sounds. Besides, my resident Wrentits seem to prefer my own peculiar kissing-type noises.

If you are too faint-hearted to try pishing, The Audubon Bird Call is available in nature-related stores. It is small and portable, easy to learn to operate and makes appropriate squeaky-wheel sounds.

Some bird families and species are especially attracted to pishing, such as those mentioned above, as well as nuthatches and kinglets. Others you might expect to see are woodpeckers, jays, flycatchers, wrens, Mockingbirds, sparrows, thrushes, vireos and warblers. The next time a bird swoops into the cover of thick shrubbery, you could be rewarded with a better look if you try a little pishing!

Meg Pauletich
From "The Gull", Golden Gate Audubon Newsletter



TEAM SETS BIRDING RECORD

A team of five top California birders, sponsored by the Western Regional office of National Audubon Society, set a new North American record by identifying 243 species of birds within California on April 28. This surpassed the previous record for a single day of 235 species.

This competition - called a "Big Day" and run under rules devised by the American Birding Ass'n - has existed in the birdwatching fraternity for over 20 years. Only recently, National Audubon and other groups have begun using such events as fund-raising "bird-a-thons", with supporters pledging some amount for each species found. Each team (of 2 to 6 birders) stays together the entire day and all members strive to identify all birds called out by any team member - at day's end 95% of the total have to have been identified by all. In 1982, a Texas team which included Roger Tory Peterson used an airplane to surpass the previous record (231 by car in California) and found 235 species (although one bird was later disallowed under ABA rules since it was in Mexico). Last year Peterson joined an experienced California team led by Don Roberson (Monterey writer), featuring L. C. Binford (ornithologist from Rohnert Park), Jeri Langham (botany professor at Sacramento State), B. D. "Mike" Parmeter (Napa physician) and his son John Parmeter (Ph.D. candidate in chemistry at Cal Tech.). This team, using another airplane to bird California, tied the Texas total of 235.

This year both teams had chartered airplanes for a "head-to-head" competition. Peterson joined the Texas team, but their 222 birds on April 24 fell well short of the record. California compiler Roberson was hopeful of a count over 240, joking

that he hoped "that would put Texas away once and for all".

A tight schedule and hours of scouting were to be the key to the day's success. Roberson took off a week and spent five days in 4 of the 5 areas to be visited (Monterey, Big Bear, Morongo Valley, Salton Sea), driving all the roads, timing them out, finding the singing birds on territory, "staking-out" late lingering winter species. Langham flew to Yuma a day early to do the same there. Binford and Mike Parmeter re-checked the Monterey route the day before. By putting a team member in each area within two days of the count, the team had a good sense of what birds might be expected and which were likely to be missed. Roberson used all this information to devise a schedule which accounted for every five-minute segment of the day.

On Saturday, the Big Day team was in the field in Yuma by 1 a.m. Cruising back roads slowly, stopping and piling out to listen for owls, the team soon attracted the attention of the local gendarmes. Roberson's schedule had the team leaving Yuma by 6 a.m., yet at 5 o'clock (the alleged time of sunrise) the team was huddled in the car, rain pouring down outside, dejectedly wondering "where's the daylight?" Attempts to find a roosting Osprey with the car's headlights and brief forays in hopes of calling Rock Wrens were unsuccessful.

In the car, the team began modifying the schedule. They slogged through the muck to Langham's "stake-outs" - super birds like Solitary Sandpiper and a very unusual Swamp Sparrow. Behind the passing storm, the sky filled with birds - streams of swallows, swifts, herons and passerines, unlike any previously witnessed by any of the team on the River. When the muddy boots were hauled into the plane, the team had recorded nearly all the "crucial" River birds and were but a half-hour behind schedule.

The team circled Salton City in the plane - where Roberson had 9 Yellow-footed Gulls "tied-down" to specific wharves and sand-bars. It took two passes, but the whole team saw one or more of the distinctive birds. After landing at Thermal and a stirring ride through pre-planned back roads (Roadrunner, Lark Sparrow), the group arrived at the north end of the Sea. There was no time to enjoy. Within 20 minutes the team had found the birds on Roberson's pre-planned list and they were off, despite some rather loud grumbles. They were in the air by 8:30, having made up the lost half-hour.

Morongo Valley can be a lovely desert oasis full of migrants. It had held many species on Thursday and Friday, during Roberson's and John Parmeter's scouting visits. On this day, though, winds were gusting to 30 m.p.h. and many birds - like "dozens" of Townsend's Warblers the day before - had simply vanished. It was hard work finding even the regular birds, but the group slowly picked them up - Vermillion Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, Black-throated Sparrow - but time was a-wasting and migrants were down. Even though they bypassed all the extra spots scheduled (except for John Parmeter's "stake-out" Scott's Oriole) - they lost an hour to the wind here.

Mike Parmeter spotted a Golden Eagle in flight just below the plane, but the roller-coaster ride made retrieving it for the others impossible. An excellent pilot proved to be important - Terje Kristiansen again added much by getting the team through the weather at a minimum loss of time. He set them down gently into Big Bear high in the San Bernardino Mountains, where the air was crisp and the wind sharp.

Roberson's father met the team with a high-



THE TICO EXPERIENCE - PART IV

Our Tropical Ecology class from San Jose State University rode taxi trucks to Santa Rosa National Park. We studied White-faced Monkeys, Spider Monkeys, and other mammals and birds. At dusk we visited a water hole and saw a Great Curassow fly away. Four Tapirs waded into the pond when it was almost too dark to see them, then several Double-striped Thick-knees slipped down to the water.

On the way back to camp we light-blinded and caught a White-tailed Nightjar in the grass between the ruts of the road, identified, and released it.

An arduous, seven-mile hike took us to the beach camp, where Pacific Screech-Owls lived overhead. A "pet" Coati amused us when it was too hot to bird, and we found a Striped Skunk in our garbage box. A White-necked Puffbird posed for a while. We stayed cool by swimming in the heavy surf, then showering at the well.

Habitats included a beautiful beach, where turtles laid eggs, dry scrubland, brackish marshes surrounded by mangrove trees, and tall, somewhat dry jungle.

Lots of parakeets were around, and a Crested Caracara flew over when my binoculars weren't handy. The trail through the jungle yielded a brief look at a little Agouti that paused to look at us. Some of the more interesting birds were Roadside Hawk, Common Black Hawk, Mangrove Cuckoo, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, White-lored Gnatcatcher, Citreoline Trogon, and Long-tailed Manakin.

On arrival at the upper camp, a classmate led us to a Banded Anteater sleeping in a tree. Our last hour before our taxis were due were spent watching a group of White-faced Monkeys with a stolen Coati baby. The parent Coati was frantic, running up and down the tree. The monkeys were afraid enough of the larger animal to retreat slowly before it. They finally settled on the lower limbs of the tree, where the alpha male monopolized the delicacy, while others watched.

A raptor flying low over the tree apparently frightened the monkey into dropping the partially eaten Coati.

After a hot ride to Liberia, we celebrated at the Bramadero Motel with cool drinks and good meals. In San Jose we prepared for our trip to the east coast, subject of my next column.

Lee Lovelady

BIRDING OLYMPICS -cont.

clearance four-wheel drive vehicle.

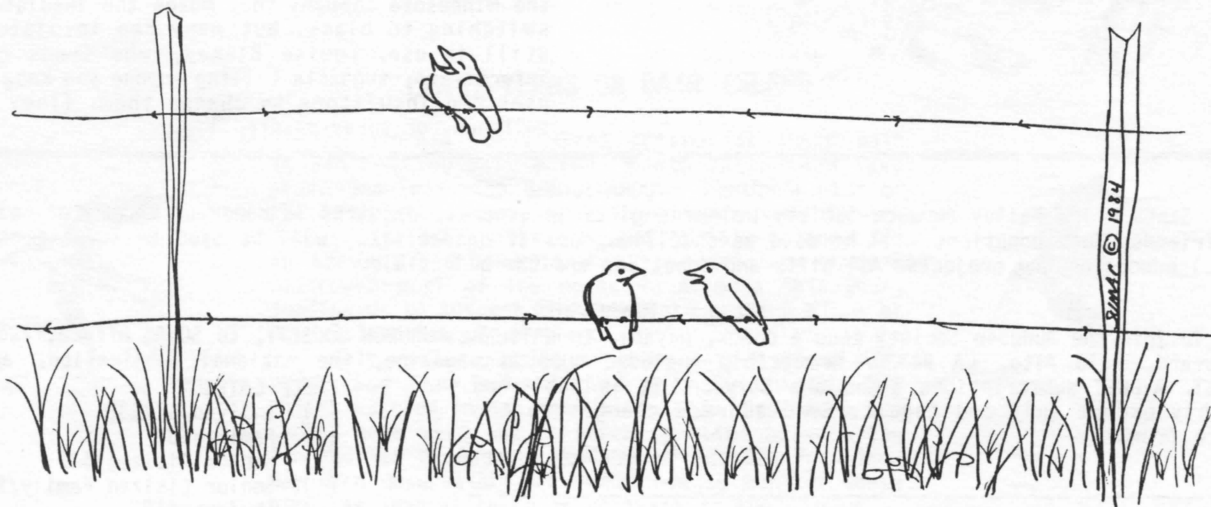
Big Bear was the cornerstone of the day's success. The new area added extra birds and luck was high. Though still an hour behind schedule, the team left southern California with 198 species, compared to but 181 last year. Of the 17 extra birds, at least 15 were directly attributable to scouting - hard work that paid off.

It was crucial to do the Monterey/Moss Landing route with a minimum of wasted time. There were only 2 1/2 hours to visit all the spots before sunset. The late lingering Oldsquaw was still at its favored pond at the state's sanctuary. Moonglow Dairy still had its "Trike" (tricolored Blackbird).

Monterey was finally reached with only a half hour left to sunset- if only 5 minutes more had been lost at each previous spot, the team would have been left lost in the dark. As it was, timing and scouting brought birds quickly - a late Wood Duck on a downtown lake, some loons and cormorants at the Coast Guard Pier, and on to Pt. Pinos with 15 minutes to sundown. At the point, one looks right into the setting sun. Yet lo and behold, all the rocky shore birds are lined up on the very rock chosen for them over a week before - Oystercatcher, turnstones, Tattler, and when a restless John Parmeter moves closer, a pair of bonus Surfbirds! The record had been tied and surpassed in an instant. The remaining light could be used to set up scopes looking back into the Bay for pelagics - and there they were.

Darkness came by 7 p.m. The total stood at 241, a new record. Yet two "easy" owls remained to be heard in Robinson Canyon, so the team traveled on. They weren't so "easy" to find on this Saturday evening, but after an hour of work, both the Northern Pygmy-Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl were added to the list for the final count of 243. Unlike last year, when the team was pushing until midnight, the day ended by 8:30 - only 20 hours of solid birding from its beginning some 510 miles to the south. "It goes to show that given perfect weather, 250 is possible," Roberson said, "but all in all, we're very pleased."

Don Roberson



"Well, he calls it singing."

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General membership meetings, held the third Wednesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., are open to the public. Board of Directors meetings, open to all members, are held at 7:15 p.m., the first Tuesday of each month. Call the office for directions.

AVOCET DEADLINE IS THE FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH. Send contributions to the editor: Susan McCarthy, 475 So. 12th, San Jose, CA 95112.

MAILING LIST UPDATE WARNING

A major overhauling of the Avocet mailing list will occur in September. If you do not receive your OCTOBER Avocet, and are still either a National Audubon Society or an Avocet-only subscriber, please call or write the office to be reinstated on the mailing list.



PROTECTING THE WETLANDS

Interested in helping protect the marshes and wetlands of the Bay? Members of SCVAS who have an interest in writing letters, and in learning more about land use planning, how various state and national agencies work, and how to get involved in protecting scarce wetlands are invited to join in SCVAS's conservation work. Please call Lynn at the office, (415)329-1811 for more information.

SWALLOWS AND THEIR NESTS

Did you have swallows nesting around your house or workplace this year? Wonder what species they were? Or what to do if someone illegally removes swallow nests or nestlings? Well, through the efforts of volunteer Harry Beerbohm, you can learn the answers to these and other questions about swallows. Harry has compiled a 4-page handout on swallows and their nests. Just send a self-addressed, stamped legal size envelope to the SCVAS office to receive a copy. Thanks again, Harry!

INSULATOR ALERT

Hummingbirds have been electrocuted, across North America, after being attracted to red insulators on electric fences. Random inspections of fences with red insulators revealed one dead hummer for every five insulators. North Central Plastics, the Minnesota company that makes the insulators, is switching to black, but many red insulators are still in use. Louise Blakey, who sends us this information, suggests telling anyone you know of who uses red insulators to change them. (They can be switched, or spray-painted.)

DONATIONS

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society welcomes gifts in general, or gifts in honor or memory of relatives and friends. Such donations will be used as specified, or, if unspecified, will be used to support environmental education and projects. All gifts and donations are tax deductible.

MEMBERSHIP

To join the Audubon Society send a check, payable to NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, to SCVAS office, 2253 Park Boulevard, Palo Alto, CA 94306. Membership includes AUDUBON magazine, the national publication, and the AVOCET. AVOCET subscriptions alone are \$6/year. It is published monthly except July and August. Send address changes to the office promptly.

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