



The Avocet

1137g
Mr Alan M Eisner
3538 Farm Hill Blvd #4
Redwood City, CA 94061

Volume 33, Number 3

March 1986

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

On all field trips, CARPOOL and share expenses. Bring binoculars, field guides, lunch (optional on half-days) and liquids. For arrangements call Dolores Norton (415)941-1666 or Gail Cheeseman (408)741-5330.

Field Trip Coordinator for March - Carol Zabel (415)948-5671

- Mar. 2 **Coal Mine Ridge, Portola Valley.** Sunday, 9 am, half day. I-280 to Alpine Rd. turnoff, S about 3.2 miles to stop sign at Portola Rd. Continue on Alpine 0.9 miles to parking lot on right just before Willowbrook. No restrooms. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Phil Hand (415)851-2623.
- Mar. 5 **Bay Area Bird Photographers.** Wednesday, 7:30 pm. Baylands Interpretive Ctr. "Wings over the Refuge", a slide dissolve program with photography by Howard Kessler, narration by Iona Reise. Co-sponsored by the City of Palo Alto.
- Mar. 8 **Moss Landing - Elkhorn Slough.** Saturday, 8:30 am, half or full day, Monterey in afternoon. Meet at Marina parking lot near 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. Leader: Bruce Barrett (408)268-7097.
- Mar. 16 **Alum Rock Park.** Sunday, 9 am, half day. I-280 onto I-680, then follow Alum Rock Ave, E to the end. Park by the Youth Science Institute. Leader: Dave Johnston (408)867-7278.
- Mar. 19 **General Meeting.** Wednesday. Refreshments at 7:30 pm, program at 8. Palo Alto Cultural Ctr, Newell at Embarcadero. Doug Cheeseman, Professor of Zoology at De Anza College and Program Chairman of SCVAS, will present a program on the birds and some nocturnal animals of tropical Queensland and Papua New Guinea. He will discuss the adaptations and behavior of these animals. Doug and Gail Cheeseman led a trip to New Guinea and Australia during the summer of 1985.
- Mar. 22 **Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve.** Saturday, 8:30 am, half day. Meet at the intersection of Skyline Blvd. (Hwy 35) and Alpine Rd. (Page Mill Rd.) above Palo Alto. Informal carpooling, Park & Ride, I-280 and Page Mill Rd., 8 am. Restrooms at Montebello OSP 1 mile below Skyline. Leader: Paul Noble (415)948-3876.
- Mar. 26 **Coal Mine Ridge.** Wednesday, 8:30 am, half day. Take Hwy 280 to Alpine, S about 3.2 miles to stop sign at Portola Rd. Continue on Alpine 0.9 miles to parking lot on right just before Willowbrook. Bluebirds, vireos, warblers, views. Leader: Phil Hand (415)851-2623.
- Mar. 29 **Alviso.** Saturday, 8:30 am, half day. Meet at the Marina at the end of Hope St. N on Gold St. from Hwy 237 in Alviso, left on Elizabeth, right on Hope. Leader: Grant Hoyt (415)969-7892.

Field Trip Coordinator for April - May Lou Burgin (408)253-7115

- Apr. 2 **Bay Area Bird Photographers.** Wednesday, 7:30 pm. Raymond Quinton, photo editor for SF's Ortho Books, will discuss bird photography from the publisher's point of view. He has been working on The Birds Around Us, a book project featuring the work of many authors and photographers, including some BABP members.
- Apr. 5 **Elkhorn Slough Boat Trip.** Saturday, 9 am. Meet at Jetty Rd. and Hwy 1, N of Moss Landing. We'll bird there for 1 hr; boat trip for 3 hrs up Elkhorn Slough. Limit of 14 people (3 small boats). Bring lunch. Cost \$8. Call Gail Cheeseman for reservations. Call Gail by 7 am if raining. (408)867-1371. Leader: Bernadette Ramer.
- Apr. 6 **Pinnacles Nat'l Monument.** Full day Sunday. 8:30 am. Meet at Choame pkg. lot on E side of Monument. From San Jose take Hwy 101 S to Hwy 25. S on Hwy 25 approx. 40 miles to Hwy 146. S on 146 5 miles to Monument. Entrance fee. Bring lunch, liquids, and hat. About 4 miles of level walking. Call leader if raining. Woodland birds and early migrants. Leader: Kevin Monahan (408)425-7841.
- Apr. 9 **Field Trip South.** Wednesday, 8:30 am. Fremont older open space preserve. Exit off 280 at Sunnyvale-Saratoga Rd. (also called De Anza Blvd.). Go S on Sunnyvale-Saratoga Rd. a little over 2 1/2 miles to Prospect Rd. W on Prospect across railroad tracks and up into hills 1 3/4 miles to the parking lot. Leader: Frank Farran (408)252-3874.

BIRDSEED SALE

It's time for our spring bird seed sale. Once again, SCVAS is offering QUALITY SEED at a REASONABLE RATE.

This time, all proceeds will go to support NAS' Mono Lake Legal Defense Fund. Please tell all your friends, and help us support this worthy cause. Our goal is to sell 1200 pounds (6 TONS) of seed - and you can help us reach that goal.

Premium - high protein mix of red millet, white proso millet & black sunflower seeds. No fillers, not available in supermarkets or feed stores.

Western Wild Bird - classic blend of red millet, white proso millet, sudan grass screenings and red millet.

Black Oil Sunflower - small seed, high in oil content and nutritive value.

Grey Medium Sunflower - larger seed, attracts many species.

Thistle - rich in oil, appeals to smaller birds.

THIS IS A PRE-PAID SALE. Your order, including a check payable to SCVAS, must be received by WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9. All orders must be picked up from the SCVAS office in the Peninsula Conservation Center on either Friday, May 2 between noon and 6 pm, or on Saturday, May 3 between 10 am and 1 pm. UNCLAIMED SEED WILL BE RESOLD SATURDAY AFTER 1 PM UNLESS AN EXCEPTION HAS BEEN MADE IN ADVANCE.

Please send the order form and your check to SCVAS, 2253 Park Blvd., Palo Alto, CA 94306 NO LATER THAN APRIL 9.

	# Bags	Cost
Premium Seed	20 1b @ \$ 7/bag	
" "	50 1b @ \$15/bag	
Western Wild	20 1b @ \$ 6/bag	
" "	50 1b @ \$13/bag	
Black Oil Sun	20 1b @ \$12/bag	
" "	50 1b @ \$27/bag	
Striped Sun	20 1b @ \$15/bag	
" "	50 1b @ \$34/bag	
Thistle	5 1b @ \$10/bag	
" "	20 1b @ \$35/bag	
Subtotal		_____
Add 7% Tax		_____
Total		_____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

NEW EDITOR NEEDED

The Avocet's current editor will be moving out of state, so a new editor or editorial team is needed. It's interesting work, and it's a great way to get editorial/publications experience. Training available, if needed. Volunteers, please call the present editor, Susan McCarthy, at (408)293-7498.

ANOTHER STEP BACKWARDS

Once there was a viable tract of riparian woodland bordering Matadero Creek, just west of the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin. Although it was a small patch of riparian woodland (approx. 3.1 acres), it possessed all the characteristics that define the habitat: a fresh water course, numerous willows, and dense tangles of understory growth. As is typical in such a habitat, a healthy variety of animal life took advantage of the area. A census conducted from 31 Aug. - 11 Dec. 1985 recorded 96 species of birds, 8 species of mammals, abundant fish and invertebrates, and over 62 species of plants within the woodland and its zone of influence (approx. 6 acres).

Shortly after Christmas, the Santa Clara Valley Water District began systematically removing all the understory growth within the woodland. Almost everything under the 7 foot level was hacked out and hauled away. Only some blackberry brambles and reeds remain standing, and I imagine these will eventually answer to a bulldozer.

A riparian woodland with no understory growth can no longer be considered viable riparian habitat. Comparing what's left of the woodland to its former state is like comparing an empty house to a richly furnished home.

The integrity of this patch of habitat was destroyed in the name of furthering flood control. I have visited the site during heavy rains and watched the creek flood its banks and flow freely through the adjacent vegetation. If anything, it's all the garbage people dump upstream, brought downstream with the rains, that might block the natural flow of the creek. Was the destruction of this already rare habitat really necessary?

Is it worth making such a big deal over such a small parcel of habitat? Of course it is. The Matadero riparian woodland was once an important source of food and cover for many birds and other animals. It has proven to be a locally preferred stop-over point for many migratory birds. Is another rip-rap lined watercourse soon to follow? How many small bits of habitat can we lose before we have none at all?

Perhaps in time the Matadero riparian woodland will return to its former self, But for the moment, just so many more plants are destroyed, and just so many more animals are displaced. We've just lost some more ground in the fight for conservation.

-David Suddjian

(Editor's note: to complain about this action and the underlying policy, write or call The Santa Clara Valley Water District, 5750 Almaden Expwy, S.J. 95118 (408/265-2600) to the attention of Bernard Goldner.)

NON-AUDUBON CLASSES

SFBBO announces another year of birding tours, starting with Arizona at Easter, Michigan in June, and others. Call Don Starks at (408)371-9720 for a brochure and information.

Bay Area Bird Photographers and Keeble and Shuchat Photography are sponsoring a seminar on Nature and Wildlife Photo Marketing Saturday March 8, 9:30 am - 4 p.m. Fee is \$10. It will be taught by Jack Wilburn, professional freelance wildlife photographer, and will cover every aspect of marketing your photographs. Contact Keeble and Shuchat Photograph, 290 California Ave., Palo Alto.

The Trail Information and Volunteer Center is offering seminars on trailwork March 12 and 15 and April 6. Official TIVC certificates will be awarded. You will be able to lead trail crews on TIVC's annual Trail Days in April. For information and registration call TIVC (415)968-7065.

FIELD NOTES - Bill Bousman

What makes a species a species and not just a subspecies or form is a subject of endless debate among scientists and philosophers. For "listers" that debate is unexciting unless the taxonomists decide to split a species -- the listers murmur approvingly and check out whether they can add species to their lifelist. And if the taxonomists lump two species as one, rebellious cries are heard.

For species on the North American continent the judges of the what is and what is not are a standing committee of the American Ornithologists Union. Their 35th Supplement to the AOU Checklist is out and the news is good for local listers and interesting as well. Birds on the county checklist that have been affected are Arctic Loon, Western Grebe, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. It has been long accepted that there are three races of the Arctic Loon, two in Asia and one in North America. Based on research, the committee decided that the group should be split into Arctic Loon for the Asian birds and Pacific Loon for the North American birds. We now need to write Pacific Loon on our field lists and keep an open spot for the new Arctic Loon. There are winter records as far south as Washington. Soon information will be out on separating the two species and we'll hear of California records.

Whether there are two species of Western Grebe was a subject of debate a hundred years ago. As originally described there was a dark-phase bird (Western Grebe) and a light-phase bird (Clark's Grebe). But the final ruling was that they were one species. Why are they now considered different? On lakes where both forms breed they are almost completely segregated. Their courtship calls and displays are almost identical. The exception is the "advertising call", the first stage in courtship. The female advertising call of one form has a slight gap in it so it sounds like two notes instead of one. Recent tape playback experiments show that the males of one form almost never respond to the female call of the other. If a small piece of tape is removed so that the two-note call sounds like the one-note call then the other form will actively call back. Interestingly, in Canada where only the dark form breeds, the males will respond to either female call. The formation of a separate species requires some means to avoid hybridization - for the Western and Clark's grebes this means is subtle indeed. These grebes are easy to separate if you are not too far away and they're well illustrated in the National Geographic guide. Clark's has white lores, an orange bill, and lighter flanks. How common is Clark's Grebe? A 1977 survey made in California suggested that one bird in eight is a Clark's. However, the distribution is sporadic in that the two species seem to like their own kind, so that some reservoirs have none, while others may be mostly Clark's. Around here we really don't know. I consider the bird to be uncommon, and less frequently seen than Western. I would be delighted if anyone who finds a group of Western/Clark's grebes goes through and gets the ratio.

The last bird to be split is the Red-naped Sapsucker which is now considered a separate species from the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The Red-naped is a regular winter resident in Southern California and elsewhere, but is very rare around here. It was quite exciting this Christmas that the Red-naped was found for the first time on the Palo Alto and San Jose Christmas Bird Counts. The bird has been split primarily because of electrophoretic studies done on all the sapsuckers. These studies show that the birds have not interbred to a significant degree for a long time, and that the most closely related sapsuckers are the Red-breasted and Yellow-bellied. This conclusion is supported by field studies in zones of overlap. The National Geographic guide

shows good pictures of all the sapsuckers, and the species can be separated with careful study.

Two adult **Tundra Swans** were found in a small pond near San Antonio Junction on the Mt. Hamilton CBC for the first count record (Barbara Cox fide Don Schmoltdt-DSc). Also most unusual for the Mt. Hamilton CBC were two **Greater White-fronted Geese** found 31 Dec on Isabel Reservoir (Paul Hait fide DSc). **Blue-winged Teal** continue in the Palo Alto FCB with two seen on 9 Jan (Paul Noble-PN). **Common Merganser** are scarce and sporadic on the mountain reservoirs and large streams. Eight seen on Grant Lake on 15 Dec are from a typical location (James Yurchenco-JY, Amy Lauterbach-AL). **Red-breasted Mergansers** continue to be seen on the Alviso salt ponds with 17 there 7 Jan. A single adult **Bald Eagle** was found on Isabel Reservoir on the Mt. Hamilton CBC (DSc). Another adult was found at Calaveras Reservoir 18 Jan (Larry Parmeter). Our second record this winter of a **Rough-legged Hawk** is one of an immature at Monte Bello OSP 12 Jan (PN). A **Merlin** was seen on 8 Jan in Joseph Grant Park feeding on a meadowlark (David Douglas). **Wild Turkey** were heard above Alum Rock Park on 26 Dec (Dave Johnston-DJ fide Jim & Sue Liskovec-J&SL), and 2 were heard along Mines Road on 2 Jan for the first Mt. Hamilton CBC record (Bob Richmond-BR fide DSc). A total of 10 **Snowy Plover** were found in Alviso on 29 Dec (PN and David Suddjian-DSu fide J&SL). Good photographs were obtained of the sandpiper reported on the San Jose CBC with additional written descriptions. It is definitely a juvenile **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, by far the latest record from Northern California. It was found just north of the Alviso Marina on 29 Dec (PN et al.), again on 1 Jan (Joe Morlan-JM), and was last seen on 5 Jan (DSu fide JM). It's likely that this is the one found by Peter Perrine in November. The adult **Parasitic Jaeger** found at Charleston Slough in December was seen in the vicinity on 5 Jan (Don Starks-DSt and Dick Stovel-DSv) and 18 Jan. The Forster's Tern flocks are gone and the bird mostly chases Ring-billed Gulls. A first winter **Glaucous Gull** continues in the vicinity of Shoreline Park and Charleston Slough with sightings on 5 Jan (DSt), 18 Jan, and 21 Jan. A wintering **Caspian Tern** at the Sunnyvale sewage treatment plant on 29 Dec (Derek Currall et al.) is an exceptional record for this species which winters much further south. A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** was found in San Antonio Valley on 2 Jan (Elsie Richie-ER fide DSc). An owl in Alum Rock Park 29 Dec responded to taped **Long-eared Owl** calls and was undoubtedly this species, but wasn't seen despite considerable searching (DJ fide J&SL). The Mt. Hamilton CBC reported very good numbers of **Lewis' Woodpeckers** with 116 found (BR, Sid Hibma-SH, ER, fide DSc). The previous high was of 84 in 1983 and the 9-year average is 40. A few **Winter Wrens** were found along upper Stevens Creek in Monte Bello 12 Jan (PN). They are resident in this area. The numbers of **Phainopepla** on the Mt. Hamilton Count were also very good with a high of 26 birds (BR,SH,ER et al fide DSc). The previous high was the 20 recorded last year and the 9-year average is 7 birds. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** wintering along San Francisco Creek was re-found on 12 Jan (DSu). A **White-throated Sparrow** was there 12 Jan (DSu).

I will be going to Paris for six months to work in an aeronautical laboratory starting in April. I think this will be an enjoyable experience for my family and me, and I hope to have time to see if the leaf warblers, pipits, and larks are really as hard to identify as they seem to be. While I am gone David Suddjian has graciously agreed to write this column. So, if you see an "uncommon to rare" please write or call: David Suddjian, 1136 Callas Lane, #1, Capitola, CA 95010 (408)479-9603.

Staff	Lynn Tennefoss (days)	415/329-1811	DIRECTORS (1984-87)	408/749-8126	Publicity	Deborah Manley	408/749-8126
President	Kevin Monahan	408/425-7841	Deborah Manley	408/251-3086	Library	Myra Hodgson	415/326-3641
1st Vice Pres	Judy McEuen	408/251-3086	Mark McEuen	415/326-0252	Field Trips	Vicki Silvas-Young	408/293-7124
2nd Vice Pres	Dave Johnston	408/258-4322	Trish Mulvey			Dolores Norton	415/941-1666
Treasurer	Dave Nauer	408/259-1283	DIRECTORS (1985-88)	415/323-7284	Membership	Linda Hagelin	408/867-3046
Rec. Sec'y	Courtenay Dawson-Roberts	415/327-5746	Karen Ingels	415/493-5540	Aud. Adventures	Elaine Gould	408/448-0622
Past President	Sue Liskovec	415/969-5542	Phil LaRiviere	415/327-1254	Hospitality	Barbara Hambelton	408/446-3645
			Don Price		Conservation	Jim & Sue Liskovec	415/969-5542
DIRECTORS (1983-86)			CHAIRPERSONS	408/293-7498	Christmas	Donna Zetterquist	408/429-9716
Richard Jeffers		415/325-9675	Editor	408/867-1371	Bird Count	Pete LaTourrette	415/961-2741
Barbara Hambelton		408/446-3645	Programs		Grants		
Roy Lowe		408/251-2323	Susan McCarthy		Photo Club		
			Doug & Gail				
			Cheeseman				

General meetings are open to the public. Board of Directors meetings are open to all members. Call the office for times and directions.

Avocet deadline is the first Monday of the month. Send contributions to the editor, Susan McCarthy, 475 S 12th, San Jose, CA 95112.

KINGS RIVER LOSES OUT IN SEQUOIA FOREST PLAN

The Kings River remains an open target for developers planning a massive dam, according to recommendations in a draft forest management plan recently released for public review by the Sequoia National Forest.

One of California's largest wild rivers, the Kings flows from the High Sierra east of Fresno. A century ago John Muir called the river's canyon "a rival of Yosemite" and sought protection for the area. Only after a 59-year battle was Kings Canyon National Park created by Congress in 1940 to preserve the High Sierra portions of the Kings.

Leaving the protection of the park and flowing into the Sequoia National Forest, the Kings loses none of its spectacular nature. As part of its forest management planning, the Forest Service was to have studied this part of the river for addition to the National Wild & Scenic River System.

The Kings is one of the top trout streams in the West. The canyon provides 40% of the winter habitat of the North Fork Kings deer herd, which plummeted from 17,000 animals in 1950 to less than 2,000 today as reservoirs flooded deer habitat.

Unfortunately, the Forest Service's management plan threatens to give developers a free hand. Released in late November, the forest plan recommends Wild and Scenic River status for non-controversial parts of the river, but it fails to even evaluate a spectacularly scenic 14-mile stretch that a local water development agency would like to flood behind Rodgers Crossing Dam.

Studies have found that Rodgers Crossing would be a grossly ineffective dam. The most recent study found that the dam would provide water only once every three or four years. Yet the Kings River Conservation District, dominated by wealthy agri-

business interests, is re-evaluating the dam's feasibility and may decide that hydropower will make it profitable.

Letting a group of developers decide whether they want to dam a great river is no way to run a national forest. Letters to the Sequoia National Forest asking for a full Wild and Scenic study of the Kings are urgently needed. Only this kind of study can examine the full range of values the Kings River offers the public. The deadline for public comment is March 28. Please write Jim Crates, Supervisor, Sequoia National Forest, 900 W. Grand Ave., Porterville, CA 93257.

Concerned readers can also ask Supervisor Crates to adopt the "Conservation Alternative" for the Sequoia. This is a forest management plan developed by conservation groups and concerned local residents. It seeks to preserve the Sequoia's scenery, old-growth forests, and wildlife from increased development and timber harvesting proposed by the Forest Service.

-by Patrick Carr
Friends of the River

BAYLANDS PHOTO EXHIBIT

If you haven't seen the Baylands Photo Exhibition, sponsored by SCVAS and other organizations, it's at the SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters, in Newark. The show may be seen from 10 am to 5 pm, every day of the week. Don't miss it!

IN MEMORY

A gift has been received from Jack and Karin Taggart, in memory of Charlotte Eberhard of San Jose.

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.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Gift from _____

CHECK CATEGORY

- () Individual/\$30
- () Family/\$38
- () Senior Citizen/\$21
- () Senior Citizen Family/\$23
- () Student/\$18
- () AVOCET only/\$6
- () Introductory Membership/\$20