

The Avocet

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

Volume 34, Number 1

January 1987

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

Field Trip Coordinator for January: Paul Noble (415)948-3876

- Jan. 3 **Whale and Bird Watching Boat Trip.** Saturday, 7:45 am - 3 pm. Leaders: Doug & Gail Cheeseman & Allen Royer. Cost \$30.00. Reservations, (408)867-1371 or (408)741-5330.
- Jan. 7 **Bay Area Bird Photographers.** Wednesday, 7:30 pm at the Baylands. Two-part program features Bob Ranoa's slide presentation of his Florida trip and a demonstration by Doug Herr of a computer slide-filing system he has developed. Co-sponsored by the City of Palo Alto.
- Jan. 10 **Owling.** Montebello Open Space Preserve. Saturday. LIMITED TO 10 PERSONS. BY RESERVATION ONLY! Call Paul Noble (415)948-3876.
- Jan. 11 **Post CBC Rarities Chase.** Sunday. Half to full day. Leader: Don Starks. Call Paul Noble for reservations and information The Week Before The Trip ONLY! (415)948-3876.
- Jan. 13 **Bird Discussion Group.** Tuesday, 9:30 am at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga. Topic: Australian Birds.
- Jan. 14 **Field Trip South.** Wednesday, 9:30 am. Alviso Environmental Education Center area. Walk with Refuge Naturalist Linda Drey on trails behind the Ed Center. From 237 (Mt. View-Alviso Xway), take Taylor St. Turn right at Grand Blvd, straight to Ed Center. Gail Cheeseman (408)741-5330.
- Jan. 17 **Whale and Bird Watching Boat Trip.** Saturday, 7:45 am - 3 pm. Leaders: Doug & Gail Cheeseman & Allen Royer. Cost \$30.00. Reservations, (408)867-1371 or (408)741-5330.
- Jan. 17 **Owling.** Montebello Open Space Preserve. Saturday. LIMITED TO 10 PERSONS. BY RESERVATION ONLY! Call Paul Noble (415)948-3876.
- Jan. 18 **Foster City.** Sunday, 9 am, half day. Take Hwy 101 N to Hillsdale Blvd E turnoff. Follow Hillsdale about 1 mi to Shell Blvd. Turn right on Shell. Go about 1/3 mi and park on right next to Tennis courts. Specialties: Possible Hooded Mergansers, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Red Knot. Leader: Delores Norton (415)941-1666.
- Jan. 21 **General Meeting.** Wednesday, 7:30 pm, program at 8 pm. Frank Balthis will present a program on the natural history of the West Coast of Baja and its islands. Details of the program are inside.
- Jan. 24 **Trip to the Monterey Seavalley,** Shearwater Journeys. Saturday. Call Debra Shearwater, (415)688-1990, for more information.
- Jan. 24 **Owling.** Montebello Open Space Preserve. Saturday. LIMITED TO 10 PERSONS. BY RESERVATION ONLY! Call Paul Noble (415)948-3876.
- Jan. 24-25 **Superbird Weekend.** Saturday-Merced NWR and Los Banos. Sunday-Panoche Valley. Carpooling is encouraged; the shorter the caravan, the better the birding for everyone! Bring your CB's and walkie-talkies. Motels and camping available in and near Los Banos. RAIN OR SHINE.
- Jan. 24 **Merced NWR and Los Banos.** Saturday, 9 am. Meet at Sandy Mush Rd and Hwy 59. Take Hwy 101 S to Hwy 152 E to Los Banos and continue another 19 miles to Hwy 59. Turn N on Hwy 59 approximately 7 miles to intersection with Sandy Mush Rd. Restrooms and gas available in Los Banos but NOT at meeting place. Specialties: Sandhill Cranes, White-faced Ibis. Leader: Ted Chandik (415)493-5330.
- Jan. 25 **Panoche Valley.** Sunday, 8:30 am. Meet at the rest stop on I-5, 18 miles S of Hwy 152. LIMITED FACILITIES during the day. Specialties: Mountain Plovers, Mtn. Bluebirds, Lewis' Woodpeckers, and possibly Chukars. Leaders: Jim and Sue Liskovec (415)969-5542.
- Jan. 28 **Field Trip North, Foster City.** Wednesday, 9 am. Take 101 N to Hillsdale Blvd E turnoff. Follow Hillsdale about 1 mi to Shell Blvd. Turn right on Shell, go about 1 block and park in gravel lot on left opposite the Community Center. Specialties: Possible Hooded Mergansers, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Red Knot. Leader: Delores Norton, (415)941-1666.
- Jan. 31 **Golden Gate Park.** Saturday, 9 am, half day. Meet at N side of Strybing Arboretum on South Drive near Tea Garden. Take Hwy 280 N to 19th Ave. to Golden Gate Park. Turn right on South Dr. (King Dr. on some maps) about 1/2 mi to Tea Garden. Park on side of So. Dr. near large greenhouse. HEAVY rain cancels. Leader: David Suddjian (408)479-9603.

NON-AUDUBON TRIPS AND EVENTS

The following are not sponsored by Audubon but are listed for your information.

- Fremont Adult School offers two Birding Field Trips Classes. Students will visit numerous birding spots to learn field identification, life styles and ecology of local birds. Alice Hoch, an experienced birder and teacher will teach both classes. They will meet on six Tuesdays, from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, starting January 13 and on six Wednesdays, same hours, starting January 14. For information concerning registration, equipment, car pools, etc., call the Fremont Adult School at (415)791-5841 or the instructor at (415)657-0475.

- A one-day field trip to observe birds in the Delta will be offered by Fremont Adult School. Hundreds of Sandhill Cranes will be viewed on their wintering grounds in the delta of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers. They may be joined by cranes doing their nuptial dance, as well as hawks, ducks and gulls. The field trip is on Saturday, January 31 from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. Pre-registration by January 27 is necessary. For information concerning registration, equipment, car pools, etc. on these classes and field trips, call the Fremont Adult School at (415)791-5841 or the instructor at (415)657-0475.

- Sequoia Adult School is offering classes for birdwatchers. Birds At Home and In The Field for beginning and intermediate birders will meet on eight Wednesday evenings and five Sunday field trips. Classes begin January 7 and cost \$40. Bird Study for Serious Birders, for intermediate and advanced birders, will highlight winter birds. Class will meet on eight Monday evenings and five Saturday field trips, beginning January 5. A field trip to Santa Barbara and environs, January 23-25, will feature wintering birds uncommon in the Bay Area. For information on these classes and field trips call Maryann Danielson, (415)342-6919. Registration is limited.

- Palo Alto Adult Education offers Introduction to Birdwatching, to introduce the beginner to birdwatching in the Bay Area. Nine evening lectures and three field trips will begin on January 12 at Palo Alto High School. The cost is \$37. For more information call (415)329-3752.

- Professor Doug Cheeseman will teach Zoology in the Winter quarter at DeAnza College. His class will cover the animal kingdom from single cell forms to mammals and birds, using slides from his world-wide safaris to illustrate materials.



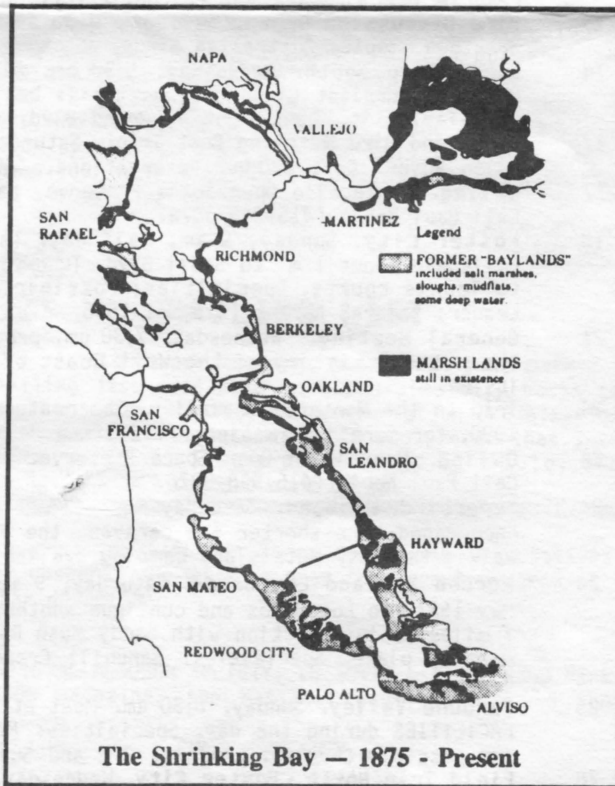
- A workshop, "Living With Place: Practicing Deep Ecology", will be held at Point Reyes National Seashore, January 23-25, and is sponsored by the Sierra Institute, Univ. of California Extension, Santa Cruz. Noted author-activist Bill Devall will lead the retreat, which will offer practical ways to enlarge one's interaction with and understanding of wild nature and deep ecology. For information call Nelda Whitaker (408)429-2761.

- The Grassland Resource Conservation District is holding a Wetland Symposium and Bird Walk on Saturday, March 14, in Los Banos, Merced County. More information will follow.

- On January 31 and February 1, the Planning and Conservation League will hold its Fourth Annual Environmental Legislative Symposium, to be held at California State U., Sacramento. A variety of workshops will address the most pressing environmental issues facing California: growth, pollution, coastal protection, pesticides and toxics, and more. For more information and to register, call Anne Hedges, coordinator (916)444-8726. Registration is limited.

- The League of Women Voters will host a public information meeting about hazardous materials liability questions on January 8 at 7:30 pm in the "Hal Brady Room" at the Los Altos Community Center, 97 Hillview Ave., Los Altos. Speakers will include representatives from government agencies and lawyers who represent persons adversely affected by hazardous materials and from firms that represent industrial clients.

- The Santa Clara Adult Education Program will offer an eight week course on the natural history of California's diverse avifauna. The course will be taught by Mike Rigney at the Santa Clara Adult Education Center, 1840 Benton St., Santa Clara, on Thursday evenings from 7-10 pm starting January 29. Mike is co-founder, with Dr. Richard Mewaldt, of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and served as its first Executive Director. The course will be based on habitat identification and the role each habitat plays in the distribution of birds. Field trips will include identification sessions at local birding hot-spots as well as an introduction to bird banding at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station.



PROTECTING THE BAY IS EVERYBODY'S JOB!

Courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service & Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge



THE BEST LAID PLANS

by Eunice and Joe Wissel

When we first moved to Northern California in the mid 1950's Santa Clara County was known as the Valley of Hearts delight and fruit orchards were everywhere. The birds were characteristic of the agricultural environment. As the transformation to the Silicon Valley took place many of the more elusive birds withdrew to the Santa Cruz Mountains and other remote areas. Most of the housing areas were new so the trees and shrubs were very young, furnishing very little avian habitat.

In this environment we initiated a feeding program and provided water which is for the most part more important than food in the dry California summers. The predominant birds in the area were Mockingbirds, Scrub Jays and Brown Towhees along with House Sparrows and House Finches. With the introduction of a hummingbird feeder we found ourselves year round hosts to Anna's Hummingbirds.

With the passage of time the shrubs and the trees matured and some of the more timid birds started to return. When we saw Chestnut-backed Chickadees in our back yard we put out a cloth bag type feeder which contained thistle seeds and eventually they took the seeds from the bag. When our almond tree started to bear we noticed round holes in the sides of some nuts. We saw the Downy Woodpecker feeding on the almonds from time to time.

The next step which appeared to be logical to us was to attempt to provide nesting sites for some of our visitors. Since the almond tree was in the front of our house and the Downy Woodpecker was seen most frequently in that area we planned a woodpecker abode for a tree in the front yard. The feeder for the chickadees was in the rear of the house so we selected a tree in the backyard for these visitors. We carefully obtained the appropriate birdhouse dimensions and hollowed out a log for the woodpeckers. We made sure that the log was 14 inches long, six inches in diameter and the entrance hole was an inch and a quarter in diameter. We fastened the log house in a tree in the front yard about 15 feet from the ground. At the same time we built a house for the chickadees using plywood in combination with a bark front. The nesting cavity was about 7 inches from top to bottom and the entrance hole was slightly less than an inch in diameter. We placed this house near the feeders in the back yard about 12 feet above the ground. We stepped back and admired our handiwork having carefully met the prescribed specifications. For some time nothing happened. None of the birds paid the slightest attention to either birdhouse.

Then one morning we were surprised to hear a resounding hammering - in the backyard! The Downy Woodpecker was trying to enlarge the entrance to the house built for the chickadees. The bird persisted for some time and then departed. While a significant amount of wood had been removed the woodpecker had not succeeded in opening the hole to the appropriate woodpecker dimension. We considered taking the house down and enlarging the hole, but assumed that the woodpecker would find the "right" house in the front yard. After another period of inactivity we noticed a pair of Chestnut-backed Chickadees entering the woodpecker's house in the front yard. We were now concerned because the entrance hole was big enough to allow predators in. In addition we weren't sure baby birds would be able to reach the entrance from the depth of the cavity which had been designed for the larger woodpeckers. We watched anxiously while the parents made frequent trips obviously feeding young which we could not see. One morning we were

happy to see a baby chickadee standing in the entrance to the house waiting to be fed. Eventually the chickadees departed signaling the end of a successful nesting effort.

That wasn't quite the way that we had planned it. On subsequent occasions the Downy Woodpecker and a Nuttall's Woodpecker came to the back yard and hammered at the entrance to the "chickadee" birdhouse. We thought that the following year things would straighten themselves out. However this year the Plain Titmice have entered both houses and one pair has successfully nested in the "woodpecker" birdhouse.

On the basis of our experience we would encourage our readers to put up cavity type birdhouses according to specifications and their best judgement; then sit back and see what happens.



GGAS vs PORT OF OAKLAND

GGAS is currently involved in a law suit with the Port of Oakland regarding the fill and destruction of 180 acres of wetland habitat for an air freight development. Last spring the Army Corps of Engineers' permit for the project met with controversy, and EPA officials expressed objection. It was disappointing to conservation groups when the EPA dropped their opposition in late July.

Environmentalists investigated legal action and after several weeks of study, GGAS decided to act based on violation to the California Environmental Quality Act. On August 21, 1986 we filed a complaint with a group called CALM (Citizens for Alameda County's last Marshes) resulting in a restraining order on the project. Following this lead, the State of California joined the suit on September 10. Save S.F. Bay Association also tried to join the suit, but were denied because it was determined they had no new cause.

Currently, we are waiting for the court decision, due on October 21. Attorneys are also looking at mitigation sites appropriate for this project, and there may be settlement out of court.

Though it is felt that there is violation to Army Corps Section 404 regulations, we have not as yet pursued this legal action.

Wetland habitat is the victim of destruction and controversy. The current law suit is a courageous effort to maintain important wildlife habitat using the laws designed to protect these decreasing resources. GGAS is not opposing the project, but does want appropriate local mitigation for wetland losses. It is also important to assure that current laws are not weakened by bureaucracy, politics and influence.

We are the leaders in an important urban wildlife protection effort, one which will no doubt be watched carefully by many people. The wildlife is primarily migratory, an international resource, and a major responsibility. Law suits are not what we enjoy most, but the need was apparent, and we are committed.

Donations at this time would be very much appreciated. They will offset legal costs and show support for this legal action. It will also give members an unequalled opportunity to participate in urban habitat protection. Please label your donations "legal action fund."

-Leora Feeny - The Gull

BAY AREA AUDUBON CHAPTERS

Sometimes SCVAS members like to subscribe to other chapter's newsletters, or like to give gift subscriptions to individuals in other chapter's regions. For your convenience, here is a list of all 8 Bay Area Audubon Chapters as well as NAS's Environmental Education Center in Tiburon, their geographical areas, and the costs of their newsletters.

Chapter	General Membership Area	Newsletter Subscriptions
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society 2253 Park Blvd. Palo Alto, CA 94306 (415)329-1811	Santa Clara County	The Avocet \$6/year
Sequoia Audubon Society P. O. Box 1131 Burlingame, CA 94011 (415)593-7368	San Mateo County	Sequoia Needles \$5/year
Ohlone Audubon Society c/o Dr. Howard Cogswell 1548 East Ave. Hayward, CA 94541 (415)581-2201	S & E Alameda County	Kite Call \$5/year
Napa- Solano Audubon Society c/o Myrlee Potosnak 506 Tabor Ave. Fairfield, CA 94533 (707)644-0109	Napa, Solano Counties	Song Sparrow \$5/year
Mt. Diablo Audubon Society P. O. Box 53 Walnut Creek, CA 94596	Costra Costa County	The Quail \$6/year
Madrone Audubon Society P. O. Box 1911 Santa Rosa, CA 95402 (707)546-7492	Sonoma County	Madrone Leaves \$10/year
Marin Audubon Society c/o Janet Walker 431 Green Glen Way Mill Valley, CA 94941 (415)388-7888	Marin County	Redwood Log \$5/year
Golden Gate Audubon Society 1550 Shattuck #204 Berkeley, CA 94709 (415)843-2222	SE, NW Alameda, NW Contra Costa Counties	The Gull \$8/year
Richardson Bay Audubon Center 376 Greenwood Beach Rd. Tiburon, CA 94920 (415)388-2524	Whole Bay Area - a resource center	

JANUARY PROGRAM

At the next meeting of SCVAS, January 21, Frank Balthis will present a program on the natural history of the West Coast of Baja, California, and its islands: "In the Realm of the California Grey Whale". Frank will also include some fascinating material on Killer Whales that he photographed this past summer in British Columbia. Frank is a Ranger Naturalist for Ano Nuevo State Reserve and an outstanding nature photographer. He has had his photographs published in a number of publications, including Natural History, Sierra and National Wildlife. Frank has also had his photographs published in calendars by California State Parks, Bo-Tree, etc. He will present incredible photography as well as a very informative program on Baja natural history.

COMING SOON ... The new Audubon Television Special, *"On the Edge of Extinction: Panthers and Cheetahs."* On cable SuperStation WTBS.

Thursday, January 8, 9:05pm EST
Thursday, January 15, 12:00am EST
Sunday, January 18, 5:35pm EST
Tuesday, January 20, 8:05pm EST

(Check local listings for schedule changes)

Future programs will feature alternative agriculture, waterfowl, and the wood stork of the Florida Everglades. All Audubon TV Specials are shown on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) during the summer. Videocassettes are available. For more information: National Audubon Society, Audubon Television Programs, 801 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Suite 301, Washington, D.C. 20003.

FIELD NOTES - Bill Bousman

I very much enjoyed my vicarious California birding through David Suddjian's Field Notes column for the last six months and I join many others in extending my appreciation to him for a job well done. My favorite bird was the Cassin's Auklet at Shoreline Lake which still leaves me shaking my head in wonder.

I am currently revising the 1975 Santa Clara County Checklist and I am doing it in two stages: first, those species previously listed from "uncommon" to "accidental", and secondly, all of the species. I'm about through hummingbirds now and I had this idea that if there was some extra space in the Avocet I could stick a draft species distribution sheet in every once in a while and people could comment on it. The first sheet was published in the June Avocet, but since it was just an introductory sheet it didn't make a whole lot of sense by itself. When I do finish the first draft I will make a note of it here.



Wintering **American Bittern** numbers are quite variable. Six in the Palo Alto Baylands 22 Nov suggest a higher concentration this winter (Bill Bousman - WGB). An adult **Tundra Swan** was at Pescadero Marsh 23 Nov (WGB). Perhaps this is one of the immature birds that stayed there last winter. A male **Blue-winged Teal** was found in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin on 2 Nov and a pair were there 8 Nov (both David Suddjian - DSu). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was seen again in the outer part of the basin on 8 Nov (DSu). **Redhead** continue to be seen in the FCB in November (DSu, WGB), but in lower numbers than reported last month. Nine **Hooded Merganser** were reported from Skylonda Pond 4 Nov (Clark Blake) where they have wintered regularly in past years. My first official act upon returning from France was to mess up a sighting of a Golden Eagle last month. The Bald Eagle reported from Zanker Rd. was a Golden Eagle, not a bald. I identified it correctly, but reported it wrongly. **Golden Eagle** sightings this month included a west-side adult off Dear Creek Rd. in Palo Alto 14 Nov (Jobst Brandt) and two adults near I-280 and Bird in the middle of San Jose 23 Nov (Larry Macarty - LM). The first **Merlin** reported for the fall was an adult male over the Mountain View Forebay 16 Nov (WGB). At least one **Peregrine Falcon** continues to be seen along the south S.F. Bay with one reported 1 Nov (James Yurchenco, Amy Lauterbach). A **Black Rail** was reported at the Palo Alto Baylands 4 Nov on the first winter high tide (fide RBA Tape). Paul Noble (PN) is censusing owls at Monte Bello regularly and his efforts are significantly increasing our knowledge of the local owls. Two **Northern Pygmy-Owls** there 20 Nov were in a new location and may be a different pair. A **Short-eared Owl** there 20 Nov was hunting at night and is one of our few records away from the bay. He had one pair of **Northern Saw-whet Owls** there on the 3

Nov census and found these two plus four more on 20 Nov. An imm. male **Costa's Hummingbird** broke its wing at a home in Saratoga 21 Nov and was identified as this species at the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley (LM). There are few records for the county. At least two **Lewis' Woodpeckers** remain at Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve with a sighting on 22 Nov (Dick Stovel - DSt). A **Western Flycatcher** at Monte Bello OSP 11 Nov (PN) was well past the last banding date from the Wool Ranch Transect, but is probably best considered a late transient. **Clark's Nutcrackers** have been seen flying past Pt. Diablo this fall (DSu) so one that turned up in Henry Coe S.P. 7 Nov (Barry Breckling - BB) fits this pattern. Nonetheless, this montane species is extraordinarily rare in the county with no records since 1967. Our autumn flight of **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, another irruptive montane species, appears to have finished with one reported in Los Gatos 6 Nov (Kathy Parker - KP). One or two **American Dippers** in Alum Rock Park 16 Nov are from a place where they are regularly found in the winter (Don and Jill Edwards). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** seem to be in higher numbers with a small group seen at Henry Coe S.P. 6 Nov (BB) and two seen in Menlo Park 23 Nov (WGB). Although most of us don't consider American Robins an irruptive species their winter numbers vary widely and extraordinary concentrations are sometimes reported. An estimate of 8,000 birds going to a nocturnal roost near Jasper Ridge 22 Nov (DSt) was considered a lower bound as no count was made of the earlier portion of the flight. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** along San Francisquito Creek below Middlefield Road 27 Nov (WGB) was in an area where they have wintered in past years. A **MacGillivray's Warbler** with a missing leg was seen in Los Gatos 10 and 13 Nov (KP). There are no previous winter records for this rare warbler. A male **Wilson's Warbler** banded at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) 9 Nov was a month later than the last record during the Wool Ranch Transect (fide PN). There are a few winter records for this species in the county. A **Western Tanager** was found in S. Los Altos 13 Nov (PN). A male and female were along San Francisquito Creek below Middlefield Road 27 Nov for the second winter in this area. (WGB). As is often the case the latter two birds were associated with a flowering eucalyptus. One to two **Sharp-tailed Sparrows** have been reported from the Palo Alto Baylands this fall with individuals seen 3, 5, 14, and 15 Nov (all fide RBA Tape). This species is still undergoing review by the California Rare Bird Committee (CRBC). Complete descriptions of well-seen birds should be forwarded to the CRBC.

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

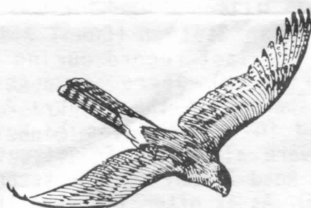


FIELD IDENTIFICATION: SHARP-SHINNED AND COOPER'S HAWKS

Identification of Accipiters presents difficulties for all observers, beginning and experienced alike. Correct identification is largely dependent on 3 factors: a good view, knowing what parts of the bird to look at, and previous experience. Quality viewing is often a problem. Many sightings involve birds seen only briefly, incompletely, at a distance, or all of the above. Observers must know the salient features to study before they see the bird. With previous experience comes the ability to form quick impressions and the background to compare the many relative points useful for field identification of these species.

Accipiters are short and sturdy hawks, with long tails for maneuvering, broad wings and long legs. Adults of both Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks are dark blue-gray above and have white underparts barred with reddish. Immatures of both species are brown above and have whitish underparts streaked with brown. Almost all the features used to separate the two species are relative, so it's important to base your ID on multiple points. Below is a summary of the features that should be studied.

Cooper's Hawks are larger than Sharp-shinned Hawks. In both species, females are larger than males and immatures of each sex are marginally smaller than the adult. There is no overlap in size between species, but this feature is really only useful when looking at the extreme cases (male Sharp-shinned & female Cooper's). If the bird is smaller than a flicker it's probably a Sharp-shinned. With experience one can form an impression of the range in size for each species.



One of the better field marks involves the shape of the tail and the length of the outer tail feathers. The tail feathers of Sharp-shinneds are all about the same length, giving the tail a squared-off look when folded or slightly fanned, and a shallow evenly-rounded look when fully fanned. In contrast, the outer tail feathers of the Cooper's are notably shorter than the other feathers, imparting a very rounded look to the tail when fanned, and a less squared look when folded. If the bird is perched or flying close enough the length of the feathers should be discernable. Experiment with strips of paper cut accordingly (12 strips to be accurate) and study the effects of different feather lengths. The photos in the Audubon Master Guide illustrate this difference well.

While examining the tail, note the prominence of the white terminal band (at the tip of the tail). This white band should be prominent and obvious on Cooper's, and much reduced or nearly absent on Sharp-shinneds. However, be aware that backlighting will highlight whatever white is present, causing the minimal terminal band of the Sharp-shinned to appear more prominent.

The two species have different flight styles. In flapping flight the Sharp-shinned appears buoyant, tight and "twinkly" (due to its small size). The comparatively larger Cooper's has a more powerful flight, often with rather floppy wingbeats. In addition, the Sharp-shinned flaps more rapidly than the Cooper's. When studying the flight style, note the prevailing wind conditions. Strong winds alter the nature of flight.

Look at the head size. Cooper's Hawks have a larger, more massive head mounted on a noticeable neck. In contrast, Sharp-shinned Hawks are small-headed and appear neck-less. This is especially useful for birds flying overhead, when the large head of the Cooper's will extend out beyond the bend of the wings, and the smaller, "no-necked" head of the Sharp-shinned will appear behind, or at best equal to, the bend of the wings. Differences in head size are also helpful for perched birds.

When watching immatures, note the nature and extent of the streaking on the underparts. The Sharp-shinned's underparts are white with much heavy, blurred streaking extending from the throat down across the belly. Their underparts often appear messy. The Cooper's has whitish underparts (though may be pale tan on the breast) with crisp spots forming clean brown streaks. The streaking/spotting stops short of the belly. The Cooper's underparts may appear spotted, rather than streaked, and are paler.

When watching adults, note the contrast between the crown and back. Cooper's have blackish caps that contrast sharply with the blue-gray back. Sharp-shinned's caps are just about concolor with the back and little or no contrast is evident.

Some other points to consider include: tail length (proportionately longer for Cooper's); wing length (proportionately longer for Sharp-shinned); head color of immatures (more buffy & tawny for Cooper's, whiter for Sharp-shinned); leg size (more spindly for Sharp-shinned); maneuverability (Sharp-shinned is more agile); raised hackles (Cooper's may raise the feathers on its nape when perched, Sharp-shinneds generally don't); wing position (Cooper's may hold its wings in a dihedral when soaring); call (similar for both species, but Sharp-shinned's is higher pitched and shrill).

Distribution: both species are fairly numerous during fall migration and winter (Sept - Apr) but Sharp-shinneds may outnumber Cooper's by as much as 2 to 1. During this time both species occur throughout Santa Clara Co. (Cooper's may be more likely in bayside areas). The Sharp-shinned Hawk has nested only occasionally in the county and is very rare May - Aug. The Cooper's Hawk nests in the mountains in small numbers and may be expected there May through Aug. Any Accipiter is very rare in the lowlands at this time, but Cooper's Hawk is most likely.

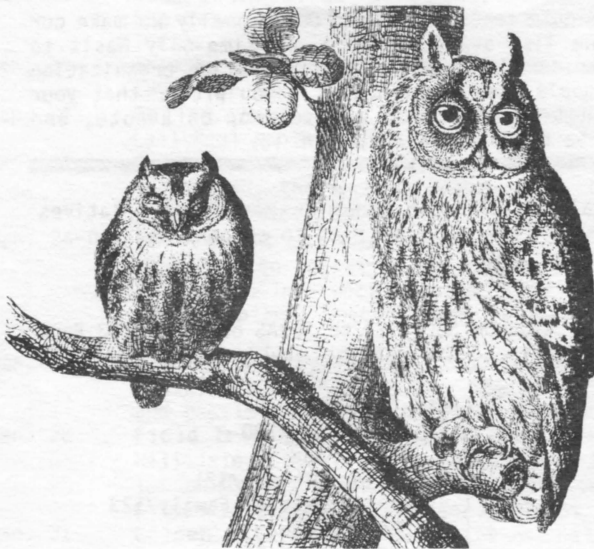
- David Suddjian



OWL CENSUS UNDERWAY by Paul Noble

In February of 1986 I became curious about the distribution of owls at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve in the hills above Palo Alto. Beginning in March of that year, in cooperation with the Mid-peninsula Regional Open Space District, I initiated a study to census owls on the preserve. Due to the vastness of this preserve (1295 hectares) only the northern half is being censused. The study objectives are twofold: first, to find out what species of owls inhabit the study area and second, how many of each species occur there. In addition to these main objectives any information on the owls' natural history (nesting documentation, habitat requirements, etc.) is to be gathered when possible.

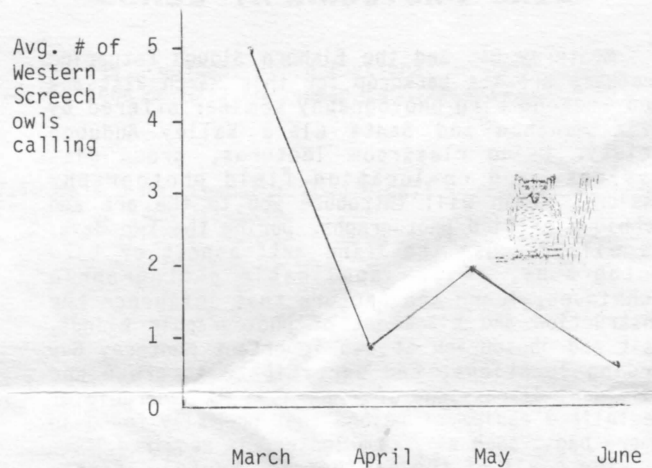
The census methods employed are as follows: twice a month (or more) I enter the preserve either before midnight or a couple hours before sunrise and, using playback tapes, try to elicit responses of the various species of resident owls. For some species of owls playback tapes are unnecessary due to visibility when hunting (i.e. Barn owl) or the tendency for the owl to call without stimulus (i.e. Great Horned). For others, however, (Western Screech, Northern Saw-whet, Northern Pygmy) playback tapes are almost a necessity. The tapes are played for 15 seconds followed by a minute of silence. Calling owls are then noted on a map as to their location relative to me. I move on a few hundred metres and repeat the procedure. This continues as I make a transect through the study area. The transect route is limited to developed and some undeveloped trails. From this information a census map is made for that census date with each species of owl indicated by a color coded dot. Eventually the clusters of dots on a master map give a good impression of the distribution and density of calling owls. In the 9 months of the census I have come up with some interesting data. Northern Saw-whet owls, very rarely encountered in the county, were documented to be breeding on the preserve when in August I called out a juvenile bird. Northern Pygmy owls are encountered quite regularly and most probably breed here. In November I saw a Short-eared owl hunting over the open meadows, indicating they may winter in these grassy hills.



Objectives for 1987 include more thorough coverage of under censused portions of the study area, the determination of whether the resident population of Northern Saw-whet owls is augmented by wintering individuals, breeding documentation of Northern Pygmy owls and the environmental factors that regulate the owls' activity (moon phases, time of night, time of year, etc.). The census is scheduled to run through August of 1987. A full report on my findings will appear in a future Avocet. Until then I offer you some stats on Western Screech owls.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF WESTERN SCREECH OWLS
CALLING PER CENSUS

MARCH-JUNE 1986



NATURE SOUNDS SOCIETY

The Nature Sounds Society is a group of individuals interested in recording sounds in nature. They print a small and excellent quarterly newsletter, and hold quarterly meetings as well as annual workshops and monthly or bi-monthly field recording trips. Membership dues for 1986-87 (Sept. through August) are \$6/individual. SCVAS receives the newsletter, and has it available in the office for interested members to review. Membership dues should be sent to Membership Chairman, Nature Sounds Society, Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak St., Oakland, CA 94607.

The Winter Field Recording Trip will be held Jan. 17-18, at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. For info, write William Gilbert, 4630 Driftwood Court, El Sobrante, CA 94803 or call (415)222-7820.

The Fall Newsletter includes information on Sound Exhibits at the S.F. Zoo's Primate Discovery Center's Nocturnal Gallery (birds and insects), and at the Oakland Museum (California Raptors), as well as information on Cassettes of Recorded Bird Songs available for sale by Eleanor A. Pugh (Backyard Birds, Birds of Forests, Foothills & Fields, Learn to Identify Birds by Ear, and more). For more information, please call Paul Matzner, Chair, NSS, (415)273-3884.

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

Avocet deadline is the first Monday of the month. Send contributions to the editor, Levona Sterngold, 720 M Blair Court, Sunnyvale 94087.

SCVAS TO OFFER BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY CLASS

Monterey Bay and the Elkhorn Slough Estuarine Sanctuary are the backdrop for this March 21st and 22nd weekend bird photography seminar offered by Kevin Monahan and Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. Using classroom lectures, group discussions, and on-location field photography sessions, Kevin will introduce you to the art and technique of bird photography. During the two days, you will discuss the "fine art" aspect of bird photography, review applicable photographic techniques, learn the factors that influence the construction and placement of photographic blinds, visit and photograph at two important Monterey Bay birding locations, and participate in group and individual discussions of your work. No ownership of specialized equipment beyond that normally found in camera bags, such as 200mm lenses, is required.

The goals of the seminar are twofold. First, Kevin will discuss the concept of photographic style, in the fine art tradition, as it relates to bird photography. Emphasis will be placed on showing how the development of a personal style is critical to ultimate photographic success. Second, Kevin will demonstrate bird photography techniques that do not require "exotic" lenses and equipment. While these might ultimately be in a photographer's future, the goal of this seminar is to help the participants make that elusive first step into bird photography without requiring any major purchases.

Enrollment in the seminar is limited to insure that you can have access to the instructor and privacy during field photography sessions. For more information, please contact Kevin at (408)425-7841 or Lynn at the SCVAS office, (415)329-1811.

LEAST TERN NEWS

Generally, it has been a good nesting season for the California Least Terns (CLTs), a minimum of 55 pairs, in the Bay Area.

The Metropolitan Oakland International Airport hosted 35 nests initiated by an estimated 29-34 pairs, the highest numbers since 1983. Unfortunately, only 10-11 chicks fledged successfully due to heavy predation in June, apparently by Northern Harriers. While reproductive success was poor there, it was apparent that many of the pairs re-nested at NAS, Alameda, where reproductive success was good-excellent throughout the season.

At NAS an estimated 37-49 pairs initiated 55 nests. The 68-88 chicks fledged there represented the most young fledged in a year at NAS since the over 100 fledged in 1981; the second to the most fledged in at least 11 years.

The PG&E Power Plant in West Pittsburg hosted only one pair of California Least Terns this year but their two chicks both fledged successfully.

Leora Feeney and I would like to thank those of you who took heed of our plea in the April Gull and took special care to look for CLTs this year. We'll need your help again next year, as will be discussed in a future article.

- Laura Collins
- The Gull



MAILING LIST

A note to our members: Occasionally we make our mailing list available on a one-time-only basis to another carefully screened conservation organization with goals similar to ours. If you prefer that your name not be included, please drop us a note, and we'll be happy to take care of it.

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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