



The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

May 1994

Birds in The Balance at Asilomar

The message from Audubon's Western Regional Conference—held this year along the beautiful Monterey coast at Asilomar—was consistent and clear. One needed only to look at the conference brochure to get it. On the cover was a delightful pen and ink drawing of a Wilson's Warbler nestled amidst California Blackberry, with a Western Sword Fern as a backdrop. Audubon people came from British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and California to discuss this year's topic—Birds in the Balance.

Birds in the Balance is the name of National Audubon's program within Partners in Flight. As you may know, Partners in Flight involves a dozen federal government agencies, all 50 states' fish and wildlife agencies, nonprofit organizations, universities, and the forest products industry. Their goal is to maintain populations of forest and grassland neotropical migratory birds throughout the Americas.

With the tone set, the conference plunged into four days of birds—bird slide shows, bird habitat, bird legislation, and bird programs. Each day saw one or more plenary sessions, where more than 700 participants saw the Birds in the Balance program unfold before them. Launched in 1991 with a memo

to all the organizations participating, the program developed an action plan by 1992 and now supports a wide variety of projects designed to address the issue of research, monitoring, management, education, and international action, all focused on these special birds.

Bob Barnes, Regional Coordinator for Birds in the Balance, stirred up excitement for the program and let chapters know how they can be involved. He noted successful monitoring programs, including the Point Reyes Bird Observatory and the Coyote Creek Riparian Station near us. A field trip was offered to learn hands-on bird monitoring techniques at a new station, the Ventana Wilderness Research Station near Big Sur. Bird banding is done by all these stations, and other techniques such as nest searches, point counts, area searches, and spot mapping can be done by volunteers to provide the vital information needed in guiding our actions.

Presentations at the plenary sessions focused on the need for gathering information and practicing conservation throughout the migratory routes of these birds. Emphasis was placed on the importance of Western Mexico and Central

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In Praise of Butterflies

General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, May 18

7:30 PM Refreshments, 8:00 Program

Palo Alto Cultural Center, Newell & Embarcadero

Can you identify most of the birds you see, but few of the butterflies that come your way? The May program will give you a great butterfly background. Bob Stewart is well-known in the Bay Area as the Marin County Open Space District Naturalist. He is a wonderful teacher, guide, and photographer, as well as a biologist. Before becoming the Marin Biologist 12 years ago, he worked for Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory. Bob will present information on the life histories of butterflies and how they relate to birds. His two slide carousels will be mainly butterflies of California, but also will include shots from recent trips, such as to Trinidad and Tobago. Don't miss this outstanding presentation!

Chapter News

Nature Shop Update

New Birding Book by SCVAS Member Now Available

We are pleased to be carrying Nick Lethaby's new book *A Bird Finding Guide to Alaska*. Nick is an SCVAS member and field trip leader. His book is primarily intended for visiting birders and describes how to see birds that do not occur commonly in the US outside Alaska.

A secondary focus is on species that are easily seen in Alaska but not in other parts of the US. The guide is divided into three main sections: Planning your visit, site accounts, and species accounts. The book is available in the Nature Shop for \$14.95.

Spring Sale

May is markdown month in the Nature Shop. A variety of items will be marked down between 10%-30%

including books, gift items and feeders. We want to make room for some new summer stock!

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with Us!

Saturday, May 14th, is the second annual International Migratory Bird Day. All across North America, people will celebrate the return of migratory birds with events dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitat.

Join us in celebrating at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Education Center in Alviso. Birdwalks, demonstrations, games and activities will be going on from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. SCVAS will have a display and will

make a presentation on migratory birds in the morning. Plan to be there!

Another event in celebration with Migratory Bird Day will be SCVAS's first Family Field Trip. We will have a half day trip to Charleston Slough on Sunday, May 8th. It starts at 9:00 AM and all ages are welcome. We will have some binoculars available for use. The trip is a great way to get the whole family involved with birdwatching. Questions and directions, call the SCVAS office at 408/ 252-3747.

In Memory of Tina Pirani. Contribution made by John D. Staedke

Congratulations to *Avocet* layout editor Laura Lebherz and husband Stuart on the birth of new SCVAS member Max, who arrived on April 10 at 6 lbs. 11 oz. Since Max came into the world rather suddenly and a bit early, Laura was unable to work on this month's newsletter, but former editor Chrys Fitzpatrick was kind enough to step in at the last minute to put this issue together. Congrats Laura, and thanks, Chrys!

SCVAS OFFICERS

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| Membership | Vacant | |
| Birdathon | Tony Eppstein | 415/326-1376 |

General meetings are open to the public. Board of Directors meetings are open to all members. Call the office at 408/ 252-3747 for times and directions.

The Avocet is published monthly (except for July and August) by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, 22221 McClellan Rd., Cupertino, CA 95014. Deadline is the 25th of two months prior. Send contributions to *The Avocet*, c/o SCVAS at the above address.

SCVAS is the chapter of the National Audubon Society for Santa Clara County.

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Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592

May 1994 Calendar

On all field trips carpool and share expenses. Bring binoculars, field guides, warm clothing, lunch (optional on half-day trips) and liquids.

**Denotes Field Trip

****Sunday, May 1, 8:00 AM. Half day. Sunol Regional Wilderness.** Leader: Phil Hand 415/851-2623. Take I-680 N past Fremont to Calaveras Rd. Drive S on Calaveras Rd. 4 mi. to park entrance on Geary Rd. Meet at first parking lot, near headquarters. Highlights: spring migrants, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Golden Eagle.

Wednesday, May 4, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers. Tim Davis and Renee Lynn will discuss how they work with and photograph captive animals for fun and profit. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd. Palo Alto.

Saturday, May 7, 8:00 AM. SCVAS Chapter Birdathon with the Uncommon Loons. Leaders: Nick Yatsko 408/247-5499 and Rod Norden. The Loons and supporters will meet at Arastradero OSP at 8 AM., do Stanford campus at noon, and finish up at Charleston Slough to see the team goal of 100 species. Directions: I-280 to Page Mill Rd., W approx. 1/3 mi., right turn on Arastradero Rd. then another 1/3 mi. to Preserve parking lot on right. Minimum donation of \$10 requested to support fundraiser.

****Sunday, May 8, 8:00 AM. Beginner's Trip to Charleston Slough. Half day.** Leader: Bob Reiling 408/253-7527. Directions: take Hwy 101 to San Antonio Rd. in Mt. View, exit E to Terminal Way, turn right and meet at east end of Terminal parking area. Highlights: basics of shorebird, duck and waterfowl identification. Bring binoculars.

Tuesday, May 10, 9:30 AM. Eve Case Bird Discussion Group at the home of

Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Av. Los Gatos, 408/395-4264. Topic: Mergansers.

****Wednesday, May 11, 9:00 AM. Half day. Smith Creek Fire Station.** Leader: Alan Thomas 408/265-9286. Directions: Take Alum Rock Av. E from 101, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd. Smith Creek is 4.5 mi. past Grant Ranch Park entrance. Moderate 2.5 mi. walk. Highlights include a variety of oak woodland and riparian species.

****Sunday, May 15, 8:00 AM. Half day. Monte Bello OSP.** Leader: Mike Mammoser 408/248-2288. Meet at Page Mill Rd. I-280 Park'n Ride at 8 to carpool. Bring water, lunch optional. Long pants advised (ticks). Beginners welcome. Moderate hiking of 2-3 mi. Highlights: variety of woodland, chaparral, grassland species including possible Rufous-crowned and Black-chinned Sparrows, Purple Finch, Black-throated Gray Warbler.

****Saturday, May 21. Carmel Valley/Chew's Ridge. Full day.** Optional camping and Sunday owling. Leader: John Mariani 408/997-2066. Call leader for directions. Trip will cover Carmel Valley for specialty birds including Mountain Quail, Dusky Flycatcher, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Western Tanager, Purple Martin and others. Overnight camping available at China Camp for owling (several species possible).

****Wednesday, May 25, 8:45 AM. Half day. Arastradero Preserve.** Leader: Al Huber 415/493-6854. Directions: From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. W approx. 1/3 mi., turn right on Arastradero Rd. and proceed to parking lot another 1/3 mi. on right. Lunch optional. Highlights: oak woodland species in the midst of breeding activity.

Plan Ahead

Wednesday, June 1, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers. For this final meeting of the season, Dr. Denny Mallory will present his "Mono Lake Update" slide show, describing how the lake and its wildlife are progressing now that feeder creeks are flowing in again. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd. Palo Alto.

****Saturday, June 4. Full day. Palo Alto Summer Bird Count.** Compiler: Bill Bousman 415/322-5282.

Wednesday, June 15. SCVAS Annual Dinner at McClellan Ranch Park. Look for details in the June *Avocet*.

The Cheesemans are offering the following trips: Alaska, June 15 - July 1 with Alaskan naturalist Ron Regnart; Alaska Wilderness Float Trip, July 17 - 28 with Alaskans Ken Alt and John Morack; Trinidad and Tobago, January 18 - 31 with outstanding wildlife artist and SCVAS member Ed Rooks. Contact Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris at 408/867-1371.

Purple Martin Study

The historical and current distribution of the Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) is the subject of thesis research being conducted by Brian Williams of California State University at Sacramento and supported by the Department of Fish and Game. He is seeking information from local birders regarding known or suspected nesting locations of this species, and will be collecting data through the 1994 nesting season. He may be contacted at P.O. Box 605, Loomis, CA 95650; phone 916/624-4861.

Field Notes

By Bill Bousman

Bitterns through Waterfowl

One to two **American Bitterns** were found in the marsh along Coyote Creek south of Silicon Valley Boulevard 7-20 Mar (SCR,MMR,MJM). Although this species frequently winters in saltwater marshes it apparently nests only in freshwater marshes. As far as is known it has not nested in the South Bay in the last 50 years — will it ever nest here again? **Cattle Egrets** have been found regularly in Alviso with 4-24 birds found this month. The peak count was of 24 on 15 Mar (SCR). The imm. **Greater White-fronted Goose** that has wintered at Hellyer CP was seen through 21 Mar (SCR). The four birds at Shoreline Park were seen once again on 25 Mar (MMR). A new report of a White-front was of an imm. seen at Grant Lake 26 Mar (MJM,RF) associating with Canadas. **Blue-winged Teal** have been found irregularly in the vicinity of the Mountain View Forebay this month. Three males were seen 15 Mar (KCW), a pair was there 20 Mar (JY,AL), and a pair was in Charleston Slough 31 Mar (WGB). A **Eurasian Wigeon** was found again in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) 19 Mar (SCR). The concentration of **Ring-necked Ducks** at the Ogier Ave ponds continued into March with 289 counted on 5 Mar (AME). A male **Tufted Duck** was found on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 6 Mar (MMR) which is very near where the first bird was found last fall. Is it possible that this male remained here all winter and that, with the three

birds in Sunnyvale, we had four birds wintering? Our Shoreline Lake Barrow's **Goldeneyes** started to move out this month with five counted 6 Mar (AME) and three seen there 11 Mar (MMR).

I neglected to mention an extraordinary concentration of **Common Mergansers** on Uvas Res. in my January column. Al Eisner counted 305 there on 23 Jan which is the highest count I have for any location in the county. The fishing must have been great.

Chestnut-collared Longspurs have remained on Sierra Road throughout the month.

Raptors through Goatsuckers

Merlin numbers normally drop off in March but the twelve records this month (m.ob.) were well above the February totals. The **Peregrine Falcon** count, on the other hand, was down, with only four reported. **Lesser Yellowlegs** are rare in winter and spring so three birds north of the Alviso Marina 6 Mar (MMR) and a single bird in the marsh at Spreckles and State in Alviso 16 Mar (SCR) are of

interest. Careful searching of the shorebirds flocks off Palo Alto revealed two **Red Knots** 18 Mar (MMR). A **Greater Roadrunner** at the summit of Sierra Road 29 Mar (MiF) is about as far north as we have found this species on the west slopes of the Diablo Range. The pair of **Long-eared Owls** continue at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve (OSP) with both heard calling on 13 Mar (WGB). The first **Common Poorwill** of the season was a fresh roadkill on Sierra Road 5 Mar (HLR). The actual migratory movements of this species are difficult to ascertain.

Flycatchers through Goldfinches

The **Eastern Phoebe** in Shady Oaks Park near Coyote Creek in San Jose has been seen at least through 27 Mar (SCR). A **Canyon Wren** has been fairly regular above the entrance kiosk at Alum Rock Park in March (m.ob.) and one was also found 26 Mar (JY,AL) at Pacheco Falls in Henry Coe SP where they are regular. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was found at Stanford 8 Mar (SCR) and may be the same bird found earlier in the winter. Wintering **Orange-crowned Warblers** have continued to be found along riparian areas along the valley floor with the first singing birds on territory found on 12 Mar (MJM). A **Nashville Warbler** found on Berryessa Creek below Messina Road 18 Mar (SCR) was probably

RARITIES: Please drop me a note—
Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way,
Menlo Park, CA 94025.

a wintering bird as our first migrants do not come through until mid-April. Much less expected was a **MacGillivray's Warbler** found 1 Mar (CKS) along Coyote Creek at Malovis Road and seen at least through 15 Mar (m.ob.). This bird probably wintered locally, if not along Coyote Creek, then somewhere along the central coast. This is the only winter record I have for this species. The **Green-tailed Towhee** found last month along Coyote Creek above Hwy 237 was observed through the first part of March with the last report being 13 Mar (MJM). A **Vesper Sparrow** was found once again in San Antonio Valley 26 Mar (SCR,DW) where it has wintered. **Swamp Sparrows** continue to be found in good numbers. A single bird was found on Guadalupe River above Trimble on 1 Mar and three were along Guadalupe above Montague the same day (SCR). One bird was found in the marsh on Coyote Creek above Silicon Valley Boulevard 7 Mar and an astounding total of eight were found on a small marsh south of the Ogier Ave ponds on 27 Mar

(SCR). Two **White-throated Sparrows** have continued to frequent a feeder in Los Gatos, at least through 25 Mar (JD). One was found on Coyote Creek at Malovis 15 Mar (SCR), another was on the creek below Hwy 237 on 17 Mar (SCR) where a number have wintered, two were on Coyote Creek below Berryessa Road 17 Mar (SCR), and a single bird was along Coyote Creek above Silicon Valley Boulevard 20 Mar (MJM). We too easily take for granted the riparian corridors that weave through our urban area – for this rare sparrow these corridors are a winter home and the key to its survival. The **Chestnut-collared Longspurs**, first found last month, were refound 5 Mar (AME) when five were observed along Sierra Road. They disappeared again but, on 27 Mar, six were found at the old corral at the Sierra Road summit (MMR) and between four and six birds were seen regularly through at least 30 Mar (m.ob.). It seems clear that these birds have wintered in this vicinity even though they were not discovered until late February. Some of the

birds in late March were well on their way to breeding plumage and were quite spectacular.

Lawrence's Goldfinches continue to be found this month with two seen on Quimby Road 21 Mar (DES), seven found near Isabel Creek 26 Mar (SCR,DW), and 15 more found in various spots along the Mt. Hamilton Road through San Antonio Valley to Mines Road 26 Mar (SCR,DW).

Early arrivals: **Pacific-slope Flycatcher**, 17 Mar (RF *fide* SCR); **Western Kingbird**, 15 Mar (SCR); **Nor. Rough-winged Swallow**, 28 Feb (SCR); **Cliff Swallow**, 1 Mar (VL); **Barn Swallow**, 26 Feb (MMR); **House Wren**, 7 Mar (SCR); **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, 23 Mar (MJM); **Solitary Vireo**, 20 Mar (MJM,MMR); **Warbling Vireo**, 13 Mar (WGB); **Wilson's Warbler**, 20 Mar (m.ob.); **Hooded Oriole**, 16 Mar (JY *fide* MMR); and **Bullock's Oriole**, 10 Mar (RWR,RF).

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Reid Freeman (RF), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Valerie Layne (VL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Chris Salander (CKS), Don Schmoltdt (DES), Clark White (KCW), David Wilcove (DW), and James Yurchenco (JY).

Palo Alto Summer Bird Count

This is the 14th year of the Palo Alto Summer Bird Count and this year it will be held on Saturday, June 4th. The count protocol is identical to the Christmas count and the same circle is used. The only difference is that there is no count fee and it doesn't normally rain.

The summer count data provide a way to track populations of birds that winter in the neotropics and is a little piece of the puzzle of the health of our environment. If you have helped before call your section leader; if you are new to the count call Bill Bousman, 415/322-5282.

Environmental Action News

June Elections Key for Birds, Wildlife (and People Too)

This June 7 election could make a great difference for the future of the Santa Clara Valley. Two measures—one a local advisory vote in parts of the County and the other a statewide bond act—would fund the acquisition and maintenance of open space and parks which provide vital habitat for wildlife and quality of life for all of us. Last Month's *Avocet* introduced these measures, but they're important enough to talk about again.

On the local ballot for part of the County will be Measure A—the Santa

Clara County Open Space Authority Advisory Measure (see below).

Statewide the voters of California will decide whether to pass Proposition 180, also known as CALPAW. The last *Avocet* listed the specific projects throughout the County which together would receive nearly \$50 million if CALPAW passes. However, that's not all! CALPAW also contains undesignated funds, which our chapter in conjunction with other conservation organizations or local governments could apply for. These funds are for such projects as wetlands and riparian

habitat protection and programs for urban environmental projects aimed at youth. We might, for example, be able to support our work on creek and stream protection by applying for creek restoration funds.

All these possibilities are only made possible by your vote. In addition to voting in June, please consider volunteering for these campaigns. Both the Friends of Open Space and CALPAW are in need of volunteers to get out the vote. Call Craig at the office 408/252-3748 to ask how you can help.

Vote Yes on Measure A

Open Space on June Ballot

An important opportunity to protect open space will be before voters on June 7. Measure A, the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority Advisory Measure, will permanently protect thousands of acres of beautiful hillsides, wetlands, creeks and fertile farmlands. In addition, funding will be used for multi-use trail networks and neighborhood parks and recreation facilities.

Measure A gives voters a chance to save the hills, farmlands and wetlands that frame our communities, provide watershed protection, parkland and unmatched vistas. The area included within the Authority's jurisdiction includes the Diablo Range foothills from Milpitas to Gilroy, the Santa Teresa Ridge, the Southern Santa Cruz

Mountain foothills west of San Jose and Morgan Hill, and South Bay wetlands. Urban open space areas within the cities of San Jose and Campbell, Milpitas, Santa Clara and Morgan Hill are also eligible for acquisition funds.

Urban open space areas within cities are also eligible for acquisition funds

Measure A has been endorsed by a wide array of community organizations including environmental, business, recreation and civic groups. The

measure asks voters to approve an average \$12 annual assessment which will raise approximately \$3.5 million each year. In addition, voters will elect the Authority's seven member board of directors in June. Although created through separate state legislation, the Open Space Authority will operate in a similar fashion to the MidPeninsula Regional Open Space District which covers northwestern Santa Clara County and southern San Mateo County.

The Open Space Authority will help us provide an important legacy to future generations. We welcome volunteers to work on the campaign by calling 408/977-0460. And remember, vote YES on MEASURE A.

America as wintering grounds. On more than one occasion it was pointed out that successes in the United States and Canada could be undercut by losses in Western Mexico. Here, as always, we find that appropriate thinking incorporates the connections between local areas, building from the local to the regional and beyond.

The plenary sessions were backed up by panel discussions delving into the details of the overall program and how local Audubon chapters could inject themselves into the process. Our chapter is uniquely suited to act on these ideas. Our ongoing support of the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) is an excellent example. SCVAS has supplied both funding and volunteers to CCRS, helping their projects to grow. Now CCRS can share its experience in bird monitoring and habitat restoration with other such organizations along the key migratory routes of these birds.

Education was another major focus of the conference. Different chapters and education leaders shared ideas on how to make learning about the environment fun for children and adults. We got some great ideas for our Young Audubon Program for 4th-12th graders, which we hope to roll out in the coming months. We also got tips on our new display, "Creating Habitat in your own Backyard," which we plan to use at fairs and events. Anyone interested in our educational programs should contact the office.

Conservation and environmental advocacy were also prominent on the agenda. From endangered species legislation to international agreements on the protection of habitat, panels related what Audubon activists are doing to the overall goals of the program (for more information on this, see the Environmental Action News on page 6).

All in all, the conference gave the information needed to understand the Birds in the Balance program, and the inspiration to act on that information.

"New" Birds in the West

The American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) has added several new birds to the species found in North America and has changed the names of others. The AOU is widely recognized as the governing body that decides which birds are separate species and which are subspecies. The AOU relies on studies, usually performed by researchers at universities or scientific institutions, to determine speciation. Its decisions are usually adopted by most birding groups and are reflected on bird checklists. Among the additions/changes:

- * the **Himalayan Snowcock** (originally introduced from Asia) is added based on an established population in the Ruby Mountains of Nevada.

- * the **Green-backed Heron** has been split into two species: the North American species reverts to its former name, **Green Heron**, while the neotropical species becomes **Striated Heron**.

- * **Black-shouldered Kite** is again known as **White-tailed Kite**. This change is made to distinguish the North American species from the Eurasian species, similar in appearance but now determined to be separate.

- * the **Lesser Golden-Plover** has been split into two species: **American Golden-Plover** and **Pacific Golden-Plover**. Most field guides have long illustrated both, and both may be found at Point Reyes in fall migration.

- * the **Rosy Finch** is re-split into three species: **Gray-crowned Rosy Finch**, **Black Rosy Finch**, and **Brown-capped Rosy Finch**. Illustrations and descriptions of these former subspecies are shown in most field guides.

The concepts influencing the decisions affecting the separation of species are continually evolving. They provide another reminder of the importance of conserving our birding habitats—even for "just" a subspecies.

—Rob Colwell.

(Some of us are convinced that AOU changes the status and nomenclature of bird species for the sole purpose of tormenting birdwatchers. It took years of brain-to-tongue retraining to finally stop saying "Green Heron" and "White-tailed Kite"; now we're told these names were correct all along. Time to update those checklists again.—Ed.)

Hopefully, we can pass on some of that information and inspiration to you. There are many ways as an individual that you can help these migratory birds. Creating habitat, restoring habitat, educating others, participating in monitoring programs, and supporting conservation legislation are some of the many things you can do. As just one example, we plan to experiment with spot mapping and nest searches at McClellan Ranch Park. Anyone interested in such monitoring programs can contact our office or CCRS at (408) 262-9204.

For more information on Birds in the Balance and volunteer opportunities

with migratory bird programs, contact the office.

Finally, we would like to thank all the Santa Clara Valley Audubon members who attended Asilomar: Francis Bogard, Craig Breon, Sandy Cortright, E. Richard DeSmet, Jayne DiCandio, Kathy Freas, Conlyn Hancock, Elsie Karlin, Miriam & Alec MacKenzie, John McLemore, Beverly & Robert Moncrieff, Chris Otahal, Elizabeth & Leonard Rush, Clysta Seney, Wendy Shattuck, Jean Shurtleff, Alexandra & Douglas Standing. Thank you for representing our Chapter!

—Jayne DiCandio and Craig Breon
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