



THE SEQUOIA

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, Inc.

San Mateo County, California

December, 1955 VOL 6 NO 1

C A L E N D A R

December 6 : Audubon Screen Tour, San Mateo High School Auditorium, 8:00 P.M. Tom and Arlene Hadley will present "Into the North Woods", an action color film of great beauty and deep significance. Invite your friends.

Dinner in honor of the Hadleys will precede the Screen Tour. Please telephone Ly 3-6040 for reservations.

December 15: Evening Meeting, 8:00 P.M., San Mateo County Junior Museum on Coyote Point. Mr. Charles Hice, Director of the museum, has invited us to visit the museum and view the new collection of shore birds and song birds which the museum has just acquired. This "brushing-up" session should prove very helpful on the Christmas count.

January 2 : Crystal Springs Christmas Count. Meet at Crystal Springs Dam on Skyline Drive at 8:00 A.M. If possible, bring lunch and plan to spend the day counting. However, even a few hours will help. We also need observers to count the birds in yards and at feeding trays. If you can help, telephone Em 6-7661.

January 17 : Evening Meeting, 8:00 P.M., San Mateo Public Library. Program to be announced.

January 26 : Audubon Screen Tour, San Mateo High School Auditorium, 8:00 P.M., "American Birds and Big Game". Cleveland P. Grant presents the best sequences of twenty years of photographing wildlife. Telephone Ly 3-6040 if you would like reservations for the dinner in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Grant.

CRYSTAL SPRINGS CHRISTMAS CENSUS

This year the Sequoia Audubon Society is attempting its first Christmas count: The Crystal Springs Christmas Census, covering a fifteen mile diameter circle including Pillar Point on the west, the approach to San Mateo Bridge on the east, and extending from the center of San Andreas Lake on the north to the northern edge of Woodside on the south. This census was first organized by James P. Rigby in 1948 and the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society reported some 115 species for the area that year. Though we are beginners we should be able to make a creditable showing in such a rich field.

Have you read "Last of the Curlews" by Fred Bodsworth (Dodd, Mead)

Remember that the National Audubon Society office in Berkeley has many interesting gift suggestions including many for \$1.00. The address is 2426 Bancroft Way. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

GRECO ISLAND

Members of the Sequoia Audubon Society and friends met at the Belmont Sea Scout Base early on the morning of October 22. Our guests of honor for the day were Mrs. Ruth Lucas, a reporter, and Mr. Merlin-Jones, a photographer, who were gathering material for a feature article in PENINSULA LIVING. (The article appeared in the issue of November 12.)

The Mariners furnished transportation for the group from Belmont to Greco Island. The trip down the bay was delightful, the water very calm. Many hunters were about and we saw great numbers of ducks in flight. The trip along the channel to the bay provided excellent birding: American and snowy egrets, long billed curlews, avocets, sandpipers, willets, godwits.

Greco Island has a catwalk the full length of the island making it easy to cross the marshy area, but in single file only. High lights of the day were the great blue herons, sometimes easily recognizable, and at other times so still for such a long time that we thought they were posts. We also saw thirty white pelicans in flight; beautiful, graceful - for many this was the best part of the day.

The Mariners returned to pick us up for the trip home. It was a glorious day. The wind had freshened and everyone enjoyed the boat trip back to Belmont. We did not see as many birds on shore as on the outward trip, but had them wheeling and circling about us and over the channel. More than twenty species were seen during the day.

The Mariners and their skipper are to be congratulated on the capable way they handled the cruise, and heartily thanked for the special lift they gave us all. Mr. Merlin-Jones was obviously having a very good time and Mrs. Lucas in her story for PENINSULA LIVING reports that she did too.

L. Alice Steele

LOS BANOS- November 12

Seventeen of us arrived at the Los Banos Game and Wildlife Refuge and were escorted into the unharvested area of the refuge by the warden, Mr. Wattenbarger. Where to begin on what we saw on the Button Willow lakes! Rafts of ducks, thousands of them. One moment the lagoons were black with them and then our passage exploded them into a maze of beating wings filling the air with pattern. Hark! the soft rolling k-r-r-r-oo of the sandhill crane. Many of us had never seen one and this was the big treat. By twos, by dozens, by fiftys, up to 200 at a time, we saw them during that day, making their Vs, long necks stretched out, large wings flapping slow in a deep curved beat. Two white pelicans floating on a quiet inlet, dignified, ancient looking. Pipits curtseying on mud flats - gallinules squawking away into the reeds - a white tailed kite hovering over the marshes - yellow legs, avocets, dowitchers, and always herons, large, small, blue, white, black crowned..

But the climax came last - all exclamation points - a dream sequence - unforgettable. Mr. Wattenbarger had told us the snow geese had not yet arrived in any number, but now we heard high wild cries and against the sky, beheld V after V, rank after rank coming down the wind to the rice paddies at our feet, the snow geese, a host of white wings, black tipped. Circling and whistling they settled like snow indeed on the unharvested rice paddies the refuge provides for them, while we watched and practically worshipped their beauty and their courage.

In all, that day, more than fifty different species of birds were observed but numbers alone do not define the day. What we felt was a rededication of ourselves to preserve this heritage of wonder and beauty.

Aveline Butler



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May-June, 1955

C A L E N D A R

- May 14 : Morning trip to Huddart Park. Many birds should be nesting and the nature trail is always interesting. Meet at 8:30 A.M. at the new shopping area in Woodside where there is ample parking. Bring interested friends.
- May 26 : Evening meeting, San Mateo Library, 8:00 P.M. Brooking Tatum will show us more of his colored slides. This time, Plant Life in the Redwood Community. Those of us who saw his other plant communities are eagerly looking forward to this treat.
- May 28 : The very popular trip to Butano Forest to see the rhododendrons in bloom. Meet Jed McClellan at 8:30 A.M. at Skyline Blvd. and the origin of the road to Half Moon Bay. Bring lunch if you would like to picnic at the top of the ridge.
- June 4 : A trip to Greco Island, courtesy of the Belmont Sea Scouts. We will tour the mud flats and the catwalk which runs the length of the island. Clapper rails should be nesting. This is a part of the area in which National and the Sequoia Society hope to establish a salt marsh sanctuary. Meet at Redwood City Harbor at 8:30 A.M. Bring lunch and wraps suitable for a day on the Bay.

R E P O R T S

Field Trip to Dumbarton Bridge

As usual, Les Sleeper had planned a perfect field trip for April 23. The tide was at the ebb as we drove across Dumbarton Bridge - an exciting adventure in birding somewhat hampered by the impossibility of stopping to leisurely observe the bird life.

At the Newark end of the bridge there was ample parking for the seven cars in our party. Here we sat on the dike thrown up by the salt company and first watched the cliff swallows gather material from the mud flat to build their homes on the side of the bridge. Then the incoming tide conveniently drove the shorebirds to us in myriads - marbled godwits, red-backed sandpipers in full breeding plumage, avocets, dowitchers and other shorebirds. Forster's and Caspian terns screamed overhead.

As the rising water drove the godwits in long wavering flights toward the Newark hills, we drove to the radio station for another brief stop and then on to the Newark end of the causeway where we saw still other new birds, including Brewer's blackbirds nesting in an Acacia tree. Total species for the day: thirty-six.

Our thanks to Les. We hope to have him with us again.

Beginner's Walk

About fifteen adults and children participated in the field trip to Arroyo Court Sanctuary and San Mateo Park on April 30. Winona Sears was leader. The day was warm and the sun in and out. Biggest thrill of the day was a western tanager in migration in the Park. Bush-tits and robins were building nests and spotted towhees and song sparrows were already nesting. White-breasted nuthatches were seen in the Park, and cedar waxwings in both areas. Green-backed goldfinches were eating dandelions from the lawns in the area of the Sanctuary. A russet-backed thrush, nesting in the area or late going north, was also seen. Total for the day: twenty-four species.

O B S E R V A T I O N S

An Allen's hummingbird nest close to a south window of the Lilly home in San Carlos has brought interest and excitement to many who have been able to observe it through the window without disturbing the tiny setting-hen. To everyone's amazement the mother hummer has been feeding a pair of fledglings from an earlier brood while keeping her second clutch warm. It's a neat trick not many birds can handle.

The hooded orioles have been visiting the bird bath in the Monroe's garden in Redwood City since April 8. They have nested in a willow tree in the garden for three seasons, but as yet there are no signs of nest building this year.

Our treasurer, Ursula Gallichotte, reports that the Screen Tours broke even financially this season, which is a considerable increase over last year. We hope for even greater success next year. Bob Leblicher, our new Screen Tour Chairman, has arranged for them to be presented in the San Mateo High School Auditorium. There are 1600 very comfortable, roomy seats, so plan to come and bring your friends to help fill the hall.

We are receiving some very fine bulletins from other Audubon branches in the West which we would like to share with you all. Look for them on the display table at the next meeting. You will enjoy reading about what the other societies are doing.

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REPORTS

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OBSERVATIONS

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THE SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY BULLETIN

March, April, 1955

C A L E N D A R

- March 11: Screen Tour, Baldwin Ave. Auditorium, San Mateo, 8:00 P.M. Fran William Hall presents "South to Siesta Land", a picture of the colorful out-of-the-way villages, countryside and wilderness of Mexico. Bring your friends.
- March 19: Beginners bird walk. A morning walk along Windsor Drive in San Carlos, under the direction of Aveline Butler, to become acquainted with our common birds. Group will leave San Carlos S. P. Station at 8:30 A.M.
- March 24: Regular Meeting, San Mateo Public Library, 8:00 P.M. Albert Wool of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society will show colored movies of the California condors which he made in Los Padres National Forest. This is a rare opportunity as pictures such as these may not be made again because the area is now a closed sanctuary to protect the condors.
- March 26: Our annual trip to inspect the skunk cabbage on Butano Creek. The leader? Jed McClellan, of course. Assemblage point will be Skyline Blvd. at the origin of the road to Half Moon Bay, 8:30 A.M. Don't forget lunch so you can remain until the afternoon on this very popular field trip.
- April 1: Screen Tour, Baldwin Ave. Auditorium, San Mateo, 8:00 P.M. Dr. Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. presents "Tip O' the Mitten", an all color movie made at the University of Michigan Biological Station at Cheboygan. This absorbing documentary of nature scientists and their projects combines educational content with superlative entertainment.
- April 2-5: Pacific Coast Audubon Convention at Asilomar. Combine a pleasant outing and many field trips in one of California's most beautiful areas with a program exemplifying the Audubon program of nature education and conservation. Write Pacific Coast Office, National Audubon Society, 2426 Bancroft Way, Berkeley for details.
- April 12: Special Meeting, San Mateo Public Library, 8:00 P.M. We are privileged that Kenneth Morrison, Director of Public Information for National and Editor of Audubon Magazine, is planning to be with us at this time. The subject of his talk will be "Fifty Years of Audubon Progress". He will also show the film "Marsh Waters - Waste or Wealth" by W. J. Breckenridge.
- April 23: Les Sleeper of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society will lead our Sequoia group on a field trip to the Dumbarton Bridge area. Here is an opportunity for beginners to study

shore birds during their spring migration under the tutelage of an expert. Meet in front of the Hiller Helicopter Plant on Willow Rd in East Palo Alto at 8:30 A.M. Bring lunch if you wish to remain into the afternoon.

April 28: Regular Meeting, San Mateo Public Library, 8:00 P.M. We will devote this meeting to a discussion of Audubon Camp of California. Former Audubon Campers will show slides made at the Camp and discuss Camp activities. This should be of particular interest to teachers and youth leaders who may be interested in attending Camp.

April 30: City parks can provide a habitat for flourishing bird populations. Join the beginners bird walk led by Winona Sears to San Mateo and Arroyo Court Parks. Meet at 8:30 A.M. at Arroyo Court Sanctuary (Arroyo Court and Third Ave.) in San Mateo.

Few, if any, of us are experts. We are all learning together. So we welcome on field trips and to meetings anyone interested in becoming better acquainted with nature.

You may be interested to know that the Canterbury Book Store in San Carlos has made arrangements with National to sell the sets of Western Bird Cards and now have a supply on hand.

R E P O R T O F A C T I V I T I E S

ANNUAL MEETING

We are grateful to the staff of the San Mateo County Junior Museum for providing us facilities for our Annual Meeting and for demonstrating the facilities and program of this extremely valuable institution. The mounted exhibits are very fine and everyone enjoyed visiting the live animals after the meeting.

At the business meeting, officers of the Society for the coming year were elected, as follows:

President, Mrs. D. G. Valentine, 800 Jefferson Court, San Mateo
Vice-president, Robert Lebkicher, 1840 Anamor St., Redwood City
Secretary, Mrs. W. C. Harman, 656 Cedar St., San Carlos
Treasurer, Mrs. V. H. Gallichotte, 3531 Emerson St., Palo Alto
Directors:

J. Ed McClellan, 1356 Bernal Ave., Burlingame
Mrs. David R. Sears, 935 Waltermire St., Belmont
B. Neil Dickinson, 554 Oak Park Way, Redwood City

It was decided that regular monthly meetings will be held on the fourth Thursday of every month (except July and August) in the San Mateo Public Library (downstairs) at 8:00 P.M. Board meetings will be held on the third Tuesday - time and place to be announced.

SPECIAL MEETING

Brooking Tatum showed his portfolios of colored slides of the Valley Grassland, Foothill Woodland, and Chaparral to an enthusiastic audience in the San Mateo Library on February 15. Those who missed this interesting showing of beautiful slides and enlarged prints will be glad to know that Mr. Tatum plans to return at a future date to show us the plants of the Redwood Community.

SAWYER'S CAMP ROAD TRIP

A gradual descent into the quiescent rift valley between lower Crystal Springs Lake and San Andreas Lake in search of the elusive varied thrush was the mad purpose of the field trip taken on February 12. Twenty-five members and guests assembled at lower Crystal Springs dam (the place called La Junta by early Californians since it is the junction of the Laguna, San Mateo, and San Andreas Creeks) and took the Sawyer's Camp Road to the north of the dam.

From the meager parking spaces by the side of the road we were able to distinguish water birds on the lake, among which were horned, eared and pied-billed grebes, Canada geese, green-winged teal and the very striking bufflehead ducks. Chaparral covered slopes and damp ravines gave opportunity for observing the plentiful land bird life in the game refuge. Jed McClellan identified much of the plant life along the way including the beautiful yellow flowering leatherwood and creamy coast silk tassel. As the road crossed the San Andreas stream and followed up the valley toward the San Andreas dam, a sharp lookout for varied thrushes was rewarded by the observance of an unusual number of these beautiful birds in the Sawyer's Camp Grove. Total bird list for the day was forty-five species.

MEMORIAL PARK TRIP

Salix scouleriana was the special object of our quest on February 26. No more unwillow-like willow can be imagined, but Jed McClellan, our leader, unerringly pointed out the telltale catkins of this large oaklike (or ash-like, take your pick) tree scattered among the dripping *Sequoia sempervirens* (we were dripping too) of Memorial Park. Originally known as the nuttall willow, *salix scouleriana* is now more appropriately designated as the fire willow from its habit of being the first inhabitant to appear after the devastation of fire.

Brooking Tatum, a noted member of our Society who specializes in photographing California native plants for educational purposes, was also invaluable in pointing out many trees, vines, and shrubs.

A mystery: Was the plum tree growing among the redwoods and along the creek *prunus subcordata* (Sierra plum) or just the by-product of some picnicker's lunch? Jed and Tatum were not sure. So don't ask the editor.

The timid who allowed a bit of rain to deter them from seeing the birds and plants of the redwoods, from lunching by the gray pounding Pacific, and from enjoying a ride over the sleet covered Skyline Blvd should be sorry that they missed such an exhilarating trip.



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C A L E N D A R

October 22 : The "Thunderbird" cruises again — to Greco Island which is now a nature sanctuary sponsored jointly by the Sequoia Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and the National Audubon Society. We sail at 8:00 A.M. from Belmont Sea Scout Base (Ralston Avenue overpass and Bayshore) returning on the incoming tide in early afternoon, so bring lunch as well as wraps suitable for a day on the bay. As always, time and tide wait for no man, so be present by 8:00 A.M. if you do not wish to be greeted by an empty pier. We must leave while the Belmont slough is full at high tide since even the "Thunderbird" can't sail on mud.

October 27 : Regular evening meeting, 8:00 P.M., San Mateo Library Assembly Room. Jed McClellan will show his collection of books, pamphlets, and pictures (not projected) on the native birds and other animals and the native plants (grasses, wild flowers, shrubs, and trees) of California, and on related subjects. For nature lovers who are now building their libraries this should be an interesting session.

November 3 : The first Audubon Screen Tour: Walter H. Shackleton will present "Rhapsody in Bluegrass" at 8:00 P.M. in the San Mateo High School Auditorium, just a block south of Peninsular Avenue on Delaware.

NOW is the time for us all to start talking about the Screen Tours. Season tickets are five dollars for adults and two dollars for students. Every person interested in the out-of-doors and good photography is a prospect. Not only are these color films most interesting, educational, and amusing, but also the narrators are fine naturalists and photographers, enthusiastic hobbyists, specialists in nature lore. The San Mateo High School Auditorium has the most comfortable seats on the Peninsula (a real talking point!) and there is a parking lot right there. Read your Screen Tour folder carefully and then go out and show it to your friends. Last season we broke even financially. With your personal activity and support we should have some money left over this year to provide scholarships to Audubon Camp.

November 12: Plans are being made for a field trip to Los Banos Game Refuge on this date. This will be a most exciting trip as we will see thousands of ducks and hundreds of sand-hill cranes and snow geese and many other species who seek the refuge during hunting season. We would like to concentrate our caravan so if you want transportation or would like to drive your car telephone Oleta Dickinson, EM 6-7661, so all cars can be filled for the trip.

ECHO PARK DAM

For the present the threat to Dinosaur National Monument has been averted. We were pleased to read in Congressman J. Arthur Younger's REPORTS, "...I want to state that I shall vote in opposition to the proposed development of the Upper Colorado, which includes the Echo Park Dam."

FIESTA BOOTH

The Sequoia Audubon Society participated in the San Mateo County Fiesta, August 5-13, by putting up a booth containing exhibits and literature. Donald H. Fry, Jr. of Palo Alto supplied us with slides of familiar birds of the Peninsula area which were projected on a small screen. Different members gave of their time to be on hand at the booth during the day and evening hours to answer questions and explain the purposes and aims of the Society. Children seemed to be the most interested and asked many questions. More than one hundred people signed the register, evincing an interest in the Screen Tours and Field Trips.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

On September 17 we visited the Dumbarton Bridge area to observe migrating shorebirds and waterfowl arriving from the North. Among the twenty-three kinds of birds listed for the day were long-billed curlews, semi-palmated plovers, phalaropes, willets and godwits; but best of all, we saw three groups, of twenty-five to fifty birds each, of white pelicans, some sitting, some swimming, and a pair soaring with a group of vultures. Some pelicans don't care with whom they are seen.

OBSERVATIONS

In the May-June SEQUOIA we reported a female Allen's hummer which was feeding a pair of fledglings from an earlier brood while keeping her second clutch warm. Dorothy Lilly kept a very accurate observation record of the activities of this female Allen's and was astonished to find a third nest of young hummers which had been incubated while the second fledglings were being fed. The second nest was constructed thirty feet west of the first nest, but the third nest was placed precisely on top of the first one resulting in a double, or two-story, nest.

MORE ABOUT HUMMINGBIRDS — While most female Allen's hummers carefully camouflage the outside of their nests with bits of lichen, there is evidence that it is a custom for them to do so rather than solely an instinct. One Allen's nest with babies inside has been reported, by Elizabeth Evans in San Carlos, with no lichens at all on the outside. It was situated in the crotch of a smooth barked ornamental cherry tree. The gray grass fibers of the nest exactly matched the grain of the tree's bark and to have placed lichens on it would have made it conspicuous. That bird had to be an artist.

SAWYER'S GROVE ROAD — A DIARY

by Jed McClellan

For many years Sawyer's Grove Road along the Spring Valley Lakes has been one of my favorite haunts. This is a narrow woods road about six miles long. This year I decided to keep a kind of diary of the plant life along the road; so from February 6, 1955 through September 5, 1955 I have driven the length of the road twenty times recording the highlights of the seasonal changes in plant life. It has been very interesting to watch the succession of blooming and fruiting, from the willow catkins of February through the spring flowers, the summer flowers, and into the bull thistles and lessingias of the fall; each species in its season budding, coming into full bloom and at last developing its fruit. The yellow annual lupine had one of the shortest blooming periods and the large yellow mimulus had one of the longest. Even the several species of thistle had different blooming periods. One of the most interesting single displays was a large patch of red lesser duckweed in the edge of the middle lake which remained bright for several weeks.

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