



Bulletin of the SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY
San Mateo County, California

Vol. 9 No. 1
January-February, 1958

CALENDAR
JANUARY - FEBRUARY

January 9 - Regular meeting, 8 PM
Burlingame Recreation Center.
Several members had not received their summer pictures in time for the September Kaleidoscope so it was decided to present another Kaleidoscope at the January meeting. Please plan to bring your slides or movies and join in this very interesting evening. Telephone Oleta Dickinson, EM 6-7661, to be sure we have the proper equipment for projecting your pictures.

January 23 - Screen Tour, 8 PM
San Mateo High School Auditorium
Cleveland P. Grant will present "Yukon Indian Summer", an expedition into the wilderness Yukon Territory via color motion pictures.

A POTLUCK DINNER at 6 PM at the Burlingame Recreation Center will precede each Screen Tour. Please telephone Alice Steele, DI 4-8317, or Oleta Dickinson, EM 6-7661, and tell them what you would like to bring.

February 8 - Field trip to Crystal Springs Lakes and Sawyer Camp Road. Meet at Pulgas Temple on Canada Road at 8:30 AM. Geese and ducks should still be plentiful.

February 13 - Regular meeting 8 PM
Burlingame Recreation Center.
Jim Butler will bring us an interesting evening on "Astronomy for Amateurs".

February 17 - Screen Tour, 8 PM
San Mateo High School Auditorium. Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. brings us his epoch-making color film of the faraway Falkland Islands, off the southern tip of Argentina, where penguins and people live fascinating lives. POTLUCK again.
-Oleta Dickinson, Program Chairman

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the new year, with renewed interest in our purpose, let us each one be alert and miss no opportunity doing his part in telling others about our conservation program. After all, conservation is Audubon's aim, and for helping to show others how much is to be gained, we have as our special reward the joy of participation in the many and varied aspects of our program. We can share this joy with others and thus further the whole idea.

With this aim in mind, may each member of our Sequoia Chapter resolve to bring at least one new member into our group during 1958.

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL AUDUBONERS AND ALL FRIENDS OF AUDUBON.
--Mabel Lee, President

FIELD TRIP TO LOS BANOS GAME AND WILDLIFE REFUGE

On November 16 fourteen members of Sequoia Audubon Chapter journeyed beneath a dull drizzly overcast to Los Banos Game and Wildlife Refuge. As a reward for their fortitude, the day, which had started in such a forbidding manner, soon changed to one of breathtaking beauty. The overcast transformed itself into cloud formations of graceful and delicate pattern, and a warm sun shone down upon the strange beauty of the sloughs and lakes where trees of picturesque shape give variety to the landscape and protection to many kinds of birds.

The great flocks of migrating water fowl, each kind flying in its own characteristic flight pattern, is a sight never to be forgotten, and the incredibly large number of birds almost benumbs one's senses. Even as one looks at the great flocks, silhouetted against the sky, or circling down to land on one of the lakes or on the neighboring feeding grounds, such tremendous numbers are difficult to comprehend.

All day we were entranced by the long streamers of Sandhill Cranes, each one in dignified flight, supported gracefully by their great wings, and playing their own celestial accompaniment, a deep, harmonious rolling "cree, cree" - a sound that will always remain in our memories.

Great flights of "honking" Canada Geese, Cackling Geese, and Hutchins Geese settled to form long dark "waves" along the margins of the lakes, and for contrast, were followed by white "waves" composed largely of Snow Geese and Ross Geese.

The great flights of Sandhill Cranes (we counted 72 birds in one flight), Geese, and Ducks were interspersed with occasional follow the leader flights of White Peli-

cans, their black-tipped wings in sharp contrast to their white bodies. Stalking their prey along the edge of the ponds were American Egrets and Great Blue Herons, while above them, Black-crowned Night Herons napped in the trees waiting for twilight to arouse them for their night's hunting.

The varied conditions of food, protection, and water, abundant in the Refuge attract many smaller birds in addition to the more spectacular water fowl. Violet-green Swallows, Red-winged Blackbirds, Audubon Warblers, Black Phoebe, Goldfinches, Acorn Woodpeckers, Belted Kingfishers, and a California Shrike were all enjoying good hunting.

It is not surprising that numerous hawks visit this paradise in search of unwary victims. Among the hawks observed were Marsh Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, and Sparrow Hawks.

The extensive list of the day's wonderful "birding" was substantially increased by the fact that many members of the group arrived at the Refuge with an impressive list of roadside observations seen en route. Unusually large numbers of Brewer Blackbirds and many Yellow-billed Magpies had been seen. Mockingbirds, Mourning Doves, California Quail, and a pair of hawks tentatively identified as Swainson Hawks were all reported.

It was indeed a fabulous day, made even more enjoyable by Mrs. Avilene Butler's helpful assistance in identification.

--Ruth Brockenridge

WHOOPIING CRANES APPEAR ON POSTAGE STAMP

by Earl Albertson

(Quote from Sacramento "The Observer", December 1957)

"Members of the Audubon Society will be pleased to note that a postage stamp has just been issued

showing a pair of whooping cranes with their young. With only 26 wild whooping cranes in existence today, the printing of a hundred million of these stamps is an excellent way of drawing the attention of the general public to the plight of this impressive bird which is so close to extinction."

CHRISTMAS CENSUS

Twenty observers in five parties covered the "Sequoia Circle" centered in Crystal Springs Lakes on our annual Christmas Count on December 28 netting a total of 120 species. This is the second highest total ever secured in our area for the Christmas census. Lacking were many birds usually common, while to offset this were rarities - western flycatcher, western kingbird, black oyster-catcher, knots, and golden eagles. Thrill of the day was seeing about 250 black-crowned night herons leaving their roosts en masse for their feeding grounds in the marshes. A detailed report will be prepared for publication in Audubon Field Notes.

--Neil Dickinson

NATIVE PLANTS - DECEMBER

Plants of special interest in December, to be seen in San Mateo County, are:

Will currant, in full bloom in sunny places on the lower hills.

Manzanita, one large white-flowering species in bloom along Skyline Blvd., in Kings Mountain area.

California Laurel, in bloom; also dropping ripe fruit.

Mosses, especially the bright green moss which grows on the trunks and large limbs of trees, appearing grey or brown and dry in summer, but springing to brilliant life in the winter rains.

Big-leaf Maple, still brightly yellow and reddish brown in the protected areas where the leaves have not been blown off.

Box Elder, still holding its leaves in protected areas.

Creek Dogwood, with its autumn pink leaves still abundant in quiet canyons.

Numerous species - and colors - of fungus springing up in the moist woods, especially on logs, stumps and trees.

The grasses that cover the open areas, changing the hills from summer brown to winter green.

The small ferns, maiden hair, gold back, licorice, and leather leaf, which are now putting out their fresh new fronds.

Toyon, loaded with red berries ready for Christmas.

Malrene, full of red berries and fruit-loving birds.

Buckeye, bare of leaves, but covered with its large picturesque nuts.

Snowberry bushes still lighting the shady places with crowded white berries.

Coast live oak - dropping ripe acorns.

--J. Ed (Jed) McClellan

NATIVE PLANTS - JANUARY-FEBRUARY

January and February are generally thought of as dead-of-winter months; but in San Mateo County we can see a very considerable number of wild plants in bloom, some blooming in January and some beginning only in February. Some flowers to watch for are:

TREES

Arroyo willow Red alder
Fire-willow (*Salix scouleriana*) - late February, especially in Memorial Park.

SHRUBS

Hazel Silk tassel bush
Ose berry Leatherwood
Red elderberry Blue ceanothus
Manzanita (some beginning in late November)

LOW PLANTS

Western wall flower
Fetid adder's tongue (slink pod)
Milk maid (*Dentaria*)
Hound's tongue
Sessile trillium-Coast trillium
Skunk cabbage
California poppy
Redwood sorrel (*oxalis*)

--J. Ed (Jed) McClellan

"Adventure in Africa"

The Screen Tour of November 18 was a rare treat and was greatly enjoyed by an enthusiastic audience.

Mr. Murl Deusing, the spell-binder who took his audience with him to "Adventure in Africa", was introduced by Mr. J. Ed McClellan, prominent Burlingame attorney, and a past president of Sequoia Chapter.

Mr. Deusing is a Walt Disney photographer and was one of the photographers for the television program "Zoo Parade". For this program he traveled ahead of the regular television crew in order to get background wildlife stories and pictures. He traveled over 10,000 miles in Africa observing animals at close range.

Mr. Deusing gave credit to the tsetse fly for conservation of wildlife by holding much of the country open for game instead of settlement by man. Among the great wildlife areas conserved by the tsetse fly are the Serengeti Plains in Northern Tanganyika near Mt. Kilimanjaro where large numbers of native African animals still roam. It was to these great plains that Mr. Deusing followed the migration of great herds of Wildebeest.

In spite of his lighthearted, dry humor, which in itself captivated his audience, Mr. Deusing proved himself to have the soul of an artist. To pick out any of his superb animal photography and label it the "most" would indeed be a difficult chore. His pictures of such mammals as gazelles, impalas, warthogs, hippos, baboons, and giraffes were all excellent. Nor did he neglect the birds. The audience enjoyed his beautiful pictures of ibis, crowned cranes, bustards, guinea fowls, ostriches and spoonbills. However, his breathtakingly beautiful picture, "Elephants on Parade" (elephants silhouetted against a three-dimen-

sional background of lacy trees and magnificent cloud effects), may indeed be called the "most" for it elicited a spontaneous round of applause from the audience.

A group of fourteen Sequoia Chapter members enjoyed the potluck dinner at the Burlingame Recreation Center before the Screen Tour where they had the double pleasure of enjoying good companionship and of meeting Mr. Deusing in person.

--Ruth Breckenridge

NOVEMBER MEETING

At the regular meeting in November Mr. C. L. Sleeper of the Santa Clara County Audubon Chapter talked to a small but appreciative group on the subject of "Bird Study Methods". Mr. Sleeper is an interesting speaker who really knows his birds. He drew many interesting incidents from his rich experience in the field to aid his listeners in developing ability to recognize birds. He pointed up the fact that bird behaviorism is an important aspect of bird recognition and should be noted as carefully as physical characteristics. He described the "ballet" show of the American egrets, and the radar system of the gulls observable when two or three of the group signal and a "follow the leader" flight to food or safety is almost immediately underway by the entire group.

To help his listeners in bird recognition, Mr. Sleeper showed the Roger Tory Peterson slides of western birds. As he showed the slides, Mr. Sleeper pointed out distinguishing characteristics which serve to differentiate species easily confused.

Mr. Sleeper's talk was helpful, not only to those who sought help in bird identification but also to the "experts", for Mr. Sleeper's abundant observations have led to

discoveries of an unusual nature. One of the surprising incidents which he related was the fact that he had observed Phainopeplas, those glossy black, crested birds of the desert, nesting in Livermore Valley!

The members of Sequoia Chapter who attended the meeting gained much from Mr. Sleeper's talk, and it is hoped that he will join our group often for field trips and other activities.

--Ruth Breckenridge

FIELD TRIP-ARROYO COURT SANCTUARY

On December 7 five people braved the low overcast to take the field trip to Arroyo Court Sanctuary in San Mateo. These brave souls, Mabel Lee, Joan Mochan, Ruth Waldron, and Neil and Oleta Dickinson, noting the small size of the group promptly "changed" the name of Sequoia Chapter to the "Fair Weather Audubon Society".

In spite of the poor attendance it was a very enjoyable trip and the birding was excellent. The group had good opportunities to watch the following birds: Hermit Thrush, Acorn Woodpecker, Scrub Jay, Robin Brown Towhee, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Slender-billed Nuthatch, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Plain Titmouse, Black-throated Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, Bushtit, House Finch.

--Ruth Breckenridge

REGULAR MEETING DECEMBER 12

At the regular meeting on December 12, Mr. John Larson, Warden of Green Island Sanctuary and of Green Island Sanctuary in Texas, gave his listeners a delightful first-hand account of "Life on an Audubon Refuge". Mr. Larson has been a warden for many years, and has a deep love for wildlife which is reflected in his depth of understanding of conservation problems. His listeners were enthralled by his informal discussion of his daily life on Green Island.

The colored slides of Green Island and its bird inhabitants were outstanding. Some of the pictures had been taken by Mr. Larson and some by Neil Dickinson when he visited Green Island Sanctuary.

Green Island is near the coast of Southern Texas about thirty miles north of the mouth of the Rio Grande River. Green Island, covering about 35 acres, reaches a maximum elevation of thirty feet. It is covered with brush which averages nine feet in height. Interspersed among the dense undergrowth are cacti and Spanish Daggers.

Among the many interesting birds protected on Green Island are the Reddish Egrets which were formerly thought to be extinct. Last year 8000 Reddish Egrets were counted on Green Island. Mr. Larson's and Mr. Dickinson's slides gave the audience some excellent views of Reddish Egrets. Some of the other conspicuous denizens of Green Island which were excellently pictured were Ward's Heron (the Texas Counterpart of the Great Blue Heron), Snowy Egret, Louisiana Heron, White Ibis, Glossy Ibis, Spoonbill and Black-crowned Night Heron. Many other waterfowl in addition to these more conspicuous birds are visitors at Green Island. Among them are the Laughing Gull, Willit, Stilt, Brown Pelican, White Pelican, and Black Skimmer.

In addition to a number of land birds, such as the Cardinal, Mockingbird, and Thrasher, which enjoy visiting Green Island, great waves of migratory birds fly over the island. In these great migration flights may be seen thousands of Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Black-bellied Cuckoos, Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers and Summer Tanagers.

Those who had the privilege of hearing Mr. Larson became very enthusiastic over the wonders of Green Island, and some hope to visit there. Visitors are per-

mitted from the last of May through August with an advance application sent to National Audubon Society.

--Ruth Breckenridge

WINTER OBSERVATIONS

The winter months are the time to enjoy our sparrow friends - white crowned, golden crowned, song and fox, and their gayer cousins the linnets and finches and the larger cousins, the towhees. Then there are the jays, woodpeckers, hawks, and the small fry--tits, chickadees kinglets, Audubon warbler. Not least are the Beau Brummels of the Bird World, the Cedar waxwings.

What with the rush and fuss of cleaning up the berry bushes, even non-bird watchers observe and wonder and even ask questions or enter complaints. Whichever it may be there is your chance for a sales talk on birds as friends, as personalities, as necessary economic partners of ours, as fascinating hobby - a chance too, to mention the havoc of Christmas guns. Just "give" with all the lore and law about birdlife you can get across.

--Avilene Butler

NOV. 9th FIELD TRIP IN SAN CARLOS

The San Carlos bird walk was most enjoyable and rewarding. A "baker's dozen", including two members from Santa Clara Society, started off from the S.P. Station.

The first stop was at a hedge of olive trees on Walnut St. Three or four golden crowns were hopping about on the ground, and the song of a white crown told us it was indeed a winter resort for these melodious birds, but not the right time of day to hear them. On to Recreation Park a few blocks away we looked for acorn woodpeckers. A flash of black and white through the branches of an oak and a cache of acorns neatly stored in the rough bark of the tree, proved this to be woodpecker territory. Chickadees twittered above us, a spotted

towhee spied us, warned his friends, and then scrutinized us from a dead limb. We heard a white-crown and then drove over to Howard Avenue.

This stop was a thrilling experience-the high-light of our trip! We saw 10 or 12 black-crowned night herons sunning themselves in the topmost branches of the dense bay tree hedge that borders the creek. They were perched on a branch like stuffed birds, and we could observe them in detail. The body we could see was oyster white, eyes bright reddish brown. The black crown sweeps back from the beak like a pompadour. The legs are yellow. We were told that every evening at dusk small groups wing toward the bay where they fish. They call as they fly, and the sound may be said to resemble an asthmatic dog's bark. They return at sun-up. It may be that this hedge of trees has been a heron roost for centuries.

Reluctantly we left the herons and drove to Carlmont, designated next stop. Much to our chagrin, we found the drive-ways chained. What at first was a disappointment turned out to be rewarding substitution, as it was decided to visit the lakes where we observed thousands of water fowl -- the variety of which was thrilling.

Avilene Butler and Neil Dickinson were our well-informed guides.

--Claire Stewart

ATTENTION! CIRCLE AND SAVE these dates for the REUNION of Audubon Campers (1948 through 1957), their families and friends. For Northern California, SUNDAY, April 20; Southern California, SUNDAY, April 27. Full information and details later.

To save retyping, please submit all material for bulletin in half page vertical columns (just as it will appear in bulletin)

Thank you.

--Editor

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