



# sequoia needles

Bulletin of the

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

San Mateo County, Ca.

March 1988

Vol. 36, #7

## THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM

LUIS TAM, who presented us with last May's program on East Africa returns with a new presentation, having just assembled two 15-20 minute multimedia programs on Brazil and on Australia and New Guinea.

These are intense programs, each lasting about twenty minutes, accompanied by narration and background music. Those of you who saw the May program will be even more impressed by these.

## OOPS!

The proof-reading gremlins struck us once again! Last month's *NEEDLES* had at least four major goofs.

First for those of you who may have just emerged from a time machine, last month was February, 1988 - not 1987 as it said on the masthead. If you accepted it on its face value, I hope you weren't too surprised to find that February had an extra day this year.

Second, the WILD GOOSE CHASE 1987 story started off with a very confusing sentence. Somehow the computer program inserted an erased line at the beginning of the story. It looked fine on the computer screen, but printed out quite differently. The moral of this story - proofread the written word - not just the electronic one.

Third, as corrected above and in this month's calendar, Luis Tam's program is on Australia and New Guinea - not New Zealand.

Fourth, Ron Thorn was quick to point out that we had omitted one of his best birds from the Año Nuevo Christmas Count. So, to set the record straight, Ron found a rare American redstart on Cloverdale Road, making our final total 180 species for this count.

Finally, our apologies for the lateness of this edition. A new job (with some associated travel) and a nasty cold (scientific name - "whatever's going around") account for the delay. So don't blame the mails or our hard-working circulation volunteers.

## FROM THE EDITOR

### CLIFF RICHER

In case you're wondering - and nobody's asked - there are a number of editing conventions which I follow in producing the *NEEDLES* every month.

Bird Names - In most birding books and magazines, the names of the birds are capitalized - for example, Elf Owl. This also seems to crop up in other wildlife publications. I've seen Purple Phlox, Kangaroo Rat and Striped Skunk in a few cases. However, the general rule is that only proper nouns are capitalized. So Elf Owl turns into elf owl and American Robin becomes American robin. In the absence of a good historical or grammatical reason, I follow the general rule and Birds are birds in the *NEEDLES*.

One general rule of grammar which I do not follow is the one that says that a period is always included within the quotation marks. This rule has never made any sense to me, so I sometimes put the period inside the quotation marks and sometimes outside. For example: He said, "The elf owl was incredibly small." ..or.. The elf owl was described as being "incredibly small". In the first case it is obvious that the statement within the quotation marks stands on its own. In the second example the statement within the quotation marks does not stand on its own, so the period is placed outside the quotation marks.

The abbreviations in the *NEEDLES* may seem arbitrary. To a lesser degree, this is also true of numbers. In these cases I'm deliberately inconsistent. A. M. and P. M. are variously shown as A. M. or PM and Highway One can appear as Highway 1, Hwy. One, Hwy. 1, Hwy 1 or Hwy1. I use variations to make Hwy. 1 fit into the layout and make a line easier to read.

Finally, there is the biggest reason why we sometimes follow grammatical or spelling variations. We *gōof* make mistakes.

After I finish pasting up the *NEEDLES* each month, I deliver it to the office and forget about it for another month.

That I am able to do this every month is a tribute to a group of dedicated volunteers. From the office it has to get to the printer, and after the printer gets through with it, your newsletter still has to be addressed, folded, assembled, sorted and mailed. All of this is accomplished by a small and dedicated group of volunteers headed by President Linda Kypta - who serves as Circulation Editor and Office Supervisor in addition to her many other duties.

These volunteers deserve special thanks from all of us, but especially from your grateful Editor:

Lee Brown      Elgin Juri      Ralph Keating      Richard Morriss  
Carol Larsen      Bonnie McClennan      Art Perry      Al Seubert

I thank them all profusely BUT - and it's a very big but - other obligations sometimes get in the way, so more help is needed. We especially need a Circulation Editor to take charge, to assemble the volunteers and to learn the workings of the Address-o-Graph machine. So come and get involved!

CALENDAR

MARCH 1988

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
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MARCH 3 SAS BOARD MEETING. 7:30 P.M., Meeting place to be THURSDAY announced. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

MARCH 10 SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING. Luis Tam, THURSDAY will present a multi-media slide show on three very diverse areas of the world. New Guinea, Brazil and Australia will be featured in this beautiful and memorable program. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Social Mixer at 7:30 P.M., with the General Meeting beginning at 8:00.

MARCH 13 MOUNTAIN VIEW FOREBAY AND SHORELINE PARK. This SUNDAY area affords some of the most varied shorebird and waterfowl wintering habitat in a small area and in every year it has produced a surprise bird or two. Parasitic jaegers, red-necked grebes, Ross' geese and tufted ducks are only some of the past visitors. This year's mystery bird is a "calico" heron that may be an immature little blue or a little blue heron-snowy egret hybrid. The trip will involve walking on level well-defined paths. We will meet at 9:00 AM at the foot of San Antonio Rd. near the entrance to Mountain View Shoreline Park. To get there, take Hwy. 101 to San Antonio Rd. and take the San Antonio Rd. (North) exit. Follow San Antonio Road for a short distance until it makes a right angle turn and becomes Terminal Road. Stop and park as close to the intersection as feasible. Trip breaks up at noon.

LEADER LINDA KYPTA 591-9053

WELCOME!

FIELD TRIPS AND THE GENERAL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS AND TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC. BEGINNERS ARE WELCOME ON ALL OF OUR FIELD TRIPS. SOME TRIPS ARE DESIGNATED AS BEGINNERS' TRIPS BECAUSE THEY ARE RELATIVELY NEARBY AND MAY BE ENJOYED WITHOUT SPECIAL CLOTHING, EQUIPMENT OR PRIOR EXPERIENCE.

MAR.19-20 BODEGA BAY, THE RUSSIAN RIVER, AND BLUE GROUSE. SATURDAY The trip will begin at 9:00 AM in the parking lot & SUNDAY of the Tides Restaurant in Bodega Bay. This is a 2-2 hour drive from San Mateo. Those not wanting to try the drive that morning can find overnight lodging in Petaluma (inexpensive) or Bodega Bay (not so inexpensive). We will spend Saturday morning around Bodega Harbor, where we will be looking at waterfowl, shorebirds and gulls. In the afternoon, we'll make our way up the coast to the mouth of the Russian River, and bird the woods in that vicinity. We will spend the night camping at Salt Point State Park, 25 miles up the coast (alternate accommodations are available). We will get an early start Sunday morning in order to search for the booming Blue Grouse, the highlight species of the trip, along Hauser Bridge and King Ridge Roads. In addition to the grouse, the scenery in this area is magnificent. The trip will officially end at about noon near the town of Monte Rio on the Russian River; however, if anyone is interested, we may make a few stops during the afternoon on the way back to the Bay Area. Call the SAS office (593-7368) for directions, information on accommodations, and a detailed schedule. NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATE FROM PREVIOUS NOTICES.

LEADERS STEVE SCHAFER AND JANET DUERR 689-0788

MARCH 23 BIRDING FOSTER CITY BY BICYCLE --- Enjoy the many WEDNESDAY species of Foster City birds while biking. Using bicycle paths we will make a complete circle (Continued on Page Three)

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

JEANNE PRICE

The Bolinas Preserve opens for another nesting season the second weekend of this month and will remain open to the public on weekends and holidays until mid-July. Why not plan a series of visits to the ranch this year? See the early spring wildflowers and the courting displays in the heronry. Come back later to see eggs and just hatched fuzzy chicks from the overlook and visit the rehabilitated ponds to check on newts and dragonflies. Finish off with a summer picnic and a view of young birds building up their muscles and their confidence to fly.

Last year was the best one ever for heron reproduction according to Helen Pratt, who has been tracking this information for more than ten years. Eighteen pairs of herons raised 45 young or 2.5 per breeding pair. 113 pairs of egrets raised 1.65 chicks each, making last year the third best for this species at ACR since records have been kept.

Ranch Manager Skip Schwartz reported great blues started arriving right on time at the Ranch in late January. By now nests should be made and eggs laid, so plan your first visit soon.

When you come you might check out one of the new family backpacks stocked with field guides, hand lenses, thermometers and ID cards for poisonous plants. I will help you learn more about the Ranch through discovery. Ask at the sign-in desk about borrowing a backpack.

If you're going to Marine World, look for the new exhibit sponsored by ACR in the Shedd Aquarium to be officially opened March 26 during Wildlife Week. Done in conjunction with the Oceanic Society, the Marine Mammal Center, the Nature Conservancy, PRBO and Marine World, it examines the biological diversity of the California coast and its food chains, Earth's water cycle and how we use water.

A DATE TO REMEMBER -- Saturday, May 21 at 10:00 AM, Dr. Kevin Padian, assistant professor of paleontology at the University of California in Berkeley will speak on evolution in Volunteer Canyon, Bolinas Preserve. This will be of special interest to teachers and environmentalists. There is no fee and reservations are not required.

Thanks to Chevron USA for a generous donation to ACR, which will support the monitoring of the Ranch's freshwater marsh restoration in the Tomales Bay area.

The last Community Hikes at the Bouverie Preserve this spring are scheduled for March 12 & 26, April 9 & 23 and May 7 & 21 from 9:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Reservations are required. Space is limited, so call early (707) 938-4554.

**DAVID GAINES**  
1947-1988

David Gaines, birder, naturalist, conservationist and writer died in an automobile accident on January 11, 1988.

David was founder of the Mono Lake Committee and its only Chairman since its creation in 1977.

Don Oberlin, the Mono Lake Committee's Assistant Information Coordinator was also killed in the accident. Injured were David's wife Sally and their two children, Sage and Vireo. Vireo was hospitalized with head injuries.

Ironically, earlier that morning the US Forest Service announced that they would be setting a Mono Lake level to best meet the goals of managing the scenic area. David had been working for this evidence of tangible support for some time.

"David was a true friend of the Earth," said Dan Taylor, Regional Vice President of National Audubon, "and perhaps the most effective and dedicated environmental leader I have ever known."

Both the Gaines and Oberlin families have indicated that contributions in memory of Dave or Don can be made to the Mono Lake Committee or the Mono Lake Foundation. Sally Gaines has requested that these funds go toward the purchase of the Mono Lake Visitor Center.

Our hopes are all diminished by this loss.

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The only memorial for David Gaines is saving Mono Lake. --- Enid Larson

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**POPULATION VIDEO**

The National Audubon Society's Population Program has produced a 23 minute video tape entitled *What is the Limit?*

We have this VCR format tape available in our office and it may be borrowed free of charge by any member wishing to view it.

**SHEARWATER JOURNEYS**

Debra Shearwater has scheduled these pelagic birding trips for March.

- Thursday, March 17--Monterey Bay-\$42
- Tuesday, March 22--Monterey Bay-\$42
- Sunday, March 27--Monterey Seavalley-\$42
- Monday, March 28--Monterey Bay-\$42

Checks should be made out to Shearwater Journeys and mailed to PO Box 1445, Soquel, CA 95073.

For information call Debra Shearwater at (408) 688-1990.

**CALENDAR**  
(Continued from Page Two)

around the city. Most winter birds should still be here - and some will be developing breeding plumage. The bikes let us cover more ground than we would by either auto or foot so we should see more species. (74 species were counted on a similar trip on January 10) We will meet - with bicycles - at the parking lot on the southeast corner of Foster City Boulevard and Beach Park Boulevard at 8:30 AM. The trip should last until noon. Limited to 8 participants. To reserve a space call the Sequoia Office at 593-7368.

**LEADERS**

NICK COIRO AND LINDA KYPTA

MAR. 26- NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY WESTERN REGIONAL MEETING  
MAR. 29 at Asilomar Conference Center with workshops and  
SAT-TUE. meetings. See the separate article on Page Five.

**APRIL 1988**

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
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APRIL 2 FOSTER CITY FIELD TRIP. In a departure from our usual mid-winter trips we will tour this diverse area looking for early migrants, shorebirds in breeding plumage and winter holdovers. We will also look at the area proposed for the Foster City Marina and see its possible impact on the marine and bird life of Foster City and Belmont Slough. We will meet at the parking lot on the southeast corner of Foster City Boulevard and Beach Park Boulevard at 9:00 AM. The trip should last until noon.

**LEADER**

NICK COIRO 349-1834

APRIL 7 SAS BOARD MEETING. 7:30 P.M., Meeting place to be THURSDAY announced. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

APRIL 10 WADDELL CREEK FIELD TRIP. This area lying south and east of Año Nuevo State Reserve has a variety of habitat that should be attractive to migrating species. Our leader is acquainted with the area as a birder and a surfer and patrols it regularly as part of his duties with State Parks. We will meet at 9:00 AM in the parking lot of Año Nuevo State Reserve. The trip breaks up at noon.

**LEADER**

GARY STRACHAN

APRIL 14 SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING. Program THURSDAY is to be announced. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Social Mixer at 7:30 P.M., with the General Meeting beginning at 8:00.

APRIL 17 MINES ROAD FIELD TRIP. An auto caravan through an isolated valley where relict populations of birds linger on. Phainopepla, Lewis' woodpecker, Lawrence's goldfinch, golden eagle and prairie falcon are near certainty while roadrunner, wood duck, wild turkey, Costa's hummingbirds, rufous-crowned, sage and grasshopper sparrows are likely. Yet, despite its seeming isolation, you will never be more than 45 minutes away from either Livermore or Interstate 5. This is an all-day trip, ending at dusk, so bring lunch and liquids. Dress in layers as temperature is highly variable. Service stations and restroom facilities are limited so be prepared. To get there, cross the San Mateo Bridge and follow the signs to I-580. Stay on 580 about 23 miles to the N. Livermore Ave. exit. Turn right at the exit and follow Livermore Ave. through the center of town. We'll meet at the Nob Hill shopping center on the left approximately 1/2 mile beyond the center of town and leave there promptly at 8:30 A.M. Late-comers will catch up if they continue on S. Livermore Ave. until it becomes Tesla Rd. and take a right on Mines Road less than a mile away.

**LEADER**

CLIFF RICHER 355-4058

## COW-BIRDING

STEVE SCHAFER

No, I don't mean looking for cowbirds. I'm talking about birding near cattle. Many articles have been written about birding in Alaska, birding from a boat on the ocean, etc. But the subject of birding in the presence of cattle is virtually untouched. Since this is a form of birding that has its own unique hazards, I thought I might share some of the practical knowledge I have gained while practicing this delicate art.

First of all, it is very important to learn how to quickly identify the different types of cattle you might encounter. Being able to tell a Guernsey from a Hereford is nice, but useless. On the other hand, a birder who can instantly determine a Holstein's sex is a true cow-birding expert.

Cattle come in three sexes: male (bull), female (cow), and none (steer). Since this is a family publication, I can't go into the details of field marks. Instead, I suggest you study your *Field Guide to North American Domestic Bovines*. If you don't have a copy, go to your local library, walk up to the information desk and ask in a clear voice, "Excuse me, can you tell me the difference between a bull and a steer?" The librarian will most likely have the answer on the tip of his or her tongue; if not, you will be quickly ushered off to locate the appropriate scholarly text.

I can't overemphasize the importance of proper identification. Picture the following scenario: You're standing at the side of a country road. Beyond a barbed-wire fence lies a grassy pasture. At the far end of the field, about 100 yards away, an unidentified bovine grazes quietly. Suddenly, you hear an unusual call note above your head. Almost before you can react, a small bird falls from the sky and lands behind a clump of grass, halfway between you and the beast. From the sound of the call, plus the fleeting glimpse that you got, it is very probable that the bird is a Smith's Longspur (a state record!). Unfortunately, as far as you can tell, the bird died on impact, because no amount of waiting or noisemaking will cause it to reappear.

Obviously, you have no choice but to walk into the pasture, but doing so before identifying its main occupant would be foolhardy. A good pair of binoculars is helpful here. If the beast is a cow or a steer, it is probably safe to enter the pasture. If it is a bull, the best course of action is to set up your scope and sit tight. Eventually, another birder will show up and ask what you are looking at. Hopefully, this person is inexperienced in cow-birding, and will be willing to flush the bird for you.

Another point to remember is that cattle tend to forget about you if they can't see you. Once, while birding in Japan, I was standing a few feet behind a large cow, minding my own business. The cow had seen me approach, but had shown no interest. A few minutes later, the cow turned around and saw me once again. Until that moment, I had never realized that a cow could jump three feet straight up into the air. Fortunately, I was far enough away that no damage was done, but I'm sure you can visualize the possibilities.

One of the major hazards of cow-birding arises not from the cattle themselves, but rather from what they have left behind. Needless to say, it pays to keep an eye out for ground-dwelling birds as well as arboreal species while cow-birding. Be careful not to get too caught up in this aspect of cow-birding, however. A visit to one of the Point Reyes dairy ranches may turn up a vagrant species or two, but it might also make you swear off milk for life.

I hope these tips will help make your cow-birding adventures more enjoyable. One last bit of advice: *Never* let your wife lead you across what she claims to be dry ground between a pair of slop ponds; the results could be disastrous.

## SONOMA COUNTY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

STEVE SCHAFER

The Madrone Audubon Society and Redwood Region Ornithological Society are beginning the third year of the Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas project. The goal is to produce a complete atlas showing the geographical distribution of all of the species breeding in Sonoma County. This atlas will be used primarily for land use planning.

Over the next few years, volunteers will survey each of the 5-kilometer square blocks into which the County has been divided, searching for evidence of breeding or attempted breeding. Specific criteria are used to classify each species' status within the block.

Each volunteer is expected to go out into his or her block once or twice each month during the breeding season (April through mid-September) in order to obtain breeding evidence for as many species as possible. Generally, a block can be covered in one season.

Seminars on the fine art of atlasing will be held on the mornings of March 13 (Sunday) and March 26 (Saturday). Call Steve Schafer or Janet Duerr at 689-0788 for more information.

## BIRDING CLASSES IN SAN FRANCISCO

Evening birding classes will again be offered by the S.F. Community College District. Fees are \$40 for the classes which last seven weeks.

Classes stress identification, status and habits of North American birds. The text is the National Geographic Field Guide. The instructor is Joseph Morlan, compiler of the weekly recorded Northern California Rare Bird Alert.

Ornithology I: An introduction to avian biology. It stresses systematics, evolution, behavior and ecology, especially of common California birds. Tuesdays, March 15 to May 3 from 7-9:30 P.M.

Ornithology II is a systematic study of identification and status of waterbirds - sea birds, waders and waterfowl. Wednesdays, Mar.16-May 4, 7-9:30 P.M.

Ornithology III will cover land birds - hawks, gamebirds, owls, swifts and hummingbirds. It meets Thursdays, March 17 to May 5 from 7-9:30 P.M.

All classes are held in Room 222, Marina Middle School, corner of Bay & Fillmore Streets. There is free parking in the school lot on Bay Street. Bring field guides and binoculars to class.

Weekend field trips are optional. Call 776-8247 for information & registration.

1988 WESTERN REGION CONFERENCE

DEFINING THE COMMON GROUND  
Asilomar - March 26-29, 1988

Once again the beautiful Monterey Peninsula will be the backdrop for the bi-annual regional conference with members from the Western Region, Alaska and the Rocky Mountains coming together to listen, observe and discuss.

Key issues will be featured in workshops and presentations. Acid rain, Alaska, environmental protection strategies, hardwood growths, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands, loon populations, marine mammals, old growth forests, the Platte River, raptor migration, refuges, spotted owls, urban and conventional wetlands are some of the critical conservation topics which will be covered. On a more mundane level, there will be sessions on chapter effectiveness, fundraising, computer applications and educational techniques. And for the hobbyist, there will be quality workshops on nature photography and bird identification.

A special youth program for children ages 3-12 will parallel the adult sessions.

Monday mornings field trips will include Año Nuevo, Elkhorn Slough, Garland Ranch, Monterey Bay, Point Lobos and the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Facility.

Contact the Western Regional Office in Sacramento (916) 481-5332 for full details.

BIRDING NOTES

The American Ornithologists' Union has restored the yellow-green vireo, *Vireo flavoviridis*, to separate species status. The bird is found in southeast Texas and is well-described in the Nat'l Geographic, Golden and Peterson field guides.

The scrub jay is now considered a threatened species - at least in Florida - where an isolated population is suffering from loss of habitat and competition with the more common blue jay.

Distribution information is being sought on several species.

The great-tailed grackle is rapidly expanding its range and documentation is being sought on nest sites, sightings of young birds and sightings of flocks or individual birds. Send information on any sightings to Laslo Szijj, Department of Biological Science, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA 91766.

Ring-billed and California gulls from Lake Lahontan, Nevada have been banded in a study of post-breeding dispersal. These gulls have a standard US Fish and Wildlife Service band on the right leg and a green or red numbered plastic band on either leg. Recovered or sighted bands should be reported to Alan Gubanich, Dept. of Biology, University of Nevada, Reno NV, 89557. Significant information includes the date, time and location of the sighting, the color of the band, its number and whether the band is on the right or left leg.

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY PATCHES --- \$4.00 BY MAIL  
San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching is Sequoia Audubon Society's guide to birding sites in San Francisco and San Mateo County. More than 30 different spots are described and accompanied by maps, directions and helpful notes about each spot. A species index directs you to habitats for the birds you want to see. Order one for yourself and several as gifts! Only \$6.00! (Taxes, shipping and handling included).  
Also available by mail - including postage and tax  
National Geographic Field Guides-New Edition 10.00  
Birding Northern California - Joan Richmond 12.00  
Mono Lake Guidebook 7.50  
Pacific Coast Checklist-in pads of 25 2.50  
Wings Over Our Gardens 2.00

BIRDING VIDEOTAPES AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL  
TECHNIQUES OF BIRDING by Arnold Small - \$2/wk.  
VIDEO GUIDE TO BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA - \$5/wk.  
Send checks to: Sequoia Audubon Society  
1414 Hill St. 720 El Camino Real #403  
Berkeley, CA 94702 Belmont, Ca. 94002



San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching

NAME .....  
ADDRESS .....  
CITY ..... STATE ..... ZIP .....  
ALSO AVAILABLE AT MEETINGS AND SOME FIELD TRIPS

## GARDEN WINGS

JUANITA HEINEMANN

### NESTS

Nest location, construction techniques and materials used are chosen according to the needs of each species. Nest locations range from the garden floor (quail), to a forked branch (bushtits, hummingbirds), to a hole in a tree (woodpeckers) to the vertical surface of a house (swallows).

Many birds are exceptionally good weavers and construct tightly woven nests (goldfinches). Others build loosely constructed, twiggy platforms (doves). Birds use a variety of building materials including: spider webs, plant down, grasses, animal hair, leaves, feathers and mud.

For birds that need a cavity to nest in you may provide a bird house or nesting box. The diameter of the entrance hole will determine the species of bird that will use the house. When purchasing a bird house it is a good idea to request a house for the particular species, such as flicker (large hole) or titmouse (small hole). Bird nesting platforms or shelves also are available for robins, phoebes and swallows.

For do-it-yourselfers there are kits and designs available through bird supply stores and catalogs, or you may wish to order "Homes for Birds" from the Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Services. Write to:

Superintendent of Documents  
US Government Printing Office  
Washington, DC 20402

Ask for Stock #024-010-00524-4 and enclose \$2.50.

Bird houses or shelves should be positioned in a safe place where pets or predators cannot reach them. A pole or post-mounted bird house should be located in a sunny spot, but not in direct hot sun.

It is advisable to take down all bird houses or nesting shelves after each nesting season. Clean thoroughly, discarding the nesting material. If parasites are present in the nesting material, you may dust or spray the interior with a parasiticide. Pyrethrene and rotenone (chemical names) products are safest for birds. A 4% to 5% malathion product may also be used. Be sure to air the house well before replacing.

Native wild birds and their nests are protected by Federal and State wildlife laws. It is against the law to destroy or disturb a fully constructed nest, a nest with eggs or a nest occupied by baby birds and their parents. Some birds use the same nest for more than one season. Their nests are protected by law year-round.

For years books and articles have recommended providing nesting materials for wild birds. Many of the suggested items have been found to be hazardous and sometimes lethal.

*DO NOT* provide clothes dryer lint, fine hair-like string, cellophane Easter basket grass, Christmas tree tinsel or nesting string sold in pet shops or bird supply catalogs.

Clothes dryer lint can contain laundry detergents, bleach or fabric softeners which might be harmful to the birds. Dryer lint has also been removed from the mouths of suffocated baby birds.

Fine string, cellophane grass and tinsel are also dangerous. Wildlife rehabilitators have received baby birds that have become so entangled in these materials that they have suffered broken bones in their tiny wings or legs, or have even strangled to death.

(Extracted from *Wings Over Our Gardens* by Juanita Heinemann, published 1985, by California Garden Clubs, Inc.)

## BIRDING HOTSPOT #4

NICK COIRO

### ZION NATIONAL PARK

Zion National Park, located in southwest Utah is very scenic with a spectacular canyon and high monoliths. It is usually considered to be a desert area but contains riparian woodlands, ponds, a reservoir and high country pinyon-juniper woodlands. The park's checklist includes 271 species, reflecting its various habitats.

Accommodation in the park includes a lodge and cabins plus two developed campgrounds (no hookups). Motels are located in nearby Springdale (almost on the western border).

Birding in late spring and early summer can be quite good. Mid-summer in Zion Canyon can be quite hot but temperatures are moderate in the higher areas.

Interesting birds include poorwill; Gambel's quail; black-chinned and broad-tailed hummingbirds; dusky and gray flycatchers; pinyon jay; Virginia's, Lucy's, Grace's and black-throated gray warblers; blue grosbeak; lazuli bunting; Cassin's finch; and black-throated and vesper sparrows.

## THE ENDANGERED SPECIES OF CALIFORNIA



*The San Joaquin Kit Fox  
one of 252 native  
California species at risk*

**Use LINE 45!**  
**Help Conserve Wildlife  
and Habitat at Tax Time.**

**CALIFORNIA  
ENDANGERED  
SPECIES  
CAMPAIGN**



# BIRDING SAN MATEO COUNTY

Peter Metropulos

## DECEMBER AND JANUARY SIGHTINGS

The usual, lone **RED-NECKED GREBE** was in Princeton Harbor on January 17 (SF).

Scattered reports of **CATTLE EGRETS** (aka Horse Heron, Beef Bittern or Steak Stork) came in with a flock of 14 flying in to roost at Pescadero Marsh on December 26 (PM) being the highest count. Two at Portola Ranch on December 21 (AR) were at a new locality.

The flock of **TUNDRA SWANS** at Pescadero Marsh grew to 31 birds on December 26 (GH,PM). Another at Upper Emerald Lake in Redwood City on Jan. 4 (GM) must have been a surprise.

Equally strange were a flock of 11 **SNOW GEESSE** winging over Huddart Park on December 19 (EH).

Three drake **BLUE-WINGED TEAL** were on the old Menlo Park Sewage Ponds on December 21 (DK,PM) and six were at Pescadero Marsh on December 26 (GH).

**EURASIAN WIGEON** numbered three at Redwood Shores on Dec. 19 (PM), one at Ravenswood Point on Dec. 21 (KL) and two at Marina Lagoon on January 10 (RJ). All were drakes - no doubt many less-obvious hens avoided detection.

**HARLEQUIN DUCKS** numbered five throughout the season at Año Nuevo Point (mob).

Two **OLDSQUAWS** were at Princeton Harbor on December 19 (PM), another at Pilarcitos Creek mouth on December 19 (RT), and another was on the bay at Burlingame throughout the season (LK,MJ,BL).

A drake **WOOD DUCK** on Redwood Creek near Toys-R-Us, January 17 (JB), was at a strange location.

Six **COMMON MERGANSERS** at Bear Gulch Reservoir on December 21 (AB) were the only ones reported.

A **FERRUGINOUS HAWK** at Pedro Valley Park on Dec. 19 (SS,JS) was a good find.

Very rare on the coast, a **PRAIRIE FALCON** was about a mile inland from Pigeon Point on Jan. 21 (CG).

A **SANDHILL CRANE** at Webb Ranch in Portola Valley on December 21 (B&JC) gave us our fourth county record.

Three **LESSER GOLDEN PLOVERS** were foraging robin-style on the grassy pasture north of Pigeon Point December 26 (PM).

Unprecedented in winter was a flock of 20 **LESSER YELLOWLEGS** at the western end of Dumbarton Bridge on December 21 (GH).

December storms blew small numbers of **RED PHALAROPES** into coastal estuaries. Twelve were in Princeton Harbor on December 6 (CB) with six remaining in the nearby marsh on December 8 (CR).

A **PARASITIC JAEGER** was pursuing gulls off Pigeon Point on January 6 (RF).

Always a thrill, a **GLAUCOUS GULL** was at Pescadero Beach on January 16 (PN).

A **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** at Half Moon Bay on Dec.

19 (AK) was the only report of this sea-farer.

Irregular and uncommon winter visitors were two **ANCIENT MURRELETS** at Pigeon Point on Dec. 16 (BS).

Their favored habitat is disappearing fast but **SHORT-EARED OWLS** remain in small numbers. Reports this season came from Belmont Slough, Redwood City Baylands, Half Moon Bay and Pescadero Marsh.

**BURROWING OWLS** are all but extinct in our area. One lone bird was near the Port of Redwood City on December 21 (DK,PM).

A **Selasphorus HUMMINGBIRD** seen at Higgins Creek on December 19 (SSc,JD) could not be identified specifically. Either Allen's or Rufous would be extremely rare in mid-winter.

A male **RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER** returned to Searsville Lake, December 21 (C&JBH).

The usual pair of **PILBATED WOODPECKERS** were in evidence at Portola State Park on Dec. 26 (CR).

A **BLUE-GRAY Gnatcatcher** was in a Half Moon Bay willow thicket on December 19 (AK).

A **TENNESSEE WARBLER** was detected among flowering eucalyptus at Pedro Valley Park on Dec. 19 (SS).

**NASHVILLE WARBLERS** were found wintering at Half Moon Bay on December 19 (DK, RT) and Pescadero from December 26 to January 24 (CG,BS,RT).

A **YELLOW WARBLER** at Princeton Harbor from December 2 - December 21 (PM,BS) was one of very few valid winter records.

A **HERMIT WARBLER** at Pilarcitos Lake on December 19 (CBe) was another winter rarity.

Our now-legendary **PRAIRIE WARBLER**, which wintered at Princeton Harbor last year, returned again this winter to treat local birders. It was still present in late January (BS).

**PALM WARBLERS** were reported at Half Moon Bay on December 6 (PM), at Pigeon Point on December 25-26 (PM,BS) and Pescadero on January 14 (BS).

Two **BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLERS** were in Half Moon Bay on December 19 (DK,RT) and another was at Pescadero on December 26 (RT).

Our first wintering **AMERICAN REDSTART** was found in Pescadero on December 26 (RT) and was still there January 14 (BS).

Another extreme rarity in winter, two **MACGILLI-VRAY'S WARBLER** were discovered, one at Half Moon Bay on December 19 (RT) and another at Bean Hollow Road on December 26 (NC).

A male **WILSON'S WARBLER** was near Searsville Lake on December 21 (LF,CZ).

Although not quite a visual treat as a male, a female **INDIGO BUNTING** was nonetheless appreciated, coming to a feeder near Año Nuevo Point from January 26 to 30 (GS).

A **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** at Princeton Harbor on December 19 (PM) was one of a very few winter state records. This bird has probably lingered here since last fall.

(Continued on Page Eight)

BIRDING SAN MATEO COUNTY

(Continued from Page Seven)

Very rare, but perhaps of regular occurrence, birders found four **SWAMP SPARROWS**: one at Half Moon Bay, December 6 and 19 (PM, RT), one at Pescadero Marsh on December 6 (GH) and two at Año Nuevo Point on December 26 (AK).

Regular each winter in small numbers, **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS** were spotted in Burlingame (MJ), Belmont (GSa), Princeton Harbor (PM), El Granada (BS) and Pescadero (RT).

A **HARRIS' SPARROW** at Pescadero on January 31 (DK, PM) was only our second county record.

A **LAPLAND LONGSPUR** returned again this winter to the Baylands Park at Menlo Park. It was seen until mid-December (DK, PM) but not thereafter.

A **RUSTY BLACKBIRD** found during November in Half Moon Bay was noted again on December 22 (BS) and January 20 (CR) but eluded most who sought it.

**RED CROSSBILLS** staged a major invasion into our area this winter, being seen far and wide, where ever pines were present.

The only **EVENING GROSBEAKS** reported were five at El Granada on December 19 (BS).

OBSERVERS

Carl Beck (CB), Chip & Jane Becker-Haven (C&JBH), Craig Benkman (CBe), Jobs Brandt (JB), Bill and Jean Clark (B&JC), Nick Coiro (NC), Janet Duerr (JD), Shawn Finnegan (SF), Louise Fletcher (LF), Roland Franz (RF) Cathy Gill (CG), Elizabeth Hayes (EH), Grant Hoyt (GH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Mark Jones (MJ), Dan Keller (DK), Andy Kratter (AK), Linda Kypta (LK), Ken Lajoie (KL), Barbara Lucas (BL), Peter Metropulos (PM), Genevieve Miller (GM), Cliff Richer (CR), Allen Robinson (AR), Grace Sain (GSa), Steve Schafer (SSc), Barry Sauppe (BS), Scott Smithson (SS), Judy Spitler (JS), Gary Strachan (GS) & Ron Thorn (RT).

(Peter will be birding in Costa Rica in March. Please do not call to report rare sightings. His column will not be printed next month, but look for it thereafter. ---The Editor)

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