



THE HOOT OWL

San Joaquin Audubon Society

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1995 VOL. 33 #1

Saturday, JAN. 14. Cosumnes River Preserve. Monthly bird census. Call John Schick at 464-8304 for details.

Saturday Jan. 28 "Mystery Spot" Local Field Trip. Join leader Waldo Holt on a visit to areas of interest in San Joaquin Co. Destination may be Staten Island, Woodbridge Road or other area "hot spots" depending on what is visiting our area in late January. Expand your "county list" call Waldo for specifics 462-4438.

Saturday Feb. 5⁵⁰⁴ Panoche Valley Field Trip. Meet leader Terry Ronneberg (835-7847) at the Westley Rest Roadside Rest area on southbound I-5 at 8:00am. Join him as he stalks the elusive Mt. Plover. Bring your lunch and keep your binocs ready. Other possible birds include Golden Eagle, Mt. Bluebird, and Roadrunner.

Saturday Feb. 11 Cosumnes River Preserve. (same as above, JAN. 14)
(These are always held on the 2nd Saturday of each month.)

TUESDAY FEB. 14 The California Wood Duck Program. At this, our first program of the new year, Steve Simmons director of this program for the California Waterfowl Association will be our presenter. In his 22 years of providing nest boxes for Wood Ducks in California, he has handed over 30,000 Wood Duck ducklings! In addition, Steve will talk about the owls, kestrels, woodpeckers, and other cavity dwelling species that use the nest boxes. 7:30 at Central United Methodist Church, just across Pacific Ave. from U.O.P. Ample parking and sufficient cookies.

Fri-Mon Feb 17-20. 2nd Annual "California Duck Days". A weekend of field trips, workshops, etc. focusing of the magnificent San Joaquin-Sacramento Delta and its wildlife. See details inside.

Wednesday, Feb. 22 Sierra Club Meeting On Vernal Pool & Wetland Biology. Presented by Terry Strange, Field Biologist for San Joaquin County Mosquito Abatement District. 7:30 at Holy Cross Methodist Church. To be followed by a trip to local vernal pools to be led by Terry and Steve Stocking on Saturday Feb. 25. 465-2729 for details.

SUNDAY Feb. 26. Calaveras Levee/Grupe Development Field Trip. With any luck the resident celeb Great-tailed Grackle will make an appearance. Call leader Nancy Ballot (476-1926) for the scoop on this urban adventure.

EARTH DAY 1995. April 28-29 at Oak Park Stockton. Calendar it!

CONSUMNES RIVER PRESERVE ACTIVITIES; The Visitor Center will be open from 10 to 4 all weekends in February. Nature Walks will also be held every Sat. for details and confirmation call 916-684-2816.

OAK GROVE NATURE CENTER; A full schedule of programs for children is planned in February. Pre-registration is required so call 953-8814 for details. Docents also are planning meetings, field trips and a work day. Call the same number for info.



MISCELLANEOUS BIRD SIGHTINGS:

11-20 Varied Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Slate-colored Junco, Red-naped Sapsucker: all at Stockton Rural Cemetary by J. Rowoth. The very same day he reported Franklins Gull, Pac Golden Plover & Am. Avocet from Lodi Sewage Ponds. On 11-23 he reported lotsa Varied Thrush & a Red-breasted Sapsucker from S.R.C. KC Foley & J. Rowoth reported Marbled Godwit on Hiway 12 & Ferruginous Hawk on Thornton Rd.

We should mention that many others have reported Varied Thrush this winter. It is an "invasionary year" Mrs. Bonnie Harper saw them in Murphys on 12-12. Arnold Whipple saw them in his backyard in Stockton as did the Stockings (12-17) and M.other Obs.

On 11-26 Marc Frachella reported many snow geese at Sacramento Natl. Wildlife Refuge. 11-27 Nancy Greenwood noted a partial albino House Finch with white cheek patches at her feeder. 12-03 Jim R. noted a Rough-legged Hawk at C. Snipe at Roberts Is. 12-23 a partial albino Junco, looking like a snow bunting was at the Stockings.

John Blades and Jim R. checked out the red-breasted Sapsucker and Varied Thrush at the Stockton Rural Cemetary. 12-27 J.R. saw a Rough-legged Hawk on 8-Mile Road. 12-28 Steve Stocking & Waldo Holt ob.

many Snipe etc at the Harney Landfill and a group of Bl-crowned Night Herons on the Lewellen Ranch. Nancy Greenwood reported a Bald Eagle at Salt Springs Reservoir in Calaveras Co. On 12-30, between Stockton and Rio Vista (1-5 & 12) the following were noted; Kingfisher, 3 Kites, 4 Kestrel, 3 Red-tail, a Harrier, 10 dead Barn Owls, many coots, crows, spoonbills, mallards, snowy and great Egrets. 2 dead chickens, 2 dead skunks and a dead possum. Lets drive more carefully out there!

1-2 The first reports from Jim R. were a Ferruginous Hawk, Mt. Bluebirds & Vesper Sparrow on Waverly Rd. Lewis Woodpecker & Red-br. Sapsucker on Buena Vista Rd. 1-5 found a pr of Kites on the Calaveras near U.O.P. in Stockton by Stocking & Kothe.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Our November 20 field trip to the **San Luis Wildlife Refuge** was a rare sunny day during that foggy period before the rains came down. So 10 eager nature lovers drove south. Time passed and all three cars found the refuge entrance and started on the car route. We saw many Ring-necked Ducks, Wh-faced Ibis, wonderful views of Amer. Bittern, Marsh Wren, Cinnamon Teal etc PLUS six coyote. About 40 Tule Elk posed for our group at close range! **Lodi Lake Field Trip** Saturday, December 3 dawned rainy and cold-a day to sleep in. But the field trip had been announced and I had promised to be on hand to lead it. ONE indefatigable birder showed up, so the two of us set off to see what we could see. After a quick circuit of the wilderness area and the remnant of the lake itself, we surprised ourselves by ending up with around 30 species, highlighted by lotsa Varied Thrushes and a flock of Common Mergansers, which goes to show that there are some strange birds out there, even in lousy weather.

CALIFORNIA DUCK DAYS II, 1995

Many organizations including National Audubon, Yolo Audubon and U.C.Davis are co-sponsoring this wetlands festival in the Heart of the Pacific Flyway. The festival will be held February 17-20 in and around Davis.

First there will be a special program on Thursday evening, February 16 , by noted ornithologist Dr. Ted Beedy, who will discuss Yolo Basin Wetlands and Waterfowl.

The festival drew 1200 participants last year, many of whom viewed over a quarter million Snow Geese, Bald and Golden Eagles, four species of falcon, and thousands of Sandhill Cranes. The festival will host numerous field trips within our area will be led by volunteers from area Audubon Socieies, including ours. A wide variety of noted speakers, special events and workshops are planned.

For more information: call or write:
California Duck Days '95
P.O. Box 5000-141
Davis, Ca. 95617
(800) 425-5001





COUNTY LISTING/THE BIG 300 AND PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT: D.Yee
Birding and lists go hand-in-hand. Even birders who don't assign numbers to their "lifers", usually at least keep track of what they have seen. Of course, we listers are always reminded to avoid the evils of listing, especially the one where "the list" becomes an end unto itself, and each new bird is nearly a notch on ones ego belt. Actually, your biggest listers are usually your best all around birders and mighty conservationists/ environmentalists as well.

I first ran into Dick Erickson during the summer of 1980 at the Stockton sewage ponds. I was doing some casual birding, not looking for anything in particular. Dick was rather fanatic about finding new birds for his San Joaquin County list even though he lived in the Bay Area. A county list? What kind of madness was this? Dick and I exchanged phone numbers and a year later I started my most prized list: the birds of San Joaquin County. Although still in its infancy then in the 70's, county listing has become quite the rage recently.

So, what's a "good" county list in California? It depends on the county. In coastal counties (where the heaviest "tickers" reside), 300 is very good, 350 is great, and 400 is where few have gone before. Indeed, 400 has been broken by perhaps less than 20 birders in their respective coastal counties, all primarily to the south. In northern California I know of only 2 in Monterey and one in Marin who have broken the magical 400. Away from the coast its a different kettle of gulls. Fewer habitat zones so fewer migrant traps, fewer birders so less coverage, and a harsher climate reduces the expectations significantly. Here in the Central Valley counties, 200 is very good, 225 is excellent, 250 is great, and 300 is ultimate. Average birding will bring you to 150 in time. Steady, persistent birding throughout the year will eventually net 200. To go above 200, one must chase rarities (be a bit fanatic) and if one is to get above 250, obsessive is the appropriate term.

On Nov. 9, 1994, my obsession led me to my 300th county bird; a White-winged Scoter at the Lodi Sewage Ponds. My wife Sue, who encourages me in my obsession by calling it my passion, should get credit as she insisted that I go out birding that morning. It was a most joyous occasion. When I started in 1981, I saw 188 species, and 200 followed shortly the following year. It was great during the early going with new birds added almost every month. My 250th was a Cassin's Finch in Feb. 1985. Number 160 was a White-rumped Sandpiper in May 1986. But soon, new county lifers were harder to comeby. Black Rail was 275 in May 1988. To nab the next 25, it took more than 6 years: it seemed alot longer. Fortunately, good new sets of eyes,like those of Waldo Holt, joined in the frenzy, and I was encouraged to persist. The virtues of patience and humility balanced my reward of achievement Is there any practical significance to these high county bird totals? Well, it turns out that almost without exception, every top lister in their respective county within California, is also the author of that county's bird checklist. In the process of getting out and seeing all of those birds over the years these listers end up being the experts on their status and distribution within each county. This information often becomes the basis for Environmental Impact Reports, Habitat Conservation Plans and other studies which are often very important to conservation causes. Indeed, the heavy listers are often active, outspoken environmentalists/conservationists. Many protectors of the environment start out as birders. So, why don't you start keeping your SJ County bird list right now? There's quite a contingency keeping track these days. However there are too many "out of towners" near the top. Get in there and challenge them. The "sport" of it makes it all the more fun.



STONE LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ESTABLISHED

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is finally a reality as the newest unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recent purchase of 300 acres at South Stone Lake and 407 acres near Lower Beach Lake marked the official establishment of the refuge on I-5 south of Sacramento. A dedication ceremony is planned for March 1995.

This nearby refuge is a key element in efforts to compensate for wetland losses throughout the Central Valley and restore a valuable link in the chain of wetlands used by migratory birds of the Pacific Flyway. Refuge lands contain remnants of wetlands, riparian forest and grasslands which will be preserved, enhanced and restored. Historically, millions of waterfowl wintered in this area during seasonal feeding.

Ultimately the Refuge will consist of a 9,146 acre core area, made up of public and private lands to be protected and managed through purchase from willing sellers, and cooperative agreements for over 5,000 acres with several state and local land management agencies. The Wildlife Service will also establish a 9,055 acre cooperative wildlife management area that will be protected through voluntary cooperative agreements, memoranda of understanding, conservation easements and land purchases.

Wetland reconstruction and habitat restoration activities are scheduled to begin in spring of 1995. Currently, public access to the refuge is limited to pre-arranged excursions, approximately one weekend per month, from October through April, the Wildlife Service and Sacramento County host opportunities to visit the refuge. For more information about these trips, contact the Refuge office at 916/979-2085

>>Joint membership in the National Audubon Society includes a subscription to both Audubon magazine and The Hoot Owl. Make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to Dennis Smith 1253 S. Tuxedo Stockton, Ca. 95204. Send renewals directly to the National Audubon Society.

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