



THE HOOT OWL

V V V ▲ ▲ ▲ ^ ▲ ▲ ▲ V V V

SAN JOAQUIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

JULY-AUGUST 1994 VOL. 32 #4

- July 26. Tuesday Evening. WHITE SLOUGH WILDLIFE AREA. Let's try something different--an evening bird walk. Meet at 6:15 at U.O.P.'s Burns Tower to carpool to this local birding locale, or meet at White Slough parking area at 6:30. Jim Rowth at 462-7512 for information.
- July 28. Water the Oak Seedlings at Oak Grove Park. Meet at 6:30 at the Yokuts Trail for an hour of watering & peripheral birding.
- July 30. Saturday to CARSON PASS AREA for WILDFLOWERS & BIRDS. Other enthusiasts from Sierra Club and Native Plant Society will be in attendance. Call Kathy Hieb 1 339-8779 or Robin Kirk: 547-0721
- August 13. Cosumnes Monthly Bird Count. Call John Schick at 464-8304 Willow Slough trailhead at 8am.
- August 14. Monterey Bay Pelagic Boat Trip. If enough are interested, we will conduct a land search as well on Saturday the 13th. Don't miss this, our annual trip to check out the amazing numbers of pelagic birds and some mammals as well! For costs and further details contact David Yee at 951-1526.
- August 27 FIELD TRIP to LODI LAKE & LODI SEWAGE PONDS. A morning visit to check for early fall migrants at these popular birding areas. Meet at 8:30 on Laurel Ave. on the east side of Lodi Lake Park. Contact Waldo Holt at 462-4438.
- August 23. San Joaquin Audubon Board Meeting. Home of Dave Wagner, call 945-6997.
- September 10. Cosumnes Monthly Bird Count. John Schick: 464-8304.
- September 13th. FIRST FALL SAN JOAQUIN AUDUBON MEETING. Central United Methodist. Pacific & Fulton at 7:30. Details later.
- September 17. Mokelumne River Clean-Up Day. Set it aside, details later.



ELECTRA ROAD FIELD TRIP REPORT:

Six hardy souls met at Burn's Tower early June 18 for our trip to Electra Road, a lush riparian BLM area along the Mokelumne River near Jackson. We were met by "early birders", Ester Milnes and Neil Kerr, who had staked out a Yellow-breasted Chat for us. (Ester had also seen a MacGillivray's Warbler before the main group arrived.) We were impressed by the number of grosbeaks and orioles in the parking area; it would be impossible to ask for better looks at these magnificent birds! It was difficult to pry ourselves away from the parking lot! During our leisurely stroll, we ticked off some 32 species, including Wrentit, Yellow Warbler (lots, vocal), Lesser Goldfinch, Common Merganser, Pacific-slope Flycatcher (voice ID), W. Tanager, Lark Sparrow, Belted Kingfisher, NRW Swallow, and Cal. Quail. We ended our trip with a picnic lunch during which we shared cherries with several bold male grosbeaks. All in all, a fine bird trip. (J.Rowoth)

BIRDS IN THE BALANCE

Audubon has initiated a new program, Birds in the Balance, to encourage contacts and cooperation with Audubon and other like-minded organizations in other parts of the Americas. The main goal is to help to preserve habitat and wintering grounds for those species of birds that breed and raise their young here in North America but which migrate to Latin America to spend the winter. (Our local migrants, grosbeaks, tanagers, warblers, vireos etc--tend to winter in the Mexican states of Michoacan, Jalisco, and Colima.) The goal of Birds in the Balance is to keep common species common, to keep birds which are not on the endangered species list from ever being listed. It is clear even if we do everything we can to protect habitat and make conditions ideal for our migratory species here in North America, if these same species' wintering grounds are too degraded or are allowed to disappear altogether, the species will not survive. Anyone who is interested in getting involved in this program please contact our Outreach Chair, Jim Rowoth (462-7512) so that we can better assess local interest and resources available for such a project.

GREAT GREY OWLS

Great Grey Owls have nested in the Spring Creek area 12 miles from La Grande Ore. since 1982.

The best time to view great grays is from mid-May to early June when the young are leaving their nests.

BIRDS:



VARIOUS SUMMER BIRD SIGHTINGS;

May 9, the Whipples noted Ash Throated Flycatcher, Bl-headed Grosbeak and Northern Oriole, all near Copperopolis.

May 21 at our Annual Picnic, this time at the Cosumnes Preserve, 48 species were observed including Hermit Warbler, Townsends Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Fox Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, and Swainson's Hawk.

June 6 an Osprey was noted at the corner of Napa Rd and Highway 12 by Steve Stocking.

June 12 J. Rowoth observed Black & Wh-thr swifts, Dippers and Clark's Nutcrackers at Yosemite N.P. 6-13 he observed lots of singing, territorial behavior at Mono Lake. Performances made by Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Savannah, Sage and Brewers Sparrows, and Sage Thashers. Also appearing were O.C. Warb., Rock Wren, breeding plumaged Eared Grebes (lots), Gr-Tailed Towhees and Loggerhead Shrike. He also noted Clark's Nutcrackers and Mt. Bluebirds at Gardisky Lak

6-25 a group including Kathy Hieb, Roger Hen and family noted a pair of Black-headed Woodpeckers entering and leaving nest hole and Blue grouse booming on Porcupine Flat trail to Upper Yosemite Falls in Yosemite Natl. Park.

In late June the Ronneburgs visited Watertown-Glacier and Yellowstone and added 6 "life birds" to their list; Bobolink, Spruce Grouse, Am. Redstart, Red-naped Sapsucker, Franklin's Gull and Rosy Finch. They had 124 species for Montana and 138 species on the trip. They were pleased to see one of the few actual wolves in Yellowstone Park. On June 30 there will still Swainson's Hawks in the city of Stockton. (S. Stocking). On July 1 Waldo and Steve observed many Mallards and Cinamon Teal as well as Tri-colored Blackbirds, W. Kingbirds and Cliff and Barn Swallows at the Harney Lane "mitigation ponds. On July 4 there was a Valley oak tree full of very active Bushtits in Stockton.





CALLING ALL USED BINOCULARS

As part of the "Birds in the Balance" project described above, we are soliciting any and all old/damaged binoculars from our readers. National Audubon has established contact with a retired optometrist in Queretaro, Mexico, who has agreed to receive and repair old binoculars, which Audubon will then distribute to local Audubon/nature-oriented groups where the need is greatest and where it believes such contributions will do the most good. Environmental education is growing, but is still in its infancy in much of Latin America. Also needed are U.S. field guides, Mexican field guides, for example do not include pictures of migrants from the U.S. It is assumed that anyone with a Mexican field guide also has a U.S. guide. Donated binoculars/field guides are tax deductible! Questions? call Outreach chair, Jim Rowoth, 462-7512.

RAILS FAIL TO HATCH

It's no wonder that the California clapper rail is endangered, Foxes and rats are scarfing the species, cities are engulfing its habitat and pollution is contaminating its food. Just how much this contamination is contributing to the rail's demise was the subject of a recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife study by Steve Schwarzbach.

"To recover the rail in the long term, we're going to have to build some wetlands. We need to know what level of risk we can expect from contamination in any sediments we use; an idea of how clean is clean." says Schwarzbach.

In a 1991-1992 study he examined eggs from 71 rail nests in five S.F. Bay marshes. He measured mercury and other contaminant levels in the eggs and recorded abnormal development, looking for telltale signs of contaminant impacts. To support the nesting study, he measured contaminants in sediments and rail food (purple shore crabs, ribbed horse mussels and mudsnails) collected near the nest sites.

Mercury was found to be the one chemical clearly elevated into the toxic risk threshold. It is bioaccumulating from the sediments and up the food chain to the rail eggs where it is found in levels much higher than the "fail to hatch" range.

THE TREE AND THE CHICKADEES

Mary and I pulled off the road to Blue Lakes east of Carson Pass to wait for Charlie and Robert to return from a climb of a nearby peak. I was photographing wyeathia, stickseed, brodiaea, shooting stars and buttercups. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a bird fly up into a sapling Lodgepole Pine then out of that tree onto the end of a large fallen tree trunk. The bird, a Mountain Chickadee, perched on the edge of an oblong hole about 3 to 5 feet up the stump. The bird flew off and I forgot about it. The tree trunk had been lying of the ground for a long time, but it looked like the tree rings would still be visible enough for a count. I started counting using my penknife as a pointer and marked every 50 rings. All of a sudden a Chickadee appeared at the entrance of the hole about 12 to 18 inches from my shoulder. It had 3 or so yellowish termites which I could see in it's beak. Soon the bird came out of the hole and flew off. Then it came back and perched on the end of the trunk, slipped into the hole and stayed awhile. Later it zoomed out of the hole. I kept at my self-appointed chore, counting rings. The bird kept coming back, but would only perch on the edge of the hole and not go in again. I backed off about 5 feet and the Chickadee flew up and entered the hole again. I stood up, walked 6 to 8 feet away and focused my camera on the hole. I tried one photo of it flying out but it happened too fast. Once I counted the time that the Chickadee spent in the tree hole, 16 seconds. I must have watched it fly up, land, enter the hole and fly out 5 or 6 times. The Mountain Chickadee was feeding on termites inside an old Jeffry Pine log. I counted over 475 annual rings in that log which had grow in a very dry area. But the count may not be quite accurate. Too much was going on.

Vic Wykoff, 6-23-1994

SHOREBIRD CENSUS

The 1993 count of public and private wetlands of the "Grasslands" of Merced and Fresno Counties turned up 62,763 shorebirds.

23,541 dowichers, 13,496 dunlin, 5,122 least sandpiper, 4,885 black-necked stilt, 4,641 western sandpiper 2,144 blackbellied plover, 1,483 white-faced ibis and 1,275 long-billed curlew. 42 species were noted during the count including golden and bald eagles, godwit, semipalmated plover, and willet.



ENDANGERED SPECIES ACTS ENDANGERED TIME TO ACT

The number of Bald Eagle pairs in the 48 states was down to 417 in 1963. By 1993, partly due to the Endangered Species Act, the number had risen to 4,016 pair. This is only the most famous species which has recovered and has been reclassified from an endangered to a threatened species. There are also many others which have had to be added to the list.

Even now a battle is being fought in Sacramento over the California Endangered Species Act. 5 bills, some good, some bad are being considered by the State Senate and Assembly. Two bills, AB 3052 and AB 2874 will be heard by the Senate Natural Resources Committee within a few days from your receipt of this newsletter. Call or write Senator Johnston asking for his opposition to these bad bills and in favor of strengthening the Act. The best bill at this time is SB 1549 (Hart). Contacting your Assemblyman would also be a good move.

1994 is also a critical year form the federal Endangered Species Act. There is a very real threat of weakening the Act in 1994. Representative Pombo needs to be reminded that some of his constituents favor strong protection for endangered species. Senators Feinstein and Boxer need to hear of your support for a strong, effective Endangered Species. Act. S 921 (Baucus/Chafee) needs to be strengthened and HR 2043 (Studds) needs more support. **IT IS TIME TO LET THEM KNOW OF YOUR SUPPORT**

>>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.

---\$35 individual---\$38 family---\$20 student---\$21 senior. \$23 senior family
---\$50 sustaining---\$250 contributing---\$1,500 life--\$5newsletter (non-member)

Name: _____ Address: _____
City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

San Joaquin Audubon Society

Officers:

President: David Wagner
943-6997

President Elect:

Nancy Ballot

Secretary:

Jeanne Gais

Treasurer:

Dennis Smith

Board Members:

John Blades
Kasey Foley
Jim Rowoth
Kuss Stoddart
Steve Stocking

Chairpeople:

Editor: E. Stocking
Programs: D. Yee
Field Trips: D. Yee
Conservation: Waldo Holt
Membersnip-Publicity:
Kasey Foley
Outreach: Jim Rowoth
Hospitality: N. Greenwood

STOCKTON AUDUBON SOCIETY
236 West Knoles Way
Stockton, CA. 95204

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
Paid
Stockton, CA.
Permit No. 450