



THE HOOT OWL

SAN JOAQUIN AUDUBON SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1996 VOL. 34 #5

Tuesday Sept 10. Jesse Grantham of the National Audubon Society will present: **BACKYARD HABITAT ENHANCEMENT.** Our speaker has spent a lifetime creating and developing habitat enhancement projects on a backyard scale, for the average homeowner. His slide show and talk will focus on plants, water systems, nest boxes, and other techniques one can use and develop in their own backyards to attract and assist native birds in their struggle to survive in a rapidly changing environment. 7:30 at Central United Methodist across from U.O.P. in Stockton. Parking/refreshments

Saturday Sept. 14. Cosumnes Preserve Bird Census. Call John Schick for details at 464-8304. 7:00 at Willow Slough trailhead.

Saturday Sept. 22. **Field Trip to Lodi Lake:** There is nothing like fall migration, and what better place in the county but Lodi Lake. Nearly every fall migrant has been seen here. Join Jim Rowth as he skillfully picks out the many warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. Meet at the end of Laurel St. at 8:00. 462-7512. (morning outing)

Saturday Sept. 28. **Field Trip to wetlands at Elmwood Tract.** Both landbirds and waterbirds should be present in good numbers. This is a local, morning walk to an area soon to become legendary. Meet Waldo Holt at "Toot Sweet" at the NE corner of I-5 and March Lane at 7am.



Sunday, Oct. 6. Water Valley Oaks. 8am-10am. Call Karl Kothe for details 464-1004.

Tuesday, October 8. **BIRDS OF SOUTHEAST ARIZONA WITH A TOUCH OF TEXAS** Covered are birds of all three mountain ranges, Santa Rita, Huachucas, Chiricahuas, and deserts and washes of Arizona plus Edwards Plateau, Big Bend & Brownsville area of Texas. Our speaker, Jim Lomax is the Past President of Mt. Diablo Audubon and has been photographing birds for over 8 years. 7:30. Central-Methodist Church.

Saturday, October 12. Cosumnes Preserve Bird Census. Call John Schick for details at 464-8304. 7:00 at Willow Slough Trailhead.

Saturday, Oct. 12. **Pt. Reyes Field Trip.** The peak of the season! In addition to all the regular western birds which would be around, there's the added plus of all those vagrants. Eastern warblers can abound, with wayward vireos, buntings, sparrows, orioles, etc expected. Rare shorebirds and grassland species are also expected such as longspurs and Golden-Plovers. Meet the effervescent Kasey Foley at the park and ride at I-5 and Hwy 12 at 6:00 am to carpool for this all day event. 473-3904.



Saturday, Oct. 19. **Field Trip to Lodi Lake.** By this time the wintering species will be present in addition to late migrants. There's no way to over-visit this unique place. Meet Waldo Holt at the end of Laurel St. at 8:00 AM. (street on east side of the Lake)

NOTICE: ALWAYS CALL YOUR LEADER, AT LEAST SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE THE OUTING, THERE MAY BE CHANGES IN DATES, TIMES OR DESTINATIONS. (Obviously this applies only when a phone number is given, not necessary for some local trips.)

MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Welcome to the new season with Audubon. Join us for an exciting program September 10 with Jesse Grantham from National Audubon who will present ideas to improve habitat through landscaping. Invite your friends, city & county officials, grandparents and other interested friends of nature.

Field trips are an important function of the local group; but there are other important activities. Across the nation, many local chapters of Audubon are involved in efforts to improve habitat for birds and other wildlife. Recently, I received a report concerning Audubon's role in protecting and restoring more than 120,000 acres of wetlands. Without education, protection by itself is not enough. Developing a culture of conservation is essential. Why have the wetlands become a focus of national attention? Wetlands are vital to environmental health providing habitat for many species including fish, birds and other wildlife. In addition, they help to recharge groundwater and provide open space. Estimates indicate that 5% of wetlands remain after years of being both neglected and victimized by draining, landfill and urban expansion. This Central Valley region of California continues to experience encroachment into the Delta as well as loss of vernal pools. One success story involves restoration of areas at Cosumnes Preserve. There are several other wetlands being established at local "mitigation" areas. Wildlife has returned to these areas.

Across California and the nation, local Audubon chapters are assuming the responsibility of educating the public and policy makers to better protect these unique habitats. Best of all, each member can develop better habitat in your very own yard.

MONO LAKE FIELD TRIP REPORT BY SUGA M.

Jim Rowoth was the leader of our July 12 trip taken by 5 birders in search of adventure, new birds, and the beauty of Mono Lake. The trip produced approximately 70 species.

But two sightings alone were worth the trip. Rosy Finches had eluded Jim and Kasey many times in the past and they were on a mission to find them.

Later we met Gene who told us she had seen rosy finches at Lake Ellery. We hurried back to the turnout by Lake Ellery. There we saw one gorgeous, pink and black finch with silver underwings perched on the top of a dead snag. We saw some other birds, fluttering silver, black and pink: rosy finches.

The next morning we returned to the spot and saw at least a dozen rosy finches flickering and hopping and pecking among the rocks by the lake.

Our next quest was for pinyon jays. While driving down Cottonwood Canyon road in the junipers Kasey suddenly shouted "Stop". "Pinyon jays", we saw at least a dozen pinyon jays sitting in the tree tops and gliding among the trees. We were so excited we high fived and hugged each other. (cont)

(cont) Mono Lake was starkly and dramatically beautiful. We took an early morning canoe trip among the tufa. We camped under the Milky Way. Kasey got one life bird, Jim got 3. The novice saw 17. We came home by way of Sonora Pass where thunder, lightning, pouring rain, rock slides, and mountain sickness afflicted us. But we found adventure, nature's beauty wonderful birds and friendship. It doesn't get better than that.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS(July-Aug)

7-1 Cheri Pillsbury ob W.B.Nuthatch feeding young, flock of Cassins Finches, flock of Evening Grosbeaks, and Townsend's Solitaire at Yuba Pass, in Sierra V. Mt.Bluebird feeding young, flock of Vesper Sparrow and 3 Sage Thrashers. 7-15 Suga M. Ob 100 White-faced Ibis on Woodbridge Rd
7-15, Swainson Hawks fledge, near Alpine & Pacific in Stockton, S.&L. Stocking. 7-18 near Dardanelloe Cheri P. ob Am. Dipper. 7-20 Jim Rowoth ob White-faced Ibis Gr Yellowlegs at Woodbridge Rd. and at Lodi Sewage Ponds W. Phalarope, Semi Plover, Bellied Plover, Caspian & Forester's Tern & gull of the Bonaparte type. 7-27 Steve Stocking and several others observed R.B. Nuthatch, Clarks Crows, W.H. Woodpecker, Wilson's Warbler, Townsends Warbler and other mt. birds on trail to Heiser Lake and at Lake Alpine. 7-29 Jim R. ob Wilson Phalarope & Whimbrels at Lodi Sewage Ponds. 7-30 Steve S. and retinue ob. 14 Pine Siskins feeding on seed at Grant Grove, K.C.N.P.. 7-31 Cheri P. & Gene Udwin observed family of Mt. Quail in Yosemite. 8-2 Jim R. ob both Gr&Lr Yellowlegs at the Lodi Sewage Ponds. 8-4 Steve S. & R. Boubelik ob 6 Band-Tailed Pigeons near Chiquito Pass, Yosemite National Park. 8-7 they observed a Swainson's Hawk at Ottaway Lake in Y.N.P. 8-10 Jim R. ob 24 Amer Wh Pelicans flying above Oak Grove Park. On 8-11 Jim & Waldo H. observed ob Wh-Tailed Kite, Common Moorhen and American Bittern on Elmwood Tract. 8-15 Cheri P. ob Prairie Falcon in Nevada.. flock of Pygmy Nuthatches and Mt. Chickadees at Sierra Valley, and the following all on the ground drinking from a pipe, W.H. Woodpecker, R.B. Nuthatch, West Tanager, Cassins Finch, Aud Warblers. 8-16 she observed 3 Brewer's Sparrow and several Sage Thrashers at Mono Lake.
8-17 the Stockings observed a Common Nighthawk out on a smoky day in Smith Nevada. 8-18 Jim & Margaret Williams ob Nashville & Wilson's Warbler Wrentit, W. Tanager, B.H.Grosbeak, Wood Duck, P.S. Flycatcher, Gr. Heron at Lodi Lake. On Woodbridge road they ob. W.F.Ibis, Gt.Yellowlegs and Spotted Sandpiper. Wilson's Phalarope at Lodi Sewage Ponds. 8-19 Jim Ob. R.B.Nuthatch in Stockton. Aug 22 Cheri ob Red-N. Phalarope, Black Swift and 20,000 plus Sooty Shearwaters at Pescadero. 8-24 Steve S. ob Crows, Gr.Egrets and Swainson's Hawks following a farmer plowing on Bouldin Island. 8-28 David Yee & Waldo ob White Tern in Humboldt County!!!!!!!



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FOR RICHES WHO'S SELLING THE COUNTY?

A majority of county residents place a high intrinsic value on the rich and diversified animal and plant life of our county. We all know preservation of this resource is essential. We also know it is threatened by urban development. Perhaps you have heard of the Habitat Conservation and Open Space Plan--and fervently hope someone is taking care of your natural treasure.

Sorry to tell you--it ain't so!

For the past two and one half years, the San Joaquin Council of Governments (COG) has directed the writing of a multi-species habitat plan. It is sometimes referred to as a protection or conservation plan. In fact, the plan's focus is to establish a development fee that will facilitate the permit processes required when urban development disrupts or wipes out wildlife habitat.

Much of the richest habitat land in the county, 117,000 acres, lies within the various general plan development boundaries, slated for urbanization. Most of the land is still in its habitat state--the general public will not be alerted to its loss until subdivisions grow out of alfalfa fields and gated-community guard towers replace Swensons hawk nesting trees.

Is it too late to develop a significant preserve of this rich resource? Did you know that currently there is no public action directed specifically at preservation of open space/habitat? The COG plan perhaps gives that illusion--with danger of using taxpayers' money to finance a plan which simply facilitates the conversion of ag and natural lands to urban sprawl.

Two committees have met monthly to direct the preparation of the Plan. A staff person was hired by COG with full responsibility to develop the Plan. An environmental consulting firm and an economic consulting firm were contracted to provide analysis and working documents to be used by the two committees.

The Technical Working Group, whose expertise is biology and planning, has met monthly to oversee the development of a county-wide biology analysis and guidelines for habitat preservation. This plan is currently being examined by the economic consultant to determine the cost of implementation. The Policy Advisory Committee, composed of stakeholders with expertise in local, vested-interest politics, also meets monthly to formally vote on recommendations from the technical group and to deliberate about POLICY. There have been predictable stand-offs during these meetings when biology conflicts with "private property rights" or lucrative landuse policy.

THE PLAN is scheduled for public review soon, approval by regulatory agencies and then the arduous journey through the seven City Councils and Board of Supervisors for adoption.

SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA BIRDWATCHING

The newly revised edition of this guide has been announced by the Sequoia Audubon Society. It has 174 pages of text, 20 illustrations, maps, birding area descriptions and much more. The total cost is \$18.25 a copy to Sequoia Audubon Society Inc., 30 West 39th Ave. #202. San Mateo Ca. 94403.



(cont)

It was determined by the Policy Committee that the Plan would go into effect for which ever jurisdictions adopted it, not dependent on county-wide adoption. In addition, developer participation in the plan is voluntary. Obviously, this potential lack of commitment jeopardizes the whole premise of the Plan: that funds acquired from mitigation of lost habitat will be used to acquire replacement habitat. Accuracy of the economic analysis and the financial ability for acquisition and management of habitat is unpredictable with so many variables. At a cost of approximately a half million dollars for the Plan's preparation, thousands of people hours, and years of stalling, we could remain in the current stagnant scenario, with little compensation for the time, habitat, and money lost. Still, mitigation for loss of habitat is required by the regulatory agency (politics aside!), the developer is committed to finding the best deal, the local planning staff chats with the developer's attorney overlunch, and the local watchdog hangs around the sidewalk at the courthouse deciding whether there is enough energy to bark...again. WHO BENEFITS?

The Development community and local planning departments will benefit from a streamlined process IF they choose to participate. They need the mechanism for acquiring and managing replacement habitat. WHAT DOES THE PLAN DO FOR YOU? Negotiations funded by taxpayers, Measure K, and habitat mitigation have produced no critical, visionary county-wide preservation plans, no corridor proposals linking open space and preserves, no provision for protection of the last best, riparian habitat in the county. Failure to determine the long-range economic benefit of wildlife habitat and open space to the entire community, outside of its current real estate or speculative value, remains a major obstacle in demanding a just compensation for its urbanization.

THIS LETTER IS THE OPINION OF MARJ FRIES, SEND HER COMMENTS AT P.O. Box 4741, Stockton, Ca. 95204 DO YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN THIS ATTEMPT TO PRESERVE LOCAL HABITAT AND SPECIES? Contact Dave Wagner, past Audubon Pres. who attends meetings. Help him determine if something is mephitic here.

COMMENTS ON THE OPINION EXPRESSED ABOVE:

- (1) The Technical Working Group represents those with various expertise including biology and planning. Our Conservation Chair, Waldo Holt is a member of this group.
- (2) The "Policy Advisory Committee described as composed of stakeholders with "expertise in local, vested-interest politics.", also includes Waldo and your editor, Steve S., both for their interest in conservation. It also includes representatives of the State Department of Fish and Game and the Federal Fish & Wildlife service.
- (3) You should know that we will not sign off on this plan if we do not believe that it will improve the chances of protection for wildlife habitat in San Joaquin County.

LAND CONSERVATION TAX CREDIT BILL

This bill, SB 1280, O'Connell, would allow a partial tax credit for those who donate land to protect endangered species, openspace, parkland or fish and wildlife to state and local agencies. Donors would also receive a federal tax deduction, allowing them to recover the entire value of their property. UNFORTUNATELY, the governor has not yet signed the law. Write to him!



SAN JOAQUIN AUDUBON T-SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE

MEDIUM, LARGE AND EXTRA-LARGE 100% PRESHRUNK COTTON SHIRTS ARE WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR! THE UNIQUE DESIGN OF A SWAINSONS HAWK ON ITS NEST IS BY NOTED WILDLIFE ARTIST KEITH HANSEN. THE SHIRTS ARE \$11 each or 3 for \$30.

Call 473-3904 or come to any General Meeting or to a Board Meeting. Going fast, get yours now!

CRANING FOR SANDHILLS:

Enjoy magnificent flocks of sandhill cranes coming to roost at the California Department of Fish and Game's Woodbridge Ecological Reserve near Galt. A series of 2.25 hr, naturalist led public viewings to two properties (including one that is normally closed) are scheduled the first and third Thursdays and Sundays, Oct. 3 through Mar. 6, all late afternoons. Registration is required by calling (916) 358-2353. A \$5. donation per person is requested. Trips do fill quickly, so call early. Other birds typically seen are stilts, raptors, waders, shrike, swans, and songbirds.

ATTENTION ALL BIRDERS !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Interested in the birds of San Joaquin County? Looking for a little competition? Interested in having fun with other birders? Feathers may fly!

We may just have something which you would want to participate in. It's a San Joaquin County Big Year for 1997. We will compete against one another, we will see who can see 150 species in 1997, we will see who can see 200 species in 1997.

There will be prizes, maybe a fist-fight or two, but mostly a lot of fun and camaraderie. More in the next Hoot Owl. David Yee, Program Chair

Stockton

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>>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)

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