



THE HOOT OWL

STOCKTON AUDUBON SOCIETY

Vol 25 #6

Nov-Dec 1987

Calendar

Tuesday November 10 STOCKTON AUDUBON MEETING : NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FARALLON ISLANDS WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE BIRDLIFE.

Well known bird artist, Keith Hansen, will show slides of his many visits to these magical islands just outside the Golden Gate Bridge. The Farallons have turned up more species of rare and unusual birds than any other spot on the west coast of North America, and Keith has seen many of them. He will also have some of his artwork on display. **WE WILL MEET AT 7:30 PM AT THE CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 3700 PACIFIC AVENUE, STOCKTON.**

FIELD TRIP; STOCKTON SEWAGE PONDS.....SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15

These ponds have gained a big reputation among birders in California as an ideal spot to observe many species of ducks and gulls, including very rare ones such as Tufted Duck, Oldsquaw, Little Gull and Franklin's Gull. Join Joshua Horner and Kim Platti as they enthusiastically take you through the complex and perhaps other areas which may be productive. Meet them at the entrance to the ponds off Highway 4 at 8am. For more information call Kim at 478-7860.

FIELD TRIP; GREY LODGE N.W.R. SATURDAY DECEMBER 5

There is probably no better spot in the Sacramento Valley for observing waterfowl. Swans, geese, and ducks in enormous numbers as well as raptors are to be expected. Last year Eurasian Wigeon were seen. It is about a 2.5 hour drive so plan for a full day, bring a lunch and wear warm clothing. Meet leaders John & Kathy Schick at 7:00 am at Burn's Tower UOP to car pool. Call 464-7083 for information

STOCKTON AUDUBON MEETING TUESDAY DECEMBER 8 BIRD IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP

David Yee and Dick Filson will present a slide-program/workshop on bird identification. This will be in preparation for the upcoming Christmas Bird Counts but will be helpful to all of those of you who want to improve your skills at the identification of winter birds of this area. Meet at the United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Avenue in Stockton at 7:30 pm

CHRISTMAS COUNT DATES.....PUT THESE ON YOUR CALENDAR

THE STOCKTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT....SATURDAY DECEMBER 19

Coordinator: David Yee 951-1526, 466-3337

WALLACE-BELLOTA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT... SATURDAY JANUARY 2.

Coordinator: Dick Filson 466-8414.

It is that time of the year again when we get in high gear to brave the elements with fellow birders to participate in Audubon's most prized group-oriented activity; the annual Christmas Bird Counts. Stockton Audubon will again sponsor two, the Stockton and the Wallace-Bellota counts. Both have gained state-wide attention as well as an increasing number of species. The counts are a perfect diversion from the busy holiday rush and help to form the largest data bases on the status of our birdlife. So please join Dick and me in one of the best birding events of the year.

David Yee

For more trips and information on activities see page #2

CALENDAR (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

FIELD TRIP; Sunday November 22. SWANS, CRANES & GOLDEN PLOVERS.

Join Sally Walters as she searches out the prime areas in the Delta that concentrate large numbers of Swans, Geese and Cranes. Raptors and shorebirds will also be found and a visit to the Lodi Sewage Ponds should produce Lesser Golden Plover and other rarities. **Meet Sally in front of Oak Grove Park at 8:00 .**

STOCKTON AUDUBON BOARD MEETING . December 2 7:30 pm.

At the home of Victor Wycoff, 2309 Bonniebrook Drive in Stockton

NEED CHRISTMAS PRESENTS?

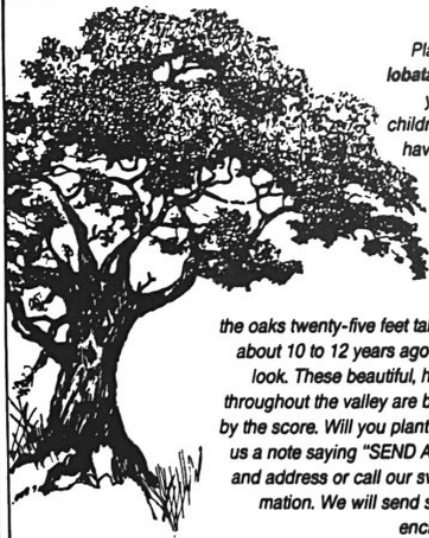
The Field Guide to the Birds of North America (recently revised) is probably the best field guide available today. The new edition of this National Geographic classic is a \$19.95 value which is available at our meetings for only \$15.00.

Also available is "Birding Northern California", an excellent guidebook to the best birding areas of our northstate. This is only \$6.00. Come to our November or the December meetings to get these or call George Welch at 477-9618.

SAN JOAQUIN/SACRAMENTO DELTA---BUS TRIP

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 22. Where else can you find a river delta sixty miles from the sea? The Delta was once the largest fresh water marsh in California and is still a very productive ecosystem. We won't see it as a "giant 300,000 acre 'sea of grass' as did the '49ers, but Steve Stocking from San Joaquin Delta College will take us on a tour and guide us to the preserved sections for a better understanding of this important valley habitat. Sponsored by Great Valley Museum of Natural History. There will be short hikes from the bus and a picnic lunch along the way. 8am to 4pm. Members \$12/non-members \$14, To register call the museum office; 575-6196.

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the oaks twenty-five feet tall from acorns we planted about 10 to 12 years ago—come on by and take a look. These beautiful, huge, native trees you see throughout the valley are being cut down each year by the score. Will you plant some for posterity? Drop us a note saying "SEND ACORNS" with your name and address or call our switchboard with the information. We will send several acorns to you and enclose planting instructions.

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NAS PRIORITY ISSUES

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY HAS identified five high priority issues for intense and immediate focus:

- Safeguard the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is under threat of oil development.
- Conserve ancient, virgin forests, especially in the Northwest, where they are rapidly disappearing.
- Preserve wetlands, which this country continues to lose at a rate estimated to be 450,000 acres per year.
- Fight the spread of toxics, including acid rain.
- Protect the Platte River ecosystem in central Nebraska, home to many species and migratory habitat for sandhill and whooping cranes.

Of course, we will continue to work on the dozens of other important issues, but these five are being attacked in coordinated campaigns that involve every facet of the Society as well as the grassroots membership.

Chapters have their own priority issues and can draw on the huge reservoir of talent, energy, and expertise contained in National Audubon Society.

BIRDS

Except when noted, all sightings by David Yee

SSP= Stockton Sewage Ponds, LL= Lodi Lake,
LSP= Lodi Sewage Ponds



FIELD BOTANY

Botany 12

INSTRUCTOR: S. STOCKING



Spring Semester

Delta College

3 Units 2 Field Trips

8-28, 2 Baird's Sandpipers and 5 Caspian Terns at SSP. 8-29, 10 Willow Flycatchers and a Cooper's Hawk at LL. 9-1 2 Lesser Yellowlegs and 2 Semipalmated Sandpipers at LL. 9-3, a Canada Goose and a Blue-grey Gnatcatcher at Lodi Lake. 9-4 a Semipalmated Sandpiper at the Ripon Sewage Ponds. 9-8, a Phainopepla, a Wh-cr Sparrow and a Lesser Golden Plover at LL. 9-12, 10 Elegant Terns at Rodeo Lagoon; Golden Gate Natl. Seashore by Russ Lawson, also 9-12, 21 species were observed by ten viewers at Oak Grove Park including Warbling Vireo, Bl-th Grey Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, & Wilson's Warbler. 9-13, three Warbling Vireo, a Hutton's Vireo, 15 Or-cr Warbler, a Nashville Warbler, 25 Yellow Warbler, 2 Black-th Gray Warbler, a Townsend's Warbler, a Mac Gillvary's Warbler, 25 Wilson's Warbler, 12 Western Tanager, a Fox Sparrow, 2 Lincoln's Sparrow all at LL. 9-17 a Calliope Hummer at LL, 9-18 6 Pectoral Sandpipers at Lodi Sewage Ponds, 9-19, 2 Elegant Terns at Montana del Oro State Park by Russ Lawson. 9-21 a R-br Nuthatch at LL, 9-22 a Common Tern at SSP, 9-23 a Olive-sided Flycatcher and a Purple Finch at LL. 9-24 10 Vaux's Swift at Louis Park, 9-25 a Blackpoll Warbler and a Laurence's Goldfinch at LL. On 9-26 the field trip participants viewed an Osprey at Van Assen Park on the Mokelumne (reported by Kathy Schick). 9-28 2 Solitary Vireo and a Pine Siskin at LL. 10-3 a Brown Creeper, 75 Long Billed Curlew, a Golden-cr Kinglet and 3 Chipping Sparrow at Brovelli Woods. Oct 9 2 Varied Thrush at LL. 10-9 a large number of Long-billed Curlew feeding with gulls at the intersection of I-5 and 12 (Steve Stocking). 10-10, Evening Grosbeak and N. Goshawk at Norden (Steve Stocking). 10-13 a Winter Wren at LL., Oct 14 a Brown Pelican at Wimpy's, and also on 10-14 a Greater Scaup at LL. 10-17 a Broad-winged Hawk at Caswell, also 10-17 a lg number of Surf Scoters at Pt Reyes (Russ Lawson). 10-17 members of Steve Stocking's Natural History Class observed 24 White Pelicans near San Luis Wildlife Refuge. On 10-22 David observed an Orchard Oriole at Lodi Lake, and the Rofs sided Towhee returned to the yard of Nancy Greenwood on 10-25.

EDUCATIONAL CHRISTMAS TOYS

The Peace and Justice Network is offering educational toys for sale on November 19, 20, 21, & 22, and December 4, 5, & 6. Sale times are: Thursday and Friday, 3-8 PM, Saturday and Sunday, 12-5 PM, at the Anderson Y, corner of Pacific & Knoles (across from UOP). Buy inflatable dinosaurs, deluxe magnifying boxes, butterfly nets, models to assemble, bird posters, puzzles, paperdolls, and many other items that encourage exploration creativity and fun. Also available are many materials for **parents and teachers.**

SUPERCOLLIDER AND WILDLIFE

Those who attended our September 26th field trip (which was in the northern area of the Superconducting Super Collider or SSC) are already aware that the area is rich in wildlife. We saw 33 species in about 3 hours including a Swainson's Hawk and an immature Golden Eagle. The present Collider site contains over 1/3 of our Bellota Christmas Bird Count circle and a large chunk of the spring breeding bird survey David Yee conducts annually. A large part of the northern and eastern perimeter consists of intermittent vernal pools, which contain some very special flora and fauna. Stockton Audubon has been careful not to take a position for or against the SSC but continues to be concerned that all wildlife and habitat receive proper study and mitigation if necessary. Conservation Chairman Kathy Schick has submitted several written responses to environmental documents and attended public hearings on Audubon's behalf.

CONSERVATION - WE NEED YOUR HELP

Stockton Audubon Society has been more active than most people realize in local conservation issues. The Stockton Audubon donation of \$1,000 toward building an interpretive center at Oak Grove Regional Park helped encourage the county parks department to maintain that nature area. Since then we've helped buy and care for native plantings and the bird oasis there.

Our elected board members voice concerns for wildlife and wildlife habitat issues whenever they are aware of problems or potential problems. As your Conservation Chairman, I receive project proposals from state and federal agencies and occasional Environmental Impact Reports from developers. Other board members also suggest conservation issues, and over the past ten years our editor Steve Stocking has probably contributed the most in ideas and information on conservation issues.

But we board members can't know everything or be everywhere; so your suggestions about conservation issues are crucial. Last winter, after receiving telephone calls from members, we questioned why the vegetation was being stripped from the Calaveras River. Steve investigated this for us and was able to get it stopped and inform the Flood Control District that CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) requires it to call Fish and Game before destroying habitat. Late last month another birdwatcher noted that some dying oak trees near a bird nest in a local park had been cut and others were tagged for cutting. Calls from board members helped make the parks department aware of CEQA and of the existence of the nest.

Broadly CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) requires that the impact on the environment be studied before new developments (such as subdivisions) are approved-- this generally takes the form of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Similar studies must be done before a state-funded agency makes a change in wildlife habitat (even to cutting down a tree). Certain threatened or endangered species (such as Swainson's Hawks) enjoy special protection and in areas where they are likely to occur, (State) Fish and Game will be asked to comment on the EIR. Our state Fish and Game keeps a database for immediate reference in such cases.

Stockton Audubon often plays a role in educating public agencies and developers to the importance of CEQA. We can also help Fish and Game keep their database current.

Do you know of any nesting/breeding/roosting site for any protected species in our area? Have you seen any habitat destruction underway? Please let us know, we need help from all of you in order to prevent problems to our environment. Just call me (Kathy Schick - 464-7083) or any board member and we'll check into the situation. Thanks for your help.

- Kathy Schick, Conservation

SAVING VALLEY OAK TREES

Board member Vic Wykoff has become chairman of the committee on Valley Oak trees in the Stockton area. He is writing letters to encourage residents to nurture and not cut down volunteer oak trees which are growing in convenient places in their yards such as shrub and ivy beds. He is also working to get a tree ordinance in Stockton requiring some checks before homeowners can cut down heritage trees. At the very least this could promote planting of new oak trees (and thus providing some nesting and food sources) for each vintage tree cut down.

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP DAY - FEBRUARY 28, 1988

This year Stockton Audubon Society will again have a booth at the annual International Friendship day held in Civic Auditorium. Sunday, February 28th, all afternoon there will be entertainment, food, festivities and information. Join us!

THE SAN JOAQUIN-SACRAMENTO DELTA (part one)

The "Delta" was once the largest freshwater marsh in California, and is still a very productive ecosystem. Even though over 90% of the area has been developed for farming, there are a few locales where some of the marsh vegetation and its wildlife abound.

Although the water in much of the Delta is fresh, it is affected by the tides, and daily fluctuations can be seen far up the tributaries and rivers which come together amidst the Delta islands. The Sacramento, Colusa, Mokelumne, San Joaquin and Calaveras Rivers, as well as many small creeks enter the Delta. Between these rivers and their interconnecting sloughs are the islands of the Delta: Victoria, Brannan, Mandeville and many others. Toward the center of the Delta, the islands are composed of peat, an extremely fertile soil formed from centuries of accumulation of partially decayed marsh vegetation. Most of the wildlife which remains, relies on the berms--small islands formed by the dredging of the channels in the process of formation of the islands and their surrounding levees. The birds, which winter here in such impressive numbers, are able to utilize the islands, some of which are covered with shallow water in the preparations for spring planting.

Green herons, bitterns, coots, common moorhens, kingfishers, red-winged blackbirds and other water oriented birds can be found along most water ways. If you know where to look, you can find colonies of Black-crowned Night Heron, Great Egrets, and Great-blue Heron. Early in the day, in a quiet area, you may be lucky enough to observe river otter, muskrats, beaver, and Western Pond turtles. Most of the wildlife is concentrated along the smaller sloughs which have not been deepened for ship traffic nor had their banks cleared and rip-rapped with rock or concrete chunks to protect the levees from erosion. There are some islands which are returning to marsh after breaks of old, poorly maintained levees. In these shallow water areas, shown clumps of native vegetation may be found- including California Hibiscus, Common Monkey-flowers, Yellow Iris (introduced), California Lady Fern, Arrow-head plant, Brown Dogwood, Button Bush, and Common Reed. Trees include White Alder, the towering Fremont Cottonwood, many willows, and even Coast Live Oak in the north Delta. In all areas, the most common plants are the tules, cattails and the introduced giant reed, which is often mistakenly called bamboo or cane.

The best places to see what a part of the natural Delta looked like are at Trapper Slough, Correia Road, and at the wildlife area at the corner of I-5 and Highway 12. One of the best maps to guide you, is the 3-A map titled "Bay and River Delta". Trapper Slough is best observed from Bacon Island Road which follows the north side of the slough just after it leaves Highway 4 west of Stockton. Correia Road goes north from Eight Mile Road west of I-5 and provides good viewing of the berms in White Slough. The wildlife area is reached from a spur frontage road on the south-west corner of I-5 and Highway 12. Most good wildlife viewing areas, such as the Delta Meadows near Locke, the islands in Disappointment Slough, Grant Line Canal north of Tracy and many others require boats for access. Great masses of wintering swans, geese, and ducks can often be seen from Staten Road, Highway 12 near Terminous, Eight Mile Road and Highway 4 on Victoria Island,--All west of I-5. The artificial wetlands of both the Lodi and Stockton Sewage Treatment Ponds probably offer the best "birding" for ducks, rare gulls, and shorebirds. Woodbridge Road, west of I-5, impresses with its concentrations of wintering Sandhill Cranes and other waterfowl.

Take a walk through an Oak grove which is being returned to its original state at Oak Grove Regional Park at Eight Mile Road and I-5. Oak groves were common at the edge of the Delta where streams flooded seasonally. Within the Delta, it was too wet for valley oaks, except in a few areas such as the natural levees of large rivers, which stood above sea level. Eat your lunch at the picnic area in the park and then venture across the 0 foot elevation contour, just to the west of I-5, for your visit to the San Joaquin-Sacramento Delta.

The Tule elk, antelope and Grizzly bear are gone, but enough of the Delta remains to attract those interested in wildlife. Visit the small remnant of marsh at the corner of I-5 and Highway 12 in the early morning or evening. Walk to an area just west of the first pond (a Peripheral Canal segment), and stand looking west. There you can hear and see the Delta as did the 49ers who stood looking east across what was then a giant 300,000 acre "sea of grass" between them and their fortunes. S.K. Strocking, 1987 Great Valley Museum Field Notes