



El Tecolote

BULLETIN OF THE SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

June 17 Board of Directors Meeting - 7:30 p.m., Junior Library, Museum of Natural History. All members are invited to attend.

The following events are sponsored by the Santa Barbara Underseas Foundation, a non-profit educational organization dedicated to the proper utilization of the ocean and its resources. Call 966-4814 for more information.

June 19 Devereaux Point Dune Exploration - 1 p.m. Explore the unique sand dune community, and its inhabitants' behavioral patterns. Attendance is limited. Call 966-4814 for reservations.

June 23 Marine Animals of the Santa Barbara Area - 7:30 p.m., Adult Recreation Center, 100 East Carrillo Street. Lecture-slide presentation, and SBUF meeting. Features Dr. Charles Woodhouse of the Museum of Natural History. Free to SBUF members, 50¢ to non-members.

June 26 Floating Marine Laboratories - 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 3 p.m. Educational and entertaining cruises into the Santa Barbara Channel, with a marine biologist on hand to answer questions. Cost is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children under 12; half price for SBUF members. Call 966-4814 for reservations or information.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have come to the end of another year for SBAS. Thanks to all board members, committee chairpersons, and members who helped make it so successful. Special thanks to retiring board members: Bill Gielow, Field Trip Chairman, for a year of great field trips; Michael Goodwin, Program Chairman, for the interesting programs; and Minna Smith, Treasurer, for handling our finances so efficiently and keeping us solvent. It has been a pleasure to work with you all.

During the summer the new board will elect officers, appoint committees, and make plans for the coming year. Our regularly scheduled field trips will start again in August, and our next monthly meeting will be in September.

Meanwhile, have a wonderful summer, and don't forget to take slides for our Members' Slides Night.

See you in the fall!

Joy Parkinson

BURROS IN DEATH VALLEY

On April 24 and 25 Bill Gielow, Mary Lou Hand, and Jim Hodgson of SBAS, and Dan Strout of the Sierra Club were in Death Valley examining first hand what feral burros are doing to the valley. They were led by Pete Sanchez, the Wildlife Management officer of Death Valley National Monument.

Burros, natives of northeast Africa, first became established in Death Valley in the early 1870's when they were released by prospectors and miners. Lack of natural enemies and protection from hunting have allowed the burro population to increase greatly. Presently the Park Service estimates that 1000 burros are living in Death Valley, and are using approximately 800 square miles, mostly in the Panamint Mountains, on the west side of the valley.

Damage in the valley has been reported for many years. The most apparent impact is on the Desert Bighorn Sheep, who have suffered from competition for food and water. Burros literally take over springs and waterholes, trampling waterholes until they are unfit for use by other wildlife or man. Burros eat an average of at least 9 pounds of vegetation per 100 pounds of body weight per day. Most adult burros weigh about 300 pounds. This means that approximately 2650 tons of vegetation is consumed annually by burros in Death Valley.

When you visit a spring, such as Goldbelt Grade Spring near Hunter Mountain, you find that the spring looks like a mudhole, and that the vegetation has been cropped back for several hundred yards around the spring. There are no grasses or wildflowers in evidence. Burro trails crisscross the entire area. This leaves a lot of exposed, bare soil. Flash floods then wash away the soil, forming gullies, and leaving no substrate for plants to seed in.

All the wildlife in the valley is affected. Bighorn Sheep populations have dropped from about 915 in 1961 to about 520 in 1975, with the burro as a contributing factor in the decline. When vegetation around a spring becomes so sparse, rodents and other small animals disappear, quail have no cover, and nesting birds can no longer use the area. Many of the affected plants and animals occur nowhere else in Death Valley; some nowhere else in the world.

At this time the National Park Service is experimenting with a special fence that keeps burros out and yet allows Bighorn and other wildlife to pass through; this is proving moderately successful. There is now no effective means of controlling the burro population; unless one is found soon, the Bighorn and other native plants and animals will no longer be found in the desert, and some will become extinct.

Jim Hodgson

Color-marked Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers

In 1976 and 1977 the Surinam Forest Service plans to color-band large numbers of Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers along the Surinam coast in northeastern South America. The objective of this study is to obtain more information about the origin of the birds visiting Surinam and about their migration routes to and from the country. All birds will be banded above the tarsus ("knee") with one standard Fish and Wildlife Service band and two orange color bands of about the same size as the aluminum band.

Should you see any of these birds, please write to Arie L. Spaans, Surinam Forest Service, P.O. Box 436, Paramaribo, Surinam, South America, mentioning species, location and date of observation, the position of the aluminum and color bands (left or right leg, and, if more than one band is on a leg, which band is above and which below), and the number of color-banded birds involved.

Jan Hamber

Golden Trout Workshop

Once again the Southern California Audubon Chapters will sponsor four week-long workshops at Golden Trout Camp, high in the Southern Sierra Mountains, just south of Mount Whitney. This sub-alpine, semi-primitive camp is reached by a 2½ mile hike, on the border of the John Muir Wilderness Area, just 215 miles from Los Angeles.

Led by devoted and knowledgeable Audubon naturalists, the Golden Trout Workshops are designed to add to one's knowledge and understanding of this fragile area. Leisurely, but formally structured daily field study sessions will enable one to thoroughly examine the ecological factors concerning the southeastern Sierra Nevadas.

A special highlight of this year's Golden Trout Workshops will be the addition of Family Week. During this time special children's programs will be conducted concurrent to the adult sessions. Special rates are available to families participating during Family Week.

Dates of this year's workshops are: July 25-31 and August 15-21 for all ages; and August 1-7 and August 8-14 Family Weeks. The cost is \$80.00 per adult, and \$50.00 per child through age 13 (children during Family Week only). For registration and information write: Golden Trout Workshop, 825 North Soledad, Santa Barbara, CA 93103, or call 966-4836.

Birding the Texas Coast and Lower Rio Grande Valley

I have just come back from a week of birding in Texas, divided between the Texas coast and the lower Rio Grande Valley. The American Birding Association held its third international convention in Beaumont, Texas this year, and I joined the more than 400 other birders from all over the U.S. and Canada (plus one from Iran) for three very full days of strenuous birding near Beaumont. For one who is comparatively new to birding, without much experience beyond Southern California, this was an almost overwhelming experience, but a wonderful opportunity to see a great many new species, located and identified by experts in the field, and all in a brief span of time and distance.

Some of the birds I saw for the first time were: Anhingas, Roseate Spoonbills, Hook-billed Kites, Chachalacas, Yellow Rails, Purple Gallinules, Jacanas, American Oystercatchers, Hudsonian Godwits, Masked Ducks, Groove-billed Anis, Pauraque, Buff-bellied Hummingbirds, Ringed Kingfisher, five kinds of woodpeckers, including Pileated and Red-cockaded, Rose-throated Becard, Green and Brown Jays, Fish Crows, Kiskadee Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Black-headed and Lichtenstein Orioles, Bachman's and Olive Sparrows, and seventeen beautiful warblers.

The ABA will holds its next convention in the first week of May, 1978, in California, in the Palm Springs area. Plans are to include the Salton Sea, desert and desert oases areas, among others. There will be a full report on this year's convention in the ABA's bi-monthly magazine.

Ardyth Woodbury

GASP Seeks New Members

The Group Against Smoking Pollution (GASP) welcomes new members to continue to further the goal of protecting the rights of the non-smoker. If you are interested, please write or call GASP, P.O. Box 1341, Santa Barbara, CA 93102, or phone Helen Matelson, 966-3217, or Pete Trojan, 687-3973.

Helen Matelson

El Tecolote Address Changes - Please send address changes to the Membership Chairperson, Barbara Greene, 4512 Via Huerto, Santa Barbara, CA 93110. Be sure to also send an address correction to National Audubon.

Isla Vista Wildlife Information Requested

The Isla Vista Community Council Ecosystem Management Group of Isla Vista Planning requests reports of all sightings of rare, endangered, and status undetermined wildlife seen in the Isla Vista area, to help them prepare and implement a recovery plan for these species. Please include as much detail as possible, identifying the subspecies (if determined), and the location and circumstances of the sighting.

Please report the following species, and any other rare, endangered, or status undetermined species seen: Endangered - Brown Pelican, California Condor, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Light-footed Clapper Rail, Least Tern, and Savannah Sparrow; Rare - Black Rail; Status undetermined - Wood Ibis, White-faced Ibis, Red-shouldered Hawk, Osprey, Merlin, Snowy Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Short-billed Dowitcher, Burrowing Owl, and Fox Sparrow; Other - Sea Otter.

Send your reports to: Isla Vista Community Council Ecosystem Management Group, c/o I.V. Planning, 966-C Embarcadero del Mar, Isla Vista, CA 93017, 961-3775.

Martin Kellog

Baja in May

In early May I travelled the relatively new Mexico Highway 1, which extends 1200 miles from Tijuana to Cabo San Lucas, the tip of the Baja peninsula. The road allows easy access to many beautiful beach and desert areas on both the Gulf and Pacific coasts, which are thus far fairly undisturbed. Many spots are excellent for birding, as well as peaceful beachcombing and tidepooling. Some of the many species readily observed include Bendire's Thrasher, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, White-winged Dove, Ground Dove, Caracara, American Oystercatcher, Wilson's Plover, Little Blue Heron, Magnificent Frigatebird, and Scott's Oriole. Many Ospreys were observed at various beach sites. A Sabine's Gull was seen at Bahia Concepcion.

Richard Amsel

El Tecolote Deadline - The deadline for the combined August-September issue is Monday, August 2, 1976. Please send all contributions to Mary Lou Hand.

El Tecolote
Santa Barbara Audubon Society
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