

El Tecolote

BULLETIN OF THE SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

April, 1985
Volume 22, Number 4



SBAS Office
300 N. Los Carneros
Goleta, CA 93117
964-1468

Robert Lindsay
President and Editor

April 24
Wednesday General Meeting - Join us for an evening of whales, dolphins, seals and sea lions. Our guest tonight is Dr. Charles Woodhouse from our own Museum of Natural History. Dr. Woodhouse has studied local marine mammals for many years and will surely provide an interesting show.
* Meetings are held in the ~~Fleischmann~~ Auditorium and the Museum of Natural History and begin promptly at 8:00 pm. The public is welcome.

May 22
Wednesday General Meeting - This will be our last program until September. On this night the upper reaches of Mission Canyon will be explored in photographs. Skye Bass, SBAS Board Member and office volunteer will share with us an outstanding selection of slides of this wild spot right in the Santa Barbara foothills. ~~Time and location are the same as for April.~~ Hope to see you there. * * *

Chris

PROTECT RIPERIAN HABITATS

In an article appearing in the Santa Barbara News-Press on Thursday, April 5, Barney Brantingham dealt with a letter written by Karen Bridgers concerning the lack of "sensitivity" on the part of County Flood Control as the clear riparian habitat in the name of "routine maintenance."

While the Brantingham column brought the problem to public attention, it by no means solved the problem, or answered the valid questions satisfactorily. Karen has decided to pursue this by petitioning the County Board of Supervisors to review her complaints, and the complaints of others who have witnessed some of the devastation done by Flood Control. Two prime examples are the aerial spray-

ing of defoliant into the Santa Maria River channel, and the total destruction of 17 years' worth of prime riparian growth on upper San Jose (also known as Fremont) Creek, where it runs along Camino Rio Verde.

In order to get the Board of Supervisors involved, they need to know that Karen is not the only one outraged at what is being done. She urges all concerned Audubon members to individually write to their district supervisor, expressing their concern, and demanding an investigation of Flood Control's creek-clearing policies. Are such acts as the spraying of the Santa Maria River and the destruction of Fremont Creek compatible with CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act)? If not, why hasn't the Board

(con't. on pg. 5)

BIRDS IN SANTA BARBARA

by Paul Lehman

Highlights of the late winter/early spring season included the returning male Hepatic Tanager in Rocky Nook Park in Santa Barbara finally being seen late February - early April; this bird is back for its third winter here. Exceptional was a Baird's Sandpiper in Goleta in late March; this bird, an early spring migrant, is exceedingly rare on the West Coast in spring. An apparent incursion of the very rare Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel occurred off our coast in late March and early April, with dead individuals found on beaches at Refugio and in Ventura and a live bird seen off Santa Barbara. Grasshopper Sparrows were found for a second time in an extremely grassy area at the base of San Marcos Pass.

Spring migration will be in full swing during April and May, with new arrivals appearing weekly. Get out and go birding!



DIAL-A-BIRD

For current news of rare and unusual sightings in the Santa Barbara area, call 964-8420 anytime, night or day. You will hear a three minute recording giving all the latest information. If you have any unusual or exciting sightings, please call Nancy Crawford at 964-7508.

Good Birding!

Dick Smith Scholarship Award

We are pleased to announce that Bridget Recht has been selected as the recipient of the SBAS Dick Smith Scholarship to the Audubon Camp of the West in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming. Bridget is currently a biology teacher at Anacapa High School in Santa Barbara and is a graduate of the Environmental Studies Department at UCSB. As an instructor in environmental education, she has a strong background in conservation issues and is in a great position to pass on the lessons of the Audubon camp back in to our community.

So congratulations Bridget. We hope the camp is all you expect it to be. Good luck and thanks for your interest.



WESTERN PIGMY RATTLESNAKE

1985/86 Board of Directors Nominations

Though the nominating process is not yet complete, a preliminary list of nominees has been compiled. Those nominated for next year's board so far include Skye Bass, Allan Bordofsky, Teri Ogden, Marge Cappiello, Minna Smith, John Flavin, Herb Drapkin, Carol Rae, Chris Benesh, Guy Tingos, Audrey VonBieberstein, and Penny Hannon. This leaves three positions unfilled though prospective nominees are being lobbied even now.

Next years board will be elected by you, the members, at our annual meeting set for June 8th. After that time, the new board will select the officers and committee chairs from among their ranks. The current nominees are all fine choices and promise to make next year's board a credit to our organization. More news will follow in the next issue of El Tecolote.

South Coast Bird Reports

Los Angeles	213/874-1318
San Bernardino	714/793-5599
San Diego	619/435-6767

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS !!!

- April 24
Wednesday General Meeting - See Pg. 1 for details
- April 28
Sunday Field Trip - Winchester Canyon and Lake Los Carneros. Another chance to see the birds of our mountain canyons. The Winchester area has had such recent sightings as Mountain Bluebirds and is the best if not only local spot from which Prairie Falcons can be seen. Add the fresh water marsh birds of Lake Los Carneros and a good morning of birding is assured. Meet in the K-Mart parking lot at Storke Rd. and Hollister Ave. at 8:00am for this ½-day trip.
Leader: Guy Tingos
687-8266
- May 4
Saturday Field Trip - Nojoqui Falls. This is a beautiful treasure of the Santa Ynez Mountains, an impressive water fall around which late spring wildflowers often abound. This spot hosts the only local group of Purple Martins and many other interesting birds. This ½-day trip will begin at 7:30 at the K-Mart parking lot at Storke Rd. and Hollister Ave. Bring water. A very moderate hike is necessary to reach the fall.
Leader: Chris Benesh
968-9434
- May 9
Thursday Board of Directors Meeting - 7:30 pm. Meetings are held in the conference room, upstairs at the Coast Federal Bank building at 1330 State St. Members are welcome to attend. All articles for the May issue of El Tecolote must be submitted by this meeting.
- May 12
Sunday Field Trip - Refugio Canyon. A wide variety of lowland, chaparral, and montane species are possible for this trip. Come see why President Reagan chose to make this canyon his home. Meet at the K-Mart parking lot at Storke Rd. and Hollister Ave at 8:00 am. Bring a lunch.
Leader: Jim Hodgeson
969-1209
- May 18
Saturday Field Trip - Alisal Canyon. Birds and flowers will be the attractions for this trip. This has been an excellent year for flowers and many should still be seen even at the late spring date. Meet in the Von's parking lot at the corner of Turnpike Rd. and Hollister Ave. at 7:30 am. Please park by the bank, not near the market. Expect a moderate hike on this trip.
Leader: Guy Tingos
687-8266
- May 24
Wednesday General Meeting - See Pg. 1 for details.
- May 25
Saturday Field Trip - Nichols-Delongsprey Ranch. This beautiful ranch located on the banks of Lake Cachuma, is an outstanding birding area holding many of the valley and woodland birds that abound in the Santa Ynez Valley and whatever water birds happen to be staying at the lake. Don't miss this trip if you can help it. Meet in the Von's parking lot next to the bank at Turnpike Rd. and Hollister Ave. at 7:30 am.
Leader: John Flavin
965-4979

(con't. pg. 4)

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS (con't)

- June 1
Saturday Special Field Trip - Santa Cruz Island. A few spots are still available on the boat if you wish to join us for a trip to our offshore neighbor. This is a rare opportunity to land on and explore Santa Cruz Island and to see the many pelagic bird species that live in the channel but never come to shore. Spaces are limited, so please make your reservation soon by calling John Flavin at 965-4979. The cost is only \$30 per person. Hope you can make it.
- June 8
Saturday Annual Meeting - This will be a Pot-luck picnic affair at which we will elect the new Board of Directors for the 1985-86 year. The exact location of this event has not yet been set but will likely be in a Goleta park. Watch for details in the May issue of El Tecolote.

SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD

Our last board meeting was held on April 11, 1985. Members present included Robert Lindsay, Carol Rae, Teri Ogden, Herb Drapkin, Eileen Gray, Minna Smith, Marge Cappiello, and John Flavin.

Much of the final organizing for the year was accomplished at the meeting. The dates for the annual meeting (June 8, 1985) and this year's Bird-A-Thon (May 19, 1985) were selected. The list of nominees for next year's Board of Directors, though not yet complete, was presented (see article, pg. 2). Robert Lindsay gave the Board an update on the Dean Bazzi Memorial Bird Checklist that is being created in conjunction with the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens. It should be ready by June of this year.

New business included plans to host a Southern California Coordinating Council meeting sometime next year. These events bring together many local Audubon chapters to let them know what the others are doing and to coordinate action on issues of regional importance. The actions of SBAS member Karen Bridgers who is trying to bring County Flood Control under the supervision of the County Environmental Review agency was made known to the board. Last, we voted to contribute \$100 to the efforts of the Citizens Planning Association to create an Environmental Investigating Reporting Fund that would allow soon to retire environmental reporter Bob Sollen to train fledgling reporters. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Annual SBAS Bird-A-Thon

May 19th is the date that has been set for this year's Bird-A-Thon. For those of you not familiar with the event, people who wish to raise funds for the chapter solicit sponsors willing to pay them some set amount for each bird species found on the Bird-A-Thon day. These proceeds are then sent on to National Audubon to finance their activities (though a third is returned to the chapter). Sponsor pledges usually fall between 5¢ and \$1 per bird. Participants should inform sponsors of the number of species likely to be found. If you have any interest in participating, either as a birder or a sponsor, please contact John Flavin, SBAS Field Trip Chair, at 965-4979.



FLOOD CONTROL (con't)

of Supervisors adopted a policy that would require Flood Control to consult Environmental Review before proceeding with "flood control projects" in environmentally sensitive areas?

Your input can be addressed to your own district supervisor, or to the board. The address for all county supervisors is 105 E. Anapamu, Santa Barbara 93101.

Education Committee News

The education committee is continuing to cover the many requests for our Spring Slide shows. Welcome to Sam Sklar who has joined us last month and has given six shows. I wish to thank all the members of the committee for their cooperation -- Skye Bass, Joe Boyd, Virginia Collett, Nancy Crawford, Herb Drapkin, Lila Eisberg, Blaise Maffia, Iris Rigoli, and Sam Sklar.

In order to expand our slide collection we ask that members submit any suitable slide which we will duplicate and return. Slides of common species are especially needed. Leon Yelinsky has given us 17 slides concerning mating of an Osprey. Thanks Leon.

Our committee will have a Pot-luck gathering sometime in June at the close of our season. The date and place will be set at the convenience of the members who have done so much for the committee this year. You will be contacted later in May.

Minna E. Smith
Committee Chair
966-7971



APRIL 26TH Marks Bicentennial of John James Audubon's Birth

John James Audubon, the founding father of the sport of birdwatching, the inspiration to generations of wildlife painters, and the unintentional progenitor of the modern conservation movement, will be the subject of art exhibits, lectures, a new postal stamp, innumerable parties, and a family reunion in celebration of his 200th birthday.

Audubon was born on April 26, 1785 in Haiti, the illegitimate son of a French naval officer and his creole mistress. From the age of 18, Audubon lived in the United States. For much of his life he wandered the North American wilderness from Florida to Newfoundland, identifying many unknown species of birds, painting hundreds of species in full life-size for his "double elephant" folio, THE BIRDS OF AMERICA, and describing their behavior in his groundbreaking ORNITHOLOGICAL BIOGRAPHY.

Audubon's extraordinary legacy as both artist and naturalist is being commemorated with special exhibitions of his work in New York City, Lafayette, Louisiana and Charleston, South Carolina; the publication of a booklet titled "Audubon Demythologized;" the issuance of a 22c Audubon postage stamp; and hometown celebrations at Mill Grove, Pennsylvania and Henderson, Kentucky, where Audubon lived during his early years in this country. In Henderson, a family birthday party will be attended by 15 of John James' descendants.

"Audubon's greatest contribution was fostering awareness," according to artist and ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson, whose own bird books have stimulated millions of Americans to take up birdwatching. "Awareness inevitably leads to concern. Because Audubon opened the eyes of others, it's understandable why he has become the father figure of the conservation movement in North America."

Named for John James Audubon, the National Audubon Society has grown to 550,000 members, with over 500 chapters nationwide. Like many other such organizations, the Society has broadened its mission to include the protection of all life -- animal, plant and human -- and the air, land and water on which all life depends.

Copies of "Audubon Demythologized," a 16-page color-illustrated booklet, may be ordered by sending a check for \$2 to Information Services, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York City, 10022.

WINTER BUTEOS OF THE CARRIZO PLAINS
by Jody L. Venema

The Carrizo Plains are located in the southeast corner on San Luis Obispo County. The main access is from the west via Highway 101 to Highway 58 east, which begins at the township of Santa Margarita. As it winds through the coastal mountain ranges, the 50 mile drive is interspersed by a variety of habitats: chapparal, oak-pine savannah, grasslands, and Juniper scrub lands. These habitats provide a wide range of bird species that gives a drive to the "plains" an added appeal.

The Carrizo Plains is a flat, treeless, and sparsely populated enclosed valley. The valley floor, at an elevation of about 2,000 feet above sea level, is approximately 40 miles long and 8 miles wide. The east side of the Carrizo Plains is bordered by the Temblor mountain range which contains the San Andreas Fault and separates the plains from the San Juaquin Valley. The west side is bordered by the coastal mountain ranges which separate it from the pacific coast. This unique enclosure and high elevation give the Carrizo Plains an above average annual solar insolation. The higher elevation reduces the incidence of tule fog from the San Juaquin Valley, and the coastal mountain ranges protect it from the ocean fog and clouds. Thus, unless a rain storm is moving into the plains, you can expect to have clear, bright, sunny days all through the year. While a high percentage of the Carrizo Plains is dry land farmed for food grains like wheat and barley, there are unfarmed grasslands and scrub land areas which afford natural protection for the plains' wildlife.

The Carrizo Plains in the winter months hosts a large and varied population of raptors, three of which are buteos of particular interest. - the Red-tailed Hawk, the Ferruginous Hawk, and the Rough-legged Hawk. These buteos migrate into the Carrizo Plains in the winter because of its relatively clear, mild weather, and its high rodent populations. From mid to late summer, the grain crops are harvested by machines leaving a small percentage behind in the fields. This "waste" is what supports

the local rodent populations which are preyed upon by the buteos.

The Carrizo Plains are unique in that different color phases of all these buteos are drawn there; from the common light phases to the harder to identify dark phases. The dark phases are harder to identify because of the vast similarities between the 3 buteos at first glance. Trying to separate these dark phase plumages can be quite challenging and exciting. Some of the basic clues to help in identification of these dark phase plumages will follow.

The Red-tailed Hawk, one of the most widely distributed and common buteos of North America, is also the most common of the Carrizo Plains. A wide range of color phases from light to medium to very dark featherplumages characterizes the Redtail. To distinguish the dark phase Redtail from the Ferruginous or Rough-legged Hawks, look for basic light phase field marks: no feathering on the legs, and the chestnut red upper tail. The Red-tailed Hawk hunts primarily while soaring and feeds on field mice, squirrels, gophers, snakes, rabbits, and a variety of birds.

The second most abundant buteo in winter on the Carrizo Plains is the Ferruginous Hawk. These hawks probably migrate from their nesting ranges in eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, Idaho and Nevada to the Carrizo Plains. Its home ranges of treeless open dry grasslands is simulated at the Carrizo Plains. The Ferruginous Hawk is one of the largest, most powerful of the North American Buteos. This buteo swoops down from great heights in the sky to prey on squirrels, rabbits, gophers, snakes, and stray cats.



(con't. on pg. 7)

Carrizo Plains (con't)

The Ferruginous Hawk is unique because in addition to its distinct light and dark color phases, it has a third "red" phase, which has more rufous coloration to its plumage. All three phases are found at the plains. The distinguishing field marks in its dark phase are: legs feathered to toes, white tail washed with pale rust, and large white patches on the upper wing surfaces. This bird is also the most vocal of the three buteos as it soars over the fields. It is often seen standing in fields, on rocks, shrubs, fence posts and power poles.

The least numerous of the three buteos on the plains is the Rough-legged Hawk. The roughleg migrates the furthest to the plains from nesting ground in the open country tundra zone of Alaska and Canada. Winter populations in the plains vary according to the tundra lemming populations which is its principal food source on its northern nesting grounds. When the lemming populations crash, large numbers of Roughlegs move into the United States to winter. This buteo has two distinct light and dark color phases, the latter being rarer. The distinguishing field marks of the Roughleg dark phase are: feathers to the toes, small white patches on the upper wing surface, and a long white tail with a dark band or bands, depending on the gender. Often seen perched on or near the ground, this buteo has the longest wingspan and may be seen coursing low to the ground in flight, or hovering in one spot similar to the American Kestrel. The Ferruginous Hawk may hunt in a similar fashion, but not as frequently. Because of its smaller, weaker talons, the Roughleg seeks out smaller prey, mainly field mice, gophers, small birds and insects. The Rough-legged Hawk is also a crepuscular hunter.

These three buteos can be seen throughout the Carrizo Plains but most are seen near the major roads of the area where power poles and fence posts provide abundant perches.

Finally, because of the Carrizo Plains extensive area and diverse buteo populations, birding trips should be planned as an all day affair, or even plan for a two day trip to this unique and varied habitat.

Volunteer of the Month

This month, it is my pleasure to select John Flavin as the Volunteer of the Month. John has been an outstanding coordinator of field trips this year and has attended just about every trip we have sponsored since he took charge of the committee. This sort of dedication and commitment is quite rare and we are fortunate to have found someone with a wealth of these qualities as we found in John. I am delighted that he has chosen to stay on for yet another year. His is an important job which has been ably carried out. I thank you John, you're a credit to SBAS and a joy to all of us who have worked with you.

REQUEST FOR OBSERVATIONS OF BLACK SWIFTS, BANK SWALLOWS AND PURPLE MARTINS

The California Department of Fish and Game is gathering information on the Black Swift, the Bank Swallow, and the Purple Martin in California to document distribution, abundance, habitat requirements, and reproductive success. In addition, we are especially interested in documenting threats to these species' habitats.

Please send any reports of recent sightings of breeding Black Swifts, Bank Swallows and Purple Martins to Ronald W. Schlorff, California Department of Fish and Game, Nongame Wildlife Program, 1416 9th St., Sacramento, CA 95814. Please include your name, address, phone number, along with the following: location of sightings, date of observations, behavioral notes, and any other relevant information. This information will assist state and federal agencies in developing habitat protection and species management plans for these bird species of special concern.

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California Condor Program Update
from the Western Regional Office

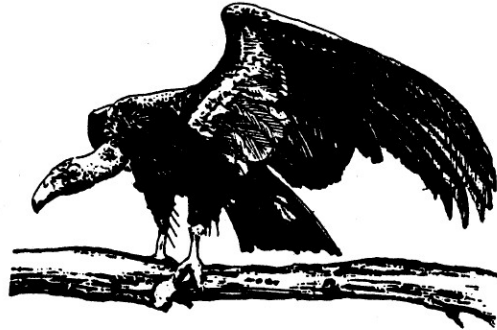
We have just received some disappointing news from the Condor Research Center. Observations indicate that only two pairs of Condors are currently nesting. Although the data are still preliminary, it appears that three pairs active last year may have each lost a mate. Five pairs were breeding by this time last year.

If three birds were lost over the winter, then the mortality rate in the wild population is higher than previously anticipated. The wild population could be only a dozen or fewer birds.

All this information is of a preliminary nature. Better data and analysis should be available in the near future. But for now the prospects look grim.

On a more encouraging note, a total of 16 eggs and fledglings have been

successfully reared in captivity in only the last two years to establish a flock from which future releases can be made. For now, all we can do is hope that the recovery program is successful in building up the wild population once causes of mortality can be found and corrected.



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