

# El Tecolote

BULLETIN OF THE SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

February/March, 1986

Volume 23, Number 2



SBAS Office  
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(805) 964-1468

Hugh Ranson  
Editor

## MARCH MONTHLY PROGRAM

On Friday, March 28th, our guest speaker will be B. "Moose" Peterson, who is a local wild life research photographer. He has been working on a long-term study of the Least Bell's Vireo for the US Fire Service, and his work has centered on the Mono Basin population of the vireo at Gibraltar Reservoir. Moose, who has been a Santa Barbara resident for eight years, has worked extensively on endangered species, such as the California Condor and the Peregrine Falcon. The Least Bell's Vireo is currently on the Californian list of endangered species, but is not yet on the federal endangered species list.

The meeting will begin at 8:00 pm. in the Farrand Hall of the Museum of Natural History. Refreshments will be available before and after the meeting.

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## THE DICK SMITH SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Clear, star-filled skies, evening campfires by snow-fed Torrey Creek, and the time spent among bighorn sheep, beaver, otter and eagles highlight this Audubon camp. The setting is a glaciated valley 7,500 feet high in Wyoming's Wind River Mountains, among 13,000 foot snow-capped peaks.

In past years, SBAS has made it possible for interested and deserving people to participate in the unique learning adventures of the National Audubon Ecology programs. Our Dick Smith scholarship has given teachers, naturalists, community leaders, students and others the opportunity to participate in these dynamic learning programs, and share in concerns about our natural world and it's well being.

It is again time to select SBAS's recipient of the scholarship. We urgently need your help in securing top candidates for this \$650 award. Applicants need not be Audubon members. The scholarship covers all costs for one of the three two week sessions, except transportation to and from the camp. The 1986 sessions are: June 22-July 4; July 20-August 18; July 20-August 1.

It is our aim to find candidates who have a strong interest in ecology and conservation, and those who offer promise of using the training to advance the cause of conservation. Consequently, it is requested that the following information be provided for each nominee: 1) your interest and activity to date; 2) why you wish to attend, and why you would be our best selection; 3) the ways in which the benefits would probably be passed back into the community.

We stress the need to make the reservation early to assure a place in the session of our winner's choice. Applications must be received by March 12 (very soon, so hurry and tell your interested friends.) If you need more information - would like to hear more about the camp itself - before applying, call me immediately, and I'll send you a brochure. Send your applications to me or to the office.

Carol Rae,  
Scholarship Coordinator,  
P.O. Box 912,  
Goleta, Ca 93116.

Phone 964-3827 (cont. on pg.2)

## BIRDS IN SANTA BARBARA

Most of the local wintering avian highlights this season were individual birds returning for additional winters. For example, single Grace's Warblers in Montecito were present for their seventh and second winters respectively; a nearby Greter Peewee was back for its second or third season, albeit seen this year on only one day; single Olive-sided Flycatchers and Virginia's Warblers in Hope Ranch were back for their second and fourth winters respectively; the male Hepatic Tanager in Rocky Nook Park was present for its fourth year; and a "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal and two Orchard Orioles in the Devereux area had returned for their fifth and third seasons.

The best "new" birds this year include two or three Glaucous Gulls around Santa Maria, Broad-billed Hummingbird and Vermilion Flycatcher in Goleta, Tropical Kingbird in Santa Barbara, and Green-tailed Towhee in Hope Ranch. Lastly, up to 25 Grasshopper Sparrows on a grassy hillside near Figueroa Mountain during December was an exceptional count, and an unprecedented occurrence for the winter season.

Paul Lehman

## SOUTH COAST BIRD REPORTS

Los Angeles	213/874-1318
San Bernardino	714/793-5599
San Diego	619/435-6761



For current news of rare and unusual sightings in the Santa Barbara area, call 964-8240 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 Chris Benesh at 968-9434. Good birding !!!

## SANTA BARBARA BIRD REFUGE UPDATE

Tomi Sollen reported to the board about the plans for the refuge. The plans include a chain link fence between the railroad tracks and the refuge, two stationary and two floating platforms (able to hold two people) with reeds surrounding them. A new sewage system is being planned, and a weir to let flood waters out into the ocean. California native plants will be put in, and there will be information centers placed around the shore. There will be a domestic waterfowl area (sectioned off by a floating fence), and the seabird rehabilitation center that is operating there now.

The board had a few suggestions for the proposal, such as two larger viewing platforms (to accommodate a large group of people and the use of scopes) instead of four smaller platforms. There should be no floating fence since the birds would fly over or go around. The fence would kill or injure birds that happened to fly into it; the fence would be approximately four feet high. The area that is to be sectioned off contains habitat currently used by wild birds. Finally, the fence may prove to be aesthetically displeasing. There was no mention of any plans for seats or benches, so this was another recommendation.

A letter has been written concerning the above points, and copies are being sent to Jerry Ambrose and the Environmental Review Board.



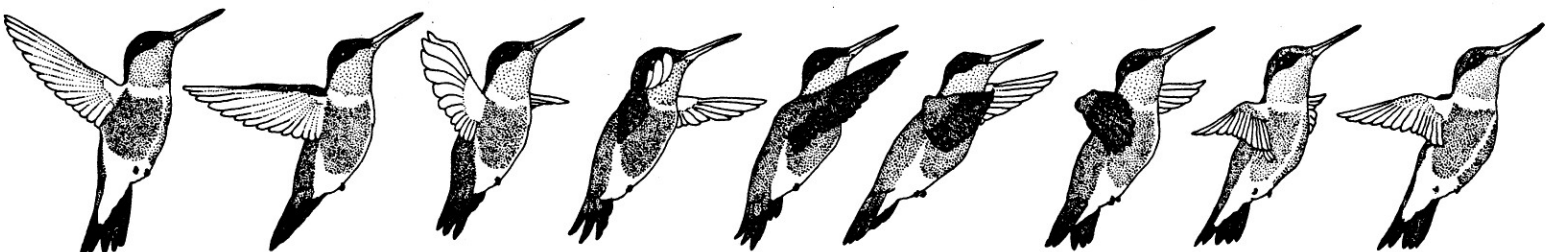
(scholarships, continued)

If we receive no applications for the Wyoming camp, SBAS will send two people to the July 20-26 session of the Golden Trout Workshop in the Sierra Nevada, up out of Lone Pine. Submit applications if you are interested in this opportunity. Call for information.

## CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

- Friday  
February 28      Monthly Program- See last months issue for details.
- Saturday  
March 1      Botanical Gardens and Rocky Nook Park - See last months issue for details.  
Meet at the entrance to the Botanical Gardens at 8:00 am.  
Leader: Joan Lentz  
969-4397
- Sunday  
March 9      Sandyland Slough and Carpenteria Creek- This trip will explore the  
tidal salt marsh for a variety of wintering waterbirds, and will then  
move to Carpinteria creek to look for wintering riparian landbirds.  
Meet at the Bird Refuge at 8:00 am.  
Leader: Guy Tingos  
687-8266
- Thursday  
March 13      Board of Directors Meeting- Meet at Jim Hodgson's house at 7:00 pm.  
All members are welcome. 969-1209
- Saturday  
March 15      Lake Cachuma- A return to the scenic setting of the Nichols-Delompre  
Ranch. Always a good chance to see the birds of the Santa Ynez valley,  
various geese, Ospreys, Lewis' Woodpecker, etc.. Meet at the Von's  
parking area at Turnpike and Hollister at 7:30 am. Bring a lunch.  
20 person maximum.  
Leader: John Flavin  
965-4979
- Saturday  
March 22      North Coastal Beaches- This half-day trip will take us to some of  
the familiar habitats found along the coast including riparian woodland,  
oak woodland, and chaparral. We will also look at the bird activity  
along the shore. A great trip for those who wish to become more familiar  
with our resident birds. Meet in the parking lot at Storke and Hollister  
near Jack in the Box at 8:00 am.  
Leader: To be announced.
- Friday  
March 28      Monthly Program- See page one for details.
- Saturday  
March 29      Oso Flaco Lake and Santa Maria Rivermouth- This trip provides an opp-  
portunity to see a wonderful freshwater marsh and dunes area at Oso Flaco  
combined with one of California's best wintering waterbird areas at  
the rivermouth. Bring a lunch, and meet at Storke and Hollister near  
Jack in the Box at 8:00 am.  
Leader: Jim Hodgson  
969-1209
- Sunday  
April 6      Devereux Slough- Both spring shorebird and landbird migration should  
be picking up, so we can expect to see a wide variety of birds as we  
walk through some of the Devereux habitat. Meet at the school adjacent  
to the entrance to Devereux at 8:00 am. Half-day. Bring 'scopes if you  
have them.  
Leader: Chris Benesh  
968-9434

If you are planning on attending any field trips and are unsure as to whether the trip is going to go on as planned because of bad weather conditions, please call the leader the evening before.



## BINOCULARS FOR BIRDING

Selecting the right binoculars for birding is a difficult task for most people. What follows are some basic facts learned the hard way over about 30 years of personal experience.

Optically testing and comparing all the different models and brands is impractical; by buying a good brand and paying a good price (roughly, \$75-100 and on up), and paying attention to the following basic facts, you should have a very high probability of getting a good product that will last many years. Computer design of optics has permitted the manufacture of very good optics in camera lenses, binoculars, and telescopes, at a comparatively low price. When you pay more, you hope to get lenses and prisms that are more ruggedly and accurately installed so that they are less sensitive to shock and adverse weather conditions.

To my mind the first, and most important feature for those who wear glasses, is called "high eyepoint". This means that the binoculars come into focus at a greater distance away from the eyepiece, which in turn means that you can see the full field of view with eyeglasses, even though the eyeglasses hold your eyes farther away from the binoculars. Do not, under any circumstances, believe the misleading advertising of some brands that say "fold-down eye-cups for eyeglass wearers" or some similar baloney. The specifications must clearly state in plain English that you will see the FULL field of view with glasses; otherwise it will be like looking down a tube. These binoculars will cost a little (sometimes alot) more, but eyeglass wearers will probably be very disappointed with anything else. Look for Bushnell "Custom" (most models now discontinued); the brand-new line of Bushnell Audubon binoculars, designed by a team of expert birders, I believe to be OK; almost all Zeiss, Leitz, and Nikon "High Performance" lines with the letter "E" in the model number (for example, 7x35E) should include the high eye-point feature. If money is no object, buy Leitz or Zeiss and be sure, but you can get optical performance every bit as good in some Nikons and other brands; whether or not you could get as rugged construction is unknown to me.

The next features are described not necessarily in order of importance; individual preference is a large factor in analyzing these features. One is "brightness" or "twilight performance". One measure of this, used by some manufacturers (Zeiss uses a different system entirely and comes up with different answers; we won't go into it here), is as follows: divide the binocular power into the objective diameter, and square the result. For example, consider 7x35 binoculars; 7 is the power or magnification, and 35 is the objective (largest) lens diameter in millimeters. 7 goes into 35 five times. 5 squared is 25, which is a measure of brightness. 7x50's are brighter. The catch is that this is a very slight advantage; you can only tell the difference in the few minutes after the sun has gone down. During the day there is NO difference, because the pupil of your eye in daylight is smaller than the so-called "exit pupil" of the binoculars, and thus the amount of light entering your eye is regulated by your eye pupil, not the binoculars. I say, forget about brightness, unless you do alot of birding after sunset, and settle for smaller objective lenses. Less glass means less weight. If you bird from a boat, that's different. The larger exit pupil of bright binoculars makes it easier to keep the binoculars lined up with your eyes when you are moving.

Which brings us to the next consideration, size. Good mini-binoculars (Nikon, Zeiss, Leitz, etc.) are every bit as sharp and clear as the finest large binoculars made. So why pay more, and lug around bigger and heavier glasses? This isn't too easy to answer. However, based on my experience, I say that there is a small but significant difference in the time it takes to focus the binoculars when you see a bird, and you will miss a bird on occasion because of that. Also, it is harder to adjust the distance between the two barrels so as to line up with your eyes. Once these adjustments are made, the image can be perfect, it just takes longer. There also may be small differences in field of view, and possibly the eyepoint may not be as high as in larger binoculars, so check this out before buying.

Which are better, Porro or Roof prisms? The most familiar design is Porro, which is the type wherein the barrels have a jog in them so that the objective lenses are farther apart than the eyepieces. Roof prism binoculars (straight barrels) are becoming more common, as in Leitz, and in Zeiss Dialyt. I once could tell the difference instantly by looking through Zeiss glasses, for example. Everything looked flat. With Porro glasses, you get an enhanced stereo effect due to the wider spread of the objective lenses. Birds look rounder, and stand out from their surroundings. Nowadays I'm not sure that I can tell the difference (it couldn't be age, could it?). Try both and see if you can tell the difference. Do this in the same place, time, and light, looking at the same subject. If in doubt, buy the Porro.



## BINOCULARS FOR BIRDING (cont.)

What about armored binoculars? Basically, they provide a little shock mounting. It is the binoculars themselves that are made waterproof. The "armor" is a sleeve that is heated and is slid over the binoculars, as tight as a teenager's jeans. The armor isn't much of an advantage, if any. It is recommended that "waterproof" binoculars be kept away from moisture as much as possible, as it would be disastrous if there were even the slightest imperfection in the sealing.

Having close focusing distance is important. It is a distinct advantage to be able to focus down to 8 or 10 feet or so, and many binoculars can do this. But make sure they will actually do so, don't take a salesperson's word. Center focus is also important; individual focus is used only on binoculars for marine or other bad weather conditions because the screw thread eyepiece adjustment provides better waterproofing. We are talking about binoculars that have both eyepieces adjustable, and no center focus; avoid this type. The type to get has center focus, with one eyepiece adjustable (usually the right). Binocular specifications will usually state IF for individual focus and CF for center focus.

So what binoculars are best? No such thing as "best". You try to find the best compromise of features that suit you. So far as power is concerned, 7 or 8 is close to optimum for most people. You get a little wider field of view and a little lighter weight (usually) than 9 or 10 power, and you can usually find birds a little quicker. And they are a bit easier to hold steady. My favorites are 8x32 Porro binoculars. For some reason, the optical formula for 8x32's results in a smaller size binocular than most 6 power. Otherwise, the higher the power, the bigger the binoculars, within the same class, of course. (Within the mini class, the 10 power are the biggest, the 9 power are smaller, etc..) For long distance viewing, the 10 power binoculars are best. But beware, most won't focus any closer than 30 feet, so are useless for feeder watching and other closeup viewing. However, some feel that eyeballing birds closer than 30 feet is adequate. In any case, top-of-the-line glasses made by major manufacturers should be close to perfection so far as sharpness, and similar optical qualities, are concerned, so the choice boils down to the features discussed here.

There may be an exception to the latter statement; to me, the most gorgeous clear, bright, bay-window view I have ever seen in binoculars is with the Zeiss 10x40. These binoculars seem to have a quality that exceeds anything else. That's my opinion for what it is worth. But they won't focus closer than 33 feet, and they won't fit in my pocket. And there is the cost of them to consider, of course.... I am sure that I don't identify birds any better with them either, but after 5 years of using them I am still impressed.

Now that you have bought the ideal binoculars, there is one extremely important thing you need to do. Adjust them to fit YOUR eyes. If your eyes are perfect and/or if you have perfectly fitted eyeglasses, you may find that the right eyepiece scale will be on 0 position, but you should go through this exercise anyway to make sure.

Here's what you do. On a clear day, find a comfortable seat; don't stand. You should have a wall, stand, shelf, or other solid platform to set your binoculars on at eye level. Preferably both you and the binoculars should be solidly positioned so neither one wobbles. Always keep both eyes open. Cover the right barrel of the binoculars so you can't see out, and very, very, very carefully focus on a spot of light, a sign, or a telephone wire. Go back and forth past the point of sharpest focus enough times to make sure that you are stopping on the optimum point. Then, without changing the focusing wheel, cover the left barrel and do the same thing with the right barrel, using the right eyepiece adjustment. Note the reading on the scale, and always be sure to set the right eyepiece on this exact position when using the binoculars. Binocular manufacturers haven't learned to provide a lock for this adjustment, so you either have to check the scale frequently or put a small piece of tape over it to hold it in place.

Failure to do this job carefully will result in degraded performance of your binoculars, probably eyestrain, and possibly monocular vision. Yes, if your brain receives significantly unequal images from each eye, it will reject the poorer one, and you will be seeing with only one eye. No harm will be done in that case, but the poorer image just doesn't register.

You should recheck your adjustment once or twice a year, and always when you get new eyeglasses.

Virgil Ketner

## SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD

Board members Chris Benesh, Marge Cappiello, Herb Drapkin, Jim Hodgson, Teri Ogden, Carol Rae, Guy Tingos and Audrey von Bieberstein met at Audrey's house on February 13th. The most important things discussed were the Dean Bazzi Memorial Bird Checklist and the Santa Barbara Bird Refuge. The sketches for the checklist are now at the approval stage; it won't be long before we will see the checklist in printing. Tomi Sollen came to the meeting to explain what the new proposal for the Bird Refuge is. The board had a few suggestions for the plan, and did not approve the plans as it stands. (see Santa Barbara Bird Refuge Update)

Audrey von Bieberstein will be our delegate at the Western Regional Conference March 22-25. When she returns she will give us an update on the wonderful programs she attended. Other items of importance were the purchase of a fire safety ladder for the office, which will be installed soon. The T-shirt logo contest is still going on, so if anyone is interested there is still time to submit designs.

The next meeting will be at Jim Hodgson's house, at 7:00 p.m. on March 13th. We welcome all members who wish to come.

Teri Ogden

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### FIELD TRIP COMMITTEE NEWS

In taking over as this committee's chairperson, I have realized that there is no real committee. It is my wish to correct this by inviting all interested persons to become members. Qualifications are few. One must simply feel comfortable showing other people birds, and be willing to lead an occasional trip. I would like to create a list of volunteers who would be available as leaders for trips. This would make it much easier for me to get in touch with those willing to help. In addition, I also greatly encourage those who have ideas for good birding trips to let me know. Remember, there are trips for different levels of birders, so do not feel that you need to be an expert. It is my hope that we can maintain the level of excellence we have enjoyed in past years, and I could sure use your help.

Chris Benesh

### OFFICE NEWS

Mike Kory can no longer be our Friday volunteer, so again we need someone to take a day at the office. If Friday isn't convenient for you, perhaps a switch can be made. Remember, you need no special skills, and it is enjoyable work. The hours are 10 - 2. Our sincere thanks to all our fine substitutes who come to our rescue.

Brochures for the 1986 Audubon Camps and Ecology Workshops are in the office.

Audrey von Bieberstein

### LIBRARY

We have an interesting new book on our library shelf, thanks to Anne Eissler. It is The Birds of Korea by M.E.J. Gore and Pyong-oh Won - text in English and Korean.

Also, we have two copies of Rich Stallcup's Birds for Real (a companion to the Golden Birds Guide), one the gift of Frances Bidstrup.

Audrey von Bieberstein  
Librarian

Field Trip Report - Bird Refuge and Harbor, 2/9/86.

Never take the Bird Refuge for granted. About 25 people on this walk had great looks at 3 Common Murres, a Common Moorhen, and a female Hooded Merganser. Two dozen Cinnamon Teal, several singing Marsh Wrens, and a Clark's Grebe spiced up the usual assortment of gulls and herons. Though a high tide kept us off the breakwater, we still saw Royal Terns, Surf Scoters, Pacific and Red-throated Loons, and 2 Horned Grebes at the harbor.

Guy Tingos



Field Trip Report - Salton Sea, 2/1-2/2/86.

Inclement weather in Santa Barbara put many people off from attending this field trip, but those who did participate were rewarded with fine weather, and spectacular numbers of birds. Saturday's birding began at the State Recreation area at the north end of the Sea, where we saw an unusually tame Virginia Rail, plus typical desert species such as Verdin and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher. We also saw many hundreds of Eared Grebes; it is estimated that half a million grebes winter on the Sea.

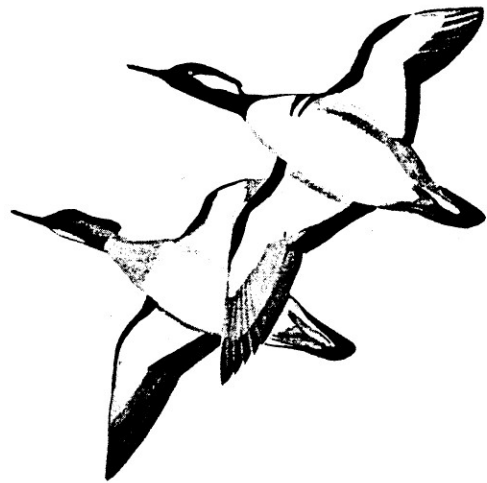
The next stop was the south-east end of the Sea, where there were huge flocks of White Pelicans, and Ross' and Snow Geese. Among the large numbers of shorebirds was a single Stilt Sandpiper,

which was cooperative enough to feed in front of us for twenty minutes. At some ponds to the south of the Sea, we watched flocks of White-faced Ibis and Cattle Egrets flying in to roost, and as dusk descended, in flew a noisy group of forty Sandhill Cranes.

That night we camped at Finney Lake, where we were treated to a view of a Western Screech Owl by flashlight. In the morning we saw some more desert species, including Cactus Wren and Abert's Towhee, and an unforgettable sight was of a Ladder-backed Woodpecker chasing a Red-naped Sapsucker! Back at the Salton Sea there were large numbers of both Lesser and Greater Scaup, which could be compared side by side so that everyone could note the subtle differences in plumage between the two species. Also present here were a small flock of Great-tailed Grackles, and a single Burrowing Owl.

We broke up the long journey back to Santa Barbara with a quick stop at the north end of the Sea, where we were rewarded with the sight of Common Ground Doves and a covey of Gambel's Quail, which nicely topped off a fine weekends birding.

Hugh Ranson



CHANGES TO THE TECOLOTE

Please note that this edition of the Tecolote is for Feb./March, and the one you will receive in March will be the April edition. This change is being made because the Tecolote was reaching members towards the end of the month that the newsletter covered; now it will be arriving in time for the following month.

We have also received feedback that the Tecolote has been arriving after the monthly meeting, but the meeting is described in detail in the previous month's newsletter, so make a note on your calendar of upcoming meetings when you receive the Tecolote.

# SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY

*Committed to the sound use and conservation of our natural resources*

SBAS OFFICE  
300 North Los Carneros  
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## OFFICERS

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Treasurer	Guy Tingos	687-8266
Office Coordinator	Audrey von Bieberstein	967-2866
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## ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

Bill Dahlke	683-3315
Jim Hodgeson	969-1209
Rare Bird Alert	964-8240

EL TECOLOTE, the SBAS Newsletter, is published 11 times annually and is free to members. Subscriptions to non-members cost \$10.00. For information about membership, please call our office.

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Field Trips	Chris Benesh	968-9434
Programs	Marge Cappiello	967-9569
Publicity	Herb Drapkin	683-3374
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Conservation	Chris Benesh	968-9434
Membership	Carol Rae	964-3827
Library	Audrey von Bieberstein	967-2866
Hospitality	Carol Rae	964-3827
Christmas Bird Count	Paul Lehman	967-2450
Rare Bird Alert	Chris Benesh	968-9434

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Monthly programs are held at 8:00 pm in Farrand Hall at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History on the 4th Friday of each month, September through May. The November-December program is held the 1st Friday of December. Non-members are welcome to attend.

EL TECOLOTE  
Santa Barbara Audubon Society  
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Goleta, CA 93117

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