

# El Tecolote

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY



October/November 1993

Vol. 32, No. 2

## Aerial Clowns

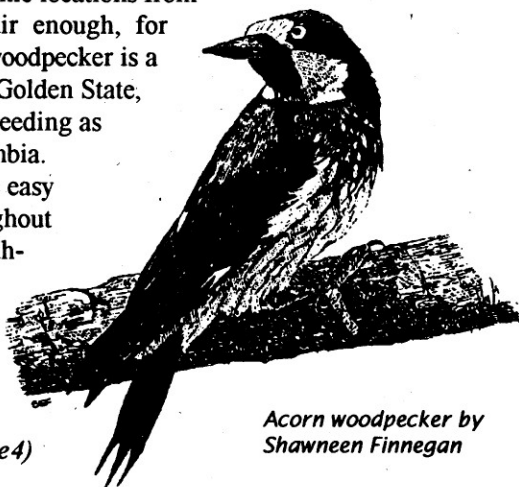
by Jere French

**D**URING winter months, when local birders are scanning the skies and peering through woodlands in search of exotic northern visitors — long- and short-eared owls, varied thrushes, rough-legged hawks — few will bother to focus on our best winged comics, the acorn woodpeckers. These comedians seem to enjoy following us on field trips, laughing, scolding, pushing and shoving one another off limbs or away from the neat rows of acorns drilled into oaks, sycamores, telephone poles or anything wooden and out of reach of earthbound creatures. Keep looking for Say's phoebes, wintering sparrows, and the ever-elusive pine siskins, but don't forget to watch the antics of the acorns. They WANT to be noticed.

Sometimes referred to as clown-face, the red, white, black and yellow bird has endured a series of names: acorn-eating woodpecker (for obvious reasons), ant-eating woodpecker (for its peculiarly broad diet), *Melanerpes formicivorus*, its scientific name, means "creeping black anteater," narrow-fronted woodpecker (for reasons I cannot begin to guess), Mearns' woodpecker (to honor an early western naturalist, Edgar A. Mearns), and the San Pedro woodpecker (perhaps for its interest in watching ships being unloaded in the L.A. harbor). Until fairly recently, it was also known as the California woodpecker (obviously for where it mostly lives), but the American Ornithologists' Union began some years ago to systematically withdraw geographic locations from birds' names. Fair enough, for even though the woodpecker is a true native of the Golden State, he has relatives breeding as far south as Colombia.

And despite its easy recognition throughout this extensive north-south range, the acorn is a most unusual member of the family of woodpeckers.

(See Acorn on page 4)



Acorn woodpecker by Shawneen Finnegan

## October Program

Friday, October 22, 1993

Farrand Hall, SB Museum of Natural History  
7:45 p.m. Refreshments / 8:00 p.m. Program

### "The Natural History of the Sedgwick Ranch"

The "crown jewel of the Santa Ynez valley," the Sedgwick Ranch has it all — variety of habitats, spectacular views, stunning geologicals, a plethora of plants and animals, and now, the added hot salsa of political controversy. John Robert Haller, Professor Emeritus of Botany at UCSB, draws on his long experience hiking and studying this treasure to reveal its beauties and marvels, and to explicate the controversy. Professor Haller is known both as a crack taxonomist (his speciality is pine trees) and as an outstandingly inspiring teacher.

## November Program

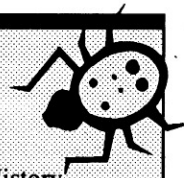
Friday, November 12, 1993

Farrand Hall, SB Museum of Natural History  
7:45 p.m. Refreshments / 8:00 p.m. Program

### "Bugs, Part II"

The last time Dr. Larry Friesen spoke to us, he brought us the insects of California. His undertaking this time is even more ambitious. In "Bugs, Part II" he will bring us, through the excellent imagery of his photography, a grand panoramic survey of the insects of the world. You will meet the Riddick Bowes, the Queen Elizabeths, the Johnny Carsons, the Dick Nixons, and the Albert Einsteins of the realm of *Insecta*. Dr. Friesen, an entomologist and professor at SBCC, has a special interest in the bees and insects of Santa Cruz Island.

For your added pleasure, he is also bringing his large and fascinating collection of photographic gear.



## Activities Calendar

### Saturday, October 2: Adopt-A-Beach.

Help clean up Coal Oil Point again this year. Meet at Coal Oil Point parking lot at the end of Devereux Road at 9:00 a.m. Call the SBAS office for details.

### Saturday, October 9: Devereux Slough.

Meet leader **Rob Lindsay** at 7:30 a.m. at the West end of Del Playa Drive, Isla Vista for an exciting morning of spotting birds large and not so large, aquatic and not so aquatic, unusual and ... you get the idea. Call Rob (964-9514) for info. No charge.

### Saturday, October 16: Lake Los Carneros/Goleta Creek.

Meet leader **Karen Bridgers** at 8:00 a.m. in the Stow House parking lot, 304 North Los Carneros Road, Goleta. Thrill to the sights and sounds of water birds, warblers, winter-weary migrants and hopefully a rarity or three. Call Karen (964-1316) for info and rain update. Back before lunch. No charge.

### Saturday/Sunday, October 23/24: Artwalk '93.

SB Museum of Natural History is the setting for this 5th annual art show displaying fiber art, sculpture, photography, jewelry and ceramics as well as original two-dimensional works. Featured artists are Museum dioramists Ray Strong and Richard Schloss. 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Entrance fee: \$3.00.

### Saturday, October 30: Hollister Ranch Field Trip.

Tour the private and much-fabled remaining vestige of almost undisturbed California coastline, just west of Gaviota. A bit of habitats riparian, coastal and shoreline. Leader and time to be announced. Meet at Jack-in-the-Box, corner of Storke Road and Hollister Avenue, Goleta. Bring snack, drink and windbreaker. Call Jeff Chemnick (965-0895) for info/rain update. No charge.

### Saturday, November 13: Harbor and Bird Refuge.

Meet leader **Rob Lindsay** in front of the Navy building at Santa Barbara Harbor, Cabrillo Boulevard, at 7:30 a.m. Learn the who, what, where and why-not about shorebirds and water birds. Back by lunch. Call Rob (964-9514) for info/rain update. No charge.

### Sunday, November 21: Figueroa Mountain Area.

Meet leader **Everett King** at 7:30 a.m. at Carl's Jr. at the Five Points Shopping Center, 3925 State Street. Bring a lunch, a drink, a jacket and plan to spend the better part of the day sampling the avifauna from Lake Cachuma, Santa Ynez Valley, Midlands School area, and up to the coniferous zone of Figueroa Mountain picnic grounds for lunch. Specialties abound! Call Everett (962-0883) for info and rain update. No charge.

## Lotusland

The Lotusland field trip on September 25 was greatly oversubscribed, so for those who were unable to go, Jeff Chemnick will be arranging another trip for early next year. Watch for upcoming announcement.

## Conservation Notes

◆ **Goleta Community Plan.** The GCP was approved by the County Supervisors. It sets guidelines for development, preservation and resource management for the next ten years. While there is some beneficial wording in the plan for riparian and creekside preservation, there is also lots of development approved. If every project is built, you won't recognize the Devereux Slough area in ten years' time except for the water (if it's not silted in by then).

Watch individual projects as they come up later for Environmental Impact Reports, and call/write the California Coastal Commission *now* (Ventura, 641-0142) to request they hold any upcoming hearing related to GCP issues at a location in the Santa Barbara area. The intolerable twin 22-story Mobil Oil "Clearview" (an idiotic misnomer) slant-drilling project proposed next door to the Devereux Slough may also be part of that hearing.

◆ **California Environmental Quality Act.** Lee Moldaver and I met Assemblyman Jack O'Connell in August and urged that the CEQA not be weakened as some in Sacramento have proposed. The Audubon legislative analyst in the capital just reported back to us that the worst of the weakening proposals have successfully been blunted.

◆ **Compost Project.** The National Audubon-sponsored neighborhood composting project is running smoothly in Santa Barbara according to Mindy Gottsegen, our local manager. She anticipates preliminary results on the quality and viability of the compost in a few months. Mindy is also very knowledgeable on Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), a recent land-use management method which can benefit both developers and environmentalists.

The monthly Conservation Committee meetings are open to all members and invited guests; call the conservation chair for additional information.

—Ron Hirst

### California Parks and Wildlife

If you haven't yet signed the CALPAW initiative, please do so by **October 10**. Petitions are available at the office or by mail. Dave Wass and a helpful band of volunteers are gathering signatures most Saturdays at the downtown Farmers' Market, Cota Street entrance.



## Andree Clark Bird Refuge

The Bird Refuge will be holding a wine tasting and silent auction at the Santa Barbara Winery on Thursday, **December 2**, to raise funds for environmental education and interpretive programs. For tickets and information, please call Sue Alemdar at 564-5465.

## President's Message

If you asked the buffalo, passenger pigeon or the Indians of Amazonia, they might tell you that human carelessness and greed are the bane of Nature. But if people can cause harm, our ingenuity can also do good as well. Hundreds of volunteers will spend the morning of **October 2** by the ocean for California Coastal Cleanup Day. Few come for the free prizes sponsors give, appreciated as they are; most just want clean land and clean sand for hiking or quiet contemplation, and are willing, once in a while, to pitch in to get it. Feel free to join us at Coal Oil Point, UCSB West Campus on October 2 at 9:00 a.m. to help Audubon do our stretch. Call the office if you're interested. It's fun!

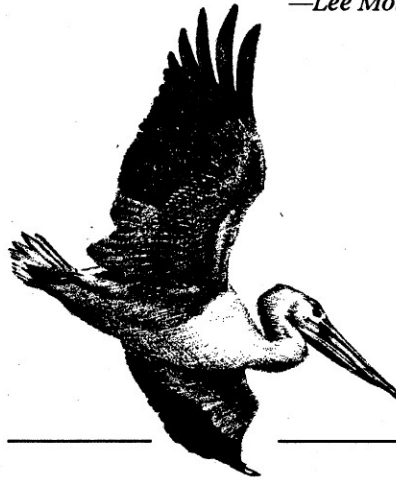
Speaking of the Audubon office, remember that it's inside the CRIC section of the Goleta Community Center, where our combined research library is a very handy *free* tool for all Nature-lovers. Stop by when you can (but call first to ensure that one of our office volunteers is there to let you in). Better yet, if you have an hour or two to spare each week, offer to become a volunteer yourself. It's as interesting as the beach cleanup, but it is warm and indoors, away from hay-fever pollen. Make a great group even better.

If you have things to share about Nature, come participate and speak at our monthly Members Meeting the last Friday of each month at the Natural History Museum (the guest speakers are great too). Or better yet, volunteer with Don Rathbun and Lila Eisberg for our Audubon Education Committee and Speakers' Bureau. With science funding to schools so diminished, the kids really get excited about visitors with slides to show or ecology to explain.

Amidst all the challenges of a county government less interested in our air, water and wildlife than in the past, it's good to be able to report that your letters and phone calls *did* do some good. USCB's Wayne Ferren is receiving a major CREF grant to expand his work protecting the Carpinteria Salt Marsh and wetlands system, a top Audubon priority. And Sue Alemdar is making great strides restoring the Andree Clark Bird Refuge to the showcase condition it deserves; they need docents.

People may sometimes cause difficulties, but Audubon people can often help solve them. Share your skills with our chapter and we all become enriched.

—Lee Moldaver



## New Members Wanted! Great Prizes!

Now is the right time to tell your friends, neighbors, relatives and coworkers about Audubon and to sign them up as members. The more members we have, the greater impact your chapter can have in all our conservation, education and outreach programs. Please take part in this special **membership drive which will run until January 1, 1994**. We would like at least 100 new members in the next three months.

Special prizes and incentives are available for those who participate. Everyone who hands out membership pamphlets will receive a copy of the new 1993 checklist of Santa Barbara County birds. Every new member will also receive a free gift. In addition, the following prizes, to be awarded in January, will go to those who sign up the most new members:

- \* An all-day **pelagic birding trip** operated by Shearwater Journeys, P.O. Box 1445, Soquel, CA 95073. Debra Shearwater operates, out of Monterey, the best pelagic birding trips on the west coast. Write to her for complete information on the 50 trips planned for 1994;
- \* A **whale-watching trip** on the 'Condor' operated by Capt. Fred Benko of Sea Landing, Santa Barbara. Contact Sea Landing (963-3564) for scheduled trips;
- \* ***The Birds of Santa Barbara County*** by Paul Lehman. This is an authoritative volume on the history and distribution of 448 species recorded in the county;
- \* **\$25 gift certificate** from Pacific Travellers Supply, State Street. Choose from a full selection of maps, books and travel related items;
- \* A Nature Gift for children from The Nature Company, Paseo Nuevo Mall. A fascinating **Butterfly Kit** raises beautiful painted lady butterflies, from caterpillars to cocoons to butterflies;
- \* **Great Birding Trips of the West** by Joan Easton Lentz. Ten great birding trips described as if you were there. After reading this book, you'll wish you were.

Santa Barbara Audubon will also be offering (for a limited time) a special new-member subscription rate of \$20, a saving of \$3 off the regular rate. Many people know of Audubon and think very highly of it and would need little persuasion to become a member. Go ahead, ask them to sign up *now*. Membership makes a great gift idea too, offering Audubon activities, the *El Tecolote* newsletter, and *Audubon* magazine.

Pick up the membership pamphlets at the office, or by mail, at monthly programs, from board members, or just send in \$20 per new membership with your name as initiator.

—Ron Hirst

## "The Birds of Santa Barbara County"

For those of you who will purchase Paul Lehman's book *The Birds of Santa Barbara County*, we need your money now. We're still \$3,000 short of the amount needed to go to press. Contributions exceeding the \$25 purchase cost will be greatly appreciated. Make check payable to UC Regents/UCSB and send to Mark Holmgren, Vertebrate Museum, Dept. of Biological Sciences, University of Calif., Santa Barbara, CA 93106-9610. Thank you.

—Mark Holmgren

## Acorn (Continued from page 1)

Omnivorous, it scarfs bugs off the ground like a thrasher, picks flies out of the air like a phoebe, snips fruit from the trees like a waxwing, and when these sources of nutrition disappear, our bird gets through the winter by way of its previously laid-by store of acorns. More gregarious than other family members, it enjoys the fellowship found in communal living, and when a young couple have tied the knot (in bird terms), their neighbors, like members of some frontier society, pitch in to help build the expecting pair a house, or in this case, a hollowed-out cavity in a nice neighborhood tree, with a few acorns embedded in the bark as wedding presents.

At our cabin at Big Bear Lake, we would often lay seed on a nearby stump, noting that it was usually acorn woodpeckers that were first to arrive, followed by Stellar's jays and chipmunks. And the acorns always seemed to manage to hold their own against the larger competitors, chortling derisively (or so it sounded) at the departing blue tail feathers.

One should try to avoid being TOO anthropomorphic, but it is nonetheless hard to resist attributing human qualities to the amusing habits of these colorful clowns of the California skies.

(Reprinted from *Chaparral Naturalist*, Pomona Valley Audubon, April 1993)

## Some Rare Birds!

In case you just moved here, live in a shell, or need a prompt, here is a reminder: Santa Barbara County is one of the best bird-watching locales in the country! We are fortunate to have numerous birds year round, the Christmas Count is always near the top in species diversity, and we have some extraordinary birds flying in for visits.

For your viewing pleasure, 1993 has presented the following very rare birds: Arctic terns, magnificent frigatebirds, red-necked grebes, little curlew, Xantus's murrelet, ruff, groove-billed ani, broad-billed hummingbird, dusky-capped flycatcher, scissor-tailed flycatcher, gray flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, Kentucky warbler, prothonotary warblers, worm-eating warbler, Canada warbler, Lucy's warblers, nesting parula warblers, yellow-throated vireo, white-eyed vireo, hepatic tanager, orchard oriole and Scott's oriole.

Thanks to Karen Bridgers for recording these rare birds. Karen operates the Rare Bird Alert hotline (964-8240), which you can call to find out where rare birds are in our area now. If you would like to report a rare bird, call Karen directly (964-1316); but first determine if it is rare to our area by checking your field guide or the new and conveniently formatted "Birds of Santa Barbara County" checklist available from the Audubon office. Good birding in Santa Barbara County!

—Ron Hirst

## SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY

### OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Secretary: Everett King .....	962-0883
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Publicity: Betty Bazzi .....	967-5200
Bird Refuge Census: Helen Matelson .....	966-3217
Rare Bird Reporter: Karen Bridgers .....	964-1316

Rare Bird Alert .....	(805) 964-8240
SBAS Office .....	(805) 964-1468

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday .....	11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday .....	11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday .....	11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Thursday .....	11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Friday .....	11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

### MEMBERSHIP

Special new member rate .....	\$23
Individual .....	\$35

Please send *only* new member applications and *El Tecolote* subscriptions to: Santa Barbara Audubon Society, 5679 Hollister Ave., Suite 5B, Goleta, CA 93117.

### EL TECOLOTE

Editor: Dorin Mayes ..... 683-1079

*El Tecolote* is published 8 times a year by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society. Members are invited to submit articles, announcements, letters, photos and drawings for publication consideration. Copy deadline is the 10th of the month prior to publication. Non-member subscription is \$10 per year.

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