

El Tecolote

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY

HAPPY
HOLIDAYS



December 1994/January 1995

Vol. 33, No. 3

Fearless Anna's

► *Hugh P. Smith Jr.*

IN the eastern United States, the only hummingbird found dependably is the ruby-throated hummingbird; but in Solvang, where we live, six species have visited our feeders — Costa's, calliope, black-chinned, rufous, Allen's, and Anna's hummingbirds. Anna's hummingbirds are permanent residents of our area, although the numbers in our yard fluctuate markedly at times.

Anna's are fascinating to watch. They like to bathe, and they will sometimes be seen vigorously splashing in the raindrops on a few leaves, or flying through a gentle spray when the lawn is being watered. Infrequently, they bathe in my tiny ground-level birdbath, but here they are rather shy and wait until the bigger birds have gone. At nearby historic La Purisima Mission in Lompoc, they often bathe in the old fountains. A bedraggled little Anna's happily splashing around is a marvelous sight.

Anna's hummingbirds weigh only about as much as a penny, but have the disposition of big junkyard dogs. They are feisty, fighting all comers and chasing off intruders near their feeder or perch. Only during periods when massive numbers of hummingbirds flood the feeders do they give up, outnumbered, and grudgingly share their feeders. It is said that they are highly individualistic, and that "sharing is not in their vocabulary," but one year we had a demonstration that suggests that Anna's can cooperate if necessary. Just outside our dining room window was a feeder, and as usual a "king" presided over it, sitting nearby in an olive tree where he could guard his wealth. Several times, immature males would approach his feeder, but he would immediately chase them far away. After a while, we noted that one immature bird would approach him, and as soon as he left, another immature bird would rush in and drink from the unguarded feeder. Upon returning, the king would rush to chase off the freeloader; instantly the first decoy bird swooped in for his share of the sugar water. This continued off and on for several days, until the king figured things out. After that he would sit in his olive tree and threaten the approaching birds, but he never left the area of the feeder, so they could not sneak in behind him.

Not only are Anna's fearless in battles with each other, they will also sometimes buzz other birds or even cats that threaten them or their nests. These quick little hummers sometimes take risks, not realizing how fast some predators can move — some-

(See *Fearless* on page 3)

December Program

Friday, December 9, 1994

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

"Backyard Birder"

Most of us, in our pursuit and passion for birds, wander like albatrosses over the latitudes of the earth, forever seeking the next elusive new species. A stubborn few have taken a different path — they let the birds come to them, in their own backyards. A member of this latter group is **Dr. Hugh P. Smith, Jr.** Using all the tricks-of-the-trade: feeders, bird baths, a variety of plantings and a "peanut-butter tree," he and his wife Sue have turned their backyard into a bird photographer's paradise. So now he brings to us, in our backyard, the world that he fostered in his. Especially brilliant are his photographs of the many hummingbird species that visit his plants and feeders.

January Program

Thursday, January 26, 1995

Faulkner Gallery, Santa Barbara Public Library
40 E. Anapamu Street

7:15 p.m. Find Your Friends and Your Seat
7:30 p.m. Enjoy the Show

"The Four Seasons of Sequoia"

Surprise, surprise! You had better keep your eyes open for this one. The first surprise is where and when the program will be held. That's right, at the Faulkner Gallery: easy to find, easy to park, plenty of light, but be sure to check the time — 7:15 p.m., Thursday, January 26.

The second surprise is our guest speaker for the evening — **Ines Roberts**. Sure, most of you may have heard of her, but your chapter has just finally screwed up its courage to send her an invitation, which she graciously accepted. Her program addresses a very impressive subject — Sequoia National Park. Not just a cursory once-over, but a full year's photographic perusal and worshipful interpretation of the many wonders of this arboreal cathedral.

FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, December 11

Figueroa Mountain and San Marcos Pass

Join trip leader **Paul Keller** for an excursion in search of wintering upper-elevation avifauna. Meet at Carl's Jr. in the Five Points Shopping Center at 7:30 a.m. Bring a lunch and warm clothes. We'll stop en route at Kinevan Road and then work our way up to the picnic area atop Figueroa Mountain. Return should be by mid-afternoon. Call Paul (968-7084) for info or rain update. No charge.

Saturday, January 14/Sunday, January 15
Carrizo Plain Overnighter

Last year we were too late for the cranes, so this year we are going a month earlier! Join trip leader **Paul Keller** for an exciting weekend of birding in a unique area only a few hours' drive from Santa Barbara. We'll meet at the Jack in the Box in the K-Mart parking lot, corner of Hollister and Storke Roads on Saturday at 8:00 a.m. Several birding stops will be made en route before arriving at our accommodations at the California Valley Lodge in the late afternoon. Then up the following morning to explore the Carrizo Plain and hike to the Painted Rock, weather permitting. We'll then work our way back and arrive home in time for dinner.

Single, shared or double occupancy rooms are all available. The Lodge does have a 3-meals-a-day restaurant. Paid reservations in advance are required to participate. Please contact the Audubon office (964-1468) during the office hours shown on the back page of this newsletter to reserve your place now for this very special opportunity to see a host of specialties including the sandhill cranes and numerous raptors. Cost per person is \$33 for shared or double occupancy and \$50 per person for single occupancy. Meals and beverages are not included. Suggest bringing a snack for back-up. Space is limited to eight rooms so please book as soon as possible. Bring warm clothes, sensible shoes, and rain gear. For further info contact the office or call Jeff Chemnick at 965-0895.

Saturday, January 28

Ventura County Game Preserve

Leader **Guy Tingos** will take us to this remarkable haven for ducks, geese, rails and raptors. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Andree Clark Bird Refuge and bring lunch, beverage and windbreaker. Call Guy at 687-8266 for info and rain update. No charge.

CONSERVATION REPORT

The Conservation Committee wrote letters to the federal Interior Dept. and Office of Management & Budget regarding use of federal Land & Water Conservation Funds for purposes in Santa Barbara County.

A special thanks to Dave Wass for helping to install snowy plover Critical Habitat signs at the Devereux Slough beach. Santa Barbara Audubon designed the signs and paid \$350 for materials. We have already noticed beachgoers reading the signs, leashing their dogs and avoiding the plover habitat.

The political and economic climate of the 90s is a tough one for conservation policy making. The concepts of "Unfunded Mandates," "Wise Use" and "Takings" are putting a lot of pressure on

long-standing environmental legislation. Be watchful and call or write your legislators when you hear of attempts to dismantle environmental legislation such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, or CEQA.

— Ron Hirst

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 31, 1994

Everyone is welcome to help Santa Barbara Audubon with the annual Christmas Bird Count, to be held this year on Saturday, December 31, 1994. On the evening of Count Day, you are all invited to the compilation dinner at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (Bird Habitat Hall). The potluck dinner begins promptly at 6:00 p.m. and the compilation at 7:00. Please bring a salad, main dish or dessert. If your group includes out-of-towners, they can contribute drinks, bread, paper plates, etc. Please bring your own service.

This year's Count compiler will be Joan Lentz, assisted by Karen Bridgers and Pat Kelly. Please fill out the coupon below and mail it to Pat, or call her at 962-9916.

PLEASE SIGN UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO WE CAN ORGANIZE THE COUNT EARLY THIS YEAR.

We will be contacting you to let you know details of the area you will cover.

Before the Count, watch for the following birds, which we often have difficulty in getting: grosbeaks, tanagers, orioles, any non-Anna's hummingbirds, unusual sparrows at feeders such as white-throated or Harris's. Other species we need: any geese, dippers, pygmy-owls, long-billed curlews. If you see any of the above, or have knowledge of any other interesting birds, please call Joan Lentz at 969-4397 or Karen Bridgers at 964-1316.

Don't forget participants pay a \$5 fee to cover the costs of compiling and publishing the results.

THANKS SO VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

— Joan Lentz



**SANTA BARBARA
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**
Saturday, December 31, 1994

Yes, I(we) want to join the Bird Count team!

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Preferred area? If yes, where _____

Would like to work with: _____

Optional: ☐ Dinner, ☐ Leader, ☐ Feeder count

Please complete this form and return to:

Pat Kelly
554 Litchfield Lane
Santa Barbara, CA 93109

(805) 962-9916

(Continued from page 1)

times cats catch and kill them. A greater roadrunner in Arizona has been described that caught hummers by sneaking up on the roof near their feeder. (I have seen a roadrunner jump up and catch an American goldfinch off a feeder 3½ feet above the ground in my backyard.)

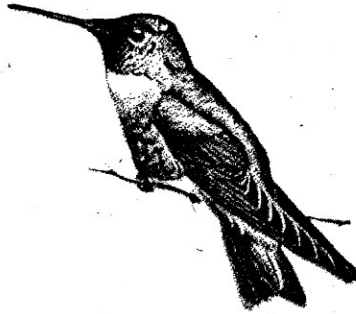
When around human beings, Anna's can be quite bold. They may come right up to inspect you, especially if you are wearing something colorful, particularly red. They may perch on people filling their feeders. Sometimes when taking down a feeder to clean and fill it, I have had to lift the last bird gently off with my fingertip before taking the feeder away. Once or twice, I have even carried an Anna's into the house, not noticing that it remained perched on the back side of the feeder. Once when our kitchen window was left open while we were cleaning and filling the feeders, Anna's hummers flew in through the kitchen window and began to feed. Then they flew up into the highest spot in our living room, zooming around looking for a way out through the roof; we could not get to them to rescue them. Finally my wife suggested bringing the sugar water feeder inside. When we put it near an open door, they flew down immediately, fed eagerly, and then zipped outside.

In a similar fashion, the little birds sometimes get trapped in our garage. Although there is a huge two-car door wide open, they always try to fly out through the roof. Twice sugar water did not work in this situation, and we could not trap the birds in any kind of netting. I finally used a hose to gently wet down a hummer until it seemed unable to fly; but the moment it drifted down lower, it burst out the open door with no obvious ill effects.

Anna's hummingbirds have been considered California birds, usually being found on the western side of the Sierra mountains on down into the coastal areas, inhabiting gardens and chaparral, without evidence of true migration. In our yard, their numbers vary markedly. Our records show that in 1990 we had an "invasion" of Anna's in April, lasting about a week. (During that week, we also noted single examples of four other species of hummers in one day!) We continued to have a fair number of Anna's, and then during the month of August, we had another period

when there were 20 or more of these hummers here constantly. Following a cold snap, the numbers decreased to 10 to 12 at a time; then from October 2 - 5, we had a massive invasion, with 15 to 20 hummers at feeders on each of three sides of the house! In 1991, April was again busy but not as much so as the previous year, and there was no marked influx in the fall. In 1992, the spring and fall numbers were rather small, compared to the previous years.

Where do they go? It seems certain that the vast majority disperse after the immatures are grown, and they seem to go up into the mountains when the valleys in California are hot and dry in the summer. Joan Hardy, who lives on top of San Marcos Pass, a thousand feet higher than the surrounding countryside, says that she has huge numbers of Anna's and many



black-chinned hummingbirds in July, August and September, requiring her to prepare 18 to 20 quarts of sugar water daily. We also know that in years when lots of rain causes the rural and desert wildflowers to bloom heavily, fewer hummers are noted in our cities and many more are found out in the countryside and deserts.

The reasons for the increasing dispersal of these hummingbirds probably include the human population growth in the southern desert and coastal states with the accompanying provisions of flowering plants and hummer feeders, plus perhaps the pressures in California of overpopulation, loss of natural habitat, and smog. California has been getting a lot of bad press lately, with news of unemployment, lack of clean water, riots, earthquakes, floods, etc. You don't guess the hummingbirds read the papers, do you?

Excerpted from the May/June 1993 issue of *Bird Watcher's Digest*.

Come to the December 9 Program and hear more of Dr. Smith's enjoyable stories.

Bluebirds Stop Singing the Blues

The National Audubon Society's Western Region Birds in the Balance Campaign announces the initiation of the **California Bluebird Recovery Program**. This new program is in response to a request from Don Yoder of Mount Diablo Audubon Society who is on the National Board of Directors of the North American Bluebird Society.

"Many states have active bluebird programs," says Mr Yoder. "I have wanted to see an organization step forward to help establish a network connecting people who want to promote the welfare of bluebirds in California. National Audubon's positive response is very much appreciated. Now, we can get started."

"To start, we want to hear from anyone who is doing anything with bluebirds in California . . ." says Audubon's Bob Barnes. "Then we are going to have a newsletter that shares information on bluebirds. The program will then expand according to interest and resources."

Barnes further states, "What is so appropriate is that the California Bluebird Recovery Program is truly reflective of Audubon's roots in the world of birds."

To be a part of, or for more details, contact Coordinator, California Bluebird Recovery program, Birds in the Balance Campaign, National Audubon Society, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, CA 95825. Phone: (916) 481-5332. Fax: (916) 481-6228.

Mountain Plover/Tri-colored Blackbird Counters Requested

Sponsored by the National Audubon's *Birds in the Balance* migratory bird program and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, last year's counts yielded such valuable data that follow-up counts are being planned for the first half of 1995. If you are interested or willing to participate in these important data-gathering counts, contact Bob Barnes, Birds in the Balance Program Coordinator, at National Audubon Society, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, CA 95825. Phone: (916) 481-5332. Fax: (916) 481-6228.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On New Year's Eve, a couple hundred intrepid birders will fan out across the south coast, determined to make us Number One in the Annual Christmas Bird Count. We'll gather at the Natural History Museum with the splendid Joan Lentz to share one of the friendliest potluck dinners around.

But the next morning we shall wake to face a new year, full of challenging new opportunities that may puzzle, vex or elate us. We await a new Mayor of Santa Barbara, a new County Board of Supervisors (with the arrival of Jeanne Graffy and Tom Urbanske), a new State Legislature (with Brooks Firestone), and a new party running Congress. As we get to know our new UCSB Chancellor (Henry Yang), and his new School of Environmental Sciences (under Dr. Dozier), we wonder if it will be that easy to meet our new National Audubon president (as Peter Berle prepares to retire after ten years).

All the new people in government, with their new staffs, face a daunting learning curve. Let us help them, singly and collectively. Let us show them our love of Nature and the conservation ethic, and our respect for improved education, and for the unspoiled places of the world. Let us reach out in person, by phone, mail, fax.

Some in Sacramento and Washington will be unaware of our Coastal Protection Act, our Environmental Quality Act, our Endangered Species Act. Sadly, some *will* know, but will actively oppose them, as they oppose even the Environmental Protection Agency. Let us open their ears, their eyes, their minds and their hearts.

Opportunity will be local too. Santa Barbara Audubon will consider different days and locations for our monthly Members Meeting. We may experiment with afternoon/sunset field trips in the Spring. We *always* seek your suggestions for field trip destinations or interesting program speakers. And on top of all that, we have received two CREF grants to help launch the next phases of our Coastal Preservation Program, between UCSB and Vandenberg AFB, working collaboratively with area landowners.

This is a full plate! Without such a terrific membership, and Board and corps of office volunteers, the faint-hearted might be a little daunted. But for now, the hope of safe, happy Holidays, and a topnotch Bird Count are shafts of light across a changing sky.

— Lee Moldaver

From the Past Hospitality Chair

Belated thank you to the following who contributed juice, cookies and home-baked goodies for our meetings: Marge Cappiello, Carol Rae, Shirley Conley, Audrey von Bieberstein, Claudia Taben, Minna Smith, Sue Higman and myself.

It was always a pleasure to see old friends, to meet new members and guests at this social refreshment period.

Our special gratitude to David Wass, our Program Chair, who, besides his colorful introductions, has transported the coffee pot and accessories.

Please welcome our new Hospitality Chair, Joyce Pettersen. Volunteer to host one meeting; sign up at the next meeting.

— Tomi Sollen

Santa Barbara Audubon Society
5679 Hollister Avenue, Suite 5B
Goleta, CA 93117

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SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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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	\$20
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

(805) 683-1079

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RARE BIRD ALERT NUMBERS

Los Angeles	(213) 874-1318
Monterey Bay	(408) 375-9122
Morro Bay	(805) 528-7182
No. Calif.	(510) 524-5592
Orange County	(714) 563-6516
Sacramento	(916) 481-0118
San Bernadino	(909) 793-5599
San Diego	(619) 479-3400

