

El Tecolote

NEWSLETTER OF THE SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY



February 1995

Vol. 33, No. 4

Can One Person Make a Difference?

► B. "Moose" Peterson

IN these days when the corporate Goliath seems to be slaying the conservationist David, is there really any chance that one person alone can make a difference? As activists, we write and voice our concerns in every forum possible. The outcome of our efforts is so often futile, we can soon lose hope. Often many give up, the disappointment more than daily life can afford. In my daily efforts to educate the public about our natural heritage, I come up against this wall of despair. I had an opportunity in December, though, which confirmed my belief that one person can make a difference.

I received a call on a Thursday afternoon from a producer in New York of the NBC Dateline news program. He was looking for video footage of a Tipton Kangaroo Rat, an endangered species in the news because of the actions of a farmer in the Central Valley. This farmer was in court because of an illegal take of the kangaroo rat, a very controversial court case. I have photographs of this kangaroo rat in my files, but because of the press's "misconstrued" coverage of the facts, I had not been making them available. This producer had been told that I was the one who was going to be able to help him, but I had no video footage as I only shoot stills.

Well we talked for a few minutes, with me trying to size up whether this guy could be trusted to honestly depict the facts. Near the end of the conversation after he realized there were no kangaroo rats in captivity to photograph and no video

footage available, the producer made the comment that the rat was just another "sewer rat." Well, I saw my opportunity to educate this producer a little and possibly change his agenda (news-wise that is). I told him that kangaroo rats are anything but sewer rats: they are cute and quite likable. At this point, once I caught his interest, I said I would make a couple of calls on his behalf to see if I could arrange a shoot for him.

I called him back in a few minutes and told him I would take him out personally to video tape the kangaroo rat. What I was willing to do, was go out with him and his crew to video tape a Short-nosed Kangaroo Rat. I explained that since the Tipton was a listed species and there was already a court case for harassment, we didn't want to bother them. The Short-nose is a cousin of the Tipton (a candidate species itself) and on public land where I had worked and where it could be easily photographed. Well, he had to think about that one; he was in New York, and flying out to photograph a "cousin" might not work. He'd give me a call back and let me know. One hour later the phone rang and it was Rob saying they'd be out Monday to do it.

It's Monday night around eleven o'clock and I have these four, blurry-eyed newsmen out in the grasslands of the Central Valley. Good fortune was with me that night because I had caught one kangaroo rat for the crew to photograph. This friendly little fellow was placed in my custom tank for photography while the

(See *One Person* on page 4)

February Program

Friday, February 24, 1995

Farrand Hall

S.B. Museum of Natural History

7:45 p.m. Refreshments

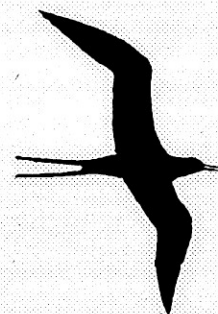
8:00 p.m. Program

"Birder's Eyevue of Eastern Australia"

Charles Bragg of the Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society wears many hats: newsletter editor (*The Audubon Imprint*), membership chairman and field-trip leader. As if that were not enough, every year he finds time to take a major bird trip and bring home a photographic testament of his rambles and discoveries.

His latest trip took him up and down the east coast of Australia, from the Great Barrier Reef to Melbourne, through tropical jungles, tropical rainforests, and over to South Island, New Zealand.

He was not disappointed, nor will you be, when you view the marvelous variety of birds and habitat he saw and recorded.



ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Saturday, February 18: Lotusland

Due to overwhelming response and demand, we have arranged a two-hour tour/field trip of this botanical mecca in the heart of Montecito. All reservations are already sold out for the year, but we have 25 spaces available for the 10:00 a.m. tour which is more of an exotic plant tour than a birding event. But bring your "binos" and expectations. Last year yielded 2 pairs of wood ducks in the Japanese garden. Reservations are \$10 per person and must be made and paid in advance to the SBAS office, 964-1468. Meet Lotusland docent and trip leader **Jeff Chemnick** at the Andree Clark Bird Refuge at 9:15 a.m. and we will carpool to Lotusland and start our tour at 9:35. Call Jeff (965-0895) for info and rain update. Back in time for lunch.

Saturday, February 25: Gibraltar Road Transect

Join mystery trip leader **TBA** at Sheffield Reservoir (corner of Mountain Drive and Mission Ridge Road) at 7:30 a.m. and we'll bird our way up the mountain to Camino Cielo and La Cumbre Peak. From the lowlands to the highlands, we are sure to find some niceties along the way. And the view from the top is always worth the effort. Call Jeff Chemnick (965-0895) for info and rain update. No charge. Back in time for lunch.

A look to the future — Saturday, May 13: Pelagic trip from Ventura Harbor to Anacapa, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands

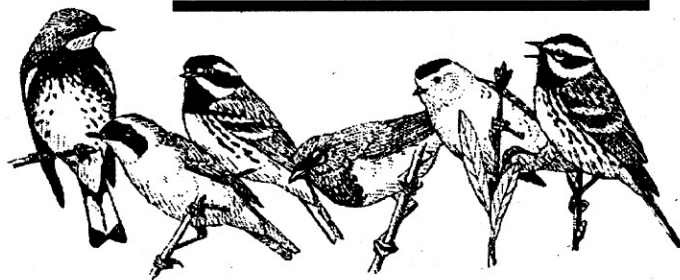
Book now; more details will appear in upcoming newsletters. Shearwaters, storm-petrels, auklets, albatrosses are all marquee attractions as well as a host of cetaceans and other marine life forms. Cost is \$68 per person for the 12-hour trip. Full galley on board. Call **Jeff Chemnick** (965-0895) to make your reservations now and secure your place on the boat.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Winter is often a time of challenge and renewal, guided by the forces of the human spirit. You can see (elsewhere in these pages) that we again placed in the Top Ten nationally during our annual holiday Bird Count last New Year's Eve; that result wasn't unexpected. What was new, fun and exciting was the leadership and enthusiasm Joan Lentz and Karen Bridgers brought to the project. Weeks of planning, location scouting, team building, mapping and logistics produced energy, cheer, success and fun that even my flu-ridden condition could not hide. Watch out South Padre Island, one day we'll catch you! We have the birders and the spirit to prevail.

Inside Santa Barbara Audubon the challenge continues. As terrific as Jeff Chemnick has made our field trips, and Dave Wass our programs, they still seek your ideas for that special place not yet visited, or that special speaker not recently heard. Call our office hot line (964-1468) so we can make 1995's programs even better.

— Lee Moldaver



Christmas Bird Count Totals an Impressive 203 Species

As one of the participants remarked at the end of the day, "It was a really good count!"

That seemed to echo the feelings of the more than a hundred local birders who walked streets, climbed through creeks and waded around tidal mudflats to complete the 1994 National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count on December 31.

A total of 203 species was tallied, enough to put Santa Barbara in the top five in the nation, behind traditional Texas rivals Corpus Christi (213) and Freeport (204), and Moss Landing, Calif. (204).

Highlights, as usual, were the rare, out-of-range species for which Santa Barbara is famous. Examples were a Eurasian wigeon, broad-billed hummingbird, zone-tailed hawk, tropical kingbird, and clay-colored sparrow in Goleta, a hepatic tanager on the Riviera, and a worm-eating warbler in Montecito. The legendary hepatic tanager which returned for 12 consecutive years to Rocky Nook Park did not make an appearance this year, but a "new" tanager, which came to Franceschi Park on the Riviera for the first time last year, was back as a successor.

The Count exceeded expectations for a couple of reasons: an invasion of typically montane species into the lowlands accounted for the presence of mountain chickadees, varied thrushes, and pine siskins. Large numbers of American robins, cedar waxwings, and hermit thrushes reflected a movement of more northerly winterers south to southern California. Also, there may be a gradual replenishing of local bird populations after the end of the drought. White-tailed kites have reappeared, and northern harriers and even two short-eared owls were found foraging on More Mesa the evening of Count Day. An American bittern showed itself at Lake Los Carneros, and two least bitterns were heard calling at Laguna Blanca in Hope Ranch.

Luck and the weather cooperated. Sought-after species just turned up: a Townsend's solitaire in the mountains, an immature bald eagle and a ferruginous hawk on the Goleta plain, a peregrine falcon at Gibraltar Dam.

Of course, there were disappointments too. The near-misses drew cries of frustration from the crowd assembled at the Museum of Natural History for the compilation dinner. Birders groaned at the thought of the American avocets which flew out of the count circle on Count Day, the lone long-billed curlew which failed to show, and the horned larks that deserted the agricultural fields on the day they were needed.

Still, it was with a feeling of pride and optimism that Santa Barbara birders looked around at each other at the end of the last day of the year and agreed that it was, indeed, a really good Count.

— Joan E. Lentz

1994 Christmas Bird Count

LOONS

- 6 Red-throated Loon
- 5 Pacific Loon
- 9 Common Loon

GREBES

- 118 Pied-billed Grebe
- 13 Horned Grebe
- 51 Eared Grebe
- 184 Western Grebe
- 28 Clark's Grebe

SHEARWATERS

- Northern Fulmar
- 1 Black-vented Shearwater

PELICANS

- 247 Brown Pelican

CORMORANTS

- 379 Double-crested Cormorant
- 46 Brandt's Cormorant
- 12 Pelagic Cormorant

HERONS

- 1 American Bittern
- 52 Great Blue Heron
- 54 Great Egret
- 71 Snowy Egret
- 5 Cattle Egret
- 2 Green Heron
- 41 Black-crowned Night-Heron

SWANS, GEESE & DUCKS

- 9 Canada Goose
- 9 Wood Duck
- 21 Green-winged Teal
- 356 Mallard
- 99 Northern Pintail
- 3 Blue-winged Teal
- 15 Cinnamon Teal
- 226 Northern Shoveler
- 52 Gadwall
- 197 American Wigeon
- 21 Canvasback
- 36 Redhead
- 73 Ring-necked Duck
- 2 Greater Scaup
- 109 Lesser Scaup
- 81 Surf Scoter
- White-winged Scoter
- 6 Common Goldeneye
- 76 Bufflehead
- 5 Hooded Merganser
- 18 Common Merganser
- 17 Red-breasted Merganser
- 214 Ruddy Duck

NEW WORLD VULTURES

- 125 Turkey Vulture

HAWKS

- 1 Osprey
- 36 White-tailed Kite
- 19 Northern Harrier
- 24 Sharp-shinned Hawk
- 13 Cooper's Hawk
- 81 Red-shouldered Hawk
- 148 Red-tailed Hawk
- 2 Golden Eagle

FALCONS

- 106 American Kestrel
- 11 Merlin

QUAIL

- 256 California Quail
- 6 Mountain Quail

RAILS & GALLINULES

- 5 Virginia Rail
- 4 Sora
- 3 Common Moorhen
- 1232 American Coot

PLOVERS

- 225 Black-bellied Plover
- 150 Snowy Plover
- 33 Semipalmated Plover
- 225 Killdeer

STILTS & AVOCETS

- 6 Black-necked Stilt
- American Avocet

SANDPIPERS

- 18 Greater Yellowlegs
- 153 Willet
- 1 Wandering Tattler
- 4 Spotted Sandpiper
- 40 Whimbrel
- Long-billed Curlew
- 112 Marbled Godwit
- 5 Ruddy Turnstone
- 12 Black Turnstone
- 447 Sanderling
- 6 Western Sandpiper
- 45 Least Sandpiper
- 5 Dunlin
- 30 Long-billed Dowitcher
- 5 Common Snipe
- Red Phalarope

JAEGER, GULLS & TERNS

- 1 Pomarine Jaeger
- Parasitic Jaeger
- 120 Bonaparte's Gull
- 541 Heermann's Gull
- 146 Mew Gull
- 352 Ring-billed Gull
- 910 California Gull
- 2 Herring Gull
- 1 Thayer's Gull
- 2672 Western Gull
- 10 Glaucous-winged Gull
- Black-legged Kittiwake
- Caspian Tern
- 73 Royal Tern
- 185 Forster's Tern
- 220 Black Skimmer

AUKS & MURRES

- Common Murre
- Cassin's Auklet
- Rhinoceros Auklet

PIGEONS

- 708 Rock Dove
- 270 Band-tailed Pigeon
- 3 Spotted Dove
- 824 Mourning Dove
- Common Ground-Dove

CUCKOOS

- 6 Greater Roadrunner

OWLS

- 5 Barn Owl
- 5 Western Screech-Owl
- 29 Great Horned Owl
- 2 Northern Pygmy-Owl
- 1 Burrowing Owl

SWIFTS

- 1 White-throated Swift

HUMMINGBIRDS

- 1412 Anna's Hummingbird
- 1 Costa's Hummingbird
- 1 Allen's Hummingbird
- 1 Selasphorus sp.

KINGFISHERS

- 17 Belted Kingfisher

WOODPECKERS

- 602 Acorn Woodpecker
- 1 Red-naped Sapsucker
- 9 Red-breasted Sapsucker
- 84 Nuttall's Woodpecker
- 53 Downy Woodpecker
- 14 Hairy Woodpecker
- 294 Northern Flicker (Red-shaft.)
- Northern Flicker (Yel.-shaft.)

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

- 228 Black Phoebe
- 66 Say's Phoebe
- 1 Tropical Kingbird
- 3 Cassin's Kingbird

LARKS

- Horned Lark

SWALLOWS

- Violet-green Swallow

JAYS & CROWS

- 2 Steller's Jay
- 824 Scrub Jay
- 1130 American Crow
- 7 Common Raven

CHICKADEES & TITMICE

- 4 Mountain Chickadee
- 272 Plain Titmouse

BUSHTITS

- 2090 Bushtit

NUTHATCHES

- 2 Red-breasted Nuthatch
- 89 White-breasted Nuthatch

CREEPERS

- 1 Brown Creeper

WRENS

- Rock Wren
- 20 Canyon Wren
- 101 Bewick's Wren
- 27 House Wren
- 3 Winter Wren
- 14 Marsh Wren

DIPPERS

- American Dipper

OLD WORLD WARBLERS & THRUSHES

- 3 Golden-crowned Kinglet
- 747 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- 67 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- 107 Western Bluebird
- 1 Townsend's Solitaire
- 282 Hermit Thrush
- 5504 American Robin
- 17 Varied Thrush
- 216 Wrentit

THRASHERS

- 223 Northern Mockingbird
- 78 California Thrasher

WAGTAILS & PIPITS

- 85 American Pipit

WAXWINGS

- 1326 Cedar Waxwing

SILKY FLYCATCHERS

- 3 Phainopepla

SHRIKES

- 77 Loggerhead Shrike

STARLINGS

- 1886 European Starling

VIREOS

- 24 Hutton's Vireo

WOOD WARBLERS, TANAGERS & SPARROWS

- 113 Orange-crowned Warbler
- 1 Nashville Warbler
- Yellow Warbler
- 3741 Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)
- 306 Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)
- 1 Black-throated Gray Warbler
- 186 Townsend's Warbler
- Hermit Warbler
- 2 Palm Warbler
- Black-and-white Warbler
- 160 Common Yellowthroat
- 3 Wilson's Warbler
- 1 Summer Tanager
- 5 Western Tanager
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Black-headed Grosbeak
- 145 Rufous-sided Towhee
- 701 California Towhee
- 18 Rufous-crowned Sparrow
- 1 Chipping Sparrow
- 67 Lark Sparrow
- Sage Sparrow
- 153 Savannah Sparrow
- 33 Fox Sparrow
- 189 Song Sparrow
- 26 Lincoln's Sparrow
- 2 Swamp Sparrow
- 5 White-throated Sparrow
- 696 Golden-crowned Sparrow
- 1900 White-crowned Sparrow
- 995 Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)
- 3 Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)
- Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed)

BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES

- 391 Red-winged Blackbird
- 6 Tricolored Blackbird
- 519 Western Meadowlark
- 583 Brewer's Blackbird
- 98 Brown-headed Cowbird
- Orchard Oriole
- Hooded Oriole
- 4 Northern Oriole (Bullock's)
- Northern Oriole (Baltimore)
- Scott's Oriole

FINCHES

- 223 Purple Finch
- 2215 House Finch
- 299 Pine Siskin
- 304 Lesser Goldfinch
- Lawrence's Goldfinch
- 194 American Goldfinch

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

- 252 House Sparrow

ADDITIONAL SPECIES

- 2 Least Bittern
- 1 Snow Goose
- 1 Ross' Goose
- 1 Eurasian Wigeon
- 2 Bald Eagle
- 1 Zone-tailed Hawk
- 2 Ferruginous Hawk
- 1 Peregrine Falcon
- 1 Lesser Yellow Legs
- 2 Short-eared Owl
- 1 Broad-billed Hummingbird
- 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- 1 Chestnut-backed Chickadee
- 1 Solitary Vireo (Plumbeous)
- 1 Warbling Vireo
- 1 Worm-eating Warbler
- 1 Hepatic Tanager
- 1 Clay-colored Sparrow

GRAND TOTAL: 203 Species

One Person (Continued from page 1)

crew shot three hours of "B Roll." (In case you're wondering, B Roll is all that fill-in video tape they use when outlining the story.) They had me drive the car to the site, walk around with a flashlight looking silly, and mumble some biology trivia about the Tipton and Short-nose Kangaroo Rat. Then the time finally came to photograph the kangaroo rat.

It's now 3:00 a.m., the crew's working on borrowed time as it's 6:00 a.m. their time. The crew huddles down next to the tank, turns on their lights, places a microphone in the tank and becomes captivated by my friend the kangaroo rat. I've been photographing kangaroo rats for eight years, but I've never come across one as friendly as this one. It posed for the crew, rubbed its face and cheek pouches, hopped around, drummed its back leg and was nothing but adorable. For twenty minutes the crew shot tape, totally captivated by this two-inch ball of fur. The photographer shooting the tape just said, "this is better than *National Geographic*!"

They didn't think it could get any better, but it did. After taping was completed, I carried the kangaroo back to where it was caught to let it go back to its hole. The producer wanted to get that on film as well, so I crouched down and opened up my hands to let the rat go. Well, typical of kangaroo rats, it just sat in my hands, looking things over. It sat there long enough to permit me to talk a little bit more about the unique role it plays in the ecosystem. I had just finished telling my

trivia when the tiny animal started to walk up my arm. It climbed all the way up to my neck (I'm bending over as the video is running the entire time). All of a sudden, in typical kangaroo rat form, it sprang up in the air, did a 180-degree turn and bounded to the ground. It slowly bounced back to its burrow with the video crew right behind it the whole time, getting it all on film. The kangaroo rat then went down its hole, returning to the entrance to look at the crew one last time. They ran tape the entire time, in utter amazement!

The point to this story? This one exposure to the kangaroo rat completely changed the concept these folks had of a previously faceless endangered species. Instead of being the point of misery for a poor farmer, it was now an entity with a life and role in the ecosystem. Simply spending time with this crew and showing them our wild heritage changed how they will communicate to others about the story.

So can one person make a difference? There's no doubt one person can. Letter-writing and phone-calling can be effective, but nothing compares to an in-person encounter to open up the mind of a doubter. This one encounter with four individuals has the potential of influencing thousands, maybe millions. I'm very fortunate to have such opportunities come my way to communicate the wonders of our natural heritage. As individuals concerned with preserving our wild heritage, we all have these opportunities to make a difference, even if just once in our life. One person can make a difference and I can end with further proof: just look what John Muir accomplished!

Hummer Help Wanted!

Moose Peterson is working on a project involving nesting hummingbirds. You can help by calling him (569-3731) with any nest sightings where the nest is six feet or closer to the ground. He especially is looking for unusual nesting situations, hummers using coat hangers, potted plants and the like for nest sites. Thanks for your help!

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

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EL TECOLOTE

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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
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