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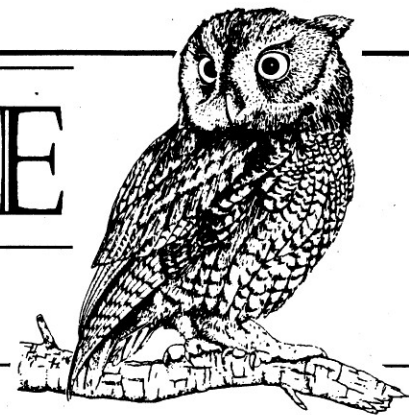
# EL TECOLOTE

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*Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Incorporated*

Volume 35 Number 7

April 1997



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## A DAY ON THE PLAIN

PETER H. KING

Nobody in California has seen it all. It is possible to live in California, as I have, for more than 40 years, to travel across California each week as a journalistic scavenger, to read about the place, think about it, form all sorts of opinions about it ... and still go out one rainy day and be absolutely floored by it. Monday was one of those days.

It occurred here, on what is called the Carrizo Plain. The plain is a virtually unpopulated valley that runs north-south for about 60 miles between the Temblor and Caliente mountain ranges. It is as beautiful a natural landscape as can be found in California.

It also is arguably one of the least known. Serious bird watchers tend to know about the plain, as do geologists, wildflower enthusiasts, archeologists, and botanists keen on California grasses and sage. After that, the awareness curve tumbles off a cliff. Geographically, the plain sits in the middle of nowhere — twisting, two-lane roads in and out — and at the same time in the middle of everything, right smack in the center of California, about an hour east of San Luis Obispo. Until this week, I had never been to the place.

Perhaps the best way to envision the Carrizo Plain is to imagine what the San Fernando Valley looked like before it was farmed, subdivided, freewayed, malled up, and just plain civilized. Imagine a wide open, rolling grassland, framed by stark, steep mountains. Imagine hawks wheeling overhead, flocks of bluebirds flittering among the brush. Imagine a sky without smog, a landscape devoid of sound except for that of birds, wind, and the occasional coyote.

Although the plain enjoys close proximity to an earthquake fault line — the infamous San Andreas is actually visible as it shoots down the lower flank of the Temblors — one dreamy subdivider did buy up a bunch of the plain about 35 years ago with an eye to develop it. He renamed it “California Valley” and started peddling lots to presumably snowbound Midwesterners. It didn’t

take. A couple dozen trailer houses, some incongruous street names, and a battered billboard remain as monuments to that adventure in metropolis building.

In other times, the plain has attracted waves of miners and solar power investors, jojoba plant promoters, and cattle ranchers. Only the ranchers stuck, and they are scattered, keeping their distance. The net effect, as Philip L. Fradkin put it in his wonderful history of the state, is a “retarded California. ... Time has begun to run backward on the plain, an unusual occurrence in California.” Some people want to make certain the trend is not reversed.

A new dream envelops the plain. In this installment, it is to become “the Serengeti of California,” a living reminder of a once common landscape. Several years ago the Nature Conservancy purchased enough land here to spur the creation of a 200,000 acre Carrizo Plain Natural Area. The preserve is managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, state Fish and Game, and the Conservancy - not always to the satisfaction of every plains constituent.

Sandy Wohlgemuth, a retired pharmacist and conservation chairman of the Audubon Society’s L.A. chapter, is disturbed by the cattle-grazing and antelope and tule elk hunting allowed at times on the preserve. So

*(Continued on page 4)*

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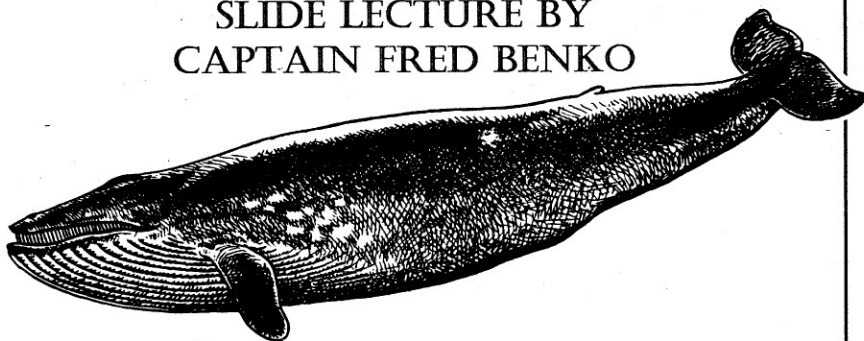
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APRIL PROGRAM  
MAMMALS OF THE CHANNEL  
SLIDE LECTURE BY  
CAPTAIN FRED BENKO



Wednesday, April 23  
8:00 p.m. program; 7:30 p.m. refreshments  
Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History — Farrand Hall  
1226 Puesta del Sol  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

For more details, call the Audubon Office at (805) 964-1468.

SOME 27 SPECIES of marine mammals inhabit the Santa Barbara Channel during all or part of the year. Captain Benko's slide program will focus on these animals and the oceanographic conditions that exist here that make these waters unique. Fred Benko is captain of the 88-foot boat, the Condor, which takes Santa Barbara locals and visitors on whale-watching trips led by members of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's volunteer group, the Whale Corps. This presentation is co-sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.



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695 Ashley Road  
Santa Barbara, CA 93108  
(805) 969-3767 / (805) 969-4423 FAX  
jeastman@silcom.com

## FIELD TRIPS

### ANZA-BORRERO DESERT STATE PARK

Saturday-Sunday, April 5,6

Cathy Rose & David Kisner

Target: Long-eared Owls, LeConte's Thrashers, Lucy's Warblers, and other desert birds  
—WAITING LIST ONLY—

Friday-only option: Call Paul Keller at (805) 968-7804.

### TROUT CLUB, SANTA BARBARA

Sunday, April 13, 7:30 a.m.

Rob Lindsey: (805) 964-9514

Target: spring foothill migrants, Northern Pygmy-Owl

Take 101 to La Cumbre exit in Santa Barbara. Go north on La Cumbre Rd. and turn left into Five Points Shopping Center and park at Carl's Jr. at 3925 State St. Car pool from here. Trip over before lunch. Bring snack and water. Trout Club residents Susanne and Carroll Barrymore will be our hosts for this normally off-limits area.

*All field trips are open to the public. Unless otherwise noted, trips are free and reservations are not needed. If you need a loaner pair of binoculars for a trip, call the leader.*

## UCSB Museum of Systematics & Ecology Needs Your Help

Mark Holmgren at the MSE is seeking assistance with two ongoing projects to document breeding locations of local birds. (1) He is requesting your observations of breeding records for all birds within Santa Barbara County, including species, locality, dates of observation, and especially stage of breeding you observe. (2) MSE is also particularly interested in the local kite population and is urging the County to make sound decisions with respect to planning and development which affects nesting areas, foraging areas, and movement corridors that kites require.

If you are inclined to assist, Mark would like to provide you with additional information to guide your observations. He can be reached at (805) 893-4098 or holmgren@lifesci.ucsb.edu.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

AT THE END OF FEBRUARY, Vice-President Lee Moldaver and I attended the popular Partnership for Excellence Conference at the Four Seasons Biltmore. This conference brings together Santa Barbara's non-profit community and various foundations and individuals that support our area's non-profit organizations. During the two-day conference, I was reminded of the extraordinary number of non-profit organizations in this county — all of them existing to support a myriad of important causes. The people of Santa Barbara have many choices as to where to invest their dollars and volunteer efforts. Considering S.B. Audubon's 34-year history as a 100% volunteer led organization, we clearly have a lot of people to be grateful for over the years. A **GRAND SALUTE** to the long-standing support of our members, field trip leaders, volunteers, and tireless past and present board members!

On the business side, our board decided to raise the yearly subscription rate of *El Tecolote* from \$10.00 to \$15.00. This price change only applies to subscribers who are not members of National Audubon and who only receive the local newsletter. Our diligent newsletter editor, Janet Eastman, did an analysis of our printing and mailing costs and realized we have not increased our price in over 10 years, thereby not adjusting for the increased costs of postage and printing. The subscription increase will apply the next time your newsletter subscription expires.

Till next time — Happy Spring!

Lauren de Chant

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Santa Barbara Audubon Society extends a warm welcome to all new members. We look forward to seeing you at Audubon meetings and field trips this fall. We're glad you're part of the growing number of local supporters for Audubon's efforts to excite people about birds and the preservation of their habitat. Thank you for joining:

Harry Abernathy	Ruth F. Iverson	Monica Nogues
Dorothy Andrews	Leslie Kerrigan	Wilda Osborn
Brian & Patty Barnwell	Ms. Naomi M. King	Mr. & Mrs. Bruno Pilorz
Ms. Marlene Beckerman	David A. Kisner	Barbara B. Prentice
Mr. William E. Bossert	Reidun B. Laffleur	Kendy Radasky
Henry Boynton	Doris E. Lecont	Walter Relis
Brent Burgess	Mayra Leo	Nick Ross
F. H. Campbell	Sally Lewis	S. Sasaki
Mr. & Mrs. Sam Chernoff	T. Lewis	Milton Schmerzler
Wendy Dishman	Jane Loda	Ms. Yoland Schneider
Elizabeth Eagan	Kent & Laura Madsen	Margret M. Shoaff
Nancy Edebo	Nan Marri	Ms. Gloria Silva
Erik Enthistle	James M. Mattinson	Mr. Thomas Smith
Mrs. Nancy K. Foust	Ms. Phyllis Mautino	Alan Stephens
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John Gilmour	Mr. John McGlinchey	Miss Sonia Torres
Ms. Serena Z. Goldyne	Dr. Lowell G.	Anne Townley
Ms. Catherine A. Graham	McLellan	Alison Whitney
Karla Green	A. Milligan	Jennifer Wellwarth
Marguerite Holgeson	Brett Minier	Mat & Karen Whitney
Janet Hunter	Rick & Sue Moltun	E.S. Wilbarger
Eric P. Hvolboll	Michele Moore	Ms. Jean Wright
Karen Hylen	Sister Elsbeth Morris	



**RARE BIRD ALERT**  
(805) 964-8240



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Audubon and help  
protect wildlife and  
wildlife habitats.

*Make check payable to and send to:*

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Membership Data Center  
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**Special new-member rate of \$20**

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*Local Chapter — Santa Barbara Audubon Society C13 7XCH*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday-Sunday, April 5-6	Anza Borrego Desert field trip
Sunday, April 13	Trout Club field trip
Wednesday, April 26	April Program: <i>Mammals of the Santa Barbara Channel</i>
Saturday, May 17	Lake Los Carneros field trip
Saturday, May 31	East Camino Cielo field trip
Friday, July 18	Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve field trip

(Continued from page 1)

far his complaints have generated responses that stress the need for compromise and balance among all users - the old circle of life, and politics, sort of defense.

A persistent sort, Wohlgemuth wanted me to see the California Serengeti firsthand. He guessed, rightly, that the plain would serve as its own best propagandist. Along with an expert panel he'd thrown together — a botanist, a geologist, and a biologist, Carrizo lovers all — we slogged along the muddy roads all day, stopping often for closer looks at rare birds and grasses, kangaroo rat precincts and an antelope herd, ancient rock etchings, a flock of sandhill cranes, and a lone coyote.

Just before sundown we climbed a hill. The storm clouds had cracked apart enough to create a rainbow and some spectacular plays of sunlight and shadow across the mountains. Mist rose up from the valley floor, where hawks hurried about the brush. All the panorama lacked was Ansel Adams to photograph it. I had never seen anything like it. And it had been a very good day.

excerpted from the *Los Angeles Times*, December 30, 1996

## SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Officers and Committee Chairs  
September 1996 - August 1997

### OFFICERS:

President: Lauren DeChant ..... 566-9314  
Vice President: Lee Moldaver.... 682-2120  
Secretary: Everett King..... 569-2307  
Treasurer: Annette de Knijf..... 962-1325

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Conservation: Dave Wass..... 682-6962  
Education: Elan Sutton..... 683-1143  
Programs: Gage Ricard..... 967-3604  
Field Trips: Paul Keller..... 968-7804  
Membership: .....  
Hospitality: Jay Bishop..... 565-2332  
Publicity: .....

BIRD REFUGE: Rob Lindsay..... 964-9514

RARE BIRDS: Karen Bridgers..... 964-1316

### AT LARGE

Ron Hirst..... 967-0138  
Rob Lindsay..... 964-9514  
Sally Walker..... 569-5388

*Officers and Committee Chairs meet the second Thursday of each month. Members are welcome to attend. Please call the office to verify dates and times at (805) 964-1468.*

PEN & INK DRAWING ON COVER BY DARYL HARRISON

## EL TECOLOTE

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Goleta, CA 93117

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