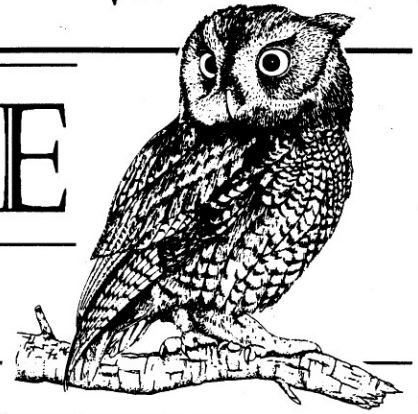


# EL TECOLOTE

*Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Incorporated*

Volume 36 Number 2

October 1997



## BIRDING IN THE PRIMORYE

*Bob Zeman*

Last May Don Rathbun and I flew to Vladivostok for three weeks of bird watching in the Primorye region of southeastern Russia. My reasons for going were threefold: (1) It was cheap — \$3,500 for everything; (2) I was going with others who were high-intensity birders; and (3) I hoped that my small contribution would help the habitat and encourage the existence of wildlife there.

Vladivostok comes from the Russian words "to rule the east." We flew in on Alaska Airlines after a flight over Siberia and a stop in Magadan where 70% of Russian gold is found. The city of Vlad is crumbling. The roads are narrow with potholes. Many of the bridges are under repair or in need of it. The urban residents leave their apartment buildings on the weekends for their dachas outside of the city where they till the soil and grow vegetables. Water is not a problem. It is said that it only rains twice in Vlad, in May — once for 13 days and once for 14 days. I believe it.

Our first day we went out to the DeFrize area to look for shorebirds along the coast. We saw a huge flock of red knots, a spectacular sight. The ducks were similar to those found in the U.S. but we did see a common and spotted redshank. We also saw a few whiskered terns. As a side note, when the first whiskered tern showed up in the U.S. at Bombay Hook in Delaware, people drove from as far away as St. Louis to see it. I know because one of them was in our Russia group. He estimated that there were 600 telescopes focused on it.

Back to Russia. I saw about 20 new species that first day including black-backed wagtail and yellow-rumped flycatcher. We returned to our hotel room to pack for the next 2½ weeks which were to be spent camping. To keep the price down and to see more birds, our plan was to camp out in the birds' habitat and to buy food from the villagers. To accompany us, there were an interpreter, a guide, a cook, a driver, and an organizer.

Vlad is home to the Russian Pacific fleet and several military factories. It is capital of the Primorye (Maritime) region and was closed to both Soviets and foreigners until 1992.

The next day we chartered a converted Soviet tugboat to take us out to the islands of Golden Horn Bay. We passed Russki Island where military ships are based and went on to uninhabited Karamazin Island. We viewed Swinhoe's storm petrel and streaked shearwaters along with other pelagic birds such as common murre, ancient murrelet, and rhinoceros auklet. We covered the mile-long island's various trails and slept well that night.

Unable to wake us up in the morning, our guide shouted "Pleske's warbler!" and we were up in a minute. Although he was kidding, we did see it later in the day. The Pleske's ranked in everyone's top 10 birds wanted. As an added bonus, a large whale surfaced right off the coast.

We motored over to Rikord Island in the afternoon where I was glad to be the first to spot the common snipe — especially so because as I showed it to the others, an Isabelline wheatear popped up — a first sighting for this area. We saw four types of thrushes and three warblers on this island. At night we motored for a quick visit to a rock outcropping that had literally thousands of gulls and terns as well as many other birds nesting.

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After two nights on the islands we motored back to Slavianska on the mainland and boarded our vehicle, a former Soviet army truck, that took us down to Khasan. The road ran near the Chinese borders to the North Korean border and then five miles to a marsh on the sea of Japan. We stopped and spied an azure-winged magpie that is found only here and in Spain (Siberia and Iberia).

In the marsh was a primitive hunting lodge with cabins used by the military. We stayed for five days partly to look around and partly because it rained so much our truck could not get out, and we had to request a tractor pull. But we saw five buntings, a Ural owl, and a Eurasian eagle owl. Another top ten bird was a baillon's crake.

We hiked five to ten miles a day mostly in boots. There were a few trails, and we took precautions against mosquitoes, ticks, and other insects by spraying our clothes and rubbing repellent on our skins. In an effort to flush out a grasshopper warbler, our guide almost stepped on a snake. He grabbed it and discovered it was a poisonous pit viper. We also spotted fox, Sitka deer, and mink in this area.

After our rescue by the tractor, we drove within a quarter mile of the border and then on to a pond where we saw Baer's pochard and common pochard. There was also a muskrat swimming.

We drove to Kedrovaya pad about 100 km north of the border. Ticks which spread encephalitis were thick here, so we stayed only one night. But the bird life was great. I saw a white-backed and a lesser-spotted woodpecker. Crested honey buzzard flew overhead. I ticked another top ten bird in a falcated teal.

The next day we drove on and passed Spassk-Dalny. At one time, 50% of Russia's concrete was produced here. Alexandr Solzhenitsyn was sent to this gulag (forced labor camp) where he wrote *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* based on his experiences. The plant is shut



down now due to lack of money and the need for repairs.

We camped for the next four nights at Lake Khanka, a part of which is in China. We took long hikes to see Oriental storks, purple heron, and white-naped cranes. After one hike, I took off my clothes and jumped in an irrigation ditch to swim. It was great.

The reed parrotbill ranked number one on most people's target list. It had been seen by only 50 birders from the western hemisphere. It is a small, sparrow-sized bird with a parrot-like bill, found in the area near Lake Khanka. We rode as far as we could and then walked to some small row boats and rowed out among the thick reeds of the marsh land. We spent all day looking and playing the tape of calls to lure it in. Finally in the early evening it popped up and gave good looks to Don and nine others. Unfortunately, I had gone looking for Tigers.

The last habitat of the Siberian tiger is in this area. A lot of research is being done because the population is down to a few hundred. I was able to visit one researcher who had built a one hectare-sized enclave in which he kept about four tigers. Two came right up to the fence while I was there. They were beautiful and majestic.

We then drove on to the Bikin River where we camped for another four nights. We stopped in a small village to buy vegetables, potatoes, fish, pasta, bread, and other food stuffs. The villagers were fascinated with us because many had never seen Americans before.

We were awakened every morning by common and oriental cuckoos and hiked the hills and marshes for ashly minivets, marsh tits, and blue and white flycatchers. One day we boated 80 kilometers down the Bikin River. The highlights were mandarin ducks, scaly-sided mergansers, hobbies, and ospreys. The first two were rare. Collectors pay up to \$20,000 for a scaly-sided merganser. A caribou or elk came down to the river. I was fortunate to find two agates on a shoal where we stopped for lunch.

We stopped at a local museum for a talk and viewing of exhibits of the area. I also saw a non-poisonous black snake and an ermine. On our last big day in the field we took a long hike looking for hazel grouse and hooded crane. I was one of two that missed the grouse but saw the crane. It showered about four times during this jaunt.

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*El Tecolote* is published 8 times a year by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc. Non-member price for an annual subscription is \$15 per year. Audubon members are invited to send announcements, letters, articles, photos, and drawings for consideration to:

Janet Eastman, Editor  
Santa Barbara Audubon Society  
5679 Hollister Avenue - Suite 5B  
Goleta, CA 93117  
(805) 964-1468 FAX: (805) 967-7718  
Deadline for submissions is the 10th of the month.

## OCTOBER PROGRAM

### Big Birds:

### A Measured Approach

slide presentation by Jeff Chemnick

Wednesday, October 22  
8:00 P.M.

Doors open at 7:30 p.m. for refreshments.  
Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History  
Farrand Hall  
1226 Puesta del Sol  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

Popular Audubon guest speaker Jeff Chemnick will tackle a very large topic — big birds! Jeff's enthusiasm for birding and insatiable curiosity have taken him around the world, where he has captured (on film, of course) many big and tall birds — from the weighty (345-pound African ostrich) to the waders (cranes and flamingoes). Jeff's program is certain to introduce you to new lands and new birds. This is arm-chair traveling and birding at its best!

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

Drink coffee and save the rain forest with *Guatemalan Songbird Coffee* from Thanksgiving Coffee Co., available at Wild Birds Unlimited or call (719) 578-1614.

T-shirts & apparel from recycled cotton 1-800-53TRASH



## NEW BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

Look for these recent titles at your local bookstore:

*Kingbird Highway: the story of a natural obsession that got a little out of hand* by Kenn Kaufman (Houghton Mifflin 617-351-5084) - chronicles Kaufman's precarious journey as a 16 yr. old in post-Aquarius America, hitchhiking back and forth across the country on an obsessive ornithological quest. \$23.00

*The Beak of the Finch: a story of evolution in our time* by Jonathan Weiner (Alfred A. Knopf) - how isolation works to produce new species and how climate can change the size of a bird and the numbers of its population.

*Last of the Curlews* by Fred Bodsworth with a foreword by W. S. Merwin and an afterword by Murray Gell-Mann (Counterpoint 202-887-0363) - the story of a solitary Eskimo curlew's last perilous migration and search for a mate.

*California Coastal Access Guide*, newly revised and expanded (California Coastal Commission/University of California Press) - fifth edition is an essential handbook for anyone exploring the 1,100 miles of one of the world's most diverse and spectacular shorelines. \$17.95

*All the Birds of North America* (American Bird Conservancy/Harper Reference); contributors include Kimball Garrett, Ken Kaufmann, and Paul Lehman, - 200 color illustrations and 600 color range maps, \$19.95.



## National Audubon Society Membership Application

I want to join  
Audubon and help  
protect wildlife and

Special new-member rate of \$20

Make check payable to and send to:

National Audubon Society  
Membership Data Center  
P.O. Box 5100  
Boulder, CO 80321-1000

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Local Chapter — Santa Barbara Audubon Society C13 7XCH

## FIELD TRIPS

### CALIFORNIA CITY & GALILEO HILL

#### KERN COUNTY

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 5:30 A.M.**

target: Chukar, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black-throated and Sage Sparrow, other desert birds, fall migrants and vagrants

leader: Steve Tucker (805) 659-4870

When you call Steve to reserve your spot, tell him from where you'll be coming. He will arrange car-pool locations and, if you want to meet us there, a meeting place and time as well as directions to California City, AAA Kern County 19-G, DeLorme p. 65 C-7. Steve, who lives in Ventura, needs a ride. Dress in layers for hot or cold. Bring lots of water and lunch. Back in Santa Barbara before dinner, but if birding is good you may elect to bird longer so bring money for dinner. Ten person limit. Drivers may appreciate gas money. (Galileo Hill, AAA Kern County, F-21, DeLorme p. 66 C-1.)

### LAKE LOS CARNEROS, GOLETA

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 8:00 A.M.**

target: Least Bittern, rails, fall passerines

leader: Karen Bridgers (805) 964-1316

Los Carneros exit from 101 north on Los Carneros Road to Stow House parking lot next to fire station. AAA Santa Barbara and Vicinity C-4, DeLorme p. 89 A-6. Finish before noon.

### *Planning Ahead ...*

### PACIFIC MISSILE TEST CENTER AT POINT MUGU

#### NEAR OXNARD

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 6:45 A.M.**

target: waterfowls, rails, egrets, shorebirds

leader: Paul Keller (805) 968-7804

From the east take 101 north to Cabrillo Blvd. (left lane exit just past town of Montecito). Take Cabrillo and turn right onto Los Patos Way, and look for Andrée Clark Bird Refuge parking on the left. From the west, take 101 south to Los Patos off ramp (after Milpas exit) and turn right into Bird Refuge parking. AAA Santa Barbara & Vicinity E-16, DeLorme p. 98 A-7. Carpool from here. The trip will begin at Mugu's Pizza across the Main Gate off Hwy. 1 at Wood Rd. at 8:00 a.m. If you want to meet us at Mugu's Pizza, you must let me know. To reserve your space call me on November 3, 4, 5, or 6. If you get my

machine, enunciate clearly and slowly, spelling as necessary, your last name, first name, middle initial, social security number, citizenship status, phone number, and if you are under 18 yrs. old, your age (must be 12 or over). Limit of 25 people. We need at least 15 participants for the trip to go, so barring medical emergency or death in the immediate family, if you sign up, you must show up. Leader will be someone yet to be assigned from the Point Mugu environmental staff who will show us around until about noon. Bring photo ID, lunch, water. Dress in layers for heat, fog, wind, or showers. Scopes useful. Cameras not allowed.

### VENTURA COUNTY GAME PRESERVE IN OXNARD

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 1998, 7:30 A.M.**

target: Virginia Rail, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, American Bittern, White-faced Ibis, Yellow-headed Blackbird

leader: Guy Tingos, (805) 681-0026

Meet at Andrée Clark Bird Refuge parking lot. From the east take 101 north to Cabrillo Blvd. (left lane exit just past town of Montecito). Take Cabrillo and turn right onto Los Patos Way and look for bird refuge on left. From the west, take 101 south to Los Patos off ramp (after Milpas exit) and turn right into refuge parking. Carpool from here. If you want to meet at the game preserve, call leader for directions and procedures. Trip over by noon.

*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.*



## RARE BIRD ALERT

(805) 964-8240



## THE FIRST STEP

to saving Devereux Slough

*Dave Wass*



YOU SIT AND STARE OUT the window and seriously wonder whether what you are about to do - make a phone call, write a letter, join a group demonstration - can make any difference in the outcome of an issue. It seems so easy to accept the inevitability of the eventual and certain victory of the opposing side which is undoubtedly so much more capable at this game.

And, of course, haven't you paid your membership dues and maybe even a little extra? Isn't that really enough? Can't somebody more experienced take care of the letter-writing chores? Maybe it's enough to participate in the Beach Clean-Up. Besides, these environmental issues are really too complex for neophytes like you to comprehend, much less write letters about.

If your thoughts have been cruising along these familiar and well-traveled freeways, you are visiting all the rest stops familiar to first time environmental activists. As a matter of fact, if you are aware of all the twists and turns your clever mind has led you through to get to this point, just a slight nudge will bring you to full commitment to a defining course of action. Most pro-active conservation starts with doubt, a terrifying lack of confidence, and enough fear-energy to power a semi from coast to coast.

But the political and environmental forces driving the big issue with which Santa Barbara Audubon Society (SBAS) is now contending — UCSB's drive to build 500+ housing units, many of them perilously close to the Devereux Slough — is far beyond a nudge. It is a rude shove by an institution from which we expect more environmental sensitivity.

Despite entreaties by SBAS to meet with and discuss other possible solutions to the university's housing needs, UCSB refuses to dialogue with anyone to address the community's concerns about the environmental health of the Devereux Slough and the survival of the extensive bird and wildlife there.

For a large number of dedicated environmentalists, motivation is supplied in abundance when they see precious wildlife and natural resources threatened by the projects of empire builders public and private.

To review the facts:

(1) Devereux is one of the last salt water sloughs left on the coast with a nearby fresh water pond, sand dunes, a coastal beach which is home to the snowy plover,

## 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:

Ms. Elise Foladare  
Pillsbury Foster  
Fred Fucci  
Bradley Hacker  
Barbara McIntyre  
Marie D. Meade

Dr. & Mrs. Gunther P. Nag  
Ruth A. Profant  
Mrs. Helyna V. Schlager  
George Simandle  
Dr. Dianne Skafte  
Susan Soria

grasslands supporting many endemic species, and the Devereux Creek with its many branches and wetlands.

(2) The Devereux Slough plus the Coal Oil Point Reserve supply vital, yearlong habitat for 100 species of birds and temporary resting and feeding grounds for 300 species of migrant birds.

(3) The Devereux Slough is even now at risk because of heavy sedimentation from upstream. The effect of construction nearby would accelerate this process and in several decades lead to the destruction of the habitat that supports this great bounty of bird life.

(4) More than 2,000 units of housing have been approved by the county within a 5-minute drive of the campus. Why couldn't some of these units be used for faculty housing?

Please send your letters of concern to:

1. Chancellor Yang  
Office of the Chancellor  
University of California  
Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2030

2. Supervisor Gail Marshall  
105 E. Anapamu St.  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

3. Supervisor Jeanne Graffy  
105 E. Anapamu St.  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Thanks for taking that first (or subsequent) step!



**SANTA BARBARA  
AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**OFFICERS:**

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**Vice President:** Lee Moldaver.... 682-2120  
**Secretary:** Everett King..... 569-2307  
**Treasurer:** Chris Walden ..... 969-4256

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Conservation:	Dave Wass.....	682-6962
Education:	Elan Sutton.....	683-1143
Field Trips:	Paul Keller.....	968-7804
Newsletter:	Janet Eastman .....	964-1468
Programs:	Gage Ricard.....	967-3604
Membership:	David Kisner.....	692-9792
Publicity:	Sheila Golburgh Johnson	682-4618

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

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

## AT LARGE

Darlene Chirman .....	692-3690
Don & Florence Stivers .....	967-3690

*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. FAX (805) 967-7718.*

*PEN & INK DRAWING ON COVER BY DARYL HARRISON*

(Continued from page 2)

The group as a total had seen or heard 223 species of birds of which on average 80 percent were new. My list was about 185 and I was happy. We drove down to Dalnereeshk to catch the Trans-Siberian railroad. We boarded at midnight and slept all the way to Vlad. The end is 9,288 kilometers from Moscow.

We spent the day touring the city and buying souvenirs. We admired the harbor, saw the home of Yul Brynner, the GUM department store, and the statues in the square marking the May 9th victory over the Germans in the Great Patriotic War. The next morning, after stopping in Petropalovsk on the Kamchatka peninsula, we caught our flight for the states.

In retrospect, there are many habitats worth preserving in the Primorye. Fortunately, the residents are knowledgeable about the wildlife and realize its beneficial effects. Ecotourism can only benefit this cash poor region where the natives welcome birdwatchers. With the communist threat a thing of the past, visitors to the region can enjoy immersion in a new and foreign culture — more enjoyable for those who study up on a little of the language beforehand — while at the same time discovering new and exciting world of birds.

# EL TECOLOTE

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**5679 Hollister Avenue — Suite 5B**  
**Goleta, California 93117**



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