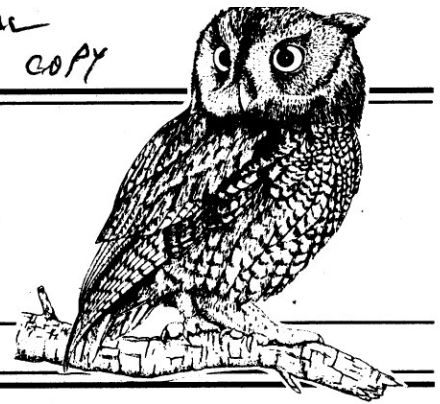


El Tecolote

Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.

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White-Tailed Kites Under Siege

by Gail Brown

AT THE MUSEUM OF SYSTEMATICS AND ECOLOGY at the University of California, Santa Barbara, research biologist and associate director of the museum Mark Holmgren points to charts and graphs showing the decline of a bird of prey that he has studied in the wild for more than a dozen years.

The beautiful small hawk, known as the white-tailed kite, is changing its roosting and nesting habits, and that greatly concerns Holmgren and other conservationists. They believe that the bird is threatened by man's development of its local habitat. Holmgren's current monitoring project shows that kites are under stress, threatened locally by conversion of habitat and disruption of movement corridors where it forages for food and travels to roost communally.

Kites occur primarily in the Western United States, predominantly in California, but can be found as far north as Washington and as far south as Chile. And, they extend east to a small population in Florida. But much of what is known about kites comes from studies of Santa Barbara's Goleta Valley population which have contributed greatly to knowledge of the species throughout its range. Local publications about the kite date back to 1943 and rigorous data collection first began here in 1966.

Recently Holmgren described an overall "trajectory of decline" of the kite at a meeting with planners for the County of Santa Barbara. He suggested that kites may be affected by development, and even though they are still around, their connection to their habitat has been seriously undermined.

"The changes we've documented place this population of kites on a trajectory toward total loss of all functions," said Holmgren. "A shift has occurred in the Goleta Valley from complex and persistent uses like breeding and roosting to more transitory and more simple uses of the habitat."

Holmgren advocated for more care in land use planning to maintain the support system for kites and the small mammal populations upon which they feed. (Kites eat house mice, California voles and western harvest mice.)

The kite, which once nested in the City of Santa Barbara, is no longer found there, but does live in the less developed community of Goleta next door. Yet even in Goleta the population is in retreat. Before the mid-90s many of the local birds bred in the open space and wetlands along the More Ranch Fault south of Highway 101, in

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1998 Christmas bird Count Saturday, January 2, 1999 Won't Float without a Boat!

by Joan Lentz

EVERYONE IS INVITED to participate in the Santa Barbara Audubon annual Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, January 2, 1999. After a day of counting birds, all are urged to then attend the compilation dinner at the S. B. Museum of Natural History Fleischmann Auditorium. The potluck dinner begins promptly at 6:00 p.m. and compilation at 7:00 p.m. Please bring a salad, main dish, or dessert. Out-of-towners may contribute drinks, bead, paper plates, etc. Please bring your own service also.

This year's organizer Joan Lentz asks if anyone out there could offer his boat for Count Day—or at least half the day.

SBAS will pay for gas and never venture

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Goleta, near UC Santa Barbara.

In 1998, there was almost no breeding south of 101, according to Holmgren. Instead, breeding is occurring north of the highway in the foothills where open space is also being rapidly converted and thus may serve only as a temporary respite for the birds.

Another sign of fragmentation, decline and possible exodus of the birds is that fact that between three to five roost sites were used last winter, whereas normally no more than one is used by the local population. Furthermore, this main roost last winter was located north of Highway 101, a new phenomenon.

The new nesting behavior of the local kites worries Holmgren. The fact that the pattern of nesting is shifting north of Highway 101, with only one nesting area remaining south of 101, suggests larger concerns. Holmgren explained that the area south of 101 is still the best remaining local habitat, thus the nesting changes suggest that other sites south of 101, which were used historically, now lack viability for the kite, he said.

"These new patterns of kite distribution must be viewed in light of the disruptions to the connected open spaces which serve as corridors for small mammal populations — the prey upon which kites and other birds of prey depend," said Holmgren.

Recently, working in the field at Goleta's More Mesa, Holmgren observed each bird arriving home for the night in a willow grove, the only roost left south of 101. As the sun set he and a team of volunteers carefully counted 40 birds, delighting in the appearance of the last few stragglers.

The volunteers are part of a group of 20 individuals involved in controlled monitoring of the birds in an area stretching from Winchester Canyon in the west to Cieneguitas Creek in the far eastern end of the Goleta Slough Watershed.

Kites, Holmgren explained, seem to be able to tolerate some disturbance to their habitat; they are particularly resilient and can live near humans as long as the human community is adjacent to a larger open space that sustains significant small mammals for them to eat.

In one case, he found the birds nesting right on top of an unoccupied house; two broods

were raised there. But Holmgren noted that this nesting would not have occurred had the house been occupied. Nor do kites nest in areas where housing dominates.

Because they are strongly associated with wetlands, kites receive some indirect protection due to the Clean Water Act, he said. Kites are also protected as designated by the conservation element of the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan, the guiding document for the development of the county.

The fact that kites are showing stress in spite of their natural resilience and the legal protection that they receive from the county and federal government alarms Holmgren. "It shows that we're not doing enough regarding cumulative impacts of development," he said.

Holmgren noted that although kites are not listed as threatened or endangered, the bird is listed in the sense that it receives federal and state protection beyond that given to most species.

He described a "protective envelope," in addition to the protections mentioned above, that has so far not prevented the kites' "trajectory of decline." The envelope includes protection of all raptors under the Migratory Bird Protection Act and regional wetland mitigation policies of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Environmental reviews of kites are required by the Clean Water Act, the California Coastal Act, and the California Environmental Quality Act, but Holmgren states that these analyses are seldom performed with necessary breadth or rigor.



December Program

Wednesday: December 16
the

Birds and Wildlife of Lake Cachuma

with

Liz Mason & Neil Taylor

Cachuma Field Naturalists

Doors open 7:30 p.m./program 8:00 p.m.
at the Santa Barbara Museum of
Natural History, Farrand Hall
Free

Liz Mason and Neil Taylor, field naturalists for Cachuma Lake County Park, will offer a narrated slide show about eagles, ospreys, peregrines, neo-tropicals, threatened local species, and some of the more interesting animals that share this man-made, year-round water supply just across the mountains. Re-discover this amazing birding area which draws visitors, campers, and nature lovers from all over California. Come share the wonders of Cachuma.

January Program

Wednesday: January 27
the

Birds and Amphibians: Recent Research Discoveries

with

Mark Holmgren

UCSB Museum of Systematics & Ecology

Doors open 7:30 p.m./program 8:00 p.m.
at the Santa Barbara Museum of
Natural History, Farrand Hall
Free

RESPECTED UCSB FIELD RESEARCHER Mark Holmgren has championed the Santa Ynez River habitats, while studying the White Tailed Kite, the Red Legged Frog, Vandenberg's vernal pools, and a wide variety of "threatened" local species. Few naturalists know the biota of Santa Barbara's back country the way Holmgren does. Few scientists have the verbal skills to make it come so vibrantly alive to the casual observer. It will be informative and educational evening.

Recycling for Audubon



HELP YOUR LOCAL AUDUBON SOCIETY every time you recycle by designating the Santa Barbara Audubon Society as the recipient of any money earned from your recyclables. The Community Environmental Council has recycling centers located at 631 Garden Street in Santa Barbara and 701 Botello Road in Goleta.

The next time you go to recycle, you may donate your California Redemption Value (CRV) aluminum cans, CRV glass, and CRV plastic to Santa Barbara Audubon Society. The total must be at least \$3.00. Currently CEC is paying:

\$.755/lb. CRV aluminum cans (over 50 lbs. .80/lb.)

\$.05/lb. CRV glass bottles

\$.42/lb. CRV plastic bottles

Simply inform the cashier at either location that the money generated be put on the Audubon account. What a great way to make a double contribution to society and the environment! Questions can be addressed to Kathi Flett, Recycling Specialist 805-964-2039.

Field Trips

GOLETA BEACH COUNTY PARK, GOLETA AND DEVEREUX SLOUGH

1998 DECEMBER 05, SATURDAY, 8:00 AM

Ducks, shorebirds, gulls, waterbirds

Ron Hirst, 805-964-7658, sbtech@aol.com

From the south take 101 north to 217 then turn off to Goleta Beach County Park. From the north take 101 south to Fairview Ave. Go south (right turn) and follow main road, which involves bearing right onto Fowler Rd and left onto Moffet Rd, and follow signs to Goleta Beach. Meet next to the pier. Winter is the season for waterfowl so we should see local waterfowl at its best. Rain date is Dec. 06, Sunday. Trip over by mid-morning.

PACIFIC MISSILE TEST CENTER AT POINT MUGU

1998 DECEMBER 12, SATURDAY, 6:45 AM

waterfowl, rails, egrets, shorebirds

Paul Keller (coordinator) 805/968-7804.

wrentit@jps.net

Reservations required were due by Nov. 24

SANTA BARBARA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT AREA

1999 JANUARY 09, SATURDAY, 8:00 AM

Rare birds of last week's Christmas Bird Count

Paul Keller, 805/968-7804, wrentit@jps.net

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. Priority will be to get permission to look for rarities on private property. Trip over before lunch.

RANCHO JOCOSO—EAST END OF LAKE CACHUMA

1999 JANUARY 30, SATURDAY, 7:30 AM

Common Goldeneye, Wood Duck, Lewis's Woodpecker, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, American White Pelican, Mountain Bluebird

Jeff Chemnick, 805/965-0895

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. Bring water. Back before lunch.

Looking ahead ...

VENTURA COUNTY GAME PRESERVE, OXNARD

1999 FEBRUARY 06, SATURDAY, 7:30 AM

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

Guy Tingos, 805/681-0026,

gtingos@west.net

Drivers may appreciate gas money. 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 Andree 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. Carpool from here. If you want to meet us at the Game Preserve (private and normally off limits) take Hwy. 101 to Camarillo. Exit Las Posas and go south to Hueneme Rd and turn right. Go west and turn left on Casper Rd. About a mile after the left bend on Casper Rd turn right into the game preserve and park by the green bungalows by 8:15 am. Bring water and snack. Scopes useful. Trip over by noon.

Unless otherwise noted, field trips are free and reservations are not needed. If you would like a loaner pair of binoculars for a trip, call the leader.

RARE-BIRD ALERT	Lists rare birds sighted recently.	(805) 964-8240
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WORLD WIDE WEB SITE FOR
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AUDUBON
FIELD TRIPS

<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/SoCal/trips.htm>

Restoration Dates for Volunteers December 1998 — January

Saturday, December 5	San Jose Creek Plantings	9:00 am - Noon Meet Berkeley footbridge
Sunday, December 13	Pampas Grass Volunteer Day	8:30 am - 12:30 pm Atascadero Bikeway (rain cancels)
Saturday, December 19	Atascadero Creek Plantings	8:30 am - 12:30 pm Site along bikeway (rain cancels)
Sunday, January 10	Atascadero Creek Plantings	8:30 am- 12:30 pm Site along bikeway
Saturday, January 30	San Jose Creek Plantings	9:00 am - Noon Berkeley Footbridge

For more information and to participate, please call organizer Darlene Chirman (805) 692-2008.

Cats Indoors Campaign Endorsed Locally

SBAS IS SUPPORTING the American Bird Conservancy in its national campaign to encourage cat owners to keep their pets indoors for the safety of both wildlife and cats. Songbirds in Santa Barbara, including mourning doves, towhees, juncos, and scrub jays, are attacked and killed by domestic outdoor cats while small mammals, a primary food source for many raptors, are also killed.

Santa Barbara city and county ordinances forbid any pet to be unrestrained and unsupervised beyond the owner's property. And cats who do roam face many hazards including attacks by coyotes or dogs, disease, parasites, human cruelty, car accidents, and poisons. Each year, the County Animal Control office in Goleta receives about 1,300 reports of missing cats and about 4,000 cats are brought to the shelter or picked up by animal control officers.

The American Bird Conservancy has developed a brochure that provides information on the benefits to cats of living an indoor life. SBAS volunteers will distribute brochures to animal shelters, pet stores, and vet offices.

— Claudia Armann
Research Editor, AQUA Magazine
carmann@aquamag.com
(805) 745-7118



Bird Enthusiasts Needed for Second Annual Backyard Bird Count February 19-22, 1999

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology invite all bird enthusiasts to join this 2nd annual Backyard Bird Count, the first Internet-based census. All participants count the birds they see at their feeders, local parks, or other areas and make their reports online through Bird-Source:

<http://birdsource.cornell.edu>

Birders here in Santa Barbara can chart local results and compare them with the findings of counters across North America.

Last year 14,000 participants reported over a 1/2 million birds. To participate in this year's count, simply go to the Bird-Source website, click on the 2nd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count button and fill in the easy-to-use form.

Mark your calendars and help scientists to define the status of birds at the close of the century, one year after El Niño. Suggestions, ideas, and questions to: Sally Conyne: sconyne@audubon.org.

Calendar of Events

December 5	Goleta Beach f.t.
December 12	Point Mugu f.t.
December 16	Program: <i>Lake Cachuma Wildlife</i>
January 2, 1999	Christmas Bird Count
January 9	C.B.C. Area f.t.
January 27	Program: <i>Research in Birds & Amphibians</i>
January 30	Rancho Jocosco f.t.
February 6	Ventura County Game Preserve f.t.
February 19-20	Backyard Bird Count

El Tecolote is published for the benefit of SBAS members. Submissions to the newsletter and non-member subscriptions (\$15.00/year) may be mailed to Santa Barbara Audubon Society, 5679 Hollister Avenue 5B, Goleta, CA 93117. Please make checks payable to SBAS.

Officers and Committee Chairs meet the second Thursday of the month. Members are welcome to attend. Please call the Audubon office to verify dates and times (805) 964-1468; FAX (805) 967-7718. Cover art by Daryl Harrison.

(Continued from page 1)

farther than 2 miles offshore. Please call Joan if you can help out.

Assisting Joan will be Karen Bridgers and Joan and George Hardie. To join in the fun, fill out the coupon below and mail it in or call to sign up as soon as possible. We will contact you after mid-December to let you know details of the area you will cover.

Before the count, watch for the following birds, which we often have difficulty finding on Count Day: grosbeaks, tanagers, orioles, non-Anna's hummingbirds, unusual sparrows at feeders such as White-throated or Harris', any geese, dippers, pygmy-owls, and Long-billed curlews—or any species listed as rare or very rare in the *Birds of Santa Barbara County Checklist* by Lehman and Lentz. If you see any of the above or any other interesting birds, please call Joan Lentz at 805-969-4397 or Karen Bridgers at 805-964-1316.

SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY 1998 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT Saturday, January 2, 1999

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

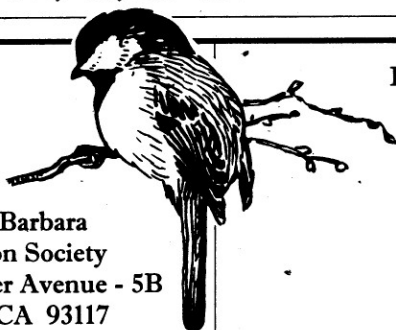
Phone: _____

Preferred Area: _____

Would like to work with: _____

Dinner ☐ Leader ☐ Feeder Count ☐

Return to: Pat Kelly, 554 Litchfield Lane, Santa Barbara 93109
or call her at 805-962-9916



Santa Barbara
Audubon Society
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DECEMBER 1998—JANUARY 1999

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