



SEQUOIA NEEDLES

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County
Founded 1949

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June-August 2009

RELAXED BIRDING IN COSTA RICA

BY ROBBIE FISCHER

The last week in January 2009 Joe Morlan and I visited two ecolodges in Costa Rica. We chose the foothills and the mountains as our habitats. We were not planning a listing trip but rather a birding vacation with ample time for Joe's digiscoping. January is noted to be the beginning of the dry season although we did have showers many of the eight days we were there.

We booked the trip through www.costaricagateway.com and I highly recommend them. They arranged our lodging and drivers to and from the airport and between each of the two lodges.

We spent our first five nights at Rancho Naturalista southeast of San Jose in the foothills. The room rates include a bird guide each day and we enjoyed Chris's enthusiasm and knowledge of the local birds. Chris was willing to accompany us on day trips, walk the local trails or just let us do our own thing if that's what we preferred. It was a nice change from the go, go, go of a birding tour.

Rancho Naturalista is a great place for hummingbirds; especially the Snowcap, Violet Sabrewing, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer and Violet-crowned Woodnymph. At dusk each day a Purple-crowned Fairy could be seen bathing in pools in a stream gorge near the lodge. Besides hummers, one evening we were lucky enough to see both a Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser and a Dull-mantled Antbird in the gorge.

We took a morning trip to the Tuis River valley, encountering Bay Wren, a pair of Buff-rumped Warblers wagging their



Resplendent Quetzal, photo by Joe Morlan

tails, Russet Antshrike and Yellow-bellied Elaenia, among other tropical species. Another day we visited CATIE Botanical Gardens for Jacanas with chicks, Boat-billed and other Herons, and a Green Ibis.

The lodge feeders used bananas to attract birds such as Crimson-collared and Passerini's Tanagers, Collared Aracari, Hoffman's and Black-cheeked Woodpeckers. The large covered deck was a great place to wait out showers while watching Green-breasted Mangos and White-necked Jacobins jockeying for position at the hummingbird feeders.

From Rancho we traveled into the mountains to stay three nights at Savegre Mountain Lodge. Here selasphorus hummingbirds included Volcano and Scintillant, which Joe was able to photograph feeding young. We quickly learned the "song" of Green Violetear, the most abundant hummer. Savegre has a trout farm and we spent many happy hours at the forest edge near

(Continued on page 2)

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center
(See program details on page 2)

June

Thursday, 11th Potluck Meeting

Potluck and Fundraiser: 6:00 PM;
Program: 7:00 PM

Program: Challenges of
Summer Birding

September

Thursday, 10th Check website for
program details

Upcoming Field Trips

(See trip details on page 3)

June

Sunday, 7th Pescadero Marsh*

Saturday, 13th Birding class
follow-up trip

Sunday, 14th Redwood Shores
Library Walk*

Sunday, 21st Pescadero Marsh*

Saturday, 27th Filoli Estate

July

Sunday, 5th Pescadero Marsh*

Sunday, 19th Pescadero Marsh*

August

Sunday, 2nd Pescadero Marsh*

Sunday, 16th Pescadero Marsh*

*Beginner/Family Trip

Check the field trip descriptions for any special information or requirements. Late comers may be disappointed. For all field trips bring your binoculars, sun block, and water; wear sturdy walking shoes or boots, and a hat, and always dress in layers for hot, sunny weather to cool, windy conditions. While we will attempt to stay on schedule, circumstances may

(Continued on page 3)

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MEETING PROGRAMS

BY SUE COSSINS AND PAULA MILLER

Program and Potluck Dinner

Challenges of Summer Birding

By Matthew Dodder

Thursday June 11, 7:00 PM

Spring is nearly over and the young of many local breeding species are leaving the nest, causing confusion among birders. How do we recognize these puzzling young birds; what can we look forward to in summer, and how do we prepare for the onslaught of fall migrants? Join Matthew for a presentation on the challenges of summer birding and what to expect in the coming season of migration.

Matthew began birding as a boy in Boston in the mid 1970s, and is in his eleventh year of teaching "Bay Area Birding and Beyond!" at Palo Alto Adult School. He is a board member at SCVAS. His website is www.birdguy.net.

A potluck dinner beginning at 6 PM will precede this program. Doors open at 5:30. Please bring a plate, cup, utensils, and a side dish to share. SAS will provide the main course, hot beverages, and dessert.

Accompanying Field Trip: Saturday, June 13th. Place to be determined. Please check the SAS website for updates. www.sequoia-audubon.org.

The annual SAS Volunteer Appreciation Event held April 25, 2009 at Filoli Estate in Woodside treated our active volunteers and generous donors to a bird walk around the outlying forest, a gourmet box lunch, and free time to explore the mansion and grounds.

Photo by Bob Cossins

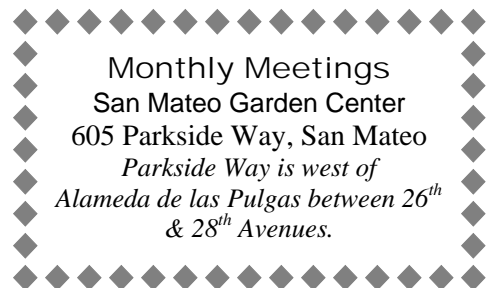


(Costa Rica Birding, continued from page 1)

the trout pools, discovering mixed flocks of songbirds. Collared Redstarts, Flame-throated Warblers and Silver-throated Tanagers always caught our attention. The richly buff-colored Tufted Flycatcher and the diminutive Torrent Tyrannulet vied for flying insects with Dark Pewee and Black-capped Flycatcher along the Savegre River. Each day in the late afternoon we enjoyed the song of the Black-faced Solitaire, purported to be a bird of the forest but we always saw one near the trout pools.

The target bird for these mountains is the Resplendent Quetzal. One morning we caught a ride to a reserve a couple miles from the lodge. Joe and I each paid \$2 to enter the area and were led a couple hundred yards uphill to where a male Quetzal was feeding in a fruiting tree close to the dirt road. We watched it for close to an hour although digiscoping was a challenge. It was daunting to try to get the entire bird in the scope thanks to the long, streaming upper tail coverts. We consider that a high-class problem.

Costa Rica is a wonderful country to relax and revel in the diverse habitats and warm welcome to birders.



Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

Parkside Way is west of

Alameda de las Pulgas between 26th

& 28th Avenues.



FIELD TRIPS

BY CAROL MASTERSON

Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk

Sunday June 7, 10:00 AM – Noon

Come and discover Pescadero Marsh. The California State Park Docents will lead a field trip to learn about the marsh. This beautiful park has a mile-long shoreline, rocky cliffs, and of course a world-famous marsh. The birding at the marsh is great at this time of year. The docents will point out the plants and animals that inhabit this San Mateo County treasure. If it is not raining, meet in the parking lot just over the bridge at Pescadero State Beach. Wear clothing in layers for cold and windy to sunny weather. Heavy rain cancels. For more information contact Ranger Dave Augustine at 650-879-2170 or Rita Jennings at 650-728-2254.

Directions: Go south from Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1, about 12 miles. Just past the bridge over Pescadero Creek, look for the south parking lot. If you get to the intersection of Pescadero Road and Hwy 1 you have gone too far. http://www.greenfoothills.org/news/2001/08-2001_PescaderoButano.html

Beginner/Family Nature Hike

Saturday June 13

**Follow-up field trip for birding class
Location and time TBD**

Instructor: Matthew Dodder

Open to everyone with a \$5.00 fee paid to the instructor.

Redwood Shores Library Walk

Sunday, June 14, 3:00 – 4:00 PM

This popular walk begins in the library with a brief showing on the big screen, of birds expected to be seen. Then the group will either walk along the slough behind the library or drive a short distance to birding ponds.

Directions: The library is located at 399 Marine Parkway, Redwood City (Redwood Shores), 650-780-5740.

Leader: Sonny Mencher 650-814-8028

Beginner/Family Walk

Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk

Sunday June 21, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Come and enjoy the marsh in the afternoon. It's a fun way to spend time with Dads on Father's Day, June 21st! There is

always something new to observe in the marsh. The docents are knowledgeable about the plants and animals and enjoy sharing this information with children of all ages. Meet in the parking lot just over the bridge at Pescadero State Beach. Wear clothing in layers for cold and windy to sunny weather. For more information contact: Ranger Dave Augustine at 650-879-2170 or Rita Jennings at 650-728-2254.

Directions: Go south from Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1, about 12 miles. Just past the bridge over Pescadero Creek, look for the south parking lot. If you get to the intersection of Pescadero Road and Hwy 1 you have gone too far. http://www.greenfoothills.org/news/2001/08-2001_PescaderoButano.html

Beginner/Family Nature Hike

Bird Walks at Filoli led by SAS volunteers

**Saturday, June 27, 9:00 AM – Noon,
with George Chrisman and Leonie Batkin**

Enter the world of flycatchers, grosbeaks, swallows, warblers, and Red-shouldered Hawks on a Filoli bird walk. Hundreds of migrating birds visit Filoli each year on their way between Central and South America and their breeding grounds farther north. Many birds decide to stay in these woodlands and nest. Don't forget your binoculars and a bird field guide, if you have them. Please leave your cell phone in the car. Children 14 years and older only.

Fee: \$20 for members of Filoli, \$25 for non-members of Filoli

Advanced Reservations Required 650-364-8300 or tours@filoli.org

Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk

Sunday July 5, 10:00 AM – Noon

For details, please see June 7 listing.

Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk

Sunday July 19, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

For details, please see June 21 listing.

Upcoming Field Trips

(Continued from page 1)

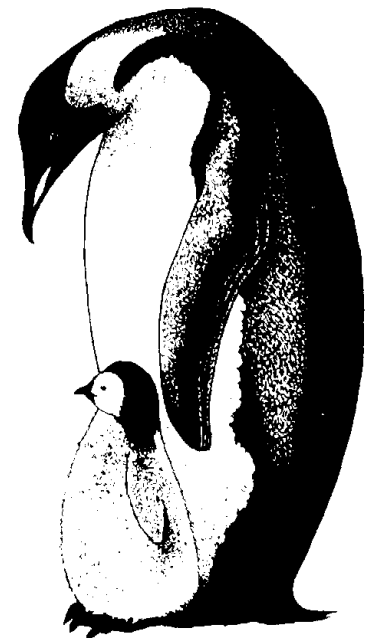
dictate changes to field trip leaders, dates, or times.

For the latest schedule and updates always go to the Sequoia Audubon web site, contact the trip leader, or call Carol at 650-347-1769.

SAS on Vacation

Just a reminder – SAS is on vacation during the months of July and August. We will return in September with our field trips and our September 10th general meeting.

Have a great summer 'til we see you in September.



(Continued on page 4)

(Field Trips, continued from page 3)

Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk
Sunday August 2, 10:00 AM – Noon
For details, please see June 7 listing.

Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk
Sunday August 16, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
For details, please see June 21 listing.

Audubon California State Assembly, Asilomar, CA

Assembly was amazing. Highlights included youth presentations, a Sierra Nevada Celebration keynote address by John Muir Laws, photos by Galen Rowell, and a film by Larry Arbans. Workshops covered effects of wind and solar energy production on wildlife, working with private landowners, and science and policy of climate change. Field trips were to the Carmel River, condor viewing at Ventana, and a pelagic trip led by Todd McGrath and Jon Feenstra.

For those who couldn't attend there is a program on www.ca.audubon.org/assembly.php and 2009 Audubon California Assembly reports and photos on www.ca.audubon.org/chapters.php click CHAPTER BLOG. Feel free to comment on the reports or the Assembly on the blog.
Next Assembly: 2011



Photo by Sue Cossins

At each Assembly, Audubon California gives the Chapter Volunteer Award for Outstanding Service to exceptional individuals who have made an outstanding contribution towards the Audubon mission. On Sunday at the Assembly, Audubon California gave the 2009 Chapter Volunteer Award for Outstanding Service to Steve Ferry of Santa Barbara Audubon, Nick Freeman of Los Angeles Audubon, Mike Prather of Eastern Sierra Audubon, **Robin Winslow Smith of Sequoia Audubon**, Tam Taafe of La Purisima Audubon, and Marilyn Waits of Redbud Audubon. The group is pictured above with Glenn Olson, Audubon California's Executive Director.

Antarctica Trips

Have you ever dreamt of going to **Antarctica** or **South Georgia**? Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris has partnered with our Audubon Chapter to offer two amazing trips to the Southern Ocean:

Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia, and the Falkland Islands

December 28, 2009 to January 25, 2010

Itinerary: http://www.cheesemans.com/antarctica_sg_dec09.html

South Georgia and the Falkland Islands

October 15 – November 8, 2009

Itinerary: http://www.cheesemans.com/a_south_georgia_oct09.html

Doug, Gail, and Ted Cheeseman are long-time members of Audubon and have been leading trips to Antarctica since 1984. As wildlife biologists and photographers, they focus on providing an in-depth wildlife experience with maximum field time and an emphasis on conservation. Please call them with any questions: 800-527-5330

Bonus incentive: Anyone who books one of the above trips and mentions this ad will earn a \$500 donation to SAS from the Cheesemans

Jennifer Rycenga is shown receiving the 2009 Environmental Educator of the Year award from Board of Directors Vice-President, Gary Deghi at the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.

Jennifer Rycenga

Editor of the newly hatched SAS web page
San Mateo County Birding Guide

Whether perched at your computer or soaring around the county, your vision has earned you
Environmental Educator of the Year
April 25, 2009

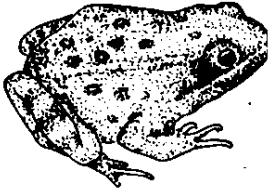


Photo by Bob Cossins

SAS NEWS

Conservation Program

Sharp Park



The SAS Board of Directors supports the effort to restore Sharp Park Golf Course in Pacifica to open space and potentially include it in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Brent Plater of the Committee to Save Sharp Park states: "San Francisco loses up to \$300,000 each year subsidizing Sharp Park Golf Course in San Mateo County. In the current budget crisis San Francisco is proposing to cut services and hours at neighborhood parks. A better idea is to stop the losses at Sharp Park through restoration planning and reinvest the money saved back into San Francisco's neighborhood parks and community centers."

Sharp Park Golf Course is harming two endangered species, increasing the risk of flooding in neighboring communities, and locking up hundreds of acres in a single recreational use. San Franciscans deserve better. Sharp Park can become a community-centered model of outdoor recreation for our kids, natural flood control adapted to climate change, and endangered species recovery."

Latest News: May 6, 2009, S.F. Chronicle: "Yesterday, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a resolution aimed at restoring habitat for two rare species found at the city-owned Sharp Park Golf Course in Pacifica. San Francisco officials will develop a plan, schedule, and budget to protect the threatened Red-legged Frog and endangered San Francisco Garter Snake. The city will work with the Federal parks system, Pacifica, and San Mateo County officials."

Cargill



According to the recently released report, *The Impacts of Sea-Level Rise on the California Coast*, by the Pacific Institute, **the state's #1 top threatened county is San Mateo**, both in terms of population and infrastructure. San Mateo County has fully \$24 billion in infrastructure at risk, almost one quarter of the entire statewide projected impact from sea level rise.

We face the almost insurmountable challenge of protecting existing infrastructure around the Bay, including San Francisco Airport, Highway 101, and many thousands of homes. Given Cargill's ambitious plans, we are also confronted with the possibility of even more growth in the inundation zone. Redwood City should NOT approve Cargill's plan to place billions of dollars of new housing infrastructure out on Redwood City's bayfront salt ponds given the looming threat of sea-level rise. Yet by all indications the majority of city council members still favor the project.

Website

New on our Website

By Jennifer Rycenga

Just in time for your intensive spring birding, Sequoia Audubon is happy to announce the debut of the online *San Mateo County Birding Guide (SMCBG)*. It features full descriptions of multiple birding sites around our county. Each entry contains maps, pictures, web links, and more. Please take a test drive today, by accessing the website at <http://birding.sequoia-audubon.org/>.

In the mid-1990s, Sequoia Audubon published the second edition of *San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching*. The new SMCBG builds from the accounts in that book, while editing them substantially to record changes and include new material. We are also adding many sites that were left uncovered or only marginally mentioned in the book due to space limitations. Because the online SMCBG can be expanded, there will be many more sites added to the original twenty-eight that you will see if you visit today. I will announce new sites as they are added. At the moment, seventy-five sites are projected; suggestions for new sites can be emailed to me.

There are a few special features on the SMCBG (<http://birding.sequoia-audubon.org/>) particularly worthy of mention. Be certain to check out the "Help" and "Look Here" sections, located in the buttons atop the table of contents on. The Help button will show you how to use the many fine map features built into the SMCBG. The Look Here category includes a set of county-wide birding routes (three to date), a list of sites to be added, acknowledgements of both current and original authors, guidelines for authors and photographers, and a copy of Francis Toldi's fine essay on the natural features of the county, which originally appeared in the *San Mateo County Breeding Bird Atlas*.

The heart of the SMCBG consists of the site guides. Within each location guide, be sure to note the links to external websites,

(Continued on page 7)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

BY SUE COSSINS

What can you do? We have lots of great jobs. Get involved with Sequoia Audubon and help the birds with some of these volunteer opportunities. Take a look at these listings and see if you might be able to give us a hand. Call Sue Cossins 650-347-9358 or check our website for more information www.sequoia-audubon.org.

Field Trip Chairperson

After many years of doing a wonderful job in this position, Carol Masterson would like to find a replacement. This position involves planning field trips and sending write-ups to the Program Coordinator for publication in the newsletter and website. **For more details call Carol: 650-347-1769 or email: carolmasterson@sbcglobal.net**

Bird Enthusiasts

Help the birds of Edgewood Park and Preserve in their struggle to survive and reproduce by participating in our Bird Conservation Program. The Program, now in its 10th year, has substantially helped Western Bluebirds, Bewick's Wrens, and Western Meadowlarks. Current emphasis is focused on the California Quail, which as of May 2008 had become extinct in the park. We need census takers, nest monitors, and behavior observers.

Requirements: No experience necessary. We will train you. You must be willing to commit a few hours of your free time, once a month. Edgewood Park and Preserve is located in Redwood City near Hwy 280.

Contact: Lee Franks 650-592-7733

Cattle Ranch Birding

Years ago, the Williams family donated their 1200-acre working cattle ranch in the Santa Cruz mountains to Audubon. While the ranch is not open to the public, over the years several birders have visited it to get a good look at some of the sensitive species that use the various ranch habitats, such as the Loggerhead Shrike, Grasshopper Sparrow, and the Purple Martin. Now we wish to go beyond looking and implement a Monitoring Program in order to identify habitat preferences and breeding locations of these species. We're looking for a few knowledgeable birders with survey experience to participate in the program.

Requirements: Must be willing to commit to spending 3-4 hours bi-monthly, hiking the ranch roads collecting data and compiling it online. The Ranch is located on Skyline Blvd, near the Windy Hill parking lot.

Contact: Lee Franks 650-592-7733



(SAS News, continued from page 6)

and the avian research aspects of the site (most notably how to enter your sightings into eBird to build the database for each site). The SMCBG will be a place that encourages site-specific citizen-science participation from birders.

One of the best features of having this site guide on the web is that it can be easily revised. I know I am not an expert on every dimension of every site listed. If you find errors or items I or the other authors have overlooked, send me your suggestions for changes and improvements. If you want to propose a major revision, just ask.

The same logic applies to photographs. At the moment, since I have been working intensively on this project, far too many of the photographs are mine. Once the true photographers amongst you see the results, you will intuit your assignment: get better photographs! Each site can hold up to five pictures; more than that, and we'll launch a satellite site on Flickr, accessible as a weblink from the list of links. It is important to have a panoramic view of each site, special habitats or landmarks, and at least one picture with a bird in it. For this last requirement, rarities are good and birds significant to that site are also excellent. For instance, a picture of a Marbled Murrelet taken at Pigeon Point, or the Ring-necked Pheasant from Ravenswood, serve as visual reminders of a main avian attraction for the site. Sonny Mencher has agreed to take on some of the duties of being a photo editor; you can contact him directly at sequoiaaudubon@yahoo.com. Technical requirements for photos are given on the SMCBG website, in the "More Sites on the Way" page.

Coming in the future, we hope to build a searchable species function, so that you can discover which San Mateo sites have been

(Continued on page 8)

SAS appreciates your tax-deductible donations which help fund the Chapter's education, conservation and ongoing activities


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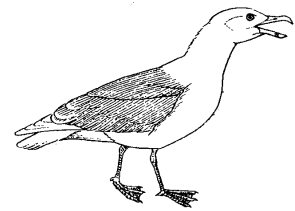
(SAS News, continued from page 7)

known to host your favorite birds. County routes for bike birding, birding by mass transit, birding by kayak, and Big Day Birding Routes are in development. There are also plans for a San Mateo County and Sequoia Audubon history page. Stay tuned!

The migration of the *San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching* book to the web as the *San Mateo County Birding Guide* is the result of the persistence and vision of the board of Sequoia Audubon Society, and the fine website design and birding enthusiasm of webmaster Bill Groll — webmaster@sequoia-audubon.org. I have been serving as general editor, a task that means I have been able to explore the county more than ever. It also means that I will serve as the concierge to your increased participation in the site. Please direct all email regarding the SMCBG to me at the following email address: smcbgeditor@earthlink.net.

Thank you for sharing your comments, observations, additions, compliments, and complaints.

Jennifer Rycenga
 Half Moon Bay, CA
 General Editor, SMCBG



Glaucous Gull

THE BIRD BOX
RARE BIRD
ALERT
415-681-7422

Join us for the Annual Summer Planning Meeting

The Board of Directors invites you to help with goal setting for the coming year.

Sunday, July 19, 9:00 AM — 3:00 PM
 Georgia Stigall's Ranch, Woodside

Bring a bag lunch; dessert will be provided by SAS. Please notify Sue Cossins if you plan to attend: Sue@earthlink.net or 650-347-9358

Mission Statement

The mission of Sequoia Audubon Society is to participate in environmental education and conservation and in the restoration, preservation, protection and enjoyment of our native natural resources with emphasis on birds and their habitats.