



SEQUOIA

AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Volume 62, No. 2
November-January 2011-2012

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: CITIZEN SCIENCE AND SEQUOIA

BY JENNIFER RYCENGA

Sequoia members love birds. We love to attract them to our yards, observe their interactions, anticipate their migration, and photograph their aerodynamic stunts. Cultivate your avian enthusiasm constructively through citizen-science projects! The annual Christmas Bird Counts occur this year on December 17th (Crystal Springs) and December 31st (Año Nuevo). The data connected with Christmas Bird Counts now spans over 100 years, providing significant longitudinal records. Participate in our Sequoia counts; continue this great tradition!

Birdwatching keeps us in direct contact with nature – a welcome respite from the world of electronic gadgets and constant media bombardment. Sequoia Audubon is committed to keeping our field trips real – not virtual – and fun for all! But Sequoia must also be an active advocate in tracking the bird life of the county, especially given the power of contemporary database technology. If you have lists of bird sightings from previous years in shoe boxes filled with checklists, or in computer form but not yet in a database, Sequoia wants to help enter those into the San Mateo County records. We will soon have students and volunteers ready to shepherd old records into Cornell's eBird database (<http://www.ebird.org/>). Recording your sightings this way is a type of citizen-science, especially helpful in



constructing breeding bird atlases, tracking migration patterns, and visualizing seasonal distribution. Whether the lists in question are your own or belong to a family member or friend who is no longer alive, please contribute them. Recording sightings for citizen-science projects provides a kind of immortality, for both ourselves and for the birds whose lives we document. May their species and ours flourish together!

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, APRIL 2011, PART 2

BY LYNDA BROTHERS

One of the highlights of the trip included a non-birding evening trip to Matura Beach, Trinidad, to watch the Leatherback Sea Turtle come ashore and lay eggs. They are monitored by a local non-profit set up to study them and generally raise awareness and help preserve the turtles.

The turtles, which can weigh as much as 2,000 pounds, heave themselves ashore from March to September. It being fairly early in the season, we were lucky to observe a 1,000-pound female come ashore at around 9:00 PM. We watched as she used her one good hind flipper and her one damaged hind flipper to dig a nest about three feet deep in the sand. One of the trained guides helped our wounded female dig her nest hole, which took about an hour. Eventually she laid about 150 billiard ball-sized eggs -- a combination of fertilized and unfertilized eggs. We quietly observed the nesting without disturbing anything, but once she began to lay her eggs she entered into a trance-like state and we were able to touch her, take photos, and otherwise create a disturbance. It is believed that about 6,000 of the world's estimated population of

(Continued on page 5)

Leatherback Turtle nesting on Matura Beach, Trinidad, April 2011. A local volunteer is assisting in the nest site excavation due to the turtle having an injured rear flipper. Photo by Bob Cossins

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

November

Thursday, 10th, 7:00 PM

Program: Birding Class: A Case for Sketching

December

Thursday, 8th, 7:00 PM

Program: Panama Wild!

January

Thursday, 12th, 7:00 PM

Program: Birding Class: Planning a Birding Vacation

(See program details on page 2)

Upcoming Field Trips

(See trip details beginning on page 3)

November

Saturday, 12th Candlestick & Heron's Head Parks

Sunday, 13th Coyote Point Marina

Saturday, 19th Mountain View Shoreline*

Sunday, 20th Colma Cemeteries

December

Saturday, 3rd Mussel Rock

Wednesday, 7th Foster City

Saturday, 10th Redwood Shores*

January

Wednesday, 4th Cosumnes River Preserve

Sunday, 15th Pearson-Arastradero*

Sunday, 22nd Laurelwood Park

Saturday, 28th Panoche Valley

* Beginner/Family Trip

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MEETING PROGRAMS

BY SUE COSSINS

Birding Class: A Case for Sketching By Matthew Dodder

Thursday, November 10, 7:00 PM

Two years ago I made good on a promise to myself and started field sketching. Some pages in my little book begged to be torn out and forgotten, while others made my mother proud. Far from being the brilliant portraiture of the trained artists among us,

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

*Parkside Way is west of Alameda de las
Pulgas, between 26th and 28th Avenues.*

my crude pencil sketches have some value – to me. The process of drawing has made me more aware of detail; exercised my visual memory, and made me a better communicator. Afraid of taking that first step? I will discuss a few surprising techniques to get you started and the benefits of sticking with it. You may find your birding skills improve in the process.

Matthew began birding as a boy in Boston in the mid-1970s, and is in his 13th year of teaching "Bay Area Birding and Beyond!" at Palo Alto Adult School. He is a former board member at SCVAS. His website is www.birdguy.net



Birding Class Instructor Matthew Dodder at the Canopy Tower, Panama, summer 2011. The metal background is the back of the famous "bird mobile" at the Canopy Tower.

Accompanying Drawing Field Trip Coyote Point Marina, San Mateo Sunday, November 13, 8:00 AM

With pencil and pad in hand, we will focus on common, larger birds as we practice sketching what we see. No experience is necessary, but you must be willing to try. Bring pencil, eraser, and pad with hard back or notebook to draw on. Rain cancels.

Directions: We will meet at 8:00 AM in the parking area by the harbor bathrooms.

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

Leader: Matthew Dodder 650-868-4922 (cell); mdodder@sbcglobal.net
Beginner/Intermediate Trip

Panama Wild!

By Bob and Sue Cossins

Thursday, December 8, 7:00 PM

In March of 2010 Bob and Sue joined a 19-day Cheeseman's Ecology Safaris Birding and Mammal Adventure in Panama. The trip was led by Jim Danzenbaker and local guides. The lodges stayed in included Canopy Tower, Canopy Lodge, Los Quetzales, Finca Lerida, Nattur Eco-lodge, and Cerro Azul. The lodges served as a base for exploring the surrounding areas of rain forests, coastlines, coffee plantations, and the canal zone, to name a few. Bob took over 3,000 images, which have been reduced in number to a manageable, one-hour Powerpoint presentation. We hope you can come to help us relive our remarkable journey!

See a sampling of Bob's Panama images at the Sequoia Audubon Society's website home page: www.sequoia-audubon.org. Various other images are also viewable at www.bobcossinsphoto.com.

Birding Class: Exploring Belize – Suggestions for Planning and Enjoying a Birding Vacation By Joe Morlan and Robbie Fischer Thursday, January 12, 7:00PM

Join us for an evening of birding in the tropics featuring the wildlife of Belize. In addition to sharing their experiences of exploring Belize on their own, Joe Morlan and Robbie Fischer will offer

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**Candlestick & Heron's Head Parks
Saturday, November 12, 8:30 AM**

In Candlestick Park between September and April it is possible to see most of our local shorebirds on the mudflats along the entrance road and in the protected cove north of Candlestick Point. The open water is usually good for diving ducks including Scaup, Scoters, Common Goldeneyes, Buffleheads and Red-breasted Mergansers. We will watch also for Western, Clark's, Horned, and Eared Grebes. Then we will caravan to Heron's Head, a site notable for breeding Black-necked Stilts, rare in San Francisco.

Directions: From Hwy 101, take exit 429A toward Candlestick Park. Turn slight right onto Alanna Rd. Turn left onto Harney Way. Turn right onto Jamestown Ave. Use the main entrance by the kiosk and drive to the southern end of the parking lot. Rain cancels.

Leader: Robbie Fischer
robbie22@pacbell.net

**Accompanying Field Trip to the
Birding Class of November 10.**

**Coyote Point Marina, San Mateo
Sunday, November 13, 8:00 AM**

With pencil and pad in hand, we will focus on common larger birds as we practice sketching what we see. No experience is necessary, but you must be willing to try. Bring pencil, eraser, and pad with hard back or notebook to draw on. Rain cancels.

Directions: We meet at 8:00 in the parking area by the harbor bathrooms. Open to everyone with a \$5.00 fee paid to the instructor.

Leader: Matthew Dodder 650-868-4922
(cell) mdodder@sbcglobal.net

Beginner/Intermediate Trip

**Mountain View Shoreline
Saturday, November 19, 9:00 AM**

This bayside location with salt marshes and shrubby grassland will provide views of a good variety of migrating and wintering waterfowl as well as land birds. Large flocks of white pelicans are often a dramatic sight there and there is a good chance for Black Skimmer, Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal along with a variety of shorebirds. Viewing

conditions are generally excellent for sorting out species with binoculars and scopes. Walk should last approximately two hours.

Directions: We will meet at the end of the San Antonio Road North exit from Hwy 101, about 35 miles (45 minutes) south from San Francisco. Park along Terminal Blvd (<http://tinyurl.com/367ebt8>), .

Leader: Allan Ridley 415-516-5999
Beginners welcome

**Scouting the Colma Cemeteries for the
San Francisco CBC**

**Sunday, November 20, 8:00 AM (2-4
hours total)**

Cypress Lawn Cemetery forms a beautiful park-like setting that happens to have amenities favorable to birds. The large lake and the smaller ornamental ponds at the entrance off El Camino Real are used in the recycling of the water used to maintain the grounds. The appeal to birds was undoubtedly secondary. The lake, ponds, and shores are populated by gulls, ducks, passerines, American Coots, Canada Geese, Black-crowned Night Herons, Rock Pigeons, and the occasional surprise bird. The surprises include Green-winged Teal, Greater White-fronted Geese, Eurasian Wigeon, a Red Phalarope lost during the famous "wreck" of December 26, 2005, along with the only Marbled Godwit we have recorded there, and a lone Pectoral Sandpiper on the mudflat of the lake during a drain-down. Wood Ducks are frequent; Common Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser occasional. Great Blue Heron is also an occasional visitor. All the swallows hunt over the lake, and Cliff Swallows nest on the old Columbarium. It is an excellent place to study gulls. So far there are nine species and one hybrid recorded. There is, as might be expected, a serenity felt in strolling among monuments to the dead. The statuary and architecture are remarkable. Please review Cemetery Etiquette for Bird-watching, <http://birding.sequoia-audubon.org/cemetery.html>. Limit 12 people.

Directions: We will meet at the ponds at Cypress Lawn and also visit Holy Cross

(Continued on page 4)

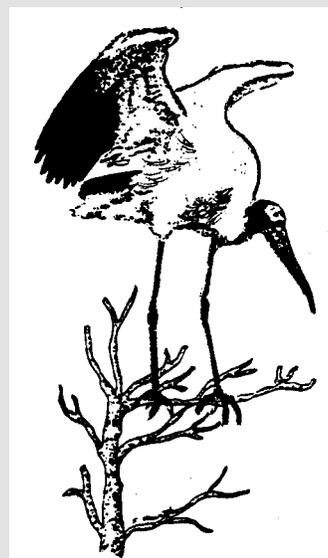
Check the field trip descriptions for any special information or requirements. Late comers may be disappointed. For all field trips bring your binoculars, water, sturdy walking shoes or boots, sun block, and hat, and always dress in layers for hot sunny weather to cool windy conditions. While we make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

For the latest schedule and updates, including information on rain postponements, please join and check out <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sequoiaaudubon/>

**Wildflower Walks at
Edgewood Park**

To display the treasures of Edgewood all year long, Friends of Edgewood Wildflower Walk docents now guide nature hikes on the third Saturday morning of each month. The walks vary according to the docent and the current happenings in the Preserve. The free walks cover about 3 miles, at a moderate pace, with frequent stops. Walks start from the Education Center at 10:00 AM and end around 1:00 PM.

No reservations are needed. For more info: www.friendsofthewood.org.



(Field Trips, continued from page 3)

and Olivet cemeteries. Going south on I-280, exit at Serramonte, then turn left under the freeway while in the central turn lane. At Junipero Serra Blvd., continue north on Serramonte Blvd. Turn right on El Camino Real. Move to the left lane. After two blocks, turn left into the cemetery. Park there or on El Camino alongside the ponds. Going north on I-280, exit at Hickey Blvd. Continue on Hickey until it dead ends on El Camino, at which point you will want to be in the left lane. Turn left onto El Camino Real; move into the right lane. In about one mile, the cemetery will appear on your right. Be aware of merging traffic from Old Mission Road on your right just before the cemetery entrance.

Leaders: Laurie Graham & Jeff Fairclough, 650-589-2133, fair80@comcast.net

Mussel Rock, Pacifica

Saturday, December 3, 8:00 AM – Noon

We will see interesting earthquake and landslide history as well as some interesting seabirds. We hope to view Surf Scoters and their rarer Black Scoter cousins, Black Oystercatcher, many species of gulls and shorebirds, sparrows, and marsh birds. Join us while we explore this under-birded park on the Pacifica/Daly City boundary. This walk is appropriate for beginning birders, but all attending should wear good shoes, as there is some climbing.

Directions: The parking lot for Mussel Rock is reached at the end of Westline Road. The best approach, from any starting point, is to reach the junction of Manor Drive and SR 1. From there, go north on Palmetto Avenue; take a left on Westline, and go to the end, being careful not to drive into the transfer station! Heavy rain cancels trip, but light rain is fine.

Leader: Jennifer Rycenga; smcbgeditor@earthlink.net for questions and more information.

Beginner/Intermediate Trip

Foster City

Wednesday, December 7, 8:30 AM – Noon

Explore the ins and outs of Foster City – the Shell Bar, Sea Cloud Park, Port Royal, and other little known spots. This will be a walking/driving field trip. Dress in layers, wear good shoes, and bring a scope if you have one. Meet at the small parking lot at Port Royal and Rock Harbor Lane.

Directions: From Hwy 101, take Hillsdale Blvd east. Turn right on Edgewater Blvd. and follow to the second Port Royal turn. Turn right on Port Royal and at the point where the road turns right, turn left into the little parking lot at Rock Harbor Lane.

Leader: Leslie Flint lflint@earthlink.net

Redwood Shores

Saturday, December 10, 8:30 AM – Noon

Redwood Shores is more than Radio Road. Learn some of the other great places to bird: Nob Hill Pond, Davit Lane, Starboard and Marlin Parks, Belmont Slough, Oracle Pond, and the Sofitel Lagoon are some of the sites we will visit. We will walk approximately five miles on flat terrain, passing several rest rooms.

Directions: Meet at 8:30 in front of Starbucks, next to Nob Hill Market. The shopping center is about one-third mile east of 101 from the Holly Street/Redwood Shores Parkway exit.

Leader: Sonny Mencher soccerquiz@yahoo.com

Beginners welcome

Cosumnes River Preserve, Stockton

Wednesday, January 4, 8:00 AM – Dusk

The Cosumnes River Preserve is located halfway between Stockton and Sacramento. This 1500-acre preserve has rich stands of valley oak, riparian forest, and seasonal wetlands. We will look for Ross's, Snow, and White-fronted Geese, Tundra Swans, and ducks. We hope to see lots of Sandhill Cranes. Bring lunch, liquids, scopes, and cameras. We will meet at 8:00 AM at the Cosumnes River Visitor Center. Reservations are requested so I know whom to expect. For carpooling, contact Leslie.

Directions: Take Interstate 5 to the Thornton-Walnut Grove Road exit. Go east towards the Chevron gas station onto Thornton Rd. Follow Thornton Rd north for about two miles. It will turn into Franklin Blvd. Continue north on Franklin, crossing over the Thornton-Franklin Bridge. The visitor center and parking lot are on the right just after crossing the bridge.

Leader: Leslie Flint lflint@earthlink.net

Pearson-Arastradero Preserve, Palo Alto

Sunday, January 15, 8:00 AM – Noon

Arastradero hosts many wintering hawks in meadows and oak woodlands. A pond may have wintering ducks and the oak trees attract White Breasted Nuthatch, woodpeckers, and other oak specialists. This is one of the best local spots to see the elusive California Thrasher. We will walk 3-4 miles slowly with some low hills.

Directions: From Hwy 280 take Page Mill Rd west. Turn right on Arastradero Rd. The entrance to the parking lot will be on your right.

Leader: Ginny Marshall (ginnybirder@sbcglobal.net)

Beginners welcome

Laurelwood Park and Sugarloaf Mountain

Sunday, January 22, 8:30 AM – Noon

Come explore this under-birded area in the heart of San Mateo. Riparian, oak, and open habitats combine to make what appears to be a small municipal park into an expansive mix of habitats. We can expect to see Nuttall's Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Townsend's Warbler, and raptors overhead. This walk will include some climbing, so wear good shoes. Heavy rain cancels.

Directions: Check out the entry on Laurelwood in the San Mateo County Birding Guide (<http://birding.sequoia-audubon.org/description.php?loc=78&p=0>). Park on Glendora Drive, and meet at the playground area below.

Leader: Jennifer Rycenga; (smcbgeditor@earthlink.net) for more information

Panoche Valley

Saturday, January 28, 8:00 AM

Panoche Valley lies between Hwy 101 and Hwy 5 in San Benito County. Winter in Little Panoche Valley is great for raptors. Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, and Prairie Falcon are all possible. We also hope to see Roadrunners, Mountain Bluebirds and, in a good year, Mountain Plovers. We will plan to stop at Mercey Hot Springs where the special

(Continued on page 5)

(Meeting Programs, continued from page 2)

tips on how to plan and organize your own birding vacation. They will share some of their favorite birding vacation locations, which ones can be done on a budget, how to go about getting the most out of a birding trip, and what are some of the pitfalls. Bat Falcons, Gray-necked Wood-Rails, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, King Vultures, and the endemic Morelet's Crocodile will be featured in what promises to be an entertaining and informative presentation.

Joe Morlan is an Ornithology Instructor at City College of San Francisco. His website, <http://fog.ccsf.edu/jmorlan/>, is an excellent source of statewide birding information, rarity details, photos, and many other features.

Due to prior commitments, Joe Morlan will not be available to lead a follow-up field trip.

(Trinidad & Tobago, continued from page 1)

35,000 leatherbacks breed on Trinidad. Much more could be written about this amazing reptile – the world's largest -- but suffice it to say their population is dwindling due to entanglement in fishing nets and interference with nest sites.

On Tobago, we were met as usual at the airport by our guide, who now runs Birds of a Feather – a company founded by his father. We birded our way along the very narrow road (I was very glad that he was doing the driving!) to our lodging at the far end of the island. The Blue Water Inn is located on a white sandy beach looking out at numerous small islands including the island of Little Tobago just across the bay. We took a day-long field trip to the Gilpin Trace in the highlands. This is a venture not to be missed and provided incredible views of Blue-crowned Motmots, and displaying manakins and jacamars. The Trace is in a large forest that was set aside as a nature preserve by the British over a century ago, with a proper British road system – great for birding! On another day, we took Frank's Glass Bottom boat to Little Tobago – this smaller island is now a nature preserve. At one time it was the home of an eccentric hermit who introduced Birds of Paradise (all gone now). We had great views of oceanic species including a nesting Red-footed Booby and Magnificent Frigatebirds. This area is popular with scuba divers because of the brain coral formations, which we viewed through the glass bottom of our boat. Our trip ended with a steel drum band concert at our Inn. Like the birds, these were steel drums unlike any we'd ever seen before.

(Field Trips, continued from page 4)

attraction is roosting Long-eared Owls (a \$5 fee is required). Bring lunch and liquids and a full tank of gas as there are no gas stations between Hollister and I-5.

Directions: Meet at Paicines Reservoir, on the right just past the junction of Hwy 25 and County Road J1, 13 miles south of Hollister. From San Mateo, take Hwy 101 south to Hwy 25; follow Hwy 25 through Hollister to Paicines.

Leader: Leslie Flint lflint@earthlink.net

OTHER BIRDING ACTIVITIES

(Sequoia Audubon does not sponsor the following activities.)

15th Annual [Sandhill Crane Festival](#)

November 4-6, Hutchins Street Square, Lodi, CA

Featured Speaker: Dr. Richard Beilfuss, President and CEO of the [International Crane Foundation](#)

Viewings of the state's largest concentration of Greater Sandhill Cranes, workshops, exhibits, children stories, dancing, face painting, live wild animals, and fine art.

Contact: info@cranefestival.com or 800-581-6150

18th Annual Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival

November 9-13, Harlingen, Texas

This is the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival's 18th year. We're calling it The Big Year! Why? Check out this year's seminars and you'll see. We can also call ourselves Big, as one of the oldest and most esteemed events of its kind. And why is that? Because of...

The Leaders. The RGVBF is long-famed for the quality of its leaders. Bird with the big names — the authors and editors of your favorite books and publications, the movers and shakers in science conservation and education.

The Birds. The Valley boasts the biggest concentration of eye-popping tropical species, birds not found anywhere else in the U.S.

The Place. The Valley offers a great birding getaway— warm, affordable, and friendly.

The Big Picture. The RGVBF is a catalyst for action concerning conservation, education, and awareness. We are a caring non-profit, working toward higher goals.

Complete information and registration: <http://www.rgvbf.org/>

15th Annual [Central Valley Birding Symposium](#)

November 17-20, Stockton, CA

Stockton Hilton Hotel, 209-957-9090 (hotel reservations)

Please join us for a full set of engaging programs and bird-filled field trips at this year's Central Valley Birding Symposium. The Stockton Hilton Hotel is in tip-top shape, and we look forward to returning to our "home" for the Symposium. Among the wide range of vendors are the top optical manufacturers in the world alongside magnificent art displays of birds. Come and enjoy the camaraderie of birding friends, both old and new, all under one roof.

Contact: <http://www.cvbs.org> or Frances Oliver's email cvbsreg@gmail.com

19th Annual Wings Over Willcox Birding and Nature Festival

January 11-15, Willcox, Arizona

Keynote Speaker: Ted Floyd, "Birding at Night: The Final Frontier"

The 19th Annual Wings Over Willcox is just a few short weeks from the centennial of Arizona's statehood on February 14, 1912. To celebrate the event, WOW's tours and seminars will highlight Arizona from 100 years ago, with the theme of how things were in Sulphur Springs Valley during this time period.

Contact: www.wingsoverwillcox.com or call 1-800-200-2272 to receive a brochure.

(Other Birding Activities, continued from page 5)

16th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival January 13-16, 2012, Morro Bay, CA

Every Martin Luther King weekend over 450 birders visit Morro Bay, California, a Globally Important Bird Area, to see, photograph, and learn more about birds. Morro Bay is located halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco on the Pacific Flyway. The area offers pristine beaches, beautiful state parks, an excellent natural history museum, panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean and, best of all, thousands of birds. Over 200 species are usually sighted during the Festival weekend.

Saturday evening's keynote speaker: Jon Dunn, one of the primary experts on field identification in North America.

Contact: <http://www.morrobaybirdfestival.org/>

13th Annual Snow Goose Festival, Butte County, CA January 26-29, 2012, Chico Masonic Family Center, Chico, CA

The featured speaker is John "Jack" Muir Laws, naturalist, author, illustrator, and educator.

His topic: *Finding Connection in Nature: The Sierra Nevada Mountains.*

Experience the sights and sounds of the Pacific Flyway migrating waterfowl at the Snow Goose Festival! A long weekend full of fun, adventure, and learning for all ages with field trips, workshops, an art show, and a banquet with auction.

Contact: (530) 345-1865 www.snowgoosefestival.org email: info@snowgoosefestival.org

THE CASE FOR PARTIALLY TICKED BIRDS

BY FRANCIS TOLDI, with thanks to Barry Sauppe, John Toldi, David Armstrong and Adam Winer

Bird listing protocol is unduly harsh and restrictive in many ways. Perhaps the most egregious is the rule that allows a birder to count a species only when it has been properly identified by sight or ear. It is unfair that a birder receives no credit for the many "almost" sightings that every birder experiences. It is high time for a revision of the listing rules to allow credit for partial sightings. Purist listers not wanting to include partial sightings could indicate "NPTB" (No Partially Ticked Birds) next to their listing totals.

I suggest a modification to the listing rules to allow the following:

The half tick:

- Birds conclusively identified by sight, but which unfortunately give the wrong song or call
- Birds conclusively identified by song or call, but which unfortunately pop into view as the wrong species

- Distant specks on the horizon that could conceivably be a hoped-for species, particularly from pelagic and hawk watching sites (Note: Some birders consider this a full tick)

The quarter tick:

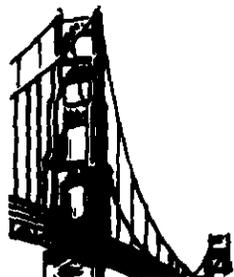
- Improperly identified *Empidonax* flycatchers and *Calidris* sandpipers
- Stakeout rarities, conclusively ID'd by voice, but which turn out to be other birders playing tapes to coax out those same rarities
- Birds properly identified in zoo aviaries and private collections
- Deceased birds and/or bird fragments (e.g. feathers, mummified cat-kills, picture window casualties, etc.)
- Birds identified from "bird sign" (e.g. footprints, windshield scat, holes in trees, empty nests, etc.)
- Stakeout rarities conclusively identified by others, but which have "just left" upon your arrival. More generally, any sighting that requires a "two birds" theory. Add a .1 tick if "you should have been here" LESS than "five minutes ago."

The .1 tick:

- Small dark rats and/or mice that look just like Black Rails as they creep through the pickleweed
- Birds identified by voice, but which turn out to be chipmunks or other rodents
- High-flying raptors which upon further inspection are actually aircraft
- Distant bird-shaped forms that turn out to be interesting tree snags, floating Styrofoam cups, and the like
- Birds that are "always" at a given locale according to a bird-finding guide or the birder's prior experience, but this time aren't. Add .1 if the observer saw the species in this very place within the last 48 hours
- Birds identified via auditory or visual hallucinations caused by sleep deprivation or anti-seasick medication
- Foster Farms birds (or other freezer contents identifiable to species)

Author's note: An earlier version of this appeared in the *Needles* a number of years ago.





Conservation News from our neighboring chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society: “Lights Out San Francisco”

By Mike Lynes, GGAS Conservation Director

For bird species that migrate at night, tall well-lit structures such as skyscrapers and communication towers pose real risks of death and injury because many species rely on the stars and the moon to navigate and can be lured off course by bright, artificial lights. Storms, high winds, and fogs can push migrating birds to lower altitudes, where the lights of the city are even more attractive and dangerous. Throughout the United States, observers have recorded hundreds of birds dying in a single night as a result of collisions with lighthouses, communication towers, and skyscrapers.

In an effort to reduce night-time collisions in San Francisco, Golden Gate Audubon has partnered with the City of San Francisco and the Pacific Gas and Electric Company to promote the Lights Out San Francisco program. Participants in the program turn off unnecessary interior lights and draw blinds on windows in rooms where lights are necessary. While energy conservation is always a good idea, the Lights Out program focuses on the spring and autumn bird migration seasons, from February 15 to May 1 and August 15 to November 30 of each year. Golden Gate Audubon encourages all members and supporters to educate the business owners and managers in their places of work about the Lights Out program. Homeowners and apartment dwellers can do their part by turning off unnecessary lights and drawing their shades.

For more information, please visit our Lights Out for Birds page or Page 1 of the Sept/Oct 2011 issue of *The Gull* at www.goldengateaudubon.org/.

Remembering Robin Smith near Bair Island

By Aldora Lee

SAS Past President and active member, Robin Smith, passed away on June 15, 2011.

It was the 1990s and I was standing with a small group of Sunday afternoon birdwatchers with Robin Smith, our leader. I was new to birding. This was an afternoon visit to a location I had not been before. The field trip destination was just a small distance from the northbound off ramp of Highway 101 at Whipple.

I was not sure what we would see or what the outing would be like. The other members of the group seemed more experienced as birdwatchers. Robin discussed the locale and why it was important. For me, the scene had a beginner's sameness: mostly sand and silt, tufts of weeds, not many birds. To my eyes, it was almost a wasteland. But to Robin, it was something else. Where I saw just weeds and silt, she saw “habitat” -- important habitat for shore birds and birds in migration. Also, she saw the future of Bair Island. Her knowledge, conviction and determination inspired me.

When, later, Menlo Park had to decide between soccer fields and parkland, I “stood on the ground” that Robin had created for me. I too supported the “Save Bayfront Park” effort.

Tiny, wiry, determined, informed, and caring about her environment was that first impression of Robin. I was lucky to have chosen her field trip.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Program Chairperson

After 13 years in this position, the chairperson would like to hand it over to one or two people who would also find this to be a satisfying task. Providing interesting speakers and birding instructors for our members at the general meetings can be a very rewarding experience. Here are the duties:

1. Secure speakers for the nine general meetings, September through June, five of which are birding classes. (Speakers are already booked through February, 2012.)
2. Introduce the speakers at the general meetings. (A board director could also do this.)
3. Submit a write-up of the program (written by the speaker) to the newsletter editor prior to the deadline for publication. It should include program title, speaker's name, a brief description of the talk and a short biography of the speaker.

Contact Sue Cossins if interested at 650-347-9358 or sas-sue@earthlink.net.

Sequoia Audubon Society Membership Form

- Individual membership for seniors (>62) and students (<25) \$15.00
- Individual membership \$20.00
- Family membership \$25.00
- Donation to SAS \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Yes, I am interested in volunteering _____

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SAVE THE DATES: San Mateo County Christmas Bird Counts
Saturday, December 17, 2011 – Crystal Springs
Saturday, December 31, 2011 – Año Nuevo

Join us for the 112th Annual CBC on either or both of San Mateo County’s dates.

One of the fun things about participating in the CBC is the compilation dinner that follows at the end of the day. This year, the Crystal Springs count will again have its compilation at Laurelwood Round Table Pizza in San Mateo. The dinner is \$5.00 per person.

Because the Año Nuevo count happens on New Year’s Eve Day, as an enticement to get everyone to participate we have a special compilation dinner planned. This year it will be a barbeque held at a private barn south of Pescadero. The menu will include appetizers, BBQ steak, chicken, salmon, and Portobello mushrooms, scalloped potatoes, green salad, artichokes, and dessert. Because this is such a special event we will be asking CBC counters to pay \$12.00 for dinner and SAS will make up the difference for the actual cost. AND, we thought it would be fun to invite non-CBC SAS members to this dinner as well at a cost of \$20.00 per person (which is our actual cost). Thus those of you who don’t normally participate in the CBC will get the opportunity to have a great dinner AND hear the results of the count day. And because we will end at 8:00, there is still time to get to another New Year’s Eve party. This event will be by reservation only. For information and questions, contact Leslie Flint (lflint@earthlink.net)



Marbled Murrelet

THE BIRD BOX
RARE BIRD ALERT
415-681-7422

Mission Statement *Sequoia Audubon Society protects native birds and other wildlife and their ecosystems in San Mateo County by engaging people of all ages in conservation, education, advocacy, and enjoyment.*