

Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 33 Number III

November 1998

Coming Attractions

November 12, Thursday, 7:30 PM - General Meeting Darwin Hall, Room 221 - Sonoma State University, Cotati

AFRICA: In the comfort (?) of the classroom chairs, travel with Bob & Bertha Rains to the countries of Rwanda, Zaire and Kenya. Bob & Bertha, staunch RROS members who have volunteered and then served willingly for almost every office in our organization, will take us back in time to 1990 when they went on a Field Guides trip to Africa. Bring binoculars for a closer look at their interesting slides.

November 19th-22nd, Central Valley Birding Symposium

The Central Valley Bird Club has announced its second annual symposium to be held at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton November 19-22. They have scheduled field trips and ID workshops as well as a Birder's Market. The field trips promise huge waterfowl flocks and cranes in addition to a couple hundred other species. Speakers include Pete Dunne, John Dunn, Arnold Small, Joe Morlan, and Dave Shuford. For more information write F. Oliver, 1817 Songbird Place, Lodi 95240 or call the Convention Bureau at 800 350-1987.

November 20th, Friday - Observations Deadline

The 20th is the deadline for Kite Tales observations. Please forward sightings to Ned Wynn 129-B Powell Ave. Healdsburg, Ca 95448 707 431-8412 or via email: ekwynn@sonic.net

November 21st, Saturday, 8:30 AM - Field Trip to Schoellenberger Park

Schoellenberger Park is a Petaluma City Park. Meet in the parking area off the South McDowell Blvd Extension at 8:30AM. The parking area is not easily seen from McDowell; if you have difficulty finding it look for a narrow driveway on the west side of McDowell on the south side of a building with Teal or Turquoise trim. Bring scopes; we will look for wintering and late migrant waterfowl and gulls. Afterward we may go somewhere for lunch and then bird out Bodega Hwy if people wish to. Leader: Ruth Rudesill 833-6026 (however, I cannot be reached between Nov 2nd-18th.)

November 25th, Wednesday - Kite Tales deadline

Send announcements and articles to Gerry Mugele PO Box 813 Glen Ellen, Ca 95442 or via email: mewgull@ix.netcom.com

Your Birding Skills Needed at a Feeder

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society are asking birders everywhere to join the **2nd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count**, February 19-22. This is the first internet-based bird census. Birders of all experience levels are sought to count the birds they see at their feeders, local parks, or other areas.

Birders' reports are made online, through BirdSource <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu>>, a state-of-the-art website which is a joint project of Cornell and Audubon. Using the 'net,' tabulation results will be immediate.

Like last year, participants will be able to quickly see for themselves how their reports fit into the continent-wide perspective, as animated maps illustrate which birds are reported where in real-time. This year, however, participants will be able to ask the database their own questions, such as which species were reported in a particular zip-code, or how many of a certain species were seen. In addition, BirdSource will supply novices with help identifying birds by sight and by their distinctive calls.

To participate, simply go to the BirdSource website at <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu>>, click on the 2nd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count button and fill in the easy-to-use form. In addition to animated maps, visitors to the site can view colorful bird images, hear examples of songs and calls, read about the conservation status of key species, compare maps with other BirdSource projects, and more.

For more information contact Kara Grobert via email: kgrobert@audubon.org or via phone: 212 979-3027

A Great Blue's Dietary Habits

Jim Stevenson reports: A week ago Sunday I photographed a Great Blue Heron that caught a Sanderling, and had sanderlunch right there on the beach. It was reminiscent of a GBH I photoed many years ago with a Ruddy Duck in his bill.

Good Birding Spots #2**Sonoma Valley Regional Park**

by Gerry Mugele

Sonoma Valley Regional Park is one of the more pleasant places to bird in the Valley of the Moon. It is located at 13630 Sonoma Highway, near the village of Glen Ellen. There is a \$2 fee for parking or you can get the annual pass for \$40 which provides access to all 37 Sonoma county parks. The only facilities provided are a Porta-potty and drinking water at the parking lot. For the tight-wads there is also a "free" entrance off Arnold Drive just north of the Sonoma Developmental Center; park on the East side of the road and enter through a gate in the chain-link fence.

The 162 acre park adjoins Developmental Center land to the south. The main trail in the park is a paved path running about 1.5 miles from the parking area to the Arnold Drive gate. From the east end it crosses some grassy hills and enters a narrow arroyo with a variety of oaks. In the open areas you can find abundant Western Bluebirds, Redwing & Brewers Blackbirds, White & Golden Crowned, Savannah, Song, Fox & Lincoln's Sparrows, Lesser & American Goldfinches.

In the oaks you can find all the typical oak woodland species with a special abundance of woodpeckers including at least two communities of Acorn.

A mile from the parking area the path meets Sonoma Creek and turns left. Mergansers and Wood Duck frequent this area. A dirt trail can be taken on the south ridge of the arroyo to return to the entrance. At various points Lake Suttonfield can be seen to the south. Waterfowl are abundant in winter. The past four years Hooded Mergansers have made appearances. Shorebirds are infrequent but can be found. Osprey, Kestrel, Merlin, accipiters, kites, Golden eagles have all been seen as well as Red-tailed and Red-shouldered hawks.

Note: For access to Lake Suttonfield, obtain a permit from Sonoma Developmental Center.

Field Trip Report - Bodega Bay on October 10, 1998 *by Mike Nelligan*

The following members were present to share the sunny warm day: Nancy Conzett, Jack Harper, Mike Nelligan, Jean & Jim Tonascia, and Gene Udwin (our newest member). Joining the group for the day was Barbara Hower, visiting from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It is always a thrill to see a birder get a life bird as was the case when Barbara got her first look at a Virginia Rail in the Rail Ponds. A total of 75 species were seen. Highlights besides the two Virginia Rails were an American Redstart in the trees near the point where the road begins its climb up to Bodega Head and a female Black-throated Blue Warbler in Owl Canyon.

Birds Observed:

Common Loon	Pied-billed Grebe	Horned Grebe
Red-necked Grebe	Eared Grebe	Western Grebe
Clark's Grebe	Sooty Shearwater	American White Pelican
Brown Pelican	Double-crested Cormorant	Brandt's Cormorant
Pelagic Cormorant	Great Blue Heron	Great Egret
Snowy Egret	Black-crowned Night Heron	Brant
Wood Duck	Mallard	Greater Scaup
Surf Scoter	Ruddy Duck	Turkey Vulture
Northern Harrier	Sharp-shinned Hawk	American Kestrel
California Quail	Virginia Rail	Sora
American Coot	Black-bellied Plover	Snowy Plover
Killdeer	Black Oystercatcher	Willet
Whimbrel	Marbled Godwit	Black Turnstone
Red Knot	Sanderling	Western Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher	Heermann's Gull	Ring-billed Gull
Western Gull	Forster's Tern	Anna's Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher	Downy Woodpecker	Northern Flicker
Black Phoebe	Say's Phoebe	Scrub Jay
Common Raven	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Bewick's Wren	Winter Wren	Marsh Wren
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Starling	Orange-crowned Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Yellow-rumped Warbler	American Redstart
California Towhee	Fox Sparrow	Song Sparrow
Golden-crowned Sparrow	White-crowned Sparrow	Red-winged Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird	House Finch	American Goldfinch

More Migration News

Rich Stallcup has said that this fall's migration may have been the best ever in California. Your editor has been receiving many reports of weather related oddities from Guatemala. Perhaps the best item is from Texas, forwarded by Bob Mugele: "Over the weekend it rained 15-20 inches in San Antonio, and Austin. Many rivers between those cities and the gulf are flooded. This seems to have created a migration traffic jam. Geese, Pelicans, Sparrows (Swamp, Field, Le Contes), Kinglets, Red-headed Woodpeckers are all over the place in N. Central Texas.

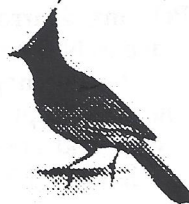
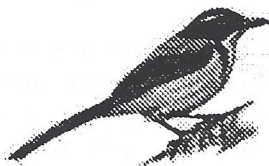
One humorous anecdote about the flooding. The evening news showed a cow in Seguin that was on the roof of a house! Evidently she was swept out of a field and floated on the current until she bumped into a house, climbed out of the water and stood on the roof. The next morning, the waters receded and there's a cow up on the roof of the house, 15 ft. off the ground! Priceless footage followed, of the cow charging would be rescuers!

Observations *by Ned Wynn*

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Red-necked Grebe	2	9/25	North of Westport	MEN	DT	still showing some red on neck
White-faced Ibis	1	10/6-?	Sebastopol	SON	Mob	2nd county record?
Ross's Goose	1	9/23	Carmody Lane ponds	SON	TE	
Blue-winged Teal	2	9/27	Ukiah Waste Water Ponds	MEN	CV, GC, BD, Mob	
Harlequin Duck	> 8	10/5	Glass Beach	MEN	DT	
Mongolian Plover	1	10/3	Eel River Wildlife Area	HUM	BDP	
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	10/2		HUM	BDP	
Baird's Sandpiper	1	10/4	Ukiah Waste Water Ponds	MEN	CV, BD	
Pectoral Sandpiper	1	10/6	Sebastopol	SON	BDP, DH, DE	
Bald Eagle	1	10/4	Sonoma Valley	SON	GM	Immature
Prairie Falcon	1	10/16	Manchester	MEN	DT, RH, EW	
White-head Woodpecker	1	10/18	Willetts	MEN	OK	
Tropical Kingbird	1	10/6	Marine Lab trees	SON	JH, BDP, DE, DH	
Townsend's Solitaire	1	10/5	Hopland Field Station	MEN	CV	
Gray Catbird	1	10/2	Campbell Cove	SON	DN, DH	
Sage Thrasher	1	9/26	MacKerricher State Park	MEN	DT, GH	Same spot as 3 years ago
Nashville Warbler	1	10/3	Owl Canyon	SON	EKW	
	1	10/6	Diekman's Store	SON	BDP, DE, DH	
Blk-thrted Blue Warbler	2	10/3-?	Owl Canyon	SON	DN, DC, EKW, mob	
Magnolia Warbler	1	10/2	Owl Canyon	SON	DH	
Palm Warbler	1	10/6	Salmon Creek Overlook	SON	DE, BDP, DH	
Blackpoll Warbler	1	9/20	Ukiah Waste Water Ponds	MEN	CV	
	1	9/26	Ft. Bragg by Skunk Tracks	MEN	GH, DT	
American Redstart	1	10/2	Owl Canyon	SON	DN, DH	
	2	10/6	Wright's Beach	SON	BDP, DE, DH	Yng. Male, fem.
	1	10/6	Hole-in-the-Head	SON	BDP, DE, DH	Yng. Male
Prothonotary Warbler	1	10/19	Hopland Field Station	MEN	CV	
Lark Bunting	1	9/21	MacKerricher State Park	MEN	DT	Yng Male
	1	9/30	Glass Beach	MEN	JW, DT	
Clay-colored Sparrow	2	9/30	Glass Beach	MEN	JW, DT	
	1	10/8	Campbell Cove	SON	DH	
White-throated Sparrow	1	10/13	Bodega Dunes Cmpground	SON	DH, DE	
Bobolink	6	10/2		HUM	BDP	

Observers:

George Chaniot, Drew Cronk, Barbara Dolan, Ted Elliot, Doug Ellis, G. Hazard, David Hoffman, R. Hudspeth, Ollie Kolkmann, Joel Hornstein, Gerry Mugele, Dan Nelson, Benjamin D. Parmeter, Dorothy Tobkin, Chuck Vaughn, Evelyn Wadsworth, Jerry White, Edmond K. Wynn



A Luxury Migration

Birders in England and those in the United States have very different ideas about what is countable and what isn't. Here is another prime example of this difference in philosophy.

A Gray Catbird landed on the Queen Elizabeth II in New York and rode across the Atlantic to England aboard the cruise ship. When word about the "passenger" arrived in England a "Mega Alert" was sounded as this would be the first occurrence in England for this species, one previous record from Ireland.

Apparently hundreds, maybe thousands of birders descended on the port. Unfortunately for them, the Catbird remained on board the ship. Later that same day the ship departed for the Mediterranean. Since only ticketed passengers were allowed on board, the birders were not allowed to see the bird. In the 23 October 1998 London Times, Andrew Raine was quoted as saying "We're completely devastated that it has left on the ship." There was an accompanying photo of the bird sitting on the railing of the ship. Apparently there was at least one birder on the cruise from New York.

I don't know if this bird would be considered an acceptable record for England, but it was definably bound to be a big chase bird.

The ship has stopped at several Mediterranean ports, still with the catbird aboard. It is now due to return to England on, I think, November 6.

The UK BirdNet mail list has almost daily updates on the status and location of the catbird, which is being fed. Anticipation of its return mounts, and its tickability is subject to much debate.

Unfortunately for Britain's legions of twitchers, the catbird's favorite perch on the ship is not visible from dockside. There have been suggestions of helicopter charters.

(ed: remember, I don't make this stuff up.)

And Now on the Radio

Last month we told you about the new book: *A Guide to Finding Birds in Mendocino County*, by RROS member Kris Carter.

Now "FLIGHT LINE", an "Earth & Sky" program on birds, airs on KZYX and KZYZ on Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m. following "Earth and Sky." Each segment will air again on the following Saturday at 11:00 a.m. following "Humble Pie."

"FLIGHT LINE" gives listeners three minutes of information about birds, covering topics from individual species to bird behavior to birding locations. The first segment, "The Color of Birds" aired October 6th and covered the source of color in birds and what birds use color for.

Tune to KZYX and KZYZ for more about birds on "FLIGHT LINE," by RROS and Mendocino Coast Audubon Society member, Kris Carter.

KZYX and KZYZ are public radio stations in Mendocino county so those of us from Sonoma, Napa and Marin will probably not be able to listen in except perhaps when visiting Mendocino.

Maybe Leg bands Would Help

The poor student had endured an incredibly grueling semester in the ornithology class and was dreading the final. Nevertheless he spent every possible moment preparing. The day before the fateful final exam his roommate asked if he wanted to take a break. He decided he'd earned it; he knew every beak, every feather, every eye ring and every song. He had only the legs left to study. But after a pizza and beer he fell asleep. The next morning, when he entered the room for the final identification exam he found that the professor had set out the legs of different species of birds for them to identify. He was stricken. This was certainly the last straw. The student proceeded to storm out of the classroom proclaiming "That's it! I refuse to take this exam!" The professor upon hearing this called out to the student as he stomped out the door "Hey you! What's your name?" The outraged student pulled up his pant leg and replied "here's my leg ... you tell me!"

Redwood Region Ornithological Society was organized in 1962 "to encourage the study and conservation of birds, other wildlife, and their natural habitat." Meetings are held the second Thursday of each month, September through May. Regular general meetings (October through April) are held at 7:30 PM in room 221 Darwin Hall, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California. Dues are \$15 per family, \$8 per individual, or \$3 per student for one year membership. Send dues to the treasurer shown below.

1998 - 1999 Officers:

President: Mike Nelligan, 124 Wikiup Drive, Santa Rosa CA 95403 707 576-1475
E-Mail: bandm@monitor.net

Vice President: Deyea Harper, 2310 Northwood Dr., Santa Rosa CA 95404 707 542-1542
E-Mail: JHarperTrustee@compuserve.com

Secretary: Benjamin D. Parmeter, 2500 Emerson St., Napa CA 94558 707 255-6757

Treasurer: Betty Burrige, 1653 Arroyo Sierra Way, Santa Rosa CA 95405 707 527-0225
E-Mail: bettyb@monitor.net

1998 - 1999 Chairs:

Field Trips: Ruth Rudesill, PO Box 371, Kenwood CA 95452 707 833-6026

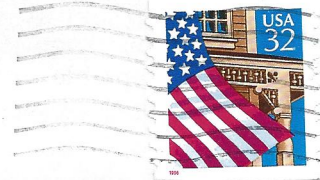
Observations: Ned Wynn, 129-B Powell Ave., Healdsburg CA 707 431-8412
E-Mail: ekwynn@sonic.net

Social: Barbara Gumtow, 7915 Bella Vista Dr., Sebastopol CA 95472 707 823-7869

Christmas Count: Doug Ellis, PO Box 776, Kenwood CA 95452
Ted Eliot, 5850 Grove St., Sonoma CA 95476 707 935-3410

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*Have you paid
your dues yet?* →