

# Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 33 Number V

January 1999

## Coming Attractions

### January 10th, Sunday, 7:30 AM - Field Trip to Point Reyes

Meet in the Petaluma Park & Ride lot at Highway 101 and Lakeville (Hwy 116) for car pooling. Bring scopes, lunch and all weather clothes. We'll look for wintering birds (like longspurs) and we'll check out the elephant seals. Leader: Ruth Rudesill 707 833-6026.

### January 14th, Thursday, 7:30 PM - General Meeting Darwin Hall, Room 221 - Sonoma State University, Cotati

A bird trip back east:

If you've never been, always wanted to go, but didn't know where to start, join us for a presentation by former member Joel Hornstein of Yuba City for "BIRDING SOUTH LONG ISLAND". Joel takes his camera and binoculars with him whenever he goes birding and has accumulated a lot of wonderful slides. We will have an opportunity to see some of his work in this program, including Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in New York.

NOTE: Look for "pre-meeting" information on page 5

### January 15th through January 18th - Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

The 2,200-acre Morro Bay estuary attracts thousands of migratory birds and as many as 195 species. The weekend will include workshops on bird photography, gardening for birds and butterflies, gull identification and pelagic birds of California. The keynote speaker this year is Kevin Padian who will speak on "How did birds evolve from dinosaurs? (And how do we know?)"

For more information call 800 231-0592 or visit the website at [www.morro-bay.net/birds](http://www.morro-bay.net/birds)

### January 20th, Wednesday - 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](mailto:ekwynn@sonic.net)

### January 25th, Monday - Kite Tales deadline

Send announcements, articles, letters to the editor and such to Gerry Mugele  
PO Box 813 Glen Ellen, Ca 95442 or via email: [mewgull@ix.netcom.com](mailto:mewgull@ix.netcom.com)

### February 12th to February 15th - Salton Sea International Bird Festival

The Salton Sea is one of the best birding spots in Western North America. Take this opportunity to add to your California list. Keynote speaker Ken Rosenberg will present "Birding Adventures in the Neotropical Rainforest".

For information call 760 344-5FLY or visit the website at [www.imperialcounty.com/birdfest](http://www.imperialcounty.com/birdfest)



## Good Birding Spots #3

## Gualala River

by Benjamin D. Parmeter ©

One of my favorite birding spots is the area around the mouth of the Gualala River on the Sonoma-Mendocino County line. Here, the year round, good birding is available. The level of the water in the river changes as the mouth of the river opens and closes due to the shifting sandbar at the mouth.

In winter all three common species of loons are seen on the lower river. Often a Peregrine Falcon can be seen perched on a snag on the island in the river. All three cormorants are usually in the area. Common Mergansers are very regular. Some shorebirds frequent the sandbar when the river is low. Most regular are Greater Yellowlegs and Least Sandpiper. Black Oystercatchers frequent the offshore rocks. Surf and White-winged Scoters are regular. Black Brant are not uncommon.

Offshore scoping has produced Sooty and Black-vented Shearwaters. A good variety of gulls is always present on the sandy beach to the south of the river mouth.

Regular alcids are Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Marbled Murrelet, and Rhinoceros Auklet. At Fish Rock, about four miles to the north, is a famous sea bird nesting site, including a few pairs of Tufted Puffins.

In Summer many interesting birds can

be found. Purple Martins nest in the concrete bridge over the river, using holes under the bridge on the Sonoma County side. Tree, Cliff, Rough-winged and Violet-green Swallows are common. Red-breasted Sapsuckers are frequently seen near the Sonoma County campground. Hairy and Acorn Woodpeckers are always present in the same area along the river. Orange-crowned, Yellow, Wilson's, MacGillivray's Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chat nest in the riverside riparian growth. Common Yellowthroats nest in a small marsh just north of the bridge. Warbling and Hutton's Vireos are common. Hermit Warblers are surprisingly common in the nearby Douglas Firs. Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, and Olive-sided Flycatcher are easily observed. Winter Wren is a common resident and its beautiful song can be heard almost throughout the year.

A number of rarities have been seen in the area including Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Magnolia and Chestnut-sided Warblers, and there is also a record for a Canada Warbler nearby at the Sea Ranch. A pair of Gray Jays stayed in the area for three years and nested on at least one occasion. A Franklin's Gull was seen in June of '91.

Owls in the area include Great Horned, Western Screech, Northern Saw-whet, Pygmy, and Spotted.

Formerly, Common Nighthawks were here annually. They should be looked for again.



**A Black and Yellow Rail**

*Phil Unitt tells the story:*

I got a phone call from Meryl Faulkner of Project Wildlife, a group of San Diego wildlife rehabilitators, that a supposed Black Rail had been picked up on Wednesday 16 December in Santee. It was not breathing properly and died later that day. Meryl received the bird a couple days later and had it with her when she called me. She knew it wasn't a Black Rail and described it to me over the phone. From the description I suggested it might be a Yellow Rail, and we arranged for me to pick the bird up that evening. The bird is indeed a Yellow Rail, a first for San Diego County. I will prepare it as a specimen for the San Diego Natural History Museum when I return to the museum on Wednesday after 4 days of Christmas Bird Counts.

I am trying to verify the exact location and to elicit any other details by calling the folks who picked it up initially; so far, I've just left a message on their answering machine. In any case, the specimen is in excellent condition and represents one of very few (still fewer than 10?) records of the Yellow Rail from southern California.

**Killer Vulture and the Parasitic Great Blue Heron**

Bob Doe reports an interesting recent observation at Braunig Lake near San Antonio. The recent cold snap has shocked many fish in this lake. Several were floundering around in the very shallow near-shore water.

A Turkey Vulture, ordinarily thought to be strictly a scavenger, waded into the water and retrieved a still struggling fish about 8 inches long, and returned to shore, carrying the fish in its beak.

As soon as the TV got completely on-shore, a Great Blue Heron flew in and landed right next to the vulture, causing the vulture to drop the fish which the Great Blue immediately stole.

**And on the subject of Vultures:**

Two vultures were in the desert eating a dead clown. The first vulture asks the second vulture: "Does this taste funny to you?"

**Cooperative Foraging**

Every morning just after sunrise, one can see a flock of 20-30 Double-crested Cormorants flying upstream along Bray's Bayou in Southwest Houston. They land near where a very heavily traveled road crosses the bayou and are soon joined by 10-20 Snowy Egrets (and often, 2-3 Great Egrets). The egrets apparently arrive in twos and threes.

What makes this fishing party interesting is the way the birds take advantage of the man-made geometry of the bayou to maximize their catch.

Although the stream follows the original meanders and is one of the city's designated green spaces, it does have a concrete bottom and sides forming an inverted trapezoid. Normally, there is water flowing only in the bottom of the channel, with the ledges on either side dry or only a few inches deep in water. The snowys line up 3-4 feet apart on the edges on both sides of the channel while the cormorants swim and dive in the channel itself.

As the cormorants drive the fish down stream and to the edges; the snowys drive them back to the center of the channel. The whole party works its way downstream, the cormorants swimming, and the egrets moving in turn (loosely speaking) to the downstream end of their line (or the one on the opposite edge). Occasionally, both flocks will pick up and fly farther upstream. The fish are apparently plentiful enough to make this a regular daily activity, so regular you can almost set your watch by the appearance of the cormorant flock.

**Duck Migration**

Have you ever noticed that when ducks migrate in their usual Vee formation, one side of the V is longer than the other? Can you guess why that is? Most often it because there are more ducks on that side. (it is *supposed* to be a joke.)

**And...**

A duck walks into a drug store and buys a chapstick. The clerk sez, "Will that be cash or charge?" The duck sez, "Just put it on my bill!"

Observations *by Ned Wynn*

Species	#	Date	Place	County	Who	Notes
Eared Grebe	3	12/20	Delta Pond	SON	BDP, BL	
Red-necked Grebe	1	12/19	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP, DA	
" " "	1	12/22	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	JP, BDP, DH	
Western Grebe	8	12/20	Delta Pond	SON	BDP, BL	
Clark's Grebe	2	12/20	Delta Pond	SON	BDP, BL	
White Pelican	85	12/20	Delta Pond	SON	BDP, BL	
American Bittern	1	12/19	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP, DA	
" "	1	12/19	S. of Delta Pond	SON	BDP, BL	
Snow Goose	1	12/20	West-Olivet Pond	SON	BDP, BL	
Ross' Goose	1	12/20	Delta Pond	SON	BDP, BL	
White-fronted Goose	2	12/19	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP, DA	flyover
" " "	1	12/20	Willowside area	SON	BDP, BL	
Brant	33	11/22	Doran Park- harbor side	SON	JH, DHr, BB, MN	
Eurasian Wigeon	2	12/20	West-Olivet Pond	SON	BDP, BL	2 males
" "	1	12/23	Bodega Harbor (the Tides)	SON	JP, BDP, EKW	
Ring-necked Duck	2	12/19	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP, DA	2 females
Oldsquaw	1	11/21	Bodega Harbor	SON	DHr, BB, MN	
Black Scoter	20	12/22	Schoolhouse Beach	SON	JP, BDP, DH	
Barrow's Goldeneye	1	12/19	Port of Sonoma	SON	AW	fen.
Hooded Merganser	2	12/11	Carmody Road	SON	BDP, DH	2 females
" "	2	12/22	Carmody Road	SON	JP, BDP, DH	Male & female
Common Merganser	162	12/20	Laguna de Santa Rosa	SON	BDP, BL	
Red-breasted Merganser	1	12/20	Timber Hill	SON	BDP, BL	
Osprey	1	12/15	Inverness	MAR	BDP, DH	
Ferruginous Hawk	1	12/9	Bridgehaven	SON	DB	
" "	1	12/22	Petaluma Hill Road	SON	AW	Adult, light morph
" "	1	12/28	Lovall Valley	SON	KM	
Merlin	1	12/15	Point Reyes Station	MAR	BDP, DH	Columbarius
Prairie Falcon	1	12/19	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP, DA	
Snowy Plover	2	12/22	Salmon Creek Mudflats	SON	JP, BDP, DH	
American Avocet	1K+	11/28	Tubb's Island	SON	BDP	in basic plummage
Wandering Tattler	1	12/22	Duncan's Landing	SON	JP, BDP, DH	
Long-billed Curlew	32	12/20	Laguna de Santa Rosa	SON	BDP, BL	
Long-billed Curlew	200	11/28	Tubb's Island	SON	BDP	
Thayer's Gull	4	12/20	Laguna de Santa Rosa	SON	BDP, BL	1 1st yr & 3 3rd yr
Common Murre	3	12/17	Bodega Head	SON	BDP	
Marbled Murrelet	~20	12/17	Bodega Head	SON	BDP	
" "	20	12/22	Bodega Head	SON	JP, BDP, DH	
Ancient Murrelet	2	12/17	Bodega Head	SON	BDP	
" "	1	12/22	Bodega Head	SON	JP, BDP, DH	
Rhinoceros Auklet	1	12/17	Bodega Harbor	SON	AW	
" "	4	12/22	Bodega Harbor	SON	JP, BDP, DH	
Burrowing Owl	1	11/28	Tubb's Island	SON	BDP	
Short-eared Owl	3	11/28	Tubb's Island	SON	BDP	
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	1	12/23	Below Diekmann's Store	SON	JP, BDP, mob	
" " "	1	12/23	Bodega Dunes CG	SON	DN	yes a 2nd bird!



## Observations (continued)

Tree Swallow	5+	11/28	Tubb's Island	SON	BDP	
" "	2	12/19	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP, DA	
" "	~40	12/20	Laguna de Santa Rosa	SON	BDP, BL	various locations
Orange-crownd Warbler	1	12/11	Below Diekmann's Store	SON	BDP, DH	
" " "	1	12/20	Matanzas Creek Winery	SON	GM	
" " "	1	12/20	Timber Hill	SON	BDP, BL	
" " "	1	12/22	Below Diekmann's Store	SON	JP, BDP, DH	
Tennessee Warbler	1	12/11	Below Diekmann's Store	SON	BDP, DH	First fall bird
Hermit Warbler	1	12/15	Shield's Marsh	MAR	BDP, DH	
Prairie Warbler	1	12/22	Owl Canyon	SON	JP, BDP, mob	First fall male
Swamp Sparrow	1	12/15	Shield's Marsh	MAR	BDP, DH	ad.
White-throated Sparrow	1	11/12	Nancy Conzett's Feeder	SON	NC	
" " "	1	12/22	Parmeter's Feeders	NAP	JP, BDP	
Tricolored Blackbird	50	12/19	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP, DA	near parking area
Yellow-headed Blackbird	1	12/22	Carmody Road	SON	JP, BDP	
Northern Oriole	1	12/11	Below Diekmann's Store	SON	JP, BDP, EKW	imm. Bullock's

**Observers:**

Dick Ashford, Dennis Beall, Betty Burrridge, Deyea Harper (DHr), David Hoffman, Bill Lenarz, Gerry Mugele, Kathy Mugele, Mike Nelligan, Dan Nelson, John Parmeter, Mike Parmeter (BDP), Alan Wight, NedWynn (EKW)

**RROS** has several new members and we wish to inform them that each month before our regular gatherings at Sonoma State we have an informal (no-host) pre-meeting dinner at Mary's Pizza Shack in Rohnert Park. Mary's is on Golf Course Drive immediately west of the Double Tree Inn. After our meal we proceed to Sonoma State's parking lot "J" Entering from East Cotati Avenue, you will need to purchase a parking permit at the roadside kiosk (\$1.50) and then make the first left.

Darwin Hall is most easily reached from Parking Lot J by walking to the main entrance road, then turning north (left) into the center of campus. Darwin Hall is the first main building on the left.

**Are you Online?**

For those of us that are Internet Enabled, Cornell's Ornithology lab has a great website providing a most useful page of CBC results. Want to know what happened before they get around to sending you the published results? <http://birdsource.tc.cornell.edu/features/cbc/>  
That's how I found out that the Shasta count had more Eagles than Ring-billed Gulls. They only had 12 Ring-billeds and 13 eagles: 6 Bald and 7 Golden.

**CBC Happenings: A Tale of a Too Friendly Robert Feline**

**Jim Stevenson reports:** While on the San Bernard (Texas) Christmas Bird Count, we had an experience that simply defies explanation. My party of five had a bobcat descend from a big oak. He then walked through the group and up to me and rubbed my leg while purring. Astonished, the "dream" continued by me (perhaps unwisely) reaching over and lifting the cat into my arms. It purred wildly while I petted it, and remained with us for the next two hours.

Now I realize this cat must have been a rehab release, but in 40-something years of field work, that was about the strangest thing I have ever encountered.

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, 2310Northwood 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 Burridge, 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  
E-Mail: rar@pcweb.net

**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

**Kite Tales:** Gerry Mugele PO Box 813, Glen Ellen, Ca 95442 707 938-2134  
E-Mail: mewgull@ix.netcom.com

Gerald G. Mugele  
PO Box 813  
Glen Ellen, California 95442

