

Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 33 Number VIII

April 1999

Coming Attractions

April 8th, Thursday, 7:30 PM - General Meeting
Darwin Hall, Room 221 - Sonoma State University, Cotati

Our Traditional Members Slide Night:

Limiting yourself to 10 slides, share some of your old and new photo shots with us. They could contain identifiable birds, mystery birds, people, plants, critters, or places of RROS trips.

April 10th, Saturday, 8:00 AM - Field Trip to Pine Flat Road

This month's field trip is to a favored RROS area on the slopes to the East of Alexander Valley. We will meet at the bottom of Pine Flat Road, just off Highway 128 Southeast of Geyserville. We'll be looking for Spring arrivals. (see Rick LeBaudour's report on this site on page 2) Bring your lunch and let's make a day of it. Leader: Ruth Rudesill 707 833-6026. Call for information or directions.

April 10th & 11th - Heron Days at Clear Lake

Even our old friends in Lake County are going in for eco-tourism: They'll have pontoon boat tours of Anderson Marsh to see the Great Blue Heron rookery (the boat ride fee is \$10 and advance reservations required.) Lake County is beautiful in April and the wild flowers can be astounding. For more information/reservations call the Lake County Visitor Information Center at 800 525-3743 or call Redbud Audubon at 707 994-2024

April 20th, Tuesday - 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

April 25th, Sunday - Kite Tales Deadline

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

June 3rd-6th, Western Field Ornithologists' meeting, Anchorage, Ak.

Yup, that's right; WFO is meeting in Anchorage at the peak of the season. You'd better plan now to get in on this trip for some great birding. A pelagic trip is planned for the 6th. It will be an all day trip out of Seward and most of us can probably expect to see a good number of life birds. And how about a possible Long-billed Murrelet for your life list.

Information on registration, accommodations, other field trips, etc. are posted on the WFO web site (www.wfo-cbrc.org). WFO members should have received their meeting circulars about mid March.

Good Birding Spots #7**Pine Flat Road***by Rick LeBaudour*

Pine Flat Road is located in the Northeast section of Sonoma County, East of Alexander Valley. It may be reached from Alexander Valley Road where it intersects with Highway 128, about six miles Southeast of Geyserville.

The road winds its way upslope for seven or eight miles through a variety of habitats, including oak woodlands, grassy hillsides, groves of Douglas Fir, Digger Pines and chaparral.

The best time of year to bird the area is mid April to late May. Morning is the best time of day for hearing birds and the traffic is light. The elevation climb from the valley is roughly 2,000 feet.

Birds I have seen and heard over the years, up to April 19th 1998, include: Wild Turkey, Pileated Woodpecker, Purple Martin, Northern Pygmy Owl, Western Tanager, Nashville Warbler, Hermit Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, California Thrasher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, Chipping Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak and Golden Eagle.

During the Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas project, Dan Nelson found Lawrence's Goldfinches displaying breeding behavior.

On a Madrone Audubon field trip in May 1993 Black Swifts and Black-chinned Sparrows were seen.

I have on occasion encountered youngsters taking target practice, so make sure to observe private property signs. Pine Flat Road is well worth a chunk of your birding time. Start early and bring food and water to enjoy your birding at a leisurely pace.

Going North?

Planning to visit some fulmar colonies this Spring? Be careful. It is best to keep well clear of the nests of the fulmar, an often grumpy bird that is capable of spitting a foul-smelling, yellowish oil at nest intruders. The oil comes from the bird's stomach. The bird can send the oil as far as 1.5 meters (5 feet) with great accuracy.

Fulmars are "tube-noses" related to albatrosses and petrels, in the order Procellariiformes. While most birds in this group produce stomach oil for feeding their young, only the fulmar spits it at intruders.

Even when they are not spitting oil, fulmars and their close relatives are malodorous creatures. Every part of the bird emits a strong, musky odor, even the eggs. Northern Giant Petrel (AKA Northern Giant Fulmar) eggshells that have been in a museum for 100 years still smell.

Off Shore Mendocino

Have you been thinking there must be some really great birds off the Mendocino Coast? Here's your chance to have a look:

The Peregrine Audubon Chapter in Mendocino County has organized a Mendocino County pelagic trip for Sunday, 23 May 1999. Weather permitting, the TREK II, under Captain Rick Thornton, will depart Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg at 7 a.m. sharp, head along the Noyo trench to 30 miles offshore, and return in the mid-afternoon.

Ron LeValley of Mad River Biologists will be the main leader; other leaders are being recruited.

The cost is \$70 per person, payable in advance. Make checks payable to: Peregrine Audubon Chapter. Send your check to "Pelagic Trip", c/o Bob Keiffer, P.O. Box 354, Hopland, CA 95449. Space is limited to 28 persons. Reservations are first-come, first-served and based on payment received, so sign up now to reserve a spot!

Upon receipt of payment, Bob Keiffer will send you confirmation information with specific details (dock location, what to expect, previous species list, etc.).

Birds seen before include: Black-footed and Laysan Albatross; Murphy's Petrel; Pink-footed, Buller's, and Sooty Shearwaters; Fork-tailed, Leach's, and Ashy Storm-Petrels; Pomarine Jaeger; South Polar Skua; Sabine's Gull; Caspian, Common, and Arctic Terns; Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklet; Tufted and Horned Puffin; and more.

One spring trip resulted in ten species of marine mammals! Orcas, Pacific White-sided Dolphins, Dall's Porpoises, Blue Whales, Sperm Whales, Baird's Beaked Whales, Harbor Porpoises, Northern Fur Seals, Elephant Seals, and more, have been seen.

For more detailed information, contact Bob Keiffer at (707) 744-1424 or <rjkeiffer@ucdavis.edu>.

A Truck Load of Penguins

A guy is driving a large flat bed truck down the road with dozens of penguins standing on the back. Just as he passes a parked patrol car he hits a bump and all the penguins are bounced high into the air.. The cop sees this and chases the truck. The officer is appalled to see the birds leaning left and right at incredible angles as the truck takes each turn. Furious at the situation, he pulls the truck over and yelling, tells the driver, "I want you to take those penguins to the zoo right now!" The guy, not wanting to annoy the cop more, says, "O.K."

The next day the cop sees this same guy going down the road with the penguins in the back. This time the penguins are all wearing sunglasses. He pulls the guy over again and says, "What the heck are you doing? I thought I told you to take those penguins to the zoo yesterday." The guy answers, "Yes, that's right, we went and had a great time. Thanks so much for the suggestion. Today we're going to the beach!"

Field Trip Report

Shollenberger Park, Petaluma
March 13th 1999, - by Ruth Rudesill

Five of us walked around Shollenberger Park, which was cold and foggy but the sun broke through by the end of the walk.

Highlights included: Over a dozen Blue-winged Teal, good looks at Sora, Common Moorhen, and American Bittern. Two Pied-billed Grebes were "dancing"

Participants: Deyea Harper, Bob and Bertha Rains, Ruth Rudesill, and Ann Stone

Birds Observed: Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Turkey Vulture, American Kestrel, Virginia Rail, Sora, Moorhen, American Coot, Killdeer, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Long-billed Curlew, Least Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, California Gull, Western Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Mourning Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Black Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, American Crow, Marsh Wren, Northern Mockingbird, American Pipit, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Western Meadowlark.



The RROS Rare Bird Phone Wheel

Welcome to the seven new members joining those already listed on the phone wheel.

Reminder: please keep phoning until you hear a live person, otherwise the rare bird gets lost. This Phone Wheel list will not be reprinted in the Kite Tales, so please keep this issue for your use.

- 1. Richard Merriss 707 525-8629
- 2. Rick LeBaudour 707 792-1800
- 3. Wini Nelson 707 762-6152
- 4. Alan Wight 707 763-8572
- 5. Gerry Mugele 707 938-2134
- 6. Ted Eliot 707 935-3410
- 7. Mike Parmeter 707 255-6757
- 8. Wayne Tillay 707 965-2978
- 9. Ruth Rudesill 707 833-6026
- 10. Ian Morrison 707 833-2065
- 11. Bob Rains 707 528-6785
- 12. Ann Stone 415 346-8360
- 13. Tony Kroha 707 537-9648
- 14. Linda Allen 707 538-7256
- 15. Diane Hichwa 707 579-1182
- 16. Dan Wilson 707 579-3949
- 17. Betty Groce 707 539-8664
- 18. Betty Burr ridge 707 527-0225
- 19. Avis Anderson 707 539-0470
- 20. Deyea Harper 707 542-1542
- 21. David Hoffmann 707 546-0325
- 22. Linda Petrulias 707 632-5532
- 23. Louise Johnston 707 823-2245
- 24. Ned Wynn 707 431-8412



Kite Tales

Observations

April 1999

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Laysan Albatross	1	3/13	Pt. Arena	MEN	BDP	
✓ American Bittern	2	3/21	Shollenberger Park	SON	BM, GM, et. al.	
Green Heron	1	3/21	Shollenberger Park	SON	BM, GM, et. al.	
✓ Ross' Goose	1	3/11	Lucchesi Park, Petaluma	SON	AW	thru at least 3/21
Mute Swan	3	3/21	Shollenberger Park	SON	BM, GM, et. al.	
✓ Blue-winged Teal	16	3/7	Shollenberger Park	SON	AW	
✓ " " "	20+	3/21	Shollenberger Park	SON	BM, GM, et. al.	
Oldsquaw	1	3/10	Bodega Harbor	SON	DB, mob, MAS	female
Golden Eagle	1	3/10	Hudeman Slough	SON	TE	sub-adult
Merlin	1	3/10	Healdsburg	SON	EKW	Yard bird
"	1	3/11	Hole-in-The-Head	SON	TE	
Peregrine Falcon	1	3/4	Shollenberger Park	SON	DHr, KM, GM	
" "	1	3/10	Pt. Arena	MEN	BDP, TE, DA, CB	
" "	3	3/20	Hood Mountain	SON	AW	courtship
Blue Grouse	1	3/10	King Ridge Rd.	SON	BDP, DH, JD	
Mountain Quail	1	3/13	Pt. Arena	MEN	BDP, TE, CB, DA	calling
Virginia Rail	2	3/20	Shollenberger Park	SON	BM, GM, et. al.	
✓ Sora	5+	3/21	Shollenberger Park	SON	BM, GM, et. al.	
✓ Common Moorhen	6	3/21	Shollenberger Park	SON	BM, GM, et. al.	
Wandering Tattler	1	3/11	Bodega Harbor Jetty	SON	TE	
Glaucous Gull	1	2/26	Freshwater Lagoon	HUM	BDP	
✓ " "	1	3/11+	Lucchesi Park, Petaluma	SON	AW	
Northern Pygmy-Owi	2	3/10	King Ridge Rd.	SON	DH, BDP, JD	called in
Burrowing Owl	1	3/6	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	MR, DN	w/ nearby coyote
Costa's Hummingbird	1	2/28	St. Helena	NAP	CB, BDP	yard bird
Rufous Hummingbird	1	2/28	St. Helena	NAP	BDP, RB	feeder
" "	1	3/13	Howarth Park	SON	RH	
Allen's Hummingbird	1	3/2	Bodega Harbor	SON	EKW	
✓ Northern Shrike	1	2/26+	Bodega Marine Lab	SON	PC, EKW, DH, mob	
✓ N. Rough-wing Swallow	4+	3/8	Shollenberger Park	SON	TE	
✓ Barn Swallow	1	3/2	Shollenberger Park	SON	AW	
" "	2	3/8	Shollenberger Park	SON	TE	
House Wren	1	3/6	Copeland Crk. Rohnert Pk	SON	BDP	wintering bird?
American Dipper	1	3/10	King Ridge Rd.	SON	BDP, DH, JD	2nd bridge
" "	3	3/13	King Ridge Rd.	SON	BDP, TE, DA, CB	2nd bridge
Nashville Warbler	1	3/5+	Copeland Crk. Rohnert Pk	SON	CC, AW, EKW	
Chipping Sparrow	1	2/28	Coalinga	FRE	EKW	Early ?
✓ Clay-colored Sparrow	1	3/5+	Copeland Crk. Rohnert Pk	SON	CC, AW, EKW, BDP	
✓ Black-headed Grosbeak	1	Cont.	Bodega Bay	SON	NC	juv. since 1/7/99
✓ Dark-eyed Junco	1	3/20	Sugarloaf Ridge St. Park	SON	AW	male - Slate-colored

Observers:

Dick Ashford, Dennis Beale, Charlie Bray, Peter Connor, Nancy Conzett, Chris Corben, Juanita Doran, Ted Elliot, Doug Ellis, Deyea Harper (DHr), David Hoffman, Rod Hug, Bob Mugele, Gerry Mugele, Kathy Mugele, Dan Noreen, Mike Parmeter (BDP), Mary Rooney, Alan Wight, Ned Wynn (EKW)

Birding for Science

Birds In Forested Landscapes (BFL)

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology needs volunteer birders and experienced biologists to help study the effects of forest fragmentation on North American forest birds, as part of our Birds in Forested Landscapes project (BFL).

Do they nest more successfully in large forests? Are nest predators and Brown-headed Cowbirds more numerous in small forests? By joining the BFL team, you can help answer these questions while learning about bird identification and avian ecology.

As a BFL participant, you'll survey up to seven thrush species and Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks. You choose study sites in forests of various sizes then census birds on at least two visits (using tape or CD of their vocalizations), search for indications of breeding success, and record landscape characteristics about your sites.

Results from BFL are being used to develop conservation and management recommendations for sustaining healthy populations of these species.

This project is a great opportunity to "get out in the field." It's ideal for individuals, groups, class projects, and collaboration with ongoing research. If you're a student, it can be an important addition to your resume.

For more information, contact:

Allison Wells
 Cornell Lab of Ornithology
 Ithaca, NY 14850
 amw25@cornell.edu

A Little Night Music for Owls

Alison Sheehey tells it: I have an interesting anecdote about saw-whet owls I thought some of you might enjoy hearing. At one time I actually got paid to hoot for spotted owls. Unlike some researchers, I will tell you that the canned recordings I had got no response. For me vocal imitation was the most effective way to get a quick response from spotted owls. I have also imitated most of the owls of the Sierras with good results. But one night a recording was more effective on saw-whets.

In June 1992, I was working for a company contracted to research spotted owls in the Piute Mountains of Sequoia National Forest. Our crew of six worked and camped out for a month. We worked in pairs.

One night my partner and I returned to an empty campsite. As we started the campfire and made a midnight snack I asked if he objected to some music. He did not, so I proceeded to play some Scott Joplin piano rags on the CD player. Suddenly we were surrounded by a family of 8 saw-whet owls just sawing away in tune to the music.

Taken aback, I thought we must be disturbing them so I turned off the CD. They just looked kind of disappointed and flew away. It dawned on me; they might actually like the music. I turned it back on and we enjoyed a saw-whet serenade accompanied by Joplin for the next twenty minutes.

So next time you look for saw-whets; remember they may be the jazziest owls around.

Broadwinged Hawks Numbers!

The list below is for the **one day** totals at a Hawk Watch site on the Texas Gulf coast. Reported by Patty & Bill Beasley and Vicki Simon

Here the numbers for Tuesday 3/30/1999:

- Black vulture 1
- Turkey vulture 88
- Osprey 1
- Northern Harrier 1
- Cooper's hawk 3
- Red-shouldered hawk 4
- Broadwinged hawk 31,500
- Swainson's hawk 18
- American Kestrel 1
- Unknown raptor 1
- Total: 31,618**

That's 31,500 Broadwingeds!

And just to confirm the numbers, Pat DeWenter, of Weslaco, Texas reports: While on my way to the grocery store Wednesday afternoon March 31st, at 1:20, I saw a **HUGE** number of Broadwinged Hawks. I pulled over to try and do a count, but didn't have my binocs! With my naked eye I could see three very large kettles and estimated that there were between 2000-3000 hawks that I could see without optics!

This is the second day this week that I've seen kettles over Weslaco. How many of these birds that go over Texas each Spring are never seen and counted at the various hawk watch sites.

You Just Might Be a Birder if...

- You often call your four children by each other's names but you never misidentify Lesser or Greater Yellowlegs.
- News that a species has split (and you have already seen both forms!) is cause for a three day drunk.
- Someone yells "Duck!", and you look up and shout "Where?"
- You criticize television programs and commercials that depict a Bald Eagle but play a Red-tailed Hawk call.
- You plan all vacations to maximize the number of life birds.
- People stop and stare when you pish at the shrubbery at the local mall.
- You try to talk your kid into going to college in Belize so that you have an excuse to go and bird there.
- A malfunctioning machine squeaks at work and you describe it to maintenance as sounding like a black-and-white warbler.
- Every last gift or card you receive has a bird on it.

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
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 707 935-3410
Ted Eliot, 5850 Grove St., Sonoma CA 95476 707 938-2134

Kite Tales: Gerry Mugele, PO Box 813, Glen Ellen, Ca 95442 707 938-2134
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