

Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 33 Number IX

May 1999

Coming Attractions

May 13th, Thursday, 6:00 PM - Year End Potluck Meeting Shollenberger Park, off South McDowell Blvd. Petaluma

Once again we're ending the RROS year with a Potluck feast and meeting:

Bring your own folding chairs, a TV tray, a potluck dish, and your plate with utensils to our May meeting. A couple of tables will be provided to put the potluck offerings on, but be prepared to eat on your lap or your TV tray. We will have a beautiful view of this park and its birds as we visit and enjoy our shared dinner goodies. Afterwards those that want to will be able to walk around the ponds and see what other species might be found.

Important: No restroom facilities are available at this location. The nearest public access toilets are at the Beacon Station at the intersection of Lakeville Highway and Casa Grande Road or at the Yardbirds store about one half mile west on Lakeville Highway. Parking at Shollenberger is limited; if the lot is full when you arrive, use the parking area of the adjacent vacant building with the teal colored trim.

Map and driving instructions are included on page 5.

May 23rd, Sunday, 8:30 AM - North Sonoma County Coast

This month's field trip will take us along the dramatic Sonoma County coast north of the Russian River. Meet at the intersection of Highway 116 and Highway 1 on the north side of the river at Bridgehaven. As we travel north we will be looking for coastal nesting birds and then move inland to seek forest species. We plan to reach the Gualala area. Bring scopes, lunch, and some cash for park entrance fees (\$3 to \$5) Leader: Ruth Rudesill 707 833-6026. Call for information or directions.

June 19th to 25th - Birding in Scotland

Want to bird the Firth of Forth, have your meals where Mary Queen of Scots probably dined and spend your nights in a 13th century castle on a 30 acre estate? All this is part of an RSPB course offered at Carberry Castle, about 20 minutes from Edinburgh. Details on page 5.

August 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

August 25th, Wednesday - 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

Good Birding Spots #8

Ida Clayton Road

by Alan Wight

One of the best places for springtime bird watching in Sonoma County is Ida Clayton Road where a large number of our returning spring migrants can be seen. April and May are the best months.

Ida Clayton Road intersects Highway 128 as it enters southern Knight's Valley in eastern Sonoma County. It climbs into the mountains on the northwest shoulder of Mt. St. Helena. The terrain is steep and offers many nice vistas, including wonderful views of the north side of Mt. St. Helena. The road continues to the Lake County line where it becomes Western Mine Road. The high point of the road is about 2600 feet. Several different habitat types are traversed by the road, including douglas-fir forest, oak grassland, oak woodland, and chaparral. This variety of habitats hosts a fine variety of birds.

The chaparral zone is a good place to look and listen for Bewick's Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, California Thrasher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Sage Sparrow. Over the past few years, vineyards have encroached on this part of the road and replaced a good portion of the chaparral to the south.

Above the chaparral, Ida Clayton Road enters a stand of douglas-firs. This is a good spot for Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Warbling and Solitary Vireos, and Pileated Woodpecker. Singing Nashville Warblers have been seen at this location several times. From this point on, the calls of Mountain Quail can often be heard. The road becomes relatively level at this point and traverses the north side of a ridge. This is a good area to look for migrant Hermit, Townsend's, and Nashville Warblers.

Most of Sonoma County's recently-returned spring migrants can be seen along Ida Clayton Road. Birds that are regularly seen include Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Tanager, Purple Finch, Lazuli Bunting, Orange-crowned Warbler, Band-tailed Pigeon, House Wren, and Western Wood-Pewee. White-throated Swift and Olive-sided Flycatcher are also occasionally seen.

Ida Clayton Road has produced some rather unusual (for Sonoma County) birds over the years. A calling Greater Roadrunner was heard on April 29, 1978 (Benjamin D. Parmeter). There are at least three spring/summer records of Black-chinned Sparrows along Ida Clayton Road from the late 60s and early 70s. A MacGillivray's Warbler used to be an annual occurrence along a creek on the upper part of the road (the traditional RROS field trip lunch stop). This bird disappeared a few years ago and has not yet returned (I'm still hoping).

For those interested in plants, Ida Clayton Road provides an even greater diversity than of birds. Some of the more noteworthy plants are Sugar Stick (*Allotropa virgata*), Mt. St. Helena Fawn Lily (*Erythronium helena*), Mountain Dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*), and several species of Ceanothus.

All in all, Ida Clayton Road is a very nice place to be in the springtime.

Off Shore Mendocino

Reminder: Only a few more weeks. Call now.

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>.

Bird Brains

They're better than you think.

LONDON -April 6th 1999 - Apart from their ability to fly, birds have another enviable ability: They can sleep with one eye open and half of their brain awake, researchers said yesterday.

It's called unihemispheric slow-wave sleep - or USWS for short - and it allows birds to detect approaching predators while still getting a bit of shut-eye.

"They are able to make behavioral decisions about whether they keep one half of the brain awake, or allow both halves of it to sleep," behavioral neurophysiologist Niles Rattenborg said in a telephone interview.

Field Trip Report

Pine Flat Road

April 10th 1999, - by Ruth Rudesill

Seven brave birders dared the elements to bird Pine Flat Road. Snow was falling at the top of the road (lightly) and the visibility was very poor. It was cold and very few birds were around. Most species on our list were heard and not seen.

Participants: Linda Allen, Avis Anderson, Barb Gumtow, Richard Hurley, Tony Kroha, Ruth Rudesill, and Carole Sunlight.

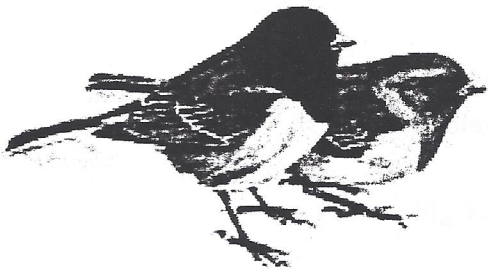
Birds Observed: Turkey Vulture, White-tailed Kite, Anna's Hummingbird, Northern Flicker, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Steller's Jay, Scrub Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit, Winter Wren, Bewick's Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Western Bluebird, American Robin, California Thrasher, Wrentit, European Starling, Hutton's Vireo, Spotted Towhee, California Towhee, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, and Western Meadowlark.

RROS Elects New Officers

Our April meeting included the annual elections of RROS officers. Our newly elected officers are:

- President: Deyea Harper
- Vice President: Betty Groce
- Secretary: Mike Parmeter
- Treasurer: Mike Nelligan

The remaining offices and roles will continue to be filled by those dedicated souls from the prior year.



The Outgoing Prez Sez: "Thanks."

Thanks to all the officers and chairpersons for their efforts in providing another successful year for RROS. Special thanks to Deyea Harper for bringing us interesting and informative programs. If you have an idea for a program next year, Betty Groce would be happy to hear from you. Thanks to Betty for accepting the nomination for Vice-Presidency next year.

A special project of mine was the "Good Birding Spot" articles, and I thank each member that contributed an article.

Finally, thanks to Terry Babineaux for the extended loan of his slide projector. Without it many of our meetings would have been dark. I'm hoping to see everyone at the May picnic/pot-luck at Shollenberger Park.

Mike Nelligan

MIT Bird Studies

On a pleasant Spring day a behavioral science student from MIT had an unfortunate encounter with some members of the football team from that other school in Cambridge. They mocked him mercilessly for his birdwatching by the Charles River. He asked them to leave him alone but they taunted him even more. He demanded they be on their way but they responded by asking what he could do about it. In desperation he threatened to disrupt their football game. They were overcome by gales of laughter and let their victim escape.

That summer the MIT student went to the Harvard football field every day wearing a black and white striped shirt. He walked up and down the field for ten or fifteen minutes scattering seed all over the field, blowing a whistle and then walking off the field.

At the end of the summer, it came time for the first Harvard home football game, the teams entered the stadium, the referee walked onto the field and blew the whistle to begin the game. The game had to be delayed for over an hour while officials tried to get the hundreds of birds off of the field. The student wrote his thesis on this and graduated.

Observations

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
✓ Red-necked Grebe	6	3/27	Bodega Harbor Entrance	SON	DN	alternate plumage
Cattle Egret	?	4/6	Sanford Rd @ Occidntl Rd.	SON	NC	Aleutian race
Ross' Goose	1	4/11	Lucchesi Park Petaluma	SON	AW	continuing
✓ Canada Goose	1	4/3	Lakeville Highway Dairy	SON	AW	
✓ Tufted Duck	1	3/26	Lakeville Sewer Ponds	SON	DN	male - 6th year in a row
Oldsquaw	3	4/10	Bodega Harbor	SON	MOB	
Swainson's Hawk	3	4/6	Along I-5 Throckton Rd	SAC	EKW	2 male 1 fem, dark morph
✓ Ferruginous Hawk	1	4/3	Lakeville Hiway	SON	AW	
Golden Eagle	2	3/14	Stage Gulch Rd.	SON	RR	pair
" "	1	4/14	Cheney Gulch	SON	NC	
Peregrine Falcon	1	3/25	Porto Bodega	SON	DN	
✓ Chukar	2	3/28	Tubb's Island	SON	BDP	Origin uncertain
✓ Sandhill Crane	2	3/17	Rohnert Park	SON		
✓ " "	2	4/6	Hunter Lane	SON	CS	same birds?
Little Gull	1	4/6	Stockton Sewer Ponds	SJ	EKW, mob	Winter adult
✓ Cassin's Auklet	1	4/3	Inside Bodega Harbor	SON	GM et. al.	
✓ Long-eared Owl	1	3/25	Pine Flat Rd.	SON	JW	nr. Kendall Jackson
Short-eared Owl	1	3/21	China Camp State Park	MAR	DN	
Rufous Hummingbird	1	3/17	Cazadero	SON	DB	
" "	8		Occidental Rd.	SON	EJ	
" "	2	4/11	West Petaluma Yard	SON	AW	1st seen 3/28
Red-breasted Sapsucker	1	4/1	Conifer Rd.	SON	LP	
✓ Cassin's Vireo	2	3/21	Cazadero	SON	DB	Yard bird (early)
✓ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	3/20	Campbell Cove	SON	DN	
" " "	1	3/21	China Camp State Park	MAR	DN	
✓ Townsend's Solitaire	1	4/6	Burnham Ranch Rd.	SON	KF	
Crissal Thrasher	1	3/18	CA side of Colorado River ?		RR	
Wilson's Warbler	3	4/15	Bodega Dunes	SON	DN	
White-throated Sparrow	1	4/12	West Petaluma Yard	SON	AW	
" " "	2	4/14	Kenwood	SON	RR	Feeder, singing
Indigo Bunting	1	4/11	feeder nr Sutter Hosp. S.R.	SON	KS	male
Hooded Oriole	1	3/31	Sonoma State Campus	SON	GR	
" "	1	4/12	West Petaluma Yard	SON	AW	
Bullock's Oriole	1	4/5	Spring Lake	SON	RR	nest
" "	1	4/5	yard in Petaluma	SON	WN	
Evening Grosbeak	6	4/12	West Petaluma Yard	SON	AW	

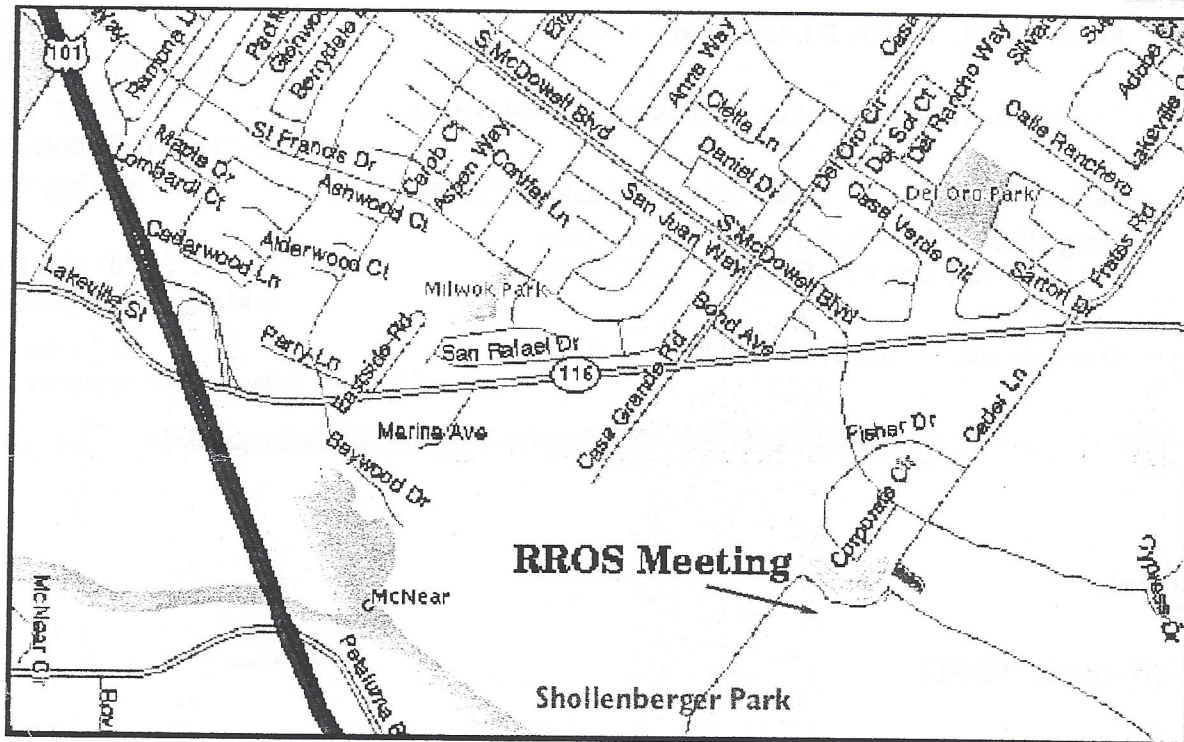
Observers:

Dennis Beale, Nancy Conzett, Kathy Francone, Ellen Jori, Gerry Mugele,
 Dan Nelson, Wini Nelson, Mike Parmeter (BDP), Linda Petruvias,
 Gail Roper, Ruth Rudesill, Kristin Sesser, Claire Shurvinton, Alan Wight,
 Jon Winter, Ned Wynn (EKW)

How to get to Shollenberger Park:

From Rohnert Park drive south on US 101 to the Highway 116 (Lakeville Highway) exit. From Novato and points south, drive north on US101 to the Highway 116 exit. Proceed east on Lakeville to the first traffic signal beyond the Beacon Station at Casa Grande Road; turn right onto South McDowell Blvd. Continue about 1/4 mile to the narrow drive labeled "City Park"

From the Sonoma Valley and points east, take Highway 116 (Stage Gulch Road) in Sonoma Valley. At the junction of Adobe Rd and 116 continue west on Adobe Rd to the intersection with Frates Rd. Continue straight on Frates to the intersection with Lakeville Highway. Cross Lakeville onto Cader Lane and proceed straight to the park.



Birding in Scotland:

Carberry Castle will be the center of a week of birding in the Lothian area of Southeastern Scotland. There is a promise of such birds as Razorbills, Atlantic Puffins, Gannets, Ptarmigan and others. In association with RSPB (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) birders will be treated to daily outings and lectures. Sonoma birder and eminent California historian, James Rawls (AKA Dr. History) will give a talk on John Muir. There will also be a visit to Muir's home in the nearby town of Dunbar. .

The £299 cost (about \$480 as of May 1st) includes lodging from June 19th through June 24th, meals from lunch on the 19th through breakfast on the 25th, and all transport on field trips. Quite a bargain.

For reservations or more information contact Jock Stein by phone at 0131 665 2116, or via Email Carberry@dial.pipex.com. For more about the week's activities and other local contacts call Gerald Mugele at 707 766-8682 or via Email at MewGull@ix.netcom.com

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.

1999 - 2000 Officers:

President: Deyea Harper, 2310 Northwood Dr., Santa Rosa CA 95404 -2245 707 542-1542
E-Mail: JHarperTrustee@compuserve.com

Vice President: Betty Groce, 411 Trail Ridge Ct., Santa Rosa CA 95409-6482 707 539-8664

Secretary: Benjamin D. Parmeter, 2500 Emerson St., Napa CA 94558-4611 707 255-6757

Treasurer: Mike Nelligan, 124 Wikiup Drive, Santa Rosa CA 95403-7700 707 576-1475
E-Mail: bandm@monitor.net

1999 - 2000 Chairs:

Field Trips: Ruth Rudesill, PO Box 371, Kenwood CA 95452-0371 707 833-6026
E-Mail: rar@pcweb.net

Observations: Ned Wynn, 129-B Powell Ave., Healdsburg CA 95448-3413 707 431-8412
E-Mail: ekwynn@sonic.net

Social: Barbara Gumtow, 7915 Bella Vista Dr., Sebastopol CA 95472-2701 707 823-7869

Christmas Count: Doug Ellis, PO Box 776, Kenwood CA 95452-0776 707 935-3410
Ted Eliot, 5850 Grove St., Sonoma CA 95476-6095 E-Mail: patted@sonic.net

Kite Tales: Gerry Mugele, PO Box 813, Glen Ellen, Ca 95442-0813 707 938-2134
E-Mail: mewgull@ix.netcom.com

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

