

Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 34 Number I

September 1999

Coming Attractions

September 9th, Thursday, 6:00 PM - Beginning Year Potluck Meeting Garden at Dr. Jack Arnold's Home

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

This time it's a special gathering at Dr. Arnold's home at 199 Calistoga Road in Santa Rosa. Come say "Hi." to Jack. The driveway is on the west side of Calistoga Road and can be difficult to see. Keep an eye out for the large trees before you reach the firehouse. Bring your own table, folding chairs, a TV tray, a potluck dish, and your plate with utensils to our September meeting. Be prepared to eat on your lap or your TV tray. The dinner will begin promptly at 6:00 PM and will be followed by a short business meeting.

NOTE: Parking is limited on the property; you may need to find parking beside the road. Please use care because traffic moves fast and can be heavy here.

September 18th, Saturday, All day Long - PRBO Birdathon

This is Point Reyes Bird Observatory's big fund raising event of the year and certainly deserves our support. If you aren't already a counter call Deena Wade at 415 868-1221, extension 24, to sign up. Or if you can't participate in the field you can still sponsor an individual or a team in the field. This year, by special request, *Kite Tales* invites you to sponsor your editor, Gerry Mugele. Give him a call at 707 938-2134 to make your pledge or to join the team. There will likely be some *other* team counting in Sonoma County too, so you *could* sponsor Mike Parmeter (707 255-6757) although it will probably be much more expensive for you on a per species basis, and better for PRBO.

September 19th, Sunday, 7:15 AM

Field Trip to Point Reyes National Seashore

Meet at 7:15AM at the Petaluma Park-and-Ride (located at Highway 101 and Lakeville Highway) for car pooling. We will be searching all the usual spots for the usual fall migrants and the unusual vagrants. Bring binoculars, field guides, scopes, lunch, water and warm clothes. Leader is Alan Wight. Call Alan at 763-8572 if you have any questions.

September 20th, Monday - Observations Deadline

The 20th is our 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

September 25th, Saturday - 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 #9

Hawk Hill, Marin Headlands

by Mike Nelligan

The fall southward migration of raptors at Hawk Hill can be observed during the period of approximately August 30 through December 20. There is no peak migration during this period because some raptors tend to migrate earlier than others. For example, Sharp-shinned Hawk migration is nearly through before Northern Harrier migration reaches its peak. Red-tailed Hawk migration reaches its peak about the time Cooper's Hawk is finished passing by Hawk Hill.

Species to watch for, and approximate period of higher concentrations are:

- Osprey Aug. 30 - Sept. 30
- White-tailed Kite.....relatively constant
over the entire period
- Northern Harrier.....Sept. 30 - Nov. 30
- Sharp-shinned Hawk.....Aug. 30 - Oct. 30
- Cooper's Hawk.....Sept. 20 - Oct. 20
- Red-tailed Hawk.....relatively constant
over the entire period
- Red-shouldered Hawk.....Sept. 20 - Oct. 30
- Broad-winged Hawk..... Sept. 15 - Oct. 15
- Ferruginous Hawk..... Sept. 10 - Nov. 10
- Rough-legged Hawk.....Oct. 20 - Nov. 30
- Golden Eagle.....Sept. 20 - Nov. 20
- American Kestrel..... relatively constant
over the entire period
- Merlin..... Sept. 30 - Nov. 20
- Peregrine Falcon.....Sept. 20 - Dec. 20

Some of the above information is taken from the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO) website www.ggro.org. GGRO consists of three staff, three interns and approximately 250 volunteers dedicated to the study of the raptor migration in the Marin Headlands. Hawk Hill in the headlands is the best place to observe the fall migration.

GGRO is funded by the Golden Gate National Park Association, the National Park service and donations from the public. Activities of GGRO include: a banding program, the Hawkwatch

program, a Telemetry program, and Hawk Talks. GGRO also presents banding demonstrations to the public on Hawk Hill every Saturday and Sunday in Sept. and Oct. You can contact GGRO by telephone at (415) 331-0730 or by E-mail ggro@ggnpa.org.

To get to Hawk Hill, Marin Headlands from the north take the last Marin County exit off Highway 101 to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). Turn right up the hill onto Conzelman Road. Stay on Conzelman road for 1.8 miles and you will see a sign for Hawk Hill. At the top of the road you will find a parking area, walk to the far west end of the parking lot, and then up a fairly steep dirt trail (150 yards) to the observation area. From the south, cross the Golden Gate Bridge and take the Alexander Avenue (Sausalito) Exit. Turn left at the first opportunity and cross under Highway 101. Turn right onto Conzelman Road and drive 1.8 miles (as for approaching from the north.).

The Odd Caracara

Some years ago there was a peculiar Crested Caracara resident at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Aransas is the area where the Whooping Cranes winter on the Texas gulf coast and is heavily visited by birders. This particular bird would join visiting birders on their walks. While the birders birded, the Caracara closely followed along to snatch the creatures that might be stirred up by shuffling feet. He particularly appreciated having boards and logs turned over to bare the scrumptious goodies he would not have access to on his own. On one walk, the Caracara was observed enjoying several frogs, a skink, a large worm or blind snake, many crickets and grasshoppers and many unknown things.

The bird hatched in a nest near the refuge headquarters but was kidnapped (birdnapped?) by a falconer as a not quite fledged youngster. Someone got the license number and a posse rescued him a few days later. They arrested the falconer too. The bird was returned to the nest but had already been tweaked resulting in the tameness. He made a good photo subject but care was required to keep ones feet out of the photo.

Bird Behavior and Conditioning

The pink-legged goose has a tendency to construct its nest on top of a little hill it builds for itself. Since it can't always be on top of the nest, it has a few instincts to help it protect its unhatched clutch. One of these is known as the "egg-retrieval instinct." Essentially, according to the behaviorist's theory, it works like this: when an egg rolls out of its nest, the goose will see it. Upon seeing the wayward egg, it will get up from its nest, approach and straddle the egg, attempt to knock it back up the hill to the nest with its beak, and then resume brooding. Of course, this isn't an easy task and more often than not, the goose loses the egg after a few taps. But, trapped in its fixed action pattern, the bird will continue with the knocking motions all the way up the hill, never even noticing that it's lost the egg. Until, that is, it sees it again from atop the nest.

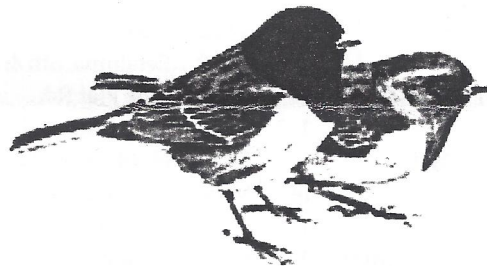
Even with these inherent behavioral oddities the system works quite well except for one problem. Objects other than eggs can trigger this egg-retrieval instinct. Foremost among these are beer cans. Apparently beer cans and eggs are very similar from the goose's perspective, so it will waddle down its hill, tap the beer can up into its nest, and return to its nest sitting.

Ordinarily this wouldn't cause a problem. However, the goose has another instinct known as the "egg-rejection instinct." The rejection instinct works like this: if the goose is sitting on something which doesn't feel like an egg, it will knock it out of the nest. Beer

cans, although they might look like eggs to the pink-legged goose, definitely do not feel like eggs. So, soon after the goose sits upon its newly acquired beer can, it will toss it out of the nest.

Here's where the problem comes in. The goose, after kicking the can out of the nest, will eventually notice the beer can again (Oh! An egg!) and will waddle out towards it, tap it up the hill, and sit down upon it a second time, whereupon it will throw the can out again. And, yes, this process proceeds indefinitely.

This all goes to show that nature never intended beer to be sold in cans.

**Congratulations to Ted**

RROS' own Ted Elliot has joined the ranks of the very few to have seen 700 bird species in the ABA-area. On April 26th, 1999, near Venus, Florida, Ted spotted a Short-tailed Hawk. Of course he ran the list up a bit more before returning home, so he's now at seven hundred and something.

Ted believes that with this sighting he may have set another sort of record as well. He began keeping his life list in 1939. Has anyone else taken sixty years to sight their 700th species?

Observations

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Shy Albatross (!)	1	8/24	9 mi. WSW Pt. Arena	MEN	DS	ad. 2nd state record
White-faced Ibis	1	5/14	Viansa Winery Wetlands	SON	SS, DVL	
Oldsquaw	2	5/5	Bodega Harbor	SON	BG	
	2	6/20	Bodega Harbor	SON	BDP	
	1	8/7	Bodega Head	SON	JH, LH	
California Condor	2	4/17	New Cuyamas	SLO	PL	
Swainson's Hawk	2	8/21	Ramal Road	SON	AW	1 ad. 1 juv. light phase
Golden Eagle	1	5/5	Salmon Creek Road	SON	BG	
	1	8/6	Crane Canyon Rd	SON	GM	ad.
Black Rail	2	6/21	Tubbs Island	SON	BDP	Heard only
Pacific Golden Plover	2	8/7	Doran Park	SON	JH, LH, BB	
Pectoral Sandpiper	1	6/29	South Carmody Rd. Pond	SON	AW	
Laughing Gull	1	6/21	Sea Ranch Area	SON	BDP, DE	
	1	8/29	South of Bodega Head	SON	AW, RS	2nd Year bird
Black-legged Kittiwake	2	6/22	Gualala Estuary	MEN	AW, EKW	
Marbled Murrelets	2	8/29	Pinnacle Gulch	SON	BB	
Greater Road Runner	1	3/?	Pine Flat Rd.	SON	SC	
Barn Owl	1	6/22	Healdsburg	SON	AW, EKW	flying over house
	4 ?	8/30	Petaluma, 6th & Western	SON	JA	nesting in church belfry
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	6/13	Pine Flat Rd.	SON	MR, DN, GM	
	1	6/21	King Ridge Rd.	SON	BDP, DE, J&ES	Excellent looks
Long-eared Owl	1	5/1	Hopland Field Station	MEN	GC, BK, CV, JW	
Vaux's Swift	few	May	Healdsburg	SON	EKW, DCW	daily thru Season
	1	6/21	Gualala River	SON	BDP, DE, J&ES	
Rufous Hummingbird	1	8/23	Healdsburg	SON	EKW	
Purple Martin	4-5	6/21	Gualala River Mouth	SON	BDP, DE, J&ES	
	2	6/22	Gualala River Mouth	SON	AW, EKW	
Blue-winged Warbler	1	6/2	Willowside Rd. Bridge	SON	CS, EKW, DN	County Record?
Black & White Warbler	1	5/5	Salmon Creek Road	SON	BG	
Brewer's Sparrow	1	6/20	Campbell Cove	SON	BDP	
Blue Grosbeak	3-4	6/21	Tubbs Island	BDP		present thru July
Lawrence's Goldfinch	2	5/19	Hopland Field Station	MEN	CV	

Observers: Betty Burrridge, George Chanot, Steve Cochrane, Doug Ellis, Betty Groce, Joel Hornstein, Linda Hornstein, Bob Keiffer, Peter Leveque, Gerry Mugele, Dan Noreen, Mike Parmeter (BDP), Mary Rooney, Sam Sebastiani, Debbie Shearwater, Claire Shevereton, Rich Stallcup, Jim & Ellen Strauss, Donna Van Loon, Chuck Vaughn, Jerry White, Alan Wight, Donna Wynn (DCW), Ned Wynn (EKW)

**Redwood Region Ornithological Society
Report of Finances
1998 - 1999**

Beginning bank balance, 1 July 1998.....\$1,980 *

Receipts:

Dues.....	\$ 840
Book Sales.....	178
Interest on Savings.....	56
Donations.....	138
Total receipts for year.....	1,212

Disbursements:

Kite Tales newsletter.....	\$ 618
Book sales proceeds to heirs of co-author.....	89
Guest Speakers.....	125
Rent, meeting place and potluck.....	289
Postage, taxes, filing fee.....	10
Total disbursements for year.....	-1,131

Ending bank balance, 30 June 1999..... \$2,061*

* Includes a \$1,250.00 certificate of deposit

Betty Burrridge, Treasurer



And speaking of finances:

Dues are due! Have you paid your dues for the 1999 - 2000 year? If not, now is a good time to get your check in the mail to Mike Nelligan, 124 Wikiup Drive, Santa Rosa CA 95403. Do it now before you forget. RRROS is still a great bargain at \$15 per year for a family, \$8 for an individual membership and a mere \$3 for the impoverished students among us. Mike is anxiously awaiting your check.

Not sure whether you're paid up? Check your address label on your copy of the *Kite Tales* . It indicates your dues status.

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: Alan Wight, 19 Wooddale Dr., Petaluma CA 94952 707 763-8572
E-Mail: shwand@sonic.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

Good Birding Spots: Ted Eliot, 5850 Grove St., Sonoma CA 95476-6095 E-Mail: patted@sonic.net

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