

Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 34 Number V

January 2000

Coming Attractions

January 13th, Thursday, 7:30 PM - General Meeting
Darwin Hall, Room 207 - Sonoma State University, Cotati

Our Traditional Members Slide Night:

This is our "do-it-yourself" program that often reveals some spectacular photographic skills within the RROS membership. Limiting yourself to 10 slides, share some of your old and new photo shots with us. The subject of your photos could be identifiable birds, mystery birds, people, plants, critters, or places of RROS trips, etc. No nudes, please.

January 22nd, Saturday, 8:30 AM
Field Trip to Bodega Harbor

Meet in the parking area near the rail ponds at the north end of Bodega Harbor at 8:30 am. We will look for birds seen on the January 2nd Christmas Bird Count. We may drive up the coast to the Russian River in the afternoon depending on how things go. Bring binoculars, scopes, field guides, lunch, water, and warm clothes. Leader is Alan Wight. Call Alan at 763-8572 if you have any questions.

January 20th, Thursday - 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@pon.net

January 25th, Tuesday - 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

February 18th-21st, Friday - Monday

Salton Sea International Bird Festival - Imperial Valley, California

Here's an opportunity to hear Pete Dunne lecture on the fine art of "pishing." Really! Kimball Garrett will give a talk on birding from the Salton Sea to the Gulf of California, across some fascinating but little explored birding areas. The organizers have put together an impressive list of field trips, seminars and outings to interest all birders. To register or request more information write: PO Box 156 Imperial, Ca 92251. call 760 344-5359
or on the net: www.imperial county.com/birdfest

Good Birding Spots #12**The Klamath Basin***by Ruth Rudesill*

The Klamath Basin is now regarded as one of the top birding spots in the U.S. Few locations can boast the variety of habitats and species diversity found there. Located on the Oregon-California border, the Klamath Basin is a combination of the Cascade Mountain, Great Basin and California Oak faunal regions.

Over 335 species have been recorded in this area and some are in the birder's top ten most wanted list: Great Gray Owl, Yellow Rail (found at Fort Klamath) and Three-toed Woodpecker (found at Sky Lakes wilderness.).

The highlight of this area is the Bald Eagle population in the winter, numbers up to 1,000 eagles, the highest concentration in the lower 48. And the waterfowl can literally darken the sky; hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese and swans winter in the region.

Birding is good any time of year but most birders visit in winter and summer. February is the time to see the eagles and other wintering raptors as well as Northern Shrike and Bohemian Waxwings in some years. The waterfowl reach their peak in March. Fall can be good for waterfowl/shorebirds but avoid hunting season.

Spring is good for migrant shorebirds but the weather can be more challenging then; we have had Memorial Day trips that had worse weather than the February trips! Many birds nest in the lakes/marshes including several species of grebes, ibis, Sandhill Cranes, many ducks, Wilson's Phalarope, and Short-eared Owls. Lava Beds Park has Purple Martins as well as bats, in the caves plus many sparrow species, Pinyon Jays, and Mountain Bluebirds. Be sure that you don't miss the Petroglyph Cliffs on the east side of Tule Lake/Lava Beds for the nesting Prairie Falcons.

To reach this area, drive north through the Sacramento Valley and Siskiyou on I-5 and exit on US Hwy 97 in Weed, north of Mount Shasta.

Many people choose to stay in Klamath Falls and do day trips from there. It's a short drive to Lower Klamath, Tule Lake Wildlife Refuges and Upper Klamath Lake.

Also easily reached are Crater Lake National Park and Lava Beds National Monument. The elevation of the area goes from 4,000 to 9,000 feet. All these parks and refuges have good roads and places to stop for viewing wildlife.

Most birders stop by the Tule Lake NWR (National Wildlife Refuge) Visitor Center on Hill Road to check the rare bird list. There is a year round campground at Lava Beds.

There are so many good birding spots it is impossible to cover them all in this short article. A good reference is "A Birder's Guide to the Klamath Basin" by Steven D. Summers which has maps, suggested trips / sites, and local information. RROS has added to this information with our findings of new species and sites.

Hints for Finding Mountain Plovers

As reported regularly on the Northern California Rare Bird Alert, Mountain Plovers are currently found at the intersection of roads 16 and 90B in Yolo County, a half mile west of I-505.

There are also longspurs amidst thousands of Horned Larks here. They are best found by listening for their call. Given time, they come in to the bare area by a trough. A scope is usually needed. Many birders have had trouble finding the birds even when they are nearby. If you see, among the Horned Larks, a bird down in a hollow, creeping very slowly; keep your eyes on that bird, it is very likely a Chestnut-collared Longspur. There are a few McCown's and Laplands there as well, but they are harder to find. They are usually in with the other longspurs. Any time of day is good, but the light is not the greatest, as you're looking SSE. Around 3PM is best.

Also, about 60 Mountain Plover were found northwest of roads 16 and 88. Apparently this is a historical but recently overlooked wintering spot for the species. Updates on these birds would be nice.

-Steve Hampton, Ph.D. Calif DF&G

Farewell to a Friend

Kite Tales has worked very hard to find the right way to present very sad news.

To put it simply and we hope gracefully: our longtime friend, RROS member, Wini Nelson passed away on December 11th. She was enjoying a trip to Australia with her husband Clyde and two of son Dan's siblings. As they were on their way to the airport for the flight home she was suddenly stricken.

Clyde said that they had had a wonderful trip and she loved seeing so many new birds and wonderful sights.

May this news provide you, as it has for us, an opportunity to recall and savor the good times sharing Wini's company. We will miss her and her never ending smile.

RROS' Projector Fund

President Deyea thanks all the members who donated funds to purchase our projector, and notes; we have collected the full amount. Because of your generosity we will have many years of wonderful viewing with this state of the art projector.

Treasurer, Mike Nelligan, wishes to acknowledge the following contributors to the RROS slide projector fund which totals \$571.00:

Linda Allen, Carol Brandt, Betty Burrige, Marian Dolgireff, Lew & Marilyn Edmondson, Bob Evans, Jack & Betty Groce, Jack & Deyea Harper, David Leland, Virginia McDonagh, Herb McGrew, Ian Morrison, Karen Nagel, Mike Nelligan, Ruby Nelligan, Clyde & Wini Nelson, Rebecca Olsen, Mike Parmeter, Bob & Bertha Rains, Ruth & Ann Rudesill, Carole Sunlight, Alan Wight, and Ken Wilson

Thanks also to Marian Dolgireff for donating 4 projector trays for our use.

Feeding on Asphalt

Gloria Saylor of Port Lavaca, Texas tells us:

On my way back to the office from the afternoon PO run, I saw a large flock of Laughing Gulls in the parking lot of a mall with all new paving surrounding it. Gulls in parking lots are not a big deal but these were hovering above the crew which was putting down a new layer of hot asphalt. They were behaving just as though they were behind a shrimp boat in the bay, circling, squawking, dipping. But hot asphalt and paving material? I'd love to know what THAT was all about.

Brad Schram of Arroyo Grande, Calif adds:

I watched a flock of White-throated Swifts for 20 minutes on Highway 1 north of San Simeon some years ago. They were a flock, of maybe 30-50 birds swirling low over the highway and one by one diving, opening their bill and scraping the surface of a layer of fresh asphalt with their lower mandible!

I stood beside the highway, and watched as they did this, some six feet away--I could hear their mandible scrape the surface. It was as if they were drinking from a pond (I've seen swifts, as swallows do, drink this way). I wondered if they were getting a reflection from the surface and it looked like water? 2 problems with that: 1. it was a cloudy fall day, 2. I couldn't see any heat waves.

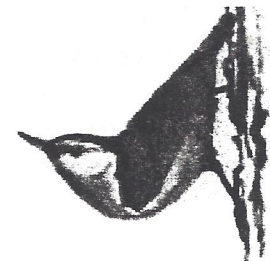
One of the swifts was hit a glancing blow by the windshield of a passing car and veered into the roadside shrubbery. I pulled it out and it clamped on my finger with its feet--which hurt! They have short, thick, powerful toes--the better to cling to rock faces with. It recovered and rejoined the flock.

An article in Science (Oct. 22, 1999) on olfactory sense in birds (much more than we'd thought--not just procellarids and or larids,) makes me wonder if something about the smell of asphalt in certain conditions rings a chemical dinner bell? Ridiculous on the face of it--but I wonder. I don't think that swifts will be shown to have much of an olfactory sense--why would they need it? We never see them hanging around rose gardens, after all. . It might affect gulls, though.

Observations

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
✓ Pacific Loon	1	11/24	Lake Ralphine	SON	BG	
Red-necked Grebe	1	12/9	Bodega Bay	SON	BG	
" " "	2	12/15	Bodega Harbor Entrance	SON	TE, DA, BDP	
Laysan Albatross	1	12/4+	Pt. Arena Harbor	MEN	DS,	5th or 6th year
✓ American White Pelican	25	12/19	Delta Pond, Santa Rosa	SON	BDP	
✓ American Bittern	1	12/12	Sebastopol Cmnty Center	SON	AW	
" "	3	12/18	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP	
✓ Cattle Egret	1	12/12	Sebastopol Cmnty Center	SON	AW	
✓ Grtr-wht Fronted Goose	1	12/5	Lakeville Highway	SON	AW	
✓ Ross' Goose	1	12/2	Lucchesi Park, Petaluma	SON	AW	Still Present
✓ " "	1	12/19	Laguna de Santa Rosa	SON	BDP	
Wood Duck	3	12/7	Enterprise Rd Pond	SON	KF	
Eurasian Wigeon	4	12/19	Delta Pond, Santa Rosa	SON	BDP	males
Hooded Merganser	4	12/7	Enterprise Rd Pond	SON	KF	2 pair
✓ " "	14	12/15	Lower Carmody Rd Pond	SON	TE, DA, BDP	
" "	1	12/18	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP	1 fem.
" "	2	12/19	River Rd. Pond	SON	BDP	pair
✓ Osprey	1	12/19	Laguna de Santa Rosa	SON	BDP	
Ferruginous Hawk	1	12/15	Bodega Highway	SON	DA, BDP, TE	
✓ Rough-legged Hawk	1	11/22	Skaggs Island	SON	DA	
" " "	2	12/5	Scott/White Rock Rds.	SAC	DA, TE	1 dark-phase
✓ " " "	1	12/9	Coleman Valley Rd.	SON	DB, PC	adult
Golden Eagle	1	11/22	Ramal Rd.	SON	DA	imm.
✓ " " "	1	12/15	Estero Lane	SON	BDP, DA, TE	sub-adult
Merlin	1	12/19	Bennett Vly Golf Course	SON	DN, MR, GM, LR	
Peregrine Falcon	1	12/18	Abbott's Lagoon	MAR	BDP	adult (anatum race)
Prairie Falcon	2	12/5	White Rock Rd	SAC	DA, TE	
Surfbird	8	12/17	Bodega Head	SON	DA	
✓ Burrowing Owl	1	12/14	Pine Flat Road	SON	BG	
Lewis's Woodpecker	10+	12/5	Scott Rd.	SAC	TE, DA	
✓ Eastern Phoebe	1	12/19	Delta Pond, Santa Rosa	SON	BDP	calling & singing
✓ Tree Swallow	27	12/19	Delta Pond, Santa Rosa	SON	BDP	
✓ Rock Wren	1	11/21	I Street, Petaluma	SON	AW	
✓ Swamp Sparrow	1	12/19	S. Rosa Crk @ Willowside	SON	BDP	
White-throated Sparrow	2	11/28	Sonoma Feeder Birds	SON	DA	Still present

Observers: Dick Ashford, Dennis Beall, Pam Conley, Ted Eliot, Kathy Francone, Betty Groce, Gerry Mugele, Dan Noreen, Mike Parmeter (BDP), Lilly Reichert, Mary Rooney, Dianne Sierra, Alan Wight,



Miscellany**Archival Kite Tales**

Betty Burrige wants RROS members to know that she has a set of Kite-Tales from '75 - '82 for whomever would like to have them.

Pre-meeting Meeting

As a reminder: Each month, prior to our regular RROS meeting a group of members meets for dinner at Mary's Pizza Parlor in Rohnert Park. All members and friends are welcome and encouraged to join us. We usually get there about 6, some as early as 5:30.

West Nile Virus

USGS, Dept. of Interior Press Release Dec. 14th:

West Nile Virus May Be New Deadly Strain, USGS Tells Congress

Recent crow die-offs suggest the West Nile virus which emerged in New York state in late August could be more deadly to North American bird species than to species in Africa, the Middle East and Europe, where the virus is normally found, a USGS scientist reported today at a congressional field hearing held in Connecticut by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Dr. Robert G. McLean, director of the USGS National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wis., briefed the committee on the role of native bird populations and other wildlife in the emergence of West Nile virus in the United States. Detection of the virus in birds and other animal species provides critical information to public health agencies tracking the infection in people.

"The high mortality in crows and other bird species is unusual for these viruses," McLean said. "This suggests that this virus is more virulent to our native birds or it may represent a new, more virulent strain of the virus."

Resident and migratory birds may play an important role in natural transmission of the virus and in maintaining the virus in the United States, McLean testified. "Migratory birds could also spread the virus to other states outside of the New York City area," he said. "Enhanced monitoring through surveillance for early, rapid

detection of West Nile virus in states outside the affected area will be important to guide prevention measures."

The emergence of West Nile virus in the United States, which led to the deaths of seven people from West Nile encephalitis, has brought together the combined expertise and resources of many federal and state agencies along the eastern seaboard. Several federal and state agencies and private groups are searching for stored human and animal specimens that were collected prior to 1999 in order to test them for the presence of West Nile virus. These specimens are also being tested for antibodies to determine if the virus was present in the United States before the 1999 outbreak. Results from these investigations should provide more insight into how, where and when the virus was introduced, McLean noted.

McLean, who has 30 years of experience with wildlife diseases, also discussed the activities and efforts of the USGS in investigating the wildlife aspects of this virus. "As of early November, 392 birds have been tested by USGS and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and 192 were positive for West Nile virus," McLean said. "The virus has infected at least 20 species of birds, including exotic and native birds at zoos, and about four species of mosquitoes. But, it is difficult to assess how many birds have died from this disease."

USGS, CDC, U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies have heightened wildlife surveillance for detection of West Nile virus, and they have expanded monitoring to other Atlantic and Gulf Coast states. McLean assured the committee, "We are continuing to collaborate on enhanced surveillance and to determine what specific surveillance methods will work best for each region."

McLean believes that native bird populations will play a key role in the investigation of the long-term impacts of the West Nile virus in the United States. He added, "Additional research is needed in order to determine if wildlife, mosquito or both populations in the affected areas can maintain the virus in New York and other states and serve as an over wintering source for resurgence next summer."

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 207 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
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Vice President: Betty Groce, 411 Trail Ridge Ct. , Santa Rosa CA 95409-6482 707 539-8664
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Secretary: Benjamin D. Parmeter, 2500 Emerson St., Napa CA 94558-4611 707 255-6757

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1999 - 2000 Chairs:

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