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Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 34 Number VII

March 2000

Coming Attractions

March 9th, Thursday, 7:30 PM - General Meeting
Darwin Hall, Room 207 - Sonoma State University, Cotati

Cruise the Bering Sea

By special arrangement, for one night only, direct from Seattle, Washington, Mr. Dick Marshall will address RROS, friends and guests. Mr. Marshall will be assisted by our own Mr. Ted Elliot in his talk on their trip around the Bering Sea last Spring. Mr. Marshall's excellent slides will illustrate the expedition. Accompanied by their wives, our stalwart adventurers began their cruise in Japan and from there traveled north to the Kurile Islands, Kamchatka and across the Bering Sea to the Aleutian chain and Alaska. Come to vicariously relive their experiences, see photos of places you'll likely never reach yourself, all from the comfort and security of room 207.

March 18th, Saturday, 8:00 AM

Field Trip to Bodega Harbor

Meet in the parking lot near the rail ponds at the north end of Bodega Harbor at 8:00 am. We will search for wintering birds and early migrants. Bring binoculars, scopes, field guides, lunch, water, and warm clothes. Leader is Mike Parmeter. Call Mike at 707 255-6757 if you have any questions.

March 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@pon.net

March 25th, Saturday - Kite Tales Deadline

Send announcements, articles, complaints, 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

North Coast Birding Activities:

Aleutian Goose Festival, Crescent City - March 24-26th, 2000.

www.delnorte.org/soar Keynote presenter - Stanley W. Harris

and

Godwit Days Spring Migration Festival, Arcata, April 14-16th, 2000.

www.godwitdays.com Keynote presenter - Clay Sutton

Good Birding Spots #14**Sonoma County Pelagic Birding***by Dan Nelson*

Pelagic birding trips from Bodega Bay have gained national attention among birders seeking the unusual. In recent years, several "firsts" for California have appeared at Marin County's Cordell Bank, which is a seamount due West from Pt. Reyes. The Light-Mantled Sooty Albatross and Great-winged Petrel seen there were both firsts for the A.B.A. list area.

With county-listing becoming more and more popular in the 1990's, I, along with others, became eager to search Sonoma County waters to the North of Cordell Bank where few pelagic trips have visited. After all, Cordell Bank is about as famous as Pt. Reyes itself, so filling a boatload with birders and whale-watchers to visit just Sonoma County waters seemed like a thankless effort. Only ten years ago a look at the Sonoma County pelagic list revealed the absence of several regular or very expected species, plus other regular visitors to Marin waters that were, at the time, "accidental" off the Sonoma County coast.

Heading due west for twenty-five miles from Bodega Head, one reaches the steep drop-off zone of the Continental Shelf, where the ocean depth increases suddenly and drastically. At the surface, wind and ocean currents mingle to produce an up-welling of nutrient-rich waters from the deep, producing a unique environment where krill and microscopic plant life thrive. Many birds and marine mammals congregate here where food is plentiful and life can be everywhere!

My first visits to these Sonoma County waters were in 1994 when Sandy Etchell, Sandy's father as captain, and I, ventured west on the 20 ft. "Sea Raider". We encountered quite a frenzy of feeding birds in an area I called the "North Wall of Bodega Canyon". We located flocks of Sabine's Gulls, Arctic Terns, Ashy Storm-Petrels, several shearwater species, Black-footed Albatross, in Marin waters, just across the county line, we saw Xantus' and Craveri's Murrelets, and Least Storm-Petrel. (due west of Estero Americano).

In late summer when northwesterly winds usually subside, warmer water can flow up from the South. Although Bodega Canyon lies in

Marin County, up welling from the steep North Wall of the canyon (it runs East to West, perpendicular to the shelf edge) often surfaces to the north, in Sonoma County. This area is about 25-30 miles west of Bodega Head, but can be as close as 20 miles and has proven to be a hotspot. It can even "out duel" Cordell Bank at times. On August 29, 1997, our initial "Mollymawk" trip to this area documented the first Sonoma County Long-tailed Jaegers(6) and Black Storm-Petrels(3). Two weeks later, on Sept. 14, the first Wilson's Storm-Petrels(2-3) were added to the county list. Also that September there was a huge raft of about 1,750 Ashy Storm-Petrels which also included the always enigmatic Leach's Storm-Petrel. In the area we tallied 3 Xantus' Murrelets, many Arctic Terns, Sabine's Gulls, and hundreds of Sooty, Pink-footed and Buller's Shearwaters. The waters where these were found have depths reaching 250-300 fathoms.

On August 28, 1998, only 20 miles west of Bodega Head at 120 fathoms, we were ecstatic to find the extremely rare Short-tailed Albatross; a species that was believed, at one time, to be extinct. It came in to our "chumming", along with Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels (5), Wilson's Storm-Petrels (2-3), Black Storm-Petrels (50+), Ashy Storm-Petrels (100+), and Long-tailed Jaegers (14). Other specialties noted in these areas on numerous trips include Laysan Albatross, South Polar Skua, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Tufted Puffin, Rhinoceros Auklet, Cassin's Auklet (often thousands!) Red Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope, and both Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers.

A summary of the marine mammals could take up a whole separate article! In short, summer and fall are usually best, with Dall's Porpoise, Pacific White-sided Dolphin and Northern Right Whale Dolphin often showing themselves; in addition to regular appearances by Blue Whales and many Humpback Whales, which are known to be real acrobats!! Also seen occasionally are Common Dolphin, Orca, Harbor Porpoise, Risso's Dolphin and Minke Whale, with the Gray Whales showing in late winter and spring near shore. Baird's Beaked Whale has been seen further offshore.

Continued on Page 3

*Continued from page 2:***Sonoma County Pelagic Birding**

As we have only just begun, it is a fact that many secrets of Sonoma County pelagic birding have yet to be revealed. It is my dream to have numerous trips scheduled to visit these areas each year. Rarer Auklets, Albatrosses, and Pterodromas are certainly possibilities!! Perhaps YOU will be there when the next surprise reveals itself!

Field Trip Report**Shollenberger Park**

February 12, 2000

- by Rick Lebaudour

Four birders braved three hours or tortuous wind and rain to see a total of 72 species. Highlights were one Tundra Swan, two Redheads, four Blue-winged Teal, two American Bitterns, one Green Heron, six Clark's Grebes, one Bonaparte's Gull, and an unusually large flock of 120 Horned Larks.

Participants were Richard Hurley, Rick Lebaudour, Ian Morrison, and Rhio Reigh.

Arnold Small - Farewell

Brian Small has informed us that his father, Arnold Small, passed away the morning of February 7th. Arnold was the man that literally wrote the book "The Birds of California" in 1974 and his contributions to birding in California, North America, and the world are far too great to be summarized here.

In the words of Kimball Garrett: "Arnold Small's passion as an educator, birder, photographer, conservationist, and family man made him a unique and special person; he will be greatly missed."

Arnold Small was a college professor and lifelong ornithologist who researched his subject for more than fifty years. He was one of the founders of birding as we know it today. He helped form ABA, then helped save it when it was in trouble. Whether you knew him or not - in some way his activities touched you and every other California birder.

*More on page 5***Editorial****California Birding is Still Changing**

The passing of Arnold Small got *Kite Tales* to contemplating the twenty something years since we met. We were surprised when we realized how much more is known about avian distribution and how our view of California birding has changed in the intervening years.

When Small's book *The Birds of California* was published in 1975 it included a checklist of the birds known to have been found in California at that time. That list consisted of the names of 518 avian species. One of the newer additions to the list was the Thayer's Gull.

The California list stands at 607 species by the AOU's count in 1999. It includes species names that had never been seen in California prior to 1975. It also includes names of recently described species that were unknown to the world twenty-five years ago, such as the Island Scrub Jay and the California Gnatcatcher.

Taxonomic splitting and lumping has also had an affect on the state list. When Small's book was published we had only the Northern Oriole which had resulted from the lumping of the Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles. Today, we once again have those two distinct species.

But the thing that has most changed our state list is the product of hours in the field by skilled and dedicated birders, such as the members of RR0S, ever searching for an additional tick for their personal state lists and life lists. Over the years these efforts have added sightings of such exotics as Brown Shrike, Smew, and Rustic Bunting.

We also have changes in introduced species: Arnold's work listed Ringed-turtle Dove and Gray Partridge. The AOU chose to eschew both in their California list, while including White-tailed Ptarmigan. And there are still populations of parrots in metropolitan areas and other exotics including those Mandarin Ducks here in Sonoma county. Will they "officially" naturalize?

What changes will we see in the next quarter century? Anyone care to make some predictions?

Observations

Species	#	Date	Place	County	Who	Notes
Red-necked Grebe	1	2/1	Bodega Harbor	SON	DHr, KM	
Black-footed Albatross	12	1/22	Cordell Bank		DN	
Laysan Albatross	8-10	1/22	Cordell Bank		DN	
Northern Fulmar	125	1/15	Cordell Bank		DN	
Pink-footed Shearwater	3	1/15	Cordell Bank		DN	
Short-tailed Shearwater	15	1/15	Cordell Bank		DN	
✓ Grtr-wht Fronted Goose	1	2/20	Adobe/Stage Gulch Rds	SON	AW	
✓ Snow Goose	1	2/20	Adobe/Stage Gulch Rds	SON	AW	
✓ Ross' Goose	5	2/20	Adobe/Stage Gulch Rds	SON	AW	
✓ Canada Goose	4	1/23	Shollenberger Park	SON	AW	Aleutian subspecies
✓ " "	31	2/20	S of Shollenberger Park	SON	DN	Aleutian subspecies
Eurasian Wigeon	1	2/1	Bodega Farm Pond	SON	DHr, KM	
✓ Canvasback	1	2/1	Bodega Farm Pond	SON	DHr, KM	
✓ Redhead	4	2/15	Shollenberger Park	SON	TE	
Ring-necked Duck	60+	1/14	Delta Pond	SON	DHr, CD, DN	
Tufted Duck	1	2/1	Bolinas Lagoon	MAR	RL, BDP, AW	drake
" "	1	2/16	Bolinas Lagoon	MAR	BG, MAS	
Common Merganser	9	2/1	Bodega Farm Pond	SON	DHr, KM	1 drake
Red-breasted Merganser	2	2/1	Bodega Harbor	SON	DHr, KM	pair
Osprey	1	1/20	S. Rosa Flood Cntl Chanel	SON	DN	
✓ Bald Eagle	1	2/19	Occidental Road bridge	SON	C&M Goudeau	adult
" "	2	2/20	Cache Creek park	LAK	GM	1 adult 1 imm.
" "	3	2/20	Beer Creek	COL	EM, DW, CM	all adult
Ferruginous Hawk	1	1/28	Watmaugh Rd (Sonoma)	SON	RH	
" "	1	1/29	top of Sonoma Mtn.	SON	TE	
✓ Rough-legged Hawk	1	1/29	Skaggs Island	SON	AW	
Merlin	1	1/14	Delta Pond nr Laguna Rd.	SON	DHr, CD, DN	
"	1	1/29+	Bloomfield	SON	MA	
Peregrine Falcon	2	1/14	Above Delta Pond	SON	DHr, CD, DN	both adult
✓ Sandhill Crane	1	1/16	South of Delta Pond	SON	RL, AW, BM	
✓ Pacific Golden Plover	1	1/26+	S. of Shollenberger Park	SON	RH, DN, AW	Thru 2/6 at least
Black-legged Kittiwake	50	1/22	Cordell Bank		DN	
Rhinoceros Auklet	43	1/15	Cordell Bank		DN	
✓ Burrowing Owl	1	2/8	Pine Flat Rd.	SON	DE, DH	
Tree Swallow	50+	1/14	Delta Pond	SON	DHr, CD, DN	
✓ Barn Swallow	2	1/23	Shollenberger Park	SON	AW	early
✓ Rock Wren	1	1/28	I Street Petaluma	SON	AW	
✓ " "	2	2/8	Warm Springs Dam	SON	DE, DH	
Mountain Bluebird	20+	2/6	West Butte Rd.	SUT	TE	
✓ California Thrasher	1	2/20	Gehricke Rd. Sonoma	SON	KN	
Orange-crownd Warbler	1	1/20	S. Rosa Flood Cntl Chanel	SON	DN	
" " "	1	2/1	Below Deikmann's Store	SON	DHr, KM	
✓ Nashville Warbler	1	1/16	Below Deikmann's Store	SON	DN	
✓ " "	1	1/21	Petaluma garden	SON	AW	
Townsend's Warbler	1	Feb.	Mark West Crk @ Fulton	SON	GR	
White-throated Sparrow	1	1/6	Post St. Petaluma	SON	DN	
" " "	2	1/7	Petaluma yard	SON	DN, CN	
" " "	1	1/22	Sebastopol yard	SON	K&DB	
Harris' Sparrow	1	2/6	Grizzly Island	SOL	RL, RM	

Observations: *(continued)*

Northern Cardinal 1 2/5 Sebastopol yard SON K&DB female escapee

Observers: Mary Abbott, Kathy & Dave Biggs, Carolyn Dixon, Ted Eliot, Doug Ellis, Betty Groce, Deyea Harper (DHR), David Hoffman, Richard Hurley, Rick Lebaudour, Brad Mabb, Madrone Audubon Society, Richard Merriss, Kathy Mugele, Karen Nagel, Clyde Nelson, Dan Nelson, Mike Parmeter (BDP), Gail Roper, Alan Wight, Dean Wilkendorf

Don Roberson Remembers Arnold Small 1926 - 2000

Arnold Small was larger than life. Not only was he a major name in the California birding world over the past half century, but to those of us who knew him well he was just a great guy. He was always full of energy, confidence, generosity, and good humor. I had the good fortune to become a friend over the last 25 years, and am a much enriched person because of it.

Every autumn, Arnold and Herb & Olga Clarke would journey to Monterey to do a boat trip, often in connection with Arnold's UCLA class. We always got together for an evening of dinner and stories about the birding world. Arnold and Herb exist in the realm of world class photographers, and Arnold would often bring his latest show. Indeed, his "Birding Planet Earth" show is probably my all-time favorite bird slide show.

Arnold was among the front-runners chasing California birds in the '70s and '80s, and I'd often run into him (plus Herb & Olga and sometime Bruce Broadbooks or Larry Sansone; they often traveled as a pack) at some remote locale chasing some great bird. One of the most memorable was in January 1986.

After a small flock of Common Redpoll was found near Tule Lake up on the Oregon border, Arnold, Herb & Olga flew to Klamath Falls, Oregon, and rented a car. They were up before dawn, driving the icy roads to get to the site early. In the bitter cold they hit a patch of "black ice" and flipped the car, rolling it over completely and landing back upright. Shaken but undeterred -- after all this was the first chaseable Common Redpoll in the state! -- they continued on. Just a few of us were there when they arrived in a badly banged up rental. But getting his priorities straight, Arnold was out and looking for the birds immediately. We all added the redpolls to our state list that day.

Arnold was also a great storyteller. Obviously he did a lot of birding in California, but more interesting were his tales about birding the world. He wrote an important article when he had just seen his 4000th lifer (White-headed Piping-Guan in Surinam), an achievement that at the time represented seeing nearly half of the known birds of the world. It concludes with this thought:

"Collecting" new families is as gratifying to me as seeing new species -- only much more difficult. In fact, there is only one order of the 28 living orders of birds that I have not yet met in the wild -- and that is the Rheas. But when the great day finally dawns that I see my first wild Rhea, it will be like number 1 or number 4,000 all over again, only more so -- or the Rhea will represent not only a new species, but a new family, and a new order -- in short, a brand new bird in the fullest sense of the world. And for me, I know, finding that bird will be one more incredible thrill in a lifetime of exciting adventures in birding.

Arnold, of course, saw his rhea and many, many more great birds: at the end of 1997, the ABA list report had him at well over 6500 species. A most impressive feat.

Yes, in all things it seemed to me that Arnold had his priorities straight. He took superb photos; he told the best stories; and he had a wonderful time with life. That's the Arnold Small that I remember, and that I will very much miss.

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
E-Mail: JHarperTrustee@compuserve.com

Vice President: Betty Groce, 411 Trail Ridge Ct., Santa Rosa CA 95409-6482 707 539-8664
E-Mail: blgroce @ Prodigy.net

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

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