

KITE TALES

MARCH

REDWOOD REGION ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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1975
SANTA ROSA, CAL.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

MARCH 13, Thursday, 8:00 p.m.: Birds and Wildlife of East Africa.
Peter Leveque, RROS member and biology teacher at SRJC, will provide a real treat for our regular March RROS meeting. In August 1974 he traveled to Tanzania and Kenya, and will share slides of that trip. Meetings are held in Rm. 221, Darwin Hall, CSCS campus.

MARCH 15, Saturday, 7:30 a.m.: Field trip to Lake Hennessey.
Lake Hennessey is in Napa County, in the St. Helena area. It should provide good looks at waterbirds, early spring migrants, and possibly eagles. Meet at the Black Forest Inn parking lot at 7:30 a.m. Bring a lunch, and a friend, if you wish. Black Forest Inn is at the corner of Callistoga Road and Highway 12 in Santa Rosa.

MAY 4, Sunday: Offshore field trip from Bodega.
Eighteen bodies is the maximum number for this field trip, and the fee is \$12.50, payable in advance to Mike Parmeter. This trip always fills early, so if you wish to go contact Mike as soon as possible. He will mail you all other necessary information. His address is 2500 Emerson St., Napa, Ca. 94558. Ph: 253-6757.

Dorothy Ratcliff writes from Palo Cedro, "I am putting together a few slides of birds and animals which are or have been on the endangered list. I plan to show them to some local school groups. I need a picture of an Eagle - Bald or Golden or preferably both. I also need a picture of a White-tailed Kite and a close-up of a Brown Pelican."

If any RROS members have such slides and would be willing to sell duplicates, would you get in touch with Dorothy at 2551 Beryl Drive, Palo Cedro, Cal. 96073? Your help would be appreciated.

Further on in this issue we are printing a list of current members AS WE HAVE THEM. The list may be incorrect or incomplete. If your dues are currently paid, and your name is not on this list, or if you wish to pay your dues so you can be a member in good standing, please contact the treasurer. Unfortunately with paper and postage costs we just can't continue to send the Kite Tales to non-paying friends. But if you wish to pay just \$2 you can be a non-member and receive the Kite Tales. The dues aren't that expensive, though. We'd like your support.

FIELD TRIP TO THORNTON, A BRIEF REPORT.....

Six members enjoyed beautiful weather on the February 15th field trip to Thornton. The snowy Sierras were in view. Water birds were generally scarce. The concensus was that they were down in numbers. Only ducks and one species of goose were seen, the goose species being the White-fronted Goose. Several hundred of those were seen.

Several hundred Sandhill Cranes were in good view, with reports of more than 2000 nearby that were not seen. For interested people, cranes can be seen on side roads off Thornton Road.

For those of us who like to keep lists, I am sorry to report that I won't be able to give the list for this trip and the January field trip to Bodega until next time.

POINT REYES BIRD OBSERVATORY 1975 COURSE SCHEDULE.....

PRBO, a nonprofit research, conservation and educational institution since 1965, offers courses at the lowest possible price to arouse interest in the natural world. For more detailed information concerning any of the following courses, contact Meryl Stewart, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 442, Bolinas, Calif. 94924.

April 26-27, May 10-11: Birds of the Bay Area. Four days of observing all kinds of birds in the best habitats of the Bay area. Particularly for those interested in the finer points of bird identification, including behavior and song. Bill Clow and Bob Stewart. \$30.

May 3-4: Plants of Point Reyes. A two day introduction to the flora of the Point Reyes National Seashore. Gladys Smith and Gordon True. \$20.

May 16-18: Landbirds of the Point Reyes Peninsula. An intensive look at breeding birds, their nesting behavior, songs and general ecology. Field trips to PRBO study areas representing most of the habitats on the peninsula. Bill Clow and Bob Stewart. \$20.

May 20-25: Birds of Southeast Arizona. An excursion through one of the best birding areas in the country with attention to other vertebrates and general ecology of deserts. Three nights camping, three nights with lodging, all food and lodging included. Rich Stallcup, Peter Warshall, Art Earle, Bob Stewart. \$250.

June 9-13: Natural History of Point Reyes. A look at the natural history of the Point Reyes Peninsula with emphasis on birds and ecology. Explore Tomales Point, Point Reyes, Bishop Pine forests, PRBO, including a two day back-packing trip on the Point Reyes National Seashore. Peter Warshall and Bob Stewart. \$45.

June 22-27: Transect of California. A six-day camping transect of California to observe native vertebrates and flora of major habitats from Mono Lake to Monterey (very strong emphasis on birds). Cost includes all food and camping expenses. Transportation by private car pool. Rich Stallcup, Peter Warshall, Art Earle, and Bob Stewart. \$200.

A NOTE ABOUT LEAD SHOT POISONING.....

Bud Galapp brought to our attention an article on lead shot poisoning which appeared in National Parks and Conservation Magazine, November, 1974. It is worth reading, if this subject is of concern to you. Briefly the problem is this: more than 2½ million waterfowl die each year from lead shot poisoning. Contrary to popular belief, wounds do not cause the poisoning. Rather the poisoning is caused by the birds ingesting lead shot that has missed the mark and settled to the bottom of wetlands, rivers, and lakes, where waterfowl feed. The lead shot travels to the gizzard where it eventually breaks down chemically, toxic compounds are formed, and are absorbed into the bird's circulatory system. The lead shot also paralyzes the gizzard muscle, depriving the bird of its ability to 'chew' and digest food. Death may be relatively swift (one week) or it may be a lingering death from starvation (3-4 weeks).

An alternative to lead shot is available. Steel shot is a practical, available, and nontoxic substitute for lead shot and would greatly reduce waterfowl losses each year, the article continues. The reasons it is not being used widely now? Cost: a box of steel shot shells costs perhaps \$2.00 a box more, on the average, than lead shot. Gun damage: anti-steel shot spokesmen claim that gun damage costs as a result of the switch would be high. However, a Dept. of Interior Environmental Impact Statement showed that choke expansion damage is no more likely to occur when steel shot is used than when lead shot is used. A third objection cited is that steel shot is not as efficient as lead and would increase unretrieved bird losses by three million birds. But a study seems to indicate that the use of steel shot would increase the annual unretrieved bird losses by 200,000 to 400,000. Considering that at least 2½ million birds would be saved from lead shot poisoning, the article concludes that the figures seem a reasonable tradeoff. In addition, as hunters gain experience in using steel shot, unretrieved bird numbers would probably be lower.

The Interior Department has proposed a ban on lead shotgun ammunition for waterfowl hunting throughout much of the U.S. starting in 1976, and not to be fully implemented until at least 1978. According to a further article in this same magazine, NPCA (National Parks and Conservation Association) submitted comments on both the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) and proposed regulations designed to stop further poisoning of birds. The NPCA urges that the proposed timetable for implementing the ban be changed to begin with the Atlantic Flyway in 1975, then proceed to take effect in other areas more speedily, and that the ban protect birds including rails and cranes in addition to the ducks, geese, swans, and coots covered in Interior's proposal.

Interested people are urged by NPCA to submit their comments on the draft environmental impact statement, urging that the Interior Dept. drop the inadequate protracted timetable in their proposed regulations and instead implement a more comprehensive and timely rule as follows: a complete ban on lead shot and a mandatory use of steel shot for hunting all waterfowl, rails, and cranes beginning in the Atlantic Flyway in 1975 and in the rest of the flyways in 1976. If you write, be sure you clearly state that you are commenting on DEIS 74-76 and you would like your comments to be incorporated into the final environmental impact statement. Write:

Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Att: Office of Environmental Coordination
Dept. of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

DORAN BEACH ROAD SHORE BIRD STUDY

Gail Scott is a senior at CSCS doing an independent study project on shorebirds in the Doran Beach Road area. This is the third part of her study report:

The months of January and February have been rather exciting for me regarding Doran Beach Road. The tides have been relatively low these past two months, therefore, most of the Charadriiformes can be seen in the middle or northern parts of Bodega Bay and not on Doran Beach Road. Various species of ducks (order Anseriformes) have, for the most part, dominated the mudflat area these past months with Dunline occasionally sharing the site. Green-winged Teals, American Wigeons, and Pintails are frequent visitors.

January 16, 1975 was the first day that I had sighted the Cinnamon Teals feeding among the other ducks on the mudflat area. The Cinnamon Teals are now among the regular visitors. On the same day I came across a female Marsh Hawk on a kill. When she had finished feeding and had flown off I went down to examine the remains of her prey. Only the wings and head were left of what appeared to be a female Green-winged Teal. I had not witnessed the actual pursuit and capture by the Marsh Hawk, therefore, I don't know if the teal had been in poor condition before it fell prey to the hawk.

On the 20th of January I was fortunate enough to witness what appeared to be a courtship dance. While I was checking out the "beach dwellers" I noticed two Ring-billed Gulls acting rather strangely, at least abnormal for winter behaviour. I sat down on the beach and observed their antics from a distance of approximately 20 yards. The two gulls began their display by walking with outstretched necks, in a threatening fashion, toward a solitary gull. This posture, along with a yipping-like call, proved too much for the lone gull so it hurriedly flew off. The two gulls then stood side by side and began pointing their necks and beaks to the ground, almost touching the sand, then proceeded to extend their necks, heads and beaks toward the sky. They would then bob their heads and necks up and down. All the while they were making that same yipping-like call. This movement was repeated several times. Then the gulls stopped stopped and began walking away from one another and one would occasionally let out the yipping call then the other would follow suit. When they were approximately ten feet apart they repeated their little dance, only this time with their backs toward each other. They went through the above described movements three more times then simply flew off! I waited to see if the gulls would return for an encore, however apparently that had concluded their performance. It being only the middle of winter I felt quite fortunate to witness this display pattern.

I saw my first Scaup, on the mudflat area of Doran Beach Road, on February 2, 1975. I was unable to tell whether it was a Greater or Lesser Scaup.

I have seen a single American Avocet on three separate occasions, on the mudflat area, on February 2nd, 5th, and 19th. Each of these sightings has been on rainy days.

In the early part of February I became acquainted with Marsh Road. This road is on the left hand side just before you enter the town of Valby Ford going toward Bodega Bay. I was told that there were Whistling Swans inhabiting the flooded pastures and sure enough there they were! The first couple of times I went out there, there were eleven swans. The last time I counted only nine. A number of Cinnamon Teals, American Wigeons, Pintails, and Mallards were also feeding among the swans.

The most exciting moment of these two months was on February 19, 1975, at approximately 1:30 pm. There sitting on a log in the pickle weed just off Doran Beach Road was a Peregrine Falcon! This log happened to be in one of the favorite sitting areas of the Marsh Hawks so I noticed it right away.

DORAN BEACH ROAD SHORE BIRD STUDY, continued.....

I was not more than 10 to 15 yards away and it remained in plain view for 3 to 5 minutes. At first I was hesitant to make a guess, however its 'moustaches' were so evident and then it stretched and showed its gray back. It took off, after a while, and I was positive of its identification. That was the first time I have ever seen a Peregrine Falcon at such a close distance!

All in all Doran Beach Road area remains relatively the same regarding the shore bird population. As I had stated previously the tides have been low, therefore the birds tend to prefer the middle and northern portions of Bodega Bay.

The mouth of the bay is an excellent area for Horned Grebes, Red-breasted Mergansers, Buffleheads, Common Loons, Western Grebes, occasionally Common Goldeneyes, Scaups, Ruddy Ducks and the familiar Surf Scoters.

DORAN BEACH ROAD LIST OF BIRDS with approximate numbers seen per day

Order Charadriiformes

Family Scolopacidae

Dunlin 50-1000
 Western Sandpiper 50-1000
 Least Sandpiper 10-200
 Sanderling 100-200
 Willet 5-100
 Marbled Godwit 2-200
 Dowitcher 0-20

Family Charadriidae

Blk-bellied Plover 1-100
 Killdeer 2-10
 Snowy Plover 2-100
 Semipalmated Plover 1-10
 Black Turnstone 0-5

Family Recurvirostridae

American Avocet one on Feb. 2, 5, 19

Family Laridae

Ring-billed Gull all numbered
 California Gull between
 Western Gull 2-100
 Glaucous-winged Gull
 Mew Gull
 Forster's Tern

Order Gaviformes

Common Loon

Order Podicipediformes

Western Grebe
 Horned Grebe

Order Ciconiiformes

Great Blue Heron
 Snowy Egret

Order Gruiformes

American Coot

Order Anseriformes

Pintail
 Green-winged Teal
 Cinnamon Teal

Order Anseriformes, continued

American Wigeon
 Ruddy Duck
 Bufflehead
 Red-breasted Merganser

Order Falconiformes

Family Accipitridae
 Marsh Hawk

Family Falconidae

Peregrine Falcon 2/19/75

Family Cathartidae

Turkey Vulture

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES FOR THIS YEAR? The RROS year runs from May to May. Family membership, \$4.50; individual, \$3; student, \$1. Kite Tales only, \$2.

We need your dues to meet our obligations