

Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 35 Number VI

February 2001

Coming Attractions

February 8th, Thursday, 7:30 PM - General Meeting
Administration Building, Laguna Waste Water Treatment Plant
4300 Llano Road, Santa Rosa (see map on page 5 of our November edition)

New Zealand - Islands Down Under with Ken Wilson

This interesting program and slide show will follow the recent tour of New Zealand which included some of RROS' own members and was led by Ken, chief bottle washer of Talon Tours in conjunction with his brother Tony of Manu Tours in New Zealand. Perhaps we'll hear more about the fascinating Kea, predator parrot, vandal, part time terrorist and mischief maker of the South Island.

February 10th, Saturday
Field Trip to Grizzly Island, Solano County

Come explore the wetlands and view the waterfowl of Grizzly Island Wildlife Area with us. Meet at the Petaluma Park-and-Ride (located at US 101 and Lakeville Highway just west of US 101) at 8:00 am for car pooling. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, field guides, lunch, water, and warm clothing. Leader is Alan Wight.

Call Alan at (707) 763-8572 if you have any questions. Heavy rain cancels.

February 20th, Tuesday - 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

February 25th, Sunday - 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

March 9th - 11th Friday - Sunday,
Field Trip to Susanville Area for Sage Grouse

We will spend three days birding the Susanville area. Our main goal will be to see Sage Grouse at dawn on Saturday on their lek. Details will be in the March Kite Tales. Leaders are Alan Wight and Rick Lebaudour.

Call Alan at 763-8572 if you would like hotel information before the March Kite Tales comes out.

Good Birding Spots #19

West Butte Road
by Ted Eliot

One of my favorite spots in the Sacramento Valley in winter is West Butte Road. It is also an easy link between the Sacramento and Colusa refuges and Gray Lodge. To get there take Interstate 80 east to 505. Follow 505 until it meets I 5 north. Take the exit for State Route 20 east at Williams and continue east to Colusa. I like to get to this area by crossing the Sacramento River at Colusa and driving along Butte Slough Road. This road goes along the river and is for the most part on the dike and hence affords excellent looks at whatever birds are in the river. Moreover, there is lots of good and varied passerine habitat along it.

Butte Slough Road ends at Pass Road, where I turn left (east). After about 2 miles, I turn left (north) on West Butte Road. The mileages that are given below refer to miles from the Pass Road/West Butte Road intersection.

All along the road to the east are magnificent views of the Sutter Buttes. There is also excellent raptor habitat along most of the road, mostly on the right, in the form of rocky outcroppings on pasture land. Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks should be looked for.

At 2.0 miles, there is open water on the left, worth scoping for waterfowl. At 2.8 miles, there is a stone wall on the left which runs for a hundred yards or so and which has been home to Rock Wrens for several years. It pays to walk along the road here because there is a variety of other passerines, including in the past, on occasion, Vesper Sparrows (which might be seen elsewhere along the road).

For about a mile, beginning at 3.4 miles, Mountain Bluebirds in flocks of 20 or 30 have been seen regularly. A wetland on the left at 5.5 miles can be productive. So can a large thistle patch (finches and sparrows) on the right at 6.0 miles. and some ponds on the left at 8.8 miles.

At 9.2 miles, West Butte Road ends. At this point I turn right on North Butte Road. At the intersection are some fields which often host Sandhill Cranes.

intersection are some fields which often host Sandhill Cranes.

At 10.9 miles, just before a sharp turn to the right, park on the right and walk along the road to find passerines in the trees and brambles.

After you walk past the turn, there are a lot of large trees on the left (north) side which used to harbor Lewis's Woodpeckers. Unfortunately a local farmer may have scared them away or shot them because I haven't seen them (or him) since the winter of 1998-99.

At 13.1 miles, turn left (north) off North Butte Road onto Almond Orchard Road which takes you in short order to the entrance, on the left, to Gray Lodge.

One note of caution: During wet winters, some of this route can be flooded, so it is desirable to take a good map (the AAA map of the Sacramento Valley has served me well) in order to find alternative routes to Gray Lodge. January and February are the best months for this trip.

Long Time Member Passes

Douglas A. Ellis

By Betty Burrige

One of the most knowledgeable and highly respected birders in Sonoma County, Doug Ellis, died unexpectedly on January 3 at Annadel State Park. He was 51 years old.

Doug was a master at identifying birds by sight and/or sound, especially our local owls. He was highly skilled in imitating bird songs, but excelled at calling in owls. Popular and much sought after as a field trip leader, Doug generously shared his knowledge with beginners and experienced birders alike over many years.

He was a member of Redwood Region Ornithological Society since the 1970s. He was a major contributor of field observations, and a valued advisor during the production and publication of the Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas from 1985-95. Doug served as compiler for the Santa Rosa Christmas Bird Count for RR0S for the past 20 years.

continued —>

Douglas A. Ellis

A native Californian, he received a bachelor's degree in Geography from California State University at Hayward. Using this background as a springboard, he began his ardent studies in field ornithology, botany, lepidopterology and odonatology (the study of dragonflies) Photography was another of Doug's great talents.

He had a sharp wit, a kind manner, and a brilliant mind. His remarkable memory served as a valuable and precise resource for details of past events and rare bird sightings.

His untimely death is a great loss for the birding community. He will be sorely missed by his family and his many friends.

**Fieldtrip Report Lake Berryessa
January 20, 2001 - by Alan Wight**

Four of us enjoyed a very productive day of birding. On our way to Lake Berryessa, we encountered a few Lewis' Woodpeckers in Pope Valley. By the end of the day, we had seen approximately 40 Lewis' Woodpeckers here and (mostly) in the oak trees along the northeast side of Lake Berryessa. We had nice close looks and even got to hear their squeaky calls.

Our first stop at the north end of the lake turned up five Bald Eagles of various ages from first winter through adult. While watching the eagles and other birds, a Northern Pygmy-Owl popped up into a tree right in front of us. We had excellent views of it while it looked around and then stared at the ground and dove after something.

Along the northeast side of the lake we saw a few Yellow-billed Magpies, some Lark Sparrows and a mixed flock of blackbirds that contained many Tricoloreds. This area added some exciting raptors, with three more Bald Eagles, five Golden Eagles, two Prairie Falcons, and a Merlin. On the lake and along the shore were six Common Loons, one Horned Grebe, and several lingering American White Pelicans.

We drove to Monticello Dam where we found one Canyon and one Rock Wren and both Hooded and Common Mergansers. There was also a Peregrine Falcon perched on the rocks high above us.

Finally, at Lake Solano County Park, we saw a

Finally, at Lake Solano County Park, we saw a male Barrow's Goldeneye and a female Phainopepla. A total of 93 bird species were observed.

Field trip participants were Richard Hurley, Rick Lebaudour, Wayne Tillay, and Alan Wight.

Birds observed: Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Canada Goose, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, California Quail, Sora, American Coot, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, California Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Lewis' Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Western Scrub-Jay, Yellow-billed Magpie, American Crow, Common Raven, Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Bewick's Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Western Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Wrentit, Northern Mockingbird, California Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Phainopepla, Loggerhead Shrike, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Spotted Towhee, California Towhee, Lark Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Tricolored Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, Purple Finch, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch.

Ending net impairment

RROS VP, program chair and executive bottle washer of Talon Tours has entered the third millennium. Yes, Ken Wilson is now online! His email address is: talontours@yahoo.com

Observations

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Laysan Albatross	1	12/23	Pt. Arena	MEN	BG	
{ Grtr-wht Fronted Goose	1	1/2		Bodega Farm Pond		SON TE
	"	3	1/9	Hudeman Slough		SON BDP
	"	1	1/15	Pond at 116/Adobe Rd.		SON AW
	"	10	1/15	Ramal Rd Preserve		SON AW
Canada Goose	lots	1/9	Hudeman Slough	SON	BDP	
✓ " "	2	1/15	Pond at 116/Adobe Rd.	SON	AW	Aleutian
Eurasian Wigeon	1	12/22	Bodega Farm Pond	SON	DA, TE	
" "	1	1/2	Bodega Farm Pond	SON	EKW, TZ	
✓ Blue-winged Teal	4	1/5	Shollenberger Park	SON	TE	
King Eider	1	1/4 +	Point Reyes Fish Docks	MAR	BG, BDP	1st winter male
Black Scoter	1	12/30	Bodega Bay	SON	BG	
" "	?	1/4 +	Point Reyes Fish Docks	MAR	BG, BDP	
Long-tailed Duck	5	1/12	Point Reyes Fish Docks	MAR	BDP	
" "	1	1/25	Point Reyes Fish Docks	MAR	BG	male
✓ Barrow's Goldeneye	2	1/3	Mouth of Petaluma Rivr	SON	TE	
✓ Hooded Merganser	8	12/22	Lower Carmody Rd Pond	SON	DA, TE	
" "	10+	1/10	Detert Reservoir	LAK	BDP	
" "	11	1/17	Pope Valley Rd.	NAP	MAS	
Common Merganser	12	1/29	Sonoma State Campus	SON	RO	
Bald Eagle	2	1/17	Lake Hennesey	NAP	MAS	adults
" "	4	1/24	Lake Berryessa	NAP	BDP	all imm.
✓ Rough-legged Hawk	1	1/15	Ramal Road	SON	AW	
✓ " "	1	1/29	Sonoma State Campus	SON	RO	
Golden Eagle	1	1/13	Pine Flat Road	SON	BDP, AW	
" "	1	1/18	Skaggs Island	SON	KM, DHr	imm.
{ Merlin	1	1/2		Bodega Bay		SON TE
"	1	1/5	Shollenberger Park	SON	TE	
"	1	1/7	Adobe Canyon Rd	SON	IM	
✓ Peregrine Falcon	1	1/19	D St Bridge, Petaluma	SON	DN	sub-adult
✓ Prairie Falcon	1	1/12	Hudeman Slough	SON	TE	
✓ " "	1	1/15	Hudeman Slough	SON	PL, GW	
✓ Wandering Tattler	2	12/22	Bodega HEad	SON	DA, TE	
✓ Rock Sandpiper	1	12/22	South End Doran Beach	SON	DA, TE	
Common Snipe	5	1/15	Hudeman Slough	SON	PL, GW	
Red Phalarope	20	1/12	Point Reyes Fish Docks	MAR	BDP	
Bonaparte's Gull	3	1/15	Hudeman Slough	SON	PL, GW	
{ Heermann's Gull	1	1/23	Schoolhouse Beach	SON	BDP	1st Winter
" "	1	1/23	Mouth of Salmon Creek	SON	BDP	
" "	1	1/23	Bodega Head	SON	BDP	
Thayer's Gull	2	1/23	Schoolhouse Beach	SON	BDP	1st Winter
Band-tailed Pigeon	4	1/13	Pine Flat Road	SON	BDP, AW	
✓ Burrowing Owl	1	1/2 +	Pine Flat Road	SON	DH, BG, BDP, AW	

Observations - continued

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Tree Swallow	12	1/12	Hudeman Slough	SON	TE	
" "	20	1/15	Hudeman Slough	SON	PL, GW	
✓ Barn Swallow	1	1/12	Hudeman Slough	SON	TE	
✓ Wilson's Warbler	1	1/2	Diekmann's Store	SON	TE	
✓ Western Tanager	1	1/23	Nancy Conzett's feeder	SON	BDP, NC	Female, basic plumage
✓ Fox Sparrow	1	1/13	Pine Flat Road	SON	BDP, AW	large billed

Other Creatures of Interest:

Coyote	1	1/15	Hudeman Slough	SON	PL, GW	
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Observers:

Dick Ashford, Ted Eliot, Betty Groce, Deyea Harper (DHr), David Hoffman, Peter Leveque, Madrone Audubon Society, Ian Morrison, Kathy Mugele, Dan Nelson, Rebecca Olsen,

Mike Parmeter (BDP), Alan Wight, Giel Witt, Ned Wynn (EKW), Tim Zalunardo

President Betty gets (a) Gooney at Point Arena

Well, we'll just let her explain it:

On December 23, Jack and I drove to Pt. Arena to see the Laysan Albatross. When we arrived, the bird was in the water drifting just off the pier with his head tucked under one wing. Occasionally he would look around and then go back to napping. This went on for nearly half an hour and wasn't terribly exciting, so we finally went to have lunch. The nearest restaurant is upstairs in a building at the end of the pier. Since it was such a lovely day, we availed ourselves of the outdoor deck where we could continue to watch the bird.

He finally awakened and started slowly paddling his way toward the pier. I had my point and shoot camera so couldn't resist racing down the steps and out on the pier. I got a couple of shots and then he picked up and started to fly away. To my surprise, he landed next to a surfer who was paddling toward the pier. As I watched, I saw the surfer splash water on the bird. Then he slid off his board into the water and turned the board around so he could POKE the bird. I couldn't imagine why this was taking place. The surfer paddled on to the pier with that gooney bird right behind him.

As the surfer walked to his car Jack went down to find out what took place. He asked the surfer if he had a relationship with the bird to which the surfer replied that this was the first time he'd been there and had never seen the bird before. He then volunteered, "That blasted bird landed beside me and bit me!!!!!"

Later, one of the locals told us that the fishermen had been feeding the Laysan so he probably expected to be fed by the surfer. Is he spoiled rotten or what?????

Firebirds

Late breaking news, January 30th 2001. This report is from savanna resource manager Erasmo Montemayor of Port Lavaca, Texas :

I witnessed the most unbelievable thing today while helping a local rancher carry out a prescribed burn. As we started the fire about 100-150 White-tailed hawks arrived to hunt in the conflagration. I saw one of the hawks dive down and pick up a rat that was in flames. It was actually on fire. The hawk flew off a short distance and soon dropped the rat outside our perimeter. The rat started an adjacent field on fire. We spent the next 3 hours trying to control that fire. That was the largest

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 at the Laguna Waste Water Treatment Plant, 4300 Llano Road, Santa Rosa, California. Dues are \$15 per family, \$8 per individual, or \$3 per student for one year membership. Send dues to the treasurer shown below.

2000 - 2001 Officers:

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

Vice President: Ken Wilson, 8 Pine Tree Circle., Cotati, CA 94931 707 795-7547
E-Mail: talontours@yahoo.com

Secretary: Bertha Rains, 450A Las Casitas, Santa Rosa, CA 95403-1383 707 528-6785
E-Mail: bbr@ap.net

Treasurer: Mike Nelligan, 124 Wikiup Drive, Santa Rosa CA 95403-7700 707 576-1475
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2000 - 2001 Chairs:

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

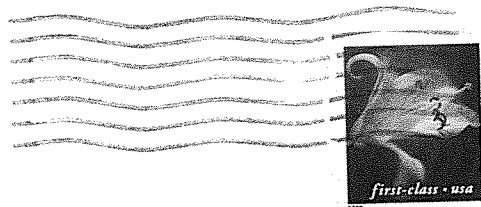
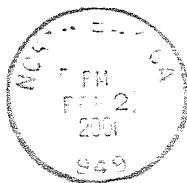
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E-Mail: ekwynn@pon.net

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

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E-Mail: patted@sonic.net

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