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# Kite Tales



Redwood Region Ornithological Society

Volume 35 Number VIII

April 2001

## Coming Attractions

**April 12th, 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)

### **Long Term Studies On Shorebirds and Water birds in Tomales Bay with John Kelly**

John Kelly Phd. is the Research Director at Audubon Canyon Ranch and currently lives and works at Cypress Grove Research Center. He received his doctorate in Ecology.

John will share with us, some of his recent work on the Ecology of nesting Herons and Egrets in the San Francisco Bay area. He will also address his studies on the behavior of the Common Raven.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about our local avian community. This is certain to be an interesting and educational evening.

### **April 22nd, Sunday at 7:30/9:00 AM** **Field Trip to Mitchell Canyon, Contra Costa County**

This beautiful canyon on the slopes of Mt. Diablo is a wonderful place to observe newly arrived spring migrants. In addition, it is a magnet for less common migrating birds such as Hammond's Flycatcher, Calliope Hummingbird, Nashville Warbler, and Hermit Warbler. Along with the birds come a nice variety of butterflies, reptiles, and wildflowers. Meet at 7:30 am at the Petaluma Park-and-Ride for car pooling or meet at the Mitchell Canyon parking lot at 9:00 am. The Petaluma Park-and-Ride is located on Lakeville Highway in Petaluma just west of US101.

To get to Mitchell Canyon, take Highway 680 south to Walnut Creek. Take the Ygnacio Valley Road exit east. Once on Ygnacio Valley Road, drive east 7.7 miles and turn south on Clayton Road. Drive one mile and turn right onto Mitchell Canyon Road. Follow this road for 1.6 miles to the end. Bring binoculars, hiking shoes, water, and a lunch. We will walk about three miles total at a leisurely pace. Leader is Alan Wight. Please call Alan (weekdays 7-9 pm or weekends any time) at 763-8572 if you plan to meet the group at Mitchell Canyon or if you have any questions.

### **April 20th, Friday - 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](mailto:ekwynn@pon.net)

### **April 25th, Wednesday - 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](mailto:mewgull@ix.netcom.com)

## Field Trip Report

Susanville Sage Grouse  
March 9-11, 2001

We spent the better part of three days exploring the Honey Lake area. On Saturday morning we were successful in finding Sage Grouse. We arrived at the Sage Grouse lek at dawn and saw and heard 10 displaying males and approximately 5 females. After watching this wonderful show for quite some time, a group of 12 Pronghorn Antelope appeared and ran past the lek. At a group of cliffs near Wendel we found a few Chukar, two Prairie Falcons, two Sage Sparrows, a Rock Wren, and a Canyon Wren. Leavitt Lake had a nice collection of waterfowl and at least 20 Bald Eagles. There were large flocks of migrating Sandhill Cranes flying over at times and large flocks of Snow/Ross' Geese on and around Honey Lake. Along Mapes Road north of Honey Lake were a Northern Shrike, a few Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and a large sparrow flock that included two Harris' Sparrows. Dick Ashford saw a Field Sparrow in this same flock on March 9. Just before starting our drive home, we had nice looks at an immature Northern Goshawk in Susanville. While driving home via Lake Almanor, we stopped in Chester where we saw Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches, and Mountain Bluebirds. A total of 105 species were observed.

The field trip participants were Dick Ashford, Joan Dranginis, Rick Lebaudour, Mike Parmeter, Rhio Reigh, Ruth Rudesill, and Alan Wight.

**Birds observed:** Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Ross' Goose, Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Chukar, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sage

Grouse, California Quail, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, California Gull, Rock Dove, Band-tailed Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Acorn Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Shrike, Steller's Jay, Western Scrub-Jay, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Mountain Chickadee, Bushtit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Bewick's Wren, American Dipper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Western Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, American Robin, European Starling, American Pipit, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Field Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Harris' Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Tricolored Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch, Cassin's Finch, House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak, House Sparrow.

~ Alan Wight

## Some Butterfly Tracking

Are you interested in helping butterflies? Jacqueline Levy is a graduate student San Francisco State University conducting a study on the effectiveness of butterfly gardens and needs some volunteers.

The study, focusing on the pipevine swallowtail, will run from March through July and will require an hour a week of your time. If you have planted their host-plant, Dutchman's pipe in your garden, or would like to, you can help. You need only commit to checking your plants each week for butterfly eggs and caterpillars and recording what you find.

If you would like to participate please contact Ms. Levy. Everything you need to know is posted on her web page:

<http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~jmlevy>.

You can also reach her by phone at her lab : (415) 338-3873.

## Wine Industry and Growth versus Breeding Birds

### How do the expanding wine industry and concurrent population growth affect our Sonoma County Breeding Birds?

Volunteer birders with strong skills in both visual and aural identification are being sought by Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) to conduct point count surveys for a study this spring to help answer these important questions.

Over 80% of California's oak woodland and lowland riparian habitats, which host unique and diverse songbird populations, are in private ownership and are rapidly disappearing. PRBO will be implementing science-based bird conservation projects using study sites in both public and privately owned riparian and oak woodland habitats throughout Sonoma County. The data will be used to investigate all of the factors believed to influence the health of our ecosystems, including agricultural practices. This scientific information will be contributed to California Partners in Flight's Oak Woodland Bird Conservation Plan.

The time requirement for volunteers is variable, but a minimum commitment is three mornings (3 hours per morning) between May 1 and June 30 spaced at 2 to 3 week intervals. A 3 hour training workshop on field protocols is also required; one is scheduled April 20, 2001.

Those interested should contact Sandy Scoggin (415) 868-1221 extension 16 or via the net at Sscoggin@PRBO.org and mention - The Birds of the Oak Woodlands and Riparian Corridors of Sonoma County: Monitoring the effects of urbanization and an expanding wine industry on breeding birds.

## Brown Binocular Sites

We've all seen those signs put up by the state; the brown ones with the silhouette of binoculars on them to indicate a wildlife viewing area. Now there is a complete list of all the sites in the state so designated. On the internet visit:

<http://parks.ca.gov/travel/parktypes/wwsites.htm>.

## Avian Covert Action

We spy on these birdy body parts to identify them but what is their function? Why *that* arrangement?

Viewed from the top, a bird's secondary and then primary feathers extend from the body (most proximal) to the outermost primary in such a manner that the feather closer to the body overlaps all succeeding feathers.

The reason is obvious, in flight, the overlapping remiges form a solid surface in the downstroke phase. On the upstroke the outer feathers twist and open like a venetian blind, allowing air to slip between the vanes of the primaries, thus reducing the work required to raise the wing and minimizing the disturbance to air flow over the upper surface. Usually the covert arrangement echos the secondary/primary overlap scheme. However, in some birds, specifically many songbirds, the covert arrangement is just the opposite; rather than overlapping in the same manner as the primaries/secondaries the coverts overlap in opposite order.

This causes us to wonder:

What function do the coverts provide and why might the covert overlap be opposite the overlap arrangement of the primaries and secondaries?

Speculation can bring us a couple reasonable explanations:

Songbirds rely on the upstroke more than larger birds, such as raptors, that are less acrobatic in their flight patterns. The opposite arrangement might provide more stability on the upstroke.

Songbird display coloration is often covert specific, as in the Redwing Blackbird. Maybe the opposite arrangement aids in the display. This seems a less reasonable alternative unless it is found that the covert arrangement is sex specific, which seems most unlikely.

*Kite Tales* welcomes an answer from published sources, which we have been unable to find, or any member/reader conjecture. We will happily host a discussion of this or any other such curiosities. Submit your thoughts via email or conventional mail to the addresses listed on the cover.

Observations

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
✓ American White Pelican	4	2/24	Sebastopol	SON	AW	
✓ Cattle Egret	45+	2/24	High School Rd, Sebast.	SON	AW	
✓ Tundra Swan	2	2/27	Bodega Hwy/Gericke Rd	SON	DN	
Eurasian Wigeon	1	3/8	Las Gallinas Sewer Ponds	MAR	BG, MAS	male
Tufted Duck	1	3/8	Las Gallinas Sewer Ponds	MAR	BG, MAS	male
Harlequin Duck	9	3/17	MacKerricher Beach	MEN	RL, RM	
✓ Hooded Merganser	12	3/26	SDC, Glen Ellen	SON	LD, RN	
Red-breasted Merganser	1	4/2	Eagle Lake	LAS	LD, RN, LM, GM	male
Rough-legged Hawk	1	4/2	Honey Lake	LAS	LD, RN, LM, GM	
Golden Eagle	1	3/2	over Sonoma Mtn.	SON	TE	sub-adult
" "	1	3/9	over Adobe Canyon	SON	IM	immature
" "	1	3/28	County Park Glen Ellen	SON	LD, RN	immature
" "	1	3/30	Shollenberger Park	SON	LD, RN, GM	
" "	1	3/31	Del Val Reservoir	ALA	LD, RN, LM, GM	
" "	1	4/3	near Mugele house, GE	SON	LD, RN, LM	sub-adult
Peregrine Falcon	1	3/29	Lovall Valley	NAP	LD, RN	
Prairie Falcon	1	4/2	Leavitt Resvoir	LAS	LD, RN, LM, GM	
✓ Blue Grouse	?	3/14	King's Ridge Rd.	SON	BDP, DH, LS	
Greater Sand Plover	1	Feb+	Seadrift, Bolinas Lagoon	MAR	M.ob.	Through at least 3/31
Spotted Sandpiper	1	3/8	Stafford Lake	MAR	BG, MAS	
" "	1	3/24	pond, San Antonio Rd.	MAR	LD, RN, GM	
Rock Sandpiper	4	3/17	Virgin Creek	MEN	RL, RM	
✓ Western Gull	1	2/11	Spud Point, Bodega	SON	AW	wymani subspecies
✓ Spotted Owl	1	3/25	SDC, Glen Ellen	SON	LD, RN, GM	
✓ Short-eared Owl	4-5	3/3	Brown Farm, Laguna	SON	BG, BP	
✓ White-throated Swift	3	3/11	Hwy 101@Petaluma River	SON	DN	
✓ Rufous Hummingbird	1	3/1	Oakmont feeder	SON	J&BG	male
✓ Red-breasted Sapsucker	1	3/13	Cazadero	SON	DB, PC	
Nutting's Flycatcher	1	2/26	Irvine	ORG	J&BG	1st Calif Record
Pygmy Nuthatch	2	3/18	Salmon Creek Rd.	SON	AW	excavating cavity
Townsend's Solitaire	1	3/26	2331 Atlas Peak Rd, Napa	NAP	LD, RN, GM	in Chaparral area
Phainopepla	2	3/31	Mines Rd.	ALA	LD, RN, GM, KM	
✓ Summer Tanager	1	ALL	Forestville, Van Keppel Rd,	SON	MH, LSo, DN	male, Present all winter
White-throated Sparrow	2	3/24	Audubon Canyon Ranch	MAR	LD, RN, GM	
✓ Harris's Sparrow	1	3/15	Lebec Lane, Rohnert Park	SON	RM	
Red Crossbill	?	3/17	near Booneville	MEN	RL, RM	

Observers:

Dennis Beall, Pam Conley, Lesley Dron, Ted Eliot, Jack & Betty Groce, Mike Heffernon, David Hoffman, Rick Lebaudour, Madrone Audubon Society, Richard Merris, Ian Morrison, Gerry Mugele, Lilly Mugele, Dan Nelson, Russell Nisbet, Mike Parmeter (BDP), Bill Payne, Laura Southworth (LSo), Lang Stevenson, Alan Wight

**RROS Officers for 2001/2002**

**Time to vote: Cast yours at the April Meeting!**

Our nominating committee consisting of Mike Parmeter, Bob Raines & Betty Burrige has submitted the following slate of candidates for the year 2001-2002:

- President-----Ken Wilson
- Vice-President-----Ted Eliot
- Secretary-----Linda Allen
- Treasurer-----Betty Burrige

Alan Wight will continue with his great work arranging, organizing, and coordinating our field trips. Barbara Gumtow will continue with her fine work as Social Chair.

**Power Outages and Birds**

**At least our recent California outages can't be blamed on birds.**

A stork's nest tangled in power lines is thought to have plunged Lisbon and the southern half of Portugal into darkness, a National Grid spokesman said on Wednesday.

"In a helicopter tour near a pylon, we saw the remains of an unfortunate stork, a piece of its nest and a damaged set of insulators in the affected area," the spokesman told the local radio.

Lisbon and most of southern Portugal were without mains electricity for about one hour late Tuesday in the country's most extensive blackout for some 20 years.

"The follow-up investigation will seek to discover how a defect like this could spread over such a wide area," the spokesman added.

**Moon Glow Dairy Off Limits**

**This great birding spot is temporarily closed to birders.**

From Birdwest Listserve:

Effective immediately, Mr. Louis Calcagno, owner of Moon Glow Dairy in Moss Landing is suspending all access to visitors including birders, for the next 60 to 90 days in an effort to curtail the

potential spread of Foot-and-Mouth Disease to his livestock.

Please join in and honor Mr. Calcagno's request putting fellow birders on notice.

**Condor Release**

**The Last Female California Condor Taken Into Captivity Has Been Released Back Into The Wild.**

On March 14th, after more than a decade in captivity, a wild-born female California condor once again soared over her home territory in the Sespe Condor Sanctuary near the town of Fillmore in Ventura County, California.

This bird, known as Adult Condor #8, was the last female wild-bird captured and was the first of the original wild birds to be released. She was joined by three Los Angeles Zoo-raised juvenile condors who were experiencing life as wild birds for the first time.

In 1986, Adult Condor (AC) # 8, one of only six California condors remaining in the wild, was brought into captivity as part of the efforts to save the condors from extinction. For the past 14 years, AC-8 has lived at the San Diego Wild Animal Park as a breeding female in the captive-breeding program. She has been a very successful breeder and is now believed to be past breeding age.

She was released with the three young birds to serve as a mentor for them to learn the necessary skills for survival in the wild. Biologists will monitor their well being daily as the birds adapt to their new surroundings.

**Visit Malheur NWR with PRBO**

**June 9-10 with Rich Stallcup**

This trip to Eastern Oregon includes two days of birding with Rich Stallcup in the Malheur Region, and an evening slide presentation by biologist Aaron Holmes, highlighting the results of his land bird monitoring in sage brush habitats.

Transportation, lodging and food are not included.

Cost of this trip is \$150.00 per person. To sign up contact Melissa Pitkin at (415) 868-1221 ext. 33.

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  
E-Mail: bandm@monitor.net

**2000 - 2001 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@pon.net

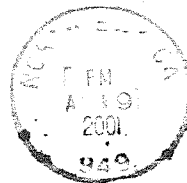
**Social:** Barbara Gumtow, 7915 Bella Vista Dr., Sebastopol CA 95472-2701 707 823-7869

**Christmas Count:** Ted Eliot/Bob Evans

**Good Birding Spots:** Ted Eliot, 5850 Grove St., Sonoma CA 95476-6095 707 935-3410  
E-Mail: patted@sonic.net

**Kite Tales:** Gerry Mugele, PO Box 813, Glen Ellen, Ca 95442-0813 707 938-2134  
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