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Kite Tales

Volume 41 Number 57

APRIL 2006

Please note !!!!!!! Meeting starts at 7:00 !!!!!!!

GENERAL MEETING – Thursday, April 13 - 7:00 P. M.

THAILAND (BIRDS, CULTURE AND MORE)

In December 2005 **Ken Wilson and Becky Olsen** returned to Thailand exploring many National Parks and places of cultural interest.

Ken will present a talk and slide show focusing on the parks, birds and many other interesting aspects of this ancient Southeast Asian culture.

Be sure to bring your binoculars.

Directions: From Hwy 101 take Hwy 116 West toward Sebastopol. Turn right (north) on Llano Rd. and go ~ 1 mile to **Laguna Wastewater Treatment Plant at 4300 Llano Rd, Santa Rosa**. Look for an open gate on right. Proceed to Administration. Bldg. at SE corner of the plant. From Hwy. 12, take Llano Rd. south about 3 miles. Plant is on left.

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OTHER COMING ATTRACTIONS: (See next page for details)

April 17, Mon. 7:30 p.m. Madrone Audubon Society General Meeting – John Dell’Osso, Chief of Interpretation and Resource Education at Pt. Reyes National Seashore” talks about “Habitat Diversity and Species Richness, in that wonderful natural resource nearby in Marin County. 1st United Methodist Church, 1551 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa 95404

April 29, Sat. Field trip to Mitchell Canyon, Contra Costa County

May 20, Sat. Field trip to Geysers Road

Saturday, April 29 – Field Trip to Mitchell Canyon, Contra Costa County

This beautiful canyon on the slopes of Mt. Diablo is a great place to observe newly arrived spring migrants. It's 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 and wildflowers. **Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Petaluma Park-and-Ride** for carpooling or meet at the Mitchell Canyon parking lot at **9:00 a.m.** The Petaluma Park-and-Ride is located on Lakeville Highway in Petaluma just west of US101. To get to Mitchell Canyon, go south on I-680 from the Martinez Bridge and take the Treat Boulevard exit north of Walnut Creek. Turn left (south) at the first light and proceed a short distance to Treat Boulevard. Turn left (east) on Treat Boulevard. Drive 1.1 miles to Bancroft Road and turn right. Drive 0.6 mile to Ignacio Valley Road and turn left. Travel 5.1 miles to Clayton Road and turn right. 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 at a leisurely pace and eat lunch on the trail. 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.

Saturday, May 20 - Field Trip to Geysers Road

We'll search for woodland, grassland, and chaparral birds along Geysers Road northeast of Healdsburg. Possibilities include Grasshopper Sparrow, Purple Martin, Mountain Quail, California Thrasher, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. **Meet at the first bridge on Pine Flat Road at 8:00 am.** We will drive from here to Geysers Road. Bring binoculars, water, and a lunch. Leader is Alan Wight. Please call Alan (weekdays 7-9 pm or weekends any time) at 763-8572 if you have any questions.

Tule Lake and Klamath Basin Field Trip - Report by Alan Wight February 24-26, 2006

Fifteen of us enjoyed good weather and lots of birds. Bald Eagles made a nice showing - we saw 51 flying out from the Bear Valley roost early Saturday morning and many more in Klamath Basin during the rest of the trip. There were large numbers of Ross's Geese in the area, including eight (!) dark morph birds (we also saw at least seven dark morph Snow Geese). There were many raptors in the area, including one dark morph adult Harlan's Hawk, one Prairie Falcon, and several Rough-legged Hawks and Golden Eagles. Duck highlights included two Barrow's Goldeneyes, two Hooded Mergansers, and at least five Eurasian Wigeons. Locally rare were a Northern Mockingbird and a White-throated Sparrow at the Tule Lake Visitors Center. We ended the trip at Lava Beds and Hidden Valley, adding Red Crossbill, Cassin's Finch, Mountain Chickadee, and Red-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches. The field trip participants were Linda Bertoli, Rich Bertoli, Deyea Harper, Jack Harper, Joel Hornstein, Linda Hornstein, Don Howard, Richard Hurley, Rick LeBaudour, Andy Lacasse, Martie Leys, Richard Merriss, Gerry Mugele, Elaine Pruett, and Alan Wight.

Birds observed (92 species): Greater White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Canada Goose, Cackling Goose, Tundra Swan, Gadwall, Eurasian Wigeon, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, California Quail, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Prairie Falcon, American Coot, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Say's Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Steller's Jay, Western Scrub-Jay, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Mountain Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, Bushtit, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Canyon Wren, Bewick's Wren, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, American Pipit, Cedar Waxwing, Spotted Towhee, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Cassin's Finch, House Finch, Red Crossbill, House Sparrow.

Mammals observed: Muskrat, Yellow-bellied Marmot, California Ground Squirrel, Belding's Ground Squirrel, Bobcat, Coyote, Raccoon, Mule Deer.

(See report of North Point Property field trip (March 11) on page four)

EDITORIAL

Our RR0S is a very highly respected bird club, well loved by its members and well appreciated by the birding community. We all enjoy the benefits of high quality field trips and programs, not to mention an (ah-hem!) excellent newsletter, the Kite Tales. But we all know that RR0S does not function automatically without human participation. To date, the Nominating Committee still has positions open for Treasurer, Vice President and President for the '06 – '07 year. Former officers stand at the ready to orient, advise and assist newcomers. Ask yourself if this is the time for you to step forward and join the list of distinguished birders that have led RR0S. This is certainly the time that RR0S needs you.

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OBSERVATIONS by Ruth Rudesill

February to March 2006

Bird Species	Date	Location	Co.	#	Observers
✓ Snow Goose	2/9/06	Hudemann Slough	SON	1	BDP
✓ Snow Goose	2/15/06	flooded area so Napa	NAP	3	BDP
✓ Snow Goose	2/22/06	Duncan Mills	SON	1	BGr
✓ White-fronted Goose	2/22/06	Duncan Mills	SON	1	BGr
✓ Tundra Swan	3/1/06	Shollenberger Park	SON	1	BDy
✓ Blue-winged Teal	2/15/06	flooded area S of Napa	NAP	1pr	BDP
✓ Barrow's Goldeneye	2/26/06	Bodega Harbor	SON	1f	IM, KWl, BBu
✓ Hooded Merganser	3/9/06	Lake Park Dr SR	SON	1pr	LPe
✓ Common Merganser	1/29/06	Hudemann Slough	SON	16	BDP
✓ Cattle Egret	3/13/06	Willowside Rd	SON	1	GW alternate plumage
✓ Ferruginous Hawk	2/28/06	Hwy 1 N of Manchester	MEN	1	MN, BBu
✓ Merlin	3/22/06	downtown Petaluma	SON	1	RSt
✓ Peregrine Falcon	1/1/06	near Campbell Cove	SON	1	BDP
✓ Mountain Plover	2/28-3/4/06	field off Hwy 37	SON	4	LHg,AWgh. RAR
1st County Record		field near Richard Jansen "Fresh Air" Bridge, near San Pablo Bay			
Mountain Plover	3/18/06	field @ Fresh Air bridge	SON	1	CLou
Thayer's Gull	1/31/06	Tides Wharf	SON	1	BDP, TE
✓ Glaucous Gull	2/27/06	Bodega Harbor	SON	1ad	NC
✓ Glaucous Gull	2/28/06	Hwy 1 at Garcia River Bridge	MEN	1	MN, BBu
✓ Glaucous Gull	3/20/06	Bodega Harbor	SON	1 2nd	RSt
✓ Black-legged Kittiwake	2/26/06	Off Duncan's Landing	SON	1	IM, KWl,
✓ Western Screech Owl	3/14-25/06	nestbox Oakmont yard	SON	2pr	BGr nesting
✓ Short-eared Owl	2/4/06	River Road near Fulton	SON	1	LPe
✓ Rufous Hummingbird	3/14/06	Oakmont feeder	SON	1m	BGr
✓ Allen's Hummingbird	3/4/06	Oakmont feeder	SON	1m	BGr
✓ Pileated Woodpecker	2/22/06	Annadel St Park	SON	1	BGr
✓ Horned Lark	3/18/06	field @ Fresh Air bridge	SON	sev	CLou
✓ Tree Swallow	1/19/06	Buchli Station Rd	NAP	100s	BDP
✓ Tree Swallow	1/29/06	Hudemann Slough	SON	200s	BDP
✓ Barn Swallow	1/29/06	Hudemann Slough	SON	1	BDP
✓ Cliff Swallow	1/29/06	Hudemann Slough	SON	1	BDP
✓ American Robin	2/4/06	near Sutter Hosp Santa Rosa	SON	1	LPe leucistic
✓ Sage Thrasher	1/19/06	Buchli Staiton Rd	NAP	1	BDP
✓ Orange-crowned Warbler	1/21/06	Diekman's @ Bod Bay	SON	1	BDP, TE
✓ Painted Bunting	2/8-3/14/06	feeder on Bloomfield Rd	SON	1m	K&DBi continuing
✓ Great-tailed Grackle	2/25-3/18/06	Shollenberger Park	SON	1m	RSt, BDy, RAR
✓ Great-tailed Grackle	3/8/06	Rooster Run Golf Petaluma	SON	1m	Clarice ?
✓ Purple Finch	3/25/06	yard feeder, Oakmont	SON	14	BGr

Observers: Betty Burrige, Kathy & Dave Biggs, Nancy Conzett, Bob Dyer, Ted Eliot, Betty Groce, Lisa Hug, Calvin Lou, Ian Morrison, Mike Nelligan, B.D. "Mike" Parmeter, Bill Payne, Linda Petrulias, Ron Storey, Glo Wellman, Alan Wight, and Ken Wilson

When the Rare Bird Comes to You by Kathy Biggs

Groggily I walked towards the kitchen, anticipating my morning cup of coffee. I glanced at the tubular bird feeder just a dozen feet outside the glass door. But, something was wrong – as I looked, I saw a bronzy glow extending an inch or more off the surface of a bird's back. "Something must be wrong with my eyes." So, I balled up my fists and gave my eyes a good rubbing. Well, doggone it – the bird still exuded a bronzy shine!

I grabbed my binoculars, put them to my eyes and gasped! What I was seeing was absolutely beautiful! The bronzy haze turned out to be light reflected off a metallic green-backed bird, that then peaked around the edge of the feeder at me, revealing a bright, dark blue head, a red eye-ring and a scarlet chest!

My husband Dave and I thought it must be an escaped pet cage-bird. But then, as we marveled at his beauty, a memory slowly surfaced: this bird looked like a Mexican bird we'd seen years ago. Our bird guide confirmed this. But, we were in northern California and Painted Buntings belong in Mexico and southern Texas. What was he doing here??!??

We determined that our bird had one mark not shown in the guides, and emailed several birders about it. Well, it turned out that the extra green collar it had was the exact mark that excited the more knowledgeable birders because only young, first Spring males still had some of their green, "baby plumage" coloration left. A young bird was more likely to be a misplaced wild bird than a mature male would have been. Immediately they began asking questions concerning its feather's condition. If the bunting were an escaped cage bird, its feathers would show wear from being brushed up against the cage sides. If not, more pristine feathers would be more of an indication of a wild bird, which had somehow gone astray. We invited them over to ascertain this for themselves.

The first to show up that next morning was Mike Parmeter and next was Ruth Rudesill. Anxiously we awaited the bunting's appearance. Finally, two hours later the bunting graced us with an appearance, displaying his vivid colors and the pristine condition of his feathers. "We need to document his feather condition," Mike suggested. "I know just who we need: Rick LeBaudour."

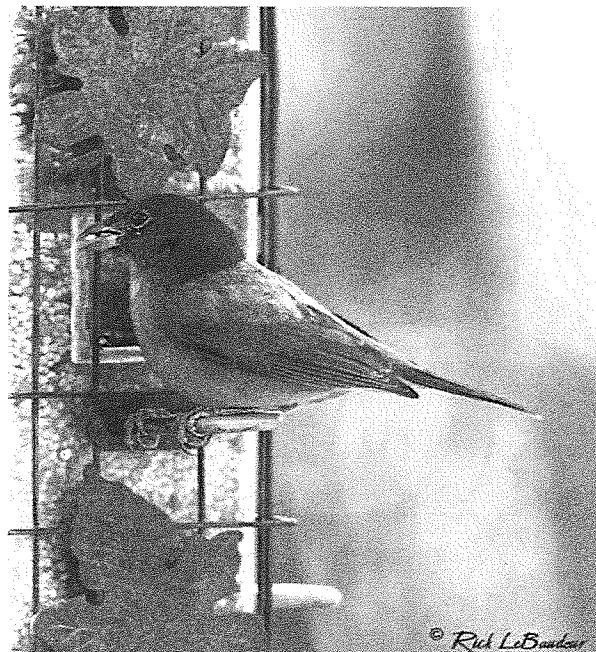
When Rick arrived he was carrying a cannon - - no, I don't mean that as the brand name, I mean his lens was the SIZE of a cannon! He watched for the bunting. One hour passed, then two. Other birds came and went to and from the feeder, but not the bunting.

After 2 ½ hours ALL the birds disappeared. Rick lamented, "An accipiter must have come into the area." I swear, just 90 seconds later, the accipiter, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, dove into the very bush where we'd seen the bunting first land.

Quickly we drew our binoculars to the "Sharpie" Did he have blue feathers sticking to his beak?? He didn't, but that wasn't totally reassuring. After 3 hours, Rick had to give up the chase, but he vowed to be back the next morning, and he was.

We reassured Rick that we had seen the bunting again, so it hadn't become Sharpie food, and Rick settled in. Again after 3 hours he had to leave, having never even gotten a glimpse of the bunting, no less a photo that could show its feather's condition.

On day 4 Rick made one last attempt at getting a photo. Forty-five minutes into his vigil, the bunting came in and literally posed for him; Rick clicked off ~100 shots. Here, with Rick's permission, is one of our favorite photos: Color photos of the bird can be seen on the web at <http://www.sonic.net/~bigsnest/Bunting.html>



Sonoma Land Trust needs the help of several enthusiastic and experienced birders

for bird counts on one of our restoration projects adjacent to San Pablo Bay. The North Parcel restoration project is near Hwy. 37 and Lakeville Hwy. SLT, with funding and assistance from the State Coastal Conservancy and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, has restored a former hay field to a managed, seasonal freshwater wetland. The goal is to create shore bird resting and feeding habitat that resident and migratory shorebirds can use during bad weather and/or when high tides force them out of tidal wetlands. We created a system of shallow ponds and water control structures to keep rainwater ponding on the property as long as possible into spring. In addition, we are using cattle as four legged lawn mowers to keep the vegetation below 6", which is the shore birds preference.

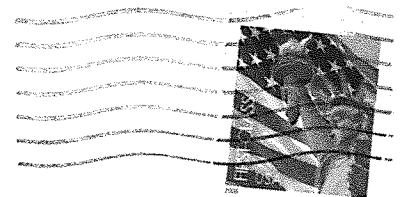
As part of the project, we have promised to do regular monitoring at the site to see if and how much shore birds are using the property. SLT would like to increase the number of survey days out there and are inviting you to help. We are hoping that some experienced birders might like to volunteer their time to help record bird activity on the property from mid-March through end of May, preferably when San Pablo Bay tides are greater than 3.0 feet.

If you would like to volunteer for any of these days in April and May, please email or call SLT's Volunteer Coordinator, Shanti Wright (526-6930 ext. 100) (shanti@sonomalandtrust.org). We will have a brief introduction session on site with other volunteers sometime in mid-April. Thank you. Bob Neale - Stewardship Director of the Sonoma Land Trust

KITE TALES

**1992 Windmill Circle
Santa Rosa CA 95403**

APRIL 2006



BD & S Parmeter
2500 Emerson St.
Napa CA 94558

94558+4611

