



# sequoia needles

Bulletin of the

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

San Mateo County, Ca.

May, 1987

Vol. 35, #9

SAS' GENERAL MEETING  
MAY 14, 1987

BIRDATHON '87

LUIS TAM, a member of Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, will present a double projector, synchronized, lap-dissolve slide program entralling you with the animals, landscapes, birds and sunsets of East Africa.

This is an intense program, lasting about twenty minutes, accompanied by narration and background music.

In addition, a short Audubon program on the California Condor has been scheduled, but not confirmed as of press date.

Meetings are held at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside on the second Thursday of every month. The Social Mixer begins at 7:30 P.M. with the General Meeting and Program at 8:00. The public is invited.

and bring a friend!

## HOSPITALITY CHAIR

Jo McCartney, responding to President Kypta's appeal for help, came forward at the April General Meeting and volunteered to assist at future meetings. Following the meeting and a short discussion, she was appointed our new Hospitality Chair.

THANK YOU, WIN,  
THANK YOU, TOM.

This appointment of a new Hospitality leader was made necessary since Win Dye, our former Hospitality Chair, will be very much occupied in May and June with her impending move to Oregon.

We will sorely miss Win and Tom Dye. Win is on our Board of Directors, has been Hospitality Chair and Publicity Chair, and as a member of our Education Committee was instrumental in reviving and revitalizing our Campership Award program.

Tom is one of those "Rocks of Gibraltar", around which organizations are built. He has often been there to help without being asked, has assisted in the hospitality duties and has worked with us in fund-raising on our Wild Goose Chases.

an age, when it is unfashionable to be "Rock", Tom and Win Dye are two of the best, most decent people we know. They will most of all be missed for that.

For many reasons, the Birdathon has sneaked up on us this year and we find ourselves doing it a bit later than normally. The intention is to conduct this activity on (or near to) John James Audubon's birthday throughout all the chapters of National Audubon. We will be about three weeks late this year.

The Birdathon is an event in which birders raise money for their chapters and their National Audubon regions. As practiced in most chapters, individuals sign up pledges for their own birding efforts, and then go out and try to identify as many birds as possible within a twenty-four hour period. In some chapters, notably Seattle Audubon in our region, this is the major birding event of the year, outshining even the Christmas Count in enthusiasm and number of participants. Last year's Birdathon raised \$150,000. for local and regional projects.

Unfortunately, we have not had the same Birdathon tradition that characterizes such efforts. We have only recently revived our official sponsorship of this event and we have had to rely on fielding a representative team and in seeking most of our support from within our membership. After several excellent Birdathons and Wild Goose Chases, our fund-raising efforts have dropped off sharply. Partly this is because we have been unable to find a suitable corporate sponsor to contribute the use of their offices and telephone systems for one night of telephone solicitations; and partly because our principal fund-raiser of previous years has been unable to commit the necessary time.

Therefore we need your help and your voluntary contributions. The money will go to good causes. The 50% that goes to the National Audubon Society remains in the region and will go to the Mono Lake Defense Fund. The 50% that remains with the local chapter will be used - in turn - by Sequoia to help us in our support of other worthy organizations such as Audubon Canyon Ranch, Committee for Green Foothills, Peninsula Humane Society, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory and other causes that may from time to time come to the attention of the Board of Directors.

As of the time we are going to press, there are a number of details to be ironed out but it now appears that our official team will once again include Barry Sauppe, our Christmas Count Compiler and Birdathon leader; Linda Kypta, SAS President; Peter Metropulos, Christmas Count Coordinator and author of our new bird sightings column; Cliff Richer, SAS Field Trip Chairman; and Gil West, one of our most capable birders and field trip leaders and a Birdathoning veteran who annually raises money for PRBO on their fall event. The birding time and date have been tentatively set for May 14 at 2:00 A.M. Because of our somewhat later starting date this year we expect to miss a number of waterfowl and shorebird species and estimate our count at 150 species. As with previous Birdathons we expect to cover 200 miles or more during the 20 hour stint. Again, as with previous efforts, we expect the usual number of mishaps that will be duly recorded and related in the *NEEDLES* along with the species listing.

However, we will be relying entirely on voluntary and unsolicited contributions so we need your help desperately. Why don't you complete and send in the form on Page Six, or just call the office at 593-7368 to give us your pledge. We thank you for your support.

CALENDAR

May 1987

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
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NEWS FROM THE RANCH

JEANNE PRICE

This month is the prime time to pay visit to the Bolinas Preserve's heronry. All kinds of nesting activity is going on from the mating display of the great egrets to the feeding of the great blue heron chicks. Don't miss it!

The Marin Audubon Society is holding its 32nd annual Mothers' Day Barbecue in Volunteer Canyon on May 10, profits from which will, as usual, be donated to ACR. This is always a sell-out.

Kit Lee, chairman of the Volunteer Council at the Bolinas Preserve, reports 97 docents this season are working two weeks longer than in the past. School groups have been scheduled for 12 weeks, four days a week, 60 pupils a day, with no Easter vacation and an extra week in June. Kit said the schools scheduled this season are a third each from San Francisco, Marin/Sonoma and the East Bay.

After only the first two weeks of the season Manager Skip Schwartz was already reporting an attendance of 1000 visitors including school groups, thanks to good advance publicity.

There are still a couple of great classes for your consideration before ACR closes for the summer.

Brush up on your storytelling for those long summer evenings. "Once upon a Time" is a weekend class on June 27 and 28 at the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve. Extension semester credit is available for this one.

On Saturday, July 11 in Marin and Sunday, July 12 in Sonoma County, the 12th Annual Butterfly Count will be held. Help to capture, identify and release these beautiful mysterious insects. A Get-to-Know-the-Critters night will be held Wednesday, July 8.

To sign up for or for further information on either of these events call the Ranch at (415) 383-1644.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"What would be said of a generation that sought the stars but permitted its lakes and streams to languish and die."

Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister  
... Dominion of Canada

UNQUOTABLE QUOTES

"Are you ready to draw the battle lines against those people (California's Congressional delegation)?"

---John R. Huff, Texas Oil Driller and Pres. of the National Ocean Industry Association, an organization of shore drillers and their affiliates.

"Yes we are."

-Donald Hodel, Secretary of the Interior

MAY 7 SAS BOARD MEETING. 7:30 PM at the Sears Savings THURSDAY Bank, Carlmont Shopping Center, at the intersection of Ralston Avenue and the Alameda de la Pulgas in Belmont. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

MAY 9 SAN PEDRO VALLEY COUNTY PARK FIELD TRIP. This SATURDAY wooded park provides a variety of habitat for migrating and resident species of vireos, warblers and thrushes. And with luck our trip should coincide with the height of the spring migration so that unusual species are a distinct possibility. Our leader knows the park well and will scout it intensively prior to the trip to assure the maximum enjoyment for all of us. There will be some walking along easy trails. The trip will begin at 8:30 in the parking lot of the park. To get there take Highway 1 to Pacifica and turn inland at Linda Mar Boulevard. Follow Linda Mar to its end and follow the signs to the park.

LEADER SCOTT SMITHSON

WELCOME!  
FIELD TRIPS AND THE GENERAL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS AND TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC. BEGINNERS ARE WELCOME ON ALL OF OUR FIELD TRIPS. SOME TRIPS ARE DESIGNATED AS BEGINNERS' TRIPS BECAUSE THEY ARE RELATIVELY NEARBY AND MAY BE ENJOYED WITHOUT SPECIAL CLOTHING, EQUIPMENT OR PRIOR EXPERIENCE.

MAY 14 SAS GENERAL MEETING. EAST AFRICA WITH LUIS TAM. A THURSDAY highly professional integrated sight & sound slide show on the natural wonders of this marvelously diversified natural area. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Social Mixer at 7:30 PM, General Meeting begins at 8:00. See the article on Page One for details.

MAY 17 PELAGIC TRIP OUT OF MONTEREY. We have a number of SUNDAY spaces reserved on Debbie Shearwater's trip for this date. These trips tend to fill up fast, particularly at this productive time of year. Call the office (593-7368) to make your reservation. A fee of \$40.00 per person is required. This is due and payable NOW. Meeting time is 6:30 A.M. in Monterey at Fishermen's Wharf, so you may wish to make arrangements for accommodations in the area. This is an all-day trip so bring lunch and liquids. The trip will go on rain or shine and can only be cancelled at the dock. Those prone to sea-sickness should take the usual precautions. No refunds for no-shows. Call SAS Coordinator Linda Kypta, 591-9053, or the tour operator, Debbie Shearwater, 408-688-1990, for further information.

LEADER PETER METROPULOS

MAY 20 MIDWEEK FIELD TRIP TO PESCADERO MARSH. State Parks WEDNESDAY continues to work on the restoration of the marsh and its educational and recreational values. Even despite a dry winter, Pescadero Marsh has plenty of water and remains one of the premier birding spots in the county and the only sizable estuarine marsh between Bolinas Lagoon and Elkhorn Slough. Exact itinerary will depend upon which of the new trails and/or bridges will be open and ready. Along the immediate coast, the weather may be cool or warm, depending upon fog and wind conditions, so be prepared

(Continued on Page Three)

**HOW DO WE LOOK?**

the last several years we have experimented with a number of different typefaces and styles depending upon what computers, printers and word-processing programs were available at the time.

Page One and Page Four represent our latest experiment. This type is called a "proportionally-spaced quality" typeface by our word-processing program and is supposed to be easier to read and have more of a "professional look" to it than other typefaces.

Pages Six, Seven and Eight are done in standard and condensed dot-matrix typeface, the one that is usually associated with computer print-outs.

Pages Two and this page are done in what is called "quality" typeface but with the right margins justified. This makes for a neater looking page, but results in "unnatural" spacing between words and letters.

We have our own first choice based on a combination of appearance and ease of use but we would appreciate your comments. Please let us know if you have any preferences or find one that is easier to read than another.

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE SELECTIONS**

Over many hours of meetings and interviews, the nominating committee has come up with the following list of candidates which they recommend to the membership as SAS' officers for the forthcoming year.

- For President: Linda Kypta
- For Vice-President: Cliff Richer
- For Secretary: Ed McElhany
- For Treasurer: Colleen Horner
- For Directors: Full terms of three years  
Rick Baird  
Steve Schafer
- For Director: Two year term to fill the unexpired term of Cliff Richer  
Gail Smithson

The Nominating Committee's work is not yet completed however as they will need to find a candidate to fill the one year remaining on Win Dye's term. Win has announced her intention to resign from the Board effective with her move to Oregon. (See the related story on Page One.) Anyone knowing of a qualified individual, or anyone who would like to be considered should contact Rick Baird, Nick Coiro or Rick Johnson.

**TREASURER DECLARES DIVIDEND**

Colleen Horner, Treasurer of Sequoia Audubon Society, gave birth to a son, April 7, 1987.

Raul Horner, our newest member, weighed in at eight pounds and seven ounces.

**CALENDAR**

May 1987

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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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accordingly. Walking will be relatively easy and on level grades. We will meet at 9:00 A.M. at the parking lot just south of the bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy. 1. To get there, just take Hwy 1 south from Half Moon Bay to the marsh and take the first right after crossing the bridge over Pescadero Creek.

LEADER LINDA KYPTA 591-9053

**MAY 22 FRIDAY** MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND IN DEATH VALLEY. An extended trip covering prime birding areas of the Sierra through passes, Mono Lake, Owens Valley, the White Mountains and Death Valley where rosy finches, great gray owls, sage grouse, broad-tailed hummingbirds, chimney swifts and Lucy's and Virginia's warblers are resident and almost any species can be found as a vagrant. Advance notification is required so that motel and transport arrangements can be made. Timing is subject to opening dates of the Sierra passes but we anticipate Friday and Monday nights at a motel in Lee Vining and camping at Furnace Creek and Cottonwood Canyon. With a small group the itinerary will be flexible to accommodate individual schedules and needs. In order to accomplish this, we must have firm reservations no later than May 7. While it may be possible to accommodate individuals after this date, the likelihood decreases with each day. Call the leader for details, to make your reservations or for an itinerary and checklist.

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 355-4058

**PREVIEWS OF COMING ATTRACTIONS**

June 1987

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

**JUNE 4 THURSDAY** SAS BOARD MEETING. 7:30 PM at the Sears Savings Bank, Carlmont Shopping Center, at the intersection of Ralston Avenue and the Alameda de la Pulgas in Belmont. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

**JUNE 11 THURSDAY** THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND POTLUCK DINNER. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 1987-1988.

**JUNE 20 SATURDAY** YUBA PASS & SIERRA VALLEY. Three areas of sharply contrasting habitat lie within a very few miles of each other on this scenic and bird-rich trip. We have made arrangements to again use the facilities of the Sierra Nevada Field Campus of San Francisco State University so an early indication of interest is required. The Sierra Nevada Nevada Field Campus is in Yuba Pass approximately 5 miles north of Sierra City. Full accommodations at the Field Campus can be had for \$21.50 per day. This includes breakfast, a sack lunch, dinner, 24-hr. snacks and a cot and mattress in a platform tent. There are indoor and outdoor facilities with flush toilets and hot showers. Just bring your own sleeping bag and towels. If you prefer to use a motel, meals are available at \$13.50 per day. For someone arriving for dinner on Friday and staying through Sunday morning, the cost, including Sunday's sack lunch, would be \$37.00. Cash and checks are acceptable but no credit cards. Call the office or Cliff Richer to reserve.

LEADER GIL WEST

## TRICOLOR BLACKBIRDS ENDANGERED?

SUSAN SANDERS

Tri-colored blackbirds, a rare and sensitive species? You can see hundreds or even thousands of these birds if you know where to look. How can such an apparently abundant species be considered sensitive?

But tri-colored blackbird populations have suffered at least a 50% decline over the last five decades and this downtrend is continuing. Loss of wetlands due to agriculture and urbanization, exposure to pesticides, herbicides and other toxic elements have contributed to reduced habitat and reduced nesting success. This species is sensitive to aerial spraying and to disturbance while breeding; human entry into the colony can sometimes result in nest abandonment.

Ornithologists have reported spectacular numbers and densities of breeding tri-colored blackbirds. In the 1930's one researcher estimated that 250,000 pairs of tri-colored blackbirds were breeding in a 65 acre marsh! He reported that while standing amidst the colony he could touch as many as 26 nests without changing his position. This gregariousness carries over into the fall and winter when tri-colored blackbirds leave the immediate vicinity of their nesting colony and concentrate in huge roosts. Wintering tri-colored blackbirds often associate with red-winged blackbirds and European starlings.

This colonial species prefers to nest in freshwater marshes, building its open cup nest in cattails or tules. Tri-colored blackbirds will also nest in willows, blackberries, mustard, wild rose and salt cedar. A major factor in their selection of a nest colony is the availability of a nearby food supply. Breeding colonies are usually found within convenient flying distance of rice or pasture lands where they forage for invertebrates in flooded fields or margins of ponds.

Tri-colored blackbirds are largely a California species. Although a few breeding colonies have been reported in southern Oregon and in nearby Carson City, Nevada, they are found chiefly in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. They are resident in California year round and are somewhat migratory within the Central Valley during fall and winter.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated the tri-colored blackbird a Candidate Category 2 species, which means that the available evidence on the species indicates it may warrant listing, but for which more information is needed before it can be listed as Threatened or Endangered. Ironically, the Department of Agriculture still lists the tri-colored blackbird as an agricultural pest.

(This article first appeared in the BURROWING OWL, the newsletter of the Davis Audubon Society in December 1986)

## BIRDING

PETER J. METROPULOS

This is the first of a new monthly column devoted to rare, out-of-range, or otherwise noteworthy bird observations. Sightings published here are contributed by Sequoia Audubon members and friends as well as visiting birders from near and far.

I urge anyone seeing something they consider unusual (or unidentifiable) to contact me at 592-2417. Besides sightings of rare birds, other interesting observations could involve early arrival or late departure dates of non-resident species, local nesting records of uncommon or rare birds and recognition of trends in bird populations (decreasing or increasing).

The NEEDLES has for years been the only Audubon newsletter in the Bay Area not to feature a regular "Sightings" column. With this issue we change all that and with the input of contributions from the birders, novice and expert, among our contributions from the membership, I am confident we can feature an interesting and informative collection of bird observations each month.

Again the phone number for reporting is 592-2417. I look forward to hearing from you!

### OBSERVATIONS FOR MARCH, 1987

Four BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS were following a trawler off Pigeon Point, March 15 (PM,RT). A PINK-FOOTED SHEARWATER was seen with a feeding group of 60 SOOTY SHEARWATERS from Pigeon Point, March 20 (BS). Also in this flock was an extremely rare MOTTLED FETREL. This species breeds in New Zealand (as do the shearwaters accompanying it) and ranges north in the Pacific, several hundred miles off-shore, to the Gulf of Alaska. This sighting by, Barry Sauppe, supplies San Mateo County with a first record. BROWN PELICANS arrived early, having hopefully completed a successful breeding season in Mexico. Thirteen were at Pigeon Point on March 9 (PM). A belated report was received of an immature MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD soaring north past Pigeon Point on February 4 (JB). There are a few county records of this tropical seabird, but all from the fall. A pair of BLUE-WINGED TEAL was at Pescadero Marsh, March 22 & 29 (PM,RT). A drake EURASIAN WIGON was at Belmont Slough March 10 & 15 (SF) and two others were in Colma at Woodlawn Cemetery from March 1 through the 15th with one staying at least until the 30th (CR). A pair of HARLEQUIN DUCKS at Ano Nuevo Point through March were at an expected location, but a female at James Fitzgerald Marine Reserve from February 16-March 21 was a surprise (CR,TS). A migrant OSPREY was along the Bay near Menlo Park, March 21 (RT). A north-bound PEREGRINE streaked over Pescadero Beach, March 26 (TS). A LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER (fulva race) was picked among a flock of black-bellieds in open fields in south Half Moon Bay, March 14 (SF). A LESSER YELLOWLEGS was in Pescadero Marsh on March 29 (PM,RT). Two POMARINE JAEGERs were seen chasing food-carrying gulls from Pigeon Point, March 29 (PM,RT). BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES appeared at many coastal localities in March, the largest concentration being 50 at Pigeon Point, March 20 (BS). PIGEON GUILLEMOTS, which disappear from our coastal waters in winter, re-appeared at Pigeon Point on March 20 with 18 seen (BS). Pigeon Point has long been known as a reliable spot for seeing MARbled MURRELETS. Twenty were there on March 22 (SF,RT). Pairs were observed in courtship ritual while gray whales mated nearby. (What a sight!) NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWLS were reported from El Granada (BS) and Filoli Estate (HO). RUFous HUMMINGBIRDS were sighted at Ano Nuevo Point (GS) and San Mateo Highlands, March 27 (PM). Whether the pair of LEWIS' WOODPECKERS at Filoli Estate is nesting or just late to depart is anyone's guess at this point. Throughout March they were seen investigating a hole in a large oak. There are no nesting records of this species for San Mateo County, and they are considered rare anywhere near the coast. A very early WESTERN FLYCATCHER was at Gazos Creek, March 13 (BS) and another at Pescadero Marsh on March 14 (CR).

(Continued on Page Five)



## NAS CONVENTION

August 24-29, 1987  
BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON

If you haven't received your National Convention information yet, don't worry, we're told that it's on its way to you.

Auduboners from around the nation will converge on the campus of Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington for a program of entertainment, speakers, workshops and field trips to the scenic areas of Puget Sound and the Pacific Northwest.

This year's theme will highlight the tremendous beauty and values of the Earth's forests, particularly the old growth of the Pacific Northwest and Southeast Alaska.

Planned field trips include pelagic birding excursions, trips to the Cascades, to Vancouver, B.C. and to San Juan Island. The cost will be \$200. per person double occupancy and \$220. single. For children under 12 it will be \$110. This is a five day package including meals and lodging. (The convention registration fee of \$50 is separate and most field trips require advance reservations and additional fees.)

Pre- and post-convention tours include whitewater rafting, Mount St. Helens, Mount Rainier, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, the Columbia River Gorge and Barkley Sound.

If you don't receive your registration forms and information packets soon, then please contact the Western Regional Office at 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, Ca. 95825, (916) 481-5332; or the Richardson Bay Audubon Center, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, Ca. 94920, (415) 388-2524.

### GOLDEN TROUT CAMP

Three one-week Golden Trout Workshops will be held in the Sierras August 2 through August 22, 1987. It is sponsored by National Audubon members from

### BIRDATHON '87! BIRDATHON '87!!! BIRDATHON '87! BIRDATHON '87!

Barry Sauppe will lead a team of Sequoia Audubon Society birders on this year's BIRDATHON fundraiser. As has become traditional, the team will start early in the morning, well before dawn and assumedly end sometime around dusk. In between they will try to identify as many different species as possible.

You can help out by pledging a nominal amount (from 5 cents on up) for each species identified by the team.

This year as with the last three years, National Audubon is donating its half of the proceeds to the Mono Lake Committee. Your contribution will help preserve this invaluable and unique resource.

You can show your commitment to SAS and your confidence in the leader's estimate of more than 150 different birds by "pre-paying" your pledge for 150 species.

Make all checks payable to Sequoia Audubon Society and mail to:  
720 El Camino Real #403  
Belmont, CA 94002

the Eastern Sierra, San Fernando Valley, San Bernardino Valley, Pasadena, Santa Barbara and Tulare County Chapters. An informal field natural history program of hikes led by resident naturalists will be offered, with visiting guest naturalists at some sessions. The camp is located in the Golden Trout Wilderness, in the southern portion of the High Sierra, on the eastern watershed, at an altitude of 10,000 feet.

For details, write or call: Cindi McKernan, 40 Sherril Lane, Redlands, Ca. 92373, 714-793-7897. If interested, reservations should be made as soon as possible.

### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

#### BELMONT

Eva Beryl Burris Sue Westwood

#### BURLINGAME

C. Clement Claire Elliott Christophe L. Kaufman Barbara Lee

#### HILLSBOROUGH

Mr. A. Francis, Jr.

#### MENLO PARK

J. Carlton Pat Gonzales Marie Hamilton Lillian Hutton John Relihan

#### PACIFICA

Ted I. Edith Donald Kepfer Scott Lindner

#### PORTOLA VALLEY

Allene B. Soshea

#### REDWOOD CITY

Barbara L. Bessey Kevin Gilmartin Heddie Volowski

#### SAN BRUNO

James E. Mansfield Clifford Tooley

#### SAN CARLOS

Susan Mons

#### SAN MATEO

Debra Kennedy William Love, Jr. M. ODonnell

YES, I will support Sequoia Audubon Society and

the fight to save Mono Lake with a pledge of \_\_\_\_\_ per species.

YES, I will pre-pay my pledge based on an estimate of at least 100 different birds being identified.

My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

The BIRDATHON is - after the Christmas Count - the largest participation event sponsored by the National Audubon Society. I wish to join in. I will sign up pledges and conduct my BIRDATHON on \_\_\_\_\_

All honored pledges are tax-deductible.

**FARALLONS' REPORT**

February Farallon Poop Sheet from Point Reyes Bird Observatory is a rather boring one as compared to some previous years' reports when winter storms and El Nino created havoc of various sorts.

Stephanie Kaza, PRBO's Education Director reports that total elephant seal numbers are down on the island, indicative of an overall leveling off or perhaps even a decline in the total population. There have been some distributional changes of seals on the island and this is under study to determine what factors may be involved.

One of the least coveted and potentially most dangerous jobs on the island is the marking of the adult seals so that they can be told apart. While elephant seals are notoriously indifferent to the presence of humans, there are a few of them who take exception to being painted with hair dye. So Steve Farone devised the "snagamatic", a mop handle with a flat board on the end. With the addition of some velcro and some sponge rubber letters it became the world's largest rubber stamp.

Pups, being smaller and more tractable, are tagged for future identification with Fish and Wildlife tags. In addition to identifying the pups for the Farallon biologists, these tags are recorded with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and - if recovered elsewhere - can give valuable information on migration and population dispersion.

Meanwhile the Farallon staff was preparing for the nesting season. Cassin's auklets and common murrelets were returning to the island and western gulls were fighting for territory. Soon the mist nets would be up and the emphasis of the Farallon biologists would shift from the sea to the air.

**FROM THE REAL PAPERS**

Years ago the Wells Fargo Bank foreclosed on a loan to a failing nitrate mining company and found itself with more than 1000 acres of "worthless" desert land on the southeastern edge of Death Valley National Monument.

This land is part of the Amargoso River corridor, home of the Amargoso pupfish. This species lives nowhere else and has adapted to one of the most extreme environments on earth. With temperatures ranging from the 40's to the 100's, salinity levels that would kill most fish, flash floods at every rain and streams that dry up every summer the pupfish still manages to survive.

In order to assure that survival Wells Fargo has donated the land to the Nature Conservancy. Because of its location the property will be administered within a special environmental area by the Bureau of Land Management.

**SEA OTTER PLAN IMPERILED**

Establishment of a reserve breeding colony of sea otters has long been a cornerstone of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Recovery Plan for this species.

Currently ranging from Point Concepcion north along approximately 225 miles of the California coast, the sea otters are in danger of possibly being wiped out by a single large oil spill and have reached a stable population level with little or no increase in numbers over the last decade.

By this fall the USFWS hopes to have another colony of 70 otters established on San Nicolas Island, more than 60 miles off the Ventura County coast. Outermost of the Channel Islands, San Nicolas lies well within the historic range of the otters and well away from commercial shell-fishing grounds.

Nevertheless there is heavy and emotional resistance from Southern California shell-fishermen who fear the impact on their fisheries and the key to implementation of the plan now rests with two California governmental units - the Coastal Commission and the Fish and Game Commission. Recent actions by both groups give cause for pessimism, especially in view of the heated opposition. Letters and appearances at meetings are urgently needed. Despite their relatively small numbers, the shell-fishermen have turned out large and vocal contingents at earlier hearings and it is important that other voices be heard.

The Fish and Game Commission's hearing will be in Sacramento on June 24 in Room 102 of Office Building 9, 744 P Street. The Coastal Commission's hearing will be in Marina del Rey on May 12-15. Call them at 543-8555 for exact details.

To help out in this effort write Friends of the Sea Otter, PO Box 221220, Carmel, CA 93922 or call (408) 625-3290.

To give your opinion on this matter, write to the following:

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION      GOVERNOR GEORGE DEUKMEJIAN  
631 Howard Street      State Capital  
San Francisco, CA 94105      Sacramento, CA 95814

CALIFORNIA FISH & GAME COMMISSION      DIRECTOR FRANK DUNKLE  
1416 Ninth Street      US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Sacramento, CA 95814      Washington, DC 20240

\*\*\*\*\*  
State Parks has awarded a grant of \$12,000 to the Pescadero Marsh Interpretive Association for materials for bridges, railings, blinds and other enhancements for the Pescadero Marsh trails. An additional grant of \$1000 has been awarded for the purchase of educational materials such as cameras, telescopes and binoculars. The Coastal Conservancy has agreed to provide special interpretive signs for the marsh.  
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**WILDLIFE RESCUE AUCTION**

Wildlife Rescue, Inc., with the co-sponsorship of the Palo Alto Animal Services, will be sponsoring an auction to be held on June 27, 1987 at Mitchell Park in Palo Alto.

At this time they are looking for the donation of goods and services which might be auctioned off to the highest bidder and produce income for their work of rescuing and rehabilitating wild animals who are injured or are found ill.

Sequoia Audubon Society has offered 5 copies of *San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching* and a number of individuals, under the sponsorship of SAS, will donate time and skill to conduct personal bird-watching tours for the high bidders.

If you have anything which might be of value to a prospective bidder, and which you would like to convert to a tax deduction please call Wildlife Rescue at 494-7283.

**BLM ROUND TABLES**

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management is currently engaged in holding its 1987 Public Lands Round Tables throughout California.

There will be seven sessions, each designed to allow public input into the decision-making process and to assist the BLM in carrying out its "multiple use" mandate.

Sessions have already been held in Palm Springs and Barstow and another is scheduled for San Diego this month. SAS members who wish to attend should note that two are scheduled within easy driving distance.

The Hollister Round Table will be held in the San Benito High School Cafeteria, at 7 P.M. on Thursday, June 18. The high school is located at 1220 Monterey Street.

The San Francisco session will be at the Holiday Inn in the Civic Center (#50 8th Street) on Wednesday, July 15 at 7 P.M.

BLM Director Ed Hastey expects to be in attendance at all sessions. He feels that "last year's Round Tables were attended by hundreds of people from one end of the Golden State to the other. This reminded me that Californians care deeply about their public lands, want to know more about them, and want to be involved in making decisions about their future. Although there was a consensus that we all share responsibility in seeing that these lands are wisely managed."

"I think the Round Tables help us do that and I'm looking forward to meeting personally with Californians in the seven Round Tables scheduled this year."

The sessions are open to all and topics to be discussed will be selected by those attending each session. Further information can be obtained from the BLM at 2800 Cottage Way in Sacramento, 95825 or by calling (916) 978-4746.

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