

Sacramento Audubon Society

The Second 25 Years

1975-2000



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Foreword

“Sacramento Audubon Society: The Second 25 Years” is Volume II in a venture to document the Chapter’s important conservation fights, birding high points, publishing initiatives, research achievements, and individual accomplishments between 1975 and 2000. Initiative for this project came from Elmer Aldrich, Chapter President, 1977-78, who had also provided the impetus for Volume I covering the chapter’s first 25 year , written by Marjorie Ryall. June C. Persson, Chapter President, 1993-96, also encouraged preparation of the second volume.

We greatly appreciate the valuable help on this project received from many Sacramento Audubon members, and we thank them all. We are especially indebted to Elmer Aldrich, Mary Bisharat, LoRaine Brown, Jan Clark, Joe Ceriani, Mark Cudney, Joe Ferreira, Tim Fitzer, Ed Harper, Bruce Kennedy, Cathie LaZier, Tim Manolis, Jerry Marinovich, Barbara Mohr, June Persson, John Ranlett, Andi Salmi, Mary Schiedt, Evelyn Smith, Bruce Swinehart, and Alta Tura, for their generous assistance. And we are grateful for the dedication of The Observer newsletter editors and chapter recording secretaries whose diligent efforts provided the principal sources for the volume.

The committee thanks artist Erin O’Toole for allowing us to reprint on the cover her classic illustration of Wood Duck Slough at Bobelaine Sanctuary from among her beautiful drawings in the 1994 Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary Interpretive Guide to the Mixed Riparian Forest. Other graphics within this volume are reproduced courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Some technical notes. References to presidential terms and Chapter years parallel academic years, i.e., 1975-76 covers September 1975 through July-August, 1976, et. seq. And since common names of many bird species have changed during the period covered, we have opted for the sake of conformity to use names accepted at the time of publication, 2003.

Producing the volume has been an enjoyable exercise, allowing History Project Committee members to relive great birding trips, appreciate anew the contributions of colleagues, and to refresh memories of old friends no longer with us. It also made us realize that many good ideas on birding hot spots, fundraising projects and conservation approaches were advanced over the years, and may well be worth revisiting today.

Mission Statement Sacramento Audubon Society

As a Chapter of the National Audubon Society, we will focus on conservation and environmental education to ensure that the Sacramento region's natural ecosystems and diverse bird populations are preserved, restored, and made available for study and enjoyment.

“ . . . The most momentous news in the chapter’s history occurred in January, 1975, when Robert Crandall, a retired rancher of Yuba City, deeded 430 acres of the Feather River floodplain to the National Audubon Society as a wildlife refuge . . . The National Society leased the property to the Sacramento Audubon Society for management purposes . . . The rest of the story of this new addition to the roll of Audubon sanctuaries belongs to the second quarter century of the Sacramento Audubon Society’s history.”

With those passages, author Marjorie Ryall concluded “The Sacramento Audubon Society: The First 25 years.” And now this volume takes up the story that had begun Sept. 23, 1950 when 28 nature enthusiasts met at the Girl Scout House at 2430 N St. in Sacramento to formally organize the Sacramento Audubon Society.

Charter members included William Kirsher, a photographer with the U.S. Geological Survey who was credited by Marjorie Ryall with sparking the chapter’s founding and was its first president; school teachers Phyllis Thompson and her sister, Frances; Dr. Hubert B. Jenkins, professor of Life Sciences at Sacramento State College, Esther Guthrie, Science Supervisor for the Sacramento school system, and Girl Scout leaders Willie Argante (later Willie Argante Eizinger) and Muriel Kaminsky.

They were in the growing company of citizens who believe with Aristotle that “In all things of nature, there is something of the marvelous.” And with that enlightenment came the natural awareness that the living space of birds, indeed of all living creatures, must be protected and even enhanced. And conservation of natural resources came to be a dominant mission of Sacramento Audubon when National Audubon turned over to SAS the management responsibility for the magnificent Feather River wildlife sanctuary called Bobelaine, 35 miles north of Sacramento near the town of Nicolaus.

Howard R. Leach, chairman of the first Bobelaine Master Plan Committee, told in a history of the acquisition of Bobelaine (a composite of the names of Bob and Elaine Crandall), how Crandall came to turn over to Audubon his two and a half miles of Feather River frontage - some of the finest remaining riparian habitat in the Sacramento Valley.

In August 1974, Phil Simmons, then chairman of the Sacramento City Planning Commission, informed Paul Howard, National Audubon’s Western Regional representative, that he, Simmons, had been named a representative of the landowner, who preferred to remain anonymous. Simmons said the owner wanted to turn over his property to an organization such as the National Audubon Society. Simmons arranged a meeting for Howard with the owner, Bob Crandall, and eventually the transfer was arranged and Bobelaine was dedicated May 31, 1975 as one of National Audubon’s 73 wildlife sanctuaries.

‘ANIMALS FIRST’

Leach wrote, “Bob’s choice of the Audubon Society as guardian for this unique area was based on his trust that the Society would maintain the land as a place for animals first and people only if they could respect the priority of God’s creatures. Several organizations were considered when the idea of the sanctuary was developed but all others were rejected by Bob once he discovered they lacked the commitment and national reputation of Audubon.”



One of the first orders of Bobelaine business was to appoint a Sanctuary Managing Committee to oversee the area of cottonwoods, willows, oaks, and sycamores, dense undergrowth including poison

oak and wild roses, grasslands, ponds, and a long borrow pit that was home for nesting Wood Ducks, Common Moorhens, Pied-billed Grebes and Mallards. Subsequent surveys identified 190 bird species, 39 mammals, and 126 plants in the preserve.

A Native American burial/living site and a living site, each believed to be 300 to 1,000 years old, are on the land and registered in the California Archaeology Survey.

DON FRY'S KEY ROLE

The chapter was fortunate when former President Don Fry, who had retired as a distinguished state Fish & Game Department fish biologist, agreed to head the Sanctuary committee.

“The primary purpose of managing the sanctuary shall be to maintain the land as a natural wildlife sanctuary on which native plants and animals will thrive at near optimum levels,” Fry wrote in the Observer.

As long as they don't interfere with the primary purpose, Bobelaine may be used as a research study area, as an outdoor classroom for the study of animals, plants and their ecology, and as an area where Audubon members and their guests can observe wildlife and enjoy an outing, Fry added.

With the arrival of the Fall hunting season, the problem of security on the sanctuary came to the fore. The committee invited Audubon members to volunteer to patrol the area and report any hunting or trespassing to the Sutter County Sheriff or State Fish & Game Warden.

The chapter held a successful two-day open house in April 1976 to acquaint SAS member with Bobelaine. Besides guided tours and prizes for bird lists, three pick-up truckloads of trash were removed from the sanctuary.

Audubon members were saddened by the death of Don Fry in March, 1976 after he had stepped down as chairman of the Bobelaine Managing Committee. He was considered the dean of State fish biologists, writing numerous technical and popular articles on salmon and other fish and receiving many professional awards. He was praised by ornithologists for his published research on the White-tailed Kite. He devoted much time and effort to Audubon, assisting in annual Bird Censuses, Condor Survey, Breeding Bird Surveys, and in leadership of many bird and flower field trips.

And Fry showed his sense of humor on a foggy Christmas Count day when he spotted a flock of birds in a thicket and called out, “30 White-crowns.” A Sacramento Bee photographer accompanying the counters asked incredulously, “How did you do that?” “Count the legs and divide by two,” Fry replied.

Fry was succeeded by Brian Bell as chairman of the Sanctuary Managing Committee.

FREMONT CHURCH MEETINGS

Heavy Bobelaine responsibilities in the 1975-76 Audubon year did not divert members from productive birding and other nature-oriented activities during the presidency of Edward R. Warner.

Monthly meetings at Fremont Presbyterian Church included such outstanding slide programs as “Up and Down California with a Naturalist” by past president Bill Grenfell; “A Journey to the Polar Sea”

with Dr. Ernest Holland, and: "Mushrooms," by Dr. Jack Yardley.

Dave Johnson reported compilation of a three-year census of birds over nearly 300 acres of the Sailor Bar area of the American River Parkway. He recorded 118 species, including Eared Grebe, Northern Harrier, Prairie Falcon, Great-horned Owl, Short-eared Owl, Hooded Oriole, Common Loon, Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle form), Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Northern Shrike, Tennessee Warbler and American Redstart.

Kathy Zedekar organized another of her popular tours for SAS members, this one in May 1975 to southeast Arizona where birders saw 171 species, including Elegant Trogon, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Rose-throated Becard, Red-faced Warbler and Summer Tanager.

CHAPTER AWARDS

Sacramento Audubon recognized the achievements of five members at the annual dinner May 30, 1975. Honored were:

— Myra Erwin, whose work for consolidation of efforts of numerous local environmental groups resulted in the formation of the Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS), which she chaired.

— Bill Grenfell, executive director of the Sacramento Science Foundation and Junior Museum, who as SAS president sparked a surge of chapter membership; he teaches college-level natural history courses and is a skilled nature photographer and producer of the movie "Western Everglades" about the Delta area.

— Charter member Frances Thompson and her sister, Phyllis, for working tirelessly on various committees, including heading the Decorations Committee for the National Audubon Convention in Sacramento in 1966.

— J. Martin Weber, natural science consultant for Sacramento County schools, promoted development of nature areas on school grounds, provided leadership to reforestation of native oaks, and developed student participation in the Ancil Hoffman nature area.

1975 CHRISTMAS COUNT



The chapter carried on the annual Christmas Bird Count with the 1975 Sacramento count, which drew a record 118 participants who scanned the area within a 15-mile diameter circle. They recorded 133 species with two additional races, and 106,108 birds altogether, Count Chairman Elmer Aldrich reported. The lower-than-usual count was attributed to seasonal dry conditions that reduced waterfowl counts, and fog on the count day. Best birds included Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and White-throated Sparrow. Willie Argante's group topped the 10 area teams, recording 99 species.

Meanwhile, the Sierra's excellent crop of Pinon and Jeffrey Pine nuts contributed to a record 72 species seen on the Woodfords-Markleeville Christmas Count, Walt Luke reported. They included a Rusty Blackbird, four Oak Titmice, a Cedar Waxwing and four Bohemian Waxwings.

The Board of Directors approved a request to relinquish 140 SAS members living in Sierra foothills communities to a new Audubon chapter that was being formed, to be called the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society in Auburn. The members were from Bowman, Penryn, Lincoln, Newcastle, Pilot Hill, Colfax and Applegate.

After the board heard that the wildlife film series was \$1,000 in the red, directors voted to tap the General Fund to cover the deficit and cancel the 1976-77 series.

SAS By-laws had provided for election of the president to a two-year term limit; at the annual meeting in April, 1976, members approved revision of the By-laws to elect the president to a one-year term with no limit on running for re-election.

Cora Baker and Camilla Gunderson were presented appreciation plaques at the annual dinner in May, 1976 in recognition of their many contributions to the society. Baker, a charter member, had been SAS secretary, organized field trips for the National Audubon Convention in 1966, helped as Observer Seasonal Observations editor and, noted the Observer, "is a fine example of the kind of people who make Sacramento Audubon Society the great success it is."

Gunderson had served as Observer editor, corresponding secretary, and was co-editor of "The Outdoor World of the Sacramento Region" field guide. As an outstanding supporter of conservation education, she gave many school programs in the nature interpretation area of Ancil Hoffman park.

BATTLE FOR BUSHY LAKE

In 1976, at the urging of Sacramento Audubon, Save the American River Association and other environmental organizations, Governor Jerry Brown signed the Bushy Lake Preservation Act. The SAS Conservation Committee headed by John Anderson was instrumental in this campaign, which capped 15 years of controversy over use of the floodplain between Cal Expo and the American River. But it didn't end the fight to preserve it as a natural area.

When Cal Expo was first established in the 1960s, the Bushy Lake area was slated to be a golf course, and some land contouring was done, including the dredging of the borrow pit that became Bushy Lake. The golf course project was never completed but various other proposals were offered over the years, including a motocross course, a polo field and an overflow parking area for the State Fair.

Sacramento Audubon and others opposed all of these ideas and ultimately the 1976 Preservation Act supposedly decided the issue. Then in 1994, Cal Expo officials resurrected the idea of a 40-acre parking lot between Bushy Lake and the River, on the American River Parkway, triggering another fight with environmental groups. Enabling legislation for the project was approved in the Senate but died in the Assembly.

Meanwhile, largely from natural causes, the lake level has dropped, and it has become more of a marsh, except when heavy winter rains refill it with storm water, according to Auduboner Joe Ceriani, who has birded the area regularly and led trips there for the past 25 years. (Save the American River Association President Frank Cirill credited Ceriani with helping rally opposition to the 1994 parking lot plan by leading influential groups on inspection tours of the area.)

Marsh or pond, Bushy Lake has remained an excellent birding area, Ceriani reports. He has seen 151 species of birds there, plus River Otters, Beaver, Muskrats, and an occasional Deer. Birds range from Wood Ducks and Pied-billed Grebes to nesting Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, White-tailed Kites and Northern Harriers. There have been nesting egrets and Great-horned Owls. In the drier area between the lake and the river, there have been flocks of gold-finches and other small birds.

John Anderson was honored by the Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS) as its Member-Environmentalist of 1976 for his leadership in promoting a nature study area at Bushy Lake, for championing the "natural" concept for the American River Parkway at local government hearings on the Parkway plan, and by leading field trips to areas of environmental concern.

YEAR OF PUBLICATIONS

The 1976-77 year was a fruitful one for publications. The board approved an overall budget of \$7,540, and the largest item was \$3,000 for the Observer, the monthly newsletter edited by Cecil Smith. The chapter also published "Birding in the Sacramento Area," a selection of 24 Observer articles by Chapter members. It was compiled by past president Bob Mallette and coordinated by Cecil Smith. It included maps by Penny Bell and Stan Bryner, with typing by Jean Nittler.

In addition, Dave Johnson produced a "Birds of the American River Parkway" Checklist. And American River College teacher Bruce Swinehart and artist Jo Smith collaborated to produce "Nature's Window," a collection of nature columns published in The Sacramento Union and later compiled in a book by the same title.

President Ed Harper announced a wide-ranging Spring membership drive featuring a Sacramento Audubon Art Exhibit at the American River College Library; a nature walk hosted by the Chapter on the American River Parkway, a special general meeting program welcoming guests, a Bobelaine open house, and a "Birding Derby" competition benefiting a favorite environmental group.

1976 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



The 1976 Christmas Count turned up 133 species with Willie Argante's team once again sighting the most species over its average, thereby winning the "Ceramic Peregrine" trophy. (During the 1972 Christmas count, the "peregrine" was discovered on a steel power tower west of the Yolo Bypass. The prankster who created it and placed it there was later identified as a Sierra College art instructor who donated it to SAS to be awarded to subsequent Christmas count winning teams.

FIELD TRIPS GALORE

The record 139 participants in the 1976 Christmas Count affirmed the popularity of Field Activities among Chapter programs. This is understandable since Sacramento Audubon has the reputation for offering more birding field trips than any other chapter in the country.

Over the years, SAS has typically scheduled a trip every Saturday and Sunday as well as a mid-week trip at least every other week for a total of about 130 a year, Field Trip Committee Chair Andi Salmi said. The chapter also sponsored overnight trips, such as the annual weekend Monterey Pelagic trip organized by Jeff Mangum and led by Mark Cudney, and two-week trips to Montana and Arizona led by Joe Ceriani.

Local trips offered various habitats in Sacramento, Yolo and nearby counties. Jack Hiehle, retired State Parks resource ecologist, identifies birds, plants and mammals on walks on the American River Parkway and in the Sierra. Reichmuth Park, in southern Sacramento, is the specialty of Tim Manolis, who identifies warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Barbara Mohr led trips to Sailor Bar on the American River Parkway.

Veteran field trip leaders are on record with their more memorable trips:

Mark Cudney has two favorites among the 100-plus trips he has led, both on the California north coast: The first was at Arcata where his group saw a Garganey, an Old World duck; an Oriental Greenfinch and Iceland Gull on the same day. The second magical moment was at Fort Dick near Crescent City. "It had been raining and was very depressing," Cudney recalled. "Then the sun came out and suddenly we had a Gyrfalcon chasing and gaining on a Peregrine Falcon full blast, in level flight, right past us for the length of two football fields. Then the Peregrine veered off."

Bill Dillinger: "We were at Winnemucca Lake in the Sierra looking for the rare Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. Several of us left the others at the trailside camping area, took scopes and hiked a quarter of a mile up and over steep granite ledges to the east end of the lake and didn't see 'bird-one.' We re-joined the slow-pokes at lunch and were informed that a bunch of the rosy-finches had been there picking up crumbs, and Cecil Smith complained that they were too close for the long lens on his camera."

The chapter awarded Camperships in 1977 to Observer Editor Joan Stead and Corresponding Secretary Cathie LaZier. Stead planned to use her award to attend Audubon Camp in Connecticut, and LaZier would attend a camp on Hog Island, Maine.

President Elmer Aldrich took over the front page of the July 1977 Observer with a call for volunteers to staff 16 committees to carry out the chapter's principal activities. The membership responded favorably, and soon 210 persons, or 10 percent of the membership, were active on committee. Besides such mainstay panels as Field Activities, Programs, and Conservation, the lineup included an important new venture, a Youth Activities Committee led by 18-year-old Andrew Engilis, Jr. A SAS member for five years and, according to an Observer article, endowed with "enthusiasm, ideas and experience." he was to make many more contributions to the Chapter through the years. Recruitment of young people to Sacramento Audubon and field trips tailored for youth topped his committee's agenda.

Nature Photography was another popular new activity. It featured bi-monthly, how-to-do-it workshops and field trips led by and Howard and Alice Kessler.

PROTECTING SALMON



A Sacramento Audubon group was birding on the American River Parkway one November day in 1977 when members noticed two men with their dogs on the opposite bank harassing salmon on their spawning beds. One of the Auduboners, Ben Eizinger, an amateur radio operator, had brought his walkie-talkie with him and contacted John Richey, another radio operator, in Sacramento. With a phone number provided by Jerry Long, a Park Ranger on an off-duty outing with the Audubon group, Richey alerted Park Rangers on duty. Within a few minutes, a Ranger Patrol arrived on the scene and put a stop to the illegal activities.

BOBELAINE MASTER PLAN

After more than a year of meetings and on-site studies, a committee chaired by Howard R. Leach presented a draft Master Plan for Bobelaine designed to preserve and protect the Feather River sanctuary that Robert Crandall had entrusted to Audubon.

"The plan envisions minimal but progressive development of the area while providing opportunity

for interested and concerned people for sightseeing and educational purposes,” the committee wrote. “Accompanying this increased use will be interpretive and educational programs oriented to the resource values of the area and environmental concern. A caretaker residing near or on the Sanctuary is needed to enforce the restrictions necessary to protect the Sanctuary from vandalism and unauthorized entry and to perform whatever maintenance is necessary.”

Uses of the Sanctuary could include bird watching, nature study, photography, art, education, and research. Prohibited were fishing, hunting, trapping, swimming, boating, vehicles, and fires, including smoking. The Board approved the Plan, with a few changes, such as the provision of maps to aid those using the area.

As with most nonprofit organizations, fund-raising was critical for Sacramento Audubon, especially after it had shouldered the responsibility for maintaining and managing Bobelaine. A “Bicentennial Campaign” by National Audubon urging members to donate \$1 each for sanctuaries upkeep drew only minimal funds for Bobelaine. In 1977 President Aldrich appointed a committee headed by George Waldie to focus on raising money for Bobelaine. The Committee drafted a letter to the membership asking for donations to help meet the needs to maintain the integrity of the sanctuary. The appeal raised an impressive \$6,140.

Since then, the primary Sanctuary fundraiser has been “Bucks for Bobelaine” birdathons in which Audubon members obtain pledges of contributions for the number of species found in a given day, or a flat amount. One of the more successful Birdathons raised \$5,000 in 1994, with the team prize for most money collected going to June Persson with \$1,002 . . .

BLACK RAIL INCIDENT

Field trip activity was accelerated in 1977 to include many mid-week walks. And while Auduboners usually returned home from such trips aglow with memories of good birding, a December trip to the Benicia State Recreation Area salt marsh proved to be anything but that. With State Parks permission, the Sacramento group joined others in efforts to flush out a Black Rail, a secretive little bird that was on the federal threatened and state rare bird list.



One of the rails was finally sighted and 30-40 birders pressed forward hoping for a close look at what very likely would have been a “lifer” for many. In the tight circle that was formed, the rail disappeared. But minutes later it was found struggling in a tangle of submerged pickleweed where it apparently had been trampled. It soon died.

In an article in *The Observer* headlined “Life Birds at What Cost?” veteran Auduboner Jeri Langham, who had been present, described his “sadness and rage” adding that “Birding can become fanatically addicting.” “We must not let our frustrations and overzealousness erase good judgment.”

President Aldrich, writing in the same issue, cautioned that the Black Rail and similar incidents reflecting the growing competitiveness of birding could prompt a public backlash against the fast-growing sport. He cited both the “internal competition” of list-building and “external competition” among birders manifested by the published standings of listers in national journals. He said the incident showed the need for developing a set of birding ethics and, indeed, he directed the preparation and publication of the chapter’s “Code of Birding Ethics.” (See Appendix).

RECORD CHRISTMAS COUNT

Despite a rainy morning, the 1977 Sacramento Christmas Count turned up a record 140 species plus two races. Cattle Egret and Hermit Warbler were firsts for the local count. Other unusuals included Bald Eagle and, Whimbrel. The Board later approved Truman Holtzclaw's proposal to establish a new Christmas Count area in the vicinity of Folsom Lake.

The annual meeting in May featured awards of appreciation to:

- Cecil Smith, Observer editor, 1972-77 and for his leadership in Christmas Counts and field trips;
- Elizabeth McGilvray, charter member and president in 1954-55 who supervised writing of the chapter by-laws;
- Ed and Marian Warner, leaders of field trips and Christmas Counts, compilers of Seasonal Observations, and for Ed Warner's service as president in 1974-75 and 1975-76.
- Robert Christopherson, co-founder of SMUD Ratepayers Association and representative of those who question nuclear safety, and
- Sacramento County Park Commissioners for their efforts in developing the American River Parkway.

PROGRAMS ALL-IMPORTANT

President Jeri Langham was pleased to report in the September 1978 Observer that 9 of 16 committee chairs had returned to head their panels. He said Sacramento Audubon has 2,200 members, but only about 50 are involved in committee work, and some of them are serving on two, three or four committees. "We desperately need more active participation to help spread the load . . . be daring . . . call us!" he said.

One of the seven committees without a leader was the Program panel with its all-important job of finding an interesting speaker with slides for the monthly general meetings. However, by the following month Langham could report that Nina Kelly had agreed to fill the job. Subsequent program included Point Reyes Bird Observatory biologist Bill Clow with "Birding in Central America;" duck-hunter Chuck Wright's report on Ducks Unlimited's conservation projects in Canada and Mexico. and State Fish & Game Bruce Elliott's program on water birds and sea fowl.

General monthly meetings continued at Fremont Presbyterian Church on Carlson Drive. Sacramento Audubon had met there for many years except for two months in 1977 when sessions were held at the nearby Newman Center because the church room was temporarily unavailable.

SWEETWATER CREEK

Another committee that worked diligently but behind the scenes was the Research and Scientific Committee, sometimes called "the scientific conscience" of the chapter. The committee completed work in 1978 on a major study of the plants, animals and ecosystems of Sweetwater Creek Valley, a beautiful mix of riparian, chaparral and grassland communities alongside the tributary that flows five miles into the south fork of the American River 35 miles northeast of Sacramento.

The Committee chaired by Elmer Aldrich recorded the valley's 110 bird species and 120 plants in an exhaustive report for the State Department of Parks and Recreation recommending that the valley be acquired and preserved as an addition to the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area. The committee won a state planning team's endorsement of the recommendation, but unfortunately other statewide projects

took funding precedence. Sweetwater Creek remained a popular Sacramento Audubon field trip destination as private owners for the most part permitted access. But Auduboners who have enjoyed the prime birding along its trails hoped that it could some day be brought into the State Parks system.

BIRDING ADVANCES



Birding techniques improved in the late '70s with establishment of a hot line for rare birds seen in our area, formation of a Rare Bird Committee, and a series of bird identification classes for beginners.

Joel Fowler, Field Activities Chairman, set up the hotline system whereby each participant was responsible for contacting four others when alerted about an unusual bird sighting.

The Rare Bird Committee, initially comprised of expert birders Elmer Aldrich, Allen Craig, Ed Harper, and Dr. Micklos Udvardi, was formed to improve the accuracy of field identification by providing a standardized system of verifying observations. Increasingly Sacramento Audubon's field reports were used in bird distribution citations in environmental impact reports and for other scientific purposes.

And seven weekly birding identification field trips for beginners were led by Evelyn Smith and Kathy Zedekar.

WOODLAND SUGAR PONDS

Sacramento and Davis Audubon members joined in an appeal to the Spreckels Sugar Company to continue providing waste water to preserve a 34-acre portion of the Woodland Sugar Ponds. For many years it was critical habitat for nesting Black-crowned Night-Herons and Yellow-headed Blackbirds as well as thousands of migrating shorebirds. Sacramento Audubon sought an agreement permitting operation of the preserve by the chapter. The Sugar Ponds Committee successfully negotiated the agreement with the company and the following year the chapter voted to draw \$1,350 from the Memorial Sanctuary Fund to lease the wetland for 18 months, ending July 1, 1981.

1978 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

The 1978 Sacramento Christmas Count turned up 137 species, including one new to the event, a Black-and-white Warbler. The first Folsom Count tallied a respectable 131 species, including Pygmy Owl, Horned Grebe, Ferruginous Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Violet-green Swallow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Tri-colored Blackbird. And on a clear, cold day in the Sierra, the Woodfords Count totaled 83 species, including a Eurasian Wigeon and Hooded Merganser.

CHAPTER AWARDS

At its annual meeting in May, 1979, Sacramento Audubon presented Awards of Appreciation to:

— Sacramento Superior Court Judge Eugene T. Gualco for his active support for the American River Parkway and other conservation measures while a member of the County Board of Supervisors and State Legislature.

— Arborist Austin Carroll for his dedication to the protection and preservation of Sacramento's trees.

— Elmer Aldrich, for his work as chapter president in 1977-78, field trip leader, and head of the

Christmas Bird Count in 1974 and 1975.

— Ed Harper, for his leadership as chapter president in 1976-77, and for his contributions to Bobelaine, preservation of endangered habitat and support of the society's energy and Alaskan lands positions. . . .

— Mae Dunham, for her contributions to the chapter's education program, including hundreds of hours leading field trips and presenting programs for schools.

FRED LINDNER

The Observer noted with sorrow the death of Fred Lindner, "an avid participant and leader in the field activities program," on June 26, 1979

The Board gave \$160 Camperships to Audubon Camp of the West in Wyoming to Bob Carisoza, Dave Johnson, Hugh Smith, and Karen Zumwalt

M.B. Goodier penned instructive wildlife care columns in the Observer about foundlings "Skinny," a black Virginia Rail chick; "Zeke," a Yellow-billed Magpie, and squirrels "Dickens" and "J.R."

Another American River College exhibit of Audubon artwork and photographs was organized by Ed Harper as part of the chapter's annual membership drive.

STONELAKE VICTORY

Five years of legal maneuvering ended in victory in 1979 for three Sacramento Auduboners who had campaigned against the McKeon Construction Company's proposed 5,400-acre "new town" Stonelake Development in southern Sacramento County. Bruce Swinehart, Bruce Kennedy, and Fred Styles were leaders in the successful opposition to the rezoning of the land from agriculture before the county Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Their efforts helped set the stage for establishment of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in 1994 (of which more later.)

The opponents contended that the project would be a major example of urban sprawl, of "leap-frog development," of new urbanization out beyond the reach of in-place urban infrastructure.

The company sued the three, along with Linda Best and Bruce McNitt, and 50 "John Does," asking \$80 million in damages. The courts, over two years, rejected various efforts of McKeon lawyers to state a valid cause of action against the "Stonelake Five," and finally told them they could not try again.



Swinehart, Kennedy, Styles and Best counter-sued McKeon and its law firm, charging malicious prosecution and won out-of-court settlements.

The outcome was also financially rewarding to Sacramento Audubon. In October, 1979, Bruce Kennedy presented the Board with a check for \$1,400, repayment for a loan of \$1,000 made years before to the group's legal defense fund.

CHRISTMAS COUNT

Bruce Swinehart's team captured the ceramic Peregrine Falcon Trophy at the 1979 Sacramento Christmas Count, reporting the highest total (8) above the five-year average for its area, the Yolo Bypass. Intermittent rain all day held the species count to 126, including sight record reports of Glaucous-

winged Gull, Northern Shrike, and a male Bullock's Oriole that were reviewed and approved by the chapter Rare Birds Committee.

In an Observer article headlined "The Owls Who Went to College," Guy M. Helmke chronicled his observations of the decline of Burrowing Owls at California State University, Sacramento. In 1967, 25 burrows held producing nests with an estimated 200 owls. As grassy meadows gave way to bulldozers, buildings and black-topped parking areas, the habitat for the burrow-digging ground squirrels that create their homes, and the field mice on which the owls subsisted dwindled. Their apparent last retreat was the nearby Water Purification Unit where they occasionally were seen sitting atop standpipes.

AREAS OF CONCERN PUBLISHED

Sacramento Audubon's Mission Statement says, "As a Chapter of the National Audubon Society, we will focus on conservation and environmental education to ensure that the Sacramento region's natural ecosystems and diverse bird populations are preserved, restored and made available for study and enjoyment." Mindful of this goal, 26 members of the Sacramento Audubon Research and Scientific Committee climaxed three years of study and field work with publication in 1980 of the 44-page "Areas of Critical Concern and Proposals for their Protection." The ground-breaking report spotlighted 64 locations in 13 counties that represent examples of ecosystems, habitats for rare species and sites for field trips and scientific study.

Elmer Aldrich proposed the study in 1976 and chaired the committee that carried it out. "The whole idea was to get ahead of a crisis, to identify problem areas that we wanted to protect," he said. "We wanted it to be the 'bible' for our conservation committee."

Areas of Concern included the Yolo Bypass of the Sacramento River, part of which has since been preserved as the Vic Fazio Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, and the Scott Road Raptor Area in east Sacramento County, near the Deer Creek Hills area where a proposed residential community was rejected by voters in 2000 after a vigorous campaign by Sacramento Audubon, Habitat 20-20 and other environmental groups

Aldrich said the study should be revised every five years, and indeed a revision was published in 1989 by a committee chaired by Mel Pasta, but that was the last time.

National Audubon praised the completeness of the reports, saying they served as a model for proactive conservation efforts by other chapters.

ALASKA LANDS VICTORY

Still in the realm of chapter publications, Marty Cordano reported in the December 1980 Observer on final congressional approval of the hotly contested Alaska Lands Bill . . . "Yahoo! Whoopee! Hooray!"

He could be excused his exuberance because he had contributed articles for almost every issue of the newsletter for nearly two years, urging support for the measure that would protect more than a million acres, and double the National Park system and the National Wildlife Refuge system. It was the largest single piece of land and wildlife conservation legislation in the history of the country.

Meanwhile, Arvil and Ellen Parker used Observer pages to rebut an article in a local newspaper suggesting that hummingbird feeders should not be kept out during the winter because migrating hummers

might be encouraged to stay in the area rather than go on their Southern trip.

The Parkers pointed out that most of the hummers in the Sacramento area are a species that does not migrate, namely, the Anna's Hummingbird, and that they would welcome extra food during the winter months.

BUSHY LAKE DAMAGE

Sacramento Audubon played a key role in 1980-81 in heading off another threat to the Bushy Lake riparian area behind Cal Expo, the popular field trip site for birders. More than 750 trees and shrubs, including the Elderberry shrub that harbors the endangered Elderberry Longhorn Beetle, were cut down, and trash was dumped on the American River Parkway preserve. President Truman Holtzclaw appointed a committee headed by Rich Williams to pursue legal avenues to stop the damage and rectify past damage.

Committee members and state officials met with Cal Expo Manager Kirk Breed, who agreed to replant the damaged area with native plants. He apologized that the restoration project was taking such a long time.

On the political front, the Board endorsed Proposition 1, the California Parklands Bond Act on the November, 1980 ballot, and opposed County Measure A which called for a bridge across the American River between Sunrise and Watt Avenues. Proposition 1 passed, measure A was defeated.

Paul Howard, who spent nine years in Sacramento as National Audubon's Western Representative before moving to New York headquarters, returned here as Audubon Vice President for Western Operations.

ED HARPER'S CLASSES

In 1981, Past President Ed Harper began teaching a long-running series of popular classes on field identification of birds at American River College. Over the years, hundreds of Auduboners and others enrolled in the classes featuring lectures and field study of characteristics, habitats and behavior of gulls, raptors, shorebirds, and other specialties.



In February, 1981, the chapter was \$1,400 in the red. Three months later, after the Birdathon raised \$4,526, and members contributed \$800 after an appeal in the Observer, Treasurer Ken Head reported to the Board that the deficit would soon be wiped out. And so it was. Thanks to more contributions, Head reported at the December meeting that the general fund totaled \$11,101.

CHAPTER AWARDS

Retired Federal Judge Thomas MacBride and the Save the American River Association received public awards at Sacramento Audubon's May banquet. Awards for outstanding service to the Chapter were presented to Arvil and Ellen Parker, Walt Luke, and Bill Dillinger.

The Yolo County Resource Conservation District presented Sacramento Audubon's Joe Farnham with a plaque for having won the 1978 Goodyear Conservation Program Award. Farnham, a member of the SAS Bobelaine Sanctuary Committee, maintains a wildlife sanctuary on his property, in addition to

many other conservation activities.

Some nice bird sightings were reported in 1981-82. Bird of the Month for September was a Ruff, a Eurasian Sandpiper that showed up at the Woodland Sugar Ponds. In January, Louise McCullough's field trip to the Bay Area found a Eurasian Smew that had been wintering at Foster City, San Mateo County.

Townsend's Solitaire, usually found on Sierra slopes, landed in Ed Warner's Woodland yard in February. And most exciting of all, in January, Steve Hermann and Bob Mallette sighted a Gyrfalcon in the fields of Yolo-Solano counties. It was only the second recorded occurrence of this Arctic falcon in California, and it lingered for several weeks, long enough for Doug Shaw to see it strong-arm (strong-wing?) a Red-tailed Hawk for the rabbit it was carrying

BOBELAINE ACCESS DISPUTE



A long-running dispute with an adjacent landowner who placed a locked gate on the main access road to Bobelaine was finally settled in 1981. Chapter members en route to the sanctuary had been confronted by the gate beginning in 1978, thus launching a frustrating controversy over who had the legal right to use Laurel Road. The dispute involved the SAS Board, the landowner, National Audubon officials, and lawyers and threatened lawsuits.

Audubon members were required to obtain a key from Bobelaine Committee members to enter the Sanctuary. The dispute, along with difficulty in obtaining work party volunteers, slowed activities in the Sanctuary and stalled many of the projects envisioned in the first Bobelaine Master Plan completed in 1977.

Betty Hill retired (but she would be back) in 1981 as editor of the Observer and was succeeded by Joan Stead.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

A beautiful, sunny day enhanced the Sacramento Christmas bird count, producing the highest total numbers since 1977. The rainy but fairly warm fall season was likely responsible for the high numbers, including 110 Anna's Hummingbirds and some lingering migrants.

And although it was foggy and drizzly for the Folsom count, the species count of 134 was the highest since 1978. The count produced 10 new species: Double-crested Cormorant, American Bittern, Wild Turkey, Hooded Merganser, Townsend's Solitaire, Sage Sparrow, Red-necked Grebe, Western Kingbird, Mew Gull, and Bonaparte's Gull.

Dan Brown, Truman Holtzclaw, Doug Shaw and Ed Harper joined in an informal spring Birdathon in which each lined up his own sponsors. Together they raised \$1,461, which was shared equally with National Audubon, the NAS Western Regional Office, and the Sacramento Chapter.

Coordinated by Barbara Fowler, 21 Audubon volunteers assisted in the display at Sunrise Mall of the Audubon Arm, a traveling mini-museum devoted to informing people about endangered species.

FIELD TRIP REPORTER

For many years, Jerry Ann Marinovich brightened Observer pages with evocative trip reports. Sample (April, 1981):

“White clouds splashed against March’s blue sky. Along the American River Parkway, Truman Holtzclaw and Tim Fitzer produced birds almost upon request. Truman began the day by “pishing” Hermit Thrushes, Rufous-sided Towhees, and a Fox Sparrow out of last year’s dried brambles. When Tim spotted a Black Phoebe, Evelyn Smith predicted the pool of water which (sure enough!) lay just around the first bend. Truman identified the *krr-eeek* and the square tail of Wood Ducks in flight. Those who listened heard the Titmice’s hit parade of songs”

FRED AND MILDRED EVENDEN

The Observer brought the sad news that Fred Evenden, president of Sacramento Audubon in 1958-60, and his wife, Mildred, were killed in a highway mud-slide accident near Corvallis, OR, Feb. 21, 1982.

NEW BOBELAINE PLAN

Sacramento Audubon reinforced its commitment to Bobelaine Sanctuary with adoption of a First Revision to the Bobelaine Audubon Sanctuary Master Plan. Writing in the October, 1982 Observer, Elmer Aldrich said “this action by the Board, together with President Brian Bell’s 1982-83 platform of emphasis on sanctuaries, places Bobelaine as probably the number one project for the coming fiscal year.”

The plan described the value of the sanctuary in preserving a remnant riparian landscape and listed goals for management. They included, first and foremost, to “protect, preserve and manage (Bobelaine) in as near natural condition as possible;” identify and protect its threatened, rare and endangered plant and animals; identify and preserve its evidence of the presence of early Native Americans, and permit and encourage human uses of the Sanctuary that do not conflict with the other goals.

Besides managing the 430-acre Feather River preserve under agreement with National Audubon, SAS also managed the 36-acre Sugar Pond Audubon Sanctuary under lease from the Spreckels Sugar Company near Woodland.

55-FOOT WELL DRILLED

1982-83 was another busy year at Bobelaine under the energetic leadership of Sanctuary Committee Chairman Mel Pasta. A major achievement was drilling a 55-foot water well, which, together with underground piping, submersible pump and water tank, provided water for the picnic and headquarters areas. PG&E installed power.

Pasta praised chapter members who donated money and energy, and appealed for more volunteers to, among other things, realign fences, build a bridge across the slough entryway into the sanctuary, and construct a trail system. Among those activists he cited were Al Forbes for making a Bobelaine sign and Jo Smith for creating a handsome topographical map of the sanctuary.

FOCUS ON BIRDS

As usual, birds and birding were the center of attention for many Auduboners. Andrew Engilis Jr., Field Activities chairman, conducted a two-day workshop on identifying birds in the field at the University of California, Davis.

And cold weather failed to deter 83 birders as they ticked off 136 species in the 1982 Sacramento Christmas count, Tim Manolis reported. Thayer's Gull was recorded for the first time on the count. Other highlights included Peregrine Falcon, seven terns (probably Forster's), Winter Wren, 2 Black-throated Gray Warblers, and a Western Tanager. In the high country, Tim Fitzer's annual Woodford's Christmas Count included Goshawk, Golden Eagle and Bald Eagle among many raptors, plus Northern Shrike.

There also was a goodly number of candidates for "Bird of the Month" in the Sacramento area, such as a Green-tailed Towhee, a September visitor from the foothill-chaparral country spotted by Hans Johanson; American Redstart, confirmed in the CSUS Arboretum in January by Jeri Langham, and a Goshawk in March at Brown's Ravine, Folsom Lake, by Dr. Lewette, and in April in Ancil Hoffman Park by Tim and Annette Manolis.

'BIRDS OF SACRAMENTO AREA'

A major publications milestone was reached in 1982 when the revised edition of Birds of the Sacramento Area went on sale. Editor Bill Dillinger said in a Foreword that the 36-page survey was once again dedicated to the memory of SAS stalwarts Don Fry and A. J. "Sam" Argante. He gave special mention to Betty Kimball who started it all with her 1964 article "Where to Look Around You," and voluminous records from her "Seasonal Observations" column.

The booklet represented the combined efforts of more than 30 Sacramento Audubon members, including Ed Harper, Andrew Engilis Jr., and Nick Miller (Specialties); Jane Aldrich (Cover), Jo Smith (Maps), and Miriam Davey and Kathleen Seifert (Typing).

Dorothy Harvey reported in the Observer that the American Ornithological bird-namers "are at it again." Hence the Whistling Swan became the Tundra Swan, Common Gallinule became Common Moorhen, and our own White-tailed Kite became the Black-shouldered Kite (only to revert back later to "White-tailed Kite"). The new nomenclature was described as an effort to make North American species more cosmopolitan, relating to species in other parts of the world.

Observer Editor Joan Stead announced the always-painful need to shrink the size of the newsletter. She said the Board of Directors had decided that because of the high cost of printing, the newsletter should be limited to four pages, with the savings to go elsewhere, such as Bobelaine upkeep. She appealed to contributors to "keep it short."

OLIVETTE P. DENNISON



Olivette P. Dennison, who with her husband, Jack, was a charter member of Sacramento Audubon, died in January, 1983 at age 86. As the first SAS Historian, it was due to her foresight in saving activity reports that we have records of those early years, Phyllis Thompson wrote in the Observer.

Sacramento Audubon held its first sale of “pre-owned” bird and other nature-related books at the March, 1983 meeting. It was organized by Helen Davis . . . Monthly meetings were moved from Fremont Presbyterian Church to St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in the Country Club Plaza area, effective September, 1983. Incoming President Louise McCullough cited restricted parking and high rental charges at Fremont as reasons for the move . . . Treasurer Cecil Smith reported in May that the Chapter had \$20,023 in the General Fund and \$2,888 in the Sanctuary Fund.

CONSERVATION UNDERSCORED

Louise McCullough served notice that as the new president of Sacramento Audubon in 1983-84 she would seek to reawaken interest in and dedication to conservation principles. Writing in the September Observer, she asked: “Have we become a little complacent after the successes of the ‘60s and ‘70s in getting laws passed and protective measures taken by the various levels of government? Now we are seeing how easily those gains are being eroded by both our national and state administrations. We have to let them know that there are a lot of us still concerned about protecting our resources and our wildlife.”

Her conservation agenda included responding to a Sacramento County Planning Department request for Sacramento Audubon representation on an American River Parkway Plan Update Working Committee. She appointed Elmer Aldrich to the committee of 18 to work with the County Planning staff to produce the 1985 American River Parkway Plan. Audubon members Jo Smith and Bill Griffith represented other organizations on the committee.

The committee worked for more than a year in drafting much of the language designed to protect the natural values of the Parkway, an area heavily used by Sacramento Audubon for its field trips. The County Board of Supervisors approved the plan and, impressed with the value of the participation of citizens and organizations such as Audubon, formed the permanent American River Parkway Advisory Committee on which the Chapter continues to be represented.

BOBELAINE FRUSTRATIONS

Of course, an overriding element to the Chapter’s conservation ethic was its eight-year-old commitment to preserving the fragile, scarce river forest that is Bobelaine Sanctuary. During 1983-84, Sanctuary Chair Mel Pasta struggled with a seemingly endless string of frustrations in protecting the 430 acre Feather River preserve owned by National Audubon and managed by SAS.

Trespassing was endemic, and two hunters were arrested on Sanctuary property. Someone changed the locks on the Bobelaine gates in connection with an ongoing dispute over fishing rights to state-owned navigable waters. The State Fish and Game Commission turned down Sacramento Audubon’s request to close the waters of Bobelaine to fishing. However, a potential bright spot glimmered on the horizon. Pasta, Elmer Aldrich and others joined with National Audubon and Audubon’s Western Regional Office seeking state designation of Bobelaine as an ecological preserve. If successful, this would increase protection by the State Department of Fish & Game.

A PRISTINE AREA OF MOODS

As Sanctuary Committee Chair in the 1980s, Mel Pasta worked long and hard at Bobelaine. The following, from the Observer, is his eloquent rationale for visiting the preserve:

“Here you can listen, enraptured, to Nature’s symphony: squirrels chattering,

the piercing shriek of hawks, the barking “kwok” of the Black-crowned Night-Heron, the raucous, throaty squawk of the Great Blue Heron, the staccato drum-beat of a woodpecker, the croak of frogs, birds calling in a variety of pitches and decibels, perhaps not in harmony or in unison, but still delightful listening.

“Observe Nature’s parade. The scarlet tapestry of poison oak, carpets of lavender and emerald, stately sycamores, oaks and cottonwoods sentinel-tall, willows swaying gently, or the artist’s brush wielded in a profusion of oranges, browns, yellows, greens and pinks.

“Experience the chill of early morning mist, the brooding, ominous portent of a storm, the brilliance of daybreak, the vivid colors of sunset, the first hush of darkness as the mantle of dusk descends, followed by sparkling moonlight and drifting shadows.

“Truly, Bobelaine is a pristine area of moods, colors and hues, changing constantly. Over and over it repeats ever so subtly: Come visit, come discover, come explore, come enjoy”



AREAS OF CONCERN

Elsewhere on the conservation front, Conservation Chair Alta Tura penned articles in *The Observer* urging Auduboners to review the 1980 chapter publication “Areas of Critical Concern” and help keep tabs on the 64 locations cited for having unique natural values. She singled out the Sweetwater Valley Project near Folsom Lake, Brovelli Woods near Galt, a dense oak woodland covering 120 acres; Sloughouse Vernal pools, and Blossom Slough, near Thornton.

“Suspicious-looking heavy equipment?” she asked. “Slender stakes with orange ribbons? Let me know!”

Other conservation efforts included urging Sacramento County Supervisors to make Bushy Lake part of the American River Parkway under County administration; State Fish & Game Ecologist Karen Miller’s Chapter meeting program on the Nature Conservancy’s California Critical Areas Program, and appealing for financial support for campaigns seeking passage of state bond issues on the June, 1984 ballot to acquire and develop fish and game habitat and parklands. Both bond issues passed.

Andrew Engilis Jr. wrote a detailed series of articles on the American Ornithological Union’s (AOU) Checklist to North American Birds, the first in nearly 30 years. He pointed out how scientific methodology has shifted from field and museum techniques to the laboratory, resulting in such techniques as DNA-DNA Hybridization and Protein Analysis. “For example, most of the world’s bird fami-

lies have been analyzed by DNA-DNA," he wrote, "and the result is a complete rearrangement of these families."

NEW SACRAMENTO CHECKLIST

Changes in the 1983 AOU Checklist were reflected in the new Sacramento Area Checklist produced by Andy Engilis, Tim Manolis and other members of the Checklist Committee. An Observer article noted that several species that were previously in the local checklist's "accidental" category (less than five records) had been removed by the Sacramento Bird Records Committee, largely because of the lack of adequately written descriptions by the birders who submitted them.

Meanwhile, Dave Johnson reported in the Observer on a new Seasonal Observations committee that was formed to take over duties performed so admirably for so many years by Betty Kimball and more recently by Dorothy Harvey. Committee members were Tim Manolis, Doug Shaw, Kathy Moore and Ken Salzman. They were responsible for receiving rare and unusual bird reports from the Sacramento Checklist Area via a new telephone recording device; and from other individual and field trip reports by mail; and to publish the highlights in a monthly column in The Observer.

Dave Johnson was indeed a busy contributor to The Observer in 1983-84, authoring four articles telling how to find good birds at some of his favorite hot spots. The first "Notes From Dave" piece showed the way to a half-day field trip along Green Valley, Starbuck and Deer Valley Roads in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada where his Folsom Christmas Count team records about 55 species every year.

He followed up telling how to see an assortment of shorebirds in Yolo County between Aug. 15 and Oct. 1 by exiting Interstate 5 at Road at 102 and following it north to Road 20 and turning right. Then he reported on Burrowing Owls and friends in the Scott, Latrobe and Jackson Road country of East Sacramento County, concluding in February with a report on wintering species in the Solano Lake area of the western side of the valley.

1983 CHRISTMAS COUNT RECORD

Despite patchy fog, 87 participants counted 196,382 individuals of 144 species, the highest species total in the Sacramento Christmas Bird Count's 35-year history. Tim Manolis reported these highlights: 76 Cattle Egrets, Barrow's Goldeneye, Merlin, White-throated Swifts, Western Gull, Phainopepla, two Black-throated Gray Warblers and a Western Tanager.

A Pomarine Jaeger, only the second Sacramento area record, was reported Aug. 13, 1983 by County Ranger-Naturalist James Lower over Elverta area rice fields. He speculated that the predatory seabird flew inland to avoid Tropical Storm Ishmael off the Southern California coast. And a Costa's Hummingbird, usually found well south of Sacramento, lingered a month or so in Doug Shaw's yard beginning Nov. 13.

Dave Johnson launched his 1984-85 presidential term by leading his annual trips to the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve. The salt-water marsh yielded good looks at Clapper Rails, Red Knots, Long-billed and Short-billed Dowitchers, Semipalmated and Black-bellied Plovers, and Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, among others. Jerry Marinovich reported that Johnson had promised 75 species in the morning, and his group ended with 77.

FOGGY CHRISTMAS COUNT

The Central Valley's infamous tule fog held 1984 Sacramento Christmas Count numbers to 85,966, lowest in 22 years, and 132 species, down 12 from last year. Despite the gloom and chill, two birds were spotted for the first time on the count: Glaucous Gull at the Davis Landfill by Jeri Langham and Western Flycatcher on the Sacramento River near Miller Park by David Yee.

Contrarily, Folsom Christmas bird counters experienced a cold (28 to 44 degrees), crisp and clear day as they recorded 133 species, 4 races, and 1 hybrid. High counts included Canada Goose, 2,742; Ring-necked Duck, 88, and White-tailed Kite, 40, co-compiler June Persson reported . . .

In other mid-decade birding action, Dave Johnson and Ken Salzman embarked on a 14-hour "Big Day" count on April 24, 1984 as part of the Bobelaine Birdathon. It took them from Rossmoor Bar on the American River where they saw their first bird, a Mallard, and ended at Bodega Bay with their 132nd species, a Black Oystercatcher. Salzman obtained 42 Birdathon pledges, raising \$265.

And on June 15, 1985, Ed Harper confirmed the presence of Yellow-billed Cuckoos at Bobelaine Sanctuary when he sighted one of the occasionally-heard-but-rarely-seen birds that once were so numerous in California.

DEMISE OF SUGAR PONDS

Bobelaine was not the only sanctuary under the chapter's wing. For many years SAS leased ponds covering 75 acres near Woodland from the Spreckels Sugar Co. to preserve the marsh habitat for nesting birds, migratory species, and wintering waterfowl. Yolo Audubon Society collaborated with SAS on the project.

The ponds, made up of nutritious wastewater from the beet sugar refining process, were a favorite birding spot for hundreds of Sacramento Audubon members, including Jerry Marinovich, who planted willow trees in habitat enhancement projects there. "There were lots of shorebirds, including Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers, and I saw nesting Yellow-headed Blackbirds and White-faced Ibises there," she recalled.

Alas, the compact, easily accessible ponds dried up after Spreckels sold the Woodland plant to Imperial Holly Sugar Co., which shut it down in the late 1990s. No doubt the birds found other hangouts, such as the nearby Vic Fazio Yolo Wildlife Area and the City of Davis Wastewater ponds.

FROM LITTLE ACORNS . . .

"As more and more oaks appear in the names of shopping centers, apartment complexes and streets, we see less and less of the real thing."

Conservation Chair Alta Tura offered this trenchant observation in the course of urging members to adopt sprouted acorns and plant them where they will do the most good. The County Board of Supervisors proclaimed 1985 "The Year of the Oak," and the Sacramento Tree Foundation proposed planting 10,000 trees in the next year.

"Don't miss this opportunity to establish future landmarks," Tura said.

ALAN FORBES

Alan Forbes, 67, a dedicated Bobelaine worker, died Nov. 7, 1984. He contributed his care and skills by carving sanctuary signs and building the exhibit shelter and fences.

OUR EDUCATION MISSION



Over the years (with some unfortunate lapses), Sacramento Audubon has been active in presenting nature study curricula in area elementary schools. Purpose of the classes has been to encourage children to be aware of - and protect - the natural areas, birds and other wildlife, and to inspire some to study biological sciences as a career.

“The time to spark an interest in nature and our environment is during the grade school years,” Virginia L. Vandermeer wrote as she set education in the schools as a major goal for her 1985-86 presidential year.

Education Committee chairpersons committed to that credo during 1975-2000 included Willie Ar-gante Eizinger, Natalie F. Schafer, Barbara Fowler, Hugh Smith, Ken Salzman, Grace Steurer, LoRaine Brown, Deborah Watson, Len Marowitz, Carolyn Goff, Kim Bacon, and Dave Pearson. In 1991-92, for instance, Brown reported that 15 Committee members presented programs to 87 classes, or approximately 2,600 students. One volunteer, Yoshino Hatanak gave programs for 19 classes at 11 schools.

Besides SAS volunteers, such as widely known bird rescuer M.S. Goodier, the Education Committee included students of instructor Bruce Swinehart’s “Techniques of Biological Interpretation” class at American River College.

The chapter purchased copies of “Audubon Adventures” from National Audubon as an aid to member presenters and teachers. In 1989, Len Marowitz began a program with school children in areas near Bobelaine Sanctuary. He also offered educational walks for youth groups, and evening talks to varied groups. June Persson showed color slides of Bobelaine to school classes in Sutter County where the sanctuary is located.

In other education initiatives, Dan Brown offered beginning birder workshops for Audubon members and friends. Andy Engilis conducted workshops for field trip leaders. Sheila Greene led a six-week workshop for children aged 6-16 accompanied by a parent, grandparent or other special adults. Deserving Sacramento Audubon members and others were awarded camperships to outdoor nature study classes presented at National Audubon’s sites in Wyoming and along the Atlantic coast.

And certainly there were educational rewards for those who joined field trips with Sacramento Audubon’s many outstanding leaders.

BOBELAINE GAINS STATE CLOUT

For two and a half years Sacramento Audubon and National Audubon leaders pursued state of California designation of Bobelaine as an Ecological Reserve. During one two-month period the draft agreement between the Chapter and the California Department of Fish and Game was revised six times in the effort to cover the sanctuary, as a private jurisdiction, with state protection. The designation was finally achieved through legislation that became law on Jan. 3, 1986.

“We now have far greater legally mandated clout to protect and preserve Bobelaine,” Sanctuary Chair Mel Pasta said.

Pasta spelled out the depth of Sacramento Audubon’s commitment to the Feather River Sanctuary when he reported in the Observer in July-August, 1986 that since December 1982, the Chapter had spent more than \$10,000 for improvements and operating and maintenance costs. They included drilling a well and installing a water system, purchasing an 18-horsepower tractor, with mower deck, tiller and bulldozer blade attachments, conducting a property survey (with National Audubon help), and costs of electricity, water, gasoline and petroleum products, lumber, and cement.

Annually, SAS members contributed over 800 hours to remove litter, repair or replace fences, dig holes, wield saws, sledges, shovels, picks and hoes, plant trees and shrubs, construct and emplace 72 signs, mow grass and weeds, irrigate trees and shrubs and maintain equipment.

Sanctuary flora and fauna research included tracking the rare Yellow-billed Cuckoo by Ed Harper, Susan Scott, Dave Johnson, and Barbara Mohr. Johnson, Mohr, and Jerry Ann Marinovich headed up a two-year bird census. Dr. Catherine Toft of the Department of Zoology, University of California, Davis, studied Arthropods (spiders and other invertebrate animals). Cecil and Evelyn Smith and Joe Aparicio headed a study of plant identification and distribution.

BUSY CONSERVATION COMMITTEE



In the mid-1980s, the Conservation Committee enjoyed one of its most active periods, with nine members and under the continuing leadership of Alta Tura, assisted by Del Tura. Alta Tura wrote letters and Observer articles opposing further diversions of water from the Lower American River; urged chapter involvement with an upcoming toxics forum, and asked members to attend hearings by the Sacramento City Council in advance of a decision on how North Natomas was to be developed.

She, Charles Sanders and Deborah Clayton represented the Chapter at the Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS), with Clayton working on natural streams and natural areas; Candace Tinkler helped organize a “Water Festival,” and Clayton was following an oak regeneration issue at the planned Cherry Island driving range.

1985-86 CHRISTMAS COUNT

A Caspian Tern, rare in winter even along the coast and almost unprecedented inland, made a first appearance on the Sacramento Christmas Count. Other highlights included a Horned Grebe, two Barrow’s Goldeneyes, three Hooded Mergansers, four Whimbrels, a Glaucous Gull, California Thrasher, Northern Shrike, and Yellow Warbler. The overall species count was 141, up nine from 1984, with 118,009 individuals.

Fog and 30-degree temperatures limited Folsom Count species to a record low of 127, but they included such nice birds as Greater Roadrunner, Costa’s Hummingbird, Red-naped Sapsucker, Northern Shrike, Glaucous Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, and 15 Mew Gulls.

The Stockton Count turned up perhaps the most unusual bird of the period, a Bendire’s Thrasher, a typically desert bird, reported by Tim Manolis. It was only the second Sacramento Valley record, the first being the bird that wintered in Arvil and Ellen Parker’s Courtland garden for several years in the

1970s.

1986 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

A Palm Warbler, a Sacramento County first, was the most exciting bird among 134 species recorded on the 1986 Sacramento Christmas Count. It was found along the American River floodplain at Cal Expo. Other notables: Hairy Woodpecker, 2 Winter Wrens, 5 Black-throated Gray Warblers and 1 or 2 bright, "Eastern" type Fox Sparrows, very rare in this area.

And despite the usual clammy overcast, the 1986 Folsom Christmas Bird Count chalked up 132 species, third highest in nine years. Highlights included Merlin and Ferruginous Hawk, 52 Wild Turkey, 2 Thayer's Gulls, and Northern Pygmy Owl.

BOBELAINE'S BIG DAY



Auduboners and VIPs were on hand in force May 17, 1987 for dedication of Bobelaine as a State Ecological Reserve, providing added protection to the Sanctuary. Keynote speaker was National Audubon Vice President Brock Evans, and State Fish and Game Director Jack Parnell discussed the significance of the Sanctuary's new state status. President Bill Dillinger was master of ceremonies.

But for many, the highlight of the ceremonies was the announcement of the naming of a beautiful, mature stand of Valley Oaks in the preserve for two of the Chapter's longtime stalwarts, Charter member Lily B. and Benjamin G. Eizinger, better known as Willie and Ben.

In the early days of the Sanctuary when the old trails were still passable, the Eizinger often took several school classes per day on nature tours. Glenn Olson, Audubon's Western Regional director, estimated that over the years, in and out of Bobelaine, the couple and their college volunteers introduced thousands of youngsters to the values of such natural areas.

Another invited guest, Gene R. Trapp of California State University, Sacramento, Department of Biological Sciences, called attention to an often-overlooked benefit of the Sanctuary owned by National Audubon and managed by Sacramento Audubon. He told how CSUS students for many years had taken field trips there and conducted research projects on such subjects as bird movements, Valley Oak reproduction, and - aided by telemetry - Ringtail home range movements.

Meanwhile, Birdathon Chairperson Virginia L. Vandermeer reported that "Birding for Bobelaine" participants listed 153 species, generating \$3,100 in pledges and early collections of \$2,900.

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

One of Sacramento Audubon's most productive scientific projects was the compilation of a Sacramento County Breeding Bird Atlas in 1988-92. Launched during the presidency of LaFrances Goodson, the atlas was to provide baseline information on the geographic distribution of nesting species, thereby helping to guide future government, business and civic planning decisions affecting birds and their habitats within the county.

"Breeding Bird Atlas Fever has proved highly contagious indeed!" Tim Manolis, coordinator, wrote in a 1988 Observer article reporting on the project's first workshop. More than 25 Audubon members

attended, and many volunteered to check for nesting birds in one of the 138 squares or blocks (5 kilometers or 3.1 miles on each side) in the Sacramento County atlas grid.

The completed Data Base is housed at the Sacramento Tree Foundation. In addition, Dee Warencia requested fellow Atlasers to report to the State Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Data Base any nesting species that are state or federally listed as Threatened or Endangered; are California bird Species of Special Concern, or a federal Candidate for listing, or just sensitive due to its colonial nesting habits. These included Bank Swallow, Tricolored Blackbird, Burrowing Owl, Swainson's Hawk, and all colonially nesting herons and egrets.



In an article in the Atlas newsletter headlined "Confessions of an Atlaser," Michael Marsh wrote "The main reason I recommend atlasing to others is . . . the sheer joy and excitement you feel when confirming nesting activity of yet another species in your block." Thus his exultant reaction when, after a futile, three-month search for nesting Lark Sparrows in his area, he saw two Lark Sparrows fly up to a perch, one of them carrying what appeared to be several long strands of horse hair in its bill -- the criterion for a confirmed nesting.

Other Atlas highlights were the 1988 discovery of Spotted Sandpipers nesting along the American River, a Sacramento County first; Dave Johnson's sighting of four young rails in a semi-marshy area off Florin Road east of the Folsom-South Canal and confirmed with the help of Barbara Mohr as Soras; and Richard Barbieri's and Johnson's "triple": confirmed breeding by Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Phainopepla, and Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers on the same day in Snipes Pershing Ravine, Orangevale.

Sacramento Audubon members rallied in support of the Nature Conservancy's new Cosumnes River Preserve, a 1,500 acre sanctuary along three miles of the Cosumnes, some 15 miles south of Sacramento. They joined in a day of acorn planting in January, 1988 to restore an oak forest that had been cleared for farming. The forest would be added to stands of willow, walnut and alder in a preserve that would grow to 10,000 acres and be a popular birding locale. Birds observed included Lazuli Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Wrentit, Bullock's Oriole, Tundra Swan, Sandhill Crane, and Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, along with a family of River Otters.

1987 CHRISTMAS COUNT

The Sacramento Christmas Bird Count recorded 142 species, just two shy of the Count high. For the first time on the Count, a Solitary Vireo was reported. (It was later split into Blue-headed, Cassin's, and Plumbeous vireo.) Others: 5 Barrow's Goldeneyes on the American River; 2 Merlins, a Semipalmated Plover, 5 Black-necked Stilts, a Whimbrel, Western Tanager, and 4 Black-throated Gray Warblers.

The Folsom Christmas Count celebrated its 10th birthday with its highest Count ever - 134 species. They included a Clark's Grebe, 4 Sandhill Cranes, and 3 Bald Eagles.

The chapter presented awards of appreciation at the Spring Banquet to four who contributed time and efforts to Sacramento Audubon. They were: Marjorie Ryall, Historical Committee Chair and author of "The Sacramento Audubon Society - The First 25 Years;" L. Frank Goodson, Sanctuary Chairperson, and vigorous advocate of a proposed Oso-Plumas National Natural Landmark that unfortunately failed to win federal approval; Del Tura, Program Chairperson and organizer of the Arcade Creek Cleanup Day in 1987 and 1988, and Lois Woodruff, Environmental Planner and Community Relations Officer,

County Department of Parks and Recreation; project manager for the Cal Expo Floodplain Management Plan.

OAK WOODLAND DECIMATED

Anger erupted among local environmental groups in 1988 when it was discovered that, despite promised mitigation measures, Sacramento County crews had removed more than 100 oaks while constructing Cherry Island Golf Course in northern Sacramento County. Former Conservation Committee Chair Alta Tura blasted the action, saying the unique Blue Oak woodland that existed along Dry Creek on the 200 acres south of Gibson Ranch was probably the last of its kind in the region.

“This ecosystem was destroyed by fragmentation and loss of its critical mass as a result of tree removal and the development to follow,” she wrote. “Valley Oaks and Live Oaks were also cut down because they were seen as obstacles to the project. A private project committing these same actions would be subject to fines exceeding \$100,000. However, the County, which enforces the Tree Ordinance, has made itself exempt.”

The Board of Supervisors, responding to this and other protests, created a task force to recommend reinstating mitigation measures to the Cherry Island project, and hired arborist Willie Carroll to recommend ways to protect the remaining oaks. Working with county officials, Carroll negotiated new bridge locations, construction techniques, and green and tee locations, and ordered first aid for surviving trees.

Meanwhile, Conservation Chair Jim Middleton maintained a two-year drumbeat of alerts in Observer columns urging membership attendance at hearings and letters to officials on sensitive issues. For instance, he called attention to an upcoming County Planning Commission hearing on the proposed Huntington Lakes housing development in southern Sacramento County that would impact the planned Stone Lakes National Wildlife Area. The Commission subsequently turned down the proposal, as did the Board of Supervisors.

The conservation theme was echoed at numerous meeting programs, including one by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Jini Scammell-Tinling on the proposed Stone Lakes project.

And in his personal agenda for helping plug “the leaks in starship Earth,” Mike Vennard urged Observer readers to join him in these goals: 1. Recycle aluminum, glass, and paper bags; 2. Write a letter to your members of Congress on a subject of your choice once a month; 3. Read the editorial page in the newspaper; 4. Attend city or county government meetings when a subject of concern is on the agenda.

1988 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Despite treacherous ice, arctic winds, and 30-46 degree temperatures, 70 Sacramento Christmas Bird Counters recorded a record high of 146 species. Highlights included Horned Grebe, 3 Barrow’s Goldeneyes, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon, 2 Semipalmated Plovers, 3 Black-necked Stilts, 3 Bonaparte’s Gulls, Winter Wren, Yellow Warbler, 2 Townsend’s Warblers and Wilson’s Warbler.

A Red-necked Grebe spotted on Folsom Lake by Mark Cudney was the most unusual bird among 127 species reported on the 1988 Folsom Christmas Count. Dave Johnson’s group had a White-throated Sparrow and several early rising owl-seekers located Screech and Great Horned. For the third straight year, Folsom Lake had to be covered from shore because the water level was too low to launch a boat.

President Cathie LaZier reported in 1989 that trespassing problems had arisen over birders eager to see a rare Franklin's Gull that turned up at the off-limits Woodland Water Treatment Ponds. Urging members to practice and promote good conservation ethics, she asked Recording Secretary Jerry Marinovich to discuss the matter with the plant manager who was concerned about liability issues at the facility where major construction was underway. The plant later designated a parking and sign-in area for birders wishing to enjoy views of the diverse water birds using the ponds.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE



With 42 members, the SAS Education Committee accelerated activities in the late 1980s. Chair Len Marowitz reported that notices of available programs were sent to 128 elementary schools, the news media, scouting and other organizations. Speakers and walk leaders were sent to many classrooms, seniors groups, convalescent homes and church groups. The committee judged entries at the Sacramento Science Fair.

Marowitz appealed for more volunteers and for donations to purchase nature-oriented materials to lend or donate to schools. "Our success, so far, has been the result of the cooperative and good-spirited volunteers who comprise the committee," he said. "They are introducing the joy of birding to many people."

'CRITICAL CONCERNS' REVISION

Publication of the revised edition of the Chapter's "Areas of Critical Concern and Proposals for Their Protection" report was again welcomed by National Audubon as "an instructive model to other Audubon Society chapters and allied conservation groups," just as the original edition was in 1980. Members surveyed 67 sites, finding that nearly one half were experiencing greater threat to their ecological values than in 1980. The study called on federal, state and private interests to face up to the continuing effects of poorly planned urban growth. President Susan Scott expressed the Chapter's appreciation to the task force headed by Mel Pasta for carrying out the big project.

1989 CHRISTMAS COUNT

The 1989 Sacramento Christmas Bird Count produced several surprises, including a Northern Waterthrush discovered in the swampy patch of the American River Parkway near Cal Expo by David Yee, Bruce Webb and Don Munson. George Koch and Richard Barbieri saw a Surf Scoter on the American River, and Reichmuth Park yielded a Hooded Oriole, Tim Manolis reported.

Chapter members have been generous with their time and expertise and with Observer publicity for sister organizations with similar goals of protecting and enhancing local habitats. A prime example has been the participation over the years of many Auduboners as team leaders and members of the American River Parkway Birdathon sponsored by the American River Natural History Association (ARNHA).

ARNHA President Jo Smith said contributions from Chapter members and others gave a healthy boost to the Association's interpretive activities at Effie Yeaw Nature Center and elsewhere on the parkway.

Auduboners gave the same help to ARNHA's annual "Bird and Breakfast" fundraisers, and to the Sacramento chapter of the Urban Creeks Council's Creek Week and Sacramento Open Space Conser-

vancy activities.

BIRD LISTS CLIMB

Mark Cudney reported good news for bird listers in 1990. His Observer article on species splits in the newly published 37th Supplement to the AOU Checklist of North American Birds described new species that birders could pursue for their lists. Brown Towhee was split into California Towhee and Canyon Towhee; California Gnatcatcher race was separated from Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and elevated to species status, and Western Flycatcher was split into two species: Pacific-slope Flycatcher and Cordilleran Flycatcher.

ARVIL PARKER

Arvil Parker, longtime Sacramento Audubon field trip leader and expert photographer, died March 11, 1990. A retired Courtland High School math teacher, he and his wife, Ellen, led field trips to the Thornton area and participated in many bird counts. In producing dazzling photos of hummingbirds in flight, he discovered a couple of hybrid hummers at his Courtland feeder. His find interested University of California ornithologists and they captured the birds in order to study them more closely.

FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES

Sacramento Audubon's Board members were forever faced with the pressures of balancing income from membership dues, donations, and miscellaneous sources against Observer, Bobelaine, insurance, and many other expenses. The quest for additional funding met with notable successes, such as "Bucks for Bobelaine" birdathons and direct mail appeals to members.

Revenue was generated from other sources, such as the sale of Checklists and other Chapter publications, birdseed, used books, discount coupon books, and coffee mugs bearing the chapter emblem; and a raffle for a signed waterfowl print donated by famed bird artist Robert Bateman. Local artist Erin O'Toole also made a significant contribution in kind, with her wildlife drawings, layout and typing services for the Bobelaine Interpretive Guide.

And the 1990s saw a major upturn in revenue realized from donations built into the costs of the Chapter's expeditions to birding hot spots near and far. In addition to her many other fundraising projects, Mary James organized more than two dozen trips, led by such expert birders as Mark Cudney and Tim Steurer to Texas's Rio Grande Valley in 1993; Todd Easterla to Cape May, N.J., in 1997, and Dan Williams on a transect of California in 2000.

1990 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Seventy-six observers braved super-frigid temperatures for the 42nd annual Sacramento Christmas Bird Count, and were rewarded with 151 species, five more than the previous record set in 1988 on a similarly cold day. Highlights were two species found for the first time on the Sacramento Count -- an Oldsquaw reported by Michael Perrone, and 21 White-faced Ibises flying around the edges of the Yolo Bypass. A total of 134,924 individual birds were reported.

Other nice finds: Eurasian Wigeon, Greater Scaup, Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Bonaparte's and Glaucous Gulls, "Yellow-shafted" Northern Flicker, Common Raven, California Thrasher, Phainopepla, Nashville Warbler, and Evening Grosbeak. Compiler Tim Manolis called the Count "the

best ever.”

Folsom also had cold weather and an all-time high count—138 species with 40,340 individuals, Compiler June Persson reported. Specialties were American White Pelican, Eurasian Wigeon, Dunlin, Canyon Wren, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Red Crossbill, Bald and Golden Eagles, and Lawrence’s Goldfinch.

NEW INFORMATION LINE

The Board of Directors enthusiastically approved President Jose Kirchner’s request to install a new Sacramento Audubon telephone line at his own expense during his term of office. It would include a taped message with information regarding field trips, meetings and referrals to the rare bird line and would receive incoming messages.

RECORDS UNIT REACTIVATED

After being inactive for several years, Sacramento Audubon’s Bird Records Committee was back in business in 1992 to review and vote on reports of rare birds in the Sacramento Checklist Area, plus those reported on Christmas Bird Counts.

Birders were invited to submit a detailed, written description of the sighting, along with a drawing, photograph or tape recording if possible. Chaired by Tim Manolis, the Committee consisted of Bruce Deuel, Ed Greaves, Ed Harper, Jeri Langham, Brian Williams, David Yee, Ted Beedy, John Trochet, and Andrew Engilis, Jr.

Sightings accepted by the Committee as Sacramento County “firsts,” and those who reported them, included:

- Canada Warbler, Reichmuth Park, Aug. 24-Sept. 8, 1986 (Gil Ewing)
- Palm Warbler, American River Parkway near Cal Expo, Dec. 27, 1986-Jan. 8, 1987 (John Trochet and Bruce Webb)
- Solitary Vireo, Plumbeous Form, Reichmuth Park, April 13-15, 1988 (Tim Manolis)
- Semipalmated Sandpiper, Natomas Main Drain near Elverta, Sept. 5, 1991 (Tim Manolis and June Persson)
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Sacramento, Dec. 10, 1991 (Tim Manolis)
- Franklin’s Gull, N. Fork, Mokelumne River between Tyler and Staten Islands, May 10, 1992 (Tim and Annette Manolis)
- Yellow-throated Warbler, Orangevale, May 25, 1992 (Dave Johnson and Barbara Mohr)
- Summer Tanager and Hooded Warbler, Reichmuth Park, Sept. 5, 1992 (Gil Ewing)

And in the first Sacramento County report in decades, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was heard July 7, 1996 at Cosumnes River Preserve (John Trochet).

1991 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

For the first time, a “Harlan’s” Red-tailed Hawk and Rufous Hummingbird were recorded on the Sacramento Christmas Bird Count, Compiler Tim Manolis reported. They were among 144 species counted as 96 Auduboners enjoyed fair weather on the 1991 Count while tallying 163,475 individuals. Other sightings: Black-necked Stilt, 17 Bonaparte’s Gulls, Phainopepla, Townsend’s Warbler, Glaucous Gull, 9 Forster’s Terns and a Caspian Tern.

Stormy weather ushered in Folsom Count Day, but it let up after two hours and the birds came out in high numbers. Auduboners recorded 131 species among 64,195 individuals. Thanks to Bill Dillinger's press agency, three television stations and one radio station showed up to provide the best media coverage yet. Cathie LaZier, Diana Oretsky, Nancy Bittner and Dillinger performed well on camera, compiler June Persson reported. Fenton Williams and Gil Ewing found the birds-of-the-day: two Pacific Loons and a female Red-breasted Merganser in Folsom Lake off Beal's Point. Also sighted: 4 Bald Eagles.

THE BIG FIRE

Friday, Sept. 24, 1992 was hot, dry and windy when fire broke out in bone-dry vegetation on the east side of the Feather River four miles above Bobelaine. Embers jumped the river and flames sped southward through the riparian lands and by 9 p.m. into Audubon's prized Sanctuary.

"It was bad, bad, bad," said Jan Clark, co-chair with her husband Bill of the Sanctuary Committee, who viewed the still-smoking scene the following morning.

About 85 percent of the 430-acre preserve's cottonwoods, willows, oaks and box elders, were lost, she said. Except for a few green patches, the ground was blackened. She watched as a fox pursued a rabbit with no place to hide on the charred landscape.

With the Sanctuary closed and field trips canceled, the Chapter faced up to the monumental task of recovery and prevention of a recurrence of fire. Work parties under the inspirational leadership of the Clarks dragged fallen trees off trails, planted acorns and hundreds of saplings. They grubbed out weeds and non-native Himalayan berries that flourished in the sudden absence of shade. John Ranlett donated funds for a pump to help with the three-times-a-week watering of the young trees. Restoration workers included Steve Talley, Andy Engilis Jr., Robert Thomas, and Mary Schiedt.

California Conservation Corps and State Department of Water Resources crews bulldozed an 80-foot-wide firebreak at the north end of the Sanctuary. A smaller firebreak was created in the center of the Sanctuary. Grants from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Teichert Foundation helped with the recovery, including rental of a bulldozer. A year later, the Sanctuary was reopened to the public.

SQUATTER'S RIGHTS?



Following the September fire, Jack Hiehle and Alice Stivanelli checked, cleaned and put new sawdust into 17 Wood Duck boxes at Bobelaine. None of the 17 boxes located had been burned and, unfortunately, none indicated successful use by Wood Ducks. But - surprise! - one of them contained a growling ring-tail. Jack and Alice judiciously let it lay and withdrew.

Apparently most wildlife had managed to escape the flames. Actually, in the fire's aftermath bluebirds were enjoying the grassy meadow in the north firebreak and woodpeckers found it easier to excavate nest cavities in scorched trees.

Ten years later, Jan Clark would say, "A lot of recovery has happened. Trees are getting nice and big. It's still very nice, even with the damage."

ARMCHAIR ACTIVISTS

Sacramento Audubon mounted a major conservation initiative in 1992 with the “Audubon Armchair Activists” club at the outset of President LoRaine Brown’s term and carried forward in June Persson’s presidency. It was designed for those who were concerned about the environment but didn’t have the time to do the necessary research and hands-on advocacy.

For a \$6 annual membership fee, members received a monthly bulletin pointing out local, state, and federal environmental issues of immediate concern. Also included were sample letters to be used as guides for letters to lawmakers to indicate Audubon’s - and the writer’s - position on such issues.

“About a half hour a month is all that’s required for an ‘Armchair Activist’ to make a meaningful contribution to maintaining/improving our environment,” Brown wrote in announcing the program in *The Observer*. “Can you imagine a thousand letters coming into the office of our elected officials from this area alone? That would represent one third of our total Sacramento membership.”

Bea Cooley and Barbara Alexander spearheaded the program. *The Observer* said Audubon letters were crucial in preventing part of the Bushy Lake area from becoming a parking lot for Cal Expo.

The program continued until 1998 when the Board of Directors voted to discontinue it after key personnel moved away and the Chapter had joined five other organizations in forming Habitat 20-20 to fight to preserve local habitat.

CECIL SMITH



Cecil Smith, who held many leadership positions with Sacramento Audubon, died Nov. 14, 1992. Smith, 70, an electrical engineer with the state, was Editor of *The Observer*, Chapter Treasurer, served with his wife Evelyn on the Bobelaine Sanctuary Committee, and with Evelyn led many popular field trips. He was noted for his wit, as recalled by Auduboner Cathie Lazier: “At the end of a Bodega Bay trip, he led the group to a Basque restaurant in Occidental. When we got there, one car was missing from the caravan, and Cecil said, ‘It’s not a successful trip unless you lose at least one car.’”

WALT LUKE

The Chapter lost another longtime, active member with the death of Walt Luke, 69, April 1, 1993. He was a prolific nature photographer and bird song recorder and introduced many children to local birdlife through slide shows he presented in schools as part of the Chapter’s education program. An industrial engineer at Aerojet, he led field trips and participated in many Christmas Bird Counts.

1992 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Bluebird skies and minimal wind helped Folsom Christmas bird counters record 138 species, tying the previous high, and a record high individual count of 69,834. All-time high individuals were reported for several species, including 8 Bald Eagles, 655 Western Grebes, 18 Sharp-shinned Hawks and 44 Lincoln’s Sparrows.

And 30 Sacramento Audubon members participated in the Eighth annual American River Natural History Association Birdathon to raise money for the American River Parkway. A total of 110 species were counted in 10 areas along the river. New species seen were American White Pelican, Ferruginous Hawk, Western Sandpiper, Costa's Hummingbird (at a feeder) and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

'WONDERFUL LITTLE LAKE'

When Mather Air Force Base closed in 1992, Sacramento Audubon members and others cheered newfound access to Mather Lake with its rich, riparian habitat. Habitat for more than 65 bird species, including at least 30 nesters, the 64-acre lake was a prime bird-watching site in East Sacramento County. Fishing was productive and several vernal pools existed nearby.

But the resource became a major habitat concern for the Chapter in the mid-90s as seasonal drought threatened to dry up the lake unless new water supplies were found. Elaine Vak, President June Persson, Marilyn Evans, and Bill Dillinger, among others, pressured public officials to resist a number of development proposals and provide additional water. Eventually, American River water from the Folsom-South Canal was tapped, followed by treated, reclaimed underground water from the former air base.

Because of structural problems with Mather Lake Dam on Morrison Creek, Sacramento County officials excluded the lake from a lease agreement that was made with the Air Force Base Conversion Agency to acquire 1,500 acres as a Mather Regional Park. Once those problems were resolved, it was expected that the lake would be leased by the county along with the rest of the park.

Meanwhile, the lake remained open to the public. But Sacramento Audubon's Wayne Blunk, who has led numerous field trips to Mather Lake, cautioned that extensive home-building plans in the vicinity could threaten lake habitat. Formal inclusion of the lake into the park, therefore, was viewed as essential.

Said Blunk, "I've seen Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Wood Ducks, seasonal warblers, American Bitterns, Moorhens, Caspian Terns, Forster's Terns, Ring-necked Ducks, Canvasbacks, Buffleheads, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Green Herons, Say's Phoebes, Red Shouldered Hawks, and Kingfisher. Also River Otters. I've heard Rails. An Osprey flew over the south end. It's a wonderful little lake."

Interestingly, A 2002 Resource Management Plan for Mather Lake prepared for the County Park Department by ECORP Consulting, Inc., Roseville, urged the Department to pursue establishment of an Audubon Nature Center at the lake. It said such a center would "provide a tremendous opportunity to implement objectives of the department without incurring many of the costs associated with them."

ANNUAL BANQUET DROPPED

Because annual awards banquet attendance had fallen off in recent years, the Board voted to abandon the May, 1993 Banquet. In its place, Directors decided to install new officers during the May general meeting and to present the Chapter's annual awards at the September meeting.

Thus the September meeting opened with a potluck dinner, followed by presentation of awards to: Vickie Lee of the Sierra Club, Community Service Award for her help starting Stone Lakes NWR; Marie Freeman, Distinguished Service Award for her dedicated efforts compiling the Chapter's computer data base of bird observations during the past decade; Jan and Bill Clark, a Double Campership for

their tireless work on behalf of Bobelaine Sanctuary, and the Teichert Foundation, an Award of Appreciation for its \$1,650 grant to Bobelaine.

1993 FOLSOM COUNT

Folsom Christmas counters recorded 138 species on a cold and foggy morning that gave way early to blue skies and minimal wind. All-time highs were listed for 18 species, including 11 Bald Eagles, 15 Virginia Rails, and 59 Rock Wrens. John Ranlett's team made the greatest area improvement, vaulting from 40-50 species to 70.

STONE LAKES NWR IS BORN

Sacramento County could boast its first National Wildlife Refuge with the establishment in 1994 of Stone Lakes NWR just 12 miles south of the State Capitol. It was a perfect sequel to the free-speech fight won 15 years before by Sacramento Audubon members Bruce Swinehart, Bruce Kennedy and Fred Styles with a developer who wanted to build a 5,400-acre Stonelake "new town" on the site (See Pages 10 & 24)

In 1988, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed acquisition of 18,200 acres of seasonal wetlands, vernal pools, native grasslands, riparian forests, and oak woodland as a national refuge. The 13-mile long corridor extends from the Mokelumne River in the south, on both sides of Interstate 5, to Sacramento's city limits. It is on the Pacific Flyway, and hosts a full range of migratory birds along with a cormorant and egret rookery.

Sacramento Audubon members, especially Curt Sutliff, Jim Middleton, and Del Tura, joined with other environmental groups in campaigning for congressional approval of the refuge. "We were mainly cheerleaders for speaking out on the community's need for the refuge," Tura said. "We met with county and state officials, had canoe trips, provided aerial photos of the area, and produced bumper stickers and refrigerator magnets saying 'Stone Lakes Is a Wildlife Magnet.'"

President June C. Persson presented the Chapter's annual awards at the September, 1994 general meeting. The awards: Community Service, Marilyn Evans, for her effective fundraising for open space and habitat preservation and her work to preserve Mather Lake; Distinguished Service, LoRaine Brown, for her leadership as Education Committee chair for three years and as 1992-93 Chapter President, and the Campership, Karen Kluge for her many dedicated hours as editor of The Observer for four years.

After holding monthly meetings at St. Mark's United Methodist Church for 12 years, the Chapter avoided sharply increased rents by moving in 1995 to the Shepard Garden and Arts Center in McKinley Park. The first meeting there featured a memorial exhibition of beautiful nature photographs by Cecil Smith, longtime Sacramento Audubon leader, by his friend, Truman Holtzclaw.

1995 CHRISTMAS COUNT

Sacramento Christmas Bird Counters registered 145 species, a record for the 46-year-old event, Compiler Mark Cudney reported. Highlights included a Swamp Sparrow seen at the entrance to the Conaway Ranch in Yolo County and a hybrid Allen's-Rufous Hummingbird feeding on nectar from red eucalyptus flowers in the backyard of a participating birder.

A Long-tailed Duck and Glaucous Gull were special visitors to the Folsom area Christmas Count,

which recorded a record 143 species.

CHANGE IN BYLAWS



In a move to bring greater flexibility to SAS governance, the Chapter in 1995 approved changes in the bylaws covering numbers and terms of Board of Directors members. Board membership was reduced from not more than 21 members to not more than 11. The new board included elected officers, who are the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Corresponding Secretary; the immediate past president, and five elected directors serving staggered terms of four years. All officers, who had been limited to one term, may be re-elected.

NEWSLETTER STABILITY

A newsletter is crucial for holding a nonprofit group together because it regularly reminds members of the benefits of belonging. Sacramento Audubon has enjoyed newsletter stability, thanks to a series of dedicated editors. In 1977, SAS President Elmer Aldrich recruited his River Park neighbor, Betty Hill, to succeed Cecil Smith, who was winding up a long editorship. Hill served until 1981 when she was succeeded by Joan Stead, followed by Diana Oretsky, then by Karen Kluge. Betty Hill returned in 1995 and held the editor's post through 2000 and beyond.

Newsletter size fluctuated between four and eight pages over the years, usually reflecting Chapter budget constraints. More than half of the Chapter's budget is earmarked for *The Observer*, but Hill noted that there have been meaningful savings with the advent of desktop publishing in which computer-generated typesetting and layout replaced work done by commercial print shops.

A noticeable change in the newsletter's appearance was a handsome new nameplate/logo featuring a White-tailed Kite, the Chapter's emblem bird, superimposed on a spotting scope. It was drawn by Tim Manolis.

Between 1993 and 1996, it could be said that Sacramento Audubon members enjoyed a virtual "newsletter within a newsletter." During that period, *The Observer* carried President June C. Persson's wide-ranging column enlightening, rallying, advocating, deploring, and appreciating issues and individuals affecting the Audubon mission.

Whether it was a bluntly-worded demand that members step up and fill vacancies on the Board, a rap on the knuckles for congressmen bent on gutting the Endangered Species Act, a call for preservation of Natomas habitat for Swainson's Hawks, or giving a pat on the back for Bobelaine volunteers, Persson's column was a "must read" for anyone who wanted to stay informed on who we are, what we do, and what we should do.

MANY OTHER PUBLICATIONS . .

The 1990s saw notable Chapter achievements in other publication areas. An Interpretive Guide to Bobelaine Sanctuary featuring 80 of artist Erin O'Toole's splendid wildlife and plant drawings plus informative text by Cathie LaZier aided by Diana Oretsky came out in 1994, a real "keeper." O'Toole not only provided the artwork, but designed the layout and typed the text. Others with a hand in the project were Karen Kluge, Bill Dillinger, Jack Hiehle and Dave Johnson.

The Third Edition of "Birding in the Sacramento Region," published in 1998, was an invaluable

compilation of 41 independently developed articles and maps detailing prime birding areas. Edited by June C. Persson, it credited 21 members of the Sacramento and Yolo Audubon Societies who reviewed and revisited the original areas and developed the text for the 10 new areas presented.

The book included comments by Bill Dillinger, Editor of the Second Edition, which was dedicated to the memory of veteran Audubon leaders Don Fry and A.J. "Sam" Argante. He also cited Betty Kimball, "who started it all with her 1964 article 'Where to Look Around you,'" and whose voluminous Seasonal Observations records formed much of the basis for subsequent compilations. Also credited: Jo Smith's map-making, Jane Aldrich's cover drawing of a Yellow-billed Magpie, Erin O'Toole's drawings, and other contributions by Vickie Lee, Bill and Jan Clark, Andy Engilis Jr., Nick Miller, Ed Harper, Miriam Davey and Kathleen Seifert.

Checklists of the birds of the Sacramento Area were revised and published in 1995 and in 1998. The latter list described the detectability and seasonal occurrence of 259 species, plus 60 species of accidental occurrence. Auduboners who worked on the lists included Brian Bell, Ed Harper, Dave Johnson, Tim Manolis, June C. Persson and Mike Venard.

Bill Clark, Sanctuary Committee co-chair, reported that sightings and tracks had shown that mountain lions were in the Bobelaine area. Informational brochures on mountain lions, published by State Fish and Game, were placed at the Sanctuary entrance.

Black Rails continued to be reported in the foothills with at least 4 present in the Spenceville Wildlife Area Oct. 1-31, 1995 and 3 heard along nearby McCourtney Road in Nevada County . . . Highlights of the 1995 Sacramento Christmas Bird Count included Peregrine Falcon and Western Tanager.

NATIONAL DECENTRALIZES



The January 1996 Observer contained a letter from Glenn Olson, now Audubon's National Field Director, announcing that the National Audubon Society had created in California its first field office, consistent with the Society's new strategic plan.

The Sacramento-based Western Regional office had been phased out and replaced by the new California Field Office of NAS. Dan Taylor would shift to Executive Director of the new office, and most of the other existing staff would remain. Offices would remain in the same place, too.

Focus of this new system of field offices would be to decentralize Audubon in order to work with local chapters and volunteers. Each state office would have the authority, capacity, and flexibility to do what worked best in that state. The national organization would provide support services as needed.

"In California," Olson said, "we will refocus our existing staff to leverage the strength and capabilities of our grassroots, to better fit the needs called for in the NAS strategic plan. These needs include grassroots training and outreach, fundraising, conservation policy, communications, education and sanctuary management."

At the Nov. 26, 1996 SAS Board meeting, Dan Taylor, executive officer of Audubon California, gave further details on the function of the new state office.

He explained that he would still be employed by National, but otherwise Audubon California would

be completely self-supporting, and would depend on support from individuals and local chapters. The aim is to focus on local issues, with communication and development the first focus. For this purpose they will be putting out a quarterly newsletter which will profile local chapters and issues.

Most funds and programs previously administered by the Western Regional Office would henceforth be administered by the new Audubon California office, for activities such as lobbying, chapter services, land stewardship, bird and wildlife programs, communications and development.

Taylor said they would be supporting several preserves and should be involved in joint fundraising with our Chapter to support Bobelaine.

At the February, 1997 Board meeting, directors voted to donate \$3,000 to help support California Audubon.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEYED

Meanwhile, the Sacramento Audubon Board directed a random sampling of 10 percent of the Chapter's 2,800 members in 1995 to find out how they felt about Chapter activities. The Strategic Planning Committee made up of Elmer Aldridge, Marie Putnam and June C. Persson developed the questions and mailed them out to 300 members (10 percent of the total), with a return of 47 (considered a good return by pollsters, President June Persson said in her Observer column.)

An analysis of the returns by Elmer Aldrich indicated that only a small fraction of the total Chapter membership participated in or even knew anything about the various activities.

Some results and comments by the Committee and Board:

MEMBERSHIP: Promotion of youth recruitment was ranked as the leading path to membership growth, followed by media publicity, a special campaign by members, and invitations to field activities and Chapter meetings. ("The key to everything is getting people to do the job. Anything else is moot," the Committee said.)

FUNDRAISING: Suggested were fund drives for special projects such as Bobelaine, increased dues, fees for some field trips, grants, endowment, book sales. Again, people are needed to run the Birdathon for Bobelaine in order to level out year-to-year ups and downs of profits.

CONSERVATION: Protecting habitat for birds and other wildlife ranked first, followed by protection of endangered species and of water quality: Specifics -- continue managing Bobelaine Sanctuary, vigorously pursue added members of Sanctuary Committee, update the "Areas of Critical Concern" study, that was last revised in 1989.

FIELD TRIPS: More trips to Checklist Area, 36.5 percent; trips specializing on tuning identification skills; 24.4 percent, trips to include relationships of birds, mammals, plants, etc. 17 percent, and trips for other than birding, 11 percent.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH: Many believed the Chapter should promote scientific research in connection with field trips.

EDUCATION: Increase talks at schools, 34 percent; promote school use of Bobelaine, 31 percent,

and more information booths at fairs and meetings, 16 percent.

ACTIVITIES RATED: Respondents rated Field Activities, Publications, and Bobelaine as the best known and best performing programs, in that order.

CHAPTER AWARDS



The Chapter formally recognized June C. Persson's many areas of service over the years by presenting her with the Distinguished Service Award for an Audubon member. David Rosen was given the award to the person outside of Sacramento Audubon for his work in environmental education and with Ducks Unlimited; Kathy Moore received a Certificate of Appreciation for her many years of overseeing the Chapter's Telephone Hotline, and Dan Williams with a campership. The selections were made by the Awards Committee chaired by Barbara Mohr, assisted by Jack Hiehle, Dave Johnson, Evelyn Smith and Bill Clark.

ELAINE VAK

Elaine Vak, a Sacramento Audubon Board member and vigorous advocate of preserving Mather Lake, died unexpectedly June 22, 1996. Vak, a retired lieutenant colonel who spent her last years of active service at Mather Air Force Base, was a leader in the campaign to obtain water for drought-threatened Mather Lake in the early '90s. Among her survivors was a sister, LoRaine Brown, past president of Sacramento Audubon.

ANOTHER BOBELAINE FIRE

The Sanctuary Committee's efforts to prevent a recurrence of the devastating 1992 Bobelaine fire paid off five years later when a controlled burn by Levee District One on the levee north of the Sanctuary got out of control. The fire break and fire roads constructed following the 1992 fire provided access for Sutter County Fire Department personnel and three California Division of Forestry inmate crews fighting the fire. Local farmers loaned two bulldozers to cut fire breaks around the fire. The blaze singed leaves as it blew through parts of new tree plantings, but few if any of the trees were killed . .

Aside from that scare, recovery of the Sanctuary from the 1992 fire moved ahead, thanks to the un-failing assistance of Mother Nature, willing hands, and healthy infusions of grant and donor money. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded SAS a \$20,000 matching grant under its Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. It was matched by more than \$10,500 in cash donations by some 400 Sacramento Audubon members, with the balance made up of donations-in-kind by Sanctuary Committee and other SAS volunteers.

The new money helped pay for an irrigation system, tractor-mounted auger to prepare planting holes, rental of equipment to remove downed trees and non-native berry thickets, and to pay California Conservation Corps members who assisted in the recovery effort.

A few of the special skills required by volunteers in the recovery work were suggested in this excerpt from a 1993 Observer column by Bill and Jan Clark: "We still have barbed wire fencing to put up, thistle plants to chop, and weeds to pull around our new trees in back. We also need help from a surveyor - there is a question about some of our property lines. We also need someone to take water to the cottonwood cuttings who can walk through poison oak."

COTTONWOODS FLOURISHING

The 700 Cottonwood, Willow, and Elderberry plantings consisting of poles cut from Sanctuary survivors, were stuck in the ground along with a fertilizer tablet, and watered at least three times a week. By 2002, Fremont Cottonwoods, the predominant Sanctuary tree, were 30 feet tall, Jan Clark said, but it may take 60 more years for them to reach their pre-fire height of as much as 100 feet.

Besides the SAS members who enlisted in the Clarks' "Adopt-a-Tree" work parties, many others were using this 430 acres of rich, riparian habitat (except when the sanctuary was closed by winter flooding caused by Oroville Dam releases).

They included participants in monthly "First Saturday" birding walks, other Audubon chapters, college classes, high school clubs, the Sierra Club, and various individuals. Examples: UC Davis entomology students collected specimens from 75 families of insects. Eagle Scouts built and installed 15 bluebird boxes.

And two bird monitoring programs got underway in the late '90s as part of a study to see how well the Sanctuary was recovering from the 1992 fire. A team headed by Barbara Mohr conducted a census and nest search in three acres of the Riparian Corridor that showed an increase in cavity nesters. Mist-netting and banding projects run by John Ranlett and his group tracked the nesting bird population in the south end of the Sanctuary for six years. And June Persson monitored Bluebird boxes.

During Spring, 1997, Ranlett's team netted nine Swainson's Thrushes, a species that winters in Venezuela. Resident birds often showed up in successive seasons, such as a Spotted Towhee that was netted in four seasons. Once a Cooper's Hawk tried unsuccessfully to snatch a small bird from the net.

1996 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

The 1996 Folsom Christmas Bird Count came up with a new high: 143 species and 36,826 individuals, Compiler Brian Williams reported. Two new species for the count were a "Western" Flycatcher at Aerojet and single Swamp Sparrows at Aerojet and near El Dorado Hills. Other highlights were Red-necked Grebe, Dunlin, Costa's Hummingbird, Chipping Sparrow, and Lawrence's Goldfinch.

And despite rainy weather, 71 participants turned out for the Sacramento Count. The 143 species that were recorded was the lowest number ever tallied, Tim Fitzer reported.

CHANGING BIRD POPULATIONS

In a 1996 "Seasonal Observations" column in *The Observer*, Tim Manolis reported that local sightings of juvenile Great-tailed Grackles were "the next step" in the bird's invasion of our region. It was yet another sign of diverse newcomers to the Sacramento area in the last 25 years of the 20th century.

White-faced Ibises have increased substantially in recent decades. Local breeding of herons and egrets, especially the Great Blue Heron and Great Egret, has increased dramatically. And the Cattle Egret that first entered the region in the 1970s now is a locally common resident in the Central Valley, said Manolis, Research Committee Chair.

"Hawks in general have increased, probably as a result of the end of the DDT era and increased protection and conservation efforts (e.g. the Peregrine Fund). Locally, Red-shouldered Hawks have

boomed since the '70s, Peregrine Falcons have become more common, Ospreys have returned as breeders along the valley's rivers, and numbers of Bald and Golden Eagles seem to have increased."

As for gulls, the growth of human population in the valley has actually increased the numbers of wintering gull species, which make extensive use of artificial habitats, especially landfills and fish hatcheries for food, Manolis said. The Glaucous Gull is now seen in small numbers on a regular basis, primarily at landfills.

White-throated Swifts did not breed on the Central Valley floor in the past, but do so now at bridges across the American River and freeway overpasses.

Manolis cautioned that while it may seem that these dramatic changes are positive ones, it is important to remember that many "negative" changes - loss of Bell's Vireo and, probably, Willow Flycatcher, as local breeders, serious declines of other riparian species such as Yellow-billed Cuckoo (now nearly extinct in the Sacramento area), and Yellow Warbler, etc. - have also occurred, primarily before 1975.

BIRTH OF HABITAT 20-20

As President Tim Fitzer concluded his 1996-97 year, he announced in *The Observer* an expanded role for Sacramento Audubon in preservation of Sacramento County habitat in his second term. He urged concerned members with knowledge of areas in danger of being lost to development to join the SAS Conservation Committee and campaign to preserve living space for birds and other wildlife.

Fitzer's appeal marked Sacramento Audubon's leadership role in creating Habitat 20-20, a consortium of six environmental groups committed to saving Sacramento County habitat. It was born of the recognition by Fitzer, Conservation Chair Mary Bisharat, Barbara Alexander, Roy Greenaway and others that it was critical to dive into habitat conservation battles at the outset instead of too-often trying to play catch-up in the final stages.

"We also decided we would have more clout if 10,000 members could speak collectively," Bisharat said.

Besides SAS, Habitat 20-20 members were the Sierra Club, California Native Plant Society, Urban Creeks Council, Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS), and the Save the American River Association. Tim Fitzer has chaired it from the start.

The first orders of business were to raise money by direct mail and to hire a full-time staff person, Brian Krall, to carry out Board policy. The overriding objective was to safeguard the Urban Services Boundary in East Sacramento County, beyond which development had so far been prevented.

The boundary line faced its greatest challenge when developer C.C. Myers sought approval by the Board of Supervisors for construction of 3,000 senior homes in Deer Creek Hills. This has long been "an area of concern" for Sacramento Audubon. It is habitat for thousands of birds, such as Sandhill Cranes, many species of hawks including Swainson's, a protected species, and a host of small birds. Thousands of blue oaks would be destroyed if the development went through.

Habitat 20-20 members mounted a full-court press against the plan, organizing opposition in East Sacramento County communities and speaking out against the plan at public forums and the Board of Supervisors. The Supervisors rejected the proposal and when the developer then sought voter approval

in 2000 for the plan, it was trounced by a 67 percent “no” vote.

Habitat 20-20 continued its campaign of, as Fitzer put it, “trying to preserve what’s left” into the new decade, backing a Folsom slow-growth movement and seeking to help farmers and ranchers keep their land, and increase the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat. “Programs have been identified which allow farmers to make better use of water and create or enhance habitat on their farms without harming their yields,” the Conservation Committee’s John York said in an Observer article.

Alta Tura, was the chapter mainstay on committees pressing for Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) in eastern Sacramento County, the Natomas Basin, and southern Sacramento County. She mapped strategy, wrote letters, and testified at public hearings in support of land set-asides to mitigate loss to development of habitat for “special status” species such as the threatened Swainson’s Hawks, along with vernal pools.

Best birds reported in the 1997 Sacramento Christmas Count were Red-breasted Merganser, Glaucous Gull, Western Gull and Chestnut-collared Longspur.

SAS GOES ONLINE



Sacramento Audubon went on the Internet in 1997, unveiling an information-packed Website complete with sound effects. The site, managed by Web Master Bill Clark, is www.sacramentoaudubon.org and provides up-to-date information on Chapter field trips, Bobelaine Sanctuary activities, and education opportunities. It also has links to many other bird-oriented sites such as the Central Valley Bird Club, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, and the U.S. Interior Department. The SAS site is accompanied by a medley of bird songs, offering those who bird by ear the chance to sharpen their skills.

Another link in the Chapter’s publications chain was the system of reporting when an unusual bird visits our area. In a 1978 Observer article, Evelyn Smith proposed a Rare Bird Alert whereby a half dozen or so members would designate one of their number to telephone the rare bird alert to Betty Kimball or to Smith and her husband Cecil, who would then relay the information to other leaders for transmittal to their group.

This system evolved into a Telephone Hotline with an answering machine that would let members call in to report and learn of recent sightings. Kathy Moore was in charge for many years until 1995 when she passed it to Terry Rosenmeier.

In 1998, the system entered the computer age, administered by Bruce Webb and with a new name, Central Valley Birdbox. Members were invited to phone to hear or leave significant bird sightings. Four years later, the Birdbox was taken over by Bill Clark with a computer, special bird-oriented software and dedicated phone line (916-783-2331) in his home.

Clark, who has the title of Electronic Communications Chair in addition to his Bobelaine duties, also achieved significant economies for the Chapter through elimination of duplicating outside services for a computer database for membership records.

NEW BOBELAINE MANAGER

John Ranlett was named Bobelaine manager by the Sanctuary Committee after Bill Clark decided to scale back his responsibilities in 1998 for health reasons. Bill and Jan remained on the Sanctuary Committee, with Bill continuing to head up Sanctuary maintenance and to report on its needs and progress regularly in *The Observer*.

Ranlett, a wildlife biologist with an environmental planning company, had been an active member of the Sanctuary Committee for five years. He was instrumental in winning grants of \$20,000 from the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation and \$32,000 from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The funds went for pumps and other irrigation equipment and plant materials.

Meanwhile, restoration efforts went forward as the state Reclamation Board finally granted a permit for the Chapter to replace burned trees after expressing concern that plantings could slow river flows and possibly threaten levees.

Ranlett served as manager for two years and was succeeded in 2000 by Mary Schiedt, a member of Yolo Audubon and active supporter of Bobelaine, who led numerous field trips at the Sanctuary and worked on post fire restoration issues. In 2002 the indefatigable Clarks returned for another tour of duty as co-managers. The couple had received appropriate recognition by National Audubon in 1996 when they were presented with a National Service Award for their thousands of hours of work at Bobelaine.

1998 CHRISTMAS COUNTS



A Ruff and Cassin's Vireo were among the better sightings in the 1998 Sacramento Christmas Count.

Debbie Watson received Sacramento Audubon's Outstanding Service award for 1988-99 in recognition of 13 years of service as Membership Chair. She was succeeded by Jan Clark.

Incoming 1999-2000 President Joe Ferreira reminded Auduboners that the strength of conservation organizations lies in their numbers, and that "our members serve as a our greatest ambassadors." He added that "to ensure Audubon's success in the future, it is especially important that we share our love for the natural world with younger generations." He promised to work toward this goal during his presidency.

1999 CHRISTMAS COUNTS

A Lark Bunting found in northeast Natomas was a first in the some 50 years of the Sacramento Christmas Count. Participants also found a northern Shrike, Western Tanager, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, and six Rough-legged Hawks among 153 species under fair skies.

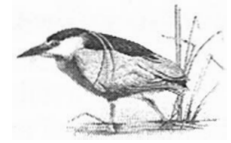
On the Folsom Count, Wilson's Phalarope and two Pacific Loons were recorded for the first time. Rolf Mall enlivened things when, while he was "pishing" for songbirds, a Red-shouldered Hawk burst out of the fog six feet away. Total species: 134.

The Rio Cosumnes Count listed black-throated Gray Warbler, Marbled Godwit, Grasshopper Sparrow and Glaucous-winged Gull, among 155-160 species.

On an unusually warm day in the mountains, the Woodfords Count included 16 Hooded Mergansers, 3 Northern Pygmy-Owls, 9 Brown Creepers, 10 Golden Eagles and 9 Bald Eagles.

BEN EIZINGER

Ben Eizinger, who, with his wife Willie, was a staunch supporter of Sacramento Audubon and Bobelaine Sanctuary, died in July, 2000 of leukemia. The Eizingers, for whom Eizinger Grove at Bobelaine is named, were two, of the first Audubon members to actively encourage educational use of the Sanctuary.



NATIONAL DUES SHARING TO STOP

As the new century began, Sacramento Audubon entered a new phase of its existence. Long partially dependent on National Audubon for a large part of its funding, the chapter, because of decisions made at the national level, now had to become almost entirely self-sufficient.

President Joe Ferreira reported in the September, 2000 Observer that National Audubon had notified him that it was going to phase out the sharing of membership dues with the chapters. This meant that the Sacramento chapter would no longer receive any money from the dues that members pay for their national membership. This had been averaging between \$15,000 and \$16,000 (To ease the transition, NAS did plan to provide a three-year safety net of \$7,000, Membership Chair Jan Clark said she had been told.)

When the news was received in early August, an emergency board meeting was held to discuss the situation, and it was concluded that to balance its budget, the chapter might have to collect some form of dues for membership, beginning in 2001.

However, since one of the Chapter's major expenses was mailing The Observer to the more than 2,000 people from our area who belonged to National Audubon but were not active in the Chapter, it was finally decided that if the Chapter no longer got a rebate from NAS on these "magazine members," the Chapter could no longer afford to send The Observer unless they paid a fee of \$25 per year. The Chapter's mailing list has thus been reduced to about 600 copies - 500 to current paying members, and about 100 to people who have just joined through NAS, who are given one month to decide if they wish to pay the \$25.

This new income, plus the reduction of production and mailing costs for The Observer, would largely offset the loss of the portion of National dues the Chapter was receiving, Ferreira estimated. Past President Roy Greenaway had conducted a poll showing that an overwhelming number of members would support the local chapter, either alone or along with National, and Treasurer Peter Watkins performed numbers-crunching that indicated that the Chapter could thus get along without the membership rebate from National.

And in the long run, he felt, becoming more self-sufficient could actually strengthen the organization.

SANSA ALEXANDER

Sansa Alexander, Sacramento Audubon member, died Dec. 4, 2000 following a sudden illness in Isfahan, Iran, while traveling the ancient Silk Road through the Middle East and India. An avid birder,

She had traveled to the Arctic, Antarctica, Africa, South America and Europe.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

The Sacramento Count was highlighted by sightings of an American Redstart in Reichmuth Park, three first-winter Western Gulls near the Yolo County landfill, a Long-eared Owl, two Greater Scaup and an American Bittern. Birders recorded an above-average total of 148 species and more than 216,000 individuals including 28,736 Snow Geese, compiler Cliff Hawley reported.

Compiler Brian Williams reported a Townsend's Solitaire at Sweetwater Creek on the Folsom Count and a Trumpeter Swan on the Auburn Count. A Blue-winged Teal on the lost Slough Unit was a first for the sixth annual Cosumnes River Preserve Count, Compiler Andy Engilis said, and compiler Jim Rowoth said 2 Western Tanagers and 2 Bullock's Orioles were spotted on the Stockton Count.



AFTERWORD

The fiscal emergency that befell Sacramento Audubon at the close of its second quarter century was indeed a challenge -- but no more so than the huge responsibility the chapter faced when it agreed to manage Bobelaine after National Audubon had acquired the 430-acre Sanctuary 25 years before. The chapter weathered both crises. Cottonwood saplings planted in Bobelaine's restoration following its 1992 "trial by fire" had reached 30 feet or more early in the 21st century, marking dedicated, innovative stewardship.

Bobelaine's comeback symbolized the role of conservation in Sacramento Audubon's mission in 1975-2000. Members also helped preserve habitat by helping head off two attempts to put in a parking lot at Bushy Lake, by campaigning for establishment of the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Area, by helping stop a senior housing development in Deer Creek Hills in eastern Sacramento County, and by spearheading formation of the Habitat 20-20 consortium to protect natural habitat and agricultural land from development.

Our Chapter's successful history dictates that Sacramento Audubon must not lose sight of its dual role: learn about and enjoy the out-of-doors and its inhabitants, and protect the natural environment that provides our enjoyment. The keys to both of these roles are to continue the big schedule of excellent field trips, and assume a proactive conservation role. To perform the latter, the Chapter should:

- seek to expand membership, especially among young people.
- accelerate the program to carry the "Audubon message" into school classrooms.
- assume a proactive conservation role, and return to using as its "Conservation bible" the Chapter publication "Areas of Critical Concern and Proposals for Their Protection." It was long past time for a new edition, last revised in 1989.

In short, we need to provide relevant answers to core questions that prospective and renewing Chapter members are entitled to ask, such as, "What is Sacramento Audubon doing to help the birds and the general environment?"



Sacramento Audubon Society Officers - 1975-2000

1975-76

President	Edwin R. Warner
Vice-President	W. Edward Harper
Corresponding Secretary	Jean Nittler
Recording Secretary	Karen Zumwalt
Treasurer	Werner Jochimsen

1976-77

President	W. Edward Harper
Vice-President	Elmer Aldrich
Corresponding Secretary	Jean Nittler
Recording Secretary	Karen Zumwalt
Treasurer	Werner Jochimsen

1977-78

President	Elmer Aldrich
Vice-President	Virginia Norris
	Jeri Langham
Corresponding Secretary	Betty Coppola
Recording Secretary	Barbara Fowler
Treasurer	Werner Jochimsen
	Ken Head

1978-79

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Vice President	Tim Fitzer
Corresponding Secretary	Penny Ford
Recording Secretary	Barbara Fowler
Treasurer	Ken Head

1979-80

President	Jeri Langham
Vice President	Truman Holtzclaw
Corresponding Secretary	Marsha D. Badenoch
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Corresponding Secretary	Cynthia Short
Recording Secretary	Donna Evans
Treasurer	Ken Head

1981-82

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Vice President	Brian Bell
Corresponding Secretary	Cynthia Short
	Evelyn Smith
Recording Secretary	Miriam Davey
Treasurer/Finance	Ken Head

1982-83

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Vice President	Louise McCullough
Corresponding Secretary	Evelyn Smith
Recording Secretary	Dorothy Harvey
Treasurer/Finance	Cecil Smith

1983-84

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Vice President	Dave Johnson
Corresponding Secretary	Barbara Mohr
Recording Secretary	Dorothy Harvey
Treasurer/Finance	Cecil Smith

1984-85

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Vice President	Virginia L. Vandermeer
Corresponding Secretary	Barbara Mohr
Recording Secretary	Jean Clemmons
Treasurer	Cecil Smith

1985-86

President	Virginia L. Vandermeer
Vice President	Bill Dillinger
Corresponding Secretary	LaFrances Goodson
Recording Secretary	June Persson
Treasurer	Cecil Smith

1986-87

President	Bill Dillinger
Vice President	LaFrances Goodson
Corresponding Secretary	Cathie LaZier
Recording Secretary	Jerry A. Marinovich
Treasurer	Cecil Smith

1987-88

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Vice President	Cathie LaZier
Corresponding Secretary	Nancy Bittner
Recording Secretary	Jerry A. Marinovich
Treasurer	Noreen Vincent

1988-89

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Vice President	Susan Scott
Corresponding Secretary	Deanna Edison
Recording Secretary	Jerry A. Marinovich
Treasurer	Noreen Vincent

1989-90

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Vice President	Diana Oretsky
Corresponding Secretary	Deanna Edison
Recording Secretary	Diane Maloney
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1990-91

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Vice President	Jose Kirchner
Corresponding Secretary	June Persson
Recording Secretary	Jerry A. Marinovich
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1991-92

President	Jose Kirchner
Vice President	LoRaine Brown
Corresponding Secretary	June Persson
Recording Secretary	Gail Fulbeck
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1992-93

President	LoRaine Brown
Vice President	June Persson
Corresponding Secretary	Syd Carlow
Recording Secretary	Gail Fulbeck
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1993-94

President	June C. Persson
Vice President	LoRaine Brown
Corresponding Secretary	Mary Ann Howard
Recording Secretary	Gail Fulbeck
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1994-95

President	June C. Persson
Vice President	Mike Laing
Corresponding Secretary	Kathy Moore
Recording Secretary	Terry Rosenmeier
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1995-96

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Vice President	Roy Greenaway
Corresponding Secretary	Kathy Moore
Recording Secretary	Ellen Vasta
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1996-97

President	Tim Fitzer
Vice President	Roy Greenaway
Corresponding Secretary	Kathy Moore
Recording Secretary	Ellen Vasta
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1997-98

President	Tim Fitzer
Vice President	Roy Greenaway
Corresponding Secretary	Elaine Thomas
Recording Secretary	Ellen Vasta
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1998-99

President	Roy Greenaway
Vice President	Joe Ferreira
Corresponding Secretary	Elaine Thomas
Recording Secretary	Ellen Vasta
Treasurer	Peter Watkins

1999-2000

President	Joe Ferreira
Vice President	Peter Watkins
Corresponding Secretary	Jan Tankersley
Recording Secretary	Ellen Vasta
Treasurer	Bill Grenfell

2000-01

President	Joe Ferreira
Vice President	Peter Watkins
Corresponding Secretary	Jan Tankersley
Recording Secretary	Jan Clark
Treasurer	Bill Grenfell



Sacramento Audubon Society
CODE OF BIRDING ETHICS
Be a Thoughtful Birder!



Ethic I: Thoughtfulness of Birds

- Be stealthily quiet. Try to observe the birds so they are unaware of your presence, thus providing an opportunity to learn their normal habits. Avoid quick movements, discordant noises, running, continuous chasing of the same birds, throwing things, and “thrashing about.” The quiet observer sees more.
- Approaching a nest too closely or repeated flushing may cause abandonment of the eggs and young by the parents and expose the nest to predation. Do not handle eggs or young.
- When photographing a nest or parents at the nest, don’t keep it unduly exposed to sun, cold or rain, causing destruction of eggs or young or desertion by parents. Instead of cutting branches or grass near the nest, tie them back. Leave the habitat as you found it.
- Use tape recorders with discretion to prevent driving birds from their territories. Never play recorders in heavily birded areas.
- Divide larger groups of people; individuals or small groups cause less disturbance.
- Avoid “tree-whacking” to arouse cavity dwellers. Undue disturbance may lead to abandonment.

Ethic II: Thoughtfulness of Habitat

- Avoid trampling fragile habitats, especially marshes, grasslands, wildflowers and tangles. Stay on established pathways. Damage to the habitat affects all species in the ecosystem.
- When practical, pool transportation to birding areas to save energy and reduce environmental impact.
- Keep motor vehicles on established roads and parking areas. One set of tracks invites others. In fragile ecosystems tracks may last for decades and severely degrade the habitat value.
- Obtain permission for entry to private lands and when necessary on government lands.
- Respect occupants’ privacy and property. Don’t block rights-of-way; leave gates as you found them. Don’t carry firearms.
- Walk single file or spread out in fragile areas, whichever causes the least permanent damage. Small groups reduce adverse impact on the habitat and require narrower paths and roads, and smaller parking areas.
- Leave no litter.
- Plan restroom stops to avoid pollution of the habitat.

- Be extremely careful with fire. Avoid smoking while walking; press out cigarettes on rocks or mineral soil. Carry butts with you, or best, don't smoke.
- Use discretion in divulging information on nests and rare and endangered birds, especially in fragile habitats.

Ethic III: Thoughtfulness of People

- Keep down unnecessary talk, noise and disturbance so that all birders in a group have the opportunity to exercise their full faculties of sight and hearing.
- Put the interests of the group before your own. Keep the birding group together so that interesting and rare or unusual sights can be shared until all interests are satisfied.
- When with a group of mixed birding abilities the leader or better birders should assist others in identification and should point out field marks, habitats, and ecological relationships.
- Avoid excessive use of squeakers and "pishing;" It may reduce their effectiveness and may annoy other birders.
- Drive lawfully and use common sense and consideration for other drivers.
- Be sensitive to the efforts and energies of fellow birders. In identifying and reporting the rare and unusual, always err on the side of "over-identification" so there is less chance of wrong identity. Be prepared to justify identification adequately with good descriptions or photographs to minimize perpetuation of errors in the literature.
 - ◆ Do not put undue weight on published geographic distribution in making identifications, but consider all similar species. When possible take notes in the field, including not only diagnostic markings, but voice and habits to validate identification.
 - ◆ When possible prior to reporting a rare or unusual sighting, have another birder of better or equal ability locate and verify your identification.
- When birding at a private home be considerate of your host's time and property.

(Prepared in 1978 at direction of SAS President Elmer Aldrich)