

1980
Christmas
Count

Leader
Kent
Fickett

Photos by
GJ



Mines Rd. 4/25/81
Leader: Jean Richmond



Serious



and.....



fun

Keeping close watch over bird habitats

By Tom Goff
Staff writer

DANVILLE — "Birds are indicators of the environment — a sort of ecological litmus paper. Because of their furious pace of living and their high rate of metabolism, they reflect subtle changes in the environment rather quickly; they warn us of things out of balance." So wrote Roger Tory Peterson, naturalist and National Audubon Society member.

"After all, if you don't conserve habitats, you don't have the birds," said Jean Richmond, Mt. Diablo Audubon Society member.

Mrs. Richmond's and Peterson's remarks reflect the Audubon Society's concern for the protection of the natural environment, a regard shadowed by the organization's public reputation as an association of bird watchers.

Though spotting and identifying birds is still the most popular of members' activities, many of the society's efforts are directed toward preserving the habitat and lives of rare, endangered and threatened species of birds and other creatures.

Mrs. Richmond said some bird

species live only a few years, and mutations incurred by changes in habitat occur after only a few generations. Some birds don't survive at all. Years ago, the weight of roosting passenger pigeons would break the limb of a tree, she said. Now they are extinct, as are the labrador duck, great auk, Carolina parakeet and the heath hen.

In Washington, Audubon lobbyists campaign for sound energy policies with an emphasis on conservation and energy use, and for the preservation of wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, and natural ecosystems. The society, said Russell Peterson, national president, "is better equipped than ever to be an architect of change in the United States."

Here in Contra Costa County, the pace of the society's advocacy is a bit slower. Still, the safety of bird habitats throughout the county has local "birders" worried.

Mrs. Richmond, an Alamo resident, said only five percent of all California wetlands have escaped the ravages of civilization. The marshes, such as the ones in Suisun Bay, are a vital link in waterfront ecosystems and are home for wa-

terfowl species.

"It's just sad that to many people, the marsh is just something to be built on," she said.

Jim Edgar, who in September will succeed Elizabeth Dickey as president of the 1,000-member Mt. Diablo chapter, brings the issue closer to home. The foothills of Mt. Diablo, the Las Trampas ridgeline and open spaces bordering Highway 680 south of Danville are all habitats for bird species ranging from turkey vultures to robins. Encroaching developments could endanger the existence of native or migratory birds in this area, he said.

"We're concerned about ill-planned and poorly conceived developments," said Edgar.

And in Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, Edgar said, grazing cattle are trampling the hillsides and endangering one of the few local nesting areas of the grasshopper sparrow.

The Audubon Society is a powerful conservation organization on the national level. Here on the local front, the Mt. Diablo chapter undertakes letter-writing campaigns, attends public hearings on land-use

issues and, said Edgar, "does a lot of investigation and staying in tune."

Although none of the habitat threats in the San Ramon Valley have come to a head yet, two proposed developments elsewhere in the county have raised the hackles of the society's conservation committee. A planned community of 700 homes on 350 acres near Oakley could damage the habitat of the black rail, a waterfowl which nests in the tidal wetlands there, said Ed Hase, committee chairman. The society, he said, is seeking full consideration for the well-being of the rail by bringing the issue to the attention of the developer and the general public.

The society is also concerned about the possibility of homes being built on the ridges of the Keller Ranch area. Although the organization is not against development per se, Hase said, it does object to the Keller Ranch development's threat to "wildlife access" — the obstruction of wildlife paths and habitats.

"There are some things we would like to stop, period," Mrs. Richmond said. "But when change is inevitable, we would like to work

Mrs. Richmond said some bird ecosystems and are home for wa



Jim Stevens — staff photo

Society members Norah Bain, left, and Jean Richmond take identification guides and field glasses on bird-watching trips.

MONO LAKE

Valley Pioneer

2/18/81

Benefit for Mono Lake set

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society will conduct a telethon tomorrow to raise funds for Mono Lake.

The lake, located east of Yosemite National Park, used to be a nesting ground for California Gulls and other birds before the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power began diverting fresh water flow from streams away from the lake.

Increased salinity of the lake has made it nearly inhabitable for the birds, while lowered levels of water have meant island nesting grounds are often accessible to predators.

The proceeds of the telethon will be used to defray costs of a lawsuit the society is involved in over

the diversion of water from the lake. Each chapter throughout California is attempting to raise funds for this purpose.

The society is also accepting donations for the legal fund. Tax-deductible donations in the form of checks made out to the

National Audubon Society should be mailed to the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek 94597.

For donations of \$6 or more, the society will send out a color poster of the lake.

Funds Sought to Save Mono Lake

The Diablo Audubon Society is seeking tax deductible contributions to go toward the fight to save Mono Lake, which is being steadily reduced by diversion of fresh water creeks by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

Send donations to Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, 94597. Contributors giving more than \$6 will receive a color poster of Mono Lake.

Audubon thanks

Thank you for publicizing the Mount Diablo Audubon Society's fund raising campaign for the preservation of Mono Lake.

The goal of \$2,000 was exceeded thanks to the generosity of the local friends of Mono Lake. If other Audubon Chapters are as successful as Mount Diablo Chapter Mono Lake will not be lost due to lack of funds to finance the impending law suit. The Mount Diablo Audubon Society sincerely thanks all who contributed to this important ecological cause.

NORAH BAIN
Publicity chairperson
Moraga

Wednesday, March 4, 1981

Contra Costa Sun—

IN AN HOUR and 15 minutes, the members of Diablo Valley Audubon Society collected \$1,100 by a Telethon for the lawsuit to save Mono Lake.

Time is on the side of the L.A. Department of Water and Power, whom the suit seeks to restrain from diverting water from the alkaline lake east of the Sierras. "If it goes on another year, it's a lost cause," said Norah Bain Orinda member of Audubon.

Any Audubon members who were out birdwatching when the fund raising call came can still contribute by sending a check to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, 94597.

Wednesday, February 18, 1981

Contra Costa Sun—Page 19

Bird watchers call to save Mono Lake

A lawsuit to save Mono Lake will cost \$100,000 and the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society wants to raise \$2,000 towards that expense by April 1.

They will begin with a Telethon on Thursday, Feb. 19 when about a dozen members of the local chapter of the National Audubon Society will telephone members for contributions.

Anyone interested in saving the large alkaline lake east of the Sierra Nevadas may send a tax deductible contribution to: Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut

Creek, 94597.

Checks should be made out to the National Audubon Society. Contributions of \$6 or more will secure a colored poster of Mono Lake as a token of appreciation.

Mono Lake is being steadily reduced by diversion of fresh water creeks by the L.A. Department of Water and Power. It is half the size it was in 1958, according to the Audubon Society.

Mono Lake is the only water for 300 miles for the birds crossing the Great Basin.

California gulls used to nest on the islands. In 1978, 38,000 nested there; in 1980 only 10, according to the Audubon Society.

The lawsuit is intended to effect a major reduction in water diversions from the Mono Lake watershed.



Thank You

MONO LAKE PRESERVATION

Congratulations -- Mt. Diablo Chapter surpassed its goal of \$2000 in contributions to the preservation fund. As of March 28, over \$2250 had been received and more is still arriving. We'll announce the figure next month. If all other Audubon Chapters show their generosity in the manner demonstrated by Mt. Diablo members and other local friends of Mono Lake including some of our County Board of Supervisors, Mono certainly won't be lost for lack of funds.

Thanks again to each and every one of you who gave and to the dedicated group of organizers and callers who helped get out the word.

MONO LAKE is steadily being reduced by diversion of fresh water creeks toward Los Angeles. It now is half the size it was in 1958, and the salinity has doubled. This is affecting the food of birds who use the lake in migration and the National Audubon Society is concerned.

Mono is the only water for 300 miles for birds crossing the Great Basin. California Gulls used to nest on the islands. In 1978 there were 38,000, last year there were only 10. A lawsuit has been filed to rectify the situation and the cost of the suit is estimated at \$100,000. The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society Chapter is conducting a fund raising, beginning with a telethon tomorrow.

they urge you to send tax-deductible contributions to Mount Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek 94597

The money will provide a new habitat in the
 museum for
 the
 Pack
 Rat



Elisabeth
 Dickey

presenting a
 check to

Sam Smoker

Director of Alexander Lindsay Museum
 to celebrate the 75th anniversary



SOUTHERN FLIGHT

Wind lashed, sleet and snow driven,
 wedging the blue with strong wings -
 God given.
 Following rivers, skirting the bay,
 Reed sheltered by night,
 man's target by day.
 How are they chosen
 who falter and fall?
 The answer is hidden,
 hidden from all.

By Gertrude M. Johnson





CC Dedicates 700 Acres of

Lesher News Bureau

MARTINEZ — Standing under blue skies and a warm spring sun, state and local officials gathered near here Thursday morning to dedicate 700 acres of marshland as permanent open space.

The large expanse of land, laced with a dike made of rubble collected from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, is located between Martinez and Pittsburg just east of Pacheco Creek. Known as Pt. Edith, the property stretches from Waterfront Road to the shore of the Suisun Bay.

The dedication was attended by officials from the State Lands Commission, which engineered the purchase of the site for public use, the East Bay Regional Parks District and Supervisor Nancy Fahden of Martinez.

William Northrop, executive director of the lands commission, lauded Fahden for her drive to open up the Contra Costa waterfront to public access and said ac-

quisition of the Pt. Edith property couldn't have been made without her help.

"I'd like to see public access to the waterfront opened up from Bethel Island to San Francisco Bay," Fahden said.

The site has long been a popular spot for duck hunters in the fall, and state Fish and Game Director Charles Fullerton said hunting would continue to be one of the future uses of the site.

The Fish and Game Department, however, is in the midst of a study of Pt. Edith to determine what uses it is best suited for, and to identify what types of wildlife it harbors, he said.

The land was bought from private owners over the past few years with funds accumulated by the lands commission through a series of title settlements around the Bay Area.

State officials said that as long as 100 years ago, thousands of acres of tidal property, over which the

state
sold
W
the o

Elizabeth giving
the gavel to Timm Edgar



Audubon Society seeks action

Members of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society are among 452,000 Audubon members nationwide launching a "citizen mobilization campaign" to counter the current attack on environmental laws.

Issues of special concern to Audubon members include the Reagan Administration's plans to decrease clean air regulations, overcut national forests, eliminate federal controls on strip mining, and use poisons for "predator control."

Other issues of interest to the Audubon Society are the federal protection of endangered species and national wildlife refuges, sanction an increase in the auto and industrial pollutants that cause acid rain, and efforts to subvert the Environmental Protection Agency

by cutting its staff by 50 percent.

The Audubon Society is encouraging people to become involved by writing letters to the elected officials.

"The key to protecting our environment against these increasing problems is communicating with government officials," said Jimm Edgar of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society.

"Letters to the right elected official at the right time can make a difference between protection or destruction of your birds and other wildlife, and the biological systems that support all life," Edgar said.

To get on the Audubon Society mailing list, call AUDUBON or write Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, 94597.

Mt. Diablo teacher fights for Delta by writing book

By ROLAND DEWOLK
Times staff writer

CONCORD — The vast, intricate maze of the Delta, so vital to Northern California, has until now strangely escaped an in-depth examination in book form.

Mt. Diablo School District science teacher Jane Helrich and Dr. Fred Tarp, a retired professor from Contra Costa College, are in the final stages of completing the first such volume, according to Helrich. And not a minute too soon.

Helrich said she hopes the publication will be out before next June's ballot on the Peripheral Canal — which she said she "violently opposes."

After tramping to the Delta for years with her junior high school students interested in discovering the tremendous diversity and importance the massive water system holds, the teacher set out three years ago to explain her expertise to a larger audience.

Helrich said she is optimistic the book, to be published by the University of California Press, will not only appeal to scientists, but "to the ordinary guy interested in the Delta."

(For those interested in reading about the people of the region, she suggests "The Historic Delta Country," a 1979 publication by area historian Charles Bohakel of Antioch.)

But the ecological history of the area is also critical, Helrich said, because of man's continuing attempt to alter its functions for more than a century.

It began when hydraulic mining in the Sierra foothills during the Gold Rush caused more than 1 billion cubic yards of silt — about 2½ times the normal amount — to wash into the Delta. A federal court order in 1884 stopped the problem, and by 1895 the region began to come back to normal.

At the same time, farmers in the area using Chinese labor began to transform the vast bog, the second largest continuous peat land area in the United States, into a series of small islands it resembles today.

The process was relatively simple: levees were built around the abundantly rich bogs. The water in the middle of the atoll-like formations was pumped out and farming began.

However, most of the levees were not built with very high standards and the years of erosion, particularly

acute since the advent of recreational boating in the Delta, have slowly ground away man's work.

Some of the levees, Helrich said, have not been maintained for up to 125 years. Some islands are sinking as much as three inches annually, she added.

The birth of more than 50 industries along the Contra Costa shore has badly polluted the waters, she said, having a disastrous effect on the Delta's rich and diverse wildlife, a shadow of what it once was.

But the greatest problem the water system faces is the continuing attempts by the state government to divert the Northern California rivers, which flush the Delta waters into San Francisco Bay and out to the Pacific.

By and large the state has been successful in its attempts to divert the water. The normally calm and carefully coiffured Helrich reddened when talking about the "null zone," — where the salty waters of the Bay meet the fresh of the rivers and how it has moved inexorably eastward as greater and greater volumes of water are pumped from Tracy to Southern California.

The Peripheral Canal, she said, will only make that problem more critical.

"You could end up with a very large cess pool of salt," she declared.

One of the few bright spots, Helrich said, is the constant dredging of the Delta to keep the water ways clear for large boats. The action also keeps the vital velocity of the currents stable.



Times photo/Eric Rahkonen

Jane Helrich displays her materials on the Sacramento/San Joaquin River Delta inside her classroom at Valley View Intermediate School.

The currents and dredging are also responsible for the brown filmy appearance of the water — a natural process that Helrich said is a good sign, not bad as many people suppose.

Minute plant life — "the basis for all life in the Delta" she said — would not be able to grow without much of the Delta's strong sunlight filtered out.



the levees were not built with very clear for large boats. The action also keeps the vital velocity of the currents stable.

Concord developer offers land for OK to build in Suisun Bay

CC Times 11-2-81

SUISUN CITY — A housing developer is offering to give the state 500 acres of environmentally valuable wetlands in return for permission to build a housing tract in a major wildlife refuge.

Concord developer Ken Hoffman wants to build 1,000 new homes on the south side of Highway 12, the road that divides the wide-open Suisun Marsh wildlife preserve from a mass of housing developments some 40 miles northeast of San Francisco.

But the 1977 Suisun Marsh Preservation Act prohibited housing developments south of Highway 12 in the area. Hoffman representative Eric Hasseltine, a former Contra Costa County supervisor, said that Hoffman is offering to give the state 500 acres of nearby marshland if the state will modify the 1977 law to allow the housing.

"I won't make the final decision, but my recommendation is that the concept has merit," said Huey Johnson, state Resources Agency secretary.

The 84,000-acre marsh is a winter home to ducks and geese along the Pacific Flyway and shelters more than 300 marshland creatures. It is a remnant of the 750,000 acres of marshlands that surrounded San Francisco Bay before urban sprawl and landfill activities covered them.

Hasseltine said Hoffman paid about \$1,600 an acre for the two parcels he is offering the state, and already owns the 317 acres on which he hopes to build.

Hasseltine also said that the portion offered is not part of the marsh, but is an upland zone included in the preserve only as a buffer.

single-family homes and development will take the pressure off prime East County agricultural land, former supervisor Eric Hasseltine declared Tuesday.

The county Planning Commission will resume the hearing next Tuesday after hearing a detailed staff report on any endangered species existing in the Big Break area.

Ultimately the issue will go to the Board of Supervisors for determination.

Representing the firm in its application to change the East County general plan to permit housing in the area, Hasseltine told the commission that it would fill a desperate need in the county for low-cost housing.

Two firms, Hofmann Co., and Kaufman and Broad Inc., seek to change the area's land use designation

properly buffered from industry by Big Break Road and a vacant 25-acre parcel owned by Dupont Co., and it will help fill the need for low-cost housing in the county. Neither she nor Hasseltine mentioned any cost figures.

She repeated Hasseltine's argument that it will take pressure off other lands.

"By leaving it industrial, pressure is placed on other lands, agricultural and otherwise, to develop with the consequences of greater land prices due to scarcity, thereby making it more difficult to provide affordable housing," Douglas said.

James Cutler of the planning staff summarized a consultant's report, an inventory of the "sensitive species" in the area.

Hasseltine, while acknowledging they existed on the property, told the commission that "it is very important to recognize that there have been absolutely no species of any type sighted or even suspected of being on this property that are protected by law.

"There are no endangered species," he said, adding that the two species are not protected.

"Nevertheless we are working with the state Department of Fish and Game (to protect these animals)," he added.

Big Break is not prime agricultural land and hasn't been agriculturally productive in a decade, Hasseltine said.

Big Break development gets initial OK

By JOHN VANLANDINGHAM
Leshner News Bureau

MARTINEZ — Despite early misgivings about the loss of industrial land, county planning commissioners Tuesday night unanimously endorsed redesignating the 300-acre Big Break area north of Oakley for residential use.

The 5-0 vote sends the issue to the Board of Supervisors which will start hearings next month.

Commissioner Don Anderson of Moraga abstained from voting on the motion to recommend that the board change the land use designation for the Big Break area from recreational agriculture to single-family, high-density residential.

"I am going to abstain because I missed some of the testimony, but I would have voted to support the change," Anderson said.

He excused himself for about 30 minutes during Tuesday's hearing to attend a political meeting. He is president of the County Republican Central Committee. Casting her vote for the proposed change was freshman commissioner Leslie K. Davis of Brentwood who was initially concerned about the loss of industrial land, estimated by the planning staff to be about 35 acres.

"I am concerned for the loss of industrial land. But, perhaps, this particular area shouldn't have been designated industrial," Davis said.

She said she didn't intend for this general plan amendment proposal to become a precedent in the East

County. "I don't intend to change possible job producing areas to residential."

Commissioner Andrew Young of Alamo echoed her concern. "I wondered if we should lose this industrial land, then I realized it's a small proportion," he said.

The existing East County general plan designates 551 acres for industrial use. A project proposing residential or commercial use cannot be approved on an industrial or agricultural designated site without a general plan amendment.

Pushing for the general plan amendment are the Hofmann Co. and Kaufman and Broad, Inc., which want to build 1,034 homes on the site.

Their representatives urged prompt action Tuesday explaining the urgency of getting this proposal included in a series of general plan amendments that are to be adopted by the Board of Supervisors very soon.

A delay might mean waiting until December or later, Eric Hasseltine explained.

Hasseltine, a former county supervisor, represents Hofmann.

He repeated the firm's earlier offer to dedicate 100 acres of marshland to the East Bay Regional Park District if the project is ultimately approved.

He said the park district board will consider a resolution of intent to acquire the land at its meeting next week.

Park District spokesman Hulet Hornbeck explained Wednesday that the resolution of intent doesn't commit

the district to acquiring the land. It formally tells the county planning department that it is part of the plan for developing the property, he added.

Hasseltine opposed a public works suggestion that the commission's endorsement be conditioned upon Hofmann's participation in a drainage project being built in the area.

"Unless we gain some benefit, and we see no need to tie in with this, we shouldn't have to pay for it," Hasseltine said.

The commission added the drainage condition to be required "if necessary."

Oakley School Superintendent Leo St. John said the project could produce anywhere from 220 to 414 students "and that's almost another school site."

Complicating the problem is that there is no place to build another school. The site proposed by the developers may be in a 100-year flood plain, which means the district couldn't accept it, he said.

Kent Fickett of Concord warned that the proposed Oakley sewer plant expansion "lies directly on top of the marsh area."

Because the marsh area is inhabited by at least one breed of rare animal, this could delay sewer expansion plans.

"We're not planning this development. We're just letting it happen willy nilly. The issue of agriculture and industry are remote. More important are the issues of road and sewage," he said.

Thank you, Jean



for being our wonderful
"Quail" Editor



for so many years

1981 Christmas Count
Jan 2, 1982



Ed

140 bird species counted

WALNUT CREEK — The Mount Diablo Audubon Society broke their record in the number of bird species tallied during the annual Christmas Bird Count which took place Jan. 2.

A total of 140 species of birds were counted, three more than last year. The additional species spotted were a sea duck called the surf scoter, and two land birds, the mountain bluebird and the phainopepla.

However, several birds usually seen during the Christmas Bird Count were not located this year. Snow and low temperatures created problems for counters.

This year the bird counters were told to focus on owls, but the group of nine persons covering the Nortonville, Somersville area (where owls are usually found) faced a strong wind and snow, which cut down visibility and hearing so that no owls were either seen or heard in that territory.

Later, as the weather improved, other counters joined the group and two phainopeplas and four townsend's solitaires, birds seldom recorded on the Christmas Bird Count, were added to the growing list.

Audubon Society annual count tallies 140 species of birds

WALNUT CREEK — The Mount Diablo Audubon Society announced recently that the Christmas Bird Count which took place on Jan. 2, 1982 was a record breaker for the society, resulting in a total of 140 species of birds recorded, a gain of three over 1981. These are a sea duck, the Surf Scoter, and two land birds, the Mountain Bluebird and the Phainopepla.

However, several birds usually seen during the Christmas Bird Count were not located this year. Snow and low temperatures created problems for counters.

This year the bird counters were told to focus on owls but the group of nine persons covering the Nortonville, Somersville area (where owls are usually found) faced a strong wind and snow, which cut down visibility and hearing so that no owls were either seen or heard in that territory.

Later, as the weather improved, other counters joined the group and two Phainopeplas and four Townsend's Solitaires, birds seldom recorded on the Christmas Bird Count, were added to the growing list.



Linda

Tim

No weather is too foul for annual national bird count

WALNUT CREEK — Members and friends of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society are planning to bundle up, brave the elements and count birds two days after New Year's.

As part of the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count, about 100 participants will cover 177 square miles of Contra Costa County to count various species of birds.

Of particular interest to the group is

the owl. Help from the public will be appreciated in counting owls. Call 798-7421 or 837-2843 if you spot an owl.

Kent Fickett, who compiles statistics for the group, hopes to count more than 150 species of birds. The 1980 count tallied 139 species, in spite of poor weather.

The original Audubon Christmas Bird count began on Christmas Day 1900 with a group of strollers in 25 locations, mostly around major northeastern cities.

Since then, the annual event has grown from its original 25 to its present 1,360 locations, and the total participants from 27 to an estimated 34,000, with bird counting in every Canadian province, every American state, many Central American countries and numerous West Indies islands.

The results will be tabulated and published in the July 1982 issue of *American Birds*, a National Audubon publication.



Rossmoor News May 4 1983

Page 14 Rossmoor News April 6, 1983

Gary Bogue Audubon speaker

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society will hold its monthly meeting on Thursday, April 7, at 7 p.m. in the Walnut Creek Women's Club, 1224 Lincoln Ave.

At 7 p.m. Tom Steller will give an in-depth discussion of feathers. The program at 8 p.m.

will be presented by Gary Bogue, former curator of the Lindsay Museum, speaking on "New Aspects of Animal Rehabilitation."

The public is invited to participate in meetings and field trips. Please dial AUD-UBON for information.

Audubon meeting features prize-winning photographer

Mount Diablo Audubon Society will meet tomorrow at 7 p.m. in the Walnut Creek Women's Club, 1224 Lincoln Ave. A collage of birds and other wildlife entitled "From Sea to Sierra--a Natural History Traverse of California" will be presented by Ian Tate, who in 1975 won the

Natural History Magazine grand prize for photography.

Opening the program will be "Marin Wildflowers" by member John Davis.

The public is invited to attend meetings and field trips; dial AUD-UBON for information.

Bird watchers count 71 species

Again, for the seventh year, a group of Audubon Society bird watchers came to WpnSta Concord to observe and count the various species of birds on December 18. This annual event is a continent-wide project. Audubon Society chapters all over North America spread out over the countryside and identify and count as many birds as possible during the same time.

The Mt. Diablo chapter of the society is assigned an area which covers a 15-mile radius from Mt. Diablo which includes the station. The group of seven, which included Bob Gallagher, Bob Smith, and Vana Renfro all from Weapons Quality Engineering Center, counted 71 species.

"The 71 species counted are only half of the species found in this area," Gallagher said.

The Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, and Cinnamon Teal were among eight rarely seen birds. About 700 Starlings, which outnumbered any other species, were

counted by the group.

According to Smith, two Sharp Shinned Hawks were seen in the Tidal area. Also, two California Quails, California State bird, were spotted between the golf course and main gate area.



The official state bird, California Quail, can be seen near the station's main gate and golf course area.

Bird count sets record

CONCORD — The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society's Christmas bird count set a new record with 142 species and 76,521 individual birds sighted, said coordinator Kent Fickett.

Volunteers observed a 15-mile area centered at Concord Boulevard and Ygnacio Valley Road.

"White-faced ibis and Arctic loon were two interesting new species, both seen in north county marsh areas," he said.

White-faced ibis breed at Honey Lake in Lassen County and in winter are usually seen near Los Banos in Merced County, he said. Arctic loons breed on the Arctic coast and as far south as Kodiak, Alaska, and are more often seen on the ocean, he said.

The results of the annual bird count can reflect environmental changes such as habitat destruction, draining of a marsh, filling of a bay or loss of open space to development.

National results are published by the National Audubon Society in the July issue of *American Birds*.

Contra Costa Times
Feb. 9, 1983

Military News Feb 1983

Joe Broyles (left), Jean Richmond and Sally Steller will be joining National Audubon Society members throughout the nation in the annual

Christmas bird count. Saturday — rain or shine — they will go out from dawn to dusk to count all the birds they can find on Mt. Diablo.

Photo by Jim Ketsdever

The Valley Pioneer

Dec. 15
1982

Birdwatchers' big day a national happening

By CLAY KALLAM
Managing Editor

includes parts of the Delta as well as Mt. Diablo itself, and a good day Saturday could put the locals over 150



Birdwatchers' big day a national happening

By CLAY KALLAM
Managing Editor

The day will begin early — up before dawn, fighting off the winter chill, hoping for clear weather.

The deserted roads and empty streets will quickly give way to the slopes of Mt. Diablo, where Joe Broyles, Jean Richmond and Sally Steller of the Valley will abandon the relative luxury of the automobile for a day tromping the hills, looking for birds.

It may not sound exciting, but the Mt. Diablo bird count is just one of 20 taking place in Contra Costa County — and one of nearly 2000 nationwide. It's the National Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count, and the daylong data search has turned into an American ritual.

"Data over a period of years and years begins to reflect significant and subtle changes," said Jimm Edgar of Lafayette. "You've got a tremendous amount of people across the county involved."

Edgar himself will participate in at least half a dozen counts throughout California (though all counts take place in a three-week span, they are not simultaneous), and in the past he has been the compiler, or head man, for the 1500-person Mt. Diablo chapter of the national society.

As with all rituals, the bird count has developed some unexpected side effects. The competition to see which chapter can spot the most species in its allotted 24 hours is hot and heavy, with the Mt. Diablo chapter zeroing in on the magic 150 mark this year.

Only about 5 percent of the chapters reach 150, and Edgar said, "We're within the range of that select group." Last year, the Mt. Diablo counters spotted 142 species within a 7½ radius of the smokestack near Cowell Road in Concord. But Santa Barbara came up with 212 and neighboring Oakland had 162.

With 212 and neighboring Oakland had 162. The Mt. Diablo area

includes parts of the Delta as well as Mt. Diablo itself, and a good day Saturday could put the locals over 150.

Several areas are more interesting than a novice would expect at first glance. San Ramon Creek, despite its proximity to the freeway, will produce its fair share of species, and golf courses are often a haven for birds. Large ponds will draw freshwater ducks and Mt. Diablo itself has many different habitats.

"A lot of bird migration is done by landmarks," said Edgar, "and Mt. Diablo is a significant landmark for migrating birds."

Each group has a specific area (there are 15 such areas in the Mt. Diablo chapter region) and not only will the spotters count species and individual birds, they will also be on the lookout for rare species. For example, the Mt. Diablo group might spot a hooded merganser (a kind of duck) or a mountain bluebird as it has done in the past, and the information would be passed on to the national compiler.

"The year of the drought we saw ocean birds coming into the Delta," said Edgar, but individual birdwatchers (who are constantly trying to add to their personal list of species seen) normally won't add new entries.

In fact, just the opposite is happening in Contra Costa County. "Increased development has reduced habitat," said Edgar. "You see drops in certain species — it's not anything specific, just a general decline."

But nothing stops the devoted birders during the Christmas count. "This is not a 'drop in if you get a chance' kind of deal," said Edgar. "We're asking people to make a commitment."

One of the commitments is a dawn-to-dusk outdoor day regardless of the weather. What happens when it rains? "You just bomb ahead," said Edgar. "You have no choice."

BIRDS, Page 4



Birds

From Page 1

But Audubon Society members sign up for the Christmas count in droves, some coming back every year for 20 or 30 or 50 years. The number of counts (individual groups) goes up every year and there's no end in sight.

"It's a labor of love," said Edgar.

Community



Times photo/Bob Sibilis

Birdwatchers from left: Marjorie Plant, Elizabeth Dickey, Marv Reif, group president Jimm Edgar and Marilyn O'Connor.

Christmas Count 82



Good By Florence



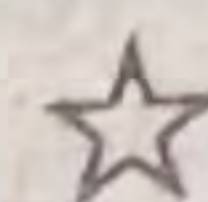
You are missed



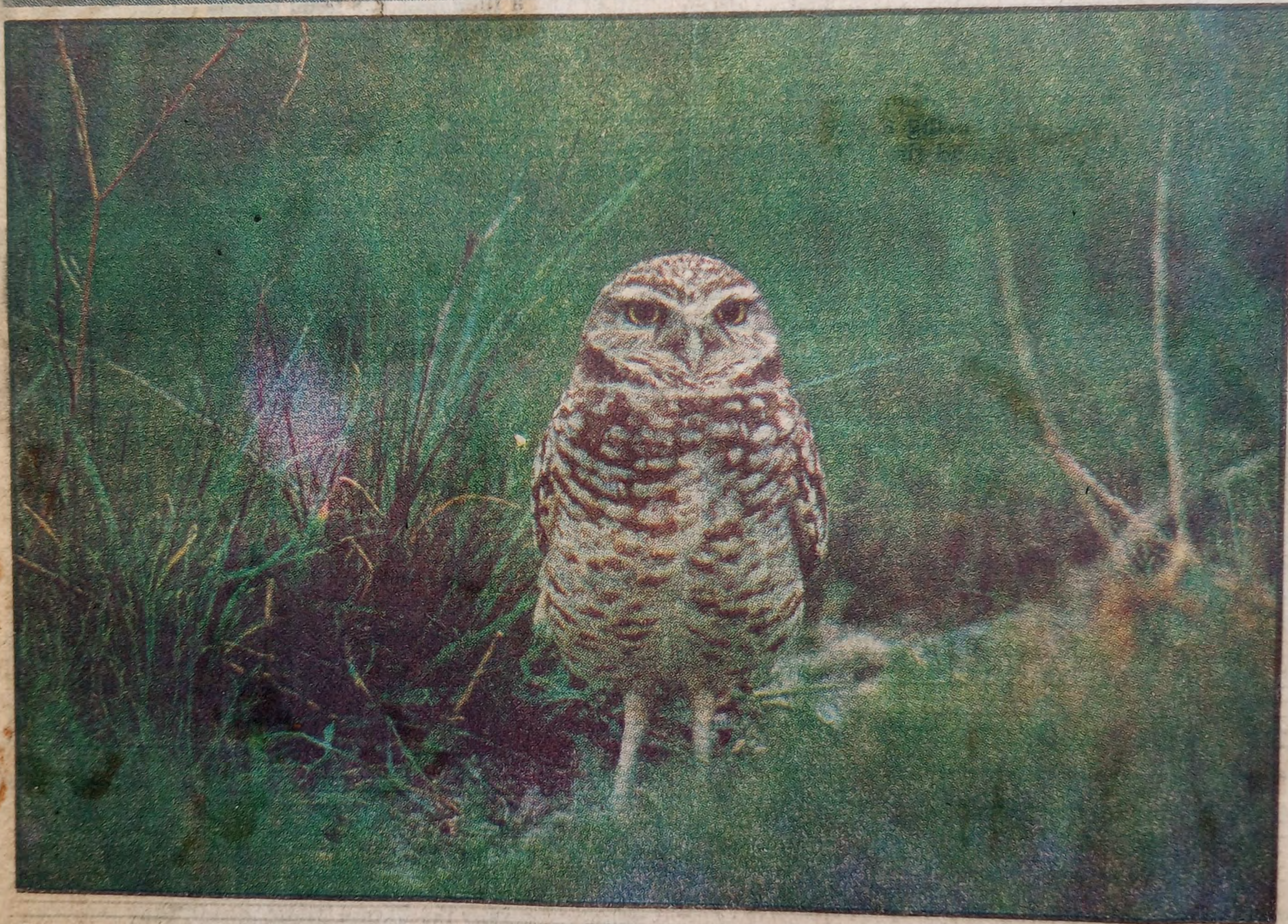
A W A R D S



SALLY - FOR CHECKLIST - WELL DONE
JEAN - FOR 11 YEARS SERVICE
EDITOR OF QUAIL



Threatened burrower



Burrowing owls, such as this one near Dublin, are losing their homes as humans develop open fields.
For the story, please see Page 4A.

Times photo/Thomas Ovalle

Development pushing owls out

By Marian Green
Times staff writer

Burgeoning development is pushing the burrowing owl out of its home in the flat grasslands of the San Ramon Valley and Pleasant-Livermore area, according to a state Fish and Game Department official.

"The burrowing owl has been going downhill because of development," said Manley Inlay of the department's wildlife management division.

"It just happens that man's activities are in the type of areas that the owl makes its burrow home," Inlay said. "It just can't compete."

Although figures aren't available, the burrowing owl population probably is decreasing dramatically in the southern Contra Costa and other areas around the state where development has taken over much of

its natural habitat, Inlay said.

The problem is so great that state officials are considering placing it on a "critical list" of endangered species and provide money to help preserve the owl, he said.

If placed on the list, the burrowing owl would be classified with other endangered animals such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon and kit fox.

Burrowing owls, which carry a scientific name of "Speotyto cunicularia," are still common in undeveloped treeless areas of California and most western states, according to a book titled "The Birds of California," by William Leon Dawson.

In California the owls often live in holes abandoned by ground squirrels. They enlarge the holes and tunnels by loosening the dirt and kicking it backward with their powerful claws.

Also called ground owls, billy owls, cuckoo owls or snake owls, burrowing owls are from 9 to 11 inches tall, have a wingspread of 22 to 24 inches and have distinctive long legs. Their coloring is a dull, grayish brown or wood-brown with many white or buff spots.

Burrowing owls are faithful to mates, and in early spring, the male repeats a "coo coo-oo" love song. When scolding intruders or pursuing game in the twilight hours, the owls also make a loud, clacking sound.

The owls feed on mice, frogs, snakes, lizards, small fish, grasshoppers, crickets and beetles. They also can kill ground squirrels as large as themselves by planting their talons in the squirrel's back and then breaking its neck with sharp blows of the beak.



A bird in its new refuge near the Concord Naval Weapons Station. Below, a red-winged blackbird.

Times photos/Robert C. Pepping

U.S. Navy gives 3,000 acres to the birds

By Denis Cuff
Times staff writer

PORT CHICAGO — About 3,000 acres of wetlands in a safety zone at the Concord Naval Weapons Station were dedicated Wednesday as the newest federal preserve to protect endangered birds and mice.

Officials from the U.S. Navy and the federal Fish and Wildlife Service signed an agreement Wednesday creating the Concord National Wildlife Refuge on marshy shores and islands around the primary port supplying weapons and ammunition to the Navy's Pacific fleet.

The preserve is on six Suisun Bay islands and a long shoreline that is located in an arc-shaped buffer zone intentionally kept undeveloped around Port Chicago loading docks.

The preserve is very important to protect the shrinking saltwater

habitat of the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse and California clapper rail, according to Larry DeBates, assistant regional director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Another endangered species, the least rail, also may be found within the preserve, he said.

"Any of these marshes left are of critical importance to us because there are so few of them left," DeBates said, noting that some 80 percent of the Bay Area's wetlands have been lost to make way for dumps, housing or marinas. "If you lose the habitat, you lose the species."

Capt. G. Glenn Mays, the naval base commander, expressed pleasure that the base's "mission" and security needs also makes it very "compatible" for use as a refuge to protect wildlife from development pressures.

"Because of all the building



around us, they migrate toward us," Mays said, recalling how his office window offers regular views of a large hawk hunting in an open field.

DeBates said the Fish and Wildlife Service initially will use the

site to study the endangered species. Later on, some improvements may be added to help the creatures, he added.

While the Fish and Wildlife Service will do studies and draw up management plans, the Navy will remain in "primary control."

The general public still won't be allowed on the land, continuing current Navy policy.

But Navy officials say they may allow some scientific or education groups to visit some preserve areas after they develop a policy to review requests for access.

The preserve includes the following islands: Roe, Ryer, Freeman, Snag, Middle-Ground, and Seal.

Seal Island, the one nearest the docks, will be off limits even to Fish and Wildlife personnel for "safety and security reasons," according to the operating agreement.

THURSDAY MAY 3, 1984

Formerly Contra Costa Gazette
Pleasant Hills News

ONE SECTION — 12 PAGES



photo by John Harris

Park. The council heard a
s from Scott Gordon, (third
William Kneebone, committee

lay 12

Audubon Society Jumps Into Garbage Fray

By JIM CAROOMPAS

News-Gazette Staff Reporter

The Mount Diablo Audubon Society accused Acme Fill Corp. of creating a political "crisis" by closing its dump site.

The Sierra Club, meanwhile, recommended that the county spread more evenly the distribution of solid waste instead of relying solely on the Richmond dump during Acme's temporary closure.

In a letter to Colonel Edward Lee of the Army Corps of Engineers, the society also asks that the Corps require a permit for all areas Acme wishes to use which have wetland vegetation. The Corps is charged with deciding the issuance of a permit for Acme to expand 97 acres. About 30 of those acres are considered wetlands.

"It seems quite clear that neither Acme nor the county had any serious intention of developing a long term solution of the garbage disposal pro-

blem by obtaining an upland site," the letter states. "What has now been accomplished has been the creation of a political crisis by an attempt to turn west Contra Costa County residents against central county residents by diversion of

See COUNTY Page 2

Good Morning



Expand M

Your coverage
"April on the M
many people to e
Park for hiking, p
ing, camping, bir
torical walks and
from the highest p
Bay Area.

Mostly Fa
See Page

However it may
that the organiza
blo," is attempting
park. To assist w
chase the member

Expand Mt. Diablo park

Your coverage of activities for the "April on the Mountain" season enabled many people to enjoy Mount Diablo State Park for hiking, picnicking, horseback riding, camping, birding, wildflower and historical walks and viewing the panorama from the highest point in the San Francisco Bay Area.

However it may not be generally known that the organization, "Save Mount Diablo," is attempting to add 360 acres to the park. To assist with this important purchase the membership of Mount Diablo Audubon Society gave \$1,000. We feel that this is a very worthwhile use of funds, as the addition will preserve more habitat for the birds and other wildlife, as well as the visual integrity of the mountain from nearby communities.

With the rapid increase in population and the proliferation of businesses in the area, wilderness open space is of great importance. Mount Diablo Audubon Society encourages all who care about preserving "our mountain" to send tax exempt contributions to, "Save Mount Diablo," P.O. Box 5, Concord, CA., 93422.

NORAH BAIN
Publicity Chairperson
Mount Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek



Staff photo/Kathy Baker

AVID BIRDERS, from left, Betty Rowe, Barbara Vaughn, Genevieve Baird, Jenny Kerry and Bobbie Gillis count species at Heather Farms Park as part of the Audubon Society's Christmas bird count.

Birders take annual census of county's feathered friends

By Sharon Bernstein
Staff writer

WALNUT CREEK — I was shivering, but the birders weren't.

They were oohing and ahing and chirping and trilling right along with the feathered fellows they were looking for.

But don't call them bird watchers.

They're birders, folks who consider themselves a step above the watchers because they're "more committed" to things like the annual Christmas bird count on Mt. Diablo and in nearby parks.

Between Dec. 20 and Jan. 5 each year, Audubon Societies across the United States and Canada, as well as in the West Indies and parts of Central America, fan out, divide up the territory and count birds. Each group is respon-

sible for a 15-mile diameter circle of land.

In Contra Costa Saturday, members of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society divided into 17 groups of about five members each, and combed the ridges, valleys, creeks and ponds of Central County for birds.

"The nice thing about this is you can do it on so many levels," said Barbara Vaughn, a 57-year-old court reporter from Orinda who led a group of five women through Heather Farms Park in Walnut Creek. "For some people it's purely a social thing. For others it's a very serious scientific thing."

By 8:30 a.m., the group had already spotted nearly 300 birds from 25 species.

They saw a green-backed heron, a morning dove, a woodpeck-

er and an awful lot of ducks.

"I heard a chicken," said Jenny Kerry. "Does that count?"

A muskrat, its rudder-tail flipping back and forth, swam down the Contra Costa Canal as the birders crossed over a bridge above it.

"Does that count?" asked Genevieve Baird.

"Not unless he gets up and flies away," replied Vaughn.

By the end of the day, Vaughn's group had spotted 57 species. The total for Contra Costa was 152 species, 10 more than last year and two more than this year's 150-species goal.

George Finger is a retired engineer who coordinated this year's count in Contra Costa. Finger led his group down Wall Ridge on Mt.

Diablo.

Unlike Vaughn, who said she has been interested in birds "on and off for 30 years," Finger is a relative newcomer.

For Finger, birding is pretty serious business. Recently, he and a group of friends drove five hours to Santa Maria to see a bird called a little curlew, never before spotted in the United States.

"When you first start out, people call you a bird watcher," Finger said. "That's when you put pieces of cheese out and watch 'em in the back yard. When you get more interested and start going to meetings and such, you become a birder. And when you're really hooked, you're a hard-core birder."

Finger says he's somewhere in between the regular birder and the hard-core.

In the morning fog at Heather Farms, it was the birds that awakened sight and hearing.

The white underbellies of shore birds cut sharp edges through the mist, and the ducks' raucous honking swelled and ebbed.

And every passerby, from the joggers to the man on the old green three-speed bike, knew something about birds.

"He's here if you want to see him!" called Bobbie Gillis, pointing out the green-backed heron to Hugh Harvey, the guy on the bike. "He's flying! He's right out in the open!"

I started to understand why they weren't shivering. They were too busy.

1985

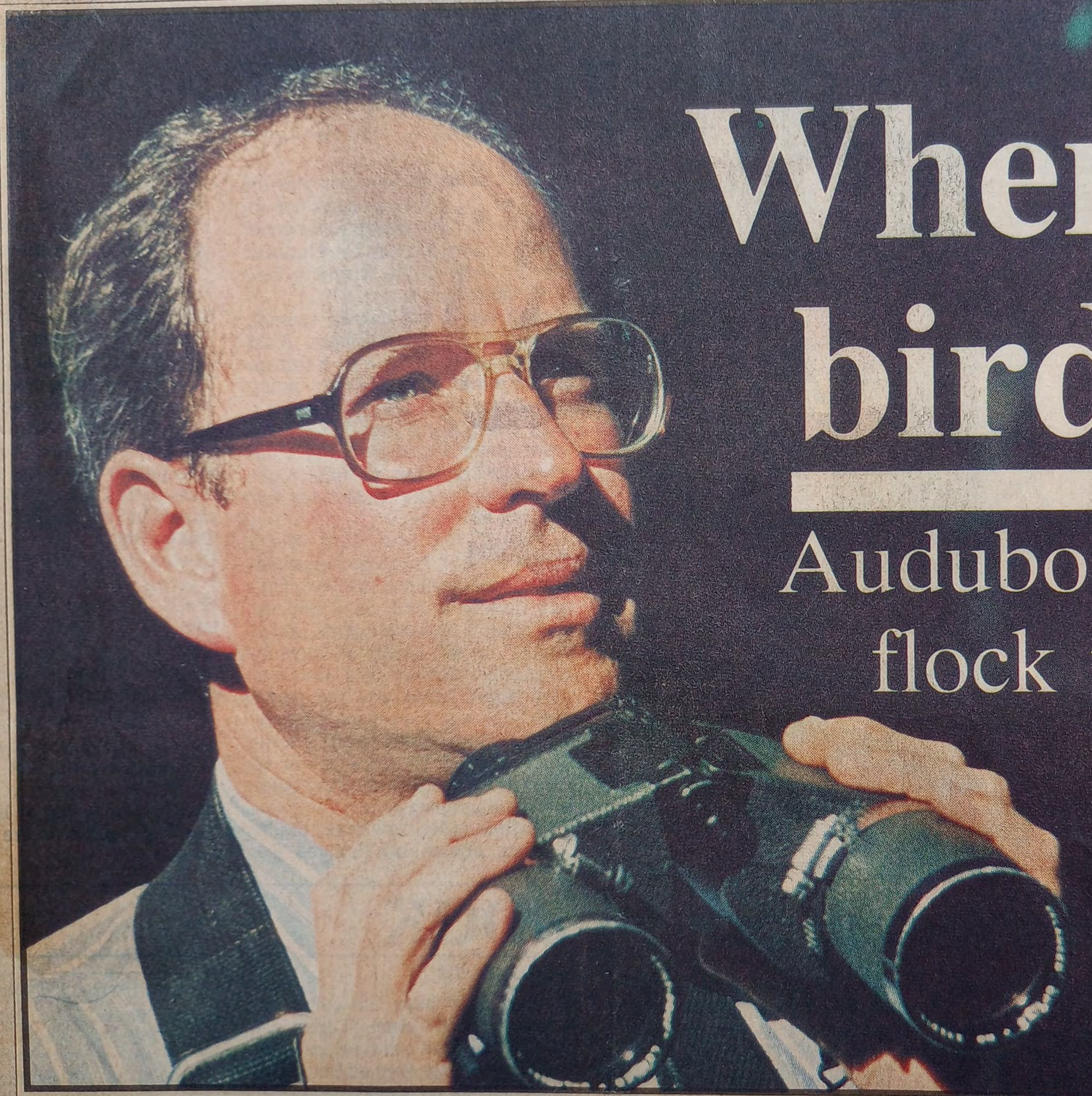
Christmas Bird Count



AVID BIRDERS, from left, Betty Rowe, Barbara Vaughn, Genevieve Baird, Jenny Kerry and Bobbie Gillis count species at Heather Farms Park as part of the Audubon Society's Christmas bird count.

Staff photo/Kathy Baker

Birders take annual census of county's feathered friends



Where the birds are

Audubon members
flock to the field

AN AVID BIRDER, Dr. Maury Stern of Lafayette leads frequent bird-watching field trips for the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society. He is president of the group.

Staff photo/Jon McNally

By Carol Fowler

Staff writer

plained Stern of the hissing sound. "It

the wing. The experienced birder also

utes after getting there. I heard this sound



Staff photo/Jon McNally

AN AVID BIRDER, Dr. Maury Stern of Lafayette leads frequent bird-watching field trips for the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society. He is president of the group.

By Carol Fowler

Staff writer

CASWELL STATE PARK —
"Tpsssss, tpssss, tpssss," hissed
Dr. Maury Stern of Lafayette.

Orange and black feathers flashed in the underbrush. Eight pairs of binoculars raised to eight sets of eyes. A creature with an orange breast, black head and fat bill emerged in the binoculars' field of vision. "There he is," said Stern.

"He" was a black-headed grosbeak with a choir-sweet song. Sighting this bright bird was one of the objects of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society's May outing to Caswell State Park along the Stanislaus River near Altamont Pass.

"We call this 'Tpsipping,'" ex-

plained Stern of the hissing sound. "It reminds me of a kitty and it brings up the birds to find out what's going on."

During a daylong leisurely stroll through the riparian community (river or lake bank) and at nearby Durham Ferry the group identified 60 birds, not a large number by their reckoning. To the inexperienced it was a revelation.

Walking along these sandy paths, the uninitiated would be lulled by the bird songs, but probably not see a single bird. They tend to stay in underbrush, in top branches or concealed by protective coloring.

The initiated recognize the bird by song and instantly anticipate where it might be seen — hopping along a tree trunk, sitting on a branch or flitting on

the wing. The experienced birder also understands habitats and feeding patterns, and knows what species will be found where.

Stern, who is president of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, explained the art of bird watching. "Most people will look down at their binoculars first and then look for the bird. If you see the bird, keep it in your line of vision and raise the binoculars to your eyes."

It works.

"I think it's easiest to start with ducks, or big birds that are out in the open. About five years ago I gave my wife a bird feeder for Mother's Day. That got us interested. Then I took a bird class and we went to a wildlife refuge in the Central Valley. About three min-

utes after getting there I heard this great cackling noise. It was snow geese coming to feed. It was like being in the middle of a Disney film. I've been hooked ever since."

Stern is one of thousands of people nationally who take to the forests, desert, river banks, marshes and shores each weekend to watch birds. This popular activity is considered second only to gardening as a passive sport.

The Mt. Diablo Audubon Society has 1,500 members. "People join for various reasons. Some of them like to support the conservation programs of the national Audubon Society or they like the national magazine. About 200

Please see **BIRDERS**, Page 2D

Book tells where to watch the birdie

By Carol Fowler

Staff writer

ALAMO — Knowing where to look for what birds is the beginning of bird watching. Jean Richmond, who has been an avid birder for almost 20 years, has written a detailed guide to the area, "Birding Northern California." It is published as a non-profit endeavor by the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society.

Masses of information crowd the 142 pages. Arranged alphabetically, each site contains a description of the area, a trail map and specific directions to reach it. Richmond cautions against slippery paths and dangerous sloughs. She tells you where to park and what facilities to expect. She also suggests etiquette for birding on private property.

Sites range from Arcata in the north to the Monterey peninsula in the south and the Sierra foothills on the east. The birds are listed in terms of the specific localities

in which they were spotted.

"Many people tell me they have gone to an area, and found the birds in exactly the same spot I had. Birds are creatures of habit. They tend to go back to the same place every year, and the young tend to return to the hatching area," said Richmond.

Sitting in the family room of her Alamo home, she chatted about the project while hummingbirds hovered at syrup feeders and fiery northern orioles flashed at another style of syrup feeder in her yard.

The book is based on the site guide columns that Richmond wrote for the Quail, the newsletter of the Mt. Diablo Audubon

Please see **BOOK**, Page 2D

JEAN RICHMOND OF Alamo wrote "Birding Northern California" featuring site guides to 72 birding spots.



Staff photo/Kathy Baker

CONTRA COSTA

PROFILE



By Ron Riesterer/The Tribune

Jean Richmond has compiled her articles into a book.

Alamo birdwatcher publishes first guide

By D. Ross

Special to The Tribune

ALAMO — A birdwatching devotee here has stuck a new feather in her cap.

It's a new book just published by the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, a 142-page "site guide" entitled, "Birding Northern California."

The book, by Alamo housewife Jean Richmond, is a revised and up-dated compilation of her articles that have appeared for the past 10 years in the Society's newsletter, The Quail. It lists 72 of the best birdwatching spots, most of which are within 100 miles of the Bay Area.

Richmond says it's not a "how-to" book, but rather "tells you where to go, where to go when you get there, what birds are around, and how to find them."

For example, the reader learns that a walk along Jewel Lake in nearby Tilden Park may offer the sights and sounds of Black Phoebe, Kinglets, Green-backed Heron, and Tennessee and Black-and-White Warblers. The author also notes the attractions of Laurel Canyon, Lake Anza, and Tilden's caves, Pack Rat, Big Springs, and Jewel Lake trails.

Sections on each location include Richmond's notes on park facilities and mention the changing cast from season to season. Directions to all 72 spots are described from the east end of the Bay Bridge, and maps show highway and backroads routes.

Also included is a list of Northern California books and where to find them at locations from Arcata up in Humboldt County, and as far south as Mount Pinos in Kern and Ventura counties.

"I've been keeping records of my birding since 1962," says the 59-year-old mother of three, who started her hobby in her own backyard.

"We had a huge walnut tree with a 75-foot spread and the nuts would drop onto our patio and open up. I got to know the little Plain Titmouse birds that would come to eat them. I had had a small, basic book to identify birds, but when my husband gave me a pair of binoculars, my interest really took off," she says.

RICHMOND JOINED and almost immediately. She says the Quail. She says the

"When I joined, we Now we have two weeks month and more during fall."

As you might expect, even for the beginner, the more knowledge you have of shortcuts in identifying birds.

"It eventually gets to need field guides. At the hood of my seeing a new birds for other people."

Richmond says reason requirement for birdwatching good hearing. My hearing ever been just because I didn't use. Now I probably by sound rather than sight looking."

She says weather can have a tant effect on birding. "When it's cold and rainy they're usually it's still, you can spot birds on branches. But when it's warm and it's harder to detect birds."

"Birds are a good indicator," she added. "What happens to the rest of us so taken out of the environment comeback. If something happens become a human problem."

"My father used to tell birds than people. But in suffer the same fate the birds."

"Birding Northern California and nature shops throughout Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, CA 94596. The price is \$10."

RICHMOND JOINED the Audubon Society in 1971 and almost immediately became editor of The Quail. She says the club has grown enormously.

"When I joined, we only had one field trip a month. Now we have two weekday and two weekend trips every month and more during heavy migration in spring and fall."

As you might expect, she is a fountain of information, even for the beginner. "The more birding you do, the more knowledge you pick up, and you can learn a lot of shortcuts in identifying birds from experienced partners.

"It eventually gets to the point where you don't need field guides. At this point, there's so little likelihood of my seeing a new bird, I get my kicks by finding birds for other people."

Richmond says reasonably good eyesight is the only requirement for birdwatching, but "it also helps to have good hearing. My hearing is much more acute than it's ever been just because I developed the hearing I had but didn't use. Now I probably find 80 percent of my birds by sound rather than sight. You hear it, then you start looking."

She says weather conditions often have an important effect on birding. "When it's pleasant," says Richmond, "the birds are singing and active. But when it's cold and rainy they're usually down and out of sight. If it's still, you can spot birds when they rustle leaves and branches. But when it's windy, the trees are swaying and it's harder to detect bird movement.

"Birds are a good indication of the environment," she added. "What happens to birds will show what will happen to the rest of us sooner or later. When DDT was taken out of the environment, the pelicans made a comeback. If something had not been done, it could have become a human problem, too."

"My father used to tell me I was more interested in birds than people. But in the end, people are going to suffer the same fate the birds do."

"Birding Northern California" is available at book and nature shops throughout the Bay Area, and from the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, P.O. Box 3, Walnut Creek, CA 94596. The price is \$10.



Staff photo/Bob Pepping

GEN AND BILL SATTLER of Save Mount Diablo hike on a trail on the north side of the mountain.

Couple maintains they're paying back Mount Diablo

By Denis Cuff

Staff writer

CONCORD — Bill and Gen Sattler have a mountain of energy for protecting Mount Diablo.

They figure they're paying the mountain back.

The couple met on a hike there 40 years ago, played with their four children there and now, in their 70s, they keep in good shape with regular treks up the steep slopes.

The Sattlers are quiet but tireless forces in a conservation group that has helped double the size of Mount Diablo State Park in 15 years and protect it from urban pressures.

"Our main priority is to preserve the mountain as much as possible in its natural state," said Gen, 71, the secretary of Save Mount Diablo.

Bill, 77, is the treasurer of the conservation group. Save Mount Diablo, like the Sattlers, uses a low-profile and tireless presence to lobby or solicit funds from state legislators, county supervisors and the public.

"Most of our people are quiet people," Bill said. "We'd rather write letters than talk publicly."

The Sattler name is known because of the Sattler's appliance stores that Bill with his brothers Ernest and Henry ran before turning the business over to younger family members.

Bill and Gen Sattler

Ages: Bill, 77. Gen, 71.

Professions: Bill: retired appliance store firm accountant. Gen: retired nurse and homemaker.

Hobby: hiking.

Quotes: Gen: "Our main priority is to preserve the mountain as much as possible in its natural state."

Bill: "If you want open space, you have to buy the land."

Bill was the company accountant until retiring about eight years ago.

Now he uses his business skills for the conservation group. It has raised private contributions and lobbied for state funds to expand the park from 7,300 acres to 15,400 acres since Save Mount Diablo was formed in 1971.

Conservationists started the group because state money was being spent on other state parks, but not Mount Diablo.

Mary Bowerman, a Lafayette botanist, inspired people to act by telling them of the rare and endan-

gered plants on the mountain. Art Bonwell of Concord, a conservationist, organized the first meetings.

"The Sattlers have been the hardest workers. They're always there," Bonwell said.

The couple have sat through many hearings. They have talked with and written to politicians, park administrators and donors.

"Believe, me, the people in office consider the letters," Gen said. "They notice when there's a big stack of letters on their desk about a park issue."

Bill said the need to protect the mountain is greater than ever because of shrinking open space.

When Bill was 10, his family moved from San Francisco to a walnut ranch in Concord.

"We'd hike all over the mountain then and there was no problem. The ranchers didn't mind," Bill recalled. "Ranchers don't allow that today. I don't blame them with all the people in the area. If you want open space, you have to buy the land."

The Sattlers' favorite hiking spot is Mount Diablo, but they also take backpacking trips in mountains in the Western states and Canada.

"One man stopped us on a mountain pass and asked to take our picture," Gen recalled. "He said, 'I want to take it home and show people what hikers in their 40s should be like.'"

November 1986

Author, author!



Jean Richmond



Chapter offers deep
appreciation for her years
of preparation of the very
successful "Birding Northern
California"



Birders are ready for count

*Burrowing owl could
be absent this year*

By Marie Felde
The Tribune

WALNUT CREEK — Bird fanciers here are hoping that when they do their annual bird tally Saturday, the small burrowing owl will stand up to be counted.

The owl, which lives in a hole in the ground and occasionally pops into view, doesn't make or a particularly exotic sighting, but could be an important one.

"This may be the last year we see that bird in our counting circle. Lately the only place we have seen it is in a large field in the Pittsburg area and now that field is three-fourths built on," said George Finger.

Finger is helping coordinate the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count, part of a much larger effort to track North America's bird population.

Last year, the Contra Costa contingent spotted a record 152 species for its 177-square-mile territory.

"One hundred and fifty seems to be the magical plateau. We hit it for the first time last year. Our new goal is 155," said Finger.

Among the more unusual sightings last year was a small group of Sand Hill cranes. "They normally winter in the (Central) Valley. We think they got confused by the fog," he said.

This year, Contra Costa's 70 volunteers have been assembled into 17 bird sighting parties and will be dispatched to bird hot spots around the county.

One group will be sloshing

through the marshes of Suisun Bay. Another will be on a boat off the Martinez shoreline. Five more parties will be hiking around Mount Diablo.

The earliest, hardest groups will begin with "owling" before dawn, said Finger. That's when they hope to see, or at least hear, the burrowing owl.

Because owl fanciers can't count on seeing the birds in darkness, they rely on an owl's distinctive song.

"If we don't hear it, we play a tape of its call and quite often they return the call," said Finger.

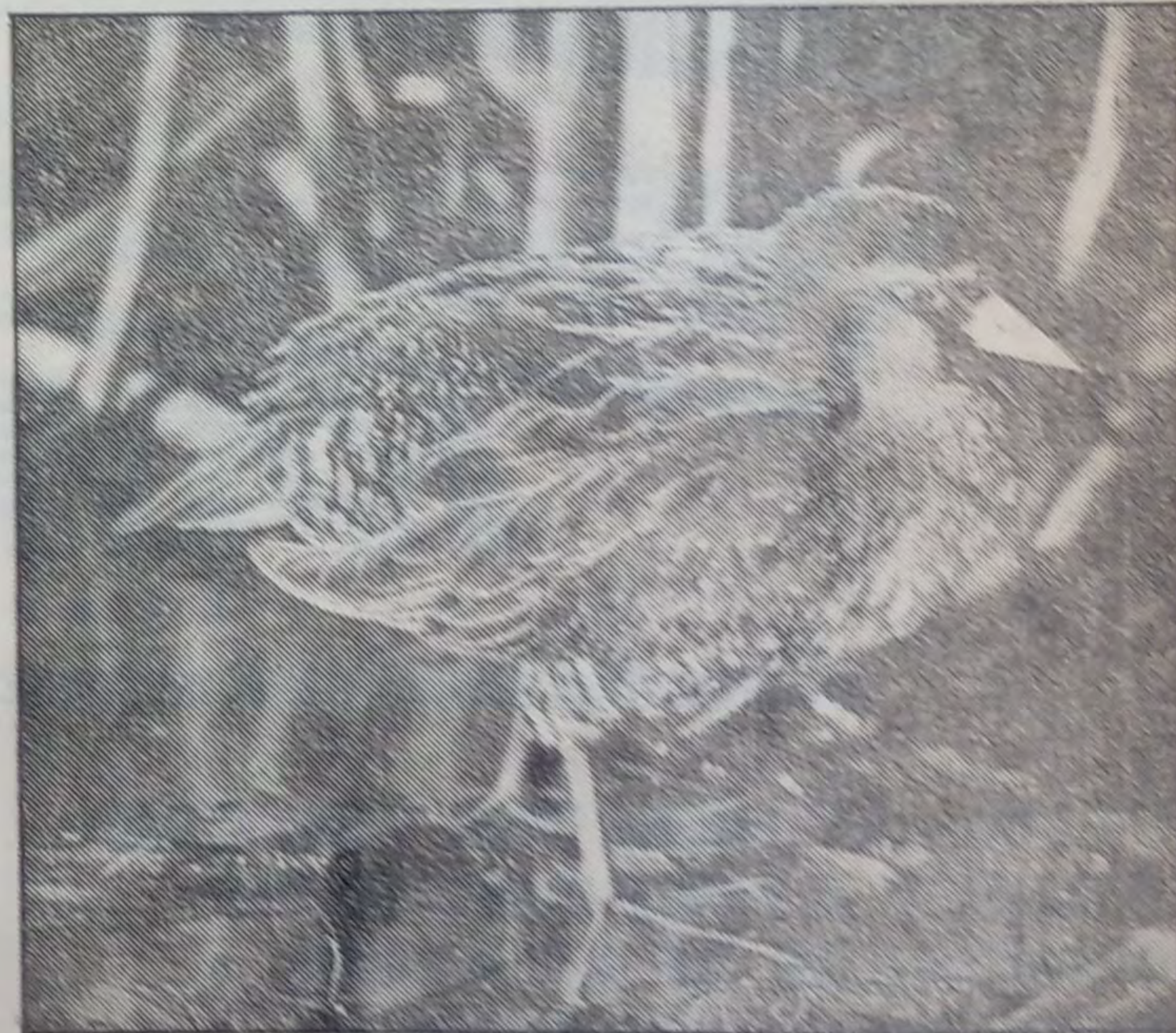
After daybreak, Finger will bid adieu to the owls and will team up with his two sons and another helper to count birds atop Mount Diablo.

Meanwhile Barbara Vaughn will take her binoculars and spotting scope and head to Walnut Creek's Heather Farms Park with a team of four others.



Photos by Bill Knowland, The Tribune

Above, Mary Jane Culver, left, and Barbara Vaughn are ready to look for birds like the Brewer's blackbird, below left, and the Sora rail, below right.



Vaughn is hoping the park's ponds will lure winter birds in one of more urban areas chosen for the count. "Last year my area was the Civic Park in downtown Walnut Creek. It was a total bust," she said.

Spotting birds is a combination of luck and expertise, the birders agree, with the more eyes looking the better.

They are fairly certain they will tally flocks of sparrows, doves, gulls and quail. Among the more unusual birds they hope to see in their eight-hour watch is the Phainopepla, a desert bird, that, appropriately for a Christmas count, feasts on mistletoe.

Christmas

Bird Count

1986

TWO CONSERVATIONISTS HONORED



JEAN RICHMOND OF ALAMO accepts the John Muir Memorial Association's annual conservation award Monday night from John Davis of Martinez, the group's conservation chairman. Richmond, the author of "Birding Northern California," has watched birds for more than 25 years. Davis was also given a lifetime conservation award at Monday's ceremony. A retired probation officer, Davis has written a book describing the hiking and birdwatching trails in Martinez. He has led the John Muir Memorial Association and is also a member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society.

Staff photo/Dan Rosenstrauch

helping other people. The book was written to help people find birds. When they find birds, they appreciate them, and when they appreciate them, they help protect them. The loss of habitat is birds' biggest threat."

Developers who think wetlands on the peninsula and Delta are good only for landfill are the most serious threat, Richmond said. But even little things, such as removing a dead walnut tree from a yard, can restrict

into bird habitat was a gray mouse, described in bird books as nondescript and described by her as "perky with a crest and as cute as a bug."

Twenty-five years later, Richmonds still hasn't put her binoculars away.

When she's really serious, she'll lumber through Alaskan tundra, Florida marshes and Arizona deserts to get a good look at a new

Conservation Awards dinner

March 23, 1987



'Bird nut' gets John Muir award

'Conservationist, not preservationist,' Alamo woman says

By Peggy Sotcher

Staff writer

Calling Jean Richmond a bird watcher is strictly for the birds.

"I'm not a bird watcher. People think of bird watchers as little old ladies in tennis shoes running around, 'La dee da,'" she said, dancing around the living room of her Alamo home.

"I'm a bird nut."

The author of "Birding Northern California" and more than 120 monthly columns in the Audubon Society newsletter on where to spot birds, Richmond is this year's recipient of the annual Conservation Award, given by the John Muir Memorial Association.

The award will be presented during the association's dinner at 7 p.m. today at the First Congregational Church, Susana and Court Streets, Martinez.

"I'm honored and all that, but I'm bewildered. I haven't done that much," Richmond said. "I just like helping other people. The book was written to help people find birds. When they find birds, they appreciate them, and when they appreciate them, they help protect them. The loss of habitat is birds' biggest threat."

Developers who think wetlands on the peninsula and Delta are good only for landfill are the most serious threat, Richmond said. But even little things, such as removing a dead walnut tree from a yard, can restrict

'You can't worry about everything. You have to set priorities and worry about those. Then I cry about the rest'

— Jean Richmond

the diet of woodpeckers and leave chickadees homeless, she said.

"There are conservationists and there are preservationists. I'm a conservationist," she said. "You can't worry about everything. You have to set priorities and worry about those. Then I cry about the rest."

The bird that drew Richmond into bird nuttiness was a grey titmouse, described in bird books as nondescript and described by her as "perky with a crest and as cute as a bug."

Twenty-five years later, Richmonds still hasn't put her binoculars away.

When she's really serious, she'll lumber through Alaskan tundra, Florida marshes and Arizona deserts to get a good look at a new

bird.

Other times, she watches birds from her kitchen window. Her spacious back yard is dotted with bird feeders and a bird bath. She sprinkles seed on the ground for the birds who would rather not go out on a limb to eat.

"I just like to watch them do what they're doing."

If she had her way, Richmond would be outdoors every day of her life. Instead, she gets out a couple of times a week. Faced with a few spare hours, Richmond will head to one of her favorites spots: Mount Diablo, Briones, Las Trampas or the Martinez wetlands.

"It's rejuvenating," she said. "You can forget the cares of the world. Parents shouldn't structure their children as much as they do. I say if a kid wants to lay on his back

and watch the clouds go by, let him. It's the mental refreshment he needs."

Richmond keeps extensive records of the different birds she's seen — 670 in all — and where she saw them. Her book includes such details as where to park, what birds to look for and when. Including her work on the Audubon Society newsletter, Richmond has written so many bird watching guides that the keys on her portable typewriter are worn down.

"People tell me, 'I saw the birds right where you told me to look.' That's not that surprising. Birds come back to where they were hatched."

Birders will spot more varieties with the help of the printed word, she said, but the best way to learn about birds is to get out and find them.

Conservation
Awards dinner

March 23, 1987

Loss for Environmentalists

New Altamont Wind Farm Is OKd

By Kathy Bodovitz

Wind-power advocates won out over protectors of the kit fox yesterday when the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors approved plans for 106 windmills in the hills near the Altamont Pass.

The decision ends a two-year battle between the property owner and five environmental groups that claim the project will destroy a unique wildlife habitat.

The supervisors acknowledged the concerns about wildlife in the area, but said their desire to promote alternate sources of energy, combined with environmental safeguards built into the project, persuaded them to approve the windmills.

Plans for the wind farm were submitted two years ago by Howden Wind Park Inc. The county Planning Commission approved the project, but then the supervisors stalled it so that an environmental report could be prepared.

Last week the company withdrew from the project, saying only that the wind farm is no longer in its interest. But a spokesman for property owner Tony Souza said at least three other companies are interested in developing it.

Meanwhile, five environmental groups — People for Open Space, the Contra Costa Greenbelt Congress, the Mount Diablo Chapter of the Audubon Society, the Preserve Area Ridgelines Committee of Livermore and the Alameda County Greenbelt Congress — asked the supervisors to rescind approval.

"This site is simply too unusual to justify destroying it," said Mark Evanoff of People for Open Space. He said several species living in the area, including the kit fox, the California tiger salamander and the Townsend western big-eared bat, need special protection.

In addition, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. spokesman Harry Arnott said that while the company supports alternate energy sources, "we are literally awash with power. We

just don't need anymore."

Moreover, under a federal law designed to promote alternate energy during the mid-1970s, the utility must buy the wind power at prices well above the market rate.

However, Supervisor Tom Powers said that just because there is an energy glut now, "I have a hard time squaring that with long-range planning. Maybe oil prices will go sky-high in six months."

Supervisor Tom Torlakson added, "There are legitimate environmental concerns, but I think there are safeguards built in."

AUDUBON SOCIETY

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society's meeting will be on Sept. 16, at San Francisco Bay Refuge. Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot at the entrance to the refuge. The Society will meet on Sept. 24, at Tilden Regional Park. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at the entrance to the Nature Center. For information, call 254-0486.

AUDUBON SOCIETY

Dr. Luis Baptista, Chairman and Curator of Ornithology and Mammalogy of the California Academy of Sciences, will speak at Mt. Diablo Audubon Society's monthly meeting on Oct. 8, 8:30 p.m., at the Willow Creek Center in Pleasant Hill. For information, call 376-8732.

CC Times 10/16/87
Let's hear it for pelicans

Headline: "100 Pelicans pay a rare visit to marshland." Right on, we say!

The Times front page article covering the visit of the pelicans brings home the value of the particular wetland (Shell marsh). Most knowledgeable individuals consider that particular area as the most important wetland in Contra Costa County.

To be noted is the fact that the area was recently under serious challenge from a development project. If that project had succeeded, only a tiny bit of wetland would have been left.

It is most doubtful either pelicans or other migratory birds would have found the tiny bit of remaining wetlands as worthy of a place to rest and feed.

Informed, enlightened decision makers (the Martinez City Council) correctly assessed the importance of the wetland and denied permission for the development project to go forward.

Bay Area wetlands have been reduced, over the past 50 years to but about 10 percent of what used to exist. Continued development pressures threaten many remaining wetlands. Further losses, of even small wetland areas, can be disastrous. Birdlife, water quality and even the future of the ecology of the Bay are but a few of the major issues involved.

We're pleased the presence of the pelicans was a news event. In the long run, understanding and support by the people will determine the future of wetlands and other ecological issues of major importance.

A. B. McNABNEY
Vice President-Conservation
Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek

100 pelicans pay a rare visit to marshland

By Denis Cuff

August 1987

parking lot at the entrance to the Nature Center. For information, call 254-0486.

on Oct. 8, 8:30 p.m., at the Willow Creek Center in Pleasant Hill. For information, call 376-8732.

100 pelicans pay a rare visit to marshlands

By Denis Cuff

Staff writer

MARTINEZ — Some 100 pelicans with 9-foot wingspans are making an unusual visit to marshlands off Interstate 680, causing passing motorists to gawk.

"I've never seen a flock of them in my seven years here," said Dick Bogaert, a biologist with the Mount View Sanitary District, which manages the marsh. "They are huge birds, yet amazingly graceful in the air."

The white pelican is among the largest birds in North America, according to Danny Reno, a wildlife supervisor with the state Fish and Game Department.

He said the pelicans probably sought refuge in the sewage-feed marsh to rest before heading farther south on their annual migration from states to the north or Canada.

The birds also might be scouting out local fishing waters as possible wintering spots, he added.

Bogaert said he first saw the pelicans last Tuesday in the district's 80-acre marsh located on both sides of Interstate 680 south of Waterfront Road.

The marsh is easily visible from the freeway, but most birds don't



Staff photo/Eric Rahkonen

THESE COWS seem curious about the white pelicans that have begun visiting marshlands off Interstate 680.

stand out like the pelicans.

"I couldn't stop driving for a long look, but just getting a quick glance at them circling overhead was very impressive," said Pam Nave, a wildlife supervisor at the

Lindsay Museum in Walnut Creek.

White pelicans do visit the Bay Area and a few solitary ones have visited the Martinez marsh before. Still, it's not common to see them

— even though the species isn't endangered like the brown pelican, Bogaert said.

The white pelican feeds differently from its cousin. Instead of diving into the water at high

speeds, the white pelican catches fish by dipping its bill into the water as it swims.

White pelicans nest in Canada and many western states before flying south for the winter.

C.C. Times

10/5/87

is a chilly undertaking

By Barbara Koh

Staff writer

MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK — At 5 a.m. Saturday, they are playing owl tapes in the dark.

By 7:30 a.m., some 115 bird watchers are fanned out over a 15-mile-wide circle in Contra Costa County, counting any and all birds they can identify by sight or sound.

The occasion is the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society's annual Christmas bird count. By sundown, 153 different species of birds had been counted.

Trekking to the top of Mount Diablo Saturday morning, Stephanie Roth spots something. Binoculars are raised to the cold, misty gray sky.

"Oh, it's beautiful. That one's a varied thrush," says Dr. Maury Stern, a Lafayette pediatrician.

"Ooh, it's pretty," says Roth, a secretary to the chief financial officer at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory.

"Hear the soft 'choong'?" Stern asks. "That's the varied thrush's call."

Saturday's count included the Concord Naval Weapons Station, marshes in Pittsburg, creeks in Alamo and Lafayette, Heather Farms Park and most of Mount Diablo. It was one of about 1,500 counts by the National Audubon Society in the United States, Canada and South America during the Christmas and New Year season.

The Christmas count started in 1900, says Stern, a former president of the Mt. Diablo Audubon chapter. "It goes back to hunting birds on Christmas Day — they slaughtered everything they could. Some people thought it would be good to count them rather than slaughter them."

The count helps to assess the health of the environment, Stern says. "We can draw conclusions about whether the ecosystem is OK or falling apart."

"Ooh, oh my gosh," Roth bursts out. "There was a big one, like an owl or a hawk."

She points, but the bird has disappeared. "My glasses keep steaming up," Roth complains.

Soon, though, she sights a mockingbird. "I could identify that one because I have lots of them at my condo."

Jenny Kerry of Orinda tallies the mockingbird.

This is Roth's first Christmas count. She'd been curious about the birds around her San Ramon condominium, and was hooked on bird watching through a course offered by California Adventures.

"My first birding trip was 'Birds and Bakeries of Marin.' We had mushroom-cheese croissants at a Bolinas bakery and went to Point Reyes. It was a totally relaxing day, and we had a good instructor who'd been birding since he was nine," she says.

Kerry, an Orinda travel agent-secretary-homemaker who grew up in England, says her father would identify birds to her. "When I came over here, I couldn't tell what they (the birds here) were." She, too, enrolled in a class.

Meanwhile, Stern, with seven years experience peering through binoculars, is the most experienced birder in the group. He is a walking, talking guidebook.

"That's a hermit thrush," he says. "It's related to a robin, and eats berries. It's a winter visitor from the mountains in the northern U.S."

Stern had started noticing birds after he gave his wife a bird feeder for Mother's Day. Then he and his wife were invited to a bird watching trip in the Central Valley.

"After five minutes of walking, suddenly, there were several hundred thousands of snow geese, white, with black on their wing tips. It was like being in the middle of a Walt Disney film."

"You can't appreciate what these birds look like until you look through binoculars," Stern says.

Off in the distance, the varied thrush perched in the tree looks like one of the yellow-orange leaves, a mere blob. Through the binoculars, its orange breast and black head become distinguishable.

Sounds, too, are important. As birds are seen or heard, Stern describes their sounds. The wren's is "like a ball bouncing down the stairs"; the ruby-crowned kinglet's is "somebody typing"; the bushtit's is "like static electricity — zzt, zzt."

With the overcast skies and sprinkles of rain, the three birders are not seeing as many birds as they'd expected. Stern resorts to "pishing."

"Pisshh, pisshh, pisshh," he calls hopefully. "Sometimes small birds in the brush are attracted to it. Some people think it piques their curiosity." No birds are curious enough to respond.

By late morning, the trio has counted some 65 birds of 20 different species, including the Anna's hummingbird, California thrasher, Rufous-sided towhee, Nuttall's woodpecker and Steller's jay. They would continue counting until sundown, when all the counters would gather at the Hillside Clubhouse in Rossmore for dinner and a tally.

"Not much action today," Stern says. "The wind and rain keep the birds under cover. They're there — we just can't see them."

"This is part of birding — a nice walk," Stern adds with a grin.

It is still cold enough to see your breath, rain is threatening and the trail is muddy.

"You meet some nice people birding," Kerry notes.

"This is better than staying at home paying the bills," Roth says.

An illustration of the facts involves St. Matthew Island, a rockbound patch of Arctic tundra in the Bering Sea some 250 miles off the coast of Alaska. The island is rich in wildlife. Millions of seabirds nest on its cliffs. Seals, sea lions, walrus and whales feed along its shores. This smallish island was designated as a national wildlife refuge in 1909 by President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1970 Congress gave the island added protection by declaring it a federal wilderness area.

This summer the secretary gave the island to an oil company! The oil company plans to build a major installation on the island for the purpose of exploration for oil.

Insofar as I know there was no consideration given to the protected status of the island or to the varied wildlife that has lived there for centuries.

The "excuse" of the secretary and department is that it has the "right" and limited authority to make exchanges of refuge and wilderness lands, ergo, giving St. Matthew to the oil company in exchange for some "other" piece of land is "OK."

It is little wonder that people who are concerned about the impacts that civilization is having on wildlife, land, our future have given battle to Secretary Watt.

By the way, the gift of St. Matthew may never be consummated for National Audubon, joined by other conservation minded people, fishermen and Alaska natives has filed suit to block the secretary's action.

A. B. McNABNEY

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society
Walnut Creek

omas Ovalle
en fields.

sland

monstrate that for-
ames Watt was go-

Condor Study Urged By Researchers

VENTURA (AP) — In an effort to learn more about the endangered California condor, researchers are seeking permission from the state to capture a number of the giant birds and breed some of them in captivity at the San Diego Zoo, officials said Monday.

John Borneman, the National Audubon Society representative to the Condor Research Center in Ventura, said the group has asked the state Fish and Game Commission "for permission to capture an as yet undetermined number of condors for radio telemetry and captive breeding."

Borneman said the state agency has not yet made its recommendation, but that a public hearing would be held May 26. Final decision is expected at the commission's meeting on July 28.

He said the proposed research — along with similar work under way in the Peruvian Andes with other breeds of vultures — is important to learn more about the condors' flight, nesting and breeding habits, as well as threats they face and causes of mortality.

Such work with condors has been restricted since the death last June of a condor chick that suffered shock and heart failure after being handled by a hiker in the Sespe Condor Refuge near here.

No California condor has ever been born in captivity, and Borneman indicated officials of the Condor Research Center hoped breeding experiments planned at the San Diego Zoo would be successful.

Wild birds find friendly refuge in yard

By Chris Lewis
Staff writer



A trance comes over Jean Richmond as she peers out the sliding glass

door at the rear of her suburban Alamo home. The house is hushed and motionless, yet she seems intensely captivated by something.

If you watch and listen closely, you can eavesdrop on the event that has her complete attention: the twitter of the chickadees and doves dining together on a pile of seeds, the finches doing acrobatics from the trees.

Her back yard, dotted with seed and nectar feeders, serves not only as a sanctuary for birds, but as a sanctum for her. Whether doing dishes or fighting off frazzled

nerves, reprieve is only a glance away.

"I just enjoy looking at them — even birds I've seen upteen times, it's really relaxing," she says with unbroken gaze. "It makes life easier doing all the drudgery things."

Mrs. Richmond is among 40 million people in the nation who feed and enjoy wild birds in their back yards, according to the Wild Bird Feeding Institute. The hobby has grown to such proportions that nearly 31,000 back yards have been designated wildlife habitats by the National Wildlife Federation since 1973.

Mrs. Richmond mainly attracts wild birds with feeders. Three feeders containing nectar and two feeders of suet, high-protein kidney fat, hang from the trees and a roof overhang. She also sprinkles seed on the ground and on a platform

feeder encased in a homemade wooden cage.

Pyracantha bushes in the yard provide birds with berries and almond and apple trees in the front yard bear food for sapsuckers.

"The advantage of birding (bird watching) is you are not only relaxing, but learning as you go," she says.

After 20 years of "birding" in her Alamo back yard, she has such a well-rounded knowledge of winged creatures she can identify the species of a flock racing overhead by the way they fly.

She can also rattle off the names of most birds on sight, although her trusty reference guide is always nearby. Most species — including the common sparrows, robins and finches — are broken down into numerous varieties.

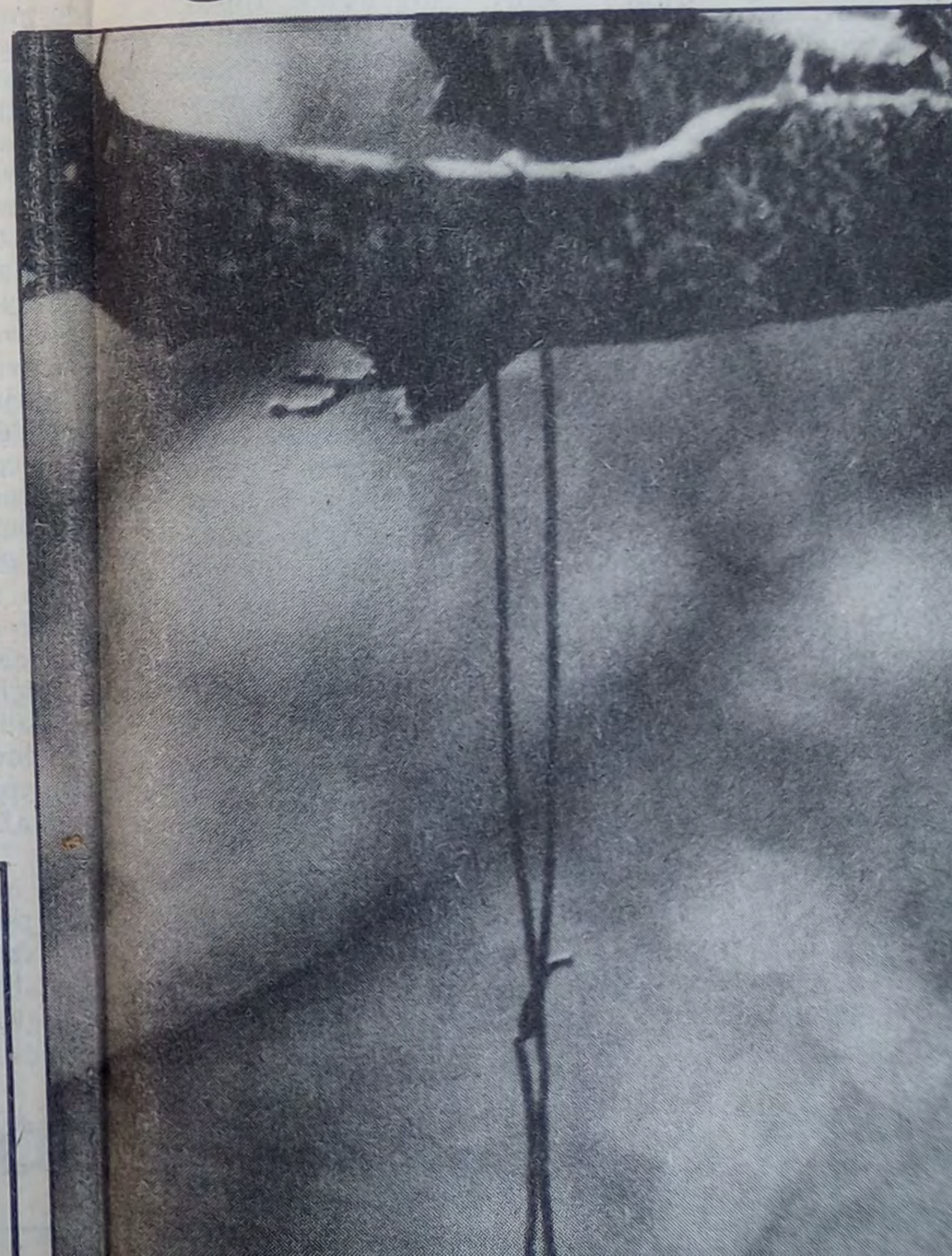
She claims to have identified 122 species in her back yard, and has a

file of little black record books dating back to 1969 to prove it.

A member of the Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, Mrs. Richmond was editor of the society's newsletter, "The Quail," for 11 years. She is currently writing a sight guide, which is being eyed for distribution by the American Birding Association in Austin, Texas.

Despite her extensive scientific knowledge of birds, she also enjoys the lighter side of bird watching, like the time she saw a woodpecker tumble off rocks into the deep end of the bird bath.

The nectar feeders in her yard are a three-ring circus for the orioles, who will "go through all kinds of contortions" to get syrup from a feeder meant for a smaller hummingbird, she says. When their large bodies prevent them from sticking their tongues into a small hole, the orioles will pounce on the



Yard set up as bird

