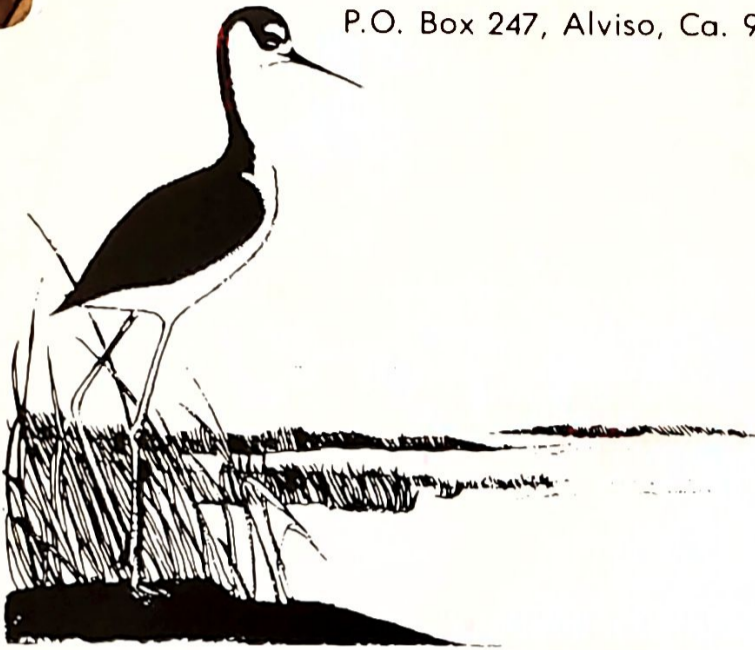


SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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?? HOW MANY WESTERN FLYCATCHERS ?? AND WHY ??

By L. Richard Mewaldt

Can a long-term objective of Coyote Creek Riparian Station be to measure year-to-year variation in populations of broad-front migrant birds such as the Western Flycatcher? As SFBBO grows, the banding station will grow with it, so that the answer to the above question will be yes. Biomonitoring can be used to detect continental trends in bird populations. These trends, in turn, seem to be sensitive indicators of environmental change.

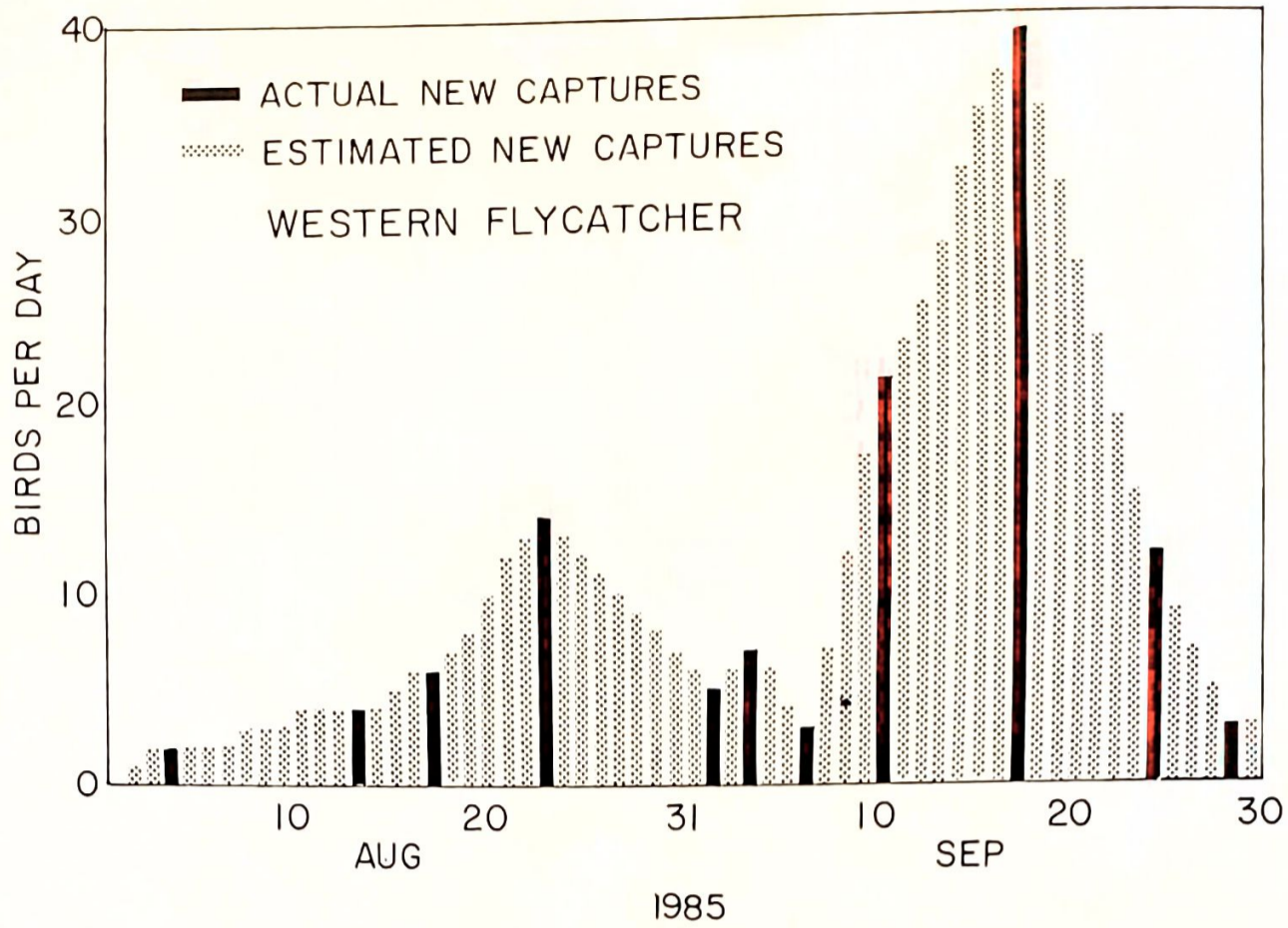
Changes in numbers of passage migrants, as detected at a bird observatory, can be indicators of widespread natural and man-induced environmental changes. For example, David Hussell at Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario, pioneering in such studies, found striking correlations between numbers of certain species of wood warblers netted and banded in the fall at LPBO and widespread forest insect infestations further north. These warblers were, by species, variously affected in accordance with their feeding habits and certain insect control measures. Dr. Hussell has

also demonstrated correlations of LPBO captures with productivity as measured in breeding bird surveys (NAS) on breeding grounds north of Long Point (Studies in Avian Biology No. 6:92-102).

TO monitor such population trends, it is essential that the sampling strategy be reasonably consistent from year to year, either on a whole station effort -- or at least on a birds-per-net-hour basis. Because migrants tend to come through a given area in waves, it seems important to operate monitoring stations daily during periods of migration. To illustrate this need, I present Figure 1.

In August and September of this year we operated CCRS mist nets on eleven days: 4, 14, 18, 24 August and 2, 4, 7, 11, 18, 25, and 29 September (Figure 1). We captured from 2 to 39 new Western Flycatchers on those 11 dates for a total of 116. QUESTION How many would we have captured if we had been operating daily? An interpolation estimate, as shown in Figure 1, suggests 681 Western

Continued on page 2



Flycatchers. BUT, how different would it have been had we captured only 15 on 18 September OR, if we netted on 13 September and caught only 3? OR, if we had caught 57 on 13 September? OR, those 57 on 26 August? There seems to be no real substitute for operating daily during periods of migration.

Another point should be made here. The estimate of 681 Western Flycatchers in August and September 1985 is reasonable. The error of estimate, however, may be as much as plus or minus 250 (guess only); thus the total may have been 431 to even 931. Table 1 (data obtained from the North American Bird Bander) puts these capture numbers into perspective.

Table 1. Western Flycatchers banded in Western North America as tabulated by the Western Bird Banding Association in NABB.

Year	All Western North America	Highest Bander Total	Bander
1981	402	303	PRBO
1982	400	318	PRBO
1983	409	280	PRBO
1984	433	360	PRBO

It is clearly evident, that unless 1985 was an exceptional year, our Aug-Sept catch portends the importance of CCRS as a potential biomonitoring station. Even a conservative extension of only our Aug-Sept captures (e.g. 431) is nearly as great as the entire annual capture totals 1981 to 1984 for western North America including Canada and Mexico. The totals for Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) are for Palomarin (operating daily) and for the Farallons. These figures are, in fact, comparable to our captures of Western Flycatchers on the Wool Ranch (just 8.3 km ENE of CCRS) in the early 1970's. Operating daily from the last week of August and all of September in 1970 we captured 169; operating daily about half of August and all of September in 1971 we captured 408. In 1971 the western North American total was 748 of which the ABL of SJSU (Wool Ranch) contributed 456 (including spring captures) and PRBO 275 (231 at Palomarin and 44 on S.E. Farallon Island).

Yes, there is the opportunity for CCRS to serve in the future as a critical

biomonitoring station for western North America. Working in concert, PRBO's Palomarin Station, PRBO's Farallon Island Station, and SFBBO's Coyote Creek Riparian Station could well form the nucleus of a major western North American Biomonitoring effort.

CCRS ENDOWMENT FUND

Response to the dollar for dollar matching fund contribution pledge (\$2500) by an anonymous donor has been encouraging. To press time we have received nine qualifying contributions (\$10 to \$500) for a total of \$925. We must thus raise another \$1575 by 31 December 1985 to take full advantage of the fund matching pledge. If we fulfill the whole amount, the CCRS Endowment Fund will stand at \$9000, just one thousand dollars short of our initial goal of ten thousand dollars. We plan to place that bloc of dollars in a long-term Certificate of Deposit so that monthly earnings can pay the CCRS electric and phone bills, CCRS share of Observatory liability insurance costs, trailer-laboratory registration, and modest amounts for forms, nets, and bird-feed-bait for traps.

If you can, please send your check payable to SFBBO, and earmarked CCRS Endowment. If you have questions or suggestions please call me (408-258-7491). If you wish, I will take you on a personally guided tour of CCRS and its unusual research area.

L. Richard Mewaldt

Classes & Trips

SFBBO announces a class on **Gull Identification** offered by Don Starks of the Bird Observatory. Three lectures and three field trips, times and dates to be announced. Contact Don Starks at (408) 371-9720 for more information.

Sequoia Adult School is offering 2 classes for birdwatchers in January.

- All That You Wanted to Know About Birds and Were Afraid to Ask. This class consists of 9 Wednesday evening lectures and 5 Sunday field trips starting January 8, at 7:30 pm at the San Carlos Senior Center.
- Birds Through the Seasons. Nine Monday evening lectures and five Saturday field trips starting January 6, at the Menlo Atherton High School.

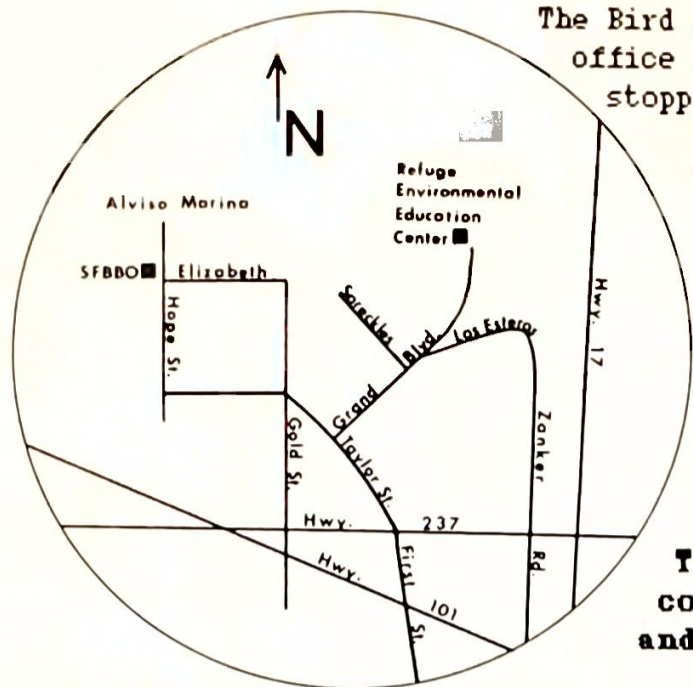
The instructor for both of these classes is Maryann Danielson and the fee is \$40 per class. Call Sequoia Adult School (415-369-6809) for additional information.

Field Trips

Two field trips sponsored by Sunbeam Ecology Explorations, led by Maryann Danielson will be offered in January and February.

- Santa Barbara and Environs. January 24-26. Fee is \$70 which includes 2 nights lodging and a pre-trip slide show. Santa Barbara's milder climate provides a wintering area for birds uncommon in the Bay Area, such as Royal Terns, Orchard Oriole and Grace's Warbler.
- Tule and Klamath Lakes for Raptors and Waterfowl. February 14-17. Fee, \$95 which includes a pre-trip slide show and three nights lodging. One of the trip highlights will be large numbers of Bald Eagles leaving and returning to their roost from their foraging area on the Klamath Lakes NWR.

For further information on these trips contact Maryann Danielson at (415) 342-6919.



The Bird Observatory office is located at 1290 Hope St. in Alviso. The office is open from 1-5 pm weekdays and some weekends. But before stopping in, call (408)946-6548 and check the schedule.

The General Membership meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Center in Alviso. (see map) The Board of Directors meetings are held monthly. Call the Observatory for dates and times.

The newsletter deadline is the first Monday of the month. Send contributions to the editor: Susie Formenti, 16675 Buckskin Ct., Morgan Hill, CA 95037.

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory is a non-profit corporation under IRS statute 501(c)3. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Thursday, January 9, 1986

Refuge Environmental Education Center
in Alviso

7:30 pm

FEATURED SPEAKER: John Aiken, Project Manager for the Conservation Center of the San Francisco Zoological Society, will present a slide show and talk on the Birds of Prey Natural Area along the Snake River in Idaho.

TAX CHECK-OFF THREATENED

A current bill in the Assembly would repeal the voluntary tax check-offs on the state income tax forms, including the endangered species check-off. This is an important source of revenue for endangered species recovery projects. The bill, AB 540, is pending in the State Senate Committee on Revenue and Taxation. What is needed is an amendment to AB 540 to allow the endangered species tax check-off to continue. If you feel strongly about this bill, please write to the Committee at the State Capital, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Sanderling/Plover Census

The Sanderling Project in conjunction with PRBO will sponsor the mid-winter Sanderling and Snowy Plover census on January 11-12, 1986. Very little information is known on these birds, so a census of the entire Pacific Coastline is planned. If you would like to participate in this Census, contact the Bird Observatory office or the Sanderling Project, Bodega Marine Laboratory, P.O. Box 247, Bodega Bay, CA. 94923.

BAEER FAIR

Saturday, January 25, is the date of the 9th annual Bay Area Environmental Education Resource Fair. This year's Fair will be bigger and better than ever with many more workshops and exhibits on display. It will be held at the Marin Civic Center in San Rafael. For more information call (415) 657-4847.



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Make checks payable to SFBBO. Your gift membership is tax deductible.

Student/Senior	\$10
Regular	\$15
Family	\$20
Associate	\$50
Contributing	\$100
Sustaining	\$200
Life	\$400 *
Patron	\$2000 *
Corporation	\$500 +

* Single payment becomes part of an endowment fund