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SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 7

1985
JANUARY 1984

OILED BIRDS

What happens to sea birds after an oil spill? One way to find out is to talk to Kathy Hobson, SFBBO Executive Director, who volunteered hours and days of her time to help. We all know the story by now; sometime around Halloween an oil tanker virtually cracked in two perhaps 10 miles from the Farallon Islands. Various kinds of lubricating oil leaked out of the hull of the ship.

Let's start with the birds, though the majority were Common Murres, they ran the gamut from Surf, White-winged and Black Scoters; Western, Eared, and Horned Grebes; three species of Loons; Cassin's Auklets; Pigeon Guillemots; a couple of Fulmars; miscellaneous ducks; a Brant; and a few Coots.

Initially, the Dept. of Fish & Game set up a bird "deoiling" station at Fort Cronkite in Marin County; more than 600 birds were processed here. A dozen or so birds went to the Marin Wildlife Center, and about the same number to the International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) in Berkeley.

We mentioned above that oil from this spill tended to vary a bit, and included some light lubricating oil; such oil is hard to see on a bird and thus a reasonably healthy looking victim could be heavily oiled but not show it.

When oiled birds are first processed they are weighed, examined and banded with a special plastic band. Their temperature is taken, since oiled birds tend to die of hypothermia.

Just how are oiled birds cleaned? So far one of the best methods seems to be a 1% solution of the common

dishwater detergent, Dawn. The birds are given a series of detergent baths and rinsed with a sprayer until the feathers appear dry. A good bird cleaning tool is a Water Pic, something not even your dentist knows. Prior to cleaning they are tubed (force-fed) and ophthalmic ointment is applied to their eyes.

When a bird is finally deoiled, rinsed and dried, it's put in a pool or padded pen with more food. An interesting point; many waterbirds won't drink from a bowl, and thus the need for a pool. By giving them progressively longer swims in the pool the birds are able to regain their waterproofing and preen their feathers back into alignment. Just prior to release, the birds are banded with a US Fish and Wildlife Service band supplied by SFBBO.

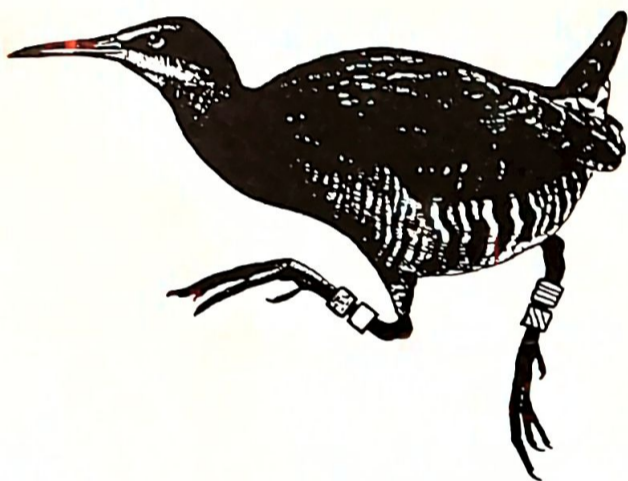
What is the mortality rate of these distressed birds. Kathy mentions somewhere between 20-30%, so in this case perhaps 150-200 birds have already died. Since 1/2 of the tanker is still bobbing around out there in 2400 feet of water, there will be more. As of this writing (early December) more birds are being treated.

Aside from the many volunteers who spend so generously of their time, there are some "official" organizations to clean and monitor oil spills. The US Coast Guard, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Dept. of Fish and Game all have contingency plans in case of an oil spill. The bird rescue center at Fort Cronkite was organized by Alice Berkner of IBRRC and Patt Gullett of the Dept. of Fish and Game. The center was staffed by volunteers from the Wildlife Rehabilitation Council and crews from the California Conservation Corp and personnel from Fish

& Game and Fish & Wildlife Service. Clean Bay is a consortium of some six oil companies which provides equipment to clean up the water or the shores. It's somewhat like an insurance policy, and if nothing else it functions to get the cleanup process moving rather than squabbling over who's at fault. Oiled birds can't generally wait for the courts to place blame. In this case there was no question of fault, and the process did move quickly. Should there be an "anonymous" spill the Coast Guard is also on hand with equipment. But for the birds, it's the Kathy Hobson's and people like her who do the work; and if birds could talk, they say, "Thank You."

Dave Nauer

WANTED



SIGHTINGS OF COLOR BANDED CALIFORNIA CLAPPER RAILS

The California Clapper Rail is an endangered bird inhabiting the tidal saltmarshes of San Francisco Bay. In September 1983, wildlife biologists began color banding clapper rails to investigate their population size and movements. Each rail is banded with 2 colored plastic bands on one leg and 1 color band and a numbered metal band on the other leg. Band colors used are: white, yellow, orange, red, and light green. If you see a banded rail, carefully note the color sequence on both legs, the location of the bird, the time, and the date. The success of this project depends on resighting a large number of banded birds. Please report sightings to:

Roy Lowe or Tom Harvey
S.F. Bay National Wildlife
Refuge
P.O. Box 524
Newark, Ca. 94560
(415) 792-0222

Peter Perrine or Kathy Hobson
S.F. Bay Bird Observatory
P.O. Box 247
Alviso, Ca. 95002
(408) 946-6548

NEW OFFICE HOURS

The Bird Observatory office will now be open from 1-5 p.m., Monday thru Friday, instead of 9-5 daily. This decision was made by the Board of Directors for two reasons. One, it frees the staff for many of the work related duties that can't be done in the office, such as meetings, running errands and giving tours. And two, it keeps the staff from putting in a 14 hour workday. So many of the evening committee meetings that the Executive Director is required to attend add extra hours to her already over-worked day.

As much as we would like to have the office open seven days a week, we hope these new hours will be convenient for everyone. We will continue to try and maintain weekend hours from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., but it's always a good idea to call first before stopping in.



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Thursday, January ¹⁰ 13, 1984
Refuge Environmental Education Center in
Alviso
7:30 pm

DOUBLE FEATURE

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- * A movie Titled, "*The Garden of Eden*"
A semi-documentary film on the preservation of wildlife diversity, put out by the Continental Group & the Nature Conservancy.
- * Audubon warden, Lyman Fancher talks on Harbor Seals of the south bay.

SPOTLIGHT

Dave Jensen reports on the Comparative Marsh Study.

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

PEREGRINE OBSERVATIONS

The Predatory Bird Research Group at the University of California, Santa Cruz in conjunction with the Peregrine Fund is asking your help in compiling habitat utilization data for peregrine falcons.

They are attempting to compile peregrine observations in California using an information form that you can obtain at the Bird Observatory office. This project will be underway throughout 1984 and 1985. If you have any questions about the project, please call Brian Walton or Carl Thelander at (408) 429-2466 or (408) 425-8755.



1985 BIRDING TOURS SPONSORED BY SFBBO

The first of this year's tours will also prove to be the trip of the year; Texas in the spring. Texas has to be some of the finest birding in North America. The upper coast is renowned and unparalleled in its spring migration show and literally can't be matched anywhere. The Lower Rio Grande Valley, at any time, is as close as you can get to the tropics and still be in the 48 States. Most tours offer these separately, but we are offering both at a discount rate. The tour lasts from April 20 to May 5 and we'll hit all the hot spots looking for a list of over 300 birds. Leaders will be Don Starks and Dan Singer and the cost will be \$500 and include transportation from Houston. Remember, all profits go to the Bird Observatory to allow us to continue our research. Interested? Because of logistics this trip will definitely be limited, so don't waste too much time dreaming. Call Don (tour organizer) evenings at (408) 371-9720 or write him at 2076 Foxworthy Ave., San Jose, Ca. 95124 for further information.

If you can't get to Texas, you can still bird your happy heart out! How about Death Valley in May, Southern Sierra/Kern River in June, Yosemite in July? Had enough? Then there's two trips in August - one to Arizona, another to Condor country. More information in later newsletters.

Don Starks

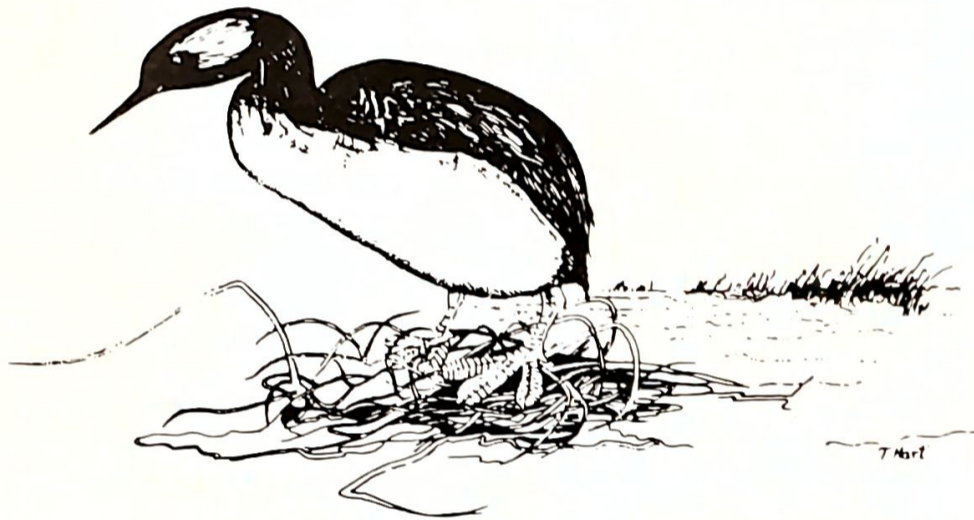
DONATIONS

The Bird Observatory gratefully thanks the following people for their generous donations this past year. Dr. Eve Case for maps of North America, color slides, slide notebooks, carousels, and metal boxes; Lillian K. Henningsen for books and journals; Josephine Petit for manual typewriter; Ginny Becchine for a poster; Tim Gates for a microwave oven; Carol Schweder for a couch, two armchairs, and a lamp; Dr. Raymond Pierotti for books and Condor & Auk journals; Mike & Theresa Rigney for armchair and table; Bob Roadcap for Wilson's Bulletins; Mr. E. Haynes for books; Linda Wills for a lamp; Mrs. Elgin B. Hurlbert for her husband's papers and a parabolic microphone; Ms. Ann Stratford for wine for the Kotani-En Garden fundraiser; Don Bleitz for mist nets, holding bags, Pesola scale, net poles, and booklets; Pat & Jean Dubois for materials for a Bird Observatory event and electrical supplies; Lyman Fancher for a boat, motor, trailer, hot water heater, and donation of \$450 worth of repairs; John McDonald for books and subscriptions to journals; Tom Rountree for slides & photos; The Lindsay Museum for bird banding journals; Peg Woodin for the loan of two heaters for the office; Dick Mewaldt for books for the library; John Saulter for \$500 worth of plumbing labor and equipment; Cecil Poole for a set of Western Birds and other journals; and John Layne for plumbing for the hot water heater.



SANDERLING MID-WINTER CENSUS

The Sanderling Project, a non-profit research organization based in Bodega, has planned their annual mid-winter census of Sanderlings and Snowy Plovers and SFBBO has been asked to help. The date is the weekend of January 5th and 6th. They have asked us to census beaches between the Pescadero River Mouth and San Gregorio and any mud flats in south San Francisco Bay. We will be looking also for Sanderlings with color bands, birds they marked this past spring in northern Oregon. If you are interested in hiking some beaches or glazing mud flats in the bay give us a call and we'll give you more information on times and places.

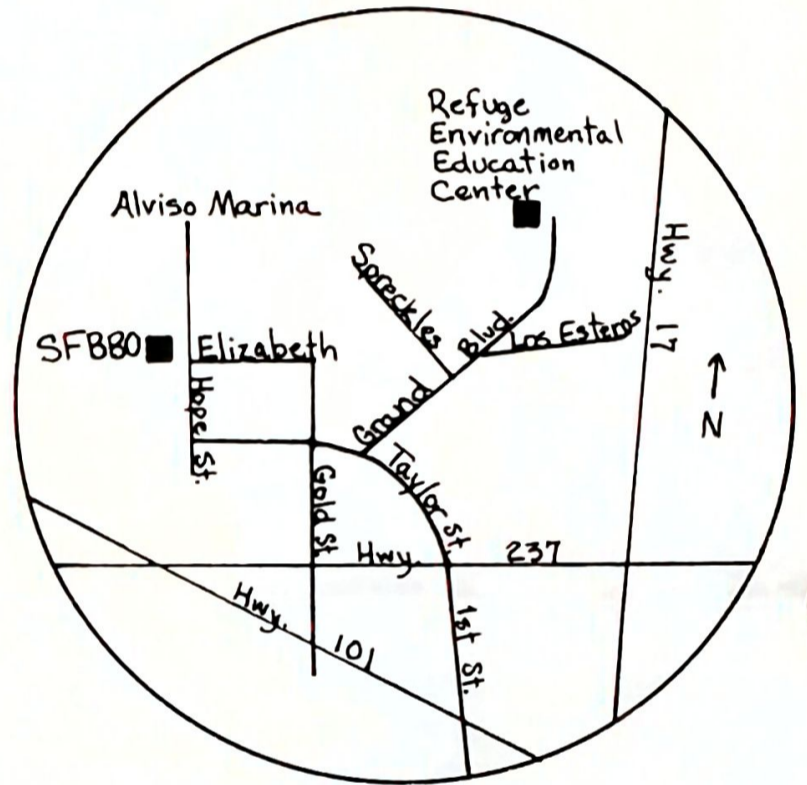


Editor Susie Formenti

Assistant Editor, Dave Nauer

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 below). The Board meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm at the Bird Observatory. Members are welcome to attend both meetings.



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

I would like to join Renew my membership in the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory.

NAME _____	Student/Senior	\$10 annually
ADDRESS _____	Regular	\$15 annually
CITY _____	Family	\$20 annually
STATE _____ ZIP _____	Associate	\$50 annually
PHONE _____	Contributing	\$100 annually
	Sustaining	\$200 annually
	Life	\$400 *
	Patron	\$2000 *
	Corporation	\$500 + annually

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

* Single payment becomes part of an endowment fund.