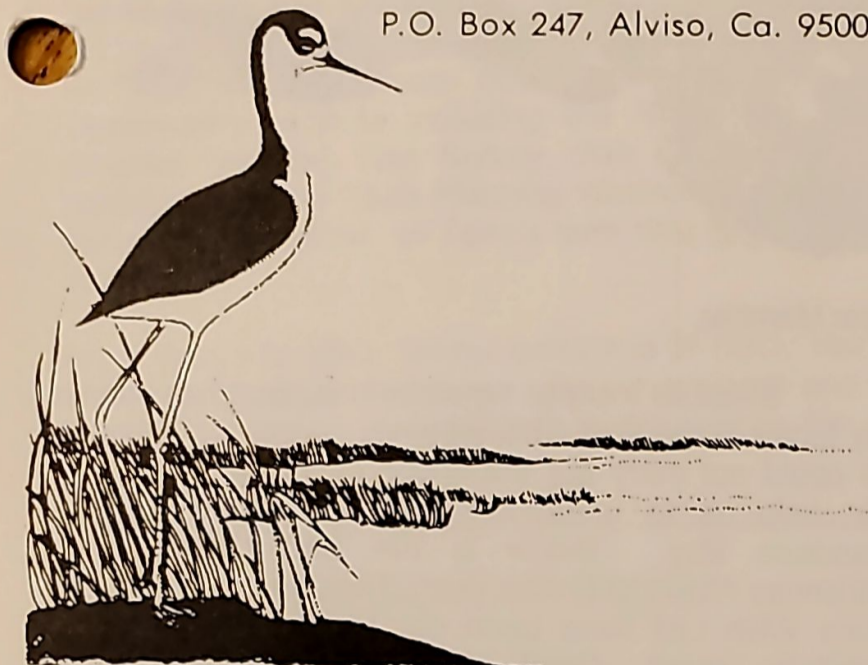


SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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IS THEIR LIFE AFTER URBAN DEVELOPMENT ?

by C. Kevorkian

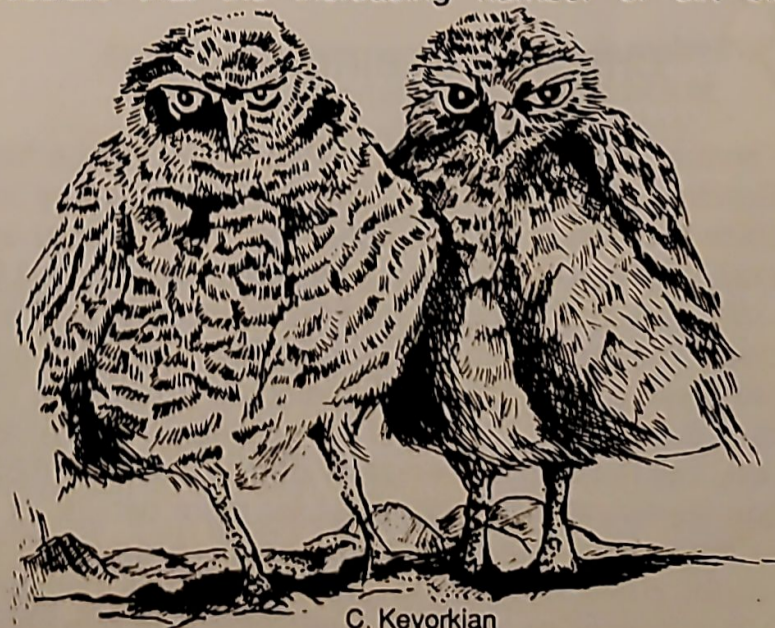
For at least thirteen years the City of Sunnyvale has been planning the Sunnyvale-Baylands Park which will include areas adjacent to Caribbean Drive and Highway 237. At the present time, this area provides habitat for many forms of wildlife including the Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Classified as a "Species of Special Concern" by the State of California, the Burrowing Owl has faced increasing habitat destruction and has been forced to migrate to more suitable nesting areas. Whether this will occur as a result of the Sunnyvale park still remains to be seen. A recent statement by the head of the Department of Parks and Recreation revealed that the park may include 20-30% "natural habitat", but only an Environmental Impact Report can determine how large an area is necessary to maintain a viable population. The Burrowing Owl has proved extraordinarily adaptable, but to what degree we can disrupt its nesting habitat without totally driving it out of the area requires further investigation.

A case in point is a field located within the acreage purchased for the Sunnyvale Park. Situated northeast of Highway 237 and the Lawrence Expressway this field has been the site for a progressively decreasing population of Burrowing Owls. Twenty years ago this area was pastureland for horses and remained so for about thirteen years. Because of continuous grazing and a continuous supply of horse dung, the owls flourished. These two factors encourage nesting since the Burrowing Owl lines its burrow with horse dung and selects nesting sites located in areas surrounded by short ground cover. A study done in 1970 notes the

presence of twenty owls during the month of May. Three years later, a Spring count revealed twenty four owls. This was thought to be the maximum number of owls the field could sustain.

In 1973 the land was sold to the City of Sunnyvale and, as a consequence, the horses were removed. At present, there are no active burrows in the field itself. Only two active burrows have been sighted and these are located on the southern levee separating the field from Calabuzas Creek.

We know that the absence of horses in the field has contributed to the decreasing population. We can only speculate that the increasing number of dirt bikes



C. Kevorkian

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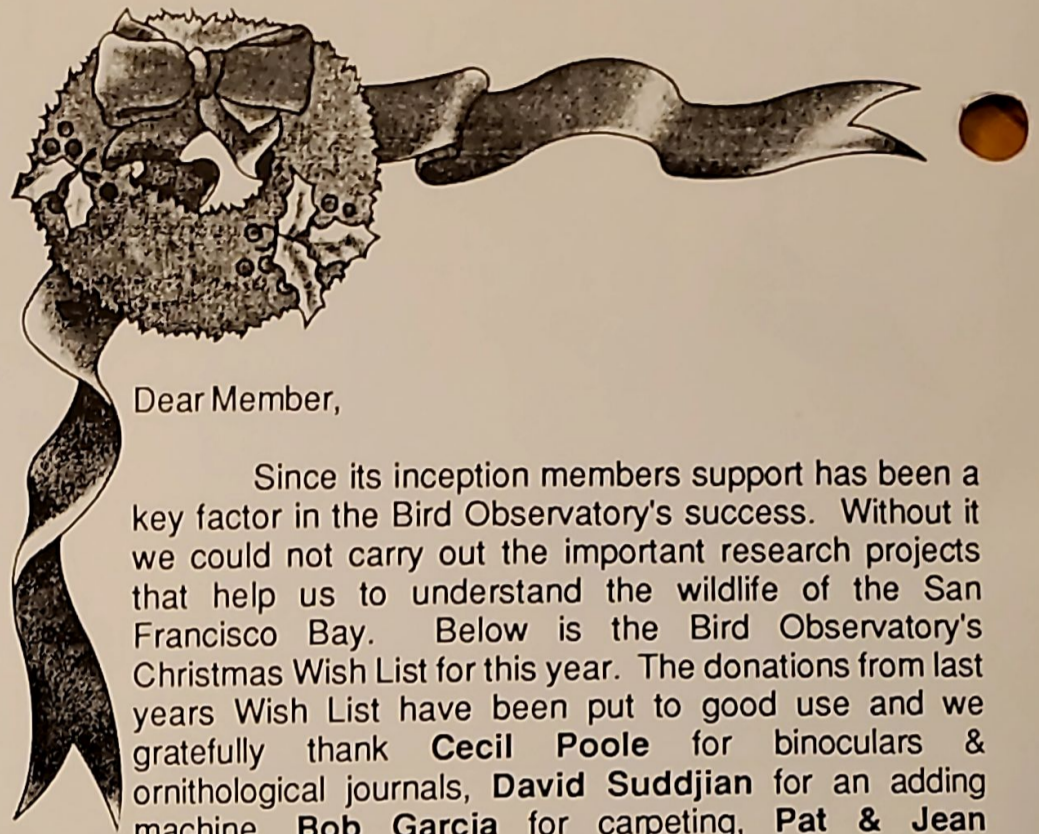
Urban Development

Continued from page 1

frequenting this area has also played a part in driving the owls away. Evidence for this is a dirt bike path not five feet away from the entrances of the two remaining burrows. A count done for the 1984 South Bay Nesting Bird Study yields more optimistic results. The study area included the aforementioned field and adjacent areas, most of which lie within the proposed parkland. The count revealed nine burrow nests, with a total of thirteen adults and twenty-five young. Although this study shows that the area is not as densely populated as it was in 1970, it nonetheless indicates that the Burrowing Owl has not totally abandoned the area. With proper wildlife management, the area could be a viable habitat for a large number of owls once again.

The Sunnyvale Baylands Park is classified as a "Peoples Park" and will include a man-made lake, picnic tables, and barbeque pits. But to truly be a "Peoples Park" a portion of the land should be left undeveloped, including enough acreage to provide ample hunting and nesting ground for the wildlife remaining in the area. Without management plans such as this we are forcing an already threatened species out of the area and possibly closer to extinction. In addition we are denying people the chance to learn about these habitats through observation. Since the park plan has not been finalized, there is still time to persuade the directors that preservation of habitat would truly make the Sunnyvale-Baylands Park a "Peoples Park". ■

Watch for an update to this article in a future newsletter.



Dear Member,

Since its inception members support has been a key factor in the Bird Observatory's success. Without it we could not carry out the important research projects that help us to understand the wildlife of the San Francisco Bay. Below is the Bird Observatory's Christmas Wish List for this year. The donations from last years Wish List have been put to good use and we gratefully thank **Cecil Poole** for binoculars & ornithological journals, **David Suddjian** for an adding machine, **Bob Garcia** for carpeting, **Pat & Jean Dubois** for inflatable boats and a computer, **Ed Roberts** for native plants, **Dave Formenti** for building material and carpeting for the office, **Santa Clara Valley Audubon** for wild bird seed, and **Leslie Salt** for payment on the boat motor. Please help make the wishes we all share for birds and the environment of the south Bay continue to come true.

With Warm Thanks and Our
Best Wishes for the Holidays

Subscriptions to:

Journal of Field Ornithology (\$20/yr.)
Colonial Waterbirds (\$20/yr.)
The Auk (\$26/yr.)
The Condor (\$18/yr.)

Correcting Electric Typewriter with wide carriage

Book Cases & Storage Cabinets

Map Storage Cabinet

Wild Bird Seed

Folding Chairs

Slide Projector and Screen

Banding equipment - Nets, Pliers, Scales, etc.

Donations to the copy machine fund

Boating Life Jackets

Push Button Phone

Wooden Oars

Binoculars

Spotting Scopes

Calipers

Rubber Boots & Waders

Native plants for the garden:

Gum Plant

California Bulrush

Willows

Toyon

Ceanothus

Alkali Bulrush

Coyote Brush

Box Elder

Native Annuals



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 21. The Bird Observatory will organize the Alviso section again this year. If you are new to Christmas counts, or a new birder, please don't let that stop you. Both novices and experienced birders are needed. We guarantee an exciting day. The final tally will be given at a dinner held immediately following the count. If you are interested in helping in the Alviso section, call the Bird Observatory office or Jean Dubois, section leader, at (408) 395-4264 for more details. It is important to have adequate coverage of all areas within the count circle in order to properly census both the abundant species as well as the uncommon to rare ones. So save December 21 for an exciting day of birding.

NEW BOARD MEMBER

David Seals has been appointed by the SFBBO Board of Directors to fill a seat vacated by Terry Hart. David and his wife, Roberta, have been active in many Bird Observatory projects including the Salt Pond Study, Colonial Breeding Bird Survey, Bair Island and have participated in the Goals Planning Workshop. David will serve the remainder of Terry's term thru September of 1987.

Many thanks to Terry for her service to SFBBO. Her art work has graced many pages of this newsletter and the SFBBO brochure. The SFBBO Board wishes her the very best in her new activities. ■

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

In the October newsletter you received information on the SFBBO annual membership drive. Support the Bird Observatory by adding just one new member and take a chance at winning some of these fantastic prizes.

- 2 tickets on a whale watching trip with Cheesman's Ecology Safari's
- A bed and breakfast night of your choice in Santa Cruz
- A \$50 gift certificate for the Nature Company
- 3 Volume set of Audubon Fieldguides
- 2 admission tickets to the Monterey Bay Aquarium
- Wine
- SFBBO T-shirts

For each new member you recruit increases your chances of winning in the drawing. The membership drive will end on December 4, with the drawing being held at the General Membership meeting. You do not have to be present to win. ■

Volunteer Questionnaire

Just a reminder to send in the volunteer questionnaire that was mailed to you in October. This questionnaire will update the SFBBO list of volunteers. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please take a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire and mail it as soon as possible to the Bird Observatory office. We will use this new listing as the base from which we will make contacts for participants in future projects.



COLOR-MARKED BROWN PELICANS

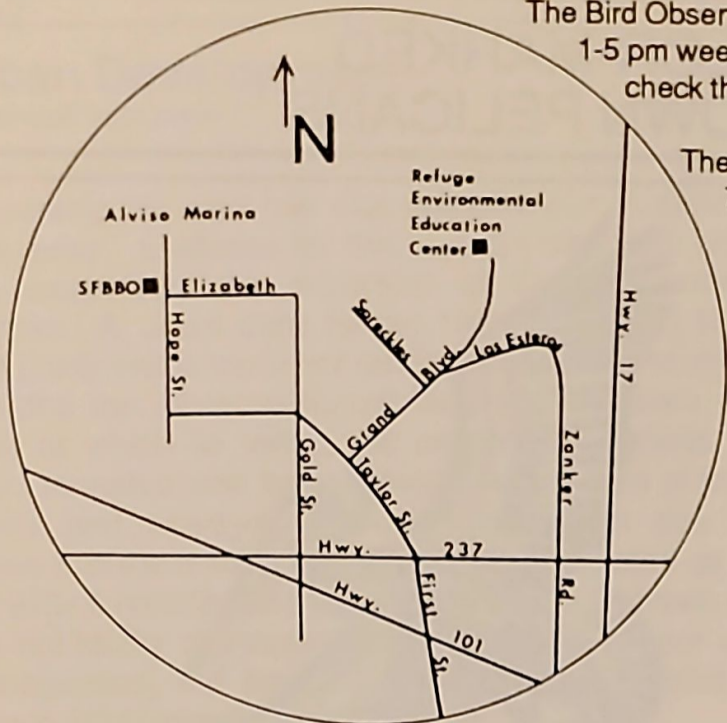


You are being asked to cooperate in studies of the California brown pelican by reporting your sightings of banded and tagged birds to the **Pelican Research Project, Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, University of California, Davis, Ca. 95616.** Brown pelicans have been leg-tagged to study their movements, migrations, and interactions with man. The tags vary from plain aluminum bands to bands plus plastic leg markers of various colors. Each configuration has a meaning, so a good, accurate description of what is seen yields the most information. If you see one or more of these birds, please report the following information:

- 1) the configuration (what is on what leg)
- 2) the color (and number if possible)
- 3) the date and location of sighting
- 4) the situation
- 5) any other comments you'd like to make that might be important (was the bird sick or injured, was it being a nuisance, etc.)
- 6) your name and address

Please do not remove the tags or bands unless the bird is dead. If the bird is sick or injured and captured, notify the nearest Dept. of Fish and Game warden. If the bird is hooked, remove the hook and line carefully so as not to injure the bird or rip the skin or pouch. If the hook is imbedded in the skin, push the barb through the skin, cut it off, then back the cut hook out. If the bird is dead, we'd appreciate the tags back, so we can check them for wear and longevity. We will inform you of the bird's origins, age, etc. Your help will be much appreciated. ■

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 meetings are open to the membership and 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 Bucksin 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.

DONATIONS. SFBBO Board members are grateful to Pat Dubois for her thoughtful donation of refreshments for the Board meetings.

Also thanks to Ed Roberts, Don Starks and Peg Woodin for the refreshments for the November General Meeting.

CONTRIBUTIONS. The Bird Observatory gratefully thanks Leslie Salt for their donation of \$269 to pay for the balance on the new 15hp Evinrude outboard motor.

Thanks to Dave Formenti and Structural Measurement Systems (SMS) for their donation of lumber and carpeting. The carpeting will be installed in the office and the lumber will be used to strengthen and weatherproof a two-story section of our office building. SMS also donated to two copies of their technical data base software, "Parameter Manager", that will be used for graphical analysis of SFBBO bird research data.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Thursday, December 4, 1986

Refuge Environmental Education Center

in Alviso

7:30 pm

FEATURED SPEAKER. Call the Bird Observatory office for information on the speaker for the General Meeting.

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

The Bird Observatory office will be closed for the holidays from December 22 to January 4. Have a bright and beautiful Christmas season.

Editor, Susie Formenti



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Alviso, CA 95002
(408) 946-6540

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

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (____) _____

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.