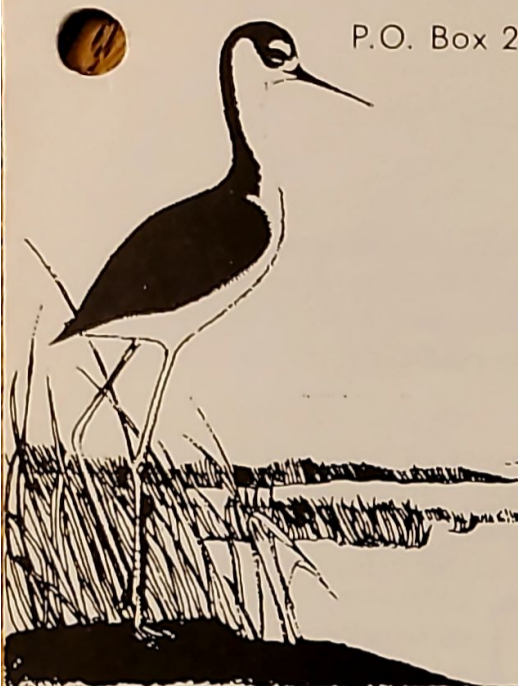


SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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Volume 6, Number 6

June 1987

Bay Information Network Formed

"They brought us four boxes of apples today," said SFBBO Office Manager Barbara Cox.

"Apples? What Kind?"

"Macintosh," Barbara replied.

"Gee, I didn't know Macintosh apples were available this time of the year."

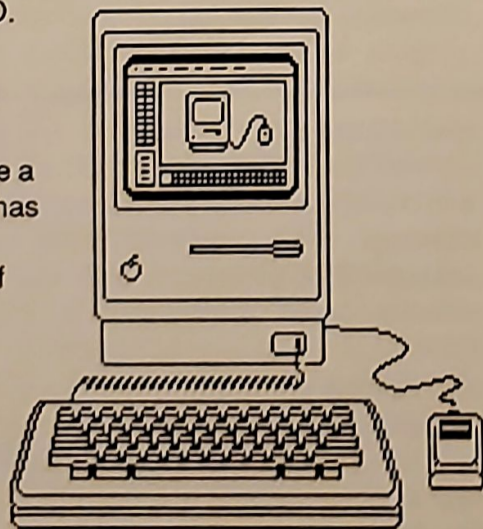
The eating kind of Macintosh may not be around in local produce stands, but the computer type of Macintosh is definitely in season at SFBBO.

Thanks to a grant from Apple Computer Corporate Grants Program, SFBBO has become a member of a new group that has been

established for the purpose of sharing environmental information in the San Francisco Bay region.

Called Bay Information Network, (BIN), we are linked by way of Macintosh computers and modems in

the office of each group to form a biological network which runs from Richmond down the East Bay to SFBBO, then to Palo Alto.



BIN is composed of the following organizations:
San Francisco Bay-Delta Aquatic Habitat Institute,
Richmond

Citizens for the Eastshore State Park, Albany
Committee for Water Policy Consensus, Concord
Save San Francisco Bay Association, Berkeley
NOAA Hazardous Materials Response Branch,
Alameda

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, Alviso
Santa Clara Audubon Society, Palo Alto

In addition to a Macintosh Plus and a modem, each group received a hard disk, a printer, and assorted software. This new equipment will enable SFBBO to store data in a much more readily accessible manner and to communicate and exchange information with other groups who work with the biology of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Kathy Hobson and Barbara Cox received training in the use of the equipment as part of the grant award. In turn, we intend to provide training for other members of SFBBO who are involved as project leaders, active volunteers, or who are interested in helping with the new and useful task of information storage such as the colonial bird census data amassed over the years of our investigations. If you would like to participate in any of these activities, telephone the office to have your name put on the computer training list. ■

**Environmental Groups Linked
by way of Macintosh Computers**

OUR SUBURBAN STATE BIRD

by C. Kevorkian

Like monuments, such street names as Quail Ridge Road, Quail Hollow Drive, and Quail Lane are frequently seen in Santa Clara County, reminding us of the past presence of our state bird, the California Quail (*Lophortyx californicus*). From past records we know quail were prevalent here, at times in coveys equaling thousands, and because of this, they provided what seemed to be an unending supply of market quail. Thousands of quail were taken each year by market hunters who found the business so lucrative or sporting that after a 1901 law which fixed bag limits and prohibited the sale of quail, they continued shipping the birds by bootleg methods. For these reasons, but more importantly due to habitat destruction, the California Quail is nonexistent throughout most of the Santa Clara Valley.

Today, in this county, we find quail in a few areas, primarily the coastal ranges, where they utilize conifer, oak, and dense chaparral. Unlike Mountain Quail, they usually frequent openings or edge situations while feeding, rather than dense cover. This subspecies, *L. c. californicus*, is larger, darker, and more richly colored than the valley California Quail.

Because much of the Santa Cruz Mountain areas have been preserved, the California Quails basic habitat needs are stable and like all living things are basic: food, protective cover, and water.

One of the most predominant vegetational formations on our eastern coastal range slopes is chaparral. There are many distinctive local types of chaparral made up of different species of shrubs. Those prevailing along our ranges are Coyote Brush (*Baccharis*), Wild Lilac (*Ceanothus*), Poison Oak (*Rhus*), and various species of oaks (*Quercus*). Chaparral has always been an important component of quail habitat and provides such principal foods as acorns and other seeds from the many shrub-like plants. In addition, quail make good use of waste grain in stubble fields, and both wild and cultivated fruits and berries.

This brushy vegetation not only provides food but daytime cover for quail coveys. After the morning feeding, the birds retreat to a sufficiently dense cover which will provide shade

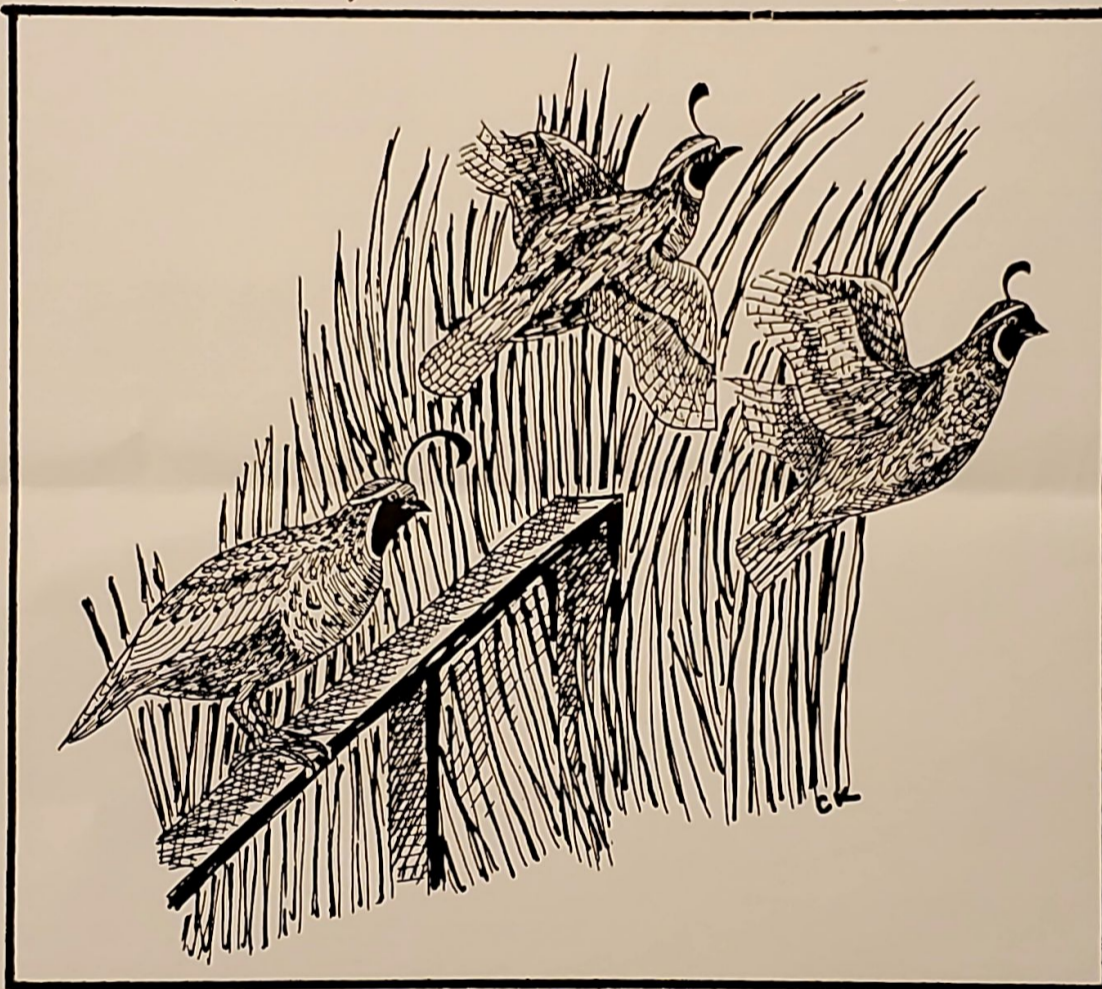
from the sun, shelter from rain, and escape from hawks or other predators. There they spend the day at leisure until evening when feeding begins once again. At night, California Quail prefer to roost off the ground, normally in dense trees or tall shrubs.

Although little used throughout most of the year, water is critical in summer and early autumn, when temperatures are high and young quail are being reared. If only a drip or puddle, it will serve as long as it's dependable. Because of urban settlement, the natural water systems have been drastically altered, lowering the water table and causing many of the original seeps to go dry. As a result, much otherwise prime quail habitat is unusable.

Finding all three factors: water, food, and cover is becoming increasingly difficult. Ordinarily, two are quite common, but the third is lacking. For example, the chaparral throughout the coastal ranges normally lacks good supplies of water. On the other hand, where there is water, areas like farmland and grazing land, cover plants are lacking.

The California Quail is certainly not a threatened

species, but those of us who are unceasingly charmed by the sight of quail along the roadside and never tire hearing their wild cry at dawn and sunset, would like to see their populations increase. The California Quail has been noted as a good example of a game bird that has become "domesticated". If suitable cover and water is available, quail will nest in residential areas and adapt well to the presence of people. In fact nesting populations are found in brushy or wooded areas in the heart of Berkeley and along riverbanks in the center of residential Reno, Nevada. A tangle of blackberry vines, twenty feet in diameter and six feet tall, make a perfect nesting cover for California Quail, in addition to ornamentals like Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), *Pyracantha*, and Holly. If you live near occupied quail habitat, you may consider adapting your yard to attract these birds. They are easily attracted to feeding stations and this, in addition to sufficient cover and water would be enough to maintain a small covey. Imagine, if you live on Quail Lane, that street name would actually mean something!



CALIFORNIA GULL STUDY - 1987

California Gulls are into their full flurry of nesting for the 1987 season. Volunteers conducted a census of nests and eggs on Saturday, May 9 and came up with a count of 1720 nests. With an average of three eggs per nest, this translates to a gull chick population of 5160 as your mental math undoubtedly calculated. Banding trips are scheduled from June 1 onwards as follows:

Monday, June 1
 Saturday, June 6
 Thursday, June 11
 Tuesday, June 16
 Sunday, June 21
 Friday, June 26
 Wednesday, July 1

All trips will begin at 7:00 p.m. and end at 11:00 p.m. Volunteers should dress in preparation for cool weather. Hard hats are the preferred "topper" by most volunteers, (there are loaners available at the observatory). A good flashlight is necessary; a headlamp is even better.

Two new studies are in operation in the gull colony this year. Volunteers are needed for both of these projects. The studies are described briefly below. More thorough information will be included in a subsequent newsletter.

Jan Dierks is doing research on the diet of unfledged California Gull chicks. This involves both daylight and nocturnal visits to the colony plus the collection of ~200 samples from chicks for later analysis. Volunteers are needed to assist Jan with her work. Her night trips to the colony will coincide with the dates given above. Daylight visits involve observations by spotting scope from the road, by boat drift down the borrow pit between the levees, or from the newly erected blind on levee B. Contact the office for dates of daytime visits.

The second new gull study is being performed in cooperation with Dr. J. R. Jehl of Hubbs/Sea World Marine Research Institute and researchers in California Gull colonies ranging from the San Francisco Bay colony to Alberta, Canada. This study involves a comparison of the bioenergetics of eggs with reproductive success. One dozen fresh eggs were collected from each colony and sent to Dr. Jehl for analysis in a bomb calorimeter. Subsequently, selected study areas in each colony are being monitored to determine reproductive success in that colony. As the fledging period approaches, volunteers will be needed to do daylight observation from the blind. This is best done by two people (but no more than two since the blind measures only 4 x 4'). Those of you interested in participating in this study should telephone the observatory office to determine the specific dates when daylight observations will be conducted.



SFBBO Volunteers Provide Educational Programs

The work of the Observatory could not be accomplished without the enthusiastic help of dozens of individuals who generously donate their time, effort, and expertise. While we frequently mention the efforts of those individuals who ably assist us in our research work, we less frequently acknowledge the equally important efforts of those who assist us in providing educational programs to school groups, 4-H groups, scout troupes, and to the general public.

We'd like to express our appreciation to the following individuals who have contributed their time and talents to our educational programs in 1987:

Allen Royer, Elsie Richey, Marilyn Fowler, Max Lincoln, and Clarice Lincoln for conducting bird banding demonstrations at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (SFBWNR) Environmental Education Center on February 14.

Paul Noble for leading a birdwalk for a group of Explorer Scouts from Palo Alto on March 14.

Allen Royer and Lynn Tennefoss (on March 15), and **Elsie Richey and Dave Johnson** (on March 21) conducted bird banding demonstrations at the SFBWNR as part of the celebration of National Wildlife Week.

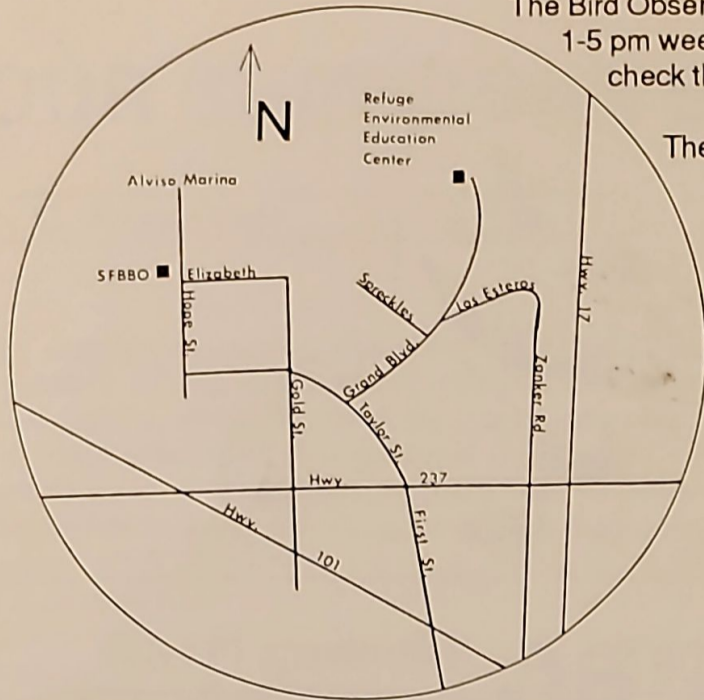
David and Roberta Seals for helping at the Youth Science Institute's Wildlife Day at Alum Rock Park on March 21, to **Allan Sillett** who conducted a bird banding demonstration, and to **Don Starks** who, at the same event, presented a slide show presentation on "Birds of San Francisco Bay".

Kathy Hobson and Peg Woodin for conducting bird banding demonstrations at the SFBWNR Environmental Education Center on April 5.

Thanks, also, to the Golden Gate Audubon Society for setting up SFBBO's display and handing out copies of our informational literature at the Outdoor Sport and Recreation Show at Moscone Center in San Francisco from February 28 through March 1.



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 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, June 4, 1987

Refuge Environmental Education Center
in Alviso

7:30 pm

FEATURED SPEAKER: Joan Humphrey

TOPIC: Nesting Ecology, Distribution and Population of the Sacramento River Bank Swallow. Results of a 1986 study along the Sacramento River.

Donations

Thanks to Berry Brown, Pat Dubois, and Phyllis Swanson for the refreshments for the May General Meeting.

WISH LIST

Is anyone willing to donate to the Bird Observatory a three year subscription to **Outdoor California**. A three year subscription (18 issues) is \$15. If you would like to make this donation please call the office.



SFBBO Windbreaker

Don't forget to order your SFBBO windbreaker. Send your check for \$25, payable to SFBBO, by June 1st. See May newsletter for description and sizes.

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.