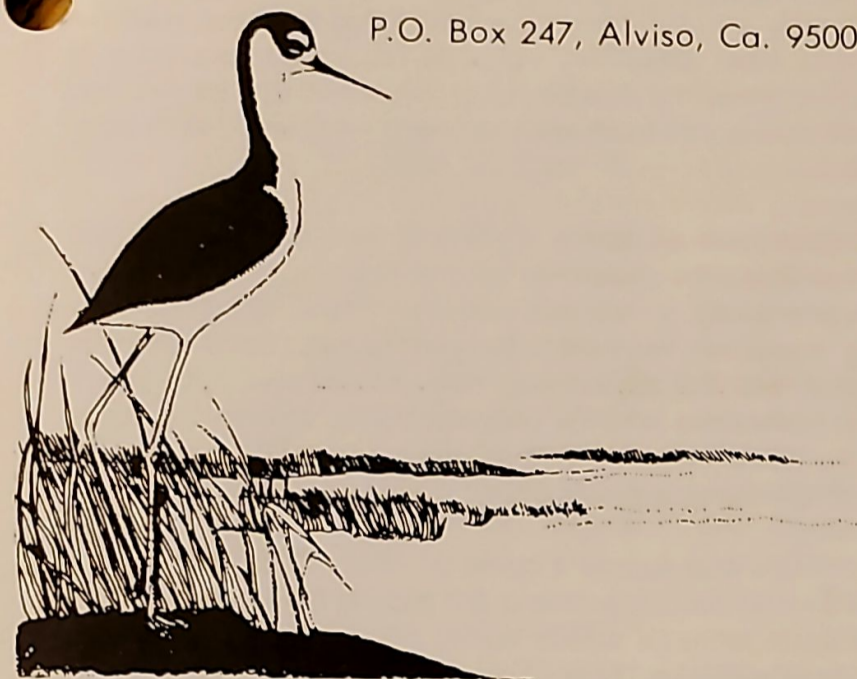


SAN FRANCISCO BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY NEWSLETTER

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July 1987

A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

September 1, 1987, will mark the conclusion of the terms of office for two fine and hardworking members of the SFBBO Board of Directors. According to the bylaws, no member of the board may serve more than two consecutive terms. Thus Phyllis Swanson and Don Starks, both ex-presidents of SFBBO, will end their respective tours of duty on the board. Thanks to Phyllis and Don for a job well done. Although we hope that they both will remain active and continue to add their vitality and enthusiasm to the organization, it is necessary to identify at least two people who are willing to contribute their ideas, talents, and energies to this organization. Are **you** interested?

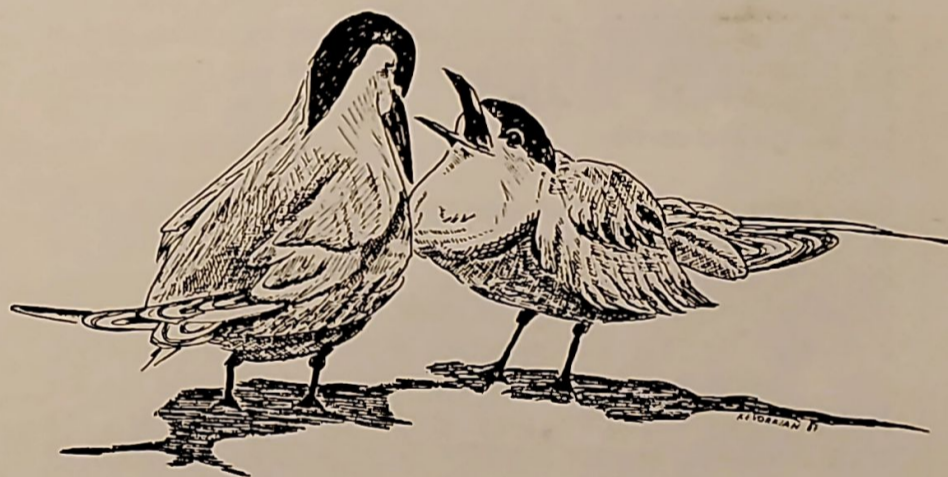
As described in the Bylaws, the duties of members of the board are as follows:

- a. Perform all duties imposed on them as stated by the Bylaws.
- b. Prescribe duties and fix compensation for all agents, officers, and employees of the organization, in addition to employing or discharging said individuals except as otherwise provided by these Bylaws.
- c. Supervise all officers, employees and agents of the corporation to assure that their duties are performed as set out by the annual goals meeting.
- d. Meet at such times and places as required by these Bylaws.

Board members are the people who deal with the "nuts and bolts" aspects of SFBBO. It requires a commitment of time and energy to serve on the board, but present and former members will tell you that the rewards of working to help SFBBO grow and develop are well worth the effort.

If you would like to suggest someone as a candidate for the SFBBO board of directors, contact the office or the nominating committee: Phyllis Swanson (408) 274-2349, Peg Woodin (408) 262-6204, and Jean Young (408) 252-2145.

If you believe that **you** have something to offer this organization, and if you are able to commit some time and energy to SFBBO, contact the office or one of the board members. If you have questions, they will be glad to answer them. Why not be active? It's for a good cause. ■



CALIFORNIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

The California Bird Records Committee of the Western Field Ornithologists is seeking information on the status of non-native populations of the following species in California: Common Peafowl, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Ringed Turtle-Dove, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Black-hooded Parakeet, Canary-winged Parakeet, Red-crowned Parrot, Lilac-crowned Parrot, Yellow-headed Parrot, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Oriental White-eye, and Northern Cardinal. Anyone with information on the history of release or escape, population size, distribution, nesting success, attempts to manage or eradicate these populations, or other factors which bear on the question of their establishment, or of the establishment of other introduced species not on the California State Check-List is urged to report to Kimball L. Garrett, Section of Birds and Mammals, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007. ■

MAMMAL OF THE MONTH

Deer mouse

Peromyscus maniculatus

by Vicki R. Jennings



This article continues a series started in the April newsletter on the mammals of San Francisco Bay and its surrounding marshes. The first Mammal of the Month was *Microtus californicus*, the California meadow mouse or vole. This month's article introduces the deer mouse, *Peromyscus maniculatus*. Subsequent articles will cover mammals ranging from salt marsh harvest mice to harbor seals. As I said in the initial article, although mammals are an inconspicuous part of the marshes and San Francisco Bay, they are nevertheless an important part. As much as birds, mammals deserve our knowledge and concern.

Surely one of the prettiest rodents, the deer mouse is a study in richness of pelage and detailing. Seldom more than six inches in total length, the body and tail are strongly bicolored. Upper body and tail range in color from cinnamon to silver, while the belly, feet, and underside of the tail are brilliant white. Often there is a light spot between eye and ear, and the ear itself is usually edged with pale, almost metallic short hair. The tail is frequently shorter (by 10% or more) than the length of head and body. Eyes are very large, whiskers profuse; in short, this mouse is a visual feast. (For those of you whose experience with rodents is limited to the sorry results of house mouse trapping in your kitchen--take my word for it, there are beautiful rodents!)

Six species of *Peromyscus* are found in California, four of them in the Bay Area. *Peromyscus maniculatus* is the most wide-ranging of these (indeed, its overall range extends from Alaska to central Mexico, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and covers about 5 million square miles), and is found in nearly all life zones and plant communities, the periphery of salt and freshwater marshes included.

I have never live-trapped *Peromyscus* in areas subject to strong tidal action, but wherever the elevation permits a diversity of plant species, good cover, and infrequent tidal inundation, small numbers of these little rodents may be found. They are never common in this area; one field guide even flatly states that they are not ever found in marshlands

(but we all know that field guides lie a lot, don't we?). In a total of 4420 trap nights at four South Bay sites only 19 *Peromyscus* were caught. Contrast that with the 341 house mice and 411 *Microtus* caught during the same period at the same sites! (Total trap nights, or TN, equals the number of traps set times the number of nights the traps are left out. Usually 100 to 150 traps are used each night for three or more nights.)

Deer mice feed on seeds, fruits and invertebrates (in some forested areas the mice may be significant predators on tree-damaging insect larvae and pupae). They apparently don't utilize succulent vegetation (leaves, grasses etc.) as does *Microtus*, and this dislike may help restrict deer mice to the higher levee sides where a greater diversity of flowering plants may be found. Caches of food are made in sheltered spots, permitting leisurely and safe dining.

Each mouse may occupy a home range of 1/2 to 3 acres, with much overlap occurring among the mice in the area. Females show some territorial activity during the breeding season, and may claim exclusive rights to some or all of their usual areas. Just to confuse the issue, though, some researchers report that two females may share a nest and, seemingly, nursing duties as well. It is thought that this tolerance may be the behavioral artifact of a crowded "childhood" in populations of high density; that is, these mice get used to sharing as they grow up. Within each home range several food caches, nests and rest stops are established. Nests may be in burrows, in vegetation tunnels, even in old birds' nests.

Two to four litters are produced every year, with three to five (sometimes as many as eight) young in each. As in most rodents, puberty comes swiftly; teenage mice are ready to breed at five to six weeks of age. However, unlike *Microtus* populations, *Peromyscus* shows a relatively stable and low population number in this part of the country.

Unless you are very lucky, you'll never see this uncommon, nocturnal, beautiful mouse when you visit the Bay's marshes. I'm sorry about that, for I'd like to share its charm with you, but I suppose it's enough to know that even unseen and uncommon creatures have their roles and their value! ■

SFBBO ENDOWMENT FUND

From its inception, the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory recognized the need for long-term funding. As a means of accomplishing this, an endowment fund was established with the money received from life memberships and memorial gifts. Only the interest is used from this fund. Please remember us and our programs when considering memorial donations. Thank you.

1987 SFBBO Birdathon

by Bill Bousman

Clark Blake and I set out to combine a Santa Clara County Big Day and the SFBBO Birdathon on Saturday, April 25. Our plan was to start owling on Mines Road near the Alameda County line before dawn, head up into the San Antonio Valley, up the east side of Mt. Hamilton and over the top and down into the Santa Clara Valley. We would then hit the bayside habitat and then go on to Stevens Creek Park to work on the more coastal species. Any left over time would be used for missed species, staying always in the county.

We left the bay areas on Friday afternoon and drove over Mt. Hamilton to scout our route. Probably our rarest bird of the entire trip was an Osprey migrating north along the front slope of the Diablo Range. We didn't note a lot of migrant insectivores on Mt. Hamilton which was not a good omen. Things got better as we dropped down into Arroyo Bayo and we started to find Wood Ducks at a number of places. Once in San Antonio Valley we found Lewis's Woodpecker right away which was a good sign as they had been pretty much absent from the valley during the winter as a consequence of a failure in the oak mast crop. At the Hurner Ranch we found two Green-backed Herons which was a good find.

We then dropped down into Del Puerto Canyon in Stanislaus County to spend the night at Frank Raines Park. We were up at 3:30 a.m. and owling by 4:25 a.m. First bird of the day was a Western Screech-Owl calling at the Stanislaus County line. We worked north on Mines Road picking up calling Great Horned Owls and Poorwill. AT the Alameda County line we had an unknown owl calling, and upward inflected "mew" call, very much like the female Long-eared Owl on the European tapes. However, we couldn't get the bird to respond to us or come closer, so we finally decided to leave it as an unknown species because neither of us were familiar with the call. We quickly picked up a number of species who breed in the valley or on the east slope of Mt. Hamilton, but no further west: Greater Roadrunner, Lewis' Woodpecker, Say's Phoebe, and Phainopepla. In addition, Green-backed Heron, Wood Duck, Hairy Woodpecker, Lark Sparrow, and Sage Sparrow were all hard birds to find that are more likely in the valley.

Up onto Mt. Hamilton we went with many stops looking for migrating birds. We never found any big groups, but the many little groups were all we needed. By Smith's Creek we had Orange-crowned, Nashville, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Gray, Hermit, and Wilson's warblers! A calling Red-breasted Nuthatch near the top was unusual. Coming down the west side of Mt. Hamilton we started seeing raptors - by Alum Rock we had added Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks and Golden Eagle. Alum Rock was good for a few things like Allen's Hummingbird, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and Brown Creeper, but it was our last chance for Rufous-crowned Sparrow and we couldn't call it up. This was the first bird on our list that we knew we could no longer get.

Then down to Alviso. There our first surprise was that the gate to the Environmental Education Center was closed. That cost us a chance for a few things like Cattle Egret, Red-breasted Mergansers, Sanderling, and Bonaparte's Gull - oh, well. We headed then for the Palo Alto Baylands to catch the receding tide south of the mouth of San Francisquito Creek. Bingo! We hit the jackpot! Among the frenzy of three to six thousand shorebirds that moved in we found Black-bellied Plover, Willet, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Western and Least sandpipers, Dunlin, Short-billed and Long-billed dowitchers, and Wilson's Phalarope, almost all in breeding plumage. The two Ruddy's and the two Wilson's Phalaropes were the rarest birds of the day.

Then off to the Mountain View Forebay and Charleston Slough for Horned Grebe, American White Pelican, and Common Moorhen. By this time we knew we were doing well. We went to Stevens Creek to pick up a few missing birds that we thought we could find there and found Downey Woodpecker (female on a nest), Western Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Hutton's Vireo. We were now at 139 and it was 5:00 pm. We had almost three hours of light left and now it was a question of where to spend our time. Two species we had missed could be anywhere - Band-tailed Pigeon and Cedar Waxwing. Up on Skyline there was a possibility of Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Varied Thrush, and

Lazuli Bunting. Around Stanford we felt we could find Red-shouldered Hawk, White-throated Swift, and, if we stayed late enough, Barn Owl. If we went back to the Baylands there was a possibility of a few more shorebirds or some bay birds and at dusk the Clapper Rails would start to call.

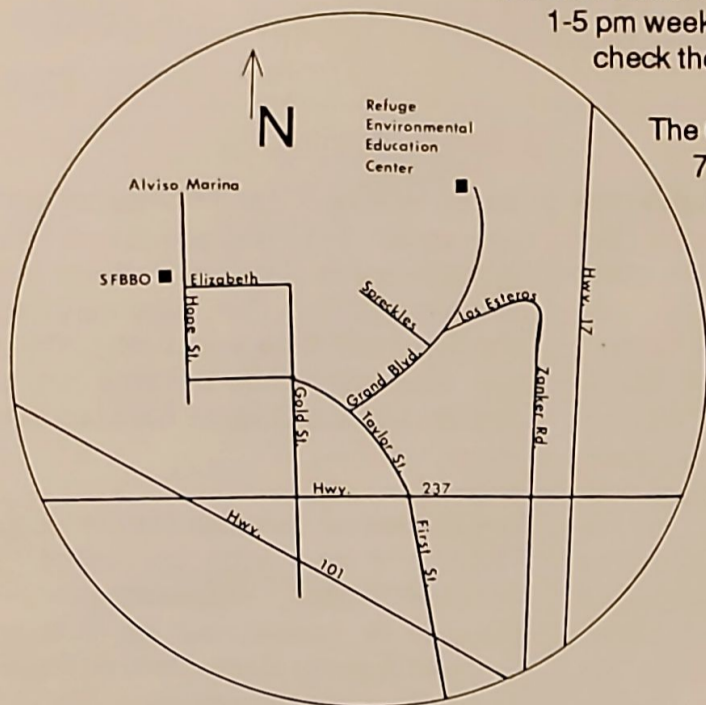
We headed for Saratoga Gap by Mt. Eden Road, and then north on Skyline. We checked creeks, redwood glens, and Douglas fir forests, but no luck. We dropped down to Monte Bello on Page Mill and walked into the sag pond. No Virginia Rails, but we did find a Lazuli Bunting (140). We now dropped down into the valley to cover Stanford and at the Cactus Garden picked up Cedar Waxwing (141) and Red-shouldered Hawk (142). At the Hoover Tower we had White-throated Swifts (143), but we decided not to wait for the Barn Owls. Back to the Baylands where we found Western Grebe (144) in the abandoned harbor and Long-billed Curlew (145) out on the mud flats just as the sun set. We walked out the catwalk for the Clapper Rail when two of the local Canada Geese (146) flew by. Then the Clapper Rails (147) set up a fuss and we had our last bird.

Statistics: 147 species seen or heard in Santa Clara County; birded a total of 15 hours, 40 minutes; drove 140 miles; and walked about 3 miles. The most common species that we missed? Probably Band-tailed Pigeon. I have seen them every day since our trip in my yard in Menlo Park, San Mateo County. •

Watch for the results of the SFBBO Big Day Fundraiser in the next newsletter.



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.

Donations

Thanks to Elsie Richey, Pat Dubois, and Crystal Woodin for the refreshments for the June General Meeting.

SUMMER FIELD TRIPS OFFERED

A summer field trip series to study birds in a variety of habitats will be offered by **Sunbeam Ecology Explorations**. Participants may sign up for the entire series or individual trips. The instructor will be Maryann Danielson. For further information call (415) 342-6919.

- June 6 Birdbanding at Palomarin and Audubon Canyon Ranch.
- June 20 Chimney Rock at Point Reyes for nesting Western Gulls, Oystercatchers and wildflowers.
- July 18 A transect of Mt. Hamilton to observe altitudinal changes in the flora and fauna
- August 1 San Mateo County Coast for nestingsummer birds.
- August 15 Bodega Bay for early migrating shorebirds.

Fremont Adult School is offering two "Birding Field trips" classes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Each class will meet on five mornings from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The Tuesday class will begin on June 23rd and the Wednesday class will begin on June 24th. Instructor Alice Hoch. For more information and registration call the Fremont Adult School at (415) 791-5841.

NOTICES

There will be no General Membership Meeting for the months of July and August.

Also, note that the newsletter is not printed in August. Your next issue will be the September newsletter. The Bird Observatory office will remain open as usual from 1 - 5p.m., Monday thru Friday. This is the busiest time of the year for Bird Observatory research projects and volunteer help is needed. If you would like to volunteer, call the office. Have a great summer!

Editor, Susie Formenti



P.O. Box 247
Alviso, CA 95002
(408) 946-6540

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

NAME _____

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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.