

M&O
Serials
QL 671
.G84

THE
MONTHLY



GULL
BULLETIN

VOLUME 16

SAN FRANCISCO, AUGUST, 1934

AUG 24 1934 NUMBER 8

RECEIVED
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

A Rhapsody of Raptors

December 4, 1933, will go down in my memory as probably the red-letter day of my ornithological experiences. On that date, through the generosity of Mr. Charles A. Bryant, I was in Sespe Canyon, Ventura County. This is well known as the Mecca of all California bird enthusiasts, and there is a great thrill in store for those who have never seen a Condor, when they first start up that wonderful, rock-walled gorge. Mr. Bryant and I did not start until a short while after noon and we were rather dubious as to the possible results, having been told that the birds left the canyon about ten in the morning and did not return until sundown.

Canyon Wrens were calling on all sides, but, try as we might, we could see none. I will admit that, with possibilities of Condors farther on in the canyon, we probably did not look so hard nor so long for them as we might have done.

To me, who had believed that canyon walls and jagged peaks must be scaled to find Condors, it seemed queer to be walking up a perfectly good road to our destination. In fact, as Mr. Bryant put it, "one could wear his best clothes and run the risk merely of getting his shoes dusty." Perhaps this will remove some of the romance of the search for this great bird for those who, like myself, had been told many tales of the "inaccessibility of its haunts." As we made our way up this road, many a chill went up and down my spine until the binoculars proved the bird in sight to be merely a Red-tailed Hawk or a Turkey Vulture. The presence of many Sharp-shinned Hawks served to show that there must be numerous small birds in the canyon; and so it proved. Thrushes, Sparrows, Warblers, Wrens and many other species were singing from every brush pile or among the branches above our heads.

Emerging into the more open portion of the upper canyon, we eagerly began scanning the surrounding peaks for a sight of this great bird, and as we looked up we saw a large black bird sailing along a hillside. "Condor!" we exclaimed and hurriedly brought it into focus in our glasses. That was the first time in my life that I was ever disappointed at seeing a Golden Eagle in action. A pair of Sparrow Hawks diving at an unperturbed Red-tail provided us with our fifth raptor since we had entered the canyon. Another moment added still another, a Cooper Hawk. And yet we were downcast, for our Condors were nowhere to be seen. Six raptors in "Condor Canyon" and yet no Condors. Were we to be compelled to see all the hawks of California before getting a chance at the king of them all?

I turned to look at some White-throated Swifts that were dashing at break-neck speed around the cliff, and lo and behold, there was a tremendous bird gliding silently along the brow of the hill. At last! My ambition achieved. Although the bird was at some distance, its great size was at once apparent. That

size was forcefully brought home to us when a Red-tailed Hawk spiraled up to pay his respects to a master flyer. What a difference there was! The Condor looked to be all of five times the bulk of the Red-tail, and a small group of Swifts dashing by near him looked like so many flies.

Our bird swung away over the hill and we were afraid that perhaps we had seen the last of him, but he soon reappeared and another Condor was with him. Two at once! Things were picking up. A young bird put in his appearance at this time and was immediately pounced upon by one of the adult birds and put to flight. However, he forced the older Condor to the limit to overtake him. His diving and twisting easily equaled if not surpassed the superb performances of playing Ravens. Our original bird had one trick too many for the impudent young upstart and after a brief chase that must have covered several miles the immature bird took himself off over the ridge and out of our sight and beyond the range of the older bird's ire.

We were certainly pleased. We had gone up with our greatest hope to see at least one, but there we were with a great aerial show put on by three Condors. We sat back on some convenient boards lying by an abandoned oil well and watched them to our hearts' content. One was exceptionally obliging and flew over us several times quite low down. No doubt, he was wondering what queer species we were to leave the highways for such a spot as that. He flew over and lit on the brow of a cliff, spreading out his wings to let them sun awhile. Rejoining the other bird, they both sailed up the canyon and on up into some clouds that were hovering about the tops of the ridges. As they did not reappear soon, we thought we had seen the last of them and were ready to leave. As we started down the canyon a small hawk dashed over our heads and behind the brush. From force of habit more than anything else, we put the glasses on him as he reappeared and our already thrill-frayed nerves were set on edge again as we recognized the bird to be a Pigeon Hawk. There we were with eight different raptorial birds, the largest of them all included. Who could ask for, or possibly want, more?

Searching the skies for a last look at the Condors, we were again overjoyed by the sight of four of them sailing in majestic circles about the ridges. All were adults, and counting the immature bird, that made five that we had seen. But we were not through yet, for soon still another pair of adult Condors showed up, bringing the total seen to seven, all this within two or three hours. We watched these for awhile, and then continued down the canyon to our car.

Raptor Canyon would be a more fitting name for the place than Sespe, at least from an ornithologist's point of view.

Gordon Bolander, Oakland, California. May 24, 1934.



The field trip, Sunday, July 15th, to Land's End, Cliff House, and Golden Gate Park was attended by a small but enthusiastic group, who at the end of the day felt well rewarded for rising early on a Sunday morning and coming on a trip, especially when the weather didn't look any too promising at the start. Perhaps some of those who failed to come stayed home on account of the uncertain conditions existing due to the strikes.

There was a high fog most of the day, though the sun did show itself for awhile in the afternoon. On the trail along Land's End there was a brisk ocean breeze, but it was not cold enough to be unpleasant.

The Pigeon Guillemots were in their accustomed location, favoring the camel-back rock, about twelve adults and two young ones; the latter, though apparently out of the nest proper, yet not able to fly, each occupying its own separate little hollow, were receiving parental care and waiting for their wings to grow. Unusually good observations were had of these interesting birds of the

sea. Once four of them alighted upon a rock not more than twenty feet from where we stood and remained there for some time, giving us a good view of the carmine lining of the mouth when they gave their hissing call note.

At the old stadium in the park we saw a bevy of fifteen young Quail apparently not more than a day old. On both Spreckels and Metson Lakes we noticed Mallards with small broods of very young ducklings. The middle of July is unusually late for such observations.

The following is the list of species, thirty-two in number, recorded for the day. In Golden Gate Park:

Pied-billed Grebe	Western Flycatcher	Purple Finch
Mallard	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Common House Finch
Ruddy Duck	Coast Bush-tit	Pine Siskin
California Quail	Western Robin	Green-backed Goldfinch
American Coot	Russet-backed Thrush	San Francisco Towhee
Allen Hummingbird	Pileolated Warbler	Point Pinos Junco
Belted Kingfisher	Brewer Blackbird	Nuttall Sparrow
Red-shafted Flicker	English Sparrow	Song Sparrow
Black Phoebe		

Found along the water only:

Brown Pelican	California Gull	Pigeon Guillemot
Farallon Cormorant	Heermann Gull	Willow Goldfinch
Western Gull		

Members attending: Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Stephens; Mesdames Courtright, Mexia; Miss Walker; Mr. B. C. Bremer.

Laura A. Stephens, Leader and Historian.



Field trip to Ross, Marin County, June 17, 1934. Eighteen members, three guests. An ideal day for birding. Fifty-one species observed as follows:

Turkey Vulture	Cliff Swallow	Yellow Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	Purple Martin	Black-throated Gray Warbler
Desert Sparrow Hawk	Coast Jay	Pileolated Warbler
California Quail	Nicasio Jay	Western Meadowlark
Vaux Swift	American Crow	Brewer Blackbird
Anna Hummingbird	Nicasio Chickadee	Black-headed Grosbeak
Allen Hummingbird	Plain Titmouse	Lazuli Bunting
Belted Kingfisher	California Creeper	Purple Finch
Red-shafted Flicker	Ruddy Wren-tit	Common House Finch
California Woodpecker	Western Robin	Pine Siskin
Willow Woodpecker	Monterey Hermit Thrush	Green-backed Goldfinch
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Russet-backed Thrush	San Francisco Towhee
Western Flycatcher	Western Bluebird	San Francisco Brown Towhee
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Warbling Vireo	Lark Sparrow
Violet-green Swallow	Cassin Vireo	Point Pinos Junco
Tree Swallow	Hutton Vireo	Chipping Sparrow
Barn Swallow	Lutescent Warbler	Song Sparrow

Although on many of our trips we had heard the song of the Monterey Hermit Thrush, this was the first time we had the opportunity to see the species itself. It ran up the road a few paces, picked something from the ground and continued on a few more paces, repeating this for quite a distance. We had an excellent view of it until finally it flew away. Later we heard it singing nearby.

In addition to the above, Farallon Cormorants and Murres were seen on the San Francisco Bay, and a Great Blue Heron and Western Gulls on Richardson Bay.

Members attending: Mr. and Mrs. B. K. Dunshee and Mildred; Mr. and Mrs. Otis H. Smith; Mr. and Mrs. Albert B. Stephens; Mesdames Courtright, Thomas; Misses Berg, Cave, Cockefair, Cohen, Papina, Sterne, Walker; Messrs. Bryant, Webb. Guests: Mrs. Anabel; Messrs. Chase, Power.

Audubon Notes

August Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 9th, at 8 p. m., room 19, Ferry Building. The speaker of the evening will be Mr. T. T. MacCabe, of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, who will speak on "Birds of Western British Columbia."



August Field Trip will be taken Sunday, the 12th, to Tennessee Cove, Marin County. Purchase round-trip ticket to Manzanita, 45c, and take 8:45 a. m. Sausalito Ferry. Bring luncheon. Leader, Joseph J. Webb.



July Meeting: The 204th regular meeting was held on July 12th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with twenty-two members present. Owing to the labor strike, a sentry was placed at the door, a new sensation for our members.

Observations were reported by Commander Parmenter as follows:

May 17, Cliff House Rocks, Wandering Tattler; June 7, Dumbarton and San Mateo Bridges, Black-bellied Plovers 100+, Hudsonian Curlew, California Gulls 100+, many young; 21st, Muir Woods, two Horned Owls; July 3rd, Crystal Springs Lake, Caspian Terns 21; Lobos Creek, Presidio, Kingfisher.

Dr. Adele Grant in her talk on the "Economic Value of Birds" spoke first on the methods employed to obtain the scientific data necessary for such an evaluation.

Conclusions based on observation alone are unreliable and out of date. The best method and the one most generally used, is that of analysis of stomach contents. Numerous specimens should be taken from a given area at regular intervals. In the case of sum-

mer and winter visitants, say: from two to four weeks apart. One particular bird at one particular time does not give a complete range of food.

Dr. Grant cited a case where Robins were seen in a strawberry patch, apparently pecking at the berries, found with holes and consequently unmarketable. Dr. H. C. Bryant investigated and found that the stomach contents of the Robins consisted wholly of wire worms, upon which the blame for the damage was rightly placed.

In another case, Brown Towhees were suspected of doing damage to melons where investigation proved just the opposite, as they were feeding on cut-worms.

Experiments in feeding suspected English Sparrows in captivity showed they ate from 1100 to 1200 grains of wheat daily, and refused sprouted alfalfa seeds unless all other food was denied them.

Dr. Grant placed the birds in four classes:

1. Birds of prey, including the Shrike. In the case of the Shrike it is valuable from an economic standpoint as a killer of rodents and destroyer of grasshoppers, although it also has a bad reputation for occasionally killing caged birds.

2. Insect eaters. The value of insect eaters is shown in a record of one Flicker whose stomach contained 9200 ants.

3. Seed eaters. Horned Larks, to a large extent, were found to eat weed seeds, such as calandrinia,—one stomach contained 732 seeds, and another contained 100,000 pig weed seeds.

4. Scavengers.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Joseph J. Webb.....	519 California St., San Francisco
Corresponding Secretary.....	C. B. Lastreto.....	260 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer.....	Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....	1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Subscription to monthly Bulletin, \$1.00 per year. Single copies, 15c.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer