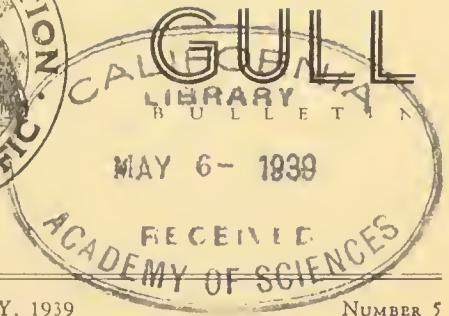


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## The California Coast between Fort Bragg and Capetown

A brief account of a trip to a singularly attractive and uninhabited part of California recently visited by my wife and self may prove interesting to readers of *THE GULL*. Nowhere in extensive journeys to different sections of the state have we encountered fewer people or habitations, even on the southeastern deserts. Indeed, this part of our northwest coast is a nature lover's paradise, unsullied by billboards, service stations and other modern conveniences. Members of the Audubon Association interested in seeing their birds in primeval settings of great scenic beauty and willing to drive over good, but narrow, roads are urged to visit this region.

Leaving our camp in the redwoods west of Yorkville, Mendocino County, about ten a. m., July 26, 1938, we comfortably reached Fort Bragg via the Navarro River Highway by noon. This lumber town with fair hotel and auto camp accommodations is an easy day's trip from San Francisco via this route through Cloverdale or by the more scenic one, State Highway No. 1, bordering the ocean from the mouth of the Russian River north.

After lunching at Fort Bragg we continued north on this highway to its end at Westport, then leaving the sea at Union Landing, followed the excellent county road to a point three miles north of Rockport, where the road to Usal turns off to the left. This place marked our departure from traveled roads and the real start of the trip. For five miles the narrow road traverses a high ridge bordering the sea, affording magnificent views of the coast, until it descends at a steep but safe enough pitch to the old ranch house near the mouth of Usal Creek. Beyond this locality, we traveled nineteen miles along heavily timbered ridges with marvelous outlooks until we reached the next ranch house at the junction of the Thorn and Needle Rock roads. Here we entered "Indian Lands" and, driving through a bracken and white-thorn clothed hillside, about sundown encountered more Mountain Quail (*Oreortyx picta palmeri*) than it has ever been our pleasure to see. For three miles, flock after flock composed of families with nearly grown young ran in front of the car, flying only as a last means of escape when it was a few feet from them. Upward of twenty families were passed in this manner in the distance mentioned. As the quail flew, their uneven tails showed the annual molt to be occurring.

We soon passed out of Mendocino County, just south of Chemise Peak, to the west, over which evening fog was drifting, and entered Humboldt County. Following down a small stream north of this mountain, we found a delightful camping spot among California laurels and Douglas firs bordering the creek a mile south of the ranch at the junction of our road with the main one to Shelter Cove from Garberville. Here, as at our next night's camp on Honey Dew Creek a few miles north, we were surprised to find Russet-backed Thrushes (*Hylocichla ustulata ustulata*) in more boreal environment than at our place in Mendocino County, where the Monterey Hermit (*Hylocichla guttata slevini*) is the nesting thrush.

The next morning we drove out to Shelter Cove and saw a Duck Hawk (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) a short distance above the fishing camp that probably nests in the cliffs of the rough canyon. Soon we returned to the ridge summit five miles by road inland and continued north on a good road over Horse Mountain to the headwaters of Bear Creek, where the only inhabitant, Mr. Cowles of the Lone Star Camp, assured us that the stream is well named because there are numbers of these animals about, also deer and mountain lion. We then struck up a steep climb, 1.8 miles to Wilder Ridge, where our road joined the main one from Briceland to Honey Dew. Here we had a magnificent view of King Peak, 4268 feet elevation, to the westward. The road then descends Wilder Ridge and follows Honey Dew Creek to the post office of that name, eight miles distant. There we followed the picturesque Mattole River to Petrolia, where it turns to the left to enter the sea. From Petrolia to Capetown, the road borders a fine beach for several miles south of Cape Mendocino, an austere headland. After nearing Capetown, we were in (to us) familiar country, the winter home of the White-cheeked Goose (*Branta canadensis occidentalis*) (see *Condor*, vol. 39, 1937, pp. 149-159). We continued on toward Ferndale but turned off at the summit of Bear River Ridge, which we followed nine miles inland until we joined the Scotia road, in order to see Kingman Pond near its summit, which is occasionally visited by the geese in winter. After traveling out on the Scotia road, by Mt. Pierce and part way down into Bear River Canyon, we retraced our steps and drove to Scotia on the Redwood Highway.

The trip being primarily one of back roads, we followed the highway south only to Dyerville, whence we ascended Bull Creek with its magnificent redwood groves to the store of that name, then over Cathay's Peak, 3500 feet elevation, to Honey Dew once more, where we camped on the creek a mile south.

The next morning, we left early for Ettersburg and encountered three Sooty Grouse (*Dendragapus fuliginosus fuliginosus*) dusting in the road on Wilder Ridge. From a point 6.8 miles beyond Ettersburg, we descended McKee Creek to Thorn, where we once again met the Mattole River and followed its headwaters to a mere creek, at the ranch at the junction of the Usal and Needle Rock roads, near which we had seen so many quail the previous evening. For several miles below this ranch house, the Mattole River affords some of the most attractive camping sites we have ever seen among fine redwoods bordering its course.

Once more we traversed the "quail" road southeast of Chemise Peak, but in mid-morning saw few birds. After passing our camp of the first night we turned right at the ranch house and followed the main Shelter Cove road to Garberville. A mile east of the ranch, on a tan oak and Douglas fir clothed hillside, we experienced the thrill of the trip. Here we encountered five full-grown Sooty Grouse in the road, three hens and two cocks. A pair of the birds were so fearless that they paraded with tails fanned upward not ten feet in front of our parked car. An old male flew to a massive fir and alighted on one of its lowest horizontal limbs, along which he walked to its tip before flying off down the canyon.

From Garberville, we again followed the Redwood Highway south, this time as far as Laytonville. At Underwood Park north of Cummings, we passed the turn off to the Hollow Tree road, a good one previously traveled by us in winter, that reaches the Usal road north of Rockport in fifteen miles. We took the Branscomb road from Laytonville to the coast at De Haven, where it joins State Highway No. 1, two miles north of Westport. We did not find this road particularly interesting, though it passes through fine redwoods along the headwaters of the South Fork of the Eel River and masses of five-fingered ferns border it a short distance from De Haven. We would recommend others following our route to return to Rockport over the better Hollow Tree road.

From Westport, it was a short drive to Fort Bragg, whence we returned to our camp by evening via the Navarro River Highway.

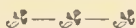
Persons following our route in summer will find the roads surprisingly good, though narrow. They are perfectly safe for slow driving, the only kind that per-

mits appreciation of the great beauty of the landscape. June and early July would be the best season for this trip, when Rhododendrons and Azaleas are in bloom. Both shrubs border many of the roads in dense stands. Tiger Lilies thrive among the streams, and we found Chamise or Redwood Lilies still in bloom at two places.

The usual category of birds will be encountered along the way, but numbers are not to be expected in the dense woods. Here, Thrushes, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Tawny Creepers, Western Flycatchers, and Hairy Woodpeckers are the kinds most frequently seen. Spotted and Pygmy Owls are apt to be heard at night in such surroundings. The chaparral-covered hillsides support more bird species: Quail of two kinds, Wren-tits, Towhees, and Jays being the most numerous ones. Water birds are common along the coast. Brandt Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*) and Western Gulls (*Larus occidentalis occidentalis*) nest on many of the rugged islets, and soil-covered ones, if visited, would probably reveal Petrels breeding. Many Surfscoters (*Melanitta perspicillata*), flightless from molt, were observed on the ocean north of Fort Bragg. American Mergansers (*Mergus merganser americanus*), which breed along the larger streams south to Navarro River, are not infrequently encountered.

To us the greatest pleasure in this excursion was getting into unsettled country off the beaten path. So successful were we in this aim, now difficult to realize in California, that it seemed appropriate to mention the trip for the benefit of others so inclined. After leaving the ranch house at Usal, we drove nineteen and a half miles before reaching the next habitation and it was not until we had gone six and a half miles farther, that we met our first car at the next ranch.

James Moffitt, San Francisco, California. August 24, 1938.



### Birds Along Sears-Point Road

An automobile trip along the Sears-Point Road, near Vallejo, California, is always one of interest to a bird lover. The recent purchase by the state and removal of tolls from this road, though resulting in increased automobile traffic, apparently has not seriously reduced the number of birds wintering in this area nor affected their fear or lack of fear of man.

On February 5, 1939, we made the following estimates of the number of each species seen by us during a trip to this area from 1 p. m. to 4:30 p. m. The sky was overcast and there was a light, cold west wind.

Pied-billed Grebe 4; California Heron 8; American Egret 8; Black-crowned Night Heron 2; White-fronted Goose 21; Mallard 50; Baldpate 4; Pintail 150; Green-winged Teal 50; Shoveller Duck 3000; Canvas-back Duck 1000; Lesser Scaup 2; Buffle-head 2; Ruddy Duck 300; Marsh Hawk 7; Sparrow Hawk 2; Coot 1000; Black-bellied Plover 300; Wilson Snipe 2; Long-billed Curlew 3; Hudsonian Curlew 15; Western Willet 8; Greater Yellow-leg 15; Least Sandpiper 100; Red-backed Sandpiper 500; Long-billed Dowitcher 50; Western Sandpiper 500; Marbled Godwit 3000; Avocet 3000; Western Gull 100; Bonaparte Gull 15; Short-eared Owl 2; Pipit 50; California Shrike 2; Yellow-throat 1; Meadowlark 20; Brewer Blackbird 200; House Finch 500; Samuels Song Sparrow 150.

One gun-club keeper reported that he had found a young "marsh owl" last spring. We inferred from this that the Short-eared Owl may have bred there. "Monkey-faced Owls" apparently were common enough though none were seen by us. A number of the latter had been caught in the pole trap of one of the keepers. We asked regarding Kites, but none had been seen recently. Both of the two keepers interviewed had seen "Duck Hawks" this winter. The variety and number of birds in this area change frequently with changing tides and weather conditions. The many sprig which had wintered here, we were told, had left a few days earlier due to the stormy weather. A considerable change in bird life along the road was evident to us, even during the few hours we were there, when retracing the same sections of the road we had covered two to three hours previously.

J. D. Graham and Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California.

**Audubon Notes**

**May Meeting:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 11th, in room 19, Ferry Building, San Francisco, at 8 p. m.

The speaker of the evening will be Mr. Thomas T. McCabe, whose subject will be "Birds of the Offshore Islets of Northern British Columbia."

The lecture will be illustrated.

Members may bring guests.



**May Field Trip** will be taken on Sunday, the 14th, to Saint Mary's, Contra Costa County. Take Sacramento Northern train on track 6, San Francisco Terminal, First and Mission Streets, at 8:15 a. m. Party will meet at 9:15 a. m. Bring luncheon.



**April Meeting:** The 260th regular meeting was held on the 13th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with forty-four members and guests present. President Junea W. Kelly presiding.

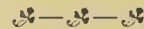
The following observations were reported:

Gordon Bolander: Marin County, Western Flycatcher, March 30th, and at Lake Merced, April 18th.

Mrs. Kelly: Alameda, Warbling Vireo, March 26th; Knots, March 15th; Strawberry Canyon, Pileolated Warbler, April 15th.

John J. Scott: Homestead, Locust Station, Mill Valley, Road-runner, April 22nd.

Mrs. Junea W. Kelly, the speaker of the evening, told us of her trip to Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, where she spent a month studying the shore birds on their nesting grounds. The lecture was illustrated with many very interesting and beautiful slides.



**June Meeting:** On June 8th the regular meeting will be held in Pacific House, on Treasure Island.

The speaker will be Mr. Philip N. Youtz, Consultant and Director of the Pacific Area, whose subject will be "Exploring the Pacific."

Mark your calendar and come to this meeting and bring a friend with you. Also bring your observations and help to make this an interesting meeting.

**Audubon Association of the Pacific**

Organized January 25, 1917

**For the Study and the Protection of Birds**

President..... Mrs. G. Earle Kelly..... 1311 Grand St., Alameda, Calif.  
 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.

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.