

Comparative Notes on the Christmas Census Made at San Francisco and on the Monterey Peninsula

Having been a regular Christmas census taker (for *Bird-Lore Magazine*) on the Monterey Peninsula for the last six years, I thought it might be of some interest to compare the number of species found there with those enumerated on the same occasions by the San Francisco group in its region. In this brief discussion I shall not make comparisons of the different types of environments encountered in the two regions nor the "man hours" spent afield, the weather, or other conditions affecting thoroughness of the counts on each of the census days in the respective regions. Disregarding these limitations, which, no doubt, affect the comparative value of the results, I submit the following data.

Using the records as published in *THE GULL* and extracted and arranged therefrom by Mrs. Stephens (to whom I extend thanks) I find that censuses have been made in San Francisco since 1915. My years of consecutive census taking do not reach back of 1932. Therefore, for comparative purposes, only the period 1932 to 1937 will be used. However, some data for the whole period for San Francisco will be presented also:

Total number of species for all censuses:

San Francisco, 1915-1937 — 139 species; 1932-1937 — 119 species.

Monterey Peninsula 1932-1937 — 136 species.

Analysis for six-year period, 1932-1937:

Year	San Francisco	Monterey Peninsula
1932	82 species	80 species
1933	88 "	103 "
1934	76 "	109 "
1935	70 "	108 "
1936	80 "	101 "
1937	86 "	99 "
Average	80.3	100.0

N. B.: In the figures used throughout these notes the unit represents a species as a whole and no additional count is given if more than one race of any species has been listed by the observers.

Present on the San Francisco list but absent on the Monterey Peninsula:

White Pelican*	Gadwall	Ferruginous Roughleg*
Green Heron*	Greater Scaup*	Western Sandpiper*
American Bittern*	American Scoter*	Mourning Dove
Whistling Swan*	American Merganser	House Wren
Canada Goose	Turkey Vulture	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Tule Goose	Goshawk*	Tricolored Blackbird

Total: Eighteen, of which nine were not listed in San Francisco for the comparative period 1932-1937. *Not listed 1932-1937.

Present on the Monterey Peninsula but absent on the San Francisco list:

Black-vented Shearwater	Marbled Murrelet	White-throated Swift
Cinnamon Teal	Ancient Murrelet	Nuttall Woodpecker
Hooded Merganser	Rhinoceros Auklet	Yellow-billed Magpie
Black Oystercatcher	Road-runner	Plain Titmouse
Spotted Sandpiper	Screech Owl	Pygmy Nuthatch
Red-backed Sandpiper		Total: Sixteen.

The Black-vented Shearwater was noted only once on the Monterey Peninsula censuses when two were seen in 1935. More species of *Alcids* were included on Monterey lists than on San Francisco ones. On the latter censuses only the Murre occurs, whereas at Monterey the Rhinoceros Auklet, Marbled Murrelet, and Ancient Auklet were found.

The Cinnamon Teal was noted in four out of the six Monterey Peninsula counts, but is entirely absent in San Francisco listings. Of the Sonoran Zone birds two interesting examples found on the Monterey Peninsula list are the Road-runner and the Yellow-billed Magpie. The former is a resident at Point Lobos, where it rubs shoulders with many a Transition Zone species. The decorative Magpie is frequently found in winter among the widely separated live oaks on the hillside southwest of Monterey, where it was "bagged" four times on the censuses.

Then, of course, there is that typically rocky-coast bird, the Black Oystercatcher, another Point Lobos inhabitant, absent from Monterey Peninsula only in 1936, but never appearing on the San Francisco list. Of the smaller land birds, the Pygmy Nuthatch, so typical of the Monterey Pines where they grow indigenously, would not be expected at San Francisco. The rare Hooded Merganser was found on the same pond at Monterey in 1935 and 1937. May this charming bushy-crested little duck return many times!

Of those present on the San Francisco list but absent at the more southern of the two peninsulas, the American Bittern shows up prominently. Just why this is I can't say. There is no very extensive habitat area for it on the Monterey Peninsula, but enough of the same sort of environment to account for Herons, Rails, Coots, etc. Although, curiously enough, I have seen the Least Bittern at the Carmel River mouth once in late summer, the larger species, by far the more common on the Pacific Coast is entirely absent from my Monterey Peninsula list at any time of year. Another bird of few appearances is the Farallon Cormorant. Common enough are the Baird and Brandt Cormorants which breed in the region, but the Farallon I have recorded only about a half-dozen times, two of these on census days. They are regular and common at Moss Landing, twenty miles or so northeast along the coast.

Whatever the significance of these comparisons, it has always been a keen delight to take the census on the Monterey Peninsula, and with the advance of years I feel sure that the data thus accumulated will be worthwhile.

Laidlaw Williams, Box 453, Carmel, California. September 22, 1938.



California Clapper Rail, *Rallus obsoletus*

On the morning of September 5, 1938, Labor Day, E. G. Tiegel (who is interested in birds), the proprietor of the Presidio Garage on Union Street, San Francisco, brought to me a California Clapper Rail which he had just caught in the second story of his garage. The following day he told me that his night-man had seen the bird the previous night in the garage but had failed to tell him about it. I put the bird in a fairly good size carton so that it would not be cramped. Our automobile was not available as I had left it to have some work done that day, so I called Mr. and Mrs. Stephens to ask if they were taking their car to a place where the birds could be liberated in a suitable habitat.

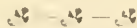
They were going that morning to Bay Farm Island so I turned the bird over to them. They liberated it as they suggested and it apparently was none the worse for its two days in the garage and lack of food, as it flew about 300 yards when released.

From our superficial look at its plumage we believe that the bird had not quite reached its mature plumage. April seems to be the height of the nesting season according to Dr. B. W. Evermann.

A. C. Bent, in "U. S. National Museum Bulletin No. 135, North American Marsh Birds," pps. 267-272, states there are not enough specimens of the California Clapper Rail in immature plumages in eastern collections to work out the sequences of plumages to maturity, etc.

The Stephenses noticed that one of its toes was missing but the stump had healed. W. L. Dawson, in "Birds of California," 1923, p. 1533, quotes Chase Littlejohn to the effect that many specimens of this rail had maimed feet or missing toes due to a mussel which flourishes on the mud strip just below the line of vegetation on the banks of the tide channels. The mussel apparently never releases the rail's toe once it has a hold; probably this accounted for the loss of a toe by this rail.

Henry E. Parmenter, San Francisco, California. September 8, 1938.



The above-mentioned rail was very quiet until we were about half way across the bridge and the odor of the marsh began to permeate the air. It then became quite lively, moving about in the box and sticking its long bill through the holes made in the box for ventilation. It evidently was able to recognize the odor of its habitat.

Other unusual occurrences of the Clapper Rail reported recently was one at the Chain of Lakes, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, October 16th, seen by Mesdames Kelly and Stephens. This individual left the edge of the lake, crossed a path and presented an odd spectacle resting momentarily beneath a pine tree.

Three days later, October 19th, Laidlaw O. Williams reported one opposite the buffalo paddock in Golden Gate Park. It ran across the main highway and stopped to peck in the cracks in the bark of a pine tree. It was also seen to pick up something from the grass, probably a sowbug. More than likely this was the same rail seen at the Chain of Lakes.

On October 17th, two Clapper Rail were seen at Lake Merced among some watercress. Later one of these was killed by an automobile when it ventured across the highway. The other was still present on November 8th.

On October 20th, one was seen searching for food among the seaweed at the foot of Buchanan Street on the Marina. On October 17th, one was seen walking along Sea Cliff Avenue in the residential district of San Francisco.

No one seems to know just what is the matter with these strange birds and why they don't stay in salicornia marshes where the books say they belong. We have speculated on this problem in other issues of THE GULL. It is quite evident there is need for bigger and better salicornia marshes.



November Field Trip

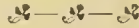
The November field trip was taken in Marin County starting from Ross under the leadership of Mrs. Mary L. Courtright. The day was perfect for walking, being warm and pleasant in the sun. Birds were not numerous, though kinglets, both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned, were quite abundant.

Birds listed on Richardson Bay and marshes were as follows: Western Grebe, Brown Pelican, one American Egret, Pintail and Ruddy Ducks, Clapper Rail, Coot, Killdeer, Western Sandpipers, Western and California Gulls, Kingfisher, Crow.

Elsewhere: Pied-billed Grebe; Ring-necked Ducks, 100+; Turkey Vulture; Sharp-shinned, Cooper, Red-tailed and Sparrow Hawks; Coot, Band-tailed Pigeon; Mourning Dove; Anna Hummingbird; Kingfisher; Red-shafted Flicker; California and Willow Woodpeckers; Black Phoebe; Coast and Nicasio Jays; Crow; Chickadee; Plain Titmouse; Bush-tit; Creeper; Winter Wren; Robin;

Hermit Thrush; Western Bluebird; Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets; Myrtle, Audubon and Townsend Warblers; Meadowlark; Green-backed Goldfinch; S. F. Towhee; Junco; Nuttall, Golden-crowned, Fox and Song Sparrows.

Members attending: Messrs. and Mesdames Myer, Stephens; Mesdames Courtright, Kelly, Otis H. Smith; Misses Cohen, Danz, Gallagher, Papina; Mr. Power and three guests: Mrs. Anabel, Messrs. Ellis and Ray.



Audubon Notes

December Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 8th, in room 19, Ferry Building.

The speaker of the evening will be Dr. Sumner C. Brooks, Professor of Zoology, University of California, whose subject will be "Ocean Birds and Ocean Movements."

Members may bring guests.



December Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 11th, to the University of California campus, Berkeley. San Francisco members take 9 a. m. Southern Pacific Ferry and Shattuck Avenue train to Berkeley station. Bring luncheon, which will be eaten at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur H. Myer, who will serve hot coffee.



November Meeting: The 255th regular meeting was held on the 10th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with eighteen members and guests present. President Junea W. Kelly presided.

Miss Ethel J. Case of Oakland was elected to membership.

The following observations were reported:

Gordon Bolander: Lake Merced, 23 Whistling Swans, male Wood Duck, November 6th; R. N. Pheasant and Short-billed Gulls, 8th.

Mrs. Kelly: Bay Farm Island, 3 Ruddy Turnstones, 8 Red-backed Sandpipers, October 14th; San Pablo Reservoir, 3 American Egrets, 60 Canada Geese, hundreds of Pintails, November 6th.

Chas. W. Michael: Golden Gate Park, 5 California Jays, November 7th; Stow Lake, 2 Ravens, 8th and 9th.

Commander Parmenter: Mountain View marsh, Brown (Least) Tern, October 31st; Sears Point Cut-off, 3 White-tailed Kites, Ferruginous Rough-leg, Duck Hawk, 2000± Avocets, November 5th; Lincoln Park, San Francisco, Raven, 8th; Crystal Springs Lake, 1 Hutchins and 66 Canada Geese, Red-bellied Hawk, 10th.

Mrs. Stephens: Golden Gate Park, Allen Hummingbird, October 9th (very late); Pygmy Nuthatches, October 20th and November 8th; Lutescent Warbler, 25th; Sora Rail, 29th; White-throated Sparrow, October 25th, and one on Mt. Davidson, November 1st; Marina, Wandering Tattler, October 29th.

The speaker of the evening was Mr. H. M. Butterfield of the University of California, who took for his subject "Pioneer Trees in California Gardens." He began with the Spanish period of the olive, avocado and pepper trees of 1830. He told of the early nurseries, their catalogues and the men connected with them. He gave an account of the introduction of Australian acacia, eucalyptus and tea plant. He listed the oldest and finest specimens of these trees. In addition he gave the location and size of the finest specimens of our native trees. He made, of individual trees, an object not only of beauty but of historical interest.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

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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.

