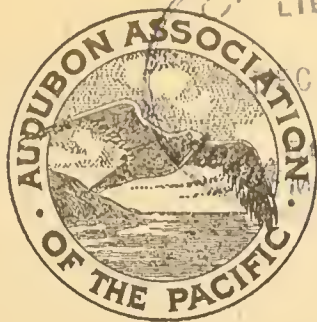


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The Pacific Horned Owl

It is the writer's good fortune to have the privilege of visiting a ranch owned by C. S. Mott, of Sausalito, California. This ranch is located about ten miles (in an air line) west of King City, Monterey County, California. One leaves the main highway (El Camino Real) at Greenfield, travels in a westerly direction about four miles, then upon a winding dirt road in a southerly direction up what is known as Reliz Canyon ("Reliz" means land slide) for about seven miles, where the road crosses the northeast boundary of the ranch.

The drive up Reliz Canyon, in itself, is exceedingly interesting. The narrow, winding dirt road follows the creek more or less, the canyon gradually narrowing until at places rise precipitous walls on either side to a height of seven hundred and fifty feet, or thereabouts. The canyon is narrow at spots, wider at others, and continues on until a fairly open field is reached.

A creek runs through this ranch in an easterly direction to the northeasterly boundary line, then down Reliz Canyon into the Arroyo Seco. From the entrance gate the road follows this creek for about a mile, when the ranch house is reached. On either side of the road are rolling foothills with oaks of various kinds and sizes—along the banks of the creek are cascara trees, willows, alders, sycamores, and some shrubs, all a splendid habitat for land birds of many species. About one hundred and fifty acres of these rolling hills are planted to grain, in which there are field mice, squirrels, rats, rabbits, gophers, etc. Many ravines or canyons run in a northerly and a southerly direction to the creek; they are thickly wooded and range from one-half to one mile in length and rise gradually to a height of from five hundred to seven hundred and fifty feet. At various points in these canyons or ravines are large rocks and sandstone cliffs, some a hundred feet high, and here one finds wide ledges and large caverns, the home of our feathered friend, the Pacific Horned Owl.

On many a warm moonlight night I have left the ranch house quite a while before dusk, walked to the grain field, sought a secluded spot and there awaited the first call of this interesting species, which is generally heard long before dusk. The birds usually reach their feeding ground during twilight, although I have seen them on several occasions much earlier in the evening. Thus, I have had some splendid views at close range. The first call is faintly heard, as the bird is quite distant at the head of a ravine or canyon and is starting from its day's resting-place toward the grain field, its hunting ground. It does not make a non-stop flight from the canyon to the field, but approaches by easy stages, flights of short distances, calling as it stops en route. Gradually the call becomes more distinct and finally one knows that the bird is near by. More often the deeper-toned voice is heard first, then the answer of the lighter-toned voice; the former is that of the male, I believe, the latter that of the female.

I have seldom failed on a warm moonlight evening to hear the call and answer of these owls, but have not always been fortunate enough to be stationed at the proper observation point to see a pair of them or even a single one alight in

one of the larger oaks. I have heard, during an evening, as many as five owls calling and answering from different directions. If I have not selected a good vantage point and have not seen the bird alight, I await its call and then approach the tree indicated by the sound. As I come into view, the owl usually gives a very loud, querulous "Who—who—who," as much as to say, "What are you doing in my domain?" The moment the bird is sighted I stop and stand still; the call is repeated intermittently, but it seems to me that gradually it becomes less querulous until finally, satisfied that no harm is intended, the bird proceeds in search of its food. One curious thing noted was that every time the bird hooted its tail would rise to a perpendicular position. Another observation: the bird in leaving the tree always flies out on the side opposite me, thus hiding its direction of flight.

One evening it became apparent that this bird used its perch, a dry limb on the top of a medium-sized oak, as an observation point. I saw it dart to the ground, then planted to corn, return to its perch, watch a while, looking in all directions, and again dart down and return. The third time it did not return, probably having been successful in its quest.

Throughout these nights you can hear its call and answer from time to time. As daylight approaches it is evident that the owls are leaving the field and going up the canyon or ravine to their resting place. Now the sound becomes fainter and fainter, until finally, when the sun strikes the top of Pinon and Santa Lucia Peaks and adjacent high ridges, all becomes still so far as this bird is concerned. I have, on different occasions, left the house just about daybreak and followed the bird by its calls for a mile or more up the canyon.

Though a large bird, its flight is noiseless. Its ear-tufts are conspicuous. It is bold, courageous, wary but yet curious. On two occasions when it saw me in the field it left the tree, circling around me twice, watching closely all the time; then, its curiosity being satisfied, it proceeded on its way.

It has several calls: one "Who—who—who—who," drawn out; another "Who—who—hoo-hoo," the first two drawn out, the last two close together; a third is just "Who—who," the calls varying as to length. To some, the owl's hoot is a weird, ghostly sound, while to others it is extremely fascinating and pleasing.

The strangest call of all, only occasionally given, however, is the one described by ornithologists as "sepulchral" or "demoniacal" laughter. I believe the term "demoniacal" better describes the sound than "sepulchral"; it is certainly "diabolical" in its nature—only on one occasion did I hear this cry. At first I was startled by its weirdness; it seemed like the cry of an animal in deep pain or distress. The sound appeared to come from the foot of a near-by tree, but, as I started toward it, I again heard this peculiar cry or sound apparently coming from something in the tree itself. I glanced upwards and there perched on a dry branch was our friend. It gave one final cry and left.

Joseph J. Webb, San Francisco, California, October 24, 1935.



November Field Trip was taken on Sunday, the 17th, in Marin County, starting from Ross Station and following the usual route past Phoenix Lake, up the Fish Gulch Road to the picnic place near Lake Lagunitas, where luncheon was eaten. After luncheon the party continued on through Bon Tempe Meadow, down the Shaver Road, and along the old Fairfax Road to Ross Station. Seventeen members and three guests were present.

Dark clouds in the early morning threatened rain, but very soon after our arrival at Ross they became lighter and the sun shone through the rifts. There was a light west wind which made walking comfortable.

Our bird lists for this year have been smaller than usual. We had hoped that the list for this trip would be long enough to help increase our average, but we

were disappointed. However, we were well compensated for the lack of birds by the unusually bright colors displayed by the deciduous trees in their autumn foliage. There were many shades of yellow and brown. The red was furnished by the unusually large berries of the madroña trees. One street in Ross is thickly bordered on either side by elms. The leaves were a very bright yellow. Many had fallen, making a golden carpet; others came down in a shimmering golden shower with each gust of wind. Farther along on the hillsides the oaks and maples had the green foliage of the Douglas firs and great masses of white and gray clouds for a background. Though the buckeye trees had long since dropped their foliage, the unopened seed pods still hung on the naked branches and contributed to the decorative effect of the picture. The sun shining through the rifts in the clouds produced the proper lighting effects.

The winter season of 1934 and 1935 furnished more rain than have several preceding seasons. An unusually warm spell after the rainy season was followed by a cold spell which tended to check the rapid development of the vegetation. These conditions, no doubt, are responsible for the color effects which were present on our trip.

From the bridge at Ross a fair-sized flock of Band-tailed Pigeons were seen flying toward the ocean. Several other flocks were noted during the trip, some in flight, others perched in the tall redwood trees.

Golden-crowned Kinglets, irregular winter visitants in this region, were noted at several locations. A flock of approximately seventy-five Ring-necked Ducks was present on Phoenix Lake. One female Baldpate was with them.

On San Francisco Bay the following species were noted: Red-throated Loon, Western Grebe, Brown Pelican, Farallon Cormorant, Western, California, and Bonaparte Gulls.

On Richardson Bay and adjacent marshes: Great Blue Heron, Pintail, Ruddy Duck, Cooper Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sandpiper (Sp. ?).

Elsewhere for the day the list of forty-four species follows:

Eared Grebe	Say Phoebe	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Pied-billed Grebe	Coast Jay	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Baldpate	Nicasio Jay	Cedar Waxwing
Ring-necked Duck	Western Crow	Hutton Vireo
Ruddy Duck	Nicasio Chickadee	Audubon Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Plain Titmouse	Purple Finch
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Coast Bush-tit	Northern Pine Siskin
Red-tailed Hawk	Red-breasted Nuthatch	San Francisco Towhee
Sparrow Hawk	California Creeper	San Francisco Brown Towhee
American Coot	Winter Wren	Western Lark Sparrow
Band-tailed Pigeon	Nicasio Wren	Junco
Belted Kingfisher	Western Robin	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Red-shafted Flicker	Varied Thrush	Fox Sparrow
California Woodpecker	Dwarf Hermit Thrush	Samuel Song Sparrow
Black Phoebe	Western Bluebird	

Members present: Messrs. and Mesdames Dunshee, Otis H. Smith, Stephens; Mesdames Courtright, Kelly; Misses Cohen, Danz, Dunshee, Griffin, McConnell, Papina; Messrs. Bremer, Bryant, Chase. Guests: Mrs. Anabel, Miss Kennedy, Bill Knowlton.

C. A. Bryant, Leader and Historian.



Audubon Notes

December Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 12th, at 8:00 p.m., Room 19, Ferry Building.

The speaker of the evening will be

Mr. Joseph Dixon, of the Wild Life Division, National Park Service, whose subject will be, "Some Birds in Danger of Extermination." The lecture will be illustrated.

December Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 15th, to the University of California campus, Berkeley. San Francisco members take 9:00 a.m. Southern Pacific Ferry and Shattuck Avenue train to Berkeley Station. Party will meet at University and Shattuck Avenues. Bring luncheon. Leader, C. A. Bryant.



November Meeting: The 220th regular meeting was held on November 14th, Room 19, Ferry Building, with thirty-four members and guests present. President Junea W. Kelly presiding.

Observations were reported as follows:

Harold Kirker: White-faced Glossy Ibis, Stow Lake, Golden Gate Park, October 25, 1935.

Commander Parmenter: Holboell Grebes 3, Lake Merced, October 12th; female Cinnamon Teal, North Lake, Golden Gate Park, October 28th to 31st; female Bufflehead, Stow Lake, November 5th; 200+ American Egret, Dumbarton Bridge, October 16th; Snowy Egret, 5 October 16th, 8 November 1st, 6, 7th; Hudsonian Curlew, 1 October 16th, 6 November 7th, Alvarado marshes; also, Pintails increased November 1st to 8th, from 4000 to 5000+; Shovelers increased in numbers until there were 1000+ November 7th; Greater Yellow-legs fairly common and among them were 6 Lesser Yellow-legs on November 1st. Avocets were plen-

tiful at the south end of San Francisco Bay, 500+ being seen on several of our visits.

Mrs. Stephens: Rock Wren and Say Phoebe, at end of Ninth Avenue, San Francisco, October 20th; Canada Geese 90, Crystal Springs Lake, November 3rd, over 200 December 1st.

Mr. D. D. McLean was the speaker for the November meeting. He spent the summer in British Columbia, along the coast, among the Canadian Rockies and crossed the rolling plains of the international border, penetrating north to unexplored regions beyond Lesser Slave Lake.

This Canadian region appears to be a meeting ground for many and varied forms of bird life. The common birds were the migrating species from the Pacific Coast. There were birds evolved in that geographical district and species from the Atlantic seaboard, such as the eastern Kingbird, seen at the foot of the Rockies. Both the western and eastern Vesper Sparrow were seen.

Mr. McLean made a record in the finding of an eastern Black Phoebe on Pyramid Lake, north of Jasper National Park. On his way south he found an eastern Kingbird nesting on the shore of Puget Sound, which was also a new record.

The Audubon Association is fortunate in having among its friends such trained and keen observers who are able to bring back detailed reports from distant places.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

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

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Life memberships, \$50.00.

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