



Christmas Bird Count

It was not until 1928 that we began to publish in *THE GULL* the records of our annual Christmas census. For many years before this censuses had been taken at Christmas time and even before our Association came into being. In fact, a number of the early recorders were among the first members of our Association; such names as Harold Hansen, W. A. Squires and C. R. Thomas being familiar to those knowing something of our early history. It was not, however, until 1928 that the census covered much more than Golden Gate Park and sometimes Lake Merced.

This year, 1941, only ten people took part in the count: Messrs. and Mesdames Stephens, Watson; Mesdames Enid Austin, Kelly; Misses Andersen (a guest), Danz; Messrs. Leffler and Myer.

The morning was overcast but pleasant for walking although the visibility at times was poor. Rain started shortly after noon. Due to the small number of observers, much of the territory was left uncovered. Furthermore, soldiers were everywhere and many of our good spots were closed because of military orders. Several of us were stopped and questioned, or told that we were on forbidden territory—binoculars and note books did look rather suspicious. As a result of all this, the number of species was 68, the same as our first record of 1928, and the number of individuals (5778) was by far the lowest in all these years, water birds and ducks being far below their usual numbers, and many species missing.

The following figures were given me by Frank Watson, who was in charge of the count for 1941: Red-throated Loon 3; Eared Grebe 25; Western Grebe 60; Pied-billed Grebe 46; Brown Pelican 12; Farallon Cormorant 13; Brandt Cormorant 15; American Bittern 3; Mallard 501; Baldpate 26; Pintail 1; Redhead 4; Ring-necked Duck 205; Canvas-back 28; Lesser Scaup 59; American Golden-eye 1; Bufflehead 1; White-winged Scoter 3; Surf Scoter 26; Ruddy Duck 101; Red-breasted Merganser 5; Sharp-shinned Hawk 2; Cooper Hawk 1; Sparrow Hawk 4; Quail 62; Florida Gallinule 1; Coot 585; Snowy Plover 35; Killdeer 2; Black Turnstone 12; Sanderling 158; Glaucous-winged Gull 694; Western Gull 461; California Gull 716; Ring-billed Gull 6; Short-billed Gull 146; Band-tailed Pigeon 1; Anna Hummingbird 40; Kingfisher 1; Red-shafted Flicker 20; California Woodpecker 1; Black Phoebe 18; California Jay 4; Chickadee 60; Bush-tit 3; Creeper 3; Raven 2; Vigors Wren 2; Tule Wren 1; Robin 150; Hermit Thrush 14; Golden-crowned Kinglet 32; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 42; American Pipit 5; Orange-crowned Warbler 1; Audubon Warbler 273; Townsend Warbler 8; Yellow-throat 6; English Sparrow 63; Brewer Blackbird 269; Purple Finch 2; House Finch 66; San Francisco Towhee 17; Junco 142; Nuttall Sparrow 449; Golden-crowned Sparrow 21; Fox Sparrow 11; Song Sparrow 27.

With greater interest shown I am sure we could cover all the territory allotted to us (this we have never been able to do) and consequently get a larger list both as to species and individuals. Better organization of this activity would help greatly. When possible, groups should familiarize themselves with their territory a day or so before census day. This has already been proved helpful by those who have worked year after year in the same area.

Laura A. Stephens.

Honkers on the Desert

A most unusual sight, a flock of Canada Geese, *Branta canadensis*, are spending the winter at Palm Springs. This flock of nine very large birds have been circling the town probably attracted by the many blue swimming pools but not daring to alight in them. They probably spend the day on the white water desert wash and roost at night up on some small lake on San Jacinto Mountain.

M. Hall McAllister, Palm Springs, California. January 23, 1942.



California Jay versus Sparrow Episode

On Thursday morning, December 4, 1941, about 9:30 a.m., Mr. E. L. Sumner, Dr. Reynolds, and I were walking around the Reynolds' garden to see the birds. Suddenly we heard a great commotion. Birds were congregating in a particular spot in the garden—some seemed to be "screaming" at the tops of their voices. Dr. Reynolds at first thought it to be some Brown Towhees having an argument. Then I noticed a California Jay on the ground. This bird seemed to be the focal point of the excitement. On looking closer I saw that the jay had something in its bill. Dr. Reynolds and I started down the stone steps, slowly making our way nearer to the jay. We were noticed; and the jay flew to an old stump where it proceeded to pick and pull at the object in its possession. Unfortunately we did not have the glasses. Otherwise we would have been able to get a good look at the jay's activities without frightening it in any way. We tried to get nearer to the stump; but at our approach the jay flew to the safety of the lower branch of a live oak tree. As the jay flew to this perch, we noticed that it carried a small bird in its bill. There it continued to pull and tug and finally with what seemed to be a big gulp ate the last morsel of the pillage. An investigation proved that an adult bird had been the jay's victim, for left on the stump was a tuft of sparrow feathers.

Misaye Watanabe, Piedmont, California. January 22, 1942.



January Field Trip

The twenty-fourth annual census of water birds at Lake Merritt, Oakland, was taken on January 11th. The weather was pleasant. After the hunting season closes birds begin to leave the lake. Since our census date remains the same, although the dates for the hunting season have changed, we do not have the large numbers of ducks in January that we had some years ago.

The Mute Swans have increased in number. Since the geese are pinioned they are not counted in the census. They do, however, add a note of interest and give opportunity to observe the various species at close range. The following species were observed: Canada, Lesser Canada, Cackling, White-fronted, Lesser Snow and Ross Geese. Two scoters were observed, but as these birds persisted in sleeping and the light was very difficult the species could not be determined. It was disappointing to find no cormorants, egrets, green-winged teal or wood ducks.

The following is the result of our morning's walk around the lake, thirty-three species: Red-throated Loon 1; Eared Grebe 80; Western Grebe 3; Pied-billed Grebe 23; Black-crowned Night Heron 32; Mallard 13; Baldpate 225; Pintail 202; Shoveller 8; Redhead 2; Canvas-back 186; Lesser Scaup 143; American Golden-eye 46; Buffle-head 1; Ruddy Duck 202; Red-breasted Merganser 2; Coot 200; Glaucous-winged Gull 121; California Gull 42; Ring-billed Gull 8; Bonaparte Gull 43; Forster Tern 4; Red-shafted Flicker; California Jay; Titmouse; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Robin; Audubon Warbler; English Sparrow; Brewer Black-bird; Nuttall, Golden-crowned and Song Sparrows.

Twelve members were present, as follows: Mesdames Kelly, Sheldon; Misses Berg, Blake, Cohen, MacIver, Stanton, Watanabe, Webb; Messrs. Leffler, Myer, Stopple and eleven guests.

Junea W. Kelly, Historian.

Field Trips

January 25, 1942, marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Audubon Association of the Pacific. During these twenty-five years we have taken many field trips, and the accounts of these for twenty-three years have been recorded in *THE GULL*, which came into existence two years after our organization in January, 1919.

Some of the facts about these trips: number taken, locations and number of species observed for the entire twenty-five years are quite interesting

| Location | Number of trips | Number of species |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| Lake Merced, San Francisco..... | 37 | 156 |
| Ross, Marin County..... | 37 | 122 |
| Golden Gate Park, San Francisco..... | 34 | 161 |
| Berkeley, Alameda County..... | 32 | 69 |
| Lake Merritt, Oakland..... | 24 | 76 |
| Tennessee Cove, Marin County..... | 19 | 111 |
| Burlingame, San Mateo County..... | 19 | 96 |
| Alameda, Alameda County..... | 18 | 94 |
| Saint Mary's formerly Cashin, Contra Costa County..... | 14 | 99 |
| Point Bonita, Marin County..... | 14 | 127 |
| Baumberg, Alameda County..... | 10 | 51 |
| McCoy Ranch, Alameda County..... | 6 | 103 |
| Lafayette, Contra Costa County..... | 6 | 57 |
| Mill Valley and Muir Woods, Marin County..... | 4 | 69 |
| Regional Parks, Berkeley..... | 4 | 60 |
| Aquatic Park, Berkeley..... | 4 | 42 |

Three trips each were also taken to Farallon Islands, Fairfax, Claremont, and Niles Canyon; two each to Hayward and along the San Francisco Skyline Boulevard; and one each to Dumbarton Bridge, Wildcat Canyon, Lansdale, Redwood Peak, Dimond Canyon, El Cerrito, Mr. Lastreto's place at Atherton, Mt. Diablo, Mills College and Sausalito.

It is surprising to note that the trips to Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, produced the largest number of species, 161, the very location which has always proved to be the least attractive to our members and which in the last few years has been almost entirely shunned. And now, due to military regulations elsewhere, it is about the only spot left in San Francisco for the few of us who still bird there and find pleasure in so doing.

Second in point of species, 156, is Lake Merced, another spot which is being eliminated from our regular schedule for several reasons. The beautiful canyons of this area which were bird havens a few years ago have all been destroyed, a broad highway now encircles the lake, acres of trees have been removed, and the water level of the lake has been raised, which spoils it for a number of species. The lake has been stocked with black bass and given over to fishing and boating. The San Francisco State College, and a large housing project going up in this area are eliminating much that was ideal bird habitat. However, some of us still go there and make the best of it.

Marin County comes next with Point Bonita heading the list of 127 species, an area long ago taken over as a military reservation and closed to the public. Then there is Ross with 122 species. We may go here, although certain places near reservoirs are closed. Tennessee Cove, also military, has been closed to civilians for some time.

In Alameda County the McCoy Ranch shows 103 species and Saint Mary's, Contra Costa County, with 99 species, are both still popular places with our members.

Lake Merritt, Oakland, has only 76 species to its credit but because we have taken a census here of the ducks and other waterfowl without missing for twenty-

few years this has occurred prior to our January trip. Consequently our censuses have shown a falling off. It is therefore suggested that we go to Lake Merritt in December instead of January and start a new record.

Burlingame, San Mateo County, with 96 species, includes many species found on the property of the San Francisco Water Department, which we have not been permitted to visit for many years. Many homes have also been built upon the fields where we found so many Horned Larks and Meadowlarks, etc. During the last few years we have tried adding the Mountain View marshes to this trip, but it was rather difficult on account of so much highway traffic and now this area is also closed to birding on account of military restrictions. Burlingame alone would produce very little.

Alameda, another area now closed because of military activities, has always been interesting because of the shore-bird migration, the only migration of birds in large numbers that we get in the West.

During 1941 forty-six members and ninety-four guests attended the trips. We listed 153 species, adding three new species to our life-list,—Black Brant, Black-chinned Hummingbird and Hooded Merganser,—bringing the total to 247 species.

Our trips would produce records of greater value if we would make them more like the Lake Merritt trip by choosing a certain place for each month of the year as we used to do, and then take an approximate count of the various species. If anything of special interest is noted it should be written up. Experiments with new locations could be tried out on other Sundays or possibly on Saturday afternoons. The idea of just going on a hike or a picnic has seemed oftentimes to overshadow the more interesting and useful activity of serious bird study, which after all is what we were organized for.

Laura A. Stephens.



Audubon Notes

February Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 12th, at 8 p.m., in the Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

Mrs. T. Eric Reynolds, of Piedmont, will show a colored motion picture, "Fun with Birds."



February Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 8th. Due to the fact that the regular date, the 15th, will be Men's Registration Day, and the 22nd a holiday, and also because of a better tide on the 8th, the trip date has been advanced. The trip will be by automobile to the inner side of Tomales Bay. Members and friends should meet at the old Manzanita Station, Marin County, about 9 a.m. and proceed from there via Fair-

fax and Tocaloma to Point Reyes Station, meeting about 10 a.m. Bring luncheon. Contact Miss Frances J. Blake in regard to transportation.

Note: Binoculars must not be used towards the coast.



January Meeting: The 25th annual and the 292nd regular meeting was held on the 8th in the Assembly Room of the San Francisco Public Library, with nineteen members and guests present. Second Vice-President David G. Nichols presided.

The officers and directors listed in the January GULL were elected to office.

The Treasurer's report was read, and a general discussion of the problems of THE GULL and fields trips was held.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

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|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| President..... | Mr. David G. Nichols..... | 1710 Grant St., Berkeley |
| Corresponding Secretary..... | Mr. Joseph J. Webb..... | 519 California St., San Francisco |
| Treasurer..... | Miss Ivander MacIver..... | 2414 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley |
| Editor..... | Mrs. T. Eric Reynolds..... | 140 Estates Drive, Piedmont |

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 p.m.

Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.