



# SEQUOIA NEEDLES

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County  
Founded 1949

Volume 58, No. 5  
June-August 2008

## DID YOUR SHOPPING LIST KILL A SONGBIRD?

BY BRIDGET STUTCHBURY  
[CONDENSED FOR SEQUOIA NEEDLES  
BY CORDELIA NAUMANN]

Though a consumer may not be able to tell the difference, a plump red tomato from Florida is often not the same as one grown in Mexico. Imported fruits and vegetables found in our shopping carts in winter and early spring are grown with types and amounts of pesticides that are usually illegal in the United States.

The victims of these pesticides are North American songbirds. Bobolinks, also known as skunk blackbirds, were once a common sight in the Eastern United States. In mating season, the male in his handsome tuxedo-like suit sings deliriously as he whirrs madly over the hayfields. Bobolink numbers have plummeted almost 50 percent in the last four decades, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

Bobolinks are being poisoned on their wintering grounds by highly toxic pesticides. Rosalind Renfrew, a biologist at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, captured Bobolinks feeding in rice fields in Bolivia and took samples of their blood to test for pesticide exposure. She found that about half of the birds had drastically reduced levels of cholinesterase, an enzyme that affects brain and nerve cells – a sign of exposure to toxic chemicals.

Since the 1980s, pesticide use has increased five-fold in Latin America, as countries have expanded their production of nontraditional crops to fuel the demand for fresh produce during winter in North America and Europe. Rice farmers in the region use monocrotophos, methamidophos, and carbofuran, all agri-

cultural chemicals that are rated Class I toxins by the World Health Organization. These pesticides are highly toxic to birds and are either restricted or banned in the United States.

A single application of a highly toxic pesticide to a field can kill seven to 25 songbirds per acre. About half the birds that researchers capture after such spraying are found to suffer from severely depressed neurological function.

Testing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration shows that fruits and vegetables imported from Latin America are three times as likely to violate Environmental Protection Agency standards for pesticide residues as the same foods grown in the United States. American consumers can discourage this poisoning by avoiding foods that are bad for the environment, bad for farmers in Latin America, and bad for their own families.

What should you put on your bird-friendly grocery list? Organic coffee, for one thing. Most mass-produced coffee is grown in open fields heavily treated with fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides. In contrast, traditional small coffee farmers grow their beans under a canopy of tropical trees, which provide shade and essential nitrogen, and fertilize their soil naturally with leaf litter. Their organic, fair-trade coffee is now available in many coffee shops and supermarkets, and it is recommended by the Audubon Society, the American Bird Conservancy, and the

*(Continued on page 2)*



### Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center  
*(See program details on page 2)*

#### June

**Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup>, Potluck Meeting**

Potluck and Fundraiser: 6:00 PM;  
Program: 7:00 PM

**Program:** California and Western Birds in Motion

#### September

**Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM**

**Program:** Avian Anatomy & Physiology

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### Upcoming Field Trips

*(See trip details on page 3)*

#### June

**Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup>** Pescadero Marsh\*

**Saturday & Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>**

People Paddle

**Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup>** Pescadero Marsh\*

#### July

**Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup>** Pescadero Marsh\*

**Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup>** Pescadero Marsh\*

#### August

**Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup>** Pescadero Marsh\*

**Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup>** Pescadero Marsh\*

#### September

**Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup>** Pescadero Marsh\*

**Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup>** Pescadero Marsh\*

*\*Beginner/Family Trip*

### Special Discounted Pelagic Trips

#### August

**Friday, 1<sup>st</sup>** Bodega Canyon and Cordell Bank

**Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup>** Farallon Islands

**Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup>** Fort Bragg

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Sequoia Audubon Society

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### Audubon Canyon Ranch

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Members are encouraged to submit original or uncopyrighted material – articles, artwork, cartoons, photos – for Needles. The deadline for submission is the first day of the month preceding publication. Send comments and contributions to:

sas\_editor@yahoo.com



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## MEETING PROGRAMS

BY PAULA MILLER AND SUE COSSINS

### California and Western Birds in Motion

By Larry Arbanas

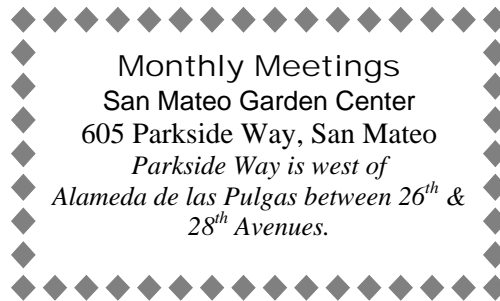
Thursday, June 12, 7:00 PM

Please join us in welcoming Larry Arbanas, a Northern California bird filmmaker whose passion for filming birds began in 1989. He has steadily developed his passion into his profession since moving to California a decade ago.

We will have the opportunity to see his film, *California and Western Birds in Motion*.

As a Field Research Associate of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Larry can access the finest Hi-Def television equipment to produce these bird movies.

We are the recipients of his good fortune!



Expect to see Burrowing Owls at the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, White-tailed Kites near Mt. Diablo, Clapper Rails at Arrowhead Marsh, birds of Bishop and birds of Southeast Arizona/Sonora Mexico among many others.

This promises to be a very special evening! We look forward to seeing you.

A potluck dinner beginning at 6 P.M will precede this program. Doors open at 5:30 PM. Please bring a plate, cup, utensils and a side dish to share. SAS will provide the main course, hot beverages, and dessert.

A raffle of birding items will also be held. Tickets are \$1.00 apiece or six for \$5.00. Donations of prizes are kindly accepted. Questions? Call Carol Masterson 650-347-1769

### Avian Anatomy & Physiology: Know Your Birds Inside and Out!

By Stephanie Ellis

Thursday, September 11, 7:00 PM

Learn to appreciate birds beyond their field identification! This class will focus on “how a bird works” with slides that provide an overview of the avian skeleton, as well as the basics of the digestive, respiratory, circulatory, and reproductive systems as compared to mammals. Participants will also be introduced to adaptations of birds that enable a certain life style (such as salt glands in seabirds), how a bird responds to heat and cold stress (i.e., counter-current exchange blood flow in the legs), and the significance of bill shape, toe arrangement, feather structure and more! Join Stephanie Ellis for this fun and informational class to learn birds inside and out.

### Accompanying Field Trip

Saturday, September 13

Place and time TBD.



(Shopping List, continued from page 1)

Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.

Organic bananas should also be on your list. Although bananas present little risk of pesticide ingestion to the consumer, the environment where they are grown is heavily contaminated by pesticide use.

When it comes to nontraditional Latin American crops like melons, green beans, tomatoes, bell peppers, and strawberries, it can be difficult to find any that are organically grown. We should buy these foods only if they are not imported from Latin America.

Now that spring is here, we take it for granted that the birds' cheerful songs will fill the air when our apple trees blossom. But each year, as we continue to demand out-of-season fruits and vegetables, we ensure that fewer and fewer songbirds will return.



## FIELD TRIPS

BY CAROL MASTERSON

### **Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk**

**Sunday June 1, 10:00 AM -Noon**

Come discover Pescadero Marsh. A California State Park Docent will lead a field trip to learn about the Marsh. This beautiful park has a mile-long shoreline, rocky cliffs, and of course a world-famous marsh. The birding at the Marsh is great at this time of year. The docents will point out the plants and animals that inhabit this San Mateo County treasure. Meet in the parking lot just south of the bridge on Hwy 1 at Pescadero State Beach. Wear clothing in layers for cold to sunny weather. Heavy rain cancels.

**Directions:** Go south from Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1, about 12 miles. Just past the bridge over Pescadero Creek, look for the south parking lot. If you get to the intersection of Pescadero Road and Hwy 1 you have gone too far. For more information, go to [http://www.greenfoothills.org/news/2001/08-2001\\_PescaderoButano.html](http://www.greenfoothills.org/news/2001/08-2001_PescaderoButano.html)

**Contact:** Ranger Dave Augustine (650) 879-2170 or [nolema@coastside.net](mailto:nolema@coastside.net).

**Beginner/Family Nature Hike**

### **Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk**

**Sunday, Father’s Day, June 15, 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM**

Come and discover Pescadero Marsh. The California State Park Docents will lead a field trip to learn about the Marsh. This beautiful park has a mile-long shoreline, rocky cliffs, and of course a world-famous marsh. The birding at the Marsh is great at this time of year. The docents will point out the plants and animals that inhabit this San Mateo County treasure. Meet in the parking lot just south of the bridge on Hwy 1 at Pescadero State Beach. Wear clothing in layers for cold and windy to sunny weather. Heavy rain cancels.

**Directions:** Go south from Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1, about 12 miles. Just past the bridge over Pescadero Creek, look for the south parking lot. If you get to the intersection of Pescadero Road and Hwy 1 you have gone too far. For more information, go to [http://www.greenfoothills.org/news/2001/08-2001\\_PescaderoButano.html](http://www.greenfoothills.org/news/2001/08-2001_PescaderoButano.html)

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**Beginner/Family Nature Hike**

**Contact:** Ranger Dave Augustine (650) 879-2170 or [nolema@coastside.net](mailto:nolema@coastside.net).

**Beginner/Family Nature Hike**

### **Other Pescadero Marsh - State Park Docent Nature Walks**

Sunday, July 6, 10:00 AM – Noon

Sunday, July 20, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Sunday, August 3, 10:00 AM – Noon

Sunday, August 17, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Sunday, September 7, 10:00 AM – Noon

Sunday, September 21, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

### **Five Special Discounted Pelagic Trips with Shearwater Journeys**

#### **Bodega Canyon and Cordell Bank**

**Friday, August 1 – Special Sequoia discounted price \$160; regularly \$185**

Historically we have seen Ashy Storm-petrels, Wilson’s Storm-petrels, Northern Fulmars, Pomarine and Long-tailed Jaegers, Tufted Puffins, Cassin’s and Rhinoceros Auklet, Pigeon Guillemots and, possibly, Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses. We may see Arctic Terns, Buller’s, Pink-footed, and Sooty Shearwaters. At low tide Bodega Harbor can be teeming with shorebirds. Don’t miss this great trip at a great price.

#### **Farallon Islands Pelagic Trip**

**Sunday, August 10 – Special Sequoia discounted price \$115; regularly \$135**

Join the Shearwater Journeys team to see nesting Tufted Puffins, Common Murres, and Pigeon Guillemots. Last year we saw Long-tailed Jaeger, South Polar Skua, Rhinoceros and Cassin’s Auklets, Black-footed and Pink-footed Shearwaters, Wilson’s Storm-petrel, and a Leatherback Sea Turtle. This is a fun trip. We may also see Humpback Whales and dolphins. Please note: landing on the island is not permitted.

#### **Fort Bragg – Offshore Pelagic Trip for Mega-rarities**

**Sunday, August 10 – Special Sequoia discounted price \$160; regularly \$185**

This is a trip not be missed. Drive up to Santa Rosa and spend the night then head out for a great day of pelagic birding off the northern California coast. You will have the possibility of seeing really rare

(Continued on page 4)

## *Upcoming Field Trips*

(Continued from page 1)

### **September**

**Friday, 12<sup>th</sup>** Monterey Bay

**Friday, 26<sup>th</sup>** Santa Cruz

Check the field trip descriptions for any special information or requirements. Late comers may be disappointed. For all field trips bring your binoculars, sun block, and water; wear sturdy walking shoes or boots, and a hat, and always dress in layers for hot, sunny weather to cool, windy conditions. While we will attempt to stay on schedule, circumstances may dictate changes to field trip leaders, dates, or times.

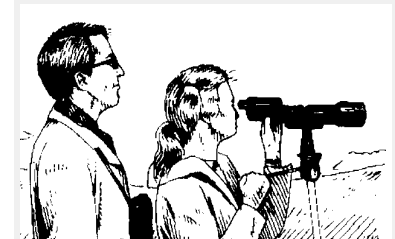
For the latest schedule and updates always go to the Sequoia Audubon web site, contact the trip leader, or call Carol at 650-347-1769.

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### *SAS on Vacation*

Just a reminder that SAS is on vacation during the months of July and August. We will return in September with our field trips and our September 11<sup>th</sup> member program. The program will be a birding class entitled *Avian Anatomy and Physiology* and will be presented by SFBBO’s Stephanie Ellis.

Have a great summer ‘til we see you in September.



(Field Trips, continued from page 3)

birds, such as Merkhams Storm-petrel, Streaked Shearwater, Dark-rumped Petrel, and Yellow-billed Loon. Sign up early; this trip sells out.

**Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip – Fall Seabird Classic  
Friday, September 12 – Special Sequoia discounted price  
\$115; regularly \$135**

This fun all-day pelagic trip is organized by Debra Love Shearwater, an expert in seabird identification. This is an excellent time of year to see Southern Hemisphere seabird rarities with possible sightings of Black-footed, Laysan, and Short-tailed Albatross, and Bulwer's Petrel. This is also a good time for terns and Long-tailed Jaegers. We will also be on the lookout for Blue Whales and other marine mammals.

**Santa Cruz – Closer-to-Home Pelagic Trip  
Friday September 26, Special Sequoia discounted price  
\$115; regularly \$145**

Join us for what should be a great fall birding trip. Many interesting seabirds are attracted at this time of year by the increased food supply on the Santa Cruz side of the Bay. Along the shore we will look for Marbled Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots, and Common Murres. Along the sea canyons we will look for Ashy and Black Storm-petrels. We will also look for Pink-footed, Flesh-footed, and Buller's Shearwaters, Red-necked Phalaropes, and Rhinoceros and Cassin's Auklets. And we will scan the Bay for whales, dolphins, porpoises and sea lions. This is a very nice boat with full galley.

Reservations are made on a first-come, first-served basis, and many of these very popular trips sell out months in advance. Please indicate a second-choice trip, in case your first choice is sold out. If making reservations for more than one person, include each person's name, address, phone/email, as required by the United States Coast Guard. For more information or to sign up go to <http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com>. To make your reservation, send check or money order to: Shearwater Journeys, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024. A confirmation letter will be sent to you. Because of rising fuel costs there will be a fuel surcharge. Please mention that you are with Sequoia Audubon for the discounted rates – don't miss out on this great deal. This discounted rate is non-refundable, for any reason..

## GOODBYE, MARY

BY SUE COSSINS

Mary Bresler, former SAS President and long-time Board of Directors member holding many offices, recently passed away.

Mary lived into her 90's and had to give up her last office with Sequoia Audubon, Secretary on the SAS Board, about ten years ago so she could stay home to care for her elderly husband. Those of us who have been with SAS longer than ten years remember Mary's quiet, friendly ways and her dedication to our organization.

## Fall Birding Classes in San Francisco

Evening birding classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon Society will be starting September 9, 10, and 11, 2008. All classes meet 7-9:15 PM in room 307 at Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay St. Free parking is in the school lot off Bay St. on the east side of the building.

The instructor is co-author of *Birds of San Francisco* and the *Bay Area and Birds of Northern California*. He is also coordinator of the recorded "Northern California Birdbox" sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon Society. Slides illustrate all lectures, and the text for all classes is *A Field Guide to Birds of North America*, fifth edition, by the National Geographic Society. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* is recommended as an adjunct text for Ornithology II & III.

Field Ornithology I meets on Tuesdays. It is an introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution, and behavior. Part A (EA101) starts September 9 and ends October 21; Part B (EA105) is a continuation of Part A. It begins October 28 and ends December 16.

Field Ornithology II meets on Wednesdays. It is a continuing in-depth study of the identification and status of North American birds including terns, jaegers, alcids, pigeons, and parrots. Part A (EA110) starts September 10 and ends October 22; Part B (EA115) starts October 29 and ends December 17.

Field Ornithology III meets on Thursdays. It is a continuing study of North American land birds including juncos, longspurs, grosbeaks, buntings, blackbirds, and orioles. Part A (EA120) starts September 11 and ends October 23; Part B (EA125) starts October 30 and ends December 18.

The instructor may arrange optional field trips on weekends. Please bring binoculars and field guides to class if you have them. Fees are \$140 for each seven-week course (\$125 for EA120 which is six weeks), with a \$10 discount if you pre-register at least a week early. Pre-registration is strongly advised. For further information call (415) 561-1860. To enroll, please register online at:  
<https://www.evolveveww.com/ce.ccsf/>

or mail or fax the registration form at:  
[http://www.ccsf.org/Services/Continuing\\_Education/images/regform/reg.html](http://www.ccsf.org/Services/Continuing_Education/images/regform/reg.html).

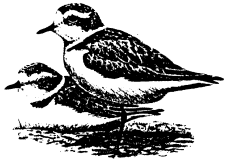
For additional information see the instructor's web site at:  
<http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan/> or the official City College Continuing Education site:  
[http://www.ccsf.edu/Services/Continuing\\_Education/](http://www.ccsf.edu/Services/Continuing_Education/)



# SAS NEWS

## Half Moon Bay State Beach Snowy Plover Watch Program

Rita Jennings



We suspect that one or two pairs of plovers are thinking about nesting, but no nests have been found yet. Plover Watch volunteers are diligently monitoring the beach for any courtship or nesting activities.

Ranger Nelle Lyons advises that the Snowy Plover breeding survey is planned for the week of May 19.

## Pescadero Marsh Update

Rita Jennings



The Pescadero Marsh docents continue to do a great job leading Sunday tours. Tours are held at 10 AM on the first Sunday and at 1 PM on the third Sunday of each month. The heron rookery is where the action is, but the marsh also has abundant native plants coming into bloom. The meeting place for tours is still the parking lot on Highway 1, south of the bridge across Pescadero Creek. Check the field trip section for more information.

## Conservation Program

### Open Space Vote in Redwood City

Robin Smith

Conservation Coordinator



A group of conservation organizations, including Sequoia Audubon Society, have joined together to put an Open Space Vote measure on the ballot in Redwood City for the November election. The purpose of the measure is to allow Redwood City voters to have the final say on any proposal to develop on city parks, open space, or baylands. Any development placed on open space land would need to be approved by a two-thirds vote. Building or expanding public recreation facilities on open space will not require a vote.

The Conservation Committee sent information and petitions to all our members who live in incorporated Redwood City asking for their help in collecting signatures to qualify this measure for the ballot in November. If you received one, please do your best to sign and return it. Get your friends and neighbors to join in.

The Open Space Vote supporters need to collect about 5,500 signatures, which is 15% of the people who voted in the last election. As of last weekend, they were halfway to that goal. Give them a hand in this endeavor. It will be a boon for our local birds.

## Redwood City General Plan Update

Nancy Arbuckle



The City of Redwood City is in the process of updating its General Plan. This update may well affect lands that are currently zoned as Open Space. The Plan has many implications for traffic patterns, intensity of development, possible daylighting of creeks, as well as potential rezoning of the Cargill Salt Flats. The City has a number of affinity group meetings scheduled. I attended the one for environmental groups held in early April. The City heard from developers and builders the day before.

In attendance at the meeting wherein I represented Sequoia Audubon were representatives of the Friends of Redwood City, Sierra Club, Greenbelt Alliance, and the Committee for Green Foothills. A number of issues were on the table including support for public transit and development in transit corridors. There was complete consensus among environmental groups represented that open space remain open and that the Cargill site retain its open space zoning and be returned to wetlands.

The General Plan update is slated to take months. Updates on the process may be found on Redwood City's website, <http://www.redwoodcity.org/cds/planning/generalplan.html>.

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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BY SUE COSSINS

What can you do? We have lots of great jobs. Get involved with Sequoia Audubon and help the birds with some of these volunteer opportunities. Take a look at these listings and see if you might be able to give us a hand. Call Sue Cossins (650) 347-9358 or check our website for more information [www.sequoia-audubon.org](http://www.sequoia-audubon.org).



## Update Our SF Peninsula Bird Guide for the 21st Century

SAS needs assistance updating its local birding guide, *San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching*. First published in 1984 and revised in 1996, it stands as a major accomplishment of Sequoia Audubon Society. It is time to create another revision and place it online at the Sequoia Audubon website. This is a major project, which will develop and change over time. The project will begin with scanning the contents of the 1996 edition and then gradually updating the info. We will update one birding site at a time, so we need lots of help with many different small jobs. Help take a small piece of this important project:

- Update birding information.
- Visit birding sites around the Peninsula.
- Help with an inventory of habitats, flora and fauna.
- Double check local area bird records for correctness.
- Help prepare visual materials and copy for the web.
- Update location maps; find pictures and information about SM County birding sites.

If you have computer knowledge (or want to learn), or if you are a birder with knowledge of local sites or are interested in bird populations, we need your help getting this project onto the web. Possible college credit/internship for students.

Contact: Jennifer Rycenga [gyrrlfalcon@earthlink.net](mailto:gyrrlfalcon@earthlink.net)

## Sequoia eNews Editor

Help our members stay in touch with what's happening at Sequoia Audubon. Send monthly updates via email to Sequoia Members.

Requirements: Writing or editing skills and ability to send emails.

Time: 1-3 hours per month.

Location: Work at your home on your own computer or at the Sequoia Office.

Contact: Carol Masterson (650) 347-1769

## Greeter at our Monthly Meetings

Help to greet visitors and new members at our Thursday night monthly meetings.

Requirements: Enjoy meeting new people. Help make new members welcome.

Time: Approximately 2 hours a month at our monthly meeting.

Location: San Mateo Garden Center

Contact: Eileen Kay (650) 592-4626

## Work with Cub Scouts

Lead Webelo Scouts on a bird walk at Coyote Point. For the past three summers four SAS volunteers have led Webelo Scouts on bird walks. It's a fun one-day commitment in mid-July. The boys, aged ten, are very interested and enthusiastic about learning the basics of bird watching. SAS provides binoculars for the boys to use.

Contact: Sue Cossins (650) 347-9358



Photo by Sonny Mencher



SAS appreciates your tax-deductible donations which help fund the Chapter's education, conservation and ongoing activities


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Photo by Bob Cossins

Costa's Hummingbird female feeding fledgling.  
 Anza Borrego Desert State Park, March 2008

**THE BIRD BOX**  
**RARE BIRD**  
**ALERT**  
**415-681-7422**



Yellow-billed Loon

**Birding Scholarships Available!**

Sequoia Audubon offers scholarships for high school students to attend birding conferences or other bird-related activities. Examples of upcoming events are the Western Field Ornithologists' annual conference in San Mateo, CA, Oct. 9-12 (visit [www.wfo-cbrc.org](http://www.wfo-cbrc.org) for more information) and the Central Valley Birding Symposium, which will be held in Stockton, CA in November (<http://www.cvbs.org/>). For a scholarship application, please email Sue Cossins ([suecossins@earthlink.net](mailto:suecossins@earthlink.net)) or Robbie Fischer ([robbie22@pacbell.net](mailto:robbie22@pacbell.net))

**Audubon California Action Alert**  
**June 3rd Primary Election**

There are only two propositions on California's ballot. Both have major ramifications for the environment. Audubon California opposes Proposition 98 and supports Proposition 99.

**Mission Statement**

*The mission of Sequoia Audubon Society is to participate in environmental education and conservation and in the restoration, preservation, protection and enjoyment of our native natural resources with emphasis on birds and their habitats.*