

THE DRIPPING FAUCET

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What Were Birders Seeing Around Here 100

Years Ago? By Steve Stocking-Reprinted by permission, originally from the Hoot Owl, the San Joaquin Audubon Society Newsletter

Have you recently spotted a Plumed Quail, Willow Woodpecker, Intermediate Sparrow, Lutescent Warbler, or a California Squirrel Hawk? Recently I was checking out some old articles about central California birds and I came across these names. Others included Tell Tale, Ground Tit, Western Grass Bunting, and Black Ptilyogony. Present-day names for some of these were easily determined, but others were much more difficult to pin down.

The oldest west coast

birding guide that I have is the "Handbook of Birds of the Western United States," by Florence Merriam Bailey, 1902, with an addendum revised to 1920. The addendum changes the nomenclature to conform to the 1920 A.O.U. checklist. Another interesting section of the addendum is the list of "supplementary references." There are many articles included which have regional bird lists, but few of these are from the Central Valley or the central Sierra. Most are from coastal areas. Many of these were pub-

lished either in the "Condor" or in "Pacific Coast Avifauna," which were products of the Cooper Ornithological Club, a highly respected organization of the day. Other than the 33 plates by Louis Agassiz Fuentes, the illustrations of the "Handbook" were from museum specimens. I decided to review a few of the publications that I could find from the late 1800's to the early 1900's to see how both the birds and the nomenclature had changed in the last 100 years. I chose "A Partial List of the Birds of Central California," by L. Belding of Stockton, published in the Smithsonian Proceedings of April 22, 1879; "A List of the Land Birds of the Placerville-Lake Tahoe Stage Road," by C. Barlow from the Nov. 1901 issue of the "Condor;" and "Some Birds of the Fresno District, California," by John C. Tyler, a Cooper Ornithological Club publication from 1913. The earliest publication reviewed was the one by Belding. He mentions the extensive tule swamps west of Stockton and the birds he observed on trips from (continued pg 3)

Meet Our New Docent

Alan England has lived in Stockton most of his life, being away primarily for college at UCSB, and his masters from Boston University and USF.

He retired from S.J. County as a probation officer and was also a licensed marriage and family therapist.

Alan is a member of the Audubon Board and the San Joaquin Juvenile Justice Commission and volunteers for several other organizations. His inter-

ests include California history (what do you expect when his mother was a fourth grade teacher!), natural history, camping and canoeing. He characterizes himself as a wanna-be photographer.

Alan will be assisting with school tours and staffing the Nature Center. We want to welcome Alan aboard and thank him for joining our efforts to educate the public about the wonders of Oak Grove Park.

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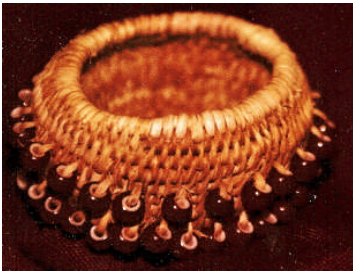
NATURE CENTER COORDINATOR: JAMES REXROTH

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"The Basket Beaders"

by Martha Mallery, September 2008



"... Is the basket symbolic of many creative endeavors?"

I sat at a picnic table weaving a basket made of willows and tules in the autumn haze of Yosemite Valley. The sun cast half-hearted light on our basketry class through the oak foliage overhead. Earlier that morning Lucy Parker, our instructor, had told us: "Sometimes I make a basket and someone buys it and adds beads to make it their own. I don't like it when someone beads my basket."

As an expert basket maker and teacher of the California basket weaving tradition, Lucy is re-

nowned throughout the state. And she patiently introduces beginners like myself to the art of basketry that has been passed down through generations.

"I wouldn't bead someone else's basket," I thought as I struggled to weave a damp strip of tule between the willow branches.

The sun peeked from behind a limb high in the oak and dazzled my thoughts.

"Yikes," I wondered. "Is there more to a basket than the tules and willows at my fingertips? Is the basket symbolic of many creative endeavors?"

I know I'm notorious for asking newsletter editors to rearrange their layouts. Was I beading their baskets? I once asked a professional photographer to add a cartoon bubble to his picture of a Sandhill

crane. I thought the caption I made up was funny. He thought I was degrading his artwork. When I tried to convince a friend to add different species of plants to her garden, was I beading her basket? Destroying her creative design?

As I looked across the autumn meadow toward the valley's precipitous cliffs my imagination soared. Did the Yosemite Park and Curry Company bead this idyllic little valley with cottages and concessions along a string of asphalt roadways?

No. We dare not go there.

I finished another loop of tule vowing that I would try to be a basket beader no more. I had come to Yosemite to learn about basketry. I learned about life.

Thank You For Renewing Your Memberships



Thank you kindly for your tax-deductible contributions!

Sheldon Barr; Jay Bell; Conni and Jim Bock; Lydia Chadwick; Lois Davis and Family; Muriel Deselm; Beth and Lee Fennell; Kasey Foley and Rich Petersen and Family; Janwyn Funamura; Eric and Patricia Hammer; Judith Hutton; Richard Ling and Laurie Cotulla; Martha Mallery; Toni Moran; Mr. and Mrs. T.J. Nightengale; Frances Quinn; Barbara Rankin and Family; James and Carol Rexroth; Pamela and Rene Reyes and Family; Nancy Shephard; Steve and Linda Stocking; Lynne and Daniel Terry; Dave and Jo Wagner; Victor Wykoff, Jr. and Family. Thank you all for your kind contributions to the Oak Grove Nature Center.

If you haven't yet renewed your membership there's still time to get in on all the spring activities. Please send your membership check (payable to the **OAK GROVE DOCENT COUNCIL** [the Bank is reluctant to process any variations to our name] ; Single-\$25, Family-\$35, Supporting-\$50, Contributing-\$100, Sponsor-\$500, Oak Patron-\$1,000) to the address on the back of the newsletter.

Thanks again,

Martha Mallery, Treasurer

Twined Tule Basketry Class Offered

The Oak Grove Nature Center is pleased to announce that we are offering to the community a Native American Skills Class. The Twined Tule Basketry Class will be lead by Lucy Parker (Yosemite/Coast Miwok/Mono L. Paiute/Kashaya Pomo) from Lee Vining, CA. She is an active and accomplished teacher, demonstrator and lecturer on her culture and the California Indian basket weaving tradition.

The class is scheduled to take place on Saturday, April 18th from 10 am to 4 pm. The class fee is \$50.00 (\$40.00 for those of California Indian heritage).

Registration is limited (25 spaces) and can be mailed to the Nature Center or made in person at the Center. After registering a list of tools/supplies that each student will need for the class and where to look for them will be provided. Or for an additional \$10.00 a 'kit' with what you will need (except a towel) can be purchased from the Docent Council.

To register send your: Name, Address, Phone Number, E-mail address and your check for \$50.00 (\$60.00 to include a kit) (**please make checks payable to the OAK GROVE DOCENT COUNCIL**)

TO: [Oak Grove Nature Center Twined Tule Basketry Class](#)
4520 W. Eight Mile Rd.
Stockton, CA 95209

We should have a great time and we hope to see all of you there.



A twined tule basket under construction.

President's Message

"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush." -- Doug Larson

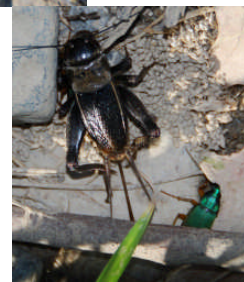
And even with rain! As I walk through the native plant garden, signs that Spring has arrived are all around. Wildflowers and grasses are sprouting, tiny leaflets are emerging on the bare branches of the valley oaks, and the songbirds' choruses are in full swing.

Springtime brings feelings of excitement and anticipation, and that is how I feel about this upcoming year at the Nature Center. It's exciting to let you know about several events we already have scheduled in March and April. For March's Spring Educational Seminar, UOP Professor Emeritus of Botany Dale McNeal will be giving a presentation on oaks, focusing on the valley oak trees found here in the park. In

April, we will be co-hosting a stargazing event with the Stockton Astronomical Society. A California Indian basket weaving class will be conducted by Lucy Parker, focusing on traditional materials and basketry methods (see article for details). And, preparations are being made for a day full of buggy fun at our "BugFest". In addition, our monthly Nature Nights programs will continue to offer (continued pg 4)



The place will soon be crawling with bugs!



What Were Birders Seeing Around Here 100 Years Ago? ...continued

Stockton to Murphys, Calaveras Big Trees, and Soda Springs, as well as a visit to the Marysville area. He noted the "Red-bellied Hawk" (Swainson's) which was very common in the Stockton area in summer and nested in oaks. He describes the valley east of Stockton as being very level, sparsely timbered except for narrow strips of oaks and willows along the principal water courses. "Because of the scarcity of water in the breeding season, birds are not numerous." He also used the interesting name of "Tell Tale" for the Greater Yellowlegs, "Sheldrake" for Common Merganser, and "California Squirrel Hawk" for Ferruginous Hawk. He observed that Yellow-headed Blackbirds were abundant in the valley, but not Tricolored Blackbirds. Most of his observations of foothill and mountain birds were the same ones we would see today. But I did note that there were no observations made of Common Ravens in the hills or mountains. The only hypothesis that I can make about this omission is that Ravens are very smart birds, and may have avoided

areas of human habitation where they quite possibly could have been shot. There were no protected species back in the 1800's.

Like Belding, Barlow was both an experienced observer and a collector. He collected both eggs and the birds themselves in the form of skins. His observations were annotated by W. W. Price, who had made extensive observations in the area for many years. The birds studied are, like those studied by Belding, ones which summer in the Sierra. Fall, winter, and spring birds were not noted. That said, it is interesting to note that the summer birds are the same ones we would observe at the same elevations at the present time. If global warming has had an impact on bird species which spend their summers in this area, it is not obvious. House Sparrows were observed at Placerville, but no European Starlings, Wild Turkeys, or other non-native species were noted. Again, and surprisingly, no Ravens were

observed.

I know little of the other authors, but John C. Tyler, author of "Some Birds of the Fresno District, California," has a Stockton connection. He was a Fresno businessman and an active amateur who wrote extensively about the birds of the Fresno area. He, too, collected bird eggs for museums and probably to sell to collectors. Collecting eggs was a rather common hobby and there was a journal, "The Nidologist," for bird egg collectors. Tyler was the father-in-law of Jack Arnold, who taught for years at Stockton (Delta) College and College (University) of the Pacific. He later developed the biology department at the new Sonoma State College as well as spending time after retirement as an ornithology research associate for the California Academy of Sciences. In the agricultural area around Fresno, Tyler noted many species (the names of which have since been changed), such as Florida Gallinule, Forbush Sparrow, Linnet, Hudsonian Curlew, Hut-

chins' Goose, and Duck Hawk. But all species are the same as those which would be found in the area today. Can you figure them out? One interesting observation was that there was an "increasing rarity of Magpies." A local migration of Tricolored Blackbirds was described as passing over at frequent intervals from daylight until after sunset. Swainson's Hawks were common, and one farmer noted that they kept the mice and gophers in check, so he allowed them to hunt "undisturbed over his place." Tyler did note Ravens on the west side of the valley near the foothills. It appears that the birds, if not the birders, have changed less than we might think over the last 100 years.

I would like to dedicate this article to my recently deceased father, Dr. Kenneth M. Stocking, who was the president of the Stockton (San Joaquin) Audubon Society in 1942 and introduced me to the pleasures of watching birds soon after.

Steve Stocking, Education Chair



Dates to Remember

Join us for Professor Greg Anderson's "River Otters" talk on March 20th at 7 PM

March 14th, 11 AM: Oak Grove Docent Council's Spring Educational Seminar. UOP Professor Emeritus Dale McNeal will be educating us on oak trees. Call the Center for details. 953-8814

March 20th, 7 PM: Nature Nights. Professor Greg Anderson from UOP will be presenting "River Otters" for us. Hope to see you all there.

April 4th, 7 PM: Nature Nights Special-Star Party hosted by the Stockton Astronomical Society.

Please RSVP by calling or emailing the Center.

April 7th, 6:30 PM: OGDC Board Mtg. Everyone welcome.

April 17th, 7 PM: Nature Nights- Restore the Delta's Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla will be discussing the plight of the Delta and how we can help.

April 18th, 10 AM: Twined Tule Basketry Class taught by Lucy Parker. See article for details.

April 25th, 10 AM: 'BugFest', a day of fun with insects and other ar-

thropods. Plan to spend a buggy day with us.

May 5th, 6:30 PM: OGDC Board Mtg. Everyone welcome.

May 15th, 7 PM: Nature Nights. We are trying to arrange for Linda Voorheis from Manteca Unified to talk to us about the Yokuts Indians of the San Joaquin Valley. We will update you when we know more.

President's Message- continued

educational and entertaining topics for everyone to enjoy. Please make sure to check the "Dates to Remember" section of this newsletter for the dates, times, and details of these events. We are looking forward to a very busy, exciting year for the Nature Center. But, in order to keep up our programs going strong, we need to ask for more volunteers. If you are able to volunteer just a few hours a month, please give us a call at 953-8814. Any amount of time someone gives can really help! Training is available and no previous experience is necessary.

Lastly, I'd like to say thank you to David Marraccini for doing such a wonderful job as our last President. I also want to say thank you to our active docents whose enthusiasm, dedication, and hard work are so appreciated. And, finally, I'd like to give special acknowledgment to James Rexroth, our fearless Nature Center Coordinator. I'm inspired by each one of them, and I am honored to be the new President of the Oak Grove Docent Council.

**OAK GROVE NATURE CENTER AND DOCENT COUNCIL
SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION**



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COMMITTED TO PRESERVING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE OAK GROVE
AND EDUCATING OTHERS TO THE VALUES OF CONTINUING SUCH PRESERVATION.