



CACHUMA LAKE FLYER

Cachuma Lake Nature Center Newsletter

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Ellen Lubic, Editor

EVELYN WHO?

Evelyn Stahl was born in Providence, RI, in 1931. (Careful, all you math students - not until April of '31). At 4, her parents with their only child traveled overland to Detroit, and then, at 8, to the mid-west (Rock Island, IL), where she lived in their Little House On The Prairie until they kicked her out to discover the real world. Yes, Alice, alas, there is a real world.

After a couple of degrees in chemistry and two abortive attempts at a Marriage Made In Heaven, she wed Ed Putnam in 1961, inheriting his teen-aged daughters, Phyllis and Bette. Shortly thereafter we moved to California when Ed was hired by General Electric to help man the space boom (soon turned to bust) at VAFB. The next 30 years (even in brief) could occupy the pages of several years' newsletters. Suffice it to say, I ran a lab for an animal nutritionist in the SY Valley, was a System Analyst for GE's TEMPO operation, and had a think-tank company (INTERPLAN) that allowed me to study economic development possibilities in third-world countries and the long-range R&D plans of the U.S. Navy. These idyllic pursuits came to an abrupt halt with the recession. Finally, Hughes (SBRC) hired me, and I spent the last dozen years of employment in interpreting the technology and value of spaceborne instruments to the non-scientific and in writing proposals for future space instruments. I retired early in 1994, but continued to work for Hughes on a consultant basis until 1997 when the SBRC operation was sold to Raytheon

Since Ed's death in 1992, I had been taking the wildlife cruise at least twice a year. Neal recognized repeat business and, about a year ago, suggested that I consider becoming a docent for the Nature Center. The thought of becoming a docent on nature struck me as ludicrous, since my knowledge of nature was practically nil. However, he said I might not want to be an interpretive docent, and, with that loophole in mind, I finally asked what I should do. He said, "Just show up at the Nature Center at 10:00 on any Wednesday." Thus, I walked into the docents' room last July and introduced myself to Linda. As usual, she was directing traffic, so I poked around awhile, admiring the new computer equipment. Maybe that was my escape! The friendly, relaxed atmosphere and the intentness with which everyone was working was captivating. After I toured the exhibits, I was hooked. What a great learning center you have created!

As you know, my election to President of the Docents was totally unexpected. However, I honestly look forward to channeling the creative ideas I have heard in a way that might be of benefit to the Center's future. All of you have been on board much longer than I, so I hope you will help me to turn your short-term and long-range wishes into reality.

Thanks for inviting me on board. - Evelyn -

Docents Elect New Officers for '99

President - Evelyn Putnam
Vice- President - Helen Osenga
Secretary - Barbara Gutmann / Becky Deutsch
Treasurer - George Smith

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Editor's Note from Ellen Lubic:

I am happy to finally be of some service to the wonderful Docent group, even though I could not believe I raised my hand during the deafening silence when **George Hughes** asked, as he looked directly into my eyes, "and who will volunteer to do the newsletter?" So, here I am.

I begin with a big THANK YOU to the outgoing editor, **Donna Shorts**, for all the past newsletters which she made so interesting and informative. She has promised to help get me off to a good start and I know I will rely on her experience for some time. And while I am giving plaudits, I join with the rest of the Docent group in thanking **George Hughes** for the gracious leadership he gave us this past year as our President. Our other hardworking 1998 Docent Officers, including **Don Wimpres**, **Barbara Gutmann** and **George Smith**, as well as our magnificent Gift Shop Manager, **Betty Wimpres**, all deserve recognition and thanks as well. It constantly amazes me to see the many hours and dedication to this jewel of a Nature Center which our Docents contribute.

As most of you know, I write for a living, but even so, must also rely on your 'feeding me' the information so that we may continue to publish a quarterly newsletter to benefit our many members and friends. Please put your typed, press ready copy into my mail slot at the lake, or better yet, email your copy to me at **Elubic@aol.com**. The deadline for the next issue is **May 15**, and there are no excuses 'cause you will already have gotten your tax refund. Cachuma Board members are always invited to participate and CLF Board information is welcomed.

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Grants

The Schlinger Family Foundation has given \$7,500.00 to start a building fund for the future audio-visual facility to be built where the garage now stands. Evert Schlinger and his wife Marion are members of the Cachuma Lake Nature Center, Inc. Board.

Recently a grant was received from the Santa Ynez Valley Foundation for \$600.00 to finance the mounting of a Ring Tail,* which is a rarely sighted, nocturnal animal of our area. Another proposal under consideration at this moment by the same foundation is for funding to purchase a new table saw.

Helen Logan, member of the Board of Directors, and Linda Taylor, Exhibit Chairperson, cooperate in grant writing. Helen recently attended a workshop sponsored by the Santa Barbara Foundation on grant writing.

* Ring Tail (not Ring Tailed Cat) is the correct name for this species.

Migration

from an "Educational Minute" given by Linda Taylor at the February 13, Docent meeting.

Migration is an enormous topic to undertake for an educational "minute." With this in mind, only bird migration will be discussed. At a later date additional information on this broad topic will be covered.

Defined as "the regular, extensive seasonal movement between breeding and wintering regions"* migration is not undertaken by all birds. Some are sedentary, that is they remain in the same location to breed and to winter. For example in our area, Acorn Woodpecker, Scrub Jay, House Sparrow, House Finch and many others remain. Some species have races which migrate and others which are sedentary.

Methods of researching migration are leg banding; 600,000 birds are banded in North America each year, only a small percentage are ever recovered. Implantation of radio transmitters is a sophisticated, expensive method. Radar is effective, but species cannot be determined. "Moon watching", the simple observation of birds flying at night across the face of the moon, provides information on numbers, times of night, and if the observers are good birders--species.

Since birds may lose up to 44 percent of their body weight during migration, why do it? A long, hazardous flight may not be as big a threat to a bird as spending the winter in cold weather with shortened daylight hours. Migration protects food supplies; by moving from one locale to another, birds capitalize on abundant food in each area. Insect eaters benefit most by migration. Traveling the farthest to reach insect rich Alaska for the spring and summer, insect eaters generally speaking, travel farthest and arrive earliest in the season. Seed-eating birds are more often sedentary. Birds which eat only a few varieties of plants or fruit or flowers travel over a wide area; those which have a broad "palate" in regard to food choice tend to stay in a smaller area.

Amazing studies indicate that birds have an innate sense in regard to migration. Young hatched from eggs of a migratory species placed in the nest of a sedentary species, will tend to migrate at the appropriate time, regardless of the behavior of the "foster parent." Conversely, young hatched from the eggs of a sedentary species but raised by a migratory "foster parent," will usually remain behind when the migrator leaves for the winter.

Patterns of migration vary widely: some birds migrate north to south for the winter; southern hemisphere birds do the opposite. In Europe and Asia, birds tend to migrate southwest, to Africa. In the Americas, the route is more north-south. Some follow rainy season patterns; some migrate by elevation--from higher to lower or lower to higher. A loop pattern is common; birds follow one route in the fall, (probably following ripening crops) and a shorter route in the spring. Seabirds have less need to migrate since water temperature is more constant than land temperature and since

these birds are not dependent on a specific crop or plant.

The Arctic Tern probably holds the long distance record, traveling from the North American Arctic, across the Atlantic Ocean, through Western Europe and Africa to the Antarctic. Blue Geese and Snow Geese fly from Canada to Louisiana without stopping.

The factor which most effects the timing of migration is the accumulation of body fat, without which the bird could not survive the rigors of the flight.

*The Life of Birds, Joel Carl Welty

Exhibits

Jim Smith recently completed an exhibit, which should appeal to a wide age-range. With a genuine robin's nest and photos of a robin and three other birds, the viewer is invited to name the bird which built the nest. When the correct button is pushed, a recording of a robin's song is heard.

At this point in the development of the Nature Center, additions create a domino effect. A ring-tail, badger, fawn, and fox are specimens which are currently being mounted for the animal case. In order to make room for them, the large mounted turkey will be moved into an individual case in the bird room. In order to make room for that, Darryl Rutherford, a new volunteer, has constructed a showcase to hold large nests below the case of small nests. He has also constructed a stand which combines a couple of exhibits in the bird room, creating more floor space, without sacrificing popular exhibits.

Finally wild flowers are beginning to bloom after our cold and dry winter and the fresh plant exhibit is becoming more diverse. On a weekly basis, the exhibit is tended by docents who replace wilted specimens and add new species which have come into bloom.

Since Condors are of great interest in Southern California, the current exhibit on them will be overhauled this spring. Taking into consideration the lack of empty space in the Center, the exhibit will necessarily remain small, but will incorporate information on their increasing numbers and the widening area into which they are being introduced.

In showcases at the marina and dam overlook, new displays have been put into place advertising the Trout Derby.

Fourth Annual Cachuma Lake Nature Center

TROUT FISHING DERBY

APRIL 10th and 11th, 1999

(at Cachuma Lake Rain or Shine)

\$5,500 in cash prizes GUARANTEED
\$3,000 for the trout with the highest tag number
\$2,000 for the longest trout (tagged or untagged)
plus many other cash and merchandise prizes

Camping information : 805 686 5054

Boat Rentals: 805 688 4040

Mail-in Registration before March 26, 1999 - \$20.00

Registration at Lake April 9, 10, 11, 1999 - \$25.00

Call 805 961 3935 for more information

<This is a benefit to support the Cachuma Lake Nature Center>

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About the Trout Derby - by Linda Taylor

Everyone who is interested in the success of the Nature Center is urged to support the Fourth Annual Cachuma Lake Nature Center Trout Derby to be held April 10, and 11. Proceeds from this event provide funding for the day-to-day operation of the Center.

Help is most needed in prize solicitation. Our volunteers have found they are most likely to acquire a prize, cash, or gift certificate from businesses which they patronize on a consistent basis. Please give your support to the the Derby and the Center by contacting your favorite business or store. Prizes should be registered at the Center where forms are provided. Please report names of businesses from which you have received prizes to Linda Taylor by March 5, for inclusion in the printed program mailed to all contestants.

\$5,500 in prize money will be awarded. To date, the largest single contributor is the Chumash casino and reservation which has donated \$2,000 to finance the second place (longest) trout. First place--\$3,000--will be awarded to the entrant who catches and registers the trout with the highest tag number. Other cash and merchandise prizes will also be awarded. Unfortunately for most of our readers, docents, members of the Board of Directors, and Park employees are not eligible.



MANAGING SKUNK PROBLEMS

Many people consider skunks odorous, obnoxious pests that should be avoided at all costs. However, these animals have some beneficial habits, they kill insects and rodents. The striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) is the most common species in California, although the smaller spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius*) can be a local problem around dwellings. The striped skunk is a house-cat sized animal (4 - 10 lbs.) that has long black fur with two variable broad white stripes down the back. The head is triangular; the tail large and bushy. The strong musk characteristic of skunks is expelled from two scent glands near the anus.



Biology

Skunks are nocturnal, preferring to hunt at night for insects, small rodents, carrion, poultry, eggs, nestling birds, fruit, pet food and garbage. Because they are active at night, many people never see the animals as they travel through their neighborhood, even in areas with a large skunk population. Skunks will use any sheltered place as a den including wood piles, animal burrows, culverts, under houses, decks, and sheds. Breeding may begin as early as January, but usually occurs during February and March. Males are viciously competitive for females, and bred females will attack males attempting to breed with them. One or both animals frequently spray during this intraspecific aggression. Litters are born 9 weeks after conception with an average of 4 - 8 young. The young skunks stay with the female for several months, but usually begin to disperse by mid to late summer.

Damage

Skunks become a problem when their activities conflict with human interests. When skunks take shelter under homes, decks, or in garages, their presence is not easily tolerated by occupants of the building. All skunks have the ability to discharge a nauseating musk from their anal glands. They are capable of spraying their musk several times with accuracy to about 10 feet. Confrontation with pets often results in the pet being sprayed or bitten.

Skunks can also cause severe damage to gardens and lawns by their digging activities. While searching for grubs and other subsoil insects, skunks frequently uproot turf and other plants. This damage consists of small pits ranging from 3 to 5 inches across or sometimes large sections of sod are rolled back.

Skunks are predators and can decimate ground-nesting wild bird populations and local populations of endangered species of small mammals. In addition, skunks can cause significant economic losses to egg/poultry raisers.

Disease

Skunks are the primary carrier of rabies in California. Approximately 65 percent of the skunks checked for rabies tested positive for the disease during the past 5 years. Rabies is a viral disease that is fatal in mammals, including man and domestic animals (dogs, cats, livestock). It is transmitted by the bite of an infected animal. Rabies is preventable in man and domestic animals through routine vaccination, but is not curable after onset of symptoms. Vaccines developed for domestic animals have not proven to be reliable in preventing rabies in wildlife. California wildlife species have shown an overall increase of 7 percent in confirmed cases of rabies from 1978 through 1988. In addition to rabies, skunks can carry leptospirosis, listeriosis, canine distemper, canine hepatitis, Q-fever, tularemia, and trypanosoma. They are also heavily infested with ticks, fleas, and mites which are known carriers and transmitters of disease.

Problem Prevention

Skunks are often attracted to residential areas by the availability of food, water and shelter. They can be encouraged to leave by reducing or eliminating these attractants.

Remove unused pet food and water bowls at night and keep tight fitting lids on garbage cans. Store pet food in animal proof containers. Gardens should be harvested frequently and windfall fruit picked up. Food should never be intentionally left out for wild mammals.

Seal up entry holes in and under buildings and decks. Keep pet access doors locked. Slotted metal vent covers are preferable to screen wire in keeping skunks from entering houses through foundation vents. Low backyard decks have proven to be extremely attractive shelters for skunks. They may be excluded by using 1/4 inch grid screening or solid metal flashing. Trench around the perimeter of the deck a minimum of 12 inches deep, insert screening in trench and backfill. Attach top of screening to facade of deck with nails or fence post staples. This technique may also be used along fence lines to prevent skunks from entering yards and gardens. Before completing final seal on the last entry point on a building or deck, it is wise to make sure no animals are trapped inside. On the night before completing repairs sprinkle flour in the entrance hole and check for tracks the following morning. If no tracks are evident for 3 consecutive nights, no animals are likely to be present. You may wish to make a temporary one-way exit using 1/4 inch grid screening. Form the screening into a cone or funnel shape. The large end should be sized to encircle the entry hole and be attached over the hole to the facade of the deck or building with nails or fence post staples. The small end should face away from the building and be 4 to 6 inches in diameter so that skunks can squeeze out of the hole but not re-enter.

Skunks causing lawn and turf damage may be encouraged to leave by controlling grub worms and other subsoil insects. Chemicals to control these insects may be obtained at hardware or garden supply stores.

Poultry and egg losses may be eliminated by proper fencing and by keeping well maintained, secure coops.



A Peek at History

For those of us who have enjoyed seeing the beautiful white Pelicans on the Lake this winter, the following quotation is cause for thought.

August 8, 1804: "The captain (Meriwether Lewis) looked up to see a blanket of white coming down the (Missouri) river. He went to the bow to stare down into the water. The keelboat and the white whatever-it-was came together. On close examination it turned out to be a sea of white feathers, over three miles long and seventy yards wide. The boat rounded a bend. Ahead was a large sandbar at the foot of a small island. It was entirely covered with white pelicans, preening themselves in their summer molt. To Lewis, the number of birds was 'in credible; they appeared to cover several acres of ground.' The mosquitoes were so thick that he could not keep them out of his eyes to take an aimed shot, so he fired his rifle at random into the mass and collected a specimen, which he then weighed, measured, and described. He was astonished to find that the pouch could hold five gallons of water."

From *Undaunted Courage, Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*, by Stephen E. Ambrose.

FAIR OR FOWL?

High above Village C C's third green,
enacted a graceful battle scene.
In-flight combat 'tween a hawk and crow,
the crow striving to strike the first blow.
Larger and stronger, he seemed to be,
his fierce assaults done relentlessly.
Each time that crow dove, it seemed so crass,
as the red-tailed hawk parried with class.
The crow seemed to have him in his sights,
yet wily hawk, he to had some rights.
One could hear the anguish of the crow,
each time he narrowly missed his foe.

Having many an evasive move,
my favored hawk had something to prove,
like "tho' sticks'n stones may break my bones,
your rasping screech merely wails'n drones.
My role in life is to hunt for prey
and you, black crow just get in my way.
So begone and care well for your brood
by searching much as I do for food.
There is plenty down there for us all,
so why continue this falderal!"

-Billy Cornflake 10-6-93 W