

SWOC TALK

May - June, 1975

Newsletter of the Southern Willamette Ornithological Club

Volume 1, Number 3

MEETINGS

The eleventh meeting of SWOC will be held at 7:30 PM, June 2, 1975. We will meet at the conference room on the third floor of Science III, University of Oregon Campus, Eugene. No definite agenda but some discussion will be held on plans for this year's Eugene Christmas Bird Count.

The twelfth meeting of SWOC is scheduled for 7:30 PM, July 7, 1975, the meeting place again the conference room at Science III. No agenda yet.

PAST MEETINGS

The ninth meeting of SWOC was held on April 7, 1975. Discussion revolved principally around the computerized field notes scheme and the possibility of organizing a SWOC ornithological collection. Twenty-three people attended.

The tenth meeting of SWOC, on May 5, 1975, was attended by seventeen people. The meeting was begun with the unveiling of a cake, honoring the 106th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Albert Gregory Prill, prominent ornithologist of Scio, who died in 1958. Don Payne followed this celebration with a discussion of a mortality study on Oregon Juncos that he has been conducting for several years at his home. Discussion after this covered many topics.

MEMBERSHIPS

On March 26, 1975, membership stood at twenty-eight people. Since then, four people, Joy Goolsby, Ken Jones, Paul Magney, and Helen Matters, have joined, raising the total of paid memberships to thirty-two.

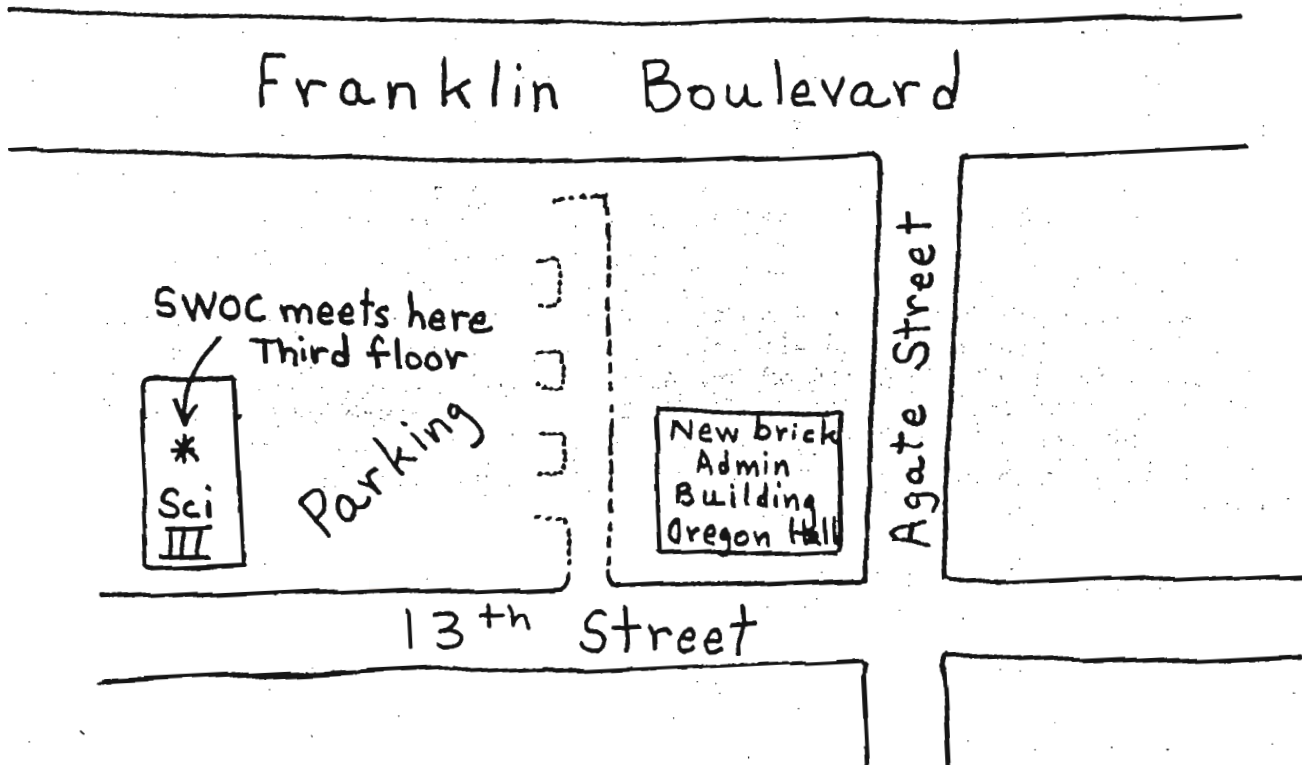
BUSINESS

Thanks to our thirty-two paid memberships, SWOC has a checking account of \$120.88. Printing costs for volume 1, number 2 of SWOC TALK was \$8.28, with mailing costs at \$3.00, making a total cost of printing and mailing \$11.28. Projecting a cost of \$15.00 per newsletter, our next four issues would cost a total of \$60.00, leaving a balance of about \$60.00. It is obvious from this that SWOC could well afford to sponsor special publications or research projects, or conceivably increase the size of SWOC TALK. Such business matters will probably be discussed at the eleventh meeting of SWOC.

Dues are \$5.00 yearly. Please make checks out to "SWOC." Mail should be addressed to "SWOC, c/o Chip Jobanek, 10600 McKenzie Highway, Springfield, Oregon, 97477."

A PLEA

We are in need of articles or notes for SWOC TALK. When the time came to assemble this present issue, little had been received from members. Please consider contributing. Possible ideas for topics include behavioral or ecological notes, reports on unusual sightings within the southern Willamette Valley, or distributional notes on areas or species. Please submit all material to Chip Jobanek, 10600 McKenzie Highway, Springfield, Oregon, 97477.



BIBLIOGRAPHY OF OREGON ORNITHOLOGY

Randy Floyd is compiling a bibliography of literature citations related to birds in Oregon from 1971 on. This bibliography will update "A Bibliography of Oregon Ornithology (1935-1970), with a Cross-referenced List of the Birds of Oregon," 1972, by Scott, J.M., T.W. Haislip and M. Thompson, Northwest Science 46 (2): 122-139. The bibliography will include literature citations of behavioral, ecological, distributional, and taxonomic studies which were conducted in Oregon or which used specimens or data from the state. It will include citations of studies that involve Oregon but don't cite data from the state, and citations from governmental publications. The bibliography will not include articles from newspapers, popular magazines, or local natural history society bulletins unless they contain material unique to the scientific literature.

If you come across an article that contains information about Oregon birds and you think the article would be missed in a literature search, make a note of it and let Randy know about it. Also if you know of articles or publications that probably are not available in Oregon libraries, please let Randy know about them.

Randy is also interested in citations that were not included in the Scott bibliography.

Randy will be out of the state from May until September, so please give your information to Chip Jobanek.

AN ORIOLE THAT REMEMBERED PEOPLE

Chip Jobanek

Three years ago, throughout the summer of 1972, I raised a young "Bullock's" Oriole that I had found as a just-fledged chick. This bird readily accepted my offerings of food. Even after it was able to fly and had returned to the backyard woods, it would return to be fed, flying from a tall alder and alighting on my shoulder. After a short vacation which of course meant my absence the oriole could not be found.

Earlier this spring, Terry Westlake, a friend, was outside near his home when a male "Bullock's" Oriole alighted on his finger. Amazed at the tameness of this wild bird, Terry and the rest of his family began to offer food to the bird which it accepted. The Westlakes live a half-mile from my house.

I feel fairly certain that the oriole that so willingly flew to Terry's finger is the same oriole I raised three years ago. Although I have no direct evidence, such as identifying plumage abnormalities or a band or marker, the tameness that the oriole showed and the close proximity of the Westlakes home to my house are the reasons for my feelings. It appears that Buster, a "Bullock's" Oriole, remembered people.

The Vaux's Swift in western Oregon

Donald E. Payne

At this latitude, Vaux's Swifts are mostly migrants. The northern bound flight appears around the first of May and, depending on the weather, remains in the area for a couple of weeks. Some few have nested locally, although with more field work I'm sure more nests will be discovered. This note is to encourage some other bandings and investigations in Flyway #4, as I am sure the migration pattern parallels the coast — perhaps more in the inland valleys.

The story of our 1974 bandings runs like this:

The only roosting site that I have found to be used with any regularity is the chimney of an abandoned schoolhouse on the University of Oregon campus. The building is presently being used as a storage for theatrical stage props and kindred paraphernalia. The chimney is the tallest structure for some distance around. From the exposed base, it is 40 feet tall, by 4 feet square, and made of the usual bricks with a cement cap around the top. A couple of 20-foot extension ladders get us up onto the roof, and on up to the cap, with relative ease.

This spring the flock, for some reason, did not appear to use the chimney. Either we didn't see them or they went elsewhere. There were swifts foraging over the river and associated fields, but the one swift which was seen entering the chimney did not seem enough to try to capture.

On 24 August, 70 plus swifts were tallied as they flew down to roost. It was thought that we could get the trap over the cap early enough in the morning and not to have to climb up to cover the chimney that night. Not so! The associated commotion and disturbance of placing the trap, even though done in the semi-darkness of daybreak, was enough to alert and flush them out. We final-

ly caught 26 birds and two returns from my bandings of May 1973. The flock remained in the area for several days. On 6 September we again tallied 80 plus swifts going down the shaft for the night. This time we put the tarp on the cap after the flock was inside.

It was no trick at all this time to slip the trap over the tarp and remove the birds. We used a plastic bag for gathering, since an onion bag let them climb up to the throat of the trap funnel and some of them escaped during the transfer. There were 111 new birds, four repeats, and two escapees. It took four of us to do the whole operation "sweep."

Our equipment consisted of a tarp, trap, two 20-foot extension ladders, plastic bag (garbage liner), ropes, holding cage, flusher (noise device to stir birds up and out of chimney), and size #1 bands.

I can furnish a trap design if anyone is interested.

The plastic bag has the hazard of smothering the birds if not emptied promptly. Our holding cage is 18" x 18" x 36".

These birds were weighed, wing lengths measured, fat deposit estimated, and parasites were taken; sexing and aging were attempted, but were not satisfactory. Does anyone have a good key for swifts?

So far I have only taken my own birds for repeats. One swift banded on 4 May 1973 repeated at both captures this summer.

Where do our Vaux's spend the summer and the winter?

Route 7, Box 159A, Eugene, Oregon 97405

IN REVIEW

Chip Jobanek

A Guide to Bird Watching, by Joseph J. Hickey. 1975. Dover Publications, Inc., New York. (Originally published 1943, Oxford University Press, New York.)

It is indeed very refreshing to review a book with which I am in total agreement. After three readings within five years, I have yet to find a statement in this book that isn't in direct accordance with my own philosophies on bird-watching.

The main thought behind the book, simply, is that there is a great deal that the birdwatcher can do besides "listing" and searching for the rarity that would help contribute to our knowledge of birdlife. Following the first chapter, which serves as an introduction to bird-watching, Hickey discusses in five exciting chapters how to begin the serious study of birds. "The Lure of Migration Watching," "Adventures in Bird Counting," "Explorations in Bird Distribution," "The Romance of Bird Banding," and "The Art of Bird Watching" all offered detailed looks into their subjects and shows how the bird-watcher can contribute to investigations into these subjects.

If I was to sum up this book in one word it would be stimulating. After reading this book, I had a strong desire to begin many of the projects that Hickey suggests. I realized the importance ~~that~~ systematic bird-watching in a small area; the appeal of traveling to Malheur, Florida, or Arizona diminished as this book revealed how much more important work could be done in a backyard. Most importantly, however, this book stressed that there is an enormous amount of information yet to be discovered about birds and it is the amateur bird-watcher that can help discover it.

This book is light and rapid reading. Hickey writes with such excitement and interest that it is difficult to put this book down until it is finished. It is frequently anecdotal and humorous but at all times refreshing, invigorating, and exciting.

Besides the main chapters in the text, there is in this edition a four-part appendix, consisting of "An Introduction to Bird Tracks," "Some Results of Breeding-Bird Censuses," "Outline for a Life-History Study," and "An Annotated List of Bird Books." An appendix in the first edition listing bird clubs in Canada and the United States is omitted from this edition because it is severely outdated. A Forward by John Bull, written 1974, revises Hickey's list of bird books without annotation.

Despite the fact that this book was written over thirty years ago, it still remains as one of the finest books ever written. Anyone thinking of beginning in the fascinating hobby of bird-watching, or a bird-watcher tired of chasing the endless list, should read this book. In its fresh, stimulating manner it could perhaps re-introduce them not only to bird-watching as a hobby, but also to bird-watching as a means to contribute to our knowledge of birds.

SOME COMMENTS ON ALFRED COOPER SHELTON

Chip Jobanek

The Southern Willamette Valley at the beginning of this century was blessed with several superior ornithologists, the finest of which were Dr. Albert Gregory Prill of Scio, Arthur Roy Woodcock of Corvallis, and Alfred Cooper Shelton of Eugene. Shelton, in particular, made many important contributions to the ornithology of the southern Willamette Valley and of Oregon as a whole.

In the time when collecting was the only efficient way to catalog an area's birdlife, Shelton was an indefatigable collector. To look through the University of Oregon Museum of Natural History's bird collection, almost entirely Shelton and Prills' skins, is to marvel at the immense effort and time which went into ornithological research of Shelton's era. Prill once commented that it took him a half an hour to prepare a sparrow skin and a half a day to put up a goose; Shelton, after spending the day collecting numerous birds perhaps ranging from hawks to sparrows, would spend a large part of the night making study skins.

The immense effort that went into Shelton's field work is further appreciated when the conditions of the time are realized. Shelton effectively covered diverse habitats and areas of Oregon at a time when roads were crude. He writes of taking the train to Marcola, the trolley to Springfield, and the stage to McKenzie Bridge. Field work often meant establishing camps for one or two week periods. Even nearby Spencer's Butte was seven miles from Eugene then; this distance did not allow many trips to town.

Although Shelton concentrated a great deal of his field work on the birds of Lane County, he also made excursions to other areas, such as Bend, Moody, Galice, and Netarts Bay. He was one of the first ornithologists to work in the Umpqua and Rogue River Valleys.

Because Shelton published but one article, and that on land birds of Lane County, he received little recognition for his serious field work. One of my complaints of Gabrielson and Jewetts' 1940 Birds of Oregon is that they did an inadequate job of checking bird collections, in particular Shelton's. Although Jewett in 1930 and Gabrielson and Jewett in 1940 considered Overton Dowell, Jr.'s 1923 Mercer specimen as the first Green Heron collected in Oregon, Shelton had collected one in 1915. Again, despite Gabrielson and Jewetts' statement that H.H. Sheldon took the first Oregon Red-eyed Vireo specimen in 1916, one month before Shelton took one at Oakridge, they overlooked the fact that Shelton had collected a breeding female in Grants Pass the year before. Indeed, Gabrielson's 1931 article, "The birds of the Rogue River Valley, Oregon," would have been much improved had he consulted Shelton's fine collection.

Another of many minor errors in Birds of Oregon which hinder realization of Shelton's contribution to Oregon ornithology appears on page 542. Here, it reads that "Vernon Bailey, Jewett, and Alex Walker were among the members of a Biological Survey and Oregon State Game Commission party that collected on the Three Sisters, on several dates between July 11 and 17, 1914, the first breeding [Rosy Finches] taken in the state." Overlooked was the fact that Shelton was a prominent member of that party — in fact, Shelton, accompanied by Jewett, climbed to the top of the Middle Sister on July 12 and collected four finches. Since Birds of Oregon was written entirely by Gabrielson, this omission of Shelton's contribution to that record is understandable but unfortunate.

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Although Shelton was a fine ornithologist, he was not without mistakes. A female Hooded Merganser he collected near Elmira was identified for some time as a Red-breasted Merganser until he caught his own mistake. The Green Heron mentioned earlier was identified as a Least Bittern and apparently Shelton never realized his error. His reports on his field work were often marred by typing errors. In a report on Netarts Bay, an unfortunate but amusing error had him writing on the status of the "Rugged" Grouse. He once wrote of persuading a friend not to shoot Gray Jays with his "sex gun". Overall, however, serious mistakes are few.

Although I have concerned myself only with Alfred Shelton, the ornithologist, he was also a very active mammalogist. Probably Shelton's mammalogical studies have been overlooked as severely as his ornithological studies; much valuable information could perhaps be revealed by re-examing these.

For several decades after his work, Alfred Cooper Shelton was forgotten as an original contributor to our knowledge of Oregon birds. I hope that many people now will rediscover Shelton and assign him the credit he deserves. The next time you hike Spencer's Butte, climb the Sisters, or walk upon the University of Oregon campus, remember the man that went before you. We owe Alfred Cooper Shelton a great deal — its time we repaid him with appreciation.

This issue of SWOC TALK was prepared by Chip Jobanek and was printed by the Quick Copy Center of the University of Oregon, Eugene.

The Southern Willamette Ornithological Club, or SWOC, is an organization representing the interests of bird students in the southern Willamette Valley. The goals of SWOC include:

- Conduct monthly meetings of ornithological interest
- Act as the coordinating body for local projects
- Participate actively in local governmental planning
- Act as a "sounding board" for new ideas and information pertinent to the study of Willamette Valley birdlife
- Distribute this information through the form of a newsletter and papers

Quite simply, SWOC is an informal discussion group which deals with the problems of Willamette Valley birds. We need your participation. Please consider joining SWOC and playing an active role in any of these stated goals. Address all letters to "SWOC, c/o Chip Jobanek, 10600 McKenzie Highway, Springfield, Oregon, 97477."