

A WARBLER'S VIEW OF SIERRA CLUB MEMBERS

September 1980

As part of the Delta Chapter's continuing emphasis on and encouragement of scientific studies on chapter outings (see "New Species Discovered on Red Creek, *Delta Sierran*, January 1980), a special team, trained in reverse ornithology, spent the Memorial Day Weekend collecting data. Well equipped with tape recorders, binoculars, learned tomes, and cold beer, the scientists succeeded in opening a new area of study. By interviewing – rather than just watching – birds, the group, for the first time in history, learned what birds think when they watch a Sierra Club outing.

There were interesting and exciting experiences during the expedition, which took place in that most fecund of wilderness areas, the Red Creek bottomlands. For instance, Josie Patton was able to snare a Knife-billed Oyster Catcher by sprinkling salt on its tail; however, because Josie did not have lemon juice, horseradish, and Worcestershire sauce, the bird escaped. Leo Couty, with great stealth and skill, climbed to a crow's nest without scaring the crow away. Leo made the remarkable discovery that crows keep pint flasks of Old Crow whiskey in their nest to serve to guests. Leo then spent the rest of the afternoon with his new friend, sharing Leo's bottle of Amaretto after the crow's Old Crow ran out.

After an analysis of their research, the scientists prepared a report containing a partial list of Delta Sierrans as observed by birds on Sierra Club outings.

1. *The Equipment-Laden Nerd*. This character always brings too much gear on any outing. On birding trips he has so many binoculars, cameras, telephoto lenses, books, knapsack, film, etc., etc. that he is unable ever to see birds. One kingfisher reported to the researchers with a raucous laugh that it had actually sprinkled salt on the backsides of one of these Nerds without the Nerd knowing it.

2. *The Obnoxious One-Upsman.* This person usually is observed when campers are discussing past trips. If one person says he has climbed Mt. Rainier, the One-Upsman responds with *his* tale of climbing Mt. McKinley. If a canoeist is regaling those around the campfire with a story of how his canoe turned over in the raging Bogue Chitto River, the One-Upsman will counter with a tale of how he almost drowned when his dory capsized while riding the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. The group usually wishes that the One-Upsman *had* drowned.

3. *The Hypocritical Energy-Saver.* This denizen of Sierra Club outings brags that he lives without air-conditioning, pays N.O.P.S.I. less than \$20 per month, and uses a wood stove for cooking and heating. These boasts are usually made on an outing on which the Energy-Saver has driven 400 miles for the opportunity to complain about wasted gasoline.

4. *The Compulsive Joiner.* This Sierran is rarely seen on outings. He does, however, attend every meeting of the Sierra Club, The Audubon Society, the Protect the Pied Turtle League, etc. He is usually too busy with agenda, legislative action reports, and letters to congressmen to go out into the woods he works so diligently to preserve.

5. *The Red-Nosed Boozer.* As his name suggests, this creature is distinguished by his scarlet snout. He frequently hangs around the campfire until quite late, filling the woods with raucous laughter, bawdy songs, and bad jokes. He is usually the last to crawl out of his tent in the morning, complaining that, during the night, the entire Russian army marched across his tongue in their stocking feet.

6. *The Natural Food Purist.* Another member of the Nerd family, this character subsists entirely on organically grown sunflower seeds, stone-ground whole wheat bread, and herbal tea. When other campers display white bread, granulated sugar, coffee, or nitrite-soaked meats, the Purist shudders in paroxysms of fear. One of this species was observed to fall dead when

another camper lunched next to him on a Big Mac, fries, a Dr. Pepper, and a Moon Pie.

7. *The Disorganized Slowpoke.* This Sierran is usually late for the start of the outing. When breaking camp in the morning, he always forgets into which stuff bag various items of his gear belong. The Warblers had much opportunity to observe one specimen who too 1 ½ hours to pack his canoe after breaking camp.

8. *The Laid-Back Loafer.* This species is never seen on backpack trips because such excursions are too strenuous. Instead, the Loafer prefers slow, easy, summer canoe trips with frequent stops. He is frequently seen in company with the Red-Nosed Boozer, lying on a sandbar, snoring in the shade of an overhanging tree. The loafer's favorite canoe trip is to cover two river miles in three days. While in the canoe, the Loafer paddles only when necessary to avoid colliding with the bank or another canoe.

9. *The Brand Name Dropper.* This member of the Nerd family talks only about the camping gear he owns or expects to own. No discount store or Army surplus for this one, he lets the other campers know that his boots are Vasque, his backpack is Kelty, his canoe is from Blue Hole, his tent from North Face, etc., *as nauseam*. He prepares his freeze-dried meals on his Svea stove, being careful not to get dirt on his L.L. Bean knock-around-camp shorts at \$26.50 a pair. Byron Almquist of the Canoe and Trail Shop loves Brand Name Droppers.

10. *The Tobacco Moocher.* This pathetic figure begins the outing with great resolution. He takes his last smoke the night before the trip, ritualistically flushes the cigarettes down the toilet, and swears a holy oath that no more filthy nicotine will pass his lips. But, after the outing is a few hours old, he observes an unenlightened Sierran lighting up, and the withdrawal pangs begin to strike. Just one, reasons, the Moocher as he bums a smoke from his colleague; and that's the way it is, just one, every two hours for the rest of the outing.

– Earl Higgins