

POINT REYES BIRD OBSERVATORY
By Frank P. Frazier

A highlight of our western jaunt to spend Christmas with our daughter in Southern California was a day at Point Reyes. It was a day to treasure -- the weather clear and refreshing; the Pacific ocean sparkling in the bright sunshine, and an all too brief visit at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory with EBBA members Richard Mewaldt and Ted Van Velzen.

As the map shows, Point Reyes is half way up the coast of California, an hour or so by car from San Francisco. The accompanying photograph shows how Point Reyes juts out into the Pacific Ocean.

The Point Reyes Bird Observatory is a non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of California. It is a full-time professional non-game bird banding station, the first of its kind in North America. Dick Mewaldt is President of the Observatory and Ted Van Velzen, formerly of the Banding Office and whom many members met there or at EBBA annual meetings, is the resident biologist.



Both Dick Mewaldt and Ted Van Velzen greeted us as we drove up. And this despite the fact that a few days before rain and wind off the ocean had blown off part of the building's roof with subsequent damage to gear and ceilings as can be imagined.

The Observatory is located in the Point Reyes National Seashore and is unusually appropriate for bird banding operations. Its remarkable variety of habitats includes surf-battered rocky headlands, protected estuaries and lagoons where water-birds mass, and highlands with mountain meadows and virgin stands of Douglas Fir and Bishop Pine.

Where the Peninsula extends into the Pacific, migrants are highly concentrated in occasional oases of woody vegetation which break the wide rolling grasslands. More than 300 species of birds have been recorded within the Seashore.

It is Ted Van Velzen's job as resident biologist to carry out, with the assistance of volunteer banders, a continuous trapping and banding program. It is believed that recovery of birds banded there over the years will help answer some vital questions about the direction, timing, magnitude and manner of bird migration.

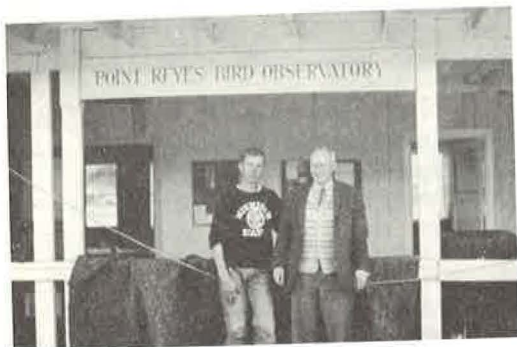
I was most impressed by the plans for the future of the Observatory, America's only full-time professional non-game bird banding station, and in the enthusiasm of its members.

Several European countries have long supported Bird Observatories dedicated to the study of non-game birds -- the Soviet banding operation at Rybacki Station on the Baltic Sea and the British one at Fair Isle on the North Sea are examples.

The Point Reyes Observatory is launching a comparable effort. It promises to make major contributions to our understanding of bird migration and population dynamics.

I believe every bander should do what he can to help further the Observatory's plans. One way is to become a member -- annual dues are \$5 (\$10 for a Sustaining Member and \$25 and up for a Contributing Member). Checks should be made payable to Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Star Route -- Lighthouse Road, Inverness, California.

You'll be proud and glad to be a part of this fine bird banding project.



Top left - Ted Van Velzen and the Editor

Top right - Ted Van Velzen and Dick Mewaldt

Center - The Observatory Building. Dick's son Bill and friend Raymond Lancaster are making repairs to the damaged roof

At right - Roofing compound is handed from Ted to Dick and on up to Manuel Morris, Acting Regional Chief of Lands, San Francisco office, a volunteer worker and a bander
(Photos by Frank P. Frazier)

