

Short Notes

Observations at a winter roost of White-tailed Kites (*Elanus leucurus*)— This winter our neighborhood in the Parkway area of South Sacramento, Sacramento County, experienced the remarkable phenomenon of a spectacular communal White-tailed Kite roost. It all began at sunset on 19 December 2000 when the local roosting flock of kites were coming in for the evening. I heard several of them calling, then suddenly the sky above our yard was filled with kites. I watched, awestruck, as more and more kites gathered together over my house. I counted well over a hundred before I lost track of their number. The kites were arriving from all directions and formed the largest kettle of raptors I've ever witnessed. Eventually they all began to circle in and descend into a large pine and towering eucalyptus behind our house.

That initial gathering was the largest I observed, but the kites remained throughout the winter and on most nights it was typical to see 70 to 100 kites wheeling about and settling into the trees as darkness fell. On windy evenings it was thrilling to watch them surf the wind as they made their approach, rising high on the air currents, then careening down the wind streams at exhilarating speeds before pulling up to hang suspended in the wind. Truly an awesome sight!

The kites dispersed in early March, their numbers gradually tapering off through February. I feel privileged to have witnessed this event right in my own neighborhood and I'm hoping for their return next winter. — *Cathy Corcoran, 4678 Barbee Way, Sacramento, CA 95823.*

Banded Fox Sparrow returns for ninth winter to Sacramento— On 16 January 1993, I trapped and banded (under the supervision of Tim Manolis, Banding Permit # 21130) a Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*) of one of the brown-headed, northwestern races in my backyard in Sacramento, Sacramento County. The bird appeared to be in good condition with considerable fat.

This bird has returned to visit my yard in every winter since then, being retrapped on 2 March 1997 and again on 15 February 2001. It appeared to be in good condition on the latter date. The bird always returns to the same feeder and birdbath every winter. — *Elmer Aldrich, 5631 Camellia Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95819.*