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San Francisco? Already San Francisco?

by Lawrence W. Swan

The forethought of some people is amazing. I have been asked to write about San Francisco and you should know that the AFA Convention in this City by the Golden Gate is not until August 1985. Is the idea of this early prologue simply an inducement, a whetting, a seeding of a notion, a lure? I suppose it is.

It is not really right or proper to describe San Francisco for the simple reason it offers its variety and charm in so many different ways to so many different kinds of people. And even some sort of restriction that suggests I write for bird people is not confining enough for, if you did not already know it, aviculturists themselves are a motley assemblage with incongruous points of view. In other words, San Francisco is and can be what you want to make of it, you incongruous lot.

Now if you want to ask me what I personally think of San Francisco I should point out that I have worked in the City for over thirty years and wouldn't have it otherwise. I am prejudiced. On the map it is the nail on the handless thumb of The Peninsula mostly surrounded by the Bay and connected by bridges that radiate from it. It is the hub of the area, the Bay Area. From its hills (and they are hills which you will realize if you drive up Green Street, for instance) there are views of water where great ships come in from the Orient and where, on clear days, the blue is specked with the white of a thousand sail boats. And always, as you turn a corner, there is that fantasy of red-steel arcs and webs, the Golden Gate Bridge. To me, no city on earth offers such a surfeit of vistas.

You may ask what you might want to do in San Francisco, what you might not want to miss. Again, it is up to you and your own predilections. Almost anything is available in San Francisco. I should think you would want to visit the new Primate Center at the San Francisco Zoo, perhaps the finest thing for monkeys and their kin in the world. And you wouldn't want to miss the California Academy of Sciences with its glorious aquarium and fish roundabout. Here, too, there are penguins that you can see in their "flight" underwater in a huge glass tank. Nearby, in the surrounding Golden Gate Park, there are lots of things to interest you from the magnificent gardens to some of the world's greatest art. There will be day tours.

And what else? Why of course, food!

You may know that San Francisco is famous for its restaurants. Now I can assure you that you can get quite as good food in Paris or New York. The difference is simply that what might start with fifty dollars in New York you may be able to get at fifty places for a tenth as much. Well maybe a little more than that. Anyway, the city is crawling with places to eat where every varied nuance of atmosphere is available and in every available national food. Have you ever tried Burmese or Argentinian or Herzgovinian? They are all here. But I have to admit that I have not yet found an Antarctic restaurant. Hey, that's an idea! Penguins for decor!

Should I forget San Francisco's night life? Yes I shall. Find out for yourself. Gird your loins first. Take our night tour.

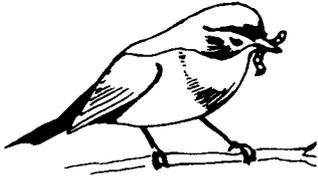
It seems I could go on forever so I shall expand to the hinterland — the trips you can make in the vicinity like Muir Woods, the Point Reyes Bird Sanctuary, the Wine Country and its samplings of good stuff (there will be a tour). These are to the north. To the south there are the immense redwoods of Big Basin, the fun at Santa Cruz, the aura of Stanford University, the scenery of Point Lobos and the artistry of Carmel. Where on earth could you see more? Maybe you can grasp why I, born and raised in Darjeeling in India where the mighty range of Kangchenjunga overwhelms the northern horizon and gives the world its greatest view, prefer, somehow, to live near San Francisco where versatility and variety, charm and charisma, interest and intensity meld into the City of enchantment.

If, as it may be for some of you who are never satisfied, San Francisco isn't enough, remember that a trip to Hawaii at special rates to bird people is planned, something you can think about, perhaps a place to rest up after the Convention.

And so, along with cable cars and such there will be a very informative, varied and inspiring AFA Convention for your pleasure and interest. It is time to plan your visit. The raffle will out-affle anything in AFA memory. Consider the first prize, a brand new automobile! This will be followed by a home computer, a pair of blue ring-necks, a trip to Hawaii, an RCA TV set and so forth and so forth. Ah yes, the dates — August 7 to 12, 1985. It will all happen at the Cathedral Hill Hotel, San Francisco. Come! ●

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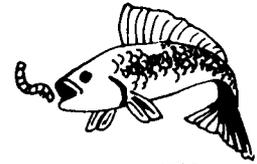
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