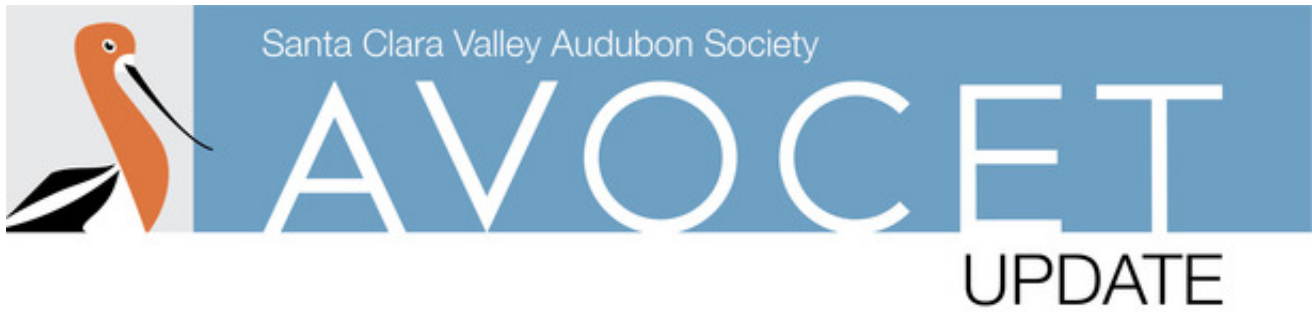


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Eurasian Wigeon: Tom Grey

AVOCET Update for January, 2022

The coming year promises to be filled with exciting programs, in-person field trips, bird surveys and bioblitzes. Take a look at what's planned for January alone! Thank you to everyone for your support this past year, and the many hundreds volunteer hours that helped keep this chapter's activities during a challenging year. We look forward to seeing you after the holidays and wish you a very happy New Year! Stay safe, keep birding, and be well.

~Matthew Dodder, Executive Director



Title artwork features a hand-colored engraving by Alexander Wilson for *American Ornithology*, published in 1814

Waterfowl Class

From Swans to Geese to Ducks, the ancient order of Anseriformes has long fascinated humans, even to the point of appearing in early cave paintings, and reinforcing their importance to early humans. Fortunately they are the easiest birds to observe, especially in winter, making December – March the perfect time to fully appreciate these iconic birds. From coastal bays to inland lakes and flooded farmlands they can be found by the hundreds or even thousands, providing birders ample opportunity to enjoy their enormous variety of colors, shapes, and behaviors. In this three-session online class, Matthew Dodder will discuss the taxonomy, diet and identification of the 35 species that occur in Santa Clara County with numerous comparison images. Special attention will be given to some of the rare and more difficult to identify species as well as hybrids.

Waterfowl-focused field trips will be offered for registrants to sign up in the first class session.

January 10 Part 1: Taxonomy, Morphology, and Behavior

January 17 Part 2: Divers, Dabblers, and Domestic

January 24 Part 3: Difficult identifications

[Register Here](#)



Red Bird-of-Paradise: Tim Laman

Speaker Series

Edwin Scholes on Cornell's Birds of Paradise Project

January 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM (via zoom)

Edwin Scholes, with photographer Tim Laman, became the first ornithologist to document all 39 species of birds of paradise, famed for their outlandish coloring and bizarre mating dances. He is a leading authority on their behavior and evolution. Scholes' and Laman's work is the basis of the National Geographic Museum's "Amazing Avian Evolution" exhibit. Scholes works as the biodiversity video curator at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York.

[Register Here](#)



Merced NWR Trip

Saturday, January 29, 2022

Come explore one of the Central Valley's winter birding jewels. Sandhill Crane, Snow, Ross's, and Greater White-fronted Geese could number in the thousands, along with many varieties of ducks, shorebirds, and raptors. This is an auto tour around the perimeter of the refuge so it is accessible to all. Bring a lunch and we will eat together at the observation platform halfway around the loop. Scopes recommended.

[Register Here](#)



Share your memories of Gail Cheeseman

We are planning a special tribute to our long-time friend Gail Cheeseman in our next quarterly Avocet. Gail passed away in November and we miss her very much. Many of you have been on a Cheeseman's Ecology Safari with Gail & Doug, been on a pelagic trip with her or birded with her here in our county. We'd love to hear your stories! We'll add your voice to our tribute as a reflection of the huge impact Gail has had on our community. Please take a minute to send us a short memory, story or anecdote that highlights Gail's personal impact on your life. If you have any photos of you with Gail, we'd love those too! You can send email (including photos) to our Board President, Barry Langdon-Lassagne, at admin@scvas.org, or fill out the brief form [here](#).



Field Trips

In-person field trips for Jan 1 - Feb 2 post on **Dec 24**. Locations covered include Merced NWR, Joseph D. Grant County Park, Coyote Lake County Park, Coyote Valley OSP and more! Visit [field trips](#) for more information and to register.

Trips filled-up? Check a day or two before your trip of interest goes out. Sometimes we have cancellations.



Greater White-fronted Goose: Juliana Manoliu

Self-Guided Field Trips

We have added two new guides to our selection:

- [Stevens Creek County Park \(Cupertino\)](#): The Early Bird Catches the Worm, Acorn, and Toyon Berry! by Diane McCoy
- [Hellyer County Park \(San Jose\)](#): Take a Gander at these Geese! (Accessible) by Eve Meier

For all of our January recommendations and the complete collection of guides, visit our [self-guided field trip page](#).



Time is running out for a tax deductible donation

In 2021, charitable donations up to **\$300 may be eligible for a tax deduction** even for those taking the **Standard Deduction**, but the eligibility expires on **31 December 2021**. Check with your tax advisor to determine if this affects you, and make sure to make your donation before the deadline.

[Donate Here](#)



Nature Shop Calendars

We still have a few Audubon Calendars for the upcoming year. Be sure to stop by the Nature Shop to pick one up before they're all gone! The shop (and our office) will be closed for the week after Christmas and will reopen on January 3rd. See you then!



House Finch: Deanne Tucker

Backyard Birding

Close out the old year, and ring in the new, with **our latest backyard birding features**:

[Getting To Know The Neighbors](#) - SCVAS Member Francesca Ricci-Tam documents the birds that live around her home in sketches and stories.

[Backyard Bird of the Month](#) - The Cedar Waxwing, with its masked face and ruby-red wing spots, has a strong penchant for fruit.

[All Around Town](#) - Scaly-breasted Munias are surprise feeder visitors; raptors soar, dine, and drink; and winter songbirds are everywhere.

Best of 2021 - Call for Submittals

What are your favorite memories of birding your yard or neighborhood this year? What did backyard birding mean to you?

Send your **2021 backyard birding highlights and reflections** to us at backyardbirds@scvas.org and we'll publish them in [All Around Town](#). Stories, lists, poems, photos, sketches, and sound clips are all welcome - be as creative as you wish!

Great Backyard Bird Count

Save the date! The [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) is **February 18-21, 2022**.

During this annual event, **birders around the world count birds** wherever they'd like and share their observations with scientists. This is a fun way to learn your backyard birds and explore your community! Stay tuned for more information.



Newt: Carolyn Knight

Conservation Corner

The Newts of Alma Bridge Road

On December 8th over 100 community members provided public comment urging Midpen to prioritize protection of the newt population on Alma Bridge Rd by Lexington Reservoir, Los Gatos. Many comments came from our own SCVAS members! Midpen has prioritized newt conservation, let's hope Santa Clara County follows suit! Watch for alerts and help us advocate for the newts in 2022! To sign up to volunteer with the Newt Patrol, see <https://www.bioblitz.club/newts>.

Coyote Valley in 2022

On December 14th, the County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve a climate resilience district in Coyote Valley! This, along with San Jose City Council's November decision, will ensure Coyote Valley is protected as open space, habitat and agriculture into the future. We hope that landowners will have resources to protect water and enhance habitat on their lands - for example - plant crops and harvest in ways that allow the endangered tri-colored blackbirds to breed successfully, plant hedgerows for songbirds and milkweed for monarch butterflies, and create habitat for burrowing owls. We'll be asking all of you to help us speak for birds and butterflies in Coyote Valley!

Trails on Valley Water properties

In December, following 7 years of advocacy by SCVAS and other environmental groups, the Valley Water Board of Directors established guidelines for public trails along creeks. These new guidelines will help protect riparian and aquatic ecosystems and help balance human access to nature with healthy habitats. We have been urging Valley Water to add habitat protection guidelines to their public trails since 2015 and are encouraged by the decision!

Plastic Turf: Giulianna's Op-ed Published in the *Los Gatan*

On December 8th, the Los Gatan published our very own Environmental Advocacy Assistant Giulianna Pendleton's op-ed on the dangers of installing artificial turf in elementary schools. Please take a moment to [read this opinion](#) on what artificial turf would mean for birds and wildlife, children's health, and plastic pollution.



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