

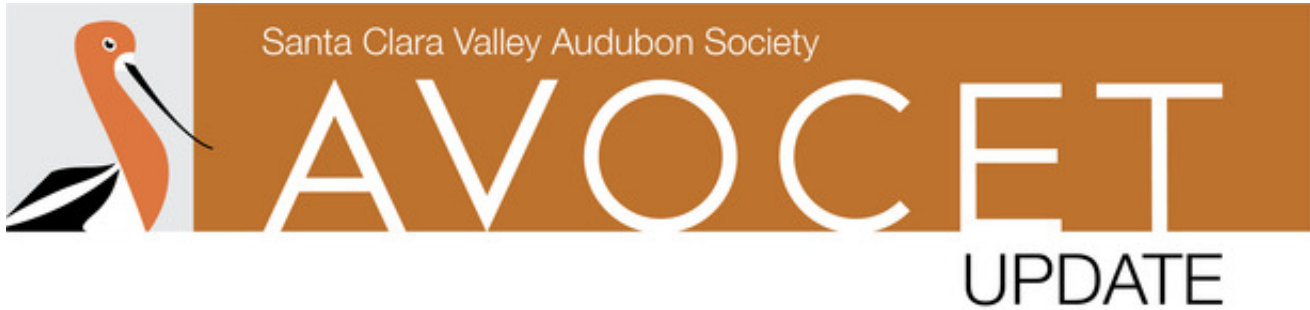
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Varied Thrush: Tom Grey

October 2022

Fall is officially here! We know this by the brown floor of the trail, the preponderance of the orange displays in the grocery store and the cloying aroma of pumpkin spice... But we know more powerfully that it is fall because of the birds showing up on our eBird alerts—Black-and-white Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, American Redstart and Northern Waterthrush... It's an exciting time for birders as the days grow shorter and darker, and the avian urge to move brings "eastern" species into our orbit. The list of exciting arrivals will no doubt grow, perhaps through the end of the month. But it will also be short-lived as these birds continue south to their wintering grounds. In this update you will find upcoming field trips visiting local hotspots to intercept some of the many birds visiting our county. You can check out a new class on aquatic birds. Learn more about the recent occurrence of avian influenza among our Waterfowl, and of course Conservation. Most of all, you'll want to get out there and enjoy this lovely cool weather and all the birds this new season brings. For a summary of the season, [watch the recent presentation](#).

~Matthew Dodder, Executive Director



New SCVAS Class

Swimmers: Looks like a duck. Acts like a duck. It *isn't* a duck...

Part 1 - Monday, October 10, 7:00 PM via Zoom

Part 2 - Monday, October 17, 7:00 PM via Zoom

Optional Field Trip - Saturday, October 22

There are many bird families that can swim but few are more closely associated with water than the under appreciated Cormorants, Loons and Grebes. While unrelated to each other, they share many features that allow them to survive in an almost completely aquatic habitat. Like Ducks (which were covered in a previous class) these water-loving families have evolved different features to tackle the associated challenges—navigating the depths, finding food in the shadows, and despite every compromise that seems to work against it, the power of flight. In this 2-session class, Matthew Dodder will discuss the morphology of these birds and how they employ a variety of solutions that have allowed them to thrive. Following the two online presentations (covering adaptations, field marks, and tips for identification), a separate field trip to the San Mateo coast will be offered where we will search for the birds discussed and practice the techniques learned.

[Register here](#)



Mike Ambrose, Sonja Kramer and Bilal Al-Shahwany leading a trip at Sunnyvale Baylands

Field Trips

In-person field trips for October post on **September 28**. Locations covered include Joseph D. Grant County Park, Stevens Creek County Park, Ulistac Natural Area, and a variety of trips along the bay. We also have a photowalk!. Visit [field trips](#) for more information and to register.

NEW! To help more people have a chance at getting a spot on our very popular field trips, **please limit your sign-ups to 2 trips per month.**

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



Lincoln's Sparrow: Sushanta Bhandarkar

Self-Guided Field Trips

Fall migration continues and the weather has begun to cool! Visit New Chicago Marsh to check out Avocets through Willets or head to the foothills for sparrows and other songbirds. Looking for an easy, paved choice? Try out Blackberry Farm.

- [Don Edwards: Shorebird Spectacle at New Chicago Marsh](#) (Alviso)
- [Blackberry Farm: A Riparian Corridor in Silicon Valley](#) (Cupertino)
- [Calero Creek Trail](#) (Almaden Valley)
- [Coyote Lake: Mendoza Ranch Area](#) (Gilroy)
- [Pearson-Arastradero Preserve](#) (Palo Alto)

See all of our [fall recommendations](#) or visit our [complete collection of guides](#).

If you would like to write a guide for a location that you love to bird, please contact Eve Meier at fieldtrips@scvas.org.



What Dave *really* said in 2001...



Pine Siskin: Brooke Miller

Backyard Birds

Bird of the Month

Our featured backyard bird for October is the Pine Siskin. This tiny, flocking bird is a member of the finch family. It has a thin pointed bill, heavy brown streaking, and yellow stripes in its wings.

Siskins are mostly winter residents of Santa Clara County. Some years, when food is scarce further north, large numbers of the birds spend the winter here - this is known as an "irruption." Will this winter be an irruptive one? We'll have to wait and see!

Siskins are often associated with salmonellosis outbreaks at backyard bird feeders. Be sure to regularly clean your feeders to help prevent the spread of disease.

Learn more about the Pine Siskin in [our latest Backyard Bird of the Month article](#).

All Around Town

In our [recent backyard bird report](#), contributors noticed subtle signs of seasonal change. Take a look to find out what birds our members and friends have spotted near their homes lately.

What birds have you observed near your home lately? Send your notes, lists, and photos to backyardbirds@scvas.org and we'll publish them in the next All Around Town. We are curious about all birds, so don't feel that you need to wait for a special sighting before writing in.



Canada Geese and Snow Goose: Michelle Nelson

Avian Influenza Update

The 2022 outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (“bird flu”) in the U.S. has reached wild birds in Santa Clara County. In August and early September, four cases were confirmed among Canada Geese and Red-tailed Hawks in our county.

Besides poultry flocks, the current outbreak of avian flu mainly affects waterfowl (like geese and ducks), other water birds (including pelicans, terns, gulls, and cranes), and birds that scavenge or hunt them (like vultures, raptors, crows, and ravens). Small songbirds, which make up most of our common backyard birds, seem to be rarely affected by avian influenza viruses.

If you are birding in areas with many waterfowl and other water birds, the California Department of Fish & Wildlife recommends that you wash your clothes and disinfect your shoes before traveling to other areas or coming near domestic or pet birds.

At this time, SCVAS is not recommending that backyard birders take down their feeders or baths for wild birds, unless you raise poultry or keep other domestic or pet birds outside.

As always, we urge you to keep your bird feeders, baths, and feeding areas clean, which helps prevent the spread of disease. To protect yourself and your pets, use caution when handling items used by birds - wear gloves and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards - and keep pets away from feeders, baths, and feeding areas for wild birds.

For more information:

[**Avian influenza in California fact sheet**](#)

[**Avian influenza and bird feeders**](#)

[**Avian influenza disease description**](#)



Red-shouldered Hawk: Tom Grey

Coyote Creek Watershed Day

October 1, 9AM-1PM

Coyote Creek Visitors Station

We're celebrating one of our favorite watersheds to bird with Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful! Bring the family in a day filled with bird walks, bioblitzes, and bike rides as we learn about the Coyote Creek Watershed and its importance in our community.

[Register Here](#)



Photo by Matthew Dodder

Conservation Corner

Our sponsored Light Pollution Bill, [AB 2382](#) was vetoed by the governor. In his veto letter, the governor referred to existing (and in our opinion, grossly inadequate) building codes, cost and safety (which we believe to have been addressed in the bill as proposed). We are greatly disappointed, and will consider trying again in the future.

Read more about light pollution in this recent [article in the Los Angeles Times](#) and in this [recent opinion in The Mercury News](#), written by Travis Longcore, a speaker at our symposium below.

SAVE THE DATE: Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and the Sierra Club are organizing a symposium titled, "**Light at Night: A Glowing Hazard**," to focus on light pollution and bird friendly design on the **afternoon of November 16**. You will have a chance to learn and to ask questions of the leading experts in the field! Please stay tuned.

Our friends at Green Foothills are currently accepting applications for their Leadership Program for 2023. This program is for Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Benito County residents. The Leadership Program is an 8-month training program preparing participants for leadership roles at nonprofits, public agencies, companies, and community-based groups where they advance initiatives for environmental conservation, justice, and inclusive public processes. Scholarships are available. [Application and more information.](#)

ADVOCATES MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

Success story from Sunnyvale: Rani Fischer, our new Environmental Advocacy Assistant wrote a letter to the editor regarding light invading her home from an adjacent development. Her letter prompted the City of Sunnyvale to contact the polluter and require that lighting be projected downwards, without spilling into neighbors homes and property. Here is Rani's letter:

Stop light pollution in Sunnyvale

Every night bright lights pour into my living room from the Fortinet building a half mile away here in Sunnyvale. I shield my eyes when I go to the kitchen to get a drink of

water so that I can fall back asleep.

Since I live on the edge of a residential area that abuts office parks, the lighting ordinance (SMC 19.42.050) for residences doesn't apply to me. The spotlights are an unjustifiable source of light pollution and waste of energy. Also, they disorient the hundreds of thousands of birds that migrate every spring and autumn as well as the insects upon which the birds feed. In humans these high-spectrum lights, especially LEDs, suppress melatonin, causing insomnia which damages neuroendocrine and cardiovascular systems, and even exacerbates cancer.

Light pollution is a dangerous problem with an easy solution. Sunnyvale should follow [Cupertino](#) and [Salt Lake City](#) and create a dark-sky ordinance.



Missing Bench...

One of our two lovely benches went on holiday this weekend and never came back... It will be missed by our many visitors who enjoy sitting in the shade and watching the birds visit our feeders. If you are a carpenter and would like to build us a new one, please swing by the Ranch to take the measurements. No rush, but we would be so grateful. Thank you.



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