

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society



2019
2020
ANNUAL REPORT

Our Mission

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society promotes the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of birds and other wildlife by engaging people of all ages in birding, education, and conservation.

2019
2020

Dear Friends,

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society is at a remarkable place in its history. For 95 years, the Chapter has faithfully pursued its three-pillared mission with a small staff and the help of an incredible team of dedicated volunteers. At no other time in its history has that been more true than it is today.

Our membership is growing steadily and our financial situation has improved to the point where we can now breathe and make a few plans. Diane Hart, after serving a full term of three spectacular years as Board President, has stepped aside from that role but leaves behind a legacy which Barry Langdon-Lassagne now continues. He and Matthew Dodder, the Executive Director, have proven they work well together and share many of the same bold ideas. Neither one of them shies from questioning assumptions or exploring new ideas. Together they hope to grow our Chapter and its relevance, in part, by engaging with other organizations such as Saved By Nature and Latino Outdoors to better serve and learn from ALL members of our community.

And then, the coronavirus. Normal operations were disrupted and had to be completely reimagined. The Birdathon, scores of field trips, our busy calendar of class visits, the Nature Shop—nothing was untouched by the widespread need for change. SCVAS embraced the dark unfamiliar however, and

learned to bend it toward some light. From our Education and Field Trips to our Outreach and Development committees, our volunteers have worked tirelessly to rethink how we do things—how to reach new audiences—but more, how we could improve the Chapter's offerings. We found an amazing pool of creative thinking from which sprang a fountain of new ideas like “distributed Birdathon teams”, “virtual field trips”, “Zoom Speakers” and our very own YouTube channel overflowing with exciting video content for people to engage with. We also explored rebuilding our school programs so they will be effective with or without in-person instruction. It seems we are socially distancing only in the physical sense—we are still very much together!

We are more optimistic now, despite the disruption—despite everything. It seems SCVAS excels under pressure, and for that we are grateful to all of you—our donors, volunteers, and staff. Thank you everyone for the best possible year in this strangest of years. •

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director

Barry Langdon-Lassagne
President of the Board



Remaining relevant

Our History

On the evening of January 8, 1925 a group of forty-five or so people “interested in the preservation and protection of bird life” gathered at the Saratoga Inn and began the creation of a local Audubon Society.

In our earliest years we were concerned about “the growing scarcity of the Condor and the Pelican” and signed a petition to protect them. We organized field trips and met regularly. In a 1927 meeting, we debated “Are English Sparrows more Harmful than Beneficial?” In a meeting in 1928 it was reported that “Palo Alto owned a tract of marshland suitable for a bird sanctuary,” which led to us to work with local governments, corporations, the Fish & Game Commission, the Sierra Club and other local Audubon Societies to push for the creation of a wildlife refuge in our bay. In 1929 we published our first newsletter, called *The Wren-Tit*, which was filled with natural history articles, field trip reports and meeting minutes. We also started the San Jose Christmas Bird Count in 1929.

Over the years, the chapter slowly expanded to over 100 members. We conducted more frequent field trips, created a second Christmas Bird Count in Palo Alto in 1949, renamed the newsletter *The Avocet* in 1954, engaged in more conservation projects and met in various locations throughout the south bay such as San Jose State College, the lodge at Alum Rock and the Palo Alto Junior Museum.

The issues around conservation of wild lands and protection of threatened bird species that brought us together 95 years ago sound so familiar because we continue to tackle them today. We now have four Christmas Bird Counts, hundreds of field trips per year, education programs that reach thousands of schoolchildren and a long-term lease with the City of Cupertino to use the historic McClellan Ranch as our headquarters. We’re more dedicated than ever to environmental advocacy, supported by staff and volunteers. We’ve grown to 1,175 members. As we approach our hundredth anniversary, those core values, interests and causes upon which we were founded continue, and we will strive to bring appreciation and concern for birds and their habitats to a wider community and to new generations. We are so grateful for the support of our members and donors and look forward to the work ahead.

For more of our history and the archive of our newsletters going back to 1929, visit scvas.org/the-avocet-archive.

All quotations are from *History of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society 1925-1962* compiled by Warren M. Turner. •

Diversity is a Strength

Just as biodiversity strengthens natural systems, a diverse membership strengthens our efforts to protect birds and their habitats. We are committed to accept all ethnicities, lifestyles and gender identities among our staff, members, donors and partners. We ask you to join us in building a more inclusive community.

2019 2020

Education building our future



Photo: Matthew Dodder

2,256

K-6 students served
(2,864 RSVPs prior to SIP)



For more than 30 years, the Wetlands Discovery Program has been our signature educational offering. In that time, it has introduced an estimated 24,000 school children to the wonders of our local wetland habitat and wildlife, and inspired them to take an active role in conservation. From the classroom to the field, the SCVAS Ed Program, led by **Carolyn Knight** and her team of passionate volunteer

educators, has worked to share its knowledge of our flora and fauna with students throughout the county. The Wetlands Discovery Program has always been free of charge for Title 1 schools, and our catalog of programs and staggered fee schedule have made additional programs accessible to other underserved schools as well. Additionally, we are working to create bilingual materials for all our programs to continue this trend. Yes, the pandemic put a halt to our in-class work, and many field trips were cancelled. Carolyn and the Ed Committee have used the open schedule to develop materials for effective distance learning. SCVAS is ready to take on more classrooms both in-person and on-screen. •

64

individual programs
(prior to shelter-in-place)

7

cities

38

schools

17

Title 1 schools



“This was the most awesome field trip in the world! There were so so so MANY different types of birds!!! ... The sparrows were the smallest and cutest birds I have ever seen in my whole life!”

Uipanchi, 4th grade student, Ponderosa Elementary

“The school visit helped build teams and cooperation—working together. It also got them excited about the trip. Preteaching before the trip is brilliant.”

Paula Arnold
4th grade teacher,
Ponderosa Elementary

“The Wetlands Discovery Program is a unique experience. Children learn about our local environment and wildlife habitats, how human activity impacts these natural systems and what they can do in the present and future to better take care of our local natural systems—the best kinds of learning experiences for kids.”

Lawrence Volpe
6th grade teacher
Lairon College Prep

“I joined three years ago and the experience has been wonderful. I only wish I could do more! The people in this group have an amazing amount of knowledge to share.”

Tess Stahl
Volunteer at SCVAS

Education Volunteers

(Includes both EdCom and WDP)

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Dwight Agan | Garrett Lau |
| Mike Azevedo | Jim Liskovec |
| Jack Carter | Joan Loney |
| Craige Edgerton | Kris McNamara |
| Allison Fluty | Jim Meikrantz |
| Elaine Gould | Barbara Millin |
| Diane Hart | Mary Ann Robertson |
| Linda Johnson | Allen Royer |
| Ginny Kaminski | Liz Salzer |
| Ginger Langdon-Lassagne | |

Programs

- Wetlands Discovery
- Bird ID & Adaptation
- Bird Beak Investigators
- Bird Walks
- Nest Box Building
- Owl Pellet Dissection
- Owls of Santa Clara County
- Adult Education Presentations

NOTE: We are working on making all our programs bilingual and effective for distance learning and in-person instruction.

20

EAC volunteers
(Environmental Action Committee)

63

advocacy letters



Egret Nesting Colony on Google Campus
Photo: Matthew Dodder



“The skills and confidence I gained at SCVAS continue to guide me everyday in my current job at the San Jose Mayor’s Office. I also continue to volunteer with the EAC - it is the best conservation committee in our region—a small committee that casts a huge shadow!”

Mackenzie Mossing
Former SCVAS Environmental Advocacy Associate
EAC Volunteer

2019
2020

12

EIR comment letters
(Environmental Impact Report)

8

letters of support

“I worked with Shani on various projects, and saw firsthand how she can get things done, staying focused on her mission, even while working on many projects at the same time. The EAC is very effective at activating people and gathering public support for environmental causes.”

Merav Vonshak, Ph.D.
EAC Volunteer

“Shani is a reliable and expert resource who consistently brings issues forward often not otherwise considered on topics as wide ranging as bird safe glass to creek setbacks to threats to newt population. Shani’s input invariably results in better outcomes for birds and all wildlife.”

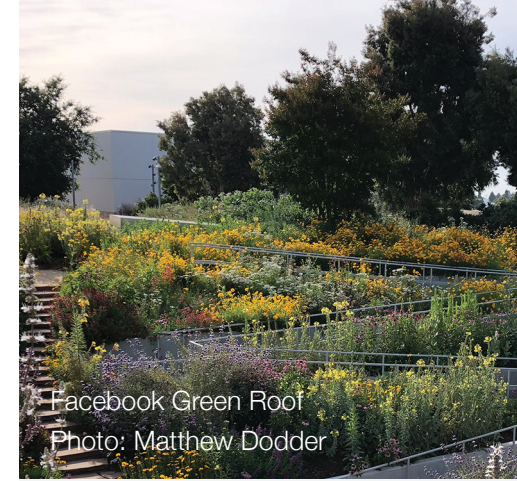
Karen Holman
Board President
Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Conservation our passion to action



On issues ranging from urban parks to wide open spaces, from individual birds and their nests to entire bird populations, from endangered species to common ones, our Environmental Advocate **Shani Kleinhaus**’ voice has been strong and effective. With the 20 dedicated members of SCVAS’s Environmental Action Committee (EAC), Shani has worked on planning processes and bird conservation efforts in almost every city and jurisdiction in our County.

With patience, perseverance, and a sharp focus on the welfare of birds and wildlife, we continue to promote a sustainable future that does not leave birds and nature behind. Last year we participated in 50 public meetings and composed or collaborated on 63 Advocacy letters, 12 comment letters on California Environmental Quality Act reviews and eight letters in support of state and federal legislation that is critical to birds, birders, parks and nature



Facebook Green Roof
Photo: Matthew Dodder



education programs. These efforts resulted in increased awareness and protection of birds and their habitats, leading to better policies, improved development of projects and master plans, and more thoughtful design of urban landscapes, parks and open space by such government agencies as:

- Santa Clara County,
- Santa Clara Valley Water District,
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority,
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District,
- the cities of San Jose, Cupertino, Palo Alto, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Campbell, Los Altos, Saratoga and Morgan Hill.

We have continued to work with companies to promote nature and California native plantings on their campuses, including the Facebook Green Roof and the urban Egret and Heron rookery on Google’s Mountain View campus.

To further leverage our influence, we collaborated with a constellation of environmental groups and research institutions to preserve critical open space areas in the region. Already, almost 1,000 acres have been purchased for permanent protection in Coyote Valley. We are working there and elsewhere to regenerate habitat for Burrowing Owls and Tricolored Blackbirds, among other threatened species.

We are actively seeking a solution to the massive mortality of Pacific Newts as they cross a road during their annual migration to and from Lexington Reservoir. And we are continuing to promote bird-safe building design guidelines in cities throughout Santa Clara County and beyond.

Our Environmental Action Committee and Shani’s advocacy on behalf of birds and nature continue to inspire businesses, government agencies, and cities to make better decisions affecting all of us who call the Santa Clara Valley home. •

50 crucial public meetings for local conservation issues



Photo: Matthew Dodder

Birding

sharing our love of nature



“We saw the Egret Nesting Colony on the Google Campus. For the first time, I saw the Snowy and Great Egrets nesting in the trees and taking care of their cute babies. After that experience, I was hooked.” **Ruchi Verma Gupta**

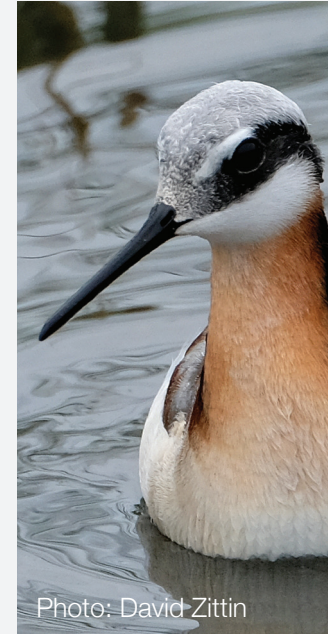


Photo: David Zittin

On its surface, birding is a simple concept—go outside, and look at the birds around you. If, on the other hand, you are sheltering in place during the pandemic, you can look *through your window* at the birds in your yard. Record your sightings if you wish and challenge yourself to find more species. That’s it. Perhaps now more than ever though, we are realizing that birding is not necessarily a solitary activity, and it is far from a simple concept. **Eve Meier** and our incredible volunteer Field Trip Leaders are each educators and advocates in their own right. As such, the birding arm of SCVAS, one of the three pillars of our mission, is a perfect hybrid of the other two. Covid, as expected, changed everything. We quickly generated virtual birding tours on YouTube, live broadcasts on Facebook, and a selection of “Birding Locations,” which guided birders to local hotspots where they could observe social distancing while birding at their own pace. When field trips resume again, SCVAS will continue to explore these new online opportunities to share our love of nature with anyone who prefers, or is unable, to join in person. •



“The Santa Clara Valley is such a special place. It is home to so many plants and animals that are absolutely fascinating and ecologically amazing! I love leading field trips. It gives me a chance to help others discover something new in our wonderful home: a new favorite trail, a new bird, a new appreciation for a common species, and ultimately a passion for conserving the open spaces of Santa Clara Valley.”

Dani Christensen



Photo: Ed Reed



Field Trip Volunteers

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Julie Amato | Norm Kikuchi |
| Mike Ambrose | Barry Langdon-Lassagne |
| Jay Anderson | Ginger Langdon-Lassagne |
| Raminder Bajwa | Hugh McDevitt |
| Dan Bloch | Eve Meier |
| Adam Burnett | Barbara Millin |
| Robin Chen | Kitty O’Neil |
| Danielle Christensen | Rich Page |
| Laura Coatney | Bill Pelletier |
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| Michael Hawk | Tess Stahl |
| Diane Hart | Steve Tracey |
| Ann Hepenstal | Chuq Von Rospach |
| Rick Herder | Merav Vonshak |
| Bob Hirt | Bill Walker |
| Kirsten Holmquist | Mary Wisnewski |
| Chris Johnson | Nick Yatsko |
| Jim Johnson | Dave Zittin |
| Clay Kempf | Floy Zittin |

“Barry & Ginger managed to show us so many birds in our neighborhood park! With their expert guidance, I was able to get meaningful images. Thank you!”

Carter Gasiorowski



Photo: Eve Meier

2019
2020

“We enjoy going into the field with birders of all levels. Regardless of experience, each individual offers a learning experience for us. Our reward comes from getting others excited about the beauty and biology of birds.”

Dave and Floy Zittin

489 people enjoyed our field trips
(prior to COVID-19 and SIP)

40+
leaders

50+
locations

1,700
RSVPs

121
events

Thank you, donors!

June 1, 2019 — May 31, 2020

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Larry & Charlotte Langdon
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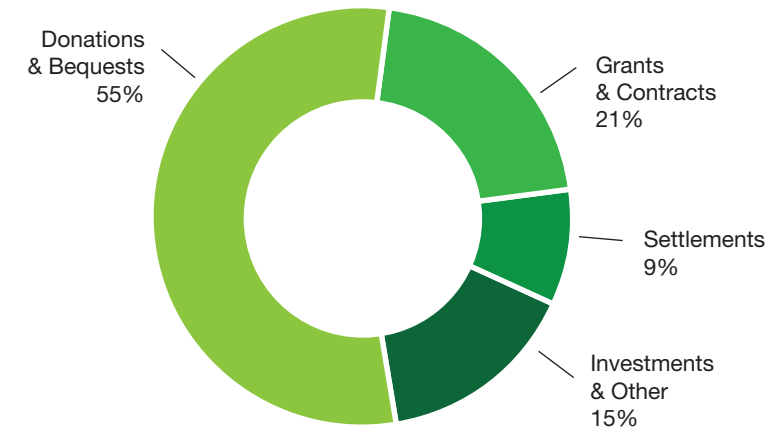
June 1, 2019 — May 31, 2020

SCVAS ended the 2019/2020 fiscal year, which ended May 31, in the black despite the significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. More remarkable, in April we were able to conduct a very successful socially-distanced Birdathon fundraiser while sheltering in place, raising over \$45,000 and exceeding our budget estimates and prior year numbers. Our contributions rose as well, indicating that our members, donors and community are pleased with our programs, conservation activities and member services. Our ratio of program expenditures to total spending is nearly 80 percent, while our fundraising expenses remain low at 10 percent. Our investment portfolio increased from 2019 to 2020 by nearly 10 percent despite the economic downturn early this year. Our conservative investment policy certainly has helped us in these tough times. We look forward to 2021 with cautious optimism, lots of energy, and a very sound Balance Sheet.

The condensed financial statements listed here are a representation of the full set of financial statements which can be found at scvas.org/financial.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society is headquartered in Cupertino, CA, has an EIN of 94-6081420, and is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations may qualify as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes. Consult with your tax advisers or the IRS to determine whether your contribution is deductible. SCVAS is classified by the IRS as a Charitable Organization, with a ruling year of 1977.

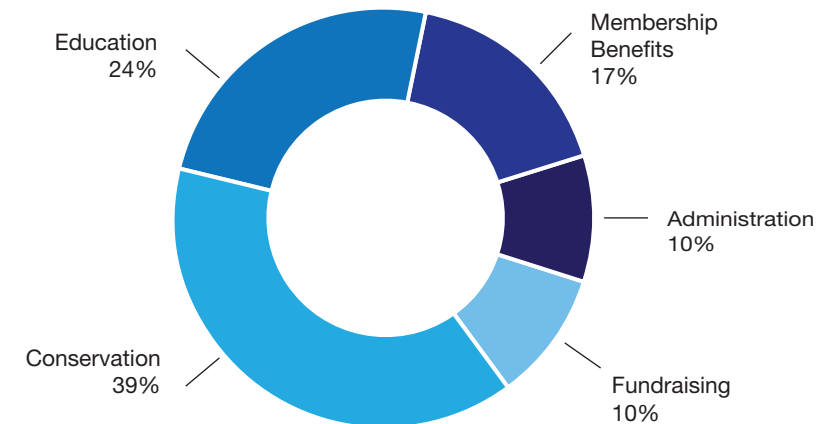
(Source: IRS Business Master File and Form 990)



Income

Donations & Bequests	296,447
Grants & Contracts	111,492
Settlements	49,253
Investments & Other	82,508
Total Income	\$ 539,700

Where the money comes from and how it is spent



Expenses

Conservation	172,597
Education	108,456
Membership Benefits	75,116
Administration	42,820
Fundraising	43,304
Total Expenses	\$ 442,293

2019
2020



www.scvas.org

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Cupertino CA 95014-4030

SCVAS is a 501(c)(3) organization.
Donations may qualify as tax-deductible.

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Board of Directors

Meetings are open to all members.
Bimonthly: 2nd Wed. at 7:30 PM
Call the office to confirm.

President

Barry Langdon-Lassagne

Vice President

Bill Walker

Secretary

Joan Leighton

Treasurer

Bob Hirt

Directors

Michael Armer
Gabrielle Feldman
Diane Hart
Peter Hart (outgoing)
Vivek Khanzodé
Sue Pelmulder (incoming)
John Richardson

Volunteer Committees and Chairs

Birdathon: Barry Langdon-Lassagne (acting)

Development: John Richardson

Education: Ginny Kaminski

Environmental Action: Keith Wandry

Field Trips: Eve Meier

Finance: Bob Hirt

Membership: Diane Hart

Outreach: Ann Hepenstal



Photo:

Wilson's Phalaropes, Tom Grey

Graphic design: Matthew Dodder

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