



## The Avocet

MR AIAN M EISNER  
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REDWOOD CITY, CA 94061

2020

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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

On all field trips, CARPOOL and share expenses. Bring binoculars, field guides, lunch (optional on half-day trips), and liquids. For carpooling arrangements call Dolores Norton (415)941-1666 or Gail Cheeseman (408)741-5330.

#### Field Trip Coordinator for December - Dave Nauer (408)259-1283.

- Dec. 2 **Lake Merritt.** Sunday, 9 a.m. Meet at Rotary Science Center, Oakland. N on Hwy 17 to Oak St. E on Oak; Oak becomes Lakeside, then Harrison. Right on Grand, right on Bellevue to meeting place. Possible Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Red-necked Grebe. Afternoon spot to be announced at trip. Call if raining. Leader: Allen Royer (408)251-6133.
- Dec. 5 **Bay Area Bird Photographers.** Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. at Baylands. Bill Ferguson (retired professor of entomology) will talk about macrophotography and show some of his outstanding insect slides. Co-sponsored by the City of Palo Alto.
- Dec. 11 **Bird Discussion Group.** Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. at the home of Jean and Pat Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Avenue, Los Gatos. Subject: Birding Through the Window.
- Dec. 12 **Field Trip South.** Wednesday, 9 a.m., half-day. Chesbro Reservoir, Morgan Hill. Take Almaden Expressway S from San Jose, left on McKean Road (which becomes Uvas Road), 11 miles S to junction of Uvas Road and Old Oak Glen Road. Lunch optional. Leader: Emily Curtis (408)779-2637.
- Dec. 16 **San Jose CBC.** See story inside.
- Dec. 17 **Palo Alto CBC.** See story.
- Dec. 27 **2nd Annual Monterey Bay Christmas Count.** Thursday. Leaders: Allison, Bailey, Baldrige, Chandik, & Shearwater. \$22. Contact Debra Love Shearwater, P. O. Box 7440, Santa Cruz 95061 (408)688-1990.
- Dec. 29 **Grant Ranch County Park.** Saturday, half-day, beginner/family trip. 9 a.m. Take Hwy 101 or I-680 to Alum Rock Ave; east on Alum Rock to Mt. Hamilton Rd. Follow Mt. Hamilton Rd. to Hall's Lake (0.2 mile past Grant Ranch Park entrance). \$3 park entrance fee per car. (Will carpool from Hall's Lake and share fee.) Bring those new Christmas binoculars for an easy walk to see possible Golden Eagle, Black-shouldered Kites, other raptors. Bring lunch! Heavy rain cancels trip. Leader: Vicki Silvas-Young (408)293-7124.

### PALO ALTO CBC

The annual Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count will be held Monday, December 17. Birders interested in counting in any neighborhood should contact Clark Blake at (415)854-8483 (home), or (415)323-8111 ext. 2221 (work).

### WHAT'S SMEW? IT'S A DUCK THAT STANDS IN THE WAY OF A DIKE

(-excerpted from Richard Hudson, Wall Street Journal 9/19/84)

The Dutch are running out of suitable places to build dikes. About half of Holland is polder (land enclosed by dikes and pumped dry). It seems the Dutch cabinet is now faced with the decision to build one more great polder - the Markerwaard Polder, a \$550 million, 100,000 acre project. The dike would surround a lake near Amsterdam, but 90% of the smews of the world live here. As usual, Dutch farmers and developers want it, environmentalists and fishermen among others oppose it. As Richard Hudson put it, "So the next few weeks may see the last hurrah of Dutch dike building."

--Kite Call

### AUDUBON ADVENTURES

SCVAS is sponsoring the new Audubon Adventures educational program in nine elementary classrooms throughout Santa Clara Valley. The initial response to the first edition was a very positive one on the part of fifth and sixth graders and their teachers.

Each student receives a personal copy of the four page newsmagazine. They are guided in its use by a teacher's edition which provides background information and teaching suggestions.

The cost of the program is a minimal \$20 when ordered through Audubon. This provides a class of students with six editions during the school year, each centered on a particular theme such as raptors, wading birds or seabirds, etc. The program would cost teachers \$35 if not ordered through Audubon.

Sponsoring a fifth or sixth grade class would be a marvelous holiday present and an excellent way to help introduce young people to the concerns and joys of Audubon. If you are interested in this, just send a check for \$20 to Lynn at the Audubon office. Include the name of the teacher, grade level, school name and address. If you do not have a particular school nor teacher in mind, the Education Committee will choose one and inform the recipients of your generosity.

-- Elaine Gould  
Educ. Comm Chairperson

## SAN JOSE CBC

The all day counting of ducks, geese, hawks, sparrows, and rarities followed by a marvelous dinner and tally will be held on Sunday, December 16. Your help is needed to make the day a success. It is important to cover all areas within the count in order to properly census the common to abundant species, as well as the uncommon to rare ones. Choose an area to your liking and call the section leader ASAP. As sections fill up, we may ask people to count in other areas. If you have not done a Christmas Bird Count before, on-the-job training will be provided!

We need feeder watchers too. This information is just as valuable as the data obtained in the field. If you (1) live within the count circle, (2) will be home all or part of the day on December 16, and (3) are willing to watch your feeder(s), then call us before the count, and we can work out the details. Rarities such as wintering Bullock's Orioles and White-throated Sparrows are possible.

If you would like to help with the dinner, please call Lynn Tennefoss at (415)329-1811. She would love to have some assistance before and on December 16.

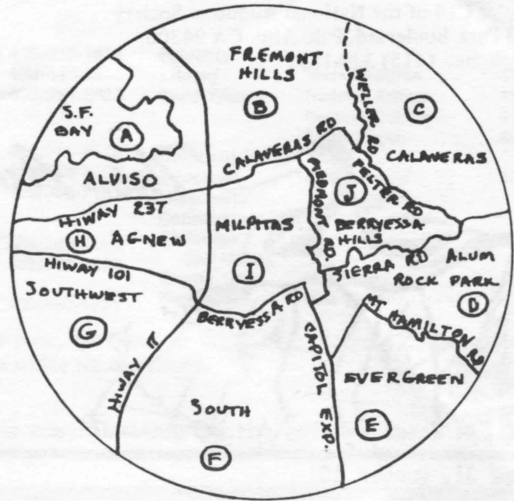
Again, please join us for a day of exciting birding, good fellowship and a tasty dinner.

Jim and Sue Liskovec (415)969-5542 are San Jose Christmas Bird Count compilers.

### OTHER CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Point Reyes	Dec. 15	Bill Lenarz 8 Inman Ave. Kentfield, CA 94904
Santa Clara Valley	Dec. 16	Jim & Sue Liskovec (415)969-5542
Oakland	Dec. 16	Nancy Conzett (415)527-2593
Santa Cruz Bird Club	Dec. 16	Bruce La Bar (408)476-7583
Palo Alto	Dec. 17	Clark Blake (415)854-8483
Mt. Hamilton	Dec. 19	Clark Blake (415)854-8483
Crystal Springs	Dec. 22	Frank Allen (415)344-9339
Ohlone	Dec. 23	Phil Gordon (415)538-3550
Southern Marin	Dec. 23	Ken Howard (415)332-4117
San Francisco	Dec. 27	Dan Murphy (415)564-0074
Los Banos	Dec. 27	Kurt Campbell (707)664-0104
Monterey Pelagic (\$22)	Dec. 27	Debra Shearwater (408)688-1990
Monterey	Dec. 28	Don Roberson (408)375-0794 (408)373-4463
Ano Nuevo	Dec. 29	Frank Allen (415)344-9339
Mt. Diablo	Dec. 29	Chris Swarth (415)849-2053 George Finger (415)933-2468
Morro Coast	Dec. 29	C. K. Currey (805)528-1022
Moss Landing	Jan. 1	John & Ricky Warriner (408)722-5589
Arroyo Cheap Thrills	TBA	Dave Shuford (415)669-7429

All these counts can use help. If you would like to participate, please call the compiler, or the SCVAS office if you have any questions.



### SECTION LEADER NAMES AND PHONE NUMBERS 1984 SAN JOSE CBC

A(Alviso)	Jean Dubois (408)395-4264
B(Fremont Hills)	Vicki Silvas-Young (408)293-71244 Mike Newcomer (408)736-4176
C(Calaveras)	Kept Stone (408)263-3395
D(Alum Rock)	Dave Johnston (408)867-7278
E(Evergreen)	Audrey & Don Stoye (408)249-2108
F(South)	Dave Nauer (408)259-1283
G(Southwest)	Anne Wilson (415)941-0966 Rick Palmer (408)243-0582
H(Agnew)	Dick Stovel & Lisa Swagerty (415)856-6105
I(Milpitas)	Terri Hart (408)946-6353(days)
J(Berryessa)	Betty Groce (415)326-5540

Please call co-compilers for information.

### HOLIDAY GIFTS

Celebrate the season, and contribute to SCVAS. Please use the form below if you would like to order any of the following items.

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Birding at the Bottom of the Bay (\$6.50 + \$1 postage) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ SCVAS patches (\$2 + SASE) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Field Guide for the Birds of North America (NGS) (\$12.95 + \$.63 postage) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Mass. Audubon Society Bird Identification Calendar for 1985 (\$8.50 + \$.63 postage) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Water Birds of Pt. Reyes & The Farallones Islands Poster (\$9 + \$2 postage) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

Send check made out to SCVAS, to 2253 Park Blvd., Palo Alto, CA 94306.  
Tax is included.



## FIELD NOTES - Bill Bousman

Two problems in field identification sit conveniently on our doorstep each winter. Many a birder must envy our opportunities to work through the gull flocks and secretive sparrows. Typically, nine species of gulls winter in the South Bay: Bonaparte's, Mew, Ring-billed, California, Herring, Thayer's, Western, Glaucous-winged, and Glaucous. How many hybrids winter here is another different question. In adult plumage some of these are relatively easy to separate out. A few will always cause difficulty no matter what plumage they are in. Normally, we have most of our trouble with the large, pink-legged gulls. The best way to learn them is to pick a spot where they congregate and start to study them and learn the distinguishing characters. The Palo Alto Duck Pond, the Palo Alto dump, and Charleston Slough are all good spots. Each attracts a different group of gulls. Time of day sometimes has an effect on the mix. A scope is a great assist in looking at the fine detail of some of the gulls, but binoculars work well too. Head shape, bill size and wing coloration in flight all become important in separating the difficult species and sometimes a scope is a hindrance here. The two most difficult species are Thayer's Gull and Glaucous Gull. Thayer's is much like a Herring Gull (it was considered a subspecies until recently) and if it was just a question of eye color (Herring has a straw-colored eye, Thayer's is normally dark) life would be easy. But Glaucous-winged X Western hybrids also have a dark eye and wing patterns similar to Thayer's. The smaller bill and head of Thayer's should separate it from hybrids in this case, but this requires experience with the other gulls. Glaucous Gull is by far our rarest resident gull and usually appears in first or second winter plumage. The problem is with second winter Glaucous-winged Gulls who also appear very light and who are developing a pink base to their bills. Usually, the Glaucous-winged show some bleeding between the black tip of the bill and the pink base, and show some gray mantle feathers. It is best to be cautious in separating these two until you have some experience with the plumage transitions in Glaucous-winged.

The winter sparrows found at the bay's edge can also provide hours of enjoyable study. In a good winter we'll have nine: Savannah, Sharp-tailed, Fox (eastern race), Song, Lincoln's, Swamp, Golden-crowned, White-crowned, and Harris'. The problem is going through the thousands of common sparrows looking for the rare ones. Once familiar with the differences in the Savannah, Fox, Song and Lincoln's we are prepared to notice and quickly pick up the field marks of Swamp and Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Practice with the Lincoln's which typically pops up for five seconds in response to "pishing" - that is often as long as we get with others.

The first winter report of **Cattle Egret** was of two along Adobe Creek on 12 Oct (Phyllis Browning-PB). Three **Blue-winged Teal** were also seen along Adobe Creek on 21 Oct (Paul Noble-PN, Ginny Becchine-GB). We should be seeing more as the ducks come out of eclipse plumage. An **Osprey** was seen over Anderson Reservoir 26 Sept (Barry Breckling-BB) and appears to have been there since the 15th. More west side **Golden Eagle** reports include an immature near Stevens Creek and Wolfe 28 Sept (Audrey Stoye) and another in Mountain View on 2 Oct (Cathy Gill, Roland Franz). A **Prairie Falcon** turned up in Rancho San Antonio OSP 28 Sept for a SCVAS trip -- a pleasant surprise (Leslie Morrissey *fide* Don Starks). Two **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found in the settling ponds behind the El Camino Dog Kennel 30 Sept (David Suddjian-DS, PN). What is attractive habitat to the rarer shorebirds is unclear. No **Pectoral Sandpipers** have been reported from the

Mountain View Forebay since it was constructed. This fall things changed with a vengeance. The first report was of one on 23 Sept (Al Eisner) and by the 25th numbers had built up to eight (Derek Currall). Derek visited the Forebay from then on nearly every day to document these visitors and his careful notes show that numbers decreased after the 25th, but that from 1-3 birds were seen until 11 Oct (also Dick Stovel and PB). The biggest surprise of the fall was when two **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** were also briefly in the Forebay. Phillis Browning found them on the afternoon of 6 Oct and after obtaining a good description went for a telescope and other people, but the birds could not be found again. In adjacent Charleston Slough a dark morph **jaeger** was seen 11 Sept (PB,GB), but was not identified as to species. All identified jaegers to date in the county have been Parasitic. Another fall surprise was a **Townsend's Solitaire** seen on a SCVAS trip to Foothills Park on 24 Oct (Dolores Norton). They tend to have irruptive years and sometimes stay in the vicinity of fruit-bearing shrubs for days at a time. Pete LaTourette found the plumbeous race of the **Solitary Vireo** for the second year in a row along Coyote Creek across from the San Jose Municipal Golf Course on 13 Oct. Despite the extensive razing of vegetation in this area some good habitat for winter warblers remains. He also saw a **Wilson's Warbler** there that day. Three **Grasshopper Sparrows** were still in Monte Bello OSP 30 Sept (PN, DS). It seems likely that they bred there this year. A **White-throated Sparrow** returned to a feeder in Menlo Park 29 Oct. **Red Crossbills** continue to be found on both sides of the valley. Two were heard at Castle Rock SP 6 Oct (Don Starks) and about 10 were along the Middle Fork of Coyote Creek in Henry Coe SP 14 Oct (BB). Some records of winter arrivals: Red-breasted Sapsucker, Monte Bello OSP, 30 Sept; Say's Phoebe, Moffett Field, 3 Oct; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Palo Alto, 30 Sept; Hermit Thrush, Foothills Park, 30 Sept; Varied Thrush, Monte Bello OSP, 30 Sept; Water Pipit, Moffett Field, 17 Oct; Cedar Waxwing, Palo Alto, 30 Sept; and Yellow-rumped Warbler, Matadero Creek, 30 Sept (all 30 Sept records PN, DS).

If you see an "uncommon to rare" please write or call: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025 (415/322-5282).

## SCVAS HISTORY

From History of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society 1925-1962, compiled by Warren M. Turner, and past issues of the AVOCET.

55 YEARS AGO ... In the November 19 minutes, the first mention of the Christmas Bird Count is given as follows: "Dr. Smith announced that the December field trip would be taken to Alum Rock Park. Miss Emily Smith suggested a Christmas Bird Census be taken on the December Trip."

26 YEARS AGO ... "Expenses force first Audubon National dues increase -- the first since 1905. New rates applying to all renewals change from \$5 to \$6.50 for one member, and husband and wife changes to \$10."

AND THANKS TO DR. EVE CASE FOR THE CONTINUING TRADITION OF BIRD DISCUSSION GROUPS.

17 YEARS AGO ... THE NOVEMBER 1967 AVOCET states, "A NEW ACTIVITY PLANNED. Are you interested in forming and participating in a "Bird Discussion Group"? If so, please come and join us for coffee at my home at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, November 14th. Eve Case." This last November marked the 17th anniversary of Eve Case's Bird Discussion Group. SCVAS thanks Dr. Case for her hospitality - many members have greatly enjoyed the continuing tradition of Bird Discussion Groups! New and old members are welcome to join in this fun way to learn about birds. Please see the calendar for the next meeting.

<b>Staff</b>	Lynn Tennefoss (days)	415/329-1811	<b>DIRECTORS</b>	Richard Jeffers	(days) 415/329-1811	<b>Publicity</b>	Myra Hodgson	415/326-3641
<b>President</b>	Kevin Monahan	408/559-8713	Barbara Hambleton	408/446-3645		<b>Library</b>	Richard Jeffers	415/325-9675
<b>1st Vice Pres</b>	Judy McEuen	408/251-3086	Roy Lowe	408/251-2323		<b>Field Trips</b>	Dolores Norton	415/941-1666
<b>2nd Vice Pres</b>	Diana Stillens	408/972-2777	<b>DIRECTORS (1984-87)</b>				Linda Hagelin	408/867-3046
<b>Treasurer</b>	Bob Houghton	415/327-2186	Deborah Manley	408/749-8126		<b>Membership</b>		
<b>Rec. Sec'y</b>	Courtenay Dawson-Roberts	415/325-4654	Mark McEuen	408/251-3086		<b>Education</b>	Elaine Gould	408/448-0622
<b>Past President</b>	Sue Liskovec	415/969-5542	Greg Meszaros	408/985-7157		<b>Hospitality</b>		
			<b>CHAIRPERSONS</b>			<b>Conservation</b>		
<b>DIRECTORS (1982-85)</b>			Editor	Susan McCarthy	408/293-7498	<b>Christmas</b>		
Betty Groce		415/326-5540	Assistant Editor	Virginia Bennett	408/973-2699	<b>Bird Count</b>		
Dave Johnston		408/258-4322	Programs	Doug & Gail		<b>Grants</b>	Keo Stone	408/251-2186
Phil La Riviere		415/493-5540		Cheeseman	408/867-1371	<b>Photo Club</b>	Pete LaTourrette	415/961-2741

General membership meetings, held the third Wednesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., are open to the public. Board of Directors meetings, open to all members, are held at 7:15 p.m., the first Tuesday of each month. Call the office for directions.

**AVOCET DEADLINE IS THE FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH. Send contributions to the editor: Susan McCarthy, 475 So. 12th, San Jose, CA 95112.**

### MT. HAMILTON CHRISTMAS COUNT

Christmas counters covering Mt. Hamilton on Wednesday, December 19, will enter some sections under private ownership. Special permission has been obtained to enter these areas east of Mt. Hamilton. If you are interested, plan to allow a 1-1/2 hour ride to the top of Mt. Hamilton in the morning. The location for the after-Count compilation of tallies is still to be arranged.

This year, Clark Blake will be compiler. Past compiler Don Schmoltdt may assist, but due to a new job, his schedule is uncertain. To join this count, call Clark at (415)854-8483 or (415)323-8111 ext. 2221.

### THANKS TO OCTOBER VOLUNTEERS

This month's cookie bakers for the General Meeting were Jean Clark, Deborah Manley, Sandy McKee, and Carol Zabel. Office volunteers included Marion Lockwood, Tibby Simon, Harry Beerbohm, Mercedes Williams, Deborah Manley and Rose Green. We sorted and delivered over 300 "recycled" AUDUBON magazines to local schools, assembled a new bookcase and reorganized our storage area, updated the membership list, and sent out a membership mailing. Many thanks to Deborah Manley for stepping in to help out with the monthly publicity, and to Sara Priestman for helping to pick up a donated bookcase. If you would like to volunteer for SCVAS, please call Lynn at the office (415)329-1811. There are many activities for you to become involved in!!

### OFFICE CLOSED

The SCVAS office will be closed for the holidays from December 24 to January 2.

### CLASSES, TRIPS, AND EVENTS

Nature Explorations--Tuleyome is offering three programs of interest to birdwatchers. Ken Gardiner will give a class on Marsh and Shore Bird Photography Jan. 7 from 7:30 to 10:00 p.m. His photographs have appeared in *Audubon* and *American Birds*, among other publications. Elsie Richey will lead a group to the San Luis Reservoir and the Gilroy area for a Pacific Flyway Watch Jan. 26 and 27. In a program called Elkhorn Slough Birds, Bob and Bernadette Ramer of the Moss Landing Marine Laboratory will take a group out to dig mud for microscopic examination to determine its edible content, among other activities. For information call or write Nature Explorations, 2253 Park Blvd., Palo Alto 94306 (415)324-8737.

Doug Cheeseman will be teaching a short course at De Anza College on the Natural History of Marine Mammals and Birds, Thursday evenings Jan. 10, 17, and 24. Contact the Short Course Office (408)996-4673. Cost is \$25. Doug and Gail Cheeseman and Allen Royer will lead three whale and bird watching trips out of Monterey Dec. 31, Jan. 12, and Jan. 19. Cost is \$28. Call (408)741-5330 or 867-1371. The Cheesemans also have trips scheduled to Kenya in June, Peru in July, and Australia/New Guinea in July and August. Contact them for details.

A birdwatching expedition to Costa Rica Feb. 7-20 and one to Ecuador/Amazon/Galapagos Mar. 16-Apr. 2 are offered by Hala Araj. The Costa Rican trip will visit many nature preserves and national parks in a variety of habitats. The Galapagos segment of the Ecuador trip will be based on a chartered yacht and will last a week. For a brochure or other information, contact Hala Araj at (415)655-5283 (mornings) or at 5326 Thomas Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

### DONATIONS

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society welcomes gifts in general, or gifts in honor or memory of relatives and friends. Such donations will be used as specified, or, if unspecified, will be used to support environmental education and projects. All gifts and donations are tax deductible.

### MEMBERSHIP

To join the Audubon Society send a check, payable to NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, to SCVAS office, 2253 Park Boulevard, Palo Alto, CA 94306. Membership includes AUDUBON magazine, the national publication, and the AVOCET. AVOCET subscriptions alone are \$6/year. It is published monthly except July and August. Send address changes to the office promptly.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

- CHECK CATEGORY  
 Individual/\$30  
 Family/\$38  
 Senior Citizen/\$21  
 Senior Citizen Family/\$23  
 Student/\$18  
 AVOCET only/\$6  
 Check Enclosed  
 Please Bill Me