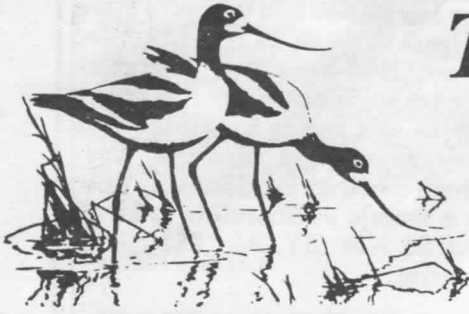


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The Avocet



January 1989

Volume 36, Number 1

GENERAL PLAN REVISION

In December, Santa Clara County began to revise and update the 1980 General Plan. This document states adopted goals and policies which direct officials in all county decisions. It guides decisions on land use and development, transportation, public safety and health, economic wellbeing, recreation, housing and the natural environment — all of which are important to SCVAS members. It is a statement of public consensus to which our public officials are accountable.

A recent column in the San Jose Mercury News featured SCVAS member Peter Steinhart with the following observations:

"Most of us came to the Santa Clara Valley for economic opportunity, but stayed for the setting - the rolling hills, the oak-wooded valleys, the golden sunlight on October afternoons, the space and quiet in which to feel at home.

"For at least two decades we have worried about what's happening to that setting. Houses leapfrog up the hillsides, industrial parks blanket the valley floors, and from the steamy frustration of traffic jams we see that setting became suburb. We expect 300,000 more jobs in the next 12 years.

"Developers have plans for the hillsides and the valleys beyond. And despite city and county general plans which promise not to invade the open space, councilmen and supervisors are easily persuaded to trade the setting for increased tax revenues."

We now have the opportunity to do something about these concerns. Working with the Santa Clara County Greenbelt Coalition, SCVAS members are invited to participate in the County General Plan review process and offer recommendations on goals, policies, and action priorities. Three subcommittees are being formed. One, focusing on valley floor policies especially for South County, seeks members from the Morgan Hill and Gilroy area. Another will consider hillside and ranchland development policies and is looking for members from greater San Jose. The third will address

streamside buffers, riparian and wetlands protection, and water pollution, and any members who share those interests are invited to participate.

To get involved, either on a committee or with letterwriting and other support activities, please contact Vicki Moore at the Greenbelt Alliance San Jose office (408) 983-0539 or Lynn Tennefoss at SCVAS

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE ARE BACK AT THE PALO ALTO CULTURAL CENTER.

The January ID workshop from 7:45-8 pm will feature Rod Norden explaining distinguishing features of two species of seabirds. Rod will be presenting a full-length seabird program for the Bay Area Bird Photographers soon, so this short ID session will be a good preview. It will also serve as an introduction to the evening's lecture, which focuses on ocean species, "Whales and other Marine Mammals of the Southern Seas," presented by Doug Cheeseman. Doug will include slides taken last summer showing fascinating feeding behavior, especially of Fin Whales and Humpbacks.

SCVAS LEGAL FUND

The SCVAS Board of Directors announces the creation of a new Legal Fund. Contributions to this fund will support a variety of legal actions, at this time, mostly concerned with preservation of wetlands in the South Bay. Please call the office for more information.

IN THE FEBRUARY AVOCET

- NEW! GRASSROOTS ACTIVIST COLUMN
- REVIEW OF SAN JOSE AND PALO ALTO CBC'S
- NEW! ARTWORK!

FIELD NOTES by BILL BOUSMAN

It has been a good year for finding new birds for the county checklist. Here you'll find the first record of a bird that has been found repeatedly in our neighboring counties, but never here. But first I needed to clear up some records from 1987. On 2 Dec '87, a sparrow was caught at CCRS that was identified as an adult Brewer's, the second such record for the county. A photo printed in *Riparia News*, however, suggested that the bird might be a juvenile **Clay-colored Sparrow**. A year later, and after a thorough examination of the extensive photos, Rich Stallcup has detailed the reasons why this bird is a Clay-colored sparrow and not a Chipping or Brewer's sparrow. Even with good photos, the fall and winter *Spizella* identification problems remain. The final note for our 1987 record occurred on 30 Dec when Harold Reeve (my Stanislaus County counterpart) and Jim Gain watched two **Cassin's Finches** fly into Santa Clara County from upper Del Puerto Canyon—another first county record. Flocks of these Sierran finches had been seen in Del Puerto Canyon during the fall.

LOONS TO HERONS

Loons are back, at least at Shoreline Lake. The first **Red-throated Loon** of the season was there on 30 Nov (Derek Currall-DCU). A **Pacific Loon** was found at Shoreline Lake on 15 Nov (Al Eisner - AME) and again on 24 Nov (Mike Mammoser - MJM, et al). **Common Loons** have been there on 12, 15, 19, 23 and 24 Nov. (DCU, MJM et al) with two there on the latter date. The hybrid **Snowy Egret x Little Blue Heron** has been seen from the Mountain View Salt Pond No. 2 to the Palo Alto Baylands with records extending through 24 Nov. The frequency of sightings and locations suggests there may be two birds. Unfortunately for observer confusion, the color plate in the National Geographic Guide for Little Blue Heron is wrong as noted by Guy McCaskie (*Birding*, XVI, 1). The

plate erroneously shows this species as having yellow lores—it does not. Rather the lores are a slate gray as correctly noted in the text. Our hybrids, however, have yellow lores. The only report of **Cattle Egret** this season was of six over the Oka Ponds on 1 Nov (David Suddjian - DLSu). Unusual numbers of **Green-backed Herons** have been found in the Los Gatos Creek area in October and November (all DLSu and Geri Brown - GAB). Numbers ranged from a single adult and imm. on 9 Oct, to a peak of 3 ad. and 2 imm. on 9 and 10 Nov.

GEESE TO MERGANSERS

Adult and imm. **White-fronted Goose** associating with the domestic goose flock at Vasona Res. 4-9 Nov. were free-flying (DLSu). In Santa Cruz County this pattern is not considered unusual for wild birds. This species was noted here last spring and judged to be feral—does anyone know whether these birds are permanent here? Two **Blue-winged Teal** at the Sunnyvale Baylands 4 Nov (Larry Parameter - LP) were the only ones found this month. By comparison **Eurasian Wigeon** have been so thick you have to shake them off. Males have continued to be at Charleston Slough through 24 Nov with a peak of four there on 9 Nov (Bill Bousman - WGB, MJM, Grant Hoyt - GHo, Dick Stovel - DS, AME, James Yurchenco - JY, and Amy Lauterbach - AL). Single birds have been seen in the Palo Alto FCB on 13 and 19 Nov (DCU, JY, AL) and the Sunnyvale WPCP on 27 Nov (Jack Cole). Six **Red-head** in the Sunnyvale Baylands 5 Nov (LP) were the only ones reported. Small numbers of **Ring-necked Ducks** are characteristic of foothill lakes and reservoirs in the winter. Two to 300 birds in Henry Coe SP 6 Nov (JY, AL) is an unusual concentration. A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** on Shoreline Lake 23-25 Nov in a flock of **Common Goldeneyes** was a rare sight (AME, MJM, WGB, Paul Noble - PLN). The **Hooded Mer-**

gansers returned to Skylonda Pond by 20 Nov and two were there at least through 27 Nov (Jennifer Green). **Red-breasted Merganser** are sufficiently common on the Alviso salt ponds in winter that they do not get reported. Anywhere else they are decidedly rare, so a female at Shoreline Lake 19 and 25 Nov (JY, AL, PLN) is of interest.

EAGLES TO FALCONS

An adult **Golden Eagle** above Pescadero Creek in the southern foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains (DLSu) and a sub-adult at the Alviso EEC 6 Nov (PLN) were both away from where commonly found. The early returns suggest that this will again be an exceptional **Merlin** winter. Birds have been found at the Oka Ponds on 9 Oct (DLSu), Charleston Slough 23 Oct (Mike Feighner - MFe, PLN), the Sunnyvale Baylands (Jim & Sue Liskovec) and Jasper Ridge BR (MFe) on 6 Nov, the Palo Alto estuary 11 Nov (MJM, GHo, DS), Los Gatos 12 & 27 Nov (MFe) and Mountain View Forebay 18 Nov (DCu). The last bird was a female or imm. of the prairie race Richardson. At least one **Peregrine Falcon** has been hanging around with an imm. at the Palo Alto Baylands 6 Nov (Alice Oberg); one there 9 Nov (DCu) and one at Embarcadero and Frontage roads 24 Nov (MJM).

PLOVERS TO SNIPE

Three **Black-bellied Plover** were at the Los Gatos Creek ponds 11 Oct (DLSu). As with many of our bayside shorebirds, they are rarely found along inland water. The real surprise here, however, was of a juvenile **Lesser Golden-Plover** of the race *fulva* that was in with them (DLSu). This is only the fourth record in the last nine years. **Spotted Sandpipers** continued to be found in this same general area along Los Gatos Creek and as Vasona Res. with records through 4 Nov. The high count was of six at the Los Gatos Creek ponds on 10 Oct (all DLSu).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

On all field trips CARPOOL and share expenses. Bring binoculars, field guides, warm clothing, lunch (optional on half-day trips) and liquids. If you can provide or need transportation, call Gail Cheeseman (408) 741-5330.

JANUARY

Field Trip Coordinator:
Claire Wolfe (408) 733-5654.

Jan 4 Bay Area Bird Photographers Wednesday, 7:30 pm at the Baylands. Rod Norden will show his photos of seabirds and marine mammals. Co-sponsored by the Arts and Sciences division of Palo Alto.

Jan 7 Stockton Sewage Ponds & Altamont Pass. SATURDAY, 9 am. Full Day. Take I-5 to Stockton. Take Hwy 4 exit. Go left, cross bridge and turn right on Turk Rd. Park at first large pond on right. Bring lunch and scopes. Dress in layers. Highlights: waterfowl (Stockton) and raptors (Altamont). Please call leaders if planning to attend. Heavy rain or stormy conditions cancel. Leaders: Mark and Steve Miller (415) 967-3429.

Jan 8 Post CBC Rarities Chase. SUNDAY, 8:30 am. Full Day. Meeting place and trip itinerary to be determined. Call Audubon office for recorded message AFTER Jan. 2. (415) 329-1811. Leader: Don Starks.

Jan 8 Introductory Birdwalk for Beginners at Charleston Slough SUNDAY, 9 am. Half day. Meet at E end of San Antonio Road, in Mtn View. Easy walking of 2 miles. Learn basics of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors. Leader: Rod Norden (408)996-6442.

Jan 10 Bird Discussion Group Tuesday, 9:30 am at the home of Jean and Pat Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Armchair Birding.

Jan 11 Field Trip South, Sunnyvale Baylands. WEDNESDAY, 9 am. Meet at the north end of Twin Creeks Softball Center parking lot. From Hwy 237, take Caribbean Dr. north less than 1 mile. Turn right into Twin Creek. Easy walking 2-3 miles. Highlights: Burrowing Owls, wintering ducks. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Don Starks, (408)946-6548

Jan 14 Woodbridge Road. SATURDAY, 8 am. Full Day. Meet at the McDonalds parking lot next to the Shell station on Mission Blvd. in Fremont. Take I-680 to 2nd Mission Blvd. exit. Carpool from here. Bring lunch and plenty of fuel. Trip limited to 20 participants. Call leaders for reservations. Anticipated species: Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, etc. Leaders Betty Wyatt (408) 255-6091 and Audrey Stoye (408) 249-2108.

Jan 15 South Santa Cruz County. SUNDAY, 8 am. Full Day. Meet at the Watsonville Community Hospital. Take Hwy 1 S. from Santa Cruz. Exit east on Airport Blvd. Turn right on Green Valley Road then an immediate left into the hospital. Meet at the back near the creek. Stops during the day will include College Lake, Pinto Lake and the Pajaro River Mouth. Anticipated species: waterfowl, Cattle Egret, Christmas count rarities. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Clay Kempf (408) 462-6534.

Jan 18 General Meeting Wednesday, 7:30 pm. Palo Alto Cultural Center, corner Embarcadero and Newell. Doug Cheeseman, on Whales and Other Marine Mammals of the Southern Seas. See below for more details.

Jan 21 Coyote Point and Burlingame Bayfront.

SATURDAY, 8:30 am. Half Day. Meet in the parking lot in front of the Coyote Point yacht club. Take Hwy 101 N to Burlingame. Exit on Coyote Point Drive and follow to yacht club. Entrance fee. Highlights: shorebirds, waterfowl, and some wintering passerines, loons, grebes, etc. Leader: Paul L. Noble (415) 948-3876.

Jan 22 Foster City. SUNDAY, 9 am. Half day. Take 101 N to Hillsdale Blvd. east. Follow Hillsdale 1 mile to Shell Blvd. Turn right and proceed 1/3 mile and park near the Rec building and meet at the lagoon. Highlights: Hooded Merganser, Barrows Goldeneye, and Red Knot. Leader: Dolores Norton (415) 941-1666.

Jan 25 Jasper Ridge. WEDNESDAY, 9 am. Half day. Meet at preserve main gate. Take Sand Hill Rd. W off I-280. Go 2 miles to gate on left. \$3/person fee. Reservation only: Alberta Jasberg at (415) 493-9546. Leaders: Jasper Ridge docents.

Jan 28, 29 Winter Birding Weekend:

Jan 28 Los Banos Waterfowl Management Area and Merced NWR. SATURDAY, 9 am. Full Day. Meet at the Jct. of Rt 59 and Sandy Mush Rd. Take Hwy 101 S to Hwy 152 E. Go over pass and past Los Banos about 20 miles to Rt 59. Go N to meeting place about 7 miles. Allow 2.5 hrs from S. Bay, longer if tule fog forecast. Bring scopes and be prepared for cold/ wet conditions. Trip goes rain or shine. Bring lunch, food and fuel. Please try to carpool. Informal carpooling at I-280 and Page Mill Rd. (leave by 6:30 am) or Dunne Ave. Chevron just N. of Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill (leave by 7:30 am). Highlights: Mountain Plover, Sandhill Cranes, geese. Motels available in Los Banos. Leader: Ted Chandik (415) 493-5330.

Staff Lynn Teneffoss 415/329-1811
President Dave Johnston 408/867-7278
Editor Levona Sterngold 408/738-2859

General meetings are open to the public. Board of Directors meetings are open to all members. Call office for times/directions. *Avocet* deadline is first Monday of month. Send contributions to office.

NON-AUDUBON EVENTS

• Spring birding classes at SF Community College begin this month. Call (415) 776-8247. • Maryann Danielson will teach "Following the Birds Through the Winter" & "Birding Basics" at San Carlos Senior Center beginning Jan 11. Call (415) 369-6809.

• Short course and pelagic trips: "Mammals and Birds of Four Continents" (Africa, Australia, Antarctica and South America), taught by Doug Cheeseman. Thurs. Jan 12-Feb 9, 7:30-9:30 pm, DeAnza College, call (408) 996-4673/4. Three Saturday marine mammal and seabird trips offered on Monterey Bay Jan 14, 21 & 28. Call (408) 741-5330/867-1371. • Bodega Bay - Gray Whales, Harbor Seals and Sea Lions Boat Trip, March 11; Monterey Pelagic Seabird Trip, May 13, call Roger Marlowe, (707) 829-0705. • SFBBO offers a Gull Id class, starts Feb 1, four lectures & two field trips.

FIELD TRIPS Cont.

Jan 29 Panoche Valley. SUNDAY, 8:30 am. Full Day. Meet at rest stop on I-5, 18 miles S. of Los Banos. Trip goes rain or shine. Bring lunch/warm drinks. Please car pool (see Jan 28 for locations). Highlights: wintering raptors, sparrows (poss. Vespers), Mtn Plovers, Mtn Bluebirds, Lewis' Woodpeckers, maybe Chukar. If you have a CB radio, bring it. Leaders: Jim and Sue Liskovec (415) 969-5542.

FEBRUARY

Feb 4 Livermore/Altamont Hawks. SATURDAY, 9 am. Full Day. Meet at the Jct. of Greenville Rd. and Patterson Rd. just south of Hwy I-580 at the base of

Altamont Pass. Bring lunch and full tank of fuel. Spotting scopes helpful. If possible read "Livermore-Byron Hot Springs" in *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay* (p. 93). Ferruginous, Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagle, falcons. Leader: Don Schmoltdt (415) 236-5612 (eve.).

Feb 5 Kayaking Elkhorn Slough. SUNDAY, 8:30 am. Half day. Join Greg Myers on a unique look at Elkhorn Slough. Using kayaks you will be able to glide within feet of the wintering waterbirds. You can't get any closer. No experience necessary. Safe and gentle. Meet at Moss Landing State Beach at the end of Jetty Rd. in Moss Landing. Bring clothes and footwear that are waterproof. Trip limited to 15. Fee \$45 (10% donation to SCVAS). Call leader Greg Myers for more information (408) 353-4238.

FIELD NOTES Cont.

A late juv. **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Vasona Res. 4 Nov (DLSu). Twenty-two **Common Snipe** at the south pond on Los Gatos Creek 11 Oct (DLSu) is an unusual number.

OWLS TO VIREOS

Three **Short-eared Owl** at the Palo Alto Baylands 23 Nov (MJM, PLN) were the first reports of the season and are encouraging. A **Common Poorwill** found in San Jose 29 Nov and brought to Wildlife Rescue (*fide* Joan Priest) was probably attempting to winter locally. Some birds are known to winter along the coast where they spend much of their time in a state of torpor. A **Selasphorus spp. Hummingbird** at Los Gatos 5 Oct was late (GAB *fide* DLSu). The last **Rufous Hummingbird** banded at CCRS was 18 Sep. Three **Yellow-billed Magpie** noted along Pescadero Creek 15 Oct (DLSu) were at the southern tip of the Santa

Cruz Mountains and the county and are slightly west of their known range. The first **Golden-crowned Kinglet** of the season was banded at CCRS 8 Oct and by the end of November 11 had been caught. Two were at Vasona Res. 9 Nov (DLSu). It appears that this may be a mildly irruptive winter for them. The peak of the **Warbling Vireo** passage is 19 Aug-21 Sep, so a bird at Hidden Villa 21 Oct is a month late (DLSu).

WARBLERS TO LONGSPURS

A **Palm Warbler** at the Los Gatos Creek ponds 3 Nov (DLSu) was only our fifth record in the last nine years. They are more abundant along the coast. A female or imm. **American Redstart** along Pescadero Creek 15 Oct (DLSu) represents the fourth county record (it precedes the CCRS bird noted last month). A **Wilson's Warbler** there that day was a late migrant (DLSu). A female **Western Tanager** at Vasona Res. 9 Nov (DLSu) is probably wintering locally. A **Sharp-tailed Sparrow** was at the Palo Alto Baylands 24 Nov (WBG). Rare anywhere on the west coast, they are found here nearly every winter. **White-throated Sparrows** have been found in typically small numbers. Two were banded at CCRS with the first there 9 Oct and the next on 12 Oct. A tan-striped phase bird returned to a feeder in Palo Alto 13 Nov (Phyllis Browning) and another bird was at a Menlo Park feeder 13 and 14 Nov (WGB). In a flock of **Horned Larks** along rarely birded Pescadero Creek at the southern extremity of the county DLSu found a female **Lapland Longspur**, 15 Oct. This is our first county record, although they have approached within a few miles of our border before with winter flocks at Bayfront Park in Menlo Park and Hayward Regional Shoreline.

• Bill Bousman (415) 322-5282.

DONATIONS - Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society welcomes gifts in general, or gifts in honor or memory of relatives and friends. **MEMBERSHIP** - To join the Audubon Society or subscribe to the Audubon Activist, send checks, payable to NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, to SCVAS office, 415 Cambridge Ave., Suite 21, Palo Alto, CA 94306. Dues are: \$20 Intro Membership; \$30 Individual; \$38 Family, includes AUDUBON magazine, the national publication, and The Avocet. Avocet subscriptions alone are \$6/year. Make checks payable to SCVAS. AVOCET published monthly except July and August. SEND ALL ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE OFFICE.