

The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

May 1991

Immediate Action Crucial To Help Save Our Wetlands

May is National Wetlands Month! You Too Can Help in Wetland Preservation!

A well-financed coalition of industry groups including the Farm Bureau, oil and chemical industry, timber industry, homebuilders, and road construction lobby have been hammering on the Congress, the governors and the White House for several months claiming that section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which protects wetlands, is causing all kinds of problems for farmers and developers.

• A series of hearings in the House Small Business Committee produced a litany of complaints against the Clean Water Act and Section 404 in particular. EPA Administrator Bill Reilly ran into a buzzsaw on wetlands at the first hearing on Clean Water Act re-authorization in the Public Works Committee last week.

• The Hayes (D-LA) bill, HR 1330, would destroy wetlands protection as we know it, although the bill is entitled "Comprehensive Wetlands Conservation and Management Act of 1991." Momentum is building for this bill, which already has 53 co-sponsors. A companion bill by Sen. John Breaux (D-LA) will soon be introduced. Breaux claims he already has 30 co-sponsors for his bill and is demanding early action by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

These bills would designate the Army Corps of Engineers as the sole regulatory authority and eliminate EPA's ability to veto Corps 404 permits (no more stopping a Two Forks Dam); redefine wetlands to eliminate seasonal, ephemeral and isolated

wetlands not inundated for at least 21 consecutive days in the growing season; create a system of high, medium, and low value wetlands and limit the amount classified as high value to 20% of a county or parish; determine that section 404 is not a wetlands protection provision and require recognition of private property rights and the benefits of economic growth.

We are presently losing wetlands at a rate of 300,000-400,000 a year with our existing imperfect protection system. **In order to preserve what is left, we need to flood Congress with letters, telegrams, and phone calls with the message that wetlands are a great national treasure and we oppose any weakening of protection of them.** (continued on page 7)

National Ocean Sanctuary

The California Ocean Sanctuary and Fisheries Enhancement Act HR 989, sponsored by Barbara Boxer and Mel Levine, will protect the 200 miles offshore from the national coastline. The Sanctuary includes all surface and sub-surface waters, and the ocean seabed. This resolution encourages the continuation of present low environmental-impact fishing, sea plant harvesting, and recreational activities in the Ocean Sanctuary.

Prohibited in the Sanctuary in both State and Federal waters would be new oil and gas exploration, leases, or development; deep ocean strip-mining; incineration of waste which results in toxic air emissions; transportation of toxic wastes for the purpose of incineration or ocean dumping, or ocean dumping of toxic materials.

Strict regulation of oil tanker operations, oil tanker design, and oil tanker traffic would be mandatory within the Ocean Sanctuary; a comprehensive oil-industry funded long-range state-of-the-art research and technology development program for oil spill prevention and response is required.

Please write your Senators and Representative today urging passage of H.R. 989 that will establish a National Ocean Sanctuary. (See page 7 for addresses.)

Some reasons for the Ocean Sanctuary Bill that you may want to include:

• The Interior Department has backed out of their compromise agreement and is unwilling to protect sensitive coastal areas of national significance on the California coast.

• Critical biological habitats are scheduled for offshore drilling and ocean stripmining by the Interior Department.

• Toxic incineration proposals are being pursued by chemical waste disposers, and EPA appears willing to grant necessary permits for this activity.

• To protect multi-million dollar commercial fishing industry.

• To preserve coastal-dependent tourism economies in coastal regions.

The Coastal Committee of the Mendocino-Lake Group of the Sierra Club will be showing "Only One Ocean," the exciting multi-image show produced by North Coast artist Judith Vidaver at the beginning of our May 15 General Meeting (See Calendar for more information.)

Chapter News

Thanks to the many SCVAS May Volunteers:

◆ Bird Seed Sale Volunteers: Jay Abel, Chris Bekin, Geri Brown, Nancy Doty, Tony Eppstein, Bobbie Handen, Grant Hoyt, Mike Johnston, Rene Lynch, Bill Pewett, Jules Resnick, Edward Rooks, Benita Terry, Jerry Waldorf, Nick Yatsko, and Donna Zetterquist.

◆ Special Thanks to the folks at Peninsula Conservation Center, Pets' Friend Animal Clinic, REI and YSI for hosting our Bird Seed Sales. And to Janice Edgerly-Rooks and Edward Rooks for hosting a new site this year.

◆ Thanks to office volunteers: Yana Arnold and Sue Ellen Brock for helping with the Bird Seed Sale, to Jim Johnston for all his help with the mailing list, to Tibby Simon and Joyce Todd for helping on mailings and other projects.

Congratulations Sue!

Past SCVAS president Sue Liskovec won the Helen Glenney Award from the Environmental Federation of California. The award, created in honor of Helen Glenney, the first Executive Director of the Federation, is awarded annually to the individual and to the organization making the highest contribution to the work of the EFC.

Sue Liskovec received this year's individual award for her work as president of the Federation for the past two years. Representing the California Audubon Chapters on the EFC Board of Directors, Sue spent her tenure as president providing exemplary leadership and generously devoting her time and energies far beyond the requirements of her office.

Special Thanks to Corporations:

◆ to PG&E for granting \$10,000 to Save BOTH for it's Burrowing Owl Habitat Restoration Project.

◆ to Schumberger Technologies for funding 10 Audubon Adventures classrooms in the Franklin McKinley schools.

Audubon Wetlands Discovery Program - Phase II

The second phase of the Audubon Wetlands Discovery Program will start with a teachers-lead-teachers trip on April 13th at the Sunnyvale Wetlands. In the weeks following the staff trip a total of 300 students and their teachers representing Moreland, Oak Grove, San Jose Unified and Union School districts will have the opportunity to experience this disappearing habitat.

This phase was made possible by an IBM grant of \$1,525. In his letter Mr. Downey of the Community Services Division stated, "only as children see the wetlands areas and understand their value can they realize the value of protection..."

The curriculum and equipment for the Wetlands Discovery Program is available for teachers who are not included in the grant-sponsored schools. For further information call Cecily at the SCVAS office at (415) 329-1811.

— Bobbie Handen

The Birds Around Us

The Birds Around Us is an elementary school level environmental education curriculum prepared by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society with funding from the Gaylord M. Androes Memorial Education Fund. The Fund was established to create a curriculum and slide show for 4th to 6th grade students that would highlight local birds and fit within the California Department of Education guidelines. It is our hope that many more children in Santa Clara County schools can be introduced to the wonderful world of birdwatching. If you would like to borrow this curriculum, please call the SCVAS office at (415) 329-1811.

Special Thanks to Individuals:

◆ to Genny Smith for the contribution of birding books to the SCVAS library.

◆ to Oz Fox for the Celestron telephoto lens.

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General meetings are open to the public. Board of Directors meetings are open to all members. Call the office at (415) 329-1811 for times and directions.

The Avocet is published monthly (except for July and August) by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, 415 Cambridge Ave., Suite 21, Palo Alto, CA 94306. Deadline is the 25th of the prior month. Send contributions to the editor, Michele Girard, c/o SCVAS at the above address.

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A Rare Experience!



Whales & Tales
Wildlife Store and Gallery

800-422-8253
429 University

415-326-1130
Palo Alto

May 1991 Calendar

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. Trips highlighting chapters from our new site guide, "Birding at the Bottom of the Bay," are identified as BABOB trips. Field Trip Coordinator for May is Mike Feighner (408) 354-0138.

**Denotes Field Trip

Wednesday, May 1, 7:30 PM.

Bay Area Bird Photographers. Speaker Brigitte de Saint-Phalle will present a slide program on photographing birds from a kayak. Some of these were taken at Morro Bay. Meeting is held at Palo Alto's Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center on East Embarcadero Rd.

**Saturday, May 4, 8:30 AM. Half day.

Smith Creek. Leader: Alan Thomas (408) 265-9286. Directions: Meet at Smith Creek Fire Station on Mt. Hamilton Rd., 4.5 miles past Grant Ranch. Lunch opt., no facilities. Bring munchies and liquids. Beginners welcome. Moderate hiking for 2-3 miles. Highlights: A good variety of woodland and riparian species.

**Sunday, May 5, 8:00 AM. Full day.

Mines Rd/Del Puerto Canyon. Leaders: Rod Norden (408) 255-3033 and Mike Feighner (408) 354-0138. Directions: Take south Livermore Ave. to 8th St. in Livermore. Meet at the Nob Hill Shopping Center. Please Carpool. Maximum of 10 cars on caravan with full cars only. Possible species include Wood Duck, Lesser Nighthawk, Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis' Woodpecker, Canyon and Rock Wrens, Phainopepla, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Northern Oriole. 12 hour trip, but participants may turn back at San Antonio junction. Bring lunch (dinner), full tank of gas. Limited facilities. Beginners welcome.

**Wednesday, May 8, 9:00 AM.

South County Trip to Coyote Park at Anderson Dam. Leaders: Emilie Curtis (408) 779-2637 and Jane Glass (408) 779-3637. Directions: From Hwy. 101 in Morgan Hill (about 20 miles south of San Jose) take Cochrane exit east to Anderson Reservoir in Coyote River Park. Meet at the end of Cochrane Rd. below dam in the parking lot. Highlights: Wood Ducks, plus other nesting birds.

Thursday, May 9, 7:00 PM.

Birding Clinic at REI with Betty Wyatt. Betty, the editor of BABOB, will share her enthusiasm and experience with learning to identify birds at a special REI clinic. REI is located at 20640 Homestead Rd. (at corner of Saratoga-Sunnyvale Rd.). Two special field trips are being held at Stevens Creek Park in

conjunction with this talk on May 12th and 19th. (See descriptions in Calendar.)

**Saturday, May 11, 8:00 AM. Full day+.

Chew's Ridge. Leader: Mike Feighner (408) 354-0138. Call leader to sign up and for more information. Highlights: Mountain Quail, Flammulated Owl, Black-chinned Hum-mingbird, Purple Martin, Dusky Flycatcher, Western Tanager. Optional: Owling Saturday night, camp and return following morning.

**Sun., May 12, 9:00 AM Half day.

Beginner Trip to Charleston Slough. Leader: Rod Norden (408) 255-3033. Directions: Take 101 to Mountain View, exit San Antonio Rd. east to its end at Terminal Way. Highlights: Basics of birding with emphasis on shorebirds and waterfowl.

**Sunday, May 12, 9:00 AM.

Stevens Creek Park. Leader: Betty Wyatt. Directions: Meet at the Visitors Center/Chestnut Picnic Area. (It is the first large parking lot on the left on Stevens Canyon Rd.) Highlights: warblers, woodpeckers, water birds, raptors and owls (in the early hours). **BABOB Trip.**

Tuesday, May 14, 9:30 AM.

Bird Discussion Group at the home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga (408) 867-4748. Topic: Falcons.

Wednesday, May 15, 7:15 PM.

May General Meeting, co-sponsored by the Palo Alto Open Spaces and Sciences Division at the Palo Alto Cultural Center, 1313 Newell Rd., at corner of Embarcadero. Topic: "Only One Ocean." (See box below.)

**Saturday, May 18, 7:30 AM. Full day.

Rancho del Oso/Waddell Creek. Leader: Earl Lebow (408) 464-8814. Directions: Meet in parking lot of Santa Cruz City Government Center, 701 Ocean St. Highlights: Snowy Plover, Black-headed Grosbeak, Pileated Woodpecker. Easy walk will cover about 3 miles.

**Sunday, May 19, 8:00 AM. Full day.

Henry Coe State Park. Leader: Mike Feighner (408) 354-0138. Directions: Take Hwy. 101 south to Dunne Ave exit east. Continue on Dunne to Park, 13 miles. Meet at Park Headquarters. This trip will be in conjunction with state park outing open to the public. Highlights: Wild Turkey, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Orioles. Moderate to strenuous walk of about 5 miles to and from Manzanita Park. Bring lunch and water. **BABOB Trip.**

**Sunday, May 19, 9:00 AM.

Stevens Creek Park. Leader: Betty Wyatt. Directions: Meet at the Visitors Center/Chestnut Picnic Area. (It is the first large parking lot on the left on Stevens Canyon Rd.) Highlights: warblers, woodpeckers, water birds, raptors and owls (in the early hours). **BABOB Trip.**

**Wednesday, May 22, 8:30 AM.

Waddell Creek. Leader: Alan Thomas (408) 265-9286. Directions: Meet at Waddell Creek Beach parking lot on ocean side of Hwy. 1 and north side of creek. This is 1.1 mile south of San Mateo/Santa Clara County line and about 2 miles south of Ano Nuevo. We will walk up the creek a couple of miles from ocean to redwoods. Bring lunch, liquids, and warm clothes.

**Saturday-Sunday May 26 & 27, 8:00 AM.

Crescent City/Arcata. Leaders: Allen Barron and Fred Broerman. Call Betty Wyatt (408) 255-6091 for more information and to sign up for trip. Directions: Meet at south end of marina near restrooms. Marina is just south of Crescent City. We suggest that participants arrive Friday night. Hotels are available in Crescent City and Arcata. Camping is available at Smith River. Bring food and water for both days. Trip limited to 15. Highlight: Puffins, Guillemots, Black-capped Chickadees, and Gray Jays.

Plan Ahead: Saturday, June 1, Palo Alto Breeding Bird Census. Sunday, June 9, Charleston Slough. (See June *Avocet* for more details)

Wednesday, May 15, 7:15 PM. General Membership Meeting

"Only One Ocean," the exciting multi-image slide show produced by Judith Vidaver will begin this meeting. (See front page of *Avocet* for more information.) Speaker Bill Bousman will then discuss The Santa Clara County Breeding Bird Atlas. He'll tell us about the first three years of the atlas and the difficult problems that remain until the atlas is completed in 1992. He will show us species maps from the atlas database as well as a few of Pete LaTourrette's fine pictures of birds. The atlas has added an amazing amount of new information with respect to the breeding birds of Santa Clara County and is an exciting example of how volunteer activity can make a major contribution to ornithological science.

Field Notes

By Bill Bousman

Loons to Herons

A **Red-throated Loon** on the Los Gatos Creek ponds 5 Mar (BW *et al.*) and one at Shoreline Lake 17 Mar (MiF) are the first since December and probably represent a spring movement. The hybrid **Snowy Egret X Little Blue Heron** was seen at Charleston Slough again 24 Feb (RSch). **Green-backed Herons** at the Mountain View Forebay 18 Mar (MJM) and Stevens Creek north of Hwy. 101 Mar 22 (MMR) are the first of the spring influx of birds.

Ducks

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Hooks Isle, Palo Alto Baylands 24 Feb (RSch). Two **Redhead** at Shoreline Lake 7 Feb (RSch) and a male at Stevens Creek Res. 6 Mar (MJM) were the last reports of the winter for those two locations. A female **Black Scoter** turned up at Shoreline Lake 16 Mar (JY, AL) and remained at least through 18 Mar (m.ob.) for a second or third county record. A female **White-winged Scoter** there 17 Mar (MiF) was the only report this winter. **Hooded Mergansers** were found on Stevens Creek Res. on 6 and 12 Mar with a male and two females on the latter date (BW *et al.*, MJM). A female **Red-breasted Merganser** on a salt pond behind Moffett Field 1 Feb (MMR) was away from their favored ponds near Alviso.

Raptors through Gulls

A 3rd-winter adult **Bald Eagle** was seen at Calero Res. 4 Mar (SD). A sub-adult **Golden Eagle** over Mountain View 15 Mar (MMR) was probably wintering locally. The male **Merlin** of the prairie race wintering in Mountain View was seen again 12 Mar. The same bird (probably) was seen along Stevens Creek near Moffett Field 22 Mar (both MMR). A **Spotted Sandpiper** at the Oka ponds 25 Feb (MiF) is from the wintering population as we

A female Black Scoter at Shoreline Lake was only the second record in the last ten years.

usually do not see significant numbers of migrants until May. The 1st-winter **Franklin's Gull** at Ed Levin CP was observed at least through 2 Mar (RWR). A **Glaucous Gull** was at Shoreline Lake 17 Mar (MiF).

Pygmy Owl
Linda Newberry



Passerines

Rock Wrens were singing in Santa Teresa CP 9 Mar (MJM) in one of their outposts on the west side of the Santa Clara Valley. An adult **White-throated Sparrow** has remained at a Menlo Park feeder at least through 24 Mar (WGB).

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Sandy Doran (SD), Mike Feighner (MiF), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Rick Schermerhorn (RSch), Betty Wyatt (BW), James Yurchenko (JY).

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS: If you find a nest in the county this season call Roy Cameron, (408) 867-6632.

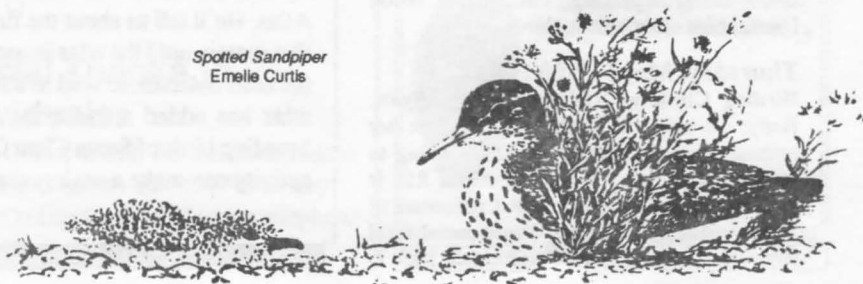
For rarities in the county, please drop me a note, or battle my answering machine: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025 (415) 322-5282.

1991 Audubon Sierra Natural History Workshop

Three one-week Golden Trout Workshops will be held in the Sierra from August 4 through August 24, 1991. The workshops are being sponsored by members of the Eastern Sierra, Pasadena, San Bernardino, San Fernando Valley, and Santa Barbara chapters of the National Audubon Society. An informal field natural history program, consisting of naturalist-led hikes by resident naturalists, will be offered, with visiting guest naturalists at some sessions. The Camp is located in the Golden Trout Wilderness, in

the southern portion of the High Sierra, on the eastern watershed, at an altitude of 10,000 feet. For details call or write to: Golden Trout Workshop, c/o Cindi McKernan, 1230 Friar Lane, Redlands, CA 92373, (714) 793-7897.

Spotted Sandpiper
Emelle Curtis



Environmental Action News

EFC — Employees Bringing Environmental Movement To Their Workplace

Environmental activists who work in either the private or public sector can bring the environmental movement into their workplace by arranging to have the Environmental Federation of California (EFC) included in their annual employee giving campaign.

The EFC is a coalition of 33 environmental groups working cooperatively to raise funds for the environment through workplace giving campaigns. Member organizations include SCVAS, the Sierra Club Foundation, the Natural Resource Defense Council, Greenpeace, TreePeople, and Heal the Bay.

Founded in 1982, the EFC is reaching more companies than ever. In 1990, the EFC organized 85 workplace giving campaigns, reaching more than 700,000 people and raising more than \$1 million for member groups.

Last year, the EFC made presentations to a wide range of companies, including Apple Computer, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, the County of Los Angeles, and the GAP Inc.

"EFC campaigns are easy to set up," said Nancy Snow, EFC Executive Direc-

tor. "We work with the company to make whatever adjustments are needed in the way they conduct the campaign. The rest is entirely up to the company's employees. We bring them information they seem anxious to receive and offer them the chance to get involved to help the environment."

In a typical campaign, an EFC representative will address the assembled employees in the company offices and describe the work of environmental groups with an emphasis on what local groups are doing. Employees who wish to make a contribution can specify one or more of the member groups for their gift; or they can make a non-designated gift which becomes part of the overall pool. Employees who are interested in having the EFC included in their company's annual employee giving campaign can call the EFC office in either San Francisco at (415) 882-9330 or in Santa Monica at (213) 452-3502.

The EFC, a 501(c) (3) organization, is headquartered at 116 New Montgomery, Suite 203, San Francisco, CA 94105.

Environmental Action Committee Looking for Letter Writers

Letter writing is a critical piece of our grassroots program. There is nothing like a torrent of mail to make a legislator think twice about opposing the environmental community on an issue. A strong grassroots campaign can influence even the most recalcitrant lawmakers. A good letter can be very short but still make a big difference. If you'd like to write some letters on any issue or on special issues, call Cecily at SCVAS at (415) 329-1811 for information on how to get involved.



Mission Blue Butterfly
Ed Rooks

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Library

Did you ever wonder what color a Tyrian Metaltail is? Or when to find birds on the Gaspe Peninsula? Or how soundly birds sleep? Or even, perhaps, what's being done about restoring the Everglades?

The answers to all of these questions can be found at Santa Clara Valley Audubon's very own library collection located at the Peninsula Conservation Center, 2448 Watson Ct, in Palo Alto. Our collection contains approximately 550 books; almost any may be checked out by having a membership in the PCC or purchasing a PCC library card for \$3/year.

Thinking of international birding? We have field guides to Costa Rica, Venezuela, Columbia, Australia and Nepal to name a few. Closer to home? How about *A Field Guide to Western Birds*. Or *A Guide to Bird Finding in Washington*. Or *A Birders*

Guide to Southern California. Or, a really excellent book, *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay*.

If you're interested in answering nagging bird biology or behavioral questions, we suggest *Watching Birds*, *An Introduction to Ornithology*, *Studar's Popular Ornithology*, or *A Guide to Bird Behavior*. For those of you concerned with attracting and feeding birds, you might try *The Birdfeeder Book*, *How to Build Birdhouses and Feeders*, and *The Audubon Society's Guide to Attracting Birds*.

We've also added a few new books which you might like to browse through. *Advanced Birding* by Kenn Kaufmann has great pointers to fine-tune your birding skills. *Hawks in Flight* by Peter Dunne (with superb illustrations by David Sibley) will help you to sort out those beautiful

but sometimes confusing soaring raptors. *Where the Birds Are*, by John Oliver Jones, is a well organized and very informative guide to finding birds in all 50 states and Canada.

While you're at the PCC, take a look at their fine library collection, which has great books about environmental action, energy, conservation careers, land and water use, plants, geology, and much, much more. Also, you could satisfy your curiosity about the color of a Tyrian Metaltail (Plate 11, *Birds of Venezuela*), birding Gaspe peninsula (page 213, *A Bird-Finding Guide to Canada*), how soundly birds sleep (page 766, *The Encyclopedia of North American Birds*), and the Everglades (page 467, *Restoring the Everglades* from the *Audubon Wildlife Report 1989/90*).
— Rita Colwell

Automatic Bird Call/Song Recognition

I am undertaking a new project to develop PC-based software that will automatically identify bird calls and songs. I will be collaborating with researchers such as Chris Clark at Cornell, Doug Nelson and Peter Marler at UC Davis, and Kim Beeman of Engineering Design in Belmont, MA. The system will operate from an audio line input such as tape, record, or CD, and will be converted to digital form using an analog-to-digital (A/D) converter. The front-end system will be based on the Signal software system from Engineering Design, which coordinates the data acquisition functions, and allows data display, editing, and analysis. Specifically, the data will be processed to generate sonograms, which in addition to the temporal waveform will be used to identify bird call or song. A number of levels of identification detail are possible, going as far as regional variations within a species, such as is seen with the White-crowned Sparrow (Nelson and Marler, UCD). I expect to be able to correctly identify a significant number of calls without much difficulty, and will address

the more difficult cases thereafter. There are several potential applications for this capability, including:

- Hand-held field identification unit.
- PC software (with appropriate audio digitization hardware) for analysis of audio input, such as the tape of a field trip.
- Larger-scale field unit for performing autonomous long range censuses in remote areas.

An important feature of this system will be a bird database, preferably one that follows a standard taxonomic order, such as the ABA and AOU lists, as well as regional data. I am contacting several makers of birding software to determine whether there is interest in this area, and the possibility of collaboration. Those who are interested will be kept informed of the progress of this project. Please feel free to call or write in response.

Richard S. Poulsen, 645 Hobart St., Menlo Park, CA 94025 (415) 324-8550 (d), (415) 354-5852 (w).

Non-Audubon Events

Kenya Safari

Doug & Gail Cheeseman have two spaces on their Kenya Wildlife Safari with resident naturalist, Terry Stevenson, July 13-August 4. For details, phone (408) 741-5330.

State of the Estuary Conference

The San Francisco Estuary Project and the Aquatic Habitat Institute are holding a three day environmental conference to bring together scientists, environmentalists and key decision-makers to discuss actions which must be taken to restore and protect the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. Three days \$150, for Saturday only \$40. May 30-June 1. For more information, call Joan Patton at San Francisco Estuary Project at (415) 464-7990.



*Trinity Bristle Snail
Ed Rooks*

How to Attract Bluebirds and Help Increase Their Number

Prominent on farms, as well as cities some years ago, was that noted symbol of spring, the bluebird. These members of the thrush family were often spotted over open fields and around orchards. Frequently during the summer bluebirds could be seen perched on some post or branch, occasionally dropping to the garden below to harvest a caterpillar or weevil, or perhaps taking a mosquito midflight. With its bright blue color and warbling song, the bluebird has long been considered a symbol of gentleness and love, and held as a friend of man.

Bluebirds have always nested in cavities. It might have been in a hole chiseled by woodpeckers in a dead limb, or a cavity of a weathered fence post.

Unfortunately, the same clean, efficient farming practices that have given us low cost, high quality foodstuffs have led to the decimation of the bluebird population. Some ornithologists have speculated

that all three species of the bluebird - eastern, mountain and western - could be nearly extinct by the turn of the century. Venomous insecticides in use since the 1940's have contaminated the food supplies for wild birds and may directly affect the fragile bluebird as well. Wooden fenceposts have been replaced by metal or plastic posts. In addition, orchards are trimmed more carefully, thus removing dead hollow limbs.

Perhaps even more seriously, the bluebird's well being has been threatened by man's introduction of the English House Sparrow and the European Starling to this continent. These antagonistic birds have been known to kill the bluebirds and pilage their nests without provocation.

Friends of the bluebird have proven that the favorite native can be protected. In 1959, a retiree in Canada took it upon himself to begin a conservation project of erecting nesting houses that eventually

produced as many as 3,500 chicks a year. More recently, similar large-scale projects have been undertaken by the Audubon Naturalists Society of the Central Atlantic States.

Individuals can use similar techniques to bring the bluebird back to their communities on a smaller scale. Bluebird nesting boxes can be bought or built and placed around the house or garden. If building your own, it is important to have the diameter of the hole in the nesting box exactly 1-1/2 " to allow the fewest predators to gain entry. Also be sure to use long-lasting materials so that artificial preserving won't be necessary.

To order a nesting box from the National Audubon Society, make check for \$13 payable to: Bluebirds Across America and mail to: BBAA, c/o National Audubon Society, Box 123, Horatio, SC 29062. Instructions and placement hints are included in each ready-made cypress nesting box.

Field Trip Reports

Bug Catches Bird

We all know that "dog bites man" is not news and "man bites dog" is news; but how about "bird catches bug" versus "bug catches bird"? This last summer my wife, Jean, was drawn to the dining room window by the sound of commotion. She found a flock of Bushtits in our dwarf orange tree in a state of great alarm and overhead, in the wisteria, an agitated Mockingbird. In a sideshow to the main event the Mockingbird was hassling Marigold, an orange cat and avid birdwatcher. Marigold, for her part, ignored the Mockingbird, but showed great interest in the Bushtits. The Bushtit hysteria was directed entirely at a large praying mantis which firmly held one of the tiny birds by its leg in preparation for the juiciest meal of its life. **Bug Catches Bird!**

Jean, in the interest of non-violence, broke up the party. The mantis's gourmet lunch flew off with its friends and with a story to tell its grandchildren. Marigold went off in the other direction with the Mocker above continuously repeating nasty things about cats. The mantis went hungry. Life in our little backyard jungle returned to the humdrum of another hot August day.

— Frank Farran

Wetlands (continued from page 1)

We suggest that your letter to the House contain this message: "We oppose the Hayes bill which would eliminate and reduce protection for millions of acres of wetlands. Please do not co-sponsor this bill and vote against it should the opportunity arise."

And in your letter to the Senate: "We're expecting Sen. John Breaux (D-LA) to introduce a bill like HR 1330. Please do not co-sponsor this bill. It is a wetlands destruction bill that will speed the already huge rate of wetlands loss in this country."

And in your letter to the President: "We are gravely concerned that President Bush, who promised a plan for "no net loss" of wetlands, is about to help speed the destruction of wetlands by greatly reducing what qualifies as a wetland. The

Backyard Birding Report

For the past three years, I have encouraged birds in my small yard by planting California native plants and by seed and hummingbird feeders. On several occasions in the past years, two **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and a **Kestrel** swooped down briefly without success. Last Sunday, February 3, about noon, I was digging in my front yard when behind me in the road I heard a "scraping" sound. Upon turning, I glimpsed a flurry of feathers flying everywhere; a Sharp-shinned Hawk had just pounced on what appeared to be a **Mourning Dove**. The hawk picked up the bird in one of its talons and flew to the next yard. As I walked toward it, it flew at low level (with difficulty) to a yard four houses down. I didn't have time to get my big lens (500 mm Nikon) to try to get a picture. Besides, as raptor-watchers know, a raptor's binocular vision prevents one from getting close at all. However, I watched it through binoculars from a bush about 75 feet away as it plucked feathers from the slain bird and proceeded to eat - all the while mantling its prey. An event like this, very infrequent, "made my day".

— John Delevoryas

Almaden Quicksilver Park Trip Report: March 23, 1991

In spite of the dire forecasts for a massive rainstorm to wash out our trip we made it through the trip with barely a sprinkle. The number of species sighted (41) was one less than last year's trip. We failed to get either a glimpse or a gobble out of the resident **Wild Turkeys** which had been seen, and photographed, strutting on the hillside eight days before. Friday afternoon before the trip I sighted a bobcat slowly going up the same slope as the turkeys, but he too was nowhere in sight. Neither were the **Lark Sparrows** seen on the prior evening's scouting trip.

What we did see was a **Red-breasted Sapsucker**. As we finished our climb up the steep hill where we paused for breath, we saw a **Golden Eagle** circling about. He was soon hassled by a **Red-tailed Hawk** which made for a nice size comparison between the birds.

Later along the ridge line we spotted a **Great Horned Owl**. The trip was un spectacular but after the trip was over and as the leaders chatted the **Golden Eagle** was seen with a ground squirrel in his clutches right after capture. We had time to put a scope on the **Golden Eagle** before he departed.

The eagle was probably nesting in the area, but we have yet to determine this with certainty. Some thought is given to making this trip a bit later in the year (mid-April), in hopes of adding some migrants and yet to arrive nesting birds.

— Tom Roach

President should not abandon this pledge that he made to the American people."

Letters written in your own words that talk about the importance of wetlands for flood control, water quality, habitat for endangered wildlife, fisheries, etc. are the most single effective step you can take right now.

May has been designated as National Wetlands Month. Both National Audubon and the EPA are planning events to raise public awareness on the importance of wetlands. Please call Cecily at the SCVAS office if you'd like to get involved.

Addresses:

The Honorable ____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121

The Honorable ____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500
White House Switchboard:
(202) 456-1414

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| Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society 415 Cambridge Ave., #21 Palo Alto, CA 94306 | | Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage Paid San Jose, CA Permit No. 5869 |
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Announcing SCVAS' Spring Membership Drive

Would you like to see SCVAS grow in its ability to offer conservation and education activities in Santa Clara County? Would you like to see more habitat saved for animal life in Santa Clara County? Of course you would! Would you like to help us accomplish this goal without having to resort to truckloads of "junk mail"? We thought you might.

Our spring membership campaign offers a simple way in which you, our members can help us do just that. Sponsor your friends to join as members of SCVAS or give a gift membership at the \$20 level or higher between April 15 and June 15. You will earn prizes for different levels of sponsorship:

- Avocet bring in 5 new memberships earn 1 SCVAS pin or patch
- Clapper Rail bring in 10 new memberships earn 1 BABOB book
- Burrowing Owl bring in 15 new memberships earn an SCVAS t-shirt
- Golden Eagle bring in 25 new memberships earn a special birding trip

To take advantage of this offer, use the membership coupon below.

We'll keep a running tally and periodically announce these in *The Avocet*. Prizes will be awarded at the June Volunteer Recognition Dinner. Any questions, please call Cecily at the SCVAS office at (415) 329-1811.

Membership: We invite your membership in the National Audubon Society/SCVAS. To join, please complete and mail this form with payment to SCVAS, 415 Cambridge Ave., #21, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

National Audubon Society Membership: Check One
 Introductory \$20 Individual \$35 Family \$38
 Members receive *Audubon* magazine and *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Membership: Check One
 Subscriber \$8 Supporter \$20 Donor \$35 Patron \$50 and more
 Members receive *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to SCVAS.

Audubon Activist - \$9: Activists receive a quarterly publication from the National Audubon Society. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.

Donation: SCVAS greatly appreciates your tax-deductible donation. Your gift helps to fund the Chapter's birding, education, conservation and research programs.

Name _____
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 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
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