

The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

March 1992

SCVAS Chapter Birdathon to Raise Money for Wetlands

By Tony Eppstein

The Birdathon, an annual Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society fundraiser will be held on the weekend of April 25-26, 1992. Planning for Birdathon '92 is well underway and you will read more about it in the April issue of the *Avocet*. A Birdathon is a fun spring celebration for you, your family and friends, and also raises money for the Chapter and its environmental projects.

As in previous years, Birdathon '92 has an easy concept. You make a pledge to pay so much per bird species (for example: \$1 per bird) identified on Birdathon day by a team you support or on birds you see in your own backyard. A preliminary

list of teams is given below. After the team has held their Birdathon trip, they will send you a count of the birds that they saw and a pledge reminder. You can then either return your contribution to the team leader or to the SCVAS office.

This year, the Birdathon theme is wetlands issues. Wetlands are at a critical point both in terms of decreasing size and in proposed federal government regulation changes that would gut protection from most of these remaining areas. SCVAS is working with a coalition of local groups concerned with better wetlands protection and will donate a portion of this year's Birdathon income to support

efforts to save local wetlands. We will also pledge \$2500 of Birdathon proceeds to the National Audubon Society's effective wetlands campaign.

Anyway, Birdathon '92 is intended to provide enjoyment for you while providing funds needed for wetlands protection and other Chapter projects. The key to the success of a Birdathon is *your* participation. Last year we raised over \$8000 in the Birdathon — help us reach our goal of \$10,000 this year. You can join a team or count birds in your backyard, but most importantly you can make a pledge to support the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Birdathon '92.

1992 Birdathon Teams:

"The Uncommon Loons"

"The Wrentits"

"If You've Seen One Bird. . ."

"The Vagrants"

"The Wrong Terns"

"The Cardinal Virtues"

"The Band-its"

"The Poorwills"

"The Bird Brains"

"The California Skimmers"

"The Wednesday Weirdos"

Nick Yatsko, Cecily Harris, Rod Norden et.al.
(Official SCVAS Chapter team)

Doug & Gail Cheeseman, Harriet Gerson et.al.

Trish Mulvey

Grant Hoyt, Dick Stovel, Mike Mammoser

Bobbie & Cindy Handen, Allen Royer

Tony Eppstein, Don Price, Jules Resnick et.al.

Mike Rigney & CCRS bird-banders

Bill Bousman & Clark Blake

Alan Walther & Paul Edstrom

Mike Feighner & Kathy Parker

Alan Thomas & Friends

It's not too late to form your own team—just think of a silly name and call the SCVAS office to sign up!

Chapter News

Hot Off the Press!

A new Peninsula Conservation Center publication, "Species in Danger in Our Own Backyard" is an invaluable reference guide for south San Francisco Bay residents interested in local wildlife and habitats. Learn about the endangered, threatened, and rare species in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Alameda counties. Read about each fascinating species, the reason for its decline and what we can do to reverse the trend. Twenty-five local animal and 14 native plant profiles of species listed as endangered by the State of California or by the U.S. Government are profiled in this new publication.

The book was written by Deborah Jameson, designed by Marie S. Lee and illustrated by Edward Rooks (SCVAS Field Trip Chair) and Mary Ann Showers. Copies are available at the SCVAS Nature Shop for \$5.

Celebrate Family Arbor Day at Villa Montalvo

Join the Santa Clara Audubon Society at Villa Montalvo's Family Arbor Day festivities on Saturday, March 7, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. To celebrate Arbor Day, there will be many forest-related educational displays and hosted nature trails. Forest rangers will lead visitors along the 1 mile nature trail. Scheduled stops along the trail include tree climbing demonstrations, discussions about wildlife, insects, tree diseases, plant identification, geology of the San Andreas Fault and SCVAS' own "Birds of the Forest" display. At the end of the trail, Gifford Pinchot will give a short talk about forestry issues. Displays at the end of the trail include fire safety programs, spotted owl management, forest products, native plants, recycling and more. Free redwood tree seedlings will be distributed at the end of the trail. You will need to park at lot 3 of West Valley College and shuttle in by bus. Please call Villa Montalvo at (408) 867-0190 for more information about Family Arbor Day.

Teacher In-Service Day to Seasonal Wetlands

A Teacher In-Service Wetlands Trip has been planned for Saturday, April 4 from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Participants will meet at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Education Center in Alviso and then proceed to the Sunnyvale Baylands. The focus of this special field trip is to educate teachers about wetlands and about SCVAS' Seasonal Wetlands Discovery Program.

The purpose of the SCVAS Seasonal Wetlands Discovery program is to teach upper elementary students about seasonal wetlands and their value. A binder for teacher use contains activities for classroom activities. The program includes a slide show, binoculars, backpacks, clipboards, and field guides for use during the trip.

The first hour of the trip will be spent viewing Seasonal Wetlands Discovery Program materials that were prepared for use with students prior to, during, and after a field trip. The remainder of the morning will be spent hiking at a nearby seasonal wetland. Bring lunch and a drink.

Directions to the Environmental Education Center: From Hwy. 237 in Mountain View, turn left on Taylor Street. Turn right on Grand Blvd. Head straight to Center. Please call the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747 for more information.



Everything for Feeding & Enjoying our Backyard Birds

- Feeders • Seed • Houses • Books
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Wild Bird Center
926 El Camino Real
San Carlos
(415) 595-0300

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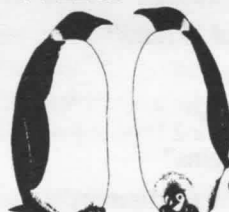
General meetings are open to the public. Board of Directors meetings are open to all members. Call the office at (408) 252-3747 for times and directions.

The Avocet is published monthly (except for July and August) by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, 22221 McClellan Rd., Cupertino, CA 95014. Deadline is the 25th of two months prior. Send contributions to *The Avocet*, c/o SCVAS at the above address.

SCVAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

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Wild/life Gifts...



A Whale of a Choice.

Whales & Tales

Wildlife Store and Gallery

800-422-8253
429 University
415-326-1130
Palo Alto

March 1992 Calendar

On all field trips carpool and share expenses. Bring binoculars, field guides, warm clothing, lunch (optional on half-day trips) and liquids. Field Trip Coordinator for March & April: Mike Feighner (408) 354-0138, (408) 742-8660 (evenings)

**Denotes Field Trip

**Sunday, March 1, 7:00 PM.

Alum Rock Owling. Leader: Dave Johnston. Call (408) 356-4945 weekdays for reservations. Meet at Youth Science Institute in Alum Rock Park. Take Alum Rock Avenue east off Hwy. 101 or I-680. Trip limited to 16. Bring flashlight and binoculars.

Wednesday, March 4, 7:30 - 9:30 PM.

Bay Area Bird Photographers. Speaker, Doug Cheeseman, will show slides from a recent trip to Alaska. Birds and mammals of the arctic, maritime, and southeastern regions of Alaska. Areas to be covered include the Pribilof Islands and Denali National Park. Meeting takes place at Palo Alto's Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center on East Embarcadero Rd.

**Sunday, March 8, 9:00 AM. Half day.

Beginners Trip to Charleston Slough. Leader: Kathy Parker (408) 358-2832. Directions: take US 101 to Mountain View, exit at San Antonio north to end at Terminal Way parking area. Highlights: Basics of birding with emphasis on shorebirds and waterfowl.

Tuesday, March 10, 9:30 AM.

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group at the home of Edward & Janice Rooks, 20537 Verde Vista, Saratoga (408) 867-4748. Topic: Birds of India.

**Wednesday, March 11, 9:00 AM. Half day.

Chesbro Reservoir. Leaders: Jane Glass (408) 779-3637 and Emelie Curtis (408) 779-2637. Directions: Meet at junction of Uvas Rd. and Oak Glen Rd. From the north, take Almaden Expy. south to McKean Rd. which becomes Uvas Rd. on to junction of Oak Glen Rd.

**Sunday, March 15, 9:00 AM. Half day.

Beginners Trip to Stanford Campus. Leader: Dick Stovel (415) 856-6105. Directions: Meet at the quad at the end of Palm Dr. From Hwy. 101, take University Ave., exit west. University becomes Palm Drive. Highlights: Possible Acorn Woodpecker, California Thrasher, Red-shouldered Hawk.

Wednesday, March 18

March General Meeting. 7:45 PM refreshments, 8:00 PM program. Speaker Rick Parmer is an outstanding Fish and Game biologist and a loyal friend of Audubon efforts to preserve bird habitat. Rick will feature the California Wildlife Campaign, an exciting new program that brings the enjoyment and importance of wildlife to students and the public. He will show slides of many of California's wildlife areas and ecological reserves, the closest being Elkhorn Slough in Monterey County. Come enjoy learning more about the best birding areas in our state and what is being done to protect these areas. Co-sponsored by the Palo Alto Open Spaces and Sciences Division at the Palo Alto Cultural Center, Embarcadero at Newell Road.

**Sunday, March 22, 9:00. Full day.

East Golden Gate Park. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. Directions: Meet at the entrance to the Arboretum on Martin Luther King Jr. Way. Bring lunch. Highlights: Possible migrants, White-throated Sparrow, Allen's Hummingbird, and Tufted Duck.

**Wednesday, March 25, 9:00 AM. Half day.

North County Field Trip to Pichetti Ranch OSP. Leader: Rose Linn (408) 736-8207. Directions: From I-280 in Cupertino, take Foothill Blvd. South. This becomes Stevens Canyon Rd. The parking lot is the second one on the left and is about 2.7 miles from I-280. Meet at the parking lot near the dam at Stevens Creek Park. Lunch optional.

**Saturday, March 28, 9:00 AM. Half day.

Edgewood Park. Leader: Dan Keller (415) 365-2032. Directions: Take Edgewood Rd. east from I-280. Meet at entrance to park, just off Edgewood Road. Highlights: Allen's Hummingbird, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler.

National Audubon Society's Western Region Conference

All SCVAS members are invited to attend National Audubon Society's 1992 Western Regional Conference that will be held April 11-14, 1992 at Asilomar on the Monterey Peninsula. This year's theme is "Biodiversity: A framework for effective conservation." Invited speakers include Hon. George Miller, Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives, John Turner, director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and National Audubon Society President, Peter Berle. Workshops will feature the Endangered Species Act and other

Monday, March 30, 7:00 PM.

Field Trip Committee. Meeting to be held at McClellan Ranch Park, 22221 McClellan Rd. Chairperson: Edward Rooks (408) 867-4748.

**Saturday, April 4 10:00 AM. Half day.

Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough. Leader: Greg Meyer (408) 336-3513. Directions: Meet at Moss Landing Preserve parking area. Take unpaved road going east from Hwy 1 at 55 mph-sign. If you have reached Jetty Rd, turn around and head north to first 55 mph-sign and turn right. Parking area is 1/4 mile on left. Highlights: waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors.

**Saturday, April 4, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM.

SCVAS Teacher In-Service Day (see write-up on page 2). This program is for upper grade elementary teachers interested in using the SCVAS Seasonal Wetlands Discovery Program with their classes. If interested, please contact Cecily at (408) 252-3747.

**Sunday, April 5, 8:00 AM. Half day.

Stevens Creek County Park. Leader: Phil Hand (415) 851-2623. Directions: Meet in the first parking area below the dam. 1-2 miles of easy walking. Highlights: Early arriving breeding birds and migrants.

PLAN AHEAD

Sunday, April 12th: Charleston Slough
Saturday, April 18: Jasper Ridge
Saturday/Sunday April 18-19: Pinnacles National Monument
Saturday/Sunday April 25-26: SCVAS Birdathon
Saturday, April 25: St. Joseph's Hill Poorwill Trip
Saturday, April 26: Mines Road
Saturday, Sunday May 2-3: Sutter Buttes

important environmental issues, sessions for chapter leaders and species workshops for environmental educators at this special bi-annual conference. Optional Monday field trips are to Elkhorn Slough, Point Lobos, Hastings Reservation, Garland Ranch and a Monterey Bay pelagic trip. Come to Asilomar and meet other Audubon Society members and learn more about current Audubon programs. Call the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747 for registration materials.

Field Notes

By Bill Bousman

Elsie Ritchey and I crept over the hill on Monument Ridge and looked down on a remote stock pond to see three Greater White-fronted Geese on the day of the San Jose CBC. I carefully noted the field marks in my notebook, but I was bothered by the stockiness of these birds - they seemed more bulky than white-fronts I've seen before. But at the same time more than one subspecies occurs along the central California coast and all species show some variation in size and markings. Once we were satisfied with our notes we stood and walked over the crest and down towards the pond. We were greeted by loud honking cries, not of alarm, but resentment of our intrusion and it was clear that they were domesticated birds. We settled instead for the Spotted Sandpiper and the Common Snipe along the edge of the pond.

Lake Cunningham, this month, has been host to a reported Ross' Goose on 15 and 28 Dec and a Snow Goose on 21 Dec and 12 Jan. Is this one bird or two? Although the bird has been seen by competent observers I have no written descriptions in my files and I am at a loss to explain these observations. Snow Geese and Ross' Geese are known to hybridize, is this a cross between these two species? I have detailed written descriptions for the immature Ross' Goose that has been at the Sunnyvale WPCP since early December and even though this bird has been well described there are some confusing aspects about its plumage. How much variation is there and how does the average observer go about telling these things? Worse yet, for a species that is hunted, how do we know that this is not a rehab bird? The people working in wildlife rehabilitation rarely have the time to acquaint local birders when they release a recovered bird in the local area. And now they are talking about separating Canada Goose into three species — arrggh!

In Memoriam:

John Phillip Wessels
Memorial Gifts made by:
Ernie & Virginia Williams
Wiley & Loretta Cousins

Loons through Ducks

One of the **Pacific Loons** at Shoreline Lake remained at least through 5 Jan (MJM, AME). **Am. White Pelicans** are fairly common along the bay in the early winter, but two at Calero Res. 19 Jan (MMR) were less expected. Few **Am. Bitterns** have been found in the southwest portion of the bay this winter so the total of ten found in the Alviso sector of the San Jose CBC 15 Dec (*fide* PLN) is a good number. A single **Cattle Egret** at the Arzino Ranch off Nortech Parkway 25

Goose dreams, goose nightmares.

Jan (WGB) continues the irregular record of one or more birds at this location.

Four **Tundra Swan** seen over Charleston Slough 3 Jan (EGu) were an unusual sight. Twenty-five south of Hwy. 152 in the Hollister area 11 Jan (RH) are also unusual. The immature **Ross' Goose** at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) has continued to be found at least through 25 Jan (m.ob.). Two pairs were seen at the Oka ponds 6-7 Jan (RF *fide* MiF, MiF) and are in an area where they frequently winter. A male **Blue-winged Teal** has been found in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) 7-22 Jan (MMR, AV) and two were found there 12 Jan (MiF). The male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Charleston Slough was last seen 25 Dec (LBG, DD) while the Los Capitancillos male was last seen 1 Jan (AV). The male in the Palo Alto FCB has been switching between the North and South ponds and has been found at least through 25 Jan (m.ob.). The **Redhead** flock in the Palo Alto FCB has grown slightly since December. Forty-eight were counted on 7 Jan (MMR) and 52 on 25 Jan (JAC). The number of **Barrow's Goldeneyes** on Shoreline Lake have been holding fairly well between five and seven birds seen through 25 Jan (m.ob.). The peak of seven birds was seen 5 Jan (MJM). The female **Hooded Merganser** remained at Shore-

line Lake at least through 5 Jan (AME). A pair of these mergansers were found on Stevens Creek Res. 3 Jan (KP). Three to five birds were found on the Oka ponds 6-12 Jan (RF *fide* MiF, MiF, AW) and four were on the Campbell perc. ponds 18 Jan (AV). Four were found on Lake Boronda in Palo Alto Foothills Park 26 Jan (MS). Winter concentrations of **Common Mergansers** of note were 70 on Chesbro Res. and 20 on Calero Res. 19 Jan (MMR) and four on Guadalupe Res. 18 Jan (AV).

Raptors

Six **Bald Eagles**, four adults and two immatures, were reported at Calero Res. on 11 and 16 Jan (RH). Two adults were seen there on 18 Jan (EGu), but none were found the next day (MMR). An adult was seen at Soap (San Felipe) Lake 12 Jan (MF *fide* AW), another adult was at the entrance to Del Valle regional Park 13 Jan (GS), and at least two adults have remained on Calaveras Res. with observations on 17 Jan (KP) and 18 Jan (MB *fide* MiF). Westside reports of **Golden Eagles** include two over Mountain View 23 Dec (AW), one over Los Gatos 10 Jan (MiF), and two imm. at Calero Res. 18 and 19 Jan ((EGu, MMR). **Merlin** continue to be found in good numbers in the area. Birds have been seen at the Palo Alto Baylands with sightings 23 and 26 Dec (JAC) and 19 Jan (MMR, MJM). A bird of the *columbarius* race was at Stanford 9 Jan (MMR) in the same spot that one has been seen for three winters now, and the male *richardsoni* was seen again in Mountain View 13 and 27 Jan (MMR) where he has wintered for the last three years. A single bird was found 19 Jan at Embarcadero and Hwy 101 (MS). **Pergrine Falcon** have been found fairly regularly at the Palo Alto Baylands with an imm. there 20 Dec (MMR), a bird there 18 Jan (RWR), and an adult of the *anatum* race on 19 Jan (MMR, MJM). A single bird was also at the Sunnyvale WPCP 30 Dec (WGB). A **Prairie Falcon** at Anderson Res. 31 Dec (BW *et al.*) was in an area where they breed. A bird along Stevens Creek below Hwy. 101 8 Jan (MMR) and two at Calero Res. 16 Jan (RH) represent wintering birds. (*continued on page 5*)

Field Notes, (cont. from page 4)

Rails through Woodpeckers

At least one **Black Rail** was seen daily at the Palo Alto Baylands 17-19 Jan (AS *fide* MiF, EGU, MMR, MJM, AW) including one taken by a Great Blue Heron on 19 Jan. At least two additional birds were present that day (AME). A **Snowy Plover** was found again at the Mountain View Forebay 1 Jan (AV). Two **Ruddy Turnstones** were on the San Francisquito Creek delta 26 Jan (KP), one of the few places in the county where they regularly turn up. **Sanderling** are occasionally attracted to man-made levees in the south bay, but the 633 recorded in the Alviso sector of the San Jose CBC 15 Dec (*fide* PLN) is extraordinary. A first-winter **Glaucous Gull** dining at the Sunnyvale dump has been found loafing at the WPCP nearby on 4 and 5 Jan (MJM, AME). A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** seen in Palo Alto Foothills Park 26 Jan (MS) was an enjoyable, if rare experience. A **Short-eared Owl** at the Palo Alto baylands 19 Jan (AME, DES) is the only report from the south bay this winter. **Northern Saw-whet Owls** are resident in the Santa Cruz Mountains in the coniferous forest, but elsewhere they are found only in winter. A number of birds have been captured in mist nets along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 2 Dec-16 Jan which illustrates that wintering birds will occasionally frequent riparian areas on the valley floor. A total of 19 **Lewis' Woodpeckers** were tallied on the Mt. Hamilton CBC 19 Dec (*fide* DES) in the San Antonio and Isabel Valleys.

Wrens through Sparrows

It has been a good year for **House Wrens**, slightly north of their typical range, with one in the Evergreen Sector of the San Jose CBC (JA *et al.* *fide* PLN), another south of the Calaveras Res. on Marsh Road 17 Jan (KP), and a third in Alum Rock Park 25 Jan (JAC). Two **Am. Dipper** on the Los Gatos Creek above Main St. in Los Gatos 31 Dec (AW) were from an area where they were rarely reported. Three **Phainopepla** were counted in the Isabel Valley on the Mt. Hamilton CBC

19 Dec and another was in the San Antonio Valley (*fide* DES). These numbers are down from recent years. A male was seen at the Arastradero Preserve 10-14 Jan (BD) and another bird was west of Calaveras Res. 25 Jan (AME). An **Orange-crowned Warbler** seen along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 18 Jan (MJM, GHt) is one of the few sight records this winter. A **Wilson's Warbler** has been wintering on Coyote Creek as well and has been netted a number of times from 17-23 Jan (*fide* WGB). A **Sharp-tailed Sparrow** was at the Palo Alto Baylands 18-19 Jan (WGB, MJM). Three **White-throated Sparrows** have been banded at CCRS 4-18 Dec (*fide* WGB). A tan-phase bird was seen in Los Altos 11 Jan (J&SL).

OBSERVERS: Jae Abel (JA), Matthias Bergstrom (MB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Jack Cole (JAC), Bob Dodge (BD), David Drake (DD), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Manny Ferreira (MF), Reid Freeman (RF), Leda Beth Gray (LBG), Ed Gustafson (EGU), Richard Healy (RH), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Jim and Sue Liskovec (J&SL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Paul Noble (PLN), Kathy Parker (KP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Don Schmoltd (DES), Martin Sidor (MS), Georgia Stigall (GS), Audrey Stoye (AS), Ann Verdi (AV), Alan Walther (AW), Betty Wyatt (BW).

RARITIES: Please drop me a note:
Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way,
Menlo Park, CA 94025 (415) 322-5282.

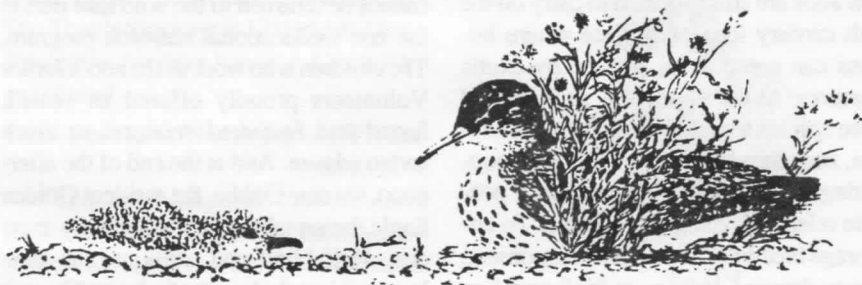
For the Birds

Spirals, a Palo Alto arts and crafts gallery is hosting a Birdhouse Art show titled "For the Birds". The show will premiere on March 13 and last until March 31. This special show celebrates Spring and the nesting of birds and coincides with a special article on birdhouses that is appearing in the march issue of *Sunset Magazine*.

Artisans from across the country have been invited to create birdhouses for this show. Although the birdhouses will be judged, the contest doesn't require that the houses be inhabitable, by birds that is! Spirals Gallery owner Micki Schneider instructed artists "that the work can be of any size, and need not necessarily be functional, nor traditional, nor constructed in the medium for which you are known." Birdhouses already received are described as "being of the highest quality and are quite varied in composition and statement—ranging from highly architectural to whimsical."

To add more excitement to this show, Bay Area community notables have been invited to create their own personally constructed birdhouses. Palo Alto Mayor Gary Fazzino, Peninsula Conservation director Debbie Mytels, and Stanford University's Director of Community Relations Andy Doty are among the celebrity birdhouse builders participating. A percentage of the profits will be donated to the nonprofit community.

For more information about "For the Birds", contact Spirals Gallery at (415) 324-1155 or visit the show at 367 University Avenue in Palo Alto.



Environmental Action News

Nesting Birds to Benefit from Housing Project

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) are co-sponsoring a Birdhouse Placement Project at McClellan Ranch Park with Boy Scout Troop #476 of Cupertino. CCRS director Mike Rigney and several of his biologists will be coordinating the project. Birdhouse builder George Honore has donated some multi-purpose bluebird/wren/swallow nestboxes for the project. These birdhouses are going up in perfect time for the nesting season which is in late winter or early spring when birds arrive at their breeding grounds and are looking for suitable nesting spots.

The purpose of this project is to provide nest boxes for some resident bird species of the Stevens Creek area. Records

will be kept on nesting progress at each of the nestboxes. We'll collect data on which birds are nesting in the boxes and how many young are being raised. A by-product of the project will be data for the county breeding bird atlas and other studies. The SCVAS Field Trip Committee will also be utilizing this data for production of a new McClellan Ranch Park bird checklist.

On Sunday, March 15, the group will begin the morning with some recreational birdwatching but at the same time determining which of the existing birdhouses should remain in the park. They will then spend the rest of the morning placing the nestboxes. Then we'll all have to wait and see who moves in!

Field Trip Report

Avian Conservation Center January 4, 1992

If I'd known we were going to the zoo, I wouldn't have come. It's been over 20 years since I faced the dull staring bird eyes, long simian hands shaking bars of cages, long feline paws endlessly pacing dirty concrete. But I hadn't been paying attention, and by the time we were headed north on I-280 it was too late to opt out. Now I'm glad I went. The SCVAS field trip to the Avian Conservation Center, located at San Francisco Zoo, turned out to be an education in how zoos, and the role they play in preservation of species, have changed dramatically in recent decades.

John Aikin, director of the Avian Conservation Program (ACP), explained how zoos are still expected to carry on the 19th century idea of a place where humans can come to be amazed by exotic creatures. At the same time, as more and more species teeter on the verge of extinction, zoos throughout the world are cooperating in programs to breed, and if possible release, endangered species. To encourage breeding, as well as in response to human demand, most zoos, including San Francisco, are upgrading facilities to provide a more natural-looking habitat for

their inhabitants.

ACP's contribution to the breeding program focuses primarily on raptors. When young birds are ready to be introduced to the wild, they are taken to a release site where food is provided until they can fend for themselves. John proudly showed maps that indicated a successful repopulation of Bald Eagles through several mountain areas of California. ACP has also achieved major accomplishments with the Barn Owl, Harris' Hawk, and Peregrine Falcon (see Jan. '92 *Avocet*).

While half the group of 28 toured the ACP facility with John, meeting some of the eagles, the Coachin Hens who act as surrogate egg-sitters, and Maia, the beautiful Hawk-crested Eagle who is John's special friend, the other half of the group visited the nearby Animal Resource Center (ARC) where birds and animals who cannot be returned to the wild take part in the zoo's educational outreach program. The children who work as the zoo's Junior Volunteers proudly offered us scaled, furred and feathered creatures to touch and to admire. And at the end of the afternoon, we saw Goldie, the resident Golden Eagle, being taken out for her daily exercise. Half blind and cautious, she flew low, and just the length of a lawn. The zoo felt less like a prison, more like a place of hope and sanctuary. — *Maureen Eppstein*

Field Trip Report

Merced National Wildlife Refuge/Santa Fe Grade Road

About 15 birders joined us on Saturday, January 25th, on our annual Merced County wildlife refuges trip to enjoy the spectacular diversity of wildlife found in this area. Although the tule fog blanketed the area during the early part of the day, no one's spirits were dampened, and by 11:00 AM the fog lifted. Although the visibility was poor in the early part of the trip, the fog produced many special moments such as two sandhill cranes that emerged out of the fog; the sounds of geese and cranes filtering through the fog; the long-billed curlews which materialized and dissolved back into the fog, crying their haunting "curlew" call which was greatly enhanced by the fog; and many other moments!

As we approached the Merced NWR, we saw a shimmering sea of white next to the road (in the refuge), and spent the next half hour watching about 10,000 Ross'/snow geese feeding on corn which had just been mowed (for food for the geese)! Among them were a number of White-fronted and cackling geese, and four blue morph snow geese. We got a brief look at what may have been a blue morph Ross' goose, but the bird was not cooperative. While watching the geese, approximately 300 to 400 sandhill cranes flew into the field! One particularly beautiful moment was viewing an American Kestrel through the spotted scope as it perched on a corn stock just in front of the mass of geese. While driving the tour route in Merced NWR, another flock of about 600 sandhill cranes rose into the air at once, all producing their haunting bugling call! Throughout our visit to the refuge, a crop duster (plane) caused about 20,000 Ross'/snow geese to periodically explode into flight. To see such an immense cloud of geese rise and settle back down is truly breath taking! Almost anticlimactic, were several white-faced ibis and a prairie falcon!

In the afternoon, we drove along Santa Fe Grade Road, north of Los Banos. As we started up the road, we met Dave Shufford, a staff biologist with Point Reyes

(continued on page 8)

SPRING BIRD SEED BONANZA



BIRDSEED:

Audubon Special Mix: A custom-blend formulated by National Audubon Society staff specifically for Northern California birds. This high protein mix contains white proso millet and black-oil sunflower seeds with no inexpensive fillers. Specifically blended to attract songbirds.

Western Wild Mix: This classic blend of red millet, white proso millet and red milo is priced to compete with super-market seed. Does not contain sunflower seeds.

Black-Oil Sunflower Seed: All-time favorite for all seed-eating birds. Has broad appeal because of high fat and protein. Especially good for winter residents. Can be offered in a feeder alone or mixed with other seeds.

***NEW* Sunflower Chips:** The heart of the sunflower is by far the most favored and nutritious food for small as well as large birds. The heart is also favored by people who feed birds because with sunflower chips there is little to no waste! The birds will eat all that is put in the feeder. The high percentage of oil in chips means greater food value to each and every bird that will come to your feeder.

Niger Thistle: A small black oil-rich seed imported from Asia and India. (This exotic will not sprout in your yard!) Attracts many birds with small beaks such as finches. This excellent source of fat and protein is generally unappealing to squirrels and large birds.

BIRDFEEDERS:

*** NEW* Cling-a-Wing \$9.95**

Made especially for small songbirds. Chickadees, nuthatches, titmice and finches are the birds the Cling-a-Wing was designed to attract. They cling to its four portholes, pop in their heads and feast away. 6" diameter holds one quart of sunflower seed, which we recommend for this feeder. Clear globe perfectly shelters seed. Pigeon-proof for city feeding, too!

Sunflower Tube Feeder \$9.95

Duncraft's best-selling sunflower tube feeder features a long-lasting aluminum hanging system, eight feeding stations with wooden dowel perches, weather-proof plastic tubing. 16" long. This tube feeder works well with sunflower seeds, sunflower chips or a mixture of both!

Window Feeder \$9.95

Lets you see small songbirds birds up close! 7" wide clear acrylic feeder adheres to any window with sturdy suction cups. Unique keyhole design allows feeder to be lifted free of suction cups for easy refilling. Seed capacity of 1 and 1/2 pints.

Soda Bottle Feeder \$9.95

A two liter soda bottle can be filled with a mixed seed variety or sunflower seed, then inverted into a cast-zinc dispenser. Has two metal perches. Seed flows out as the birds eat it. Holds up to 3 lbs. of seed and keeps it dry. A great way to re-use your old soda bottles!

Thistle Stocking \$2.95

This nylon stocking is specially designed to dispense thistle seed. People love to attract the more unusual songbirds, and thistle does it better than anything else! The Thistle Stocking is 12" long and has a drawstring for easy hanging. Can hold 8 oz. of seed.

Four-Fountains Hummingbird Feeder \$11.95

The most popular hummingbird feeder ever made! Easily-cleaned glass bottle with 8 oz. capacity. Special features include four bee-guards that keep insects away from nectar supply, and four feeding stations.

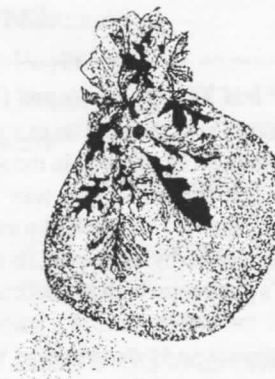
THIS IS A PRE-PAID SALE. ORDERS DUE MARCH 20!

Your order, including a check payable to SCVAS, must be received by Friday, March 20. All orders must be picked up from one of the following sites. *No exceptions please.* Confirmation of order and directions will be sent upon receipt of order and check.

Please tell your friends and neighbors about the Spring Bird Seed Sale. We will all benefit — you, the birds, and your Audubon Chapter. Have any questions? Please call the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747.

Pick-up locations:

- Peninsula Conservation Center
2448 Watson Court
Palo Alto
- Pets Friend Animal Clinic
101 W. Hendy
Sunnyvale
- REI
20640 Homestead Road
Cupertino
- Youth Science Institute
Vasona Park
Los Gatos
- Humane Soc. of Santa Clara Valley
Santa Clara



Santa Clara Valley
Audubon Society
22221 McClellan Road
Cupertino, CA 95014

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
San Jose, CA
Permit No. 5869

BIRD SEED SALE ORDER FORM – SPRING 1992

PICK-UP LOCATIONS: PLEASE CHECK ONE

- REI, Cupertino _____ Tues., Mar. 24, 4-6 PM
 Pets Friend, Snyvl. _____ Tues., Mar. 31, 5-7 PM
 PCC, Palo Alto _____ Sat., Mar. 28, 10 AM-12 PM
 YSI, Los Gatos _____ Wed., Apr. 1, 5-7 PM
 Humane Soc. of SC Valley,
Santa Clara _____ Tues., Mar. 31, 5-7 PM

AUDUBON SPECIAL _____	20 lb @ \$ 9/bag	_____	_____
	50 lb @ \$17.50/bag	_____	_____
WESTERN WILD _____	20 lb @ \$8/bag	_____	_____
	50 lb @ \$16.50/bag	_____	_____
BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER _____	25 lb @ \$14/bag	_____	_____
	50 lb @ \$25/bag	_____	_____
THISTLE _____	5 lb @ \$11/bag	_____	_____
NEW SUNFLOWER CHIPS _____	25 lb @ \$22.50/bag	_____	_____
	Bird Feeder(s) (<i>Please specify</i>)	_____	_____

bags

Cost

Subtotal _____
 Add 8.25% Tax _____
 Contributions to SCVAS (*tax deductible*) _____

Total _____

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ ZIP _____
 Phone (.) _____

Please send check to: Santa Clara Audubon Society C14
 22221 McClellan Road
 Cupertino, CA 95014

Merced Field Trip Report (cont. from page 6)

Observatory. Dave directed us to a **stilt sandpiper** that he had just found! After a bit of a search in the area he directed us to, we found the bird! The stilt sandpiper was feeding in deeper water with dowitchers, and looked much like the dunlin which were feeding in shallow water nearby. However, its feeding behavior was more like a Wilson's phalarope with it's delicate picking of food items off the surface of the water. This is a vagrant that could easily be overlooked unless one is experienced with the species! To have the opportunity to spend the time we did studying this vagrant in our own backyard was a tremendous treat! At the north end of Santa Fe Grade Road we heard overhead a strange, almost finch-like call,

which none of us were familiar with, and looked up to see a small shorebird flying by. The bird looked like a smaller lesser yellowlegs, with narrow, deeply angled wings a white rump patch. Could this have been a second stilt sandpiper??? Such mystery birds are always tantalizing!

A total of sixty-four species of birds were seen. Next year, I am going to reverse the trip itinerary and start the day at the north end of Santa Fe Grade Road, near the town of Gustine, and end the day at the Merced NWR to take advantage of the special effects of evening lighting on the huge flocks of geese and cranes present in the refuge! I hope to see you all again next year!

— Don Schmoltd