

The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

October 1992

SCVAS Urges "NO" on Gridlock—"YES" on A

Imagine Santa Clara County in the year 2007. Do you see a county that is smoggy and gridlocked? Or can you imagine a county with excellent air quality and traffic that moves well even in "rush" hour. Can you imagine being able to take rail to major employment and shopping centers? Can you imagine this scenario without a tax increase?

On November 3, we will have a unique opportunity to improve the environment in Santa Clara County...without raising taxes.

In 1984, a traffic relief initiative was passed in Santa Clara County to improve county highways by increasing the sales tax one-half cent. This initiative expires in 1994. Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society has joined with a broad-based group of organizations to form the Citizens Coalition for Traffic Relief which has qualified Measure A for the November ballot. Measure A will relieve traffic congestion, improve air quality and complete existing transportation improvement programs in Santa Clara County. This measure DOES NOT INCREASE TAXES, but will be funded utilizing the existing one-half cent sales tax expiring in 1994.

Measure A projects include a comprehensive rail system, express bus service, and key road improvements.

Measure A maximizes local tax dollars by capturing state and federal funds. For example, \$348 million in federal funds are currently authorized for the Tasman Light Rail extension, but lack a \$116 million local match. Without Measure A, Santa Clara County will lose the \$348 million and the Tasman extension.

The proposed list of projects in Measure A was approved by all 15 city councils in the county and the County Board of Supervisors. The projects include connecting Santa Clara County to Bart in Alameda County, building a county-wide rail

network, express buses to five major employment centers, improved transit service for seniors and disabled citizens, and important highway improvements.

The complete project list, facts sheets, maps and brochures are available from the Audubon office or the Citizens Coalition (408-562-5757) if you would like more information.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society strongly supports Measure A. Measure A will improve the local environment and improve the quality of life, and it doesn't require an increase in taxes. Please join us in supporting Measure A on November 3rd.

—Nick Yatsko

General Membership Meeting Wednesday, October 21, 7:30 PM

Topic: Birds of Costa Rica and Venezuela

Doug Cheeseman will present a slide show on the marvelous birds of Costa Rica and Venezuela, two neotropical countries with incredible birds, including quetzals, macaws, toucans, cock-of-the-rocks, bellbirds, hummingbirds, and tanagers. Doug will show slides and talk about the fascinating behavior of these bird families and about some conservation issues. Doug traveled to Costa Rica last April while he was on sabbatical and had many photo opportunities. Many birds that migrate to North America to breed were coming up the Isthmus, including hawks and warblers. For Venezuela. Doug will be using other people's outstanding slides, including some of Mike Danzenbaker's fantastic bird photos and some of Mary Lou Goodwins', the resident ornithologist from Venezuela who will be accompanying us to explore Venezuela's best birding areas next July. She is the author of *Birding in Venezuela*.

Chapter News

Grants Committee Report

The SCVAS Grants Program's objective is to assist in the advancement of knowledge, appreciation and protection of wildlife and other habitats through support of projects related to wildlife population studies or rehabilitation, habitat preservation/restoration, or environmental education. Total funds available for the Grants Program vary from year to year.

This year the SCVAS Grants Committee received proposals for many outstanding projects in the community. We are pleased to announce that we were able to fund seven of these projects.

The following is a list of the projects and the individual or organization

who will be completing the work. Bill Bousman, for the Santa Clara County Breeding Bird Atlas Project; Elkhorn Slough Foundation, for Heron Rookery Monitoring by Balloon Photography; Committee for Green Foothills, for a KTEH-TV Creeks Film Production; Native Animal Rescue, for Brown Pelican Rehabilitation; Trust for Hidden Villa, for educational materials development; Wildlife Rescue, for necropsy study training materials; Youth Science Institute, for a Wildlife Rehabilitation Summer Internship.

A scholarship for the Maine Audubon Ecology Camp was awarded to Amy Izzo-Olander by the Education Committee.

Library Report

Chapter Checklist File

The SCVAS Library Committee has begun collecting bird checklists and brochures that describe where to go birding. We ask that you pick up an extra checklist or brochure for the SCVAS file when you travel. Also,

when you are planning a trip come in and check our checklist box. We may have information on the area you plan to visit and the birds to expect there. For more information, call Cecily Harris at the SCVAS office at 408/252-3747.

Thanks to the Following Individuals Who Responded to the September *Avocet* Wish List:

Barbara Newcomer for the portable fan; R. Jay Andree for library books; and Carol McCarthy for the electric pencil sharpener.

We'd also like to thank Lois Lovejoy who produced the Audubon Nature Shop ad in this issue of the *Avocet*.

And thanks to the following Birdathon '92 Donors who weren't listed in the September *Avocet*:

Bill & Marg Betchart • Cindy Goral • Mike Rogers • Chip Haven and Jane Becker-Haven

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Field Trips	Shirley Gordon	408/996-9863

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.

October 1992, Volume 39, Number 8

October 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 October: Kathy Parker (408)358-2832.

**Denotes Field Trip

Saturday, October 10, 8:00 - 10:00 AM **Bird Banding Demonstration at McClellan Ranch Park**, 22221 McClellan Rd, Cupertino. Coyote Creek Riparian Station staff and volunteers will demonstrate the techniques of bird banding. This is an excellent opportunity to see birds in the hand. Rain cancels. For information call Kristin Shields at (408)262-9204.

Sat., Oct. 10, 9:00 AM. Full day. **Marin Headlands/Hawk Hill. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408)865-4831. Carpool from Park'n'Ride at I-280 and Page Mill Rd. at 8:00 AM. If you missed the September trip or got fogged in, here's a second chance to observe migrating raptors in impressive numbers. Bring lunch, liquids and warm clothing.

Sun., Oct. 11, 8:30 AM. Half day. **Beginners trip to Charleston Slough. Leader: Ed Rooks (408)867-4748. Directions: Take Hwy 101 to Mt. View, exit at San Antonio Rd. north. Meet at its end at Terminal Way parking area. Highlights: Basics of birding, with emphasis on shorebirds and waterfowl.

SCVAS WISH LIST

The SCVAS office is looking for a wall clock and a papercutter. Please give us a call at (408)252-3747 if you would like to make a donation of either of these or other office supplies.

Tuesday, October 13, 9:30 AM. **The Eve Case Bird Discussion Group** will meet at the home of Edward and Janice Rooks, 20537 Verde Vista Lane, Saratoga (408)867-4748. Topic: Horned Lark.

Wednesday, October 14, 8:30 AM Half day. **Stevens Creek Park. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408)996-9863. Directions: Meet at first parking lot (Chestnut Picnic Area). From I-280, go south on Foothill Blvd. (becomes Stevens Canyon Rd.) 2.1 miles to park entrance on left. Parking lot is down hill.



Sat., Oct. 17, 8:00 AM. Full day. **Monterey Peninsula. Leader: Kathy Parker (408)358-2832 (evenings). Come and explore the Peninsula from the sea to the hills. Call leader for more information and directions.

Wednesday, October 21, **October General Meeting**. 7:45 PM refreshments, 8:00 PM program. Topic: Birds of Costa Rica and Venezuela. (See Box, Page 1 for details.)

Sun., Oct. 25., 7:00 AM. Full day. **Monterey Bay Pelagic Boat Trip. Leader: Debi Shearwater. Highlights: Jaegers, Gulls, Alcids, Shearwaters, Storm Petrels. First come, first served. Send self-addressed, stamped envelope to Shearwater Journeys, P.O. Box 1445, Soquel, CA 95073. Trip details will be mailed back to you.

Wednesday, October 28, 8:30 AM. Half day. **Coyote Hills Regional Park. Leader: Phil Hand (415)851-2623. Directions: Take Hwy. 84 (Dumbarton Br.) east towards Newark. Exit right on Thornton, then left over freeway as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre. Turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd. Meet in lot at park entrance. Lunch optional, heavy rain cancels.

Non Audubon Events

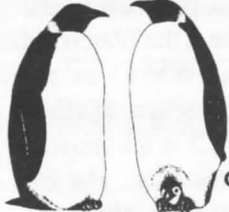
Bird Banding Training Class

Learn the skills you need to become a volunteer bird bander at CCRS. A bird banding class will begin on October 29 at Coyote Creek Riparian Station. In this exciting class you will learn to identify birds in the hand, to age and sex them, and to make various body measurements. The class runs for 3 weeks. Call Kristin Shields at CCRS at (408)262-9204 for more details.

China Birding Tour


This tour offers a unique opportunity to join Chinese experts exploring six South China Protected Winter Bird Migratory Areas where 200 species are found. Hike ancient paths in majestic, sacred mountains of Huangshan and Lushan. Experience the sites of ancient China and develop insights into the culture of today's China. The tour will run Feb. - Mar. 1993, 21 days all-inclusive, \$2749. Limited space available. Call Elaine Senf at (415)332-2781.

Wildlife Gifts...



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Field Notes

By Bill Bousman Pelicans to Ducks

A total of 630 **American White Pelicans** in Charleston Slough and Salt Pond A1 on 3 Aug (AME) is one of the largest concentrations found in recent years. Counts of 75 **Great Egrets** and 390 **Snowy Egrets** the same day were also good numbers for the South Bay (both AME). An adult **Little Blue Heron** on the Alviso Slough Trail 8 Aug (AV) was the only report of this rare heron. A female **Garganey** found 22 Aug and seen at least through 24 Aug (PJM, m.ob.) at the Mountain View Forebay is the first record of this Siberian species in the county and one of the earliest fall records in Northern California.

Raptors through Cuckoos

An **Osprey** along the Santa Clara-Stanislaus County border 1 Aug (CB) was an early migrant. An adult **Merlin** off Sweigert Road 23 Aug (AWr *vide* MMR) is the first arrival of the season. A pair of adult **Peregrine Falcons** near Shoreline Park 5 Aug (JiC) were unexpected so early in the season. The first influx of **Lesser Yellowlegs** was of 11 birds at the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) 31 Jul (JAC). Since then small numbers of birds have been found in their typical haunts (m.ob.), perhaps down from the highs of the past few years. A **Ruddy Turnstone** at the Waterbird Management Area (WMA) at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) 17 Aug (RC) is an unusual find this far down the Bay. For the third fall in a row a **Ruff** has shown up in the South Bay, this one an adult male that has been at the WMA at least 9-23 Aug (MJM, MMR, MiF, PJM). This is the seventh record for the county. A first-summer **Mew**

Gull at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) 28 Jul (PJM) is the only local summer record I am aware of. Nearly as surprising are **Herring Gulls** overwintering at the same location with five birds seen 7-20 Jun and one still remaining 28 Jul (PJM). It is believed that all of the Herring Gulls were sick. A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen on Canada Road east of Gilroy just above the valley floor on 2 Aug (AL, JY). A belated report of a one seen north of Pacheco Res. 29 May (GGH) is also noteworthy.

A female Garganey in Mountain View is the bird of the year.

Flycatchers through Grosbeaks

Willow Flycatchers are found every fall, normally in riparian areas, so the birds seen on Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 23 Aug (PJM) are expected. **Say's Phoebes** are rare breeders in the San Antonio and Isabel Valleys in the eastern portion of the Diablo Range. An adult carrying food near Coyote Res. 16 Jun (GGH), therefore, was most unexpected. Interestingly, there is another record of a breeding bird at Coyote Res. in 1951. A flock of 18 **Horned Larks** at Crittenden Marsh on 25 Jul (MJM) raises the question again whether they still breed along the edge of the Bay. The **Worm-eating Warbler** captured at CCRS in June and again in July was seen along the creek 16 Aug (PJM) and was recaptured 17 Aug (*vide* SBT). It has put on some weight since first capture and presumably will soon head south. An imm. **Blue Grosbeak** in a yard in Los Gatos 15 Aug (SBT) is only the fourth county record. Amazingly, three of those records have been this summer.

Observers: Clark Blake (CB), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RC), Jim Corliss (JiC), Al Eisner (AME), Gloria Heller (GGH), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Mike Feighner (MiF), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropoulos (PJM), Mike Rogers (MMR), Scott Terrill (SBT), Ann Verdi (AV), Alan Wray (AWr), and James Yurchenco (JY).

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS: It's not too late. If you found a nest in your yard this summer or during your travels locally and you can locate the nest on a map and provide a date for the evidence you saw, we need that record. This is especially true if you live in the south county or outside of our major urban enclaves. Please send your record to Bill Bousman at the address below or call Roy Cameron (408)867-6632.

RARITIES: Please drop me a note: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025 (415)322-5282. Please also call RARE BIRD ALERT (510) 542-5592.



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SCVAS FALL BIRDSEED AND BIRD FEEDER SALE

All orders must be placed by Tuesday, October 13.

(Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope to receive directions and confirmation)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Pickup sites: Please choose one. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Humane Society of S.C. Valley | Tuesday, October 20, 4:00-6:00 PM |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | YSI, Los Gatos | Tuesday, October 20, 4:00-6:00 PM |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | PCC, Palo Alto | Saturday, October 24, 10:00AM-12:00 PM |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pets Friend, Sunnyvale | Tuesday, October 27, 4:00-6:00 PM |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | REI, Cupertino | Tuesday, October 27, 4:00-6:00 PM |

BIRDSEED

Quantity Amount

5 lbs Audubon Special Mix	\$2.75	_____	_____
20 lbs Audubon Special Mix	10.00	_____	_____
50 lbs Audubon Special Mix	19.00	_____	_____
20 lbs Western Wild Mix	9.00	_____	_____
50 lbs Western Wild Mix	18.00	_____	_____
25 lbs Black Oil Sunflower Seed	15.00	_____	_____
50 lbs Black Oil Sunflower Seed	26.00	_____	_____
5 lbs Thistle	11.50	_____	_____
25 lbs Sunflower Chips	22.50	_____	_____

Bird Feeders (All Duncraft products are endorsed by the National Audubon Society)

Cling-A-Wing Feeder	\$11.95	_____	_____
4-Fountains Hummingbird Feeder	11.95	_____	_____
Audubon Sunflower Tube Feeder	22.95	_____	_____
Thistle Stocking	2.95	_____	_____
Tilt-top Hanging Feeder	34.95	_____	_____
Window Shelf Feeder	10.95	_____	_____

SUBTOTAL _____
 ADD 8.25% TAX _____
 TOTAL _____
 Donation to SCVAS _____
 TOTAL _____

Please send checks to SCVAS, 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino CA 95014

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ ZIP _____
 TELEPHONE () _____

Environmental Action News

Midstate Toll Road Environmental Impact Report to be Certified

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a highway that will become the southern section of the Midstate Toll Road will be released at the end of September. The 35-mile, eight-lane "East County Corridor" will link Antioch, Livermore and Tracy.

Three individuals representing jurisdictions in Eastern Contra Costa will decide whether to certify the EIR and accept the impact of the project—an impact that will reverberate throughout the region.

Environmental groups, citizens, farmers, and organizations representing business have banded together to comment on the document and to request expansion of the scope of the study.

The road and associated urban development that will take place in areas served by the 85-mile road will:

- Impact Delta water quality from urban run-off and waste water drainage from construction of 76,000 new houses, a regional airport, and a deep water port—all within the statutory Delta.

- Displace wetlands along the Delta.
- Impact nesting areas of raptors in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.
- Increase automobile trips on I-680 at the Alameda-Santa Clara County line by 56,000 trips a day.
- Displace communities of rare and endangered plants.
- Compete with other public transit projects for federal funds.

The agency certifying the EIR for the "East County Corridor" is the State Route 4 Bypass Authority, a joint powers agreement between Antioch, Contra Costa County, and the city of Brentwood. The comment period on the EIR is expected to be between September 25 and November 9.

What You Can Do:

- Submit written comments on the EIR.

- Attend the hearing on the EIR.
- Encourage your city to comment on the EIR.

Write to:

Mr. Lowell Tunison,
Senior Civil Engineer
Major Projects Division
Contra Costa County Public Works
255 Glacier Drive
Martinez, CA 94553-4897

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Report: East County Corridor/Delta Expressway.

Ask that the EIR evaluate the East County Corridor as a component of the much larger 85-mile Midstate Toll Road.

Attend the public hearing on the Environmental Impact Report: The tentative date for the hearing is October 8 in Eastern Contra Costa.

Call the Greenbelt Alliance (415)543-4291 or SCVAS (408)252-3747 for more information.

AVOCET FESTIVAL '92

Twelfth Annual Wildlife and Nature Arts and Crafts Sale

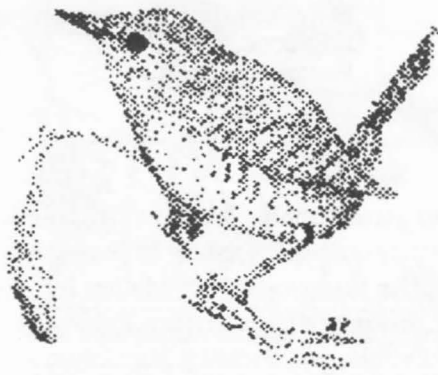
November 7 & 8, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

*Pottery • Paintings • Wood Sculpture • T-shirts • Jewelry • Raffle • Food • Wildlife Programs
Free Admission • Free Parking*

San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge's Annual Arts and Crafts Sale returns to the Refuge. Help finance 1993's nature programs by doing your Christmas shopping early! To get to San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge from either Hwy 101 or Interstate 880, follow Highway 84 toward the Dumbarton Bridge and exit at Thornton Avenue, just east of the Toll Plaza. Follow Thornton one mile south to the Refuge entrance.

For information call (510)792-4275.

Co-sponsors: SCVAS, Ohlone Audubon Society, Tri-City Ecology Center, Citizens to Complete the Refuge.



Bird Feeding: Boon or Bane?

Does the extra food we provide help some species to increase in numbers — at the expense of others?

Are people who feed birds unwittingly causing the decline of migratory bird populations? According to Project FeederWatch, a winter bird feeding survey sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the answer seems to be no.

Concern for migratory birds has been mounting in recent years. Surveys suggest that many populations have declined seriously over the past decade. In his recent book, *Where Have All the Birds Gone?*, ornithologist John Terbough discusses the possible causes.

He mentions deforestation on the neotropical wintering grounds and fragmentation of breeding habitat in North America, which most biologists agree are the main problems. But he suggests that bird feeding may be a worry as well. He wonders whether feeders may be causing increases in birds such as Brown-headed Cowbirds, which are nest parasites, or Blue Jays, which are notable nest robbers. If so, he reasons, then bird feeding may be inadvertently contributing to the declines of many forest-dwelling species, such as warblers and vireos, that never even visit feeders.

To examine this possibility, Cornell ornithologist Erica H. Dunn turned to information from Project FeederWatch as well as data from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), a continentwide survey of bird numbers in spring. She used the FeederWatch data to determine which feeder species are most widespread in North America, and the BBS data to learn which of them had been increasing and which had been decreasing during the past 25 years.

Surprisingly, she discovered that 70% of the most widespread feeder birds showed significantly declining populations. These included not only the nest-robbing Blue Jay, but also nest-site competitors such as the European Starling and House Sparrow,

(Continued on Page 8)

Passport to Adventure

Sunday, October 1, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Park at West Valley at the corner of Fruitvale and Allendale in Saratoga, claim your passport and board the bus to Villa Montalvo for a family nature safari. Chart your route through Adventure Destinations and experience the wonders of nature..

Sponsored by the Environmental Volunteers, a nonprofit organization for promoting understanding of, and responsibility for, the environment through hands-on science education.

For more information call (415)424-8035.

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HOURS: Monday - Friday, 9AM - 5PM

Nature Shop News

Fall for the Birds at the SCVAS Nature Shop! We have gifts for everyone on your fall and holiday gift list. We have Christmas ornaments, bird books, stationery, jewelry, T-shirts, sweatshirts and more. We also have birdfeeders and bird seed for all your favorite birds. Come do your holiday shopping at the SCVAS Nature Shop. Each and every purchase you make supports the activities of your Audubon Society.

Starting this October, the Nature Shop will offer \$25.00 and \$50.00 gift certificates which will be redeemable any time during the year. Certificates may be ordered by mail or purchased at the shop and monthly general meetings.

October Nature ShopSpecial!

Buy any bird feeder and get 2 lbs of Audubon Special Birdseed free! Call (408)252-3747 for details.

We are looking for Nature Shop volunteers so that we can be open on Saturdays in November and December, beginning November 14. Give us a call at (408)252-3747 if you have a few free hours to help.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society 22221 McClellan Road Cupertino, CA 95014		Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage Paid San Jose, CA Permit No. 5869
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Boon (Continued from Page 7)

as well as other species often considered "pests." The Brown-headed Cowbird also declined, although not as much as many others. These findings don't mean these species are not hurting migratory birds through their predatory or parasitizing actions, but it does suggest that feeding them is not increasing their populations.

These observations raise another question: Is bird feeding bad for bird populations? Are species such as the Blue Jay being hurt by the practice?

Probably not. Most of the declining feeder species belong to groups that are declining as a whole—even though some species in those groups don't visit feeders. These include mimids (thrashers and mockingbirds), towhees, certain blackbirds, and sparrows—birds that nest primarily in grassland or shrub habitats, which are also declining.

Bird feeding may harm some species, however. One study in England showed that regular feeding induced some Blue Tits and Great Tits to nest in suburban areas rather than their natural habitat, deciduous woodland. The suburban nesters showed very poor reproductive success because natural foods, especially the insects needed to

feed nestlings, were in short supply. We don't know whether Blue Jays were responding to feeding by nesting in suburbia, only to suffer insupportable predation by cats and raccoons. We do know that American Robins, which often nest in suburbia, are showing population *increases* nationwide.

Conclusive evidence for the effects of bird feeding on bird populations awaits more detailed studies of each species. Meanwhile, bird feeding does not seem to cause increases in most of the species that frequent feeders, including "pest" species.

If you feed birds in your backyard and you'd like to contribute to an international effort to monitor bird populations, now is the time to sign up for the 1992-1993 FeederWatch season. Participants receive a complete instruction packet, data forms, and a subscription to *FeederWatch News*, a biannual newsletter that covers not only FeederWatch results but bird feeding tips, notes on feeder bird behavior, and more. For more information on how to join, write to: Project FeederWatch, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850, or call (607)254-2414.

—from *FeederWatch News*, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Autumn 1992.

Membership: We invite your membership in the National Audubon Society/SCVAS. To join, please complete and mail this form with payment to SCVAS, 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, CA 95014. C14

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.

Or
Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Membership: Check One
 Subscriber \$10 Supporter \$20 Donor \$35 Patron \$50 and more
 Members receive *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to SCVAS.

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

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7XCH