

The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

January 1993

SCVAS Schedules Two General Meetings for January

Members will have two exciting general meetings to look forward to this month. The first, featuring photos of thousands of birds in spectacular winter settings, will be held in Palo Alto on the third Wednesday of the month, January 20. The second, a special Friday evening program presenting "Partners in Flight," will be held in Cupertino the following week on January 29. Plan to attend both and start the new year with a double treat.

Winter Wildlife Spectacle

Wednesday, January 20, 7:30 PM
Palo Alto Cultural Center
Newell and Embarcadero Rds.

Professional wildlife photographers Renee Lynn and Tim Davis will present "Winter Wildlife Spectacle". It is estimated 80% (one million birds) of the Pacific Flyway's waterfowl migrate through Klamath Basin, a vast expanse of lake, marsh, and planted fields. Mt. Shasta's 14,000 foot peak provides a dramatic backdrop to view astonishing numbers of wildlife. One of the highlights at Tule Lake in Klamath Basin is the flight of as many as 40,000 geese circling through the sky before forming V shapes miles long. The noise of their wingbeats sounds like a jet lifting off and their collective honking rings through the air like the crowd at a Saturday afternoon football game. On a single day 130,000 Snow and Ross' Geese, 100,000 White-fronted Geese and 50,000 Cackling Geese have been counted. The largest wintering concentration of Bald Eagles (500) in the lower 48 States uses the combined areas of Tule Lake and Lower Klamath as daily feeding grounds.

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge is a rich oasis in a desert

setting. Located 95 miles south of Albuquerque, it is a seasonal haven for 300 species of birds including 20,000 Sandhill Cranes, 40,000 Snow Geese and a few Whooping Cranes. They travel from as far away as Siberia, with populations peaking in mid-winter. Sunrise rousts the birds from their night roosts and they fill the morning sky as they pour into the planted fields to feed. Four hundred species of mammals, reptiles and amphibians also flourish here.

Presenters Tim Davis and Renee Lynn are regular contributors to National and International Wildlife magazines, BBC *Wildlife* Magazine, Audubon and World Wildlife Fund calendars and National Geographic Society publications.

The meeting is co-sponsored by the Palo Alto Open Space and Sciences Division.



Partners in Flight

Friday, January 29, 7:30 PM
Cupertino Public Library
104 Torre Avenue

Is there anything we can do about the declining populations of neotropical migrants? U.S. Forest Service biologist Joelle Buffa and SCVAS members Mike Danzenbaker and Lee Hung will present "Partners in Flight", a two part program about our long distance migratory landbirds. Joelle Buffa is Wildlife Program Manager for the Forest Service lands in California. She heads the Forest Service's role in "Partners in Flight," and will describe how it fits into the bigger picture with other groups, including National Audubon, working on neotropical migrants. Joelle is also a member of Golden Gate Audubon. Those who attended SCVAS programs will connect Mike Danzenbaker with the very best of bird photography. Mike will show beautiful bird slides and Lee will talk about the nesting and migration of some of our best loved long distance migratory landbirds.

Chapter News

Nature Shop Offers Discount

Happy New Year!! Thanks to you, the members of Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, the Nature Shop has had a very successful holiday season. We were open on Saturdays between November 14 and December 19 because you asked us to be. We increased our inventory to offer more gift items due to wise suggestions from members. This is your Nature Shop. The money raised goes to

environmental action, education and research programs in your community. So please continue to share your ideas with us and, of course, do your shopping here!

To show our appreciation, we are offering you 10% off everything in the Nature Shop during the month of January.

- The Nature Shop Committee

Second Annual Audubon Education Day

The SCVAS Education Committee has begun planning for the Second Annual Audubon Education Day which will be held at McClellan Ranch Park on Saturday, February 27 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. This year's theme will be California Wildlife. Santa Clara County students, parents and teachers are invited to attend.

A poster contest will be held for all kindergarten through sixth grade students. Posters should illustrate the theme "California Native Wildlife". First, second and third place prizes will be awarded at every grade level and all participants will receive a certificate of participation.

During the day there will be ongoing activities conducted by SCVAS and many local environmental organiza-

tions. Some of these activities include birding walks, bird banding, brine shrimp lab, Project Wild games, and live animals.

Last year's Education Day was a huge success. We plan to expand on what was done and make it even better. To do this we need the help of volunteers from the chapter. Please mark your calendars and plan to volunteer for a three hour stint in the morning or afternoon. A great deal of help is needed in setting up and taking down as well as with the ongoing activities. Please call Cecily Harris at the SCVAS office at 408/252-3747 if you are able to help. There will be further information in the February *Avocet*.

SCVAS OFFICERS

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North County Field Trips		
	Alberta Jasberg	415/493-9546
South County 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.

January 1993, Volume 40, Number 1

Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592

Thanks to the SCVAS members who are helping us complete our SCVAS Library magazine collection:

Ann Bender, Ted & Zoe Chandik, Pat & Jean Dúbois and Ed Gustafson

January 1993 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 January: Edward Rooks 408/867-4748.

**Denotes Field Trip

****Sunday, January 3, 8.30 AM. Full day. Post CBC rarities chase.** Leader : Mark Miller 415/ 967-3429. Directions: meeting place and itinerary to be determined after Christmas Bird Counts. Bring lunch, water and a full tank of gas. Heavy rain cancels. Call leader for information after Jan 1st.

Wednesday, January 6. Bay Area Bird Photographers. Speaker Jessie Jackson will show slides from a trip she took with John Shaw to the Chilkat River Bald Eagle Preserve. Meeting will be held 7:30 - 9:30 PM at Palo Alto's Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center.

****Sunday, January 10, 8.30 AM. Half day. Beginners trip to Charleston Slough.** Leader : Judy Wagner 415/941-7586. Directions: Take Hwy. 101 to Mountain View, exit at San Antonio Rd. Drive east to its end at Terminal Blvd. parking area. Highlights: Basics of birding, with emphasis on shorebirds and waterfowl.

Monday, January 11, 7:30 -9:00 PM. Environmental Action Committee at Cupertino Environmental Center, 22221 McClellan Rd. Open to everyone who wants to work on preserving habitat for future birding. For more information, call Tony Eppstein 415/326-1376.

Tuesday, January 12, 9:30 AM. Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Dr., Los Gatos. 408/395-4264. Topic: Pacific Flyway.

****Wednesday, January 13, 9:30 AM. Alviso Environmental Education Center.** Leader: Lee Lovelady 408/723-4864. Walk with this San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge volunteer naturalist on the trails along the Slough. Directions: From Hwy 237 in Mtn. View, turn left on Taylor St, turn right on Grand Blvd. Head straight towards Ed. Ctr.

****Saturday, January 16, 8.30 AM. Full day. Panoche Valley.** Leader : Clay Kempf 408/ 761-2875. Directions : Meet at grocery store at Paicines, 12 miles south of Hollister on Hwy 25. Bring lunch, water, full tank of gas. Please carpool. Highlights: Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Mountain Plover, Mountain Bluebirds, possible Roadrunner.

****Sunday, January 17, 9.00 AM. Half day. Princeton Harbor.** Leader : Dan Keller 415/ 365- 2032. Directions : Meet at West Point Ave and Stanford Ave. in Princeton. Highlights: Rock Sandpiper, wintering Sparrows, Oldsquaw, Harlequin Duck.

Wednesday, January 20, General Meeting. 7:30 PM refreshments, 7:45 PM lecture. Renee Lynn and Tim Davis will present a program called "Winter Wildlife Spectacle". See Page 1 for description. Meeting is co-sponsored by the Palo Alto Open Space and Sciences Division.

****Saturday, January 23, 8.30 AM. Half day. Foster City.** Leader : Nick Coiro 415/349-1834. Directions : Take Hwy.101 north to Foster City. Take Hillsdale Blvd exit east. Follow Hillsdale for 1 mile to Shell Blvd. Right on Shell to meet at parking lot between tennis courts and recreation building. Highlights: Hooded Merganser, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red Knot, possible Peregrine Falcon.

****Sunday, January 24, 9.00AM. Full day. Merced Refuge / Santa Fe grade.** Leader : Don Schmoltdt 415/215-1910. Directions : Meet at northwest corner of junction of Rte. 59 and Sandy Mush Rd. Take Hwy 152 east past Los Banos for 20 miles to Rte.59 north. Drive about 7 miles to meeting place. Drive should take about 2.5 Hours, or more if there is tule fog.

Carpool : informal, from park "n" ride lots in Palo Alto at Hwy. 280 and Page Mill Rd. (leave by 6:30 AM.), or in Gilroy on Monterey Rd. 1/2 block south of Leavesly Rd. (Leave by 7.00 AM.)

****Wednesday, January 27, 9:00 AM. . Half day. North County Field Trip to Foster City .** Leader: Rose Green 415/493-8378. Directions: Take Hwy. 101 north to Hillsdale Blvd east. Follow Hillsdale about 1 mile to Shell Blvd. and turn right and park at Community Center. Lunch optional. Rain cancels.

Friday, January 29, 7:30 PM. Special Friday Evening General Meeting at the Cupertino Library. U.S. Forest Service biologist Joelle Buffa and SCVAS members Mike Danzenbaker and Lee Hung will present "Partners in Flight", a two-part program. See Page 1 for description. Directions: From I-280, take De Anza Blvd exit towards Saratoga (south). Turn left on Stevens Creek Blvd. Right on Torre Ave. Library is second block on left. Community Room is downstairs.

****Sunday, January 30, 8.00AM. Woodbridge Rd / Delta.** Leader : Waldo Holt . Local contact: Edward Rooks 408/867-4748. Limited to 20 participants. Call local contact for reservation. Directions : Meet at the McDonalds parking lot next to the Shell station on Mission Blvd. in Fremont. Take Hwy. 680 to second Mission Blvd. exit. Carpool from here. Bring lunch, full tank of gas. Highlights: wintering Swainson's Hawks, Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, etc.

Plan Ahead:

****Saturday, February 6, 9.00 AM. Half day. Beginners trip to Stanford Campus.** Leader : Judy Wagner 415/ 941-7586 .Directions : Hwy 101 to University Ave. in Palo Alto. Exit West. University Ave. becomes Palm Dr. Meet at the end of Palm Dr. Highlights: Acorn Woodpecker, Plain Titmouse, possible California Thrasher. Rain cancels.

Field Notes

By Bill Bousman

Grebes through Ducks

A **Red-necked Grebe** was found at Shoreline Lake 30 Oct (AME) and remained at least through 16 Nov (m.ob.), pleasing many local birders. We are lucky to have this rare grebe visit us once every three years. **Brown Pelicans** are seldom found in large numbers after September but this year is different. Is this an El Nino effect or just that there was abundant food available in the local salt ponds? A peak of 12 were counted on Mountain View's Salt Pond A2W on 30 Oct (MMR). By 5 Nov numbers had increased to at least 38 at Shoreline Lake (MMR). On 8 Nov 21 were counted between Alviso Slough and Coyote Creek (PJM, ES), suggesting that nearly 60 birds were present in the south bay during the first week of November. Numbers declined after that with 17 counted in Salt Pond A1 on 10 Nov (MJM) and nine there on 19 Nov (MMR). A **Cattle Egret** was seen at the Arzino Ranch in Alviso 31 Oct (WGB) and another bird was at the Palo Alto Baylands 11 Nov (MiF *et al.*). An adult **Ross' Goose** was over Alviso Slough 8 Nov (PJM, ES) for an early record for the county. Between one and three **Blue-winged Teal** have been reported from the Mountain View Forebay and adjacent areas 30 Oct-26 Nov (m.ob.). The same number of **Eurasian Wigeon** have also been moving between Charleston Slough, the forebay, and the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) over the same period (m.ob.). A male at the Los Alamitos perc. ponds off Coleman 7-22 Nov (AV) is the only record away from the bay. **Red-head** have returned to the North Pond in the Palo Alto FCB with 15 there 5 Nov (WGB), building to 45 by 21 Nov (MJM). Two at Felt Lake 31 Oct (KHt) and a male at the Los Alamitos perc. ponds 15-22 Nov (AV) are in less expected locations. A female **White-winged Scoter** at Shoreline Lake 8 Nov (PJM) is unusual, we typically find only one or two a winter. **Barrow's Goldeneye** is now a regular at Shoreline Lake with the first (and earliest)

return on 6 Nov when a pair was found (WGB). By 22 Nov a second male was observed on the lake (MiF) and birds continued to be seen through 25 Nov (m.ob.). **Hooded Merganser** is another duck that has become more regular in recent years. A female on the Skylonda Pond 7 Nov (CB) and a male on Lake Ranch Res. 11 Nov (WGB) were early returns. Eleven on the Oka perc. ponds 22 Nov (AV) were the first sizeable concentration of the season and a few birds have remained through 25 Nov (MiF, MMR). **Red-breasted Mergansers** can be abundant on the salt ponds in winter as evidenced by 40-50 seen north of Alviso 4 Nov (MMR). However, they are scarce to the west so two over Salt Pond A1 on 21 Nov (WGB) and another over the Palo Alto Baylands 22 Nov (TAC) are unexpected.

First County records include the head of an Ancient Murrelet and a very late Chestnut-sided Warbler.

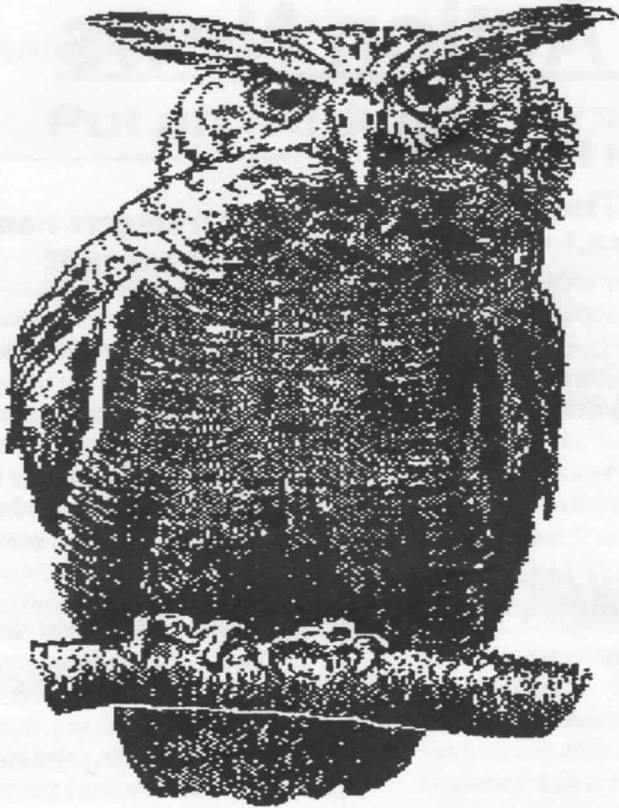
Raptors

Wintering **Osprey** are unusual in the local area so a bird foraging at Searsville Lake is unexpected. First seen 15 Sep (WW and WL *vide* JB-H), it has been reported subsequently on 12 Nov (JB-H) and 17 Nov (BBu and BK *vide* JB-H). Another(?) bird along Guadalupe River near the San Jose Airport 14 Nov (GHt, DS, WGB) is also unexpected. The first **Ferruginous Hawk** of the year was an adult at the San Jose Airport 6 Nov (MMR, MJM) and seen through 14 Nov (WGB). Birds seen in the south county along Cochrane 18 Nov (MiF) and Scheller on 20 Nov (CB) provide a good November showing. It has been a good month for **Merlins** with bayside birds at the Duck Pond 26 Oct (MMR), Charleston Slough 5

Nov (MiF), Moffett Field 6 Nov (MMR), Matadero riparian 6 Nov (MJM), and the Palo Alto Baylands again on 21 Nov (MMR). Inland, birds were found at the Arastradero Preserve 7 Nov (JLi *et al.*), Los Gatos 25 Nov (MiF), and Searsville lake 27 Nov (JB-H, CH). **Peregrine Falcons** have been well reported also with two birds north of Alviso 8 Nov (PJM, ES), at least two adult birds in the vicinity of the Palo Alto Baylands 13-21 Nov (WGB, MMR, MJM), one at Moffett Field 16 Nov (MMR), a single bird inland at Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve 17 Nov (BC and HC *vide* JB-H), and an imm. in the Palo Alto Baylands vicinity 23-25 Nov (MJM, MMR).

Rails to Alcids

The first **Black Rail** of the season was a single bird at the Palo Alto Baylands on 22 Nov (MiF). Two were seen there on 24 Nov (AW). Five **Snowy Plovers** on the Knapp Tract north of Alviso 8 Nov (PJM, ES) are rare in the county. Six **Lesser Yellowlegs** near the Alviso EEC 31 Oct (WGB) were the tail of the migration. Four **Ruddy Turnstones** were out on the Knapp Tract 8 Nov (PJM, ES) and are unusual this far down the bay. **Red Knots** appear to share some of the winter habitat preferences of the turnstones and are also rare this far down the bay so one in the Palo Alto estuary 8 Nov (MJM) is most unusual. **Sanderling** are scarce winter visitors so three flying off Palo Alto 6 Nov (MMR, MJM) and seven on the Knapp Tract 8 Nov (PJM, ES) are of interest. An imm. **Heermann's Gull** at the Palo Alto Baylands 23 Nov (EA) is only the seventh county record. Interestingly the sixth county record occurred here almost exactly a year ago. Perhaps what made this an unusual **Brown Pelican** fall also made it an exceptional **Elegant Tern** fall as well. Two to three birds were found in the vicinity of Charleston Slough and the Mountain View Salt Ponds on 2 Nov (DS). By 6 Nov 52 were counted on the two salt ponds there (MMR) and at least



14 were still there 8 Nov (WGB). Numbers declined after that with seven counted there 19 Nov (MMR) to extend the late date for this species by a month. The head of an **Ancient Murrelet** was found along Alviso Slough 8 Nov (PJM, ES), probably the result of a raptor kill. This is the first record for the county and parallels the sighting of another Ancient Murrelet at Hayward Regional Shoreline in the same week. Were these birds part of a minor incursion related to El Nino? Or did something very different happen with a continental movement of this alcid that includes a bird present this month in Massachusetts!

Owls to Icterids

A **Long-eared Owl** on Mustang Peak on the Santa Clara-Stanislaus County line 20 Nov (CB) was a good find. Six **Lewis' Woodpeckers** in San Antonio Valley 24 Oct (MJM) are resident species and expected, but a bird found at the Arastradero Preserve 7 Nov (JLi *et al.*) is a rare winterer for the peninsula and was found again on 26 Nov (AWi). A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in Los Altos 25 Oct (GHt) was the only

report away from the Santa Cruz Mountain breeding populations. **Rock Wrens** are often difficult to find in areas accessible to the public so a bird along Calaveras Road below Ed Levin CP 17 Nov (MMR, WGB) and two at Anderson Dam 18 Nov (MiF) are of interest. **Canyon Wren** fall into a similar category so one responding to a tape in Alum Rock Park 8 Nov (MJM) is of interest as well. A **House Wren** at Pacheco Camp in Henry Coe SP 19 Nov (CB) is completely unexpected. Although we encounter a few birds along the valley floor in the winter it is difficult to see how this species could expect to survive in the center of the Diablo range. An **American Dipper** was seen at Alum Rock Park on 1 Nov (MJM) and was re-found on 11 Nov (WGB). A male **Phainopepla** was at the Smith Creek Ranger Station 4 Nov (MiF) and a pair of birds was seen there 11 Nov (MMR). A **Nashville Warbler** banded at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) 13 Nov (*fide* WGB) is late for a migrant. Almost as unusual is a **Yellow warbler** banded there 1 Nov and recaptured 29 Nov. Apparently,

the same bird was seen along the creek the same day (MJM). The real surprise at CCRS, however, was a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** banded 28 Nov for a first county record. The bird was re-found the next day (MJM), but not subsequently. The date is quite late for a fall vagrant. Another vagrant report was of a **Palm Warbler** at the Campbell perc. ponds 20 Oct (CW, BBe). A **Sharp-tailed Sparrow** glimpsed at the Palo Alto Baylands 24 Nov (AME) is the first report of the season. A **Swamp Sparrow** was found there as well 6 Nov (MJM) and seen on 9 Nov (MMR) and 21 Nov (MJM). A **White-throated Sparrow** was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 31 Oct (MJM) and re-found 3 Nov (MMR, WGB). A **Bobolink** found on Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Avenue (DLS) 23 Oct is approximately the fifth county record.

Observers: *Ernie Abeles (EA), Bonnie Bedzin (BBe), Jane Becker-Haven (JB-H), Clark Blake (CB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Bob Buell (BBu), Ted Chandik (TAC), Bill Clark (BC), H. Clark (HC), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Chip Haven (CH), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Karen Hoyt (KHt), Bill Kirsher (BK), Winkie Lennihan (WL), Jim Liskovec (JLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Mike Rogers (MMR), Dick Stovel (DS), Emilie Strauss (ES), David Suddjian (DLS), Ann Verdi (AV), Alan Walther (AW), Anne Wilson (AWi), and Claire Wilson (CW).*

Have you ever wondered how many species an active birder could find in the county in one year? Well, the atlasers wondered too and decided to find out. This is not real, serious stuff, mind you. The leaders (no, not me) are at 225 at the end of November. Send me your county list for 1992 and see how you rank. I will summarize the yearlist results in a future *Avocet*.

**Rarities: Please drop me a note:
Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington
Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025.**

Environmental Action News

In Mountain View: Polluters Point Fingers As Contaminants Ooze Toward The Bay

In September, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rejected the Navy's remedial investigation reports for Moffett Naval Air Station in Mountain View, and asked the Navy "to engage in informal dispute resolution for an extended period of time" before raising the dispute to higher levels. The EPA apparently had good cause to question the Navy studies. But resolving the differences could further delay the cleanup at Moffett and other Superfund sites which share a massive plume of trichlorethylene (TCE). Meanwhile, the Navy's own studies show contamination and the leading edge of the TCE plume encroaching on San Francisco Bay and its wetlands.

In its rejection letter, the EPA listed several points:

1. The EPA believes that the Navy has not fully investigated all possible sources of TCE in the area of the plume.
2. Since shallow aquifers at Moffett are not currently used for drinking water, the Navy does not treat them as a potential drinking water source. However, the EPA believes these aquifers "must be protected and restored."
3. The Navy argues, without sufficient proof, that the electronics companies across Bayshore Freeway are responsible for the majority of the groundwater plume.

In fact, these electronic companies, led by Schlumberger - the former parent of now defunct Fairchild Semiconductor - led the challenge to the Navy studies. On some issues, their concerns appear valid. But they also appear motivated by a desire to shift the blame and

expense of cleanup to the Navy, even if it means delays that allow the further spread of TCE and other groundwater poisons.

On the heels of SVTC's victory last year in winning an accelerated cleanup plan for Moffett, we now need to monitor activities closely to ensure that prompt action is taken to remove TCE and other contaminants, even if further studies are required to identify additional sources and properly assign responsibility.

We Call For...

- Prompt resolution of the issues raised by the EPA in its rejection of the remedial investigation reports.
- Technical assistance funding so local communities can carefully analyze the charges and countercharges made by the electronics firms and Navy.
- Opening the oversight process for civilian Superfund sites adjacent to Moffett. Despite its delays and other shortcomings, the Navy at Moffett had an exemplary community relations program, and sought public advice through its Technical Review Committee. The owners of the privately owned sites should do the same.

What You Can Do...

Write a letter expressing your concerns and supporting our position to:

Dan McGovern
EPA Regional Administrator
215 Fremont St.
San Francisco, CA 94105

By Lenny Siegel, *Silicon Valley Toxics News*, Fall 1992, Vol 10, No.3.

RAN Targets Home Improvement Stores

The Rainforest Action Network and other organizations are initiating a campaign to encourage home improvement stores, commonly known as Do-It-Yourself or DIY stores, not to carry tropical timber unless it comes from an ecologically sustainable source.

DIY chains sell tropical timber products including lauan/meranti plywood, molding and doors, teak and mahogany picture frames, some pencil brands, salad bowls, outside furniture, and pre-made cabinets. They also sell domestic wood products in these categories.

What You Can Do:

Write the manager or owner of a local Builder's Emporium, Home Depot or Home Club (check the white or yellow pages for contact information). Send a copy to the respective CEO of the chain.

cc: the appropriate CEO listed below:

James McKittrick
Builder's Emporium
40 Parker Street
Irvine, CA 92718

Jim Halpin
Home Club
140 Orangfair Mall
Suite 100
Fullerton, CA 92632

Bernard Marcus
Home Depot
2727 Paces Ferry Road
Atlanta, GA 20229

Resolved for 1993:

Put an Audubon Moment into Your Day

As my holiday gift to you, I offer a new notion of New Year's Resolution. One that provides gratification not guilt, fun not frustration, pleasure not pain, energy gain not energy drain.

This is an invitation to reconnect with the natural world on an everyday basis. So often we think that nature is out there somewhere. We reserve it for week-ends or vacations or somedays because it takes too much time and effort and we're just too busy right now. Nature isn't something far removed from daily life: it's here to be cherished and enjoyed.

In simple ways, nature can be incorporated into your daily routine. While at your workstation or doing a household chore, you can be sampling simultaneously your natural surroundings. By pausing to appreciate nature, you've put an "Audubon Moment" in your day. All it takes to make that connection is a mindset open to the natural aspects of your everyday life.

By tuning into nature, you tone down stress. When I'm stuck in traffic going across the Dumbarton Bridge, if I can spot stilts and avocets feeding along the causeway, then I can decompress a bit. When rushing off to a meeting, if I stop a minute to watch an Anna's hummingbird zipping down in the J-curve of his courtship display, then I am momentarily above it all.

While you're going about your business, birds are going about their business. My husband Chip Haven works on the San Francisquito Creek side on the Stanford campus. He can often hear the "kee-yer, kee-yer" of a red-shouldered hawk calling from a nearby eucalyptus. By allowing his peripheral hearing to pick up on that natural audio track, Chip puts an "Audubon Moment" into his day. He is in touch with the timeless. And his fingers never leave the computer keyboard.

Outside my local supermarket, a group of acorn woodpeckers uses a telephone pole as a "granary tree" to store food. As I wheel my shopping cart full of groceries into the parking lot, I can watch a woodpecker tapping an acorn into one of the holes that pockmark the pole. In parallel, we are two species performing the same never-ending task. Drudgery is elevated to a higher level. Besides, by virtue of its clown-face, the acorn woodpecker offers comic relief. I can't help but smile.

As we go through the year, I'll keep making suggestions of ways to put an "Audubon Moment" into your day. But, I would guess that you'll come up with even better ones. Tell me about your "Audubon Moments." Drop me a note at 905 Cowper St., Palo Alto 94301. Give me a call at (415) 321-0776. Stop me at a program meeting or on a field trip. Together, we'll share the best of them in future issues of the *Avocet*.

- Jane F. Becker-Haven



Winter Classes for Birders

Two classes for people interested in learning more about birds and sharpening their identification skills, will be offered by Sequoia Adult School. The classes are taught by Maryann Danielson, biologist, trip leader, and photographer. For more information, call 415/369-6809.

Birding Basics - For beginning and intermediate birders. The winter quarter of this lecture/field trip series will emphasize the identification and lifestyles of our wintering bird populations. Eight slide lectures starting Weds., January 13 at 7:30 PM at the Little House, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park. Register at the first class.

Fee: \$25 (lectures only). Field trips will be arranged with an additional fee.

Following Birds through the Winter Season - for intermediate and more advanced birders. Flocking, foraging strategies and a host of other adaptations utilized by our wintering birds will highlight this winter lecture/field trip series. The identification of birds in their basic plumage will be a major objective. Eight slide lectures, starting Mon., January 11, at 7:30 PM, will be held at the Little House, 800 Middle ave., Menlo Park. Register at the first class. Fee: \$25 (lectures only). Field trips will be arranged with an additional fee.

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

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Is There a Killer in Your House?

Yet another study conducted by professors of Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin has confirmed that house cats, including those well fed at home, kill millions of small birds and mammals every year. The Wisconsin study confirmed the results of the 1987 British study that found Britain's five million house cats were responsible for an annual toll of 70 million animals per year, 20 million of which are birds.

Reported in the November issue of *National Wildlife* magazine, the recently completed Wisconsin study using radio collars on 30 free-roaming cats determined that, in that state alone, cats kill as many as 19 million songbirds and 140,000 game birds in a single year. One reason cats do so much damage is that there are so many of them. Residents of rural Wisconsin had more than four free-roaming cats each, giving some counties a density of 57 cats per square mile. Cat populations density in Madison is estimated at 1,295 per square mile.

Keeping cats well fed makes no particular difference in the number of prey they kill each day "because the urge to hunt is independent of the urge to eat," according to Desmond Morris, former curator of mammals at the London Zoo and author of "Catwatching." Putting a bell on your cat or declawing makes no particular difference either. Wildlife does not associ-

ate a ringing bell with a predator, and when cats stalk prey the bell doesn't ring. Their stealth makes them nearly motionless. Cats without claws simply bat down their prey.

Findings of a study disturb most cat owners who do not want to feel responsible for the demise of wildlife. "Cat owners exhibit a lot of denial about the hunting achievements of their pets," Stan Temple, one of the study authors, admits. He suspects that cats have contributed to significant declines of Grasshopper Sparrows, LeConte's Sparrows and Western Meadowlarks (which are declining at a rate of 8% per year) in Wisconsin.

The best approach - for wildlife and for cats- is to confine your cat to your house. This approach is recommended by National Wildlife and Marin's Humane Society. Free-roaming pets live an average of three to five years, while indoor cats commonly reach 17 or more. Indoor pets also avoid exposure to feline leukemia and rabies. Humane Society director Diane Allevato suggests constructing a screened outdoor area for your cat. Neutering and spaying are also essential to keep cat numbers down.

--from Marin Audubon Society's *The Redwood Log* December 1992.

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