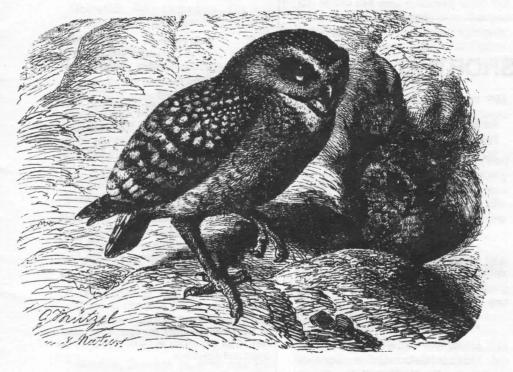


# The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

October 1993

## **CENSUS OF BURROWING OWLS**



For the last three years, Santa Clara Valley Audubon has been participating in a census of Burrowing Owls in California. As most birders know, the Burrowing Owl has been undergoing a population decline in California which appears to be directly related to habitat loss from increased development.

One of the purposes of the census is to supply data for estimates of local, regional, and total population sizes of the Burrowing Owls. This information may help in changing the present California Department of Fish and Game classification of Burrowing Owls from "species of special concern" to "threatened" or "endangered". The change in classification would provide the Burrowing Owl with legal protection.

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### General Membership Meeting, Wednesday October 20 7:30 PM Refreshments, 8:30 PM Program

Palo Alto Cultural Center Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

#### Penguins, Albatrosses and Other Seabirds of the Antarctic Region

Enjoy a dramatic lapse dissolve slide show featuring penguins and other seabirds of the Falklands, South Georgia and Antarctic Peninsula. Doug Cheeseman will use two projectors as he describes the fascinating behavior of seven species of penguins, five species of albatrosses, plus petrels, shearwaters, cormorants, skuas, gulls and, from the Falkland Islands, geese, ducks, raptors, shorebirds and landbirds.

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

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## **Chapter News**

## Wrentits First in Birdathon

The Cheeseman/ Gerson team placed first in this year's Birdathon raising more than \$2,000. Our special thanks to the members of SCVAS' winning team:

Debbie & Dave Beatty Doug & Gail Cheeseman John DeLavoryas Daniel Gerson David Gerson Harriet Gerson Leonard & Anna Helton Ken Hull Linda Johnson Pam Lavin Louise Lyon Will Taylor

## **BIRDATHON SHORTFALL**

Was it the recession? Lack of promotion? Perhaps a bird shortage? For whatever reason, the 1993 Birdathon fundraiser fell significantly short of its goal, totalling just over \$7200 as of September 1. This total represents a marked dropoff from 1992's \$11,000.

Not to be deterred by an off-year, the SCVAS Board and Birdathon committee promise to approach the '94 Birdathon with redoubled energy. Meanwhile, \$7200 is still a substantial sum, and we are grateful to all who contributed toward this year's designated project, the Santa Clara County Creek Inventory. A portion of the money will be given to National Audubon's Western Region office for riparian conservation programs in California.

## Avocet Editor Position Open

If you are interested in becoming the editor of *The Avocet*, please call the SCVAS office at 408/252-3747. Familiarity with Macintosh and Pagemaker desirable. Thanks to all who participated in the Birdathon. The following is a list of Patron donors who generously contributed \$50 or more:

· Joyce Bartlett · Lorraine Bazan · Debbie & Dave Beatty · Robert Bernasconi · Maurine Buma · Roy Cameron • Doug & Gail Cheeseman · Les Chibana · Earl Cilley · Rob and Rita Colwell · John De Lavoryas · Evan Dijk • Stephen Dorman • Pat & Jean Dubois • Tony & Maureen Eppstein · Fred Fisher · Daniel Gerson David Gerson 
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1.	Shirley Gordon	408/996-9863
Birdathon	Tony Eppstein	415/326-1376

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 the chapter of the National Audubon Society for Santa Clara County.

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Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592

## October 1993 Calendar

On all field trips carpool and share expenses. Bring binoculars, field guides, warm clothing, lunch (optional on halfday trips) and l iquids.

\*\*Denotes Field Trip

Monday, October 4, 7:30 PM. Environmental Action Committee Meeting. Cupertino Environmental Center, 22221 McClellan Rd., Cupertino. For more information call Tony Eppstein 415/326-1376.

Tuesday, October 5, 4 PM. Education Commitee Meeting, SCVAS, 22221 McClellan Rd., Cupertino. For more information call Bobbie Handen 408/356-4263.

Wednesday, October 6, 7:30–9:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers. Lucie Evans Baylands Interpretive Center on East Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto. Mark Rauzon will give a presentation on subjects ranging from golden eagles to blue whales. Meetings, which are open to the public, are co-sponsored by the Recreation/Open Space and Sciences Division of the City of Palo Alto.

\*\*Saturday, October 9, 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. Highlights: a chance to observe migrating raptors in impressive numbers. Bring lunch, liquids and warm clothing.

\*\*Sunday, October 10, 8:30 AM. Half day. Beginners trip to Charleston Slough. Leader: To be anounced. 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.

Tuesday, October 12, 1993, 9:30 AM. The Eve Case Bird Discussion Group at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Av., Los Gatos. 408/ 395-4264. The group will meet to car pool for a drive to visit Eve's tree at Big Basin. Bring a bag lunch.

\*\*Wednesday, October 13, 9 AM. Half day. Campbell Percolation Ponds/Los

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Gatos Creek. Easy 2-mile walk. Leader: Alan Thomas 408/265-9286. Directions: take Winchester Blvd. south to Hacienda, make a left on Dell and a right at park entrance into parking lot. Highlights: wintering waterfowl. Lunch optional. Rain cancels.

Wednesday, October 13, 7:30 PM. Frans Lanting Slide/lecture. Please see box below.

\*\*Sunday, October 17, 8:00 AM. Full day. Salinas River mouth. Leader: John Mariani 408/997-1429. Directions: take Hwy 17 to Santa Cruz, Hwy 1 south. About 6 miles south of Moss Landing take Del Monte exit west (unpaved road) 0.7 miles to parking at wildlife area. Several miles walking on level trail. Highlights: emphasis on raptors & waterbirds. Option: afternoon rarities chase. Bring lunch & liquids.

Wednesday, October 20, 7:30 PM. General Membership Meeting. Please see box on page 1.

\*\*Saturday, October 23, 8:00 AM. Full day. Monterey Peninsula. Leader:Kathy Parker 408/358-2832 (evenings). Explore the Peninsula from the sea to the hills. Call leader for information and directions.

\*\*Wednesday, October 26. Half day. Palo Alto Foothills Park. Beginners trip, but all welcome. Leader: Alberta Jasberg 415/493-9546. Call for reservation and meeting place.

\*\*Saturday, November 6, 8:30 AM. Half day. Arastradero OSP. Leader: Jim Liskovec 415/969-5542. Directions: take Page Mill Rd. west from I-280 to Arastradero Rd., about 1/2 mile on right and another 1/2 mile to parking lot on right. Highlights: wintering birds, sparrows and hawks.

#### NON AUDUBON EVENTS

#### **Avocet Festival 93**

The San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge will hold an environmental information fair, **Avocet Festival 93**, Saturday and Sunday, November 6 & 7, from 9 AM to 5 PM. You can help support nature programs for 1994 by doing your holiday shopping early. There will be lots of Wildlife and Nature, as well as arts and crafts, pottery, paintings, photography, stained glass, jewelry, clothing and wood carvings.

Avocet Festival '93 will be held at the Refuge,1 Marshlands Rd., Fremont. Directions: at the east end of Dumbarton Bridge-hwy 94-turn south on Thornton Ave. and continue one mile to the entrance.

The Fair is co-sponsored by: SCVAS, Ohlone Audubon, Sequoia Audubon, Tri-City Ecology Center and Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge. For more information, call 510/ 792-4275.

## PLAN AHEAD

The San Jose Christmas Bird Count and Dinner will be held on Sunday, December 19, 1993. Section Leaders will be identified in the November *Avocet*. Put this on your calendar and start practicing your counting.

#### SPECIAL EVENT REMINDER

Wednesday, October 13, 7:30 PM. Slide lecture by Frans Lanting on Africa's Okavango Delta, the largest inland delta in the world and one of the best preserved areas of "old Africa". Lucie Stern Community Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto. Advance tickets from SCVAS (S.S.A.E), \$10; tickets at the door, \$12.50. Proceeds benefit SCVAS.

## Field Notes

### By Bill Bousman

#### **Grebes to Ibis**

A check of Western and Clark's Grebes at Calaveras Res. 30 Jul (MMR,SCR) revealed at least one Western Grebe on a nest with eggs. A subsequent visit on 21 Aug (MMR,SCR,MJM) showed four occupied Western Grebe nests while on 31 Aug (MMR,SCR) two precocial young were observed riding on their parent's back and four nests were occupied as well. No evidence of nesting for Clark's Grebes was found. The largest concentration of White Pelicans noted this month was of 442 on the salt ponds north of Alviso 29 Aug (WGB). Brown Pelicans have been seen in small numbers in the salt ponds near Alviso with a maximum of nine counted on 29 Aug (MMR, MJM, WGB). Good counts of Snowy Egret include 340 in the vicinity of the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) 24 Jul (SCR) and over 300 in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) 5 Aug (MMR). Little Blue Herons have been seen regularly in the salt ponds near the Alviso Slough Trail this month, particularly in ponds A14 and A9 which have been pumped down. Peak numbers include three adults on 26 Aug (SCR) in Salt Pond A9 and four there 29 Aug (RJ). We rarely see more than two adults in any summer and there are few sightings after the end of August. There have been scattered reports of Cattle Egrets. Three seen over the Pajaro River 14 Aug (SCR) are probably not part of our local South Bay group. The vicinity of Disk Drive, Nortech Parkway, and the Arzino Ranch is the center of this group and ten noted there 26 Aug (SCR) are typical. One to two White-faced Ibis have been seen on the old Coyote Ck. stream channel near its mouth 7-15 Aug (MMR,MJM,WGB) and three birds were further upstream near the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) waterbird pond on 31 Aug (BK).

Two male **Ring-necked Ducks** and a female have summered on Calaveras Res. with the last observation on 31 Aug (MMR,SCR). An **Osprey** over the Alviso salt ponds 29 Aug (MMR,MJM,RJ) is probably the first sign of the small fall movement we see of this species. We typically start to see **Peregrine Falcons** on the South Bay in August so one at the CCRS waterbird pond 28 Jul (AME), an ad. west of there on Salt Pond A18 on 15 Aug (WGB), an imm. at the waterbird pond 18 Aug (SCR), one east of the

Sunnyvale Baylands 27 Aug (SBT), and

another imm. (or the same) on the Alviso

salt ponds 29 Aug (WGB) are expected.

**Ducks to Raptors** 

Rare shorebirds are expected in August, but the rarest this month were birds of the rocky ocean coast

#### Shorebirds!

August brings the excitement of shorebirds and the ever present possibility of something really unusual. The hot spot this fall for the fickle shorebirds wasa set of Caltrans mitigation ponds east of Calabazas Ck. and north of Hwy 237, best called "Calabazas Marsh" for now. Access to these ponds is from the baseball fields off Caribbean at the present time.

A count of 1200 Black-bellied Plover on Salt Pond A14 on 29 Aug and an additional 300 birds on ponds closer to Alviso (MJM,MMR) represents an unusual concentration. An adult or subadult Lesser Golden-Plover was again seen at the CCRS waterbird pond 14-15 Aug (AME,WGB), but the identification to race remains difficult for this species (or species group). This species will be split into Pacific Golden-Plover and American Golden-Plover in the near

future and, although alternate plumaged adults and juveniles are separable when well studied, the separation of molting adults or sub-adults is still a difficult identification problem. Lesser Yellowlegs have been plentiful this month as expected. The largest numbers have been reported from the Palo Alto FCB with 18 there on 5 and 7 Aug (MMR, MJM), 30 on 15 Aug (SCR), 60 counted on 22 Aug (SCR), and 35 on 30 Aug (SCR). The Emily Renzel Wetlands in Palo Alto was drawn down at the end of the month and 5-21 birds were counted there 30-31 Aug (MJM,SCR,WGB).

**Two Wandering Tattlers were** seen at the edge of Salt Pond A12, just north of the Alviso Marina 29 Aug (RJ) and represent the eighth county record of this bird of the rocky coast. Single Ruddy Turnstones were found on the Alviso salt ponds 25 Jul (PJM) and 26 Aug (SCR) and another bird was in the Palo Alto FCB 5 Aug (WGB). Much less expected was the Black Turnstone seen on the Alviso salt ponds 31 Jul (PJM) and 26 Aug (SCR). Unless these sightings are of the same bird they represent only the second and third recent records for the county. Nine Red Knots found on Salt Pond A14 29 Aug (MJM,MMR) are the first records this season for this rare migrant. A single Sanderling there on the same day is also of interest.

Semipalmated Sandpipershave made a good showing this fall. A juv. was seen at the CCRS waterbird pond 10-11 Aug and two juv. were at the Calabazas Marsh 12 Aug (both SBT). Baird's Sandpipers have also appeared at the Calabazas Marsh with one to three there 7-14 Aug (m.ob.) including an adult on 12 Aug (SBT). Four juv. were seen on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso 26 Aug (SCR) and four

Continued on page 5

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

#### Field Notes Cont. from Page 4

to five were on Calabazas Marsh again 27-28 Aug (SBT,AME,MJM). The first **Pectoral Sandpipers** of the season were single birds at Calabazas Marsh 28 Aug (AME) and Emily Renzel Wetlands on 30 Aug (SCR). An adult female **Ruff** showed up at the Palo Alto FCB 4-5 Aug (SCR,HLR,MMR,MJM), still showing signs of its breeding plumage. Another female, at the CCRS waterbird pond 31 Aug (SBT) was in basic plumage.

#### **Terns to Hummingbirds**

Four Elegant Terns were at Charleston Slough 7 Aug (DS) for the second record this summer. A Common Tern was seen at the edge of Salt Pond A4, east of the Sunnyvale WPCP, 28 Jul (SCR) for our only record this year. Least Terns were found through 8 Aug with two to eleven birds at Charleston Slough 24-31 Jul (MJM,PJM), 72 in a pond behind Moffett Field 25 Jul (SCR), 11 on Salt Pond A4 on 28 Jul (SCR), four west of Sunnyvale WPCP 31 Jul (MJM), and two along the Alviso Slough Tr. 8 Aug (AV). A Black Tern was foraging at the Calabazas Marsh on 9 Aug (MMR).

A Greater Roadrunner was along Arroyo Bayo 1 Aug (MMR) where they have been seen in the past. The resident Vaux's Swifts in Los Gatos were noted in typical numbers of one to seven birds though 7 Aug when fifteen were counted. Peak fall numbers built in Los Gatos to 26 on 14 Aug (JDuB). The nesting Black-chinned Hummingbird along Coyote Ck. below Hwy 237 hatched its first young 30 Jul (KS) and apparently both young fledged as they were observed near the nest 19 Aug (MMR). Birds have been observed along the creek and banded at CCRS through the end of the month. Five Rufous Hummingbirds have also been banded at CCRS which is typical of fall migrants although most of the population passes well to the east of us. 

#### Flycatchers to Crossbills

Migrant Willow Flycatchers were first noted along Coyote Ck. below Hwy 237 17 Aug and twelve had been banded by the end of the month. Single birds were also seen along Stevens Ck. at L'Avenida on 21 Aug (MMR). A flock of twelve Cedar Waxwings in Menlo Park 30 Aug (WGB) are the first arrivals noted this season. Two imm. Townsend's Warblers seen at Skyline-Sanborn CP 22 Aug (MJM) are very early migrants - I



have only one record prior to this date in the last thirteen years. Hermit Warblers are much rarer in fall than in spring so one at Monte Bello OSP 10 Aug (MMR) was unexpected. More expected were single migrating MacGillivray's Warblers, one on Stevens Ck. at L'Avenida 27 Aug (MMR) and one on the Matadero riparian 30 Aug (SCR). Three Red Crossbills at Monte Bello OSP 7 Aug (SCR,HLR) and two there on 10 Aug (MMR) are a part of movement of this species seen along the central coast this season.

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Jean DuBois (JDuB), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Bruce Katano (BK), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Kristen Shields (KS), Dick Stovel (DS), Scott Terrill (SBT), and Ann Verdi (AV).

## Festival of The Cranes

Among the most aweinspiring sights in nature is the annual fall migration of tens of thousands of sandhill cranes and snow geese to their wintering grounds on the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge near Socorro, New Mexico.

The sixth annual Bosque del Apache Festival of the Cranes, November 18–21, will present an action-packed four-day program featuring speakers such as authors Donald and Lillian Stokes and International Crane Foundation Director George Archibald. There will be more than fifty exhibits, workshops, demonstrations and conducted tours, some in areas usually closed to the public.

Experts will give demonstrations and exhibits, many with live raptors, reptiles and mammals, covering identification, rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife.

An illustrated lecture by veteran birder-photographer Gary Froehlich and three workshops by famed *National Wildlife Refuge Calendar* publisher-photographer Karen Hollingsworth will provide tips to amateur and serious bird photographers.

For more Festival information and tickets, call 505/835-0424 or write:

> Festival of the Cranes P.O. Box 743 NR Socorro, NM.

## Audubon Represented at Park Hearing

The Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Commission held a special meeting September 1st to receive public testimony concerning off-leash dog areas within the Santa Clara Regional Park System. The sites which had been given preliminary consideration included Coyote-Hellyer Park (East Side Landfill/ Velodrome Areas) and The Los Gatos Creek Park Chain. Two choices were under consideration for the Los Gatos Creek site. The area of concern for Audubon was the Wildlife Area of the Park. This riparian habitat is part of a designated wildlife area, but was included as one of the possible offleash areas. I represented Audubon's view that this was not an appropriate choice for the off-leash area and suggested, as did others, that the second site be selected for this purpose.

- Bobbie Handen

## MAJOR LIBRARY ACQUISITION

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society library has purchased a charter subscription to *The Birds of North America*, heralded by leading ornithologists as an outstanding compendium of bird lore. The acquisition of this long-awaited successor to A.C. Bent's *Life Histories* of North American Birds (already on our shelves) was made possible by a grant from the Community Foundation of Santa Clara County.

This major new avian publication series is a joint effort of the American Ornithologists Union and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. The profiles will be stand-alone documents, in a standard format, prepared by foremost avian biologists with field experience and expertise in their assigned species. Each profile will contain a color photo, black and white illustrations, distribution maps, a bibliography, and a profile of the author(s). The topical organization includes Distinguishing Characteristics, Distribution, Systematics, Migration, Habitat, Food Habits, Sounds and Vocalizations, Behavior, Breeding, Demography and Populations, Conservation and Management, Appearance, and Measurements.

The first volume of 40 profiles is now available for reference use at our McClellan Ranch office. We will receive sets of 8 new profiles every one to three months over the next 10 years until the 18 volume, 14,000 page series is complete. We will then have the most accurate picture available on about 700 bird species which breed in the 50 United States and Canada.

Whether your interest is ornithological research or greater knowledge to support your hobby, we encourage you to stop by and put these profiles to work.

-Reid Freeman

## FRIENDS OF STEVENS CREEK TRAIL

A new community action group of potentially great interest to Audubon members has sprung up in the county. The Friends of Stevens Creek Trail is a non-profit organization whose stated goal is to "raise community awareness and support, both moral and financial, for the creation of a recreational trail and wildlife corridor along Stevens Creek."

The first issue of the group's newsletter The Trailblazer briefly chronicles the history of the creek, which was named after early Santa Clara Valley settler Captain Elisha Stephens; the current status of the creek: and the Friends' ambitious plans to complete the trail from Stevens Creek's source in the Santa Cruz mountains to the bay in Mountain View. The general plan includes open space and wildlife habitat preservation along the trail, and hiking, birding, jogging, cycling and passive recreational activities which easily integrate with the natural environment.

SCVAS members familiar with our office in Cupertino's McClellan Ranch Park have enjoyed the proximity of Stevens Creek and its beautiful riparian habitat. South Bay birders have been exploring the creek for decades in search of Greenbacked Herons, Belted Kingfishers, Yellow Warblers and a variety of other delights. The creek and its adjacent habitat provide one of the most rich and precious wildlife corridors in the county. Anyone interested in learning more about Friends of Stevens Creek Trail may contact SCVAS member Lennie Stovel, who is serving as our representative on the Friends Advisory Council. She can be reached at (415)968-8004.

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

Address Correction requested

#### Burrowing Owls Continued from page 1

The Institute of Bird Populations, under the direction of David F. DeSante, Ph.D., in association with 13 local Audubon Society chapters and bird clubs from the San Francisco Bay Area and Central Valley California, coordinated the three year census of Burrowing Owls in California. The census area was divided into 5-km by 5-km blocks. A random sample of 285 blocks was chosen and 112 known owl blocks were added to make a total sample of 397 blocks.

The preliminary results of the 1991 census were that 286 of the 397 blocks sent out were censused (72%), and only 102 of the 269 known or suspected breeding pairs were found. This represents a loss of 63.1% of the breeding locations and 62.1% of the breeding pairs of Burrowing Owls from the census area during the last five years. The loss of breeding locations for the Bay Area was 62.4% and the loss of pairs for the Bay Area was 72.0% (*A Census of Burrowing Owls in California*, David F. DeSante, Ph.D., Feb. 1992). However, 178 pairs of Burrowing Owls were found in new locations. It is unlikely that the 178 pairs represent breeding pairs which have relocated. It is more likely, the pairs bred there in the past and had not been observed before 1991. Perhaps the 1992 and 1993 census data can help

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answer some of these questions on movement and population trends of the Burrowing Owl.

The preliminary results of the first year of the census are very grim for the Burrowing Owl. It is estimated that we are losing Burrowing Owls at a rate of 13% a year. The area of study for the 1992 and 1993 census was expanded to include 700 census blocks covering the entire range of the Burrowing Owl in California. An additional 17 Audubon chapters and bird clubs participated in the 1992 census. There is also a plan for long term monitoring program for the Burrowing Owls based on the census results.

The most important objective of the census is to bring a heightened awareness to the serious plight facing the Burrowing Owl. There is a definite need for conservation programs for the Burrowing Owl and land use planning on a local and regional level. Hopefully, the Census of Burrowing Owls in California will provide the information needed to bring about protection for the Burrowing Owl.

-Jayne Di Candio

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

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Subscription: Check One

[] Subscriber \$10 [] Supporter \$20 [] Donor \$35 [] Patron \$50 and more Members receive *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to SCVAS.

#### Or

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Members receive Audubon magazine and The A	wocet newsletter. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.
[ ] <b>Donation:</b> SCVAS greatly appreciates you education, conservation and research programs.	r tax-deductible donation. Your gift helps fund the Chapter's birding,

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