



# *The Avocet*

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

June-August 1994

## Birding At Record Pace In Santa Clara County

by Michael M. Rogers

For a brief period in late April it is possible to find most of our wintering birds as well as a large number of newly arrived spring migrants and breeding birds. The diversity of bird species during this period has naturally led to record-breaking "day lists" and is largely responsible for the concept that is now known as the "Big Day". The goal of a "Big Day" is to locate as many bird species as possible by sight or sound during the 24-hour period of a single calendar day. The popularity of this activity has resulted in the development of official "Big Day Count Rules" by the American Birding Association Rules Committee - for some people this is serious business.

By the time you read this, many teams will have completed their 1994 Big Days in a major fund-raising effort for the SCVAS. While some of these groups work from dawn to dusk, others enjoy a more leisurely itinerary. Our official chapter team calls it quits when they hit 100 species. Just as the pace varies among teams, so does the planned route. Some groups work a limited area, while others drive all the way to the Pacific Ocean and back. For many years Bill Bousman and Clark Blake have made an exhaustive search confined to Santa Clara County by starting in the San Antonio Valley and working their way back to the Bay and Stevens Creek County Park. Last year Steve Rottenborn and I thought we could improve on their record total of 149 species by reversing the route. On April 17, 1993 we started out at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, worked our way down to the Bay, and finished up in the

Diablo Range foothills near Ed Levin Park. Despite wind and rain we tallied 159 species between 4:00 am and 10:00 pm, establishing a new record for a Big Day confined to Santa Clara County.

Despite our success, we knew we could do better. Not only had the weather been miserable, but we had missed numerous spring migrants by trying a little too early in the month. With better weather and a little luck we figured we could get in the 160's and even be competitive with teams that include the Pacific Ocean in their itinerary, tallying rocky coast shorebirds, alcids, and other species that we had no shot at within the confines of Santa Clara County. To do this, however, would take very careful planning, strict adherence to a carefully scheduled itinerary, and a little luck. In order to give ourselves the best shot at getting the biggest possible list of species we would have to start right at midnight and possibly continue for the maximum allowable 24 hours.

The route we decided on was similar to the route chosen in 1993, except that we hoped to move a little quicker throughout the day to permit us to get to Grant Ranch before sunset (after all, an immature Greater White-fronted Goose had been hanging around there!). Also, the hours between midnight and 4:00 am had to be filled up. The first half of April was spent scouting the route; finding where the last lingering winter birds were hanging out and determining where those first migrants were appearing. We also took note of a few nest locations. In 1993 we had missed Red-shouldered Hawk - if this bird failed to show during the day this year

*Continues on page 7...*

### Annual Membership Dinner at McClellan Ranch Park

Our Annual Membership Dinner is a special evening with time to meet new people and to thank our chapter members for supporting us. It's also an opportunity to acknowledge all of the terrific Audubon volunteers who have worked so hard this year! Please join us on Wednesday, June 15 at 6:00 pm at McClellan Ranch Park, 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, CA 95014. You will partake in good food and conversation, have an opportunity to walk along the trail, enjoy the Native Plant Garden, visit the Audubon Nature

Shop and Birding Library.

Please bring something to share:

A-G Main Dish

H-L Salad

M-Q Dessert

R-Z Hors D'oeuvres

We will provide beverages, plates and silverware for everyone. Please carpool if possible. Park at the Ranch or up the street on Golf Club Drive. For questions or direction, call Jayne DiCandio at (408) 252-3747.

# Chapter News

## Birdathon '94

Thank you, Thank you!

Thanks to our Birdathon Teams for their birding and fundraising efforts which ultimately makes our Birdathon a big success. We would also like to thank all the individuals who made contributions to the Birdathon teams. The funds allow us to continue to offer the many programs we offer to our members and the community. A special thanks to our Birdathon Committee leaders Gail Cheeseman and Harriet Gerson for all their hard work in putting this year's Birdathon together.

We will be giving out prizes to Birdathon teams at the Annual Membership Dinner, June 15th and we will

announce the total amount of money raised in the September issue of the *Avocet*. It's not too late to send in a contribution to your favorite team!

Team name	No. of Species Counted
Uncommon Loons (chapter team)	rained out
Witty Wrentits	114
Vagrants/Owling Babblers	145
Wrong Terns	77
Cardinal Virtues	TBA
Birdbrains	117
Down & Dirty Birders	112
The Jumping Jays	100
Hunting the Bunting	58
<b>The Right Anser</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>If you can't eat'em what good are they!</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>"Quick-three-beers" &amp; other members of the empidonax</b>	<b>TBA</b>

## Summer Office Hours

A reminder to everyone the SCVAS office and Nature Shop will continue to be open regular hours through the summer. The one exception is August 17th-30th, we will be closed some of that time. The regular office and shop hours are Monday-Friday 9:30am-5:00pm, and Saturday 10:00am-2:00pm. There are some days where meeting or events take us out of the office, so please call ahead!

We will continue to get new merchandise in the Nature Shop all summer long. We always have birdseed on hand and we can special order seed for you at any time. Come out and visit us!

## Nominees Proposed

The Nominating Committee has proposed the following slate of Officers for the coming year:

President	Nick Yatsko
1st Vice President	Tony Eppstein
2nd Vice President	vacant
Treasurer	John McLemore
Rec. Secretary	Clysta Seney

Nominees will be up for election at the June 15 General Meeting/Membership Dinner. A full slate of Board members will also be presented for approval.

## SCVAS OFFICERS

President	Rob Colwell	415/326-2400
Past Pres.	Grant Hoyt	415/969-7892
1st VP	Tony Eppstein	415/326-1376
2nd VP	Nick Yatsko	408/247-5499
Treasurer	John McLemore	408/261-9431
Rec. Secty.	Clysta Seney	408/261-9431

## STAFF

Office Mgr	Jayne DiCandio	408/252-3747
Environmental Advocate	Craig Breon	408/252-3748

## DIRECTORS

Mike Rigney '91-'94	408/262-9204
Alan Thomas '91-'94	408/265-9286
Reid Freeman '92-'95	408/255-4969
Jane Becker-Haven '92-'95	415/321-0776
Bobbie Handen '93-'96	408/356-4263
Howard Johnson '93-'96	408/255-2422

## CHAIRPERSONS

CBC	Reid Freeman	408/255-4969
The Avocet	Grant Hoyt	415/969-7892
	Laura Lebherz	408/264-0533
Education Programs	Bobbie Handen	408/356-4263
	Doug & Gail Cheeseman	408/867-1371
Library	Reid Freeman	408/255-4969
Field Trips		
Weekend	John Mariani	408/997-2066
Weekday	Alberta Jasberg	415/493-9546
	Shirley Gordon	408/996-9863
Aud Adven	Elaine Gould	408/448-0622
Photo Club	Pete LaTourrette	415/961-2741
Finance	Don Price	415/327-1254
BAAC		
Delegate	Trish Mulvey	415/326-0252
Membership	Vacant	

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.

1994, Volume 41, Number 3

**Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592**

## Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Balance Sheet For Fiscal Year 1992-93

Assets	\$\$
Cash	25201
Inventory	7750
Investments	343950
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$376901</b>

## Liabilities & Fund Balance

Accounts Payable	1711
Grants Payable	3049
Fund Balance	372141
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$376901</b>

## Activity Statement for the Period June 1, 1992 - May 31, 1993

Revenues	
Memberships	22548
Interest & Dividends	23026
Sales	10901
Contributions	22518
Grants & Other Income	1119
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$80112</b>

## Expenses

Environmental Action	4300
Avocet Newsletter	19847
Christmas Birdcount	742
Education	1735
Research	4038
Personnel & Taxes	30298
Rent & Expenses	18332
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$79292</b>

# June-August 1994 Calendar

*On all field trips carpool and share expenses. Bring binoculars, field guides, warm clothing, lunch (optional on half-day trips) and liquids.*

\*\*Denotes Field Trip

**Wednesday June 1, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers.** For this final meeting of the season, Dr. Denny Mallory will present his "Mono Lake Update" slide show, describing how the lake and its wildlife are progressing now that feeder creeks are flowing in again. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd. Palo Alto.

**\*\*Saturday, June 4, all day. Palo Alto Summer Bird Count.** Compiler: Bill Bousman 415/322-5282. This is the 14th year for the June version of the Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count—same count circle, different birds. There is no fee and the weather is usually better than December's. Summer count data provide a way to track populations of breeding birds that winter in the neotropics, and help piece together the puzzle of the health of our environment. Contact the compiler if you're interested in participating.

**\*\*Wednesday June 8, 8:30 AM. Half day. Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.** Leader: Shirley Gordon 408/996-9863. Meet in parking lot at SW corner of Page Mill Rd. and Skyline Blvd for carpooling. Highlights: variety of breeding birds including Lazuli Bunting and Grasshopper Sparrow.

**\*\*Saturday June 11, 8:00 AM. Half day. Hellyer Park.** Leader: Steve Rottenborn 415/497-9368. Steve's extensive research on birds of the riparian corridor and his exceptional birding skills should make this a great trip for both beginners and experts. From Hwy. 101 southbound exit at Hellyer Av. and turn right at stop sign at end of ramp. Turn left at next stop sign, then left again into Hellyer Pk. Bear right along road to large parking lot by lake. Highlights:

Red-shouldered Hawk, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Warbling Vireo, Black-headed Grosbeak and other riparian species; Western Kingbird and Rufous-crowned Sparrow in dry hills along Hellyer Av.

**Tuesday June 14, 9:30 AM. Bird Discussion Group** at the Dorman's residence, 15086 Becky Lane, Los Gatos, 408/395-5309. Topic: Birding. Bring bag lunch.

**Wednesday June 15. SCVAS Annual Dinner at McClellan Ranch Park.** 6:00 PM. See details on Page 1.

**\*\*Sunday June 19, 9:00 AM. Half day. Beginners trip to Charleston Slough.** Leader: Nick Lethaby 408/435-2729. Take Hwy. 101 to San Antonio Rd. in Mtn. View, exit N on San Antonio to Terminal Way parking lot (1/4 mile). Emphasis on basics of bird identification, including shorebirds, egrets, herons, ducks.

**Thursday, July 7, 7:00 PM. Burrowing Owl/Wetlands Class at McClellan Ranch Park.** San Jose State Professor and Burrowing Owl expert, Dr. Lynne Trulio, will once again teach an informative class Thursday evening and lead a field trip to study the owls and the wetlands on Saturday, July 9th, 8am-12pm. The SCVAS Education Committee is sponsoring the class and there is a fee of \$25.00. Call Jayne DiCandio at the office, (408) 252-3747, to register.

**\*\*Saturday July 9, 8:30 AM. Half day. Beginners trip to Charleston Slough.** Leader: Judy Wagner 415/941-7586. See June 19 for details.

**Saturday, July 16, 9:00 AM. Family Field Trip at McClellan Ranch Park,** Cupertino. All ages are welcome. We will have some binoculars available for use. Walk the trail with us and learn about the birds along Stevens Creek. Possible highlights: woodpeckers, swallows, warblers and flycatchers. Call the SCVAS office for directions.

**\*\*Saturday August 6, 8 AM. Half day. Beginners trip to Charleston Slough.** Leader: Nick Yatsko 408/247-5499. See June 19 for details.

**\*\*Saturday August 13, 2:00 PM. Half day. Foster City for migrant shorebirds.** Leader: Nick Lethaby 408/435-2729. From Hwy 101 N take Hillsdale Blvd. E through Foster City; bear right as Hillsdale becomes Beach Park Blvd., proceed roughly 1 mile S and meet leader just past grassy park on right side of Beach Park. Highlights: possible Red Knot, Ruddy Turnstone, variety of shorebirds. Note afternoon start time for optimal tidal conditions.

**\*\*Sunday August 14. Full day. Año Nuevo Reserve.** Leader: Mark Miller 415/967-3429. Limit of 20 participants; call leader to reserve space. Highlights: early returning shorebirds in various plumages, coastal waterbirds, possible Black Swifts. Dress in layers for variable weather conditions; moderate hike to dune area.

## Bird Banding Classes

Coyote Creek Riparian Station will be offering a bird-banding training class beginning on Thursday, July 14, 1994. The class will run for three weeks with one evening lecture and on weekend day field session per week.

This class will provide sufficient hands-on experience to qualify people for participation in the ongoing bird biomonitoring program at CCRS in Alviso. The class will teach students how to remove birds from mist nets, how to age, sex, and measure them, and how to accurately record the data.

A prerequisite for this class is the ability to identify local Bay Area birds. The cost of the class is \$25. (Membership in CCRS is an additional \$20.) If you are interested in this course, please call the station at (408) 262-9204 to reserve a spot. We hope you will find bird banding a rewarding experience and we know it will give you a new perspective on birds and their environment.

# Field Notes

By Bill Bousman

Spring is the time for Big Days and Birdathons. Last year's record 159 species found on a single day was smashed on 20 Apr when Mike Rogers and Steve Rottenborn found 175 different birds in the county starting at midnight in the Palo Alto Baylands and finishing at dusk at Jos Grant CP. Perhaps the most unusual find was a spring migrant Wilson's Phalarope near the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP). The rest of the species found were expected for the locations searched.

## Loons through Waterfowl

A **Common Loon** over Alviso 9 Apr (SCR) was a spring migrant. **Am. White Pelicans** have been found locally during the month with a high count of 16 on the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 17 Apr (MMR). **Cattle Egrets** have been found regularly in the Alviso area throughout the month with peak counts of 18 on the Arzino Ranch on 9 Apr (AME), 17 there the next day (MJM), and 16 found on 20 Apr (MMR,SCR). Our winter of **Greater White-fronted Geese** continued with the imm. wintering at Hellyer CP found at least through 6 Apr (SCR) and another imm. that was found in March in Jos Grant CP still there through 27 Apr (MJM). The **Ross' Goose**, wintering at the Sunnyvale WPCP, was seen at least through 21 Apr (m.ob.). A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** was seen in the Mountain View Forebay 20 Apr (MMR,SCR) and a second pair was at the Sunnyvale Baylands 22 Apr (AV). A **Eurasian Wigeon** wintering on the South Pond of the Palo Alto FCB was seen through 20 Apr (m.ob.). A male **Redhead**, on Charleston Slough, has stayed at least through 23 Apr (MJM,GHt,DSt).

## Raptors through Woodpeckers

An **Osprey** at Alpine Lake at the edge of Skyline was seen 15 Apr (RWR). At least six **Merlin** have been found in April with the latest a female along Guadalupe

River between Trimble and Montague on 22 Apr (SCR). There have also been five reports of **Peregrine Falcon** during the month. A single **Prairie Falcon** in Jos Grant CP 9 Apr (MJM) was probably a part of the Diablo Range population. Ten **Snowy Plover** counted on Salt Pond A10 in Alviso 17 Apr (MJM *et al.*) is a good number for this scarce resident. Spring **Lesser Yellowlegs** have been found in the vicinity of the Arzino Ranch with three there 20 Apr (MMR,SCR) and singles seen on 24 Apr (SCR *et al.*) and 26 Apr (PJM). The most exciting shorebird, however, was a **Solitary Sandpiper** found on Coyote Creek below Silicon Valley Blvd on 17 Apr (SCR) and re-found twice more the same day (MJM,MMR). The single male **Wilson's Phalarope**, mentioned above, was an unusual spring migrant in the marsh at the west end of the

*A Sage Thrasher and a Blue Grosbeak vied for top honors with the Chestnut-collared Longspur flock*

Sunnyvale dump 20 Apr (MMR,SCR). A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** at Monte Bello OSP 23 Apr (MJM,GHt,DSt) was the only report this month. The first **Vaux's Swift** report was of a single bird over Alpine Lake on Skyline on 15 Apr (RWR). After that small numbers of migrants were noted in a number of the local areas with a peak count of nine on 22 Apr at Ed Levin CP (SCR). The first **Black-chinned Hummingbird**, a male, arrived on Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 17 Apr (MJM) and at least three or more birds have been seen there regularly since then (m.ob.). **Lewis' Woodpeckers** have returned to their breeding areas in San Antonio Valley in April (m.ob.), but more surprising were four birds found in the Hayes Valley west of San Martin 13 Apr (SCR,MMR), an area that was not covered during the atlas years.

## Flycatchers through Warblers

**Hammond's Flycatchers** have again been found this spring and perhaps this marks a change in either their populations or their migration routing as this is the fourth spring that they have been found locally on a regular basis. This is not simply an effect of observer effort or skill as the same effect is observed in the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) banding records. A single bird was first found in Henry Coe SP 3 Apr (MJM,GHt), two were in Jos. Grant CP 9 Apr (MJM), single birds were found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 and at Jos. Grant CP 17 Apr (MMR), and two were banded at CCRS 18 Apr (*fide* WGB). A **Bank Swallow** was observed over Coyote Creek at the Model Airplane Skypark north of Morgan Hill on 16 Apr (SCR) for one of our few records of this rare migrant. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** responding to a tape just east of Mt. Hamilton on 20 Apr (WGB) was probably resident. A singing **Canyon Wren** has been found (sometimes) in Alum Rock Park near either the Alum Rock or Eagle Rock during the month (AME, RWR). Most unusual was a **Sage Thrasher** found in the Hayes Valley 13 Apr (MMR,SCR). This is only the fifth county record of this Great Basin species. **Nashville Warblers** were widely reported this month with two in Henry Coe SP 10 Apr (JY,AL) being the first migrants. At least eight individuals have been reported from sites on both sides of the valley and riparian corridors over the rest of the month. Somewhat more rare than Nashville Warbler, individual **Hermit Warblers** have been found on Table Mountain 3 Apr (MMR), Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 17 Apr (MJM), Monte Bello OSP 20 Apr (MMR,SCR), and Stevens Creek CP 21 Apr (MJM). One to two **Palm Warblers** were found near Coyote Creek at Levee Road 2-5 Apr (SCR,RJ,WGB) and, I suppose, conclude the saga of this amazing invasion winter for this species. **MacGillivray's Warbler** is probably the rarest of our migrant western warblers and a single bird was banded at CCRS 13 Apr (*fide* WGB) and one was seen at Jos Grant CP 17 Apr

(MMR). The first **Yellow-breasted Chat** of the season was singing on Llagas Creek at Santa Teresa on 29 Apr (SCR,MMR).

## Tanagers through Goldfinches

The first unambiguous migrant **Western Tanagers** were probably the four males found in Jos. Grant CP 14 Apr (MMR). A male **Blue Grosbeak**, interacting strongly with Lazuli Buntings was found near Coyote Creek below Riverside GC 27 Apr (SCR,MMR) and was seen over at least the next two days (m.ob.). This is the seventh county record of a species that was not found in the county until 1989. More than 26 **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** were counted on Tulare Hill 17 Apr (SCR) of which 19 were singing. This gives an idea of how abundant this species can be in optimum habitat. One to two birds singing along the Indian Creek Trail in Monte Bello OSP 20 Apr (MMR,SCR) and 23 Apr (MJM,GHt,DSt) are near the edge of their range. The first arriving **Grasshopper Sparrow** of the season was one singing in the Hayes Valley 13 Apr (SCR,MMR). Subsequent birds have been found along Metcalf Road 16 Apr (AME), and on Tulare Hill 17 Apr (MMR,SCR). Late winter **Swamp Sparrows** include one in the marsh south of the Ogier Ave. ponds

5 Apr (SCR), another along Guadalupe River above Montague 12 Apr (SCR), and one banded at CCRS 20 Apr (*vide* WGB). At least 11 **White-throated Sparrows** have been reported during April including one at 2400 feet in Henry Coe SP 3 Apr (MJM,GHt). The latest was one at Riverside GC 28 Apr (JAC). Our late winter stars, the **Chestnut-colored Longspurs** on Sierra Road, have been reported throughout April. The majority of the records come from the Rare Bird Alert, including the latest date of four on 24 Apr. I speculated in last month's column that these birds may have been missed earlier in the winter considering the extensive habitat available on the north side of Alum Rock Canyon. However, Steve Rottenborn notes that in the east these flocks frequently don't show up until February and almost always appear after a major storm. The birds on Sierra Road were first found following a fairly significant winter storm in late February so perhaps this is their true source. A single male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was found at the Coyote percolation ponds 5 Apr (SCR) and, on 29 Apr, one to two females were found in the borrow ponds just north of the Model Airplane Skypark north of Morgan Hill (SCR,MMR). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** have been found in a num-

ber of Diablo Range locations this month. Also of interest was a bird at the Coyote percolation ponds 10 Apr (AME), two in Hayes Valley 13 Apr (SCR,MMR), four along Coyote Creek from Cochrane to Ogier Avenue (SCR), and one over Monte Bello OSP 20 Apr (MMR,SCR).

Early arrivals: **Caspian Tern**, 4 Apr (MMR); **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, 11 Apr (MJM); **Western Wood-Pewee**, 11 Apr (MJM); **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, 11 Apr (MJM); **Swainson's Thrush**, 21 Apr (CCRS); **Yellow Warbler**, 16 Apr (AME); **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, 3 Apr (MMR,MJM,GHt); **Black-headed Grosbeak**, 1 Apr (SCR); **Lazuli Bunting**, 16 Apr (SCR); and **Chipping Sparrow**, 17 Apr (MMR);

*Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Jack Cole (JAC), Al Eisner (AME), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Dick Stovel (DSt), Ann Verdi (AV), and James Yurchenco (JY).*

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

## How You Can Help Us Raise \$\$

One of the ways SCVAS receives funds is through the fundraising efforts of Earth Share of California (formerly the Environmental Federation. Last year Earth Share raised over \$2.3 million for its 82 member environmental groups—a 21% increase from the year before!

How does Earth Share do it? By organizing and running workplace giving campaigns. Employees in participating corporations and federal, city, county and state agencies can support the environment through payroll deductions. They can make a general contribution to Earth Share which then divides up the money among the 82 member groups, or employees may choose to designate to one or more of the groups. The fact that contributions to Earth Share have been increasing every year shows that employees really care about the environment's effect on their health and welfare.

As an SCVAS member you can also help us raise money

through Earth Share. Does your workplace have an employee giving campaign? If so, does it include Earth Share? If the answer to one or both of these questions is no, please urge your company to have Earth Share as a contribution option for its employees.

Environmental Federation



Earth Share.  
OF CALIFORNIA

Workplace campaigns are easy and cost-effective. They're a great way for employers to support their employees' interests, and to show their commitment to the environment and community. Employees are concerned about the environment and like learning about Earth Share's organizations and contributing at work. These are just a few of the campaigns Earth Share participates in: Safeway Stores, Kaiser Permanente, Levi Strauss, Charles Schwab & Co., Santa Clara County, and Patagonia.

To find out more about how you can help SCVAS with its fundraising, call Earth Share at either (415) 882-9330 or (800) 368-1819.

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# Environmental Action News

## The Summer Roundup

by Craig Breon, *Environmental Advocate*

As this is the summer issue and you won't hear from us again until September, a summary of the projects we're currently working on seems appropriate. The "we" in that last sentence includes myself as environmental advocate for the chapter, the hard working activists on our Environmental Action Committee, our Board of Directors, and the many members who put time and effort into projects around the county. No doubt many issues are left out of this extensive list; that only goes to show that there's plenty of work out there.

### Creeks and Streams

Many of our projects are directly related to creek and stream protection and restoration. The Board has made this a high priority, and local governments are paying more attention to the issue lately. By the time this *Avocet* comes out, the city of San Jose will most likely have passed a Riparian Corridor Policy, designed to protect creeks and streams from human impacts. San Jose's policy will be innovative and show leadership, especially for a large and diverse community. Development will often be set back 100 feet from the creeks, giving birds and other critters vital living space. Buffer zones of native vegetation are planned for new developments. The policy will even contain a city-wide action plan for restoration. It's been wonderful to see the outpouring of people who care about their creeks, and to see a vision develop where we not only protect what's left, but restore what we can.

With San Jose's policy in place, we hope to take the finished products to other cities around the county. We will eventually be coming to your town – if we're not there already – and would welcome your involvement.

Also, we are cooperating with the county staff on a nascent effort called the "River" project. The goal is to develop a landowner's guide to riparian values, and thus their protection. The manual would be produced after a series of roundtable

discussions involving various parties with interests in creekside lands (e.g., the water district, ranchers).

In addition, we are working with Representative Anna Eshoo's office to find projects for a small amount of funding dedicated to "Urban Greenways." Creek mapping would be an excellent use of these funds. Also, we continue to work closely with the Coyote Creek Riparian Station.

### At The Polls

As mentioned in recent *Avocets*, our chapter has worked hard in support of CALPAW (proposition 180 statewide) and the Open Space Campaign (locally). From signature gathering to staffing phone banks, making group presentations, fundraising, and signing onto ballot arguments, the chapter has actively pursued these measures, which could do wonders for local open space and bird habitat.

### Wetlands

After an absence of some time, our chapter will again be represented in the Citizen's Committee to Complete the Refuge, a coalition of wetlands-oriented groups. This should keep us aware of many issues around the Bay, and allow us to work for our chapter symbol, the American Avocet.

### Lawsuits

Recently, our chapter, along with other Audubon chapters, settled a lawsuit with the U.S. EPA. Under that settlement the EPA will have to set and enforce water quality standards for the Delta by December. The end result should be increased flows to the Bay Delta, flushing out the system and improving fish and wildlife habitat.

At the same time, we are involved with other environmental organizations in a lawsuit against two oil companies over the amount of selenium they dump into the Bay. You may remember selenium as the substance that caused deformities and death in birds and other wildlife at Kesterson Refuge in the Central Valley.

We may have some results in the suit by the end of the summer.

### Individual Projects

In any growing metropolis, there are plenty of development projects which could use some environmental supervision. We're working on several of these.

In the Hayes Valley near Morgan Hill, a residential complex and golf course are proposed for a near pristine valley floor. On Boulder Ridge, in the Willow Glen area of San Jose, another golf course proposal would impair one of the county's top priorities for open space acquisition. At West Valley College in Saratoga, mitigation for previous wildlife disturbance is ongoing. Also, Moffett Field, bordering Mountain View and Sunnyvale, is being transferred from the Navy to NASA, bringing with it questions of flight levels, fuel and munitions storage, and associated impacts on nearby wetlands and water quality.

### Etcetera, Etcetera...

As you can see, we're busy – and enjoying it. There are many other things going on all the time. As always, Trish Mulvey represents our chapter on a number of issues related to water quality in the South Bay. We've recently set some goals to expand our Armchair Activist network and to begin chapter information – on birdwalks and sightings as well as issues – in to local computer bulletin board services.

As always, we encourage you to get involved. I hope your summer days are filled with beautiful birds and nature's bounty, and a little effort to make sure both are around for a long time.

### 1995 Ecology Safaris

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris are offering the following tours for next year: Venezuela Birding with resident naturalist David Ascanio, organized by Venezuela Audubon, Jan. 25 - Feb. 12, \$2750; Trinidad and Tobago Natural History, with outstanding wildlife artist/native Trinidadian/SCVAS member Ed Rooks, Jan. 18 - 31 and June 25 - July 8, \$2350. Contact the Cheesemans at 408/867-1371.

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a peek up at a nest with a flashlight would remedy the situation.

Things looked good for Wednesday April 20, 1994. The weather forecast looked promising, many migrants had arrived, the tide at the Bay would expose the mudflats at the appropriate time, and, since it was during the week, not many people would be around to scare away the birds and slow our pace in transit between birding locations. On Tuesday evening the packing began. The child car seats were taken out of the Ford Explorer and the back seat was put down to make room for two bicycles. A huge cooler containing a dozen sandwiches, piles of junk food, and lots of caffeine-laden drinks was loaded up. Scopes, binoculars, flashlights, and a tape recorder were squeezed into the remaining space. At 11:30 pm we headed off to the Palo Alto Baylands and then hiked out by the outfall channel near the airport. There we waited the last few minutes until midnight.

When Steve's watch switched to all zeros we began listening in earnest. The continuous chatter of thousands of foraging Western Sandpipers was the first sound to hit our ears and made this species the first for the day. Almost simultaneously, the song of a Northern Mockingbird reverberated from across the runway. During the next hour or so we heard numerous species of shorebirds and even saw a few from the dike in our flashlight beams. Several Clapper Rails chattered at each other in the marsh, but we could not elicit a response from any other rail species, even with the aid of a tape. Walking back by the interpretive center added Rock Doves in the eaves and the stakeout Western Grebe that had been present for weeks in the nearby lagoon. We left the Baylands for the Mountain View Forebay at 1:16 am with 22 species under our belts. A single Virginia Rail responded quickly to the tape at the Forebay, but some persistent coaxing was required to elicit a response from a Sora. A stop at the Common Raven nest on a nearby transmission tower failed to reveal an incubating adult (seeing black birds at night is tough!), but a Barn Owl overhead was a nice addition. We then headed east for more owls along Marsh Road, stopping at the Main Street overpass in Milpitas to listen to the twittering of White-throated Swifts in their nest cavities. Fortunately the Milpitas police did not happen by here at 1:40 am to ask what two shady looking characters were doing pointing flashlights up at the drainage holes of the overpass. Along Marsh Road south of Calaveras Reservoir we hit a nocturnal bonanza with a pair of Barn Owls, 4 Western Screech Owls, 7 Great Horned Owls, and 4 Common Poorwills.

Next came the long drive back to Monte Bello OSP. We arrived just before 4:00 am, the time of our start in 1993. Owling at Monte Bello did add two distant Saw-whet Owls (our 30th species), but failed to produce the hoped for Long-eared and Northern Pygmy-Owls (although we did have more Western Screech Owls, Great Horned Owls, and another Common Poorwill). As dawn broke we began adding species at a rapid pace. After stashing the now useless tape recorder behind a Coyote bush we headed down to find Pygmy Nuthatch and Winter Wren, two species which could not be found anywhere else on our route. We found both these birds, as well as a warbler flock that contained a single female Hermit Warbler and four Townsend's Warblers among numerous Black-throated Gray Warblers. A single Golden-crowned Sparrow on the road as we left at 8:35 am was our 80th species for the day. Clearly we were off to

a good start.

The time in transit to Stevens Creek County Park was not wasted, as 10 more species were added along Page Mill Road, Interstate 280, and Foothill Blvd. (the last being the only Hooded Oriole for the day on a TV antenna just below the park). A Western Wood-Pewee at the park at 9:50 am was species number 100. The Red-shouldered Hawk and Hairy Woodpecker nests we had found out about a week before provided the day's only representatives of these two species before leaving for the Bay.

Our first stop at Shoreline Lake produced the resident Surf Scoters, two lingering Common Goldeneyes, and a late Thayer's Gull. A quick foray out to the nearby golf course pond between golfing parties resulted in the day's only Spotted Sandpiper. A check of the Mountain View Forebay and nearby Flood Control Basin added two lingering Common Snipe and a trio of new raptor species: Golden Eagle, White-tailed Kite, and Peregrine Falcon. With only a few minutes left before the optimum tide conditions for shorebird viewing, we stopped at the Frontage Road parking lot of the Flood Control Basin, confident that we would quickly locate the Eurasian Wigeon that had made the "South Pond" his home for several weeks. Panic struck when we found that the pond contained only about ten wigeon - many had obviously left recently. To make matters worse, the Eurasian Wigeon was apparently not among them. Refusing to give up, we ran down to the other end of the pond and, with the sun now behind us, found the bird.

At 11:35 am the tide level was indeed perfect at the Palo Alto Baylands and the mudflats of the old yacht harbor were teeming with thousands of shorebirds. Among them we found singles of both Whimbrel and Long-billed Curlew, two species missed during the night. Next we headed back to finish our coverage of the area around Charleston Slough. In order to pick up the pace the bikes were hauled out. The stakeout Redhead was still in Charleston Slough and a pair of Blue-winged Teal finally appeared out of the reeds in the Forebay, but the American White Pelicans that had been hanging around for days previously had disappeared. A high-speed bike ride to the southeast corner of Salt Pond A1 fixed that problem; 3 pelicans were sitting on the island in the northwest corner of the pond and brought the tally to 150 species at 1:08 pm. Another bayside bike trip at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant added the dependable Ross' Goose, a surprise Wilson's Phalarope, and 46 lingering American Pipits. On our last bike trip at the dikes of Alviso we bumped into another scope-toting bicyclist. Bill Bousman was working his usual route westwards from San Antonio Valley. The greetings had to remain short - not only were we all in a hurry, but despite the urge to boast, soliciting bird-finding information during a Big Day is against the rules. Our next stop at the Arzino Ranch produced 16 Cattle Egrets, 3 Lesser Yellowlegs, 2 Burrowing Owls, and the day's only Ring-necked Pheasants, which were the 160th species for the day and broke our 1993 record at 3:10 pm.

New species were getting hard to find, but CCRS added Black-chinned Hummingbirds and by splitting up (but remaining within earshot - that's another rule) we coaxed out lingering Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows. Ed Levin Park provided an Allen's Hummingbird and Calaveras Reservoir added a few needed oak woodland

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species, a male Ring-necked Duck, and a single Vaux's Swift in with a large swallow flock. Despite zooming the scopes up to maximum magnification, we couldn't make any of the bills on the distant Western Grebes orange enough to call one a Clark's. Unfortunately no Wild Turkeys could be seen or heard along Felter Road. The Sierra Road summit added the expected Horned Larks, a singing Rock Wren, and a single female Chestnut-collared Longspur - a remarkable bird to be found at this time of year in California, but part of the group that had been present at this spot since February. We drove on quickly to the base of Mt. Hamilton Road, making a quick detour to Alum Rock Park to try for the Canyon Wren that had been present there of late - it refused to respond to the tape we played from the entrance kiosk. To top off our little detour, a suspicious park visitor pulled over to ask what we were up to at the kiosk.

After telling him we were looking for birds we received a little advice - those "hawks" flying overhead were actually vultures (despite a lull between doses of caffeine we had managed this identification correctly).

We arrived at Grant Ranch at 7:23 pm and ran out to the barn near the pond where the White-fronted Goose had been seen. There it was in with 8 Canada Geese - species number 175 for the day. But no Grasshopper Sparrows had arrived yet and the resident Wild Turkeys eluded us again. To make matters worse,

the geese were visible from the road a quarter of a mile further on - a valuable ten minutes had been wasted! An express trip to the ridge above Smith's Creek Ranger Station was made quickly enough to leave us a little light, but the Chipping Sparrow that had been establishing a territory there had already gone to bed. We dropped down to the Ranger Station and tried to elicit a response from a Northern Pygmy-Owl, but only got single Western Screech and Great Horned Owls for our effort. We drove slowly back to Grant Ranch, hoping that somehow a late Wild Turkey would materialize in our headlights - none did.

At 9:00 pm we dropped back down into San Jose. Could we add a few species by checking on a few nests? No, we had already gotten all those species. Perhaps we would have more success with Long-eared and Northern Pygmy-Owls at Monte Bello now? Not likely, they are usually most vocal just before dawn. With limited prospects of improving our total and not having slept in nearly 40 hours, the thought of a warm bed at home won out, and we elected to call it a day.

Our total of 175 species broke our 1993 record by 16 species - a healthy increase indeed. But we still had three hours that we could have birded. Maybe those Grant Ranch birds would have been there if we'd gotten there a little earlier. Maybe next year there will be a couple of more stakeouts or a few other migrants in those flocks. Maybe next year if we just tried a little harder we could get to 180, maybe ... and so the ritual repeats itself.

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