

The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

September 1994

Burrowing Owls Gain Ground In Santa Clara

by Lynne Trulio

Burrowing owls have been given a chance to stand their ground at Mission College thanks to a decision by the Santa Clara City Council. The decision will force the College administration to realize that from now on its mission must include the preservation of owls on campus.

On Tuesday August 2 the Santa Clara City Council unanimously upheld its earlier decision requiring Mission College and potential developers of College land to produce a long-term plan for the preservation of owls on campus. Although a retail project is currently planned by Interland Corporation for some of the open lands, the Council said it would not grant the zoning for the land until a habitat plan is produced. Such a plan is expected to be presented to the Council on September 13.

This far-sighted decision, led by council members Judith Nadler and Keri Procnier, is a great step forward for the little ground-dwelling bird—a bird that needs all the help it can get. The western burrowing owl lives in colonies with

ground squirrels and is the only owl that lives and nests underground. Their numbers are declining precipitously in California as a result of development and owl-destructive land management policies. The birds themselves are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, but because the species is not listed as endangered or threatened, its habitat is fair game. Unfortunately, the flat, open grasslands required by burrowing owls are also prime development land.

The burrowing owl issue at Mission College reared its feathered head when the Mission College-West Valley District Foundation and its lessee, Interland, proposed removing the entire Mission College owl population and relocating it elsewhere, conveniently out of the way. The only problem with this plan was that long-distance relocations of burrowing owls are seldom successful. The owls are site-tenacious, dislike being moved, and often either fly back to their original site or disappear. A 1990 effort to relocate 10 owls from the Mission College site to IBM property in San Jose resulted in only one owl remaining at the IBM site.

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The Art of Nature

General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, September 21 • 7:30 PM Refreshments, 8:00 PM Program

Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, 2775 E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto

★ (Note location change for this program) ★

Join us as Katherine B. Rambo demonstrates how her camera and her selective eye find another point of view of our San Francisco Bay Area. She explores our urban habitat and shows us new ways to experience the lives and leavings of our natural environment and neighbors: birds, plants, minerals, water, weather, mammals. The artist that she celebrates in her slide show during this week of the vernal equinox is Mother Nature herself.

In Katherine's words, "Natural art can be found not only in famous places like Big Sur and Yosemite, but in the Lost Places: bleak, scruffy, often dismissed as wasteland; surviving scraps of agricultural land, vacant lots, ragged remnants of

tidal marshlands. Such places are easily accessible, and for people willing to walk a little farther, look more closely, pause and occasionally use a magnifying glass, these habitats reveal microworlds of mystery and fragile beauty." Sounds like where we do a lot of our birding?!

Katherine Rambo has made slide presentations at S.F. Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Alviso and exhibited at Coyote Pt. Museum, with upcoming exhibits at Stanford and the Museum of Natural History in Pacific Grove. Come and enjoy what our new Hospitality Committee has planned for the year and see what Katherine has found in Mother Nature's urban habitats.

Chapter News

Birdathon 94 Wrapup

We are very pleased with this year's Birdathon results. The 1994 Birdathon fundraiser totaled just over \$7,300 as of September 1. We were lucky to have Gail Cheeseman and Harriet Gerson step in as chairpersons, and make this fundraiser a success! The following is a list of donors who generously contributed \$50.00 or more.

Doug & Gail Cheeseman, Les Chibana, Rob & Rita Colwell, John DeLavoryas, Pat & Jean Dubois, Bob & Diane Endsley, Fred Fisher, Harriet Gerson, Carol Godsave, Bobbie & Carl Handen, Jane Becker-Haven, Grant & Karen Hoyt, Ken Hull, Dana Johnson, Linda Johnson, Marjorie Karpen, Pete LaTourrette, Ester Litten, Brad Lowman, Rebecca McCracken, John McLemore & Clysta Seney, Betty Mann, Patricia Mann, Anna Miller, David Realty, Jules Resnick, Allen Royer, Katherine Shehan, George Spiegel, Will Taylor, Jeanette Van Derseer, Ann Verdi, Alan Walthers, Juliette Wheeler, Milton West, Nick Yatsko

In Memoriam

Donations have been made to SCVAS in memory of Mary MacPherson by the following: Elaine & Kurt Bauer, Sherri Capella, Sylvia Diaz, Michelle Ferretta, Bill & Pat Graham, Prudence Grider, Wanda Griffen, Anna Kupper, Bridget Plant, Dorothy Soderberg

Nature Shop News

I was happy to see the many shoppers visiting The Nature Shop this summer. Lots of new merchandise has arrived including colorful bird pins by Spear Design, Hummingbird and Garden Bird Rubber Stamps by Hero Arts, and new T-shirt designs by Harlequin Nature Graphics. To celebrate the fall migration, we have **10% off T-shirts** for the month of September. We want you to look good out on the birding trails!

— Jayne

Adopt-A-Book

In "Building A Birder's Library", (*Birding*, February, 1993), Richard E. Webster said "Money spent wisely on books is money not wasted." This is a sentiment shared by your librarian. Webster proceeds in a 36 page article to list more than 300 titles in various categories, his rationale for their selection, and some advice on buying bird books. Almost 100 of his choices can be found on the shelves of your SCVAS library. While some of our books are not the most recent editions, others are difficult-to-find classics that enhance the quality of our collection. The nearly 600 volumes in our library were primarily donated by members, or their families, supplemented by purchases from a modest budget established in 1992.

We would now like to start a new acquisition program that encourages members to donate a book of their choice from a list which includes some of Webster's recommendations and many recently published bird finding guides. The past generosity of SCVAS members suggests that this program can be successful in building a more current library. If you are interested in participating, call or write the office for a copy of the "Adopt-A-Book" list. The list includes titles, authors, and purchase prices. You need only select a book, write a check to SCVAS and mail it to the office with a note indicating the title of your choice. When the book has been received and processed into the library (including a book plate with your name as the donor), you will be notified. If you happen to own a book on the list with which you are willing to part, just call the office and we will be happy to come to get it. If you previously resided in another state, you might consider sponsoring a bird finding guide of that state as a way of acquainting other SCVAS members with a place that holds some good birding memories for you.

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

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

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

1994, Volume 41, Number 3

Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592

September 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 Sept. 7, 9:00 AM.**

Half day. Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough. Leader: Shirley Gordon 408/996-9863. Meet at Jetty Rd. and Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. Highlights: shorebirds and waterfowl. Lunch optional.

Wednesday Sept. 7, 7:30 PM.

Bay Area Bird Photographers. Tonight's program will feature an All-members' Slide Presentation. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Saturday Sept. 10, 7:30 AM.**

South Bay Rarities Chase with Steve Rottenborn 415/497-9368. Join Santa Clara County's top rare bird finder for a tour of local bayside hotspots. Meet at Alviso Marina (from Hwy 237, take Gold St. N, left on Elizabeth, right on Hope to Marina parking lot). Itinerary

subject to change, but may include CCRS, Charleston Slough, Palo Alto Baylands. Moderate walking; bring scopes. Recommended for intermediate and advanced birders.

Tuesday Sept. 13, 9:30 AM. Eve Case Bird Discussion Group at the home of Jean and Pat Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos, 408/395-4264. Topic: Summer birding experiences.

Saturday Sept. 17, 9:00 AM.

Coastal Clean-up Day. See on p. 6.

****Sunday Sept. 18, 9:00 AM.**

Full day. Point Reyes. Leader: Peter LaTourrette 415/961-2741. Meet at Drakes Beach parking area. From Olema take Sir Francis Drake Highway about 14 miles west, turn left to Drakes Beach. Bring lunch, liquids, full gas tank. Highlights: fall migrants and vagrants.

Wednesday Sept. 21, 7:30 PM.

General Membership Meeting, Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd. Palo Alto. See box pg. 1.

****Saturday Sept. 24, Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands.** Full day. Meet at 8:00 AM for carpooling from Park 'n Ride at Page Mill Rd./I-280 in Palo Alto. Leader: Nick Yatsko 408/247-5499. Highlights: migrating hawks, including possible Broad-winged Hawk and Merlin; swifts and passerines.

****Wednesday Sept. 28, 8:30**

AM. Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader: Roxie Handler 408/730-1745. From Hwy 101 exit N. on San Antonio Rd. in Mt. View, park on Terminal Way at end of San Antonio.

****Sunday Oct. 2, 9:00 AM.**

Half day. Princeton Harbor and vicinity. Leader: Dan Keller 415/726-3306. Meet at corner of West Point and Stanford Aves. in Princeton, 4 mi. N of Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1. Highlights: waterbirds and coastal vagrants.

****Saturday Oct. 8, 9:00 AM.**

Full day. Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands. Leader: Don Schmoldt 510/215-1910. Meet at Vista Pt. parking lot at N end of Golden Gate Bridge. Our second trip to this hawk-watching hotspot for those who missed the Sept. 24 trip (or were fogged out!).

Fall Birding Classes

Two classes for birders will be offered by Sunbeam Ecology Explorations at Little House, 800 Middle Ave. in Menlo Park. There will be 8 slide-lecture sessions for each class and 4 field trips. Instructor: Maryann Danielson. Fee: \$40 (additional fee for field trips). Registration at first class.

BIRDING BASICS—for beginning and less-skilled intermediate birders. The fall session will focus on local land birds, their identification, basic biology and natural history. Wed. eves. 7:30-9:30 PM, starting Sept. 14.

BIRDS IN MIGRATION—for intermediate and more advanced birders. The fall quarter will highlight birds in migration, both on the Pacific Flyway and at other locations across North America. Mon. eves. 7:30-9:30 PM, starting Sept. 12.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris: Natural History of Trinidad & Tobago, Jan 18-31, '95

Come see spectacles of the bird world with naturalist and wildlife artist Edward Rooks on a tour of his beautiful Caribbean home of Trinidad and Tobago. We'll be there in the dry season this time. In Trinidad's Caroni Swamp, we will see chevrons of Scarlet Ibis coming to roost in the mangroves. In the tropical forests, we will see and hear Anthruses, Woodcreepers, Trogons, Toucans, and the loudest of all, Bellbirds. We will watch Manakins dance and hear Oilbirds echo-locate in their cave world. Sapphires, Emeralds, and Ruby-Topazes are just

some of the gorgeous hummingbirds to encounter. On Tobago, where Motmots and Jacamars are common, we will swim off beautiful beaches and among coral reefs. Thousands of seabirds, including the elegant Red-billed Tropicbird, nest on islets that we will visit. Call (408) 867-1371 for information.

Western Field Ornithologists

The 19th annual Meeting of the Western Field Ornithologists will be held Fri. Sept. 30 through Sun. Oct. 2, 1994 in Morro Bay. Fall is a great time for birding along the central coast of California for vagrants and pelagic species, and field trips will be offered. Presentations will include Snowy Plover winter distribution, larids of Salton Sea, Xantus' Murrelet ecology, California Records Committee update, and the always intriguing Bird Identification Panel. Banquet speaker Dr. Arnold Small will present a program on fauna comparisons between North and South Poles. Contact WFO c/o Morro Coast Audubon at P.O. Box 160, Morro Bay CA 93443 if interested in attending.

Artist Among Us

Steve Hewer, a new member of SCVAS and wonderful wildlife artist generously donated two of his paintings to the SCVAS office. Steve plans to get involved with more chapter activities and we couldn't be more pleased to have another talented artist among our membership! Thanks Steve! Steve has a beautiful pencil drawing on sale in the Nature Shop. We also carry notecards by local artists Edward Rooks and Russ Lavenson.

Field Notes

By Bill Bousman

Grebes through Ibis

Western Grebes have again nested on Calaveras Res. with 12 nests observed on 23 Jul (SCR), probably all Western rather than Clark's. A Brown Pelican seen on Salt Pond A10 in Alviso 17 Jun (SCR,HLR) was the first of the season. Nesting of Double-crested Cormorants continues to increase in the county. Eight nests were counted on Long Point on 11 May-4 Jun (WGB,PJM,WCa), where they've nested on the transmission towers for the last two years, and new colonies were detected with seven nests on Salt Pond B2, 2 Jun-10 Jul (WGB,MJM), and three nests on Salt Pond A18, 18 Jun-23 Jul (SCR,MJM). An adult Brandt's Cormorant was found on the Palo Alto Summer Bird Count 4 Jun (MMR) and was re-found 8 Jun (SCR) for one of our few records. The first Little Blue Heron of the season was an adult near the Environmental Education Center (EEC) in Alviso 19 May (SS *vide* PJM). Single adults were seen near the Alviso heronry through 26 May (PJM,MJM,SCR) and, after that, one to two adults have been found regularly in Salt Pond A9 from 17 Jun-31 Jul (m.ob.). Cattle Egrets have been fairly reliable near the Arzino Ranch in Alviso with peaks of 17 counted on 22 May (PJM) and 18 Jun (SCR). Twelve White-faced Ibis were at the Waterbird Management Area (WMA) on lower Coyote Creek 9 Jun (CO), but after that the only sightings have been of a single bird in the Mountain View Forebay 2-31 Jul (JiC,m.ob.).

Waterfowl through Quail

The Ross' Goose at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) was last reported 21 May (PJM). Most unusual was a Brant that was found on Salt Pond B2 15 May (PJM) for our fifth county record. Unlike most past birds, this one remained for two weeks (m.ob.) and was last seen 30 May (RJe). A pair of Blue-winged Teal at the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP 1 May (RJe) may have been the same pair seen nearby on the WMA on lower Coyote Creek 5 May (MMR). None

were seen following this. A single male Redhead has overwintered in the vicinity of Charleston Slough. It appears that three Ring-necked Ducks overwintered on Calaveras Res. as well as a pair in the borrow ponds along Coyote Creek upstream of Ogier Avenue in Morgan Hill (both SCR). Common Merganser again bred on Almaden Res. with a female and young seen 14 May (AV) and 2 Jun (MMR). An adult Swainson's Hawk, always unusual in the county, was found over Metcalf Canyon 9 Jun (SCR) and seems too late for a spring migrant. Summering Peregrine Falcons include a sub-adult near Penitencia Creek in Milpitas 26 May (SCR), an adult at Calaveras Res. 23 Jul (SCR), and an adult over the Alviso salt ponds 31 Jul (MMR). Up to eight Mountain Quail were heard east of Monte

Extensive breeding of Black-chinned Hummingbirds was the biggest surprise of the summer

Bello Ridge 15-30 May (JY,AL,m.ob.) with the peak count on 22 May (PLN). This is a new area for this scarce and elusive bird.

Shorebirds through Skimmers!

Good numbers of Snowy Plover have been found this season with the majority in the salt ponds northwest of Alviso. The peak count was 18 on the Knapp Tract on 14 May (PJM). A Lesser Yellowlegs at Crittenden Marsh 4 Jul (AME) was the first arriving fall bird. Peak July counts included 39 in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 23 Jul (MJM) and 28 in the Mountain View Forebay on 28 Jul (MMR). This species has become more common in the last five years. Always good finds were Ruddy Turnstones with a single bird ranging north of the San Francisquito Creek delta in San Mateo County 4 Jun (SCR,MMR), three on the Alviso salt ponds 10 Jul (RJe), and another single bird on Salt Pond A14 on 31 Jul (MMR). Less expected was a late Red

Knot off Ravenswood OSP 4 Jun (SCR) and two birds on Salt Pond A14 on 17 Jul (MJM). A adult Semipalmated Sandpiper in Crittenden Marsh 22 Jul (SCR) is one of our few records of adult birds locally; juveniles typically show up in August. An adult female Ruff, otherwise called a Reeve, was found in Crittenden 22 Jul (SCR) and probably the same bird was in the Mountain View Forebay on 28 Jul (MJM,MMR). A Red Phalarope, in alternate plumage, found on Salt Pond B1 on 16 May (SCR), is our only spring record. A first-summer Heermann's Gull over the Calabazas ponds 15 Jul (SCR,HLR) was very unusual. As we have come to expect, a few Elegant Terns have shown up this summer, but in surprising places! One was over Coyote Creek near Montague Expressway 14 Jul (MJM), while another was over Charleston Slough the same day (SCR). Even farther afield were two flying over Coyote Creek at Senter Park in San Jose - where were they going? A Common Tern off Ravenswood OSP 4 Jun (SCR) was a most surprising summer record, Least Terns have shown up again in July as we expect for post-breeding birds, but in small numbers. Four were found at Charleston Slough 6 Jul (MMR) and two were on Salt Pond B2 on 10 Jul (MJM). One to two birds have remained at Charleston Slough through 26 Jul (SCR,WGB). A small spring movement of Black Terns was seen with one on Salt Pond A18 in Alviso 4 May (SCR), one at the south end of Calaveras Res. 7 May (SCR), and four at Crittenden Marsh 10 May (MMR). The biggest surprise among the larids this season was the second county record of Black Skimmer and, most amazing, it nested locally for the first county breeding record. These birds were found incubating eggs on a salt pond on 3 Jun (VL). Four young hatched from the nest and by the end of July at least one nearly full-grown young remained (MJM *et al.*). With "Cutwater" as part of our local avifauna we are truly blessed. Let's hope that this species' range expansion in California continues unabated.

Swifts and Hummingbirds

A few Black Swifts were found in the last two weeks of May. Three were

over Moffett Field 17 May (MMR) and, from 24 to 28 May up to nine birds were seen foraging along the Santa Cruz Mountain ridge line in the vicinity of Loma Prieta (SCR,MMR,RJe). The most exciting news of the summer season was Steve Rottenborn's careful census work of remnant cottonwood riparian forest along Guadalupe River, Los Gatos Creek, and Coyote Creek and his discovery of an extensive nesting population of **Black-chinned Hummingbirds**. Although we must await Steve's final summary of his census work, in the initial portion of the breeding season he found 43+ birds and five nests in the three miles of Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creek above their confluence in San Jose. Along 12 miles of Coyote Creek, from below Hwy 237 to Hellyer CP he found 19 birds and at least one nest. On Los Gatos Creek, near San Fernando, he found four females nesting in a 50-meter stretch of creek. All were nesting in mature cottonwood and used cottonwood fibers in their nests. The center of population for this rare hummingbird is clearly mature cottonwoods with permanent water and they apparently care little about what is happening nearby away from their creekside habitat. Have we missed them all these years because we considered downtown San Jose an unattractive place to bird? A nest with eggs on Los Gatos Creek on 24 Jul strongly suggests that many of these birds are double-brooded. An imm. male **Costa's Hummingbird** was found 17 May (SCR) and seen at least through 4 Jun (m.ob.). A adult male arrived at a feeder in San Jose sometime in June and has been seen at least through 26 Jul (NF *fide* HT). We expect a few **Calliope Hummingbirds** to come through in the first week of May so one banded at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) 4 May (*fide* MMR) and a male was seen in Ed Levin CP 7-9 May (SCR,MMR,AME,MJM) were normal.

Flycatchers through Warblers

Always a rare spring migrant, a **Willow Flycatcher** was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 20 May (SCR) and one was banded nearby 15 Jun (*fide* SCR). The tail end of the **Hammond's Flycatcher** spring movement was of one singing along Guadalupe River below Malone

1 May (SCR) and one east of Black Mountain 20 May (MMR). Much less expected was a **Dusky Flycatcher** banded at CCRS 29 Apr (*fide* MMR). Finishing off the rare **Empidonax** was a **Gray Flycatcher** netted at CCRS 13 and 18 May (*fide* MMR and SCR) and one seen in Monte Bello OSP 21 May (SCR,HLR). Three **Purple Martins** were found along the Loma Prieta ridge line 24 May (SCR) and these, or other birds, were found in this area occasionally (MMR,MJM,RJe,SCR) through 3 Jul when a single bird was observed (RF,CH). A female or imm. martin at Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve 25 Jul (BC) was the first recorded there since 1972. A **Bank Swallow**, the second of the spring, was seen flying over the ponds near Los Esteros in Alviso 13 May (SCR,AME). Despite my comments in the June column, suggesting an end of our amazing **Palm Warbler** winter, three birds were found along Coyote Creek at Levee Road on 4 May (SCR) including two that were singing! A **Northern Waterthrush** along Guadalupe River at Emory 30 Apr (SCR) was a rare spring migrant. Three **Yellow-breasted Chats** on the Pajaro River downstream from Hwy 101 on 8 Jun (SCR) are likely local breeding birds.

Tanagers through Buntings

A first-summer male **Summer Tanager** was found on Coyote Creek downstream of Sycamore on 29 Jul (SCR) and was re-found on 31 Jul (MMR) for our sixth county record. This area, not far downstream from Barber Lane, had become one of July's hot spots for northern California birders with the discovery of a male **Scarlet Tanager** along the creek near Barber Lane 13 Jul (SCR,RM). This bird was seen by numerous observers in the next two weeks and was still present on 31 Jul (MJM). This is the second county record and the only July record for northern California (SBT *fide* SCR). Adding to our list of eastern vagrants was an adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** flying by the SCVAS office on 18 Jun (MJM,RF) and a first-year male along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 20 Jun (SCR). A first-year male **Indigo Bunting** was found west of Calaveras Res. 7 May (SCR) to pad out our list of vagrants and an adult male was found along Colorado Creek 29 May

(MMR) on the same territory as occupied by a bird last year that was mated with a **Lazuli Bunting**.

Sparrows through Crossbills

The first **Black-chinned Sparrows** of the season were three on Willow Ridge in Henry Coe SP 8 May (JY,AL). This species appeared most numerous in the vicinity of Loma Prieta with 11 counted there 11 Jun (SCR). One or two pairs were again found along the Indian Creek Trail in Monte Bello and four were found along Colorado Creek 29 May (MMR) where less is known of their status. **Grasshopper Sparrows** are sometimes hard to find, but they nest in many parts of the county as indicated by the following records: Ed Levin CP, 1-7 May (MMR,SCR); Mahoney Ridge, Henry Coe SP, 8 May (JY,AL); Monte Bello OSP, 15 May-4 Jul (m.ob.); Santa Teresa Hills, 28 May (AV); Jos. Grant CP, 28 May (MJM); Metcalf Canyon, 2-9 Jun (MMR,SCR); Marsh Road, 5 Jun (MJM,RF); and northwest of Sargent, 8 Jun (SCR). A **White-throated Sparrow** at Smiths Creek 8 May (MMR,SCR,HLR) was a late migrant, but an adult banded at CCRS 12 Jul (*fide* MJM) is clearly out of season. We had an invasion of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** this spring in Alviso. Twelve females and five imm. males were found near Los Esteros and Grand 10 May (MMR) and high counts of 33 birds were noted on 11 May (MJM) and 31 on 13 May (SCR). Numbers dropped after that with a male and female noted on 22 May (PJM). Three **Red Crossbills** observed on Wrights Station Road 29 May (RJe) may have bred locally this year.

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), William Cabot (WCa), Bill Clark (BC), Jim Corliss (JiC), Al Eisner (AME), Reid Freeman (RF), Nancy Frizzel (NF), Caralisa Hughes (CH), Richard Jeffers (RJe), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Valerie Layne (VL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Rebecca Miller (RM), Paul Noble (PLN), Chris Otahal (CO), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Sandy Spakoff (SS), Scott Terrill (SBT), Hazel Tilden (HT), Ann Verdi (AV), and James Yurchenco (JY).



The Big Picture

Few people realize how much a city or county's general plan affects their lives. A general plan forms the basis for land use and social service decisions in a given area.

Want to know whether that hillside you look out on in the morning is safe from urban sprawl? Will the few remaining farmlands of the Valley become tract homes and golf courses? Will taxes go up for basic services like water, fire protection, and road repair? Will your commute be more or less of a headache in five years? For answers to these questions and more, look to your general plan.

Planning Ahead

Santa Clara County's General Plan Review kicks into high gear this fall, giving all of us a chance to express our vision for the County's future. Public sentiment in general and public comments in particular help guide the County's Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors in shaping the plan.

Many of the proposed changes in the General Plan are good. However, two key tasks remain. First, there will be debate on some key proposals, such as Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) for the areas' cities, or preservation of farmlands. Second, even the good language in the plan—such as the guiding principle that intense urban development should be limited to urban areas, leaving the rural character of other areas intact—could be rendered ineffective if the County doesn't focus on implementing the plan. For example, despite good language in the County's 1980 General Plan, the last decade has brought nearly 7000 acres of additional intense development to previously rural areas. That's the equivalent of a city the size of Mountain View. In these times of funding shortages especially, asking the County to concentrate on enforcing the plans' provisions will be crucial.

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Here's Where You Come In

If you want to have something to say about the Valley's future, there will be several opportunities. Public meetings will be held in October and November, with the Board of Supervisors set to vote on the new General Plan in December. A good turnout from the environmental community at those meetings could make a big difference. Also, you can voice your opinion directly to the Supervisors with a letter, a phone call (the number for all the Supervisors is 408-299-2323), or a personal visit.

You can also call me at 408-252-3748, and I'll help you get involved.

Clean-Up Day: A Chance to Return a Favor

Have you ever relished the bird life and other wonders of the South Bay wetlands and creeks? Well, if you have, here's a chance to say thank you.

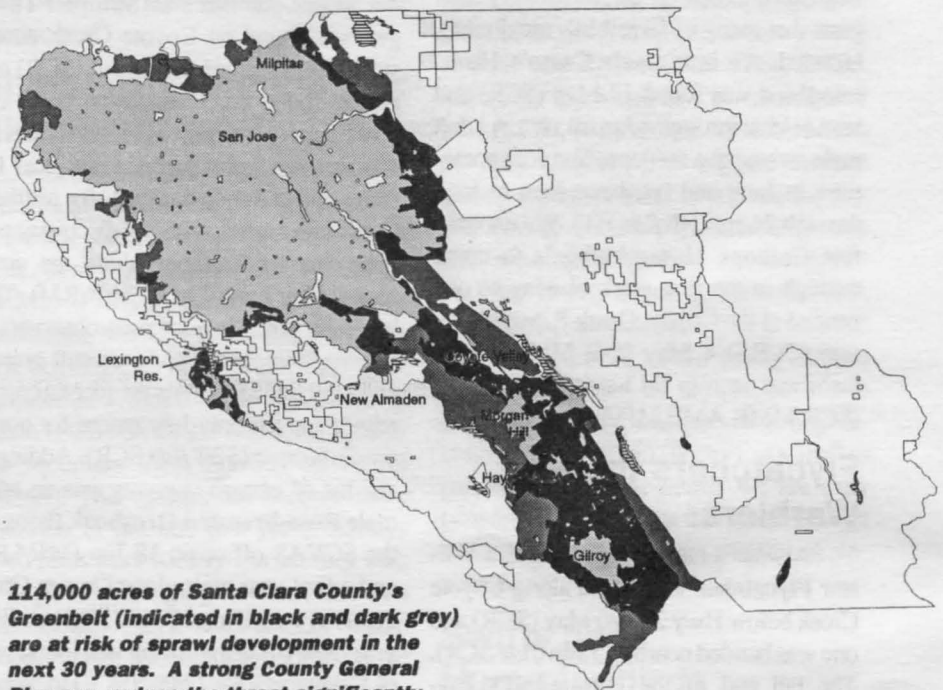
The 10th Annual Coastal Clean-up Day is Saturday, September 17. This is a huge, statewide event. Last year more than 50,000 people participated, cleaning up a total of 500,000 pounds of trash.

This year there will be a number of sites in the South Bay, including Sunnyvale, Saratoga, Los Gatos, Santa Clara, Mountain View, Los Altos Hills, and San Jose. The clean up will go on from 9 AM to 1 PM.

This is an event that is great for families. A good chance to show your kids (or grandkids) both the beauty of our area and the fact that they can make a difference in their communities. In addition, participants will receive free complimentary admissions to Marine World and coupons for Ben and Jerry's ice cream (I recommend coffee heath bar crunch).

Pre-registration is required at most sites, so act quickly. For more information you can call the office at 408-252-3748 or the regional coordinator, Jennifer George, at 408-730-7716.

—Craig Breon



...continued from page 1

On the other hand, passive relocations of birds on-site are much more successful. Owls are often amenable to being moved short distances if some habitat can be preserved near their existing site.

In July, long-time burrowing owl conservationist Janis Buchanan and I challenged the adequacy of the long-distance relocation plan before the Santa Clara Planning Commission and the City Council. We argued that the plan was flawed and that the better option of preserving owls on campus had never been explored by the College. We asked that the council require all parties to sit down and try to develop a long-term owl preservation plan for the campus. In a fortuitous twist of fate, SCVAS Treasurer John McLemore was present at several of the key meetings for other reasons. When the owl issue came up, John gave persuasive, spur-of-the-moment testimony before the council, and his help was pivotal in influencing the outcome.

The council was also persuaded by current evidence on numbers of owls in Santa Clara County and the importance of the Mission College colony. A survey of burrowing owls in California, conducted by Dr. David DeSante and partially funded by SCVAS, is showing that burrowing owl numbers have declined more than 60% in the last 10 years in the county. Although Mission College currently supports only 16 adults, it is the third largest population in the county and is one of only six sites in our county with more than 10

Field Trip Report: Charleston Slough

On Mother's Day, May 8, eight enthusiastic birders, including 6 beginners, met under partly cloudy but mostly clear and calm skies at Charleston Slough for the monthly beginners' birding trip. Although the spring migration had significantly reduced the number and variety of birds available for viewing, 48 species were seen. Several species were represented by single birds which, of course, included the "best" birds: a Redhead, and a Spotted Sandpiper in breeding plumage.

One of the advantages of spring birding is the opportunity to see nesting birds and their young. On this trip we saw the white egg of the Pied-billed Grebe and the highly camouflaged eggs of the American Avocet. Young birds included downy Mallards, fuzzy-headed Marsh Wrens, precocious and gangly-looking avocets and the apparently bald, red-billed Common Moorhen.

Discussions concerned binocular specifications and uses (especially the proper use of binoculars while wearing glasses), why one should not wear sunglasses while birdwatching (unless medically required), use of hats, which field guides are the best for beginning birders and the best place to purchase those field guides (McClellan Ranch Park, of course!)

Participation of knowledgeable birders with scopes on beginner birding trips helps make the event a positive one for the group as a whole. To this extent I would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Frank vanSlager.

—Bob Reiling

birds! Clearly this is an important population which needs to be protected *in situ*.

Relocations, development, and discing have all contributed to the decline in the College's owl population from 36 to the current 16. It is especially sad that this species is decreasing because burrowing owls can be very tolerant of human activity. They are well-known for their ability to live on golf courses, airports, military bases and other highly altered habitat. Owls will use manicured areas for foraging and will nest in areas close to human activity, as long as they have ground squirrels and unsprayed short grass—two critical owl habitat requirements. Owl habitat can often be included in development planning if less conventional landscaping is considered.

Thanks to the City Council decision, the College and developers will be meeting with Janis Buchanan and others to formulate an owl-friendly landscaping plan for the campus. This landscaping is inexpensive, requiring no irrigation, no pesticides and no squirrel control, and, if implemented, could provide a model for long-term planning for owls at other sites in the county. Such planning serves everyone's best interest, since preservation of burrowing owls in the face of development will continue to surface as an important environmental issue.

Lynne Trulio is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at San Jose State and has studied burrowing owls extensively in Santa Clara County.

People, Water, Wildlife: National Audubon Convention 1994

Fort Meyers, Florida will be the place to be this November for National Audubon's 1994 Biennial Convention co-hosted with Florida Audubon. The theme is "People, Water and Wildlife" comprising the most important environmental issues challenging our nation. These interrelationships can not be better demonstrated than in south Florida—a land of spectacular bird life, vast wetlands, and growing human population.

This year there are two special sessions following the convention. The first is a Mobile Learning Lab tour through the greater Everglades ecosystem. This tour is for people who want to learn first-hand about the ecosystem and its spectacular scenery and wildlife. The other is a Population Conference in Miami as a follow-up for action to the UN International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, to be held in September 1994.

Everyone is welcome to attend all or any of the sessions. Please contact the SCVAS office 408-252-3747 or National Audubon Society 303-499-3622 for a registration form. The dates and locations are as follows:

Fri.-Tues.	Nov. 11-15	NAS Convention	Ft. Meyers
Tues.-Fri.	Nov. 15-18	Mobile Learning Lab	Ft. Meyers
Fri-Sun	Nov. 18-20	Population Conference	Miami

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- PCC, Palo Alto Sat., 10/22, 10 AM-12:00PM
- Wildlife Ctr of Silicon Valley, SJ Sat. 10/22, 4:30PM-6:30PM
- REI, Cupertino Tues. 10/25, 4:30PM-6:30PM
- YSI, Los Gatos Tues. 10/25, 4:30PM-6:30PM
- Pet Friends, Sunnyvale Wed. 10/26, 4:30PM-6:30PM

Birdfeeders will be listed in the October *Avocet* or you can call the office at 408/252-3747 for a list of available feeders. The birdseed industry is expecting a good summer millet crop and Volkman is pretty firm on these prices. However, there is a slight chance of a change in availability or price.

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Audubon Special	20lb	\$ 9.00		
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