



The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

June 1995

Moss Landing's Best Kept Secret

Elkhorn Slough, in the central Monterey Bay area, has long been known as a birding "hot-spot," with diverse terrain and juxtaposition of many habitats. The annual Moss Landing Christmas Count is an index of the tremendous diversity of species utilizing this protected area. In 1994 this count ranked first in the nation with a species total of 214.

Since the first conservation land acquisitions in the early 1970's, protected holdings now encompass over 4,000 acres. The establishment of Elkhorn Slough as a National Estuarine Research Reserve in 1980 and the recent designation of Monterey Bay and portions of the Slough as a National Marine Sanctuary have provided impetus for continuing study and conservation in Elkhorn Slough.

In the Reserve's North Marsh, restoration and a recent acquisition have increased by 125 acres the foraging and roosting habitat for water-associated birds. This area is becoming increasingly important as other habitats in the slough are modified by tidal scour and earthquake-caused subsidence.

A Great Egret and Great Blue Heron colony on the Reserve expanded this year to 90 active nests. Nesting sites are monitored with the use of a tethered helium balloon and camera system. The colony, which started in 1985 with a single pair of herons, features the first recorded nesting site of Great Egret for both Monterey and Santa Cruz counties.

Caspian Terns have re-established a breeding rookery in Elkhorn Slough after an absence of nearly 15 years. Beginning with several pairs in 1991, the colony grew dramatically, doubling in numbers each year. The increase included several banded birds from an as yet unidentified outside colony. In 1994, graduate student Jennifer Parkin of Moss Landing Marine Laboratories counted 150 breeding pairs with 187 nests and 321 eggs on an island in the restored South Marsh of the Reserve. This colony also attracted a single Black Skimmer, a species which has the potential to breed in the same area. Reserve researchers are managing the vegetation of the island to maintain its attractiveness to the nesting terns.

Continues on page 8...

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 is also an opportunity to acknowledge all of the terrific Audubon volunteers who have worked so hard this year! Please join us on Wednesday, June 14 at 6:00PM at McClellan Ranch Park, 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino. Enjoy good food and conversation, take a walk along the Nature Trail, see the Native Plant Garden and visit the SCVAS Nature Shop and Birding Library.

Please bring something to share:

A-G Hors d'oeuvres

H-L Dessert

M-Q Salad

R-Z Main Dish

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 directions, call Jayne at (408) 252-3747.

Chapter News

Summertime, Summertime!

The SCVAS office, Library and Nature Shop will be open all summer. Our usual hours are Monday-Friday 9:00AM - 5:00PM and Saturdays 10:00AM - 2:00PM. Please remember it is always best to call ahead. There are some days when we are closed due to meetings or events outside the office.

We start restocking the Nature Shop in the summertime to get ready for the fall. It's a great time to shop because we have a full selection of sizes, colors, and designs. We will also have a full selection of birdseed all summer long!

If you missed Migratory Bird Day, it's not too late to get a beautiful T-shirt commemorating the partnership between SCVAS and Coyote Creek Riparian Station. The shirt features a Barn Swallow over a backdrop of the Americas, and was designed by SCVAS/CCRS member Les Chibana. They are available at the Nature Shop.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

There are six spaces available on a unique wildlife tour which includes the kingdom of Bhutan in the western Himalayas and Chitwan National Park in Nepal, Nov. 10-27, sponsored by Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris. For details call Gail Cheeseman at 408-741-5330 or 800-527-5330.

SCVAS Loses Close Friend

SCVAS mourns the loss of an active member, field trip participant, Christmas Bird Counter and friend. James R. Brady died April 13 after a tragic bicycling accident. A former Navy commander and pilot for PanAm airlines, Jim was a regular on Wednesday field trips for the past 10 years. Jim's family asks that any donations in his memory be sent to:

The Navy's Wives Scholarship Foundation
c/o Barbara Stead
3848 Old Colony Circle
Virginia Beach VA 23452

Birdathon Update

Most of the Birdathon Teams went out in April and below are some early results. We will be awarding special prizes to some of our teams at the Annual Dinner on June 14th. As of May 10 \$3,500 had been raised, with more checks coming into the office daily. Thanks to all participants and contributors!! Look for a full report with all the teams and the money raised in the September *Avocet*.

Team	Leaders	Species Seen
Uncommon Loons	Nick Yatsko & Rod Norden	101
Wry Wrentits	Gail & Doug Cheeseman	120
	Harriet Gerson & Les Chibana	
Wrong Terns	Bobbie & Cindy Handen & Friends	76
Hummdingers	Sandy Cortright, Heather Rottenborn	109
	Jayne DiCandio & Jon Archer	
Santa Clara Swifts	Clysta Seney & Ann Verdi	49 *
Vagrants	Grant Hoyt, Mike Mammoser & Dick Stovel	158**

* all in the City of Santa Clara

**all in Santa Clara County

CVAS OFFICERS

President	Nick Yatsko	408/247-5499
Past Pres.	Rob Colwell	415/326-2400
1st VP	Clysta Seney	408/261-9431
2nd VP	Mary Simpson	408/370-2177
Treasurer	John McLemore	408/261-9431
Rec. Secty.	vacant	

STAFF

Chapter Mgr	Jayne DiCandio	408/252-3747
Environmental Advocate		
	Craig Breon	408/252-3748
Office Fax		408/252-2850

DIRECTORS

Jane Becker-Haven '92-'95	415/321-0776
Bobbie Handen '93-'96	408/356-4263
Howard Johnson '93-'96	408/255-2422
Grant Hoyt '93-'96	415/969-7892
Sandy Cortright '94-'97	408/738-1251
Heather Rottenborn 94-97	415/497-9368
Chris Fischer '94-97	415/364-8723
David McIntyre '95-'98	415/856-6671
Steve Shunk '95-'98	408/297-3654

CHAIRPERSONS

CBC	Kathy Parker	408/358-2832
	Ann Verdi	408/266-2798
The Avocet	Grant Hoyt	415/969-7892
	Laura Lebherz	408/264-0533
Education	Bobbie Handen	408/356-4263
Envir. Action		
	David McIntyre	415/867-6671
Programs	Clysta Seney	408/261-9431
Library	Marianna Tubman	408/255-2422
Field Trips		
Weekend	Grant Hoyt	415/969-7892
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 Vacant	
	Membership Vacant	
	Hospitality Gail Cheeseman	

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.

1995, Volume 42, Number 99

Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592

June 1995 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**

Friday June 2, 7:30 PM. Special General Meeting at Saratoga library, 13650 Saratoga Ave. Allen Fish & Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. Allen will tell us all about the latest from GGRO. Hear about the telemetry program (a Broadwing that went south), the banding program (one just never knows), and the ever-popular Hawkwatch program (24,000+ hawks counted last year!) Allen is an expert in the field of raptor study and will, as always, bring some tough raptor ID slides with him. Please join us for a most entertaining evening!

Saturday June 3, all day. Palo Alto Summer Bird Count. If you have some experience counting birds and would like to participate, contact the office at 408/252-3747. (See *May Avocet* for full details).

****Saturday, June 10, 8:30 AM.** Young Audubon Field Trip to Alum Rock Park. Leaders: Dave & David Cook (408) 729-7310. Celebrate the end of the school year on a Young Audubon Field Trip! Children, teenagers, families and beginners welcome. Some binoculars are available for use. Birding walk will be followed by a mid-morning presentation of captive raptors by the Youth Science Institute. From I-680 in San Jose take Alum Rock Ave. east into park. \$3 parking fee. Meet at second parking lot at the back of the YSI Museum.

****Saturday June 10, 7:30 AM.** Half day. Arastradero Preserve, Palo Alto. Leader: Nick Yatsko 408/247-5499. Take I-280 to Page Mill Rd. in Palo Alto, exit W to Arastradero Rd., turn right and meet in parking lot approx. 1/2 mile on right. Breeding activity should be in full swing in the oak woodland and riparian habitat at this excellent birding venue. Moderate walking 1-2 miles. A good variety of raptors, woodpeckers and songbirds is expected.

Tuesday June 13, 9:30 AM. Eve Case Bird Discussion Group at the Dormans' residence, 15086 Becky Lane, Los Gatos 408/395-5309. Bring a bag lunch. Topic: Birding at the Dormans'.

****Wednesday June 14, 8:00 AM** Half day. Stevens Creek County Park. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408) 257-3647. Meet at first parking lot (Chestnut Picnic Area). From I-280 go south on Foothill Blvd. (becomes Stevens Canyon Rd.) 2.1 miles to entrance on left. Lunch optional.

Wednesday June 14, 6:00 PM. Annual Potluck Dinner at McClellan Ranch Park. See Page 1 for details.

****Saturday June 17, 8:30 AM.** Beginners trip to Charleston Slough. Leader: TBA. From Hwy. 101 in Mtn. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way (1/4 mile). Turn right on Terminal and park. Basics of bird identification, including ducks, herons, egrets, shorebirds.

****Friday-Sunday July 7-9.** Kern River and vicinity. Leader: Bob Barnes. This trip, limited to 15 participants, features some of California's most varied and bird-rich habitat. The cottonwood-willow riparian forest along the S. Fork of the Kern River is home to the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Willow Flycatcher, species that have suffered serious de-

clines due to habitat loss and cowbird parasitization. Blue Grosbeak and Summer Tanager also breed here, and the outlying environs are home to Scott's Oriole and Black-throated Sparrow in the sage/scrub habitat, and Pinon Jay at higher elevations. The leader is knowledgeable, entertaining, and has a passion for the wildlife of this region. Call Nick Yatsko at 408/247-5499 to reserve space.

****Saturday July 15, 8:30 AM.** Beginners trip to Charleston Slough. Leader: TBA. From Hwy. 101 in Mtn. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way (1/4 mile). Turn right on Terminal and park. Basics of bird identification, including ducks, herons, egrets, shorebirds.

****Sunday August 6. Half day.** Año Nuevo State Reserve. Leader: Mark Miller 415/967-3429. This outing will focus on such coastal specialties as Black Swift, Bank Swallow and Marbled Murrelet. (Due to time constraints, it will not be a shorebird trip as in recent years.) Limited to 20 participants; call leader to reserve space.

****Saturday August 12, 8:30 AM.** Beginners trip to Charleston Slough. Leader: TBA. From Hwy. 101 in Mtn. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way (1/4 mile). Turn right on Terminal and park. Basics of bird identification, including ducks, herons, egrets, shorebirds.

Birds and Wildlife of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and Steens Mountain September 7-10, 1995

September is a beautiful time of year to visit Oregon's premier wildlife area, Malheur NWR and 9700 ft. Steens Mountain. Migrant landbirds of all kinds are dropping in at the desert oases; hawks, owls, eagles, and falcons abound and rails, cranes, herons, swans, and pelicans, among others, can be found in marshes. Renowned Oregon naturalist Mark Smith will lead this tour which begins and ends in Redmond, Oregon. Cost: \$495 includes all ground costs and a \$50 donation to Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. Limit 9.

It's not too late to sign up for this wonderful trip, being offered by Full Circle Tours of Portland, Oregon for SCVAS. Please contact our office at 408/252-3747 for an itinerary and a registration form.

Field Notes

By Bill Bousman

Big Days are always fun and a source of fund-raising as well. I have reports from two in this column, both run on 22 Apr. The team of Les Chibana, Doug and Gail Cheeseman, and Harriet Gerson is referred to as (LCh et al.) and Mike Mammoser, Grant Hoyt, and Dick Stovel are referred to as (MJM et al.).

Loons through Waterfowl

The **Red-throated Loon** found last month at Shoreline Lake remained there at least through 5 Apr (KCW). A **Pacific Loon** on the Calabazas Ponds on 15 Apr (CKS) is a scarce spring migrant - this is the only April record in the last 15 years. A **Common Loon** in alternate plumage on Almaden Res. on 28 Apr (AV) fits a pattern more typical of this species of spring migrants gone astray. A **Red-necked Grebe** on Shoreline Lake on 1 Apr (LCh) was most unexpected and could not be found subsequently. The **American Bittern** in the Mountain Forebay has continued to be seen regularly in April (m.ob.) with the latest record on 21 Apr (DCW). Another bird was found on 31 Mar on the northeast corner of Lake Cunningham (EA). **Cattle Egrets** continue to be found in Alviso along Los Esteros Road and at the Arzino Ranch in April with a peak count of nine on 18 Apr (SCR). The wintering **Ross's Goose** was still at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) through 22 Apr (MJM et al.). One

to three **Blue-winged Teal** have been found fairly regularly in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) and the Mountain View Forebay with observations on 2 Apr (JM), 8 Apr (DS), 11 and 18 Apr (JAC,CM), and 22 Apr (LCh et al., MJM et al.). A washed-out, imm male **White-winged Scoter** on Salt Pond A8 in Alviso 15 Apr (MJM) is one of our few April records. Late **Hooded Mergansers** included a pair on Shoreline Lake on 2 Apr (LCh,TGr,JM), a female there on 5 Apr (KCW), and a female on Searsville Lake on 9 Apr (RGJ).

A Great-tailed Grackle in Alviso is only the second to be found in the county

Red-breasted Merganser numbers appear to drop off in March from their favored Alviso salt ponds so 38 counted on Salt Pond A10 on 16 Apr (MMR) was unusual.

Raptors through Woodpeckers

We've had a good spring movement of **Osprey** with one at Parkway Lakes 31 Mar (DSr fide SCR), one over Santa Teresa CP 5 Apr (CT), another over Alviso 10 Apr (MMR), and a late bird over Stevens Creek Res. 14 Apr (MMR). A **Merlin** that wintered at Stanford was seen on 20 Apr (SCR) for our latest report. Late **Peregrine Falcons** or spring transients included a sub-adult of the dark race *pealei* on 15-16 Apr (MJM) on the Alviso salt

ponds. The latest bird seen was an imm. near the Arzino Ranch 18 Apr (SCR). Surveys of the Alviso salt pond found 12 **Snowy Plover** on both 15 Apr (MJM) and 23 Apr (MJM,JB). Some nesting was observed. It has been probably our best spring ever for migrating **Lesser Yellowlegs**. A single bird was in the Mountain View Forebay 11 Apr (JAC,CM) while three were found in the vernal pool along Disk Drive in Alviso on 22 Apr (MJM et al.) and two were on Salt Pond A6 on 23 Apr (MJM,JB). Two **Sanderlings** on Salt Pond A6 on 15 Apr (MJM) and Salt Ponds A5 and A7 on 23 Apr (MJM,JB) are unusual for the spring. A flock of 20 **Wilson's Phalaropes** in the Palo Alto FCB on 29 Apr (MJM) was not typical for the spring. Four **Red-necked Phalaropes** on Salt Pond A7 in Alviso on 15 Apr (MJM) and a single bird on Salt Pond A5 on 23 Apr (MJM,JB) were more expected. Two **Western Gulls** were apparently on nests in the California Gull colony in Alviso on 23 Apr (MJM,JB). They occasionally nest in this colony. A late, first-winter **Glaucous Gull** was found in the Alviso salt ponds 16 Apr (MMR). A **Greater Roadrunner** was heard north of San Antonio Junction 22 Apr (MJM et al.). A **nighthawk** seen along Canada Road on 18 Apr (JAC,CM) was probably a **Lesser Nighthawk** considering the date. Returning (?) **Common Poorwill** are once again singing on territory. One calling above Stevens Creek Park on 22 Apr (LCh et al.) is unusual for the Santa Cruz Mountains. Early **Vaux's Swifts** include single birds over Sandy Wool Lake 9 Apr (SCR)

and Vasona Res. 10 Apr (JD). The maximum count of migrating birds was of five over Canada and Gilroy Hot Springs Road 18 Apr (JAC,CM). The first **Black-chinned Hummingbird** of the season returned to Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 8 Apr (LCh). San Jose birders should watch the Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creek this spring for this riparian species. A male **Calliope Hummingbird** was seen near Felter and Sierra roads on 3 Apr and a female was netted 22 Apr (both RC). **Lewis' Woodpeckers** have been well reported this month in the San Antonio Valley (m.ob.) with four found on both 22 Apr (MJM et al.) and 23 Apr (AME).

Flycatchers through Goldfinches

There has been a small movement of **Hammond's Flycatchers** in the Diablo Range this month, as we've come to expect. Four were counted in a walk in Jos. Grant CP 16 Apr (MMR) and a single bird was at Smith Creek 22 Apr (MJM et al.). The **Eastern Phoebe** win-

tering in Shady Oaks Park was last seen on 1 Apr (SCR). A **Canyon Wren** has been found, at least on some occasions, in Alum Rock Park with observations on 2 Apr (MMR) and 9 Apr (LCh). An **American Dipper** along Stevens Creek above the Mt. Eden Road junction 22 Apr (LCh et al.) was unusual. A male **Phainopepla** was along Mines Road 22 Apr (GHt) for our only report this month. **Nashville Warblers** come through in small numbers at the end of April and in early May. A single bird was in Jos. Grant CP 16 Apr (MMR), two were in Henry Coe SP on the same day (JY,AL), one was found on Mines Road and another at the Arnold Pond on 22 Apr (MJM et al.), a bird was in the Coulter pine belt east of Mt. Hamilton 23 Apr (AME). A male **Hermit Warbler** in Jos. Grant CP 16 Apr (MMR) was the only one found this month. Equally rare, a **MacGillivray's Warbler** was singing in Alum Rock Park 21 Apr (AME) and individuals were banded at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station on 23 and 26 Apr (fide MMR). The **Green-tailed Towhee**, not

quite ready to leave its winter haunts, was seen again along Coyote Creek above Hwy 237 on 9 Apr (SCR) and 15 Apr (CKS). A **Vesper Sparrow** found 22 Apr (MJM et al.) in San Antonio Valley is one of our few records for the county. A **White-throated Sparrow** wintering at a Los Gatos feeder was still present 15 Apr (JD). A bird wintering along Matadero Creek below Hwy 101 was also found 15-29 Apr (m.ob.). On the latter date and imm. was present as well (MJM). Our surprising **Chestnut-collared Longspurs** along Sierra Road have stayed into spring for a second year with observations of at least two males and two females through at least 11 Apr (AME,JAC,CM). A **Great-tailed Grackle** was seen the evening of 29 Apr (SBT) in Alviso and found the next day as well (MiF), but not after that. This is the second record for the county. Small numbers of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were reported this month. Three were in flight over different spots on the west slope of the Diablo Range 2 Apr (MMR), three were over Ed Levin CP 9 Apr (SCR), two to four were at San Antonio Junction 22 Apr (MJM et al.), and four were seen there the next day (AME).

Observers: Ernie Abeles (EA), Julie Bryson (JB), Les Chibana (LCh), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RC), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Tom Grey (TGr), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Charlie Moores (CM), Joe Morlan (JM), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Chris Salander (CKS), Daan Sandee (DS), Dick Strubbe (DSr), Scott Terrill (SBT), Chuck Tribolet (CT), Ann Verdi (AV), David Weber (DCW), Clark White (KCW), and James Yurchenco (JY).

Butterfly-Watching?

Many people are becoming fascinated by butterflies, which, along with birds, are graceful co-habitants of the airspace. They tend to be most active when birding activity hits a lull, i.e., mid-day and/or midsummer. Thus a new sparkle may appear in the birder's eye upon spying one of these flower-visiting beauties. Because of their close association with specific plants, both as nectar sources for adults and foodplants for caterpillars, learning the butterflies of one's home area improves one's understanding of the natural world.

A new non-profit association has formed to foster the growth of recreational, non-consumptive (i.e., netless) butterfly appreciation. The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) is interested in butterfly field identification through binoculars, butterfly gardening, photography, conservation, and species listing. NABA publishes a quarterly color magazine *American Butterflies*, a newsletter *The Anglewing*, and conducts and publishes the annual 4th of July Butterfly Counts. Regular dues are \$25. To join or receive more information, write NABA, 4 Delaware Rd., Morristown, NJ 07960; (201)285-0907.

Environmental Action News

Growing a Healthy Outlook: an Editorial

by Craig Breon

In the Spring of 1990, I helped coordinate UC Davis' Earth Day celebration. Immersed in my first year of law school, by second semester I had convinced myself that the useful lessons had largely been taught, it was downhill from there, and I had better start looking for something productive to do. As it was Earth Day's grand twentieth anniversary, we had big plans, most of which were realized: two weeks of speakers and events, an exhibit of 70 organizations and agencies (seen by perhaps 10,000 people), nearly 2000 T-shirts sold, and the birth of a non-profit to continue our vision.

In the midst of all this, I was interviewed by the college radio station. The interviewer tossed a series of softball questions, allowing me to highlight various aspects of our activities. Then, towards the end, he asked, "If you could urge people to do one thing for the Earth, what would it be?"

Dead air on the radio is awkward, but at the time inevitable, as my mind whirled through the options. All the standard answers came to mind: bury your car, take a vow of poverty, enroll in the voluntary human extinction movement (there is one; I kid you not), do some monkey wrenching.

I settled on "Build a garden." I was in the process of doing so, and had worked on an organic farm just before going to law school (an abrupt transition). I honestly could not, and still cannot, think of a more useful, more healing activity for the land and the soul.

The Lessons of Leafy Greens

There is something wondrously reciprocal about planting and tending a garden, where each day's fertilizing, weeding, or watering comes back to you in the form of hearty leaves and robust fruits, while a few days neglect can wreak havoc. I can't imagine being able to take more than you give to a garden (unless of course you raid your neighbor's garden—an act which I would be hypocritical to fully discourage). That give and take is beautiful, and a fact of the larger world.

Often, as environmentalists, we end up arguing that land should be left alone, free of man's "unnatural" activities. The counter-argument is that man is part of nature and thus his/her acts are natural. That assertion can sound convincing, but reveals itself simplistic when measured against Aldo Leopold's notion (from an essay that is now generally sold

along with *A Sand County Almanac*) of a "land ethic." To paraphrase: a thing is right when it contributes to the beauty and diversity of natural processes; it is wrong when it does otherwise. In Leopold's world, the road to right living would likely not be six lanes wide and paved, but may well be lined with rows of peas and carrots (which, incidentally, seem to thrive when planted as companions).

I do not have room here to fully elaborate on the myriad lessons to be had in a garden, and how they apply more universally. A few that quickly come to mind shall have to suffice.

There is little instant gratification in a garden. No seeing something in a store window, succumbing to primal urges, and emerging, moments later, the conquering consumer.

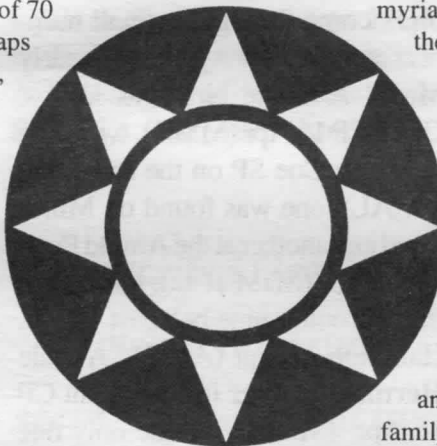
The seasons reveal themselves in all their subtlety and glory, but they demand an observing eye. If you've had friends or family mock California as a land of no seasons, your garden can refute them. Lettuce planted in March and picked on a May morning is sweet. By mid June, heat will likely have embittered the leaves.

Garden long enough, and you begin to worship dirt. I have a friend who visits me from Eugene, Oregon once or twice a year. It has become near ritual for him to spontaneously dip his hands into and marvel at the soil my celery walks on, meanwhile cursing the clay hardpack of his home turf. Never again can you pass an open, plowed field and think "nothin' there." Instead, you look for color, consistency; you begin to wonder, "Does it have good organic matter in it?" and, unfortunately, "Will the vitality of the topsoil be smothered beneath foundation stones?"

In the last few months, this page has covered some weighty—and at times worrisome—issues. While it is good to feel the weight, and to push back, it is also necessary to clear the mind of worry. Just try worrying about anything while chomping down on a home-grown lemon cucumber on a hot, clear July afternoon.

Until September

As the *Avocet* is entering its summer hibernation, I wanted to take this chance to wish everyone the best of a Mediterranean climate. Peace, productivity, and the ripest of tomatoes to you.



Members Share Their Field Trip Experiences...

Field Trip to Sunol Regional Park

The Sunol Regional Park trip was a great success. Twenty-eight birders joined me on April 8th to search for spring migrants and resident birds. The weather cooperated, and we saw or heard 59 species of birds. Highlights were one Hammond's/Dusky flycatcher (heard only); a pair of Common Mergansers swimming in Alameda Creek; two male Cooper's Hawks "sky dancing" (their courtship flight, which resembles the stiff, steep-angled wing-beats of a night-hawk), with a presumed female Cooper's Hawk nearby; an active Red-tailed Hawk nest; 3 Golden Eagles; one Rufous-crowned Sparrow; and an unidentified *Buteo* that was very likely a Broad-winged Hawk, a very rare spring vagrant in our area. Spring migrants observed include one *Selasphorus* hummingbird, "Western" Flycatcher, House Wren, Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler, a beautiful male "Myrtle" Warbler, and "Bullock's" Oriole. And of course, with all the recent rain, the vegetation in the park was lush and verdant. A great day all around.

—Don Schmoldt

Yerba Buena Nursery

Deep in a lovely wooded canyon off Skyline Blvd. sits the Yerba Buena Nursery, a treasure-trove of local native plants and a wonderful birding spot. Sequoia Audubon's Dan Keller led 30 SCVAS birders on a May 7 field trip to this delightful location, where Black-throated Gray and McGillivray's Warblers taunted us with their songs but stayed mostly hidden from sight, while the Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warblers were more binocular-friendly. A tour of the nursery grounds proved educa-

tional, and several participants made plant purchases. Somewhat disturbing was the news that the nursery may be sold and ultimately shut down. While we came up with some fantastic ideas for buying the place and turning it into a birding/native plant sanctuary, the financial wherewithal to realize such a dream remains lacking. Any readers out there interested in investing in the proverbial "good cause"?

—Grant Hoyt

Ed Levin Park

Forty birders turned out for this May 6 hummingbird hunt with Steve Rottenborn. Although the rare Calliope and Costa's hummers were missed this year (they had been seen at Ed Levin in '94 in early May), we enjoyed a variety of spring birds, both migrant and resident. Everyone got good looks at Western Tanagers, with several brightly-colored males and at least one female pausing on their northward migration. Young Audubon birding ace Gabe Hirsch spotted a pair of Bushtits apparently dismantling a partially built nest and taking the material to another nest site. Two adult Golden Eagles soared high over the nearby ridge, and Red-tailed Hawks put on some nifty territorial aerobatic displays. *Selasphorus* hummingbirds (mostly Rufous; one or two Allen's) buzzed among the flowering

eucalyptus and Steve pointed out subtle field marks. Two Lawrence's Goldfinches made a brief appearance; a Western Kingbird lingered for better viewing.

The "bird of the day" was a small *Empidonax* flycatcher flitting through a tall weedy patch at the edge of the park. Steve's sharp eyes spotted the definitive field marks of bill coloration, plumage, size and shape, making the tricky identification possible, but the characteristic downward tail-dipping was probably the most obvious trait observed by the group. The **Gray Flycatcher** is a very uncommon migrant in the county, preferring drier habitats of eastern California and western North America, and was a great find for our field trip.

—Grant Hoyt
The Avocet 7

Young Audubon—Grant Ranch

Hi! My name is Beth Chavez. I went on my second birdwatching trip at Grant Ranch Park. On the way there I saw a California Quail. On the walk we saw some Wild Turkeys out in a field. When we looked up in the hills we saw some more Wild Turkeys, and two wild pigs. The pigs and turkeys just stood there for a few moments. Then the turkeys started to walk behind a little hill, and the pigs started following them. Then we looked at the ducks in the pond. They were pretty! When we looked back at the hill we saw 17 baby pigs and one adult pig. We walked on the trail for a little bit, and we saw a pig skeleton that had a little bit of hair left on its head. We saw a Red-tailed Hawk, we saw goldfinches, a woodpecker, Killdeer, Turkey Vultures, Scrub Jay, and Caspian Tern. I liked the Killdeer the most because I like the sounds they make. The reason they are named Killdeer is because when they sing, they say "kill-deer kill-deer kill-deer." We also saw a Tree Swallow, a Mallard, a Plain Titmouse, a Warbling Vireo, an Eared Grebe, a Song Sparrow, and a Golden-crowned Sparrow. I had more fun on this trip than the first one!

(Beth Chavez is 9 years old and already knows a lot about local birds, thanks to our Young Audubon field trips. Congratulations to Heather Rottenborn for developing this outstanding new program; look for more Young Audubon activities this fall!—Ed.)

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

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
San Jose, CA
Permit No. 5869

Slough *continued from page 1...*

Snowy Plovers, now federally listed under the Endangered Species Act, have also shown a dramatic increase in breeding success in this central part of Monterey Bay. Fledgling numbers increased from 90 to 125 last year. This increase is attributable to improved habitat on the slough's Moss Landing Wildlife Area and Red Fox control program at the Salinas River Wildlife area.

These hard-won successes have followed a long-term program of habitat improvement around Elkhorn Slough and continued efforts to stem marsh loss due to tidal scour caused by the historic construction of the Moss Landing Harbor.

Current research in the slough includes work on an expanding Harbor Seal population which has increased to over 200 animals in the last decade. Dr. Jim Harvey and his students from the Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, a field station of the California State Universities, are studying movement patterns of the seals using telemetry and examining foraging behavior, prey species utilization, and pollutant levels in seal blood. Work in the slough watershed includes research by Dr. Andy Thompson of the University of Santa Clara, who is studying mate selection and foraging ecology of the Plain Titmouse. Grad student Trish Lowe is examining shorebird use of marshes with differing vegetative cover.

Concerted efforts to restore and enhance natural habitats in the Elkhorn Slough watershed are ongoing. The Elkhorn

Slough Foundation is working with local agricultural interests to develop more environmentally sound cultivation practices and to expand habitat buffers above wetlands.

In addition to the ongoing research and habitat work, a field-based education program on the Reserve provides a vital outdoor experience for over 10,000 students each year. Over 1500 teachers have been trained at the Reserve to use the slough as an environmental classroom, and quarterly workshops and enrichments are bringing in more of the educational community.

The coalition of public and private interests in the slough has been a cornerstone of program success. The non-profit Elkhorn Slough Foundation, working with The Nature Conservancy, Department of Fish and Game, and The Coastal Conservancy, has mobilized volunteers to protect the slough and to reach out to the community. The Foundation is the vehicle for community support of slough programs and serves as a clearinghouse for activities in the watershed.

The Reserve has a visitor center and network of trails for public visitation. Checklists of bird species, reptiles, amphibians and mammals are available through the Foundation. The Foundation also publishes a tri-annual newsletter and has books, articles and other information on the slough. The Elkhorn Slough Foundation is a membership-supported organization. For more information write ESF, P.O. Box 267 Moss Landing, CA 95039, (408)728-5939.

—Alan Baldrige et al., ESF

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

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

National Audubon Society Membership: Check One
 New members \$20 Membership renewal \$35
Members receive *Audubon* magazine and *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.

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

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____

Gift From: _____

7XCH

C14