

The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

September 1995

Audubon Names A New Leader

After a long search, John Flicker was named to succeed Peter Berle as the next President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Audubon Society. NAS Chairman Donal O'Brien sent the following announcement to staff and the Board of Directors:

"John Flicker is currently serving as Florida State Director of The Nature Conservancy. He was born in Minnesota, where he was raised on a farm and first experienced the great flocks of migratory Canada and Snow Geese which were initially responsible for shaping his interest in wildlife and conservation—an interest he has pursued throughout his career, most of which has been with The Nature Conservancy, where he has held a wide variety of leadership positions.

"Early in his career John served as TNC's Great Plains Director, where he initiated the new State Programs in Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota. He moved from the

Great Plains to the Conservancy's headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he served as Chief Legal Counsel for all national and international operations. He later became Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

"As Florida State Director over the past five years, John has led one of the Conservancy's fastest growing and most successful state programs. The projects he supervised include over \$1.9 billion of new appropriations for land acquisition from Florida's Preservation 2000 and County Bond Campaigns and over \$40 million for off-site mitigation. As Florida State Director, John supervises a staff of 120 and a \$6 million budget."

Local Audubon members who have been critical of Peter Berle's reign might want to take a fresh look at NAS. Perhaps the aptly-named President Flicker can rally the disgruntled factions behind the new leadership of our bird-oriented environmental organization.

The Bair Facts

A Look at a Crown Jewel of San Francisco Bay

with John Wade and Katherine Rambo

Wednesday, Sept. 20

Cupertino Public Library Community Room

10400 Torre Avenue

7:30 PM coffee, cookies and conversation; 8 PM program begins

SCVAS is pleased to host an evening dedicated to our own San Francisco Bay. Our program will review successes in preserving, restoring and protecting this regional treasure and also highlight the challenges still facing us at Bair Island and the SF BAY Nat'l. Wildlife Refuge. John Wade, a 15-year Director of Land Protection for Peninsula Open Space Trust will guide us on a video tour of Outer Bair Island, with he and his daughter and friend rowing their trusty dory to special vantage points on the Bay. Locally renowned photographer Katherine Rambo will offer a brief slide show of Inner Bair Island, including colored crystalline formations from unique areas on the Island. For a look at rookeries, shorebirds, and the results of salt diking in our own back yard, join us in Cupertino by following the map on Page 2.

Chapter News

Birdathon 95 Raises \$5,700

Birdathon 95 was once again a great success, raising \$5,700! Many thanks to Clysta Seney for all her hard work as Chairperson. Awards were given out at the Annual Dinner to the following teams and players: Harriet Gerson from the Wry Wrentits for most money raised by an individual (over \$1300!); the Vagrants for Most Birds Seen at 158 species (all in Santa Clara County); and the most birds seen by a new team—the Violent Greens with 113 species.

Thanks to all team members and donors for supporting SCVAS and Creek Restoration. Look for news on the Stevens Creek revegetation project at McClellan in the October newsletter. The following is a list of donors who generously contributed \$50.00 or more:

Alta Vista Home and School Club, Lorna & Alan Bagley, Joyce Bartlett, Laverne L. Barling, David and Debby Beatty, Phyllis Browning, Rob and Rita Colwell, John Delevoryas, Carl and Joyce DiCandio, Jean Dubois, Fredrick J. Fisher, Harriet Gerson, Dan Gerson, Carol L. Godsave, Bobbie & Carl Handen, Jane and Chip Haven, Grant and Karen Hoyt, Mary Ann Leer and Jules Resnick, Pete LaTourrette, Ester Litton, Mike Mammoser, Betty J. Mann, Anna Miller, Armin H. Ramel, Clysta Seney & John McLemore, Dick Stovel, Alan & Karen Thomas, Hazel Tilden, Ann Verdi, Milton West, Sylvia & Gordon Williams, Constance and Michael Yatsko, Nick & K.C. Yatsko.

Nature Shop News

Many new books arrived this summer at the Nature Shop. They include Ohlone Audubon Society's "Of Marsh and Mud" A Guide to Shoreline Life written by Naturalist Dave Riensche, and ABA's revised edition of "A Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona" by Harold Holt with 50 new maps and added birding areas.

The Nature Shop is also carrying University of California press books "Growing California Native Plants," "California Plant Life," "California Butterflies," and "California Insects."

To celebrate all our new finds, **all books will be 10% off** in September!

Fall Birding Classes

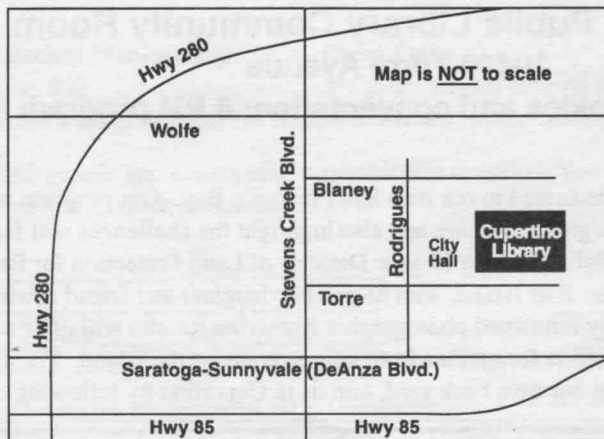
Two classes for birders will be offered by Sunbeam Ecology Explorations at Little House, 800 Middle Avenue in Menlo Park. There will be 9 slide-lecture sessions for each class. Instructor: Maryann Danielson. Fee: \$45. Four field trips will be offered in conjunction with each class. Additional fee for field trips. Phone 415/325-9349.

Palo Alto Adult School is offering birding classes beginning the week of Sept. 11. The Beginning Birdwatching class will meet Thursday nights, starting Sept. 14; Intermediate Birding meets Tuesday nights starting Sept. 12. Classes are held at Palo Alto High School, run for 10 weeks, and cost \$65. At least 3 weekend field trips are included with each class. The instructor is Les Chibana. Call Palo Alto Adult School at 415/329-3752 for registration information.

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Birdseed Sale

SCVAS is having its annual fall birdseed sale in October (see page 8). The birdseed sale is a fundraiser for our chapter and also for the Youth Science Institute and Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center. These groups provide valuable environmental education in the South Bay. Stock up on your seed for the coming winter months with SCVAS' Birdseed Sale!



CVAS OFFICERS

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2nd VP	Mary Simpson	408/370-2177
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	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.

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Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592

September 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**

Wednesday Sept. 6, 7:30 PM.

Bay Area Bird Photographers will kick off the fall season with an all-member slide program. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Saturday Sept. 9, 7:30 AM.**

Rarities chase with Steve Rottenborn (415/497-9368). Meet at Alviso Marina (take N. First St. north from Hwy 237 into town of Alviso) for a half-day of touring South Bay hot spots in search of unusual shorebirds, passerines, or whatever the leader has discovered during the previous week. Be prepared to carpool from meeting point. Bring scopes. Not recommended for beginners.

Sunday Sept. 10, 11-4.

10th Annual Wildlife Festival at Alum Rock Park, San Jose. An educational, family-oriented event presented by the Youth Science Institute.

Tuesday Sept. 12, 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.

****Wednesday Sept. 13, 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.

****Saturday Sept. 16, 8:00 AM.**

Full day. Moonglow Dairy/Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough. Leader: Mike Mammoser 408/248-2288. Meet at Jetty Rd. and Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. If you can't make Wednesday's trip, join the weekend group for a tour of the always exciting Elkhorn Slough area. Shorebirds, gulls,

terns, coastal waterbirds, raptors, and the intriguing possibility of rarities at the odiferous Moonglow Dairy.

****Saturday Sept. 16, 8:30 AM.**

Young Audubon Shorebird Field Trip. Leader: Allen Royer. Meet at Alviso Environmental Education Center. From N. First St. in Alviso, go right on Grand Blvd. and follow to Ed. Center at end of road. We expect good looks at waterfowl, shorebirds, and other plants and animals found around the Bay. Beginners welcome. Some binoculars available. *Young Audubon is gearing up for an exciting year ahead! Watch the Avocet for upcoming whale-watching and owling trips, a revegetation project at McClellan Ranch Park, and a Young Audubon Christmas Bird Count. For more information on the Sept. 16 outing, future events, or to suggest ideas for Young Audubon, contact Heather Rottenborn at 415/497-9368.*

Saturday, Sept. 23, 9AM-noon.

Coastal Cleanup Day. Join SCVAS volunteers at a Stevens Creek site in Sunnyvale as they help clean and restore our local creek habitat. Riparian-dwelling birds and animals will certainly appreciate the effort! Call Jayne at the SCVAS office to volunteer.

****Sunday Sept. 24, 9:00 AM.**

Full day. Point Reyes. Leader: Peter LaTourrette 415/961-2741. From Olema on Hwy 1 in Marin Co. take Sir Francis Drake Blvd. west approx. 14 mi. and turn left to Drakes Beach; meet in parking area. Bring full tank of gas; be prepared for fog, wind, sun and plenty of challenging birds. Our annual trip to the west coast's most active vagrant trap, where the birds and weather are always exciting. Not recommended for beginners.

****Wednesday Sept. 27, 8:30 AM**

Half day. Charleston Slough and vicinity. Leader: Phyllis Browning 415/494-6360. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio exit east. Meet just inside gate at intersection of San Antonio

and north end of Terminal Way.

****Saturday Sept. 30, 9:00 AM.**

Full day. Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands. Leader: Don Schmoltdt 510/215-1910. Meet at Vista Pt. parking area at north end of Golden Gate Bridge, caravan to Hill from there. The first of our two fall outings to view migrating raptors. Test your accipiter identification skills and scan for unusual buteos with the other Hawk Hill raptor fanatics.

****Saturday Oct. 7, 8:30 AM.**

Half day. Coyote Hills Regional Park. Leader: Phil Hand 415/965-8752. Always a good spot for raptors, waterfowl, and perhaps some unusual migrants. Take Hwy 84 (Dumbarton Bridge) east towards Newark, exit right on Thornton, then go left over freeway as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre. Turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd. into park, meet at far end of Quarry parking lot on left, 1/4 mile past park entrance.

Tuesday Oct. 10, 9:30 AM.

The Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos 408/395-4264. The group will carpool to visit Eve and Zelda's trees at Big Basin. Bring a bag lunch.

****Saturday Oct. 14, 8:00 AM.**

Half day. Arastradero Preserve. Leader: Jim Liskovec 969/5542. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west approx. 1/2 mile to Arastradero Rd. Turn right and meet at parking lot 1/2 mile up Arastradero Rd. on right. Variety of woodland and oak grassland species; good for raptors. 2 miles moderate walking.

****Sunday Oct. 15, 9:00 AM.**

Full day. Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands. Leader: Nick Yatsko 408/247-5499. Meet at Page Mill Rd./I-280 Park'n'Ride at 8:00 AM to carpool. Our chapter President is a fanatical (and very skillful) hawk-watcher. Join him for an exciting day on the Hill; this is the time of year when a few Broadwings come through.

Field Notes

By Bill Bousman

Grebes through Ibis

A **Horned Grebe** in alternate plumage was reported from Shoreline Lake 6 Jun (PMB) and in partial alternate plumage there on 3 Jul (SCR) and may be the same bird. A partial albino in Crittenden Marsh 22 Jul (SCR,MJM) is clearly a second bird. Oversummering birds are scarce for this species. **Eared Grebes** had some nesting success this summer. Ten adults and five nests were noted in a pond beyond Crittenden Marsh on 14 May (PJM) and at least two precocial young were seen with adults on Crittenden Marsh on 3 Jun (WCa). A **Brown Pelican** on Shoreline Lake 16 Jun (PMB) was the first of the season. **Double-crested Cormorants** have nested again this season but fewer than last year. Three active nests were observed on Salt Pond A18 in Alviso during the period (v.ob.) and a single nest was seen at the end of Salt Pond B2 on 22 Jul (SCR,MJM), but the Long Point tower nests were apparently not used this year. An **American Bittern** at the Arzino Ranch 4 May (PJM) was an unusually late spring migrant. The first **Little Blue Heron** of the season was an adult that foraged in the flooded fields at the end of Nortech Parkway in Alviso 6-13 May (MiF,MJM,v.ob.). An adult was also seen in the Alviso salt ponds 3 and 4 Jul (PJM,MiF). The peak May count of **Cattle Egrets** was of 13 on 4 May at the Arzino Ranch (PJM). Fewer were seen during the summer with a high count at the Arzino Ranch of five on 11 Jun (BC). The San Francisco Bay NWR now prohibits the reporting of any records to the public from the Alviso heronry, which is in a closed area of the refuge, so these records will no longer be reported here. A **Green Heron** nest observed at Arastradero Preserve 24 May (RL *et al.*) represents the first breeding record we have for this species in the northwestern edge of the county. Four young were seen here 3 Jun (AH,FV). Single **White-faced Ibis** were reported in the Alviso

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area 14 May (JD *fide* AME) and 11 Jun (BC).

Waterfowl through Rails

A first-summer **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found next to Shoreline Lake 3 Jun (MMR) for our first summer record. The bird appeared healthy. The **Ross' Goose** at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) was last reported 14 May (PJM). After a slow spring **Blue-winged Teal** showed up in good numbers in June. Two males were on the waterbird pond next to Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 10 Jun (m.ob.) and two females or immatures were there on 29 Jun (SCR). Four males were found in the vicinity of the Mountain View Forebay and Charleston Slough

*A Little Gull
in Alviso is a first
for the county.*

19 Jun (JM *fide* MMR) and a pair was in Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) 29 Jun (PMB). A female **Common Goldeneye** at the Ogier Avenue ponds 7 Jun (SCR) appeared uninjured and is one of our few summer records for this species. A female **Bufflehead** in the Moffett Channel 3 Jun (MMR) is less surprising as an oversummering bird. An injured female **Hooded Merganser** seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds 2 Jun-11 Jul (SCR) also provides an unusual summer record. Seven **Common Mergansers** were in the Guadalupe River near Trimble on 24 May and three were nearby on 6 Jul (both SCR). Along Coyote Creek, a pair was seen below Montague Expy 26 May (NY *fide* SCR) and a female with two half-grown young were seen in the same area on 22 Jun (SCR). Our atlas experience led us to believe that this species was sensitive to disturbance and would nest only in remote areas. Perhaps this conclusion had more to do with drought and the absence

of prey species than any other reason. Still, breeding of this species in the San Francisco Bay area appears to be a fairly recent phenomenon. We have had unusual numbers of late spring and early summer **Osprey** sightings this year. Single birds were seen over Loma Prieta Ridge on 19 May (SBT,MMR), at Chesbro Res. on 21 May (LCh *et al.*), over Stanford on 22 May (SCR), in Henry Coe SP on 28 May (JY,AL), over Monte Bello Ridge on 3 Jun (WGB *et al.*), at Felt Lake on 11 Jun (KHt), and on Searsville Lake on 16 Jul (RGJ,PLaT). A light-morph **Swainson's Hawk** was seen over the Loma Prieta ridgeline on 19 May (SBT,MMR) for one of our few records. Summer **Peregrine Falcon** records include an adult over Bayfront Park in Menlo Park on 3 Jun (MJM), a sub-adult over the Guadalupe River near the San Jose Airport on 2 Jul (SCR), and an adult over Stevens Creek at Shoreline on 29 Jul (MJM). A **Prairie Falcon** over Coyote Creek below Tully Road 28 May (SCR) is unusual for the breeding season. At least three **Mountain Quail** were heard northeast of Monte Bello Ridge at Black Mountain 17 May-3 Jun (MMR,SCR,WGB *et al.*) where birds were heard last year. A **Virginia Rail** heard in the Mountain View Forebay 3 Jun (MMR) and five plus there on 24 Jul (SCR) are suggestive of breeding. Three immature **Sora** were also in the forebay on 24 Jul (SCR).

Shorebirds through Skimmers

Seven **Snowy Plover** were found in the salt ponds south of Bayfront Park 3 Jun (MJM). **Lesser Yellowlegs** are always rare in spring migration so the one to four birds in the vicinity of the Arzino Ranch 1-4 May (MMR,PJM,CKS) are of interest. The first of the returning fall birds were two at the Arzino Ranch 29 Jun (SCR). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was found in the flooded field at the end of Disk Drive in Alviso 1 May and remained through 3 May (MMR,m.ob.). A adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found in the Stevens Creek Mitigation Area next to Shoreline 22 Jul (SCR,MJM), a repeat of last year's sighting. Continuing the good spring shorebird finds in the Alviso

area a **Stilt Sandpiper** was found 2 May in the flooded fields near Los Esteros and remained through at least 4 May (AME,m.ob.). This is our tenth county record and only the second for the spring. A first-winter **Little Gull**, associating with Bonaparte's Gulls in the flooded fields at the end of Nortech Parkway in Alviso, was found by Peter Metropulos on 4 May for the first county record. It was seen in the vicinity irregularly through 11 May (MMR,SCR,SBT). Staging **Least Terns** were found at Charleston Slough with two to five seen 25-27 Jul (WGB,MMR). Our third county record of **Black Skimmer** was a bird at Charleston Slough 8 May (MiF,MJM,MMR,LCh). Two birds were seen there 11 Jun (HG *fide* MJM) and, then, on 11 Jul, a nest was discovered on a small island in the southeast corner of Salt Pond A1, next to Shoreline for our second nesting record. The pair was incubating three eggs at the end of the month.

Swifts through Warblers

Our only record of migrating **Black Swifts** this year was of a single bird over Stanford 8 May (SCR). Again, as reported last year, **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were found breeding along our urban creeks in a number of areas this summer (SCR). Nesting evidence was obtained of at least 13 pairs along Coyote Creek, seven along Guadalupe River, and five along Los Gatos Creek. A total of at least 154 birds were recorded in intensive censusing of study plots along these creeks. Late spring, immature male **Costa's Hummingbirds** were found along Coyote Creek at Riverside GC on 3 May and along Matadero Creek below Hwy 101 on 11 May (both SCR). The latter bird was seen through 20 May (AME,MiF). A **Pileated Woodpecker** found along Wrights Station Road 14 May (SCR) is the eighth county record and the first that's been found during the breeding season. From 31 May to 18 Jun nine **Willow Flycatchers** were found (m.ob.). The most interesting of these birds was one along the Guadalupe River near Montague that remained in the area and was still singing on 12 Jul (SCR). The last record we have of breeding in the county is from the Guadalupe River thirty

years ago. A pair of **Purple Martins** with four newly-fledged young was found on the Santa Cruz side of Loma Prieta Ridge 21 Jul (MMR) and found there at least through 30 Jul (m.ob.). Singing **Hermit Warblers** were found in the Santa Cruz Mountains where there is a small breeding population. Two were in upper Wunderlich Park 3 Jun (GGH *et al.*), two were singing south of Castle Rock SP on 4 Jun (MJM), and one was singing in the parking lot at Castle Rock on 25 Jun (MJM). A 1st-year male **American Redstart** was found along Coyote Creek, above Coyote Ranch Road on 1 Jul and, amazingly, a second 1st-year male was found along the creek below Coyote Ranch Road the next day (both SCR). The first male was seen by a number of observers with the last date being 30 Jul (MJM). The second male was more difficult to find and was not seen after 11 Jul (SCR). An **Ovenbird** banded at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) on 25 Jun (*fide* SCR) is only the seventh to be found in the county and the second to be found in the spring. At least one **Yellow-breasted Chat** has been in the vicinity of CCRS 23 May–28 Jun (RC,WGB) but no evidence of breeding has been observed. A bird found along Coyote Creek above Hellyer Park on 27 Jun was found feeding two young on 11 Jul for a new breeding record (SCR).

Tanagers through Finches

A male **Summer Tanager** was found along Coyote Creek above Old Oakland Road on 17 Jun (SCR). This is the tenth county record. It was a remarkable spring and summer for **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**. A female was found in Jos. Grant CP on 27 May (SCR). On 13 Jun, a single bird was found on Blue Oak Road in Gilroy (FC). Then, on 26 Jun a singing 1st-summer male was found along Coyote Creek at Senter Park (SCR). A male **Blue Grosbeak** was found in a field along the bike path north of Riverside GC 3–6 May (SCR, v.ob.), the same field where one was found last year. An apparent male **Lazuli X Indigo Bunting** singing in the same field 4–26 Jul (SCR, v.ob.) provided difficult identification problems. **Black-chinned Sparrows** were absent from some of the locations

that they breed in this year. The only records were of two along Mt. Bache Road on 14 May (SCR) and two north of Mt. Mocho in the northeastern part of the county on 13 Jun (MMR). The first **Grasshopper Sparrows** of the season were three found near Sargents on 31 May (MMR). Other records include two in the vicinity of Russian Ridge OSP on 3 Jun (JAC), four singing along Metcalf Road on 6 Jun (MMR), and one on Felter Road on 9 Jul (AME). An adult **White-crowned Sparrow** along Guadalupe River below Trimble on 6 Jul (SCR) is one of our few overwintering or misoriented birds of this species. Three male **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were found in Alviso 24 Apr (PJM) and over the next month, until 23 May, one to three birds of various sexes and ages were found in the area, particularly near the old vernal pool at the end of Disk Drive (m.ob.). At least four birds were present in this period, but the upper bound is difficult to determine. The **Great-tailed Grackle** reported last spring was seen at least one more time in May with an observation on 6 May at the San Jose–Santa Clara WPCP (SCR). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found in the northeast portion of the county on a regular basis in the San Antonio Valley and along Mines Road. Nest building was observed on 17 Jun in San Antonio Valley where they nest regularly (MJM). However, three pairs found near the Ogier Avenue ponds on 7 Jun (SCR), including one pair feeding young are in an area where they are believed to be infrequent nesters.

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), William Cabot (WCa), Les Chibana (LCh), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RC), Barbara Costa (BC), Frank Cralo (FC), Jim Danzenbaker (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Gloria Heller (GGH), Karen Hoyt (KHt), Al Huber (AH), Richard Jeffers (RCJ), Peter LaTourrette (PLaT), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Rosalie Lefkowitz (RL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Joe Morlan (JM), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Chris Salander (CKS), Scott Terrill (SBT), Frank Vanlager (FV), and James Yurchenco (JY).

Environmental Action News

“May You Live In Interesting Times”

by Craig Breon

I seem to recall the above phrase being either a blessing or a curse in Chinese culture. Perhaps both. Either way, interesting times are upon us. At the National and local levels, major issues affecting the quality of our lives are being decided, often with little public awareness.

National Issues

One Cow, One Vote

Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) introduced a bill—S 852—that would turn over millions of acres of federal land to private cattle ranchers. These lands have traditionally been managed for “multiple use,” meaning that cows were supposed to co-exist peacefully with antelope, fishermen, raptors, prairie grass and hikers. Under this bill, management decisions would be made by the cattlemen. As a vast majority of these lands are in the West, we would receive the brunt of impacts on water quality, riparian and other habitats, wildlife, and recreational opportunities.

What Environment?

First we had the Contract with America proposing to gut environmental laws with harmless sounding bills like “The Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act of 1995.” With the Contract behind them, the House has looked elsewhere for sneaky ways to undermine all creatures great and small. Knowing that direct assaults on the environment make for bad press, they have lately been using appropriations bills—which provide funds for government activities—to do the job. In early August, a human services bill passed the House, including a one-third budget cut for the EPA. On top of that, 17 riders (kind of a hitchhiker on a bill’s road through Congress) affecting EPA authority were attached to the bill. These riders would prevent the EPA from enforcing wetlands protections laws, stop them from taking further action on oil industry air pollutants, and reduce their ability to prevent pesticides in food, to name just a few.

Hope Springs Eternal

In the face of such clearly destructive—and at times outright bizarre—proposals, communities and their representatives are rallying. Some of our local legislators have taken bold stands and put in long hours to try to stop these bills. I was proud to watch Norm Mineta of San Jose—adorned with a neon blue tie jam-packed with sea critters—vehemently defending the Clean Water Act on C-SPAN.

And don’t think for a minute that our influence as constituents hasn’t made the difference on some of these bills. In a recent discussion with an aide to Representative Zoe Lofgren of San Jose, I was told that her and other Representative’s offices were “deluged” by letters on the Clean Water Act, and that gets

Washington’s attention. Our chapter can take a small share of credit for that, as the number of letter writers in our Armchair Activist program has grown from 25 to nearly 100 since the beginning of the year. While a bad bill still passed, the result of our efforts are that President Clinton has promised to veto the House bill if it gets to his desk, and there’s not nearly enough votes to override that veto.

Step Right Up

Volunteerism got a boost when a long battle over whether amateurs could collect scientific information for government agencies ended (for now) with a victory. As a result, breeding bird surveys, Christmas bird counts and other sources will continue to provide the Government with valuable information. In the end, it was tough for a Congress trying to slash the Federal budget to deny the cost-effectiveness of volunteers.

Local Issues

Does San Jose Know the Way?

Like many cities of the West, San Jose seems not to be able to decide whether they should follow Los Angeles down the path of growth at all costs, or whether they would rather put the brakes on and see what’s left to protect of their natural heritage. Road signs point both ways.

At the urging of the Greenbelt Alliance, SCVAS, and other environmental groups San Jose Mayor Susan Hammer announced “The Greenline Initiative,” an effort to draw an urban growth boundary around the City. If done right, this could insure that tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land, hillsides, and open space won’t fall victim to urban sprawl for some time, perhaps forever. This is clearly an idea whose time has come. Morgan Hill and several cities in the Peninsula foothills are also contemplating similar measures.

On the other hand, San Jose is beginning to develop the Edenvale area in the foothills of the Diablo Range, and seems willing to trash Coyote Creek in the process. This despite the passage last year of a Riparian Corridor Policy, intended to protect us from exactly this type of development, and despite the fact that Coyote Creek contains much of the best riparian habitat left on the Valley floor. The project has virtually no setback from the creekside vegetation, and is only the first of what may be several projects labeled for “Special Handling” by the City. These are projects offering economic opportunities the City longs for, and for which the City is evidently all too willing to look the other way on environmental protection.

Try giving San Jose City Hall a call, and a mixed message. Encourage them for the “Greenline Initiative” and chastise them for ignoring their Riparian Corridor Policy. The number is 408-277-4241.

SCVAS Mourns Double Loss

Santa Clara Valley birders enjoyed one of the richest, most beautiful summers in recent memory as creeks flowed with an abundance of life-sustaining water, and a profusion of avifauna bred and thrived throughout the region, renewing and reaffirming the wondrous cycle of life. But Nature is unpredictable and full of contradiction. The lives of birds, and birdwatchers, may end in ways that seem unfair and incomprehensible to the survivors. The irony of Nature's ways was never more in evidence as we lost Anne Wilson and Jane Becker-Haven during one tragic week this past July.

Those who knew one or both of these wonderful people were deeply saddened by their passing. Anne was a long-time Christmas Bird Count Section Leader and a skilled birder who had travelled extensively throughout the world. She was a highly respected technical editor in her professional life, and an experienced birder and volunteer researcher. With her good friend Terry Hart she had been working on a comprehensive study of the Salt Marsh Yellowthroat, having collected valuable data on this subspecies in the early 1980's. Formal publication of this research will likely be completed within the next few years. Anne had recently

returned from a birding and camping trip to the White Mountains of California with her companion Don Schmoldt, one of SCVAS' most stalwart field trip leaders and long-time supporters. There she photographed an impressive Bighorn ram, studied birds, and indulged in her passion for overturning rocks and logs to look for snakes and reptiles. She passed away a few weeks later from complications due to a seizure. Anne was a bright, witty, independent, warm and compassionate woman with a sparkle in her eyes and adventure in her soul. Her favorite bird, her "jewel," the Common Yellowthroat, will forever bring us fond remembrance of her.

Jane succumbed to a six-month battle with cancer one week after Anne's death. A more enthusiastic, energetic Board member I can't recall—she put her heart and soul into Audubon, as environmentalist, educator and birder. It was Jane who came up with the successful "Audubon Moment" television segments seen on local community channels, and who got many of us tuned in to the idea of these brief, special moments in our own occasionally stressful or humdrum days. Education Committee members were thrilled with Jane's numerous creative contributions to Education Day and other children's

activities, as well as her staunch support of the Audubon Adventures program. Board members and staff relied on Jane in countless ways, from successfully soliciting gift donations from merchants, developing merchandise plans for the Nature Shop, and even taking notes at Board meetings. She and her husband Chip attended many SCVAS field trips; Jane genuinely loved birding, and she and Chip always enhanced a trip with their knowledge, observational skills, and camaraderie. She once pointed out to me on a Coyote Hills field trip that the latter part of a Bewick's Wren song can sound like a dial telephone. I never forgot that little tidbit, and Jane, an active Jasper Ridge docent, where Bewick's Wrens are common, might appreciate the association. She was lively, vocal, bright and likable, and she applied these qualities with great sincerity and dedication to her efforts as an environmentalist and a birder.

Our deepest sympathies go out to the friends and families of these two dear friends and fellow birders who went before their time. They will not soon be forgotten.

—Grant Hoyt

Several generous gifts in memory of Anne and Jane have already been made to the chapter. SCVAS is grateful to accept donations of this kind.

Young Audubon Visits Alum Rock Park

On June 10 about 8 Young Auduboners and 8 adults had a successful trip in Alum Rock Park. Young Dave Cook did a great job of identifying many birds. All together we saw about 30 species. I was especially glad to see for the first time a male Lazuli Bunting and a House Wren, which bring my life list to 230.

As we started up a hill we saw beautiful male Northern Orioles and the much plainer females. We also got a good look at an Ash-throated Flycatcher sitting on a bush in bright sunlight. Unfortunately it did not do any flycatching. A male Western Bluebird perched on a branch in good light was very pretty, a purple-blue head and back and a chestnut breast. From the top of a tree we heard an Olive-sided Flycatcher's call, which sounds like "quick three beers". We clearly saw the two white flank patches. I saw a Black Phoebe flycatching from a rock in the creek. I hoped to see a Dipper, but no luck. There were lots of Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Plain Titmice and Bushtits. There were a couple of American Goldfinches and lots of noisy Scrub and Steller's Jays around the creek. There was a Cooper's Hawk darting from tree to tree. Many Red-tailed Hawks and Turkey Vultures soared over.

—Gabriel Hirsch, age 9

Sights and Sounds At Smith Creek

A 7:00 AM starting time presented no deterrent to the 24 birders who showed up for a wonderful morning of watching and listening to the songbirds of Smith Creek last May 20. The weather was warm and sunny, though pleasantly cool under the impressive riparian canopy at this 1800 foot elevation. The songbirds were plentiful and vocal, from the bubbly chatter of House Wrens to the Chipping Sparrow's dry buzz. Warbling and Solitary Vireos traded songs with Black-headed Grosbeaks and American Robins, while Olive-sided and Pacific-Slope Flycatchers and Western Wood Pewees challenged our ears with call notes and brief songs. The highlight of the trip came when we hiked up into the mixed oak-pine woodland. Karen Hoyt observed a small, active flock of birds flitting through the trees. When I noticed that this flock consisted of several very agitated titmice and nuthatches, I immediately started looking for a raptor. The "gang" was soon augmented by bluebirds, finches, grosbeaks, orioles, even hummingbirds, all hopping and chirping excitedly near the top of a medium-sized pine. Les Chibana finally located the source of all the ruckus—a Northern Pygmy Owl, neatly camouflaged as a pine cone. We were treated to scope-filling views for at least 20 minutes before the angry mob of little guys drove the fearsome predator off.

—Grant Hoyt
The Avocet 7

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