



The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

October 1995

Young Audubon Takes Wing

by Heather Rottenborn

We spotted a number of wild turkeys on the hill far in the distance as Yellow-billed Magpies flew overhead and Killdeer called near the pond behind us. One of our trip leaders, young David Cook, observed wild pigs rummaging in a field not far from the turkeys. When Casey, another young participant, noticed that most of the pigs were babies, all of the kids rushed to the telescope to get a good look at a group of at least twenty or more baby pigs. These dramatic turkey and wild pig sightings began our June 10 Young Audubon trip to Joseph Grant County Park (known to birders as Grant Ranch) with an exciting flurry of animal activity, and later that morning we went on to see hawks, terns, grebes and a host of passerines that delighted our group of eighteen young nature enthusiasts.

Perhaps the most special aspect of our Grant Ranch trip was that it marked the second of many Young Audubon programs designed specifically with kids in mind. It seems that with overcrowded schools, tight school budgets and limited teachers' attention, kids are given few, if any, opportunities to experience hands-on outdoor learning about the natural world around them. In response to the need for kids to learn about the animals and environment around

them, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society created a new program that offers exciting, fun and informative field trips and activities that highlight natural attractions such as birds, mammals, plants and insects.

Young Audubon is designed to entertain and educate children about the natural world around them, while allowing them to spend quality outdoor time with their families and friends. Each monthly program is free of charge and lasts approximately three to four hours. Field trip participants are welcome to bring binoculars and bird guides, but if they are unavailable, SCVAS will provide them at no charge. Along with monthly trips, SCVAS hopes to develop special Young Audubon memberships that offer additional materials and activities. It is our hope that we can tailor future programs to the needs expressed by active Young Audubon participants.

Having already started in September with a shorebird field trip, we have a docent-guided nature walk at Rancho San Antonio (Cupertino) coming up on October 21st, with a creek revegetation project offered in November and a Christmas Bird Count for young birders offered in December. Young Audubon's monthly trips beginning in January

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South Georgia and Antarctic Waters with Doug Cheeseman and Mike Danzenbaker Wednesday, October 18th

**7:30 Refreshments, 8:00 Program
Palo Alto Cultural Center, Newell & Embarcadero**

Remote South Georgia is a penguin paradise with vast King and Macaroni penguin colonies that occur nowhere else on Earth. Large colonies of Chinstrap and Gentoo penguins are easily photographed on landings along the 100 miles of South Georgia's eastern coastline. Join two outstanding photographers, Mike Danzenbaker and Doug Cheeseman, for the whole story of an adventurous journey from the Falklands through the South Scotia Sea to a rugged, pristine land of penguins, albatrosses, and marine mammals. Doug's programs are always one of the premier highlights of our monthly membership meetings. Mike, whose photography you've probably viewed in *Birder's World* and other publications, assisted Doug on this 29-day trip. Experience the mind-boggling array of wildlife in Antarctic waters in this spectacular slide presentation!

Chapter News

Revegetation and Education

Over the last several years, students and scout groups have been removing non-native vegetation in small patches along Stevens Creek at McClellan Ranch Park. Planting of natives followed when funds were available or when plants were donated. SCVAS, with the support of the City of Cupertino, is taking a more active approach to revegetation and education in the park.

We have identified three of the "weakest" areas along the creek with the least amount of cover and understory. We'll be removing the non-natives in these areas (mainly grasses, vinca, and trees of heaven) and then planting native riparian species such as snowberry, wild rose and elderberry. Several local classrooms will be assisting with the project. Students from Los Altos and Homestead High Schools will have their own revegetation area for planting, maintenance, and monitoring. The students will learn about native plants and riparian wildlife and creek ecosystems. SCVAS staff is managing the project with guidance from the Santa Clara Valley Water District, Coyote Creek Riparian Station and various other local experts. The goals of the project are to improve riparian habitat for birds and other wildlife and educate students on the value of creeks, creek corridors, and native plants. (Any school or scout group can still help with the project—call Jayne at the office for more information.)

Students will be working on two of the three sections, but we need volunteers to help with our third area. We're looking for volunteers to assist with removal of non-natives, planting, and maintenance of the plants. Everyone is welcome on October 28th for our first volunteer revegetation day. Bring work gloves and garden tools if you have them. Meet in the parking lot at McClellan Ranch Park at 9:30 AM and we will work until about 12:30 PM. Volunteers will be needed on this project throughout the fall; if you can help on other days, please call Jayne at the SCVAS office 408/252-3747.

The project is funded by Birdathon 95 and a Los Altos High School grant. This is a pilot program which we hope to continue at McClellan and eventually bring to other schools and creeks.

Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas

Madrone Audubon Society has published the *Sonoma County Breeding Bird Atlas* with detailed maps and accounts of each of the 159 nesting birds in the county.

The 216-page volume has 70 charming pen & ink drawings by the great American bird-artist Major Allan Brooks.

A special pre-publication sale price is in effect through October 16th. Order from: Betty Burrige, 1653 Arroyo Sierra Way, Santa Rosa CA 95405. Make checks payable to the *Madrone Audubon Society*.

Orders post-marked on or **before 10-16-95:**

\$16.13 per book (includes tax)
plus \$3.00 shipping (first),
\$1.00 (each additional)

After 10-16-95

\$21.50 per book (includes tax)
plus \$3.00 shipping (first),
\$1.00 (each additional)

They're Coming!

The Annual San Jose Christmas Bird Count and Dinner will be held on Sunday, December 17, 1995. Section Leaders and more details to be identified in the November *Avocet*. Ann Verdi will organize and compile the count. The Palo Alto CBC will take place the very next day, as usual; however, Bill Bousman has stepped down as compiler, and we'll need to find a replacement.

SCVAS OFFICERS

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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.

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Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592

October 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 Oct. 4, 7:30 PM.

Bay Area Bird Photographers. Chuck Tribolet will show slides of resident wildlife in the Santa Teresa Hills. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****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.

****Sunday Oct. 8, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Phipps Ranch/Pescadero. Leader: Dan Keller 415/726-3306. This quaint organic produce farm is also an excellent vagrant trap with birder-friendly proprietors. Dan Keller will lead the group through the ranch and other Pescadero hot spots searching for unusual migrant songbirds. Take Hwy 84 west to Hwy 1, then south to Pescadero Rd. Turn left, follow road east through town of Pescadero; Phipps Ranch is 1 mile past town on right.

Tuesday Oct. 10, 9:30 AM. The Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat & 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.

****Wednesday Oct. 11, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Alum Rock Park. Leader: Bob Reiling 408/253-7527. Take I-680 to Alum Rock Ave. east into the park. Meet at 2nd parking lot at the back near YSI. Lunch optional. Heavy rain cancels.

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

Half day. Arastradero Preserve. Leader: Jim Liskovec 415/969-5542. 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 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.

****Saturday Oct. 21, 9:30 AM.**

Young Audubon Rancho San Antonio Nature Walk. A Midpeninsula Open Space docent will take us on a nature walk to learn about the natural history, trees, birds, and geology of the park. Bring a lunch for a picnic after the hike. From I-280 take Foothill Blvd. south and turn right almost immediately onto Cristo Rey Drive. Continue 1 mile, turn left into park, go to the farthest lot on right and meet near restrooms.

****Saturday Oct. 21, 8:30 AM.**

Full day. Elkhorn Slough/Monterey Bay. Leader: John Mariani 408/997-2066. Meet at Jetty Rd. on Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. Tremendous variety of waterfowl, ducks, gulls, grebes, shorebirds, raptors, etc. Bring scopes, full tank of gas.

****Sunday Oct. 22, 8:00 AM.**

Beginners trip to Charleston Slough. Leader: David Weber 415/857-9219. Take Hwy 101 to San Antonio Rd. in Mt. View, exit north on San Antonio to Terminal Way parking area. Ducks, shorebirds, herons, etc. Emphasis on basics of birding.

****Wednesday Oct. 25, 8:00 AM.**

Beginners trip to Palo Alto Foothills Park. Leader: Alberta Jasberg 415/493-

9546. Must carpool. Small entrance fee; bring lunch. Call for reservations and meeting place.

Saturday Oct. 28, 9:30 AM-

12:30 PM. Revegetation Work Day. Volunteer with SCVAS' revegetation project at McClellan Ranch Park (see article on Pg. 2). For more information call the office 408/252-3747.

****Saturday Nov. 4, 8:30 AM.**

Half day. Grant Ranch Co. Park. Leader: Alan Thomas 408/265-9286. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave east, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd., go approx. 9 miles to park. Meet at Hall's Valley Lake parking lot on left just past park entrance. Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Park entrance fee. 2 miles moderate hiking. Rain cancels.

****Sunday Nov. 5, full day.**

Sea Kayaking the Salinas River Refuge. Special trip for SCVAS members. Learn basics of sea kayaking and explore the secluded marshlands from a bird's viewpoint. Limit 8 participants; pre-registration required. No experience necessary; all equipment included. \$40 for SCVAS members. For more info or to register call Eskape Sea Kayaking at 408/427-2297.

****Wednesday, Nov. 8, 9 AM.**

Half day. Ed Levin Regional Park. Leaders: Harriet Gerson 408/252-6244, and Gail Cheeseman 408/741-5330. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing 880 and 680 to Calaveras Rd. to the park, about 2 miles past 680 on right. Meet in parking lot. Lunch optional.

Tuesday Nov. 14, 9:30 AM.

The Eve Case Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave, Los Gatos 408/395-4264. Topic: Bird Vocalization.

PLAN AHEAD:

Saturday Nov. 18—Ogier Ponds with Steve Rottenborn.

Friday-Saturday Nov. 24-25—

Sacto. Valley Wildlife Refuges with Don Schmoldt, Cheesemans.

Field Notes

LITTLE BLUE HERONS continue to be found in the Alviso salt ponds near the confluence of Alviso Slough and Coyote Creek, with two adults seen between 8/8 and 8/16 (MMR, MJM, PJM). Another adult was seen in a slightly more unusual location in Salt Pond A3W behind Moffett Field on 8/16 (SCR). A peak of 13 CATTLE EGRETS was reported from the Arzino Ranch in Alviso on 8/24 (SCR). Less expected was a single bird at Crittenden Marsh on 8/16 (PJM). BLUE-WINGED TEAL reports included one in the outer Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (PAFCB) on 8/4 (SCR) and a female in the Mountain View Forebay on 8/16 (PJM). The apparently uninjured female COMMON GOLDENEYE that was originally found on 6/7 at the Ogier Ponds was found again on 8/24 (SCR, RMI). Another female reported from Shoreline Lake on 8/26 was surprisingly early (TGr).

The first OSPREY of the fall, an immature, was reported from along Coyote Creek near the model airplane skypark north of Morgan Hill on 8/24 (SCR, RMI). Several returning PEREGRINE FALCONS were reported during the second half of the month, including an adult returning to its favorite perch on the Elwell Court high voltage tower south of the PAFCB on 8/23 (SCR). Presumably the same bird spent much of the winter on this tower last year. PRAIRIE FALCONS have moved out of the hills, with an immature bird seen hunting at the Gilroy sewer ponds on 8/27 (MMR) and a bird at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) on 8/28 (SCR, RMI). A real surprise was a BLACK RAIL seen flying across the entrance channel at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 8/30 (MDa). This record precedes our usual first reports from the Palo Alto Baylands by over two months!

Three broods of SNOWY PLOVERS in the salt ponds north of Moffett Field on

8/16 (SCR) were a welcome sight. As expected, LESSER YELLOWLEGS numbers built in August, with 17 reported from the PAFCB on 8/4 (SCR), 30 there on 8/19 (MJM), and 23 at the Gilroy sewer ponds on 8/27 (MMR). A worn basic-plumaged RUDDY TURNSTONE found in the outer PAFCB on 8/4 (SCR) was followed by a juvenile bird at the Gilroy sewer ponds on 8/27 (MMR). This latter bird is apparently the first of its species reported away from the bay in the county. Seven SANDERLINGS reported from the Mountain View Forebay on 8/8 were a surprise (CKS). Most of these birds are found along the immediate bay edge or in the Alviso salt ponds later in the year. A juvenile SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER was found in the pond west

An urban section of the Guadalupe River proved to be the "hot spot" of the month.

of the Mountain View Forebay on 8/1 (BSa *fide* AME) and up to two juveniles have been seen at the waterbird pond at CCRS from 8/25 to 8/31 (SCR, RMI, MJM, MMR). Juvenile BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS were reported from the outer PAFCB on 8/4 (SCR), the CCRS waterbird pond on 8/5 (MJM), east of the end of Nortech Parkway in Alviso on 8/16 (PJM), and at the Gilroy sewer ponds on 8/27 (MMR). This last bird, like the Ruddy Turnstone seen on the same day, is the first of its species to be found away from the bay. The year's first PECTORAL SANDPIPER was found at Charleston Slough on 8/31 (TNe *fide* AME). Good numbers of WILSON'S PHALAROPES have been detected this fall. The greatest numbers were reported from the CCRS waterbird pond, where 251 were counted on 8/20 (MJM). RED-NECKED PHALAROPES were also reported from a variety of locations, with the largest number reported being 120 at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 8/16 (SCR).

Two different first-summer MEW GULLS were found this month. The first was at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 8/16 (SCR) and the second at the nearby Calabazas Ponds on 8/30 (SCR, RMI). Two second-summer HERRING GULLS at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 8/16 were also noteworthy. LEAST TERNS continued at Charleston Slough, with up to 5 birds noted from 8/5 to 8/16 (m.ob.). The pair of BLACK SKIMMERS that nested on the island in the southeast corner of Salt Pond A1 north of Shoreline Park had two chicks by the end of the month (m.ob.). A juvenile COMMON MURRE in Guadalupe Slough on 8/16 (PJM, SCR) provided our seventh county record. Although a real surprise, we have several previous late August/early September records, the sixth county record being from the same location on 9/3/90!

VAUX'S SWIFTS were found migrating south over the latter half of the month, with 8 to 10 foraging over Matadero Creek northeast of highway 101 on 8/30 (LCh) being the largest number reported. A female BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD feeding a young bird along Coyote Creek at Capitol Expressway on 8/9 (SCR, RMI) is another example of late breeding by this species. The first migrating WILLOW FLYCATCHER of the fall was banded at CCRS on 8/20 (*fide* MMR). From then until the end of the month 32 additional birds were reported at many locations, suggestive of another good year for this species, like last year. A juvenile DUSKY FLYCATCHER at CCRS on 8/28 (SCR) was much less expected. A bird banded on 8/26 was thought to perhaps be another Dusky Flycatcher (LCh), but identification of *empidonax* flycatchers can be difficult even in the hand, and this bird could not be conclusively identified. Two adult male and several young PURPLE MARTINS were seen near Loma Prieta on 8/1 (RWR, FVS) near where a family group was seen last month. Another female migrating over Escondido Village at Stanford on 8/11 was unexpected. The first returning CEDAR WAXWING was reported from upper Coyote Creek on 8/

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The Rarities Chase is On!

Bobolink? Eastern Kingbird? Orange Bishop?!! The confused birder might've wondered what continent, much less what county, he or she was in with this kind of a bird list, but these and others showed up on the Sept. 9 Rarities Chase led by Steve Rottenborn.

An under-birded stretch of the Guadalupe River (see this month's Field Notes column) provided much of the morning's excitement. This observer stumbled across the oddly-plumaged Bobolink and was thoroughly perplexed; fortunately Steve was able to quickly identify the eastern vagrant and all 25 of us got great looks. The gaudy, apricot-and-black Bishop, an African native, zoomed over the reeds in a unique, and to us unfamiliar, flight pattern. (Bishops of several species seem to be popping up not only here but in Southern California—perhaps a disgruntled or incompetent breeder released their breeding stock.) Several Willow Flycatchers were observed foraging in relatively open, reedy habitat, offering excellent opportunities for studying this challenging Empidonax.

The group left Guadalupe River for CCRS and the waterbird pond, where Claire Wolf found two Pectoral Sandpipers camouflaged among a flock of roosting dowitchers, and a Lesser Yellowlegs was observed next to its Greater counterpart for good comparison. A Prairie Falcon soared high overhead and a Peregrine made a brief appearance, while an adult Golden Eagle perched in a cottonwood before catching a high-rising thermal. Frank Van Slager then spotted the other exciting rarity of the day, an Eastern Kingbird, perched cooperatively on the chain-link fence next to the levee, and this handsome vagrant was scoped and studied at length.

Urbanization and over-development are certainly threatening our local wildlife habitat, but there are still some great birds to be found along local riparian corridors and adjacent wetlands. Let's all do what we can to help protect these habitats so we can enjoy outstanding field trips like this for decades to come.

—Grant Hoyt

Beginner's Trip

On Saturday August 12 eight birders, including two beginners, met at Charleston Slough for the monthly SCVAS beginner's birding trip. A total of 51 species was seen on this clear, warm day even though the slough itself and Shoreline Lake were essentially empty. Nevertheless, we were rewarded with observations of delicate Wilson's Phalaropes spinning around as they foraged in the water, and side-by-side comparisons of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. The highlight was watching a pair of rare (in Santa Clara County) Black Skimmers raising their two buff-colored young on a small island in the southeast corner of Salt Pond A1 next to the slough. —Bob Reiling

Young Audubon

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include programs featuring whale-watching in Monterey Bay, bugs and butterflies, geological highlights and many other interesting subjects. It is our hope that with each new experience they have, "Young Auduboners" will come to appreciate the natural world around them even more. On the trip to Grant Ranch, Beth Chavez, age 9, commented, "I had more fun on this trip than the first one!"

Following the Grant Ranch trip, our third, an "end of the school year" birdwalk in Alum Rock Park in June also offered young birders good looks at Northern Orioles, Lazuli Buntings, American Goldfinches and a Cooper's Hawk. Also led by Dave and young David Cook, that trip was rich with opportunities for young birders to see small birds at close range. Following the birdwalk, our group had the distinct pleasure of visiting the Youth Science Institute, which offered an educational program featuring captive hawks and owls. As Gabriel Hirsch, age 9, was pleased to announce, our trip "brought his life list to 230."

SCVAS families are encouraged to participate in this enjoyable and educational new program. For additional information, questions, or suggestions for upcoming trips, contact Heather Rottenborn at (415) 497-9368 or the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747.

Field Notes

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24 (SCR, RMi).

A NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH found along the Guadalupe River between Montague Expressway and Trimble Road on 8/31 (SCR) was just one of several rarities found along this stretch of creek this month. Two MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLERS were here on 8/30 (SCR, RMi), an adult male BLUE GROSBEAK was found on 8/31 (SCR, MMR, LCh), and an adult male INDIGO BUNTING was seen on both 8/30 (SCR, RMi) and 8/31 (SCR, MMR). Even more bizarre were up to three alternate-plumaged male NORTHERN RED BISHOPS (*Euplectes franciscanus*) here on 8/30

(SCR, RMi) and 8/31 (LCh, SCR, MMR). These escaped African finches can cause real identification headaches. Another male N. RED BISHOP has also been present along Matadero Creek northeast of highway 101. It was heard on 8/18 (SCR), seen and identified the next day 8/19 (PMB, RLe), and found through the end of the month (m.ob.).

OBSERVERS: *Phyllis Browning (PMB), Les Chibana (LCh), Mike Danzenbaker (MDa), Al Eisner (AME), Tom Grey (TGr), Rosalie Lefkowitz (RLe), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Rebecca Miller (RMi), Todd Newberry (TNe), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Chris Salander (CKS), Barry Sauppe (BSa), Frank Van Slager (FVS).*

Environmental Action News

“Anatomy Of A Loss”

by Craig Breon

Every environmental advocate's job description ought to include, "Willingness to lose with grace and move on." Under that criteria, I can't say I fully qualify, but I'm learning. Not only are fundamental environmental protection laws and funding being hammered in Washington and Sacramento, but there are periodic, small-scale losses on the local level that can wear you down. The following is an analysis of one of those losses. While it is specific to San Jose, it exemplifies issues common to other areas.

Background

When I was hired in January of 1994, the first major project the chapter asked me to work on was helping pass a strong creek protection policy in San Jose. Five months later, we succeeded. The City's Riparian Corridor Policy notes the values associated with the region's creeks (e.g., of 211 bird species in the County, 60% are riparian species), the fate of local creeks historically (of 330 miles of creeks on the Valley floor, over 250 miles have been realigned, widened, concrete-lined or stripped of vegetation), and the steps needed to protect and restore what remains. Central to the Policy are guidelines for development, which state that future development should be set back from the City's creeks.

When the Policy passed, we knew that years of hard work remained. A paper policy means little; whether the City would enforce it remained a great concern. We have since followed the Policy's progress. I receive plans for proposed creekside development in the City, often visit the site, then submit comments to the Planning Department. Where controversies arise, I meet with City planners, developers, or individual Council members, and appear on behalf of Audubon in front of the Planning Commission or City Council. All my actions are bolstered by the work of volunteers.

Results have been mixed. As reported in last month's *Avocet*, the City recently ignored the Policy entirely, allowing a large office complex to locate directly adjacent to Coyote Creek. Angered by this action, I stepped up the pressure and along with others fought the next project vigorously.

Lower Silver Creek

Lower Silver Creek comes out of the foothills of east San Jose, takes in the flow of twelve smaller creeks as it wanders through the city, and eventually flows into Coyote Creek. Unlike the Coyote, most of Lower Silver is in sad shape. Some of it is already a concrete channel, with little vegetation left along its banks. Still, we felt it was riparian habitat worth fighting for.

At its September 5 meeting, the City Council voted 7 to 1 with 1 abstention* to allow the DUC Construction Company to build 79 homes (with associated roads, etc.) within 8 feet of the creek!

Many citizens from the City joined me in arguing, first before the Planning Commission and then at two Council hearings, that the development should be set back further—about 35 to 45 feet total—to allow for restoration of that part of the creek. There's a park, a church, and a school in the area, all of which have open land near the creek, providing both the space and the community organizations needed to create a rewarding restoration project. We were convincing, but not successful.

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What We Lost

We lost a small section of creek, one of many just like it throughout the City. We may have lost many other small sections because of the precedent set by this decision. San Jose (and the rest of the County) is sprinkled with creeks where agriculture has removed the trees or developers have straightened the banks to accommodate neat lines of roads and homes. The Riparian Policy specifically points to these remnants as crucial for restoration. Nonetheless, this decision dealt a serious blow to those restoration goals.

In addition, we lost momentum. When the Riparian Policy passed, the City planners and politicians took note of how many creek advocates attended the meetings. Biology, hydrology, and even fluvial geomorphology (the movement of creeks over time) were discussed by politicians, believe it or not. The City was learning. With decisions like this on Lower Silver, the planners who work with the Policy on a day-to-day basis may have received a message that it's not very important to their bosses, which makes our work that much tougher.

Why We Lost

From my contacts with various Council members, I knew going into the meeting that we would lose. In fact we lost by a worse margin than I had predicted. Ferreting out the exact reasons is not easy.

Technically, several Council members stated that the project was exempt from the Riparian Policy. The Policy exempts projects next to "bare modified earthen channels." While this section of Lower Silver is not bare, it has little vegetation. There would be more trees and shrubs in the area except that the Water District removes vegetation which might retard flood waters. Further, the eventual flood control project for this area will have trees and shrubs. We argued that this creek is not now nor will it ever be a "bare" channel. Bare implies hopeless; we argued for hope.

Why, then, would the Council strain to interpret the Policy so as to deny protection and restoration?

First, the cynical response. Developers contribute heavily to Council races. While I know nothing of the donation history of these particular developers, it is clear the councilman for this District, Manny Diaz, lobbied other council members to give these developers what they asked for. One Council member even called me to let me know that they would not be voting with us, and to essentially apologize for that fact. In addition, many of the Council members may have realized that degraded creeks also flow through their Districts, and thus a vote for restoration might mean angering landowners whom they represent.

A more forgiving answer would admit that any large City has many different competing interests, and sometimes these interests clash. In this case, the developers were bringing to the community a type of housing lacking in the area. In addition, many of the Council members are new, and did not go through the education process of passing the Riparian Policy. They may simply not understand, or not sympathize with, the value of creeks and other natural resources.

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Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's FALL BIRDSEED SALE

All Orders Must Be Placed By Monday October 16

Pick-up Locations: Please check one

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife Educ. & Rehab Center (WERC), Morgan Hill | Sat. Oct 21 10:00am-Noon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peninsula Conservation Center (PCC), Palo Alto | Sat. Oct. 21 10:00am-Noon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Science Institute (YSI), Los Gatos | Tues. Oct. 24 4:00-6:00pm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> REI, Cupertino | Tues. Oct. 24 4:00-6:00pm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet Friends, Sunnyvale | Wed. Oct. 25 4:00-6:00pm |

BIRDSEED

	Quantity	Amount
Audubon Special	20lb @ \$9.00 _____	_____
(mix includes sunflower seeds)	50lb @ \$19.00 _____	_____
Western Wild	20lb @ \$ 8.00 _____	_____
(no sunflower seeds)	50lb @ \$17.00 _____	_____
Black Oil Sunflower Seed	25lb @ \$16.00 _____	_____
	50lb @ \$28.00 _____	_____
Sunflower Chips	25lb @ \$28.00 _____	_____
Thistle	5lb @ \$11.00 _____	_____

BIRDFEEDERS

	Quantity	Amount
Cling-a-Wing	\$12.00 _____	_____
Droll Yankee Seed Saver	\$17.00 _____	_____
Droll Yankee Tube Feeder	\$23.00 _____	_____
Droll Yankee Mini Thistle	\$14.00 _____	_____
4 Fountain Hummingbird Feeder	\$10.00 _____	_____
Window Feeder (med 7")	\$10.00 _____	_____
Window Feeder (large 12")	\$16.00 _____	_____

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Anatomy of a Loss

....continued from page 6

No matter which of the above (or other possible explanations) you adhere to, the important thing is to decide how to react.

What Now?

First, let me assure you that we will continue to push for enforcement of this policy. We have been successful in the past with some projects, and will be again. I expect that the more time I and volunteers from our chapter spend on this issue, the more the City will realize that we are neither few in number nor meager in effort. However, on this and other issues we must still ask, "What more can we do?" The following are some possibilities.

We could bring out more people. Councils do react to numbers. It's uncomfortable to cast a tough vote, and even more uncomfortable when lots of people show up to bear witness. This takes organizational ability, which we and other environmental groups in the area have, but in limited amounts. We have to choose our fights carefully.

We could influence politicians in other ways. The best way might be to kick out some bad ones and elect some good ones. Audubon, because of our nonprofit tax status, doesn't engage in this kind of politicking. However, the California League of Conservation Voters does, and they have just opened a local branch. You can reach them by calling Bob Levy (408) 257-2474.

We can use more aggressive tactics. In this effort on Lower Silver Creek, our views were covered extensively in the *Metro*

(August 31 edition), and we began going out to creeks and leafletting. Other options open to us include legal tools and even civil disobedience. I am not saying these are likely, or appropriate, tools for defending a small creek. I am talking now about options for environmentalists in general. This example was used to illuminate the larger picture.

Thanks

Finally, a few words of appreciation. To Jeanne, who in speaking to the Council compared the health of a city to the health of an individual, and who reminded the Council to think of the future by quoting the late Mickey Mantle, "If I knew I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself." To Sarah, who listed all the birds she had seen recently at her creekside home. To Fadi, who attended church services of a different religion from his own in order to share this issue with the local community. To Dave, who talked to the Council of the joys he had as a child growing up near a creek. To Orlando, who only learned about the issue from the newspaper the morning of the Council meeting, and then spent his lunch gathering signatures. Good people like these and all the others who have and will help our chapter do good work make my job as rewarding as it is. (And thanks to Craig for performing his job as *Environmental Advocate with such competence and conviction, win or lose.*—Ed.)

* For the record, Council Members Diaz, Woody, Fernandez, Powers, Fiscalini, Dando, and Shirakawa voted for the development. Councilman Pandori voted against it and Councilwoman Johnson abstained, though both of them spoke well in defense of the creek.

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.

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