



The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

September 1996

WILDLIFE REFUGE IN SANTA CLARA?

By Craig Breon
Environmental Advocate

Sometimes it seems that conservationists spend all their time reacting to problems. A new bill proposed in Sacramento that will harm wildlife? Try to kill it. A new development too close to Coyote Creek? Try to push it back. It can be a little discouraging, as you wonder if your work is all about slowing the pace of destruction.

Then an idea or an issue comes along that represents a proactive effort to make life better. Enthusiasm starts to flow, and you begin to wonder why we aren't doing more of this. The following are two such efforts underway at SCVAS.

The Santa Clara Wildlife Refuge

Regular *Avocet* readers will recall a May article by Clysta Seney regarding the best birding spot left in the City of Santa Clara. Along the Guadalupe River and part of the old Fairview Glen Golf

Course, the site has "naturalized" in the years since the golfers vacated. While a majority of the City-owned land has been leased to developers for housing, about 30 acres remain as a refuge from Silicon Valley, with ponds attracting wetlands species and mature trees hosting a great variety of birdlife.

With Clysta's urging and a mailer to many Audubon members in the City, a small group has formed to call for the creation of Santa Clara's first and only wildlife refuge. In July the group made a presentation to the City Council. We noted that the City's budget could withstand the revenue losses associated with saving the land. We mused about the loss of the orchards, the creeks, and the grasslands that once adorned Santa Clara, and the fact that this was really the last piece of "wild" land the City could preserve. Most of all, we urged the Council to spare this land from the bulldozers and create a small piece of sanctuary.

And we did pretty well. While no decision was made, it appears that two or three Council members are sympathetic to the idea. We need four votes to see the refuge become a reality. There's a lot of work still to be done.

Here's where you come in! We need letters, bodies, ideas, elbow grease, whatever you can offer, especially if you're a Santa Clara resident, but even if you're not. Start with one of the three following suggestions and one day you'll be able to tell your family and friends that you helped create something special.

1) Take a tour of the future Refuge. On Sunday, September 8 at 9 AM SCVAS will be leading a tour of this lovely area. If you're lucky, White-Tailed Kites will be flying overhead and salmon will be migrating up the Guadalupe River. Meet at the Lick Mill Park parking lot, on the west side of Lick Mill Boulevard (near where Tasman crosses the Guadalupe), next to Bella Vista Apartments. If you can't make this tour, keep looking in the *Avocet*; there will be more.

2) Write a letter to the Santa Clara City Council. Use the story above for information, and request that they see this vision become reality. Write to: Mayor Judy Nadler and Council Members 1500 Warburton Avenue Santa Clara, CA 95050

3) For more information, or if you have some time or ideas to contribute, contact Audubon member Paul Barnett at (408) 243-7001.

**General Membership Meeting
Wednesday September 18th
7:30 Program, 8 PM Program
Birding in Chile and Argentina
with Alvaro Jaramillo**

Migrate south with SCVAS for our first program of the season. Al Jaramillo will escort us to southern South America for a fresh look at birding below the Tropic of Capricorn. Al studied zoology at the University of Toronto and earned a Master's degree studying Argentine cowbirds. He has spent the last year writing a book on New World blackbirds and is now beginning a field guide to the birds of Chile. Al is a wildlife biologist at Coyote Creek Riparian Station and an accomplished birder. Join him on Sept. 18th for an exciting presentation!

see page 6

VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Garth Harwood, SCVAS Chapter Manager

With this issue, we begin a new feature on the recent goings-on at the SCVAS office from the perspective of the Chapter Manager. And it's quite a view, too . . . after all, how many office workers look out their doors onto 23 acres of a nature preserve, complete with a native plant garden and thriving riparian corridor? And then, of course, there are the birds that flock to our assortment of carefully-placed feeders and flowers!

Our intention in starting this column is to provide you with a closer feeling of what goes on at the physical center of our chapter on a day-to-day basis. As a newcomer to this office, I'll admit that I'm a bit overwhelmed by the sheer volume and variety of our chapter's activities. It's obvious to me that it would be very difficult for any one person in this chapter to stay well-informed about the full spectrum of our operations, from field trips to classroom visits to conservation battles and the low-key heroics of our stalwart office volunteers.

In this space, I'll do what I can to remedy that. I'd like to let you know about some noteworthy volunteer efforts, as well as keep you informed about ongoing programs worth participating in, such as our Backyard Bird Sanctuary certification program and our chapter's role in the California Bluebird Recovery Program. I'll let you know who our most generous recent donors have been, (unless they request otherwise, of course), and I'll do my best to include some interesting events from among the birds that are such a big part of everyday life here at the park.

MANY HONORED AT ANNUAL DINNER . . . a lot of people work behind the scenes to keep our varied programs running at full throttle. At the SCVAS Annual Dinner held at McClellan Park on June 19th, some of those people were recognized for their outstanding contributions in the previous year. This year's honorees included outgoing Chapter President Nick Yatsko; Bonnie Bedford-White of Cherry Pie Graphics, who donated vast amounts of time and effort to produce our new Checklist of the Birds of Santa Clara County (get yours today!); Laura Leberherz, who completed a flawless stint as co-editor of *the Avocet* with the June 1996 issue; Marie Gordon and Chris Keswani for hours upon hours in the office; Bill Bousman for many and varied contributions including preparation of the Field Notes section of *the Avocet*; and Lee Lovelady and Frank Vanslager for educational and field trip contributions.

BIRDATHON AWARDS were also given at the Annual Dinner. Harriet Gerson has to lead any list of people associated with that event: not only did she coordinate the entire effort, but she was also the single most successful Birdathon fundraiser! Gail Cheeseman and Bobbie Handen were also presented with certificates of appreciation as leading Birdathon fundraisers (top teams, from a fundraising perspective, were the Wry Wrentits, Creek Freaks, and Wrong Terns). All participants in this year's Birdathon were awarded a beautiful, 5-color SCVAS 70th-Anniversary patch. [Note: let me know if you didn't receive one yet, and we'll get one to you pronto!]

TWO SUMMER INTERNS have given us a big boost in the office. Jon Paul Hoonstra spent most of his summer vacation doing varied tasks like mounting bluebird nestboxes at McClellan Park, watering native plants in our revegetation plots here at the park, and word-processing. Shin-Wha Whang has also donated most of her afternoons for the past several weeks to our work projects. Both students are back in school now, but we can't thank them enough for the efforts they've put in this summer.

see Office View, page 6

SCVAS OFFICERS

President	David McIntyre	415/856-6671
Past Pres.	Nick Yatsko	408/247-5499
1st VP	Clysta Seney	408/261-9431
2nd VP	Mary Simpson	408/370-2177
Treasurer	John McLemore	408/261-9431
Secretary	Elaine Gould	408/448-0622

STAFF

Chapter Manager		
Garth Harwood		408/252-3747
Environmental Advocate		
Craig Breon		408/252-3748
Office Fax		408/252-2850

DIRECTORS

Bobbie Handen '93-96		408/356-4263
Grant Hoyt '93-96		415/969-7892
LedaBeth Gray '93-96		415/424-8573
Sandy Cortright '94-97		408/738-1251
Heather Rottenborn '94-97		415/497-9368
Chris Fischer '94-97		415/364-8723
Rob Colwell '95-98		415-949-1869
Steve Shunk '95-98		408/297-3654

CHAIRPERSONS

CBC	Ann Verdi	408/377-8018
Avocet	Grant Hoyt	415/969-7892
Education	Bobbie Handen	408/356-4263
Envir. Action	(Vacant)	
Programs	Clysta Seney	408/261-9431
Library	Joyce Chang	415/965-9682
Field Trips		
Weekend	Dave Cook	408/729-7310
Weekday	Alberta Jasberg	415/493-9546
	Shirley Gordon	408/996-9863
Aud Adven	Elaine Gould	408/448-0622
PhotoClub	Pete LaTourrette	415/961-2741
Finance	Don Price	415/327-1254
Hospitality	Gail Cheeseman	408/867-1371

BAAC

Delegate (Vacant)

Membership (Vacant)

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

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

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

1996, Volume 43, Number 7

Rare Bird Alert: 510/ 524-5592

September 1996 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. 4, 7:30 PM.

Bay Area Bird Photographers. Tonight's program features Doug Wechsler, director of VIREO, the archival bird photo collection at Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Doug will describe VIREO's work and present his own slides of west African tropical birds, taken on a recent trip to Cameroon.

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

Half day. Bird-banding at Coyote Creek Riparian Station. Leader: Chris Otahal (408) 262-9204. Demonstration and tour of riparian revegetation area. This is your chance to see birds in the hand and learn the basics of bird-banding and its role in important local avian research projects. From I-880 in Milpitas take Hwy 237 west, exit at McCarthy Blvd. and immediately turn left onto Alviso-Milpitas Rd. which parallels 237. Cross Coyote Creek and immediately turn right through gate onto upper flood control levee. Follow levee north 1 mile to CCRS trailers.

Tuesday Sept. 10, 9:30 AM. Eve Case Bird Discussion Group meets at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Summer birding experiences.

****Wednesday Sept. 11, 9:00 AM.**

Half day. Hayward Regional Shoreline. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408) 996-9863. From the west, take Hwy 92 (San Mateo Bridge) to Clawiter exit, 2 left turns to Breakwater Ave. (parallel to 92). Go to end and meet at Interpretive Center. From east, take I-880 to 92 west, exit onto Clawiter and left on Breakwater. Highlights: shorebirds, waterbirds. Lunch optional.

****Saturday Sept. 14, 9:00 AM.** Full day. Monterey County Shorebird Search. Leader: John Mariani (408) 997-2066. Trip designed to look for scarce and unusual migrant shorebirds when they are most likely to appear—many intriguing possibilities along Monterey Bay coastal habitats. Directions: Take Hwy 17 to Hwy 1, then south to Moss Landing. Meet at Jetty Rd., a right turn just north of Moss Landing Harbor. Caravan from there to local bird hot spots. Bring lunch, liquids.

Saturday Sept. 21. 9 AM - Noon.

Coastal Cleanup Day. Last year over 40,000 volunteers helped clean our California beaches, creeks, lakes and parks. SCVAS is helping out again with a volunteer cleanup crew along Stevens Creek in Cupertino. To do your part in improving local bird habitat, contact Garth at the office (408) 252-3747.

****Sunday Sept. 22, 9:00 AM.**

Half day. Phipps Ranch/Pescadero. Leader: Dan Keller (415) 726-3306. Birding at the organic produce farm that also happens to be an outstanding migrant/vagrant trap. Dan will lead the group with emphasis on migrant songbirds and perennial plants. Directions: Take Hwy 84 west to Hwy 1, then south to Pescadero Rd. Turn left, follow road through town of Pescadero to Phipps Ranch, 1 mile east of town.

****Wednesday Sept. 25, 9:00 AM.**

Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader: Roxie Handler. Meet at N. end of San Antonio Rd. in Mt. View at Terminal Way parking area. Shorebirds, waterfowl.

****Saturday Sept. 28, 8:30 AM.**

Full day. Hawk Hill/Marin headlands. Leader: Don Schmoldt (510) 215-1910. Meet at Vista Pt. parking area at north end of Golden Gate Bridge, caravan to Hill from there. Our first of two fall outings to view migrating

raptors from the west coast's premier hawk lookout. Test your accipiter identification skills and scan for unusual buteos with the other Hawk Hill raptor fanatics.

****Sunday Sept. 29, 9:00 AM.**

Full day. Point Reyes. Leader: Peter LaTourrette (415) 961-2741. Our annual trip to the west coast's most active vagrant trap, where the birds and weather are always exciting and unpredictable! From Hwy 1 in Marin Co. take Sir Francis Drake Blvd. west approx. 14 miles and turn left to Drakes Beach; meet in parking area. Bring a full tank of gas, and be prepared for fog, wind, sun, and plenty of challenging birds!

****Saturday Oct. 5, 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 for carpooling. Now relieved of Chapter presidential duties, Nick can concentrate on his primary Audubon-related endeavor—the relentless pursuit of raptors! Join our hawk-eyed leader for an exciting day on the Hill with buteos, accipiters, assorted passerines and perhaps a rare Broad-winged Hawk. (Possible alternate plan if heavy fog.)

Tuesday Oct. 8, 9:30 AM. Eve Case Bird Discussion Group meets at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Kirtland's Warbler.

* * * * *

MARYANN DANIELSON will once again offer fall birding classes for beginning and intermediate birders. Evening classes begin in mid-September and meet in Menlo Park. Call (415) 325-9349 for information.

* * * * *

AUTUMN BIRDING FOR THE

BLIND---A 2-hour introductory lecture plus field trip in Palo Alto for the blind and visually impaired. Learn to identify birds like the experts do---by sound. Call Linda Lloyd at (415) 941-9407 for details.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Can any checklist truly represent the avifauna of one area? The hubris of the first checklist for Santa Clara County in twenty-one years, published in April, was amply rewarded by two new species for the county within a month's time as well as new breeding records during the summer. Read on!

Loons through Ibis

Straying migrant **Common Loons** are not unexpected in late spring so two birds at Lexington Res. on 12 May (DLSu) fit that pattern. Much less expected was a basic-plumaged bird on Guadalupe Res. on 4 Jun (MMR). Two **Eared Grebes** on Crittenden Marsh on 7 Jul (BB) were the only ones reported this summer. Three **Brown Pelicans** on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 3 Jul (MMR) were the first of the summer season. The nesting of **Double-crested Cormorants** on South Bay transmission towers continued this summer with at least 16 nests observed on Salt Pond A18 in Alviso 30 May - 13 Jul (MJM, SCR, AJ). A faded and worn immature **Brandt's Cormorant** was found on Mayfield Slough in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 25 Jun (SCR, HLR). Most coastal birds that wind up in the South Bay are sick or injured. **Little Blue Herons** were first found on 18 May (AME) when two were in the New Chicago Marsh in Alviso. One of these birds had flown in from the Alviso heronry. Two adults were seen in the heronry on 8 Jun (MJM) and two adults were also observed on 24 Jul foraging in Salt Pond A9 in Alviso, one of their preferred feeding areas (MMR). Breeding plumaged **Cattle Egrets** have been observed moving to and from the Alviso heronry 15 May - 8 Jun (AME, MJM, MMR) with a maximum of seven counted on 25 May (MJM). Our only report

of **White-faced Ibis** this season is of ten over the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) waterbird pond on 11 May (HLC *vide* SCR).

Waterfowl through Rails

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** on Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto FCB on Jul 14 (MJM) is the only report this summer. A male **American Wigeon**, apparently an oversummering bird, has been found in the vicinity of the Palo Alto FCB 1 Jun - 7 Jul (MMR, MJM). A male **Redhead** has oversummered in the Palo Alto FCB (v.ob.). A pair of **Ring-necked Ducks** has oversummered on the Ogier Avenue ponds in Morgan Hill, recorded on 26 May and 9 Jul (SCR, MJM). Female **Buffleheads** rarely oversummer so one

*A new checklist
guaranteed
an amazing summer*

on Salt Pond A3W on 1 Jun (MMR) and one in the vicinity of Charleston Slough and the Mountain View Forebay 26 Jun - 28 Jul (v.ob.) are of interest. A female **Red-breasted Merganser** on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 3 Jul (MMR) is the only July record I have for this species—it seldom oversummers.

Osprey are very casual in the county in late spring and summer so a single bird at Calaveras Res. on 23 May (SCR), one or more birds repeatedly at Vasona Res. on 23-25 May, 30 May, and 14 Jul (JD), and two birds in the vicinity of the Ogier Avenue ponds on 26 May (SCR, MJM) are all of interest. Will our reservoirs tempt this bird to nest within the county? **Sharp-shinned Hawk** is almost our rarest breeding raptor in the county. An adult carrying prey along Calaveras Road on 23 May (MMR) is in an area where they are known to nest, but two adults and a nest with young above Stevens Creek Res. on 27 Jun (SCR) are from

an area where they were not known to breed. Which leads into what is certainly our rarest breeding raptor: **Peregrine Falcon**. This species has been doing much better in central California with breeding in remote areas of San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Alameda counties in recent years. On 9 Jul David Suddjian, who has been following breeding birds in the Santa Cruz Mountains in recent years, found a pair with two recently-fledged juveniles in the Los Gatos Creek drainage. This species has not been recorded nesting in this county since W.E. English took a set of eggs west of Gilroy in 1905. Two **Mountain Quail** were heard again on Black Mountain on 13 May (MMR). An adult **Clapper Rail** with a single chick was found along with other adults in the Palo Alto estuary on 19 Jul (SCR, HLR). Continued information on breeding of this endangered species is always of interest. Our ignorance is almost complete as to the status of our nocturnal, migratory rails. These birds can use very small and ephemeral wetlands, but do they? A **Virginia Rail** seen calling in a wetland north of Grant Lake in Jos. Grant CP on 19 May (JY, AL) is from an area where we have no record of breeding, while a bird calling in the Mountain View Forebay on 7 Jul (MJM) probably attempted to breed there as birds sometimes have in the past (maybe).

Shorebirds through Skimmers

Three **Snowy Plovers** were found at the west end of Salt Pond 1 on Ravenswood Point on 1 Jun and three more were near Bayfront Park the same day (MJM). A pair north of the Alviso marina was seen on 8 Jun (MJM) and one was found on Salt Pond A14 on 24 Jul (MMR). A single **Lesser Yellowlegs** on Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto FCB in alternate plumage on 4 Jun (PMB) was a rare summer find. Our influx of fall birds started with nine in the FCB on 13 Jul (SCR). A **Solitary Sandpiper** found in a small pond east of Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 28 Apr (SSh *et al.*) was at the 'peak of migration' for this very rare shorebird. Separate sets (adult with three newly-

hatched young and another adult with one nearly-fledged young) of **Spotted Sandpiper** young were found in the Ogier Avenue ponds on 7 Jul (SCR). These are both new breeding locations for this very rare nesting shorebird. **Dunlin** molt prior to leaving their breeding grounds so they rarely arrive before the end of September. Neither the bird in alternate plumage on Salt Pond A9 on 24 Jul (MMR) nor the one at the CCRS waterbird pond on 26 Jul (GHt *et al.*) fits this pattern and both are unusual.

Steve Rottenborn needed little time to find a new species that was not recorded on the freshly-published checklist: A **Curlew Sandpiper** seen on 1 May that moved back and forth between Crittenden Marsh and the Stevens Creek Mitigation Area. This Eurasian species, in mostly basic plumage, is one of the few spring records for Northern California and remained until 4 May (m.ob.). A **Red Phalarope** found in the Mountain View Forebay on 5 May (JDa *fide* MMR) is one of our few spring records. Always a good find in the South Bay, a **Heermann's Gull** was seen along the east side of Sunnyvale's Baylands Park on 11 Jul (MiF). Overwintering **Herring Gulls** are rare locally so a 2nd-summer bird in the Palo Alto Baylands on 1 Jun (SCR *et al.*) and a 1st-summer bird nearby on 27 Jun (SCR) are of interest. A single **Caspian Tern** nest at the west end of Salt Pond 1 on Ravenswood Point is of interest as this colonial nesting species is susceptible to many local dangers. Our first spring record of a **Common Tern** was an adult seen on Salt Pond A3W on 18 May (SCR). Even more exciting, perhaps, were the three **Least Terns** observed flying north over Lexington Res. on 12 May (DLSu). We have long speculated that this species uses the Capitola-Los Gatos corridor over the Santa Cruz Mountains to reach its nesting areas in Alameda County but this is the first direct observation. Five to seven post-breeding birds were seen at Charleston Slough 16-26 Jul (MMR, v.ob.) and two more were on Salt Pond A3W in Sunnyvale on 21 Jul (CKS). Up to three **Black Terns** were seen along

Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 11 May (SCR, MJM, MMR). The **Black Skimmers** remained at Charleston Slough through 17 May (v.ob.) and after that a pair was observed on an island in Salt Pond B2 18 May - 1 Jun (MMR, SCR) where they nested in 1994.

Cuckoos through Chats

A late summer surprise was an adult **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 24 Jul (AJ, m.ob.). Quite vocal on occasions, this bird had been present at least since 23 Jul and was still being seen at the end of the month (LCh). This is probably the first bird we've had in at least 30 years. They nested in this vicinity at the turn of the century when there were willow thickets where the silicon now grows. A **Black Swift** was along the Guadalupe River near Taylor on 5 Jul (AV, CS) for our first July record of this normally scarce spring migrant. Still among the very rare, **Pileated Woodpeckers** are being encountered more frequently. David Suddjian noted a pair near Lake Elsmar on 18 Jun that called just after sunrise as breeding birds do on the west side of the Santa Cruz Mountains and, on 8 Jul, he found a female with a fledgling for the first breeding record for this species in the county!

A female **Purple Martin** along Guadalupe Slough on 18 May (SCR) was probably a migrant, but two to five birds along Summit Ridge near the Santa Cruz County border on 27 May - 24 Jul (v.ob.) were in an area where they have bred in recent years. At least three fledglings were noted on 24 Jul (MMR). A **Bank Swallow** at Searsville Lake on 15 May (SCR) was very unusual for the inland portion of San Mateo County as was the single bird at the Mountain View Forebay on 26 Jun (SCR, HLR). The **American Dipper** found along Stevens Creek above the park in April was seen from 8-21 May (v.ob.). Another bird was found along Herbert Creek above Almaden Res. on 30 Jun (AV) where they've bred in recent years. Two singing **Golden-crowned Kinglets**

near Wright's Station Road on 8 Jul (DLSu) probably represent breeding at the edge of their coastal range. Breeding **Hermit Thrushes** were found in the same area 18 Jun - 8 Jul (DLSu). **Phainopepla** in the San Antonio Valley on 12 May (MMR) and 16 Jun (DP) are from expected locations. Less expected were a male on Calaveras Road on 23 May (SCR) and three males in Alum Rock Park on 26 May (ECu, JG). A singing **Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler** northwest of Mt. Lewis on 8 Jun (MMR) on the Alameda County line represents part of a small population that breeds in higher locations of the Diablo Range, at least in some years. One banded at CCRS on 21 Jun (*fide* MMR) was overwintering. Female or immature **Townsend's Warblers** come through quite late in May as the one in Palo Alto this year on 27 May (PMB). A male **Hermit Warbler** singing at the Castle Rock SP parking lot on 10 May (MJM) is in an area where a few birds nest. One found in Belgatos Park in Los Gatos about 19 May (CKS) was a migrant. An **American Redstart** was banded at CCRS on 30 Jun (*fide* MMR) which fits a pattern of late spring vagrancy for this eastern species. **MacGillivray's Warblers** were particularly scarce this spring with one banded at CCRS on 12 May (*fide* WGB) and a singing male at Searsville Lake on 14 May (SCR). An immature along the Pajaro River on 31 Jul (DLSu), just above the Santa Cruz County border, is unprecedented in recent years and is likely the result of local nesting. They were confirmed breeding about five miles downstream in Santa Cruz this year, for the first time in decades (DLSu). A male **Hooded Warbler** singing in Rancho San Antonio OSP on 29 May (JDa) was the third county record. All have been found in the last week in May. Singing male **Yellow-breasted Chats** along the Guadalupe River above Montague on 1 May and at Searsville Lake on 9 May (both SCR) were likely migrants. *see page 8*

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

Environmental Action News

The Regional Approach to Owls

continued from page 1

Also in the May *Avocet*, we highlighted the efforts of a local group working to save Burrowing Owl habitat in Mountain View. Unfortunately, there's bad news to report. Despite generating more than 100 letters and filling the City Council chambers with owl supporters, the Council voted in June to allow developer Dick Peery to build in a manner that will prohibit significant owl habitat on the site.

Why did we lose? We were up against one of the richest men in America—who clearly cares little for the natural world—and a City Council ignorant of what wildlife require for long-term survival.

In late July the group retrenched. A meeting of 15-20 owl enthusiasts decided to try a more regional approach. If we can't win on a site-by-site basis, perhaps we could assemble a South Bay Burrowing Owl Habitat Protection Plan that would prevent this tiny owl from someday being featured on the

Endangered Species List (about 170 pairs of owls remain in the Valley—a 60% drop in just the last 10 years).

Our strategy starts with asking Doug Wheeler—Secretary of the Resources Agency for California—to direct the Department of Fish and Game to convene a meeting of South Bay planning officials and owl experts. From there, we intend to convince Fish and Game and local officials of the need for a regional habitat protection plan, similar to what is happening for the Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and other species in Southern California.

This is a tall order. The Burrowing Owl is not yet listed as endangered, so developers and city officials alike may try to duck their wildlife protection responsibilities. The cost of land on the Valley floor is so prohibitive that public acquisition of land is virtually out of the question. Finally, the Wilson administration, while claiming it wants to prevent the listing of species by acting early, has an extremely poor record on wildlife issues.

Undaunted by defeat in Mountain View and the odds against us, we have launched a more ambitious effort. Again, a lot of work to do, so **here's where you come in again!** We need letters to Doug Wheeler's office expressing the need for the Department of Fish and Game to work hard to coordinate a regional habitat protection plan for the owl in the South Bay. Remind Wheeler that he himself has said that early and decisive action is needed to prevent species from being listed as threatened or endangered.

The address is:
Secretary Douglas Wheeler
Resources Agency
1416 9th Street, #1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

In addition, if you live in the cities of Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, San Jose, Milpitas, Fremont, Newark, or Hayward, a letter to your City Council (call City Hall for the address) asking them to participate in this regional approach to owl protection would be mighty helpful. Thanks!

VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

continued from page 2

RECENT EQUIPMENT DONATIONS have allowed us to upgrade and/or replace a couple of our weary pieces of computer equipment. Thanks to Ben Johnson of Palo Alto for the Imagewriter printer that we use to print our mailing labels, and to Juliette Bryson of Cupertino for a modem that will enable our Environmental Advocate to hook up to our office from home!

BIRDS OF McCLELLAN . . . have been less abundant lately as the breeding season recedes into history. Still, it's been very encouraging to see the wide variety of species that spend time in this relatively urban park; a good number of them have produced successful broods here this year, too! Total bird species identified in the Park during June were 41; in July, 36. Some highlights from the summer: **BREEDING SUCCESSES**—that is, species which I observed tending to young of their own species in the park—included **BARN OWL**, **COOPER'S HAWK**, **HOODED** and **BULLOCK'S ORIOLES**, **ASH-**

THROATED FLYCATCHER, **HOUSE FINCH**, **N. ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW**, **VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW** (at least 2 broods raised in SCVAS nestboxes!), **AMERICAN ROBIN**, **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD**, and **MALLARD**. **BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS** did pretty well, too. I watched with mixed feelings as fledglings were fed by would-be parent **DARK-EYED JUNCOS** and **SONG SPARROWS**. Alas, there were also **EUROPEAN STARLINGS** and **ENGLISH (HOUSE) SPARROWS**. A number of other birds almost certainly bred in the park this year, but I missed out on absolute confirmation of them (but, just wait 'til next year). **FAVORITE SIGHTS** of the season here included an adult **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** attempting to feed a full-sized Tiger Swallowtail butterfly to its perplexed and unwilling fledgling in the community gardens on July 15, and a fledgling **COOPER'S HAWK** on the ground methodically tearing up and eating spent red hollyhock blossoms in the gardens on July 3. And then there's been the single male **YELLOW WARBLER** providing his lovely, upbeat voice to the birdsong chorus around here for most of the summer. Until next month . . .

BIRDS, BRINE SHRIMP, AND A RABBIT HEAD

by Elaine Gould

Wetlands Field Trip Coordinator

Over 640 enthusiastic students from eight elementary schools throughout the county visited Alviso to study the wildlife and ecology of South Bay wetlands courtesy of SCVAS this past spring. Now in its fourth year, the Wetlands Education Program enables many San Jose area youngsters to experience the lively and diverse bayside habitat for the first time, as they learn about the birds, mammals, fish, invertebrates, plants and mud that make up a wetland. Kids and teachers alike enjoyed the Interpretive Center at Alviso, including the newly constructed outdoor pavilion, as well as the surrounding marshes, ponds and levees. Here are a few of the many notes we received from students:

"Dear Audubon Society:

Thank you for the trip to the wetlands you sponsored for us. It was very fun. I especially liked the brine shrimp. When I got my brine shrimp in my petri dish, I didn't have any females. Did you sponsor the binoculars? If you did, THANK YOU. I saw many birds with them. I saw Snowy Egret, two grown and two chick Avocets, Barn Swallows, Turkey Vultures, Cinnamon Teal, Black-necked Stilts, Moorhen and practically a million bird prints. The mud with the prints was totally awesome. It was different colors. The colors were purple, red, maroon and brown. I am really glad I got to go to the wetlands. And again, THANK YOU!" A truly grateful student, Susan Cho (Country Lane - Moreland School District)

"Dear Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society,

The classes at Anne Darling School (SJUSD) would like to thank you for inviting us to the Alviso Wetlands on Wednesday, May 1, 1996. I enjoyed seeing the birds. I learned that there is brackish water, fresh water and salt water. Birds eat brine shrimp,

water boatmen, fish and other things. The birds I saw were a Hummingbird, a Snowy Egret, a Western Sandpiper, an American Avocet, a Canada Goose and a Black-necked Stilt. It was fun going to the park and seeing all the birds. No one saw a Red-tailed Hawk. I got to see a dead jackrabbit. Please let our school go next year. It was quite an experience!" Sincerely, Steve Bettencourt.

"When I went to the wetlands we saw many animals and plants. We explored the salt pond and the marsh. I thought it was a fun field trip. One thing we saw in the marsh was the American Avocet. It sticks out in the marsh because of its orange head. We also saw the Black-necked Stilt, American Coot, Canada Goose, Turkey Vulture, Mallard Duck, Great Egret and Snowy Egret. Some plants we saw are pickleweed, tules and marsh grass. I enjoyed going to the wetlands and I recommend it for others." David Curran, Hacienda Science Magnet, San Jose Unified.

One class put together an illustrated book, *The Important Thing About The Wetlands Book*. This class was particularly impressed and engrossed by the head of a freshly-killed rabbit resting on the boardwalk, the breeze blowing through its whiskers. This elicited the following response from Kyle in Mrs. Grimes' class at Hacienda (caution—the following may be offensive if you're not a fifth-grader):

"The most important thing about a dead rabbit is that it makes people puke. It ate grasses in its short life. Its predator was a hawk or owl because it left a pellet. It used to be a small furry mammal. The bird didn't eat the intestines because they had leftovers running through them. But the most important thing about a dead rabbit is that it makes people puke."

SCVAS is very appreciative of the ongoing support provided by the

wonderful staff at the Alviso Education Center, headed by Sandy Spakoff. We are also grateful for the generous funding provided by IBM and the Youth Education in Science Committee of San Jose Rotary. Next year we hope to double the number of schools participating.

Staffers Jayne DiCandio and Garth Harwood helped on many of the field trips. We welcome the support of interested SCVAS members in accompanying the classes to help with bird identification. Our purpose is to educate students about the value of wetlands, but it is obvious from their excitement that the favorite part of the trip for many of them is having a pair of binoculars to focus on the variety of beautiful birds most of them have never before seen.

SCVAS LIBRARY ACQUIRES NEW BOOKS, LIBRARIAN

We are very fortunate to welcome a dedicated, energetic new librarian at the SCVAS office. Joyce Chang is a retired chemistry-lab manager who has always wanted to be a librarian (what a stroke of luck for us!). Joyce replaces Reid Freeman, who moved to Oregon some time ago after setting up our library in accordance with Library of Congress catalog procedures.

A hearty **Thank you!** goes to SCVAS members Shirley Gordon (22 books, 5 videos) and Robert Roadcap (2 rare books), who have made recent contributions of birding books to the library, which now holds well over 600 volumes as well as 10 periodicals. Many members seem surprised to learn that almost all of our birding books, site guides, etc., are available for 3-week checkout to SCVAS members, so we can't say it too often: come on in and take a look.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society 22221 McClellan Road Cupertino, CA 95014		Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage Paid San Jose, CA Permit No. 5869
--	--	---

FIELD NOTES *continued from page 5*

Grosbeaks through Goldfinches

A female **Blue Grosbeak** was found along the Pajaro River on 31 Jul (DLSu), just above the county line with Santa Cruz. A male **Indigo Bunting** in the Windy Hill OSP 6-20 Jul (m.ob.) was a treat to many. One of the most surprising birds of the season was a male **Dickcissel** that visited the Mountain View feeder of Linda and Rob Dobbins 28-30 May. This is the first record of this species for the county. **Black-chinned Sparrows** were found more widely than last year. Singing birds were found on Mt. Hamilton 12-28 May (MMR, v.ob.); at Rancho San Antonio OSP, a new location, on 27 May (JDa); Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta 27 May - 1 Jun (MJM, v.ob.); and at Monte Bello OSP on 15 Jun (LCh). **Grasshopper Sparrows** were found in normal breeding locations with birds near the Stanford Dish 13-24 May (DK *fide* SCR, TGr); Jos. Grant CP on 19 May (MJM, JY, AL); along Metcalf Road and near Calero Res. on 4 Jun (MMR); and along Skyline 5 Jun - 22 Jul (v.ob.) with breeding determined at Windy Hill OSP on the latter date (RGJ). An oversummering **White-crowned Sparrow** on Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 26 Jul (GHt *et al.*) was a surprise. At least three **Yellow-headed Blackbirds**

were found near the Arzino Ranch in May with two seen on 11 May (SCR) and two on 15 May (MMR). Two **Red Crossbills** south of Lake Elzman on 18 Jun (DLSu) were most unexpected, particularly for mid-June. **Lawrence's Goldfinches** have been found more widely this summer with a strong coastal movement of birds. Of note were five to seven birds at Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve on 22 Jun (SCR, RGJ) including one bird on a nest and a pair building a second nest.

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Byron Brown (BB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Les Chibana (LCh), Howard Cogswell (HLC), Emelie Curtis (ECu), Jim Danzenbaker (JDa), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Jane Glass (JG), Tom Grey (TGr), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJ), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Don Kennedy (DK), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Chris Otahal (CO), Dave Powell (DP), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Chris Salander (CKS), Clysta Seney (CS), Steve Shunk (SSh), David Suddjian (DLSu), Ann Verdi (AV), and James Yurchenco (JY).

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 \$12 Supporter \$25 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 _____ GIFT FROM _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

7XCH

C14