



The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

December 1996

Rude Finches: The Inspiration for Invention

by Leda Beth Gray

When I moved into a house in Palo Alto several years ago, I was thrilled at the number of chickadees and titmice that I saw around the neighborhood. I rushed to the store to buy feeders and seed to offer them. After experimenting with a couple types of feeders and different seed mixes, and reading bird literature, I settled on black oil sunflower seeds offered in a feeder with perches. I also offered millet on a platform feeder for doves and sparrows. This setup worked reasonably well, although I became irritated with the House Finches who thoughtlessly knocked chickadees and titmice off the feeder perches in their zeal to gorge on seed.

A year or two later in the winter when Pine Siskins invaded my yard, the problem escalated until it was a mob scene, with chickadees and titmice the big losers. This was more than I could bear and I was determined to figure out a design for a feeder at which chickadees and titmice could eat unmolested. My first attempt seemed golden at first: a small plastic springwater bottle with a dowel through it to function as a perch. The trick was that the hole was *below the perch* rather than above. I was betting that the agile little chickadees and titmice would find it easy to flip upside down to pick seeds out of the hole below the perch.

I was elated the next day when I observed a chickadee eating at the new custom feeder. Having removed the other feeder, I was smug for the next two weeks watching chickadees and

titmice eat, unmolested for the most part, with the finches and siskins relegated to the millet ("lima beans for finches" is how I referred to it, after the hated legume of my childhood). My elation was short lived, however, as soon I noticed siskins and finches flipping upside down on the feeder eating easily, back to knocking each other off the perches as well as the chickadees and titmice. They even stationed "teacher finches" at the bottle feeder to show all the others how to do the maneuvers required to obtain seeds.

I put up a couple more bottle feeders, finding that overall the chickadees and titmice were having better success at the new feeders than the original perch feeder. Several weeks later, after watching one-too-many chickadees get knocked off a perch, I had "had it" again. I marched out into the garage, got a saw and sawed the perches off

one of the feeders! A day or two later, to my amazement I observed a chickadee perched on the same feeder with its little feet stuck into the hole, holding on to the bottom of the hole itself. It was busily selecting a seed and soon flew off to a nearby branch to peck it open. I was dumbfounded! The perfect design was born. Well, almost perfect.

Over the last couple of years I have experimented with hole sizes to minimize seeds being dropped as well as to discourage the ever-determined finches who had learned to take seeds while hovering next to the feeder. It has turned out to be a very clean and economical setup as chickadees and titmice take their seeds away to eat one at a time, and hovering finches are forced to do the same, leaving little or no mess compared to normal seed feeders. In addition, I have found my yard to be tranquil without the mobbing finches

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A Chestnut-backed Chickadee dines at Leda Beth's feeder. Note the absence of House Finches.

VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Garth Harwood, SCVAS Chapter Manager

WINTER BIRDS are well established here at McClellan Park now, so our offices are once again graced with the frequent, cheerful songs of White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows. Of course, at home some of these these rascals happily munch my tender seedling vegetables into oblivion. So who says the best things in life are free?

But the real story this month has (for better or worse), involved indoor work. Like many organizations, both non-profit and otherwise, we have been struggling to keep up with a major reorganization of the Postal Service's bulk mail guidelines. Virtually everyone agrees that they were ripe for reform, but the sweeping new requirements are catching a lot of us in an ill-prepared state.

Many of you will have received your November *Avocet* late, and may appreciate an explanation---especially if this issue turns out to be delayed as well. For starters, the new USPS guidelines require a complete overhaul of the way our mailing labels are printed. Higher costs are imposed on those not meeting the guidelines, so we want to comply ASAP . . . but we're not sure yet if we'll have to manually re-enter all 4,200 entries in our membership list!

Manual entry or not, here are some of the changes you'll see:

- Bar-coding on each label
- Everything in upper-case letters
- Weird and unnatural abbreviations such as "Ap" for apartment
- A lot less punctuation (some specific instances are still allowed)

All of these changes are intended to allow far more automation in the bulk-mailing process, especially through the use of optical character recognition, in which the machine "reads" and sorts mail in a flash.

Bottom line: if you can stand it, it's supposed to get the mail to you faster. Or so we're told. We hope you'll bear with us through this chaotic process---we hear that things like this are happening all over the country right now.

* * * * *

THANK YOU, LEICA CAMERA! I'm happy to report the receipt of a \$500 donation to SCVAS from **Leica Camera** toward our annual Birdathon fundraising event held last spring. This money will go a long way toward helping us through one of our leanest times of the year---it's been a long while since the Birdathon fundraiser, and we are ordering a lot of interesting merchandise for the Nature Shop in anticipation of the holidays (for which we must, of course, provide payment up front). With this latest check, the Birdathon total for 1996 has topped the \$8,000 mark. Thank you, Leica!

* * * * *

NEW MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR: Many volunteers contribute each month to the updating of our membership database. How big a job is it? Well, the last "Chapter Change Report" from National Audubon ran to 32 pages with approximately 15 new addresses per page including new members, canceled memberships, transfers in and out of the chapter, and address changes. Who would voluntarily take on the coordination of such a monumental task every month? Why, **Pat Close**, that's who! Pat has been managing the office on occasional Saturdays since late last spring, and has professional experience managing large membership databases. We're very lucky to have her aboard, and I have no doubt that she'll be instrumental in keeping our membership list cleaner than ever this year (once the USPS finishes with us, that is!)

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SCVAS OFFICERS and BOARD

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	Kathy Parker	408/358-2832
Audubon		
Adventures	Elaine Gould	408/448-0622
BAAC Delegate	(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.

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Rare Bird Alert: 415-681-7422

December 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 Dec. 4, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers presents the annual Members' Slides program. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Saturday Dec. 7, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Princeton Harbor. Leader: Dan Keller (415)529-9088. From Hwy 92 in Half Moon Bay, turn north on Hwy 1, go approx. 4 miles to Princeton Harbor. Turn left towards coast, then bear right through town, meet at corner of Stanford and West Point. Loons, grebes, ducks, gulls. Dress warmly.

Saturday Dec. 7, 10 AM - 5 PM. OPEN HOUSE at the SCVAS headquarters at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. Do your Holiday shopping at Audubon---avoid the crowded malls and find that special gift at our Nature Shop. Books, T-shirts, jewelry, stationery, bird feeders, kids' toys and more. Special guest Ruth Troetschler will be signing her newly-published book *Rebugging Your Home and Garden* from 2 - 4. Refreshments and hospitality all day. Bring your friends! 22221 McClellan Rd. just off Foothill Blvd. south of I-280.

****Sunday Dec. 8, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader TBA. From Hwy 101 in Mtn. View take San Antonio Rd. north, go approx. 1/4 mile to Terminal Way parking area. Emphasis on basics of birding---beginners welcome. Ducks, shorebirds, gulls, herons, etc. Bring binoculars, dress in layers.

Tuesday Dec. 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. Topic: Marbled Murrelet.

****Wednesday Dec. 11, 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 at Mt. Hamilton Rd., go approx. 9 miles to park. Meet at Grant Lake parking area on left, 100 yds. past park entrance. Highlights: wintering ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Lunch optional; rain cancels.

****Saturday Dec. 14, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Alum Rock Park. Leader: Dave Cook (408)729-7310. Follow Alum Rock Ave. east to park entrance, meet at parking lot in front of Youth Science Institute. Wintering woodland species; possible Dipper, Golden Eagle.

Saturday Dec. 14, 8 - 12. "Wings Over Cupertino" beginning birding class meets at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. Emphasis on winter birds. Contact instructor Steve Shunk (408)243-6304 to sign up.

Friday Dec. 20. All day. Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Birders of all skill levels are needed for this North County event covering a variety of choice habitat from the Palo Alto Baylands to Wunderlich Park; Stanford campus to Shoreline Lake; and all points in between. If you've done this count in the recent past, please contact your usual Section Leader for your assignment; if you're new to the count contact Garth Harwood at the SCVAS office (408)252-3747. Mike Rogers will compile statistics; Ruth and Gene Troetschler will host a potluck count-down dinner at their home in Los Altos starting at 5:30 PM.

Sunday Dec. 22. San Jose CBC. It's that time again---the annual San Jose Christmas Bird Count. Avoid the Christmas mall madness and join us for a full day of birding (rain or shine) as we canvas our count circle from the Mt. Hamilton foothills to the Alviso bayside, from riparian corridors to

urban parks, recording all our resident and wintering birds, maybe finding a few rarities here and there.

All levels of birding experience are needed. Newcomers and beginners are especially encouraged to help us spot, count and list the birds. Just dress warmly, bring your binoculars and a lunch. A \$5.00 fee per participant covers CBC compilation and publication costs.

A list of section leaders and their phone #'s appears on Page 7. If you have any questions about the San Jose CBC, contact one of the co-compilers: Ann Verdi (408)749-2199 daytime or 377-8018 evenings; Kathy Parker (408)358-2832.

And finally, after the long day of birding and counting, please plan to join us at the Leininger Center in Kelley Park in San Jose for a lasagna dinner and bird countdown beginning at 5:30. Anyone who can help with lasagna, salad, or dessert, please contact Kathy Parker.

Friday Jan. 3, 1997. Mt. Hamilton CBC. If you are a truly dedicated (read: crazed) CBC junkie, this is the count for you. For a rugged, unusual Christmas Bird Count experience, call compiler Don Schmoldt at (510)215-1910---he'll be happy to sign you up.

****Note: Because the official CBC time period extends through January 5, no SCVAS field trips are scheduled for the weekend of Jan. 4 - 5.**

****Sunday Jan. 12, 9:30 AM.** Young Audubon Whale-watching trip to Monterey Bay. One and a half hour trip. Leader: Allen Royer (408)288-7768. Highlights include gray whales, sea otters, sea lions, pelicans, loons and other seabirds. Boat leaves wharf in Monterey at 10:00; fees are \$12 for adults and \$10 for kids 12 and under. Call SCVAS office to make reservations. Group size limited.

Tuesday Jan. 14, 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. Topic: Sandhill Crane.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

An early **Pacific Loon** found on Shoreline Lake on 28 Oct (SCR) and seen at least through the next day (v.ob.) suggests we will have a good loon winter. A **Common Loon** found there on 27 Oct (LCh) and seen regularly after is more expected. A **Cattle Egret** found at the Palo Alto Duck Pond on 21 Oct (SCR) was the only report this month. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** at the Palo Alto Duck Pond the same day (SCR) was an unusual find. As typical of recent winters, good numbers of **Wood Ducks** are found on Almaden Reservoir with 32 recorded on 27 Oct (AV). It has been a good fall for **Blue-winged Teal** in their favored haunts in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB). A total of 12 males and 15 females were counted in Adobe Creek on 5 Oct (SCR) with the males in various stages of eclipse plumage. We have not recorded numbers like this locally since the 1970s. Single male **Eurasian Wigeon** were first found in the Palo Alto FCB and Charleston Slough on 6 Oct (MJM). Towards the end of the month three to four individuals were found in the FCB and on Shoreline Lake (m.ob.). Twenty-three **Redhead** counted on the North Pond in the Palo Alto FCB on 27 Oct (MJM) is the first sign of the flock that normally winters here. A male **Hooded Merganser** was found on the Calabazas ponds on 26 Oct (AV *et al.*) extending this fall's unusual early records.

Raptors through Skimmers

Single **Osprey** this month include one over Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 5 Oct (GHt), one at the Coleman ponds on 14 Oct (AV), and one on Coyote Reservoir on 15 Oct (EÇu, JG). Early **Ferruginous Hawks** included an immature in Alviso on 2 Oct and one along the Monterey Highway near Mor-

gan Hill on 27 Oct (both MMR). Four **Merlin** were reported this month, the first an adult returning for its fifth year along Peter Coutts Road in Palo Alto on 24 Oct (KS *fide* LCh). An all-dark bird of the *suckleyi* race found along Coyote Creek on 27 Oct (AJ) is less common. A number of **Prairie Falcons** are found along the valley floor each winter so the one seen at Shoreline Lake on 29 Oct (MJM) is expected. It was feeding on an American Coot which should please the golfers there. Our fall passage of **Lesser Yellowlegs** trails off rapidly in September and two birds seen in the Mountain View Forebay on 1 Oct (AME) and two near Spreckles and Los Esteros in Alviso on 28 Oct (SCR) are typical for October.

*Townsend's Solitaires,
Evening Grosbeaks, and
Red-breasted Nuthatches
indicate one of the best
montane invasions in years*

Fall passage of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** is typically in August so the juvenile observed at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) waterbird pond on 5 Oct (SCR, HLR) is very unusual and the latest record we have for the county. The large numbers of **Pectoral Sandpipers** at the waterbird pond tapered off rapidly in October with 50 counted on 1 Oct (MiF, MMi) dropping to 14 by 14 Oct (MMR). The last birds of the passage were individuals found on 28 Oct over South Coyote Slough and at a pond at Spreckles and Los Esteros in Alviso (SCR). The juvenile **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** found at the CCRS waterbird pond in late September was seen off and on there in the first week in October (m.ob.) with the last observation on 8 Oct (MMi). The juvenile female **Ruff**, also found at the waterbird pond in September, was seen through 2 Oct (m.ob.). A juvenile **Heermann's Gull** found at the Palo Alto Duck Pond on 7 Oct (SCR, MMR) was a rare find for the South Bay. Seven **El-**

egant Terns were found on Shoreline Lake on 26 Oct (JM *et al.*) but did not hang around. **Black Skimmers** were found at Charleston Slough through the month with a peak count of three adults and two immatures on 2 Oct (PMB, MiF).

Swifts through Grosbeaks

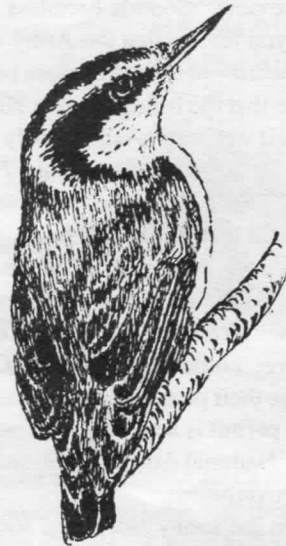
The end of the **Vaux's Swift** passage was six plus birds over Los Gatos on 2 Oct (JD). Winter movement of **Lewis' Woodpeckers** included single birds at Arastradero Preserve on 12 Oct (MMR) and one on the west side of Mt. Hamilton on 27 Oct (RSTh *fide* SCR). An immature female **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was found at the Arastradero Preserve on 12 Oct (SCR) for our seventh county record. A male at Ed Levin CP from 23 Oct through the end of the month (MiF, MJM, AW) is undoubtedly the bird that has been found there during the previous two winters. A juvenile **Pileated Woodpecker** found in Monte Bello OSP on 13 Oct (AJ) suggests a continuing expansion of this species in the county. A

Western Wood-Pewee at the Arastradero Preserve on 12 Oct (SCR) is very late for this species---few are found locally after the last week in September. Much less expected, however, was an **Eastern Kingbird** found there the same day for our fifth county record (SCR). **Tree Swallows** can be found sporadically throughout the winter so one over the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 2 Oct (MMR) may fit this pattern. **Violet-green Swallows** often show a similar pattern but 11 over Smith Creek on 26 Oct (SCR) are believed to be late migrants rather than wintering birds. **Cliff Swallows**, on the other hand, are normally gone by late August or early September so two birds at the Calabazas ponds on 26 Oct (AV *et al.*) is quite unexpected.

This fall is developing as an unusual one for irruptive species and **Red-breasted Nuthatches** have occurred widely and in the most substantial numbers since the winter of 1990-91. We

sometimes have birds that stay through the winter in irruptive years and it will be interesting to see what happens this winter. Two **Canyon Wrens** were at the north end of Coyote Reservoir on 15 Oct (ECu, JG). Four late or wintering **House Wrens** were along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 5 Oct (SCR, MMR, MJM). A single bird was found at Ed Levin CP on 14 Oct (MMR). Also late were single **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 5 Oct (SCR) and Saratoga Creek at Homeridge Park on 26 Oct (CKS). Single **Townsend's Solitaires** were found this month with one at Monte Bello OSP on 25 Oct and the other at Smith Creek on 26 Oct (both SCR). This montane irruptive is far more rare than the Red-breasted Nuthatch. A total of seven **Phainopepla** were found near Smith Creek and Hwy 120 on 26 Oct (SCR) for an unusual fall concentration.

Individual fall **Nashville Warblers** were found on 2 Oct, one at the Palo Alto Baylands (SCR) and one along Guadalupe River above Tasman (CKS). A female **Summer Tanager** along San Francisquito Creek above Middlefield in Palo Alto on 30 Oct (SCR) is probably the same bird that was found here for brief periods during the last two winters. Late or possibly overwintering **Chipping Sparrows** include one at Arastradero Preserve on 12 Oct (SCR) and four along Sierra Road on 14 Oct (MMR). Two **Brewer's Sparrows** were found on 2 Oct near the Palo Alto Water Quality Control Plant (SCR) for our 9th and 10th county records. A 'Slate-colored' **Dark-eyed Junco** was found along Loma Prieta Avenue in the Santa Cruz Mountains on 25 Oct (SCR). A single **Lapland Longspur** was found in the Shoreline Amphitheater overflow parking area on 28 Oct (SCR) for our fifth county record. Six **Red Crossbills** along Summit Ridge in the Santa Cruz Mountains on 28 Oct (MMR) may be montane irruptives or local birds. **Lawrence's Goldfinches** have been found widely with two at the Palo Alto Baylands on 8 Oct (SCR), fifteen at the Palo Alto Hills Golf and Country Club on 25 Oct (AME), and three along Summit Ridge on 28 Oct (MMR). Good numbers of **Evening Grosbeaks** this month are another component of the montane invasion. Seven were in



Thanks to Emelie Curtis for this delightful sketch of Sitta canadensis, the Red-breasted Nuthatch referred to in the Field Notes column. As Bill Bousman notes, the irruption of montane species this fall suggests these small, conifer-loving branch creepers may overwinter in the lowlands in greater numbers than usual. Listen for their soft, nasal "enk-enk" call and then check any nearby pine trees where they forage like the larger, more familiar White-breasted Nuthatch.



the vicinity of Loma Prieta on 25 Oct (SCR), one was there on 26 Oct (MiF), and four were found on 28 Oct (MMR). Single birds were over Stanford on 29 Oct and along San Francisquito Creek on 30 Oct (both SCR).

Observers: Phyllis Browning (PMB), Les Chibana (LCh), Emelie Curtis (ECu), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Jane Glass (JG), Grant Hoyt (GHT), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJ), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Mark Miller (MMi), Joe Morlan (JM), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Chris Salander (CKS), Kendrick Smith (KS), Ron Thorn (RSTh), Ann Verdi (AV), and Alan Walther (AW).

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

Good News, Bad News

SCVAS Treasurer John McLemore was elected to the Santa Clara City Council in November, and Board member Heather Rottenborn has a beautiful new baby girl, Rebecca, and a fantastic teaching job in Palo Alto. That's the good news. The bad news is that these two Audubon stalwarts have resigned from the Board due to the urgencies of their respective situations.

John has served most ably as our Treasurer for the past five years. His sound, sensible fiscal policies have guided our budget, investment strategy, and spending during an exciting period for the Chapter, marked by expansion of programs, activities, and personnel. His firm hand and strong opinions on financial matters were always balanced by an open mind, intelligent perspective, and excellent sense of humor. John's commitment to the Audubon cause, as a Burrowing Owl and open space advocate, a volunteer at countless Chapter events, and dynamic member of several committees, has been phenomenal. Birds, their habitat, and the environment in general will always have a dedicated supporter in John McLemore. Our loss is the city of Santa Clara's gain.

Heather Rottenborn accomplished a lot in her shorter stint on the Board, particularly with the Education Committee and the Young Audubon program. She took Bobbie Handen's idea for this program and developed it, organizing events and field trips like the popular whale-watching outings for youngsters. She has also served effectively on the Fundraising Committee and as interim Recording Secretary on several occasions, and volunteered at numerous Chapter events. Her deep commitment to young people as a teacher and parent has forced her to grudgingly leave the Board, but we hope that she, husband Steve, and daughter Rebecca will stay in close touch in the future.



The Political Landscape

by Craig Breon

SCVAS Environmental Advocate

As much as some of us might want to avoid the political world altogether, we do so at our own peril. Issues of vital importance to our chapter are wrangling their way through buildings as ostentatious as Capitol Hill or as meager as a local town hall. Part of my job as advocate is to keep tabs on national, state, and local elected officials, looking either for opportunities to get good things done, or places where we'll have to fight hard to defeat anti-nature proposals. So, with the latest round of electioneering safely behind us, I thought I'd provide a brief glimpse at where we stand.

The National League

From the Mercury News of Thursday, November 7, "In a year when many incumbents walked to victory in Congress, about two-thirds of 70 veteran politicians targeted by the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters went down to defeat."

It's probably safe to say that we won't see wholesale anti-environmental legislation in the next couple years. While the Contract With America never used the word "environment," people all around the country saw through the cloak of phrases like "regulatory reform" to the dagger of bills aimed straight at the Clean Water Act, endangered species protection, and resources on public lands.

As has been said on these pages before, however, laurel-resting will not be tolerated. One example may serve to illustrate this point. While President Clinton basked in the publicized glory of declaring 2.5 million acres of Utah Canyonlands a National Monument, and while he took credit for cutting a deal on the Headwaters Forest that will preserve about 6000 acres of old growth (credit here goes truly to the numerous forest activists who fought the Maxxam corporation for ten years, and continue still), a little-known but deadly revision to the Clean Water Act could doom many California wetlands.

Nationwide Permit 26 allows for activities with "minimal" effects on the environment to proceed without exten-

sive review. Sounds harmless enough, until you realize that the Army Corps of Engineers—in charge of these permits—claims that the filling of up to 10 acres of isolated wetlands would qualify as minimal. 10 acres equals roughly 7 football fields. So a developer or dam builder could fill up to 7 football fields' worth of isolated wetlands without advance notice to the public or thorough governmental review. President Clinton, as chief executive, could pressure the Corps to change their proposal, but to date has not. If the permit is adopted as proposed, it is likely National Audubon will sue the federal government.

On the sunny side, local Republican Representative Tom Campbell has proposed a bill to take the Land and Water Conservation Fund off budget. This fund, generated by oil royalties on public lands, is supposed to be used to acquire new parks and wildlife habitat. However, every year the Fund is raided to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. If Campbell's bill passes, the funds could only be used for their intended purpose. We'll be working on this one.

The State of the State

The big news on the State level is the change in leadership of the Assembly. Curt Pringle, with an environmental voting record scraping the bottom of the barrel, is out as Assembly Speaker. Replacing him will be Cruz Bustamante from Fresno, an indication of the growing importance of both the Hispanic vote and the Central Valley, where one million acres of farmland will be lost to urban sprawl in the next twenty years. Bustamante is a relative neophyte on environmental issues, so we have a chance to educate him.

The first direct result of this change will probably be felt at the Coastal Commission, which regulates development along the entire coastline. Coastal activists were shocked when Pringle appointed Commissioners who had sued the Commission before and believed the entire agency should dry up and go away. Now Bustamante will have a chance to replace those appointees with more moderate votes.

The Fiasco of Financing

If this last election didn't stir people up about campaign financing and the need for reform, I don't know what would. Except maybe the fact, as reported by the Mercury News, that 9 of the top 10 contributors to campaigns for San Jose City Council and the County Board of Supervisors are developers. The list reads like a Who's Who of ill-conceived developments: the Brandenburg's, who may have illegally filled wetlands in south San Jose to clear the way for a golf course; the Bumb family, whose Cerro Plata development in east San Jose would literally resculpt prominent hillsides near Highway 101; Rich Cristina, who just won approval for a landfill directly adjacent to the National Wildlife Refuge in Alviso.

Perhaps the passage of Proposition 208 here, and the pressure for further finance reform in Washington, will help. This bears watching—past attempts at reform have taken care of some abuses but left loopholes large enough for special interests to drive truckloads of money through.

All Politics are Local

Perhaps the most important election to SCVAS' current projects occurred not in Washington or Sacramento, but the City of Santa Clara. As many of you know, that's where we are trying to save about 35 acres along the Guadalupe River from the bulldozers. Prior to November, it looked like four of the seven City Council members would vote against us. However, two openly pro open space candidates were elected, and now we may have the four votes needed to create Santa Clara's only open space preserve. While Audubon as an organization was not involved, many Audubon members and other Santa Clara conservationists, energized by the issue, worked hard to make the open space issue central to the race.

To them, we all owe a debt of thanks. From them, we should all derive the inspiration needed to make the political landscape around us a little greener.



San Jose Christmas Bird Count

SECTION	LEADER	PHONE
A Alviso	Richard Carlson	415-494-3160
B Fremont Hills	Craig Breon	408-252-3748
C Calaveras	Keppler Stone	408-263-3395
D Alum Rock	Dave Cook	408-729-7310
E Evergreen	Mary Simpson	408-370-2177
F South (central San Jose)	Clysta Seney	408-261-9431
G Southwest (Santa Clara)	Mark Miller	415-967-3429
H Agnew	Grant Hoyt	415-969-7892
I Milpitas (north San Jose)	Ann Verdi	408-377-8018
J Berryessa Hills	Harriet Gerson	408-252-6244



Rude Finches from Page 1

and siskins. Some determined ones still hover at the feeders to eat, but disturbance to chickadees and titmice is minor. I do offer a seed mix on the other feeder with sunflower seeds to appease the finches. Having to compete with doves keeps them somewhat civil.

Here is the feeder design: A clear plastic bottle with a threaded cap, two or more 5/16 to 3/8 inch holes drilled in it near the bottom and an eye-bolt threaded into the cap, from which the bottle can be hung. This is a convenient way to hang the bottle because it can be taken down for refilling by removing it from the cap. Any size bottle will work but it is best to start small until the chickadees and titmice find it. Some sort of a rain guard or baffle is a

good idea to protect the seeds from rain and squirrels. The latter will destroy the feeder by gnawing if given half a chance. I also hang my feeders using high test (50 lb.) monofilament fishing line, to make it even more difficult for squirrels.

It may be difficult for chickadees and titmice to find the bottle feeders at first. A couple people who had no other feeders in their yards tried hanging these out and they had no success. The best situation is if you have feeding stations that chickadees or titmice are already visiting. If they are having trouble getting their share, the bottle feeder should become popular in no time. Have fun! Add perches if you want to teach finches tricks. Experiment with your own designs!



OFFICE VIEW from Page 2

LIBRARY RECEIVES BIG DONATION: **Danny Shelburne**, who was clearly one the area's most avid birders, passed away recently and **Fergus Brown**, an administrator of his estate, has donated 158 birding books to the SCVAS library. Mr. Shelburne had an interest in birds from all over the world, and a large number of the books are elegant, hardcover editions of guides to the birds of places such as Madagascar, New Guinea, Vietnam, Taiwan, the Indian Sub-continent, Puerto Rico, and Australia. We are very appreciative of this generous donation.

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TWO DONATIONS OF EQUIPMENT this month will assist SCVAS with ongoing projects. **Jack Kramer** bought a new Skilsaw power saw for the bluebird nestbox project (most cutting had previously been done by hand!). And longtime friend of the chapter **Doug Cheeseman** donated a slide cabinet capable of holding 5,000 photographic slides, which also contains a built-in light table. This piece of equipment will allow us to develop a well-organized slide library for our educational and outreach activities.

Audubon California ---A Perspective

Dan Taylor, Executive Director of the newly-formed **Audubon - California**, recently sent a letter to all Audubon members in the state explaining the strategy behind this new entity. A few further words of explanation are offered here regarding SCVAS' relationship with the State organization.

First, there has been no split from National Audubon. The planning process that resulted in the formation of State offices is emphasizing decentralization in an effort to bring Audubon closer to the birders and conservationists who make up local chapters. This creation of State Audubon offices did not necessitate any divorce from National; in fact, it is hoped that NAS will become stronger through a more active, involved participation of state and local Audubon groups. The new restructuring also reflects the considerable unease voiced by many local Audubon members in the '90's over NAS' perceived excessive growth and top-heavy administrative and management profile.

As a result, there should be better opportunities for local chapters like ours to link with the California office to further the Audubon cause closer to home. Dan Taylor is a birder, environmentalist, and long-time friend and ally of SCVAS. He and other Audubon leaders realize that at every level, Audubon must find its niche in the complex environmental scene, and that niche must specifically relate to birds and wildlife and their habitat. Accordingly, **Audubon - California** programs will be directed towards habitat restoration and enhancement, wetlands and riparian protection, and a network of sanctuaries statewide.

Disgruntled members who have withdrawn their support of National Audubon in recent years might do well to reconsider their positions in light of the dramatic changes at NAS in the past year. The SCVAS Board is committed to helping **Audubon - California** get off to a strong start as it strives to bring Audubon back to basics. Working together, we can help protect birds and their habitat for generations to come.

---Grant Hoyt

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Store hours: Monday-Friday 12-6 PM; Saturdays 10-2 PM

We have lots of bird and wildlife-related...

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BOOKS

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Holiday Open House
Sat. Dec. 7, 10-5 PM
at the Nature Shop!

*And...DON'T MISS our display of breathtaking WILDLIFE ART by local artist and SCVAS member ED ROOKS.**

*Ed donates a substantial portion of all sales made through our shop to SCVAS.

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.

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