



The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

February 1997

1996 Bird Count Results

by Mike Rogers

The Christmas Bird Count season is once again behind us and the count compilers have sifted through the many "party packets" to total up the results of hundreds of hours of field work. Now that the dust is settling, we can sit back and admire the results.

Participation on the Palo Alto and Mt. Hamilton counts was up from last year, with 72 and 23 observers, respectively, while the number of counters on the still most popular San Jose count dropped from last year's 95 to 78 this year. Perhaps the rain on 12/22 was partially to blame. In contrast, the Mt. Hamilton count enjoyed the only sunny day in weeks. The P.A. count, while dry, was cold, cloudy, and foggy.

On Pages 6-7 I have summarized the species totals for the birds seen on each of

our three local Christmas counts. The columns work their way eastward: the first column contains the results from the P.A. count, the second lists those from the S.J. count, and the last column enumerates the results of the Mt. Hamilton count.

As expected, species found on each of these counts varied due to unique habitats found in each count circle. The Palo Alto count circle contains portions of the Santa Cruz Mts. and some fairly deep portions of San Francisco Bay near Dumbarton Bridge. The San Jose count circle encompasses the Alviso salt ponds and the westernmost portions of the Diablo Range. The Mt. Hamilton count circle includes high elevation peaks and valleys of the Diablo Range.

Despite these differences in habitat, the three counts did have some things in com-

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At Last--- Bair Island Comes Home

by Craig Breon

Rejoice! After decades of being diked off, drained, proposed for development, fought over at the ballot box, and looked upon with forlorn eyes by Bay Area environmentalists, Bair Island is about to become of more interest to Clapper Rails and Harvest Mice than to the media.

Sixteen hundred acres of restorable wetlands: when combined with the parts of the Island already contained in the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, the result will be the largest continuous tidal marsh in the South Bay.

Levees will be breached and long-dormant sloughs will start to breathe the tides in and out. Pickleweed and cordgrass will slowly invade the expanse, and year by year we'll see an increasing diversity of native species returning. Millions of other Bay Area residents and visitors will see it as well, since Bair Island lies directly adjacent to Highway 101 in Redwood City.

Audubon played an important role in efforts leading to the Peninsula Open Space Trust's \$15 million purchase of the island from a Japanese construction firm. For years now, local Audubon members have raised the issue of saving Bair Island to local legislators, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (who will eventually inherit the land), and representatives of the Department of the Interior and other federal agencies. Few people came through town to talk about wetlands without getting an earful about Bair Island.

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General Membership Meeting

Wednesday February 19

"Historical Ecology of the San Francisco Bay"

with Mr. Robin Grossinger

Palo Alto Cultural Center

Newell and Embarcadero Rds.

7:30 PM Hospitality

8:00 Program

Have you ever wondered what the South Bay Area looked like 100 years ago? How did our past history influence the way our environment looks today? The key to our future may be in our past, and tonight we will open the door to the past through the eyes of Robin Grossinger. Through his work as a Historical Ecologist for the S.F. Bay Estuary Institute, Robin has been able to fit together pieces of our past and how it has impacted the local environment.

Ecological influences of the last two centuries have dramatically affected local estuaries and wetlands. Tonight we will learn about the importance of understanding the history of the South Bay watershed and how it is vital in planning for future protection of this great resource. Join us as we explore and learn more about the fascinating historical ecology of our own San Francisco Bay.

VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Garth Harwood, SCVAS Chapter Manager

MANY, MANY THANKS to all of the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) participants in our Palo Alto (December 20) and San Jose (December 22) Count circles. And we'd like to take special notice of the behind-the-scenes efforts of several tireless contributors to the success of this year's counts: **Ann Verdi** heads this list as the coordinator and compiler of the San Jose count, an immense task which begins months before Count Day. **Kathy Parker** made sure everyone ate well on the evening of the 22nd, a job that took considerable time in its own right. And **Mike Rogers**, Counter Extraordinaire and compiler of the Palo Alto Count, continues to do some serious number-crunching on behalf of us all.

BIRDING WITH A PURPOSE: As a newcomer to the CBC experience, I was tentative in my excitement before participating in the Palo Alto count on December 20. Not so now . . . I had a great time, saw a lot of interesting birds, and felt a warm glow of accomplishment as I turned in our group's data. Like that of all other CBC participants, our data would soon contribute to the largest single database on the status and distribution of wintering birds throughout the continent (and beyond). This information is widely used to analyze trends in bird populations that might not be apparent otherwise, e.g., the new Stokes Field Guide to North American Birds, which gives CBC trends for every bird along with the more traditional information.

ON A PERSONAL LEVEL it has also been immensely satisfying to participate in the local CBCs because it gave me an opportunity to make my birding, normally a quiet and personal pastime, public for a day. I took part in the Año Nuevo Count (organized by Sequoia Audubon) on January 4 and so, birded my own orchard and the lands of many cooperating neighbors, many of whom have a surprisingly strong interest in the local results, even if they are not birders themselves. By keeping track of the specific localities of our finds, I was able to let people know when their properties appear to be of special importance in the local bird community.

On the Palo Alto count I joined a group birding Menlo Park, Atherton, and Redwood City, including the neighborhoods in which I grew up. I took particular pleasure in such humble finds as a covey of California Quail at the Sacred Heart school on Valparaiso Ave. in Menlo Park (especially considering that quail are becoming scarce in Bay Area suburban areas, largely due to predation by housecats).

Our group also birded St. Patrick's Seminary along Middlefield Rd. in Menlo Park, a site of particular concern for many local birders due to impending development. We found that, at least for the present, this property is still filled with many more species and individual birds than surrounding areas (it had, for example, our group's only Wrentit east of the foothills). Unfortunately, the habitat loss here is still so fresh that displaced birds may yet undergo more attrition. Future CBCs may enable us to keep track in a general way.

PLEASE CONSIDER BEING A COUNTER NEXT YEAR! Many traditional spots were under-represented this year. A few even went completely unobserved (most lamentably, Monte Bello Ridge, Black Mountain, and Foothills Park on the Palo Alto count). One of the stand-out observations for me as a first-time participant was how useful it was to have one or two less-experienced birders along as record-keepers. It's true that our regular field trips are better venues for learning your birds, but there's a lot to be said for watching really good birders "at work"---and it's very difficult to wield a clipboard and hold your binoculars steady on a mixed flock of Hoonozwut Warblers at the same time!

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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.

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

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Rare Bird Alert: 415-681-7422

February 1997 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

****Saturday Feb. 1, 8:30 AM.** Full day. Panoche Valley. Leader: Clay Kempf (408)761-8260. Meet at Paicines Store on Hwy 25, approx 11 miles south of Hollister. Mountain Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle are likely; other possibilities include Greater Roadrunner, Vesper Sparrow, Chukar. Bring lunch and full tank of gas; please carpool if possible!

Wednesday Feb. 5, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers. Tonight's speaker is John Delevoryas, who will show slides from recent trips to the Yucatan and Uganda. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Thursday Feb. 6, 7:00 PM. Coyote Creek Riparian Station presents "Black-birds, Cowbirds and Conservation," a slide presentation by CCRS Biologist Al Jaramillo. Cupertino Library Community Rm, 10400 Torre Ave., Cupertino.

Saturday Feb. 8, 10AM - 4PM. 10th Annual Migration Festival at Natural Bridges State Beach, Santa Cruz. Local organizations will present hands-on displays on migrating animals, from whales to newts to butterflies (birds too, of course). Slide shows, scope-viewing of birds and whales, kids' activities, music, skits and more. Call (408)423-4609 for details.

****Saturday Feb. 8, 9:00 AM.** Full day. Raptor trip to Colusa/Sutter Buttes region. Leaders: Don Schmoldt (510)215-1910, Doug and Gail Cheeseman. From San Jose take I-680 north to I-80, then north on 505 to I-5. From town of Williams go east on Hwy 20 to Colusa, meet at city park at Main St. and Hwy 20. Optional exploration of wildlife refuge if time allows. Raptor

possibilities include Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagle, and more. Mountain Bluebird, Lewis' Woodpecker, Vesper Sparrow also possible.

Tuesday Feb. 11, 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: Cardinals.

****Wednesday Feb. 12, 7:30 AM.** Full day. Panoche Valley. Leader: Ed Gustafson (408)377-1123. Raptors, sparrows; possible Mt. Bluebird, Phainopepla. Limit 15 participants---call leader for reservations & carpool info.

****Saturday Feb. 15, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Arastradero Preserve. Leader: Jim Liskovec (415)969-5542. Palo Alto's Arastradero Preserve contains oak woodland, creekside vegetation, and small lake for a nice balance of habitat on a morning birdwalk. Raptors, woodpeckers, wintering sparrows and a variety of resident species are expected. Moderate walking of 2 miles; mud likely on trails. Heavy rain cancels.

****Saturday Feb. 22, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408)247-5499. Beginners especially welcome on this outing to explore the rich wetlands, salt ponds, and Shoreline Lake habitat adjacent to the

slough. Ducks, herons, egrets, shore-birds, gulls and more. Easy walking, easy viewing of a variety of species. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. exit North to Terminal Way (approx. 1/4 mi.) and park.

****Wednesday Feb. 26, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader: Phyllis Browning (415)494-6360. See directions from Feb. 22. Has the recent slough restoration project affected birdlife at Bayside's most popular birding spot? Heavy rain cancels.

****Saturday Mar. 1, Full day.** S.F. Bay Oceanic Crew Group offers its annual Audubon sail around the Bay. Boats depart from different marinas in S.F. Bay for a day of birding. Some boats had over 50 species of birds last year. The outing is free. Reservation only---call Pat Clark (510)686-1471 before Feb. 18 to reserve space.

Tuesday Mar. 11, 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: Tanagers.

****Wednesday Mar. 12, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Alum Rock Park. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. Take Alum Rock Ave. East from Hwy 101 to park entrance. Meet at last parking lot in front of Youth Science Institute. Moderate 2-mile walk. Lunch optional; heavy rain cancels.

Birders Needed!

Wetlands Education Trips

Six schools have been scheduled for field trips at the S.F. Bay Nat'l. Wildlife Refuge Education Center in Alviso this spring, mostly on weekdays between 9 and Noon. Classroom teachers need assistance identifying birds. Any SCVAS member who could spare some time to accompany the class and help identify birds would be greatly appreciated. Students keep bird checklists and learn about wetland ecology. As a volunteer, you could help discover the next Rich Stallcup or Steve Rottenborn! Call Elaine Gould at (408)448-0622 for information.

Burrowing Owl Census

Back in November we wrote to State Secretary of Resources Doug Wheeler, asking him to back up his stated goal of keeping sensitive species off the endangered and threatened lists. We suggested he use Burrowing Owls in the South Bay as a vehicle for regional planning. He accepted our offer.

Now we need to gather information for that effort. In 1993, SCVAS finished a 3-year Burrowing Owl census. We want to update the results for our county. From March 1 - 15 we'll be censusing owls, using the old census as a reference. Call Craig at (408)252-3748 to sign up.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

The first **Red-throated Loons** of the season were two on Shoreline Lake 12 Dec (RWR). Single birds were seen regularly through the month (v.ob.). The November **Pacific Loon** has been seen at least through 26 Dec (MJM) and two birds were there on 12 Dec (RWR). Adult and immature **Common Loons** on Shoreline Lake on 14 Dec (SCR) were the only ones reported this month. **American White Pelicans** are still plentiful by CBC time in most years, but pickings were slim this year with only eight on Salt Pond B2 on 20 Dec (MMR, AK) and three on Salt Pond A4 on 22 Dec (TGr, DMcI). Lingering **Brown Pelicans** are often missed on the counts so one on Salt Pond A4 on 22 Dec (TGr, DMcI) was a good find. **American Bittern** records include a single bird in the Mountain View Forebay on 22 Dec (JY, AL) and 26 Dec (MJM) and another bird at the Palo Alto Baylands on 26 Dec (MJM) and two there on 29 Dec (TGr). **Cattle Egrets** are found less frequently in winter and one at Nortech and Disk Drive in Alviso on 21 Dec (MiF) and one nearby at the Arzino Ranch on 25 Dec (MJM) were the only reports. An adult **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Almaden Lake on 1 Dec (AV) and an immature was seen at the Arzino Ranch 22-30 (RC *fide* SCR, SCR, SCR, KK, MJM, RWR). Two immature **Snow Geese** were found in Ed Levin CP on 22 Dec (*fide* MiF) and 23 Dec (MiF, MJM). A clean sweep of the rare geese for the Christmas count period includes a 1st-winter **Ross' Goose** at the Moffett GC on 20 Dec (MMR, AK) and two to three birds in the vicinity of the Arzino Ranch 22-30 Dec (RC *fide* SCR, SCR, KK, RWR, MJM). A male 'Eurasian' Green-winged Teal was found in Stevens Creek near Crittenden Marsh on 14 Dec (SCR) and seen there through the end of the month (v.ob.). The only report of **Blue-winged Teal** was of two males in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 20 Dec (MMR, AK). A male **Eurasian**

Wigeon on the large pond at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) 18-20 Dec (RWR, MMR, AK) was the only one found this month. On 14 Dec thirteen **Redhead** were on Salt Pond A2W in Mountain View and another 16 were at the Palo Alto FCB (SCR). The FCB flock declined after that and none were found there on 20 Dec (MMR). Five birds, however, were at the Sunnyvale WPCP large pond on 20 Dec (MMR, AK). A male **Tufted Duck** at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 27 Dec (MJM) marks the fourth winter we've had at least one of this species winter locally. **Barrow's Goldeneyes** have been regular at Shoreline Lake with high counts of six birds on 20 Dec (MMR *et al.*) and 28 Dec (JY, AL). **Hooded Mergansers** have been found in a variety of local lakes and streams with a count of 12 birds notable on Felt Lake on 20 Dec (AME).

Above all, December was a warbler month, with eleven species found

Raptors through Skimmers

The single **Osprey** found this month was over Coyote Creek above Hwy 237 on 22 Dec (SCR, KK). Two adult **Bald Eagles** were at Coyote Reservoir on 3 Dec (EGC, JG) and, on 22 Dec, two adults (MJM *et al.*) and an immature (MiF) were seen at Calaveras Reservoir. A 'Harlan's' **Red-tailed Hawk**, a subspecies that normally winters in the prairie states, was found along the Guadalupe River near Trimble on 7 Dec (MJM) and was seen there as well on 22 Dec (v.ob.). **Ferruginous Hawks** have been found locally over Ed Levin CP on 15 Dec (LCh *et al.*), Oak Hill Cemetery on 22 Dec (RGJ *et al.*), and along Canada Road on 26 Dec (MJM). The high tides of 10-12 Dec provided sightings of up to three **Black Rails** at the Palo Alto Baylands (v.ob.). Five **Snowy Plovers** on Salt Pond A3N on 20 Dec (MMR, AK) and a single bird north of the Alviso Marina 22-25 Dec (SCR, KK, MJM) were good

winter numbers for the local area. A **Sanderling** with an injured foot was near Shoreline Lake on 21 Dec (MiF) and another was at the Alviso salt ponds on 25 Dec (MJM). An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was found north of the Alviso Marina on 25 Dec (MJM, AME) and refound there on 28 Dec (LCh). It seems likely that this is the same bird as was found in this area last winter. The San Jose CBC revealed the best December ever for **Glaucous Gulls** with three first-winter birds on 22 Dec: one on the Calabazas ponds (TGr, DMcI), one near the Environmental Education Center (EEC) in Alviso (SCR, KK), and one on the edge of Salt Pond A12 (SCR, KK). This latter bird was also seen on 25 Dec (MJM, AME). Also on 22 Dec, a fourth bird was at Shoreline Lake (JY, AL). Our ever more resident **Black Skimmers**, all five, were still on Charleston Slough on 28 Dec (JY, AL), the latest they have remained (so far).

Owls through Bluebirds

This month has been the best for **Short-eared Owls** in recent memory. One was over the Palo Alto Baylands on 10 Dec (SMi, MiF) and one to two birds were in the Palo Alto FCB 15-28 Dec (v.ob.). A male **Selasphorus** hummingbird was at Palo Alto and Fulton on 22 Dec (SCR) and is perhaps an overwintering bird. The adult male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, wintering at Ed Levin CP, was seen on 2 and 16 Dec (AW) as well as 23 Dec (KP, MJM), but was missed on the CBC. An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was found on Dec (MMR) along the Guadalupe River above Montague for one of our few winter records. This bird was still present on the San Jose CBC (v.ob.). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** have continued to be found widely in the county and record totals were tallied on the CBCs. A **Canyon Wren** was seen in Alum Rock Park on 14 Dec (FV *fide* RWR), one of the best spots locally for this rare wren. Less expected was a bird three miles east of the summit of Mt. Hamilton on 24 Dec (MJM). A **House Wren** was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 24 Dec (AJ). Birds occasionally winter along the valley floor riparian corridors. Slightly more

rare as a wintering species is **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**. One was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 13 Dec and was heard in the same area on 22 Dec (AJ). A male **Mountain Bluebird** was seen along the Sierra Road summit on 15 Dec (LCh *et al.*) on a CBC scouting trip, but could not be found on count day.

Warblers through Goldfinches

It has been an exceptional winter for **Yellow Warblers**. An overwintering bird found along the Guadalupe River above Montague in November was found again on 6 Dec (MMR) and 22 Dec (SCR, KK, ADeM, BMcK). Another bird, found near the Alviso EEC in November, was seen there again on 12 Dec (MMR), 22 Dec (SCR, KK), and 26 Dec (MJM). New observations include one along Geng Road in Palo Alto on 20 Dec (KK, BMcK) and one near the Sunnyvale WPCP on 22 Dec (TGr, DMcI). A male **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was found along Coyote Creek above Hwy 237 on 22 Dec (SCR, KK). More rare in the winter is the **Hermit Warbler**. One was found in Bowers Park in Santa Clara on 22 Dec (MMi) and was seen there at least through 28 Dec (RWR, FV, LCh). A total of three **Palm Warblers** locally is exceptional as well. One was on the Shoreline Park GC on 20 Dec (MMR, BMcK, KK), one was found in Fair Oaks Park in Sunnyvale on 22 Dec (MMi) and was still there at least through 25 Dec (CIW, ChW, MiF), and the third was found at Bowers Park on 25 Dec (CIW, ChW) and was seen through 31 Dec (RWR, FV, CKS). The **Northern Waterthrush**, found in November near the Alviso EEC, was seen again on 12 Dec (MMR), but not found on the CBC. The rarest of our wintering warblers was the female **Hooded Warbler** found last month along the Guadalupe River. It was seen by a variety of observers during the month and provided a first record for the San Jose CBC. Rounding out this celebration of wintering warblers was a **Wilson's Warbler** found above Hwy 237 on Coyote Creek on 22 Dec (SCR, KK). The only report of a **Western Tanager** this month was a female along the Guadalupe River on 7 Dec (MiF, CH) which is probably the bird seen there in November. Another holdover from November, the immature female **Black-headed Grosbeak**

coming to a feeder in Los Altos, was last seen on 15 Dec (RCo). A **Vesper Sparrow**, seen east of Calaveras Reservoir on 22 Dec (MiF), is always rare locally in the winter. Winter high tides provided views of the secretive **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** at the Palo Alto Baylands, with reports on 9 and 12 Dec (MiF, MJM) and 22 Dec (AME). A **Swamp Sparrow** was seen at the Baylands on 20 Dec (SCR) and another bird was upstream of Hwy 237 on Coyote Creek on 22 Dec (SCR, KK). **White-throated Sparrow** reports include a bird wintering at a feeder in Los Gatos present at least through 21 Dec (JD), one seen at Almaden Quicksilver CP on 8 Dec (BL), one on the Stanford campus on 20 Dec (GHt, DSt), and one along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 22 Dec (GHt, KHt). A single **Cassin's Finch** was found south of Castle Rock SP on 3 Dec (MMR) and the absence of reports since suggests that our November "invasion" is past. At least a few **Red Crossbills** have remained locally, however, as eight were seen at Ed Levin CP on 16 Dec (AW) and five were over Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve on 20 Dec (RGJ, PLAT). Eight **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found at Henry Coe SP (JY, AL); they are always rare in winter.

Observers: Richard Carlson (RC), Les Chibana (LCh), Rita Colwell (RCo), Emelie Curtis (EGC), Al DeMartini (ADeM), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Jane Glass (JG), Tom Grey (TGr), Carlisa Hughes (CH), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Karen Hoyt (KHt), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJ), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Alma Kali (AK), Kenn Kaufman (KK), Bill Lundgren (BL), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Peter LaTourrette (PLAT), Mike Mammoser (MJM), David McIntyre (DMcI), Bert McKee (BMcK), Mark Miller (MMi), Steve Miller (SMi), Kathy Parker (KP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Alan Walther (AW), Chris Wolfe (ChW), Claire Wolfe (CIW), and James Yurchenco (JY).

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

CBC Results *from page 1*

mon. Although none recorded truly rare mountain birds such as Cassin's Finch or Clark's Nutcracker, all three counts did have their share of "montane invaders", the most obvious being Pine Siskin. Last year only the P.A. count enjoyed these birds, recording 8. This year the three counts, from west to east, found 147, 7, and 131 Pine Siskins. A remarkable 85 of the Mt. Hamilton birds were in a single flock that also contained many Lesser Goldfinches. The previous high for this species on the Mt. Hamilton count was 24 birds. Red-breasted Nuthatches also showed up in numbers. After finding none last year, all three counts reported them this year with a total of 15 birds!

Perhaps the most unusual invasion species to be reported was Red Crossbill, with 5 being seen on the P.A. count over Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. After being down last year, all three counts enjoyed good thrush numbers this year. American Robin went from 775, 466, and 16 last year to 3011, 1381, and 137 this year. Similarly, Varied Thrush numbers increased from 15, 1, and 1 to 103, 16, and 31! Cedar Waxwings, which often associate with thrushes, also increased on all counts from 146, 200, and 0 last year to 952, 631, and 31 this year.

The S.J. count tallied 66,098 birds of 164 species, both numbers down from the past two years. The weather and fewer observers in the field probably contributed to this. 3,000 fewer gulls account for a large part of the decrease, but this year 53% of the 19,211 gulls were identified to species, well up from last year's rather low 18%.

Highlights of the S.J. count included the continuing presence of several rarities along the Guadalupe River, including our fourth county record of Hooded Warbler, a rare wintering Ash-throated Flycatcher, and a "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk. All three of our rare winter geese graced the count this year and rare warblers included two Yellow and single Black-throated Gray, Palm, and Wilson's Warblers. Other good finds included an Osprey, three Bald Eagles, three Glaucous Gulls, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a Vesper Sparrow, and both Swamp and White-throated Sparrows. Unfortunately the Lesser Black-backed Gull and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were missed on count day (both were reported during Count Week). Embarrassing misses included Greater Scaup (54 last year) and Black-bellied Plover (25

Continued on page 8

1996 Santa Clara County

Palo Alto San Jose Mt. Hamilton
 12/20/96 12/22/96 1/3/97

# of observers	72	78	23
SPECIES			
Red-throated Loon	1	—	—
Pacific Loon	1	—	—
Common Loon	1	—	—
Pied-billed Grebe	98	85	19
Horned Grebe	89	46	—
Red-necked Grebe	1	—	—
Eared Grebe	283	2161	—
Western Grebe	34	107	—
Clark's Grebe	16	5	—
<i>Aechmophorus</i> spp.	7	25	—
American White Pelican	8	14	—
Brown Pelican	1	1	—
Double-crested Cormorant	293	287	4
American Bittern	CW*	2	—
Great Blue Heron	37	53	5
Great Egret	51	102	—
Snowy Egret	94	75	—
Cattle Egret	—	5	—
Green Heron	1	5	1
Black-crowned Night Heron	64	316	—
Gr. White-fronted Goose	—	1	—
Snow Goose	—	3	—
Ross' Goose	1	2	—
Canada Goose	144	645	—
Wood Duck	18	13	19
Green-winged Teal	476	86	—
(Eurasian)	1	—	—
Mallard	1187	1391	116
Northern Pintail	455	7	2
Blue-winged Teal	2	—	—
Cinnamon Teal	95	29	—
Northern Shoveler	7910	2120	—
Gadwall	314	406	13
Eurasian Wigeon	1	—	—
American Wigeon	1347	297	15
Canvasback	2554	49	—
Redhead	9	—	—
Ring-necked Duck	97	32	56
Greater Scaup	104	—	—
Lesser Scaup	385	2	—
scaup spp.	3587	6	—
Surf Scoter	3019	—	—
Common Goldeneye	219	11	—
Barrow's Goldeneye	6	—	—
Bufflehead	430	48	77
Hooded Merganser	19	6	11
Common Merganser	19	31	11
Red-breasted Merganser	4	33	—
Ruddy Duck	11662	1908	62
duck spp.	7256	300	—
Turkey Vulture	70	139	5
Osprey	—	1	—
White-tailed Kite	26	19	—
Bald Eagle	—	3	1
Northern Harrier	30	42	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	12	10	5

Palo Alto San Jose Mt. Hamilton
 12/20/96 12/22/96 1/3/97

SPECIES

Cooper's Hawk	11	13	2
<i>Accipiter</i> spp.	2	3	—
Red-shouldered hawk	26	19	1
Red-tailed Hawk	90	176	28
"Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk	—	1	—
Ferruginous Hawk	—	3	2
<i>Buteo</i> spp.	2	1	—
Golden Eagle	1	7	10
American Kestrel	59	86	8
Merlin	11	3	2
Peregrine Falcon	6	4	—
Prairie Falcon	1	1	1
Ring-necked Pheasant	8	7	—
California Quail	187	138	171
Clapper Rail	14	1	—
Virginia Rail	10	8	—
Sora	4	10	—
Common Moorhen	8	9	—
American Coot	4369	3539	546
Black-bellied Plover	1350	—	—
Snowy Plover	5	1	—
Semipalmated Plover	85	3	—
Killdeer	174	190	69
Black-necked Stilt	2023	961	—
American Avocet	1997	872	—
Greater Yellowlegs	33	23	3
Willet	2501	98	—
Spotted Sandpiper	2	—	—
Whimbrel	7	—	—
Long-billed Curlew	122	83	—
Marbled Godwit	1403	14	—
Ruddy Turnstone	2	—	—
Sanderling	9	CW	—
Western Sandpiper	3902	2098	—
Least Sandpiper	210	426	—
Dunlin	2159	298	—
<i>Calidrid</i> spp.	2012	37	—
sandpiper spp.	—	200	—
Short-billed Dowitcher	20	40	—
Long-billed Dowitcher	93	48	—
dowitcher spp.	852	180	—
Common Snipe	2	3	—
Bonaparte's Gull	623	1274	—
Mew Gull	43	895	—
Ring-billed Gull	775	2369	—
California Gull	916	3711	—
Herring Gull	118	1011	—
Thayer's Gull	15	258	—
Lesser Black-backed Gull	—	CW	—
Western Gull	176	436	—
Western x Glaucous-w. Gull	41	—	—
Glaucous-winged Gull	120	158	—
Glaucous Gull	CW	3	—
gull spp.	1817	9096	—
Forster's Tern	6	19	—
Black Skimmer	5	—	—

*CW---birds seen on "Count Week" but not on count day

Christmas Bird Count Summary

	Palo Alto 12/20/96	San Jose 12/22/96	Mt. Hamilton 1/3/97
Rock Dove	1759	1366	—
Band-tailed Pigeon	53	38	134
Mourning Dove	1559	861	—
Greater Roadrunner	—	—	1
Barn Owl	1	1	--
Western Screech-Owl	5	--	—
Great Horned Owl	12	—	4
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	—	—
Burrowing Owl	8	13	—
Short-eared Owl	4	3	—
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	—	—
White-throated Swift	1	29	1
Anna's Hummingbird	501	324	40
<i>Selasphorus</i> spp.	1	—	—
Belted Kingfisher	8	15	5
Lewis' Woodpecker	—	—	29
Acorn Woodpecker	167	28	232
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	—	CW	—
Red-breasted Sapsucker	4	11	4
Nuttall's Woodpecker	70	63	27
Downy Woodpecker	11	13	3
Hairy Woodpecker	14	2	13
Northern (Red-sh.) Flicker	137	195	90
(Yellow-shafted)	—	CW	—
(Yellow-sh. x Red-sh.)	—	2	1
woodpecker spp.	—	1	—
Black Phoebe	161	212	27
Say's Phoebe	13	26	5
Ash-throated Flycatcher	—	1	—
Horned Lark	—	50	—
Tree Swallow	—	—	1
Steller's Jay	184	95	15
Western Scrub Jay	546	341	276
Yellow-billed Magpie	--	250	115
American Crow	113	266	117
Common Raven	70	39	74
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	335	162	7
Plain Titmouse	135	63	232
Bushtit	941	781	86
Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	11	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	50	31	113
Pygmy Nuthatch	5	—	—
Brown Creeper	11	11	5
Rock Wren	—	5	1
Bewick's Wren	62	34	71
House Wren	—	CW	1
Winter Wren	4	5	—
Marsh Wren	48	34	—
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	11	4
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	302	250	43
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	—	1	—
Western Bluebird	53	224	315
Townsend's Solitaire	—	—	1
Hermit Thrush	94	70	6
American Robin	3011	1381	137
Varied Thrush	103	16	31
Wrentit	57	37	55
Northern Mockingbird	67	121	—

	Palo Alto 12/20/96	San Jose 12/22/96	Mt. Hamilton 1/3/97
California Thrasher	63	2	26
American Pipit	107	42	1
Cedar Waxwing	952	631	31
Phainopepla	—	—	3
Loggerhead Shrike	16	57	3
European Starling	1858	4339	219
Hutton's Vireo	7	3	—
Orange-crowned Warbler	3	13	—
Yellow Warbler	1	2	—
Yellow-rumped Warbler	713	548	—
(Myrtle)	24	17	—
(Audubon's)	228	223	1
Black-throated Gray Warbler	—	1	—
Townsend's Warbler	55	18	—
Hermit Warbler	—	CW	—
Palm Warbler	1	1	—
Common Yellowthroat	29	14	—
Hooded Warbler	—	1	—
Wilson's Warbler	—	1	—
Western Tanager	1	—	—
Black-headed Grosbeak	CW	—	—
Spotted Towhee	94	35	50
California Towhee	330	311	100
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	—	5	1
Vesper Sparrow	—	1	—
Lark Sparrow	—	107	77
Sage Sparrow	—	—	6
Savannah Sparrow	104	169	61
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	CW	—	—
Fox Sparrow	21	48	52
Song Sparrow	205	164	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	49	121	—
Swamp Sparrow	1	1	—
White-throated Sparrow	2	1	—
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1044	772	394
White-crowned Sparrow	1189	1968	376
sparrow spp.	—	113	10
Dark-eyed Junco			
(Oregon)	807	543	1271
(Slate-colored)	—	1	1
Red-winged Blackbird	451	1767	20
Tricolored Blackbird	310	38	2
Western Meadowlark	372	1043	31
Brewer's Blackbird	1539	1712	101
Brown-headed Cowbird	18	246	—
blackbird spp.	275	212	22
Purple Finch	23	—	25
House Finch	1007	1576	51
Red Crossbill	5	—	—
Pine Siskin	147	7	131
Lesser Goldfinch	171	1328	95
Lawrence's Goldfinch	—	—	6
American Goldfinch	217	469	1
goldfinch spp.	25	—	—
House Sparrow	128	205	37
TOTAL individuals	94245	66132	6795
TOTAL species	171	165	97

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Christmas Bird Count Results *from page 5*

last year). The count also failed to find any nocturnal owls other than a single Barn Owl!

The Palo Alto count found 94,245 birds of 171 species, both up from last year and breaking the 170 species barrier for the first time since 1987. An impressive 3019 Surf Scoters was well up from last year's 5, and Ruddy Duck numbers nearly doubled from 6875 to 11662. The duck total as a whole rose from 28,861 last year to 41,176 this year, while shorebirds dropped from 27,096 to 18,963. Gulls increased from 2,687 to 4,644 but still fell well short of numbers seen prior to the closure of local landfills.

Highlights of the Palo Alto count included all three loons, a Red-necked Grebe, a new Ross' Goose (our Sunnyvale bird looks like it will not return this year), the returning Eurasian Green-winged Teal, and the five Black Skimmers remaining at Charleston Slough. Although not faring as well with rare warblers as San Jose, the count did manage single Yellow and Palm Warblers; like the S.J. count both Swamp and White-throated Sparrows were recorded. A Western Tanager and a male *Selasphorus* hummingbird (probably an Allen's) were found along San Francisquito Creek. The P.A. count didn't have any real embarrassing misses this year, although we have usually been able to find a few Horned Larks at the Shoreline Amphitheatre parking lot; this year that flock seems to have disappeared, leaving us lark-less for the count.

The Mt. Hamilton count recorded 6,795 birds of 97 species. While the # of birds is between that of the past two years, the # of species dropped by 5 from the 102 of the same two years. Given the good weather and the increased number of observers, this is somewhat surprising. A rather surprising miss on the count this year was Mourning Dove (20 last year). On the other hand, good weather certainly helps explain the jump in Anna's Hummingbird numbers from 2 last year to 40 this year!

Highlights of the Mt. Hamilton count included a first: 11 Hooded Mergansers in Isabel Valley. Other rarities included a Green Heron, Tree Swallow, House Wren, and a Townsend's Solitaire.

These counts provide valuable data about our local bird life and all who participated deserve a hearty round of thanks, especially those who braved the rain on the San Jose count. If you have yet to try a count, consider helping out next year on the 98th count!

Bair Island *from page 1*

Of more immediate influence, however, were the efforts of the Bay Area Audubon Council and Audubon California in coordinating a media campaign aimed at Kumagai Gumi, the corporate landowners of the Island. Using funds from a lawsuit settlement (the same one funding our chapter's effort to organize local creek groups), consultants in Japanese corporate culture, with the help of more than a dozen Japanese environmental organizations, brought the campaign to culmination in an October 8, 1996 full-page ad in the New York Times. That ad and the accompanying demonstrations along Highway 101 made a splash in the local media, and ripples of that splash crossed the Pacific, where the largest Japanese daily paper covered the story on page one (above the fold). Media coverage continued for weeks, with an editorial urging a sale of the Island to the people of the Bay Area appearing in the S.F. Examiner more than two months later. By that time negotiations were already in progress.

This is a great opportunity for all of us to see the regenerative power of Mother Nature. Take a look at Bair Island sometime soon, before the levees are breached. Then, when the restoration begins, take another look. Track this land for the next few years. The lesson will be one of beautiful urban habitat restoration. Hopefully, we'll see more such sights in our futures.

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