

The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

March 1997

“Amazing” Open Space Victory

by Craig Breon

The headline of the editorial in the *Mercury* said, “A Chance to Save Open Space,” with a subtitle, “Amazingly, there still is some in Santa Clara.” Amazingly indeed, the Santa Clara City Council voted on January 21st to create the City’s first and likely only open space preserve.

Who do we have to thank for this? Us! Our chapter, our volunteers, our members (and four of seven Santa Clara council members). Forty acres of open space adjacent to the Guadalupe River, with nearly three acres of wetlands, lots of trees, shrubs, and grasses, and all the wildlife and peace of mind that comes with it. If not for the efforts of SCVAS and many others we helped energize, the

bulldozers might have been revving up as you read this.

How We Got There

A little history. It was nearly a year ago in the May, '96 *Avocet* that our Vice president, Clysta Seney, wrote an article entitled, “Once Along a River—the Guadalupe.” She told the story of the best birding spot in the City of Santa Clara; how it was slated to be sold to a development company to help pay off the debts of the City’s new golf course; how a development deal had fallen through, opening a small window of opportunity for other uses; and how we should go out there and try to save that land.

A few of our members responded, and our chapter took on the project. We started with a mailer to our members in Santa Clara, asking them to appear at a Council meeting or write letters. Two of those that appeared at the meeting were Paul and Laura Barnett, Audubon members who decided to take the project on as their own. They formed People for Open Space, which began with a few people in the Barnett’s living room and has swelled to more than 160 people writing letters, making phone calls, getting and giving tours of the site, and talking up the idea of open space in this city of near wall-to-wall development.

SCVAS and People for Open Space were eventually joined by the local chapters of the California Native Plant Society and the Sierra Club and together we did all the typical things activists do to get attention. We offered regular tours of the site to show how even an old golf course grown wild can make for excellent habitat. We walked hundreds of houses in the surrounding neighborhoods, letting them know that they could either have more housing and traffic in their community, or, with a little effort, they could have a beautiful park. We attracted some media attention. We researched the background of the land and especially it’s more than 1000 year history as the site of an Ohlone Indian village. We gathered facts and voices to refute those who made dire claims that unless this land were sold to developers (estimates of its value ranged up to \$32 million), the City would be on the road to bankruptcy.

General Membership Meeting
Wednesday March 19
“Riparian birds and urbanization:
Conservation challenges and opportunities”
with Steve Rottenborn
Palo Alto Cultural Center
Newell and Embarcadero Rds.
7:30 PM Hospitality 8:00 Program

The riparian corridors of the Santa Clara Valley have long hosted regionally important bird populations and, as many birders know, very high bird diversity. Although urbanization has influenced local riparian systems in a number of ways, these urban riparian habitats are still vitally important to the conservation of South Bay bird populations. As part of his graduate studies, Steve Rottenborn has investigated the importance of urban riparian habitats to South Bay birdlife and studied some of the ways in which urbanization has altered riparian bird communities. March’s program will take a look at the importance of riparian habitats to Santa Clara Valley bird populations, discuss how these populations have responded to urbanization, and identify the conservation challenges and opportunities these urban riparian systems present.

Continued on page 8

The Avocet 1

VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Garth Harwood, SCVAS Chapter Manager

AH, SPRING. . . as I write this, in the first week of February, the level of birdsong audible from this office is rising by the day. By the time you receive this newsletter, the onset of the breeding season should be noticeable everywhere (read: hard to ignore). Whoopee---here we go!

Naturally, we assume that some of this commotion will find its way to our new bluebird nestbox trails. The **bluebird program** is off to a terrific start, with 11 parks and other open space areas signed on. We still need a few volunteers to help monitor the boxes once a week or so at each park (please call me at the office if interested.) At McClellan Park, we have added chickadee and wren boxes to the effort, thanks to the tireless building efforts of **Gus Constant**, who has been cranking out as many as 20 birdhouses a week for the program lately! Look to this space for news on results of the program as the season progresses.

OFFICE HEROINES: I have been extremely fortunate these past few months to have two of the most patient, skillful, and conscientious volunteers imaginable helping out here at the office. They are **Pat Close**, our membership coordinator, and **Joyce Chang**, SCVAS librarian. Both Pat and Joyce routinely put in long hours and have never failed to adapt to the ever-changing priorities (well, OK, crises) around here. Incidentally, Pat Close has notified us of an impending out-of-state move later in the year, so we'll be needing another membership specialist soon. Please contact me if you think you may be able to help---act now, as the used car salesman says, and you can still benefit from Pat's vast fund of knowledge about this challenging task.

I'd also like to welcome our 3 newest volunteers at the office: **Megan Goetsch**, an intern from Homestead High School's Community Learning program, is a highly-motivated and cheerful presence who helps out with just about everything. And last but not least, both **Rita Colwell** and **Rosalie Lefkowitz** have been mastering the intricacies of our accounting software lately. Thanks, all---you're the ones who make this chapter work.

COMPUTERS NEEDED: Got a good-quality, fully functional Macintosh computer at home or work that's no longer useful to you? Our older machines at the office are getting kinda funky, and we'd love an opportunity to upgrade. Specifically, we need computers that take high-density diskettes and have at least 100 MB of memory. All donations are tax-deductible (we'll provide documentation.) Thanks!!

BIRDERS NEEDED AS VOLUNTEERS: Every year, the American Birding Association (ABA) publishes a supplement to its journal, Birding, listing volunteer opportunities for experienced birders all over the world (although mostly in the USA.) Some of these are of short-term duration and require only a small commitment in nifty birding locations; others involve months in the boonies under field conditions. But they all sound exciting to this office-bound birder! If you'd like to see the listings, please come in and check out our copy of the supplement in the SCVAS library.

The Avocet 2

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

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

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

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Rare Bird Alert: 415-681-7422

March 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 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.

Wednesday Mar. 5, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers will feature high school senior Michael Armer, who will present bird slides from the U.S. and abroad. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

ATTENTION: KIDS!!

Saturday Mar. 8, 10AM - 2PM. SCVASEducation Day at McClellan Ranch Park. Everyone's invited—especially kids!! Our sixth annual Education Day promises to be better than ever with nature walks, live animal exhibits, hands-on activities, refreshments, a raffle, and much more. The artwork featured in the Poster Contest is well worth a trip to McClellan Ranch—the kids are fantastic wildlife artists! Bring the family and share a day of learning about birds, wildlife, and the natural world with Audubon.

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.

****Sunday Mar. 16, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Stanford campus. Leader: Judy Wagner (415)941-7586. Beginners are especially welcome on this annual early spring outing to view local species as they prepare for breeding season. From Hwy 101 take University Ave. in Palo Alto west, continuing as it becomes Palm Dr. across El Camino. Meet at end of Palm Dr. at entrance to Main Quad. Rain cancels.

****Sunday March 23, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Almaden Quicksilver Park. Leader: Ann Verdi (408)377-8018. In San Jose, take Almaden Expwy south to Almaden Rd. through town of New Almaden; turn right at park entrance. Moderately strenuous hiking through woodland, chaparral. Rain cancels.

****Wednesday Mar. 26, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Arastradero Preserve. Leader: Al Huber (415)493-6854. Moderate walking, great birding in this Palo Alto bird haven. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west, turn right on Arastradero Rd. (approx. 1/2 mile) and meet in parking lot, 1/2 mile on right. Rain cancels.

****Saturday March 29, 8:30AM - 2PM.** Pt. Lobos State Reserve, Carmel. Leader: Kathy Parker (408)358-2832. Pt. Lobos is on Hwy 1 approx 1.5 miles south of Rio Rd. intersection, on west side of hwy. Meet at first large parking lot past Whaler's Cove at Sea Lion overlook. Carpooling recommended. \$6 entrance fee.

Seabirds, woodland species; possible Peregrine Falcon, migrating Gray Whales.

****Sunday April 6, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Ed Levin Co. Park. Leader: Dave Cook (408)729-7310. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and I-680, to park, approx 2 miles past I-680. Meet in parking lot on right. Migrant songbirds should be returning to join local resident breeders in Milpitas' prime birding hotspot. Lunch optional.

Tuesday Apr. 8, 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: Northern Harrier.

Shorebird Class by Boat

Learn how to identify shorebirds at Elkhorn Slough with local bird expert and long-time SCVAS member Rod Norden. View birds up close from a roomy, stable pontoon boat as it travels through the heart of the wildlife-rich slough. Detailed looks at waterbirds in breeding plumage as they pause on their northward migration.

Two classes are offered:

- ◆ Saturday April 12, 9:00 AM - Noon;
 - ◆ Saturday April 19, 3:00 - 6:00 PM.
- Boats depart from Moss Landing. Beginner to expert birders are welcome; scopes and binoculars are available if needed. Fee is \$35/person for 3-hour class + refreshments. Pre-registration required—call (408)424-3939 and ask for "Rod's Bird Cruise".

SCVAS NATURE SHOP SPRING BOOK SALE! Now through April 1...

ALL BOOKS 10% OFF
ALL TAPES, CDS, AND VIDEOS 10% OFF
And check out our T-Shirt rack for 25% OFF selected styles.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

January has been an excellent month for loons. Shoreline Lake has continued to host a **Red-throated Loon** first found in December (m.ob.) and, on 5 Jan, two birds were seen there (MJM). Another bird, first seen on 8 Jan at the percolation ponds in Los Gatos Creek CP (RLe *et al.*) has been found there fairly regularly through the month (v.ob.). A **Pacific Loon** found previously at Shoreline Lake has been seen through 3 Jan (MiF), but not after that. Another bird was found on the Los Gatos Creek CP ponds on 3 Jan (MiF) and has been seen there through at least 19 Jan (v.ob.). Up to three **Common Loons** have been seen at the percolation ponds at Los Gatos Creek CP 3-19 Jan (v.ob.) with maximum counts in the Oka ponds on 3 and 11 Jan (MiF). **American White Pelicans** do not normally stay much past early January so eleven counted on 26 Jan (SCR *et al.*) may be "oversummering." Lingered **Brown Pelicans** are even more unusual so a bird at Shoreline Lake on 1 Jan (SCR, MMR) and 3 Jan (MiF) is unexpected. An **American Bittern** was found near Salt Pond A13 in Alviso on 10 Jan (NL *fide* MiF), but there have been no further reports of birds in the Palo Alto area. A single **Cattle Egret** has been found irregularly during the month at the Arzino Ranch in Alviso (m.ob.).

Good numbers of all three of our rare geese have turned up in January, which is quite unusual. The immature **Greater White-fronted Goose** found in the vicinity of the Arzino Ranch and New Chicago Marsh in December continued to be seen through at least 17 Jan (v.ob.). In addition, an adult was seen over New Chicago Marsh on 9 Jan (MiF) and four adults were in the Sunnyvale Baylands on 26 Jan (CKS). Beyond the two immature **Snow Geese** at Sandy Wool Lake reported last month, another immature was seen at Lake Cunningham on 22 Dec (ECu *et al. fide* AV). This bird or another immature joined the other geese at the Arzino Ranch on 7 Jan (KPa) and was seen in a number of spots the next day (RWR, MMR, MJM). Easier to find were **Ross' Geese**. The

The Avocet 4

immature bird found on the Moffett Field Golf Course in December was seen there again on 2 and 27 Jan (MMR) and 28 Jan (MiF). Three birds were present at the Arzino Ranch by the end of December, an adult and two immatures, and by 8 Jan a fourth bird had joined them, another immature (MMR, MJM). These birds have remained at least through 14 Jan (v.ob.). **Blue-winged Teal** have been found regularly in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) this month (m.ob.) with a peak count of 13 on 26 Jan (MJM). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** on the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds on 13 Jan (MMR) is probably the same bird found there in December. Another male in Crittenden Marsh 19-27 Jan (MJM, MMi, MiF) may be a second bird. Four males in the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 26 Jan (CKS) were an unusually high number. The **Redhead** flock in the Palo Alto FCB

Wintering Lesser Black-backed Gull and Hooded Warbler gave sparkle to January

has often been only in single digits in January, perhaps because of all the local flooding. Forty plus birds seen there on 16 Jan (TGr) was a high count for the month. A pair of birds was also seen on the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 13 Jan (MMR). The male **Tufted Duck** found last month on the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds has been seen there and on nearby Salt Pond A3W through the end of January (v.ob.). A female was found on these ponds on 1 Jan (SCR) and is approximately the eighth county record. The **Barrow's Goldeneye** numbers at Shoreline Lake peaked on 5 Jan (MJM) with four males and four females counted. Up to three birds have been seen there through the end of the month (m.ob.). The large numbers of **Hooded Mergansers** dried up in December. Five birds were still on the Oka percolation ponds 1 Jan (KPa) and at least two birds remained through 11 Jan (MiF) but none have been reported since. Eleven birds were found on various ponds in the Isabel Valley on 3 Jan on the Mt. Hamilton CBC (MJM, DES *fide* MJM) for the first record of this species on that count.

Raptors through Skimmers

An **Osprey** over Coyote Creek at Silicon Valley Boulevard on 10 Jan (SCR) was the only bird seen this month. A 1st-year **Bald Eagle** was at Calaveras Res. on 1 Jan (SCR) and one to two adults have been seen there 7-13 Jan (KPa, MiF, MMR). A single adult was found at the Isabel Valley Reservoir on 3 Jan (MJM *et al.*). The "**Harlan's**" **Red-tailed Hawk** found along the Guadalupe River in December has been seen regularly throughout the month near Trimble (m.ob.). Reports of **Ferruginous Hawks** include an adult in Isabel Valley on 3 Jan (MJM *et al.*), an immature at the San Jose Airport on 13 Jan (MMR), an adult east of Morgan Hill on 19 Jan (MiF), an adult near Guadalupe River 19-25 Jan (LCh), and an adult at Sierra and Felter roads on 30 Jan (RCo, MAD). An adult male **Merlin** of the dark race *suckleyi*

has been seen in Palo Alto near San Francisquito Creek above Middlefield on 14-18 Jan (MMR, RWR, AME) and is probably the same bird that has wintered nearby for the last few years. Wintering **Prairie Falcons** on the valley floor include a bird along the Guadalupe River near Montague on 1 Jan (SCR), one in Alviso on 1 Jan (KPa) and perhaps the same bird nearby along Coyote Creek on 3 Jan (AJ), and a bird near Shoreline Park on 23 Jan (WCa) and 29 Jan (RWR) which is probably the same bird seen there in December. **Black Rails** continue to be found on high tides at the Palo Alto Baylands with at least four birds there on 8-11 Jan (v.ob.).

Lesser Yellowlegs are rare here in the winter. Single birds at the Arzino Ranch on 2 Jan (KPa) and 17 Jan (MiF) and at the Sunnyvale Baylands on 26 May (CKS) may represent a single individual. Locally rare as well, a single **Sanderling** was seen in the Palo Alto estuary on 1 Jan (SCR), and one to four birds were north of the Alviso Marina on 17-19 Jan (MiF, AME). Our **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, back for its second winter was found north of the Alviso Marina on 1 Jan (MMR) and at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) waterbird pond 14-21 Jan (SCR, AJ). A first-winter **Glaucous Gull** was found on the Alviso salt ponds on 3 Jan (ChW) and 17 Jan (MiF) where a bird had been found in December. A first-winter bird was also

seen on 26 Jan (MJM) in the Palo Alto estuary. Five **Black Skimmers** have remained at Charleston Slough through January, suggesting that they can survive our central coast winter (m.ob.).

Roadrunners through Sapsuckers

A **Greater Roadrunner** in San Antonio Valley on 3 Jan (WGB) is the only report this month. A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** in Monte Bello OSP on 19 Jan (MJM) is in an area where they breed. A **Long-eared Owl** found roosting in conifers at Ed Levin CP on 3 Jan (GB *fide* MiF) could not be refound in subsequent days. **Short-eared Owls** were seen at the Palo Alto Baylands 8-9 Jan (SS, KPa), in the Palo Alto FCB on 9 Jan (MMR), and and at Charleston Slough on 19 Jan (MiF). These observations may represent a single bird. A male **Allen's Hummingbird** was found at Ed Levin CP on 13 Jan (MMR) for our first spring arrival---about three to four weeks early. At least seven **Lewis' Woodpeckers** were in San Antonio Valley on 3 Jan (WGB, MMR) and sixteen were tallied in the Isabel Valley the same day (MJM *et al.*). The male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, in his third winter at Ed Levin CP, was seen 1-19 Jan (v.ob.)

Flycatchers through Tanagers

The wintering **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, found along the Guadalupe River in December, was seen again on 26 Jan (JDa) below Trimble. A single **Tree Swallow** was well away from water on a chamise-covered ridge in San Antonio Valley on 3 Jan (WGB). One identified in a flock of three swallows over the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP sludge ponds on 15 Jan (AJ *fide* MMR) was in a more typical location. Our other winter swallow, the **Violet-green Swallow**, was represented by two over the Palo Alto FCB on 1 Jan (SCR) and another two over the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 25 Jan (SCR *et al.*)

Numbers of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued to be found into January---the last remnant of the montane invasion. The total of 11 Red-breasted Nuthatches on the San Jose CBC on 22 Dec (*fide* AV), although well above our 25-year mean of two birds, was still below the previous high of 16 birds in 1972. The peak count in January was of four at Ed Levin CP on 1 Jan (SCR). A **House Wren** found off Calaveras Road near Ed Levin on 1 Jan (SCR) is a rare wintering

bird. A **Winter Wren** at Ed Levin that same day (SCR) was also unusual for the winter away from the forested drainages of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** observed along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 in December was caught in CCRS's nets on 17 Jan (*fide* SCR). A **Townsend's Solitaire** near the summit of Mt. Hamilton on 3 Jan (GC & HG *fide* MJM) was one of the few mountain invaders to linger. Three **Phainopepla** were found in the Isabel Valley on 3 Jan (DES *fide* MJM) and were the only reports this month. **Orange-crowned Warblers** are found locally nearly every winter, mostly along riparian areas, and are considered rare. A search of Coyote Creek on 16 Jan (SCR) tallied 15 birds, mostly in Pacific willows. Smaller numbers were found regularly along the Guadalupe River as well during the month (v.ob.). Previously, we considered **Yellow Warblers** to be one of our rarest overwintering warblers, but the last three winters have told a different story. The bird found along Artesian Slough near the Alviso Environmental Education Center (EEC) in November and December was seen again on 8 Jan (MMR). This may be the same bird that was found here last winter. A vigorously calling bird at Vasona Reservoir 12-14 Jan (SCR, HLR) was apparently the fourth one found this winter. The wintering **Hermit Warbler** at Bowers Park in Santa Clara was seen again on 3 Jan (CKS) and 5 Jan (CIW, ChW, MMR) but not after that. The **Palm Warbler** found in Fair Oaks Park in Sunnyvale in December may be the same bird that wintered there last year. It was seen again on 3-4 Jan (MiF), 14 Jan (AV), and 19 Jan (MMi). A second bird, wintering in Bowers Park, was seen fairly regularly through the month (v.ob.) and by 19 Jan the feathering around the bill was degraded (LCh), probably from feeding on nectar from eucalyptus flowers. The female **Hooded Warbler** found along the Guadalupe River between Trimble and Montague in November was found regularly through January (m.ob.) and is clearly wintering in this area. A female **Summer Tanager** along San Francisquito Creek above Middlefield Road, here for perhaps its third winter, has disappeared for long periods, as in previous winters. Seen in early November it was found again 14-18 Jan (KPa, MMR, AME). Adding to our Summer Tanager wealth of recent years was a 1st-year male along Coyote Creek below

Montague on 24 Jan (CKS). A female **Western Tanager** was seen along San Francisquito Creek between Seneca and Guinda on 20 Dec (PMB & RLe *fide* MMR).

(Black-headed) Grosbeaks through (Evening) Grosbeaks

The imm. female **Black-headed Grosbeak** wintering at a feeder in Los Altos has been seen at least through 3 Jan (RCo). A female or immature male **Lazuli Bunting** was seen along the Guadalupe River above Montague on 19 Jan (MMi) and it is likely that this is the same bird that was found near here in December. At least one **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** has been found at the Palo Alto Baylands on the main levee on 8-9 Jan (m.ob.) and 23 Jan (CIW). Another bird was along the waste water outfall there on 8 Jan (NL *fide* AME). A **White-throated Sparrow** was at a San Jose feeder on 2 Jan (PBe) and four birds were found along Coyote Creek on 16 Jan (SCR)---two between Barber and Tasman and two between Montague and Brokaw. A few **Red Crossbills** have lingered into January with two still at Ed Levin CP on 1 Jan (SCR) and six in residential San Jose on 17 Jan (RWR). Two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** San Antonio Valley on 3 Jan (WGB) were the only ones reported this month. A female **Evening Grosbeak** was over Ed Levin CP on 1 Jan and three birds were at Stanford on 17 Jan (both SCR).

Observers: Peg Bernucci (PBe), George Bing (GB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), William Cabot (WCa), Gail Cheeseman (GC), Les Chibana (LCh), Rita Colwell (RCo), Emelie Curtis (ECu), Maryann Danielson (MAD), Jim Danzenbaker (JDa), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Harriet Gerson (HG), Tom Grey (TGr), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJ), Rosalie Lefkowitz (RLe), Nick Lethaby (NL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Mark Miller (MMi), Kathy Parker (KPa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Chris Salander (CKS), Don Schmoldt (DES), Susan Stout (SS), Ann Verdi (AV), Chris Wolfe (ChW), and Claire Wolfe (CIW).

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

SCVAS Lobbies the Lawmakers

by Leda Beth Gray

In January after the California Audubon meeting, some of the participants from various chapters around the state, including myself, went to the State Capitol to do some lobbying on behalf of Audubon. I was a little nervous---I had never lobbied before, at least not in the strict political sense. Our SCVAS Environmental Advocate Craig Breon was with us, and he told us we might actually meet with the legislators themselves. What was I going to say?

We met as a group near the Capitol building to discuss our plans. Most of us already knew the issues we wanted to promote, and John McCaull, Audubon California's Legislative Analyst, advised us of upcoming legislation that might relate to those issues. Among others, there

was SB 2, which would put a bond issue for land acquisition on the ballot for voters to consider, and an education bill to fund programs that teach kids about the environment. The education bill will be sponsored by one of our local legislators, Assemblyman Jim Cunneen. John worked with people to bring them up to speed on the "how-to" of presenting concerns to legislators.

The SCVAS contingent was very glad to have Craig Breon along to guide us through the process. We obtained our free one-per-citizen copies of the relevant bills from a special room in the Capitol Building, so that we could read the bills, as well as be ready to refer to them during our meetings. We made appointments with Assembly and Senate offices, mostly to meet with chiefs of

staff (of Senator Byron Sher, Assemblyman Mike Honda, and Senator John Vasconcellos), but we did get to visit with one of the assembly members himself, Jim Cunneen.

We found that in every case we were very well received, that the various chiefs of staff and Jim Cunneen were sincerely interested in our issues and our views, as well as offering helpful advice about how to approach some of the issues. We spoke to them about increasing funding to the California Department of Fish and Game for more wardens and staff biologists to allow more involvement of these officials in local wildlife and environmental issues. Other topics included the upcoming education and land acquisition bills, and potential legislative responses to the recent flooding in California. We wrote follow-up letters to give the legislators a record of our meeting and to provide additional detail on some of the issues.

We learned from Craig and John that lobbying is a two-way street. It is important to find out what we can do to assist the legislator as well as ask the legislator to act on our behalf. Surprisingly, there are things we can do for them fairly easily that will improve our overall efforts. For example, we were asked to promote one of the legislators for a particular committee assignment, as well as to help gather support for Cunneen's educational bill.

Anyone who wants to lobby on topics that relate to the mission of SCVAS may contact Craig for advice and background on local issues and legislators. He can advise people on who to contact, and a strategy for effectively presenting concerns. Lobbying was a very rewarding experience for me and I strongly encourage others to become involved in this way. Legislators all have local offices, so one need not go all the way to Sacramento or Washington, D.C. to do lobbying. If you are interested, contact Craig and he can assist you in getting started, and possibly accompany you to a meeting if it is an issue that relates to Audubon concerns. Have fun and make a difference!!

Open Space Saved in S.C. from Pg. 1

Finally, it came down to the City Council hearings—two long ones. There were motions, counter motions, motions to table the previous motion, and continuances. There were heated arguments over facts and figures, with one councilwoman being called a 'bean counter' while another was deemed a 'spend-thrift'. There were impassioned appeals to both fiscal responsibility and to the values of open space. That was just the City Council.

As for the environmentalists, at each of the Council meetings we brought an impressive array of eloquent speakers, many of whom had lived in the Valley for years and could tell of how Santa Clara had undergone the transition from open fields and orchards to Intel, strip malls, and tract housing. School children came to talk about their science project out on the site; Native Americans came to propose a cultural center on or near the site.

Evidently our idea had appeal. Or perhaps it was the site itself, though doubtless some people spoke in favor of preservation who had never even walked the land. We may watch the growth of Silicon Valley all around us and largely take it for granted. Nonetheless, when a

chance appears to preserve a piece of what came before the superhighways, many of us are drawn to act.

Beware David Brower's Warning

David Brower, dean of American environmentalism, once said (paraphrasing), "The lovers of Nature can lose a battle permanently, but we can rarely win one permanently." While the Santa Clara site is safe for now, there are already smoke-filled backrooms plotting to reverse the Council decision. We won a slim 4-3 vote, and a change in the Council or one change of heart could bring back the bulldozers. Our chapter will continue to see that this decision stays put.

In the meantime, stay tuned to the Avocet for further announcements on this issue. We hope for a clean-up party out there in the spring. You may want to go out to the site (where Tasman Blvd. crosses the Guadalupe River) and see for yourself the people's new overgrown golf course.

Above all, thank you to those members who helped us achieve this most unlikely victory, and thanks to you who will help us keep it in the future!

Merced, Panoche Field Trip Reports

The Merced NWR Santa Fe Grade trip went very well, in spite of flooding and threat of closed roads (mercifully, no fog!). The Refuge at Merced was closed and Sandy Mush Rd. was open to the Refuge but not beyond. Highlights along Sandy Mush Rd. included one adult Bald Eagle, two Ferruginous Hawks, great looks at Sandhill Cranes (and earfuls of their wonderful calls), and lots of Common Snipe, including a flock of 25. We then visited the only open Refuge in the area, San Luis. Highlights here were two Hooded Mergansers flying over while we ate lunch, two Wood Ducks, five Tundra Swans, several Great Horned Owls, two Tule Elk, one coyote, and two large beaver resting atop their flooded lodge!

The real treat at San Luis was an adult Cooper's Hawk and an adult Red-shouldered Hawk perched in the same tree, about 10 feet apart. They were about 100 meters from us and posed in the same

scope view, allowing us to study them for several minutes, providing quite a life combination, to say nothing of the rare chance for a direct comparison of these two hawks! Santa Fe Grade was open, much to our delight, but very muddy. However, the journey was worth the mud. We had several hundred White-faced Ibis, nine American Bitterns, six Redheads, 10 scaup sp., one Short-eared Owl, 30+ Tree Swallows (several also seen at other locations), and two Great Horned Owls hooting from a cattail marsh, far from buildings or trees. While we listened to the owls, a Sora rail called nearby.

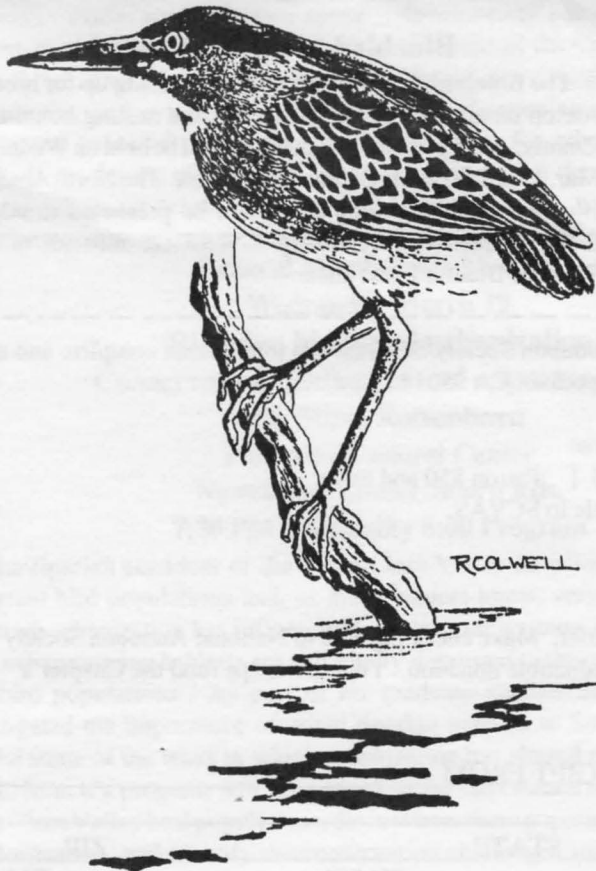
The number of geese and ducks was very low because of all the flooding, which enabled the waterfowl to disperse over a large area. We saw fewer than 500 Snow/Ross' Geese, and about 150 White-fronteds; and probably less than 5,000 - 8,000 ducks. A total of 88 species were observed.

—Don Schmoldt

The SCVAS trip to Panoche Valley on Feb. 1 led by Clay Kempf was a big success. The day started off with an adult Bald Eagle at the Paicines Store and the raptor sightings continued all day. Highlights included two adult Golden Eagles, four Ferruginous Hawks, one large immature female Cooper's Hawk that inspired Goshawkian thoughts for a while, one Sharp-shinned Hawk, four Prairie Falcons and one Merlin.

Other Panoche specialties were 10+ Mountain Plovers (superb views; they were up and about close enough to the road to be seen well with bins), three Greater Roadrunners (superb prolonged views), one Lewis' Woodpecker (thanks to Debi Shearwater who pointed it out to us), 5+ Phainopeplas, one Rock Wren, 30+ Mountain Bluebirds, one Rufous-crowned Sparrow, many Lark Sparrows, and one Vesper Sparrow, also viewed at length with scopes. A Badger gave good views to all. Frank Vanslager shared his Questar for everyone's benefit, and the birds were generally in a posing mood.

—Tom Grey



Bird Book Auction

Nearly 100 books on birds and birding have recently been identified as duplicates in the SCVAS library, and are being cleared out to permit the shelving of new acquisitions. Many of these titles are of high quality, and will be of interest to birders for addition to their personal libraries. From now until the April General Meeting, these books will be on display at the SCVAS office. Each will have a bidding slip tucked inside it. To place a bid simply write the amount, your name, and telephone number on the slip. The highest bidder as of the evening of April 16 receives the book.

All of the books will be displayed at the General Meeting that evening. After a final opportunity to bid is closed, any books without bids will be sold at "extreme" discounts! For an advance copy of the titles list, please send SASE to the SCVAS office with a note requesting the Silent Auction booklist. Or, drop by to see them for yourself.



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Fundraiser Exceeds Expectations

The 1996 Fall Fundraiser has topped the \$17,000 mark, thanks to a late burst of donations in January and February. Heading the list of recent donors were Doug and Gail Cheeseman, who once again dug deep into their pockets and contributed \$2000 to the SCVAS cause. It's hard to find the words to express our gratitude for the Cheesemans' support throughout the years. We'll simply say "Thanks, Doug and Gail" once more, and draw inspiration from their generosity to keep the Chapter active and committed to birds, birders and preserving habitat for us all.

Other members also gave generously to the campaign, and we'd like to mention them all here, but there were simply too many—over 250!—to list. The following donors (listed in no particular order) gave \$100 or more: Nancy Boesenberg, Carol Godsave, Vincent Philbrick, Bonnie Rapp, Carolyn & Gordon Davidson, Alan Bagley, Grant & Karen Hoyt, Joyce Bartlett, William Danielson, Syndie Meyer, Mike Rigney, Evelyn Delgado, Donald & Elizabeth Campbell, L.R. Michel, Peter LaTourrette, Daniel Sneider, John & Colleen Arnold, Des & Cathy Wytmans, Jo Ann Donohue, Jules Resnick & Mary Ann Leer, Constance Crawford, Stephen Robie, Mayella D'Angelo, Clysta Seney, Harriet Gerson, Anna Cook, Keith Breon, Hugh Macpherson Jr., David McIntyre, Rob & Rita Colwell, H. Taylor, David Cook, Cynthia McLaughlin, Nick & KC Yatsko.

Thanks, too, to our corporate donors: Aspect Telecommunications (\$1,000); Intel Corp. (\$500); and Altera Corp. (\$500). Their contributions will help sponsor our popular Education programs during the coming year.

Finally, our very sincere thanks go to the remainder of our supporters, who gave anywhere from \$5 to \$75. It's always hard to ask our members for money, but so many of you showed your support by simply giving whatever modest amount you could afford, and that's as gratifying as receiving the larger checks.

Birdathon Coming in April

Speaking of fundraising, the annual Birdathon is coming up in April, so start organizing your team and planning your Big Day of birding now. Harriet Gerson has once again accepted the role of Birdathon coordinator; she's also last year's top pledge-getter. You can play a role in this event that puts the FUN into fundraising—raise \$\$ for SCVAS by counting birds! Late April and early May are the prime times for racking up big species numbers. Full details will appear in next month's *Avocet*.

Bluebird Monitors Needed

The Bluebird Recovery Program is gearing up for breeding season monitoring of bluebird trails and nesting boxes in the County. An organizational meeting will be held on Wednesday Mar. 12 at 7:00 at McClellan Ranch Park. The North American Bluebird Society's slide show will be presented to educate those interested in becoming a volunteer monitor of local Western Bluebird nest sites.

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:

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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.

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