



The Avocet

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

June-August 1997

Keeping Your Cats Indoors

by Leda Beth Gray

Why is it important to keep cats indoors? First, it is good for wildlife. Many of us are becoming aware of the huge toll taken on wildlife populations by domestic and feral cats. Studies done over the last 50 years have demonstrated the particularly heavy impact cats have had on bird populations throughout the world. Estimates for the numbers of birds killed by cats in the U.S. per year range into the hundreds of millions.

Half the cat-caught birds brought into Wildlife Rescue in Palo Alto in 1994 were fledglings, emphasizing the particular vulnerability of birds during the nesting season. Combined with habitat loss, predation by cats could be a burden that many bird populations won't be able to withstand.

Not only are the prey species affected by cat predation, but also other predator species such as hawks, owls, and coyotes that depend on the prey species for their natural food supply. The population densities of cats, especially in rural areas, can be many times higher than occurs in predator species in nature, making it difficult for native predators to compete.

The good news is that keeping cats indoors is also good for the health and life expectancy of the cats, and less expensive for the cat owners. The Humane Society of the United States was quoted in 1992 estimating the average life expectancy of free roaming pets to be between 3 and 5 years, while indoor cats can commonly reach ages of 17 years or more. A number of local community groups, including Santa Clara

Valley Audubon, Santa Clara Valley Humane Society and Wildlife Rescue are currently trying to educate the public on the benefits of keeping domestic cats indoors. Following are some important benefits of keeping cats indoors:

- **Indoor cats do not get hit by cars.**

According to the Santa Clara Valley Humane Society, 57% of all the animals found dead on the streets of San Jose in 1996 were cats.

- **Keeping cats inside keeps them out of fights.**

Indoor cats don't get injured in fights with other neighborhood cats or wildlife. Our big, white, fluffy male Sta-Puft ended up at the vet's office with abscessed wounds twice after fights with who-knows-what. Believe me, it wasn't cheap. This contributed to our decision to make Sta-Puft an indoor cat.

- **Exposure to diseases and parasites are minimized or eliminated.**

Diseases such as feline leukemia, rabies, upper respiratory disease and feline immunodeficiency virus can be serious and life-threatening. Common parasites picked up outdoors by cats include fleas, ticks and worms.

- **Lower veterinary bills.**

Besides not having to seek emergency attention for cats who have been in fights, keeping cats indoors saves money on treating diseases and parasites which are contracted from other cats and wildlife. We were pleased to find out from our vet that in addition, our cats need fewer yearly shots now that they are indoor cats.

continued on Page 4

The Avocet 1

Annual Potluck Dinner Wednesday June 11 6:00 PM McClellan Ranch Park

Tonight's the night to join SCVAS staff, officers, Board members, volunteers and friends for an evening of fun and food at our McClellan Ranch headquarters. Take a stroll along Stevens Creek and inspect our revegetation work while you enjoy the Yellow Warblers, Black Phoebes and other feathered inhabitants of the grounds. Visit the Nature Shop and library while you're here, too. Bring a dish to share; we'll provide beverages, plates and silverware.

A - F Dessert G - P Salad/Hors d'oeuvres R - Z Main dish

This event is for all our members, new and old---if you haven't attended before, please join us. Meet the birders, environmental educators, and habitat protectors who work so hard to make our Chapter a strong one!

VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Garth Harwood, SCVAS Chapter Manager

Breeding birds at McClellan Ranch Park are going at it with their usual astounding energy as I write this column in the first week of May. The very first breeding activity I observed this year in the Park was by a pair of DARK-EYED JUNCOS collecting pine needles in early January. So it was fitting that the first fledglings observed this year were also Juncos, but as these young were not seen until early April, it's probable that they do not represent the first Junco clutch of the year.

But this week, there's been a regular rush of fledglings about: on Friday May 2, I observed parent birds feeding tiny MALLARDS and full-grown young of BEWICK'S WRENS, SONG SPARROWS, CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEES, and last but not least, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES.

These hardworking Nuthatches were raised in an SCVAS nestbox along the creek path, and had obliged many score of scouts and school-children by feeding their young as I led them along nature walks through the park. Nuthatch behavior at the nest is some of the most entertaining I've ever witnessed. For example, the male, when delivering food to his mate, often seemed to have second thoughts as the transfer was about to take place: she, hearing him arrive, would appear at the entrance, and reach for the food. He would extend it to her, but then back off suddenly, fly a few feet away, and do a nervous sort of dance for a while. This sequence might be repeated four or five times, after which he would sometimes fork it over, and sometimes stash the morsel in a nearby crevice. At other times, I watched as he made for or five trips from the stash to his mate, passing the food in a no-nonsense fashion. It's awfully tempting to anthropomorphize with a situation like this, isn't it?

Needless to say, I've grown quite attached to this family. So it was with great joy that I finally saw the fuzzy young being introduced to our suet feeder by the office this week. I now look forward to seeing youngsters of the BARN OWLS, HOUSE WRENS, PLAIN TITMICE, HOODED ORIOLES, VIOLET-GREEN and NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS, REDWINGED and BREWER'S BLACKBIRDS, ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRDS, AMERICAN ROBINS, MOURNING DOVES, and YELLOW WARBLERS that I've observed in various modes of breeding activity so far this season in the Park.

But, love hurts when, as "godparents" to birds we're especially fond of, we witness aspects of nature that aren't to our liking. I've been getting a series of calls from distressed people who've witnessed WESTERN SCRUB-JAYS or AMERICAN CROWS doing what comes naturally to them at this time of year, namely, killing and eating eggs or young of other birds.

It seems ugly and cruel, but it's the way these birds have made their living since the dawn of time. We can grimly remind ourselves that this is natural selection at work, seeing to it that only those individuals survive whose overall health, instincts for nest placement, etc., are especially well-adapted. But true as that is, it's both unsatisfying and incomplete.

The truth is that our species has altered all local ecosystems in ways that have drastically reduced nesting habitat for most native bird species,

continued on Page 9

SCVAS OFFICERS and BOARD

President	David McIntyre	415/856-6671
Past Pres.	Nick Yatsko	408/247-5499
1st VP	Clysta Seney	408/261-9431
2nd VP	Mary Simpson	408/370-2177
Treasurer	Douglas McLendon	408/288-9254
Secretary	Elaine Gould	408/448-0622

DIRECTORS

Sandy Cortright '94-97	408/738-1251
Chris Fischer '94-97	415/364-8723
David Drake '94-97	415/424-8575
Rob Colwell '95-98	415-949-1869
'95-98 (Vacant)	
'95-98 (Vacant)	
Bobbie Handen '96-99	408/356-4263
Grant Hoyt '96-99	415/969-7892
Leda Beth Gray '96-99	415/424-8573

STAFF

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

CHAIRPERSONS

Avocet	Grant Hoyt	415/969-7892
Education	Bobbie Handen	408/356-4263
Envir. Action	(Vacant)	
Field Trips		
Weekend	Dave Cook	408/729-7310
Weekday	Shirley Gordon	408/996-9863
Finance	Don Price	415/327-1254
Hospitality	Gail Cheeseman	408/867-1371
Library	Joyce Chang	415/965-9682
PhotoClub	Pete LaTourrette	415/961-2741
Programs	Cindy Handen	415/323-9036
Christmas		
Bird Count	Ann Verdi	408/266-5108
	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.

1997, Volume 44, Number 6

Rare Bird Alert: 415-681-7422

June - August 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

Wednesday June 4, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers. Marin County naturalist and birder Bob Stewart will give tonight's presentation on butterflies. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Saturday June 7, 7:30 AM.** Half day. Stevens Creek Co. Park. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408)257-3647. From I-280 in Cupertino take Foothill Blvd. south 2.1 miles, turn left and meet at first parking area. Highlights: breeding birds including vireos, warblers, flycatchers, wrens, etc.

Saturday June 7, all day. Annual Palo Alto Breeding Bird Count. The spring version of a Christmas Bird Count. Counters will cover an area of the 15-mile diameter count circle, from bayside to foothills to skyline ridges. If you've counted in the past, contact your section leader from previous years. If you're new and would like to participate, call Garth at the Audubon office (408)252-3747.

Tuesday June 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. Bring a bag lunch and picnic with the birds.

****Wednesday June 11, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408)996-9863. Meet at Preserve parking lot at NW corner of Skyline Blvd. (Hwy 35) and Page Mill/Alpine Rd. Highlights include Grasshopper Sparrow and Lazuli Bunting. Lunch optional.

Wednesday June 11, 6:00 PM. Annual Potluck Dinner at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. See Page 1.

****Saturday June 14, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408)996-9863. See June 11 for details.

****Saturday Sunday June 28-29.** Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley. Leader: Clay Kempf (408)761-8260. Meet at 7:00 AM Saturday at Yuba Pass parking lot on south side of Hwy 49. From South Bay take Hwy 80 to Truckee, go north on Hwy 89, then west on Hwy 49 to Yuba Pass. Saturday will be spent exploring the Yuba Pass area for Williamson's Sapsucker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Dipper, Townsend's Solitaire, Evening Grosbeak, seven species of warblers, four flycatchers and more. On Sunday the group will bird east of the pass in drier habitat where Mountain Bluebird, Green-tailed Towhee, Sage Thrasher and other Great Basin specialties occur. Last stop is the high-country Sierra Marsh, where Black Tern, Wilson's Phalarope, Common Snipe and possibly Sandhill Crane breed. Hotels are available in Sierra City and Downieville; camping at Wild Plum, Sierra City and Yuba Pass.

****Saturday July 12, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Beginners trip at McClellan Ranch Park. Leader: Garth Harwood. SCVAS' Chapter Manager will introduce participants to songbirds of the park. Easy walking. Loaner binoculars available. Call (408)252-3747 for information.

Are you a field trip leader? Like to become one? We're compiling a roster of leaders. Call Dave Cook at (408)729-7310 to sign up.

CONGRATULATIONS PAT AND PAUL NELSON ON YOUR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY!

****Saturday July 26, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Youth trip to Grant Ranch Co. Park. Leader: Dave Cook (408)729-7310. From Hwy 101 in San Jose take Alum Rock Ave. east to Mt. Hamilton Rd., turn right and proceed approx. 9 miles to park entrance on right. \$3.00 fee. We'll explore bluebird nestbox trails and look for other oak woodland nesting species.

****Sunday August 3.** Full day. Ano Nuevo State Reserve. Leader: Mark Miller (415)967-3429. Coastal specialties such as Black Swift, Bank Swallow, Marbled Murrelet and early returning shorebirds. Limit 20 participants; call leader to reserve space.

****Sunday August 24, 8:00 AM.** Charleston Slough beginners trip. Leader: Phyllis Browning (415)494-6360. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. toward the Bay. Meet inside gate at intersection of San Antonio and Terminal Way. Ducks, shorebirds, herons, egrets, possible Black Skimmers.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is offering birding trips to Hawaii this summer and next spring, co-led by SCVAS member Les Chibana. The first tour runs from Aug. 20 - Sept. 1, 1997; the second from Mar. 10 - 22, 1998. Cost is \$2675 plus airfare; limit 10 participants. Both trips will visit the Big Island, Mau'i and Kaua'i for seabirds, forest species, and rare Hawaiian endemics. Call Cheesemans' at (408)741-5330 to sign up.



Kaufman to Speak

Noted author, birder, and illustrator Kenn Kaufman will speak at a special SCVAS event on Friday October 3. Kenn will have copies of his newest book, *Kingbird Highway*, for sale and signing. A nominal admission fee will be charged to cover expenses. The location for this event has yet to be determined; see September *Avocet* for full details.

Cats from page 1

• **Easier and less expensive to keep fleas under control.** Newly available medicines, which help keep fleas under control, have to be administered on a continual basis if the cat goes outside. It may be possible to subdue fleas if the cat stays inside. At present our cats do not seem to have any fleas, and we are not using any form of flea control. The ordeal of a flea bath is essentially a thing of the past.

• **Indoor cats are safe from neighbors who do not welcome feline visitors to their yards.** In most places it is legal for property owners to trap domestic animals that wander onto their properties. Wandering cats may end up at the pound, or worse, suffer injury from angry neighbors trying to drive them off.

• **Indoor cats are safe from predation by wild animals.** In rural areas especially, cats can become prey themselves to predators such as coyotes and Great Horned Owls.

Clearly, there are many reasons to keep cats indoors above and beyond those relating to wildlife, producing a "win-win" situation. Obviously it is easiest to raise a cat indoors from the time it is a kitten, but it is also possible to convert an outdoor cat to an indoor cat. For tips on how to do this, see adjoining story.



Black-crowned Night Heron
by Emelie Curtis

The Avocet 4

Tips On Turning Outdoor Cats Into Indoor Cats

We have three indoor cats. No, they don't drive us nuts. At least no more than before, when they went outside. Since we've successfully turned them all into indoor cats, I would like to share some of what I've learned with other cat owners who want to try keeping their cats indoors.

Of the three cats that we have, one was very devoted to going outside. Black Bunbuns was on her own when we found her, and had only gradually become used to staying inside for extended periods of time. We had cut all the cats back to only a few hours of outside time each evening after dark, mostly because of Sta-Puft or Black Bunbuns bringing home an occasional bird. After Sta-Puft had been in his two big fights (see part 1), the last straw came when he began coming home with finches---at night!! That was it, all the cats were grounded.

Yes, they drove us nuts!! Luckily, Sta-Puft and our third cat, Uncle Chuck, only pestered us for a week or two. They were fairly easily diverted with games of superballs, string and catnip mice. And after all, Sta-Puft's favorite thing is eating. The main problem with him is to keep him from getting too heavy. Black Bunbuns was another story, though. She was periodically insistent for weeks. It did lessen fairly steadily, yet gradually, until she gave up altogether after about 6 or 8 weeks. It wasn't as if she was continually in torture from not going outside. She seemed fairly satisfied when she wasn't meowing to go out, consequently giving us a break. She did finally take more of an interest in playing with string and romping with Uncle Chuck.

Following are a number of things which I think have made it easier for our cats to become established as indoor cats. When I say "easier", I mean both for them and for us.

• **Have your cat spayed or neutered!!** As well as helping to address a cat overpopulation problem that results in thousands of unclaimed cats every year in our county, spaying and neutering cause cats to be more sociable, and less inclined to roam.

• **Have toys around for them to entertain themselves.** Catnip mice are a favorite in our household. I grow catnip outside, and to keep the "ratty mice" alluring, every once in a while I rub catnip leaves on the corduroy hides of the ratty-mice. This very successfully renews the cats' interest in playing with the mice (and entertains us greatly).

• **Make places available for them to sit by the window.** Cats love to bask in the morning sun, as well as watch wildlife and human activities outside. Sta-Puft is beside himself with excitement every time the squirrels run down the window sill in front of his favorite spot.

• **Isolate the cat box(es) so that periodic odors are not disruptive to the human inhabitants of the household.** Many people choose the bathroom. I chose the garage and installed a cat door in the door between the house and the garage, to minimize odors even further. We rent, so we actually bought a new door so we could leave the landlord's door intact.

Outdoor to Indoor

continued

• **Offset increased cat box use (and litter purchases) with litter conservation techniques.** There are ways to reduce cat litter usage, but (sorry!!) they all involve "sieving". I haven't yet reached a decision as to which method is more efficient. Recently I've started using the "clumping" cat litter, and find that it reduces cat litter usage. Before that I developed a cat box setup that involved a section of newspaper and a larger-than-cat box sized piece of some fine mesh flexible screen (like that used for screen doors). The newspaper was placed in the bottom of the cat box and the screen was placed over the newspaper, fitted to the inside of the box, and clipped to the sides of the cat box with clothespins. The litter was then poured on to the screen. One could then periodically change the newspaper by lifting the cat litter out by gathering up the screen. Sieving cat litter and changing out the newspaper every few days extended the life of the litter considerably, as the urine would mostly soak into the newspaper instead of fouling the cat litter.

• **Find a way to allow each cat to have a favorite (and secure!) place to which it can retreat.** For Black Bunbuns it is a little cat bed with washable cover. For Sta-Puft it is numerous throw-rugs of which he is king, plus a number of other places that he alternately claims for extended periods. For Uncle Chuck, it is the loft in the garage, to which he is the only cat athletic enough to leap.

• **Same number of cat boxes as cats.** I don't know if this keeps them from fighting over the boxes, but it is a reasonable formula for not having to maintain the boxes overly frequently.

• **Have carpeted posts, or some other place for them to scratch.** These must be made of materials that the cats prefer to your furniture. Our cats all love the carpeted posts, and I find that I can use carpet scraps to recover them when they wear out. The scratching issue can be a tough one, and can make or break the whole effort. If you have furniture or rugs, etc., that are precious to you, by all means protect them until the cat settles into an acceptable routine and it is safe to allow them access.

• **Make the bedrooms of allergy sufferers off limits to cats.** This will go a long way toward reducing allergy irritations, especially if they tend to be cumulative. Bare, uncarpeted floors with washable throw-rugs are also easier to keep clean.

Some cats pose a serious challenge to any attempts to keep them indoors. It just may not be possible in some cases without really going crazy. In cases like these one might consider a caged run for the cat, connected to the house with a cat door.

Don't give up too easily, though. It seems to be a matter of negotiating a workable agreement with your cat. We figure that our cats think they've relegated all the hunting to us, that we are the servants that go out and capture all the food, and they just lie around like kings and queens and play as much as they want. Now that I think of it, maybe they're right!!

---Leda Beth Gray

California Audubon Lobbying Hard in State Capitol

Each year SCVAS gives \$2,000 to California Audubon in support of Legislative Affairs Director John McCaull. Since joining National Audubon's Western Region office, as it was known before becoming California Audubon, five years ago John has been an effective environmental voice in the crucial arena of state politics. Here are some of the priorities John and the Legislative Steering Committee have developed for this year's legislative session:

- **Funding for Conservation:** Audubon will work with other organizations to secure a major increase in funding for wildlife and habitat conservation through: a reapportionment of the Tidelands Trust Fund (\$30-40 million in funds from offshore oil revenue royalties); support for SB 2 (Thompson) a \$500 million general obligation bond measure for park and habitat enhancement and acquisition; and support for SB 78 (Thompson) which will continue the popular Endangered Species Tax Check-off Program.
- **Wetlands Protection:** Audubon is taking the lead in an effort to support AB 241 (Lempert) which will provide much needed reform of coastal wetlands protection and mitigation policies in California.
- **Environmental Education:** Assemblyman Jim Cunneen is introducing legislation for Audubon to continue the popular and successful "Adopt A Species" program for students.
- **Reform of the California ESA:** Audubon is working with Assemblywoman Debra Bowen to introduce legislation to strengthen the California Endangered Species Act's protection for wildlife habitat, and to reform illegal "take" permitting practices by the California Dep't of Fish and Game.

John McCaull's behind-the-scenes work in the State Capitol is every bit as important as our local efforts to protect birds and their habitat in Northern California.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Pelicans through Skimmers

A single **American White Pelican** on Salt Pond A2E on 26 Apr (MJM) and four with nuptial horns seen over the New Chicago Marsh on 29 Apr (MMR) were unusual for April. Always rare, an **American Bittern** was heard along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 3 Apr (SCR). Thirteen **Cattle Egrets** over Llagas Creek on 3 Apr (SCR) and another east of San Felipe Lake (MMR, SCR) were unusual for the south valley. The peak count of birds in the vicinity of the Arzino Ranch was 21 observed on 29 Apr (MMR). The count of **Blue-winged Teal** in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) was seven on 1 Apr (WGB) and numbers declined after that with the last report of a single male on 20 Apr (SCR).

Migrant **Osprey** numbers normally taper off in April, but this year was unusual in the number of birds seen. A male and female were at Almaden Reservoir on 3 Apr (MMR) and the female was breaking off sticks from dead trees. Individual birds have been seen here on 5 Apr (TGr, AV), nearby over the Santa Teresa Hills on 13 Apr (AV), and at Calero Reservoir on 28 Apr (ECu, JG). A bird has been observed at Parkway Lakes 3-11 Apr (SCR) and other individuals include a female over Stanford on 13 Apr (SCR, HLR), one flying north from San Felipe Lake on 16 Apr (ADeM, DSh), a male at Felt Lake on 23 Apr (SCR, MMR), and one over the San Antonio Valley on 24 Apr (BMcK et al.). Will our reservoirs one day support nesting birds? An adult **Broad-winged Hawk** over Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve (BR) on 19 Apr (NY et al. fide CH) is an unusual spring record. A dark-morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** south of the

Pajaro River on 8 Apr (SCR) is only slightly less exceptional and two light-morph adults were seen over Llagas Creek at Bloomfield Road on 12 Apr (DLSu). Late **Merlins** include one at Stevens Creek CP on 20 Apr (SCR et al.) and one at Palo Alto on 21 Apr (SCR). A **Peregrine Falcon** over Bloomfield Road and Hwy 152 on 3 Apr (SCR), one west of Pacheco Pass on 13 Apr (DLSu), one over San Antonio Valley on 24 Apr (BMcK et al), and one at the Palo Alto FCB on 26-27 Apr (MJM, AME) were all unexpected.

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the Mountain View Forebay on 10 Apr (SCR) represents one of our scarce spring migrants. It's been a good spring for

Our second Curlew Sandpiper record vied with nesting Cassin's Kingbirds for April's excitement

Solitary Sandpipers with a single bird at the end of Embarcadero Way in Palo Alto on 21 Apr (SCR), one to two birds at Searsville Lake on 22-24 Apr (SCR, RCo), one along Coyote Creek below the Ogier Avenue ponds on 26 Apr (MJM), and one at Calero Reservoir on 28 Apr (ECu, JG). On occasion, flocks of shorebirds migrate north along the valley floor although where they enter the valley is uncertain. Forty-three **Whimbrel** flying north into the county at Frazier Lake Road on 12 Apr (DLSu) is an example of this pattern and a record count for this species as well. An alternate-plumaged **Ruddy Turnstone** was in the Palo Alto estuary on 17 Apr (SCR) for one of our few recent records. Even less expected for spring were the two alternate-plumaged **Red Knots** north of the

Alviso Marina on 26 Apr (MJM), with one seen again on 30 Apr (MiF). A **Baird's Sandpiper** in the vicinity of the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 13 Apr (AJ) is only our third spring record. The real shorebird excitement this spring, however, was the mostly alternate-plumage **Curlew Sandpiper** seen in the Palo Alto estuary on 17 Apr (SCR) for our second county record. Unlike last year's bird that remained for a few days and was seen by many observers, this bird could not be refound. Two **Wilson's Phalaropes** found on the Coyote Creek Riparian Station waterbird pond on 22 Apr (AJ) were rare for spring. As is typical of most springs, only a few migrant **Red-necked Phalarope** were found: one bird at the Palo Alto Baylands on 1 Apr (MMR) and two in the Palo Alto FCB on 20 Apr (JMe, SCR et al.). Unusual at any time two **Franklin's Gulls** were found, a 2nd-year bird at the Palo Alto Duck Pond on 24 Apr (BMcK et al.) and an adult north of the Alviso Marina on 29 Apr (JAC). Just across the county line, seven **Black Terns** were found on San Felipe Lake on 26 Apr (JAC, EF). At least five **Black Skimmers** have continued to be found at Charleston Slough through the month (m.ob.).

Roadrunners through Woodpeckers

A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen above Anderson Reservoir on 29 Apr (AL fide SCR). A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** found along Kincaid Road on 27 Apr (LCh) is of interest, as are all observations of this seldom-seen predator. The first **Vaux's Swifts** of the season were a group of five seen along the Guadalupe River at Hedding on 8-9 Apr (KPa). Small numbers of migrant or resident birds were seen through the end of the month with a high count of ten at

Grant Lake on 24 Apr (MMR). **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 3 Apr (NL, MiF) and 12 Apr (MJM), but there have been no records from other breeding areas along Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creek. Small numbers of **Rufous Hummingbirds** were found during April (v.ob.). The major passage is over by the end of the month and the latest record was a male at Henry Coe SP on 24 Apr (ECu, JG). Two **Lewis' Woodpeckers** in San Antonio Valley on 19 Apr (MJM) are typical numbers for the spring in recent years.

Flycatchers through Goldfinches

Always rare, a calling **Hammond's Flycatcher** was found at Smiths Creek on 12 Apr (MMR), two birds were found there on 24 Apr (MMR), and one was still there on 25 Apr (MJM). **Cassin's Kingbirds** have been showing a moderate increase in California in recent years and this spring broke through their northern limits. Two to three pairs were found in San Benito County, a little more than a mile south of the county line, 8-11 Apr (SCR) and at least two of the pairs were building nests in mature eucalyptus groves. The first county birds were two found on San Felipe Road south of Hwy 152 on 13 Apr (MMR, MJM) and were there, at least occasionally, through the end of the month (v.ob.). Another bird was found north of San Felipe Lake on 26 Apr (JF), and third bird was at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 30 Apr (MMR). If nesting is confirmed it will be the first documented record for the county.

A female **Purple Martin** was seen over Stevens Creek CP on 20 Apr (SCR et al.). The winter invasion of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** seemed nearly at an end with single birds heard near Garbo in San Jose on 13 Apr and Mary in Sunnyvale

on 16 Apr (both MJM). An **American Dipper** was found once more along Stevens Creek above the park on 6 Apr (MJM). A **Phainopepla** was seen at the south end of Snell Avenue in San Jose on 15 Apr (KF) for our only record this month and particularly unusual for its valley floor location. Migrant **Nashville Warblers** included one at Henry Coe SP on 5 Apr (MJM), one at Smiths Creek on 19 Apr (MMR), two males singing there on 25 Apr (MMR), and a total count of three the next day (MJM). A singing male was also present at Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto for the Uncommon Loons Birdathon on 26 Apr (GHt). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was singing on Pacheco Creek above the Hwy 152 bridge east of Bell Station on 13 Apr (DLSu). This is the earliest record I have for this species.

A 1st-year male and female **Blue Grosbeak** were found on the hillside above Sandy Wool Lake in Ed Levin CP on 20 Apr (MMR) and were seen by many observers through the end of the month. This species, although increasing in the west, is still very rare in the county. **Sage Sparrows** are uncommon in portions of the Diablo Range and they are sporadic residents as well in chaparral in the Santa Cruz Mountains. One seen in the Sierra Azul OSP on 6 Apr (JDa) is of this latter population. The first **Grasshopper Sparrow** of the season was a singing bird in Ed Levin Park above Sandy Wool Lake on 10 Apr (MMR). One to five birds were found there regularly thereafter (v.ob.) with at least five birds there on 20 Apr (NL). Other locations with these grassland birds include two singing near the Stanford dish on 13 Apr (SCR, HLR) and five along Jamison Road east of Gilroy on 20 Apr (CIW, ChW). A **White-throated Sparrow** that wintered in Los Gatos was still present on 16 Apr (JD). Other birds reported include a tan-phase bird along Coyote Creek below Anderson Dam on 17 Apr (KPa) and one in a yard on Story Road in San Jose on 21 Apr (PB). The dairy west of San Felipe Lake has

provided decent looks at **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** this month (v.ob.) with peak counts of four males on 13 Apr (MMR, MJM) and six females on 27 Apr (JCS fide MMR). The stealth of female **Brown-headed Cowbirds** during their nest-parasitic activities is well known but, based on Mike Rogers' observations, it is not always necessary. He watched a female cowbird pull an incubating Lesser Goldfinch off its nest to apparently lay an egg in the nest. Where are the cops when you need them! A single female **Cassin's Finch** was found in Henry Coe SP on 5 Apr (MJM) and 12 Apr (MMR). A pair of **Red Crossbills** were seen at Ed Levin CP on 10 Apr (MMR). Nesting of this species is always possible during an invasion year. Small numbers of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found in April in typical locations in the Diablo Range and along its western slope (m.ob.). A male near the Stanford dish on 13 Apr (SCR, HLR), however, was not considered typical.

Observers: Peg Bernucci (PB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Les Chibana (LCh), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RCO), Emelie Curtis (ECu), Jim Danzenbaker (JDa), Al DeMartini (ADeM), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Jeff Finger (JF), Ken Fowler (KF), Ed Frost (EF), Jane Glass (JG), Tom Grey (TGr), Chip Haven (CH), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJ), Alan Launer (AL), Nick Lethaby (NL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Bert McKee (BMcK), John Meyer (JMe), Kathy Parker (KPa), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Debi Shearwater (DSh), John Sterling (JCS), David Suddjian (DLSu), Ann Verdi (AV), Chris Wolfe (ChW), Claire Wolfe (CIW), and Nick Yatsko (NY).

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

The Endangered Species Act---Part 2

by Craig Breon

Last month I wrote about the misperceptions surrounding the Endangered Species Act. To turn the discussion, I want to focus on why the ESA is important to our country and to each of us as individuals. While a birder or wildlife enthusiast may inherently sense the worth of diversity in the natural world, it nonetheless helps to take a moment and reflect on why this strikes us as important.

First, there's the Rosy Periwinkle argument. This small plant with a delicate purple flower, found only in Madagascar, turned out to provide a vital medicine to fight childhood leukemia. Environmental organizations have turned out thousands of posters of a small child whose life was saved by this rare plant from a region of the world undergoing devastating habitat loss. Other such stories abound. In fact, a high percentage of modern pharmaceuticals come from plants, and there's a vast but shrinking reservoir of information out there yet to be tapped.

Oddly, this argument for preserving species diversity is only half effective with politicians and the public. It is no doubt powerful—and we ignore it at our own peril—but it relies on the values of other species to humans. Thus, until a species is proved useful to humans, it can be overlooked.

Then there's the Spotted Owl argument. The Spotted Owl may have little

direct value to humans (other than birders), but it acts as an indicator of a healthy forest in the Pacific Northwest. If the owl is there, then so are the voles it feeds on, and so are the micorrhizal fungi the vole eats, and so are the old trees which use the fungi to exchange nutrients with the soil. A perfect example of life's beautiful complexity in full bloom.

This argument appeals to me, for it harkens back to John Muir's comment that when you pluck one thing from Nature, you find it hitched to everything else. It begins to say that we are incorporated into the pattern, not apart from it judging how best to utilize its assets.

To me, there's an even more appealing argument, however. Call it the evolution of rights. It is not my theory, but it has been noted sporadically for some time and developed slowly.

Imagine a time when someone of a different skin color was considered to be something less than human.

Imagine a time when whole cultures were dismissed as savages and worthy of extinction.

Imagine a time when women, while admittedly human and necessary, were deemed unworthy of participating in the governance of a nation.

We have grown beyond those times (most of us), and that progress of our characters has been as important, or more so, than any technical advancement such as the steam engine or chemical fertiliz-

ers or the computer.

Now imagine a time when whole categories of living beings were dismissed as superfluous or expendable unless they somehow related to our own well-being. This is what we face—the next hurdle in the broadening of our consciousness.

Like the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, or the Native American Citizenship Act, the Endangered Species Act represents nothing less than a leap forward in our evolution. It expanded our horizons, saying that perhaps other species deserve a sustained place in this world, whether they prove themselves worthy to us or not.

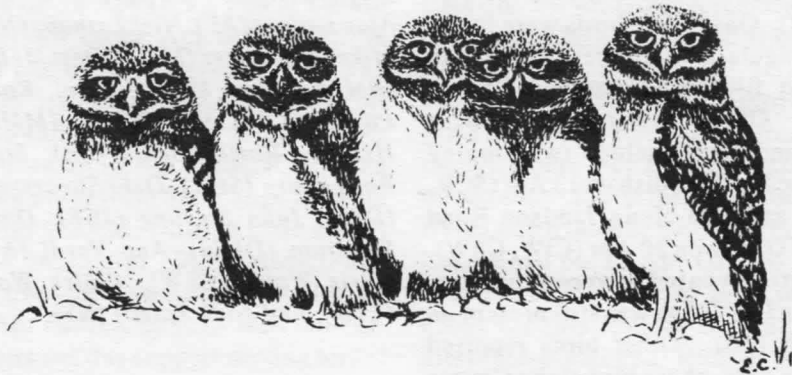
We still struggle to implement the vision represented in the Declaration of Independence, let alone those acts which have extended rights further. It should be no wonder that we struggle with the implications of the Endangered Species Act; it is the furthest extension to date. If we do not learn to live peacefully amongst diversity, we will simply be a species that failed to evolve at a critical moment. Unfortunately, the unique position of our species means that our critical moments reverberate endlessly.

May your peaceful moments with nature this summer reverberate equally. More on this and other conservation news come Fall.

A Verbal Stone Thrown Off The Mark

In last month's *Avocet* I bemoaned the fact that media outlets too easily report "wildlife vs. people" stories without thorough research or an understanding of the complexities of nature. In that article, I attribute a poorly researched article on the Pajaro River flooding to "page 1" of the *San Jose Mercury*. Paul Rodgers, the *Mercury's* environmental reporter, called to say that the story was the *San Francisco Chronicle's* (and, by the way, he didn't like it much either). I stand corrected.

Thanks, Paul, for reading the *Avocet*. Could you cover a few more of our accomplishments . . . page 1?



Ask any knowledgeable birder about the status of Burrowing Owls in Santa Clara Valley, and the responses range from "declining" to "threatened" to "doomed." So it was exciting to see a clutch of seven fledglings like these in Alviso on Migratory Bird Day, May 10. Thanks to Emelie Curtis for another lovely drawing.

OFFICE VIEW *from page 2*

and coincidentally encourage human-commensal scavenger species such as the jays and crows. So, it's probably a good idea to tip the scales in the other birds' favor when we get the chance.

That said, how can we go about it? First, it's important to remember that all birds except EUROPEAN STARLINGS, ENGLISH (HOUSE) SPARROWS, and "pigeons" or ROCK DOVES, are protected by law under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. (This applies especially to actively-nesting birds, such as the swallows we get so many calls about. If you witness anyone knocking such nests down or euphemistically "washing them off" during the breeding season, feel free to remind them of that fact and reassure them that their inconvenience will be of brief duration, as the birds will complete the nesting process within a couple of months.)

It is equally illegal to remove the threatened young and raise them by hand, so that leaves just two options, (1) physical protection of existing nests, and (2) providing plentiful and safe nesting sites to ensure a continuing surplus of young, as nature would normally provide. Option 1 is a very complicated and exhausting undertaking, as one recent caller found out the hard way. This individual spent several days in a ceaseless vigil to protect a clutch of BLACK PHOEBE nestlings against a marauding Scrub Jay, but finally lost the fight when she had to go inside for just a couple of hours---and this despite having placed a chicken-wire baffle around the nest to make it more difficult to approach.

So, difficult as it is, the best option is to provide all the habitat requirements of native species, and then allow natural forces to strike their own balance. Protection of remaining undeveloped lands is probably the most important step toward that goal, followed by the adaptation of our own yards and gardens to the needs of wildlife. A set of nestboxes to meet the needs of cavity-nesting birds can usually be made safe against avian and other predators, while other species can be provided with relatively pesticide- and cat-free places containing a mixture of thickets, shrubs, taller trees, and other vegetation that appeals to nesting birds.

Meanwhile, back at the office, we've been receiving great help from volunteers Rosalie Lefkowitz, Megan Goetsch, and Rita Colwell lately. Rosalie has developed into an all-around troubleshooter for computer glitches, and has been perfecting a system of back-up procedures to protect our membership and financial records. To that end, she's even donated a new Zip Drive and several 100-megabyte storage disks! It's deeply appreciated by us all, Rosalie.

Megan, a community-service intern from Homestead High School, has been helping out with a little of everything around the office, and has elected to stay on through the summer! Her positive attitude and flexibility have served us well this semester. And finally, Rita has undertaken a crash course in the arcane and illogical mysteries of our accounting software. Her courage in the face of capricious data erasures and randomly-organized shop receipts is a rare and beautiful thing. Thanks to each of you!

Summer volunteer needs at the office include front-desk help to answer phones, organize the shop and make sales, etc. Like to browse through catalogs and make conversation with birders from all over? An ideal opportunity would be one 4-5 hour afternoon shift a week, with training into the process of preparing wholesale orders for the nature shop. Interested?

IT'S BABY BIRD TIME! WHAT TO DO---AND NOT TO DO---IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BABY BIRD THIS SUMMER . . .

Every Spring and Summer, hundreds of injured or orphaned baby birds and fledglings are successfully rescued by helpful humans, usually in cooperation with the noble folks at our local licensed wildlife care centers. Unfortunately, some young birds are also put into danger by well-intentioned but erroneous efforts on the part of would-be rescuers. Here are a few tips:

1. If a young bird found out of the nest is fully feathered, it may be learning to fly or forage. The parents will be near and will best see to the fledgling's needs. For some species it is a normal developmental stage to spend a few flightless days out of the nest prior to mastering flight.
2. Unless there is immediate danger, don't touch. Leave the area, because the parents may not return if a person is present.
3. Don't try to feed or give water to a baby bird---it often does more harm than good.
4. It is illegal to keep an orphaned wild bird as a pet. Place the bird in a small dark box with some padding, and contact a rescue center.

—CLIP AND SAVE—

LOCAL WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTERS:

WILDLIFE CENTER OF SILICON VALLEY (Serves most of Santa Clara Valley): (408) 283-0744.

WILDLIFE RESCUE INC. (Palo Alto/Menlo Park/Mt. View/Los Altos): (415) 494-7283.

TRI-CITY ANIMAL SHELTER (Fremont, Newark, Union City): (510) 790-6770.

NATIVE ANIMAL RESCUE (Santa Cruz area): (408) 462-0726.

Birdathon Team Reports from Page 12

efforts were unsuccessful even though we were certain it was giving us 'the eye' from its nest under the bridge. Oh well, 'que sera, sera'—there were still more to be counted.

On our way to the Shoreline/Baylands habitat, a short detour at the SCVAS grounds gave us Hooded Oriole and White-breasted Nuthatch. Shoreline Park in Mt. View beckoned, and we were not disappointed when Caroline's excited call brought us up shore---the elusive Sora! Super! The Avocets and Stilts were easy, as were the assorted ducks, then a stalking Greater Yellowlegs, Great and Snowy Egrets, a Great Blue Heron in flight, and the prize—a half-hidden Green Heron that Les spotted. Cliff Swallows were busy completing their amazing mud nests, while five Black Skimmers roosted in Charleston Slough. Would they nest again this year? Time will tell.

Stopping at the Flood Control Basin didn't disappoint us. We picked up Blue-winged Teal, Common Snipe, and a distant pair of White-tailed Kites. Suddenly the air cooled, the skies clouded and an unexpected shower surprised us. By the time we arrived at the Palo Alto duck pond, the weather had recovered its good humor. After checking out the gulls, adding a Greater Scaup and Brown-headed Cowbird, we crossed over to the mudflats of the old yacht harbor. Our zeal was being tested after 11+ hours of birding, but as the late afternoon cast its golden glow over the mudflats, we were taken aback by the beauty of the scene. A flock of Bonaparte's Gulls were spectacular in breeding plumage, enhanced by the lengthening rays of the sun. We stood mesmerized by the view as it stretched before us, and Les brought out his camera lens to capture this very special sight.

Several Long-billed Curlews probed the mud, and amidst a pack of dowitchers was a Dunlin with black belly showing, in contrast to several Black-bellied Plovers in various stages of spring plumage. We were lucky to catch this moment, which was soon to fade with the setting sun.

With such a beautiful evening approaching, and reluctant to see our great day end, we walked out on the boardwalk to finish our long but great birding day. A surprise Savannah Sparrow perched atop the pickleweed and at the last moment, a Clapper Rail called, then a second one answered, signalling to us the end of our count. What could have been a more perfect finale? 5:30 AM to 6:30 PM made for quite a tramp, and all such fun! Over a great Chinese dinner we discovered our total to be 114 species!

Wrong Terns Return

We're baaack!! We saw **72 species** (2 more than promised). We thank you, and SCVAS thanks you for your support.

We had our usual culinary orgy Birdathon and hit our favorite birding haunts starting at Alum Rock Park. We made only one wrong tern along the way (why did we tern right and go two exits out of the way to get on 85 and retrace our steps anyway, Allen?) This was an especially good feeling for

Bobbie, who is usually the one to have to tern around or make U-terns.

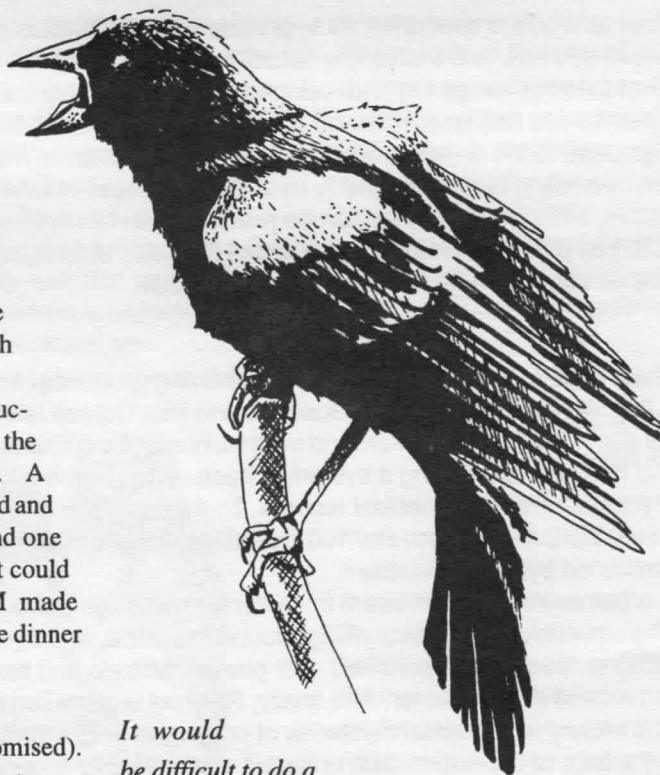
We welcomed Joanna Royer, our little **Wrong Ternlet**, who brought her parents Allen and Eileen with her. This was Joanna's first BIRDATHON, and she had 'pointing' down to a science. Her specialty was Banana Slugs, which unfortunately were not on the checklist.

It was exciting to have the Golden Eagle as one of our first birds. As a matter of fact, the raptors terned out in full force and we were able to check off Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, and Red-tailed Hawks, plus American Kestrel and Turkey Vulture.

Charleston Slough rewarded us with many species and the checklist filled up quite fast after lunch. The five Black Skimmers that seem to have taken up residence were delightful. Seeing them was a personal goal for Elaine, who like many South Bay birders has bonded with these beautiful birds.

Your support of SCVAS has terned out to be outstanding, and we appreciate each and every one of you!

---Bobbie Handen



It would be difficult to do a Birdathon in Santa Clara Valley without running into a Red-winged Blackbird. Local artist Rita Colwell has captured the boldness and beauty of the male Redwing in this drawing.

RCOLWELL

Uncommonly Loony

Saturday April 26 marked the annual Birdathon effort of the official SCVAS team, the Uncommon Loons. Lead Loon Rod Norden was a no-show, having a prior birding commitment at Elkhorn Slough, but Nick Yatsko vowed to make Rod feel guilty for missing our event!

The group spent most of the morning at Palo Alto's Arastradero Preserve, and came away with over 70 species in just three hours of birding. Few birding spots on the Peninsula offer such a variety of species with the convenient access of the beautiful preserve. Local owl expert Karen Hoyt noticed an agitated pair of Scrub Jays in a eucalyptus tree overhanging Arastradero Road, and quickly spotted the cause of their consternation---a Great Horned Owl sitting on a nest. After we all enjoyed scope-filling views of the sleepy-eyed owl, we meandered into the Preserve.

Highlights included a fantastic variety of singing springtime breeding birds such as House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Warbling Vireo, Ash-throated Flycatcher and many more. Frank Vanslager trained the Amazing Questar on a Green Heron nest at Arastradero Lake after we watched the adult fly in. The most unusual bird was a singing migrant Nashville Warbler in the lake-side willows.

Our group of 12 then lunched at Stanford's Rodin sculpture garden, followed by a stop at the Stanford arboretum for a sleepy Barn Owl roosting in a palm tree, a nest-tending California Thrasher and a flock of Cedar Waxwings. The Loons finished up at Charleston Slough and easily reached the goal of 100 species with a variety of ducks, gulls and shorebirds, many in full breeding plumage.

The great thing about a Birdathon is that it's a fun way to raise money while birding. Thanks to all the Loons for their donations to Audubon, particularly long-time SCVAS supporter Armin Ramel of Portola Valley. Armin's generosity to the Chapter over the past decade is perhaps unparalleled, and it demonstrates his love of birds and wildlife and his commitment to the Audubon cause of protecting bird habitat. Thanks Armin!

---Grant Hoyt

Verily Vagrant

Not satisfied with the previous day's four hours of Birdathing with the Loons, I joined my longtime birding buddy Dick Stovel for our annual Vagrants' team Big Day of birding. We traditionally start early for some owling, but we decided to eschew the reliable Montebello OSP for some Diablo Range owling this year. As luck would have it, the Mt. Hamilton Rd. was foggy and drizzly all the way to Kincaid Rd. past Smith Creek, so we managed only a few Western Screech Owls before daybreak. Mother Nature doesn't always accommodate the best-laid plans of birdwatchers, so we abandoned owl-calling and concentrated on the dawn chorus at Smith Creek.

The weather began to improve, and we managed to pick up a passel of passerines, though only one unusual migrant, a Hammond's Flycatcher. A singing Black-throated Gray Warbler was a treat, and a Belted Kingfisher flying over the oak woodland was, surprisingly, our only one of the day. Lazuli Buntings were common as we stopped here and there on our way down the road to Grant Ranch, and the Rufous-crowned and Lark Sparrows were singing, too. The lake provided the usual Tricolored Blackbird colony, two foraging Caspian Terns, our only Greater Yellowlegs and only Eared Grebe of the day, and Canada Geese tending to some downy goslings. We came down off the Mt. Hamilton road with no horrendous 'misses' but without any hoped-for migrant flocks, either.

Next stop was Ed Levin Co. Park in Milpitas, where we somehow managed to locate the Blue Grosbeak sycamores we'd heard about, and ultimately located the male bird with the help of Steve Miller and Chris Salander, who had been enjoying the bird for quite a while. They also tipped us off to a Grasshopper Sparrow nesting area, and we were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of one for another 'tick' on our checklist.

Access to Coyote Creek Riparian Station was barred, so we blew off the Black-chinned Hummer and other CCRS specialties in favor of Arzino Ranch, where Cattle Egrets abounded, a Golden Eagle surveyed the scene from a power tower, and a Burrowing Owl staunchly stood guard over its rapidly disappearing habi-

tat on Disk Drive. How do these creatures survive in the Valley? Not easily, I'm afraid.

We headed for the Charleston Slough/Palo Alto Baylands environs, where waterbird sightings boosted our total to well over 100. Dabbling ducks were few, but we found most, and close-up looks at Greater and Lesser Scaup were a treat. The mid-afternoon worries soon set in, though, as we bemoaned missing Blue-winged Teal, Common Snipe, Northern Harrier, Short-billed Dowitcher and other bayside denizens. A 'drive-by' stop at Stanford yielded stakeout Hooded Oriole and Barn Owl. We decided to hit Arastradero Preserve for the Great Horned Owl on its nest, and while we pondered hiking into the Preserve for the Green Heron, one obligingly flew over the parking lot. Encouraged, we headed south to Stevens Creek Park for attempts at Dipper, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Band-tailed Pigeon (failed) and Vaux's Swift, Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow Warbler and Solitary Vireo (successful).

It was getting late and we were really concerned about a low total. How could we face Mike Rogers *et al.* with less than 130 species? Palo Alto Baylands came through in a big way at low tide, as we picked up Short-billed Dowitcher, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Bonaparte's Gull, Dunlin, Clapper Rail, and, finally, Black-crowned Night Heron and Northern Harrier. We had a similar experience to the one described by the Wry Wrentits, as we sat on a bench overlooking the old yacht harbor mudflats and watched the thousands of shorebirds forage while the sun slowly set. All we had to do was pick off the new birds in our scopes! A tabulation error revealed we had undercounted by five, so we ended up with 138 species, all in Santa Clara County. Not our best effort, but face-savily respectable.

Prominent misses included Band-tailed Pigeon, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, White-throated Swift and Downy Woodpecker. I still think the Diablo Range has good owling possibilities; we'll probably give it another shot next year before returning to 'old reliable' Montebello. With good luck & good weather... 150 species?

---Grant Hoyt

Santa Clara Valley
Audubon Society
22221 McClellan Road
Cupertino, CA 95014

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
San Jose, CA
Permit No. 5869

Wry Wrentits Lead Birdathon Brigade

by Harriet Gerson

April 12th dawned as our Wry Wrentit Birdathon team stood on Stevens Creek Dam, listening to the wake-up calls of the 'dawn chorus'. Appropriately from all corners, our namesake the Wrentit's call rang out—thank you very much! What a start to a gorgeous day filled with promise. Unhappily, the sought-after Common Poorwill was not heard. No matter, our spirits still high, we got down to the real work—finding those 100+ species. We had already tallied our first bird at the SCVAS McClellan Ranch office while the skies were still dark. A 'coup'—the Barn Owl bringing breakfast to its nestlings in the old tower.

As the sun brightened the eastern skies our search began in earnest. Covering the lower picnic areas, our list began to grow. The ever-present Black Phoebe, California and Spotted Towhees, resident American Robins, Band-tailed Pigeons in flight, Mourning Doves, Anna's Hummer, Starlings (they count!) and more. The wonderful buzzy song of the House Wren announced its recent arrival, and after much searching, made the list. Also, recent to the neighborhood, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Orange-crowned Warblers (easy to hear, hard to spot!), Warbling Vireos (ditto), Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Bullock's Oriole—its chatter and song a dead giveaway—and then the Solitary Vireo with its delightful question/answer call.

It was good to observe the 'Rites of Spring' in full swing—territories being staked out, mates being sought, nesting material gathered and some birds already carrying food to the nest. Perhaps all's right with the world after all.

As the clock ticked away, we moved up the hill to the Villa Maria area. We were greeted by the distinctive 'jacob/jacob/jacob' calls of Acorn Woodpeckers, but the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and 'for sure' Western Bluebirds didn't show. An Ash-throated Flycatcher teased us with its calls, and thanks to Steve Rottenborn, it was finally spotted. It was too early for Western Wood Pewee and Olive-sided Flycatcher—the penalty for having to do an early Birdathon due to scheduling problems.

Time was running out as we scoured the Oak picnic and Upper Reservoir areas. The cormorant, coot, Red-shouldered Hawk, elegant Barn Swallows swooping and turning along with handsome Violet-greens were added. Down by water's edge we picked up Lesser and American Goldfinches, Belted Kingfisher and Red-winged Blackbird. Our count was showing promise!

Lunch at the Cooley picnic area provided stunning Townsend's Warblers, Yellow-rumps in spring dress and a strange-plumaged white-collared junco. Mich's sharp eye caught a Varied Thrush—a 'good bird' indeed! Our Dipper

continued on Page 10

Membership: We invite your membership in the National Audubon Society/SCVAS. To join, please complete and mail this form with payment to SCVAS, 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, CA 95014.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Subscription: Check one:

Subscriber \$12 Supporter \$25 Donor \$35 Patron \$50 and more.

Members receive *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to SCVAS.

OR

National Audubon Society Membership: Check one:

new members \$20 Membership renewal \$35

Members receive Audubon magazine and *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.

Donation: SCVAS greatly appreciates your tax-deductible donation. Your gift helps fund the Chapter's birding, education, conservation and research programs.

NAME _____ GIFT FROM _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

7XCH

C14