

# *The Avocet*

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

September 1997

## Shade-grown Java a Boon to Birds

by Grant Hoyt

"Shaded coffee farms are often the last refuge for migratory birds."—The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.

Recognizing the importance of these words, a loose partnership of birders, coffee distributors and conservationists is doing something about the drastic loss of songbird habitat in the neotropics. Coffee drinkers who care about bird habitat conservation may want to learn more about shade-grown coffee, a traditional, eco-friendly method of coffee farming currently gaining popularity.

Increasing demand for the black brew has caused many Central and South American farms to be converted to full sun coffee operations in recent decades

as corporate lust forced growers to maximize productivity at the expense of native vegetation. This farming method eliminated the tree canopies and rich understory vegetation that provided habitat for a huge diversity of bird species. "Studies in Colombia and Mexico found 97% fewer bird species in sun-grown coffee than in shade-grown coffee," according to the Rainforest Action Network.

Coffee roasters, importers and consumers have become increasingly aware of the ecological damage wrought by full-sun farming techniques, and this concern has been reflected in the marketplace, especially in the last decade. Consumers are more knowledgeable about political

and environmental issues, which translates into more progressive growing strategies in the richly productive coffee-producing countries, the same countries that are also enjoying a boom in eco-tourism. Birders touring the tropics and coffee drinkers here in the States pay serious attention to environmental politics at home and abroad. A strong environmental ethic that seemingly flies in the face of bottom-line economic principles instead demonstrates a best-case scenario where reasonable profits may be realized without excessive habitat destruction.

Shade-grown coffee benefits those who grow it, too. By promoting organic, reduced-pesticide farming techniques, a cleaner, healthier environment for local growers and their families is nurtured. Small farmers, often driven out by large agribusiness, are more likely to survive on their family farms with an improved, sustainable long-term economic outlook.

Naturally the shade-grown, organic coffee is slightly more expensive; small businesses of any sort can seldom compete with the big players in any market.

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### **General Membership Meeting**

**Wednesday September 17**

**"Birds of Prey of Africa"**

**with Doug Cheeseman**

**Palo Alto Cultural Center**

**Newell & Embarcadero Rds.**

**7:30 Hospitality 8:00 Program**

Doug Cheeseman returns to Audubon this month with an exciting presentation on African birds of prey from Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Doug will discuss behavioral and physiological adaptations to the environment as well as raptors' interrelationships with other bird species. Recently returned with wife Gayle from their 19th trip to Africa, Doug will present some new slides to accompany his fact-filled narration, delivered in the classic energetic Cheeseman style. Don't miss this talk by our most popular speaker!

**Kenn Kaufman**  
**Lecture & Book-signing**  
**Friday, October 3**  
**Foothill College**

*see details on page 4*

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# VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Garth Harwood, SCVAS Chapter Manager

**Volunteers needed!** Our core group of office volunteers has recently undergone a series of changes. Two first-rate summer interns, **Chrissi Reilly** and **Shin-Wha Whang**, have just recently finished up their work with us, and librarian **Joyce Chang** has re-entered the salaried workforce for a time (although she's still clocking some serious weekend time around here). Meanwhile, Membership expert **Pat Close** has now officially relocated to her Arizona paradise. In other words, we could really use your help now! Some of the opportunities that exist at the moment, in approximate order of priority, are:

- General reception and clerical (One afternoon a week, 2-4 hours). Don't worry, there's very little typing!
- Membership Coordinator (One or more afternoons a week; lots of record-keeping)
- Nature Shop buyer/display person (2 or 3 afternoons a month, in close cooperation with Garth). Help plan for the upcoming Holiday sales!
- Palo Alto Bird Count compiler (Entry, organization, and maintenance of our Excel database of birds seen on the Christmas and Summer Counts. (Hours to fit your schedule.)
- Education Resource Specialist (Hours to fit your schedule.) Organize our varied educational materials, from our great variety of printed material to our hundreds of photo slides. Develop a database of area teachers interested in environmental education and help them access our goodies.

All of these positions can be mixed, matched, or altered to fit your situation. Come on in for an introduction to our low-key work environment, or call and talk over the possibilities. We can also put you in touch with some current volunteers for the "inside scoop" on volunteering at Audubon.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Bluebird Program news . . .** On August 5th, 18 bluebirders met at Coordinator Carol Hankermeyer's house to report on their experiences monitoring bluebird trails this season. "Enthusiastic" might be too mild a word to describe the prevailing mood, although I wouldn't quite go so far as "hysterical". Let's just say that those present generally felt deeply enriched by their experience and seem eager to do it again next year.

At this writing we haven't had a chance to go through all of the data collected at the meeting, or to seek it from those unable to attend. So we'll devote considerable attention to the program's results in the October *Avocet*. For now, a few general observations:

- **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHERS** were a pleasant, if aesthetically challenging, surprise to many trail leaders, as they turned out to be one of the most common users of our boxes. They use a lot of manure (even coyote dung!) while constructing their nests. And it seems they're also sneaky when they leave the nest at fledging. At the meeting, each person reporting this species had assumed they'd erred somehow by missing the actual moment of fledging, which is easily observed over a period of several days in some species. An obvious pattern emerged after a while, though: these birds just scoot when the time comes, apparently without looking back.

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## SCVAS OFFICERS and BOARD

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

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

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**Rare Bird Alert: 415-681-7422**

# September 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 Sept. 6, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Coyote Hills Regional Park. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408)257-3647. Take Dumbarton Bridge east to Newark. Exit right at Thornton, then go left over freeway as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre. Turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd. into park. Meet at far end of Quarry parking lot on left, 1/4 mile past entrance. Lunch optional.

**\*\*Sunday Sept. 7, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Bird banding at Coyote Creek Riparian Station. Leader: Chris Otahal (408)262-9204. Demonstration and tour of riparian revegetation projects. This is your chance to see birds in the hand and learn the basics of bird-banding and its role in important local avian research projects. From I-880 take Dixon Landing Rd. (1st exit north of Hwy 237) west. Turn left at the dead end, follow gravel road and turn left onto paved road. Just after the pond turn left onto gravel road and continue approx. 1/2 mile to CCRS trailers.

**Tuesday Sept. 9, 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: Summer Birding Experiences.

**\*\*Wednesday Sept. 10, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408)996-9863. Meet at Jetty Rd. and Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. Highlights: gulls, grebes, terns, ducks, shorebirds, raptors. Lunch optional.

**\*\*Saturday Sept. 13, 7:30 AM.** Full day. N. Santa Cruz and S. San Mateo County coast. Leaders: Cliff Bixler (408)457-2089 and Todd Newberry. Meet at Whale City Bakery on Hwy 1 in Davenport, 10 miles north of Santa Cruz. Cliff and Todd will take us to whichever local spots are particularly "hot" (Waddell

Creek, Rancho del Oso, etc.). Bring lunch, liquids, full tank of gas; please carpool if possible.

**\*\*Sunday Sept. 14, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. Our monthly outing to the bird-rich and birder-friendly Mt. View/Palo Alto wetlands. Herons, egrets, gulls, ducks, shorebirds and more. Recommended for beginning birders. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way parking area.

**\*\*Saturday Sept. 20, 8:00 AM.** Half day plus. Moss Landing/Moonglow Dairy/and...? Leader: John Mariani (408)997-2066. Meet at Jetty Rd. and Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. Shorebirds, waterfowl, coastal migrants. John knows the coastal hot spots and will lead any die-hards on afternoon bird-chasing forays, weather and energy permitting.

**\*\*Sunday Sept. 21, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Explore Los Gatos' La Rinconada Park and vicinity. Leader: Gloria LeBlanc (408)378-1412. From Winchester Av. in Los Gatos go west on Wimbledon Dr. (near Courtside Club), left on Wedgewood, then 1.3 miles to meeting place at Granada Way, near tennis court. Optional lunch in Gloria's backyard amongst her bird feeders.

**\*\*Wednesday Sept. 24, 8:30 AM.** Coyote Hills Regional Park. Leader: Rosalie Lefkowitz (650)494-6358. Fall birds of bay and marsh. See directions under Sept. 6 listing.

**\*\*Saturday Sept. 27, 9:00 AM.** Full day. Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands. Leader: Don Schmoldt (510)215-1910. Meet at Vista Pt. parking area at north end of Golden Gate Bridge; caravan to Hill from there. The first of our two annual fall outings to view migrating raptors from the West Coast's premier hawk lookout. Heavy fog may change itinerary.

**\*\*Sunday Sept. 28, 9:00 AM.** Full day. Point Reyes. Leader: Peter LaTourrette (650)961-2741. Fall migration should be in full swing for our annual visit to this famed

vagrant trap, where birds and weather are always exciting and unpredictable! From Hwy 1 in Marin Co. take Sir Francis Drake Blvd. west approx. 14 miles and turn left to meeting place at Drake's Beach parking area. Bring lunch, liquids, a full tank of gas and be prepared for fog, wind, sun, and plenty of challenging birds.

**\*\*Saturday Oct. 4, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Phipps Ranch/Pescadero. Leader: Bert McKee (650)879-0977. Bird one of San Mateo Co.'s migrant hot spots with one of California's most avid and skillful young birders. Take Hwy 84 west through La Honda, then south on Hwy 1. Turn left on Pescadero Rd. through town of Pescadero to Phipps Ranch, about 1 mile east of town.

**\*\*Sunday Oct. 5, 9:00 AM.** Full day. Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408)247-5499. Meet at Page Mill Rd./I-280 Park'n'Ride at 8:00 AM for carpooling to Marin. Migrating raptors may include Broadwinged Hawk. Be prepared for fog, wind.

**\*\*Saturday Oct. 11, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Arastradero Preserve. Leader: Jim Liskovec (650)969-5542. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west approx. 1/2 mile to Arastradero Rd. Turn right and meet at parking lot 1/2 mile on right. Variety of woodland and grassland species; good raptor variety. Two miles moderate walking. Rain cancels.

**\*\*Sunday Oct. 12, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader: Phyllis Browning (650)494-6360. See directions under Sept. 14 listing.

**Tuesday Oct. 14, 9:30 AM.** The Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Av. Los Gatos (408)395-4264. Topic: Whooping Crane.



## PLAN AHEAD:

Sat. Oct. 18—Carmel and vicinity

Sun. Oct. 19—Alum Rock Park

Wed Oct 22---Windy Hill

Sat. Oct. 25—Sunnyvale Baylands Park

Sun. Oct. 26—Princeton Harbor

SCVAS is pleased to announce a special event featuring one of America's most prominent and respected birding authorities

## Kenn Kaufman

7:30 PM, Friday Oct. 3 at Foothill College in Los Altos

Author of the popular *Advanced Birding* and *Lives of North American Birds*, Kenn will be signing copies of his newest book, *Kingbird Highway*, which will be offered for sale at this event. The book-signing will be preceded by a special one-hour slide-lecture entitled "The Great Travelers—Birds and Humans". Admission is \$5 for SCVAS members; \$10 for non-members.

A serious birder since the age of 6, Kenn Kaufman is an internationally recognized expert in field ornithology and an accomplished illustrator and photographer as well. He has edited and contributed to numerous birding publications over the past 25 years and is currently Editor of the American Birding Association's *Field Notes* and Field Editor for *Audubon* magazine. His new book chronicles the legendary year-long odyssey of birding and hitchhiking Kenn undertook in the early 1970's in quest of 400 species. Since then he has birded on every continent and in some of the world's most remote and exotic locales in pursuit of his passion for birding and nature exploration.

Kenn maintains an active speaking schedule in addition to his numerous professional endeavors. He particularly enjoys speaking to Audubon groups, and loves northern California birding. He currently resides in Tucson with his wife, naturalist (and former SCVAS member) Lynn Hassler Kaufman.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear a truly outstanding speaker and purchase *Kingbird Highway* to be autographed. **Tickets are available only at the door**, which will open at 7:15, with the lecture at 8:00 and book-signing to follow. The event will be held in Room F12 on the Foothill College campus in Los Altos Hills. From Highway 280 in Los Altos take the El Monte Rd. exit west, then immediately turn right into the campus after one stoplight. Parking is available in student Lot "E" and costs \$2 (bring 8 quarters).

## Audubon Canyon Ranch: Sanctuaries for Herons and Humans in Bolinas, Sonoma

Spring '97 at Audubon Canyon Ranch's Bolinas Lagoon Preserve was full of squawking (87 heron and egret nests), squealing (2000 4th- and 5th-graders), scoping (11,843 visitors), and greeting (535 docent-days, 176 ranch guide days, and 136 host days). Special thanks to our Weekend Hosts from local Audubon chapters who generously volunteered their weekends to welcome the public.

Audubon Canyon Ranch is a private non-profit organization dedicated to education, conservation research, and management of three nature sanctuaries in the North Bay Area: Bolinas Lagoon and Cypress Grove Preserves at Tomales Bay, and Bouverie Preserve in Sonoma's Valley of the Moon. The Bolinas Lagoon Preserve is widely known for its flourishing heron rookery, best visited in the spring.

Upcoming events at Audubon Canyon Ranch include the following:

◆ "Reflections of Cypress Grove" A special art show and sale featuring forty local artists and their sculpture, watercolors, oils and photography expressing the natural beauty of Tomales Bay. The show will be held Oct. 5 and 6 from noon till 5 at Cypress Grove Preserve. For information call (415)868-9244.

◆ Fall Work Party at Bouverie Preserve: Saturday Oct. 11. Come help spruce up the preserve; lunch provided. Call (707)938-4554 for details.

◆ Fall Work Party at Bolinas Lagoon Preserve: Saturday Nov. 8 at Volunteer Canyon. Help with trail work, native plant garden, and library. (415)868-9244.

◆ Ranch Guide Training at Bolinas Lagoon Preserve: Six Saturdays starting Feb. 7, 1998. Training by four outstanding biologists includes ponds, herons and egrets, trail techniques, Ranch history.

## Cat Saves Bird!?

Editor:

My husband and I are bird-lovers as well as cat-lovers and we appreciated your positive approach to the problem of cats vs. birds in the June *Avocet*.

We now have two cats. They are kept indoors except for supervised outings. Besides the other advantages mentioned, it gives me great peace of mind to know where my cats are.

I also want to share with you a little turnabout story:

One evening my cat, Cleo, and I were walking through the field/orchard next to our house. Cleo is Siamese and has always been an indoor cat. But she does enjoy a supervised walk in the evening.

As we were strolling along, Cleo suddenly dashed over to the fence, peered down, and then meowed like crazy to get my attention. When I reached Cleo, I saw it—a tiny baby bird. It was russet with dark stripes. I figured it was a California Quail, one of my favorite birds.

While I decided what to do, Cleo made no attempt to hurt the bird, just watching and meowing occasionally. I finally decided to call a wildlife rescue group. The volunteer told me the little quail probably would not survive the night if left outside. Could I bring it over? I found a small box, filled it with soft paper, placed the bird inside and my husband brought it to the volunteer's home. "It seems to be in pretty good shape," she said. "I think it will live."

So, thanks to the sharp eyesight of a cat named Cleo, one small California Quail has been given a second chance to live what will hopefully be a long life in the open areas of Santa Clara County.

Sincerely,

Sharon Remmen

*Editor's note: Leda Beth Gray's "Keeping Your Cats Indoors" article in the June Avocet has drawn considerable praise from our readers. A local wildlife rescue group has even reprinted the article to hand out as a reference for those grappling with the indoor/outdoor cat issue. As Ms. Remmen notes, these are the kinds of positive solutions needed to address modern urban environmental problems.*

# OFFICE VIEW

from page 2

• **VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOWS** were also heavy users of our boxes. They present a special opportunity for us locally, as only 30 of them were fledged in nestboxes statewide during the 1996 season. Looks like our trails will double or triple that number this year. They seemed to set up housekeeping all at once, during the first week of May.

• **TREE SWALLOWS** were common in the boxes placed a bit higher in elevation. (On two trails set up on an elevational gradient, only the uppermost box was used by this species!) Another intriguing pattern emerged with this species: almost always, one out of an average clutch of four eggs turned out to be infertile, a pattern rarely observed among Violet-Green Swallows.

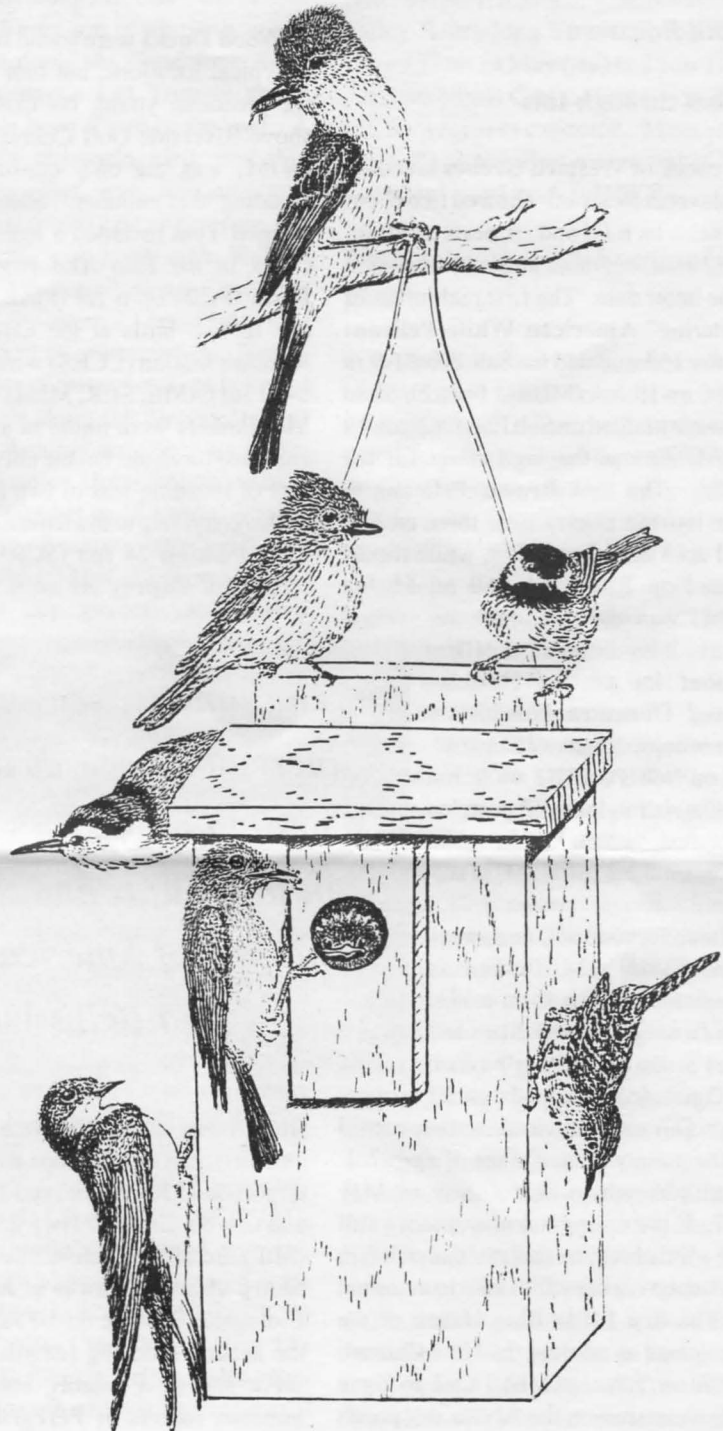
• **EARWIGS AND VANDALS** turned out to be some of the most obnoxious threats to nestboxes in our area. Almost any box gets a few bugs, to no harm. But more than one observer encountered---ugh---"several cups" of these unlovely creatures in one or more nestboxes. Vandals, on the other hand, made the earwigs look perfectly lovely by comparison when they tore down one box with an active swallow nest, kicked a wren box to smithereens, and left an active titmouse nest open to the elements after taking a peek inside.

Future trails will include nestboxes placed by a long-handled pole to get above the vandals, as well as a diversity of nestbox designs to increase the diversity of birds using our boxes. Be sure to let me know if you'd like to get involved!

\* \* \* \* \*

## Thank you, Saratoga Country Club!

Superintendent Tracy Shanahan met with SCVAS staff several weeks ago to initiate an attempt to make his golf course as environmental friendly as possible. After providing us with a report of recent pesticide and chemical applications at the course, which self-trained pesticide authority Ruth Troetschler of our Environmental Action Committee reviewed and provided advice on, Mr. Shanahan and his organization backed up his words with a \$500 check to support our ongoing conservation activities. SCVAS staff will continue to provide advice and support for his efforts to manage the natural features of the property for optimal wildlife habitat.



Can you identify every species in Emelie Curtis' lively (and beautifully drawn) assortment of box-nesters? Clockwise from top: Ash-throated Flycatcher, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, House Wren, Tree Swallow, Western Bluebird (note youngster's face in hole), White-breasted Nuthatch, Oak (Plain) Titmouse.

# Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

## Grebes through Ibis

A check of **Western Grebes** breeding at Calaveras Reservoir showed two occupied nests on 6 Jul and six nests on 20 Jul (SCR) with four more under construction on the latter date. The first real influx of "wintering" **American White Pelicans** was the 153 counted on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 15 Jun (MJM). Four hundred and twenty tallied on Salt Pond A2E on 19 Jul (MJM) was the high count for the season. The first **Brown Pelicans** to move into the county were three on Salt Pond A13 on 7 Jun (MiF), while the 20 counted on Salt Pond A9 on 15 Jun (MJM) was the maximum reported. It has been an excellent summer for nesting **Double-crested Cormorants** with six nests occupied or under construction on Salt Pond B2 on 7 Jun (MMR) and at least 27 nests on six towers on Salt Pond A18 in Alviso on 6 Jul (SCR, MJM).

Steve Rottenborn, in surveys in the Gilroy area, flushed an **American Bittern** from a nest with five eggs on 13 May and found a second nesting bird on the Ogier Avenue ponds on 23 May. Our only previous nesting record for the county was of a set of eggs collected somewhere near Gilroy in May 1937. It is exciting to know that we still have a little bit of freshwater marsh left in the county---what will it take to maintain it? The first **Little Blue Heron** of the season was an adult at the New Chicago Marsh on 7 Jun (AME). One to three birds were seen on the Alviso salt ponds through 12 Jul (v.ob.) and an adult was found in the vicinity of Crittenden Marsh 28-29 Jul (MMR, KPa). Twenty **Cattle Egrets** were seen at the Arzino Ranch on 2 May (SCR), but only small numbers of birds were found locally after that (v.ob.). Two **White-faced Ibis** on San Felipe Lake in San Benito County on 27 May (SCR) were the only ones seen this summer.

## Wood Ducks through Mtn. Quail

**Wood Ducks** were found in a number of typical locations, but four birds with six precocial young on Coyote Creek above Riverside Golf Course on 3 May (MJM) was the only confirmation of breeding this summer. Summer **Blue-winged Teal** included a male in Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 6 Jul (PMB, RLe) and one to two birds at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) waterbird pond 8-13 Jul (AME, SCR, MJM). **Common Mergansers** were found in a number of expected locations but the only confirmation of breeding was of two fairly large, unfledged young with a female at Almaden Lake Park on 24 Jun (SCR). Summer records of **Osprey** are quite unusual so

*The summer season brought incredible records of the first nesting of Cassin's Kingbird in the county and the second nesting of American Bittern and Bell's Vireo*

single birds seen at Calaveras Reservoir on 6 Jul (SCR), Guadalupe River near the airport on 11 Jul (MMR) and 23 Jul (TGr), and Coyote Creek at Hwy 237 on 21 Jul (MiF) are all of interest. Two fledgling **Sharp-shinned Hawks** at Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve on 10 Jul (RCo) are the second breeding records for the reserve and at a notably low elevation. Summer reports of **Peregrine Falcons** include an adult at Ravenswood Point on 7 Jun (MJM) and an immature over highways 880 and 237 in Milpitas on 11 Jul (SCR). Our tiny population of **Mountain Quail** continues to be heard from with reports of one to two birds on the Adobe Creek side of Black Mountain 4-7 May (MJM, MMR) and another bird on the Stevens Creek side on 11 May (MiF).

## Shorebirds

It has been an excellent "fall" migration for shorebirds this summer. A **Pacific Golden-Plover** in breeding plumage was seen in Crittenden Marsh 27-30 Jul (DN, MMR) and a "Lesser" Golden-Plover seen over the marsh on 24 Jul (SCR, HLR) was also in breeding plumage and may have been the same bird. Small numbers of **Snowy Plover** have been found locally with a pair north of the Alviso Marina on 4 May (MJM), one to two birds in Salt Pond A8 on 12 May (MMR), a bird in Salt Pond A3N on 7-8 Jun (MMR), and one in Salt Pond 4 near Bayfront Park on 7 Jun (MJM). The first **Lesser Yellowlegs** of the season was a single bird at the Calabazas Ponds on 29

Jun (SCR). This formerly rare species was found widely in July with a high count of 11 at the Mountain View Forebay on 10 Jul (SCR). One to two **Ruddy Turnstones** were at Crittenden Marsh 21-24 Jul (MiF, KPa, SCR, HLR). A breeding-plumaged **Red Knot** was found along Coyote Slough near Salt Pond A9 on 12 Jul (MMi) and is our earliest fall record. Another bird was found in Crittenden Marsh on 27 Jul (AME). An adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at the Calabazas Ponds on 12 May (MMR) for one

of our few spring records. Fall adult included one to three birds at the CCRS waterbird ponds 6-20 Jul (v.ob.) with three adults there on 6 Jul (SCR). The first juvenile was found at the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 26 Jul (AJ) with another in a field near Llagas Creek near Gilroy on 27 Jul (SCR). Two to three juveniles were at the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP on 30 Jul (AJ). An adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** was also at the WPCP on 30 Jul (AJ)---most of our fall birds of this species are juveniles and don't arrive until late September. The big excitement of the fall was a lovely adult **Curlew Sandpiper** found in Crittenden Marsh on 23 Jul by Mike Rogers for our third county record. This bird was largely in breeding plum-

age and was seen by many observers in Crittenden or across Stevens Creek on the mudflats of the Stevens Creek Mitigation Area at least through 30 Jul. A female **Ruff** was found on the Calabazas Ponds on 29 Jun (SCR).

### Terns through Woodpeckers

An **Elegant Tern** was seen over Shoreline Park on 28 Jul (BR fide MMR). The first **Least Tern** of the season was a bird at Crittenden Marsh on 6 Jul (MJM). Numbers built substantially at Crittenden and in Salt Pond A2E during the month and 48 were counted on 24 Jul (RWR). Only a single bird, on 18 Jul, was found at Charleston Slough this year (JMa). The **Black Skimmers** that wintered at Charleston Slough were last observed there on 8 May (KPa). After that, two to four birds were seen in the Palo Alto FCB through 7 Jun (v.ob.) and a pair on Salt Pond 2 on Ravenswood Point on 7 Jun (MJM) may have been from this group. One to two birds were seen once again 23-25 Jul at Crittenden Marsh (MMR). There has been no report of whether there was successful nesting locally this year. Spring and summer reports of **Greater Roadrunner** include single birds on Mines Road on 17 May (SCR), Canada Road on 17 May (MJM), on the north side of Alum Rock Park on 18 Jul (MA fide RWR), and one on the valley floor off San Felipe Road on 27 Jul (SCR). A vocalizing **Long-eared Owl** off Summit Ridge in the Uvas Creek watershed on 11 May (CKS) is not far from where birds nested earlier in the decade. Two nestling **Common Poorwill**, found near Aguague Creek in Jos. Grant CP on 1 Jun (LHB fide MMR), are always of interest as demonstrating breeding locations for this secretive nightjar. A **Black Swift** over Monte Bello OSP on 24 May (MJM) was the only migrant noted this spring. **Vaux's Swifts** were found in areas where they are believed to nest with 8-14 birds found along Calabazas Creek from 23-27 Jun (SCR) being the most notable concentration. **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were reported frequently from the well-birded reaches of Coyote Creek below Hwy 237. Elsewhere, a

female finishing a nest in a eucalyptus on 14 May (SCR) along Los Gatos Creek near Santa Clara Street was of interest as was a pair of birds along the Guadalupe River between Montague and Trimble where they have not been found in the past. A male **Costa's Hummingbird**, probably returning from last year, was seen at a feeder in the foothills east of San Jose 18-19 Jul (D&JC, v.ob.). A male **Rufous Hummingbird**, found along Calabazas Creek above Bollinger, 23 Jun-2 Jul (SCR) may have been overwintering. Nearly all adult males of this species are believed to move south along the Sierran crest or further east. Another male, seen at a feeder east of San Jose on 18 Jul (MMR) adds to this puzzle. Counts of 12 **Lewis' Woodpeckers** in San Antonio Valley on 2 May (JAC, EF) and 17 May (SCR) were good numbers for this species. A **Pileated Woodpecker** seen over Monte Bello OSP on 31 May (RLe et al.) was a good find of this now resident bird.

### Flycatchers through Swallows

Migrating spring **Willow Flycatchers** included one at "Ruthie's Shopping Mall" on Mines Road on 18 May (LCh et al.), a singing bird on the Pajaro River below Hwy 25 on 27 May (SCR), along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 7 Jun (AJ) and along Saratoga Creek below Benton on 8 Jun (SCR). A singing **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at Smith Creek on 6 May (JAC, EF), but another singing bird in Henry Coe SP on 9 Jun (JY) was extraordinarily late. A migrant **Gray Flycatcher** was at Ed Levin CP on 6 May (SCR, JAC, EF). The **Cassin's Kingbird** invasion continued with additional birds seen at the Guadalupe River in Alviso on 2 May (SCR) and along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 17 Jul (AJ). The pair of birds along San Felipe Road south of Hwy 152 attempted nesting there with birds on a nest in a eucalyptus on 27 May (SCR) and nestlings heard on 16 Jun (MMR). However, a new nest was under construction on 22 Jun (SMi) and although one bird was present on 27 Jul (SCR) it appears that the county's first nesting pair was not successful in fledging young. Up to four **Purple Martins** were seen on Summit Ridge at the end of Mt. Bache Road 2-21 May (m.ob.)

where they've nested successfully in the past. Single females or immatures on the valley floor along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 24 May (AJ) and San Tomas Aquinas below Central Expwy on 23 Jun (SCR) were less expected. More rare, a single **Bank Swallow** was over the CCRS waterbird pond on 6 Jul (SCR).

### Nuthatches through Evening Grosbeak

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was heard along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 29 Jul (AJ). They are seldom found on the valley floor in the summer months. Almost without precedent, a pair of **Bell's Vireos** were found near Gilroy on 13 May (SCR) and the female was constructing a nest. A set of eggs of this species were collected by W. E. Unglish in April of 1932 near Sargent and that record was notable as the first breeding record for the San Francisco Bay area. A female **MacGillivray's Warbler** in Henry Coe SP on 11 May (MMR, MJM) was the only migrant reported this spring. An adult **Hooded Warbler** was found in Stevens Creek CP on 7 Jun (TJ et al.) for only our fifth county record. Singing **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found east of Grant Lake on 10 May (MMR), along Pacheco Creek at San Felipe Road on 13 May, and along Llagas Creek near Gilroy the same day (both SCR), all of which may represent breeding locations. Of more interest were two males singing and a female building a nest along Mines Road at Ruthie's Shopping Mall on 17 May (SCR) where they are not known to have nested before. One to two birds were found here through the end of May (v.ob.). Always unusual, a male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in Portola Valley 2-4 Jun (RM). As with the Hooded Warbler, misoriented eastern vagrants arrive here in June. The pair of **Blue Grosbeaks** at Ed Levin CP continued to be observed in the summer, at least through 8 Jun (SR, DL), but no evidence

*continued on Pg. 8*

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

# Local Specialties, One Big Surprise on Montebello OSP Field Trip

The May 31 field trip to Montebello Open Space Preserve started at 7:30 AM under fair skies and warm, but not sweltering, temperatures. Our large group, with co-leader Rita Colwell at the head of the line, found all the usual birds, some of the hoped-for specialties, and a couple of big bonuses.

Most notable at the outset were **Grasshopper Sparrows** near the short trail paralleling Page Mill Rd., **Chipping Sparrows** singing in the line of trees by Page Mill and **Lazuli Buntings** along the Canyon Trail. A singing **Western Tanager** was a nice treat.

## Field Notes

of nesting was obtained. Additional observations of this expanding species include a male singing along Coyote Creek at Ogier Avenue on 8 May (SCR), a first-year male in Henry Coe SP on 11 May (MMR, MJM), and a female near Gilroy on 27 May (SCR). An apparent male **Lazuli X Indigo Bunting** north of Riverside GC on 11 May (SCR) is not completely surprising considering the number of mixed pairs of these two species found in central California in recent years. **Black-chinned Sparrows** were well reported this summer from the Loma Prieta and Monte Bello areas with seemingly more birds found than in recent years. Birds were also found in new locations including a singing bird in Jacques Gulch off Hicks Road 8-15 May (JMa), on Mt. Umunhum or nearby 15 May-3 Jun (JMa, AV), along San Antonio Valley Road on 17 May (SCR), and at Skyline Ridge OSP on 24 May (RWR et al.). Similarly, **Grasshopper Sparrows** appeared plentiful at such typical locations as Monte Bello OSP, Russian Ridge OSP, and Ed Levin CP. The small flock of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** near the dairy west of San Felipe Lake decreased during May with two females there on 14 May (ADeM, DLSh) the last observation. A flock of

Continuing along the trail we ran into Dick Carlson, who recommended Indian Creek Trail rather than Bella Vista for **Black-chinned Sparrows**. This proved to be more than some of the group felt up to, but those who made the climb found the birds.

Then came a most exciting and unexpected sighting: While birding on Canyon Trail shortly before Indian Creek Trail, we spotted a huge woodpecker flying high over our heads. Dick immediately called "**Pileated Woodpecker!**" which was confirmed by an east coast birder in the group. The

**Red Crossbills** at Alum Rock Park on 10 May (MMR) may have been leftovers from the winter invasion but, then again, maybe not. **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were widely found in areas they've bred in the past from San Antonio Valley to the Llagas Creek and Pacheco drainages. Perhaps less expected were four birds above Almaden Reservoir on 13 Jun (JMa). A pair of **Evening Grosbeaks** in Sharon Heights 9 May (G&MO fide LCh) was unusual.

*Observers: Mike Azeviedo (MA), Lotus Baker (LHB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Les Chibana (LCh), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RCo), Don & Jill Crawford (D&JC), Al DeMartini (ADeM), Al Eisner (AME), Mike Feighner (MiF), Ed Frost (EF), Tom Grey (TGr), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJ), Tim Johnson (TJ), Dave Lavorando (DL), Rosalie Lefkowitz (RLe), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Richard Merk (RM), Mark Miller (MMi), Steve Miller (SMi), Dick Norton (DN), George & Marty Oetzel (G&MO), Kathy Parker (KPa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Heather Rottenborn (HLR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Steve Rovell (SR), Bill Rowe (BR), Chris Salander (CKS), Debra Shearwater (DLSh), Ann Verdi (AV), and James Yurchenco (JY).*

small amount of white in the wings suggested an immature bird. Whatever its age, it was a great find—this species is uncommon and seldom seen in either Santa Clara or San Mateo County.

On the return to the parking area at noon Rita found **Lawrence's Goldfinches** in the trees along Page Mill. She clearly identified a male, which I also saw, moving with a second bird which we assumed was a female. These tiny finches with their twinkling song are found occasionally, and unpredictably, along Midpeninsula foothill environs, though far less reliably than in drier habitat in eastern portions of the county like San Antonio Valley.

We were most fortunate to miss the Montebello fog, which has been known to dampen bird outings in past years, and enjoy a lovely morning full of sunshine, fresh air, and birds.

-----Rosalie Lefkowitz

## Similar Finds at Skyline Ridge 5/24

On Saturday May 24 we had a good SCVAS field trip despite a rocky start. We were scheduled to meet at 7:30 AM but the "friendly" ranger did not open the parking area (and the porta-potties) until about 7:45. She also wanted to know if we had a group permit---"It's the law." Finally, there was some confusion over the meeting place, incorrectly listed as the southeast corner of Alpine and Skyline. (*Oops! . . . Ed.*)

Once things got started, Emelie Curtis quickly found us a female **Purple Finch** near Alpine Pond. We also had an **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, a **Warbling Vireo**, a **Black-headed Grosbeak** and a *selasphorus* hummingbird (most likely an **Allen's**) among other birds near the pond. Further up the hill on Ridge Trail we had **Black-chinned Sparrows**, **Lazuli Buntings**, a male **Purple Finch** and several **Orange-crowned Warblers**.

continued on page 9



## SFBBO Issues

### 'Big Day' Challenge

The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory proudly introduces a new birding event—the California Fall Challenge 1997—that allows county birding teams to show others what their favorite county has to offer. Here's how it works:

- Pick one (or more) county in California
- Form a dream team with your best birding friends
- Get your employer, friends and neighbors to sponsor your team
- Do a Big Day between Sept. 12 and 27th

The Grand Prize will be awarded to the team with the highest percentage of their county's list. Additional prizes will be awarded for other special efforts, such as the team with the highest overall species count, highest number of vagrants seen, best bird seen, best fundraising effort, and more.

You can pick San Diego County and go for 200 species or bird Alpine County and try to set a new county record—or both! With your registration fee you receive a one-year membership in SFBBO and an event T-shirt. If you so choose, we will split the proceeds from all your sponsors with your local Audubon chapter or the non-profit of your choice.

The event will wrap up on Sept. 27 at SFBBO headquarters in Alviso. Teams must register by Sept. 12. Call (408)946-6548 for more information.

## Skyline Ridge

*from page 8*

**Chipping Sparrows** were absent from their usual location at the top of the hill, but we did find a copulating pair on the north side of the hill just west of the old tennis court. A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** and a **Hutton's Vireo** were also seen and **Western Tanagers** were heard. Later, while several of us were having lunch in the parking lot, John Meyer heard a **Grasshopper Sparrow** which was subsequently seen, repeatedly, on a flower on the skyline of the hill west of the parking lot. A fitting end to any field trip.

-----Bob Reiling



Painting by  
JOHN DAWSON

*The mighty Great Gray Owl can be seen near mountain meadow edges in late Spring and Summer in and around Yosemite. Perhaps an SCVAS 'owl prowl' next June would spark some interest . . . anyone want to lead?*

## Popular Bird Classes Offered Again

Maryann Danielson will be teaching her long-running birding classes again this Fall through Sunbeam Ecology Explorations at Little House, 800 Middle Ave. in Menlo Park. There will be 9 slide-lecture sessions for each class.

**BIRDING BASICS**—for beginning and less skilled intermediate birders. The classes will begin with easily viewable back yard birds and then add other local fall birds. "Hands on" identification aids will be used in the classroom and in the field. Visual identification skills will be augmented with information on where and how to find the birds. Two half-day field trips are included in the class fee of \$72. Wednesday evenings, 7:30 - 9:30 PM, starting September 10. Registration is at first class.

**FOLLOWING BIRDS THROUGH THE FALL SEASON**—for intermediate and more advanced birders. This series of classes will focus on migration patterns, habitat preference and field identification skills to identify Bay Area birds. Vocalizations, time of year, habitat and foraging strategy will aid visual bird identification. Fee is \$55. Four field trips will be offered at an additional fee. Monday evenings, 7:30 - 9:30 PM, starting Sept. 8. Registration at first class.

Maryann is a very knowledgeable, thorough instructor. Many local birders have honed their birding skills under her tutelage; some have repeated her classes for the excellent quality of instruction and the camaraderie with fellow students. Curious about birding? Sign up!

# Clearcutting The Valley

by Craig Breon

From the relatively liberal Bay Area it's easy to scorn the great timber companies of the Pacific Northwest as they try their darndest to hack voraciously through the tiny remaining fragments of old growth redwood and Doug fir—Spotted Owls be damned. Dr. Suess' *The Lorax* always come to my mind as the quintessential, simple statement against the pillagers: those who with "super axe-whackers" cut and cut until the dull thud of the last *Truffula Tree* hitting the ground is heard in the distance. And all to make sneaths, sneaths, those wonderful things that everyone needs (for those who don't remember, sneaths were like sweaters). A classic tale of greed and ignorance triumphant over nature.

Luckily, the enlightened Silicon Valley isn't like those backwards timber towns dominated by a single industry, holding local families hostage to corporate success. No, here we have San Jose's "Sustainable City" plan and the Manufacturing Group's (a powerful coalition of many of the Valley's high-tech firms) proud publication every year of "What We're Doing for the Environment."

Think again. As I write from the chapter offices, I've just received my fifteenth call this year from a passionate lover of Burrowing Owls. The calls are depressingly similar: "A bulldozer just ran over..." "Development stakes have gone up where once..." "They've just disked the field at..." "There's just no room for our owls anymore out here at..." and so on.

They're clearcutting the Valley. They leave behind pavement instead of stumps, but the results are the same; in the cast of characters, only the names have changed. We have Councilpeople Fernandez of San Jose or Klietzman of Mountain View playing the role of the parochial local legislator, with their mantras of jobs and housing, jobs and housing; can't choose wildlife over people (as if that were the real choice).

Instead of Louisiana Pacific or Weyerhaeuser, we have the giant high-

techies. Makers of the Silicon Sneaths (what everyone needs). Just as the big timber companies run picturesque ads of forests, lakes, and the children who enjoy them, our companies assure us that they are the most responsible (Santa Clara County has more Superfund toxic sites than any other county in America), the most caring for their communities (but never mind that their employees go through hellish commutes on bigger and bigger freeways), the most concerned for the environment (except those pesky owls).

Of course, there are differences between our cities and the timber towns of the Northwest. Their owls have spots, ours burrow underground. Many of the northwest logging towns do truly rely on logging; if the mill can't get more timber, families really will suffer. I don't think we can say the same here. Unemployment is incredibly low; affluence surrounds us (granted, not everyone). As one of the chapter's Board members put it recently, our region is like a millionaire who, instead of thinking about how best to use his money, thinks solely of how to acquire more. In that way, we surely are worse than the clearcutters of the Northwest. We can more easily afford to make other choices.

If and when the Burrowing Owl is placed on the endangered species list, we will no doubt hear the same cries of "foul" that we have from the timber companies and timber towns. What do you mean SuperMicroSiliSystems can't build 2 million square feet of office space just because of a few owls? The environmentalists will be called unreasonable extremists. However, if that day comes, it will simply be a testament to the incompetence of some of our corporate and community leaders—our home-grown clearcutters.

## The Last of the *Truffula* Seeds

Just as in *The Lorax* there is a glimmer of hope on the last page (as the old Onceler hands a seed to the young narrator), so we have hope locally for our dwindling Burrowing Owl popula-

tion. One year ago in the September *Avocet* we announced a campaign to create a regional Burrowing Owl habitat plan. We can proudly report good progress in this effort.

Last fall a letter was sent to Doug Wheeler, Secretary for Resources in California, from SCVAS, Ohlone Audubon in Alameda County, and the Burrowing Owl Consortium, a group of scientists and policy makers. The letter asked him to direct the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to develop a plan for owls in the South Bay. At first, we received no response. So we asked local legislators to join us in that request, and a couple of them did. Then, not surprisingly, we got a positive response.

Wheeler has directed that the creation of a habitat plan for our owls is a priority for DFG in this region. With the help of DFG biologist Martha Schauss and many others, the first regional meeting was held in April. Some 60 people attended, representing a number of cities and local agencies. All heard a day-long series of talks about owl biology, habitat needs, their current status locally and elsewhere, and the factors leading to their demise.

Those meetings will continue, with goals being set for numbers and distribution of owls and their habitats, and recommendations for changes needed in development patterns or land management practices to keep owls here long-term.

Meanwhile, San Jose, with the bulk of the remaining owl habitat, has embarked on its own planning process. Largely through pressure from our chapter, the City agreed to hire a half-time planner to focus on owl issues and to dedicate \$85,000 to hiring consultants and paying other expenses towards developing a regional plan. Hopefully, San Jose's plan and that of the Department of Fish and Game will be coordinated.

Further, San Jose has begun to request that some developers leave some land, at least temporarily, for owl habitat. By all the qualifiers in that last

*continued on page 11*

## Shade-grown Coffee Now in Stock

*from page 1*

But the modern consumer has shown a willingness to spend a little more if the product has a "clean" background, i.e., produced without substantial environmental harm, in a sustainable situation, and without exploitation or abuse of workers.

The American Birding Association and Partners in Flight have formed a progressive alliance with The Thanksgiving Coffee Co., a roaster and distributor in Fort Bragg, CA to promote shade-grown coffee. For every package of coffee sold, Thanksgiving Coffee will donate 15 cents to ABA and Partners in Flight for neotropical bird conservation. They will also donate 15 cents per package to Coffee Kids and FINCA, two non-profit organizations dedicated to developing sustainable economic development and improved social infrastructure in small communities.

SCVAS now carries Thanksgiving Coffee Co.'s Song Bird line of coffees in the Nature Shop, including French Roast, Hazelnut, Espresso Blend, Costa Rican, Guatemalan, and Decaf. Please consider making a purchase for your household or as a gift. By supporting the shade-grown coffee industry, coffee-drinking birders can help protect habitat for our neotropical migrant birds.

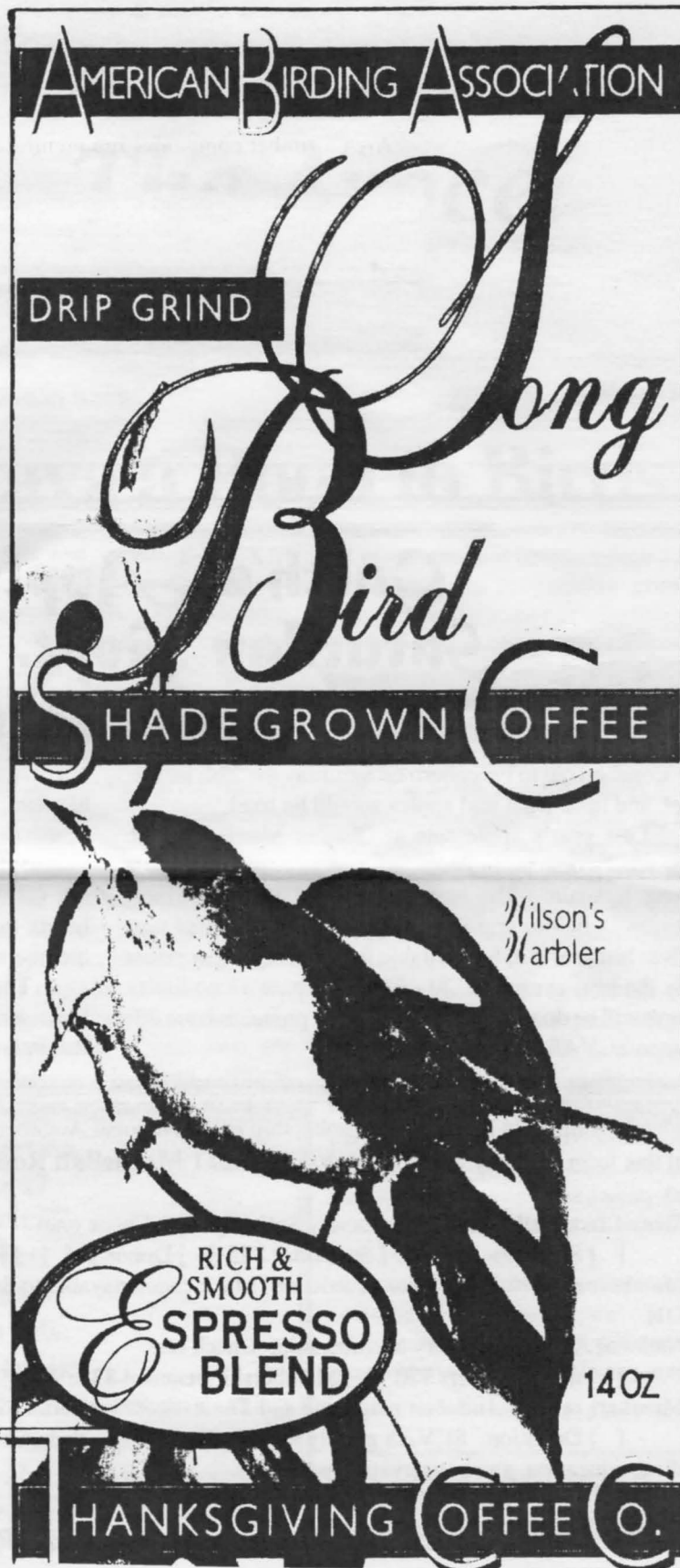


## Clearcut *from page 10*

sentence you can see how tentative a step this is, but they are moving slowly in the right direction.

In addition, the County Fire Marshall's office—which is responsible for a lot of fire abatement motivated disking and mowing of land—has agreed to create a plan for changing their practices and generally being more careful in areas of owl habitat.

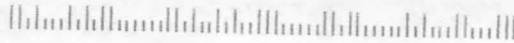
It's a start. Our chapter has raised the public attention on this issue higher than at any time in the past. We may yet be a long way from seeing Burrowing Owl populations stabilize and increase. Then again, I imagine a Truffula Tree doesn't grow that quickly either.



*This label from Fort Bragg's Thanksgiving Coffee Co. represents a concerted effort by growers, distributors, conservationists, birders and consumers to save bird habitat from destruction and promote sustainable farming methods. Six varieties are now available at the SCVAS Nature Shop.*

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# Garth's Apple Sale!

## Saturday Sept. 27 10 - 5

### Pescadero



Come on out to Pescadero on Saturday the 27th to see, feel, and taste what real apples should be like!

Last year's apple sale at Chapter Manager Garth Harwood's orchard in Pescadero was so popular that he's doing it again. The same unsprayed Red Delicious, Golden Delicious and Pippin apples that we picked ourselves last year will be available for amazingly low prices (By the box, at approx. 20 - 25 cents/lb., with no limit). Garth will be donating a full 50% of the proceeds from this sale to SCVAS.

Fall migration will be in full swing on this late September date, so why not combine a birding trip to Pescadero Marsh or Phipps Ranch on your way to the orchard? Bring a picnic lunch and bird the creek and forest habitat adjoining Garth's property; or stop at Duarte's Tavern for a hearty meal after the apple harvest. The event is open to members and non-members alike, and kids are welcome.

The Harwood family orchard is located at 5901 Pescadero Rd., 5.9 miles east of the Highway 1/Pescadero Rd. intersection. Call our office for any further details.

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, and conservation programs.

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