



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

October 1998

Milpitas Hillside Initiative Worth Fighting For . . .

by Craig Breon
SCVAS Environmental Advocate

With Milpitas facing a new proposal to destroy hundreds of acres of hillside land for luxury homes and golf courses, the City Council and the people seem poised to strike a blow against sprawl.

Measure Z on the November 3 ballot will give Milpitas residents a chance to enact a 20-year urban growth boundary. Since the City is bordered by other towns on two sides and the Bay on the third, there are only hillsides left to protect.

And lovely hillsides they are. Ed Levin County Park has become an increasingly attractive destination for birders. A good mix of habitats makes the park and surrounding hillsides a great place to escape the urban South Bay, and it's also the home of some uncommon species. Without the passage of Measure Z, Ed Levin will be increasingly surrounded by sprawl.

Another big selling point for the initiative is the money Milpitas will save if it passes. Because of Proposition 13 and the state's tax structure, residential development is almost always a long-term money loser for cities; the tax revenues don't keep pace with the rising costs of providing services like police, fire, and schools. Suburban sprawl and hillside development are even worse because of the terrain and distance from existing services. So, if Measure Z passes, existing Milpitas residents will get better, cheaper city services than they would otherwise.

An Invitation

On Saturday, October 24 SCVAS will be sponsoring a bird walk in the morning at Ed Levin Park followed by walking neighborhoods in Milpitas getting out the word for Measure Z. You don't have to do both; join us when you can.

We'll meet at the Ed Levin parking lot off Calaveras Road near the Park Headquarters (parking fee required) at 8-8:15 AM. Dave Cook and other knowledgeable birders will help identify local wildlife, so beginners and families are welcome.

Then, later that morning, we'll spend just a couple hours walking neighborhoods in Milpitas, handing out information about Measure Z. People who wish to just walk neighborhoods with us can meet at the Ed Levin parking lot at 11 AM.

. . . but Alviso Master Plan Must Be Stopped!

A flurry of messages spread recently on the South Bay bird chat e-mail circuit. The title said it all: "The end of birdwatching in Alviso." At the same time, the alternative paper for the region—*The Metro*—ran a cover story entitled "Adios Alviso."

Both the above were references to the Alviso Master Plan, a blueprint for environmental destruction for one of the few places in San Jose that has not yet succumbed to strip mall, tract house, and industrial complex uniformity.

If I were to try to draft a document that was more insensitive to the land, it would take quite an effort. Here, taken from page 235 of the plan's Draft En-

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**General Membership Meeting
Wednesday October 21
"Birding Ecuador
From the Andes to the Oriente"
with Jim Danzenbaker
Palo Alto Cultural Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.
7:30 Hospitality 8:00 Program**

Join us tonight as Jim presents a slide show covering a typical birding trip to Ecuador, one of the crown jewels of the neotropics. A variety of habitats will be covered, including lowland Amazonian rainforest, eastern slope of the Andes to 13,000 feet, and elevations in between. During the presentation Jim will provide information on each unique habitat, special birds, and the logistics, climate, lodging, insects, etc. of an Ecuadorian birding adventure.

Jim Danzenbaker is an experienced Bay Area birder whose passion for neotropical birding has led him to Central and South America 20 times in the past 18 years, including five visits to Ecuador. Tonight's program should provide us with an exciting glimpse into the dazzling world of neotropical birdlife---don't miss it!

VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Garth Harwood, SCVAS Chapter Manager



IT'S AN INTERESTING TIME of year here at the Audubon office. McClellan Park is deceptively quiet, and the only thing going on most afternoons seems to be the thistles baking silently in the shimmering air.

But walk out among them, and they come alive with the scurrings of Western

Fence Lizards, owl food (a.k.a. rodents), and various furtive birds such as Song Sparrows and Bewick's Wrens. A few more steps, and a cloud of several hundred House Finches lifts from the mild-thistle heads where they've been feasting on plump new seeds (in case you wondered why the crowd at your feeder thins out at this time of year!)

And something special is beginning to happen in and above the creekside trees: ever so silently, a river of birds is starting to mirror that of water below, flowing ever southwards. For a month or so, we ordinary mortals entrenched in our suburbs might see any number of birds not otherwise seen here: Western Tanagers, Yellow Warblers, unusual flycatchers . . . even raptors from far afield. The season's singing done, most migrants will pass through unseen, and many of those observed will present odd and difficult variations on their typical plumages, due to the molting process and the prevalence of juvenile birds.

BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROGRAM UPDATE: I suspect it's due to the fact that we had a rougher trail to tread this season, but whatever the reason, we have yet to hear back from all of our bluebird trail monitors. By next issue, however, we'll be able to provide a complete report. The story to date? A lot of losses on the nest, with some trails reporting nearly 50% mortality during the sustained and unseasonable cold rains through the heart of the nesting cycle. And it's not just us; the California Bluebird Recovery Program reports a similar pattern statewide. But despite everything, I can't wait to see our final numbers. Last October, we reported a total of 229 birds fledged from 66 boxes. This year, for just one example, Board member and all-around sparkplug **Dave Cook** has 130 birds to report from his trail at Grant Ranch County Park! With another fifteen trails or so to hear from, I expect our final numbers to show ample improvement over last year, reflecting the steadfast efforts of nearly 40 volunteers.

Volunteer **Mary Beth Arago**, summing up her season of monitoring bluebird boxes at the Stanford Dish area with her husband **Michael Arago**, shows the kind of determination that has made this program such

a success: "It's always hard to lose birds, though we realize some loss is inevitable. Wish we knew the causes of these losses so we could help prevent them. We found ourselves fantasizing about having cameras on some boxes all the time to help explain disappearances and dead birds.

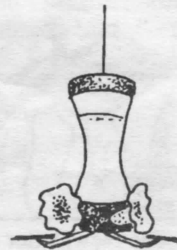
"We were surprised when Violet-green Swallow parents used a few cigarette butts and a Kleenex in their nest (this nest fledged 4!). For next season, we plan to move boxes that were unsuccessful in both 1997 and '98. And if possible we'd like to try boxes for chickadees and titmice as well as kestrels. We recently observed four Western Bluebirds in our neighborhood "park" (a field with a few trees). This is a first! We'd like to try two or three boxes there. Maybe hanging ones would be best since cats, raccoons, squirrels, and possibly certain humans could be a threat. We look forward to next season."

RETURN OF THE BLACK RAIL PATROL: Every year, there are a precious few tides high enough to push the seldom-seen Black Rail into view for a few seconds along the shores of the Bay. Those in the know consult their tide tables and dash to the parking lot of the Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center in Palo Alto, staking out a spot at the curb in the northeast corner of the lot.

It is difficult to overstate just how specific the location and timing of the effort need to be for a successful sighting. Moreover, it can be difficult to believe how close these shy wetland birds will come to their admirers during these events. The one time I joined the throng, I was gazing steadfastly out across the marshlands in my best Kenn Kaufman pose, when someone gasped, "There it is!" and pointed down---into the scruffy plants about three feet from my toes!

And it's that very combination of factors that puts the Black Rails into jeopardy each season. Unwitting fans may trample the few plants providing cover for the birds during this very stressful event, or flush them out of cover and into the teeth of opportunistic predators. Accordingly, Palo Alto city naturalist **Deborah Bartens** has asked us to help by monitoring the highest tides this fall and providing "advice" to any overzealous observers in need of it.

To volunteer, please call Deborah at (650) 329-2383. Volunteers are needed sporadically (according to the cycles of the tides) between the beginning of November and the end of January.



October 1998 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 Oct. 3, 9:00 AM.** Full day. Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408)247-5499. Meet at Page Mill Rd/Hwy 280 Park'n'Ride at 8:00 AM for carpooling. Migrating raptors (chance of rare Broad-winged Hawk).

****Sunday Oct. 4, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Phipps Ranch, Pescadero. Leader: Garth Harwood (408)252-3747. Bird one of the San Mateo coast's best migrant and vagrant traps with our Chapter Manager. Take Hwy 84 or 92 west to Hwy 1, then south to Pescadero Rd. Turn left and follow road through town of Pescadero to Phipps Ranch approx. 1 mile east of town on right.

Wednesday Oct. 7, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers. Lee Hung will present a slide program on the birds of Japan featuring the work of her husband, photographer Mike Danzenbaker. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Saturday Oct. 10, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Coyote Hills Regional Park. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408)257-3647. Take Hwy 84 (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. Raptors, shorebirds, waterfowl. Park entrance fee.

Saturday Oct. 10, 9 AM - 12. Beginning bird class at McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino. SCVAS volunteer Sandy Cortright will teach 3-hr. class. Call the office at 408/252-3747 to sign up. \$20 fee.

****Sunday Oct. 11, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader: Ann Verdi (408)266-5108. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd north off Hwy 101.

Tuesday Oct. 13, 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: Canada Goose.

****Wednesday Oct. 14, 9:00 AM.** Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough. Leaders: Gail Cheeseman (408)741-5330 and Harriet Gerson (408)252-6244. Meet at Jetty Rd. and Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. Highlights: gulls, grebes, terns, ducks shorebirds, raptors. Lunch optional.

****Saturday Oct. 17, 8:00 AM.** Full day. Monterey Peninsula. Leader: Kathy Parker (408)358-2832. Take Pacific Grove Del Monte Ave. exit from Hwy 1; after 1.7 mi. on Del Monte turn right at Figueroa St. into parking lot and meet at base of Municipal Wharf. Bring quarters for parking, lunch, full gas tank.

****Sunday Oct. 18, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Alum Rock Park. Leader: Dave Cook (408)871-9552. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take Alum Rock Ave northeast toward hills and into park. Turn left just after entrance booth and before bridge; meet in lower parking lot. (Note meeting area is different than traditional upper parking lot due to last year's storm damage.)

****Saturday Oct. 24, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Princeton Harbor. Leader: Mark Miller (650)967-3429. Meet at corner of West Point and Stanford Ave in Princeton, 4 miles north of Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1. Highlights: Waterbirds, coastal migrants, possible vagrants.

****Sunday Oct. 25, 8:00 AM.** Half day. Ogier Ponds. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 mi. and turn right towards the Model Airplane Park. Follow road to gravel parking lot at bend in road. Great variety of riparian, fresh-water marsh birds.

****Wednesday Oct. 28, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Bottom of Windy Hill OSP. Leader: Al Huber (650)493-6854. Meet at new

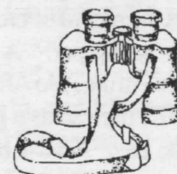
parking lot at Sausal Pond. From I-280 in Portola Valley take Alpine Rd. south (toward hills). Go 2.9 miles to Portola Rd (1st STOP sign), turn right and go 0.8 mi. to parking lot on left just past The Sequoias. Lunch optional.

Tuesday Nov. 10, 9:30 AM. The Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave, Los Gatos 408/395-4264. Topic: Brown pelican.

****Wednesday Nov. 11, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Campbell Percolation Ponds/Los Gatos Creek. Leader: John Arnold 650/948-4250. From I-280 take Winchester Blvd exit, then east on Hacienda, left on Del and right into park entrance. Entrance fee. Easy 2-mile walk. Heavy rain cancels.

****Wednesday Nov. 18, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Pescadero Marsh and vicinity. Leader: Sue James 650/348-0315. Meet at first parking lot south of bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy 1. Shorebirds, gulls, grebes, terns, ducks. Lunch optional; heavy rain cancels.

****New Beginner's Feature! Starting November 7,** a special bird walk designed to meet the needs of beginning birders will be offered by our Chapter Manager on the **first Saturday of every month from 10AM to 12 at McClellan Ranch Park.** Loaner binoculars will be available, and families are welcome! In addition to seeking out the many birds to be found at the park, this free session will include pointers on birding techniques and ethics. This new monthly program is designed to welcome newcomers to the birding community in an un intimidating atmosphere.



Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Grebes through Raptors

Of 38 *Aechmophorus* grebes on Calaveras Reservoir on 13 Aug, 25 were **Western Grebes** and three of the five nesting pairs there were also identified as this species (SCR). A single adult **Little Blue Heron** was seen again on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 21 Aug (MMR). An immature **Cattle Egret** was found along Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 20 Aug (PMB, CB) and nearby on Salt Pond A1 on 28 Aug (PMB). Two adult **White-faced Ibis** were found in Crittenden Marsh on 6 Aug (RWR, FV) and at least one bird remained there through 23 Aug (m.ob.). An immature was found at Salt Pond A9 on 21 Aug (MMR) to add to the count. An **Osprey** was seen a number of times over Uvas Creek at Gilroy on 2-12 Aug (SK) and possibly another bird was at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 7 Aug (SCR). The normal influx of wintering **Peregrine Falcons** has not occurred this year with only one August record, an adult on Salt Pond A4 in Sunnyvale on 22 Aug (MJM). An adult **Prairie Falcon** at the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) drying ponds on 23 Aug (AME) was the first of the season away from the Diablo Range.

Shorebirds through Skimmers

Of the two adult **Pacific Golden-Plover** found last month in the Palo Alto FCB, one remained through at least 1 Aug (MJM). A "**Lesser**" **Golden-Plover** was heard over Shoreline Park on 16 Aug (SCR) but was not identified to species. Although regular, the number of **Lesser Yellowlegs** found locally was down from recent years with a peak count of 12 birds on the ponds near Spreckles and Grand in Alviso on 15 Aug (MJM, AME, NL). Two adults and a recently-fledged juvenile **Spotted Sandpiper** at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 7 Aug (SCR) continues the record of breeding by this locally rare sandpiper. A juvenile **Ruddy Turnstone** in the Palo Alto estuary on 24 Aug (MMR) represents a good find this far down the bay. A **Red Knot** was seen at the mouth of Stevens Creek on 8

Aug (NL) and five birds were seen in the Palo Alto estuary on 24 Aug (MMR). A juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found at the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP ponds 3-5 Aug (SCR, NL) and another juvenile was along Artesian Slough on 22 Aug (MJM). One to two **Baird's Sandpipers** were at the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds 1-9 Aug (TGr, DW, NL, MJM). An adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS) waterbird pond on 15 Aug (NL); juveniles are more common, but peak in late September and early October. There are early signs of another unusual fall for **Stilt Sandpipers**. An adult was found at the Calabazas Ponds on 16 Aug (SCR, MJM) and remained there at least through 26 Aug (v.ob.). Two juveniles were found in the ponds near Spreckles and State in

Marsh in Alviso on 18 Aug (FB *fide* RWR) and is our earliest record for this rare migrant. All of our records are of fall birds, most occurring in September or October. Three **Elegant Terns**, including a juvenile, were seen at the Stevens Creek mouth on 8 Aug (NL). Single birds were on the Sunnyvale salt ponds on 11 Aug (TR) and 14 Aug (VT). Staging **Least Terns** continued to be found in the vicinity of Charleston Slough including 15 there on 8 Aug (NL) and 14 on 11 Aug (TGr). Birds were also found on the Sunnyvale salt ponds with 5-10 there from 16-22 Aug (NL). **Black Terns** are less often found locally on their fall migration so one at the New Chicago Marsh on 19 Aug (MMR) is noteworthy. Two **Black Skimmers** on Charleston Slough on 6 Aug (VT) were the only ones noted.

The fall shorebird season was highlighted by multiple counts of Stilt Sandpiper and Ruff

Flycatchers through Blackbirds

A **Willow Flycatcher** was seen along Coyote Creek on 23 Aug (NL) and three were there 27-29 Aug to inaugurate the fall migration (NL, MJM, MMR). A **Northern Waterthrush** was found along the Guadalupe River above Montague on 29 Aug (MMR) and was also seen the next day (v.ob.). Both early and in good numbers, single migrant

MacGillivray's Warblers were found along Coyote Creek on 23-28 Aug (NL), on the Guadalupe River above Montague on 29 Aug (MMR), and along Stevens Creek at L'Avenida on 30 Aug (MJM). **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** are more common in spring, but a few fall birds have been found in recent years. This fall's record was a 1st-year male at the Arzino Ranch off Los Esteros on 27 Aug (SCR).

Observers: Carol Belew (CB), Florence Bennett (FB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Al Eisner (AME), Tom Grey (TGr), Sue Kruse (SK), Nick Lethaby (NL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Tom Ryan (TR), Vivek Tiwari (VT), Frank Vanslager (FV) and Dave Weber (DW).

Alviso on 26 Aug (NL) and have remained through the end of the month (v.ob.). Competing with the Stilt Sandpipers were three adult female **Ruffs** (or **Reeves**). Excellent details from many observers on the molt of these birds allowed good guesses as to the total number. The first, found in the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 1 Aug (TGr, DW), appears to have remained there for two days and then shifted to the CCRS waterbird where she was seen through the end of the month (m.ob.). A second female was found in the ponds at Spreckles and Grand in Alviso on 15 Aug (AME, MJM, NL) and was different from the first bird. This female shifted back and forth from this location to the Calabazas Ponds and finally the CCRS waterbird pond on 23 Aug (AME). On 16 Aug two females were seen together on the Calabazas Ponds (SCR, MJM), including the one found the day before at Spreckles and Grand, and one or both birds were found locally through 18 Aug (v.ob.). An adult **Sabine's Gull** was seen near New Chicago

RARITIES: Please drop me a note: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025, or: bousman@merlin.arc.nasa.gov

Adventures in Warblerland, Pt 2: North to the Bay of Fundy

by Garth Harwood

SCVAS Chapter Manager

As related in the September Avocet, my one full day at Mt. Monadnock State Park in New Hampshire started slowly, then came to a rolling boil of new birds seen, seemingly at every turn. The remainder of my visit to Mt. Monadnock went equally well, if the pace of discovery slowed somewhat. The new birds of the first morning were old friends by that afternoon, and I picked up a pair of Pine Warblers and a showy Chestnut-sided Warbler along the way. The latter species affirmed the useful tip in the Stokes field guide that it was more readily found along roadsides than in unbroken forest—a good thing, since I'd decided to walk some nearby residential streets for precisely that reason.

Aware of a certain repetitiousness creeping into my observations, I decided to diversify the habitats I explored. A low valley at the bottom of the mountain held a number of boggy beaver ponds with standing drowned trees. Even from a mile away I could hear the drumming and calling of woodpeckers. I hoped above all that my chance to see a Pileated Woodpecker had come at last, as I had never found time to make the pilgrimage to Table Mountain to see our local breeding pair this season (see Bill Bousman's September Field Notes for details).

There were, I could tell by the sounds, at least two or three different woodpeckers at work in the bog. Most of these, it turned out, were well-known friends from home. However, as I approached to within 50 feet, I could see a rain of impressive chunks dropping from a punky snag—a display of power and appetite that could only mean "Pileated at Work". But I couldn't see the bird, and I couldn't approach through the stiff brush without giving myself away. I tried my best, but when I reached the water the bird had, of course, vanished. Only a series of distinctively squarish excavations were left to confirm the depth of my disappointment.

However, the great liberty of birding solo is that you can be just about as irrational as you please. Accordingly, I sat down and fed myself to clouds of mosquitoes, blackflies, no-see-ums, and who-knows-whats as I attempted to move nothing but my binoculars for the next 45 minutes.

This brand of foolishness was rewarded by my first-ever view of Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Phoebes, a Black-and-White Warbler, and by a certain amount of insect-assisted weight loss. Finally, at the end of my wait, a female Pileated Woodpecker dropped in to see if I had left yet. I hadn't, so she did, but I'd had my look at last!

Bangor Bog and Fundy National Park

I'll be brief about the rest of the journey, because more of my time was spent socially, and less of it birding; also because many of the birds I saw after New Hampshire were becoming familiar by that time. A brief morning excursion to the nondescript Bangor Bog, just outside the city of that name in central Maine, is worthy of note because it was the only location where I found Palm and Canada Warblers, and because I think any place one finds a Scarlet Tanager is worth remembering. It may also be the Common Yellowthroat capital of the universe.

As to the Bay of Fundy, I had somehow forgotten that this is the place of the legendary 50-foot tides. As you can imagine, that provides quite a spectacle, twice a day. However, despite miles of mudflats, once again there was virtually no seabird or shorebird activity; and all the excitement was inland (well, OK, the Common Eiders just offshore at low tide—that is, half a mile across the mud from the "beach"—were pretty nifty).

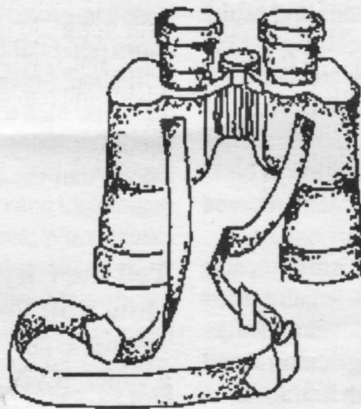
New birds encountered at Fundy included Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, and Northern Parula Warblers. Almost all of the other warblers I'd recently encountered for the first time were present as well, and as I reported earlier, the majority of them were

seen feeding fledglings in low vegetation at ranges commonly less than 10 feet. Anyone seeking my advice on prime eastern warbler-watching can expect this tip from me: late breeding season at Fundy Park offers all the excitement, with a lot less awkward craning.

There were other birds too, and plenty of them, although I missed the most sought-after specialty bird of the area, Bicknell's Thrush. I noted with pleasure the new-to-me species Blue-headed (formerly eastern Solitary) Vireo, Alder Flycatcher, hordes of noisy White-winged Crossbills, and a devilish, bland-looking sparrow which after considerable vexation and study was positively identified as the Ipswich race of Savannah Sparrow. All told, I now have plenty of fine memories to mull over this winter, and a better chance at identifying any eastern vagrants that come flitting through my lenses locally.

It's Your Turn!

I've written this account as a travelogue, but without the usual names, contact numbers, accommodations information, etc. That's because I got my information from the books in our library, where it is available to you, too. Remember, your Audubon membership entitles you to check out books from our library for up to three weeks. We have a very good travel section with field guides and site guides for most parts of the world, and I love to see our books travel. Come on in and have a look before your next trip.



Something To Work Against--- The Alviso Master Plan

continued from Page 1

Environmental Impact Report, is a list of the "significant, unavoidable, unmitigated impacts" related to the Master Plan:

- Loss of agricultural lands
- Incompatible land uses near an established recreational area (the National Wildlife Refuge)
- Incompatibility between the natural resources of the Baylands and future development
- Impacts from stormwater drainage in excess of stormwater collection and disposal capacity
- Water quality degradation in New Chicago Marsh (home to endangered species)
- Geologic, soil, and seismic impacts from building on landfill (illegally filled wetlands now zoned for development)
- Significant loss of agricultural and grasslands habitat in North San Jose
- Impacts to wetland, aquatic, and diked salt marsh habitats
- Death of Salt Marsh Harvest Mice and/or Burrowing Owls
- Public health and safety impacts from storage and handling of acutely hazardous materials on land "particularly susceptible" to strong earthquake impacts.
- Significant visual impacts from development
- Impacts to habitats in and adjacent to New Chicago Marsh from lighting and glare
- Traffic congestion
- Noise impacts from pile driving
- Potential releases of toxic air contaminants
- Regionally significant air quality impacts from development

• Stormwater and sewage increases in an area with "aging and undersized" utility lines

• Growth inducement
How's them apples! Even in San Jose—where we have come to expect a City Council that caters to industry and developers at the expense of nature and established communities—I have never seen a large-scale development plan with more potential for harm.

I should mention that there are other impacts, such as increased flooding potential or building near noxious landfill odors, that the document does not well point out.

Tell the City Council How You Feel

What to do? We need you. If you're a birder, if you care about the National Wildlife Refuge, if you're tired of traffic, if you're tired of the [un]affordable housing assault on lower and middle income workers, if you're tired of City Council members wearing a silicon blindfold chanting "jobs, jobs, jobs," we need you.

Start by calling a San Jose City Council member, the day you read this article. If you live in their district, all the better. Even if you don't, please call; this is a regional issue, and they should hear from all sectors of the County. We've listed their numbers here for your convenience.

San Jose City Council:

- District 1, Trixie Johnson—277-5438;
- Dist 2, Charlotte Powers—277-4282;
- Dist 3, David Pandori—277-5231;
- Dist 4, Margie Fernandez—277-5320;
- Dist 5, Manny Diaz—277-5157;

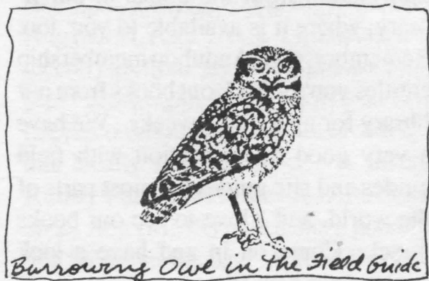
- Dist 6, Frank Fiscalini—277-5166;
- Dist 7, George Shirakawa—277-5226;
- Dist 8, Alice Woody—277-5242;
- Dist 9, John Di Quisto—277-5275;
- Dist 10, Pat Dando—277-5251;
- Mayor Susan Hammer—277-4237.

In particular, Councilwoman Margie Fernandez deserves blame for this. She has presided over the Milpitas Master Plan Task Force for years and has allowed this plan to come forward without input from the environmental community despite the rich natural resources of the area. To her credit, Margie has devoted considerable time to the problems of Alviso—a traditionally underserved community—and this has resulted in some positive changes in the area. That does not excuse her insensitivity to the environment embodied in this Master Plan.

Write a brief note to Mayor Susan Hammer and San Jose City Council Members, 801 North First Street, San Jose, CA, 95110. Just mention a few of the above list of impacts and tell them they could, and should, do better. Even a letter of a few sentences, from the heart, will help. There are ways to develop portions of Alviso that would be sensitive to the land and the people who live there.

Write a brief letter (500 words or less) to the San Jose Mercury News. Your words can reach thousands of people who may feel like you.

Call me at 408-252-3748 and ask what more you can do. We may want to walk neighborhoods, get petitions signed, and go to public meetings.

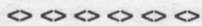


Salton Sea Adventure



I finally made my first trip to the Salton Sea during the first week of August. I was going to the Southern California deserts anyway to visit my newest grandchild, Amanda, born the end of July in Barstow, so I decided as long as I was going for the desert heat, I might as well bite the bullet and try the Salton Sea.

I stayed overnight in Indio and found some interesting birds right on the motel



Almaden IBM and Explorers Team Up for the Birds

Long-time SCVAS member Charles Wade reports that birdhouse assembling parties at Charles and Kim Wade's house in Los Gatos have resulted in the recent donation of 7 kestrel nestboxes, 24 bluebird houses, and 15 swallow houses to the SCVAS Bluebird Recovery Program. The volunteers from the IBM Almaden Research Center in San Jose included scouts from Scouts Explorer Post 2100 (Cathy Balkon, Arthur Runyan, Neal Vora, Brian Armstrong, Nita Jenne, Danielle Carlson, Jennifer Dutra and the post leader Charlie Balkon) and summer interns working at IBM including Derek Shon (Harvey Mudd College), Kane Jen (University of Texas, Drew Pomerantz (Yale), Mike Scarpulla (Brown), Renee Heuss (Viterbo College), and Charlie Dalby (Vassar). Andy Kellock and Laura Mappin helped direct the many drills, glue guns, and power drivers. A hearty thanks to all.

SPACE STILL AVAILABLE IN BIRDING CLASS

The single-session, three-hour birding class to be taught by Sandy Cortright on Saturday, Oct. 10 still has plenty of room at press time. Call the office at (408) 257-3747 for details, or send a \$20 check to reserve your spot today.

grounds, including Common Ground-Doves, White-winged Doves, three Greater Roadrunners snatching up grasshoppers, and a Crissal Thrasher perched on a fence post. Not a bad beginning, but the temperatures were above 115 degrees!

So on to Salton Sea the next morning. I spent most of my time along the south shore around the Red Hill Marina, Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, and farm and levee dirt roads. The hot temperature and high humidity were stifling, but the area was literally teeming with birdlife--- hundreds of egrets, cormorants, pelicans, gulls, terns, and shorebirds. My prime reason for visiting the Salton Sea at this inhospitable time of year was to try to find some southern species that often migrate her during mid-summer, and I was not disappointed. Yellow-footed Gulls were foraging throughout the area; Wood Storks perched on dead trees by the water's edge; and I watched an immature Magnificent Frigatebird fly over. In one shallow pond I found many terns, including Caspian, Forster's, Black, and Gull-billed, as well as Black Skimmers, Wilson's Phalaropes, and an Osprey. In a nearby farm field I saw many White-faced Ibis, Cattle Egrets, Black-necked Stilts, and Long-billed Curlews.

These were my highlights. I wanted to spend more time exploring the area, but by midday the oppressive heat was beginning to get to me, so rather than risk heat exhaustion, I opted to cut my birding short and head back to Barstow. I only skimmed the surface of this exciting birding habitat and would like to revisit the Salton Sea, but perhaps at not such an intensely hot time. ---Ann Verdi

1998 CBC's

When Ann Verdi is not birding in exotic parts of the state, she's taking care of bird business here in Santa Clara County. She wants to remind all local birders that our San Jose Christmas Bird Count will take place on Sunday, December 20---get your shopping done early so you can spend that day counting birds!

Garth Harwood reports that the Palo Alto CBC will be held the following day, Monday, December 21st. Both counts are always in need of additional volunteers, so mark your calendar and invite a friend!

Field Trip Report---Ogier Ponds

A recent weather front added several species to the list of birds seen on the first Wednesday SCVAS field trip of the fall, Sept. 9 to the Ogier Ponds. 48 species were seen which was up from the 37 seen by Frank Vanslager and I on the day before.

Near the entrance to the ponds were four Wood Ducks. (Several Wood Duck flocks were seen flying along the creek during the morning, one with 8-10 birds.) A few Gadwall joined the Mallards, American Coots, Double-crested Cormorants and a single Ring-billed Gull in the pond on the north side of the entrance road. A single Ruddy Duck in the ponds to the southeast completed the short list of ducks seen.

As we started walking south, after ticking off a few common species, one of our sharp-eyed birders found a Sora rail walking along the reeds on the far, west side of the "South Pond". This bird and a second, closer Sora were well seen by all. A Green Heron was also visible on the west side of this pond and a nice Red-shouldered Hawk was perched on a tree nearby. A surprise to me were three Least Sandpipers feeding among the rocks where a branch of Coyote Creek flowed into the south pond. Another branch of the creek nearby had two Willow Flycatchers feeding from twigs leaning over the creek and just upstream was our only Spotted Sandpiper of the day. Two Greater Yellowlegs were later seen and heard flying into the creek.

The biggest miss of the day was a small, low-flying egret seen around 8:00 AM that was identified as an immature Snowy Egret but which was observed by another birder to have a yellow bill---a possible Cattle Egret? At the end of the trip about half of the birders went to the park below Anderson Reservoir to have lunch and talk about all those neat things we did over the summer.

---Bob Reiling

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GENERAL MEETINGS are held on the third Wednesday of each month except July, August and December and 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.

RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422

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

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