



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

December 1998 -?

Master Plan Will Change Alviso Forever

Jan 1999 -?

Audubon Joins Residents To Protect Habitat, Open Space Buffers

by Craig Breon

The Alviso Master Plan, which will guide development in the area where San Jose meets the Bay for the next decade or more, has been approved by the City Council. The result will have a profound impact on one of the South Bay's most vital remaining wildlife areas and a unique local community.

As I look back on three months of hard work, a lot of satisfaction and a twinge of disappointment fill me. We helped change the plan for the better; still, Alviso will no longer be the haven for wildlife that it is today, and the ambience of the bayside village will change dramatically.

Perhaps the best way to convey our accomplishments is by explaining the odds we faced. The Master Plan had been developed over five years by a task force of business representatives and local residents led by Vice Mayor Margie Fernandez. Thus, the Plan was presented,

(though the point is arguable), as the vision of the community. When approved by the task force in early September, the Plan was supported in all but one small part by San Jose's planning staff and the Vice Mayor. According to city hall sources, Mayor Susan Hammer promised the Vice Mayor a vote before the end of the year, a timetable which limited our ability to request large-scale changes. Then the city's district system came into play.

San Jose votes for council representatives by district, with ten independent district elections, and the Mayor elected at large. This system guarantees that each sector of the city will be represented at city hall--a good idea. However, the system has a tremendous flaw: When a project exists in a given district e.g., the Alviso Master Plan in Fernandez' district, the other council members greatly defer to the district representative. In exchange for that deference, council members know that they, in turn, will receive similar deference when a project in their own district arises. While this system may be

effective in keeping a council member close to their constituents, it may not serve the city or region's best interest as a whole.

That's where we were in September, facing a nearly done deal despite the fact that formal public hearings and the commenting period on the proposed plan were just beginning. Then the citizens' groups stepped in.

A coalition of local residents and environmentalists formed to improve upon the proposed Master Plan. We managed to re-open the process for debate. In the ensuing three months, the Plan slowly evolved, with positive changes for both the community and the land. Several of the points we made were eventually embraced by the Vice Mayor and planning staff, showing they were more open-minded than we had thought.

Improvements

A partial list of the changes we helped secure:

- ◆ Buildings on several sites will be clustered closer to Highway 237, leaving more open space as buffer between the development and existing residential areas, the school, the historic district, and the National Wildlife Refuge. These buffers can be used for wildlife, including restoration of Burrowing Owl habitat and both seasonal and tidal wetlands.

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**General Membership Meeting
Wednesday January 20**

**"Birds Feel the Crunch in California"
with Mike Sellors**

**Palo Alto Cultural Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.
7:30 Hospitality 8:00 Program**

Join us tonight for an exploration of the impacts felt by the California Condor, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Western Tanager, California Clapper Rail, and many other sensitive species as California's current population of 33 million people soars toward a projected 55 million by 2025. What can Audubon do to stem the population-driven hemorrhaging of California's biodiversity? Come find out as National Audubon's Habitat and Population Coordinator for California presents a slide program on the population problem from a wildlife perspective.

Young Audubon

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More Hawk

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VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Garth Harwood, SCVAS Chapter Manager



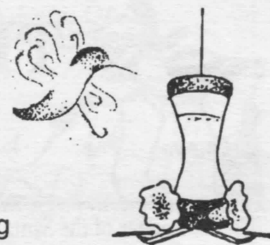
REMEMBER THOSE CRAZY BLUE-BIRDS I wrote about in November, the ones that ended up raising a family as a threesome here at McClellan Park last spring? Well, I hadn't seen a bluebird here since that gang moved on in early June... until the other day, when a foursome flew in from the west and spent an hour poking

around in the park. My attention was caught right away, of course, but what really fascinated me was that three of these birds---yes, two males and a female, same as last spring---spent most of their time sitting together on top of the very same box where the nesting had taken place, alternating turns at the entry hole, and giving it a most thorough inspection.

AND SPEAKING OF "BLUEBIRDS", another use of that word refers to unexpected, happy windfalls. That's the way it feels these days as we open your generous gifts in response to our fall fundraising appeal. Craig Breon and I compete for the privilege of opening each day's envelopes, feeling like kids on Christmas morning. Sure, it's not for *us*, but it is for the cause we believe in passionately, and I cannot overstate the pleasure it gives us to know that so many of you share our commitment to preserving and enhancing what remains of our natural surroundings in this valley. At this writing, over 200 of you have responded and collectively, you have ensured another strong year at SCVAS. Thank you.

MORE THINGS TO BE THANKFUL FOR . . . all the cheerful help provided by the "envelope docents" who helped us generate our 4,000 piece mailing in November. Special thanks to all of you regulars among our office volunteers who pitched in with extra time and effort, and also to our Board of Directors, who did an astonishing amount of the envelope addressing. I'd also like to single out **Jean Shurtleff**, **Rita Colwell**, and **Ruth Troetschler** as special-occasion volunteers who pitched in on the big mailing.

Our teaching collection of bird specimens continues to grow, thanks to the skills of **Jerry Towner** and **Leda Beth Gray**, and to "donors" such as **Karen Hesse**, who brought in a perfect specimen of a Western Screech Owl last month after it smacked into the lumber rack of an employee's truck. Our collection also includes Merlin, Great Horned Owl, American Kestrel, Red-shouldered Hawk, and a growing number of woodpeckers and songbirds. (Incidentally, it is illegal to collect such specimens unless a permit has been issued by



the State. Our "dead specimen permit" allows us to accept already-dead wildlife for teaching purposes.)

Finally, I'd like to thank new volunteer **Jaine Reese**, who has been helping out in the front office, and to recognize **Ulrike Keyssner** for an extraordinary job of reorganizing our Young Audubon program as well as leading numerous creek walks for schoolchildren here at McClellan Ranch Park.

NEW TITLES AT THE LIBRARY . . . Our library has continued to expand this year as many members have heeded our call and donated surplus birding books. We have also purchased a few entirely new titles from discount distributors. Now, if only the rate of usage of our books was increasing as quickly! Remember, your SCVAS membership entitles you to check out books from our library free of charge for a period of 3 weeks. Our collection is especially strong in the area of field and site guides to the birds of every region in the U.S. and the world, and we love to see our books travel!

Here are a few of our newest titles to whet your appetite:

- √ Stokes Field Guide to Western Birds (Stokes & Stokes, 1996)
- √ Stokes Bird Gardening Book (Stokes & Stokes, 1998)
- √ Owls of the World (Hume, 1997)
- √ Cormorants, Darters, and Pelicans of the World (Johnsgard, 1993)
- √ Peninsula Trails, 3rd ed. (Rusmore *et al.*, 1997)
- √ Field Guide to California (Alden & Heath, 1998)
- √ Where Have All the Birds Gone? (Terborgh, 1989)
- √ Birds' Eggs, a Visual Guide (Walters, 1994)
- √ The Birder's Bug Book (Waldbauer, 1998)
- √ Butterflies of California (Stewart, 1997)
- √ Birds: Wings & Tails, Bills & Mouths, Feet & Legs, Heads & Eyes (4 vols.) (Kochan, 1996)

PINE SISKINS AT RISK . . . As enjoyable as it has been to see many siskins this winter, it seems that this species is now falling prey to a species-specific strain of Salmonella. **George Oetzel** of Menlo Park has reported several sick siskins at his feeders recently, echoing warnings on the Internet and elsewhere. To minimize the risk to birds visiting your feeders, add only one or two days' supply of seed at a time when refilling, and wash feeders regularly in a 10% bleach solution. If obvious problems persist, the lesser of two evils may be to take down your feeders for a month or so until the cycle of contagion has been broken.

January 1999 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**

****Sunday Jan. 3, 8:00 AM.** Full day. Post-CBC Rarities Chase. Leader: John Mariani (408) 997-2066. Kick off 1999 with some coastal vagrant chasing. Bring a full tank of gas (carpooling strongly encouraged) and your traveling field guide library as the group attempts to track down some of the unusual birds seen on Christmas Bird Counts from Monterey to Santa Cruz. Meet at ranger's kiosk on Jetty Rd. just north of Moss Landing harbor on Hwy 1.

Wednesday Jan. 6, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers welcome back Chris Humphreys for a slide show shot on her four-month Alaska trip in 1994. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Sunday Jan. 10,
9:45 - Noon.
Young Audubon
Boat Trip
in Monterey Bay.**

Space may still be available for this 90-minute excursion at the peak of Gray Whale migration, which may also yield views of otters, porpoises, and of course, seabirds. Dress for cold and rain. Please call the office to confirm your space at 408-252-3747. Cost is \$12 adults, \$8 children. Trip leaves from Chris' Fishing Trips on the main Monterey Wharf on Coast Guard-approved boats in light rain or shine; (no refunds as boat is prepaid).

Tuesday Jan. 12, 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: Black Phoebe.

****Wednesday Jan. 13, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Calero Reservoir, McKean Rd. Leaders: Jane Glass (408) 779-3637 and Emelie Curtis (408) 779-2637. Meet at Ranger Station about 1 mile south of boat dock. Waterbirds and raptors. Rain cancels.

****Saturday Jan. 16, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Fremont Lagoons gull chase. Leader: Nick Lethaby. From I-880 take Gateway Blvd. exit west, turn left on Fremont Ave. Park in lot at end of street. Many gull species possible, including Thayer's and Glaucous.

****Wednesday Jan. 27, 9:00 AM.** Half day. Charleston Slough. Leader: Phyllis Browning (650) 494-6360. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. north. Meet inside gate at Terminal Way intersection. Rain cancels.

Friday Jan. 29, 8:30 AM - 4 PM Bay Area Action is sponsoring the San Francisco Peninsula-South Bay Restoration Conference for land managers, stewards, and restorationists to share, network, and collaborate on the challenges of managing our natural resources. Audubon members are welcome to come and express their opinions about managing natural resources for wildlife. Contact Karen Cotter, Bay Area Action, for information at (650) 329-8544; kcotter@sprynet.com.

****Saturday Jan 30, 8:00 AM.** Full day. Panoche Valley. Leader: Clay Kempf (408) 761-8260. Meet at Paicines Store, approx. 9 miles south of Hollister on Hwy. 25. Mountain Bluebird, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden

Eagle and more open-country species with one of our favorite leaders. Carpooling essential; bring plenty of gas, food & drink for a long day.

****Sunday Feb. 7, 9:30 - 11:30 AM.** Kids For the Birds Field Trip. Children from Grades 3 through 5 are invited to observe water and shore birds in Charleston Slough, Mt. View. Leaders: Jim Liskovec and Shirley Gordon. No cost, but space is limited. BY RESERVATION ONLY. Call Ulrike Keyssner for info at (408) 249-1014.

Tuesday Feb. 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: Black-headed Grosbeak.

****Wednesday Feb. 10, 8:30 AM.** Half day. Shady Oaks Park/Coyote Creek. Easy walk of about 2 miles. From Hwy 101 south exit on Blossom Hill, cross over freeway and turn right into parking area just after first stoplight at intersection of Coyote and Silver Creek Valley Rds. Will the Eastern Phoebe honor the group with an appearance? Lunch optional; heavy rain cancels.

*****Notice a dearth of weekend field trips? The Field Trip Committee needs help planning weekend bird outings. Bob Reiling can't do it all by himself! If interested, contact Bob at (408) 253-7527.*****

Tell your friends! On the second Saturday of each month SCVAS offers a **Birdwalk for Beginners** at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino from 10 AM to noon. This month's date is Jan 9; next month is Feb 13. Some loaner binoculars are available. Join our Chapter Manager, Garth Harwood, to learn more about the birds around you.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

A **Pacific Loon** was a good find on Calero Reservoir on 16 and 23 Nov (JMA). Calero Reservoir was the choice spot for **Common Loon** with the single bird found last month seen through 7 Nov (AV) and with three birds there on 9 Nov (JMa) and through the end of the month (AV, MJM). Another **Common Loon** was off the Palo Alto estuary on 7 Nov (MJM). An **American Bittern** was found around Los Gatos Creek and the percolation ponds nearby on 6-10 Oct (BHe) and perhaps the same bird was seen there again on 8 Nov (RC *fide* TGr) and in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 28 Nov (MMR). A single **Cattle Egret** at the Arzino Ranch on 7 Nov (MJM) was our first since August. A single **Snow Goose** was seen over Charleston Slough on 1 Nov (KG) and this bird or another was found regularly through the month (v.ob.). Two birds seen on the Parkway Lakes on 24 Nov (TR) provided additional records. At least one male **Eurasian Wigeon** has continued to be found in November in the Palo Alto FCB or Charleston Slough (v.ob.). One to four **Blue-winged Teal** have been in the Palo Alto FCB in November with four birds there on 7 and 22 Nov (MJM). A female on Artesian Slough on 27-28 Oct (SCR) may be the same bird found there in September. A single male **Redhead** was found on Charleston Slough on 11 Nov (MMR), but there has been no sign of the winter flock in the Palo Alto FCB as in past years. A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** on Shoreline Lake on 25 Nov (WGB) was the first of the season and the latest first arrival for this choice location in a decade. At least two males were present by 29 Nov (SRu).

Hawks through Owls

An adult **Ferruginous Hawk** at Cochrane and Hwy 101 on 3 Nov (SCR) was the first of the season. Another adult was over Lake Cunningham on 6 Nov

(MMR) and an immature was in San Antonio Valley on 15 Nov (SCR). At least two **Black Rails** were found on an early high tide at the Palo Alto Baylands on 6-7 Nov (*fide* MJM). Always rare in November, three **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found this month. Individuals in the Palo Alto FCB on 6 Nov and the ponds at Spreckles and State in Alviso on 13 Nov (both MMR) were from typical locations. More surprising was the single bird found inland at Calero Reservoir on 11 Nov (JMa). A flock of 79 **Red Knots** was in the Palo Alto estuary on 10 Nov (SCR) and is the largest concentration in the county since the early 1980s. However, flocks of this size are found more frequently further north in San Mateo County. Two **Stilt Sandpipers** in the Palo Alto FCB on 8 Nov (SRu) were quite late. A 1st-winter **Heermann's Gull** was

An immature Northern Shrike north of the San Antonio Valley was the first since 1985

at the Alviso Marina on 16 Nov (SCR, DSJ) for a rare sighting. The wintering adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** has been found irregularly in Alviso during the month with most observations from the flats north of the former Alviso Marino (v.ob.).

The resident (winter?) **Black Skimmer** flock shifted from the Sunnyvale area and showed up in Charleston Slough on 18 Nov when 12 were counted (PMB). This flock has remained through the end of the month and may winter here as they have in the past. A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen east of the Arnold Ranch on Arroyo Bayo on 21 Nov (MJM); part of our sparse resident population. The **Long-eared Owl** found last month on Mines Road was heard calling again on 14 Nov (MMR, MJM).

Woodpeckers through Phainopepla

A **Lewis' Woodpecker** seen in San Antonio Valley on 21 Nov (MJM) was the only one reported during a number of mid-November trips to the valley. An adult male **Red-naped Sapsucker** was found along Arroyo Bayo west of the Arnold Ranch on 15 Nov (SCR) and is likely the same bird found nearby on last winter's Mt. Hamilton CBC. Wintering birds often show site fidelity, but few so dramatically as the **Eastern Phoebe** found in Shady Oaks Park in San Jose on 24 Nov---it has returned for its sixth winter! An immature **Northern Shrike** was found north of San Antone Junction on 14 Nov (MMR, MJM) for the fifth county record for this northern visitor. It was found once again the next day (SCR), but not after that. So much for site fidelity. At best it appears to be a mild irruptive winter for **Red-breasted Nuthatches** with multiple birds seen regularly in Ed Levin CP (v.ob.) and a single bird on Arroyo Bayo on 15 Nov (SCR). We expect some of our half-hardy summer breeding species to linger and even over-winter along the creeks on the valley floor, but the **House Wren** doesn't always fit this pattern. We occasionally find late or wintering birds at higher elevations in the Diablo Range, but the ten House Wrens counted along Mines Road on 14 Nov (MMR, MJM) and the five found the next at Joseph Grant County park (MMR) seem most unusual. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, our other irruptive, was widespread in October. In November it has been found in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, at a number of spots on the valley floor, and in the Diablo Range. Although numbers appear to be tapering off, fourteen were counted along a three-mile stretch of Mines Road south of the Alameda County line on 14 Nov (MMR, MJM). The search for the Northern Shrike in San Antonio Valley recorded 1-4 **Phainopepla** in the valley and north of San Antone Junction 15-21 Nov (v.ob.) and these are typical winter numbers for this area.

Field Notes *continued*

Warblers through Goldfinches

A **Yellow Warbler** was found near the Alviso Environmental Education Center (EEC) on 21 Oct (SCR) and has been seen there through at least 7 Nov (MJM). This is an area where a bird has wintered regularly in recent years. A **Hermit Warbler** was seen at Montebello OSP on 20 Nov (AME) for a scarce winter record. Most of our rare wintering warblers are found on the valley floor, but Hermits have been found at various spots in the Santa Cruz Mountains in the late fall and winter in past years. A **Black-and-white Warbler** was found at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 1 Nov (EA). Unlike most of our vagrant warblers that appear in September and October, this species tends to show up in early winter. A common fall migrant, **Wilson's Warblers** are seldom found after October. A bird at the Alviso EEC on 28 Oct and 2 Nov (SCR) is therefore of interest, as is the immature female banded at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station on 21 Nov (*vide* LCh). Two **Vesper Sparrows** in the San Antonio Valley on 15 Nov (SCR) were a good find of this rare wintering bird. Single **White-throated Sparrows** found afield include one at Stevens Creek and Crittenden Lane on 3 Nov (WGB) and another on Felter Road on 8 Nov (MJM, SCR). Birds at feeders include one in Los Gatos on 10 Nov (JD), in Saratoga on 11-12 Nov (RSC), and in the Almaden foothills on 16 Nov (BH). The search for **Lapland Longspurs** on the Sierra Road summit netted only one, a bird calling in flight on 8 Nov (NL). A male **Hooded Oriole** at a feeder in San Jose on 29 Oct-1 Nov (PB) is very late and may be attempting to winter locally. **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found in good numbers in the San Antonio Valley unlike last year. Fifty-four were tallied on Mines Road on 14 Nov on 14 Nov (MMR, MJM) and on 15 Nov, 25 were found north of San Antone Junction while 30 were in the valley proper (SCR).

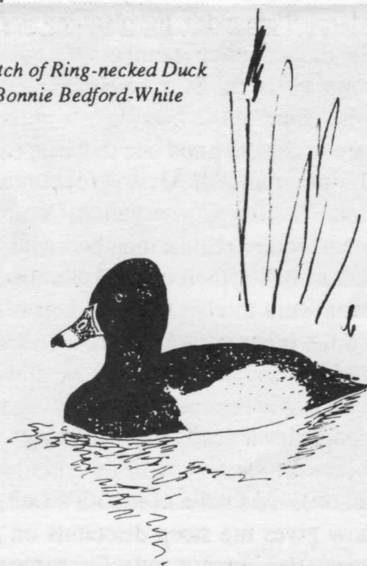
RARITIES: Please drop me a note: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025, or: bousman@merlin.arc.nasa.gov

Pescadero Marsh Field Trip

A clear, sunny day greeted the 14 birders (including one from Belgium) who gathered at the Pescadero Marsh parking area on Wednesday, November 18th. Before heading toward the marsh, we checked the offshore activity. A steady stream of loons flying south was visible along with fewer Surf Scoters and Brown Pelicans. More loons and Western Grebes were on the water. Sanderlings were active at the surf line, and Willets, Marbled Godwits and one Black Turnstone were found at the edge of the estuary. The high tide limited the shorebird activity with the lack of exposed shoreline.

As we headed into the marsh several school buses started arriving in the parking lot, and we shared the marsh with 3 classrooms of students participating in nature education activities. The students were interested in why we were in the marsh. They made us aware of some of the birds they had seen, viewed a few of our birds through spotting scopes, and seemed generally enthusiastic about their day.

Sketch of Ring-necked Duck
by Bonnie Bedford-White



Observers: Ernie Abeles (EA), Peg Bernucci (PB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Roy Cameron (RSC), Richard Carlson (RC), Les Chibana (LCh), Chuck Coston (CJC), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Ken Goss (KG), Tom Grey (TGr), Barbara Harkleroad (BH), Beverly Hesse (BH), David Johnston (DSJ), Nick Lethaby (NL), Mike Mammoserr (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Steve Rutledge (SRu), Tom Ryan (TR), and Ann Verdi (AV).

The marsh ponds were active with Northern Shovelers, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Ducks, Bufflehead, Mallards, Red-breasted Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks and one Canvasback. Distant views of a Belted Kingfisher and a Loggerhead Shrike were had by all. A Northern Harrier and an American Kestrel were seen flying over the marshy areas while several Red-tailed Hawks soared above us. A Common Snipe made a short flight into dense vegetation, several Greater Yellowlegs wandered in more visible areas, and Marsh Wrens were heard calling from the rushes. Yellow-rumped Warblers were busy flycatching, and American Goldfinches were feeding on dry thistles. A Black Phoebe and a Say's Phoebe engaged in several territorial disputes before settling down further apart.

Upon returning to Pescadero State Beach for lunch, we sighted more shorebirds: Black Oystercatchers, Surfbirds, and a Whimbrel along with both Pelagic and Double-crested Cormorants. In all, over 50 species were seen for the day, which remained sunny throughout.

-----Sue James

Winter Bird Classes

Local birding instructor Maryann Danielson will offer her popular birding classes again this winter. The first, Birding for Beginners, will focus on wintering resident birds, and is tailored for beginning and less-skilled birders. Seven slide lectures and three field trips are included. Class meets Tuesday mornings, 9-11 AM, starting January 26; fee is \$75.

The second class, Winter Bird Identification Workshops, is for intermediate and more advanced birders. Each workshop will have an evening study meeting followed by a field trip and is designed to simplify the identification of selected birds: birds of the Inner Coast ranges, near-shore seabirds, and wintering riparian area species. The workshop lectures begin on Monday, January 25, 7-9 PM; fee is \$55 for three workshops. Registration for both classes is at the first class meeting.

Audubon Helps Shape Alviso's Future

continued from Page 1

◆ City staff will develop an ordinance requiring the mowing rather than disking of lands intended as habitat reserves, helping Burrowing Owls and other species.

◆ The Urban Service Area (USA) encroachment into New Chicago Marsh was pulled back (though not as much as we had wanted), encouraging restoration of 14 acres to tidal salt marsh;

◆ Wilson Way, a small road behind Maine Elementary School, will be closed to cars, protecting schoolchildren and possibly replacing existing roadway with landscaping.

◆ Tentatively, there will be no new road from the high-tech industries south of Grand Boulevard onto Grand. Such a road would impact residents and a wetlands area. Although powerful Cisco Systems wants the road, it is willing to work on an alternative alignment.

◆ While calling for middle and upper-income housing (gentrification of this area is likely), the Master Plan as passed includes provisions for helping existing residents remain in and improve their homes and rentals.

◆ Specific areas of high wildlife habitat value will be identified, and future developers will be advised that those areas should be avoided or even enhanced.

◆ A stated, non-binding goal of the Plan will call for one-third of the remaining open land to be preserved as open space. In addition, Councilwoman Trixie Johnson (a great environmentalist who is unfortunately term-limited out of office) proposed that the city consider a policy of requiring projects that don't preserve one-third of their land to contribute to a fund that could be used to acquire habitat elsewhere in Alviso.

Some readers might be wondering what Audubon is doing advocating for affordable housing or the closing of roadways for safety reasons. The answer is simple: the people of this community asked for our help. The community is 70% middle and lower income Hispanic. Many of them were profoundly concerned about

the loss of open space and impacts to wetlands in their community. After meeting with them almost weekly at Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church, I became increasingly aware of their other concerns as well.

In this job I am so often reminded of Thomas Jefferson's words, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." Unfortunately, the city council decision on the Alviso Master Plan leaves many issues up in the air and will require us to stay vigilant as each development comes forward. We hope to work with, rather than against, Cisco Systems and others who come after them, but either way we will do what we can to ensure that the possibilities for good in the Master Plan become realities. On the other hand, the ambiguities of the plan ensure that SCVAS will continue to work with the community, and this I have enjoyed greatly.

Thanks

Too many "Thank yous" to list. To Margie Fernandez, the planning staff and the other council members for being receptive. To the SCVAS Board members who came to the hearings---a relatively rare occurrence and one that bespeaks of the importance of Alviso to our organization. To our Conservation Committee members and regular members who wrote letters, called their council members and even went to visit them in their offices. To the other organizations who worked with us to achieve what we did (this campaign even spawned a new organization, "Hispanics For Open Space", with whom I look forward to working in the future). To Rosita of Rosita's Deli, who now gives me steep discounts on great vegetarian burritos and refers to me as the Alviso town attorney. Last but not least, to the activists in Alviso: Ruben, Jenny, Mr. and Mrs. Tapia and the others who raised beautiful voices and were heard. My personal thanks to Mrs. Tapia, who fed me the night of the city council meeting and said that God always sends someone to help the people of Alviso when they need it, and this time He sent us. I can't remember ever receiving a more touching compliment on our work.

S.F. Bay, Salton Sea Need Statewide Support, Says Audubon CA Chief

Dan Taylor, head of California's Audubon office in Sacramento, urged SCVAS to energetically support the mounting efforts to save San Francisco Bay and Salton Sea from further environmental degradation and eventual destruction on a visit to December's SCVAS Board meeting in Cupertino.

The pollution and habitat loss at Salton Sea in Southern California "... is one of the most important environmental issues in the Western U.S.," said Taylor, noting that the land-locked saline lake and its surrounding marshy habitat provide crucial feeding and staging grounds for many thousands of migratory and resident bird species, including pelicans, cormorants, grebes, gulls, terns, shorebirds and more. The state Audubon office is prepared to undertake a massive campaign to save Salton Sea, similar to the 15-year battle to save Mono Lake, which galvanized environmentalists throughout the state in a difficult and costly, but ultimately successful battle that resulted in the preservation and rejuvenation of another of California's most valuable lakes.

Taylor acknowledged that many Northern Californians hadn't fully embraced the Salton Sea as an environmental issue worthy of Mono Lake-level attention. He made compelling arguments for local Audubon chapters throughout the state to back Audubon-California's growing Salton Sea campaign, and the Board seemed willing to consider such a commitment.

Closer to home, Taylor stressed the need for the eight Bay Area Audubon chapters to remain on the forefront of ongoing efforts to protect and restore San Francisco Bay as a thriving ecosystem and haven for resident and migratory birds. "Audubon can create a presence in the Bay Area that we've never seen before," he noted, "and SCVAS is the anchor for that presence in the South Bay."

SCVAS members are encouraged to communicate their opinions on these issues to our Board or staff. The Board would like to thank Dan Taylor for his continuing leadership, support, and devotion to the Audubon cause.

Readers Respond to Cooper's Hawk Story

Editor's note: All of us who work on the newsletter got a big kick out of Barbara Harkleroad's story of the Almaden Valley Cooper's Hawk and it's backyard exploits. Apparently you readers did, too---we received several responses from suburban birders who had their own "accipiter antics" to share. Here's a sampling:

Dear *Avocet* staff:

I think I can beat Barbara's experience. I, too, live in the Almaden Valley, but without the open space right next to me. I'm halfway between the Almaden Library and the Almaden Country Clubhouse. One day I heard a very loud crash against the side of the house---not the window---I couldn't imagine what it was. I went out to find a dazed California Quail lying on the patio. I didn't want to pick it right up and cause it to die of fright, so I pulled up a patio chair and sat with the quail between my feet, looking down at it.

As I sat there watching the quail, suddenly a hawk dropped down and snatched it from right under my very nose! It all happened so fast, and so unexpectedly, that I can't tell you what kind of hawk it was. I think the hawk probably made a pass at the quail I had put out food for, and missed, scaring one quail to fly up frantically and hit the house---and the hawk came back to claim its prize.

I have also had Scrub Jays come in when I call, and their babies have sat on my shoes and shoulders to be fed. Once a hummingbird came and took a bath in the puddle between my feet as I sat watering the grass. (*You must have bird-attracting feet---Ed.*)

I put bamboo screens over my two big windows that seem to cause birds to fly into them when they see the outdoors reflected in the glass. The screens have been a big help.

Sincerely,
Ruth Bloom
San Jose

Dear Mr. Harwood:

Anent your article on Cooper's Hawks in urban areas in the *Avocet*, you may be interested in the following notes I wrote about visitations in my back yard. I have been a birder since my Boy Scout days in Kansas City (1937 on) and have kept bird lists and the like. Since 1979 I have also written up special sightings such as these.

My [South Palo Alto] neighborhood is fifty years old, with half-dozen tall redwoods and spruces. My neighbor Gordon Buck (also a birder) and I inform one another whenever we are visited by raptors. We have often been visited by Peregrine Falcons, Red-shouldered Hawks, and American Kestrels, but the visitations by Cooper's Hawks are the most concentrated and chummy.

In 1995 or '96, my sister-in-law, Elwynne Trepel, who lives on Tennyson Street, noted that a Cooper's Hawk had been nesting about halfway up an evergreen tree behind her house. The next year, she said it was nesting there again, and was feeding young.



Gail Stigen's backyard bather

Editor:

We enjoyed the Cooper's Hawk story and have one of our own from a few years ago. As the enclosed picture shows, our Cooper's Hawk has been hanging around since 1993 and maybe longer. He loves our birdbath and stays at least one to one and a half hours each visit. We have no trauma to other birds during these times as they just disappear NOW.

In 1996, a Cooper's Hawk chased a small bird toward the house and "spread-eagled" against our back sliding doors with a tremendous "whump". I thought it had killed itself, but it flew up into a pepper tree and sat for a long, long time, recuperating, before it flew off.

In the July of 1997 I came home mid-morning one day there was a female Cooper's Hawk sitting on our birdbath. When it had been there for at least 15 minutes, it finally stepped gracefully and gingerly into the water, crossed the basin to the other side, and began taking a thorough wetting for a good 8-10 minutes. When it was thoroughly doused, it flapped up into Gordon Buck's persimmon tree, selecting a bare limb in the sun, and sat there sunning itself.

[Later], I saw the Hutton's Vireo that I had heard in Gordon's oleander earlier in the morning. It was perched high on the persimmon tree in the sunlight, now quite content that the awful hawk had left.

Very truly yours,
Barney Tanner
Palo Alto

This bird is one relaxed dude; he just looks at us and our guests when he's bathing and puts on a real Audubon show. He comes in October and stays until spring. Even the squirrels have a healthy respect for him, in that they fade from the scene fast when he's around.

It's all very amazing and entertaining.

Sincerely,
Gail K. Stigen
Mountain View

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