



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

October 1999

The Story of Marbled Godwit 95-828

by Ann Verdi

On August 7 I hiked the Alviso Slough Trail out to Salt Pond A-9 to see what interesting birds might be out and about. When I got to the pond I noticed a mixed flock of over 300 Long-billed Curlews and Marbled Godwits circling in the air, then landing on the marshy mudflats to feed. On scanning the milling rust-colored throng I noticed one particular Marbled Godwit with a red and yellow band on the upper right leg.

I sent this information to Al Jaramillo of San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO), who in turn forwarded my observation to Dr. Cheri Gratto-Trevor, who tracks color-banded observations for the Americas. On August 10, I received the following reply:

"Hello! Your report of a marked Marbled Godwit [MAGO] was recently forwarded to me. (I try to keep track of colour banded patterns used by all band-

ers in the Americas so I can connect banders and observers.) This one was rather easy to trace, as it looks as if it is one of my own birds!

"MAGO 95-828, a female, was originally banded on nest as an adult in the summer of 1995 in southern Alberta, about two hours east of Calgary. She originally had a white flag band with a tab extending from the leg on her upper left leg, but we noticed it was missing this year. She has a red colour band over a yellow colour band on the upper right leg. She nests in an area where I no longer do intensive work, so she was only seen twice this summer—May 5 and 8.

"I assume she did not successfully hatch off a brood (few shorebirds did this summer there) as I would probably have seen her with them---the birds are MUCH more obvious when they are defending young. She has been seen here every year

since 1995, whereas her original mate has not been observed since 1997. Many thanks for your observation and please keep an eye out for any more of my birds (I have banded both Willets and Marbled Godwits in southern Alberta since 1995). It is certainly useful to know she started south so early! Some of my birds have been seen in southern California, but I suspect most winter in Mexico. Thanks again!"

—Cheri Gratto-Trevor

*Research Scientist
Prairie & Northern Research Centre
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Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

End of story for now; however, this wonderful vignette illustrates quite graphically the importance of the San Francisco Bay (and particularly the South Bay) on the Pacific Flyway. While we're out with our binoculars and scopes scanning the mudflats, salt ponds and vegetation around local bayside habitats, we can also be on the lookout for banded birds.

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General Membership Meeting

Wednesday Oct. 20

"If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Noumea . . ."

with Don Roberson

Palo Alto Cultural Center

Embarcadero & Newell Rds.

7:30 Hospitality 8:00 Program

On a recent Christmas vacation, Don Roberson and Rita Carratello tried to squeeze in an entire trip "down under" into two very short weeks. This left them only three days for New Zealand and three days for New Caledonia. These distant islands have some of the world's rarest and strangest birds. Given their very short time, Don and Rita were most interested in seeing those which are so odd that they are classified in their own bird families. The endemics to beat all endemics, if you will. Come join the adventure as Don talks about their searches in New Zealand and New Caledonia---basically at the "end of the earth"---with the clock ticking down.

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VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Leda Beth Gray



One of the first things our volunteers learn when they are being trained to staff the office is where the phone numbers for the local native animal rescue organizations are posted. We get many calls from people who have injured birds in their yards, or baby birds that appear to be abandoned. The animal rescue folks are skilled at helping you decide whether a bird actually needs your help. They also rescue other animals, such as raccoons, squirrels, and sometimes even skunks. You may want to post one of the following numbers next to your phone, just in case:

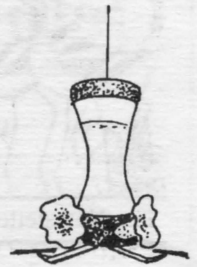
Wildlife Rescue of Palo Alto, (650) 494-7283, takes birds and other animals in need of help from Palo Alto, Stanford, Los Altos and Mountain View. The South County Humane Society, (408) 779-9372, takes animals from Gilroy, Morgan Hill and San Martin. Wildlife Rescue of Silicon Valley (408) 283-0744 pretty much covers the areas in between the other two in Santa Clara County.

For our members in Santa Cruz County, the Native Animal Rescue office number is (831) 420-0627; the hotline number is (831) 462-0726). A totally volunteer organization, they accept animals from anywhere in Santa Cruz County.

This summer we also got calls about impending danger for birds, such as planned trimming of a tree or bush that has an active nest in it. All native birds in the U.S. and their nests are protected by the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act which, among other things, prohibits the killing of native birds except game birds under the rules provided by State and Federal laws. The Act also prohibits interfering with the nest or nesting activities of a native bird. If you become aware of planned removal or trimming of trees or bushes that have active bird nests in them, you can call the appropriate agency or company to ask them to postpone their activities. By law they must do so, but to get the best response you need to contact them as early as possible.

When I lived in Palo Alto, I called the city in a couple of instances, to ask them to postpone cutting of trees with active Nuttall's Woodpecker nest holes that I saw were marked for removal with a red spot of paint on them. The City was very nice about it and did postpone their cutting until the woodpecker chicks had fledged. Unfortunately, it is hard to convince most cities to leave dead trees around for future woodpecker holes. Palo Alto will leave some in parks if they are not considered to be a hazard.

They also told me they would leave a dead street tree if the neighbors didn't mind, and if they could trim it down so as not to be a hazard. But this seems to be asking a lot.



This summer I was called on a couple of times by Audubon members to intervene in situations with companies planning to cut trees. Both companies claimed they were not familiar with the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act. I was happy to step in and do some educating, and in both cases the companies willingly called off their cutting, one of them at the last minute. If any of you ever get in a situation like this, I hope you will call on us to help. However, I suspect that most of the time you can take care of these situations on your own by citing the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

We also get calls from concerned folks about Burrowing Owls, either because the owls are endangered by impending development or because people see them in places that are unusual or not known as Burrowing Owl hangouts. We are very happy to receive these calls because they help us (mostly meaning Craig) better protect the terminally-cute little guys, and believe me, they need our help.

Similarly, I would like to know about any situations having to do with birds being electrocuted by power poles or power lines. In the early '70's this was a big issue in the U.S. much publicized by the National Audubon Society and other groups. Since then, because of the publicity, many poles that originally had design features that could lead to electrocution of (especially) raptors, have been retrofitted to avoid this, or replaced. Still, only about two years ago, I helped a friend in the Central Valley get assistance in persuading her electrical company to retrofit a pole that had been electrocuting owls and hawks. I am wondering how we are doing in the Santa Clara Valley on this issue.

We really appreciate the fact that many of our members take the time to look into issues such as these, and to alert us when they cannot solve such problems on their own. For all your past help on this, and in advance, THANKS!

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*(Ulrike's "Volunteer Opportunities"
column appears on Page 4)*

October 1999 Calendar

****Denotes field trip. On all trips carpool if possible; bring binoculars, field guides, layered clothing. LO = Lunch optional; RC = Heavy rain cancels.**

****Saturday Oct. 2, 9:00 AM**

Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands. Full day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408)247-5499. Meet at Page Mill Rd/I-280 Park'n'Ride at 8:00 AM for carpooling. Highlights: migrating raptors; possibility of a rare Broad-winged Hawk. Heavy fog may change itinerary.

****Sunday Oct. 3, 8:30 AM**

Arastradero Preserve. Half day. 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. A variety of woodland and grassland species; especially raptors possible. Two miles of moderate walking. RC.

Wednesday Oct. 6, 7:30 PM. Bay Area Bird Photographers present Bruce Finocchio with slides of California landscapes and wildlife. Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Sunday Oct. 10, 9:00 AM**

Charleston Slough. Half day. Leader: Dick Stovel (650)856-6105. From Hwy. 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way parking area.

Bird Class Correction

Sandy Cortright's Beginning Bird Class will be offered on Sunday, Oct. 10, not Saturday as listed in the September *Avocet*. The 3-hour class will cover bird groups, bird identification, binocular and field guide selection, where and how to find birds, and more.

The class will be held at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino from 9 AM to noon; cost is \$20. To register, call the Audubon office at (408) 252-3747.

Meet at entrance nearest San Antonio Rd. This trip recommended for beginning birders but, as always, birdwatchers of all skill levels are encouraged to participate. A good chance to try out your new spotting scope.

****Saturday & Sunday Oct. 9 - 10 Big Sur River/Old Coast Road, Andrew Molera State Park.**

Leader: Rick Fournier (831) 633-0572. Join Rick Saturday evening for an owling expedition out the Old Coast Road and/or on Sunday morning for a half day, two-mile field trip along the Big Sur River in search of western migrants, residents and possible Eastern vagrants, ending with a visit to the Big Sur Ornithology Lab for banding demonstrations. For owling, meet Saturday evening at 7:30 PM at the kiosk as you enter the parking lot in Andrew Molera State Park. The Sunday morning half-day field trip will meet at 8:00 AM at the same location. Camping is available in Andrew Molera State Park (a short 1/2 mile walk, modest camping fee) or at a variety of other campgrounds in the area. For those wishing more civilized accommodations, try the Big Sur River Inn or Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Inn for starters. October is usually comfortable and mild, but be prepared for cool, damp weather. Please call and confirm your participation.

Tuesday Oct. 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)265-9286. Topic: Acorn Woodpecker.

****Wednesday Oct. 13, 8:30 AM**

Alum Rock Park. Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take Alum Rock Ave. north-east toward the hills and into park. Turn left at entrance kiosk (at bottom of hill

before bridge); meet in first parking lot near "Rustic Lands" area. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Possible entrance fee; LO; RC.

****Saturday Oct. 16, 8:30 AM**

Coyote Hills Regional Park. Half day. 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. Entrance fee probable.; LO.

****Sunday Oct. 17, 8:00 AM**

Carmel River and vicinity. Half day plus. Leader: Kathy Parker (408)358-2832. Take Hwy 1 south to Rio Rd. in Carmel; turn left then immediately right into the Crossroads Shopping Center. Meet at Cinema Parking lot at back of mall near the river. Possible migrants, vagrants, rarities.

****Saturday Oct. 23, 9:00 AM**

Phipps Ranch. Half day. Leader: Garth Harwood (408)252-3747. Bird one of the best migrant and vagrant warbler traps in San Mateo Co. Take Hwy. 84 or Hwy 92 west to Hwy. 1, then south to Pescadero Rd., follow the road through the town of Pescadero to Phipps Ranch located about one mile east. RC.

****Sunday Oct. 24, 8:30 AM**

Sunnyvale Baylands Park/ Calabazas Ponds. Half Day. Leader: Ann Verdi (408)266-5108. From Lawrence Expwy go north across Hwy 237, turn right at first stoplight into park. Continue right on perimeter road to end of parking area. Highlights: Burrowing Owl, ducks, egrets, gulls and shorebirds. Possible fee; RC.

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Calendar

continued

****Wednesday Oct. 27, 8:30 AM. Palo Alto Foothills Park.** Half day. Leader: Alberta Jasberg (650)493-9546. Woodland and grassland birds. Since the park is open only to Palo Alto residents and their guests, the group will meet at Page Mill/I-280 Park'n'Ride to carpool. LO, RC.

**** Saturday Oct. 30, 8:00 AM Princeton Harbor and vicinity.** Half day. Leader: Mark Miller (650)967-3429. Meet in the northeast corner of the intersection of Capistrano Rd and Prospect Way in Princeton-by-the-Sea, 4 miles north of Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1. Be sure to bring your scope. Highlights: waterbirds, coastal migrants and vagrants possible. RC.

****Sunday Oct. 31, 9:00 AM Western San Francisco.** Half day. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415)664-0983.

Note change in Daylight Savings Time; "fall back" or be an hour early for this trip. From I-280 take 19th Ave to Golden Gate Park. When entering park on 19th Ave. be in left lane and take Crossover Dr. to 25th St. to Geary Blvd; left on Geary to Cliff House restaurant on right; meet in parking lot.

****Saturday Nov. 6, 8:00 AM Palo Alto Baylands Park/Duck Pond.** Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. From Hwy 101 take Embarcadero Rd. east to the end, turn left, drive past Duck Pond and park in lot near Baylands Nature Interpretive Center. Gulls, ducks, shorebirds, possible migrants/vagrants. Heavy RC.

****Sunday Nov 7, 8:30 AM Stevens Creek County Park.** Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408)257-3647. From I-280 in

Cupertino take Foothill Expwy exit south 2.1 miles (becomes Stevens Canyon Rd.), turn left into first (Chestnut) park entrance and meet in first parking lot. Our chance to see what's in the park in the fall for a change. LO, RC.

****Sunday Nov. 14, 8:30 A.M. Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford University.** Half day. Leaders: docents. Limit 24 participants by reservation only. Call Bob Reiling at (408)253-7527 to reserve space. \$5 fee per person. Meet at Preserve gate (not Whiskey Hill gate). Gates open 7:40 to 8:10 AM only. From I-280 take Sand Hill Rd. west 2 miles to main gate on left. Moderately strenuous walking, 2-3 miles. Trip goes rain or shine.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

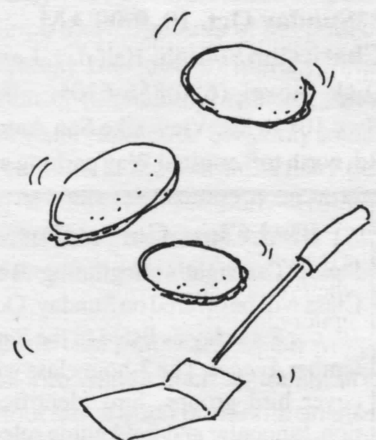
by Ulrike Keyssner

Summer holidays are over but I'm happy to be back at work. I had a great time in Israel and Egypt despite the paucity of birds during the hot and dry summer. However, there is no shortage of history to enjoy and a place I was continually dazzled by the many beautiful birds was in the tombs and temples of Pharaonic Egypt. The colorful drawings and hieroglyphs on the walls were delightful. I'm sure the Pharaohs would have become Audubon members!

As I mentioned last month, we need some knowledgeable individuals to step up to the plate and help us with our Apple computer system. We need to reorganize and sort our hardware and software. A recent donation means our environmental advocate, Craig Breon, can access the Internet from his office computer (a giant leap forward!), but we need help with the installation. Maybe there is someone in your family or at your work that you can persuade to come in for a few hours a couple of times (weekends or evenings are fine). Please let me know.

Finally, I want to announce a fun event we are having at McClellan Ranch. To show our appreciation to our hard-working volunteers and to entice new ones, we are having a **Volunteer Pancake Breakfast on Saturday November 13th**. For those of you who are curious about volunteering, this is your chance to come in, watch the SCVAS Board flip pancakes and scramble eggs, and to talk to staff and current volunteers about volunteering (i.e. office, nature shop, education, bird walks, environmental action). Remember, the amount of time volunteered is discretionary! We will begin with a bird walk before breakfast. You must RSVP and we will tell you the times for the walk and breakfast. **Call 408-252-3747 to RSVP by Friday 5th November.**

Save Saturday morning,
November 13
to attend our volunteer
pancake breakfast.



Have fun, eat
and learn about
volunteering
at SCVAS!

Of Local Interest

An occasional column on local birds and birders
by Garth Harwood

"What's happened to my BIRDS?," the anxious voice would cry at the other end of the line, in the days when I answered the Audubon phone. As often as not, the question would crop up in spring or fall, and my answer would boil down to a single calming word: "Migration!" It's that time again, and you may have seen some pretty dramatic changes lately in the birds at your feeders or in your neighborhood. Everyone knows about migration in theory, of course, but it's still easy to miss the connection to the changes occurring in your own yard. Especially when those delightful orioles, swallows and flycatchers you've grown so fond of are suddenly gone, as if for good.

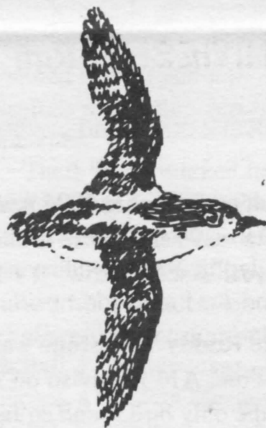
And it can be spooky, indeed, at the point of transition, when the outgoing set of migrants has already moved on, and before the incoming set of birds fills out the numbers again. But not to worry—everything is proceeding according to plan. At this time of year you can look forward to local arrivals of White- and Golden-crowned Sparrows; Yellow-rumped, Orange-crowned, and Townsend's Warblers; and even a few raptors such as Merlins and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

An aspect of migration that's especially exciting to birders is the opportunity to see birds not normally found in our area as they pass through. Indeed, fall migration is the very best time to spot "vagrants" that are truly out of range, such as the occasional Palm Warbler that strays into Santa Clara County in the fall. The reason for this is simple enough: this is when young birds are making their first migratory journey, and a certain percentage of them inevitably lose their way. (The downside to this phenomenon is that many such birds are in immature plumages that may look very little like the pictures in your field guide. Good thing you like a challenge!)

This month is an excellent time to plan several trips to local bayland parks such as Mountain View's Shoreline, Sunnyvale's Baylands, or the Don

Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge at Alviso. The sheer volume of migrating waterfowl and shorebirds is stunning at this time of year, and the scruffy patches of fennel found along the margins of locations such as the Palo Alto Duck Pond are well-known "vagrant traps" where a variety of unusual songbirds may put in an appearance. All in all, it's a pretty sweet deal, living at one of the greatest gathering points on the Pacific Flyway.

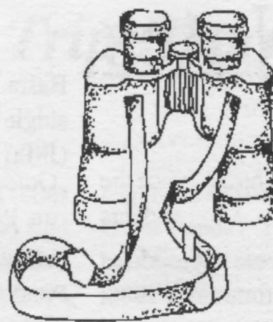
BANDED BIRD ALERT: The California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP) has initiated a broad program of banding the birds that use its nestboxes across the state. During the 1999 breeding season, I apprenticed with several volunteers from the San Mateo County program to learn



"I was treated daily to the sound of Marbled Murrelets commuting overhead at dawn..."

the art of banding songbirds, and by season's end we began banding a few of our Santa Clara County birds. Next door in San Mateo Co., the tally of banded birds already reaches into the hundreds. Over time, our nestbox program should add many more banded birds to local skies (and of course, banding has taken place for years at such locations as the former Coyote Creek Riparian Station, now officially known as Coyote Creek Field Station of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory).

Among other things, this means that



encounters between non-scientists and banded birds will become more common in the future. Leg bands only have value upon recapture (as in the information from a leg band found

on Fluffy's latest deposit on your front step, or from remains below your picture window.) Here's an important number to jot down somewhere memorable: 1-800-327-BAND. Many, if not most data on recovered bands worldwide come from ordinary citizens responding through this number. Our local goal? To discover where "our" birds go, of course. Over time, however, basic data on the seasonal movements of birds may be applied to any number of research questions, large and small.

NEWS FROM PESCADERO: In the past couple of months I have had an embarrassment of avian riches right here at home. Through the beginning of August I was treated almost daily to the sound of Marbled Murrelets commuting overhead at dawn, from their nest sites in the redwood parks upstream to the coast nearly six miles to the west. Then one day a pair of Peregrine Falcons showed up for half an hour. And to top everything else, I've had a juvenile Golden Eagle disrupting the neighborhood with its incessant cries for food for the past several weeks, a vary rare breeding confirmation of this species for the San Mateo Co. coast. (There have actually been three eagles overhead at once on two recent occasions.) Add in the Pileated Woodpeckers I mentioned in the June column, which still call out occasionally, and it's enough to make a guy feel a bit overprivileged. But OK, well, I'll find a way to live with it.

Are these birds really as new to the neighborhood as they seem, or is it just that I've finally learned how to see them? I suspect it's a combination of the two. After all, regional populations of both eagles and falcons have been recuperating for a number of years. But my walks in nearby forests have revealed the tell-

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Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Herons through Raptors

Little Blue Herons were not reported this summer for the first time since 1988, but on 1 Aug two adults were found on their favored Salt Pond A9 in Alviso (MMR). One to two birds were found there through the month (v.ob.). **White-faced Ibis** have occurred sporadically in recent years. An immature in Crittenden Marsh on 28 Aug (NL) was the first found this year. An eclipse male **Canvas-back** on the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds on 14 Aug (MMR) was probably overwintering. A **Ring-necked Duck** at the Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve (BR) on 2 Aug (SCR) was in a location where birds have been found before in the summer. An **Osprey** hovering over Felt Lake on 31 Aug (KHt) was the only one seen this month. **Swainson's Hawk** is found in this county only as a very rare spring migrant, so a bird over Coyote Creek on 15 Aug (LCh et al.)

is of particular interest as it appears to represent an early fall migrant. It is the first August record and only the second fall record of the last few decades. A **Prairie Falcon** over the Calabazas ponds on 29 Aug (MMi) was the first bird found away from the Diablo Range this season.

Shorebirds

A **Snowy Plover** was seen on Salt Pond A14 in Alviso on 1 Aug (MMR), our first local bird since May, and another bird was found on the Calabazas ponds on 25 Aug (SCR). As expected for August, **Lesser Yellowlegs** built up in numbers during the month and high counts include 39 at the Calabazas ponds on 26 Aug (SCR), 17 on the ponds at State and Spreckles in Alviso on 19 Aug (SCR), and 11 in the Palo Alto Flood Control

Basin (FCB) on 23 Aug (MMR). A single bird on Calero Reservoir on 4 Aug (JMa) was inland, where they are much rarer.

A **Marbled Godwit** with red over yellow color bands was found on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 7 Aug (AV). [See story on Page 1.] Posted to the local net on 9 Aug it was forwarded in cyberspace through the courtesy of Alvaro Jaramillo of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory and the bander, Dr. Cheri Gratto-Trevor, responded on 10 Aug with the information that she first banded this fe-

*An unusual fall
Swainson's Hawk
provided a counterpoint to
August shorebirds such as
Stilt Sandpiper and Ruff*

male as an adult on its nest in 1995 near Brooks, Alberta and has seen it in the region every year since. Wow, it's a small world!

An alternate **Ruddy Turnstone** was found on Salt Pond A14 in Alviso on 1 Aug (MMR); the only bird found so far this season. Three **Red Knots** were at Charleston Slough on 28 Aug (PLaT); again a new bird for the season. Juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** lingered into August at the Calabazas ponds with one seen on 1 Aug (SCR, DL, NL) and two on 3 Aug (RWR, FV). Another juvenile was on the CCRS waterbird pond on 19 Aug (SCR) and a juvenile was seen again at the Calabazas ponds on 28 Aug (NL). Two **Baird's Sandpipers** were north of the Alviso Marina on 7 Aug (MDo). An adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** was seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 14 Aug

(MMR) and another bird was seen at the Calabazas ponds on 22 Aug (AME). Single basic-plumaged **Dunlins** on Salt Pond A14 on 1 Aug (MMR) and the ponds at State and Spreckles in Alviso on 31 Aug (RWR, FV) were very early migrants. An adult **Stilt Sandpiper** in mostly basic plumage was found on the Calabazas ponds on 21 Aug (NL) and seen by many through at least 28 Aug (m.ob.). A second adult, with a fair amount of alternate plumage, was seen at Crittenden Marsh on 28 Aug (NL). An adult female **Ruff** was seen on the ponds at State and Spreckles in Alviso on 19–20 Aug (SCR, SBT), but was not found after that. A count of 910 **Wilson's Phalaropes** and 3150 **Red-necked Phalaropes** on the Alviso salt ponds on 1 Aug (MMR) were both season highs. Good counts were obtained at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds for **Common Terns** this year. Two basic birds were first found there on 7 Aug (MJM, JMe), three were counted on 15 Aug (MMR), and at least seven were there and on nearby Salt Pond A3W on 17 Aug (RWR, FV). One bird still remained there

on 21 Aug (MJM). Staging **Least Terns** continued to be found in the salt ponds east of Stevens Creek through at least 28 Aug (NL) with high counts of 50 there on 8 Aug (NL) and 62 on 26 Aug (RWR, FV). None were found there on 31 Aug (RWR, FV). Less often found in fall, a **Black Tern** was seen on Salt Pond A13 in Alviso on 7 Aug (MDo).

Swifts through Goldfinches

A single **Vaux's Swift** at Rancho San Antonio OSP on 2 Aug (JLi) and four at the old Paul Masson winery on 30 Aug (GHt) were in areas where they sometimes nest. Dispersing or migrating birds were found along the Bay (v.ob.), as in most Augusts, with a high count of 20 birds over State and Spreckles on 25 Aug (SCR). Larger numbers are likely during

continued next page

the main migration in September and early October. A female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was found along the Guadalupe River above Montague on 15 Aug (MMR) and is probably a local dispersant. Two to three immature female **Pileated Woodpeckers** were found in Upper Stevens Creek CP on 1 Aug (LCh) and are probably from a local nesting, perhaps of the pair that nested on Table Mountain last year. The first **Willow Flycatcher** of the fall season was along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 26 Aug (SCR). A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** seen in La Rinconada Park in Los Gatos on 31 Aug (GL) may be a local dispersant. Conventional wisdom holds that large-scale movements of this species take place in two- or three-year cycles. Last year had many fall birds which suggests that this will be an off year. A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** found along San Francisquito Creek above El Camino on 9 Aug (MDo) must have overwintered in the area as wintering birds do not arrive until the end of September. A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at Calero Reservoir on 7 Aug (JMa) was an unusual find. Four adults and two fledgling **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were at the Jasper Ridge BR on 2 Aug (SCR) indicating breeding there this year.

Observers: Les Chibana (LCh), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Al Eisner (AME), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Karen Hoyt (KHt), Peter LaTourrette (PLaT), Gloria LeBlanc (GL), Nick Lethaby (NL), Dave Lewis (DL), Jim Liskovec (JLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), John Meyer (JMe), Mark Miller (MMi), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Scott Terrill (SBT), Frank Vanslager (FV), and Ann Verdi (AV).

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

Field Trip Report

Ogier Ponds Sept. 11

On the morning of September 11, our group arrived at the Ogier Ponds to find the entrance locked! Fortunately the gates were opened at 8:30 AM and we were able to enjoy our scheduled bird walk. For starters, a couple of fishermen in a canoe entered the first pond south of the entrance and flushed every duck, including approximately a dozen Wood Ducks in the far southwest corner. Later, a family throwing a stick for their pet dog to retrieve managed to flush a remaining pair of these shy ducks from reeds on the north side of the pond.

Generally the birding was better than my scouting trip on the previous day. We had a Golden Eagle that cruised down, quite low, from the eastern foothill ridgeline to a point just south of the model airplane field, providing good looks before gaining some height. Other raptors included Red-tailed Hawk, White-tailed Kite, a couple of accipiters (one each probable Cooper's Hawk and Sharpshinned Hawk) and a pair of American Kestrels decorating various cottonwood branches.

There was a marked improvement in the variety of passerines (songbirds) seen, as the wind was not as bad as on Friday, but pickings were still slim. We had a calling California Thrasher, fair looks at a Yellow Warbler, good looks at a female Nuttall's Woodpecker, Lesser Goldfinches, a Western Meadowlark, and Belted Kingfishers, along with some of the "usual suspects".

We had excellent views of one Green Heron, but the best birds were in the pond nearest the model airplane field. As we walked along the southern edge of this pond an American Bittern flushed from the reeds and flew to the eastern edge of the ponds, giving us excellent views of its back, black wingtips and yellow-green feet as it flew. A Sora was found in the southeastern corner of this pond shortly thereafter (one had been calling earlier. We "dipped" (missed) on the Osprey, Ring-necked Ducks, Ruddy Duck and Caspian Terns seen Friday.

Finally, one question remains: Is Coors Light the beer of choice for visitors the Ogier Ponds? The blue-and-silver cardboard containers, empty cans, and bottles decorated many selected sites around the two largest ponds where humans have beat back the wild habitat and left their unsightly litter after taking enjoyment and recreation from an otherwise lovely site.

—Bob Reiling

Thanks to Field Trip Coordinator Bob Reiling for another fine report. The Avocet needs more input from our members---if you're a leader or participant, enjoy writing, and wish to convey your birding experiences to our readers, please send your submissions to our Cupertino address.

Just to expand on Bob's brief editorial comment in his last paragraph, it is indeed disappointing to find trash at one's favorite birding site. One of the cardinal rules of birding etiquette is to leave a site the way you found it. Although birders are seldom guilty of littering, they sometimes trample vegetation, break tree branches, etc. in their zeal for finding an elusive bird.

At Ogier Ponds, for example, the reedy habitat at the pond edges provide ducks, grebes, rails, bitterns, herons and other species with valuable roosting habitat out of harm's way. As Bob noted, some birds were flushed by fishermen and dogs, just as we birders occasionally flush birds from hidden sites. The birds are resilient; they find new roosting spots. We simply need to remember to tread lightly and quietly on the ground, especially when in a group, and respect the wildlife around us while we're birding.

As for the issue of litter, who knows why people persist in defacing the environment this way. Sometimes the best thing you can do is shake your head, pick it up yourself, and remove the eyesore. And continue to shake your head over the public's gullible submission to clever ad campaigns for bland products like Coors Light beer!-----Ed.

Readers Suggest Tips for Feeding Clinging Birds

Some time ago we ran across an article discussing the feeding of titmice and chickadees black oiled sunflower seeds using a modified pint plastic water bottle. It involved drilling several 1/4 inch holes near the bottom of the bottle. We found that adding a few 1/8 inch holes near the larger holes aided the clinging birds in their feeding activities. This system has worked very well for us and denied the seed to the more common perching birds, who tend to overwhelm the smaller clinging birds at conventional feeders.

Recently we have been experimenting with a feeding mixture developed by ornithologist John Terres. Called "Marvel Meal," the mix consists of:

1 cup peanut butter
1 cup vegetable shortening, melted
beef or suet drippings (we use lard)
4 cups corn meal
1 cup white flour

The mixture makes a soft doughy food. It can be presented in various feeders, but at perch feeders the perching birds overpower the Oak Titmice and Chestnut-backed Chickadees. We are now trying to modify the one-pint plastic bottle feeder to accommodate the Marvel Mix, and so far the clinging birds are enjoying it to the exclusion of the perching birds. We are still working on improving the consistency of the mix so it automatically refills the 1/4 inch holes as the birds feed.

---Joe and Eunice Wissel

Thanks Joe and Eunice! Anyone else have a suggestion on back yard bird feeding? Send them to us and we'll print them.-----Ed.

*Would this squishy mixture work in an inverted pinecone?----BB-W:
Assistant to Ed.*



Marbled Godwit

continued

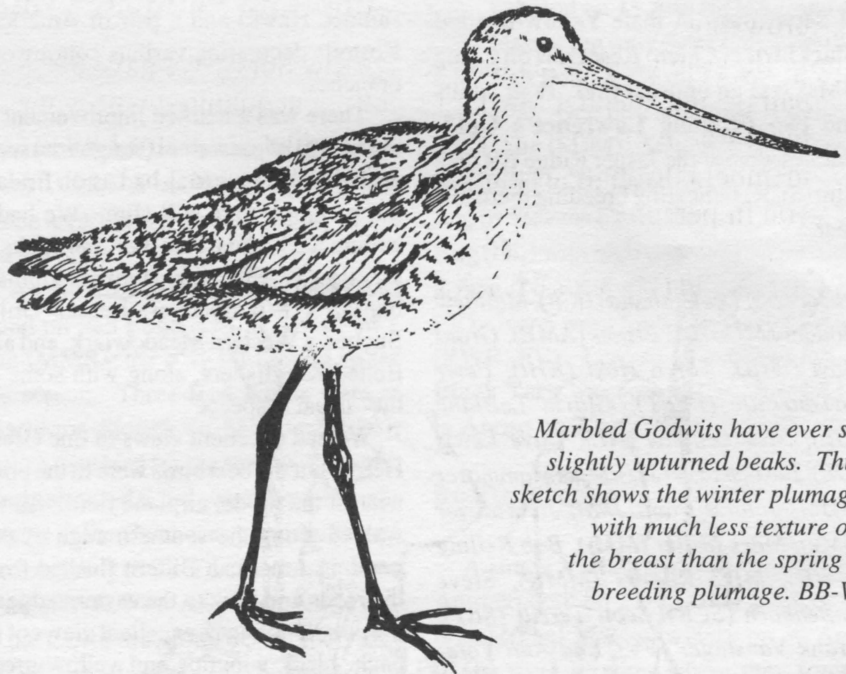
Al Jaramillo has noted some key items to look for: color(s) and position (which color is on top of which); which leg (right or left); above or below leg joint; and, of course, species of bird. He also notes that some birds can be banded with "flags" or tabs which stick out and stated that these flags are helpful in determining where the shorebird was banded, as each country has a code.

Dr. Gatto-Trevor is the official person to be contacted on banded shorebirds; however, such information can also be sent to Al Jaramillo (alvaro@sirius.com), or c/o SFBBO < Box 247, 1290 Hope Street, Alviso CA 95002.

SFBBO will be conducting their own

color banding of sparrows this fall and winter and would appreciate any sightings of birds with metal bands (note right or left leg) as well as birds with color bands. Any such sparrow sightings or other banded bird sightings should be sent to Al Jaramillo at SFBBO.

A final note on Marbled Godwit 95-828. Cheri Gratto-Trevor says she will let me know when and if this bird returns to southern Alberta next spring. In the meantime, I have revisited Salt Pond A-9, but the large flock of Long-billed Curlews and Marbled Godwits has departed, presumably winging its way to wintering grounds further south. As for MAGO 95-828, I wish her "Godspeed" on her life's journey.



Marbled Godwits have ever so slightly upturned beaks. This sketch shows the winter plumage with much less texture on the breast than the spring's breeding plumage. BB-W

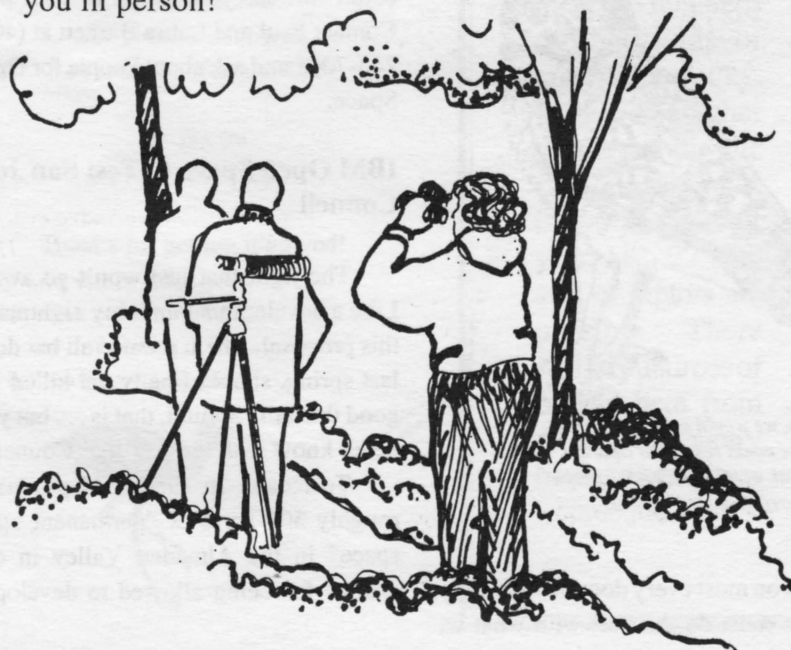
Open House for New Members

The SCVAS Membership Committee is hosting an open house for new members on Saturday, Oct. 16, 9:00 AM at our headquarters at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino, just a few minutes off I-280. If you have joined Audubon in the past year, please come out to meet us and find out what's going on in the Chapter.

We'll start off with a short bird walk around the parks varied habitats, including Stevens Creek and its richly diverse riparian growth, an old orchard, and an open grassy area, all of which provide great habitat for numerous different birds. Board member Dave Cook, an active birder and field trip leader, will guide the walk and help everyone learn about the Park's feathered inhabitants.

After the walk, we'll serve coffee, tea and bagels in our meeting room, where new members can meet other Board members to discuss programs, learn about volunteer opportunities, and give us your feedback. Our rapidly expanding and improving library and gift shop will also be open for browsing.

So grab your binoculars (or borrow ours—we have extra pairs!) and spend a few hours getting acquainted with your local Audubon Chapter. We'll have other programs for new members throughout the year. We look forward to meeting you in person!



Of Local Interest

continued

tale markings of Pileated Woodpecker excavations going back for a number of years, and the murrelets have been here forever. It's like answering that Audubon phone again: Time and time again I'd take calls where an excited caller described a "bird I've never seen before" that turned out to be one of the most common back yard birds of our area, such as a California or Spotted Towhee, or Dark-eyed Junco. I learned to have great respect for such moments. Something had triggered the caller's perception, and they'd achieved a fresh connection with the world. It would often lead to many more.

And who knows what's close to us right now, awaiting our next moment of discovery?

Birding at the Bottom of the Bay to Rise Again

We are starting to compile the third edition of Birding at the Bottom of the Bay, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's own birding hot spot guide.

WE NEED YOU!

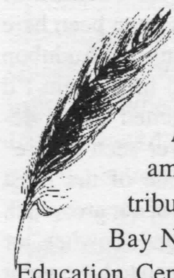
- "YOU" being any original authors, verifiers, illustrators, inputters and compilers.
- "YOU" being anyone who is interested in birding local hot spots to document what birds are there, especially for visitors to our area.
- "YOU" being anyone who would like to serve on the committee to spearhead the effort.

Please call Freddy Howell at
408-358-9453



Unnnder the Boooooardwalk

by Craig Breon
Environmental Advocate



In the Spring of 1998, our annual Bird-A-Thon raised money for, among other things, a contribution to the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge Education Center in Alviso. The Ed Center's old boardwalk above New Chicago Marsh was no longer good enough for their needs, so they needed to raise \$200,000 for a new one. Our chapter gave \$2,000.

The new boardwalk, accessible to the disabled and complete with viewing areas, will begin construction September 20 and should take about eight weeks to complete. That should be especially good news to the SCVAS Education Committee. We will soon be able to resume talking loads of kids from the South Bay to Alviso for wetlands field trips.

To those who donated to the 1998 Bird-A-Thon, or to any readers who have given to our chapter, pat yourselves on the back. Thanks to you, our chapter can afford to be generous towards the community around us.

You Could Be a TV Star (well, sort of)

SCVAS is a proud member of the coalition of environmental organizations that produces Common Ground TV (CGTV). Since 1992, CGTV has allowed environmentalists to get their message across by working together to create an environmental talk show. The coalition has produced 128 shows which air regularly on local access cable channels. A copy of each program is also available at the Peninsula Conservation Center in Palo Alto.

The shows are produced in Palo Alto by volunteers from the participating or-

ganizations. Volunteers start with working cameras, lights, switchboards, etc. and eventually many of them get involved with directing, producing, or hosting shows.

The coalition is looking for new volunteers. Training is provided, and it's a great chance to learn about the diversity of environmental issues in the South Bay and beyond. If you are interested in issues of ecology and/or in TV production, give Craig a call at the office (408) 252-3748.

More Open Space for Santa Clara? Part II---The News is Good

In this summer's edition of *The Avocet*, we reported on a chance for more protected open space along the Guadalupe River in the City of Santa Clara. At a key meeting in August, it seemed our efforts will be rewarded.

While it's a shame that the Agnews West site, originally containing nearly 300 acres of urban open space, will be developed at all, so called "progress"



"Ideally, we would get 40-45 acres which we could restore to riparian forest, oak woodlands, and perhaps some Burrowing Owl habitat."

knocks on most every door in this valley, and we must do the best with what we

can. SCVAS and People for Open Space in Santa Clara called on our members to write letters on the issue, and write they did. More than 70 letters came in to the city council, and those letters clearly had an effect on August's meeting. Every one of the six council members attending called for the developers to include open space in their proposal before bringing it back to the city for further consideration. Our efforts are a long way from over, however. No final decision has been made. We still do not know how much open space the council will ask for, where that land will be, or what it will look like. Ideally, we would get 40-45 acres which we could restore to riparian forest, oak woodlands, and perhaps some Burrowing Owl habitat.

As usual, our chapter members and other volunteers are making the difference in Santa Clara. They have kept up nearly three years of activism for urban open space, and their efforts have clearly set the stage for the council to make decisions that few other valley-level cities are making.

If you live or work in Santa Clara, we could still use your voice, or your pen. Contact Paul and Laura Barnett at (408) 243-7001 and ask about People for Open Space.

IBM Open Space to Test San Jose Council

The fight that just won't go away. Like a development mummy nightmare, this proposal, which seemed all but dead last spring, should finally get killed for good this fall. Should, that is... but you never know with the San Jose Council.

To recap: In 1980 IBM promised roughly 500 acres of "permanent open space" in the Almaden Valley in exchange for being allowed to develop a

continued next page

IBM Open Space *continued*

research park that would generally not be allowed in the hillsides. In 1998, however, IBM struck a deal with a developer to sell a portion of that open space for luxury housing. The Almaden neighbors swung into action and, with a little help from our chapter, seemingly backed IBM down and killed the project. However, the developer—who evidently has a history of getting his way before the San Jose City Council—threatened to sue IBM if they didn't carry forward with the project.

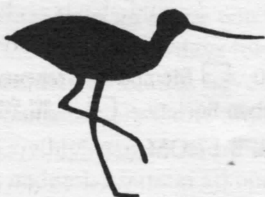
Meanwhile, one wonders which councilpeople would be irresponsible enough to vote in favor of such a project, but, as mentioned above, in San Jose you never know. So far, both Mayor Ron Gonzales and the Councilwoman for the district, Pat Dando, have said they oppose the project.

Letters are called for. If this proposal angers you as it does us, give us a call at the office for more information (408) 252-3748, or simply write a brief note of protest to:

Mayor Ron Gonzales and
Council Members
801 North First Street
San Jose, California 95110

Or fax to:
(408) 277-5192

Thanks for getting involved!



Central Valley Birding Symposium

The Central Valley Bird Club is hosting the Third Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium Nov. 18-21 at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton, CA. There will be speakers, field trips, workshops, a Birder's Market, and more.

Speakers include: Paul Lehman ("Where the Birds Are", "Weather and Bird Migration"); Jon Dunn ("Flycatcher ID Workshop"); Kimball Garrett ("Exotic Challenges to Bird ID"); and Joe Morlan ("Developing Birding Skills"). John Kemper will cover "Finding Birds in Northern California" (presenting material from his new book), and Rob Hansen will present a program on "Birds of Tulare Lake and Valley". Other topics include Beginning Birding, Landscaping for Birds and Wildlife, Basic Bird Photography, Bird Sketching, and more.

The price will once again be \$75 for the entire event, with lodging and most meals extra. A \$30 one-day fee is available, and students under 18 are free. For registration information, contact Frances Oliver at <ffoliver@ucdavis.edu>. Our website is at <http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/5954/cvbc.html>.

Last year we saw over 160 species of birds, and there are hundreds of thousands of geese, ducks, cranes and other waterfowl in the Central Valley during this time of year; also 22 species of raptors are possible. There will be hundreds of birders here from all over the country having a great time--come join us!



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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

SCVAS welcomes gifts, including those made in honor of or in memory of friends or relatives. Such gifts will be used at SCVAS' discretion for its programs and activities unless specified otherwise by the donor. Tax-deductible donations may be made in the form of a check made out to SCVAS and sent to our Cupertino address. In addition, we gratefully accept bequests, which should specifically identify Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society as recipient. Gifts and bequests will be recognized by the Chapter in *The Avocet* unless the donor prefers otherwise.

The Avocet is published monthly (except for July and August) by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, 22221 McClellan Rd., Cupertino, CA 95104. Deadline is the 25th of two months prior. Send submissions to *The Avocet*, c/o SCVAS at the above address.

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

1999 Volume 46, Number 8

Join us!

We invite you to join the National Audubon Society and its Santa Clara County Chapter (SCVAS). To join, complete and mail this form with payment to: SCVAS, 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, CA 95014

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