



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

January 2000

Props. 12, 13---Your Vote Matters

by Professor D. Lakshmanarao

We are poised for a breakthrough in the efforts to secure funding for parks and land acquisition, preserving and restoring habitats, restoring watersheds and more—concerns close to the hearts of Audubonians. Two bond measures, Proposition 12 and Proposition 13, will be on the March 7, 2000 ballot. These two propositions will provide money for addressing the environmental concerns of all of us, and promise to make for a more scenic and healthy California.

California's residents and tourists have long cherished our scenic beaches, rolling hills, and dramatic mountains. Nonetheless, it has been increasingly difficult to preserve the quality of our natural resources in recent years. The area available for parks is inadequate for California's population, which is increasing by 600,000 a year. California has not passed a land and parks bond measure in more than a decade. The money accrued

from the Park Bond of 1988 and earlier bonds has dried up.

The Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Act of 2000 (Prop 12) has a little something for everybody. This Bond Act provides funds to state agencies protecting land and recreational resources and makes grants to local agencies performing similar functions. The Bond Act is divided into more than a dozen categories, catering to the needs of the state's diverse population, urban and rural. Our Precious Coastline

Prop 12 provides over \$250 million for protecting California's coast. Further, funds from the proposed Bond Act are to be distributed all along the coastline. There are specific programs for funding the new San Francisco Bay Conservancy (\$55 million), for the Guadalupe River Trail and the San Francisco Bay Ridge Trail (\$2m), the Windows by the

Bay in Monterey (\$1m), and Santa Monica Bay in LA (\$25m), to mention only some of the items included.

Parks

The Bond provides \$545,250,000 for Parks and Recreation. Out of this, Angel Island in the Bay gets \$15m, Henry Coe State Park in Santa Clara County receives \$5m, State parks facilities administered by local agencies \$20m, and \$15m are to be spent on improving Golden Gate Park.

Wildlife

The Parks Bond Act also provides substantial funds—\$265, 500, 000—to the Wildlife Conservation Board. Wetlands preservation projects are allocated \$10m and riparian and watershed lands \$10m, while \$45m are to be spent on preservation of threatened and endangered species. \$13m are to be spent on preservation of ancient redwoods and oak woodlands.

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**General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, January 19
"Discovering the Blackbirds"
with Alvaro Jaramillo**

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

See the blackbirds like you have never seen them before and find out why they aren't really black but rather colorful! This diverse family which includes the grackles, orioles, oropendolas, caciques, meadowlarks, Bobolink, and the typical blackbirds is often overlooked. Al, a senior biologist with SFBBO, has written New World Blackbirds, and if you are interested in purchasing an autographed copy at the meeting, please call the Audubon office by January 7.

SCVAS Welcomes

New Office Mgr-----Page 2

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Another view of

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Create your own

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VIEW FROM THE OFFICE

by Leda Beth Gray



I'm very happy to announce that we have a new Office Manager on board at SCVAS. Her name is Susan Bell, comes to us from San Jose's Junior League, and is accustomed to working in a busy nonprofit office. After I finish training her, I will be returning to my position on the SCVAS Board of Directors, and starting as the chair of our

Environmental Action Committee. Susan has been doing wonderfully in the office and Nature Shop, proving to have the skills and enthusiasm to get the job done. She came to us not knowing much about birds, but is showing great interest and enthusiasm learning about them, starting with the ones that appear in the feeders outside our windows.

Welcome Susan!

Ever wonder what to do when you find a dead bird? I have gotten a number of calls on that subject over the last several months. One of the first things to do is check if the bird has a band on its leg. If it does, then record a description of the band (e.g., color and material), and the band number. When you get to a phone you can call Patuxent Wildlife, a clearinghouse for banding information, at 800-327-BAND. You will then receive a report in the mail with information about the bird, including where and when it was banded and who banded it.

If you find a dead bird in a public park, it should be left where it is and reported to park officials. If the park has a policy of noninterference with natural processes, it may be that you will be instructed to leave it where it is. If you find a dead bird in the road or on your own property, you can turn it over to a person or organization that is working under a Fish and Wildlife permit for possession of native North American birds or other wildlife species. It is illegal to possess native species of birds, living or dead, unless you are working under a permit or have a hunting license for certain species. Usually the bird will have to be fairly fresh for anyone to want it.

A number of types of organizations have permits to possess dead birds. Some nonprofit groups, such as ourselves, who use mounted birds or bird skins for educational purposes, have permits to possess native birds.

Volunteer Ventures

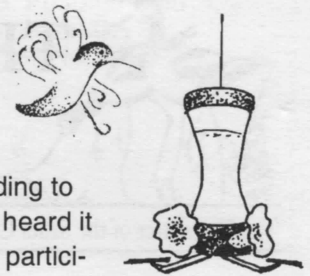
by Ulrike Keyssner

I missed the Christmas Bird Count because I was heading to Australia for the holidays, but I heard it went well and want to thank all participants. Both the Christmas and Summer Bird Counts provide valuable information for the state of our bird populations. Now that the Count is over, the hard work begins. The next part of the Count is to compile the data in a usable format that researchers and other interested parties can access. **We need volunteers to enter the Count data into the computer.** We use Microsoft Excel for the Mac but we can quickly teach anyone not familiar with this program or computer. If working at the Ranch is too difficult, this is another job that could easily be done at home with occasional visits to the office. If you would like to be a part of this important research project, please contact me. *Note: no birding skills are required.*

We want to thank longtime volunteer **Marie Gordon** for taking on the job of reconciling our monthly accounts. Marie is already a regular volunteer so we appreciate the additional responsibilities she has assumed. A big thank you to the volunteers from the organization "**Meeting for Good.**" Twenty six volunteers came in on a Saturday afternoon and helped us hand-address our Fall Fundraiser envelopes which was an enormous help. Thank you to **Sandy Cortright** who was the ambassador for the afternoon.

We need volunteers to help us run the Nature Shop and Office on Wednesdays and Fridays. We still have these two days where we do not have volunteer help. Having a volunteer in the office allows our Office Manager to get on with some of the duties that are hard to start if you are constantly being interrupted. You can choose to come in any time between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Even volunteering for half the day is a huge help to us. I have to say the Ranch house and Park is a great working environment - several of our regular volunteers have their lunch here and even go for a walk around the creek trail. No experience is required as we will train volunteers in answering the phone, working in the shop, and any of the other general duties. Please call us to discuss your availability.

Finally, **I want to welcome Susan Bell, our new Office Manager, to the staff.** I can already tell she has a great attitude and will be a hard worker but one who is also interested in enjoying the work she does.



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January 2000 Calendar

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

****Saturday Jan. 8, 9:00 AM**

Charleston Slough. Half day. Leader: Carrie Wittmer (SCVAS office (408)252-3747 or Bob Reiling (408)253-7527). Meet at Terminal Way (western entrance) located at the end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mt. View. Birding will be geared toward the beginning birder. Carrie is on the faculty of the Audubon Expedition Institute located in Belfast, Maine. Topics covered include identification by shape and markings of body, bill, wing and tail; flight patterns and migration.

Wednesday Jan. 5, 7:30pm Bay Area Bird Photographers present Doug Cheesman and his photos from the most recent trip to Australia. Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Sunday Jan. 9, 8:30 AM**

Post CBC Rarities Chase. Full day. Leader: John Mariani (408) 997-2066. Kick off the new millennium with some coastal vagrant chasing. Bring a full tank of gas, lunch, and field guides as we attempt 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.

Saturday Jan. 8, 8:45 AM

Young Audubon Whale-watching Trip on Monterey Bay.

Join us for an exciting two-hour excursion at the peak of California Gray Whale migration. Dolphins, porpoises, sea otters, and numerous sea bird species, too. Dress for cold and rain; trip goes in light rain or sunshine. Boat leaves from Monterey wharf. Cost: \$12 for children; \$15 for adults. To reserve space call Ulrike at the Audubon office, (408) 252-3747.

Tuesday Jan. 11, 9:30 AM

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: Wigeon.

****Wednesday Jan. 12, 9:00 AM**

Ed Levin Co. Park. Half day. Leaders: Harriet Gerson (408)252-6244 and Gail Cheesman. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and I-680 as 237 becomes Calaveras Rd. in Milpitas. Continue approx. 2 miles past 680 to just past golf course entrance; park is on right across from school. Do not turn left on Downing Rd. **LO, RC.**

****Saturday Jan. 15, 9:00 AM**

McClellan Ranch Park. Half day. Leader: Carrie Wittmer (SCVAS office (408)252-3747 or Bob Reiling (408)253-7527). Birding will be geared toward the beginning birder. Topics covered include field guides, binoculars and identification by size, habitat/location and color/field marks.

****Sunday Jan. 16, 9:00 AM**

Coyote Point. Half day. Leader: Sue Cossins (650) 347-9358. Meet at lower parking lot for Coyote Point Junior museum. Heading north on Hwy. 101 in San Mateo take Peninsula Ave. exit then an immediate right onto frontage road, then first left into park. Take second left after entrance kiosk to lower parking lot. **RC.**

****Saturday Jan. 22, 8:00 AM**

Panoche Valley. Full day. Leader: Clay Kempf (831)761-8260. Meet at Paicines Store, approx. 9 miles south of Hollister on Hwy. 25. Among the hoped for open-country species are Phainopepla, Mountain Bluebird, Vesper Sparrow, Lewis' Woodpecker, Mountain Plover, Greater Roadrunner, Ferruginous Hawk and Golden Eagle. Carpooling essential; bring plenty of gas, food and drink for a long, full day of birding.

****Sunday Jan. 23, 8:00 AM**

Ogier Ponds. Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408)871-9552. From Hwy. 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to

Monterey Hwy., turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right toward Model Airplane Park where power towers cross the Hwy. Park on either side of entrance gate so as to not block access to park or the farmer's orchard. **RC.**

****Saturday Jan. 29, 9:00 AM**

Merced National Wildlife Refuge. Full day. Leader: Don Schmoldt (510)547-5108. Meet at NW corner of Rte. 59/Sandy Mush Rd. From Hwy. 101 in Gilroy take Hwy. 152 east past Los Banos approx. 20 miles, then north 7 miles on Rte. 59 to meeting place. Allow 2.5 hrs. from San Jose, more if foggy. Raptors, ducks, geese, Sandhill Cranes, White-faced Ibis.

****Wednesday Jan. 26, 9:00 AM.**

Charleston Slough. Leader: Phyllis Browning (650) 494-6360. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. north, toward Bay. Meet inside gate at intersection of San Antonio and Terminal Way. Beginners welcome. **RC.**

****Sunday Jan. 30, 8:00 AM**

Shady Oaks Park/Coyote Creek. Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. Easy 2 mile walk. At Blossom Hill overpass on Hwy. 101 go east (toward foothills and Coyote Creek). Turn right into parking area just after first stoplight at intersection of Coyote Rd. and Silver Creek Valley Rd. Let's hope the Eastern Phoebe has returned! **RC.**

****Saturday Feb. 5, 8:30 AM**

San Francisco's Southern Parks. Half day. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415)664-0983. Meet at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area for shorebirds, bay ducks, loons and raptors. We will then visit McLaren Park for land birds and a few dabbling ducks. Other lesser known but birdy parks may be visited, time permitting. From Hwy. 101, exit just past Brisbane Lagoon at the Candlestick/3Com Park off-ramp. Continue east along Harney Way and turn right onto Jamestown/Hunters Point Expressway.

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Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

The early news suggests an excellent winter for loons. A **Red-throated Loon** was found on Salt Pond A10 in Alviso on 6 Nov (MMR), the earliest winter record I have. An immature was found at Shoreline Lake on 26 Nov and two birds were there on 29 Nov (both MMR). One to two birds were at Calero Reservoir on 30 Nov (JMa). **Common Loons** have also been found in good numbers with one at Anderson Reservoir on 2 Nov (TR), a bird at Shoreline Lake from 12 Nov to the end of the month (CJC, v.ob.), and one to two birds at Calero Reservoir from 21 Nov to the end of the month (AV, JMa). The only **American Bittern** found this month was one in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 25 Nov (MDo). Two adult and two immature **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Lake Cunningham on 1 Nov (MMR), but were not found there subsequently. An immature white-front visited well-birded Calero Reservoir 12-17 Nov (JMa). An immature **Ross's Goose** was found at Almaden Lake Park on 24 Nov (SCR) and has remained through the end of the month (JMa). There are scattered reports of **Wood Ducks** throughout the county, but the now-regular winter concentration at Almaden Reservoir shows the greatest numbers. This year, first noted on 4 Nov (TR), the highest count has been of 65 birds on 14 Nov (AV). An adult and an immature male **Eurasian Wigeon** were seen in the Palo Alto FCB on 11 Nov and two adult males were seen on the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds and Salt Pond A3W on 21 Nov to give fairly typical numbers for November (all MMR). A male **Blue-winged Teal** near

the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on 1 Nov (BC) and a pair there on 24 Nov (WGB) are all that was left of October's concentration. Birds also continued to be found in the Palo Alto FCB during the month with high counts of six on 20 Nov (MMR) and 23 Nov (RC). Additional birds were found in November, with three at the Alviso Environmental Education Center (EEC) on 5 Nov and two on the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 21 Nov (both MMR). Four to 11 **Redhead** have continued to be found in the Palo Alto FCB during November (v.ob.) with a high count

*A fourth-winter
Lesser Black-backed Gull
has returned to Lake
Cunningham to give us
again two wintering birds;
most exciting on the
passerine front was a
Tropical Kingbird in Alviso*

of 11 on 6 Nov (MDo). Nineteen birds were seen on nearby Charleston Slough on 7-9 Nov (MMR, JMa). Single males have also been found on Shoreline Lake on 26 Nov (WGB) and Calero Reservoir on 27 Nov (JMa). A female **Tufted Duck** was a surprise at Charleston Slough with observations on 7 Nov (MMR) and 9 Nov (RWR, FV, JMa). A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 6 Nov (MMR) was the first of the season. Two males at Shoreline Lake on 25 Nov (MJM, MMi) were the first found this winter at this favored locale. **Hooded Mergansers** have been found in a variety of locations this month (m.ob.) with a high count of 14 on the Oka percolation ponds on 21 Nov (AWa).

Hawks through Skimmers

A "**Harlan's**" **Red-tailed Hawk** was found along the Guadalupe River above Trimble on 26 Nov (MJM). It appears that this is the same bird found here for the last four or five winters. Reports of individual **Ferruginous Hawks** include one at Hwy 101 and the San Jose Airport on 1 Nov (MMR), an immature over Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 10 Nov (SCR) and a third bird at Hwy 101 and Cochrane Road on 30 Nov (JMa). Less expected, an adult female **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen over Palo Alto's Byxbee Park on 6 Nov (MDo). We now expect a few **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the winter so the three seen at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 10 Nov (SCR) were probably our quota. An adult male **Ruff** was found at the waterbird pond on 16 Nov (RWR, FV) and was seen again on 21 and 26 Nov (NL). Topping last month's high count of **Common Snipe** at Coyote Reservoir were the 200 found there on 3 Nov (TR). The adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull**

that returned last month to the Alviso area was seen again at the Alviso EEC on 7 Nov (TJ) and at State and Spreckles in Alviso on 14 Nov (NL). Returning for its third winter, a near-adult Lesser Black-backed Gull was found once more at Lake Cunningham on 1 Nov (MMR) and has remained through the month (m.ob.). This bird's identification as a 2nd-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull two winters ago was controversial (*vide* MMR) and its return has allowed us to observe its transition to the more distinctive adult plumage. The wintering flock of **Black Skimmers** at Charleston Slough has remained constant at eleven (m.ob.).

Roadrunners through Goldfinches Hayward Shoreline

A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen at the north end of San Antonio Valley on 11 Nov (DL, BL), a place where they are regular, but scarce. A single **Short-eared Owl** was seen in the Palo Alto FCB on 23 Nov (RC), where one to two birds were found last month. A **Pileated Woodpecker** was heard in Mt. Madonna CP on 7 Nov (DLSu), marking the continued expansion of this species in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A **Tropical Kingbird** was found at the Alviso EEC on 5 Nov (CJC) for the sixth county record. It could not be found the next day. A **House Wren** was found at the Alviso EEC on 6 Nov and two were seen along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 11 Nov (both SCR). Well past its fall migration, a **Grasshopper Sparrow** found south of the Model Airplane Skypark in Morgan Hill on 3 Nov (TR) is either a very late migrant or one of our very few overwintering birds. The first **Swamp Sparrow** of the winter season was a bird found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 11 Nov (SCR). On 18 Nov a single bird was found at the south end of the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on the high tide (RWR, FV). At least one bird was found through the end of the month (v.ob.) and two birds were seen there on 23 Nov (MMR). Rounding out the month's showing, a fourth bird was found along Silver Creek above Yerba Buena on 19 Nov (SCR). An immature **White-throated Sparrow** was found at the Alviso EEC on 6 Nov (SCR). Single birds were found at a Los Gatos' feeder on 8 Nov (JD) and a second feeder on 14 Nov (GLEB). An unusual concentration of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** was of 45 birds at the Palo Alto Hills Golf and Country Club on 1 Nov (AME).

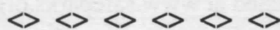
RARITIES: Please drop me a note: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025, or: bousman@merlin.arc.nasa.gov

At Hayward Regional Shoreline on Saturday, November 20 the rain stopped long enough to provide great visibility for birding and we were treated to impressive numbers of shorebirds and raptors. Harriers seemed to be everywhere, along with 3 Peregrine Falcons, a remarkable approachable Merlin of the *suckleyii* race, a White-tailed Kite that sat with its wings flopped out as if it were shrugging its shoulders, and a Short-eared Owl trying to find a quiet place to roost.

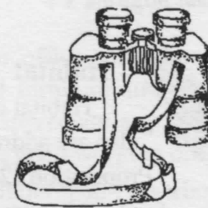
We found a shorebird roost north of the radio towers that we guessed contained 10,000 "peeps"—Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and Dunlin—3,000 Willets, 1,000 Marbled Godwits, and smaller numbers of dowitchers (all the ones that called were Long-billed), Black-bellied Plover, American Avocet, and Long-billed Curlew. American Pipits and Horned Larks were plentiful, but we saw no longspurs or unusual motacillids. A Say's Phoebe sat obligingly on the blade of a bulldozer. In all, 61 species in three hours.

After lunch I visited the interpretive center to see an exhibit of paintings, some featuring birds. By 2:00 the tide had dropped low enough to reveal some rocky shoreline, and I found a Black Turnstone and 7 Red Knots in the flocks.

—Mark Miller



Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Richard Carlson (RC), Bill Carver (BC), Chuck Coston (CJC), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Tim Johnson (TJ), Gloria LeBlanc (GLEB), Nick Lethaby (NL), Barry Levine (BL), Don Lewis (DL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Mark Miller (MMi), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Tom Ryan (TR), David Suddjian (DLSu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), and Alan Walther (AWa).



Charleston Slough

A Great Blue Heron swallows a huge fish; a wriggling lump slides down its throat. A Ring-billed Gull shows us how to open a mussel. A Northern Harrier launches some 50 anxious shoveler and pintail ducks into the air. Grebes, Cormorants, and Buffleheads dive for breakfast. These were just a few of the spectacles that amazed James Lick High School students during a recent expedition to Charleston Slough. On November 23 and 24 SCVAS provided us with volunteers, binoculars, and transportation. The birds did the rest!

The trip was an unmitigated success. Students spotted 67 species of birds, including a Say's Phoebe and wintering Black Skimmers. They were fascinated by egrets, kites, and myriad ducks. It was a first-time birding trip for all 30 students, and their enthusiasm was obvious. Afterward many offered feedback, all very positive. Each, to one degree or another, is now a birder.

We all have an innate bond with the natural world. We need only exposure to realize this connection. These east San Jose teens, mostly from non-English speaking households, have taken a large step toward this realization.

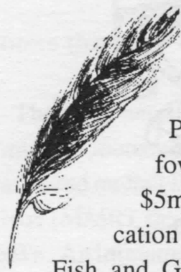
We are indebted to Jim Liskovec, Jerry Towner, and Peg Bernucci for sharing their time, their expertise, and their love of nature. Our thanks to SCVAS for the funding and support which made these trips possible.

-----Greg Meissner

Props 12 & 13

Birder/Dog Owner's View

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Habitat

Habitat concerns also are addressed by Proposition 12. Waterfowl habitat projects get \$5m out of the \$12m allocation to the Department of Fish and Game; \$5m are to be spent on wildlife area improvement projects. Thus, the proposed Bond makes it possible for various groups involved in preserving and improving the quality of life in California to pursue their efforts with vigor. Since it requires that all funds must be appropriated by the legislature through the budget process, Prop 12 provides for careful oversight by the Governor and the legislature in the utilization of the Bond funding.

Prop 13—Water Bond

Now for Proposition 13. This Bond Act aims at improving the supply of clean and safe drinking water to Californians, watershed protection and flood protection. The Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Bond Act—to be put on the ballot along with Proposition 12—will increase the reliability of our water supply in the event of drought or emergency, and improve the quality of our rivers, streams and coastal waters. If the projects funded by this ballot measure are implemented, they would increase water yield three times more than that of the proposed, controversial Auburn Dam in the Sierras, at less cost. It will also fund improved sewage treatment and the reduction of pollution caused by street runoff, thus improving water quality in San Francisco Bay and elsewhere for both people and wildlife.

What You Can Do?

As always, VOTE!!! Vote for both Prop 12 and 13. There is a legitimate worry that because the two measures

Editor:

Though only an amateur birder (I recognize many birds as “nuthatch” and “loon” but not their proper names), I am a member of SCVAS because I strongly support the conservation work this chapter does, for people (as in parks) as well as for birds (protecting habitat). But I am also a dog lover, and I should like to comment on the Perspective piece by John Mariani that appeared in the November *Avocet*. I hope you can find space for this perspective on the conjoined problems of dogs and birds; we need living space for both!

I agree that there are places where dogs should not be allowed off-leash, and some where they should not be allowed at all. When irresponsible people allow their dogs or children to annoy wildlife, we should politely remonstrate. However, there should also be some places where dogs and their owners can enjoy hiking together. If there were enough loop trails of several miles each, scattered

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have some overlap, people will vote “yes” for one of them and “no” for the other, virtually ensuring the loss of both measures.

In addition, a financial contribution and/or volunteer time are always needed. The campaigns for Props 12 and 13 can be reached at www.safeparks.org.

(Prof. Lakshmanarao has been volunteering for SCVAS for several months. A retired English professor from India, he has drafted numerous letters on state and federal conservation issues that our chapter's Advocate would otherwise not have time to attend to. Unfortunately, Mr. Lakshmanarao will be returning to India this month. If anyone out there would like to continue the good work he started, your volunteer time would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Craig Breon at (408) 252-3748.)

along the Peninsula, where dogs were allowed off-leash, it would be easier to convince dog owners to stay off trails and areas where dogs are not allowed or must be kept leashed.

In Santa Clara County there is no place where my dog and I can walk in comfort—we must always be a chain-gang. If I go on trails in any County Park or Midpeninsula Open Space with my well-behaved golden retriever, I can be hit with a stiff fine if my companion is unleashed—and in many parks, if he is with me at all.

Fortunately, the East Bay Regional Park District allows dogs off-leash on trails in most of their Regional Parks (leashed in picnic areas and parking lots, since those areas are crowded and confusing to dogs). And Fort Funston allows off-leash dogs, with a certain area roped off during Snowy Plover breeding season. But these locations involve drives of nearly an hour, one-way, for most of us. For over 10 years I've been leading off-leash dog hikes in these dog-friendly parks, and we have never had a problem with the people, cattle, wildlife or dogs we meet (we do expect all participants—humans and dogs—to be well-behaved). Surely, with all the open space we have managed to preserve around the Bay, there ought to be some posted trails and space posted for birders and those who fear dogs.

Sincerely,
Marjorie Ottenberg

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Can You Handle \$\$\$?

SCVAS' Finance Committee needs some new members. If you have a knack for balancing budgets or managing an invested portfolio, why not join this very dedicated group of volunteers and help guide the Chapter down the fiscal highway. Call Don Price at (650) 327-1254 if you're interested.

Advice From a Busy Birder: Become an "Expert" in Your Own Park

by Gloria LeBlanc

A couple of years ago I carpoled to Northeastern California for a weekend of birding with David McIntyre and Ann Verdi. Their knowledge of birds far exceeded mine and we discussed how they had acquired their expertise. David related that when he was in high school he spent an hour and a half every day birding a park near his home. He compiled lots of information regarding species seen and nesting activity.

After he had left his home town, a developer tried to build on the land adjacent to the park—land that David had included in his field study. Because of David's data, the developer's plans were subsequently reduced.

Ann Verdi said that she decided to learn as much as she could about the birds here in Santa Clara County. She calls Almaden Quicksilver County Park, her favorite birding spot, "her patch".

I was intrigued by what these two birders had done. I work about 60 hours a week, and I wondered if I had time to emulate David and Ann. Since I own my own company, however, I figured that as my own boss I could set my hours, so why not give it a go?

Since I live in Los Gatos, I wanted a local park to become "my farm". I contemplated Lexington Reservoir, Vasona and Oka, and ultimately chose the much smaller La Rinconada Park. Within ten minutes I can walk from one end of the park to the other. I now walk a three-mile loop every morning, which includes walking to one end of the park and back. At first I didn't carry binoculars, just noting the more obvi-

ous birds, but now I carry them every day.

La Rinconada Park is a small urban strip nestled between a country club on one side and Santa Clara Valley Water District property on the other. Although it is home to many squirrels and cats, I have now seen 74 different bird species there in the past two years. Some days I see nothing but Western Scrub Jays and hear little but their squawking. On other days there are hundreds of birds singing a beautiful symphony. And those days can be back to back! I never know what awaits me.

Since the Town of Los Gatos provides no bird lists for its parks, I have submitted my list to the Parks Commission for possible posting or distribution. During the time I've spent at La Rinconada I have had many people ask me what bird they're seeing, so I thought it would be good PR for the Audubon Society if the park had a bird list.

Year-round residents include Brown Creeper, Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Scrub and Steller's Jays, California Thrasher, California and Spotted Towhees. Frequently seen species in recent months: Belted Kingfisher, Green Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, White-breasted Nuthatch, White-crowned, Golden-crowned and Lincoln's Sparrows.

If you walk through a county or city park on a regular basis, we'd like to hear from you. We'd like to know what parks our members frequent. I highly recommend developing your own birding spot. It's a rewarding experience, and even the average birder may become an expert on their own territory.

months. I have come to value her opinions tremendously and am delighted she is not abandoning us in the office but will include us in her duties along with being the EAC Chair and returning to the Board. I know all our volunteers and members appreciate the effort, time, and dedication she lavishes onto SCVAS and I mirror that appreciation. **I thank you, Leda Beth.**

SCVAS New Year Wish List

Our office runs almost entirely on donated furniture and equipment. We would appreciate any of the following items in good working order:

Better than Powerbook 180

Bookshelves (6 feet tall)

Dishwashing machine

Laser printer for Mac

56K modem

Office chairs (on rollers)

Mac Power PC

VCR (VHS)

As we are a non-profit organization, we can provide donors with a receipt for tax purposes. If needed, we can arrange for delivery to our Cupertino office. Thank you!



A Red-winged
Blackbird drawn
by Rita Colwell

CALENDAR *continued*

As you drive along the Expwy watch for the entrance to Candlestick State Recreation Area on right and enter (no fee). Meet at end of paved road that runs through park.

****Sunday Feb. 6, 8:30 AM**

Arastradero OSP, Palo Alto. Half day. Leader: Jim Liskovec (650)969-5542. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west, turn right on Arastradero Rd. and meet in parking lot about 1/2 mile on right. Moderate walking. **RC.**

****Wednesday Feb. 9, 9:00 AM**

Coyote Reservoir. Half day. Leaders: Emelie Curtis (408)779-2637 & Jane Glass. Take E. Leavesley Rd. exit off Hwy 101, go east 1.5 miles, turn left on New Ave. then right on Roop Rd. to lake. Meet at Lakeview picnic area. Waterbirds, raptors. **LO, RC.**

OFFICE VIEW *continued*

Like me, Susan is a beginning birder who frets about not being an expert. However, she is remedying the situation by having bought the book, Bird Watching for Dummies and, more importantly, she is using it! Luckily, Susan's arrival does not herald the complete departure of Leda Beth whom I have learned so much from over the last nine

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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.

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

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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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