



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

May 2000

“The Big Bird” Boosts Bay Project

by Craig Breon

National Audubon Society President John Flicker visited the Bay Area last month to officially launch the Bay Project, the effort to restore up to 100,000 acres of wetlands and other habitats around San Francisco Bay. The day was a rousing success, as the Bay Area media extensively covered Flicker’s visit to Hamilton Air Force Base in the North Bay, Bair Island in Redwood City, and our own Alviso, bringing our work into a greater regional and even national spotlight.

Hamilton has been decommissioned as an air base, and the old runways will eventually be ripped up and restored to tidal wetlands. (One has to love any opportunity to de-pave a portion of the Bay.) Near Hamilton, a key wetlands acquisition has been secured at Bel Marin Keys. Marin Audubon has been active for years in fighting development proposals on the site and searching for acquisition funds. The Coastal Conservancy recently

came through with \$16 million for the 1600 acres to protect one of the few areas around the Bay where oak woodlands merge with tidal wetlands, and it’s visible from Highway 101.

At Bair Island, nearly 3000 acres of tidal salt marsh restoration will take place, by far the largest wetlands restoration project in the South Bay to date. Flicker was joined by Marge Kolar, head of the SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge, which will oversee the restoration efforts.

In Alviso, Flicker met with staff from the Refuge’s Environmental Education Center. Part of Audubon’s vision for the Bay is the establishment of a series of such education centers ringing the Bay, enabling school children from all nine Bay Area Counties to easily access the wonders of wetlands.

Perhaps most exciting for me, Flicker met with local activists from Alviso. Luis and Maria Tapia led a troop of about a

dozen local residents to meet us, thanking Audubon for the work our chapter does to protect their community as well as the lands around it. Flicker and Dan Taylor, head of California Audubon, noted that while many groups talk about working with diverse communities, SCVAS is clearly doing just that.

Stay tuned for more news on the Bay Project (also known as the Baylands Campaign). Every member reading this can feel part of the program, since it was money donated from our members that allowed us to kick off the Bay Project with \$20,000 last year. With National Audubon now talking about the project as comparable in size to the Florida Everglades restoration, it appears our start-up funding was well worth it.

We hope to announce a major grant for the Bay Project this fall, and perhaps a land acquisition or two. In the meantime, if you get as excited about this as I do, consider volunteering to help. I’ll put you in touch with Josie Hadden, a capable leader for us on this effort, and we will see how your talents fit in.

General Membership Meeting

Wednesday May 17

“The Birds of Japan”

Photography by Mike Danzenbaker

Palo Alto Art Center

Embarcadero & Newell Rds.

7:30 Hospitality 8:00 Program

Mike Danzenbaker is well-known as one of America’s foremost bird photographers. We are very fortunate that Mike and his wife, Lee Hung, are SCVAS members. Recently returned from two years in Japan, where they spent every possible moment in the field, they will present a slide show tonight concentrating on Northern Honshu where they lived, plus some of Japan’s more remote birding sites. You’ll see the spectacular wintering eagles and cranes of Hokkaido, the flocks of endangered Black-faced Spoonbills of Kyushu, passerines visiting feeders in the snowy winter at a central Honshu ski resort, breeding birds, island migrant traps in the Sea of Japan, endemics from outlying tropical islands, and a bevy of juvenile fall shorebirds. Don’t miss this spectacular show!

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Volunteer Ventures

by Ulrike Keyssner

I want to follow up on Jim Liskovec's article "Wow! Way Cool!" published in the March *Avocet*. He spoke about the rewards of leading field trips for children and about the obvious enjoyment children exhibit on these walks. At the same time, inspiring children to admire and embrace

nature also makes YOU feel good! I have led several walks and find, wholeheartedly, this experience to be true. Sometimes it's the one kid who is "into it" that makes your day, leaving you eager to instill a love of birding and nature in our future voters and leaders. It can be scary to realize that if we don't expose some of these children to these types of memorable experiences, no one else will.

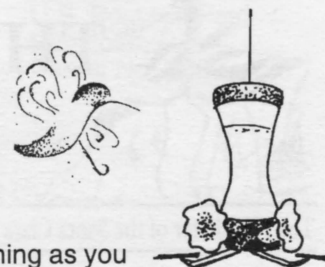
SCVAS has a respected reputation among teachers for providing fun and informative field trips at a good price—free! Donations from our members allow us to fund the programs by providing loaner binoculars, field guides, and educational handouts but (and it is a BIG but) we cannot do it without volunteer field trip leaders. We seriously need more volunteers to lead for kids. Our regular leaders, Jim Liskovec, Jerry Towner, Peg Bernucci, and Elaine Gould are doing a fantastic job but they need help, as we cannot meet all the requests we receive. (I dislike turning down groups who are eager to go on a walk!).

When approaching people to take on this job, I find many people feel they do not have the knowledge to lead trips. Please, don't let this stop you. If you are at all interested in being outdoors and looking at birds, plants, insects, etc., YOU CAN LEAD A WALK. Most of the children are in classes K-6, so bombarding them with the names of all the birds, plants, etc. that you see is lost on them. As a leader, you choose what is interesting to you and what you feel comfortable talking about. For example, I love to identify plants but do not know many by heart, so I always pick some I do know, like poison oak. First, I'll ask the kids to identify it from a patch of other plants, then talk about the importance of being able to identify it (and not touching it!), and how it's an important food source for native animals. I always carry a couple of field guides and make a point of letting the kids know I do not know everything, then teach them that we can learn together by being curious and using the field guides. It is a great feeling to identify a species together, and the kids want to do it with everything they see. You do not have to be an expert at anything but you do have

to be willing to learn and pass that willingness on to the children.

We provide as much training as you need in field guide use and ways to make the walk fun and interesting for you and the kids. When you're ready to lead your first few walks, we have a buddy system to ease you in. Walks usually last about an hour. I send out requests to leaders, who then indicate their interest in a field trip and an appropriate date. Frequency is up to the volunteer. One month you may feel like doing several and others you may not. Please call me to talk about becoming a field trip leader for kids.

Finally, I want to thank Jack Cole for labeling the remaining bird slides in our collection. He quietly and efficiently completed this huge task. Because of Jack's work, June Santoro and Harriet Benson have taken on the job of sorting the slides into taxonomic order. This is a BIG JOB—more help is needed to complete it. This job is perfect for someone who wants to brush up on their I.D. skills and use of field guides. Thank you to all our volunteers—what would we do without you?!



View From The Office

by Susan Bell
Office Manager

Spring has arrived at McClellan Ranch and along with it came the orioles. We've put our oriole feeder up and it hangs right outside the Nature Shop window. There is a pair of Bullock's Orioles that comes at the same time to feed each day. They are truly a beautiful sight to watch. The orioles seem to be very attracted to the type of feeder we carry at the Nature Shop, and we now have them in stock, just in time for the orioles arriving in your yard this Spring.

I was watching the orioles early one morning as I arrived at work. (Before I started working at SCVAS I watched where I was going; now I look up to see the birds and out at the wildlife in the park!) As I approached the door to the Nature Shop, I nearly tripped on a large cardboard box which was left on the steps. The box was covered with the outside doormat, and I thought whatever was inside wanted to get out and needed the heavy doormat to keep it in.

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May 2000 Calendar

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

Wednesday May 3, 7:30 PM

Baya Area Bird Photographers will feature Lee Hung and Mike Danzenbaker with slides on the birds of Japan. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Saturday May 6, 8:30 AM**

Mines Rd. & Del Puerto Canyon. Full day. Leader: Don Schmoltdt (510) 547-5108. Trip starts in Del Puerto Canyon, then west to San Antonio Valley, ending up in Livermore. From I-580 go east over Altamont Pass to I-5, south on I-5 to Patterson exit, then west on Del Puerto Canyon Rd. Meet at first pullout (look for Don's "BAJA OWL" license plate). Highlights: possible Costa's Hummingbird, Phainopepla, Lewis's Woodpecker and Lawrence's Goldfinch.

****Sunday May 7, 8:00 AM**

Ed Levin County Park. Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408)257-3647. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and I-680. 237 becomes Calaveras Rd; continue to Park about 2 miles past I-680. Meet in small dirt parking lot on left side of Calaveras Rd about 200 ft past park entrance. Variety of breeding birds in Milpitas' prime birding spot. **LO**

Tuesday May 9, 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: Bird interruptions.

****Wednesday May 10, 8:00 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 hills and into park. Drive

under bridge and meet at far end of parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Possible entrance fee. Resident breeding birds (Lazuli Bunting, Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, and Canyon Wren if we're lucky). **LO**

Saturday May 13, 11 - 4

International Migratory Bird Day S.F. Bay Nat'l. Wildlife Refuge, Alviso Details on page 9

****Saturday May 13, 7:30 AM**

Pescadero/coastal San Mateo County. Half day plus. Leader: Al Eisner (650)364-3686; daytime and voice mail (650)926-2018. Trip begins with a "sea watch" at Pigeon Point (bring scopes) at 7:30; arrive as late as 8:20 if you prefer. Meet at large pullout on Pigeon Point Rd. immediately north of lighthouse. Meeting site is approx. 28 miles north of Santa Cruz, 22 miles south of Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1. Highlights: variety of breeding songbirds (possible MacGillivray's Warbler), resident marsh birds, migrating seabirds and shorebirds. **LO**

****Sunday May 14, 9:00 AM**

Charleston Slough. Half day. Leader: Dick Stovel (650)856-6105. Meet at Terminal Way parking area at end of San Antonio Rd. 1/4 mile north off Hwy. 101 in Mt. View. Trip geared toward beginners, but all are welcome.

****Saturday May 20, 7:30 AM**

Birding by ear at Smith Creek. Half day. Leader: Grant Hoyt (650)969-7892. Emphasis on identification of breeding birds' songs. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave. east, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd. Go past Grant Ranch Park several miles to Smith Creek ranger station parking area. Allow 1 hour drive from Valley floor; carpool if possible. Easy 1.5 mile walk. Flycatchers, vireos, warblers, wrens; possible Chipping Sparrow and Lawrence's Goldfinch. **LO**

****Sunday May 21, 8:00 AM**

Alum Rock Park. Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. See directions under May 10 listing.

****Wednesday May 24, 8:00 AM**

Montebello Open Space Preserve. Leaders: Rita Colwell (650)949-1869 and Rosalie Lefkowitz (650)494-6358. Meet at large Montebello OSP parking area on left side of Page Mill Rd. about 7 miles southwest of I-280. Cold, wet, foggy weather possible. Moderate, hilly walking. Possible Lazuli Bunting, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Chipping and Black-chinned Sparrows. **LO**

**** Saturday May 27, 8:30 AM**

Almaden Quicksilver Co. Park. Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408)265-9286. Take Almaden Expwy. south to Camden Ave. and turn right. After about 1 mile turn left at McAbee Rd. and follow to end. Moderately strenuous walking of 2 1/2 miles (bring water). Breeding woodland birds. **LO**

CALENDAR continued on page 4

Cheeseman's Pelagic Trip From Monterey for Seabirds, Marine Mammals

Doug and Gail Cheeseman are offering a Monterey Bay pelagic trip on the "New Holiday" on Aug. 26th. The trip is from 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM and the cost is the same it has been the last twenty years: \$50. There will be at least four leaders aboard. It's a great time for migrating seabirds as well as residents, plus 5 species of dolphins and whales (most likely are Humpbacks and Blues with a possibility of Fin Whale).

Phone (408) 741-5330 or visit the Cheeseman's website at <www.cheesemans.com> for more information.

Office View *continued*

As I turned around, Susie Brain from Friends of Stevens Creek Trail had just arrived to work and asked me what I had in the box. We proceeded to take off the doormat and found a note saying "Found on Highway 9, hit by a car." Susie carefully opened the box, and there inside was a Western Screech Owl. As we all stared at each other, Susie offered to take the little owl to Wildlife Rescue for hydration and a physical checkup. As a former Wildlife Rescue Board member and current Clinical Advisor, Susie assured me that this was the best place for the owl to recover. **Santa Clara Valley Audubon has no resources to help sick or injured animals.**

Susie has kept me up to date on the progress of our little screech owl and it is in stable condition, with a doctor's appointment to check on its injured eye. We thank the volunteers

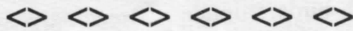
who care for these animals that fall victim to our fast-paced world, and bid the owl a speedy recovery.

If you should find a sick, injured, or orphaned wild creature, it would be best to call:

San Jose Area
Wildlife Center of
Silicon Valley
(408) 283-0744

Palo Alto or Mt. View
Wildlife Rescue of
Palo Alto
(650) 494-7283

South County Area
Wildlife Education
Rehabilitation Center
(408) 779-9372



SCVAS Volunteers Shine Beyond World of Audubon

We're fortunate to have some truly stellar volunteers performing all kinds of tasks for our organization; in fact, we couldn't exist without them. Not surprisingly, these volunteers give their time and energy to other groups as well, and two of our stalwarts have recently been recognized for their efforts.

Peter LaTourrette, who designed and maintains our web page and also heads the Bay Area Bird Photographers, was named Volunteer of the Year for 1999 by Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), the land preservation non-profit that recently led the successful effort to save Bair Island in Redwood City. POST cited Pete for his role as creator and webmaster of its own web page. He is familiar to us locally also as a field trip leader and bird photographer extraordinaire.

Last fall Bonnie Bedford-White, Graphics Editor for *The Avocet*, received an award as Business Owner of the Year from the National Association of Women Business Owners, Silicon Valley Chapter. Bonnie operates the very successful Cherry Pie Graphics Inc. of Santa Clara and donates a tremendous amount of time and professional expertise to SCVAS and other non-profits. (From the perspective of this harried Editor, the title of "saviour" would not be inappropriate for Bonnie, whose creativity, professionalism, and cheerfulness have improved this newsletter immensely.)

From everyone at SCVAS, Congratulations to Pete and Bonnie, and thanks for everything you do for us.

—Grant Hoyt

Calendar *continued*

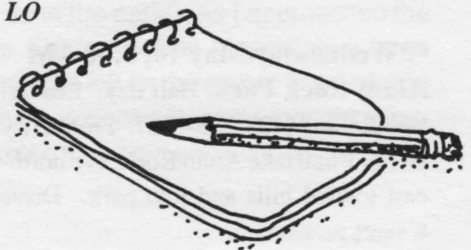
****Sunday, May 28, 8:15 AM**
Monte Bello Open Space Preserve. Half day. Leader: TBA. Questions? Call Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. See directions under May 24.

****Saturday June 3, 8:00 AM**
Skyline Ridge OSP. Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. Meet at intersection of Skyline Blvd (Hwy 35) and Page Mill Rd/Alpine Rd. Do not park in Russian Ridge parking lot. Moderately strenuous walking with some elevation change. Highlights: possible Chipping Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Tanager. **LO**

****Sunday June 4, 8:30 AM**
Stevens Creek County Park. Half day. Leader: Kathy Parker (408)358-2832 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. One of South Bay's best riparian spots for local breeding birds. Possible \$4.00 entrance fee. **LO**

****Wednesday June 14, 8:30 AM**
Russian Ridge OSP. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408)996-9863. Meet at Preserve parking lot. At junction of Page Mill (becomes Alpine when it crosses Skyline) and Skyline Blvd. (Hwy 35), go southwest on Alpine Rd for approx. 1 block to parking lot. Highlights: Grasshopper Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting. **LO**

****Saturday, June 17, 8:30 AM**
Russian Ridge OSP. Half day. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408) 996-9863. See directions under June 14 listing above. **LO**



Birdathon Team Reports

As most readers know, the Birdathon is SCVAS' annual Spring fundraising event. Proceeds from this year's Birdathon will be split between our own ongoing educational programs and the exciting new Bay Restoration Project. Two teams completed their Birdathon Big Days early enough for this month's newsletter; we should have more reports in the June *Avocet*. Thanks to all participants and sponsors for making Birdathon 2000 a big success!

—Bobbie Handen

Spiderhunters

The Spiderhunters (Vivek Tiwari and Tom Grey) did a Birdathon Big Day on April in Santa Clara County, and got a tentative count of 114 species. We started at Stevens Creek Park, where landbird activity was slow on a cold morning: singing WILSON'S, TOWNSEND'S, and ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS, WARBLING VIREOS, and a couple of BULLOCK'S ORIOLES at Villa Maria, but nothing more exciting—well, I guess a pair of NUTTALL'S WOODPECKERS copulating was a nice sign of spring! The reservoir made up for this with an OSPREY overhead, joining a CASPIAN TERN.

We didn't check the upper creek for the Dipper, but went on to McClellan Ranch, where we found the HOODED ORIOLE in its palm and a gorgeous male PURPLE FINCH at the feeders. On from there across the county to the east hills and Ed Levin Park, where Sandy Wool Lake had four species of swallows (lacking Rough-winged), and the sycamore grove above had two singing HOUSE WRENS, a great view of an all-rufous-backed male RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD, and an excellent view of a RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROW. On up to the top of Summit Road, where we were treated to the sight of two GOLDEN EAGLES in the distance, which we followed down until they landed next to

each other on the ground in a pasture. We had birds we hoped to see up there, and in short order one after another they appeared for us very cooperatively — HORNED LARK, LARK SPARROW, AMERICAN PIPIT, ROCK WREN. Then back to Bayside to see what we could get to fill out our list.

Sunnyvale WPCP had two BURROWING OWLS on the former dump hillside; Shoreline had the expected BLACK SKIMMERS; and along with expected birds, Baylands had about 60 BONAPARTE'S GULLS. Among the major "dips of the day" were Yellow-rumped Warbler(!), any flycatchers except Black Phoebe, any accipiters, and quite a few of the duck species that were all around us very recently. Still, all in all a very fun day!

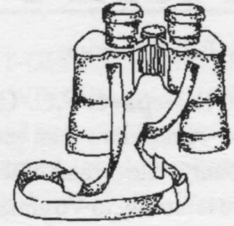
—Tom Grey

Hacienda Harried Hawks

Hacienda Harried Hawks is a new Birdathon team this year composed of nine teachers from various school districts. The team was led by Allen Royer and Elaine Gould. Other members were: Kathy Haydel, Sharon Jackson, Todd Frederick, Carolyn and Dan Flanagan, Edy Young and Suzanne Lowd. The majority of teachers were from Hacienda Science Magnet in San Jose Unified. Birding experience ranged from very little to quite a bit. However, with Allen's expertise and patience we managed to see 62 different species and had a wonderful time doing so.

We began at Almaden Lake and Alamitos Creek on the beautiful sunny morning of Sunday, March 19. A highlight was a pair of Common Mergansers which flew down the river and settled on the lake. Our single Black Crowned Night Heron was seen there peering from the tules on the island. We also saw Acorn and Downy Woodpeckers and a Northern Flicker. Along the way we met

a pair of experienced birders from SCVAS who were searching for a Nutmeg Man-



nikin, which had been spotted on the creek, close to where it empties into the lake. After checking the bird's appearance and characteristics in the new National Geographic book, we made our way up the creek. While most of us were watching a Red-Shouldered Hawk, Sharon Jackson was focused on the vegetation along the creek when a Nutmeg Mannikin flew into the view of her glasses, alighted for a few seconds, and then took off. Her sighting was confirmed by a birder-hiker with binoculars, who had joined us and was standing next to Sharon and also saw the bird. The rest of the group looked eagerly in hopes of spying the elusive bird, but to no avail.

We moved on to the percolation ponds behind the Santa Clara Valley Water District. Double Crested Cormorants were perched, as usual, in the sycamore trees. This included one unfortunate bird which had become tangled in what appeared to be fishing line and was hanging dead from the tree. On the pond, we spotted some Common Goldeneye along with Ruddy Ducks and Eared Grebes showing off their breeding plumage.

Next stop was Shoreline Lake, which held both Western and Clark's Grebes, Surf Scoter, Bufflehead and Lesser Scaup. A loop around Charleston Slough rewarded us with a variety of ducks including Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal and Canvasback. The highlight was the sighting of the small flock of Black Skimmers on a nearby island.

The group spent such an enjoyable six hours that the decision was made to go out again in the fall and bird some different sites.

—Elaine Gould

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

SCR Departs S.C. Co.

After more than seven years in our county, Steve and Heather Rottenborn are returning to Virginia. They take with them a daughter, Rebecca, a Ph.D from Stanford, and wonderful memories of birding on the west coast of North America. Steve's legacy to California birding is another topic—here I will mention only his contribution to birding in our own county. First, and least, he added eight new species to the county list and six new species to our list of known nesting birds. He did this sometimes alone and sometimes with others, but always he was quick to share his finds and we all got to see some good birds. Second, and more important, with his insightful and broad knowledge of birds he made all of us more knowledgeable, as he was a good teacher and one who set a high standard. Third, and most important, he left us his thesis work on our damaged riparian systems and, in that body of work, lies information that we need in our last-ditch attempts to save something of the streams that once coursed so healthily through this once beautiful valley. I and this column will badly miss SCR.

Loons through Skimmers

Single **Red-throated Loons** were more or less regular on Shoreline Lake in March (WGB, AME) with three seen there on 13 Mar (WGB). Lingering **American White Pelicans** on Salt Pond A1 in Mountain View peaked at 21 on 7 Mar and five birds on 13 Mar were the last reported (both WGB). An adult **Greater White-fronted Goose** was seen on the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) drying ponds on 3 Mar (AJ). Another bird was seen on the Morabito "goose farm" in Morgan

Hill on 5 Mar (MJM). Nine free-flying **Ross's Geese** were also found on the goose farm on 5 Mar (MJM). A **Brant**, flying over the Los Gatos Creek percolation ponds on 21 Mar (LT *vide* SBT), was a surprise. This is the seventh county record of this now uncommon coastal goose. A large wigeon flock on Salt Pond A1 in Mountain View contained an immature male **Eurasian Wigeon** on 21 Mar and an adult male on 30 Mar (WGB). A male **Blue-winged Teal** at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 26 Mar (MJM) was the only one found this month. **Hooded Merganser** numbers dropped in March, as expected. Six males found in

Such rarities as Sandhill Crane, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Green-tailed Towhee lingered into March, but were not as exciting as our first returning summer birds

a small pond near Gunn High School in Palo Alto on 11 Mar (MDo) were the largest concentration. A count of 43 **Common Mergansers** at Almaden Lake Park on 6 Mar (KF) was probably the last winter concentration. A **Ferruginous Hawk** was found at the Alviso Environmental Education Center (EEC) on 15 Mar (KF). The last report of the **Sandhill Crane** northwest of Gilroy was on 5 Mar (MJM). The 4th-winter **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Lake Cunningham was seen at various times in March (v.ob.). Three to five **Glaucous Gulls** were found during a gull survey at the Newby Island dump on 8 Mar (MMR, NL). Another bird was nearby at the Fremont Lagoons in Alameda County the same day (MMR,

NL) and two birds were seen there on 29 Mar as well (NL). A 1st-winter **Glaucous** was found on Almaden Lake on 19 Mar (JMa). The **Black Skimmer** flock at Charleston Slough has remained fairly constant through the month with 10 or 11 birds (v.ob.).

Roadrunners through Munias

A **Greater Roadrunner** was found on 15 Mar along Canada Road (RWR, FV), a "typical" location for this rare resident. An early **Rufous Hummingbird** was found near Gunn High School on 11 Mar (MDo). At least three migrants were seen in Ed Levin CP on 25-29 Mar (DB, MMR). Four males and five females were banded near Sierra and Felter roads on 27 Mar (RCo *vide* MMR). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was seen in San Antonio Valley on 23 Mar (JMa et al.), where expected. Two **Cassin's Kingbirds** were found along San Felipe Road on 18 Mar (RWR, FV et al.) where they have been found more or less regularly over the last few years. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** west of Table Moun-

tain along Skyline Boulevard on 26 Mar (LCh) is probably from a local breeding population. A **Canyon Wren** has been found regularly in Alum Rock Park in March (v.ob.). An **American Dipper** was found along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on 26-31 Mar (SEM, MMR). Two male **Phainopepla** were seen near San Antonio Junction on 19 Mar (SEM) and a male was seen along near Del Puerto Canyon Road near the county line on 23 Mar (JR et al.). A **Palm Warbler** was banded at the Coyote Creek Field Station on 4 Mar (LCh) for one of our few reports this winter. A **Western Tanager** at Vasona Lake CP on 27 Mar (KPa) is probably a wintering bird rather than an early migrant. The **Green-tailed**

Field Notes *continued*

Towhee wintering along Coyote Creek below Tasman was last seen on 4 Mar (MJM). This has been a strange winter for **Grasshopper Sparrows**. Two singing birds were again found in the Evergreen area on 3 Mar (MMR) where they had also been seen in February. Then at least one singing bird was found at Ed Levin CP on 31 Mar (RWR, FV), about two weeks early for a normally returning bird. Reports of **White-throated Sparrows** at local feeders have dropped this month. Birds have continued, however at one feeder in San Jose at least through 9 Mar (PB), a second San Jose feeder at least through 20 Mar (BJ), and at a Los Gatos feeder through the end of the month (JD). An immature male and female **Black-headed Grosbeak** have continued to come to a Saratoga feeder through the end of March (SB). The first returning summer Black-headed was found singing in Los Altos Hills on 30 Mar (PLN) so it seems likely that these unusual wintering birds will move on soon. A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** in a Tricolored Blackbird flock found in the Fremont Lagoons on 29 Mar (NL) was just over the county line. **Scaly-breasted Munias** (a.k.a. Nutmeg Mannikins) have been seen constructing a nest in a juniper at Almaden Lake Park 11-26 Mar (DG, JMa). Exotic species have generally not succeeded in establishing breeding populations in the South Bay, so the outcome of this nesting attempt is of interest.

Observers: Sally Baumwell (SB), Peg Bernucci (PB), Dusty Bleher (DB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Les Chibana (LCh), Rita Colwell (RCo), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Karl Fowler (KF), Don Ganton (DG), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJ), Bob Joslin (BJ), Nick Lethaby (NL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Steve Miller (SEM), Paul Noble (PLN), Kathy Parker (KPa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Janice Rooks (JR), Linda Terrill (LT), Scott Terrill (SBT), and Frank Vanslager (FV).

Field Trip Reports

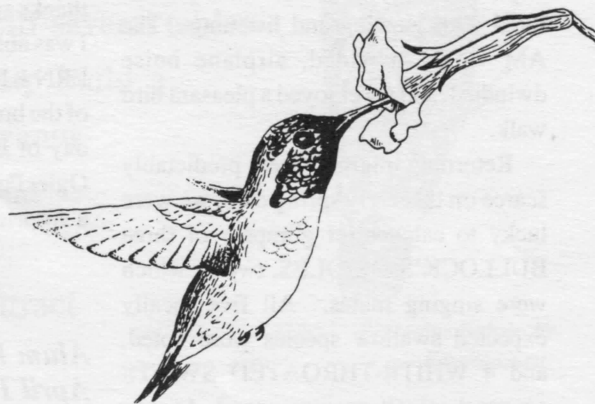
Almaden/Quicksilver Co. Park **March 27**

SCVAS joined the Santa Clara Chapter of California Native Plant Society (CNPS) for a joint field trip of birds, wildflowers, and butterflies at Almaden/Quicksilver Co. Park on Sunday, Mar. 27. In the early morning before the trip started, I found my first PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER of the season along Alamitos Creek in New Almaden near La Foret Restaurant. I sent other birders over to the locale in hopes of refinding the bird, but at that point it was "heard only." The stretch of creek between the bridge at La Foret and the bridge crossing Alamitos Road seems to be a good place to look for this species.

While folks gathered in the parking lot a pair of calling WOOD DUCKS flew over heading upstream along Alamitos Creek (the only ones seen for the day). Also a pair of WESTERN BLUEBIRDS flew between the fenceposts and the first large oak at the trailhead. Most birds seen on this trip were typical of our oak woodlands and chaparral: singing ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS were both seen and heard along the trails, as well as HUTTON'S VIREO, LESSER GOLDFINCH, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, PURPLE FINCH, plus lingering YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS and GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROWS. Of special interest were several TOWNSEND'S WARBLERS and a BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (both initially spotted by John Mariani). A COOPER'S HAWK flew overhead, as

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

well as VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW and N. ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW. Otherwise, we had our usual Quicksilver denizens: Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, Dark-eyed Junco, Wrentit, Spotted Towhee, Bewick's Wren, Cali-



Anna's Hummingbird and a Sticky Monkeyflower by Rita Colwell

fornia Quail, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, and California Thrasher (heard only).

After the trip John Mariani and I checked Almaden Reservoir and the road to Twin Creeks. Not much on the reservoir except for three COMMON MERGANSERS at the lower end, but John found our first HOUSE WREN of the season by the O'Day residence. And finally—our oddball bird of the day—a RED-EYED BULBUL found near the New Almaden entrance to the park! (Thanks, John, for posting the description on e-mail!) In all, a good field trip, enhanced by the woodland & chaparral spring flowers and newly-emerged butterflies (including Spring Azure, California Ringlet, Sara Orangetip, Northern Cloudywing, and W. Swallowtail).

—Ann Verdi

More trip reports on Page 8

Field Trip Reports (cont'd)

Ogier Ponds March 25

The presence of a couple hundred model airplane enthusiasts did not deter the 22 birders who showed up at the Ogier Ave. ponds for the March 25 field trip. We simply altered our course and visited the northern ponds instead of the more familiar southern ones, where the model airplane rally would have certainly interfered with viewing and listening. The AM winds subsided, airplane noise dwindled, and we enjoyed a pleasant bird walk.

Returning migrants were predictably scarce on this early spring date; we were lucky to catch brief glimpses of three BULLOCK'S ORIOLES, two of which were singing males. All five locally expected swallow species were noted, and 4 WHITE-THROATED SWIFTS among the swallows were a treat. Among the passerines foraging in fresh oak foliage were three singing male RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS; their elaborate, high-pitched song is always worth studying before they depart the South Bay in April en route to higher altitude breeding destinations.

Raptors were quite visible, as WHITE-TAILED KITES and RED-TAILED HAWKS soared, courted, and defended breeding territory. We were tipped off to a nest site by some local joggers, and glimpsed a Red-tail head peeping over a stick nest in a sycamore tree; more impressive was the nearer GREAT HORNED OWL nest, also in a sycamore pointed out by the helpful joggers, with the head and chest of a sleepy adult nicely viewed through Frank Vanslager's Questar. 150 GREATER SCAUP dominated the duck activity in the northern pond, with one male CINNAMON TEAL and two pair of always-skittish WOOD DUCKS also seen.

Resident passerines seen and heard in breeding song included CALIFORNIA THRASHER, CHESTNUT-BACKED

CHICKADEE, HUTTON'S VIREO, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, BEWICK'S WREN, OAK TITMOUSE, SONG SPARROW, and LESSER GOLDFINCH. The latter reminded us of its accomplished, often under-appreciated mimicking skills.

At noon, I managed to spot a distant flycatcher perched atop a sycamore; thanks again to Frank and the mighty "Q" I was able to confirm that it was a WESTERN KINGBIRD, a welcome harbinger of the breeding season. Not a spectacular day of birding, but even a slow day at Ogier Ponds is sure to provide variety and a surprise or two.

—Grant Hoyt

Alum Rock Park April 1

Twelve intrepid birders braved dry trails, near-80-degree temperatures, and the ever-present danger of April Fool's jokes to turn up about 50 species on SCVAS's April 1 field trip to Alum Rock Park in San Jose. It was warm early, with conditions good for soaring raptors, including our biggest surprise: an OSPREY soaring over the North Ridge. We also saw a sub-adult GOLDENEAGLE, three COOPER'S HAWKS, one NORTHERN HARRIER, numerous RED-TAILED HAWKS, and several cooperative AMERICAN KESTRELS; also a flock of about 20 TURKEY VULTURES soon after 8 AM. Owls were represented by a heard-only NORTHERN PYGMY OWL in the Mineral Springs area (at 11 AM, no less); and a GREAT HORNED OWL roosting in its familiar location by the YSI building. Frank

Vanslager provided us with Questar-filling views of that owl and also of the head of a perched Turkey Vulture. Our only CALIFORNIA THRASHER was just heard singing, staying out of view. But we got an excellent look at a RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW along the Todd L. Quick loop trail, after an earlier one had given us only a brief glimpse. Another highlight was a singing BROWN CREEPER. Best of all, the CANYON WREN put on quite a show at the Sycamore Grove picnic area—it was back at the large sycamore cavity (as first described by Pat Kenny on March 18), where it was alternately out of sight inside the cavity (apparently removing debris) and singing from perches on the rim.

Recent arrivals were 2 WESTERN KINGBIRDS at the high point of the Quick Trail, the same place where we saw the eagle, and a singing male BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK. Other spring birds included a cooperative male ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD, at least 3 singing HOUSE WRENS, 2 singing ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS, and at least 6 BULLOCK'S ORIOLES.

Thanks to everyone who participated—all did their share in finding the good birds and in making this an enjoyable and successful trip.

—Al Eisner



From beak to tail, the Great Horned Owl measures 22" while the Northern Pygmy Owl only measures 6.75" according to *The National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Sketch by BB-W.

International Migratory Bird Day

Saturday May 13th

11:30 AM - 4:30 PM

FREE OF CHARGE

Come celebrate **International Migratory Bird Day** with us at the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge Education Center in Alviso
(take Zanker Road off HWY 237 and follow signs).

SCVAS volunteers will lead bird walks and staff several tables with hands-on activities for children. Kids can help build a nestbox for bluebirds and chickadees and make peanut butter/pine cone bird-feeders to take home. Adults and children can learn to use binoculars and field guides. Watch migratory bird presentations and learn how to attract songbirds to your back yard.



*Peregrine Falcon by
Emelie Curtis*

Meet "Grommet"—a live Peregrine Falcon—at 1:00 PM
See you there!

Class Reunion for Alice Hoch Students

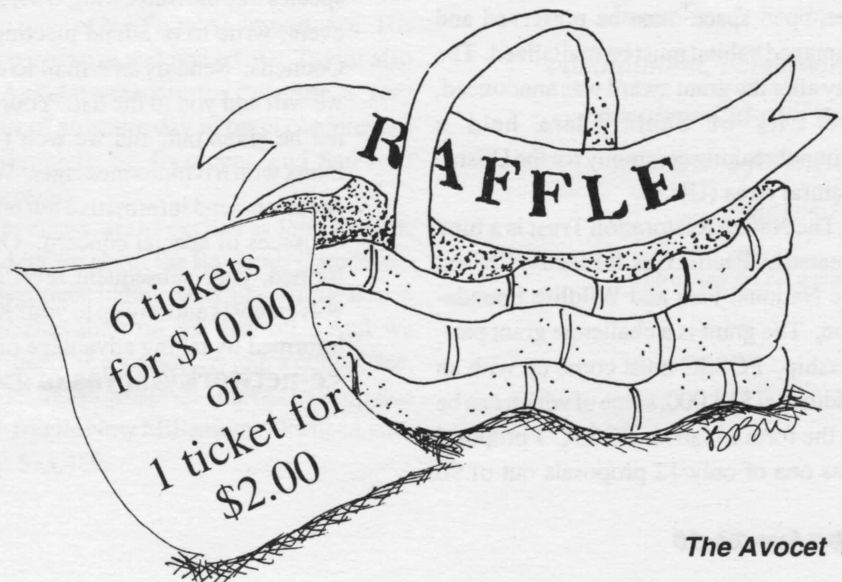
In honor of twenty-five years of teaching birdwatching classes for the Fremont Adult School, Alice Hoch is having a reunion of the students of those classes. It will be Saturday, May 6th from 10 AM until 1 PM at Central Park in Fremont. Our tables will be behind the (old) community center at 40204 Paseo Padre Parkway (at the end of Mission View Dr.) In case of rain, the reunion will be at Noll School, 39600 Sundale Dr. in Fremont.

Come and renew old friendships and make new ones. Trade stories. If you want, bring your lunch and beverage. Please alert other alumni.

If you have questions, please call Alice at (510) 657-0475 or the adult school at (510) 791-5841.

Special Raffle at our May Meeting

Learn and Look Good while birding, and at the same time support our local Santa Clara Valley Audubon. At the May 17th General Meeting, the Nature Shop will have a donation drawing for a Spring Basket filled with items that will entice the bird lover in all of us. Tickets will be on sale before the meeting in the back of the meeting room, or at the Nature Shop located at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino.



Money For the Plants For the Birds

Audubon Joins Citizens Group in Recovery Effort

by Chris Salander
Environmental Action Committee



In March the People for Open Space in Santa Clara (POSSC) received a grant from the Nature Restoration Trust for \$30,000 for revegetation of part of the Ulistac Natural Area along the Guadalupe River in Santa Clara. The funds will be used to convert part of a decayed golf course with exotic trees and grasses into an oak savannah like the valley floor before cattle and development came. Volunteers from local schools and organizations will plant native plants on the site and monitor the changes in the wildlife as the habitat changes.

Although POSSC is now a large (220 members) and self-sustaining group, the core of the organization is made up of members of Santa Clara Valley Audubon. SCVAS was the original recipient of the notice of the grant, and forwarded it to POSSC. SCVAS also provided some funding so that the grant proposal could be written. It became apparent to members of POSSC that in order to have places to go birdwatching and birds to see, open space must be preserved and damaged habitat must be revitalized. The day after the grant award was announced, the City of Santa Clara held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Ulistac Natural Area (UNA).

The Nature Restoration Trust is a fund created by Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The grant is a challenge grant partnership. POSSC must come up with an additional \$15,000, some of which can be in the form of labor. POSSC's proposal was one of only 12 proposals out of 90

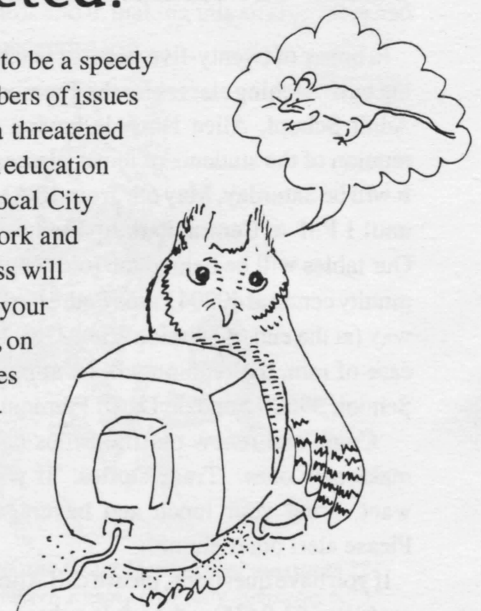
submitted to receive funding.

Planning starts immediately, with the initial planting scheduled for this autumn. We will be putting out requests for volunteers then. If you feel that the inhabitants of the natural world in this valley are being squeezed into a corner, there IS something you can do about it. If you know of another cause that needs action, see if there are similar grants for doing something about it. POSSC will be working with Wilcox High School science teachers, Santa Clara University professors, and Hughes Elementary School teachers to incorporate the work at UNA into their science curricula. Part of the grant will help provide students with equipment to survey the natural world around them. The American Indian Alliance and the California Native Plant Society will also be supporting the project with their expertise. Trails at UNA will be built by the Santa Clara Department of Parks and Recreation.

Ulistac Natural Area is best birded during the spring and fall migrations from the top of the Guadalupe River levee. Observers on that route have turned up Red-breasted Nuthatch, Nashville Warbler and Willow Flycatcher, among other unusual species. Uncommon raptor visitors have included White-tailed Kite, Barn Owl, and fly-over Golden Eagles. Flocks of White Pelicans occasionally navigate from the bayside along the river, and sharp-eyed observers may be entertained by California Quail and jackrabbits that have moved onto the site. Fourteen species of butterfly have been found there, including Western Pygmy Blue, and Monarchs spend the winter there. West Coast Ladies migrate through the park on early spring evenings at the rate of three per minute. Who knows what other species will turn up next in this suburban wildlife haven?

Join our e-network and get connected!

The SCVAS *e-network* is designed to be a speedy communication system to inform members of issues needing assistance. Help us monitor a threatened species like the Burrowing Owl; staff an education event; write to or attend meetings of local City Councils. Send us an e-mail to e-network and we will add you to the list. Your address will not be given out, and we won't flood your inbox with frivolous messages. We will, on occasion, send informative but brief notes on issues of special concern. Once informed, your subsequent level of involvement is entirely up to you. Keep informed by taking advantage of **<e-network@scvas.org>**.



Perspective

1999 Fall Fundraiser Tops Expectations—Over \$33K Raised!

by Grant Hoyt

In case you were wondering what happened to that check you sent us last Fall, don't worry. The Board didn't spend it on pizza and beer. Returns finally ceased trickling in last month, and we are thrilled to report that we raised \$33,489 from our loyal members, a 20% increase over the 1998 total, in response to last November's fundraising letter!

In that letter, we asked you to look at what we've done in the way of protecting bird and wildlife habitat in the South Bay. With Advocate Craig Breon leading the charge, SCVAS has become a major player in the local environmental scene, as area politicians, civic leaders, and policy-makers can attest. We've put our money where our mouth was and confronted some of the Big Boys on their home turf (the courts), and we've had considerable, though certainly not total, success. Not wanting to focus all our energy on the courtroom, we've taken hundreds of kids out into the natural "classroom" of local wetlands, teaching youngsters basic lessons in ecology, biology, and the appreciation of Nature. Our birding field trips explore every nook and cranny of the Greater Bay Area as our members avidly pursue the original Audubon pastime.

You members have let us know in a big way that you approve of what we're trying to do, and we are exceedingly grateful for your phenomenal financial support. Every member of this organization, from Chapter President to bluebird box-builder to field trip leader and participant, should feel proud of what we have accomplished over the last year, and excited about meeting the tough challenges that lie ahead. If you care about quality of life in the South Bay, we hope you'll continue to support your local Audubon chapter with renewed energy and resources—we're going to need it.

One of the efforts your financial contributions supported last year was the seeding of the Audubon Baylands Campaign (see related story on Page 1). National Audubon President John Flicker really injected some life into this ambitious plan to protect and restore over 100,000 acres of San Francisco Bay when he toured the Bay last month, and SCVAS is proud to have put up nearly \$20,000 last year to kick-start this landmark environmental restoration effort.

Cal-Audubon's Executive Director Dan Taylor was "delighted" with the media coverage Flicker received. According to Taylor, "John Flicker did a tremendous job in representing the issue and promoting it as an issue of NATIONAL importance. His comparison of the Bay to the Everglades was persuasive and powerful." Taylor also cited our Craig Breon among other local Audubon leaders for "playing a very prominent role" as Flicker spent the better part of an entire day in press conferences and editorial board meetings with the SF Chronicle, SF Examiner, and San Jose Mercury-News promoting the Baylands Campaign.

We hope that you, our rank-and-file local members, are as excited as John Flicker, Dan Taylor, and other National Audubon leaders are about the Baylands Campaign. We hope you'll continue to enable us to keep outstanding staff like Craig Breon (whom we'd love to clone—the man is unbelievable) on our payroll. And we fervently hope that you'll get more involved: become a volunteer, join a committee, write for the newsletter or lead field trips; in short, do whatever it takes to keep this organization effective in the environmentally-fragile New Millennium. We need you; the birds need you. And thanks again for the \$33,489.



*The love of birds,
wildlife and our
environment is more
than just feeding the
birds and providing bird
houses. It is about
commitment, community
involvement and our
member's financial
generosity.*

-Drawing by Ed Rooks

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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.

2000 Volume 47, Number 5

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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or
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