



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

October 2000

Birds, Butterflies,— and Dragonflies?

by Leda Beth Gray

On South-Bay Birds, the local e-mail list for bird postings, I noticed a year or two ago that some folks—Les Chibana and others—were listing butterfly species sightings along with bird sightings. I had taken docent classes at Jasper Ridge, and had learned many of the native plants and creatures including a few butterfly species, but I wasn't yet proficient at identifying butterflies.

It was just enough to spur my interest. I picked up Bob Stewart's "Common Butterflies of California" at the SCVAS Nature Shop and have had a great time ever since. When the birds are hiding, I now have butterflies to watch. This can be challenging with binoculars if one is trying to follow a butterfly on the wing. My head bobs and turns as I try to follow the jerky butterfly flight, like my cat's head does when he spots a fly.

Sometimes I get lucky and a butterfly lands, and then it is much easier. Besides Monarchs and Swallowtails, I've seen Buckeye, Sara Orangetip, Mourning Cloak, American Sister, Lorquin's Admiral, and Variable Checkerspot.

When neither birds nor butterflies are around, I examine the plants and try to identify them with my "Plants of the San Francisco Bay Area" by Kozloff and Beidleman (also in the Nature Shop). This book has so many great photos that I rarely have to actually "key out" flowers. I've started adding butterflies and even wildflowers to my bird reports to various lists.

Now there is another wonderful world opening itself up to me—the world of dragonflies. "Common Dragonflies of California" by Kathy Biggs is a pocket-sized guide to these dazzling insects, with stunning close-up photos of dragonflies

Don't Forget!
Wildlife Education Day
Saturday Oct. 14
(see Page 9)

and descriptive text including habitat, distribution and flight period. A colored line under each photograph depicts the length of the insect so that you don't have to stop and imagine it based on the listed measurements. Lucky for me it's pocket-sized, because by now that is all that will fit in my pack.

I have used "Dragonflies of California" in several places around the state. Sometimes the dragonflies are just too fast and won't land, and I'm out of luck. My head now makes sweeping side-to-side movements as I try to follow dragonfly movements. At times I get wonderful views through my binocs as the dragonflies hover or land.

Now and then I learn something about dragonflies as I read the species descrip-

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General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, October 18
"Salton Sea" with Dave Shuford
Palo Alto Art Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

7:30 Hospitality 8:00 Program

Come see what the Salton Sea is all about without having to endure 115-degree heat! Dave Shuford has been a biologist at Point Reyes Bird Observatory since 1975, studying patterns of distribution, abundance, and habitat use of California birds and their conservation. His research projects have included the Marin County breeding bird atlas, shorebird distribution in the western U.S., a statewide survey of inland-breeding seabirds in California, the ecology of California Gulls at Mono Lake and a reconnaissance survey of birds at the Salton Sea. Tonight's presentation will highlight the importance of the Salton Sea to Pacific Flyway waterbirds, and the recent restoration of the Salton Sea ecosystem. Don't miss this presentation by one of California's top bird biologists!

What is "Audubon"?---Page 4

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Yes on Measure B-----Page 10

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Volunteer Ventures

by Ulrike Keyssner



After my summer vacation, it is *great* to be back at SCVAS and our picturesque McClellan Ranch office. The brown field and green riparian corridor are a wonderful visual antidote to the growing sprawl that is this valley. As I'm sure many of you have experienced, flying into San Jose International Airport and viewing the South Bay from above can be

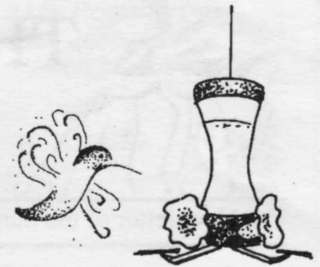
dismaying. Development seems to stretch to the horizon. Thankfully, it slows at the foothills, but the sight is pretty depressing after coming from a place like Guyana (no, not Africa but northeast South America). Flying into the capital, Georgetown, was amazing—the forest truly did stretch to the horizon. I flew over the country to reach the huge southern savannah, and was overwhelmed by its immensity, broken only by rivers. This is one country that does not suffer from population pressures, and it shows.

If you haven't been to South America yet (or even if you have), consider Guyana. English is the national language, which makes it very easy for those of us challenged by Spanish. But please, don't ask them to pass the Kool-Aid! The 1978 Jonestown tragedy has given Guyana a reputation it doesn't deserve. The country needs tourism, especially *ecotourism*, to help protect its diverse and healthy environments. Like many countries with crushing international debt, the pressure to extract profits from its large intact forests and rich mineral deposits is relentless. Guyana has the world's longest, single-drop waterfall, Kaieteur, which is five times higher than Niagara! Although there has been talk of harnessing this glorious spectacle to generate hydroelectricity, Kaieteur is safe for the moment, and sightings of the Kaieteur swifts and Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock are frequent.

To many of us, protecting these pristine rainforest ecosystems is obvious and necessary. However, the reasons for saving old agricultural land zoned for development and surrounded by houses are less clear. The job of protecting land and habitat here in Santa Clara Valley is a tough one. The results are rarely entirely satisfying, but any victory is worthwhile. For those of you like our environmental advocate Craig Breon and the volunteers on the Environmental Action Committee who are actively saving habitat in our over-developed Valley, I take my hat off to you. Thanks for doing the difficult work many of us avoid.

With volunteering and activism in mind, SCVAS is gearing up for the new school year and we are hopeful

you'll want to give back to the community and the environment by getting involved. I encourage you to call us and find out how you can help protect habitat and educate kids about the value of pristine rainforests and even old "ag" land slated for development.



If you are thinking about volunteering, we are having a lunchtime "High Tea" for current and potential volunteers to get to know each other and our organization. This is your chance to find out what volunteers are doing for SCVAS and what you could do. The High Tea will be held at the Ranch on Saturday November 11th at 12 noon. **You must RSVP by November 8th.** Call (408) 252-3747 to reserve your cucumber sandwich and scone. Coffee is optional for those untutored in appreciating a nicely brewed tea!

View From The Office

by Susan Bell
Office Manager

It is hard to believe that October is here, already! The SCVAS Education Committee has planned a terrific Wildlife Education Day at McClellan Ranch Park on October 14. This is an event you don't want to miss, there will be something for everyone to enjoy.

We're extremely fortunate to have received some valuable donations recently: a camera outfit, a scope and binoculars to help students observe and identify birds at different locations, and an electric screwdriver set that will be very useful building nest boxes for the Bluebird program. We thank the donors for their generosity.

We also receive useful information sent by e-mail regarding rare birds and their locations. One e-mail I received described the Sierra Azul Open Space, which is very accessible with an incredible view. On these clear, cool mornings you can see San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose. It's a good birding spot, too. From the middle of San Jose, it takes only 30 minutes to reach this preserve. You can reach this area by first driving to Almaden Reservoir; drive to the back of the reservoir and turn north on Hicks Rd. After winding up the road toward the crest about 2- miles, you'll come to a marked parking area on the left where the Wood Trail begins. Park, hike and enjoy. More information is available by contacting the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at (650) 691-1200.

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October 2000 Calendar

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

****Sunday Oct. 1, 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. Variety of woodland and grassland species; especially raptors possible. Two miles of moderate walking. **RC**

Wednesday Oct. 4, 7:30 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers features John Cang with his slide presentation "San Francisco Bay's Hidden Wildlife," the 25,000 acres of salt ponds ringing S.F. Bay. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Saturday Oct. 7, 9:00 AM**

Charleston Slough. Half day. Leader: Steve Rutledge (650)328-5097. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way parking area. Meet at the entrance nearest San Antonio Rd. Trip recommended for beginning birders but, as always, birders of all skill levels are encouraged to participate.

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

Pillar Point Harbor, San Mateo Co. Half day. Leader: Al Eisner (650) 364-3686; daytime-voicemail: (650) 926-2018). Meet along Capistrano Rd. just north of Prospect Way, Princeton By The Sea, behind MezzaLuna restaurant. (Park on street, not in their lot.) Take Hwy 1 about 4 miles north of Half Moon Bay, turn left at traffic light. Highlights: waterbirds, coastal migrants (landbirds and shorebirds), possible vagrants. Bring your scope. **RC**

Tuesday Oct. 10, 9:30 AM

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Forster's Tern.

****Wednesday Oct. 11, 8:30 AM**

Ogier Ponds. Half day. Leader to be announced. Call Shirley Gordon (408) 996-9863 for info. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 miles; turn right towards Model Airplane Park. Follow road for 1/2 mile, park in gravel lot at first bend in road.

****Saturday Oct. 14, 8:30 AM**

Grant Ranch Co. Park. Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408)265-9286. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave. north-east, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd. then approx. 9 mi. to park. Meet at Hall's Valley Lake parking lot on left side of road after main park entrance. Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Moderate 2-mile walk. **LO, RC**

****Saturday - Sunday Oct. 14 -15**

Big Sur River/Old Coast Rd, Andrew Molera State Park. Leader: Rick Fournier (831) 633-0572. Join Rick Saturday evening for an owling expedition on Old Coast Rd. and/or Sunday morning for a half day, 2-mile field trip along the Big Sur River in search of western migrants and possible eastern vagrants, ending with a visit to the Big Sur Ornithology Lab for banding demonstrations. For safety reasons, owling trip will be for adults only; meet Saturday at 7:30 PM at the kiosk at Andrew Molera State Park entrance. Sunday morning half day trip will meet at 8:00 AM at same location. Camping available in Andrew Molera State Park (a short walk and modest camping fee) or other campgrounds in area. Motels: try the Big Sur River Inn or Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park Inn for starters. Be prepared for cool, damp weather.

**** Saturday Oct. 21, 8:00 AM**

Carmel River. Half day. Leader: Bill Hill [Bob Reiling (408)253-7527]. Take Hwy 1 south to Rio Rd. in Carmel; turn left then immediately right into Crossroads Shopping Center. Meet in Cinema parking lot at back of mall near river. We'll bird the riparian corridor for land birds and check the lagoon for shorebirds. Possible migrants, vagrants and rarities.

**** Sunday Oct. 22, 9:00 AM**

Phipps Ranch. Half day. Leader: Garth Harwood (650) 879-0724. One of San Mateo Co.'s best migrant and vagrant warbler traps. Take Hwy 84 or 92 west to Hwy 1, then south to Pescadero Rd.; turn left and follow road through town of Pescadero to Phipps Ranch, located about one mile east. **RC**

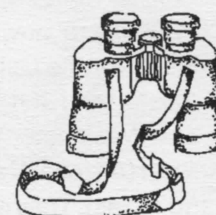
****Wednesday, Oct. 25, 8:30 AM**

Arastradero Preserve. Half day. Leader: Alberta Jasberg (650)493-9546. Moderate walking of 2 to 3 miles on trails much improved since the El Niño year. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west, turn right on Arastradero Rd. (approx. 1/2 mile) and meet in parking lot, 1/2 mile on right. **RC**

****Saturday Oct. 28, 7:30 AM**

Local hot spots and hot birds. Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. Meet at Alviso Marina: from Hwy 237 in San Jose take Gold St. north to end of street, bear left on Elizabeth St., then right on Hope St. to Marina parking lot. We'll visit some notorious local hot spots and, it's hoped, see some hot birds.

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Scope on Audubon — Local and Beyond

by Debbie Thompson

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS), founded in 1926, is one of many grassroots chapters of the National Audubon Society. We participate in Audubon on three levels beyond the local chapter: the Bay Area Audubon Council (BAAC); California Audubon and the Western Regional Office in Sacramento; and National Audubon itself.

Our chapter membership numbers around 3300, making us the second largest chapter in the state, behind Golden Gate Audubon. Earlier this year we gathered membership statistics that showed 25% of our members have been with us for nine years or more. One of our membership goals is to increase this core group of long-term members while continuing to attract and retain new members. A large membership translates into political clout with local governments as we turn up our efforts to save local bird habitat.

The greater Bay Area contains eight Audubon chapters: Sequoia (San Mateo

Co.), Golden Gate (SF-Oakland), Marin, Madrone (Sonoma Co.), Napa-Solano, Mt. Diablo (Contra Costa Co.), Ohlone (Eastern Alameda Co.), and Santa Clara Valley. SCVAS is the chapter for Santa Clara County, covering the area from Palo Alto south through Gilroy. Santa Cruz County has a bird club but no Audubon affiliate.

Representatives from these eight chapters, comprising the Bay Area Audubon Council, meet quarterly to discuss regional conservation issues. Currently the most important issue is the Baylands Campaign, a large-scale bay restoration project with strong backing from National Audubon. BAAC regularly sends a representative to the California Audubon office in Sacramento to help make decisions at the state level.

California's Audubon membership totals 65,000 among 53 chapters, largest of any state (New York has about 40,000 members). California is also one of the few states with its own office; most states are represented by a regional office. The California Audubon office in Sacramento provides coordination of state conservation policy and a day-to-day presence for Audubon in our state Capitol.

Audubon's Western Region includes California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. National Audubon's 35-member

Board of Directors includes nine Regional Directors elected by chapters from the respective regions. Our regional Board member is Charles Bragg from southern California.

National Audubon Society (NAS) has over 550,000 members in 500 chapters in the western hemisphere, mostly in North America. There are also about 100 Audubon Sanctuaries and nature centers nationwide. Audubon's international scope includes chapters in Central and South America and the Caribbean. Among the 19 NAS Field Offices in the U.S. are state, regional and special campaign offices.

NAS is gradually converting from regional to state office structure. Many chapter leaders believe we are experiencing benefits of this structural change through higher chapter participation and a closer working relationship with our state government.

Audubon is a grassroots organization with activism and volunteer opportunities at many levels. Visit our website at www.scvas.org and follow the links to California Audubon and NAS for more information about the Audubon Society beyond our local chapter.

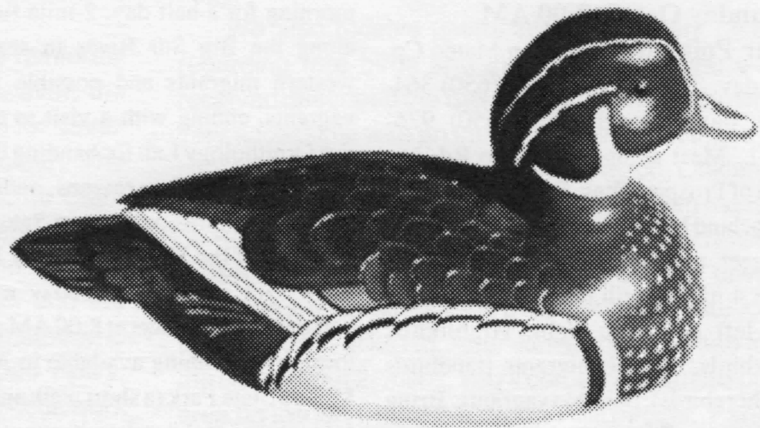


Office View *cont'd*

Another great location is our Nature Shop at McClellan Ranch Park. We are delighted to have hand carved wooden ducks by SCVAS volunteer Jack Cole on display. The careful detail and painting of each individual duck makes them almost lifelike. Pictured here is a photo of one of the Wood Ducks now on sale in the Nature Shop. All sales include a donation to SCVAS. Jack has also provided photographs of additional duck carvings that can also be purchased.

The new Audubon Guide to the National Wildlife Refuges, published in March 2000, are now available. The Guides cover the California and Hawaii, Alaska and the Northwest (Oregon and Washington) as well as the Southwest (Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico and Texas). They are all available in our Nature Shop.

The Avocet 4



Wood Duck carving by Jack Cole

Calendar

continued

**** Sunday Oct. 29, 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 the left lane and take Cross-over Dr. to 25th Ave. to Geary Blvd, then left on Geary. Meet in parking lot at Mirrie Way above Sutro Baths and the Cliff House. **RC**

****Saturday, Nov. 4, 8:30 AM
Calabazas Ponds/Sunnyvale
Baylands Park.** Half day. Leader: TBD (408) 253-7527. Meet at Alviso Marina (short caravan from there). See directions under Oct. 28 listing. Highlights: Burrowing Owl, ducks, egrets, gulls, shorebirds. **RC**

****Sunday, Nov. 5, 7:30 AM
Elkhorn Slough.** Full day. Leader: Todd Newberry (831) 426-8741. A fast-paced, all-day trip seeking 100 species from the mouth to the back of the slough: Jetty Rd, Moonglow Dairy, Reserve HQ (quick lunch), Elkhorn Rd. and Kirby Park. We will chase reported rarities. Meet at Jetty Rd off Hwy 1 at 7:30, light rain or shine. (Latecomers: we'll be on Jetty Rd. until 8:30.) Dress in layers and bring liquids. **RC**

****Saturday Nov. 11, 9:00 AM
Pescadero State Beach & vicinity.** Half day. Leader: Sue James (650) 348-0315. Meet at first parking lot south of bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy 1. Shorebirds, gulls, grebes, ducks. Bring spotting scope, layered clothing. **LO, RC**

****Sunday Nov. 12, 9:00 AM
Charleston Slough.** Half day. Leader: Dick Stovel (659) 856-6105. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mt. View. Birding geared toward beginners but all are encouraged to attend. Bring your scope.

**Tuesday Nov. 14, 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: American Dipper.

PLAN AHEAD:

Panoche Valley Jan 6, 2001 (Sat.)

Merced NWA Jan 20, 2001 (Sat.)

Mines Road May 5, 2001 (Sat.)



Open House for New Members

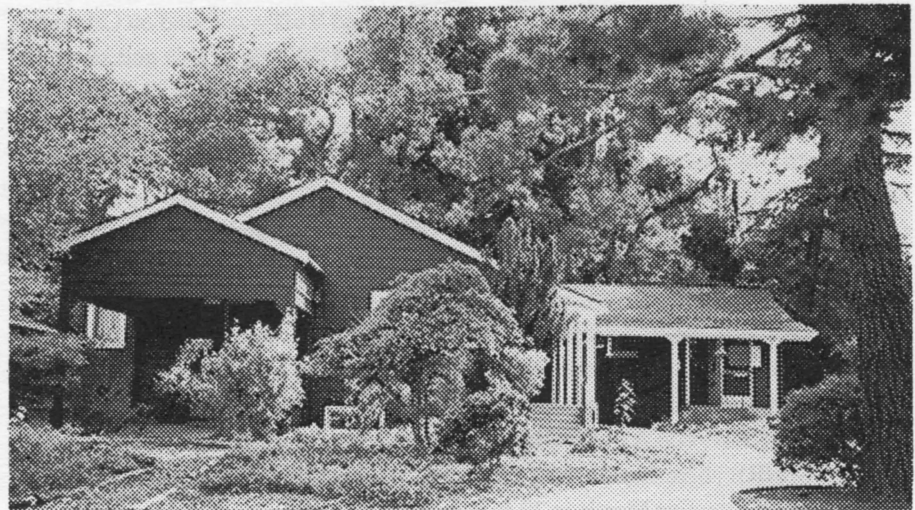
The Membership Committee is hosting another Open House for new members on Saturday, Oct. 28 at 9:30 AM at SCVAS headquarters in McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. This get-together for members who have joined in the last year offers a look at SCVAS programs, volunteer opportunities, and a chance to meet other new members.

We'll kick off the morning with a short bird walk around the park led by an experienced birder. McClellan Ranch Park is bordered by Stevens Creek and also contains an old orchard, open grassy areas, a bluebird nestbox trail, and a community garden, with opportunity for viewing numerous bird species.

After the walk, we'll serve coffee, tea and bagels in our meeting room. Members of our Board of Directors and different committees will be on hand to discuss our various programs and hear your ideas. The SCVAS library and Nature Shop will also be open for browsing.

Bring your binoculars for the bird walk (or borrow ours!) and spend a few hours getting acquainted with SCVAS. We look forward to meeting you.

*Santa Clara Valley Audubon
Society is located at McClellan
Ranch Park in Cupertino.
A map is included under our
return address near the
address label.*



Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Pelicans through Raptors

A conservative count of 1800 **American White Pelicans** on Salt Pond A2E was made on 5 Aug (JiD). We occasionally encounter flocks this large in the South Bay, but any count over a thousand birds is exceptional (and spectacular). Just as impressive, 109 **Brown Pelicans** were in the same flock (JiD). An adult **Little Blue Heron** was found along Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 6 Aug (MMR), the same area where two adults were seen in July. A **White-faced Ibis**, wandering from the Central Valley perhaps, was seen over the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 7 Aug (RWR, FV). At least six broods of **Lesser Scaup** were on the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds on 24 Aug (MMR), including 43 precocial young. Full-sized birds there as well represented successful broods from July. A female **Hooded Merganser** in Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 5 Aug (FV *vide* MMR) was likely the same bird seen irregularly this summer in the general area. The first **Merlin** of the season was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 26 Aug (MJM).

Shorebirds through Skimmer

Lesser Yellowlegs were found widely in August, as expected, but nowhere in exceptional numbers. Representative concentrations include eight at State and Spreckles in Alviso on 25 Aug (MMR) and seven at the CCFS waterbird pond on 26 Aug (RWR, MJM). An inland bird on Calero Reservoir on 26 Aug (JMa) was less expected. One to two alternate **Ruddy Turnstones** and a basic-plumaged bird were seen on Salt Pond A14 in Alviso on 6 Aug (MMR). Five **Sanderling** were observed on Crittenden Marsh on 20 Aug

(PJM), but did not linger. A juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was seen on the CCFS waterbird pond on 12 Aug (MJM). Another juvenile was found on the Calabazas ponds on 17 Aug (RWR, FV) and remained there through 20 Aug (MMR, MJM). An adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** found on the CCFS waterbird pond on 20 Aug (AME) and seen again on 22 Aug (RWR, FV) was the first of the season. An unaged bird was reported from Grand and Spreckles on 29 Aug

(AW, TV). A basic adult **Stilt Sandpiper** was found on Crittenden Marsh on 20 Aug (PJM) and 21 Aug (MMR). Another adult, with some alternate feathers, was also seen on 20 Aug (MJM) at the Calabazas ponds. Possibly a third adult showed up at the pond at Spreckles and State in Alviso on 22 Aug (RWR, FV) and was seen there fairly regularly through the end of the month (m.ob.). A basic-plumaged **Ruff** was found on Crittenden Marsh on 20 Aug (PJM) and remained there through 24 Aug (v.ob.). Possibly the same bird was found at Grand and Spreckles in Alviso on 29 Aug (AW, TV) and seen through the end of the month (m.ob.). Males and females of this Eurasian species generally tend to be very different in size, but our one (or two) August Ruffs were in-between in size and engendered a great deal of useful discussion among local birders. Despite careful descriptions and valuable analysis this bird may, in the end, be of indeterminate sex for we imperfect human ob-

servers. The first **Common Snipe** of the winter was at Almaden Lake on 18 Aug (GLeB et al.), a fairly early arrival date. Numbers of **Wilson's Phalaropes** normally drop drastically in August from their July highs, but this month was unusual as 4,000 birds were found on Crittenden Marsh 13 to 17 Aug (NL, RWR, FV). This is a record count for this passage bird, exceeding the 3500 found in 1984 and the 3600 in 1994. Migrant **Red-necked Phalaropes** usually peak in

August or September and the high counts generally exceed Wilson's. However, the 1000 plus Red-neckeds at Crittenden Marsh on 26 Aug (JMa, JL) were substantially less than the Wilson's found a few days previously. An **Elegant Tern** was found along Coyote Creek below Anderson Dam on 27 Aug (TRy, JC) and was surprising away from the Bay. An adult **Common Tern** was over Charleston Slough on 27 Aug (MJM). Staging **Least Terns** remained on Salt Pond A2E (mostly) during August with high counts of 94 to 99 on 5 Aug (MMR, MJM) and 120 plus on 20 Aug (PJM). A single basic **Black Tern** was found on Salt Pond A16 in Alviso on 6 Aug (MMR). There appears to be a pattern of dispersion in August for our local **Black Skimmers**. Three adults and at least one young bird were seen on Salt Pond A16 through 12 Aug (MJM). Two adults were seen there on 23 Aug (DG), and a single adult on 27 Aug (GB).

Owls through Grackles

A **Long-eared Owl** was seen along Llagas Creek near Gilroy on 14 Aug (TRy). This rare resident once nested along our valley streams, but there are few summer records from the valley floor in the last fifty years. Dispersing or migrating **Vaux's Swifts** were found along the Bay in August, as expected, with up to 100 over Crittenden Marsh on 23 Aug (FV) and 85 over Mountain View

*A Gray Catbird
in a San Jose yard
was the first
for the county*

Field Notes *continued* Dragonflies

continued from page 1

on 29 Aug (PLN). A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was seen on 13 Aug (MJM) along Coyote Creek near Sycamore. An **Anna's Hummingbird**, found on a nest in Santa Clara on 22 Aug (CI), is an exceptionally late nesting bird as there are no records past July for this early-nesting species. However, the nest was abandoned by the end of the month. A **Willow Flycatcher** was seen along Stevens Creek below L'Avenida on 24 Aug (WGB) and was the first of the season. Small numbers of this rare fall migrant are expected along valley riparian areas through late September. A **Gray Catbird** was found bathing in a San Jose yard on 24 Aug (JVM), for the first record for the county. This is also exceptionally early for this rare eastern vagrant in California (*vide* MMR). As with many vagrants, this bird did not linger and could not be found again. A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was found along Coyote Creek on 26 Aug (MJM) and is the first of the winter season. The pair of **Great-tailed Grackles** at Almaden Lake were watched on 6 Aug (MJM), but there was no indication that their nesting this summer was successful.

Observers: Gordon Barrett (GB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Jeff Cossins (JC), Jim Danzenbaker (JiD), Al Eisner (AME), Don Ganton (DG), Chris Illles (CI), Jolene Lange (JL), Gloria LeBlanc (GLeB), Nick Lethaby (NL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Peter J. Metropulos (PJM), John V. Moore (JVM), Paul Noble (PLN), Mike Rogers (MMR), Bob Reiling (RWR), Tom Ryan (TRy), Tom Vandenbosch (TV), Frank Vanslager (FV), and Alan Wofchuck (AW).

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

tions and become curious enough to look things up in the introductory text. For example, when dragonflies are darting around on their zigzag flights, they are often pursuing and eating insects like mosquitoes and gnats. Dragonfly nymphs are said to actually look like little dragons that walk around on the bottom of ponds and streams.

The book also covers the closely related damselflies, which people often think are dragonflies. An easy way to distinguish between the two is the way they hold their wings when perched. Dragonflies tend to hold theirs out flat while perched, while damselflies hold their wings against each other over their backs. Another difference is that dragonflies tend to have larger, heavier bodies, whereas damselflies are quite slender. Dragonfly seasons vary but most seem to be flying sometime between March and November.

One of my favorites so far is a dragonfly I saw over Searsville Lake at Jasper

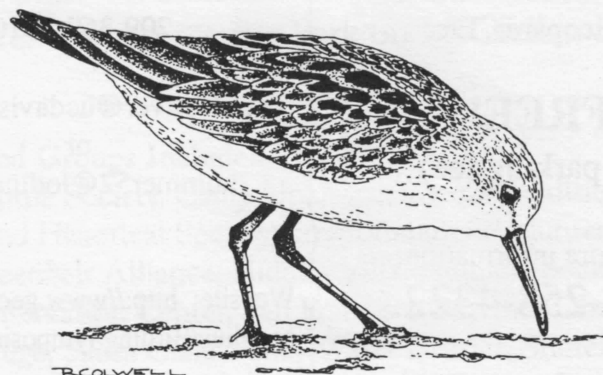
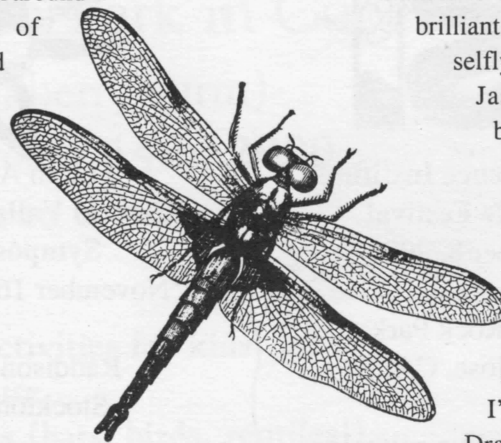
Ridge, the Blue Dasher. Blue Dasher is a gorgeous powder blue with teal-green eyes and a white face with a black dot on it. Another, the Cardinal Meadowhawk, I first spotted in Humboldt County. It is a brilliant red, with wings held forward at an angle when perched. Vivid

Dancer is another favorite: a brilliant blue, slender damselfly (also first seen at Jasper Ridge) with black stripes on its abdominal segments and an urn-shaped stripe on top of its thorax.

These locations just happen to be a couple places where I've used this book.

Dragonflies are quite widespread, found near lakes, ponds, marshes, streams and open fields. Sometimes, as with birding, a dragonfly's habitat helps in identification.

My new interest in dragonflies and damselflies reminds me of my early days of birdwatching, or of visits to new places where birds were new to me. On those occasions it was not uncommon to find a new species; later I would pore over the field guides, eagerly anticipating which species I would find. Those exciting days are back!



"Peep" (Western Sandpiper) by Rita Colwell

Birding Festivals

If you want to sharpen your skills, learn new birding facts, hear great speakers and meet new friends, attend a festival...



**Youth Science Institute
Wildlife Festival**
October 8, 2000

Alum Rock Park
San Jose, CA

Featuring live animal
presentations, nature walks,
activities, food and more...

11: 30 - 12:30 California Bats
by Dave Johnston

12:30 - 1:00 Meet the Opossum

1:00 - 1:45 Native American
Storytelling by Jane De Cuir

2:00 - 2:45 Raptor Review

3:00- 4:00 Wild Cats From
Around the World
by Leopards, Etc.

FREE!

(\$4 parking fee)

For more information,
408-258-4322



Fourth Annual
**Central Valley Birding
Symposium**
November 16-19, 2000

Raddison Hotel
Stockton, CA

Attend Workshops, Field Trips,
Birder's Market and more...

Featured Speakers include

Kenn Kaufman

Jon Dunn

Kimball Garrett

Kevin Karlson

Debi Shearwater

Joe Morlan

For more information

Frances Oliver

1817 Songbird Place

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Website: [http://www.geocities.com/
aegolius/BirdingSymposium4.html](http://www.geocities.com/aegolius/BirdingSymposium4.html)



Fifth Annual
**Morro Bay Winter
Bird Festival**
January 12-15, 2001

Over 35 Field Trips &
Daily Workshops

Evening Programs by
Kenn Kaufman
George Lepp
Brad Schram

Last year the pelagic trip
yielded a Short-tailed Albatross
sighting and
Five California Condors were
spotted in the
Los Padres National Forest

For more information

The Morro Bay

Chamber of Commerce

1-800-231-0592

Co-sponsored by the Morro
Coast Audubon Society

www.morro-bay.net/birds

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Welcomes ALL to our:



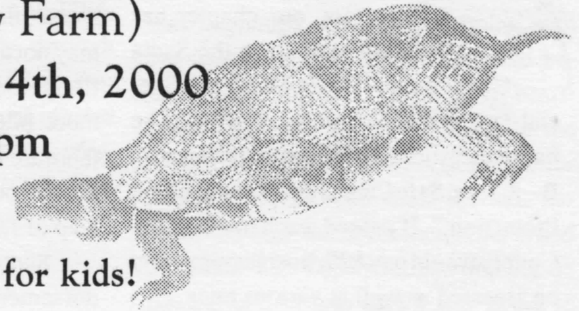
9th Annual Audubon Wildlife Education Day

at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino

(near Blackberry Farm)

Saturday, October 14th, 2000

10 am to 2 pm



- Lots of FUN activities for kids!
- Build a birdhouse
- See live animals (bats, birds, reptiles!)
- Go on a scavenger hunt!
- Join a guided nature walk
- Presentations on California wildlife and habitats
- Learn to create backyard bird and butterfly habitats
- Make a bird feeder
- Bird banding demonstration
- Fabulous raffle prizes! (Drawing at 1pm)
- Refreshments
- Audubon nature shop



Enter our **POSTER CONTEST & WIN great prizes**, announced at 1 pm.

For more details, visit our website:

“ www.scvas.org ”

PARKING and FREE Shuttle Service available at Lincoln Elementary, east of the Park on McClellan Road.

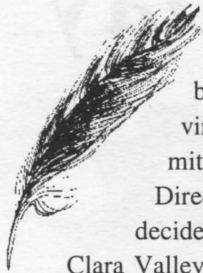
Invited Groups Include:

4H, Bay Area Amphibian and Reptile Society, Camp Unalayee, Creeks Coalition, Cupertino Parks and Recreation and Historical Society, Environmental Volunteers, Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, Greenbelt Alliance, Hidden Villa, Humane Society, Marine Science Institute, Peninsula Conservation Center, San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Santa Clara Valley Water District, Shoreline Park, Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley, Wildlife Rescue of Palo Alto, Youth Science Institute.

SCVAS Endorses Water District Tax

Vote "Yes" on Measure B Nov. 7

by Craig Breon
Environmental Advocate



After long debates by both the SCVAS Environmental Action Committee and the Board of Directors, our chapter has decided to endorse the Santa Clara Valley Water District's Special Tax on this November's ballot. The ballot measure will be entitled "Measure B—Clean, Safe Creeks and Natural Flood Protection." If passed, each home in the County would pay \$39; businesses would be assessed as well at various rates.

Some of our members may be understandably surprised by this decision, especially since some other, smaller environmental organizations are opposing the measure. What does this say about Audubon locally? The answer is: our endorsement says more about changes occurring in the Water District than changes in our philosophy.

In short, the Water District is slowly transitioning from a purely flood control and water supply agency into an agency that considers the many ways humans and wildlife interact with water, especially our creeks. This is something that we and others have urged on them for years, evidently with some success. Still, there's a long way to go for the District; we maintain significant concerns about a number of their programs and projects. Nonetheless, for their recent accomplishments in this transition, they deserve the approval of our community.

But our endorsement is really more about the future than the past. The program to be funded by Measure B includes not only funding for flood protection, but for water quality, creek and wetland restoration, appropriate creekside trails, and watershed protection. While nearly 75%

of the funding is for flood control projects, Measure B represents the first time the District has said to the community that their budget will regularly include a more holistic look at our waterways.

The Water District's future, however, like all futures, includes substantial uncertainties. The District Board of Directors will change over time, for better or worse; development too close to creeks may not allow the District to do "natural" flood control, and instead we may see more piles of rock along creek banks; there are few guarantees in Measure B. In a way, our endorsement is an educated leap of faith.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon's endorsement is important to the Water District for several reasons. First, we have been for years a leading voice for change at the District. Second, the Audubon name polls the highest amongst environmental organizations in the County because we are consistent in our beliefs, reasonable in our approach, and often effective. Third, the Water District understandably wants to hear that their honest efforts of the past few years have been recognized.

Thomas Jefferson on Our Mind

Jefferson once wrote, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." We've used that quote previously in *the Avocet*, because it so accurately applies to the environmental movement. It certainly applies here.

For now, we hope the Water District's ballot measure passes on November 7. This will be difficult because, as a special tax, it will require a two-thirds vote. If it does pass, the work is by no means over.

We do not offer our endorsement easily, and we will work to see that the vision of less flooding AND healthier creeks AND better wildlife habitat comes to pass. The Water District can expect us to be vigilant in the pursuit of our beliefs

and critical when the District disappoints us. SCVAS and communities throughout the County will need to carefully watch as the flood and erosion control projects come forward, demanding that they truly are as natural as circumstances allow. In addition, we will continue to urge the District to become more active on land use issues, to educate their engineers and other employees about the new, more environmentally conscious ways to manage waterways, and to truly see the many blessings that our creeks can bestow upon us.

So often it appears that environmental organizations are constantly fighting against things (with good reason). Our endorsement of Measure B is a nice example of speaking out in favor.



Great Blue Heron, B. Bedford White

We believe "the Water District is slowly transitioning from a purely flood control and water supply agency into an agency that considers the many ways humans and wildlife interact with water, especially our creeks."

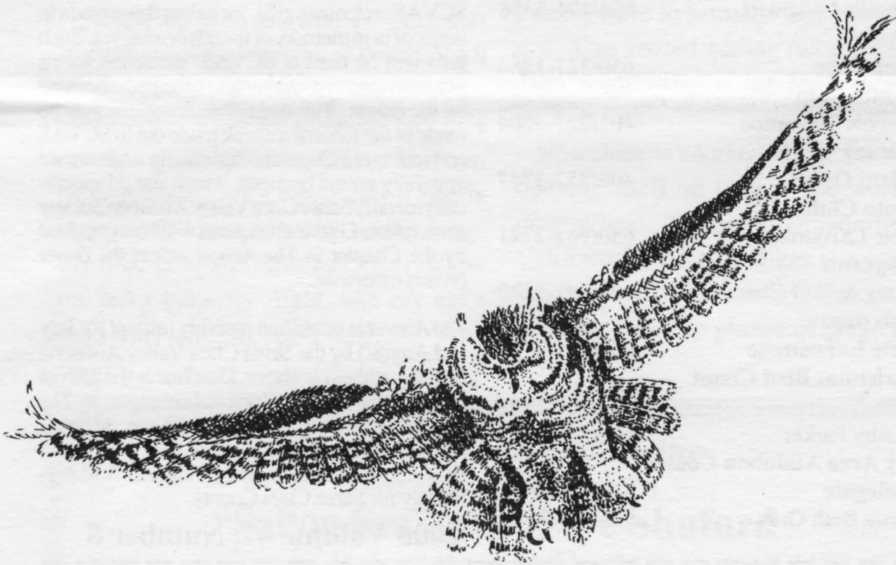
Celebrate Friday the 13th With a Great Horned Owl

On Friday evening, October 13th, Wildlife Rescue of Palo Alto will release a majestic Great Horned Owl back to the wild. This annual Raptor Release fundraiser is held at the beautiful Thomas Fogarty Winery in the hills above Portola Valley. The event features fine wines from Fogarty Vineyards, elegant hors d'oeuvres and desserts from The Palace Café and a special edition Raptor Release 2000 T-shirt. Sandy Eakins, Vice Mayor of Palo Alto, will introduce the Wildlife Rescue team and its education animals.

Take this opportunity to see one of nature's most beautiful birds return to its natural habitat after months of rehabilita-

tion. Great Horned Owls—long regarded as a symbol of wisdom—have wing spreads of 4 to 5 feet, with plumage so soft that they are almost noiseless in flight. Remarkably adaptable, this species inhabits a wide variety of environments, from dense forests, deserts and plains to city parks.

Donations of \$75/person help Wildlife Rescue serve the community through wildlife education programs and the rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. For more information and reservations, call (650) 494-7417 or e-mail wildlife@batnet.com.



*Great Horned Owls—long regarded as a symbol of wisdom—have wing spreads of 4 to 5 feet, with plumage so soft that they are almost noiseless in flight.
Drawing by Bonnie Bedford-White*

Drivers Make Way For Ducklings

In these days so full of our complaints about traffic, I want to report on a positive—if poignant—experience I had a few months ago.

I was in the curb lane driving south on El Camino Real in Palo Alto at 5:30 PM. Traffic was thick but moving briskly. Just after the signal at Serra Street I saw, to my horror, that a female Mallard duck was beginning to cross El Camino with her four ducklings tightly clustered behind her. They were at the fluffy, heart-breakingly cute stage. I pulled to the curb. She hesitated in front of my car for just a moment, and then set out, her intention firm, the obedience of her brood absolute. The family looked tiny out on the asphalt. I was sure I was about to witness a terrible scene.

No; in one lane after another, the cars stopped, some abruptly, some had more time. The ducklings bounced up beside their mother on the median strip, and then she went on. In all three northbound lanes in turn, the cars stopped.

The mother duck could not get under the chain link fence along the sidewalk so she waddled up to Park Avenue and disappeared around the corner, her ducklings still in close, perfect order. She knew, I hoped, of some nice fishpond in the neighborhood.

Driving on, I felt both compassion for the wild things coping with our world and admiration for six alert drivers who had, as a famous old children's book would have it, made way for ducklings.

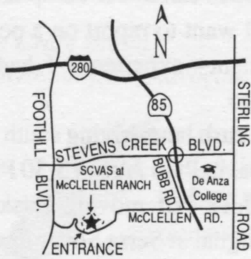
—Constance Crawford



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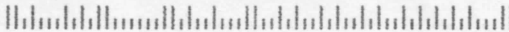
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GENERAL MEETINGS are held on the third Wednesday of each month except July, August and December and are open to the public.

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

KEEPING CONNECTED: E-mail us at <e-network@scvas.org> so we can send informative brief notes of special concern.

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, address is above. 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.

2000 Volume 47, 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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OR

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