



# THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

November 2000

## Craig Breon Named Executive Director

by Grant Hoyt

After seven hard-working years as Environmental Advocate, Craig Breon has been promoted to the newly-created position of Executive Director of Santa Clara Valley Audubon, effective October 1.

The Board made the decision to hire an ED over a year ago as part of long-term strategic planning. With SCVAS programs and volunteer participation increasing and chapter goals becoming more ambitious, it became clear that an all-volunteer board could not effectively manage the growing organization. After Craig expressed interest in assuming Executive Director responsibilities on an interim basis, the Board decided to offer him the position full-time, for a minimum of one year, and he accepted.

“When the Board made the commitment to hire an ED,” Craig noted, “the message was strong and simple—we want to expand our conservation and environmental education programs, and I really see that as my prime directive.” As part of his new duties, Craig will continue to advocate for local conservation and habitat preservation causes, although one of his first tasks will be to hire a new advocate to replace himself. He’ll also work on program development and oversee a staff of three, promoting educational outreach and volunteer opportunities to better serve our members and the community.

Craig has already established a strong presence as the face of Audubon in the county, and that role will increase as he reaches out to new elements of the com-

munity to support Audubon’s programs. He’ll continue to work with Audubon California on the Bay Project (see page 10), the ambitious program of large-scale wetlands restoration throughout the greater San Francisco Bay.

Building a strong presence in southern Santa Clara County is a major goal of the new Executive Director’s. “We can see, with the proposed Cisco development and other looming projects, that growth will be shifting to the southern parts of the county, and we want to create a greater presence for Audubon in the south county.”

Craig takes a positive attitude toward the difficult environmental challenges facing conservation-minded citizens in Silicon Valley. “Personally, I want to see Audubon fighting *for* causes as often, or more often, than we’re fighting *against* the worst aspects of development. For example, rather than just trying to restrain development along Coyote Creek, we should be pursuing foundation funding for restoration of Coyote Creek.”

A UC-Davis Law School graduate with life-long environmental sensibili-

*continued on page 5*

**General Membership Meeting  
Monday, November 20  
“An Evening with Kenn Kaufman”  
Campbell Community Center  
7:15 Hospitality 8:00 Program  
9:00 Book-signing  
Admission free to members; \$5 for non-members**

Internationally-known birder, author, editor and illustrator Kenn Kaufman has just completed his new bird field guide “Birds of North America” and tonight, he’ll autograph your copy at this special general meeting in Campbell. The new guide is currently available in the SCVAS Nature Shop, and will also be on sale at this event along with some of Kenn’s other works.

Kenn’s new field guide is geared toward beginning and intermediate birders, for whom the author has a special fondness. His acclaimed 1990 “Advanced Birding” guide is already widely-used by serious birders. Tonight he’ll give a slide-lecture explaining how he conceived and put together his latest work, then be available for signing and socializing.

Don’t miss this special event featuring one of America’s most brilliant and prolific birding authors and a most entertaining speaker. **Details on Page 11**

*Local history-----Page 4*

*Field Notes-----Page 6*

*Bluebirders meet-----Page 8*

*Audubon’s Bay Project*

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## Volunteer Ventures

by Ulrike Keyssner



Warm thanks to Jim Liskovec, Peg Bernucci, Harriet Gerson and Allen Royer for leading a Young Audubon fieldtrip to Charleston Slough last month. We had a terrific turnout of kids and their accompanying adults. The weather could not have been more perfect and sightings of White Pelicans, Black Skimmers, White-tailed Kites,

Red-tailed Hawks, and lots of herons and egrets delighted all. Some of the kids were fortunate to spot a Peregrine Falcon alarming the Slough's birds!

In order to "magnify" the fieldtrip experience, SCVAS loans binoculars to participants. For the Young Audubon field trip we used our new Swift compact binoculars which are perfectly sized for young children. The large Swifts we have are too big for small hands and faces. Loaning binoculars makes all the difference when trying to indoctrinate (ah, instill), a love of watching birds. It is enchanting to watch the amazement on kids' faces when a distant, nondescript bird is seen fully feathered and behaving in cool ways. **Funds for the new binoculars came from a grant the Rotary Club of San Jose.** A big thank you to members of the San Jose Rotary Club.

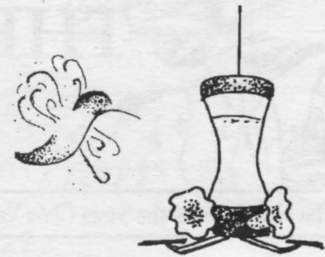
We are **looking for a few more Office and Nature Shop volunteers.** Other than Saturdays, you can set your own schedule between our open hours. The office is open 10 AM to 5 PM, Monday to Friday, and Saturday from 10 AM to 2 PM. Our current and past office volunteers have done a wonderful job for us, but we need to add to this vital team, so please call us.

**The Education and Membership Committees have openings for committee volunteers.** This is a great opportunity to have a voice in the direction and activities of our chapter. Each committee meets once a month to coordinate programs and organize special events. Bobbie Handen is the Education Committee Chair and Debbie Thompson chairs the Membership Committee. You can call them directly (see back of *Avocet*) or call me at (408) 252-3747.

To reward our hard working volunteers and to attract new volunteers we are having a lunchtime **High Tea for current and potential volunteers** to get to know each other, the SCVAS Board, and our organization. If you are thinking about volunteering, this is your chance to find out what volunteers are doing for SCVAS and what YOU could do at SCVAS. **The High Tea will be held at the Ranch on Saturday 11th November** at 12 noon. **You must RSVP by 8th November.** Call (408) 252-3747 to reserve.

## View From The Office

by Susan Bell  
Office Manager



The 9th Annual Audubon Wildlife Education Day held on Oct. 14 was a big success. Our congratulations go out to the poster winners, and thanks to all the participants in this year's K - 12th grade poster contest. We would also like to thank all the invited groups that made this day very special.

As the weather starts to get colder, think of the SCVAS Nature Shop. In our inventory of logo merchandise we have hooded sweatshirts with the pocket pouch in the front, and we just received hats, both the baseball cap style and the "bucket" hat, good to wear in the rain and keep the heat in when it's cold.

As I was going through the merchandise and admiring how good the SCVAS logo reproduced onto the items, I became curious about the history behind the logo and what may have prompted the selection. I went into the archives (old *Avocet* newsletters) and didn't find much history on the logo itself but did find evidence that it came into existence in 1956. In one early issue of the *Avocet*, I came across an article asking for help from individuals with experience in stencil-cutting and running a mimeograph machine. Although we no longer use these methods I did notice that the content and the high quality of the *Avocet* newsletter were the same. It also made me realize how very fortunate we are to have Grant Hoyt and Bonnie Bedford-White who continue these standards of quality and keep the members of Santa Clara Valley Audubon up to date on issues that seriously affect us all.

The National Audubon dues in 1956 were \$5.00, the price of membership today is just \$20.00, only a \$15.00 increase over the last 44 years. I found this very interesting especially now during our membership drive. National Audubon has an incentive for the months of Oct. Nov. and Dec. will give our chapter \$30.00 for every new member we sign up. The money received during this membership drive will help us to continue with our environmental education projects, to foster a greater public awareness of our environment, and continue to preserve and protect native animal and plant habitats. We welcome new members and as a convenience we publish a membership form in every *Avocet*.



# November 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 Nov. 1, 7:30 PM**  
**Bay Area Bird Photographers** present Howard and Lynn Jameson with a slide show on Spring birding in Texas. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

**\*\*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). From Hwy 237 in San Jose take Gold St. north to end, bear left on Elizabeth St. then right on Hope St. to Marina parking lot. 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**

**Wednesday Nov. 8, 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 miles to park. Meet at Hall's Valley Lake parking lot on left, just past park entrance. Parking fee. Freshwater ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Moderate 2-mile walk. **LO, 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 (650) 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.

**\*\*Saturday Nov. 18, 8:30 AM**  
**Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford University.** Half day. Leaders: Docents. Limit 8 participants by reservation only. Call Bob Reiling at (408) 253-7527 to reserve space. \$5 fee per person. Meet at Preserve gate (not Whiskey Hill gate). Gates open 7:40 to 8:10 AM only. From I-280 take Sand Hill Rd. west 2 miles to main gate on left. Moderately strenuous walking, 2-3 miles. Trip goes rain or shine.

**Wednesday Nov. 15, 9:00 AM**  
**Pescadero Marsh & State Beach.** (Same directions as Nov. 11 listing)

**\*\*Sunday Nov. 19, 8:30 AM**  
**Coyote Point.** Half day. Leader: Amy Summerfelt (408) 252-6775. Meet at lower parking lot for Coyote Point Junior Museum. From Hwy 101 in San Mateo take Peninsula Ave. exit then immediate right onto frontage road. Take first left into park, then second left after entrance kiosk to lower parking lot. As with all field trips, beginners are welcome. **RC**

**\*\*Friday - Saturday Nov. 24 - 25, 9:00 AM. Sacramento Wildlife Refuges, Sutter Buttes, Gray Lodge.** Full day and a half. Leader: Dave Cook (408) 871-9552. Meet at Sacto. NWR headquarters on I-5 approx. 20 miles north of Williams. Take Norman Rd. exit east from I-5, then immediately north on frontage road to Refuge. Bring scopes, full tank of gas. Allow 3 hours from South Bay. Overnight at motel in Williams (please confirm with Dave). Ducks, geese, swans, cranes, raptors. A great trip for beginners.

**\*\*Saturday Dec. 2, 8:00 AM**  
**Oka Ponds/Los Gatos Creek Park** Half day. Leader TBA (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 17 in Los Gatos take Lark Ave exit west. Turn right on Oka Rd., left on Mozart Ave and immediately right on Oka Lane. Meet at gate. **RC**

**\*\*Sunday Dec. 3, 8:30 AM**  
**Ogier Ponds.** Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. 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. Follow road for 1/2 mile, park in gravel lot at bend in road. **RC**

**\*\*Wednesday Dec. 13, 9:00 AM**  
**Cambell Perc. Ponds/Los Gatos Creek.** Half day. Leader: John Arnold (650) 948-4250. From I-280 (go south) or 85 (go north) on Winchester Blvd, then east on Hacienda, left on Dell, and right into park. Possible Hooded Mergansers. Entrance fee; easy 2-mile walk. **LO, RC**

## PLAN AHEAD

Panoche Valley Jan 6, 2001 (Sat.)  
Merced NWA Jan 20, 2001 (Sat.)  
Mines Road May 5, 2001 (Sat.)

Christmas Bird Counts: See page 11

# SCVAS Scope — The Early Years

by Debbie Thompson

I've seen the statement "founded 1926" in our letterhead many times now, and each time I see it I wonder: who started SCVAS and why? After asking around a bit, I was pointed to a booklet compiled by Warren M. Turner in 1964 entitled "History of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, 1925–1962". I thought I would try to pick out some of the most interesting details for this article. (We have several copies of the booklet in our library if anyone is interested.)

Minutes of the very first meeting state, "A group of people, about 45 in number, interested in the preservation and protection of bird life, met at the Saratoga Inn, Saratoga, California on the evening of January 8, 1925, for the purpose of forming an Audubon Society. The constitution and by-laws adopted were similar in nature to that of the National Organization." The name of the new group was to be Santa Clara County Audubon Society. An executive committee was elected with Mrs. Charles Bell as the first President.

## Early conservation issues

The Society, as it was then nicknamed, met once each month to hold a business meeting followed by a presentation by members. The presentation could include preserved specimens, observations, discussions, and lectures. Members were also concerned with conservation. Minutes of a 1926 meeting included, "A letter concerning the growing scarcity of the Condor and the Pelican was read and a petition to save the same was circulated and signed by all present." The Society also conducted one field trip per month, which was often touted as an "all-day auto trip." Field trips commenced at the corner of 5th and San Carlos Street in San Jose at 8:00 AM for many years.

Santa Clara County Audubon Society was changed to Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society by a vote at the January 1928 meeting.

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Two important traditions for our chapter were started in 1928 — a newsletter and the Christmas Bird Count. The minutes of Fall 1928 mentioned, "Dr. Gayle Pickwell [the current President] lay before the Society a proposal to issue a publication comparable to that issued by the San Francisco Audubon Society." Then in the minutes for the next month he stated, "The periodical would be called *The Wren-Tit* and he would be the editor." Dr. Pickwell was an ornithologist and zoologist at San Jose State College and an author of many books on birds. He was very active in the Society for many years, serving as President for 11 years total, 6 consecutively. Four issues of *The Wren-Tit* appeared in 1929.



*The Avocet logo first appeared in the mid-50's*

The Christmas Bird Count was first reported in the minutes of November 1928: "Dr. Smith mentioned that the December field trip would be taken to Alum Rock Park. Miss Emily Smith suggested a Christmas Bird Census be taken on the trip." The Christmas Bird Count continued at Alum Rock Park only until the Alviso Salt Marshes were added in 1932. The first summary meeting after the count was conducted in 1938. The count was expanded and divided into five segments for the first time in 1949 when there were a total of 24 observers in five parties and a total of 98 species were observed. The center of the new count circle was Capitol Avenue and Marbury Road.

## Roger Tory Peterson visits

In 1947 the Society joined with San Jose State College to bring the Audubon Screen Tours to the area to "help arouse more interest in wildlife and its conservation in our community." General Admission was initiated at 75 cents. Roger Tory Petersen presented the Screen Tour for January 1948 at the San Jose Civic Auditorium. His lecture was titled "The Riddle of Migration" and he used colored motion pictures to supplement his talk.

At the March 1941 meeting, consideration was given to changing the status of the Society from an affiliated organization to that of a branch (chapter) of the National Audubon Society. The meeting notes said, "If we become a branch, every member of our group will also be a member of the National Audubon Society and will receive the Audubon Magazine (formerly *Bird Lore*) and such mimeographed and published material as there may be produced by the local group. As a branch, the organization will be in a position to work forcibly for conservation measures, as for instance, the establishment of a game refuge for shore birds and the California Clapper Rail on the margin of the San Francisco Bay." But it wasn't until October 1949 that the Society voted to become a branch of National Audubon Society.

Before 1947, a single page was mailed to each member containing the announcement of the field trip, monthly meeting and the directors' meeting. A new, expanded publication was started in 1947 and was called *The Bulletin*. Over the next few years *The Bulletin* contained as many as six to ten pages and included such features as a regular article called "Seasonal Observations," more in-depth field trip reports and more details of the

*continued next page*





# SCVAS History

continued

Christmas Bird Count. In 1954 a contest was held to decide a new name for the publication. Four names were selected and presented to members for a vote: The Avocet, The American Kestrel, The Chat and The Kite. Of course, as we all now know, The Avocet won.

Our chapter was witnessing local development pains even in 1952. A news item in *The Bulletin* read: "With regret we report the passing of the only known breeding colony of the American Egret in the South Bay area. The grove of eucalyptus trees one-mile southeast of Agnew was cut down in early July. On July 8 most of the trees had been felled and four nestling Great Blue Herons were found on the ground. The bulldozers had doubtless covered many more."

## Dues: A buck-fifty

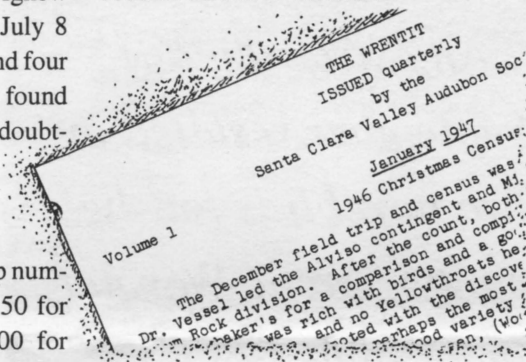
In 1955, the chapter membership numbered about 200. Dues were \$1.50 for local only membership and \$5.00 for joint membership in the National Audubon Society and our chapter. There was about \$1735 in the treasury. This was also the year that the chapter was incorporated for the protection of its members.

It seemed that we moved from a group of bird observers to advocates in the 1950's, as our chapter took on more of its current form. More educational programs were started, such as Young Audubon in 1953, and scholarships to Audubon Camp and the West Coast Nature School, both in 1958. We also increased the number of field trips from one (where it formally remained since the chapter began) to two per month in 1951.

Conservation issues soon began to take center stage. In 1956 *The Avocet* announced that there were three important conservation issues: preserving the Montalvo area as a wildlife sanctuary, assisting with the re-examination of California's game laws, with particular regard to the shooting of birds, and helping to set aside a wildlife reserve in the San Francisco Bay. A 1956 item an-

nounced "The Dumbarton Bridge and Greco Island sanctuaries are a reality with the arrival of friendly Warden John O. Larson, Jr."

It was very inspiring to read how a group of dedicated individuals with a common interest joined together to start the Society. Many people have contributed to the success of our chapter over the last 75 years and we thank each and every one of them. But there are still so many things we need to accomplish—won't you be a part of our history, too, and become an active volunteer?



*The earliest newsletter in the SCVAS archives is dated 1947 and detailed the 1946 Christmas Bird Count.*

## Executive Director

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ties, Craig wasn't a birder until he joined SCVAS. "When I came here seven years ago, I had a passion for wildlife, but I knew very little about birds specifically; however, I couldn't help being infected by the enthusiasm of Audubon members. This year, for example, I took a mini-vacation to a birding festival at Audubon's Kern River Preserve in southern California. I was thrilled to see things like Blue Grosbeak and Summer Tanager for the first time. And my birding trip to Belize last summer was amazing!"

The SCVAS Board, staff, volunteers and general membership are excited to welcome Craig as our first Executive Director. His commitment to the Audubon cause will surely help us all as we strive to protect bird and wildlife habitats in Santa Clara County.



## NOTES FROM THE BOARD

by Freddy Howell

The Board of Directors is proud to announce the addition of a new member. Mary Murphy has served on the SCVAS Membership Committee and decided that becoming a Board member would allow her to help in our conservation efforts. Mary, a third-generation Californian, was born in Santa Cruz, lives in Mountain View and works as a financial analyst for a biotech firm in Palo Alto. She is a long-time member of Audubon as well as the Sierra Club and she enjoys birding, hiking, and observing butterflies.

Mary's birding interest started at a young age and she has continued through the years to enjoy nature and to be aware of her surroundings. When Mary used to jog near Mission College she loved seeing all the Burrowing Owls. As the development came and the Burrowing Owls left, she was concerned but didn't know how to stop it. She realized that SCVAS was at the forefront of local conservation, especially with Burrowing Owls, and she wants to be active in our effort.

Towards that end, Mary has made a list of birds that inhabit the oaks and sycamores in the Stanford Business Park where she works, so that her co-workers can share in the birding passion. She's even gotten the facilities department to put up nesting boxes!

Her main goal as a member of the SCVAS Board is to bring conservation issues to the attention of adults in the community, observing that "things are happening too fast and we can't wait for the kids [that SCVAS reaches] to grow up." When you see Mary at the general meeting, ask her about the free trip to Cape May that she won at the ABA convention! Welcome, Mary.

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# Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

## Bitterns through Raptors

The first of the winter's **American Bitterns** was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 16 Sep (MJM). Eleven **Cattle Egrets** along Frazier Lake Road in the underbirded south county on 18 Sep (DLSu) were a high count for recent years. A misoriented flock of migrant **Greater White-fronted Geese** came into Searsville Lake on 30 Sep (RGJ).

An immature male **Eurasian Wigeon** found in the Palo Alto estuary on 18 Sep (MW) is slightly early for this rare wintering duck.

A female **Blue-winged Teal** on the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) drying ponds on 23 Sep (MMR, MJM) is the first record for the fall season. Two **Hooded Mergansers** were seen in the Oka perc. ponds 5-19 Sep (DG, TRy).

One observed closely on 12 Sep (DG) had yellow eyes and was likely an eclipse male. Wintering birds rarely appear before early November so it is possible these

birds oversummered. A male **Osprey** at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 28 Sep (RWR, FV) was the only one found in September.

## Shorebirds through Skimmers

It was a good fall for golden plovers. A juvenile **American Golden-Plover** was found northwest of Hwy 237 and Zanker on 5 Sep (SEM) and was seen the next day as well (MMR, RWR). Two juveniles were in New Chicago Marsh at State and Spreckles in Alviso on 9 Sep (MMR) and one was still there on 12 Sep (NL). A juvenile **Pacific Golden-Plover** was found southeast of Hwy 237 and First Street and was seen 25 Sep through the end of the month (MMR, RWR, FV, MJM). The **Lesser Yellowlegs** high count was 15 in the New Chicago Marsh near

Grand and Spreckles on 5 Sep (SEM). The only birds noted away from the edge of the Bay were the two seen on Calero Reservoir on 23 Sep (AV). A **Wandering Tattler** found on Salt Pond A2W on 12 Sep (KN) was well away from its preferred rocky ocean coast. Nonetheless, it was enjoyed by many observers through 14 Sep. Another rocky coast specialist, the **Black Turnstone**, was found on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 24 Sep (MMR). Two juvenile **Sanderlings**

found there regularly in September. A juvenile was also seen there on 23 Sep (AME). Slightly larger, this juvenile appears to have been a male. **Wilson's Phalaropes** have lingered during September. Fifteen birds in the New Chicago Marsh on 3 Sep (AME) and 9 Sep (MMR) were high counts, and at least two birds were still there on 26 Sep (RWR, FV). **Red-necked Phalaropes** show a later passage than Wilson's and large numbers are often found in September, as typified

by the 4100 birds counted on Salt Ponds A11 and A12 in Alviso on 24 Sep (MMR).

**Parasitic Jaegers** are occasional in fall and winter, but are not found every year. Therefore, a juvenile seen on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 24 Sep (MMR) was a good find. An adult **Arctic Tern** in alternate plumage was seen on Salt Pond A2E on 2 Sep (TRy, RD), for only the third county record.

**Least Terns** observed on Salt Pond A9 on 4 Sep (AME) were the last ones found this fall. A basic-plumaged **Black Tern** was seen on the San Jose-Santa

*An extraordinary  
September resulted in  
two new birds for the  
county: Arctic Warbler  
and Painted Bunting*

were seen at Crittenden Marsh on 5 Sep (MMR), and were also displaced from their preferred coastal habitats. Four **Baird's Sandpipers** observed on the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 5 Sep (*fide* MMR) were the only ones seen this fall. September is the peak of the **Pectoral Sandpiper** migration and birds were found in numerous locations. Peak counts included about 55 birds on the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 4 Sep (*fide* MMR) and 47 tallied there on 23 Sep (MMR, MJM). The adult **Stilt Sandpiper** found last month in New Chicago Marsh, near State and Spreckles streets, continued to be seen throughout September (m.ob.). A second bird, a juvenile molting into its first winter plumage, was found on 28 Sep (NL). The intermediate-sized **Ruff** reported last month in the New Chicago Marsh was

Clara WPCP drying ponds 2-5 Sep (MJM, LCh, NL). **Black Skimmers** were found on Salt Pond A16, Salt Pond A9, and Charleston Slough during September (m.ob.).

## Swifts through Blackbirds

The fall movement of **Vaux's Swifts** continued in September with highs of 30 or so birds along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 3-5 Sep (NL) and 25 over New Chicago Marsh on 23 Sep (MMR, MJM). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was found near the Stanford dish on 15 Sep (KP, LN), but was not found afterward. This woodpecker is occasionally found in the coastal hills in migration and sometimes overwinters. A male **Pileated Woodpecker** in Monte Bello OSP on 3 Sep (SP, DJ) was in the coniferous forest above Stevens Creek where they've



## Field Notes *continued*

nested at least twice. Fall **Willow Flycatchers** were found widely, mostly in riparian areas. High counts include seven to eight along the Guadalupe River between Trimble and Montague on 9 Sep (MMR) and five along Stevens Creek below L' Avenida on 7 Sep (MMR). Very rare in the fall, a **Hammond's Flycatcher** was banded at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 30 Sep (RCo). Although their numbers are highly variable, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** tend to invade the lowlands in alternate years. A bird in a Los Altos yard on 15 Sep (GHt) may be a harbinger of the invasion that is due this fall and winter.

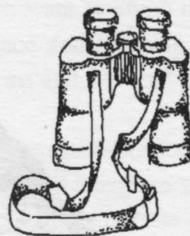
September is the normal start of the search for vagrants, but the **Arctic Warbler** found by Mike Rogers along Stevens Creek above Crittenden Lane on 7 Sep was far more than expected. There are few California records of this Siberian species. Despite extensive searching, the bird could not be refound. An adult **Brown Thrasher** was banded at CCFS on 30 Sep (RCo) and is the third record for the county. These records have all been of fall vagrants. **Blackpoll Warblers** were found in good numbers, although nothing like the banner year of 1998. A bird was seen at the Palo Alto Baylands on 26 Sep (MMR) and stayed through the next day (v.ob.). On 30 Sep single birds were also found along Matadero Creek below Hwy 101 and at the Sunnyvale WPCP fennel patch (MJM). Two **Northern Waterthrushes** were found this month. One was along the Guadalupe River between I-880 and West Hedding on 9 Sep (MMR) and the other on Stevens Creek below L' Avenida on 28 Sep (MMR, MJM).

September saw representatives of both the rare *Spizella* sparrows. An immature **Clay-colored Sparrow** was found along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 22 Sep (DLSu) and a **Brewer's Sparrow** was at the Palo Alto Baylands on 30 Sep (DK *fide* GLeB). Adding to our rare fall

sparrows, an early **Vesper Sparrow** was found at Moffett Field on 7 Sep. Accompanying the Vesper Sparrow was a bonus bird, a **Grasshopper Sparrow** (both MMR). An immature **Blue Grosbeak** along Stevens Creek near Crittenden Lane on 14 Sep (MMR) was a rare fall migrant.

Banding birds has its occasional surprises, but few compare to the immature **Painted Bunting** captured in the nets at CCFS on 30 Sep (RCo). The Brown Thrasher mentioned above was caught in the same net the same day. This is the first county record for this southern bunting. A **Bobolink** was heard over Moffett Field on 8 Sep (MJM) for the only record this year. Another rare icterid for September was a female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** found along Frazier Lake Road in the south county on 18 Sep (DLSu).

*Observers: Les Chibana (LCh), Rita Colwell (RCo), Robin Dakin (RD), Al Eisner (AME), Don Ganton (DG), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Deborah Jamison (DJ), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Dan Keller (DK), Gloria LeBlanc (GLeB), Nick Lethaby (NL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Steve Miller (SEM), Kristie Nelson (KN), Liz Nielsen (LN), Kay Partelow (KP), Steve Patt (SP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Tom Ryan (TRy), David Suddjian (DLSu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), and Michael Wienholt (MW).*



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

## Field Trip Report

### Moss Landing Sept. 9

On the SCVAS field trip to Moss Landing on September 9, two medium-sized shorebirds, feeding dowitcher-like on the edge of the harbor, brought the group to a halt. While some birders rapidly flipped through well-worn field guides, others desperately searched the hidden recesses of the mind for a name. There was, after all, something familiar about the birds.

They were dowitcher sized with overall pale grayish upper bodies (one somewhat darker than the other), white underparts, a straight, medium to short black bill, dark eye stripe, whitish supercilium, whitish throat and greenish legs. The chest and upper sides were lightly spotted. What were they?

Earlier we had seen all of the "usual suspects" (the "peeps", Sanderlings, Willets, Marbled Godwits, Long-billed Curlews, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Brown Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Pied-billed Grebe, Western Gull, California Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Heermann's Gull and a female Belted Kingfisher) as well as Semipalmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Elegant Tern, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Pacific Loon, Clark's Grebe, Common Murre, and Brandt's Cormorant.

Later we would see Red-necked Phalaropes (lots), Snowy Plover (at a great, fuzzy distance), a female Osprey, American White Pelican, Forster's Tern, Greater Yellowlegs and, at Moonglow Dairy, Yellow Warbler, Brewer's Blackbird, Tricolored Blackbird, Ruddy Duck, Northern Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, dowitchers, Western Grebe, Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, and at least four juvenile Pectoral Sandpipers.

Oh yes, the two shorebirds were a juvenile and a winter plumaged Red Knot.

—Bob Reiling

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# Statistics, Anecdotes Highlight Annual Bluebird Social

by Carol Hankermeyer

The fall Bluebird Social on September 15 was very well attended, and enlivened by the presence of Howard and Jean Rathlesberger and Don and Sue Yoder as well as Garth Harwood. Howard leads the San Mateo County Bluebird Recovery Program and Don Yoder is state Program Director of the California Bluebird Recovery Program.

Garth started us off with a tentative summary of countywide nest box results for 2000. About 300 boxes are currently monitored by 30 trail monitors and backyard birders. Despite casualties, we have the highest total fledge number yet, 751 and counting. Western Bluebirds were tops on the list (204), higher than last year's count. But Chestnut-backed Chickadees stole the show with a record 96, double last year's figure. Violet-green Swallows, however, took a nosedive with many puzzling nesting failures. First timers were Norm Watenpaugh's 4 Barn Owls and the Aragos' American Kestrel attempt, which succumbed to predation. The Palmers of Los Gatos raised 4 Western Screech Owls for the second year.

Reports from attendees of the meeting were varied and interesting. For instance, Dave Houston recounted how VGSWs nested on top of WEBLs, resulting in the bluebird parent laying an egg in the swallow nest. Unfortunately, the entire nesting attempt failed. To avoid ongoing predation from snakes, Dave moved 2 hanging boxes higher, but the birds abandoned the nests. Norm Watenpaugh reported that pigeons that inhabited his barn owl box were eaten and then replaced by the barn owls!

Some of the problems presented were various kinds of predation—unexplained nestling deaths, House Wren aggression, and one instance of blowfly or botfly parasitism. Hanging boxes on elevator

poles proved effective against raccoons but not snake predation or parasitism. Howard Rathlesberger suggested placing plastic fruit baskets or other small containers that just fit in the bottom of the box so that they may be easily removed to search for parasites.

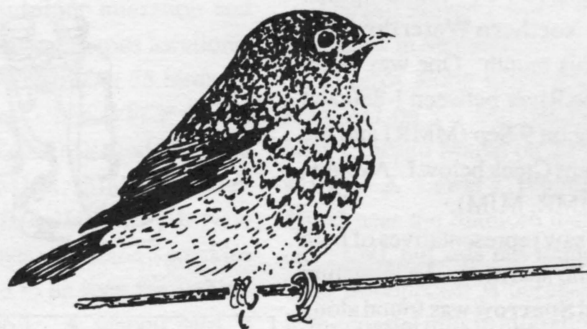
Dave Cook had 11 House Wren problems. He discovered that this species is not limited to brushy nesting sites and is so territorial that they will fill a box to the top with sticks to prevent other birds from using it! They have a nasty habit of pecking holes in other birds' eggs. Don Yoder mentioned and others verified that box pairing (placing 2 boxes in the same vicinity) helps overcome competition for nesting sites.

Don Yoder gave us an informative presentation on nest box structures to improve reproductive success. One device he demonstrated was a wire mesh entrance guard 8 1/2" long to foil the extended reach of raccoon paws. He's seen a pair of bluebirds sitting shoulder to shoulder on such a device like a couple on their front porch! Unfortunately, some birds are reluctant to cross the barrier even if they've started nesting prior to

installment of the guard. Don showed us how to attach nursery wire pot hangers to hanging boxes, thus eliminating the need to struggle with heavy gauge wire for hanging the box. He's also devised a small wooden roof extension to shield the breathing slot at the top from golf course sprinklers. He mentioned the importance of raising the roof floor above the box sides to prevent water from wicking into the box.

Howard Rathlesberger demonstrated the Peterson hanging box and commented on the need for a large enough size for swallows to stretch and strengthen their wings before fledging. He also suggested grooving the front panel or providing a "staircase" for short-legged swallows to get a foothold so that nestboxes don't become swallow death traps.

You can subscribe to the CBRP newsletter BLUEBIRDS FLY! by sending \$5.00 to Don Yoder, Program Director, 2021 Ptarmigan Drive #1, Walnut Creek, CA 94595. His e-mail is: cbrp@designlink.com. The editor, Hatch Graham, can be reached at PO Box 39, Somerset, CA 95684, e-mail jalapep@innercite.com.



*"Despite casualties, we have the highest total fledge number yet, 751 and counting."  
Juvenile Western Bluebird sketch, Bonnie Bedford-White*



# SCVAS Guides Local 5th-graders in McClellan Ranch Study Project

by Ulrike Keyssner

Earlier this year, SCVAS was approached to coordinate an ambitious yet exciting project to study McClellan Ranch Park. The McClellan Ranch Study Project is being conducted by 5th grade children from Christa McAuliffe Elementary in Cupertino. The object of the first year is to compile as much baseline data as possible so that students who study the Park in following years will be able to build on that information.

The students will focus on four main areas: Habitat Mapping of the Park, Water Quality Monitoring of Stevens Creek, Habitat Restoration of the Ranch, and Population Surveys of birds and other animals. For members unfamiliar with the Ranch, we see deer, coyote, bobcat, many species of native rodents, skunks, raccoons, and approximately 53 species of fairly common birds plus 17 species of uncommon birds. For a small suburban Park (23.5 acres) surrounded by houses, McClellan Ranch Park has a lot to offer enquiring minds. The jewel of the Park is that thin ribbon of blue edged with green, Stevens Creek, which attracts many animals to its cool waters and shady banks.

SCVAS, in conjunction with the City of Cupertino Parks and Recreation Department, is coordinating this program. Combining our skills and community connections, we are putting together a highly diverse program using scientific data-gathering and recording techniques. The goal is to develop the students' observational skills when studying natural environments and to create a wildlife study that incorporates the impacts of humans on the park. Where possible, students will be challenged to devise their own methods of data collection and experimentation and will look to resources such as aerial mapping to compile a history of the Park's vegetation over the years.



*McAuliffe School students perform the "waterbug boogy" at McClellan Ranch Park to herd macro-invertebrates into the kick net held by Ulrike Keyssner, education and volunteer coordinator for SCVAS.*

Our job is to schedule a series of "guest presentations" given by local experts and lay people passionate about their interests in the environment. We are hoping that members of SCVAS will participate in this exciting project by offering to help us enthuse the students. For example, if you are interested in native plants, insects, fish, birds, soil science, land use planning, anthropology, or water quality and have information, tools, and experiences to share, please consider making a guest presentation. You may have a unique historical perspective or social comment about the area. We want to show these students that science and learning can come in many forms and can lead in many directions.

Ideally, presentations will be interactive. They will introduce students to the chosen topic, demonstrate scientific data gathering methods and tools, and discuss social issues and ramifications of the work. Presentations should be from 1 to 2 hours (your choice) and are given in the field. We suggest a half-hour lecture to begin with followed by field study and hands-on activities.

If you feel you may not have enough information or equipment please do not let this stop you, we may be able to augment your program by combining with other presenters, or we could include you on a day when activities coincide with your interest. When possible, SCVAS is scheduling guest presentations on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month.

For more information about the project and to discuss the level at which you would like to become involved, please call Ulrike Keyssner, Volunteer and Education Programs Coordinator at (408) 252-3747, or e-mail <ulrike@scvas.org>.

**Save the Date!**

**Saturday,  
December 9th, 2000  
Holiday Open House**

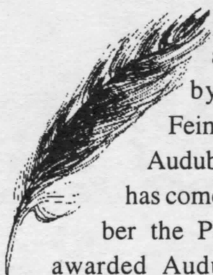
**at the  
SCVAS Nature Shop at  
McClellan Ranch Park**

**10 - 2**

# Packard Foundation Funds Bay Project

## SCVAS played key role

by Craig Breon  
Executive Director



What started as an idea tossed around by myself, Arthur Feinsein of Golden Gate Audubon and a few others has come of age. In September the Packard Foundation awarded Audubon California a \$750,000 grant to support Audubon's Bay Project for the next two years. The goals of the Bay Project may seem pie-eyed to some, but Packard's backing brings us a little closer to realizing a vision of Bay restoration on a grand scale.

### The beginnings

In the spring of 1999, a group of scientists and resource managers published the Ecosystem Goals document, laying out a blueprint for restoration of nearly 100,000 acres of former Bay wetlands. When I and others saw that document, we realized that we held the scientific basis for a great conservation campaign. We first took the idea to the Bay Area Audubon Council, and Arthur then pitched it to National Audubon and Audubon California. Our enthusiasm convinced many others, but the issue of where to find the resources for such an effort remained.

The SCVAS Board really stepped up to the plate. With an initial grant of \$17,000 (which came from the settlement of a successful lawsuit to protect serpentine habitats in San Jose), SCVAS made a commitment to a long-term vision and a lot of future work. Our funding was perhaps the stimulus for Audubon California, which then came up with the remaining funds needed to hire the Bay Project's first employee, Mike Sellors, in February of this year. National Audubon's President, John Flicker, then made a personal commitment to the Bay Project when he made a one-day tour of key

acquisition and restoration sites this spring. As momentum grew, Mike was joined this summer by Debbie Drake, who serves as Program Director for the Bay Project.

By this time, the Packard Foundation had taken notice. With ambitious but well-founded goals—and with a name like Audubon's to lead the effort—Packard decided the Bay Project was worth long-term funding.

### What's that funding for?

So, what is the Bay Project actually doing to restore the Bay, you might ask? In just our first year, significant achievements have occurred. Barbara Saltzman from Marin Audubon spearheaded the successful drive to acquire, preserve, and restore Bel Marin Keys, approximately 1600 acres of wetlands and uplands in Marin County. Debbie Drake and Dan Taylor, Director of Audubon California, have been involved with the negotiations to acquire and restore Cargill's salt ponds in the South Bay.

Most importantly, perhaps, a large team effort by employees from the Bay Project, Audubon California, other conservation groups and SCVAS helped defeat an effort by the San Francisco Airport to link restoration of Cargill lands to expansion of the airport's runway system. The state bill that resulted, AB 398, not only de-linked the two (for now), but also established the San Francisco Baylands Restoration Program Account within the Wildlife Conservation Board, a permanent place-holder for wetlands funding around the Bay. Governor Davis signed on to an initial \$25 million appropriation to fund the account. The bill also specified that the Ecosystem Goals document would guide the use of the funds.

In addition, Bay Project staff lobbied successfully for \$7.5 million in this year's state budget to go to the California Coastal Conservancy's program of competitive grants for habitat restoration around the

Bay. Finally, I am working with the Coastal Conservancy and others to acquire wetlands around Alviso in northern San Jose. All in all, not a bad first year!

### And for our next trick . . .

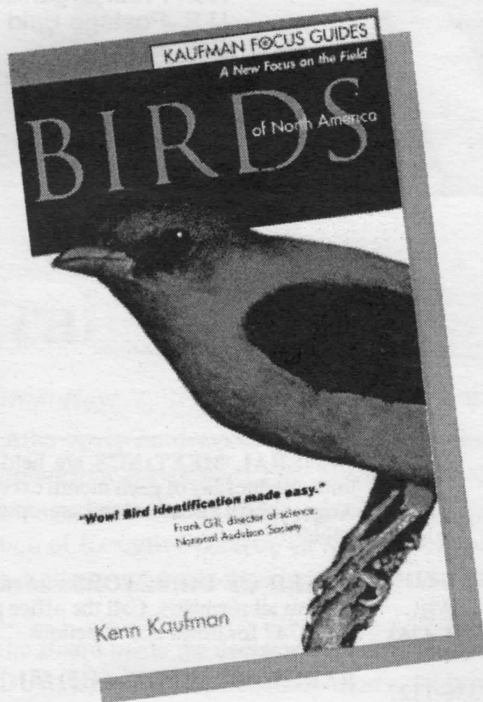
The next stages of work include developing a "Conceptual Area Plan" for land acquisitions in the Bay. This planning, to be done with the Coastal Conservancy and the Department of Fish and Game, is an important step in allowing the State to negotiate purchases from willing landowners. We are also working on additional grants from Packard and other funders—this time for acquisition of wetlands threatened by imminent development proposals.

All our thanks go out to the Packard Foundation for taking the Bay Project to the next level of effectiveness. In retrospect, however, we may owe an equally big thanks to our chapter's Board of Directors. Without their initial commitment to the Bay Project, Packard and others may have never heard about our sweeping vision of a restored Bay.

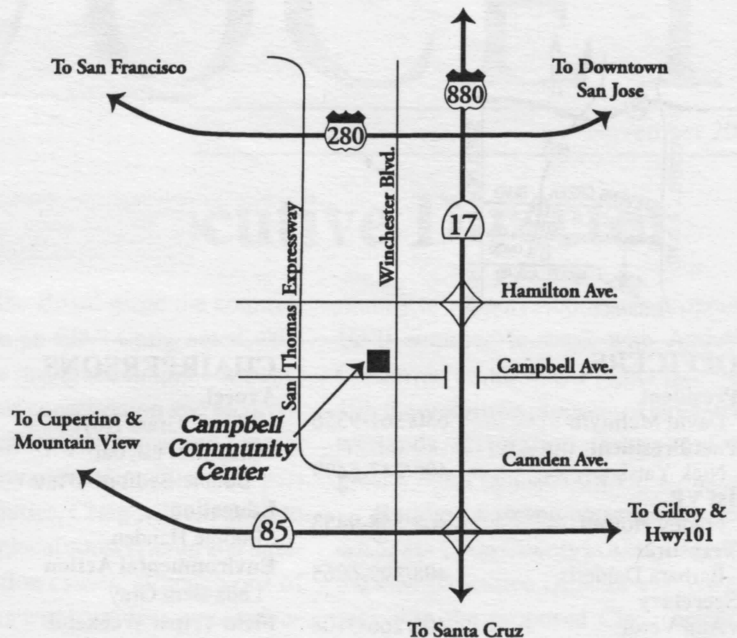


*The bay was once surrounded by acres of tidal flats and marshes. With these grants, habitat restoration has a good chance of becoming a reality.*





## Map to Campbell Community Center



*Kenn Kaufman's new field guide is a back-to-basics guide combining the best features of photographs and paintings resulting in accurate and helpful images. Excellent range maps, descriptions with look-alike species shown together and colored tabs make this an excellent addition to your library.*

## SCVAS Christmas Bird Counts

### SAN JOSE SUNDAY, DEC. 17

Please plan to join us for the day as we canvas the baylands, hills, creeks, and urban parks in our bird count. Choose your area of interest: the Alviso salt ponds and wetlands; the Diablo Hills including Alum Rock County Park, Ed Levin County Park, Calaveras Reservoir, and San Francisco District Watershed Lands; riparian corridors such as Guadalupe River, Coyote Creek, Penitencia Creek; and/or urban settings and parks such as Lake Cunningham (wintering home of a Lesser Black-backed Gull for the past few years).

Whatever your motivation—the prospect of finding a rare bird, birding with old and new friends, or just getting outside for a day of adventure with fellow birders—taking a day out of the holiday season to share this experience is the key to the CBC. We are looking for counters, recorders, and team leaders, and we can use all levels of expertise from beginners and newcomers to experts and veterans.

And afterwards, please join us at our countdown dinner—this year to be held at the Emma Prusch Farm Park in San Jose. To participate please contact Ann Verdi by phone (408)266-5108(h); (408)749-2199(w) or by e-mail at <ann.verdi@amd.com.>

### CALERO-MORGAN HILL SATURDAY, DEC. 30

Last winter we kicked off the millennium with a new Christmas Bird Count in Santa Clara County—the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC. It was a great success, with 78 birders participating and 139 species tallied. Well, on Sat. December 30th we do it all over again. If you took part last time we could really use your help (as always), and if you couldn't join us then, consider this a second chance to be there at the beginning (since both counts fall within the same calendar year, you haven't really missed the first year of the count!).

The Calero-Morgan Hill CBC is centered near Calero Reservoir. Areas covered include Almaden Lake Park, Almaden Quicksilver Park, and Santa Teresa County Park; the summit of Loma Prieta; Almaden, Guadalupe, Calero, and Chesbro Reservoirs; the north half of Anderson Reservoir; part of the Hamilton Range; the Ogier Ponds and Parkway Lakes; and imperiled open space in the Coyote Valley (information collected on the count may aid in ongoing conservation efforts).

Because this is a new count there is a lot we still don't know. Was last winter a fluke, or are Ospreys really more common than cowbirds within the count circle? Will someone find that elusive Virginia Rail this time around? Can we top our first year total of 139 species? Join us on count and find out! To participate, contact John Mariani by phone at (408) 997-2066, or by email at redknot@worldnet.att.net.

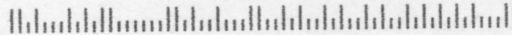
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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Leda Beth Gray '99-'02 831/336-1127

Debbie Thompson '97-'00 408/227-4604

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## STAFF

### Office Manager

Susan Bell 408/252-3747  
scvas@scvas.org

### Environmental Advocate

Craig Breon 408/252-3748  
craig@scvas.org

### Volunteer/Education Coordinator

Ulrike Keyssner 408/252-3747  
ulrike@scvas.org

### Office Fax

408/252-2850

### E-mail

scvas@scvas.org

### Website

www.scvas.org

## CHAIRPERSONS

### Avocet

Editor: Grant Hoyt 650/969-7892

Graphics, Layout:

Bonnie Bedford-White 408/261-8210

### Education

Bobbie Handen 408/356-4263

### Environmental Action

Leda Beth Gray 831/336-1127

### Field Trips: Weekend

Bob Reiling 408/253-7527

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Shirley Gordon 408/996-9863

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Ann Verdi 408/266-5108

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### Bay Area Audubon Council

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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 9**

# 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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Members receive *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to SCVAS.

or

**National Audubon Society Membership:** (Check one)  New Members \$20  Membership renewal \$35  
Members receive Audubon magazine and *The Avocet* newsletter. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.  Do not share my name and address

**Donation:**  SCVAS greatly appreciates your tax-deductible donation. Your gift helps fund Audubon's birding, education and conservation programs.

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