



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

February 2001

Wayward Wagtail Lands in Alviso

Siberian vagrant makes County history

by David McIntyre
President, SCVAS

The annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), initiated by Frank Chapman on Christmas Day, 1900, never fails to produce surprises. This year's San Jose CBC, sponsored by SCVAS, yielded a particularly exciting surprise—a Black-backed Wagtail.

The morning of December 17 was cold and unremarkable, providing no clue to the excitement that would unfold a few hours later. After obtaining the pass and keys to my usual bird-counting territory—Cargill Salt property in Alviso—and greeting my new teammates, Michael Booth and Deborah Swarts, we headed out in the pre-dawn light.

Our first discovery was not a particularly pleasant one. New office buildings

have sprung up on what has historically proven to be excellent habitat for raptors, sparrows, and other birds along Gold Street in Alviso. The little remaining habitat nonetheless produced a Cooper's Hawk, White-tailed Kite, and Lincoln's, Fox, Song, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, among other species.

At about 10 AM we headed to the Cargill Salt Ponds, where numerous gulls, ducks, and shorebirds can usually be found. These ponds are particularly interesting to visit at this time of year, as waterfowl hunters are often present. Sorting out the duck decoys from the real birds can be a real challenge.

As we walked over to the first lot where the hunters park, Deborah noted that a Black Phoebe had just flown into view. As I put my binoculars up to my eyes, I observed that a Black Phoebe had, indeed, just perched on one of the large

concrete blocks that ring the muddy lot. However, immediately to the left was a bird that I had never anticipated seeing on this bird count. "It's a wagtail!!" I exclaimed, and, not wanting to take my glasses off the bird, asked my companions to immediately open the field guide to the page illustrating wagtails.

Wagtails are rare vagrants to this region, normally residing in Eurasia. Black-backed Wagtails typically nest in Siberia and other parts of northern Asia, and have been known to nest in western Alaska. Separating wagtails by species can be very challenging, particularly if the bird is a juvenile. Accordingly, we needed to carefully study every detail of this individual, including the color of its back (which was gray, not black), the color of its wings in flight, and its throat pattern, among other subtle points of identification. Although Deborah and Michael are relatively new birders who had never even heard of a wagtail before, they were very helpful in noting various plumage details as I simultaneously tried to set up my scope, watch the bird in my binocu-

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**General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, February 21
"Sierra Bird Photography"
with Mike Danzenbaker and Lee Hung
Campbell Community Center, Rm. 80
1 West Campbell Ave. (corner of Winchester)
7:30 Hospitality 8:00 Program**

Mike Danzenbaker is well-known for his superb bird photography and Lee Hung for her charming presentations. Tonight they'll combine these talents with their in-depth knowledge of Sierra Nevada birds for another masterpiece program. Last spring one of our best presentations was Mike and Lee's "Birds of Japan." This evening they will talk about the best birding areas in the Sierra, where they spend every possible weekend from late May to mid-July. They have infinite patience to wait for precisely the right photo opportunity, and tonight you'll be able to share these special avian photographic moments. A fantastic program, not to be missed, by two of our outstanding SCVAS members!

Wagtail field sketch----Page 5
Field Notes-----Page 6
Full CBC results----Pages 8-9
"Quixotic battle"
looming?-----Page 10



Volunteer Ventures

by Ulrike Keyssner

We have several jobs available that require volunteer action. Though most of these can be performed at home, especially if you have a Mac computer, we encourage you to work in our Cupertino office and enjoy the beautiful setting and camaraderie amongst our staff and volunteers. A combination of home and office can satisfy your goals to volunteer for a valuable cause and also our goals to involve our members in disseminating our conservation and education activities to the local community.

The first job is helping us reorganize free, educational pamphlets, which are available in our Cupertino office for visitors to read and take home for reference. SCVAS produces a variety of informational hand-outs: how to build a birdhouse, what native plants attract birds and butterflies, a list of the birds found along the trail near our McClellan Ranch office. We also provide handouts from other local environmental organizations such as Wildlife Rescue, the Home Composting Program, and Shoreline Park. While we worry about wasting paper, we find many people really do appreciate the information, and some initiate a positive course of action after gaining this new knowledge. Therefore, we wish to better display these valuable community outreach tools and need help accomplishing this task. We feel a binder system will achieve our goal and keep in mind our space limitations. We have all the materials needed for the job and estimate it will take 4 hours to complete.

Our second volunteer opportunity is for those with a literary keenness and computer skills. We have created a script for a slide show about Bay Area birds. Each bird species has a short script that is presented in about one-and-a-half minutes. We need an editor to polish it up, keeping in mind our intended audience and that volunteers and teachers with varying knowledge will present the show. I estimate 10 hours may be needed and, ideally, the volunteer will take around one month to complete this task. I will provide all the direction required to begin the job; if you do not have a Macintosh we can provide an old (but still kicking) laptop so that you can work at home if desired.

The third job is also a literary one. If you have been to our Nature Shop, or attended our fabulous Education Day, you may have noticed our mounted birds (predominantly ducks). We want to create cards that identify each bird with their common and Latin names and a brief description (4 or 5 sentences) of an interesting behavior or habitat requirement. We have an extensive and well-organized library that has all the information you need—

you have to find it and write it up. A combination of working in the office and at home will be needed for this job. Most of our library books can be checked out. The time needed to complete this job is hard to estimate, however, it is not unreasonable to assume 20 to 30 minutes per species, of which there are 25. We would love to have this job completed in just over a month. Again, we have a Macintosh laptop you can borrow if you do not have a Mac at home. This job would lend itself to several people working on it. Another person, to ensure a similar writing style, could do the final edit. We have other jobs not mentioned above, if you have the time, give me a call so we can match a satisfying volunteer activity to your needs. Ulrike Keyssner, Education Programs and Volunteer Coordinator (408) 252-3747 <ulrike@scvas.org>



NOTES FROM THE BOARD

by Freddy Howell

Santa Clara Valley Audubon has had successful fundraisers in the past. In fact, our format has been effectively copied by other Audubon chapters. Last fall's fundraiser, however, has gone beyond the Board's highest expectations. As of January 8, we've received \$65,626, and donations are still trickling in! Why? Certainly, SCVAS members want to support our core programs—education, conservation, field trips, etc. Many members, though, are particularly concerned about the Coyote Valley sprawl and want to support the chapter's (and other groups') efforts to fight the housing, transportation, and open space battles that surround the potential development in this area. We have received several donations urging that the money go specifically toward the Coyote Valley effort. Since last spring, SCVAS has spent more than \$30,000 to preserve Coyote Valley, with more expenses to come, so these donations are greatly appreciated.

Other members feel strongly that the chapter's work in education as well as other conservation issues is also extremely important for the future of our local avian and wildlife habitat. If we save habitat, we save wildlife.

Just because the tax year has ended, it doesn't mean that you've missed your chance to support all these urgent causes. Make SCVAS your first donation of 2001!! The Board extends their heartfelt thanks to those members and companies who generously donated to SCVAS during our 2000 fundraising campaign.

February 2001 Calendar

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

****Saturday Feb. 3, 9:00 AM**

San Francisco's Southern Parks.

Half day. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. Meet at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area for shorebirds, bay ducks, loons and raptors. We'll then visit San Francisco's second largest park—McLaren Park—for land birds and dabbling ducks. Other lesser known but birdy parks may be visited, time permitting. From Hwy 101 exit just past Brisbane Lagoon at Candlestick/3Com Park off-ramp. Continue east along Harney Way and turn right onto Jamestown/Hunters Point Expressway. Entrance to Candlestick State Recreation Area is on right (no fee). Meet at end of paved road that runs through park. **RC**

****Sunday Feb. 4, 9:00 AM**

Ogier Ponds. Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408) 871-9552. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy., turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right towards Model Airplane Park where power towers cross highway. Follow road for 1/2 mile, park in gravel lot at bend in road.

Wednesday Feb. 7, 7:30 PM

Baya Area Bird Photographers presents Chris Humphreys with slides of birds of Saguaro Nat'l. Park, Arizona. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

****Saturday Feb. 10, 8:00 AM**

Arastradero OSP. Half day. Leader: Steve Rutledge (650) 328-5097. "Woodland birds of winter" — last of a series of trips for beginning and intermediate birders. Leader will emphasize field identification of common woodland birds and how to separate similar species. Basic biology of groups such as hawks, sparrows, jays and woodpeckers will be covered. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west, turn right on Arastradero Rd., meet

in parking lot about 1/2 mile on right. Optional extension for those interested in lunch and a little birding in Foothills Park where non-Palo Alto residents will be guests of the leader. **RC**

****Sunday Feb. 11, 8:00 AM**

Monterey Peninsula. Full day.

Leader: Rick Fournier (831) 632-2473. Morning birding at the coastline and Harbor, then off to Jack's Peak in search of Townsend's & Hermit Warblers, woodpeckers, etc. After lunch: Bird Rock on 17-Mile Drive for rocky shorebirds, Crespi Pond and Cannery Row. Meet in parking lot at Monterey Beach Hotel. Take Hwy 1 into Monterey, turn off on Canyon del Rey Blvd. Make immediate right straight to public parking lot on east side of hotel.

Tuesday Feb. 13, 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: Cinnamon Teal.

****Wednesday Feb. 14, 8:30 AM**

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

****Saturday Feb. 17, 8:00 AM**

Fremont Lagoons. Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. From I-880 north of San Jose, take Gateway Blvd. exit west, turn left on Fremont Blvd. Park in lot on right at end of street. Come prepared to help me ID gulls, which we hope will include Thayer's and Glaucous. **RC**

****Sunday Feb. 18, 8:30 AM**

Pillar Point Harbor. Half day. Leader: Al Eisner (650) 364-3686, voice-mail (650) 926-2018. Meet at Pillar Point parking lot in Princeton, 4 miles north of Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1. Turn west at traffic light on Hwy 1, then left at Pros-

pect Way; continue to West Point Ave. then right to parking lot on left. Bring a scope if you have one. Loons, grebes, sea ducks, rocky shorebirds, gulls, miscellaneous small landbirds. A "pre-trip" will visit the large gull flock at Pilarcitos Creek mouth; contact leader for meeting arrangements if interested. **RC**

****Saturday-Sunday Feb. 24-25**

Morro Bay & Carrizo Plain. Leader:

Clay Kempf (831) 761-8260

Weekend trip to a premier birding area in California. Sites include Morro Bay (Brant, ducks, shorebirds, Peregrine Falcon, Canyon Wren, Royal Tern); vagrant traps from Montaña del Oro to Santa Maria; Carrizo Plain (Ferruginous & Rough-legged Hawk, Mt. Bluebird, Sandhill Crane, Roadrunner, Merlin, Prairie Falcon, Lewis' Woodpecker, Sage, Vesper & Lark Sparrow). Meet at south side of Morro Rock, 8 AM on Saturday. Bring food for lunches in the field; dress in layers; be prepared for fowl (sic) weather. Motels available in Morro Bay. Trip limited to 25 participants—contact leader for reservations.

****Wednesday Feb. 28, 8:30 AM**

Palo Alto Foothills Park. Half day.

Leader: Phyllis Browning (650) 494-6360. Woodland and grassland birds and perhaps some goodies on the lake. Since the park is open only to Palo Alto residents and their guests, the group will meet promptly at 8:30 at the Page Mill/I-280 Park-n-Ride to carpool. Lunch optional. **RC**

****Saturday Mar. 3, 9:00 AM**

Bair Island. Half day. Leader: Robin

Smith (650) 325-3306. Bird the newest part of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. From Hwy 101 in Redwood City take Whipple Avenue exit east across frontage road to parking area (WATCH OUT for frontage road traffic!) Meet at refuge sign inside gate. Be prepared for mud! **RC**

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Wagtail *cont'd*

lars, steal glances at the field guide, and, oh yes, make sure I didn't crash the car.

Fortunately, the strikingly-plumaged black and white bird was most cooperative, allowing us close and extensive telescope and binocular views in excellent light, and even calling as it flew back and forth between the muddy ponds around the lot. Once I decided that the bird was an adult Black-backed Wagtail, and not a White Wagtail (the only other real possibility), I took detailed notes and sketched the bird while the identification points (including tail-wagging, which the bird did frequently) were fresh in my mind.

Once the bird disappeared, I instructed Deborah and Michael to try to re-find the bird while I went on a search for another rare bird—Mike Rogers, a top local birder who formally reviews all rare bird reports in California and who happened to be counting birds in an adjacent section. Luckily there were no police cars patrolling Alviso that Sunday morning, as I surely broke the speed limit in my crazed pursuit of Mike.

Meanwhile, back at the "wagtail lot," the excitement mounted. I had raced back after the unsuccessful search for Mike Rogers, only to find my teammates embroiled in an intense discussion with a duck hunter in full camouflage gear. He was telling them to leave immediately, as he was going to start shooting at geese that he was sure were about to fly overhead. Deborah and Michael bravely explained that we had a permit from Cargill to do our bird census and that we had just spotted a rare bird from Siberia! The hunter was unimpressed. Although I considered staying put, given the look of concern on my fellow birders' faces, and the fact that the hunter was armed, I reluctantly agreed, much to my teammates' relief, that it was probably best that we press on to other portions of our territory.

Amazingly, we refound the wagtail foraging at the edge of a nearby pond a few minutes later. I decided to leave Deborah and Michael with the bird once again, so I could engage in another wild car chase for Mike Rogers. (Given what had already transpired, I'm sure they were

thinking at this point that the Christmas Bird Count experience was not what they had signed up for!) Luckily, I spotted Mike pulling off a dike in his truck. Wildly waving my hands in the air, I charged down the dike shouting, "Wagtail! wagtail!" I told Mike that I thought the bird was a Black-backed Wagtail, and I really wanted him to see it as well.

We raced back to where I had left Deborah and Michael. Mike immediately found the bird, expressing his excitement that it was an adult, not a juvenile, and confirmed the sighting as Santa Clara County's first record of a Black-backed Wagtail, only the tenth record of this species for California. With camera and telephoto lens in his vehicle, Mike also took some excellent photos at relatively close range. Needless to say, finishing our day of bird-counting was a challenge after all the morning's excitement, but we did so, and were rewarded with more great looks of the wagtail at the day's end.

While discovering a rare bird is certainly exciting, the careful documentation of all birds found in a CBC circle (15 miles in diameter) is much more scientifically important. I encourage all birders, whatever their skill level, to make the Audubon Christmas Bird Count an annual ritual, as I have for over two decades. The chance to learn more about our wintering birds, to meet new friends and revisit with old ones, and the possibility of discovering a rare vagrant from another continent all make the CBC an event to look forward to year after year.

Calendar *cont'd*

**Sunday Mar. 4, 8:30 AM

Coyote Hills Regional park. Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408) 257-3647. Take Hwy 84/Dumbarton Bridge east towards Newark. Exit right on Thornton, then left over freeway as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre. Turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd. into park. Meet at far end of Quarry Parking lot 1/2 mile past park entrance. Entrance fee required. *LO, RC*

CBC Reports

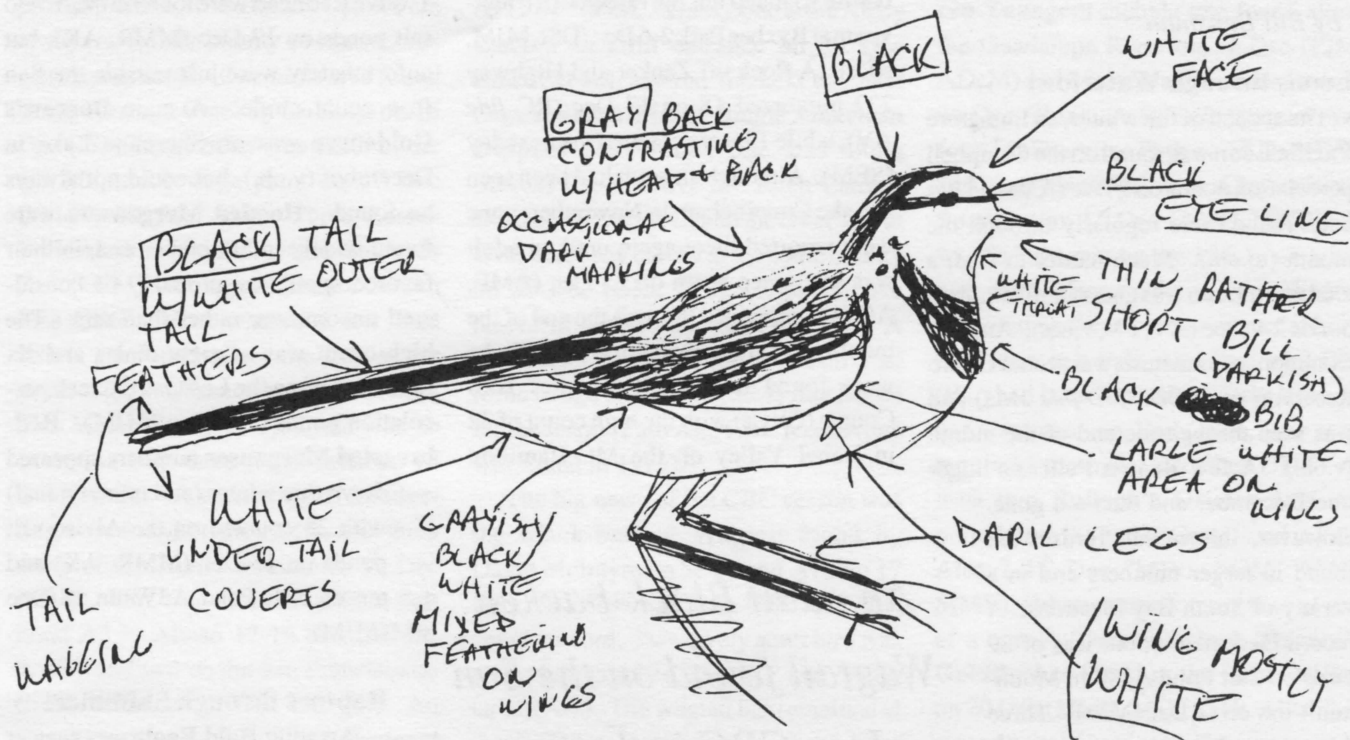
SAN JOSE Dec. 17

The San Jose CBC was held on a clear, windy day. We had 117 participants and ended up with 165 species, including 13 rarities. Undoubtedly the most extraordinary bird-of-the-day was a Black-backed Wagtail discovered by David McIntyre on Cargill Salt Pond A-8 behind SFBBO. This little Siberian vagrant is an extremely rare find and is a first for Santa Clara County.

Other special birds reported from the Alviso sector include Greater White-fronted Goose, a flock of Ross's Geese, one male Eurasian Wigeon, one Sandhill Crane, three Lesser Yellowlegs, and two Glaucous Gulls. A Ferruginous Hawk was also sighted in Alviso as well as another one in the Calaveras sector. Two Snow Geese were found (one at Calaveras Reservoir and the other at Lake Cunningham); also the Lesser Black-backed Gull returned for its fourth winter at Lake Cunningham.

Along our riparian corridors an Osprey was seen flying along Guadalupe River between Hedding and Taylor, a "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk was sighted along Guadalupe River at Trimble, a MacGillivray's Warbler was found along Coyote Creek between Montague Expwy and 880, and a female Western Tanager was sighted along Guadalupe River north of Trimble. Rounding out our rarities was a Black-throated Gray Warbler found at Lou Vierra Field near Bowers Park in Santa Clara. Other bird sightings of note include over 17,000 Herring Gulls recorded on the Alviso Salt Ponds (thanks to Mike Rogers for his scrutiny of the gull flocks), three Cattle Egrets (two in the Alviso sector and one in the Agnews sector), three "minima" Canada Geese (two in Alviso and one at Lower Penitencia Creek Park), and two Red-breasted Nuthatches found at the San Jose Country Club. Thanks to all who participated and spent much of the day as I did counting Mallards and coots, Rock Doves and starlings. They all count. And many thanks to Debbie, Steve, Ulrike, Hazel and to all who contributed to the success of the countdown dinner at Emma Prusch Park. We had a great day.

—Ann Verdi



Field drawing of the Black-backed Wagtail by David McIntyre during the San Jose Christmas Bird Count. Note how the field marks of this rare visitor are carefully documented so a complete report can be submitted as a rare bird report.

PALO ALTO Dec. 18

The Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count 2000 was a great success! The weather was sunny and clear, and many new observers participated this year, joining forces with seasoned birders in all eight of the count regions. This year marks my first year as Count Compiler and while much of the responsibilities were new and unfamiliar to me, I enjoyed them greatly. I've acted as a Regional Coordinator on several occasions in the past and plan to continue those responsibilities as well as seeing to my new responsibilities as Compiler. Some of the highlights for each region include:

Region 1 (Redwood City and East Palo Alto waterfronts)—A single immature Snow Goose at Bayfront Park. Apparently this bird had been present for some time. 3 Blue-winged Teal and a White-throated Sparrow were also found.

Region 2 (Palo Alto Baylands, Shoreline

Park and Moffet Field)—31 Brown Pelicans, an immature Greater White-fronted Goose, one Barrow's Goldeneye, a single Ferruginous Hawk, 2 Peregrine Falcons, 3 Red Knots and an immature Bullock's Oriole.

Region 3 (Residential Menlo Park, Atherton and Redwood City)—No real surprises, but 16 Common Mergansers were certainly nice since they were not encountered elsewhere.

Region 4 (Residential Palo Alto, Mountain View and Sunnyvale)—no rarities. Region 5 (Woodside)—Had a single Peregrine Falcon.

Region 6 (Los Altos Hills)—Two more Greater White-fronted Geese, an unexpected Wild Turkey, and a very late female Yellow Warbler along Stevens Creek Blvd.

Region 7 (Skyline Open Space Areas)—There was a Pileated Woodpecker at Russian Ridge but the big surprise was a

Townsend's Solitaire at Coal Mine Ridge! Region 8 (Lower Skyline, Foothills Park and Montebello)—1 immature Golden Eagle, 25 additional Wild Turkey, 37+ White-throated Swifts, and a "Chaetura" Swift. This bird sparked much debate but consensus is it was most likely Vaux's. There was also a White-throated Sparrow.

Some species often encountered on the Count were missed this year, including Common Loon, Snowy Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Mew Gull and Red-breasted Nuthatch. These disappointments were offset by some of the unexpected birds that did decide to appear. All in all, a good count with a very respectable total of 162 species.

—Matthew Dodder

Mt. Hamilton, Calero-Morgan Hill reports on page 11

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

The second of the winter, an immature **Pacific Loon** was found on the Campbell percolation ponds on 2 Dec (AV) and has been found there regularly through the month (m.ob.). Much harder to find, a **Common Loon** was also at the Campbell ponds 2-9 Dec (AV, FV, v.ob.). Another Common, an immature, was seen at Calero Reservoir on 9 Dec (JiD *fide* JMa) and was seen through the end of the month (v.ob.). A few **Brown Pelicans** linger into December and then are gone. However, this month birds were found in larger numbers and in a variety of South Bay locations. A record December count was of 29 birds on Salt Pond A2W in Mountain View on 18 Dec (MJM). Three **American Bitterns** were at the Ogier Avenue ponds 1-3 Dec (RWR, FV). A single bird was in the Alviso Slough marsh on 6 Dec (MMR) and another bird was in the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 23 Dec (AG). **Greater White-fronted Geese** were well reported in December. An immature found in the local Canada Goose flock near Byxbee Park on 2 Dec (DSt, MJM) was probably the same bird seen in the Shoreline and Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) area during the month (v.ob.). Two birds were seen near the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP on 17 Dec (RC *fide* AV) and two adults were seen the next day on Felt Lake (AME). **Snow Geese** also appeared in good numbers with an adult near Byxbee Park 2-6 Dec (DSt, MJM, RLe), another adult at the Campbell percolation ponds on 6 Dec (RWR), one at Calero Reservoir on 9 Dec (AV, MJM), an immature at Lake Cunningham on 11 Dec (CJC) that remained through the month, and another immature on Calaveras Reservoir on 17 Dec (DJ *fide* AV). An adult **Ross's**

Goose rounded out the rare goose triumvirate at Byxbee Park 2-6 Dec (DSt, MJM, RLe). A flock off Zanker and Highway 237 numbered 18 on 17 Dec (RC *fide* AV), while 15 were counted the next day (SEM). Although an adult had been seen at Lake Cunningham in November, none were reported there again until an adult was seen once again on 23 Dec (AME, AG) and remained through the end of the month. Good numbers of **Wood Ducks** were found on local Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) with the high count of 32 in Isabel Valley on the Mt. Hamilton

An adult Black-backed Wagtail found on the San Jose CBC is the first record for the county

CBC on 20 Dec (MMR, MJM). Calero Reservoir's male **Eurasian Wigeon** was last seen on 2 Dec (GW). The Alviso salt ponds held two males on 6 Dec (MMR et al.) and a single male was there on 17 Dec (MMR, AK), just at the edge of the San Jose CBC circle. Salt Pond A4, east of the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds, had a male and female on 7 Dec (CM, SM), while two males were counted in the Sunnyvale ponds on 18 Dec (MJM), this time just within the Palo Alto CBC circle. A male found in the Isabel Valley on the Mt. Hamilton CBC on 20 Dec (MMR, MJM) was a first for that count. The numbers of **Blue-winged Teal** found at the Palo Alto FCB were variable in December with a high count of 18 on 8 Dec (RWR, FV). A pair of these teal were found in Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 6 Dec (MMR et al.) and a single male was seen north of the Moffett Field Golf Course on 18 Dec (MJM).

Twelve **Redhead** were found in the Alviso salt ponds on 17 Dec (MMR, AK), but unfortunately were just outside the San Jose count circle. A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** was on Shoreline Lake in December (v.ob.), but could not always be found. **Hooded Mergansers** were found widely in December and, in their favored spots, can probably be considered uncommon, rather than rare. The high count was of eight males and six females among the Los Gatos Creek percolation ponds on 9 Dec (MJM). **Red-breasted Merganser** numbers appeared down this winter (and more typical) with 28 counted on the Alviso salt ponds on 17 Dec (MMR, AK) and ten on Salt Pond A3W on 18 Dec (MJM).

Raptors through Skimmers

An adult **Bald Eagle** was seen at Calero Reservoir on 9 Dec (MJM) and again on 15 Dec (JMa). Two adults were seen on the reservoir in Isabel Valley on 20 Dec (GHt, ADeM, MMR, MJM) and an adult and a second-year bird were on Anderson Reservoir on 21 Dec (SW). An adult **'Harlan's' Red-tailed Hawk** has returned for its fifth winter along the Guadalupe River at Trimble and was first seen on 9 Dec (MJM). It has remained through the end of the month (v.ob.). Typical numbers of **Ferruginous Hawks** were reported, with one over the Shoreline GC on 13 Dec (MMR), one east of Calaveras Reservoir on 17 Dec (KS, RWR *fide* AV), another that day at the Arzino Ranch (RC et al. *fide* AV), an adult at Moffett Field on 18 Dec (MMR), four in the Isabel Valley on 20 Dec (MMR, MJM), and one north of Morgan Hill on the Monterey Highway on 31 Dec (MMR, MJM). A wintering **Prairie Falcon** was seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 3 Dec (RWR et al.), while a bird in the Isabel Valley on 20 Dec (GHt, ADeM) was

continued next page

Field Notes *continued*

probably resident. **Sandhill Cranes** are always rare in the county so two records were exceptional. One bird was found along Saratoga Creek in Saratoga on 15 Dec (JS) and the other was south of the old Milpitas sewage plant on 17 Dec (PMcC, JD *fide* AV). Three **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park (MJM) were a good find for the San Jose CBC. Most winters a few **Red Knots** are found along the Bay as far south as the San Francisquito Creek delta (San Mateo County). This year was no exception with three found there on 18 Dec (MMR). A smattering of **Sanderling** were found on the CBCs, with three north of the Alviso marina on 17 Dec (MMR, AK), two to three birds in Salt Pond A8 in Alviso 17-19 Dec (MMR, m.ob.), and two on the San Francisquito Creek delta on 19 Dec (MMR). An exceptionally late record of **Pectoral Sandpiper** was one found on Charleston Slough on 2 Dec (CJC). Few birds are found after the first week in November.

The wintering **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Lake Cunningham was observed 11 Dec (CJC), 17 Dec (MJM), and 23 Dec (AME, AG). It is in its fifth winter at this location. Two **Glaucous Gulls** were found on the San Jose CBC on 17 Dec. An adult was on the Salt Pond A13/A15 dike (MMR) and a 1st-winter bird was on Salt Pond A16 (MJM, MMR). The **Black Skimmer** flock at Charleston Slough has held constant at 12 during December (m.ob.).

Woodpeckers through Goldfinches

A tally of 41 **Lewis's Woodpeckers** in the Isabel Valley on 20 Dec (MMR, MJM, GHt, ADeM) was a good total, but none were in the San Antonio Valley. The three **Red-breasted Nuthatches** found in Uvas CP on 30 Dec (GHt, DSt) were the only reports this month suggesting this winter's irruption has been slight in this area. This December's crop of overwintering **House Wrens** included

one along the Guadalupe River at Trimble on 17 Dec (PJM, ADeM), one at the Kirby Canyon Landfill entrance on 29 Dec (MMR et al.), and one the next day near Coyote Ranch (MJM). Single **American Dippers** were found—one was along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Canyon Road on 29 Dec (DG) and the other was at Uvas and Croy creeks in the south county on 30 Dec (GHt, DSt). Dippers have nested in both locations in the past. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was found on Coal Mine Ridge on 18 Dec (S&JJ *fide* MDo) for the second Palo Alto CBC record (one was found in 1975).

The big news of the CBC season was the **Black-backed Wagtail** found by David McIntyre on Salt Pond A18 on 17 Dec for a first San Jose CBC and first county record. This lovely adult bird was well-photographed (MMR) and audio taped (AJa). The wagtail has remained at this site but, unfortunately, there have been no observations from areas open to the public. The Mt. Hamilton CBC, on 20 Dec, provided a few reports of **Phainopepla** with four in Isabel Valley (MMR, MJM, GHt, ADeM), including two males and a female, and a male in San Antonio Valley (WGB). Wintering **Orange-crowned Warblers** included one at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 18 Dec (MJM), one near San Tomas Expressway and Scott on 22 Dec (MJM), and one along Coyote Creek south of Highway 85 on 30 Dec (MMR, AK). Less expected, an adult male **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was seen on Lou Vierra Field in Santa Clara on 17 Dec (SEM et al. *fide* AV). Completely unexpected was an immature female **American Redstart** found along Coyote Creek south of Metcalf Road on 30 Dec (MJM et al.). We have only one previous December record of this rare vagrant. For the second December in a row observers have found wintering **MacGillivray's Warblers**. The first was a bird seen in a San Jose yard on 3 Dec (LY) and the second was along Coyote Creek between Montague and I-880 on

17 Dec (PJM, ADeM). Wintering **Western Tanagers** include one found along the Guadalupe River on 17 Dec (PJM, ADeM) and a female at Edenvale Park on 26 Dec (JMa). A *Spizella* sparrow was found at Shoreline Park on 10 Dec (DSt) and was identified as a **Clay-colored Sparrow** on 12 Dec (AME, MMR). It was found again on the 13th (v.ob.), but not seen afterwards. Two **White-throated Sparrows** were reported at feeders. One, in a Palo Alto yard on 3 Dec (RC) had been there since early November. Another, in Los Gatos, was seen regularly through December (JD). At least two **Bullock's Orioles** were reported from the end of Geng Road in Palo Alto 1-18 Dec (MDo, MJM, AME, MMR), although never more than at one at a time. Twenty-three **Lawrence's Goldfinches** found in the Isabel Valley on 20 Dec (MMR, MJM, GHt, ADeM) is a good count for winter. Two were noted the same day in the San Antonio Valley (WGB).

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Richard Carlson (RC), Chuck Coston (CJC), Jim Danzenbaker (JiD), Al DeMartini (ADeM), Matthew Dodder (MDo), John Drum (JDr), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Don Ganton (DG), Andy Gibb (AG), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Sue & Jerry James (S&JJ), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJa), Dave Johnston (DJ), Alma Kali (AK), Rosalie Lefkowitz (RLe), Sue Macias (SM), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Patrick McCrystle (PMcC), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Steve Miller (SEM), Cheryl Millett (CM), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Jim Stallman (JS), Kep Stone (KS), Dick Stovel (DSt), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Grant Webb (GW), Scott Werner (SW), and Lou Young (LY).

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

2000 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Species	SJ 12/17/00	PA 12/18/00	MtH 12/20/00	Cal-MH 12/30/00	Species	SJ 12/17/00	PA 12/18/00	MtH 12/20/00	Cal-MH 12/30/00
Red-throated Loon	-	-	-	-	Red-tailed Hawk	90	101	24	94
Common Loon	-	-	-	2	Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk	1	-	-	-
Pied-billed Grebe	103	127	49	102	Ferruginous Hawk	2	1	4	1
Horned Grebe	10	6	-	4	<i>Buteo</i> , sp	1	1	-	-
Eared Grebe	1607	162	-	74	Golden Eagle	7	2	8	8
Western Grebe	39	25	-	43	American Kestrel	68	35	8	78
Clark's Grebe	8	16	-	6	Merlin	8	2	1	5
<i>Aechmophorus</i> , sp	19	34	-	-	Peregrine Falcon	6	3	-	-
American White Pelican	123	53	-	-	Prairie Falcon	9	-	1	1
Brown Pelican	1	36	-	-	Ring-necked Pheasant	8	4	-	1
Double-crested Cormorant	197	161	1	263	Wild Turkey	52	26	-	134
American Bittern	-	-	-	4	California Quail	56	219	356	178
Great Blue Heron	38	16	6	35	Clapper Rail	-	2	-	-
Great Egret	62	45	1	41	Virginia Rail	11	4	-	1
Snowy Egret	42	77	-	35	Sora	10	4	-	3
Cattle Egret	3	-	-	-	Common Moorhen	6	6	-	5
Green Heron	4	2	-	2	American Coot	3611	3752	707	1633
Black-crowned Night-Heron	368	57	-	21	Sandhill Crane	1	-	-	-
Greater White-fronted Goose	2	3	-	-	Black-bellied Plover	-	1449	-	-
Snow Goose	2	1	-	-	Snowy Plover	-	1	-	-
Ross's Goose	18	-	-	-	Semipalmated Plover	-	700	-	-
Canada Goose	998	482	16	496	Killdeer	216	207	26	205
Wood Duck	44	2	32	95	Black-necked Stilt	467	1269	-	28
American Green-winged Teal	124	575	-	66	American Avocet	1666	3269	-	-
Mallard	1936	1146	133	871	Greater Yellowlegs	26	50	13	10
Northern Pintail	423	614	-	1	Lesser Yellowlegs	3	1	-	-
Blue-winged Teal	-	14	-	-	yellowlegs, sp	-	-	-	-
Cinnamon Teal	96	187	-	6	Willet	152	2613	-	-
Northern Shoveler	7268	6278	2	22	Spotted Sandpiper	10	-	-	7
Gadwall	556	886	89	79	Whimbrel	-	8	-	-
Eurasian Wigeon	1	2	1	-	Long-billed Curlew	152	191	-	2
American Wigeon	274	2015	133	27	Marbled Godwit	5	1863	-	-
Canvasback	144	3198	-	16	Ruddy Turnstone	-	-	-	-
Redhead	-	1	-	-	Red Knot	-	3	-	-
Ring-necked Duck	135	35	104	256	Sanderling	6	5	-	-
Greater Scaup	62	15	-	4	Western Sandpiper	97	13,427	-	2
Lesser Scaup	37	72	-	60	Least Sandpiper	250	2045	-	63
<i>Aythya</i> , sp	145	6600	-	6	Dunlin	71	2397	-	4
Surf Scoter	-	2	-	-	<i>Calidrid</i> ("peep"), sp	436	13,180	-	1
Common Goldeneye	18	21	-	66	Short-billed Dowitcher	7	2	-	-
Barrow's Goldeneye	-	1	-	2	Long-billed Dowitcher	509	105	1	61
goldeneye, sp	-	-	-	1	dowitcher, sp	490	1047	-	-
Bufflehead	110	65	82	163	Common Snipe	50	-	1	30
Hooded Merganser	1	41	2	15	Bonaparte's Gull	564	34	-	7
Common Merganser	24	22	6	156	Mew Gull	623	3	-	4
Red-breasted Merganser	28	14	-	-	Ring-billed Gull	2576	713	-	114
Ruddy Duck	1844	6354	41	221	California Gull	3127	1287	-	545
duck, sp	-	42,000	-	-	Herring Gull	17,624	151	-	732
Turkey Vulture	141	40	-	67	Thayer's Gull	23	2	-	12
Osprey	1	-	-	5	Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	-	-	-
White-tailed Kite	17	28	-	23	Western Gull	146	160	-	-
Bald Eagle	2	-	2	1	Glaucous-winged Gull	243	228	-	6
Northern Harrier	44	35	1	10	Glaucous Gull	2	-	-	-
Sharp-shinned Hawk	11	9	2	12	gull, sp	7055	1657	-	1085
Cooper's Hawk	20	4	4	12	Forster's Tern	2	39	-	-
<i>Accipiter</i> , sp	-	4	-	1	Black Skimmer	-	12	-	-
Red-shouldered Hawk	28	23	2	40	Rock Dove	2845	1160	-	1149

Species	SJ 12/17/00	PA 12/18/00	MtH 12/20/00	Cal-MH 12/30/00
Band-tailed Pigeon	107	198	75	31
Mourning Dove	727	431	1	794
Greater Roadrunner	-	-	1	-
Barn Owl	2	4	-	CW
Western Screech-Owl	-	10	6	40
Great Horned Owl	1	7	7	33
Northern Pygmy-Owl	-	1	1	3
Burrowing Owl	7	8	-	-
Northern Saw-whet Owl	-	3	-	2
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	-
White-throated Swift	20	41	36	12
<i>Chaetura</i> , sp	-	1	-	-
Anna's Hummingbird	307	377	53	360
Belted Kingfisher	23	9	3	21
Lewis's Woodpecker	-	-	41	-
Acorn Woodpecker	51	145	173	134
Red-breasted Sapsucker	9	5	7	16
Sapsucker, sp	1	-	-	-
Nuttall's Woodpecker	69	73	21	127
Downy Woodpecker	20	15	1	20
Hairy Woodpecker	2	24	9	7
Northern (Yel-sh) Flicker	-	-	-	1
Northern (Red-sh x Yel-sh) Flicker	2	-	-	-
Northern (Red-sh) Flicker	160	124	79	114
Pileated Woodpecker	-	1	-	-
Black Phoebe	227	180	29	172
Say's Phoebe	25	5	2	28
Horned Lark	46	-	-	117
Tree Swallow	5	-	-	6
Barn Swallow	-	-	-	1
swallow, sp	2	140	-	21
Steller's Jay	65	249	25	84
Western Scrub Jay	286	633	279	641
Yellow-billed Magpie	130	-	104	104
American Crow	334	114	13	643
Common Raven	56	101	38	21
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	143	533	7	235
Oak Titmouse	62	208	147	200
Bushtit	993	957	176	794
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	-	1	4
White-breasted Nuthatch	26	51	90	87
Pygmy Nuthatch	-	8	-	-
Brown Creeper	4	26	-	10
Rock Wren	8	-	2	8
Canyon Wren	-	-	-	-
Bewick's Wren	30	106	49	91
House Wren	1	-	-	2
Winter Wren	5	12	1	2
Marsh Wren	68	14	1	8
American Dipper	-	-	-	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	24	-	-
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	195	275	49	286
Western Bluebird	104	86	236	113
Townsend's Solitaire	-	1	3	-
Hermit Thrush	37	85	34	34
American Robin	709	1693	377	1759
Varied Thrush	8	74	16	1
Wrentit	45	160	47	65
Northern Mockingbird	113	58	-	86
California Thrasher	4	36	16	13
Black-backed Wagtail	1	-	-	-
American Pipit	62	45	1	33

Species	SJ 12/17/00	PA 12/18/00	MtH 12/20/00	Cal-MH 12/30/00
Cedar Waxwing	481	316	95	549
Phainopepla	-	-	5	-
Loggerhead Shrike	42	3	1	11
European Starling	3700	1438	198	1818
Hutton's Vireo	4	42	2	7
Orange-crowned Warbler	14	1	-	1
Yellow Warbler	-	1	-	-
Yellow-rumped Warbler (form?)	699	442	-	363
(Myrtle)	12	31	-	38
(Audubon's)	262	317	1	105
Black-throated Gray Warbler	1	-	-	-
Townsend's Warbler	18	37	-	10
American Redstart	-	-	-	1
MacGillivray's Warbler	1	-	-	-
Common Yellowthroat	26	9	-	13
Western Tanager	1	-	-	-
Spotted Towhee	22	187	59	55
California Towhee	197	268	95	183
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	3	-	1	14
Lark Sparrow	24	-	5	11
Sage Sparrow	-	-	10	-
Savannah Sparrow	91	51	20	4
Fox Sparrow	29	39	39	17
Fox Sparrow, Eastern form	-	-	-	1
Song Sparrow	204	76	7	83
Lincoln's Sparrow	80	20	8	23
Swamp Sparrow	-	-	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	-	1	-	CW
Golden-crowned Sparrow	586	665	191	600
White-crowned Sparrow	1514	662	297	1144
sparrow, sp	206	115	1	69
Dark-eyed Junco (form?)	330	-	283	449
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	-	590	460	-
Dark-eyed (SI-col) Junco	-	-	-	1
Nutmeg Mannikin	-	-	-	5
Red-winged Blackbird	1699	1147	464	2795
Tricolored Blackbird	34	60	77	34
Western Meadowlark	544	320	186	458
Brewer's Blackbird	958	370	251	2803
Brown-headed Cowbird	33	53	-	69
blackbird, sp	254	159	52	250
Bullock's Oriole	-	1	-	-
Purple Finch	2	12	131	31
House Finch	963	660	2	751
Pine Siskin	2	37	24	71
Lesser Goldfinch	227	254	147	233
Lawrence's Goldfinch	-	-	54	-
American Goldfinch	89	61	-	83
Evening Grosbeak	1	-	-	-
House Sparrow	102	66	36	114
Total Species	165	162	102	145
Total	79,316	140,768	7,318	30,263

Key

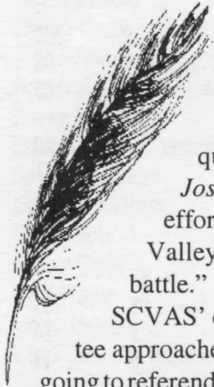
- sp = species undetermined
- CW = Count Week
- SJ = San Jose: compiled by Ann Verdi
- PA = Palo Alto: compiled by Matthew Dodder
- MtH = Mount Hamilton: compiled by Don Schmoltdt
- Cal-MH = Calero-Morgan Hill: compiled by John Mariani

Chart formatted by Bonnie Bedford-White.

The Biggest Game in Town

Coyote Valley referendum not 'quixotic' to Audubon members

by Craig Breon
Executive Director



Why do conservationists take on seemingly impossible tasks? I asked myself that question when the *San Jose Mercury* called our efforts to preserve Coyote Valley a "quixotic, losing battle." When the head of SCVAS' conservation committee approached me with the idea of going to referendum against Cisco Systems and the entire San Jose City Council, I again asked myself that question, and nearly refused to get our chapter involved.

Then I remembered that in 1996 the Vice-president of SCVAS had approached me with another seemingly impossible task—convincing the Santa Clara City Council to forego tens of millions of dollars in revenue in order to create an open space preserve on the Valley floor out of an old golf course. I gave us about a ten percent chance, but we went ahead. Regular *Avocet* readers know the outcome: the Ulistac Natural Area—a big victory resulting from that particular battle—perhaps quixotic, but certainly not "losing."

We need another big, seemingly impossible victory, and we're part way there. In January, the San Jose City Clerk certified the signatures needed to allow the people of San Jose to vote on Cisco's sprawling proposals to pave Coyote Valley. We needed to gather 30,700 valid signatures (registered voters from San Jose); we figured that 45,000 signatures would assure us enough valid signatures. We submitted more than 54,000 signatures, all collected in 30 days. I would estimate that Cisco spent perhaps half a million dollars to defeat our petition drive—using less-than-admirable and possibly illegal tactics—and didn't stop us.

"... the cause is just, our arguments strong, our believers many. With a little money, a lot of volunteers, and some luck, we can win."

Now Cisco is likely to spend around \$2 million on this referendum campaign. Unless there's a few of you out there with ten or a hundred thousand to donate (and if there are, don't be bashful), we're looking at a shoestring-and-bailing wire, volunteers and a bit of money, old-style David versus that other guy campaign.

Our chances? Depends on who you ask. A veteran political consultant recently told me he gave us a 25% chance. He also said a victory would shake the earth of Silicon Valley, and promised a bit of help. A veteran *Mercury* reporter said that with just enough money to get out our message, we should win—the traffic and housing problems of the region could overwhelm even Cisco. Most others think the vote may be close, but predict a victory for the sprawl machine over the quality of life conservationists.

The only things I know for sure: the cause is just, our arguments strong, our believers many. With a little money, a lot of volunteers, and some luck we can and should win.

I would ask here for you to help us, but what I really mean is: let us help you to get involved. We will win and make a decisive statement against sprawl if every one of you reading this acts—every one who is tired of the traffic, tired of the march towards a Los Angeles vision of our future, tired of a San Jose City Council so unimaginative and meek as to sell off our children's quality of life with hardly any debate.

What to do? Donate money and/or time. Despite what we often tell ourselves, everybody has some of one or the other to give. Checks for the referendum effort can be made to PLAN (People for Livable and Affordable Neighborhoods)

and sent to 48 South 7th Street, San Jose, 95112. Call PLAN to volunteer to walk a neighborhood, host a house party if you live in San Jose, or join others at a phone bank calling likely voters (408-293-5314).

We're not going to have big money, but we may have just enough caring people to pull this off.

Audubon Roving Eye Watches Over Our Creeks

Readers may be excused for thinking that Coyote Valley is about all we're working on these days. Wrong! SCVAS is, as always, involved in more than a dozen conservation and restoration issues around the county. Many of these have been taken over by our competent Conservation Assistant, Jennifer Peritz. One of these projects was in the making for years, but is just now coming to fruition thanks to her hard work.

Construction sites throughout the county are supposed to ensure that they don't fill our creeks with tons of sediment running off after rains. Most people may not even realize that sediments, also known as dirt, are often considered a pollutant. They choke streams, destroying fisheries and negatively affecting entire stream ecosystems and the birds and other wildlife that are so dependent on them. In addition, sediments carry other pollutants like oils and heavy metals.

For years I have seen construction sites in violation of the Clean Water Act: piles of uncovered dirt during rainstorms and shoddy protective measures broken down, allowing rivulets of mud into our creeks. Four years ago, I spent months involved with a project sponsored by the EPA to develop model standards for the Coyote Creek watershed. A nice document came out of that effort and has sat on my shelf (and evidently everyone else's) for years now. Two years ago, I warned employees in San Jose that I was tired of what I saw during the rainy season and I would start reporting sites in violation (the city is supposed to do the enforcement, but basically doesn't bother). They convinced me to hold off at the time,

Creekwatch *cont'd*

saying that their program was in flux and would be much better in the future.

This year, I finally had enough, and Jennifer gave me the opportunity to pursue this time-consuming effort. On November 3, Jennifer and I went out with a video camera and a still camera. Even I was amazed by what we saw. Visiting about 10 construction sites, we found eight in serious violation of the law. We reported several of them to the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and sent them pictures and text describing our efforts. Jennifer, meanwhile, has been out several times looking at more sites, gathering more evidence.

We already have good results, and more on the way. By just watching over the sites, some of them have cleaned up their acts. The Regional Board has issued six notices of violation to the City of San Jose, putting on record the fact that they aren't doing their job to protect local creeks.

Now we are working with the BayKeeper, a bay-wide clean water watchdog organization, to follow up on these sites. They have the experience we lack in Clean Water Act enforcement; we have the local knowledge to gather the evidence. We may soon issue a couple of 60-day notices of intent to sue. Then, if the sites don't clean up quickly and thoroughly, we may take them to court for pollution related penalties.

Meanwhile, a new permit for water quality related concerns is about to be issued in the South Bay. San Jose is fighting some of the proposed new regulations in the permit. The city's main argument as to why these new measures aren't needed is laughable. In a letter to the Regional Board, the city essentially says that because they have not been cited for violating their current permit, clearly no more restrictive measures are needed. Well, thanks to our work, that argument can be thrown out the window.

Jennifer's position is temporary while we hire a new Environmental Advocate. Nonetheless, when she goes, she'll be able to say that her work was important in protecting the water quality and wildlife of our creeks. On behalf of our members, I want to thank her for her dedication.

CBC Reports *cont'd*

MT. HAMILTON Dec. 20

Because my wife, Sally Walters, and I moved to Sacramento for new jobs, and having moved twice in four months, I was thinking of not compiling the Christmas Bird Count this year. However, since Sally did the Count for the first time three years ago, and fell in love with the wilderness of the Mt. Hamilton back country, she informed me that canceling the Count was not an option.

I must say that I am glad she persisted. Twenty-three birders observed 102 species and 7,318 individuals on Dec. 20. The new bird for the Count this year was a male Eurasian Wigeon, found in Isabel Valley by Mike Mammoser and Mike Rogers. This brings the total number of species observed within the count circle since 1977 to 157! This was also the eighth or ninth year of good weather. (It would probably be good to have more "typical" weather, featuring sleet, snow, etc. so newcomers won't get spoiled—some may be wondering why I always tell folks to bring the tire chains!)

Some noteworthy observations: Red-shouldered Hawks have now been recorded every year since 1995; prior to that, they were seen only three times in the early '80's. Four Ferruginous Hawks is a high for the Count, with three having been recorded on four other occasions. The 36 White-throated Swifts is a Count high, with the previous high being 13 in 1994. The 41 Lewis' Woodpeckers is an average number, with a high of 116 in 1985 and a low of 2 in 1978. The 176 Bushtits is a record number, surpassing the previous high of 158 in 1981. The single Winter Wren observed was the first seen on this CBC since 1985.

Three Townsend's Solitaires is a remarkable number for this CBC. Two were recorded in 1981, and single birds on seven other occasions. The 131 Purple Finches is a good number, surpassed only by 168 in 1977. And last, but not least of the Mt. Hamilton specialties, the 54 Lawrence's Goldfinches is about average, with a high of 282 in 1993 and only one bird recorded in 1999. We've seen this unpredictable finch every year now since 1993; prior to that, we missed it about every other year.

As always, I thank everyone very much for their help on this out-of-the-way Christmas Bird Count. Next year will be the 25th anniversary for Mt. Hamilton CBC! I'm hoping the recent run of good weather doesn't spoil anyone! Good birding to all.

—Don Schmoldt

CALERO-MORGAN HILL Dec. 30

The second annual Calero-Morgan Hill CBC was blessed with dry weather and clear viewing conditions. Participants counted 30,302 individuals of 145 species, beating our previous totals of 30,195 and 139. Thanks again to all of you who took part and made the count such a success!

Waterfowl numbers were depressed by a dry winter, but we still managed to find representatives of most species. Considering that conditions had shrunk our reservoirs to puddles, the presence of two Common Loons at Calero Reservoir came as a welcome surprise. While ducks were generally down, shorebird numbers were up: Long-billed Curlew, Long-billed Dowitcher, Dunlin, and Western Sandpiper were all firsts for the Count.

In all we had 15 first-count records this winter, including Hooded Merganser, Ferruginous Hawk, Virginia Rail, Northern Saw-whet Owl, White-throated Swift, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Pine Siskin. Mike Mammoser's discovery of an American Redstart was an unexpected treat. Rare eastern forms of common species were also noted, including a Yellow-shafted Flicker, Eastern ("Red") Fox Sparrow, and a Slate-colored Junco.

The count benefited from the efforts of four owling parties, accounting for particularly high counts of Western Screech-Owls (40) and Great Horned Owls (33). Probably our worst miss was Barn Owl, which is rapidly attaining the status of jinx species for this count (for the second time one was observed during count week but not on count day). But we'll get another chance at Barn Owl and all the other birds missed this time—the next Calero-Morgan Hill CBC is scheduled for Sat., Dec. 29th, 2001. Mark your calendars!

—John Mariani

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS meetings are open to all members. Call the office at (408) 252-3747 for times and directions.

RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422

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

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

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

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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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