

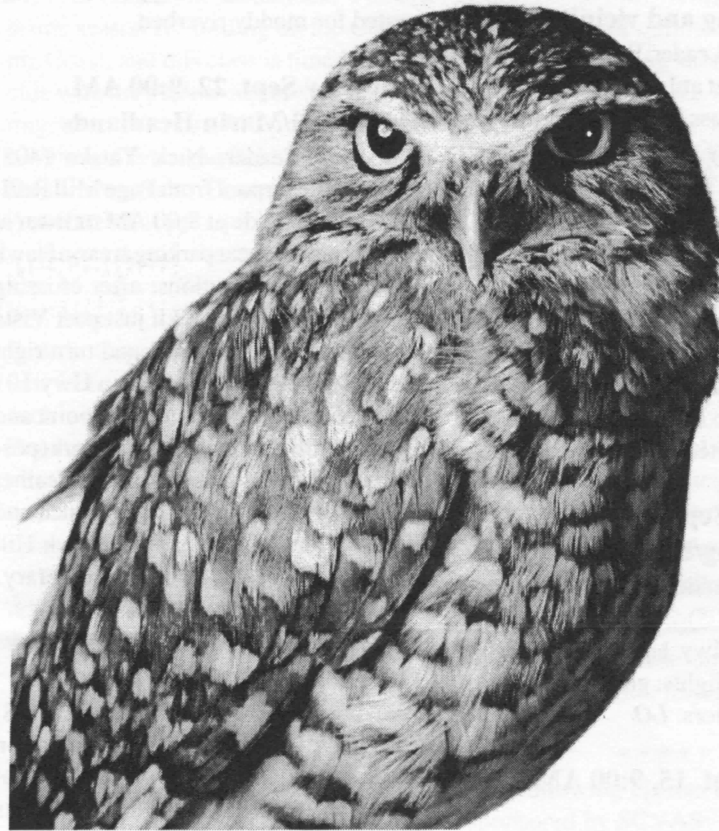


THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

September 2001

*“Make it clear to them
that every
endangered species
has a name,
a million-year history,
a place in their world.
Bring us face to face
with each one of those
species. Make us
know that they are
our companions
in the biosphere.”
—E.O. Wilson*



*Signed prints of David Liittschwager's
handsome Burrowing Owl portrait
will be sold on September 22 to
raise funds for owl conservation.*

**“The Coasts of Australia and New Zealand”
with Doug Cheeseman
Wednesday, September 19
Palo Alto Arts Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.
7:30 Hospitality, 8:00 Program**

The adaptation of the birds, mammals and reptiles for survival on the narrow strip of land that makes up the coastal areas of Australia and New Zealand is a naturalist's delight. Tonight Doug will emphasize the unique offshore islands of both countries, such as Tiritiri Matangi off North Island, Campbell and Ulva Islands at the tip of South Island, Tasmania and Kangaroo Island and the special species protected by these island sanctuaries. He will include seabirds photographed off Kaikoura, NZ, and Tasmania, especially the great albatrosses and mollyhawks. The marine mammals, the tropical reefs on the east and west coasts of Australia, and the amazing coastal rainforests won't be neglected in Doug's two-carousel slide presentation. The diversity of habitats and animals from these rich coastal areas is incredible from an evolutionary and natural history point of view.

**Burrowing Owl
Benefit
Extravaganza
September 22**

**Co-sponsored by SCVAS
& Coyote Point Museum
see page 11**

September Field Trips

Please carpool if possible; bring binoculars, field guides, layered clothing.

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

Saturday Sept. 8, 8:30 AM

Moss Landing and vicinity

Half day plus. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Meet at Jetty Rd off of Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. Shorebirds, waterfowl, early migrants.

Sunday Sept. 9, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way parking area. Meet at entrance nearest San Antonio Rd. Trip recommended for, but not limited to, beginning birders.

Wednesday Sept. 12, 9:00 AM

Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough

Half day. Leaders: Gail and Doug Cheeseman (408) 741-5330. Meet at Jetty Rd. and Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. Highlights: gulls, terns, ducks, shorebirds, raptors. **LO**

Saturday Sept. 15, 9:00 AM

Point Reyes

Full day. Leader: Peter LaTourrette (650) 961-2741. Our annual trip to the west coast's most active vagrant trap, where birds and weather are always exciting and unpredictable! From Hwy 1 in Marin Co. take Sir Francis Drake Blvd. west approx. 14 miles and turn left to Drake's Beach. Meet in parking area, carpool from there. Bring lunch, liquids, full tank of gas; be ready for fog, wind, sun and lots of challenging birds.

Sunday Sept. 16, 8:30 AM

Carmel Rivermouth, Pacific Grove

Half day plus. Leader: John Mariani (408) 997-2066. Take Hwy 1 south to Carmel, turn left at Rio Rd., then immediately right into Crossroads Shopping Center. Meet near Crossroads Cinema at back of shopping center near the river. After checking Carmel R. we will con-

tinue birding along Pacific Grove shoreline. Highlights: seabirds, shorebirds, passerine migrants, possible vagrants. Either bring lunch or buy food at meeting place. Temperatures vary; bring extra layers of clothing. Rubber boots suggested for muddy riverbed.

Saturday Sept. 22, 9:00 AM

Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands

Full day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. Carpool from Page Mill Rd/I-280 Park 'n' Ride at 8:00 AM or meet at tunnel entrance near parking area on Hawk Hill at 9:00. Directions: after crossing Golden Gate Bridge, exit just past Vista Pt., cross under Hwy 101 and turn right just before entrance back onto Hwy 101 south. Drive up hill to highest point and park. Highlights: migrating raptors (possible rare Broad-winged Hawk). Weather variable; dress in layers, bring lunch and liquids. First of two trips to Hawk Hill (see Oct. 6). Fog may change itinerary.

Sunday Sept. 23, 8:30 AM

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408) 257-3647. Take Hwy 84 (Dumbarton Bridge) east to Newark. Exit right at Thornton, then go 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 on left, 1/4 mile past entrance. Entrance fee probable. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Sept. 26, 8:30 AM

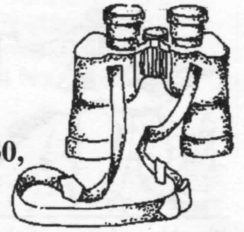
Coyote Hills Regional Park

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408) 257-3647. (See description above)

Saturday Sept. 29, 8:30 AM

Arastradero Preserve

Half day. Leader: Jim Liskovec (650) 969-5542. From I-280 in Palo Alto take Page Mill Rd. west approx. 1/2 mile to Arastradero Rd. Turn right and meet at parking lot 1/2-mile on right. A variety of woodland and grassland species; a good assortment of raptors possible. Two miles of moderate walking. **RC**



Sunday Sept. 30, 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 towards Model Airplane Park. Follow road for 1/2 mile, park in gravel lot at first bend in road.

OCTOBER—plan ahead

Saturday Oct 6, 9:00 AM

Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands

Full day. Leader: Don Schmoltdt (916) 739-8821. Meet at tunnel entrance near parking area on Hawk Hill. After crossing Golden Gate Bridge, exit just past the Vista Pt., crossing under Hwy 101, and turn right just before entrance back onto Hwy 101 south and the bridge. Drive up hill to highest point and park. Weather conditions highly variable—dress in layers, bring lunch and liquids. Second of two outings to view migrating raptors from west coast's premier hawk lookout. Fog may change itinerary.

Sunday Oct. 7, 8:30 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408) 871-9552. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward hills, then left on Toyon Ave., right on Penitencia Creek Rd. and continue into park. Meet in "Rustic Lands" parking area, on right just before reaching "T" intersection. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Possible entrance fee; **LO, RC**

Wednesday October 10, 8:30 AM Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. east toward hills, then left on Toyon Ave. right on Penitencia Creek Rd. and continue into park. Go to end of road, turn left and go to last parking lot at YSI Center. **LO, RC**

Calendar

Tuesday Sept. 4, 4:00 PM

Education Committee meeting at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. The annual Education Day planned for Oct. 27 will be discussed. Contact Chairperson Bobbie Handen at (408) 356-4263 if interested in joining the committee.

Tuesday Sept. 4, 7:30 PM

SCVAS Board meeting at McClellan Ranch. All members welcome to attend.

Wednesday Sept. 5, 7:30 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers presents the annual Members' Slide Show featuring some of the best and most recent work of local photographers. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Tuesday Sept. 11, 9:30 AM

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Summer birding experiences.

Wednesday Sept. 19, 7:30 PM

General Membership Meeting featuring Doug Cheeseman's slide show on birds and wildlife of Australia and New Zealand (see description on Pg. 1). Palo Alto Arts Center, Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Saturday Sept. 22, 6:00 PM

SCVAS/Coyote Point Museum Fundraiser at Coyote Pt. in San Mateo. Everyone's invited to this gala event to raise money for Burrowing Owl conservation and environmental education. See Pgs.10-11 for details.

Wednesday Sept. 26, 7:30 PM

Environmental Action Committee meeting at McClellan Ranch. Contact Chairperson Leda Beth Gray at (831) 336-1127 if interested in joining the committee.

SCVAS Fall Bird Classes

Beginning Birding: Fall Migration on the California Coast

Instructor: John Mariani

Discover the adventure of birding and learn to identify birds by sight and sound in this special class sponsored by the SCVAS Education Committee. Fall is a prime season for birding on the California Coast, and this class is timed to coincide with the peak of raptor and songbird migration. Cost is \$40 per participant, covering classes and field trips, plus a \$3 fee for materials. Proceeds will benefit Audubon education programs.

Instructional classes will be held on four Mondays (Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 15, & 22), from 7 - 9 PM at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. Each class meeting will focus on a particular group of birds, such as raptors, warblers or sparrows. Emphasis will be on identification and migratory behavior. Saturday field trips will include Hawk Hill, Monterey Peninsula and Bolinas Lagoon.

Participants should bring binoculars, notebook, lunch, and comfortable hiking shoes for the weekend outings. The course will also include a nocturnal "owl prowling." Reserve space soon; there is a 20-person limit. Call the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747 to sign up. For more information, contact John Mariani at redknot@worldnet.att.net www.birdswest.com

The Magic of Shorebirds: Their Biology and Conservation
Instructor: Steve Rutledge

This fall SCVAS will offer a new class dealing with one of the most remarkable avian families to visit the Bay Area: shorebirds. The class will consist of two field seminars and two evening sessions exploring the fascinating aspects of shorebird biology. Although the course is best suited for birders with some experience, beginners will also enjoy the in-depth exploration of all aspects of the lives of shorebirds.

Class is limited to 12 participants. Advance registration is required. To register, call the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747. Cost is \$40. All fees will be donated to shorebird conservation and SCVAS education programs. The in-

structor is Steve Rutledge, who taught a well-received series of birding classes for Audubon earlier this year (see report on Pg. 9).

Class Session #1 meets Mon. Sept. 17 at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino from 7 - 9 PM. This introduction to shorebirds will outline the theme of the class, emphasizing shorebird biology.

Field Seminar #1 will be held Sun. Sept. 23, 9 AM - 2 PM. Shorebirds of San Francisco Bay—includes Redwood City, Charleston Slough and Alviso.

Field Seminar #2 is on Sun. Sept. 30, 8 AM - 4 PM. Shorebirds of San Mateo Coast—includes Princeton Harbor and Pescadero Marsh.

Classroom Session #2 meets Mon. Oct. 8, 7 - 9 PM at McClellan Ranch. Review of field study; also shorebird ecology and conservation.

Requirements for participation in SCVAS-sponsored birding classes:

- ◆ *Fee covers complete series whether participants attend all sessions or not.*
- ◆ *Fee payable at time of registration.*
- ◆ *48-hour cancellation notice for money refund. No-shows forfeit fee.*

The following classes are not officially sponsored by SCVAS:

Beginning Birdwatching
Instructor: Matthew Dodder

This 8-week class is offered through the Palo Alto Adult School beginning September 10. Class includes lectures and weekend field trips. Enrollment begins August 20 and can be made through the school at (650) 329-3752. The instructor's site is www.birdguy.net. Absolute beginners are welcome!

Fremont Adult School Birding Class
Instructor: Alice Hoch

Learn field identification and ecology of local birds with an experienced teacher and birder. Class will meet on five Tuesdays from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM starting Sept. 11, followed by 5 field trip sessions starting Nov. 13. Call Fremont Adult School at (510) 791-5841 or Alice at (510) 657-0475 for more information.

Kayak with Audubon at Elkhorn Slough

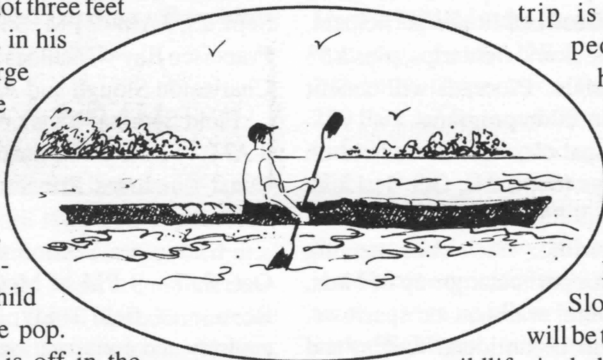
By Debbie Thompson
SCVAS Membership Chair

As I paddle through the slough on my trusty kayak, I spy many large jellyfish rhythmically pulsing through the water below me . . . then up pops a sea otter off my port side, not three feet from my boat; in his hands is a large worm of some sort. He starts pulling the worm through his teeth, straining inwards like a child eating a freeze pop.

Another otter is off in the distance tapping out a new beat as he tries to open a clam on a stone anvil perched on his belly. Terns ply the waters for food, scooping up tiny fish in their beaks while shorebirds probe the mud for prizes. This is Elkhorn Slough, as viewed from the inside. It is one of seventeen precious estuarine reserves here in the United States, and I'm feeling lucky today.

SCVAS is offering a kayaking trip for members on Sunday, October 28 at 10 AM in Elkhorn Slough. Our group will be guided through the slough by the staff

of Kayak Connection (visit their web site at kayakconnection.com) who will rent us equipment and demonstrate basic kayaking. You will find paddling surprisingly easy, safe and fun in these stable two-person sea kayaks. This



trip is suited for people who have never kayaked before. We will spend three hours exploring Elkhorn Slough, which will be teeming with wildlife including sea and shore birds, sea otters and harbor seals.

We need a minimum of four and a maximum of 16 people. The tour will cost \$40 each if you are renting equipment and \$20 if you have your own. Reservations can be made by calling Debbie Thompson at (408) 227-4604, followed by payment to confirm your reservation. Feel free to call Debbie for more information. We will accept reservations until October 5 or until the tour is full. More details about the trip will be sent after you make your reservation.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

The following slate of officers was approved by the general membership in attendance at the annual potluck dinner on June 13:

President	David Drake
Past President	David McIntyre
1st Vice-president	Charles Preuss
2nd Vice-president	Freddy Howell
Treasurer	Barbara Dalders
Recording Sect'y.	Ann Verdi

We are also pleased to announce the addition of Greg Meissner to the SCVAS Board for a three-year term effective August, 2001. Greg, a long-time birder and an active member of the SCVAS Education Committee, is an administrator in the San Jose School District and is keenly interested in increasing Audubon's presence in diverse elements of South Bay communities.

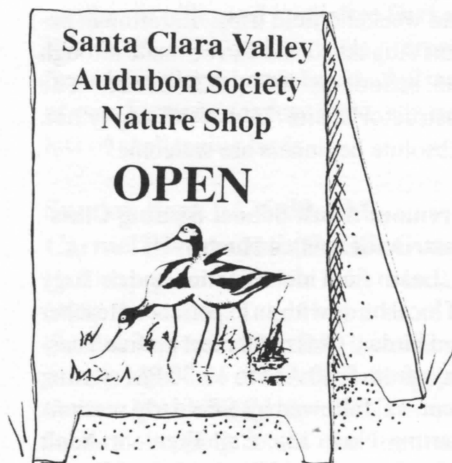
The Board held its annual retreat on Aug. 12 to discuss current issues and plan for the coming year. All four staff members joined the Board for a productive day of strategizing. Local environmentalist and prospective SCVAS volunteer Walt Hays of Palo Alto was a guest.

Topics included: the need to serve South County members more effectively; how to broaden SCVAS' outreach into the entire community with education programs and classes; the need for a more structured and focused conservation/advocacy policy; how to deal with increased attendance on popular field trips; and, naturally, the need for more fundraising to support ongoing programs.

The Board was pleased to note that several major goals announced as part of a three-year plan in 1998 had been met and exceeded. With the recent increase in staffing and expansion of programs, most participants felt it would not be necessary to continue expanding staff and programs during the next year or two, but instead concentrate on utilizing the new staff and volunteer resources to build on existing programs.

Thanks to Freddy Howell for providing the Community Center in the lovely Las Cumbres community in the Santa Cruz Mountains for the retreat.

—Grant Hoyt



Remember to buy
your birding supplies
at the SCVAS Nature
Shop: books, field
guides, bird seed,
feeders, T-shirts. It's
a great place to find
perfect gifts!

Meet Our New Environmental Advocate

by Kelly Crowley

Four years ago, as a student at Santa Clara University, I took an environmental law class. The instructor, a lawyer named Craig Breon who worked as the environmental advocate for the local chapter of the Audubon Society, invariably ended up telling David-versus-Goliath stories that pitted the little Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society against the Rich and Powerful Developers. Okay, so maybe the stories were not quite so epic or encouraging, but I was hooked. I cannot count the number of times that semester I thought to myself, "I want his job!" I didn't mean that literally, of course. At least not until Craig became Executive Director, e-mailed me the environmental advocate job description and told me I should apply.

That's the short version of how I became your new environmental advocate. The long version involves a 2300-mile road trip from Indiana, a number of interviews with various members of the Personnel Committee, and innumerable conversations with friends that included the sentence, "This is the job I want!"

The road trip from Indiana to California was a return trip for me. Although I was born in Washington, D.C., I am a tried-and-true, pre-technology-boom, Bay Area native. From age two until the time I went to college, I lived in Menlo Park. Although my birding skills are rusty, binoculars and my Golden field guide to the Birds of North America were essential items on our family vacations and trips to the Palo Alto Baylands.

After high school, I packed the car full of my most precious belongings and made the long 25-minute drive to college at Santa Clara University. My majors were Political Science and Environmental Studies, and I graduated in 1999 as class valedictorian. I wrote my thesis on how the democratization of the former-Soviet Kazakhstan would be affected by their oil-economy; by the end, it was as boring as it sounds. My valedictory address, on the other hand, was mostly about Ben & Jerry's ice cream, and included a cameo appearance by the president of the university (I needed his help with a "knock-knock" joke).

Most recently, I received my Master's degree from Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, which is currently ranked by U.S. News & World Report as the best environmental policy graduate program in the nation. I would agree that it is a top-notch program. Regrettably, Indiana University is better known for Bob Knight (the short-tempered, chair-throwing ex-coach of the men's basketball team) than it is for its excellent graduate programs. During the two-year program, I studied environmental policy and policy analysis. I took quite a number of economic and statistics classes, and a few on public sector management. (I also had season tickets to the basketball games, which I fully enjoyed!)

I am thrilled to be back in the Bay Area, and truly excited about working for SCVAS. If my energy and exuberance is not enough to convince you, ask any of my friends or family members who have spent the last six years listening to my rants about the need for smarter development and greater protection of our open space in the Bay Area. It feels great to be paid to do the things I would do for free. I look forward to working with you to protect and restore the Bay Area's natural resources.



Kelly Crowley

Volunteer All-Call!

This announcement is for current volunteers, as well as anyone who has ever considered volunteering. As you will read further on in this edition of *The Avocet*, (see pgs. 1, 10, & 11) SCVAS is sponsoring a major fundraiser for the Burrowing Owl. The fundraiser offers a unique opportunity for our members to attend an exclusive night at the Coyote Point Museum in San Mateo.

This much-anticipated event will require a large number of volunteers, both prior to and on the night of the event. Opportunities include: event organizers, invitation stuffers/addressers, publicity, host/hostess, servers, set-up/clean-up crew, etc. While helping out, volunteers will be able to participate in the evening's events, tour the museum, and view the California native wildlife that will be on display. Because the event is quickly approaching, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss the possibilities for participating in the fundraiser.

—Jennifer Peritz,

Programs Coordinator

programs@scvas.org, (408) 252-3747

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Pelicans through Ibis

The first arriving **Brown Pelicans** of the season were four on Salt Pond B2 on 2 Jun (MJM) and an immature off the San Francisquito Creek mouth the same day (MMR). An adult **Little Blue Heron** along Artesian Slough on 4 Jul (AV) was our only certain record this summer. The first substantial spring invasion of **White-faced Ibis** since 1992 brought a most unusual treat when an adult **Glossy Ibis** was found with the ibis flock in a small pond east of Gold Street in Alviso on 14-15 May (MMR, m.ob.). Both ibis have been extending their range, with the White-faced moving east and the Glossy moving west. This is a first record for Santa Clara County as well as Northern California! The first sign of White-faced Ibis was when a single bird was seen in the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on 3 May (BL, DC). Five birds were seen over the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds on 11 May (SEM), and numbers quickly increased in the Alviso area with 13 counted on 14 May (MJM et al.) and 26 on 15 May (JMe, MMe et al.). About fifty birds were seen flying south over the Coyote percolation pond on 19 May (MJM), while at least 38 were found in various locations in the Alviso area the next day (v.ob.). After this, the flock seemed to shift into the East Bay and only remnants were found locally, with one found in the pond east of Gold Street through 23 May (LB) and another bird at the Mountain View Forebay 27 May-2 Jun (JMe, MMR, v.ob.). This was a short, but very exciting invasion!

Waterfowl through Skimmers

The **Snow Goose** that wintered at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds remained there at least through 16 May (MJM). Breeding **Wood Ducks** were found in typical locations with adults and young along Coyote Creek at Riverside Drive on 1

May (TRy), separate families near Almaden Reservoir on 11 May, 3 Jun, and 22 Jul (AV), and on the Parkway Lakes on 3 Jun (MJM). **Blue-winged Teal** were found occasionally in spring and summer with a pair in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 17 May (WGB) and a male seen there on 15 Jun (MJM, AME), 4 Jul (MJM), and 11 Jul (RC). Another male was along Stevens Creek below Hwy 101 on 5 Jun and two birds were at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 7 Jun (both AG). A female **Hooded Merganser** seen at the Sunnyvale

The first breeding record of Golden-crowned Kinglets in the county in July was overshadowed by first records of Glossy Ibis and Yellow-throated Vireo in May

Baylands on 17 May (AG) and 10 Jun (JH) may have oversummered. One or two **Osprey** were seen fairly regularly at the Parkway Lakes 13 May-1 Jul (MJM, MMR) and another bird was also at the Ogier Avenue ponds 3 Jun-1 Jul (MJM). The only one along Los Gatos Creek was seen over the percolation ponds on 2 Jun (LS). A single **Mountain Quail** heard along Monte Bello Ridge on 27 May (JY, AL) is the only one that has been found this year.

Two **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the Mountain View Forebay on 9 Jul (WGB) were the first fall migrants. Four found on the Calabazas Ponds on 15 Jul (MMR) was the high count for the month. Two **Ruddy Turnstones** seen in the Palo Alto estuary on 1 May (RC) were scarce migrants for the South Bay. Equally rare, a single alternate-plumaged **Red Knot** was seen at Charleston Slough on 3 May (RC). An adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found at the Coyote Creek Field Station

(CCFS) waterbird pond on 15 Jul (MMR). Adults are occasionally found in July, before the August passage of juvenile birds. An adult **Common Tern** at Charleston Slough on 24 Jun (SR, JB) was an unusual summer record. Another adult, seen near the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds 28-31 Jul (MJM, RWR, FV) was an early fall migrant. The first **Least Terns** of the season were found on Salt Pond A2E on 14 Jul (FV) and 40-50 birds were seen there through the end of the month. A pair of **Black Skimmers** had hatched two chicks on an island in Salt Pond A16 by 8 Jun (JTH). The growing chicks were seen more or less regularly through at least 14 Jul (MJM), at which time there were four adults present. The only other local skimmer was one seen at Charleston Slough on 15 Jul (AME, MJM).

Owls through Flycatchers

Long-eared Owls once nested along our creeks on the valley floor, but are long gone. In the last 15 years this owl has been confirmed breeding at two locations in the county within the Santa Cruz Mountains. This year, a nest with young birds was observed in Ed Levin County Park on 19 May (DB). Three fledglings, still near the nest, were seen on 5 Jun and photographs were obtained (MMR, DB, MJM). A **Black Swift** was seen over the El Sereno OSP above Los Gatos on 10 Jun (EFe) and was probably a late migrant. More surprising was a single bird over Monte Bello OSP on 28 Jul (JMe). Although this rare swift is a casual breeder along the coast of central California, foraging birds are rarely observed in the county during the summer. A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was seen in Alum Rock Park on 20 May (EFe, AS). Although this hummingbird breeds sparingly on the west side of the Central Valley, it is very rare in Santa Clara County at any time. A few male **Rufous Hummingbirds** move through the South Bay on their fall migration so one at a

Field Notes *cont'd*

feeder at Stanford on 2 Jul (JMe, MMe) was of interest. Between one and five **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were seen in the San Antonio Valley in May and June, as expected (v.ob.). The big surprise, however, was that the birds found near Eagle Lake at the southern edge of Joseph Grant County Park in April remained to nest. A pair was apparently at a nest hole on 20 May (DG) and adults were seen feeding young birds on 26 May (AW) and 28 May (JY, AL). At least two pairs nested in this location, the first breeding record away from San Antonio Valley since the 1930s. A single bird found along Summit Ridge on the Santa Clara-Santa Cruz county line on 1 Jun (RWR, FV) was well away from any known breeding area. A **Pileated Woodpecker** was heard along Los Gatos Creek below Wrights Station Road on 13 Jul (DLSu) and is likely resident there. Fall **Willow Flycatchers** first start to move through the Santa Clara Valley in the third week of August, so one banded at CCFS on 22 Jul (*fide* MJM) was very early. **Say's Phoebe** is a rare breeding bird in the eastern Diablo Range so one found well west, below the Sierra Road summit on 9 Jun (DG) and 10 Jun (VT), was quite unusual. Single **Cassin's Kingbirds** were found along San Felipe Road in May and June (RWR, MMR, MJM et al.), near the San Benito County line, but no evidence of breeding was observed this year.

Vireos through Warblers

A singing **Yellow-throated Vireo** was found along Coyote Creek below Coyote Ranch Road on 13 May (MJM) for a first county record. This bird remained here at least through 15 May (m.ob.). Four **Purple Martins** were found along Summit Ridge on 8 May (FV) and a single bird was seen there again on 22 May (RWR, FV). This location is the last holdout of this declining species. The summer's token **Bank Swallow** was a single bird at the Mountain View Fore-

Surprise Party

by Mike Mammoser

Surprises are part of the game when it comes to birding. Sometimes I never know what will show up when I'm out in the field. For instance, take a Sunday in mid-May of this year:

I went out to look for Osprey. There had been suspicions of local breeding by this beautiful raptor in recent years. Carrying of nesting material had been reported at Almaden Reservoir last year and at Lexington Reservoir this year. I knew that these birds liked to range along Coyote Creek in south San Jose between the Ogier Ponds and Parkway Lakes during the winter season; it seemed like a good area to check for lingering birds now.

I drove south on Monterey Highway, turning onto Metcalf Road, where I stopped to check the Parkway Lakes fishing pond. This pond is kept stocked with trout for the local fishermen, but the Ospreys seem quite fond of it as well. I then headed south from Metcalf on a small frontage road to the entrance of Coyote Ranch Park, a private enterprise that hosts company picnics and the like. A small marshy pond exists there, where I have seen Osprey perched in the past.

Finding no Ospreys, I was preparing to leave when an impulse struck me. The Coyote Creek Trail, a paved bike path that runs from urban San Jose all the way to Anderson Reservoir, was nearby. I knew that some American Redstarts had been found along this section in the past, and I thought that it might be worth a quick look.

As I sauntered up the trail from Coyote Ranch Road, Common Yellowthroats sang from the marsh. While a calling Wilson's Warbler remained steadfastly out of sight, a pair of California Thrashers was cooperative one second, and gone the next. Warbling Vireos and Black-headed Grosbeaks sang from the treetops. A couple hundred yards down the trail, a flash of movement well off the path looked like a possible Yellow Warbler. Wanting to confirm it, I found a grassy opening that allowed access back into the trees.

Once back there, I quickly found the Yellow Warbler and a Chestnut-backed Chickadee. In the next moment, though, I was astonished to see a bird sitting low in the tree about twenty feet away from me, its bright yellow spectacles, throat, and breast instantly identifying it as a Yellow-throated Vireo! For the next five minutes this bird remained close to me, moving about lethargically, in the manner typical of vireos. It even began singing, sounding vaguely similar to a Cassin's Vireo, but without the pronounced up and down inflections. This species had never been reported before in Santa Clara County, even being rare enough in the state to require a submission to the California Bird Records Committee. I had previously seen only one of these birds in my entire life—ironically, also in California.

As it turns out, a handful of this species had been found in California during the course of spring migration, as well as some other interesting eastern vagrants. A weather pattern over the Gulf of Mexico was proposed as responsible for pushing these birds towards the west and into our backyards. Finding one of these wayward souls remains one of the delightful aspects of birding.



What began as a search for an Osprey yielded a big surprise at the end of the day.

continued on Pg. 8

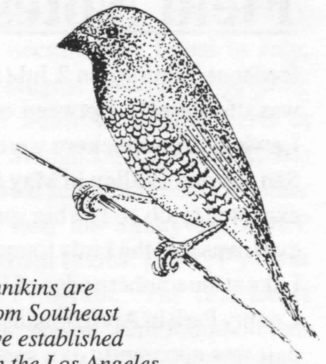
Field Notes *cont'd.*

bay on 21 Jul (VT et al.). **American Dippers** nested along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road this spring. A nest with large young was seen on 26 Apr (MMR). Birds were also seen here on 26 May (LCh et al.) and 1 Jul (BL-L). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** are expanding their breeding range in the Santa Cruz Mountains toward the southeast. Six adults and nine to ten juveniles were found along Bodfish Creek on 12 Jul and begging young were seen being fed by adults (DLSu). The next day, four adults and four juveniles were found along Los Gatos Creek below Wrights Station Road and again the adults were feeding the young birds. These are the first and second breeding records in Santa Clara County for this coniferous forest species. Four **Cedar Waxwings** were seen in Sunnyvale on 1 Jul (GL-L). Although wintering birds occasionally linger into the first week in June, overwintering birds are exceptionally rare. **Phainopeplas** have been scarce this year in the eastern portion of the county, so one found north of San Antone Junction on 2 Jun (JMa) is particularly noteworthy. Four **Hermit Warblers** along Summit Ridge on 12 May (MMR) marked the end of the spring migration. A **MacGillivray's Warbler** banded at CCFS on 13 May (LCh) is the only bird that has been found this year. A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was found along Uvas Creek in Gilroy, upstream from Miller, on 21 May (SK). Although generally hard to find, this bird delighted many observers through 21 Jun. Both a male and female were seen on 16 Jun (MJM et al.) and courtship feeding was observed. This rare warbler has nested in a number of locations along Uvas Creek and its tributaries in the past.

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

Sparrows through Goldfinches

The **Black-chinned Sparrow** is one of our rarest breeding sparrows. This season, birds were found only along Monte Bello Ridge. Single singing birds were found there on 21 May (GHa) and 27 May (JY, AL). An adult was seen near the parking lot on 21 Jul (MDo), the latest date I have for this species. **Grasshopper Sparrows** were found in typical locations this summer, including Monte Bello OSP, the Sierra Road summit, Metcalf Road, Halls Valley, and Santa Teresa CP (m.ob.). The high count was of six at Monte Bello on 10 Jun (MJM et al.). Singing birds were heard at least through 27 Jun on the Sierra Road summit (MMR) and juveniles at Santa Teresa CP on 21 Jul (AV) and Monte Bello 23-28 Jul (RWR, FV, JMe) suggests a successful nesting season. **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were the big news in June with a male on Black Road on 8 Jun (KPa) and another male in Los Altos Hills on 13 Jun (JA). We are finding this eastern vagrant in the summer in about one year in two now. A female-type **Blue Grosbeak** was seen above Sandy Wool Lake at Ed Levin CP on 15 May (AME), but none were reported from this location in the summer. Windy Hill OSP, in San Mateo County, was the **Indigo Bunting** capital through much of the spring and summer with both adult and 1st-year males present. Another adult male, at the Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto on 3 Jul (JMe, LP), was a good find. Small numbers of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found at various spots in the Diablo Range, all typical breeding locations. Birds were seen carrying nesting material near Canada Road and Susle Lane on 9 May (ECu *vide* RWR) and a juvenile was seen there on 5 Jun (RWR, FV). Lawrence's are quite rare in the Santa Cruz Mountains, so birds at Windy Hill OSP in June (v.ob.) and one or more at Sierra Azul on 10 Jun (EFe et al.) were unusual. **Nutmeg Mannikins** have been more or less regular at Almaden Lake



Nutmeg Mannikins are originally from Southeast Asia and have established themselves in the Los Angeles area. Successful nesting in Santa Clara County is a record for this exotic finch.

Park over the last few years with nest-building seen on some occasions. This year birds were seen building a nest along Alamos Creek above Almaden Lake on 6 Jul (JT), and another nest under construction closer to the lake was seen the same day (PLaT). The first nest appears to have been successful, as adults were bringing food to nestlings at the end of July (PK *vide* JMe). This appears to be the first successful nesting of this exotic finch in the county.

Observers: John Arnold (JA), Lou Beaudet (LB), Julie Beers (JB), Dusty Bleher (DB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Richard Carlson (RC), Les Chibana (LCh), Debra Chromczak (DC), Emelie Curtis (ECu), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Al Eiser (AME), Eric Feuss (EFe), Don Ganton (DG), Andy Gibb (AG), Janet T. Hanson (JTH), Garth Harwood (GHa), Jan Hintermeister (JH), Pat Kelly (PK), Sue Kruse (SK), Barry Langdon-Lassagne (BL-L), Ginger Langdon-Lassagne (GL-L), Peter LaTourrette (PLaT), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Bob Long (BL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), John Meyer (JMe), Maria Meyer (MMe), Steve Miller (SEM), Kathy Parker (KPa), Lisa Pavey (LP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rutledge (SR), Tom Ryan (TRy), Andi Stephens (AS), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LS), Vivek Tiwari (VT), Jerry Towner (JT), Frank VanSlager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Alan Walther (AW), and James Yurchenco (JY).

Trip Reports

Breeding Bird Field Seminars May 27, June 3

Our two field seminars on breeding birds covered a wide range of topics, with emphasis on bird song and nesting behavior. We had small groups for both seminars—six participants for the first, eight for the second. The small groups were ideal, as everyone got good scope views of many birds, and had the opportunity to ask questions and join in our wide-ranging discussions on bird biology and conservation.

We talked about the fascinating way that songbirds vocalize using the syrinx, a versatile organ that permits a tiny bird like the Bewick's Wren, weighing just 10 grams, to deliver robust, complicated songs (each male Bewick's Wren can sing about 15 different songs!).

Of special interest was how many bird songs are much more intricate than they appear to the human ear. We demonstrated this by playing a CD with recordings of four species of thrushes, first at normal speed, and then slowed down to one-third normal speed. The songs of Hermit and Wood Thrushes sounded even more flute-like and musical when played at slower speed, but the spiraling songs of the Veery and Swainson's Thrush took on a weird, electronic quality.

On both trips participants had the opportunity to view nesting birds close up. Special thanks to David Houston for allowing us to visit his nestboxes at Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto. (As a point of birding etiquette, birders should not reveal nestbox locations nor examine boxes without permission from the person in charge of the boxes.)

We saw two nestboxes adopted by Tree Swallows; both nests showed that these birds line their nests with feathers of other birds. The Ash-throated Flycatcher nest was quite different, showing abundant animal fur lining the box. On our first visit we noted intricate patterns

painted in rusty brown on the flycatcher eggs. (Perhaps such patterning is an indication that this species has acquired the habit of cavity-nesting only recently in its evolutionary history. Most cavity-nesters have white eggs, not requiring the markings that often camouflage eggs laid in more open nests.) On our second visit a week later, all the eggs had hatched and the nestling flycatchers were eager to be fed.

At Arastradero we also found a family of White-tailed Kites, with four juveniles showing extensive rusty coloration. The juveniles were still different sizes, a consequence of graduated clutch strategy, whereby the oldest and largest chick has the best survival prospects.

At Charleston Slough we enjoyed close-up views on nesting Cliff Swallows, thanks to birders and other concerned citizens who intervened this spring when the City of Mountain View started removing nests-in-progress from the pump house. Cliff Swallows make about 400 trips to bring mud pellets to build each nest. In some nests, there is interspecific brood parasitism: a female will lay an egg in a nearby nest, where the resident birds will raise the chick without help from the biological mother. We also had nice scope views of a White-faced Ibis, a species that is considered rare in the Bay Area but appeared in good numbers this spring.

At Foothills Park in Palo Alto we continued our bird discussions during cookie breaks and lunch. Topics included the biology of the Brown-headed Cowbird, the effects of forest fragmentation on nest predation, and the consequences of expanding human populations. We also considered the many efforts now underway to conserve songbirds and their habitats.

—Steve Rutledge

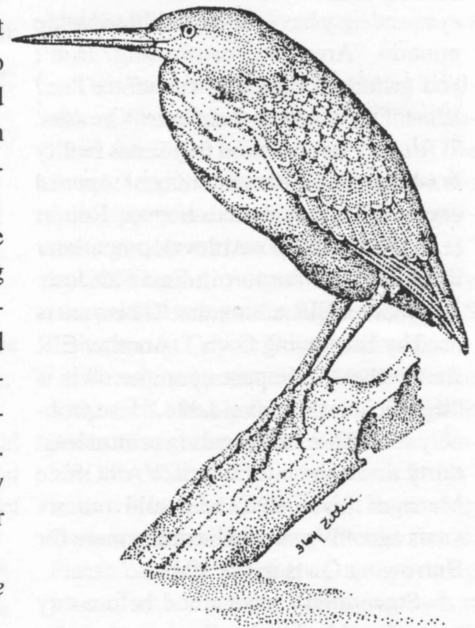
Arastradero Preserve June 24

On the SCVAS bird walk to Arastradero Preserve on Sunday, June 24th, we saw the usual crew of summer birds, with nice looks at several White-tailed Kites, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Green Heron. We were thrilled to spot one heron flying toward the pond, which is located on the main trail.

At the pond, the group noticed four Green Herons perched on a branch at the water's edge—three appeared to be juvenile birds; the fourth was sitting with its back to us. Someone in the group then spotted another bird standing about five feet to the left of the quartet; this bird also appeared to be a juvenile. Just then a sixth bird flew in and landed close to the single bird. Wow! Six Green Herons!

Shortly after, a sharp-eyed birder with spotting scope found two more birds perched to the right of the original foursome (still standing together) deeper into some vegetation; we were unable to tell the age of these birds. An amazing eight Green Herons was our final tally—quite a celebration!

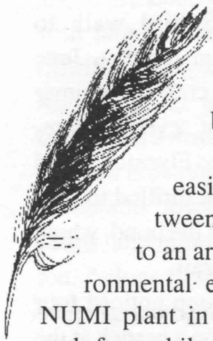
—Rita Colwell



Green Heron by Floy Zittin

For the Love of Burrowing Owls . . .

by Craig Breon
Executive Director



I must admit that I have both fallen in love with, and fallen victim to, burrowing owls.

My love is, of course, easier to talk about. In between meetings, I'll sneak out to an area across from the environmental education center at the NUMI plant in Milpitas just to watch owls for a while. They typically don't do much—just stand around the burrow, pivot the head a few times, look a little nervous if I get too close. That just thrills me. I have become captivated looking for small indications of their personalities. Like others, I also find them beautiful, compact, camouflaged, and efficient, with just the right measure of awkwardness in those long legs.

I also love the fact that I share my passion with others. Walking into the fields behind the tennis courts at Mission College to see a couple owls I hadn't seen before, my student activist companion and I share a secret. Here are the owls, hanging on amidst all this development, while most people walk by and never notice them, but we do. I look into his eyes and they have the same little sparkle mine do. "Aren't they captivating? Don't you grin each time you encounter one? What if we can keep them here?" he asks.

It's that last question that sends reality crashing in. Just yesterday, I opened another Environmental Impact Report (EIR) about a proposed development near Reid Hillview Airport in East San Jose. Yet another EIR noting that "This area is used by Burrowing Owls." Another EIR stating that the impact upon the owls is "significant and unavoidable." I've probably seen those statements in print at least thirty times since former SCVAS Office Manager Jayne DiCandio told me six years ago, "We should be doing more for Burrowing Owls in the Valley."

Since then I have stood before city councils and planning commissions on dozens of occasions pleading the case for

our local owls. Twice we have sued over owl issues (one win and one loss), and we've made impressive gains, given the odds: million-dollar-per-acre land vs. a tiny owl most people don't even notice. However, time and time again I have seen good owl habitat paved over, and though I understand why, I can't reconcile myself to the loss; in fact, I'm quite angry about it.

Current status

So where are we now, the owls and the advocates? Much lost, some gained . . . and a lot of work still to be done. Lately, in fact, several positive moves have been made. Last spring we were successful in preserving nearly 50 acres for Burrowing Owls and other wildlife on the US Dataports site in Alviso. In 1998, SCVAS fought to establish a goal of one-third open space on large properties that develop in Alviso, where some of the most important private lands with owl habitat remain. Since then, three large properties have developed: one provided the desired one-third open space; the other two developments came in around 25 - 30%.

Earlier this summer the San Jose City Council passed an ordinance that will virtually ban the discing of land where owls exist within the city. Discing destroys owl burrows, and sometimes owls, too. While San Jose's action doesn't spare land from development, it does help keep existing lands more productive for owls. We had been working on this issue for two years, and now we can hold up this example for other cities to follow.

In June SCVAS sent a letter to the Morgan Hill City Council, threatening a lawsuit unless it fulfilled a commitment to create a Burrowing Owl plan for the city. In 1999 we had been successful in getting the council to agree to such a plan, which was to be drafted by May 2000 and finalized before May 2001, but the city had done little to complete that legally binding commitment. Shortly after our letter was sent, Morgan Hill revived its efforts. Unfortunately, it sometimes takes

the threat of a lawsuit to achieve goals; fortunately, Morgan Hill may soon have a working owl plan.

These local gains are important, but they pale in comparison to the Burrowing Owl's fate in California. In nearly every area of owl habitat, populations continue to decline. As a result of this decline, we approached the Burrowing Owl Consortium (a loose affiliation of scientists, government workers, and activists who share owl information) two years ago to discuss advancing a petition to list the owl as an endangered species in the state. Last year the Consortium gave Audubon permission to take a draft petition prepared in 1997 to update and complete.

Since then, many others have joined our efforts. Audubon California hired an intern this summer to work exclusively on the petition. The Center for Biodiversity in Berkeley has joined the cause, and Defenders of Wildlife in Sacramento recently agreed to work with us.

It will take the combined efforts of these groups and more to push through what will likely be a very controversial listing petition. It will also take substantial resources. This need for funding has sparked the idea of holding a benefit specifically for the owls (see facing page).

An uphill battle worth fighting

We can stew over the losses (and there will be more) but our continuing work is crucial to the prospects of maintaining a viable population of Burrowing Owls in the South Bay. Perhaps even more importantly, we can use the plight of owls in Silicon Valley to assist the species' protection statewide. My work and the work of other dedicated activists is crucial, but we desperately need Audubon members to rally to the cause. Please join us for our September 22 benefit, and please consider buying one of David Littschwager's stunning owl portraits. The photos, like the owls, are beautiful, and the cause is just.

SCVAS, Coyote Point Museum Fundraising Bash

SCVAS and Coyote Point Museum
invite you to

“Calicopia—The food, fun, and feathers of California”

**A Benefit to raise funds for the
preservation of the Burrowing Owl
in the Bay Area and California and
to repair the aviaries at
Coyote Point Museum.**

**Saturday, September 22
(last day of summer!), 6 PM,
Coyote Point Museum, San Mateo**

The Coyote Point Museum will open specially on the evening of Saturday, September 22, for a celebration of the food, fun and feathers of California. Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and the Coyote Point Museum are jointly hosting the event as a benefit for two projects—Burrowing Owl conservation and children’s education.

As SCVAS members know, the Burrowing Owl—once common throughout the Bay Area—has dwindled to perhaps 120-150 breeding pairs in our region. Nearly gone from Coastal Southern California and much of its former range in the Central Valley, the Burrowing Owl is threatened in nearly all its remaining habitat statewide. As a result, we are working on a petition to list the Burrowing Owl as an endangered species in California (see article on facing page). We expect that petition to be opposed strongly by developers throughout the state. Audubon needs resources to complete the petition and steer it through the difficult path of approval before the State’s Fish and Game Commission, as well as to continue our fight to preserve land for Burrowing Owls in the Bay Area.

Coyote Point Museum serves nearly 100,000 visitors every year; 60,000 of those are schoolkids who come to learn about California’s native habitats and see many of the creatures that live with us in and around the Bay Area. All of the museum’s wildlife on display are rescued and remain unreleasable. Recently, the netting protecting and separating the aviaries has been attacked by wood rats,

leading to situations like the quail being eaten by a Golden Eagle (arguably educational, but sad for the quail). As a result, the museum’s bird population has dwindled from more than 50 to just 16. To fulfill its mission of providing environmental education and a safe haven for rescued wildlife, the museum must purchase new netting for its aviaries.

September 22 is the last day of summer—a perfect time to enjoy the wonderful foods and wines of our region. In addition to focusing on the causes of this benefit, we want people to enjoy an evening at a beautiful site overlooking the Bay.

That brings us to Calicopia. Like the Golden State, this benefit includes a little something for everyone:

- ◆ Internationally known endangered species photographer David Liittschwager unveiling his benefit photos of a Burrowing Owl. Anyone who purchases a photo in advance will get two free tickets to the event (see below for contact information);
- ◆ The museum will be featuring a limited-time exhibit entitled: “The Peregrine Falcon: the Return of an Endangered Species.” A live Peregrine will be present, along with several other raptors;
- ◆ During our cocktail hour you can walk up to Napa for California wine, cheese and jazz;
- ◆ Head out to the Central Valley for tasty California appetizers;
- ◆ Enjoy a Beach Party with games and contests (when was the last time you tried a Hula Hoop?);
- ◆ Live music with a California beat;
- ◆ A sit-down dinner of California cuisine and the bountiful harvests of autumn;
- ◆ An auction of travel packages to California’s nature areas. As a special item, David Liittschwager will auction off an exclusive photo shoot of your pet or pets—truly one of a kind!
- ◆ Coyote Point Museum’s wildlife will be up late for the event, including species such as the Red-Legged Frog and Sea Otter.

All this for only \$75 per person (children 12 and under free; child care provided), directly benefiting Burrowing Owls and Coyote Point’s aviaries and education programs.

For more information or to get your tickets, please call the museum at (650) 342-7755 ext.102 or SCVAS at (408) 252-3747.

Renowned Photographer Creates Benefit Owl Portraits

SCVAS recently asked photographer David Liittschwager to create two of his uniquely styled portraits to benefit Burrowing Owl conservation. We are now offering these portraits for sale, with proceeds going toward Burrowing Owl preservation in the Bay Area and statewide.

David has carved out a special niche with his camera—portraits of rare and endangered species. You’ve seen David’s work in two books: “Here Today: California’s Endangered Species” and “Witness: Endangered Species of North America.” His work has been featured in *Life*, *National Geographic*, and *Audubon* magazines as well as the *National Geographic* television special “Don’t Say Goodbye.” He has worked with such notable photographers as Richard Avedon, Susan Middleton, and Mary Ellen Mark, and has photographed endangered species in all 50 states.

Two Burrowing Owl portraits are available. One is a black-and-white photo (featured on Page 1 of this edition of *The Avocet*) and the other is a color photo. To fully appreciate the beauty of these portraits, you have to see them in their full 16" by 20" format to experience the artistry (the portraits are on display at the SCVAS office and at Coyote Point Museum).

The signed portraits are being sold for \$500 each. In a gallery, David’s wildlife portraits might be sold for \$1000. Remember, the proceeds from these benefit portraits will be used to ensure that Burrowing Owls remain with us long into the future. Please consider purchasing a captivating piece of art and helping Burrowing Owls at the same time. Contact us at the office with questions or to order a portrait.

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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.

2001 Volume 48, Number 7

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