

December Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

Saturday Dec. 1, 8:30 AM

Coyote Point

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 north in San Mateo take Peninsula Ave exit then immediate right onto frontage road. Take first left into park, then second left after entrance kiosk to lower parking lot of Coyote Point Junior Museum. **RC**

Saturday Dec. 8, 8:00 AM

Sunnyvale Water Treatment Plant

Half day. Leader: TBA Questions call (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 take Hwy 237 east, exit North on Caribbean Dr., turn right on Borregas Ave then left to parking area. A great place to study ducks; scopes are highly recommended.

A fairly easy but long walk. **RC**

Sunday Dec. 9, 9:00 AM

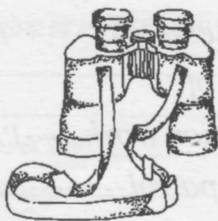
Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Phyllis Browning (650) 494-6360. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mt. View. As always, all are invited but birding will be geared toward the beginning birder. Bring a spotting scope if you have one.

Wednesday Dec. 12, 9:00 AM

Campbell Percolation Ponds & Los Gatos Creek

Half day. Leader: John Arnold (650) 948-4250. From I-280 (go south) or Hwy 85 (go north) on Winchester Blvd, then east on Hacienda, left on Dell, and right into park. Possible Hooded Merganser. Entrance fee; easy 2-mile walk. **LO, RC**



Saturday Jan. 5, 8:00 AM

Post CBC Rarities Chase

Full day. Leader: John Mariani (408) 997-2066. Kick off the new year with some coastal vagrant chasing. Bring a full tank of gas, lunch, and field guides as we attempt to track down some of the unusual birds seen on Christmas Bird Counts from Monterey to Santa Cruz. Meet at the ranger's kiosk on Jetty Rd., just north of Moss Landing harbor on Hwy 1. We'll either travel south to Monterey or north to Santa Cruz depending on the location of the rarities. **RC**

Sunday Jan. 6, 8:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527 Meet at Terminal Way at the end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mountain View. Birding will be geared toward the beginning birder but all are encouraged to attend. Don't forget to bring your spotting scope.

Wednesday Jan. 9, 9:00 AM

Ed Levin County Park

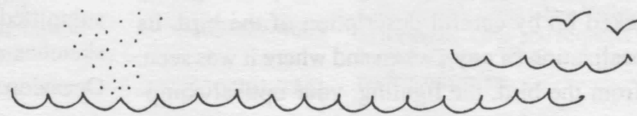
Half day. Leader: Harriet Gerson (408) 252-6244. Take Hwy 237 east to Calaveras Rd. in Milpitas, go approx. 2 miles past I-680 to just past golf course entrance; park is on right across from school. (Do not turn left on Downing Rd.) **LO, RC**

Plan Ahead:

Jan. 12---Panoche Valley

Beginning Birding Class in Palo Alto

Palo Alto Adult School's Beginning Birdwatching class with instructor Matthew Dodder will begin again on January 7. Enrollment begins Monday, November 26. Call the school for details at (650) 329-3752 or visit the the instructor's website: www.birdguy.net.



"Birding on the Bay" Young Audubon Boat Trip

Sunday, January 20

Tourist Wharf, Monterey Bay

9:30-12:00 noon

Join the Young Audubon group for a boat trip on Monterey Bay. The trip is scheduled during the peak of the Gray Whale's southern migration and may also yield views of sea otters, sea lions, porpoises, and of course, sea birds! The cost for this 2-hour tour is only \$15 per person. This trip is first and foremost for children and their parents. Adults without children will be placed on a waiting list and are welcome to join us, depending on availability.

Space is limited, so contact the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747 to reserve your space today! Once payment is received, SCVAS will send out detailed information packets for the trip. Dress for cold and rain. Rainy weather does NOT cancel this trip. Because the boat is pre-paid, no refunds are available.

Calendar

Wednesday Dec. 5, 7:30 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers presents professional photographer and zoologist Roy Toft of El Granada with wildlife images of Madagascar. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd. Palo Alto.

Tuesday Dec. 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: Tundra Swan.

Saturday Jan. 12, 9:00 AM

Volunteer Social at McClellan Ranch Park

See Jennifer's Volunteer Ventures column on Page 4 for details.

Wednesday Jan. 17, 7:30 PM

General meeting, Palo Alto

"Golden Eagles" with biologist Craig Himmelwright.

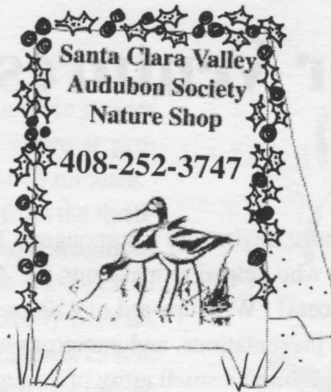
SCVAS would like to express appreciation for donations received from the following individuals in memory of their friends and relatives:

In memory of: Doris E. Brannan
Ellend Wenk
Marjorie A. Collins
Pat O'Neill
Jim and Gen Collins
Nancy, Nancy Anne and Nicky Bayda

In memory of: Richard L. Cox
Nancy and Robert Sorensen
Sandra and Ron Fischer
Ron and Linda Edwards
Robert and Lori Edwards

In memory of: Neal Royer
Pat DeWhitt

In memory of: Margaret Pryor
Mary Louise Canfield



Saturday, December 8
Holiday Open House
SCVAS Nature Shop

McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino
Discounts!!

Holiday refreshments!!

Browse our Nature Shop for holiday gifts
Learn more about local Audubon programs
and volunteer opportunities

Many warm thanks to all those who helped
make Wildlife Education Day a huge success!

Event Sponsors

Deep Cliff Golf Course • Stevens Creek Software
• Councilmember Richard Lowenthal •

Raffle and Poster Contest Prize Donors:

Wild Bird Center of Los Gatos • Naturals from the Earth
SCVAS Nature Shop • Hickleebee's Books
Klutz Books • Sakamoto Plants
CA Integrated Waste • Management Board

*Special thanks to SCVAS volunteers
for their invaluable support!*

Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz
Programs Coordinator

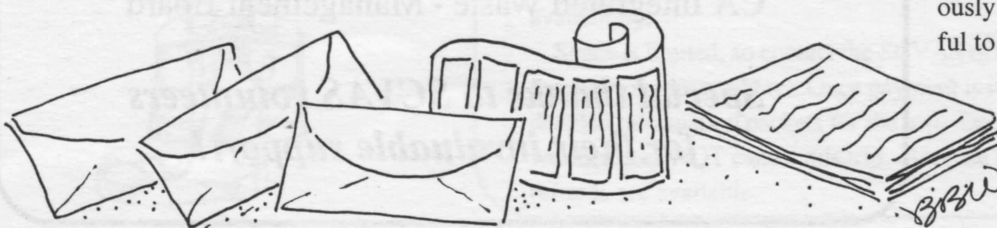
This month's column must begin with a humongous THANK YOU to all of the fabulous volunteers who helped to make our 10th Annual Wildlife Education Day such a success! With upward of 450 guests, 22 local environmental organizations, two presentations, and numerous hands-on activities, the logistics of "Ed Day" required a small army of volunteers. Luckily, that's exactly what we had. Every time I turned around, there were friendly faces offering help and support, and we couldn't have done it without you. **Thank you, thank you, thank you!**

One wonderful thing that all of our volunteers have in common is their interest and willingness to give a portion of their time to SCVAS. It is quite likely, however, that our volunteers share many other similar qualities, as well. Now, at our upcoming **Volunteer Social**, you'll have the opportunity to find out when you meet and mingle with other volunteers. This event is for anyone who has volunteered for SCVAS in the past or anyone who is interested in learning more about volunteering for us in the future. If you've ever been curious about what it's like to work in the Nature Shop, lead a field trip, participate in the Wetlands Discovery Program, work on a conservation campaign, sit on an SCVAS committee, monitor a bluebird box, or participate in any of our other volunteer programs, don't take my word for it – come to the Volunteer Social and ask one of our current volunteers! More details will come in the January *Avocet*, but for now, please mark your calendars for Saturday, January 12.

As many of you may know, SCVAS has an incredible collection of **bird nests and skins**. We take our collection to various fairs and schools, so people can get a close-up view of these otherwise "out-of-reach" pieces of nature. Our nest collection, however, has been growing very quickly over the past few months, and we need help organizing it! Volunteers who can identify or research the origin of the various nests are greatly needed. Once these nests are identified, we will create an accompanying card with a picture and description of the bird that made the nest. If you have a hidden interest in or talent for nest identification, please let me know.

Please don't forget our ongoing projects, as well. As I mentioned last month, we are in the process of preparing our **End of the Year Fundraiser**. On Saturday, December 1, from 1-4 you are invited to join SCVAS and "Meeting for Good" volunteers for an envelope-stuffing party. If this message reaches you in time, please come lend a hand as we fold, address, stamp, and stuff the fundraising letter into envelopes. This party will include snacks, a raffle, and a half-hour bird walk at the Ranch.

For more information on these or other volunteer programs, please contact Jennifer at (408) 252-3747 or <programs@scvas.org>.



Techno-volunteers Come Through— New Toys for Staff

SCVAS' technological capabilities have improved greatly over the past year, and we'd like to thank the many people who have helped. Our first gift came from Matthew Bartlett, who donated the iMac computer (named "Ruby") now used by Susan in the front office. Then — thanks to the many generous gifts we received in response to last year's fundraising letter — we purchased "Indy," another iMac now used by Jennifer, and a Powerbook (no name) for Craig.

This summer we received a grant from the Rose Foundation to continue our work inspecting construction sites for Clean Water Act violations. With a portion of those funds we purchased a digital camera and camcorder. And thanks to a Santa Clara Valley Water District grant to map non-native, invasive plant species in local creeks, we are purchasing two Global Positioning System (GPS) units from the Trimble Corporation. SCVAS Board member and Trimble employee Charles Preuss will help teach us how to use them.

We've recently received some great help from Apple employee Ken Peterson, who donated some parts and installation assistance for an "Airport," which allows all our computers to communicate with each other and get wireless Internet access.

Finally, Jerry Kaminski has been vital in keeping our computer systems going, transferring information from the old to the new computers, and troubleshooting in general. Thanks to all these folks, things are working pretty smoothly around here, and we are able to tackle certain tasks in-house that were previously impossible. We are sincerely grateful to you all.

Field trip report

Ogier Ponds

Nov. 4

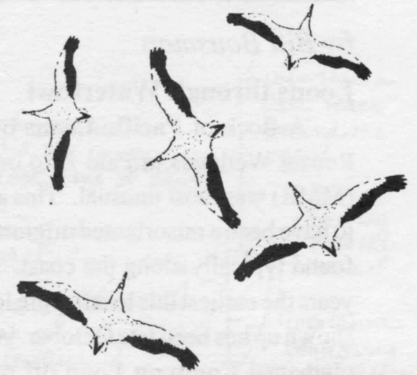
Twenty-two birders showed up for a lively morning of birding at the Ogier Avenue Ponds in Morgan Hill on Nov. 4. A low ground fog burned off quickly and the group was treated to a good variety of raptors, waterbirds and songbirds at this reliable, productive birding spot with its varied habitat and user-friendly trail system.

Highlights of the morning included an Osprey devouring a hefty fish, a pair of adult Ferruginous Hawks and a soaring flock of American White Pelicans. After we had identified two distinct individual Ospreys, one male and one female, the male returned to perch in a sycamore tree with a large, slippery fish in its talons. Frank Vanslager's Questar scope enabled us to note every field mark in great detail and watch the bird continually re-grasp its catch which kept slipping from its grasp. After five minutes on the sycamore, the bird took off, carrying the fish in classic

head-forward fashion, to a more private perch on a utility pole, where it proceeded to dine for the next 45 minutes.

Just as we'd recovered from the thrilling Osprey viewing, the two Ferruginous Hawks emerged from the northwest at about 9:30. They flew directly over us, then circled for a couple minutes, as if to give us better looks at their distinctive field marks.

Both showed the rusty upperparts and slaty-blue flight feathers characteristic of adult plumage, but were slightly different underneath. One bird was almost pure white below, with striking tawny legging feathers, while the other displayed more dark flecking on the underparts and less extensive, duller leg feathers. We were able to focus on particular marks, like the light head, lack of patagial (leading edge of the wing) mark, whitish tail, pointy wings, and more slender wings and body that separate this species from the more common Red-tailed Hawk. After this gorgeous display, the two headed south-



Sketch of American White Pelicans in flight; from a distance it is hard to believe their adult wing span is approximately 9 feet. BB-W

east toward Coyote Ridge and more typical Ferruginous Hawk habitat over hilly grassland.

Other raptors observed included two pairs of handsome White-tailed Kites, a female Northern Harrier, calling Red-shouldered Hawks and an unidentified accipiter (Sharp-shinned or Cooper's Hawk—too close to call). Ring-necked Ducks were present in good numbers, while the predominant dabbling duck seemed to be Gadwall. A sharp-eyed birder pulled out two Common Moorhens among the coots. A solo female Wood Duck and a pair of Common Mergansers were seen briefly by a few participants.

A surprising sighting was the flock of 75 American White Pelicans, which were first observed in the distance over the western foothills. The huge, majestic white-and-black birds soared over the ponds, banking against the sparkling blue sky for a breathtaking view before moving on to parts unknown.

On a scouting trip the previous day, Karen and I had a Green Heron, Belted Kingfisher, three dark-backed swallows (probably Tree), and the largest Bushtit flock either of us had ever seen — 110 birds! When you're that small, it pays to stay in a gang, but we couldn't recall seeing a group larger than 60 or 70 individuals in our many years of birding.

—Grant Hoyt

MORRO BAY WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL JANUARY 18-21, 2002

Migrate to one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots and join the Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for the 6th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Morro Bay, an important stop on the Pacific Flyway, is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, with over 200 species identified during past Festivals. This event is sponsored by MCAS and gives you a chance to join local and national birding experts on a variety of field trips and workshops.

The Festival limits field trip group sizes to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The Festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as outstanding evening programs. This year's evening programs will feature Sheri Williamson and Tom Wood from Bisbee, Arizona, both founders and directors of the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory. On Saturday night, Sheri will present "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Hummingbirds (But Didn't Know Who to Ask)." On Sunday evening, Tom will turn his raptor expertise to the topic of the Veracruz River of Raptors phenomenon.

For more information about the Festival, check our website at www.morro-bay.net/birds, which is updated on a regular basis, or call the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce at (800) 231-0592. Registration deadline is December 31, 2001; sign up early, as the most popular events fill up quickly.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

A flock of **Pacific Loons** over the Renzel Wetlands in Palo Alto on 5 Oct (MMR) was most unusual. This appears to have been a misoriented migrant flock, found typically along the coast. In past years the earliest this locally rare loon has shown up has been late October. A basic-plumaged **Common Loon** off the Palo Alto estuary on 31 Oct (FV) was more typical. A count of 55 **Brown Pelicans** on Salt Pond A2W on 4 Oct (WGB) was the last large group reported. Numbers tapered off to the single digits during the rest of October. Single **American Bitterns** were found along Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 14 Oct (MDo) and 15 Oct (RWR, FV et al.) for the first records this fall. A **White-faced Ibis** over the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 14 Oct (MDo) was quite late for this sporadic fall visitor.

Three **Greater White-fronted Geese** in with the Canadas at Calero Reservoir on 14 Oct (JMa) and 21 Oct (AV, MJM) was fairly typical for recent years. Also at Calero Reservoir, the **Eurasian Wigeon** found last month was seen through at least 14 Oct (v.ob.). **Blue-winged Teal** have apparently returned to the Palo Alto FCB again, with a single male seen on 13 Oct (LCh et al.) and four there on 14 Oct (MDo, BC). Six **Redheads** found on the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 31 Oct (FV) represent a fairly typical arrival date. This duck has been less common in recent autumns. One to two female **Hooded Mergansers** were seen in the Los Gatos Creek CP percolation ponds in October and a male was seen with the two females on 30 Oct (all LS).

Raptors through Skimmers

Prairie Falcons dispersing from their Diablo Range nesting areas include one at Calero Reservoir on 14 Oct (JMa) and

another along the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 20 Oct (MJM et al.). Eighteen **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found at State and Spreckles in Alviso on 5 Oct (MMR) which is an unusual concentration for October, when passage birds taper off. Two birds were seen there also on 14 Oct (AME) and 17 Oct (RWR, FV). Of our rare *calidrid* sandpipers, **Pectoral Sandpipers** are generally the latest to come through in the fall. This year birds peaked on 5 Oct at Spreckles and State in Alviso, with 23 seen (MMR). Numbers dropped after that with 13 on 17

*Warm October days came
with some nice rarities
including a Laughing Gull,
a Magnolia Warbler, and
a Blackburnian Warbler*

Oct (RWR, FV) and a last bird on 19 Oct (RWR, FV). Elsewhere, high counts included five birds at the New Chicago Marsh on 9 Oct and 8 in the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond the same day (both RWR, FV). The female **Ruff** was found once again at Spreckles and State on 5 Oct (MMR). **Red-necked Phalaropes** seldom linger into October so one to two at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds 17-20 Oct (v.ob.) are of interest. A good fall for rare gulls has continued with a basic-plumaged **Laughing Gull** seen off the Palo Alto Baylands on 14 Oct (JR). This is the fifth county record. An immature **Sabine's Gull** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 14 Oct (AME) and was seen at least through 19 Oct (m.ob.). This is probably a different immature than the one found in Alviso at the end of September. The wintering **Black Skimmer** flock at Charleston Slough reached a total of 20 birds in October.

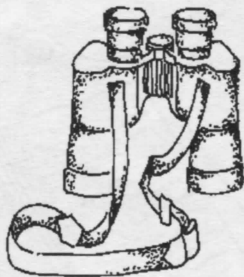
Flycatchers through Sparrows

The **Willow Flycatcher** passage sometime stretches into October. This fall a bird was banded along Coyote Creek above Hwy 237 on 2 Oct (SH, GB) and one was calling at the Alviso Environmental Education Center (EEC) on 5 Oct (MMR). A hatching year **Hammond's Flycatcher** was banded at CCFS on 14 Oct (LCh) for the latest fall record I have for the county. Vast numbers of **Cliff Swallows** leave in August and are seldom found later in the fall so one near the Palo Alto Baylands on 5 Oct and two more the same day over New Chicago Marsh are unusual (both MMR). Two **American Dippers** were along Herbert Creek on 24 Oct (KPa), while a single bird was on Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on 29 Oct (LSp). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were on the move with two at the Alviso EEC on 14 Oct (AME) and a single bird at the Palo Alto Baylands on 15 Oct (RWR, FV). Conventional wisdom holds that this will be an off year for this irruptive species. Single late passage **Nashville Warblers** were found in a number of spots: the Pajaro River below Hwy 101 on 2 Oct (DLSu), the fennel patch at the Palo Alto Baylands on 13 Oct (LCh et al.), and Stevens Creek above Crittenden Lane on 15 Oct (WGB). It was a good month for vagrant warblers. An adult **Magnolia Warbler** was found in the cottonwoods at the Alviso EEC on 19 Oct (MP). Three of the five county records have been in October. An immature female **Blackburnian Warbler** was found along the Pajaro River below Hwy 101 on 2 Oct (DLSu) and was seen in both counties. The three county records of this vagrant are from October and November. Slightly more common, single **Palm Warblers** were found near the Palo Alto Water Quality Control Plant on 14 Oct (MDo, BC) and near Shoreline Lake the same day (DStfide MMR). Wrapping up these delightful vagrants was a single

Field Notes *cont'd*

Blackpoll Warbler at the Alviso EEC on 10 Oct (MP). A **Western Tanager** found along the Guadalupe River between Montague and Trimble on 18 Oct (MMR) was an apparent late migrant. Two of the three rare *spizella* sparrows were found this month. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was seen along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 5 Oct (DLSu). A **Brewer's Sparrow** was banded along Coyote Creek, between Tasman and Hwy 237, on 2 Oct (SH, GB). The first **White-throated Sparrows** of the season were away from feeders. One bird was banded at CCFS on 14 Oct (LCh). A second was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 16 Oct (LS) and seen the next day as well (v.ob.). A third was at the Palo Alto Baylands on 17 Oct (JMa et al.). The first feeder bird was in the Almaden Valley on 31 Oct (BH).

Observers: Gina Barton (GB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Les Chibana (LCh), Brian Christman (BC), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Al Eisner (AME), Barbara Harkleroad (BH), Sherry Hudson (SH), Alma Kali (AK), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Kathy Parker (KPa), Mark Peterson (MP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Jennifer Rycenga (JR), Larry Spivak (LSp), Dick Stovel (DSt), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LS), Frank Vanslager (FV), and Ann Verdi (AV).



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

“It looks like it was a . . . ?”

by Bonnie Bedford-White

Birding with a group of friends has its rewards, but every so often I love to go afield by myself. With friends, the extra eyes and ears are an asset, and we all know how hard it is (not to mention a little scary!) to drive and bird at the same time. But being on my own has its own set of rewards. I can go at my own pace, taking my time to study ordinary species and not worry about slowing down the group. There is something magical that takes place as I become one with the landscape, absorbing everything.

So on a recent Saturday in late October, I went by myself to the Panoche Valley east of Hollister. This is a trip I usually take in January or February, but I wanted to see what was there in the fall, primarily wondering when the Mountain Bluebirds came. Would I find Mountain Plovers this early? What else would be around?

It was too early for my curiosities. No Mountain Bluebirds or Plovers, but Western Bluebirds seemed to be everywhere. Lots of Red-tailed Hawks, some Ferruginous Hawks, and many American Kestrels. The parched land obviously had some tasty prey items.

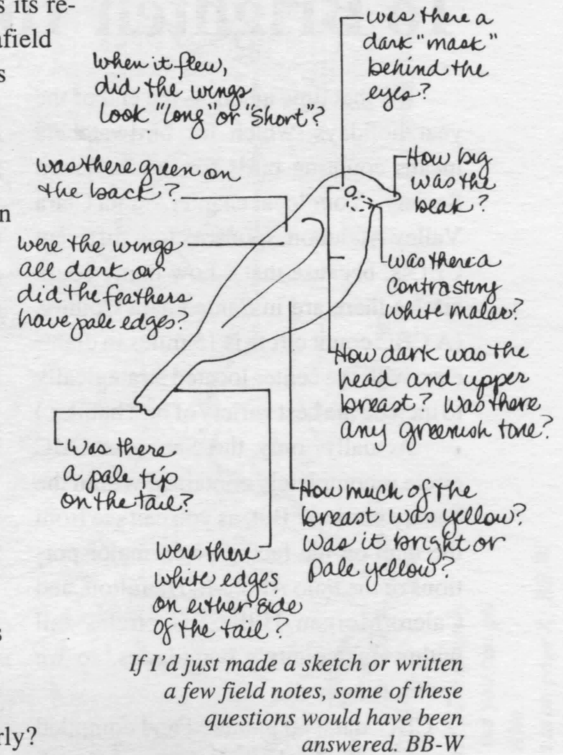
Suddenly, there on a telephone wire, I spied a curious bird. Was it a Loggerhead Shrike looking slightly yellow, illuminated by the late afternoon sun? No, it wasn't svelte enough, and the posture wasn't right. I turned around and drove by for another look, stopping the car. It was a kingbird. But wasn't it too late for kingbirds? They're only present in spring and summer. And it didn't look like a Western Kingbird . . . but why not?

Then I made a fatal error. Should I make a field sketch? I can draw. But no — I pulled out the new Sibley Bird Guide and checked the kingbirds. So far, the bird was cooperating, perched on the wire, facing me. Then, zing! It flipped around and now I saw only its back and part of the flank. The bib looked grey — an out-of-place Cassin's Kingbird? Oh, wow; oh no! — no field notes, no sketch, and the bird was taking off! (This is where the other sets of eyes would have been most helpful.)

I spent the next 45 minutes looking on fence lines, telephone lines, fence posts, treetops, and telephone poles. Nothing. The mysterious kingbird was gone.

Let's hope I've learned a lesson. By sharing, maybe you can learn as well. If you don't know what a bird is, start sketching, emphasizing the field marks. Write down everything you see, being as accurate and descriptive as possible. **Then** grab the field guides. The identification can proceed from your notes, and you won't have to lament a missed opportunity like I did.

I still had a great day of birding, despite the kingbird that got away. And next time, believe me, I will be sketching as fast as I can!



Four Local Christmas Bird Counts To Brighten Your Holiday Season

It's that time again — the end of the year holidays, which for birdwatchers means counting birds for the Audubon Society. Your local chapter, Santa Clara Valley Audubon, sponsors four different CBC's, because that's how many count circles there are in Santa Clara County. (A CBC count circle is 15 miles in diameter, with the center located strategically to include the best variety of bird habitat.)

Actually, only the San Jose CBC circle is completely contained within the county borders. But, as you can see from the map on the facing page, major portions of the Palo Alto, Mt. Hamilton, and Calero/Morgan Hill CBC circles fall within our county's boundaries, so we sponsor them all.

CBC data, all gathered and compiled by volunteer birders, is sent to regional, then national compilers, and published in the results annually. This valuable database goes back over 100 years and provides useful information on winter bird populations throughout North America. It's also a fun way to spend a winter's day with other local bird enthusiasts.

Here are the details:

San Jose: Sunday Dec. 16

The San Jose CBC is the longest-running local Count. Compiler Ann Verdi has done a fantastic job organizing local counters as they census birds from Alum Rock Park to San Jose's urban riparian corridors. This count attracts the most participants and is nationally recognized as a model CBC.

The countdown dinner, where participants gather at the end of the day to tally the day's sightings, is a CBC tradition. San Jose's countdown dinner will be held at Emma Prusch Park in San Jose. There is a \$5 fee for each counter to cover the cost of publishing the CBC results, and a small donation to cover dinner costs requested.

If you participated in the San Jose CBC last year, contact your Section Leader to receive instructions for this year's count. If you're interested in participating for the first time, or have other questions, contact Compiler Ann Verdi at <ann.verdi@amd.com>.

Palo Alto: Monday Dec. 17

The eight regions included in the Palo Alto Count circle are:

- 1-Redwood City, East Palo Alto waterfronts
- 2-Palo Alto Baylands, Shoreline Park, Moffet Field
- 3-Residential Menlo Park, Atherton, Redwood City
- 4-Residential Palo Alto, Mtn. View, Sunnyvale
- 5-Woodside
- 6-Los Altos Hills
- 7-Skyline Open Space
- 8-Lower Skyline, Foothills Park, Monte Bello Open Space

Matthew Dodder stepped in last year to fill the long-vacant niche of Palo Alto CBC Compiler and did a super job. He's asking participants from last year to contact their regional coordinators for this year's assignments. For new participants or further information, contact Matthew at <mdodder@earthlink.net>.

Mt. Hamilton: Wednesday Dec 19

Compiler Don Schmoltdt has moved to Sacramento, but he'll be coordinating the efforts of the hardy few who brave the Diablo Range outback for the 25th year of this exciting CBC. Birds can be scarce and weather fierce, but the countdown dinner atop Mt. Hamilton at Lotus and Keith Baker's house is always a treat. Contact Don at (916) 739-8821 if you'd like to count birds in some of Santa Clara County's wildest and most remote habitat.

Calero/Morgan Hill: Sunday Dec 29

Mark your calendars for the 3rd annual CBC in the South County. Dec. 29 is the date, and birders of all experience levels are invited to participate. We need all the eyes and ears we can get!

The count circle covers parts of Morgan Hill and south San Jose, including , Almaden Lake, Ogier Ponds, Calero, Chesbro and Anderson Reservoirs, and Almaden Quicksilver and Santa Teresa County Parks. It's a big area with plenty of birds — last year we tallied 30,263 individuals of 145 species. With your help, maybe we can top last year's numbers and set some new records!

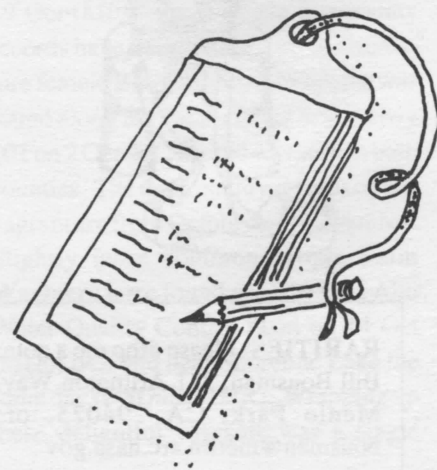
If you'd like to participate, either as a team member or a feeder watcher (that's right, you can stay at home and tally the birds that come to your back yard feeder) contact Compiler John Mariani at (408) 997-2066 or <redknot@worldnet.att.net>.

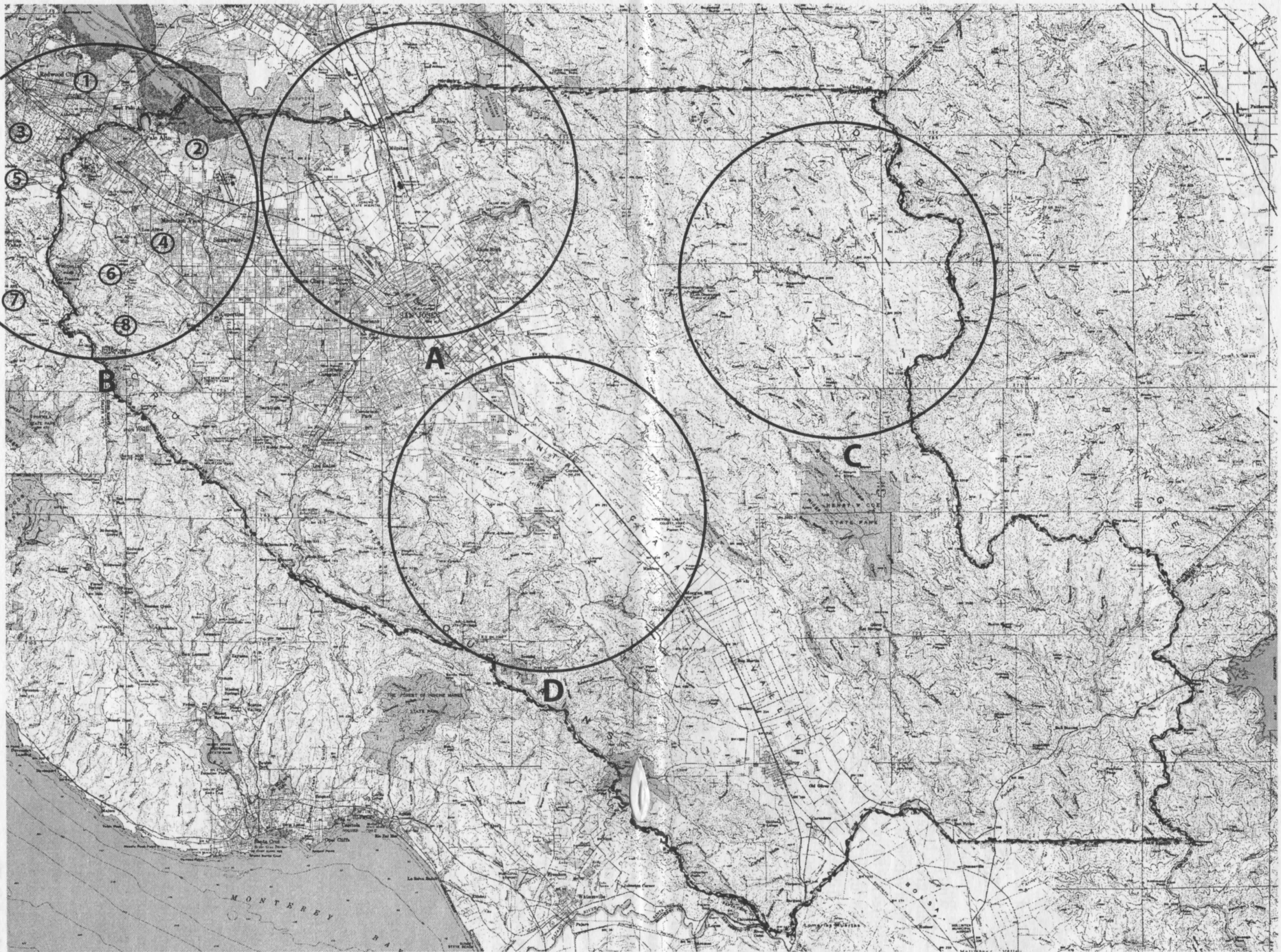
Additional local CBCs:

Crystal Springs (San Mateo Co.)
Santa Cruz: Saturday Dec. 15

Año Nuevo: Sunday Dec. 30

Moss Landing: Tuesday Jan. 1

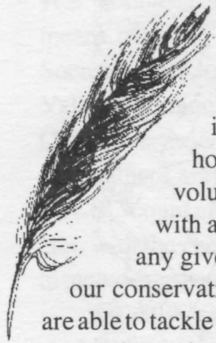




This is a scan of a huge U.S.G.S. map from 1970, the only fairly detailed map I could find with Santa Clara County boundary lines on one sheet. I didn't realize that the Palo Alto count spilled into San Mateo County, but you can get a fairly accurate view of the count circles and their relationship to each other. A=San Jose, B=Palo Alto, C=Mount Hamilton, D=Calero/Morgan Hill. More information about the counts and who to contact is on page 8. BB-W

Staff takes on habitat protection from Morgan Hill to Alviso

by Craig Breon
and Kelly Crowley



Each month we tend to focus on one or two conservation issues that we are working on. Behind the scenes, however, SCVAS staff and volunteers are often involved with a dozen or more issues in any given month. In fact, since our conservation staff has grown, we are able to tackle more issues and often do more about them. So this month we thought we'd offer a glimpse of the variety of our conservation work. Some projects require intense efforts for a short time; others take a lower level of effort but may last months.

Morgan Hill Burrowing Owl Management Plan—

As a result of our threat to sue, the City of Morgan Hill is ~~working~~ steadily on a management plan for its remaining burrowing owls. (The City was supposed to have completed the plan last spring as mitigation for development projects in its redevelopment area.) When it is completed and approved by the City Council, Morgan Hill will be the first city in the County to have a comprehensive Burrowing Owl management plan. Expect some results of this effort in early 2002.

Burrowing Owl Census—

Three times in the last ten years SCVAS has conducted a Burrowing Owl survey. The goal of these surveys is to count the number of owls remaining in the Valley and to determine where they're living. Currently, we are compiling the data from the 2001 survey. A big thanks to all those who spent portions of their mornings and evenings counting owls. Results should be available soon.

County Rural Lands—

In late September the County Board of Supervisors held a land-use workshop to discuss the direction of the County General Plan, and consider threats to the County's rural areas. Along with Committee for Green Foothills, we prepared a letter (complete with digital photos!) outlining what we consider to be the major threats to rural Santa Clara County: Construction along ridgelines and in "viewsheds," little protection of riparian areas, and urban land uses inappropriately placed in rural areas. As a result of this workshop and our efforts, the County is now examining what can be done to better protect its rural nature and beautiful vistas. We plan to specifically encourage the County to develop an enforceable riparian ordinance that would, among other things, require development to be set back from creekside habitats.

Water Quality Standards for New Development—

You may have read in the *San Jose Mercury News* about the controversial recently adopted water quality standards for new developments in the County. Audubon worked for months with the BayKeeper and other conservation organizations to help shape those new provisions, and in mid-October the Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted them unanimously. The new standards — for the first time — address the increase in volume and pace of stormwater runoff from areas we build upon and pave over. Those increases have led to steady reshaping of our urban creeks, as their watersheds no longer absorb rainfall. Those changes are almost inevitably harmful, leading eventually to channelization and the near death of urban waterways. The newly adopted standards attempt to keep rainwater and pollutants on-site for a longer period. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to create man-made wetlands, so a side benefit of the new standards may be an increase in urban and suburban wetlands.

Water District's Environmental Advisory Body—

Years ago SCVAS called on the Santa Clara Valley Water District to create an Environmental Advisory Committee, just as the District has citizen advisors for flooding and agricultural issues. Our perseverance paid off, and recently the District Board approved the concept of this new committee. We hope the new committee will help guide the District in funding creek and Bayside restoration projects.

Calpine Plant in Alviso—

SCVAS worked on the politically charged Metcalf Energy Center in south San Jose by meeting with the project's opponents to address impacts on endangered species, Fisher Creek, and the Burrowing Owl. Ultimately those issues were handled well, and we decided to neither support nor oppose the project. Now the same company plans to build a smaller plant in Alviso. We have met recently with the developers and will be commenting as the project passes through the city and California Energy Commission approval processes. Our concerns include open space on-site as well as impacts of light, noise, and pollution on lower Coyote Creek. This is part of our ongoing efforts in Alviso, where we've worked for years to protect the important natural resources that help define this unique community.

Capital Storage Project—

The area near Eastridge Mall and Lake Cunningham Park in east San Jose contains the second-largest population of Burrowing Owls remaining in the city. We have commented on several small development projects in the region. The latest — a proposed storage site — would be built on occupied owl habitat. In addition, it's quite possible that someone purposely killed at least one owl on the site. We have commented on the EIR for

continued next page

Keeping an eye on creek polluters

by Kelly Crowley

SCVAS Environmental Advocate

As you drive around the Bay Area to work, to soccer practice, to an Audubon birding field trip, take notice of the construction sites you pass. If not properly managed, those sites could be contributing to one of the major threats to Santa Clara County's creeks and streams: sediment.

Yes, sediment is considered a pollutant, much like nitrogen or motor oil. Sediment loading (the introduction of too much sediment into the ecosystem) can have a wide range of impacts, on both stream health and the human environment. Too much sediment in a stream can ultimately contribute to flooding and premature siltation of our reservoirs. Too much can reduce water clarity, increase temperatures (by making streams shallower), and effectively "pave" the bottom of a stream. These impacts can be

detrimental to the overall health of our riparian areas. Fisheries decline; insect life in streams and creeks decreases. Both of these can negatively impact the bird species that feed on them.

Construction sites have the potential to add tremendous amounts of sediment to our creeks and streams. Any dirt and gravel that ends up in the roads or gutters surrounding a construction site eventually washes into the streams, propelled by the runoff from a rainstorm. As SCVAS learned last year, many of the "best management practices" these sites are supposed to use to keep their dirt on their site are either not used at all or not used properly.

When you drive by construction sites, ask yourself a few simple questions:

◆ Are there large piles of dirt that are uncovered?

◆ Is there dirt or gravel spilling over the curb and into the gutter?

◆ Do trucks entering and exiting the property leave trails of dirt in the street?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may have found a construction site that is contributing to the problem.

As you may recall, our monitoring efforts last year had a tremendous positive impact. Many sites were cleaned up, and we started the Regional Water Quality Control Board thinking about how to better enforce the provisions of the Clean Water Act. If you think you have found a problem site, e-mail me. If it isn't one already being monitored, we can add it to the list, and work on getting it cleaned up! You can play a part in keeping our creeks and streams pollution-free.

the project and will be bringing up potential violations of law with the San Jose Planning Commission and Council.

Stevens Creek Trail—

Craig has been a member of the citizens' group helping to plan the Stevens Creek Trail in Cupertino for months now. The trail will pass by our offices at McClellan Ranch, Deep Cliff Golf Course and the city-owned Blackberry Farm. Some of the meetings have been difficult, as building a trail near homes often is, but in the end many people should have good access near, but not *too* near, the creek, connecting Rancho San Antonio County Park and Fremont Older OSP.

The Baylands—

SCVAS works closely with National Audubon staff on several projects relating to our long-term program to restore wetlands and other habitat throughout the Bay. Recently, for example, Craig has given tours of Bair Island in Redwood City to an aide to Senator Barbara Boxer

and — along with other organizations — to a group of philanthropists. We are also tracking legislation authored by Senator Dianne Feinstein to appropriate money for the acquisition of 17,000 acres of salt ponds from Cargill Salt.

The Delta—

Some potentially harmful pieces of federal legislation authored by Sen. Feinstein and Representative Calvert are being carefully watched. These bills would hijack the efforts (called CalFed) to balance restoration of the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta with reliable water supplies throughout California. As currently drafted, the bills make it tougher to restore natural areas while virtually approving numerous new dam projects before their environmental documents are even drafted. We have discussed these issues with staff of local Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and Anna Eshoo, and have clashed with the Water District Board and staff, who unfortunately support these bills.

Volunteers Active as Always—

We'd like to recognize the following volunteers for providing leadership and support on numerous issues:

• Dr. Lakshmana Rao works in our offices every week researching and writing comment letters on state and federal legislation;

• Jill Clay will represent SCVAS in working with Acterra to organize Earth Day 2002 (theme: "Celebrating the Bay");

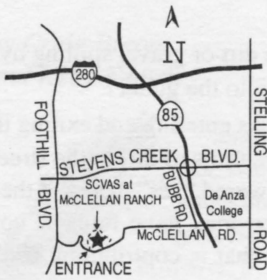
• Chris and Jeanne Salander put in countless hours organizing restoration volunteers at the Ulistac Natural Area in Santa Clara;

• John Beall can always be counted on to pursue his own concerns (such as protecting serpentine grasslands) as well as attending hearings and doing background research for SCVAS projects.

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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.

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