



THE

AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

March 2002

Hard work + new ideas = habitat savings

Supes hear SCVAS' message, vote to protect streams and hillsides

by Kelly Crowley

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors delivered some good news to local open space advocates recently when it identified high priority projects for the planning staff in 2002, which included protecting the County's hillsides, ridgelines, and riparian areas. We'd like to think SCVAS' advocacy helped influence the Supervisors' decision.

Our work on this issue started in mid-September with a digital camera and a trip to the South County. Denice Dade, of Committee for Green Foothills, and I spent a Saturday touring county land just south of San Jose. We took pictures of sites that illustrated some of the weak policies and ordinances, which posed a threat to riparian areas and hillsides. One picture showed a brand-new house built less than 20 feet from Calero Creek. Another showed a long, highly visible road cut and retaining wall. Others were of houses conspicuously placed atop ridgelines.

We compiled these pictures into a policy paper, which we presented to the Supervisors at their late-September Land Use

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Planning ahead to save creek habitat? Cooperative effort just might work

by Craig Breon

I've had this idea for a while, and it is time to bring it out in public. The crux of the matter is this: those of us who care about creeks know that virtually the worst thing you can do to a creek is to build close to its banks. Most of the Valley of the Heart's Delight learned this lesson too late; we have straightened and altered channels without leaving room for wildlife habitat or trails for people.

We end up trying to improve habitat, water quality, and aesthetics in a constrained area that also has to serve as a flood control facility for the region. It's a recipe for mediocrity.

Southern Santa Clara County still has some valley-level riparian areas that, while not pristine, are not lined with development. How, then, can we ensure that mistakes made in the north of our county are not repeated in the south? If we wait until development proposals come along and then fight them for territory, mixed results are almost guaranteed. How do we get ahead of that ill-fated curve?

Here's how. We figure out who has common interests in preserving open lands along creeks, then we try to pool their resources and immediately start acquiring buffer lands along Llagas, Uvas, Carnadero and other southern creeks. The common interests are many, and some of them even have money.

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General Membership Meeting
"National Audubon – Local, Regional and National Accomplishments"
Wednesday, March 20, 7:30 PM
Palo Alto Arts Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Judd Klement, NAS Grassroots Coordinator, Mike Sellors of Audubon's SF Bay Restoration Group, and SCVAS' Kelly Crowley will present a summary of Audubon's efforts to conserve wildlife and habitat on three levels: federal, Bay Area region, and county. Judd is working on such diverse issues as the Salton Sea, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and global family planning. Judd and Mike will start at 8 PM with national issues for about 10-15 minutes, shift to the SF Bay Restoration Program for about 20 minutes, and then finish with some local hot topics for about 15 minutes, with time for questions and discussion at the end. SCVAS president Dave Drake will introduce our speakers and give you a very exciting program on what National Audubon and SCVAS are doing to meet major challenges on all three levels.

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March Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

Saturday Mar. 2, 8:30 AM

Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: Grant Hoyt (650)969-7892. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right toward Model Airplane park where power towers cross road. Follow road for 1/2 mile, park in gravel lot at bend in road. Raptors, freshwater marsh & local breeding birds. **RC**

Sunday Mar. 3, 8:30 AM

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408)257-3647. Take Hwy 84/Dumbarton Bridge east toward Newark. Exit right on Thornton, then left over freeway as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre. Turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd. into park. Meet at far end of Quarry Parking lot, 1/4 mile past park entrance. Entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Saturday Mar. 9, 8:30 AM

Grant Ranch Co. Park

Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408)265-9286. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave. northeast, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd. and go approximately 9 miles to park. Meet at Hall's Valley Lake parking lot located on left (just past main park entrance on right). Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Moderate 2-mile walk; **LO, RC**

Sunday Mar. 10, 9:00 AM

Stanford Campus

Half day. Leader: Dick Stovel (650)856-6105. From Hwy 101 in Palo Alto take University Ave. exit west through downtown and into Stanford campus (University Ave. becomes Palm Dr.). Meet at end of Palm Dr. at entrance to Main Quad. Local breeding birds and early returning migrants should be active. Trip recommended for beginning birders. **LO**

Wednesday Mar. 13, 8:30 AM

Almaden Lake/Alamitos Creek

Half day. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408)-996-9863. Meet in west parking lot of Almaden Lake Park. From Highway 85 take Almaden Expwy south. Park is on east (left) side of Almaden Expwy. Continue just past Coleman Rd. (and the park) and return northbound on Almaden Expwy to park entrance on right. About 3 miles of easy walking. Waterfowl, raptors, variety of riparian birds. **LO, RC**

Saturday Mar. 16, 8:00 AM

Uvas Creek Park Preserve

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy go west on Tenth Street about a mile (becomes Uvas Parkway). Turn left at Miller Ave. (first four-way stop), drive over Uvas Creek and turn left into Christmas Hill Park. Park in first aisle to the right. A fairly easy but long walk. **LO, RC**

Sunday Mar. 17, 8:00 AM

Ed Levin Co. Park (South)

Half day. Leader: John Arnold (650)948-4250. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and I-680 (becomes Calaveras Rd.) to park entrance about 2 miles after crossing I-680. Meet at parking lot on right side of Calaveras Rd. Migrants, local breeding birds in Milpitas' prime birding hot spot. Entrance fee; **LO, RC**

Wednesday Mar. 20, 8:00 AM

Arastradero Preserve, Palo Alto

Half day. Leader: Roland Kenner (408) 725-0468. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west, turn right on Arastradero Rd. (approx. 1/2 mile), meet in parking lot 1/2 mile on right. Moderate walking. Good variety of local breeding birds. **RC**

Saturday Mar. 23, 8:00 AM

Almaden Lake/Alamitos Creek

Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - call Bob R. 408-253-7527). See directions under **Mar. 13** listing. Waterfowl, raptors, and riparian birds. **LO, RC**

Sunday Mar. 24, 8:00 AM

Almaden Quicksilver Co. Park

Half day. Leader: Ann Verdi (408)266-5108. In San Jose, take Almaden Rd. through town of New Almaden; turn right at park entrance. Join this hard-working SCVAS officer in finding early migrating birds of oak woodland and chaparral. Moderately strenuous uphill hiking. **RC**

Saturday Mar. 30, 8:00 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Al Eisner (Days and Voice-mail (650)926-2018, evenings (650)364-3686). From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward hills, then left on Toyon Ave. and right on Penitencia Creek Rd. and continue into park. Meet in "Rustic Lands" parking area on right just before "T" intersection and underpass. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Breeding birds (possible Rufous-Crowned Sparrow and Canyon Wren), early migrants, and lingering winter birds. Be prepared for some mud! Possible entrance fee; **LO, RC**

Sunday Mar. 31, 8:30 AM

Gilroy Hot Springs Rd.

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. Limited to 23 participants, reservations only. Be prepared to carpool. Meet at intersection of Gilroy Hot Springs Rd. and Cañada Rd. From Hwy 101 take Leavesley Rd. east through shopping center, turn left on New Ave. and then right on Roop Rd. Once in foothills bear left at fork in road, continue about four miles to Cañada Rd. Migrating and breeding birds of south Santa Clara County. **RC**

Wednesday Apr. 3, 8:00 AM

Rancho San Antonio

Leader: Jim Liskovec (650)969-5542. Emphasis will be on bird song. Some strenuous walking on hilly trails. From Hwy 280 take Foothill Expwy-Grant Rd. exit, turning south onto Foothill Blvd. Turn right on Cristo Rey Dr. and continue on to large parking area. Meet by restrooms. **LO, RC**

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Calendar

Tuesday Mar. 5, 4:30 PM

Education Committee meeting
McClellan Ranch Park.

Tuesday Mar. 5, 7:30 PM

Board of Directors meeting
McClellan Ranch Park. All members welcome to attend.

Wednesday Mar. 6, 7:30 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers presents David Cardinal with a program on the island of Sulawesi (formerly Celebes) near Borneo and Sumatra. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Tuesday Mar. 12, 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: Mountain Quail.

Wednesday Mar. 20, 7:30 PM

General meeting, Palo Alto
Audubon Society accomplishments — federal, Bay Area, and Santa Clara County — will be presented and discussed (see Page 1 for details).

Wednesday Mar. 27, 7:30 PM

Environmental Action Committee meeting at McClellan Ranch Park.

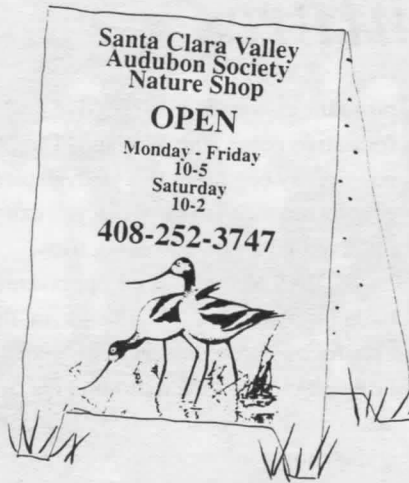
PLAN AHEAD:

Wednesday Apr. 17 in Palo Alto:
"The Beloved Burrowing Owl's Biology" with Lynn Trulio.

Saturday Apr. 27

So. County Earth Day celebration
Christmans Hill Park, Gilroy 10 AM - 2 PM. For further information call Bobbie Handen at (408) 356-4263.

Note: General meetings in Campbell will resume later this year or early next year when Campbell Community Center renovations are completed.



Our Nature Shop can help you get ready for spring migration!

Field Trips *cont'd*

Saturday Apr. 6, 9:00 AM
Stevens Creek Co. Park

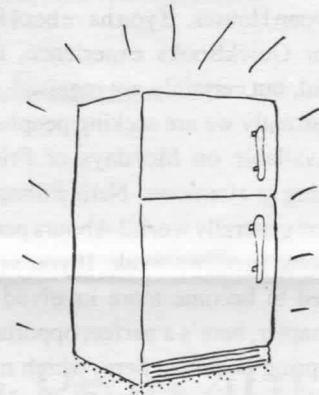
Half day. Leader: Roxie Handler (408)730-1745. From I-280 in Cupertino take Foothill Expwy exit south 2.1 miles (becomes Stevens Canyon Rd.), turn left into first (Chestnut) park entrance and meet in first parking lot. One of the best riparian birding spots in the South Bay for migrants and local breeding birds. Possible \$4.00 entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Sunday Apr. 7, 9:00 AM
Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408)288-7768. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mt. View. Please note change to Daylight Savings Time—spring forward or be late! As always, all are welcome but birding and discussions will be geared toward the beginning birder. A nice trip to bring your scope along. **RC**

Wednesday Apr. 10, 8:30 AM
Almaden Quicksilver Park

Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408) 265-9286. In San Jose take Almaden Expwy south to Almaden Rd. through town of New Almaden, turn right at park entrance. Spring woodland species should be active. Moderate walking of 3 miles. **LO, RC**



New Refrigerator Needed

Anyone upgrading to a new fridge and need to find a good home for the old one? The SCVAS staff is currently searching for a new refrigerator/freezer for the office. Not only will the fridge hold lunches and refreshments for volunteers and staff, but also the freezer houses the birds waiting to be stuffed for our Education Programs. Our current fridge is old, leaky, inefficient, and the freezer continually freezes shut. As a result, SCVAS must turn down a number of specimens that would otherwise be a welcome addition to our collection. Your tax-deductible donation would help us keep all of the little critters in the freezer in high-quality condition. If you may have a refrigerator that could work for us, please contact Jennifer at (408) 252-3740.

Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz
SCVAS Programs Coordinator

"If every American donated five hours a week, it would equal the labor of twenty million full-time volunteers."— Whoopi Goldberg

One of our chapter's most popular volunteer positions has recently become available . . . **Nature Shop Assistant.** Volunteers who work in the Nature Shop get to experience SCVAS activities from a front row seat! These volunteers handle everything from assisting customers and completing general office tasks to planning and decorating the office for events and Open Houses. If you have bookkeeping or QuickBooks experience, that's helpful, but certainly not required.

Currently we are seeking people who are available on Mondays or Fridays, morning or afternoon. Nature Shop volunteers generally work 2-4 hours per visit and come in once a week. If you've ever wanted to become more involved with the chapter, here's a perfect opportunity.

Spring is almost here, which means that the season for our Wetlands and Woodlands Discovery Program Field Trips is upon us! Last fall, SCVAS volunteers reached out to nine classrooms and led 243 school children and their teachers on walks through our local wetlands. This valuable program introduces the important role that wetland areas play in the ecological community. Through a combination of hands-on activities in the classroom and an outdoor field trip to the wetlands, volunteers share with the students their love of birding and the importance of environmental conservation.

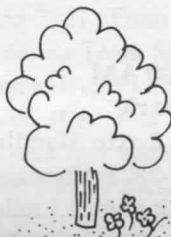
Our goal for this spring is to reach even more schools, but we need your help to get that done! Thanks to our recently developed Volunteer Training Video and Training Manual, preparing yourself to become a leader is easier than ever. Because all new volunteers are paired with experienced Volunteer Field Trip Leaders, you will be able to experience the

program alongside a supportive and informative peer. The Wetlands Program has already begun for this year, so please contact me soon to learn how you can get involved with our upcoming trips.

SCVAS also has other opportunities to help reach out to students in their classrooms. Volunteers are needed to bring the message of environmental stewardship into local schools by presenting slide shows or leading presentations. Subject areas may include bird nests and skins, bird characteristics, specific species (such as the Burrowing Owl), migration, the Bluebird Recovery Program, or

the various habitats where birds live. Our recently developed Education Kits are designed to be user-friendly, so that a volunteer with any level of experience will feel comfortable using them. Working with students is one of the most rewarding ways to share your love of birds and their natural habitat. Please join us in supporting SCVAS' Education Programs and inspiring children to explore the natural world.

For more information on these or other volunteer programs, please contact Jennifer at (408) 252-3740 or <programs@scvas.org>.



Kids' Corner



by Jennifer Peritz

Young Audubon is back! This January the Education Committee reignited the Young Audubon Program with our first event for 2002 — a whale watching trip on Monterey Bay. Over 35 families, totaling 134 people, set sail on two boats with SCVAS volunteer field trip leaders in search of the Gray Whale. In addition to multiple whale sightings, SCVAS families also viewed the Common Dolphin, sea lions, otters, and numerous sea birds. The sun was shining and so were the faces of parents and children alike.

The amazing response and incredible success of the whale trip has encouraged the Education Committee to expand our Young Audubon Program. Traditionally, Young Audubon has offered free birding field trips to children and their families. Plans for this year also include other educational opportunities, such as classes on bird nests and skins, hands-on games and activities, nestbox building, slideshows, and more. Thanks to SCVAS' Education Intern, Lori Notor, we now have new and improved educational resources to share with SCVAS members and their families. Lori developed Young Audubon Kits on subjects such as migration, bird anatomy, creek habitats, and much more!

Young Audubon events will be scheduled quarterly and announced through the *Avocet*. To receive early notice of events, become a part of the Young Audubon Database by contacting Jennifer at (408) 252-3740.

Be sure to keep your eyes on the "Kids Corner" to find out what youth programs are currently available. This column will appear periodically to announce Young Audubon, Wetlands Discovery Program, and other SCVAS Education Events.

Paper-Free Membership Renewal

By Debbie Thompson
SCVAS Membership Chair

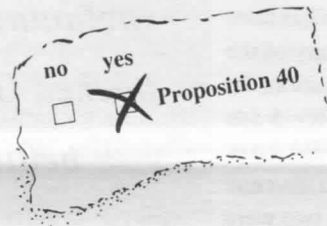
Do you get multiple renewal notices from Audubon each year? Would you like to save paper and reduce the amount of mail you get?

Well, National Audubon is now offering an optional paper-free renewal program. Those who sign up for this program will automatically be renewed as an Audubon member each year and will receive only one bill in the mail approximately two months in advance of their membership expiration date. To sign up call (800) 274-4201 and tell them you would like to use Audubon's Paper Free Renewal Program. Of course, you can cancel the program at any time. A simpler life is only a phone call away!

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Last month's breakfast to honor our volunteers was a huge success.



Fremont Adult School Birding Classes

Alice Hoch's popular morning Birding Field Trips classes resume in March at Fremont Adult School. The Tuesday session starts on March 5 and continues through April 9 for a total of 6 weeks. The Friday course begins on March 1 and continues for 5 weeks, through April 12. To register call Fremont Adult School at (510) 791-5841.

Classes will bird a different site each week from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. For those unable to attend on Tuesdays or Fridays, the instructor will offer a Thursday morning class if enough people are interested. Call Alice Hoch at (510) 657-0475 for further information. Alice has been teaching these classes for over 26 years and is an active member of Ohlone Audubon Society. Her classes are comprised of friendly, helpful birders of all levels, from absolute beginner to very experienced. Be prepared to birdwatch at the first class meeting.

Vote "Yes" on Prop 40!

Election Day is Tuesday March 5th! Make sure you get to the polls and vote "Yes" on Proposition 40. As you may recall from last month's *Avocet*, Prop 40 is a park bond that would give \$2.1 billion to State Parks, the eight State Conservancies, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and others for acquisition, park improvement, and protection of habitat and wildlife.

Both California Audubon and SCVAS provided funding for the recent "Yes on 40" campaign. Proposition 40 has been endorsed by an array of individuals and organizations, including: AARP, California Labor Federation AFL-CIO, Philip Angelides (California State Treasurer), Cruz Bustamante (Lieutenant Governor), and over 125 agricultural, environmental and parks organizations.

Remember, a "Yes" on Prop 40 is a "Yes" for an improved quality of life. It is a "Yes" for the environment. And it is a "Yes" for a better Bay Area. Please vote on March 5th!

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

One to two immature **Common Loons** were seen at Calero Reservoir in January (m.ob.) with the first on 5 Jan (JiD) and two birds on 8 Jan (MMR). The **Red-necked Grebe** found at Shoreline Lake in December remained at least through 6 Jan (JAC), but was not seen subsequently. **American White Pelicans** lingered in January at a variety of locations with a high count of 35 at the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 17 Jan (WGB). Less expected, small numbers of **Brown Pelicans** also stayed into January with a high of 14 off the Palo Alto Baylands on 7 Jan (MMR). A single immature was still present on Salt Pond A2W as late as 29 Jan (WGB). A single **American Bittern** has been seen irregularly in the vicinity of the Palo Alto FCB with observations on 2 Jan (MMR), 4 Jan (RWR), 5 Jan (ViT), and 27 Jan (EFe et al.). Another bird was at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 3 Jan (RWR) and two were there on 6 Jan (AV). After last year's dearth of **Cattle Egrets**, January came up with two birds. One was near Hwy 101 near Morgan Hill on 7 Jan (SBT *fide* MMR) and one was near the Alviso EEC on 23 Jan (DW). Single **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found in January, usually associated with flocks of Canadas. The immature found at Cottonwood Lake in December was seen through at least 8 Jan (v.ob.). An adult was at Lake Cunningham on 14 Jan and an immature was there on 18 Jan (TeG). An immature, developing adult plumage, was at the Arzino Ranch 20-24 Jan (AME, RWR, FV). The adult **Snow Goose** wintering at Calero Reservoir with the Canadas was seen regularly during January (v.ob.). **Wood Ducks** were well reported in January with a high count of 62 birds at their favored Almaden Reservoir on 27 Jan (AV). Single **Eurasian Wigeon** were found in the Palo Alto FCB in early January (m.ob.) and three males were seen in outer Adobe Creek on 25 Jan

(BM). A single male was at the Sunnyvale Baylands 5-8 Jan (BW, MW, RWR, FV) and another was at the New Chicago Marsh on 10 Jan (KPa). However, the gold mine was the developing flock of dabblers on Salt Pond A1 as hunting season closed down. At least seven males and two females were seen on this pond on 27 Jan (MMR). **Blue-winged Teal** were found more or less regularly in various part of the Palo Alto FCB in January with representative high counts of six on 5 Jan (MJM) and five on 23 Jan (MMR). A male 'Eurasian' Green-

Many of December's rare birds lingered into January, including a Lesser Black-backed Gull and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

winged Teal was found in the outer Palo Alto FCB on 5 Jan (MDd et al.) and probably the same drake was outside the FCB water control gates on 7 Jan (MMR). Numbers of **Redhead** in Charleston Slough built in January with 130 seen on 6 Jan (PG) and 162 counted on 7 Jan (MMR). The 57 birds counted in adjacent Salt Pond A1 on 27 Jan (MMR) probably include some of these Charleston Slough birds. A female goldeneye with a complete yellow bill, seen and photographed in the lake at the Arastradero Preserve from 11 Dec on (DC), is considered a **Barrow's Goldeneye**. This bird has remained here at least through 19 Jan (TGr, v.ob.). The male hybrid **Common x Barrow's**, wintering at Shoreline Lake, was seen again on 7 Jan (MMR). A pure male Barrow's was seen and well described on 4 Jan (RWR) and 9 Jan (MMR). **Hooded Mergansers** were widely found in January with double-digit counts including 10 at the Los Gatos Creek percolation ponds on 2 Jan (LSu),

11 at Lake Elsmar on 4 Jan (DLSu), and 10 on a small pond off Calaveras Road as seen from Felter Rd. on 11 Jan (MMR). Fairly large numbers of **Common Mergansers** are sometimes found wintering on local reservoirs so the 72 counted on Uvas Reserve on 1 Jan (JMa, JL) and the 89 at Lake Elsmar on 4 Jan (DLSu) are of interest. Surprising near salt water, a pair was seen on Shoreline Lake on 23 Jan (RWR, FV et al.) and probably the same pair in the Palo Alto FCB later that day (MMR).

Raptors through Skimmers

An adult **Bald Eagle** wintering at Calero Reservoir was seen throughout the month (JMa, v.ob.). An adult seen nearby in the Coyote Valley on 19 Jan (PLaT) and at Uvas Reservoir on 27 Jan (AV) may be the same bird. An adult **Ferruginous Hawk** found in December in Morgan Hill, east of Hwy 101, was seen regularly in January (v.ob.). An adult seen over the Monterey Highway at the Riverside GC on 12 Jan (MJM) may be a different bird. The immature **Prairie Falcon** wintering at the Palo Alto Baylands was seen regularly in January (m.ob.) and provided good views of this raptor of the inner coast ranges. Rare in winter, two **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found north of the old Alviso Marina on 17 Jan (RWR, FV). It's been a good winter to see **Sanderling** in the Alviso area. Birds have been found irregularly north of the old Alviso Marina (v.ob.) with high counts of eight on 15 Jan and nine on 22 Jan (both MMR). At least six birds were nearby in Salt Pond 8 on 22 Jan as well (MMR). A female wintering **Ruff** at different spots in the Alviso area is likely one bird. She was found in the New Chicago Marsh on 1 Jan (AME et al.), as in December, then north of the old Alviso Marina on 15 Jan (MMR), and finally on the drying ponds of the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 18 Jan (RWR, FV). The Lake Cunningham adult **Lesser**

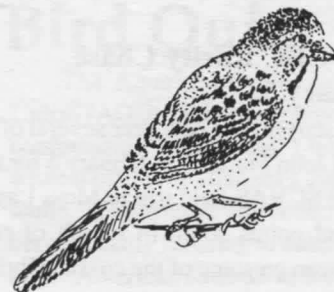
Field Notes *cont'd*

Black-backed Gull, here in its fifth winter, has been found occasionally in January (v.ob.). The **Black Skimmers** at Charleston Slough have ranged from 16 to 20 birds during January (m.ob.).

Owls through Grosbeaks

A **Short-eared Owl** over the Palo Alto Baylands on 27 Jan (JiD, JMD) is the first of the winter. January ended with local frosts, but started out somewhat warmer. On 4 Jan, the inversion layer north of Loma Prieta at 3400 feet provided a balmy 46 deg and a **Common Poorwill** was stimulated to call (DLSu). More northerly populations of this goat-sucker are clearly migratory while more southerly populations are sedentary. There are few clues as to what proportion of our birds remain through winter. A *Selasphorus* hummingbird heard along San Francisquito Creek at Piers Lane on 25 Jan (MMR) was likely a returning Allen's. The **Lewis's Woodpecker** found last month along Bailey Road west of the IBM plant has remained through January (m.ob.). Somewhat less accessible, the immature female **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at the Alamos Groundwater Recharge Pond next to Almaden Expressway has also been found during January (m.ob.), but ranges fairly widely and is occasionally absent. Two **Pileated Woodpeckers** (one heard only) were above Los Gatos Creek along Wright's Station Road on 4 Jan (DLSu). Another bird was heard in Monte Bello OSP on 12 Jan (MMR). Both are in forest where they've bred in the past. The three **Tree Swallows** seen at Lake Cunningham on 18 Jan (WGB) were well below the numbers found in December. However, good numbers of **Violet-green Swallows** were found at Lake Cunningham through 18 Jan (v.ob.) with a high count of 85 on 2 Jan (MMR). Five **Barn Swallows** over the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 6 Jan (MJM) were less expected. The only **Red-breasted Nuthatch** found in January was north of Loma Prieta in Barrett Canyon on 4 Jan (DLSu) and is probably resident here.

Overwintering **House Wrens** are rare, so a bird in the rip-rap beside Salt Pond A8 in Alviso on 22 Jan (MMR) is of interest. **American Dippers** were found in a number of their favored areas. A single bird was along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on 8 Jan (JAC) and two were found there on 17 Jan (RK, PK, MMR) with additional observations through 22 Jan (v.ob.). A single bird was singing along Penitencia Creek in Alum Rock Park on 24 Jan (MMR) and one was along Uvas Creek in Uvas Canyon CP on 26 Jan (MJM). Five **Golden-crowned Kinglets** in Mt. Madonna CP on 1 Jan (JMa, JL) and 10-15 above Los Gatos Creek along Wright's Station Road on 4 Jan (DLSu) are likely from local breeding populations. Two to three at Monte Bello OSP on 12 Jan (MMR), one at Rancho San Antonio OSP on 15 Jan (KH), and two in Alum Rock Park on 24 Jan (MMR) are probably overwintering birds. We had a nice winter incursion of **Townsend's Solitaires** with one bird visiting a yard in the Almaden Valley 7-14 Jan (BH) and a second one found at Uvas Canyon CP on 27 Jan (AV). A scattering of **Orange-crowned Warbler** records was probably typical, including one at Ed Levin CP on 11 Jan (MMR), a bird at Stanford on 23 Jan (MMR), and one in Mountain View on 28 Jan (JMD *fide* JiD). Most unusual, however, was a gray-headed bird (*celata*) found at 3500 feet elevation north of Loma Prieta on 4 Jan (DLSu). A female **Hermit Warbler** along Wright's Station Road above Los Gatos Creek on 4 Jan (DLSu) was a rare find, although very small numbers appear to winter in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A **Western Tanager** seen in Mountain View on 28 Jan (JMD *fide* JiD) is unusual for winter. The **Green-tailed Towhee** found last month along Coyote Creek below Tasman was seen there in January through at least 21 Jan (BCA, v.ob.). A single **Sage Sparrow** in the chaparral on the north side of Mt. Chual on 4 Jan (DLSu) is part of a small Santa Cruz Mountain population. Missed or absent in recent winters, a **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow** was seen at the Palo Alto Baylands on 1 Jan (CC,



More at home in the Southwest in winter, a Green-tailed Towhee found its way to Coyote Creek in January. Sketch by BB-W

KL). The adult **Swamp Sparrow** seen at the Baylands on 26 Jan (MMR) and seen there over the next three days (v.ob.) is undoubtedly the one found there in December. Wintering **White-throated Sparrows** continued at local feeders with one from San Jose (1 Jan, JAC), two in Los Gatos (20 Jan, JD), and one in Los Altos (20 Jan, PLN). A White-throat at a feeder on the Stanford campus on 30 Jan (DL) was new for this feeder. Unusual in the winter, a female **Black-headed Grosbeak** was reported from Los Gatos on 26 Jan (AR).

Observers: B. C. Acord (BCA), Bill Bousman (WGB), David Cardinal (DC), Jack Cole (JAC), Chris Conard (CC), Jim Danzenbaker (JiD), Mike Danzenbaker (JMD), Matthew Dodder (MDd), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Eric Feuss (EFe), Peter Grace (PG), Tom Grey (TGr), Ted Gross (TeG), Barbara Harkleroad (BH), Kirsten Holmquist (KH), Roland Kenner (RK), Pat Kenny (PK), Kimya Lambert (KL), Jolene Lange (JL), Peter LaTourrette (PLaT), Dave Lewis (DL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Brooke Miller (BM), Paul Noble (PLN), Kathy Parker (KPa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Amy Rufe (AR), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LSu), Scott Terrill (SBT), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Bill Walker (BW), Mary Wisniewski (MW), and Debbie Wong (DW).

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

Field Trip Reports

Post-CBC Rarity Chase January 5

To start off the new year several of us joined John Mariani on January 5 for the annual SCVAS field trip to Moss Landing and points south in search of rare birds seen on some of the coastal Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's).

We started at Moss Landing's Jetty Road, where we found a good selection of shorebirds, including Ruddy Turnstone, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Willet, Dunlin, Western Sandpiper and others. Gulls seen included Western, Glaucous-winged, Ring-billed, Herring, California, and Bonaparte's. Also of interest in the harbor were Forster's Tern, Common Loon, and Pelagic Cormorant. While looking out into Monterey Bay we found Red-throated Loon and Red-necked Grebe. Further down the beach we had scope-views of Snowy Plovers scurrying about.

Moonglow Dairy proved to be too muddy, so we headed south to Pacific Grove, stopping first at Crespi Pond and Point Piños. The most interesting birds were seen along the rocky shoreline of Point Piños — Black Oystercatcher, Whimbrel, Black-bellied Plover, Black Turnstone, Heermann's Gull, and Brandt's Cormorant beginning to come into breeding plumage with bright blue throat patches.

Farther out in the bay some of us had brief, far-away sightings of Common Murre and Rhinoceros Auklet; however, we all got excellent scope-views of four California Gray Whales passing close by Point Piños. We then headed over to small Caledonia Park where we located a male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker which



had been found on the Monterey CBC, plus a Townsend's Warbler.

Final stop of the day was the Monterey Municipal Beach where an elegant male Harlequin Duck was seen swimming around with the Surf Scoters. Several Pacific Loons were seen here as well.

Thanks to John for leading us all on a merry chase and helping us find all those interesting birds.

—Ann Verdi

Panoche Valley Jan. 12

Over 60 species were seen; here are some of the highlights:

We started at Paicines Reservoir where 6-8 Tundra Swans were seen as well as a good variety of ducks (Canvasback, American Wigeon, Common Merganser, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck); grebes (Western, Clark's, Pied-billed, Eared and one Horned); plus Great & Snowy Egrets, Great Blue Heron, Greater Yellowlegs, and ever-present coots). An adult Bald Eagle cruised around and perched on a small oak by the reservoir.

Into the oak/grey pine woodlands we saw four Wild Turkeys sauntering into the woods. At Willow Springs (Antelope Fire Station), Phainopepla and W. Bluebirds were seen among the mistletoe-draped oaks. At Panoche Pass several Rufous-crowned Sparrows foraged openly among the brush, giving better-than-average views of this often elusive species.

In Panoche Valley itself we had excellent views of perched and soaring Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, and Golden Eagle. Lark and Savannah Sparrows were numerous along the roadside fences. We then headed toward Silver Creek Ranch where a Merlin flushed a flock of 25+ Mountain Plovers, several of which landed to forage quite close by for prolonged "best-ever" views of these very special birds. Further down the road we came upon several beautiful sky-blue

Mountain Bluebirds flitting about the sage scrub and associating with House Finch flocks. And if all this wasn't enough, a small group of Chukars was sighted at Shotgun Pass.

Late afternoon in the Panoche Hills was quiet, but we were treated to wide, panoramic views of the snow-covered Sierras gleaming in the late afternoon sun above the fog-enshrouded Central Valley. Many thanks to our leader Clay Kempf (and the cooperative birds) for a memorable field trip.

—Ann Verdi

Pillar Point January 26

The best word to describe the field trip to Pillar Point (San Mateo County) is "wet." Eight birders braved the elements: light rain all morning, wind-driven on the relatively unprotected walk out to the base of the break-water. The wind was in our face as we walked out, then shifted and was again in our face as we walked back!

We spent a total of about two hours birding, so the trip was really a partial rainout. Under the circumstances, the total of about 40 species seen wasn't too bad. None of them was unusual; the best sightings were a flock of 11 Black Oystercatchers plus about 8 or 9 Black Turnstones by the breakwater. (Not everyone saw all the birds — for example, I missed identifying the one Say's Phoebe because my eyeglasses were almost entirely covered by water at the time.) After our wet walk back, everyone was ready to give up, and I neglected to gather the troops for a quick check of the south end of the marina — I should have, since I was able to view from my car a few species we missed, including an adult Heermann's Gull (a species which gets increasingly scarce as winter progresses) and a flock of Mew Gulls.

Thanks to the rest who turned out and made it a largely enjoyable trip despite the weather.

—Al Eisner

Coyote Reservoir Feb. 9

The Saturday field trip to Coyote Reservoir turned out much better than expected. The clear blue skies and warm weather brought out the soaring birds, provided better viewing of those few birds in and around the reservoir, and added immensely to our enjoyment of the trip.

Early birding included some of the "usual suspects": Northern Flicker, Yellow-billed Magpie, American Robin, Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bewick's Wren, and Dark-eyed Junco. A Wild Turkey (calling; one was seen earlier near the entrance kiosk) and a Sharp-shinned Hawk were also noted.

We proceeded to work our way along the eastern edge of the clearing to view the reservoir. A female Wood Duck was quickly found in an expected spot a short distance upstream of the reservoir; we would later have many sightings of Wood Ducks, including a pair swimming out in the open. A Lincoln's Sparrow was spotted, and obliged by sitting up long enough for most of us to view. The edge of the reservoir had Killdeer, Least Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, American Pipit, Great Blue Heron, Canada Geese and Mallards.

Out in the water we had Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Gadwall, two Common Mergansers, and two gulls: one basic-plumage Bonaparte's and an adult Ring-billed. Emelie Curtis pointed out a perched Bald Eagle on the far shore, and at each subsequent stop this bird was re-found and viewed as it moved from perch to perch, avoiding anglers who came too close in their boats. On our way back to the cars we added both towhees and a couple Hermit Thrushes.

At our next stop we found a Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, a closely-associating pair of Red-shouldered Hawks, Turkey Vulture, Western Bluebird, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Red-breasted Sapsucker. The sapsucker was hard at

work creating "sap wells" on a small tree at the southern edge of the parking lot, and allowed quite close viewing. While we were watching, these sap wells were visited by a Yellow-rump and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Our next stop was at the dam, where we had White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows, a Song Sparrow and a Savannah Sparrow. We were also fortunate to spot three different Rock Wrens on the dam face; one bird was seen well by everyone at close range. We then stopped at the boat launch parking area for lunch during and immediately following which we saw White-tailed Kites and a small flock of Lark Sparrows.

A note about the delayed start. At the beginning of the trip there were only nine of us, but over the next hour the group grew to about 20. This may speak well for having a trip in which we state beforehand that the leader will remain in the vicinity of the meeting area for "the next thirty minutes" (it seems that the majority of participants would have preferred a later start time) but it means that those who arrive late do not receive a proper introduction. A few were beginning birders who could have benefitted from some extra information.

—Bob Reiling

Ed. note: Thanks to Bob Reiling for this bit of constructive criticism, and for the tremendous amount of energy he contributes to the SCVAS Weekend Field Trip program. Bob is continually working to maintain our ambitious trip schedule (2 trips on most weekends) and is always looking for ways to improve the quality of our outings. He's also a regular contributor to the Field Notes column with unusual bird sightings around the county, and an excellent chronicler of trip highlights with reports like the one above.

Other stalwarts (Frank Vanslager, Ann Verdi, John Mariani, Allen Royer, Alan Thomas, Al Eisner, Dave Cook, Emelie Curtis and so many others) deserve our thanks as well for volunteering to lead multiple trips every year. If you'd like to lead a trip yourself, we always need fresh faces to help out the veterans and prevent burnout. Call Bob Reiling if you're interested in volunteering to lead a weekend field trip.

Bird Quiz

The American Ornithologists Union (AOU) makes a practice of confounding (infuriating?) birders when it officially changes a species name. The *Avocet* editor remembers defiantly refusing to acknowledge "American Kestrel" as the new name for "Sparrow Hawk" when AOU made that unthinkable change back in the 1960's (the editor was an angry adolescent at the time, and has since become a jaded adult, more tolerant of life's curve-balls).

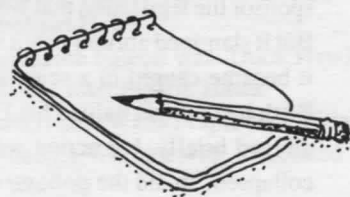
1) Two species, both found locally, received name changes a number of years ago, and, as if to totally confuse bird list-keepers, were re-christened with their prior names. Can you name them? (Hint: one is a raptor, the other a water bird of marshes and creeks).

2) Many species have undergone multiple name changes over the decades. Some of the old names were misleading or unwieldy; others seemed more appropriate than the current ones; many are worth remembering for their elegance or quirkiness.

Can you provide the early names for the following species?:

Red-shouldered Hawk
Peregrine Falcon
Merlin
American (Water) Pipit
Wilson's Warbler

Answers on Page 11



Advocate's efforts sway Supervisors *from Page 1*

Workshop. In the paper, we suggested six key environmental issues we hoped the Board would address: riparian corridor protection, identification of sensitive habitats, inappropriate hillside development, agricultural protection, urban uses in rural lands, and lot line adjustments.

As an organization whose mission is, in part, conservation, all of the issues we raised with the Board of Supervisors are important. But we knew early on, that both limits on time and resources, not to mention the priorities of individual Supervisors, would mean that only some of our issues could be addressed in the com-

ing year. Our goal then, in meetings and conversations with staff and the Supervisors, was to make it obvious that the policy windows for certain issues were wide open, and not to be ignored.

This was particularly true of riparian protection and identification of sensitive habitats. First, our picture of the house built almost in Calero Creek had definitely piqued the interest of several Supervisors at the Land Use Workshop. They wanted to know how such a project had come about, and if it was likely to happen again. What ordinances and policies had allowed such a land use?

Second, the County has hired the first of their consultants for the Habitat Conservation Plan, which they are undertaking with the City of San Jose, Santa Clara Valley Water District, and Valley Transportation Authority. The HCP process will survey county habitats and identify areas needing protection.

Thirdly, in the Stanford University Community Plan, the County approved language for protection of "Special Conservation Areas." The Supervisors and the planning staff could do something similar with the significant natural areas (a designation created in the current General Plan) that are identified in the rest of the county.

The county could leverage its own funds, or get "more bang for the buck" by protecting sensitive habitats, in conjunction with these other projects. Some might say, "killing three birds with one stone," though as a representative of Audubon, I think I would choose a different adage.

We were also aided by staff's recommendations that riparian protection be a high priority, along with a study of the feasibility (or lack thereof) of putting large assembly facilities in county land. Armed with a copy of staff's recommendations, made public the Thursday before the hearing, the Committee for Green Foothills, Greenbelt Alliance and SCVAS spent Friday and Monday refining our recommendations to the Supervisors. We composed another letter and scheduled meetings with each Supervisor.

Finally, on a Tuesday afternoon in January, our hard work paid off when the Supervisors recognized the open policy window and voted unanimously to direct staff to work on riparian protection and identification of sensitive habitats. They also moved hillside protection to a high priority. So the policy windows for these issues remain open. Now our job is to make sure the County takes full advantage of this opportunity to protect its fantastic vistas and valuable natural resources.

The "policy window" — it can close in a hurry

Limited time and resources and lack of political support are two of the major reasons (or excuses) why problems are not addressed by elected officials and agencies. However, when the resources are available, and the politics aligned just so, there is a window of opportunity, described in my graduate program as a "policy window," to push your issue to the forefront and get problems solved. As a lobbyist or an advocate, the goal is to open the policy window, demonstrate to decision makers that the window is open, and convince them to act before it shuts.

I witnessed this phenomenon on a national level, with the Environmental Protection Agency and a school integrated pest management (IPM) policy. The seeds of a national policy on school IPM were planted years ago by one of my professors and an individual EPA employee with an entrepreneurial spirit and a clear understanding that current pest management practices in schools are extremely hazardous to children.

By the end of the year 2000, many school districts and a handful of states had adopted and implemented school IPM. But the federal government was doing little to advocate its use, despite the fact that it would cost schools little to implement and would greatly reduce health risks to young students.

My graduate seminar class wrote a national policy, and as we walked across the stage to receive our diplomas, school IPM proponents were furiously lobbying in D.C, because a member of the House was about to sponsor the legislation that would enact our policy. The window was open. But it slammed abruptly shut when the Representative who would sponsor it became caught in a scandal, and because the newly-elected President Bush had not yet named his EPA appointee. Resources and politics were aligned briefly, but action was too far off, and when the political power collapsed, so did the policy. (Shamefully, there still is no national policy on school IPM, despite a consistent lobby effort.)

—Kelly Crowley

Common interests could save creeks from Page 1

First, there's the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (OSA). It has interests in open space, trails, and agricultural preservation — all of which are served by my buffer lands concept. It also just passed a new parcel tax, which will triple its yearly income from four to twelve million a year, starting in 2003. Some of this money, by the OSA's own rules, must go toward lands within cities, and some of Llagas and Uvas creeks are within the boundaries of Morgan Hill and Gilroy, so that's a good fit as well.

How about the Santa Clara Valley Water District, whose primary interests are in flood control and water supply (and therefore water quality as well)? They have added to their basic mission a role of stewardship of natural resources and, where feasible, enhancement and restoration. The District, conveniently, also has money. When Measure B passed in 2000, there was lots of flood control money in it, but also some funding for resource enhancement and recreation. So the Water District could be in.

State and federal resource agencies like the Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are obvious candidates for collaboration. They have an interest in rare and endangered fish and wildlife. Uvas Creek has Steelhead trout, and Llagas Creek once hosted breeding Least Bell's Vireo, so these agencies might bring along some cash for habitat restoration.

Then there's Morgan Hill and Gilroy. Their primary interest in this area would be trails for their citizens, especially trails long enough to allow urban dwellers to walk from the city into the country. The Coyote Creek trail is an excellent example of this, from which the people of San Jose gain tremendously. Morgan Hill and Gilroy could come to the table with some parks and open space money . . . so they could be in, too.

Finally, there's SCVAS — with an interest in habitat protection and enhancement, as well as a secondary interest in

providing access for people to natural areas. As for funds . . . well, we don't have enough to be big contributors, but we have enough to pay me to write this article and get the ball rolling (barely enough for that, so please, if you didn't respond to our annual fundraiser, think again . . . but I digress). So we're in, and frankly, if a group like us doesn't take the lead and coalesce some of these other interests, it's likely never to happen.

What I envision at the end of the day looks like this. Negotiations with creekside landowners lead to mutually agreeable prices for buffer lands along our southern streams, ideally 100-200 feet on both sides of a creek. These buffers become multi-purpose lands. If the Water District needs to modify a creek for flood control purposes, it has the room to do the job without concrete. Audubon and others work to improve the habitats close to the creeks for birds, fish, and other cool creatures. The OSA and the cities install trails at an appropriate distance from the creeks. Additionally, the buffers serve as flood plains, perhaps with setback levees, reducing the need for expensive flood control measures in the future. If the buffers were wide enough, farmers could still farm inside the levees, as is done on the Pajaro River. Increased riparian and grassland vegetation within the buffers serves to filter agricultural and urban stormwater run-off, improving water quality. Everybody is happy.

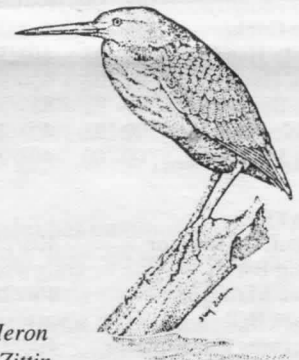
Utopian vision?

OK, so that vision is no doubt utopian, and we're a long way from it. I still think we should try.

The Water District is right now applying for a grant from the state to acquire a small amount of buffer along a southern stream to try a pilot program in how native grasses can filter run-off. There's a start, and I have told them we will write letters or talk to whomever we need to help them get the grant. Gilroy

already has protected some lands along Uvas Creek, and they have put their environmental education building on some of those lands. There's another start. We began working with Gilroy last year on Earth Day, and we will do so again this year. Further, SCVAS should have a seat on the Water District's new Environmental Advisory Committee, which will advise the District on how to spend their new environmental dollars, so we'll have some sway there.

In short, I believe we can do this. I'm telling you now so that in twelve years, when all this great work is done by so many entities, I can look back and grab all the credit (just kidding). Actually, I just wanted to share an idea that I find exciting. If we progress from here, I'll let you know. Feedback is always welcome; I can be reached at 408-252-3748 or craig@scvas.org.



Green Heron
by Floy Zittin

Quiz answers:

1) White-tailed Kite became Black-shouldered Kite, then reverted back to White-tailed Kite a few years ago; Green Heron became Green-backed Heron and is now Green heron again.

2) Red-shouldered Hawk was: Red-bellied Hawk
Peregrine Falcon was: Duck Hawk
Merlin was: Pigeon Hawk
American (Water) Pipit was: Titlark
Wilson's Warbler was: Pileolated Warbler

(Source for #2 was *Hoffmann's Birds of the Pacific States*; other answers may be possible)

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society
 22221 McClellan Road
 Cupertino, CA 95014

Phone: 408-252-3747
 Fax: 408-252-2850
 E-mail: scvas@scvas.org

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STAFF

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

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

Programs Coordinator 408/252-3740
 Jennifer Peritz programs@scvas.org

Environmental Advocate 408/252-3740
 Kelly Crowley advocate@scvas.org

Office Fax 408/252-2850

E-mail scvas@scvas.org

Website www.scvas.org

CHAIRPERSONS

Avocet
 Editor: Grant Hoyt 650/969-7892
 Graphics and Print Preparation
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