



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

April 2002

Annual Fundraising Appeal Nets \$57K

Chapter healthy, but expansion brings new challenges

As we have for the last eight years, SCVAS sent out an annual appeal to members at the end of 2001. We stuck to our tried and true methods: only one appeal per year, a simple story of what we had accomplished with your donations last year, and what we hoped to accomplish this year. And, as usual, our members responded enthusiastically with the resources we need to provide the conservation, education, restoration, and birding programs you've come to expect from us.

To date, our 2001 appeal has brought in more than \$57,000 from 393 Audubonians. Thanks! That's our second most successful year since we began the annual appeal in 1994.

Perhaps a word or two about SCVAS finances is appropriate here. Every year we get a small share of the dues most members pay to National Audubon (a few of our members belong only to SCVAS and not to National). That share is rather small, barely covering the cost of distributing the *Avocet* to our nearly 4000 members ten times a year. Recent revisions to National Audubon policies mean that our dues share will likely shrink in the future.

In addition, SCVAS has a modest reserve fund which produces interest and dividends each year. We invest conservatively, so the boom of the 90's helped us less than many individual investors, and the faltering economy of the last two years hurt less as well.

Between our dues share and the funds we receive from our reserves, SCVAS could run the office with perhaps one employee. In fact, that's exactly what we did until 1994, when we hired Craig Breon as the chapter's first Environmental Advocate (at first Craig was half-time, \$12,500 a year — truly nonprofit wages). The annual appeal was necessary to support Craig's position, and still is meant to take the chapter to another level, allowing us to hire the staff needed to create vibrant new programs and continue to offer a strong range of community services.

Evidently, accomplishments breed success. As we used and invested your money wisely, our programs grew in number and effectiveness. In response, our annual appeal brought in increasing amounts every year. Perhaps due to the economy and our efforts in Coyote Valley, the appeal peaked in 2000 with an impressive \$72,000. Thus, the 2001 appeal is the first time we haven't outperformed the previous year, but we still exceeded our goal of \$50,000.

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General Membership Meeting
"A species on the edge—
Burrowing Owl preservation efforts"
with Dr. Lynne Trulio
Wednesday, April 17, 7:30 PM
Palo Alto Arts Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

The Burrowing Owl is one of California's unique native bird species. The only owl to live and nest underground, it doesn't hoot and is active both day and night. Despite having adapted to living in human-altered landscapes, the Burrowing Owl is declining in many parts of the state, especially Northern California. Dr. Lynne Trulio, chair of the Department of Environmental Studies at San Jose State University, has been studying this fascinating bird for more than 10 years. Tonight she'll discuss the ecology of this species and efforts being made to preserve it in California. Lynne has recently completed a 4-year population change study of Burrowing Owls in the South Bay and will have some very interesting results to report from that study.

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April Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

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**

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 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 Co. 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**

Saturday Apr. 13, 8:30 AM Lower Windy Hill OSP

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. Meet in parking lot at Sausal Pond edge of Preserve. From I-280 in Portola Valley take Alpine Rd. west (toward hills) about 2.9 miles to first stop sign (Portola Rd.), turn right and go 0.8 miles to parking lot on left just past The Sequoias. **LO, RC**

Sunday Apr. 14, 9:00 AM Birding By Ear at Hidden Villa

Half day. Leader: Garth Harwood (650) 879-0724. From I-280 in Los Altos take El Monte Rd. west past Foothill College, turn left at Moody Rd. and after approx. 1.7 miles turn left into Hidden Villa. Meet at first parking lot beside entrance. \$5 fee. Emphasis on birding by ear, but bring binoculars anyway. **LO**

Saturday Apr. 20, 8:00 AM Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford University

Half day. Leader: Leda Beth Gray (831) 336-1127. Space limited; call early to reserve a spot. \$5 fee. From I-280 take Sand Hill Rd. west 2 miles to main gate on left. Be at gate between 7:45 and 8:00; do not arrive early as there is no parking on Sand Hill. Moderately strenuous 2 to 3 mile walk. Trip goes rain or shine.

Sunday Apr. 21, 8:30 AM Ed Levin Co. Park (North)

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and I-680; 237 becomes Calaveras Rd. Turn left on Downing Rd. to park entrance. Meet in lot on far (northeast) side of Sandy Wool Lake. Spring migrants and local breeding birds in Milpitas' prime birding spot. Hiking trail is steep in places. Entrance fee. **LO**

Wednesday Apr. 24, 8:30 AM Stevens Creek Co. Park

Leader: Roxie Handler (408)730-1745. From Hwy 280 take Foothill Rd. south about 2 miles. Turn left into first park entrance (Chestnut parking area). Excellent riparian setting for local breeding birds. Possible \$4 entrance fee. **RC**

Saturday Apr. 27, 8:30 AM Mines Road and vicinity

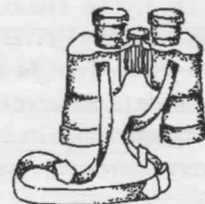
Full day. Leader: Don Schmoltdt (916) 739-8821. Trip starts in Del Puerto Canyon, then through San Antonio Valley, ending in Livermore. From I-580 go east over Altamont Pass to I-5, then south on I-5 to Patterson exit; go west on Del Puerto Canyon Rd. Meet at first pullout (look for Don's "BAJA OWL" license plate). Possible Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis' Woodpecker, Phainopepla, Lawrence's Goldfinch.

Sunday Apr. 28, 8:00 AM Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Roland Kenner (408)725-0468. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward hills, then left on Toyon Ave and right on Penitencia Crk. Rd. and continue into park. Drive left through overpass and meet at far end of parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Resident breeding birds, possible Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting. Possible entrance fee. **LO**

Saturday May 4, 8:30 AM Stevens Creek Co. Park

Half day. Leader: TBA—Call Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527 for info. See directions under Apr. 24 listing. **LO**



Calendar

Tuesday Apr. 2, 4:30 PM
Education Committee meeting
McClellan Ranch Park.

Tuesday Apr. 2, 7:30 PM
Board of Directors meeting
McClellan Ranch Park. All members welcome to attend.

Wednesday Apr. 3, 7:30 PM
Bay Area Bird Photographers presents Ken Briggs with bird slides from Bosque del Apache, New Mexico. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

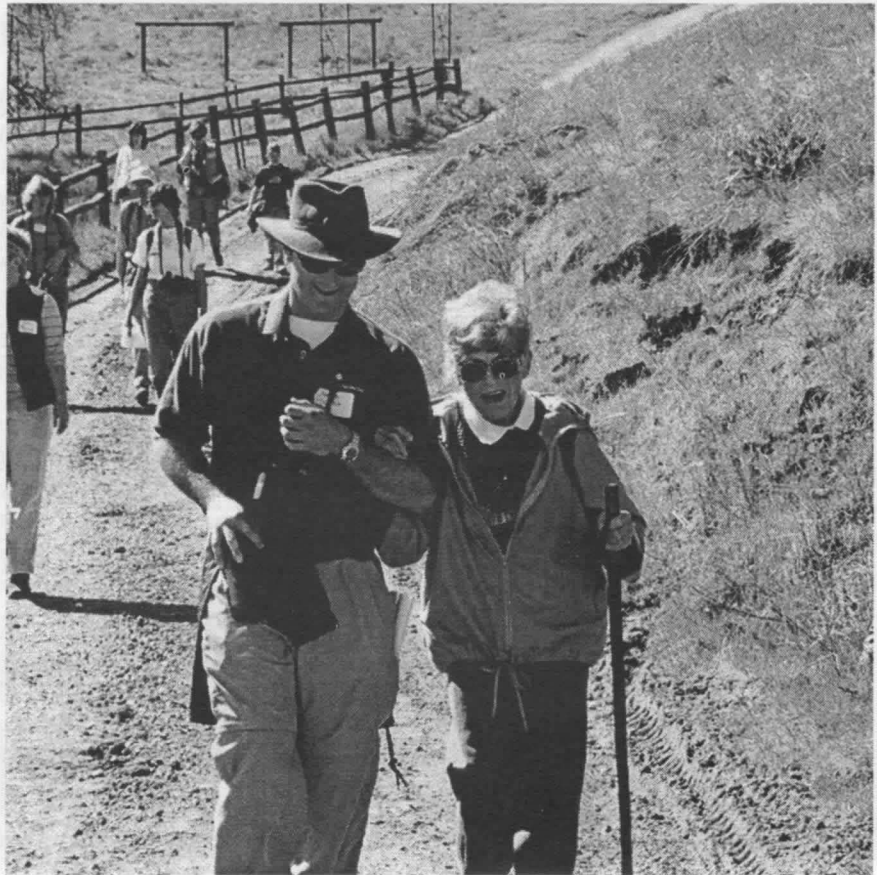
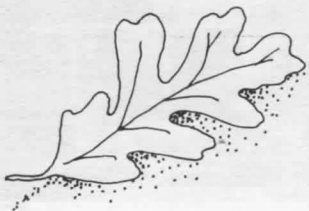
Tuesday Apr. 9, 9:30 AM
Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave, Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Mourning Dove.

Wednesday Apr. 17, 7:30 PM
General Meeting, Palo Alto
Professor Lynne Trulio of San Jose State will present a Burrowing Owl slide show and discussion (see Page 1 for details).

Wednesday Apr. 24, 7:30 PM
Environmental Action Committee meeting at McClellan Ranch Park.

Saturday Apr. 27, 10 AM
So. County Earth Day celebration
Christmas Hill Park, Gilroy 10 AM - 2 PM (see article on Page 9).

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



SCVAS Vice-president Charles Preuss and Committee for Green Foothills founding member Lois Crozier-Hogle enjoy an early spring hike at Calero County Park near Morgan Hill on March 2. As part of its 40th anniversary celebration, CGF honored Audubon for our decades of work preserving habitat and celebrating birds and wildlife in the greater South Bay region.

Natural History Workshop

The Golden Trout Natural History Workshop is a non-profit educational backpack camp in the Sierra Nevada just south of Mt. Whitney. It offers one-week camps with daily naturalist-led hikes and evening talks by professional botanists and geologists, among others. The Workshop provides an economical and unique High Sierra experience, regularly attended by California Audubon, Native Plant, and Sierra Club members.

Sessions start June 30, July 7, and July 14. For a brochure call (805) 688-8344 or e-mail paul.roark@verizon.net. Website: www.1startists.com/gtc/

Wildlife Festival

The 8th annual Kern River Bioregions Festival, a celebration of Spring in the Kern River Valley, will be held April 26 - 28 in Weldon/Kernville, Kern County CA. Activities and events include: Arts & Music, Astronomy, Birds & Birding, Butterflies, Children's Activities, Education, Fish & Fishing, Geology, Hiking, Running & Walking, Hot Springs, Kayaking & Rafting, Native American Heritage, Plants & Wildflowers, Reptiles & Amphibians, Resource Management, Western & Kern Valley Heritage.

Contact Bob Barnes at (760) 378-3044 or <bbarnes@lightspeed.net> or visit the website: www.valleywild.org for further information.

Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz
SCVAS Programs Coordinator

Volunteers truly are the heart and soul of SCVAS' many programs. From our weekly field trips to our education programs to staffing the Nature Shop, our volunteers represent the best that SCVAS has to offer. In recognition of National Volunteer Week, which is April 21-27, I invite everyone — from current volunteers or those who are simply curious — to stop by the office and learn more about our various volunteer programs. This special week is designed not only to recognize the valuable work of volunteers throughout the country, but also to encourage new individuals to become involved in volunteerism. If you stop by the office or give me a call during National Volunteer Week, you will not only learn of valuable volunteer opportunities, but also you will receive a special SCVAS Volunteer treat!

With the theme of volunteer appreciation in mind, I'd like to take the time to acknowledge **Lori Notor**, SCVAS' Education Intern. For the past three months, Lori has dedicated 12 hours per week to revamping old classroom materials and developing new ones. Thanks to her, SCVAS now has three new Education Kits, which can be lent out to teachers or used by volunteers who lead in-class presentations. These kits focus on Birds of Prey, Beaks and Feet, and Cavity Nesters and include games, stories, and hands-on activities. In addition, she updated materials that are vital to our Wetlands and Woodlands Discovery Program. Lori, who just this month graduated from UC Santa Cruz, is a helpful and creative person and was a wonderful addition to the office. Thank you, Lori — SCVAS was lucky to have your support. Good luck in your future endeavors!

Now that Lori has created such wonderful Education Kits, we need to put them to good use. The Education Program is currently seeking volunteers who are interested in presenting these kits in local classrooms. The combined activities in the kits are designed to last approximately one hour, and come with

informative background information and scripts. They are specially designed to allow volunteers or teachers of any experience level to gain the necessary background in order to present the kits in an elementary classroom. Presenting these kits allows SCVAS volunteers to reach out into the community and share their enjoyment of birds and nature.

SCVAS is also seeking volunteers who have experience or interest in Special Events. SCVAS often receives requests from various fairs or festivals to host a table or booth. These events are an incredible way to publicize the chapter, promote the Nature Shop, and increase

our membership. These events do not occur on a regular schedule, but they are generally held on the weekends between 10 AM and 2 PM. In a related opportunity, we are also looking for members who have experience with Events Planning. SCVAS often hosts our own special events, and we need help with organization and coordination of food, invitations, etc. Again, this opportunity is not on a regular basis, but will be on a "per event" basis.

For more information on any of the above volunteer opportunities, please contact Jennifer at (408) 252-3740 or <programs@scvas.org>.

OPEN HOUSE FOR NEW MEMBERS

The Membership Committee is once again hosting an open house to help new members who have joined in the past year or so find out what SCVAS is all about. It will also be a good time for you to meet other new members.

Our next open house is on Saturday, April 20 at 9:30 AM, at our chapter headquarters at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. First we'll go on a short bird walk around the park led by an experienced birder. The park is bordered by a stream and contains an old orchard, open grassy areas, a bluebird house trail and a community garden, so there is a good opportunity for many different species. After the walk we'll serve coffee, tea and bagels in our meeting room. Members of the Board of Directors and different committees will be on hand for you to discuss various chapter programs and also to hear your ideas. The SCVAS library and the Nature Shop, where you can buy SCVAS logo attire, bird seed, field guides and other items, will also be open.

So grab your binoculars (or borrow ours!) and spend a couple hours getting acquainted with SCVAS. We are very excited about meeting our new members in person, so we hope you will be able to attend.



SCVAS headquarters at McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Wide variety of birding classes offered this spring

Birds of the Sierra Nevada

Instructor: John Mariani

This course will focus on Sierran bird species, their identification and ecology. The single class meeting on Monday, June 24 at McClellan Ranch Park will be followed by a weekend field trip to Yosemite National Park, June 28-30. Target birds include Blue Grouse, Great Gray Owl, Calliope Hummingbird, Black-backed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, and Pine Grosbeak, among others.

Participants are responsible for their own lodgings and transportation. Our base within the park will be Curry Village in Yosemite Valley, from which we will commute to higher elevations. Accommodations in the park must be reserved early! To reserve space for this course, call John Mariani at (408) 997-2066 as soon as possible. Class is limited to 18 participants. Fee is \$75; additional \$1.50 materials fee payable to instructor at first class meeting.

John Mariani

redknot@worldnet.att.net

www.birdswest.com

Sponsor: SCVAS

Beginning Birding

Instructor: Lisa Myers

Reviewed in this beginning birding class will be the many elements of the "sport" of birdwatching, from field guides and optics to local and world-wide birding hot spots. Students will become familiar with bird species found in North America and Silicon Valley. During the 4-week course we will cover topics such as bird behavior, migration and important field marks. The class will participate in three field trips to local habitats. After each outing observations will be reviewed in class.

Classes will be held at McClellan Ranch park in Cupertino from 7:00 to 9:00 PM on Monday evenings, starting April 29. To register call the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747; fee is \$40. Field sessions dates will be determined by class members.

Sponsor: SCVAS

Birding by Ear

Instructor: Grant Hoyt

Improving overall field identification skills by fine-tuning your ears to the world of bird vocalizations is the focus of this new class. One evening lecture and two early morning field workshops are included. Class is open to birders of all skill levels except for absolute beginners; basic birding skills and some knowledge of local breeding birds is recommended. Participants must be willing to meet at 7 AM, when bird song is liveliest, for field study, and to remain relatively quiet during group listening sessions.

Evening class will be given on Thursday, May 16 at McClellan Ranch in Cupertino from 7:15 - 9:15 PM. Instructor will provide handouts on birding by ear, and a list of suggested tapes and other resources will be distributed. The Saturday morning field workshops, to Stevens Creek and Grant Ranch County Parks, will be held on May 18 and June 1 from 7 - 10 AM. Fee is \$30. To register, call the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747. For questions regarding the class, call the instructor at (650) 969-7892.

Class size will be limited, but a second session may be offered if there is interest.

Sponsor: SCVAS

Note: For the three SCVAS-sponsored classes, a 48-hour notice is required for cancellation refund.

Beginning Birding

Instructor: Lou Beaudet

This Saturday morning class will start off with an hour of classroom instruction followed by a three to four-hour field trip to various Bay Area birding locations. Class runs 7 weeks from April 6 to June 1; fee is \$89 (\$10 if over 55). A pair of binoculars, a bird field guide, and comfortable hiking shoes are recommended; carpooling on field trips is encouraged. Register at first class. For further information call (650) 940-1333 or visit the website: www.mvlaae.org

Sponsor: Mountain View - Los Altos Adult Education Center

Biology of Birds

Instructor: Kent Johnson

This new course will be offered at De Anza College on Saturday mornings, 9:00 AM - 3:20 PM, from Apr. 13 to June 22. Topics will include ecology, behavior, anatomy, diversity, and identification of birds. Morning classroom sessions will be followed by afternoon lab sections, including field trips to local birding sites.

Contact De Anza College at: www.deanza.fhda.edu for registration information. Contact the instructor at: <kentjohnson@hotmail.com> for course information.

Sponsor: De Anza College

Birding Field Trips

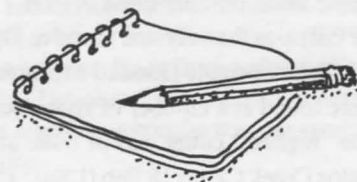
Instructor: Alice Hoch

Alice Hoch's popular Birding Field Trips classes are being offered through Fremont Adult School on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, starting in late April and running through early June. Register by April 24th for Tues. classes; register for Thursday classes by April 29th. These will be Alice's last classes until September.

Each set of 6 classes will be limited to 15 students. Class consists of tutoring during actual birding, rather than sitting through lectures. The classes will bird a different site one morning each week for 6 weeks from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Questions about class content (but not about registration)? Call Alice at (510) 657-0475.

Alice has been teaching Birding Field Trips for 27 years and is an active member of Ohlone Audubon Society. Her classes are filled with friendly, helpful people at all levels from absolute beginner to very experienced. Be prepared to birdwatch at the first class meeting. To register call Fremont Adult School at (510) 791-5841.

Sponsor: Fremont Adult School



Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Pelicans through Waterfowl

Numbers of lingering **American White Pelicans** appear to have tapered off in February. Nine were seen at Lake Cunningham on 23 Feb (MMR). An **American Bittern** was found foraging in the central portion of the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 9 Feb (MMR) and a bird flying into the Mountain View Forebay on 28 Feb (KH) is likely the same wintering bird. Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** were seen at Byxbee Park in Palo Alto on 21 Feb (DA). An immature White-front wintering at Cottonwood Lake in Hellyer CP was seen again on 23 Feb (MJM, MMR). The adult **Snow Goose** wintering with Canadas at Calero Reservoir was seen fairly regularly in February (v.ob.). Two **Ross's Geese** were found in the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) drying ponds on 10 Feb (MMR, MJM). These are the first Ross's that have been found locally this winter. **Wood Ducks** have continued on Almaden Reservoir with a high count of 46 recorded on 16 Feb in the reservoir and the creek above (AV). Two male **Eurasian Wigeon** were in the New Chicago Marsh on 7 Feb (MMR). The large duck flock in Salt Pond A1, Mountain View, contained one to two males 11-20 Feb (WGB). Seven males were found here in January. **Blue-winged Teal** were noted again in the Palo Alto FCB 25-28 Feb (KH, WGB) with a high count of 11 birds on 28 Feb (KH). A 'Eurasian' **Green-winged Teal** was seen at the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on 26 Feb (AG). The large numbers of **Redhead** found earlier in the winter appear to have moved on. A single male on Salt Pond A1 on 7 Feb (WGB) was the only one found in February. Pairs or single **Hooded Mergansers** were found at a number of spots locally. The "highest" count was of three at Los Gatos Creek CP on 18 Feb (LSu). **Com-**

mon Mergansers were also found widely and a wintering flock of 28 birds at Almaden Reservoir on 16 Feb (AV) was the best count.

Raptors through Gulls

An adult **Bald Eagle** on Coyote Reservoir on the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society field trip on 9 Feb was a good find (ECu, RWR, FV et al.). Although rarely found in late winter, one to two **Lesser Yellowlegs** have been fairly reliable at the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds and the nearby Coyote Creek Field

Nashville and Black-and-White Warblers joined the continuing rarities including a Ruff, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Green-tailed Towhee

Station (CCFS) waterbird pond with observations 16-27 Feb (RWR, FV, MJM). This winter's influx of **Sanderling** in Alviso has continued with up to 11 birds seen in the impoundment north of the old Alviso marina 7-10 Feb (WGB, MMR, MJM). Also in the Alviso area, the wintering female **Ruff** has been found north of the Alviso marina on 9 Feb (WGB) and in the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds 12-18 Feb (RWR, FV, MJM). The Lake Cunningham **Lesser Black-backed Gull** has been seen regularly in February (v.ob.). Now in its fifth winter at Lake Cunningham, this gull has become somewhat ho-hum for us locals, but it remains a significant rarity for California. A 2nd-winter **Glaucous Gull** was found at the Alviso salt ponds on 10 Feb (MMR). A probable 2nd-winter bird nearby on 18 Feb (AME) is likely the same bird. Normally, we see mostly 1st-winter birds in San Francisco Bay, so their absence this year is puzzling. It has

been 15-20 winters since we've gone without at least one of these 1st-winter birds, which suggests that last summer may have been a poor year in the north for breeding Glaucous Gulls. The number of **Black Skimmers** wintering at Charleston Slough has declined from the December high of 22 birds to 12-14 in February (WGB). In recent years this wintering flock has started to disperse in March and April.

Owls through Sparrows

A **Long-eared Owl** was heard in the Los Gatos Creek drainage east of Summit Road on 22 Feb (DLSu). This owl has been found sporadically on both sides of the Santa Cruz Mountain crest in recent years (DLSu). Although **Northern Saw-whet Owls** are widely distributed in the Santa Cruz Mountains, eight to nine birds heard along Morrill and Wright's Station roads on 22 Feb (DLSu) suggest how concentrated they can sometimes be. A **Common Poorwill** was heard in the Santa Teresa Hills on 24 Feb (JMa). It is problematic whether this represents a returning summer resident or a bird coming out of estivation. It is generally accepted that birds to the south of us are permanently resident, while those to the north migrate south in winter. A male **Rufous Hummingbird** seen in Alum Rock Park on 18 Feb (MJM) is the first certain record of the season. Similarly, a male **Allen's Hummingbird** found in Hellyer CP on 23 Feb (MMR) is also the first bird found this spring. The **Lewis's Woodpecker** wintering along Bailey Avenue west of the IBM plant was seen again on 3 Feb (CL) and 7 Feb (RWR, FV). Seven birds were seen in the San Antonio Valley on 24 Feb (MMR, MJM), where they are resident. The immature female **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** wintering beside the pond behind the Santa Clara Valley Water District offices was seen again on 16 Feb (AV). Wintering **House Wrens** include one in Hall's Val-

Field Notes *cont'd*

ley on 9 Feb (MDd et al.) and another along Saratoga Creek at Murdock Park on 19 Feb (RAH). **American Dippers** were found in typical locations: two in Uvas Canyon CP on 16 Feb (AV) and another two along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on 21 Feb (JH, KO, DQ). Two **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were seen along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 16 Feb (MJM). Both had bands and are undoubtedly birds captured earlier in the winter by personnel working at the CCFS. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 6 Feb (SH, GB) and is likely the bird observed nearby in December. Another gnatcatcher was found along Alamitos Creek on 9 Feb (JMa, JL). This latter bird is likely wintering, as our first returning summer birds do not show up until the second and third weeks in March. A female **Phainopepla** was seen in its San Antonio Valley stronghold on 24 Feb (MMR, MJM). Wintering **Orange-crowned Warblers** include two along Embarcadero Way and a third on Geng Road on 17 Feb (AME), three around the Sunnyvale WPCP on 18 Feb (MJM), and one in Hellyer CP on 23 Feb (MMR). A rare wintering **Nashville Warbler** was seen in a Palo Alto yard on 25 Jan and again on 6 Feb (PMB). A well-described **Black-and-White Warbler** was found in a San Jose yard on 7 Feb (SM). This is one of the few eastern vagrants that regularly overwinters in California. The **Green-tailed Towhee** wintering along Coyote Creek below Tasman was seen again on 20 Feb (TeG) and 24 Feb (ViT). A **White-throated Sparrow** was found along Coyote Creek below Tasman on 11 Feb (KO, DQ). Two birds were at a Los Altos feeder on 7 Feb (PLN) and a single bird continued through February at a San Jose feeder (JAC).

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

Trip reports

Oka/Campbell Ponds

Feb. 23

We were able to find our three "target" species: Common Snipe and Green Heron were seen both in the southwest Oka Pond and in Los Gatos Creek on and near "Snipe Island" and an elegant Hooded Merganser pair was found in the creek.

A good variety of other ducks was still present on the ponds, including Mallard, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Ruddy Duck. Both Western and Horned Grebes were on the main Campbell Pond. Some of the Double-crested Cormorants were in breeding plumage sporting black wisps of feathering extending from the sides of their heads — showing why they are called "double-crested".

An Osprey flew in from the south, circled the main Campbell Pond, snatched up a fish, circled around some more, and then took off toward the south again with the fish in its talons.

Signalling the beginning of the spring season both Northern Rough-winged and Violet-green Swallows were seen over the Oka ponds with one N. Rough-winged perched cooperatively on the branch of a reed. (Thanks to Frank Vanslager and his Questar for finding that little bird which looked ever so much like a piece of cattail fluff to the naked eye.)

48 species were seen on this field trip. Among other birds of interest were American Kestrel, Belted Kingfisher, Nuttall's Woodpecker (pair), Cedar Waxwing, and American Goldfinch.

—Ann Verdi

Observers: David Armstrong (DA), Gina Barton (GB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Jack Cole (JAC), Emelie Curtis (ECu), Matthew Dodder (MDd), Al Eisner (AME), Andy Gibb (AG), Ted Gross (TeG), Robert A. Hicks (RAH), Sherry Hudson (SH), John Hutz (JH), Kirsten Holmquist (KH), Jolene Lange (JL), Calvin Lou (CL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Suzanne Morrone (SM), Paul Noble (PLN), Kris Olson (KO), Dave Quady (DQ), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LSu), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Frank Vanslager (FV), and Ann Verdi (AV).

Ogier Ponds

Mar. 2

The weather was beautiful and the birding good, if not spectacular, for the 28 birders who showed up for this Saturday outing to the Ogier Avenue ponds in Morgan Hill. Songbird activity was slow, though we didn't really hit the denser riparian areas, concentrating mostly on the ponds.

Raptors were plentiful, with lots of territorial activity. The White-tailed Kites were particularly noticeable; at least 2 pairs were observed. One bird sat on a stick nest at the west edge of the second pond north of the parking area while its mate perched nearby, nervously monitoring the activity of two Osprey perched not far away. Both Osprey appeared to be male. A Red-shouldered Hawk and an unidentified accipiter made brief appearances over the same pond. At one point a kite spent 2-3 minutes dive-bombing a pair of Red-tailed Hawks that was using the contested air space for some classic, foot-dragging courtship behavior.

Across Highway 101 to the east we observed numerous buteos and Common Ravens soaring over the ridge above the landfill. I was able to pull out a Ferruginous Hawk coursing over the hillside, and we observed it on and off for an hour, though never closely enough for a thoroughly satisfying look. Later we had an adult Golden Eagle in the same vicinity.

We had a decent variety of ducks, mostly in small numbers. There were about 15 Greater Scaup and at least 2 Lesser Scaup, and 2 male Canvasback. Everyone had a good close-up view of a male Wood Duck, and later we had a close fly-over of a pair. 3 Cinnamon Teal, 2 Common Mergansers, 2 Eared Grebes and 2 Common Moorhens rounded out the waterbirds of note.

Tree Swallows were actively investigating the sycamores for nest cavities, and we probably had 15-20 birds, including several cooperative perched individuals. No other swallow species were observed. Two male Nuttall's Woodpeckers, red crown feathers raised for battle, fought over a female in the same sycamore trees. Aside from a singing California Thrasher and Bewick's Wren, there wasn't much in the way of passerine activity.

—Grant Hoyt

The Avocet 7

Water District Strides Forward

by Craig Breon

SCVAS Executive Director

At the March 5 meeting of the Santa Clara Valley Water District Board I was once again impressed with the steps it is taking toward stewardship of both the water and land of our region. Two key agenda items that morning were central to our work with the District.

One project, the creation of an Environmental Advisory Committee, was the culmination of years of lobbying on our part. The second issue, revisions to the Board's Ordinance 83-2, may sound boring but could represent a strong step forward in the complex relationship between the District, local cities, developers, and our waterways. These revisions will likely be controversial, and we'll need to support the District's efforts for some time to come.

Environmental Advisory Committee

I've reported previously on efforts to establish this new committee, but the District's actions last month should mean that the committee will shortly be up and running, with a prominent place for SCVAS.

In the spring of 1998 I wrote an article entitled "Will there be a new tax for flood control?" for the first edition of our annual creek newsletter, *Creekside News*. In that, I stated, "If the environmental community is to support a special tax [for flood control], the following are concepts we should demand be included:

"1) Dedicate a specific portion of the tax to environmental restoration and community-oriented recreation projects . . .

"2) Appoint an environmental advisory group to consult with the Board on more progressive approaches to flood and erosion control and how it should spend its pro-environmental dollars.

"3) . . . engage local cities in a dialogue about how land use and development affect the Water District's missions of flood and erosion control as well as local natural resources."

Well, to our credit and theirs, the District has followed through on all three recommendations. The District's Measure B, endorsed by SCVAS and ap-

proved by more than 2/3 vote of the people in the fall of 2000 does dedicate funding toward restoration and recreation projects. In 2001 the District held its first symposium on land use decisions and how they affect the District's mission, and it will host another similar symposium this year.

Finally, the District will now gather together at least seven representatives of the conservation community for advice on how to spend the pro-environmental dollars generated by Measure B as well as advice on District environmental policies. The precise jurisdiction of the committee will be decided as we go forward.

At a minimum, the new committee will have the ear of the Board in allocating more than \$1 million annually toward riparian restoration, protection of watershed lands above reservoirs, and creek trails. Audubon will most likely have a seat on the committee, and I'm excited by the prospect of helping shape this new entity.

Ordinance 83-2

There's excitement of a different sort in contemplating the proposed revisions to the District's Ordinance 83-2. Excitement may not even be the right word unless, like me, you enjoy a good fight. I expect controversy down the road on this one.

Ordinance 83-2 has been in place for some time, giving the District a role in development within 50 feet of "District Facilities." To elucidate the tech-speak: all valley creeks are considered District facilities because the creeks convey floodwaters. In addition, 83-2 currently prohibits "non-stormwater discharges" from entering our waterways, which could be read as a ban on pollutants in creeks. Trouble is, the District has rarely enforced 83-2, and really has not known how it wants to enforce it.

The current proposed revisions to 83-2 would intrigue any Water District watcher. Only in draft form for now, the proposed 83-2 would extend the District's influence to development occurring within 150 feet of District facilities, rather than just 50. It would also assert the District's

interests in the construction and maintenance of detention basins and other stormwater facilities that could impact local surface or groundwater quality. Perhaps most importantly, the revisions would clarify enforcement of 83-2, clearly indicating that the District intends to enforce these rules to a greater extent than it has in the past. Some local cities and property owners will likely oppose all of these measures; all of them are also well justified.

Throughout the county, land use decisions are made that slowly degrade the ability of the District to do its job. New construction sites cause increasing sediment loads into local creeks, making our waterways murky. In addition, as pavement increases in an area of rapid development, peak flows increase during storms because there is less open land to absorb rain. Those increased flows often further erode the banks of our streams, leading to erosion problems that the District has to fix, and leaving streams clogged with sediments that the District must remove. So the District essentially cleans up after the mess, which is costly and time consuming considering all the regulations it must adhere to when working in sensitive riparian and wetland areas.

A revised ordinance 83-2 could give the District a better way to address these problems. However, it may be perceived by the cities as an infringement on their control over land uses, and some property owners will likely decry the revisions as just another layer of government bureaucracy.

What You Can Do

SCVAS should support the District in its work to make 83-2 effective. In the coming months we may need to rally members to stand up for the District's attempts to better protect our creeks and Bay. Our Environmental Advocate Kelly Crowley is developing an action-oriented e-mail list to help us reach out to our members for support. If you would like to help, please e-mail Kelly at <advocate@scvas.org>. Leave her your e-mail address, and we'll add you to the list.

Earth Day Around the Bay

Local event in Gilroy

SCVAS simply could not let Earth Day slip by without being a part of the festivities. Following a tradition started last year, SCVAS will be heading to Christmas Hill Park in Gilroy to take part in the city's Earth Day Festival. Join us on Saturday, April 27, from 10 AM - 2 PM for a fun-filled, earth-friendly celebration.

This year, as the event's co-sponsor, SCVAS invited over 35 other local environmental organizations to share in the commemoration. Groups such as the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, the Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center (also known as WERC), the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and the Santa Clara County Home Composting Education Program, will host tables and offer presentations throughout the day. A sampling of the day's presentations include a Water Magic Show from the Water District and a display of real, live wildlife from WERC.

SCVAS will also offer a number of activities including bird walks, nestbox building, a scavenger hunt, and nature arts and crafts. A broad collection of items from our Nature Shop, such as field guides, logo clothing, children's books, and jewelry, will be available. This will also be a special day for all of the gardeners out there, as the city will be promoting the Earth by giving away free bags of compost!

This Earth Day Festival promises to be an informative and fun-filled event for the entire family. Come celebrate the Earth and support the chapter by joining us at SCVAS' Second Annual Gilroy Earth Day Festival! For more details or directions, contact Jennifer at (408) 252-3740.

Celebrating the Bay

This April, Bay Area Earth Day will "Celebrate the Bay" at festivals from Gilroy to Golden Gate Park, from Santa Cruz to Sacramento, and from the South Bay to Berkeley. Volunteers will restore wetlands and riparian habitat, clean up creeks and beaches, and plant trees and native plants.

In keeping with the exceptional diversity of the Bay Area, over 40 organizations

will be organizing and participating in a wide variety of Earth Day events this spring, truly providing something for everyone. Activities include hands-on restoration projects, hikes and kayak outings, educational forums, and spiritual moments for reflection and connection to nature.

Earth Day Bay Walk

The Earth Day Bay Walk is a five-day trip starting in Mountain View on Thursday, April 18 and arriving in San Francisco on Earth Day - April 22. People are invited to join the walk for an hour, a day, or the entire trip.

At rallies along the way, participants will learn about issues affecting the Bay, such as San Francisco Airport's plan to fill up to one square mile of the Bay — an area twice as large as Treasure Island — for new runways. We also will learn about the possible acquisition of 19,000 acres of salt ponds in the South Bay for inclusion in the San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge.

This journey along the Bay Trail will be a great opportunity to learn about marshland restoration, water quality treatment, local wildlife, and historical issues, such as the successful campaigns to protect Bair Island and San Bruno Mountain. Come make new friends and get some exercise while enjoying our beautiful natural treasure — San Francisco Bay. For more information, visit www.BayAreaEarthDay.net/BayWalk or call Peter Drekeimer at (650) 320-8699.

Bay Area
Earth Day
Logo design
by Mike Bult



Bird Quiz

Between 1987 and 1993, local birders spent literally thousands of hours scouring every acre of Santa Clara County to document breeding bird activity for a county Breeding Bird Atlas. *Field Notes* Editor and county record-keeper Bill Bousman and his dedicated Atlas Committee are painstakingly reviewing the enormous atlas database and preparing the species accounts for publication of what promises to be a most valuable resource for anyone seeking information on the breeding birds of our county.

In the meantime, the atlas database provides a plethora of factoids, tidbits, and cold hard data (definitely not trivia — we take this stuff seriously!) to bring out the game-show contestant in local bird-lore aficionados. This month's quiz features a local architectural oddity and the birds nesting therein:

Moffett Field in Mountain View is the site of NASA's massive wind tunnel — a big, blue, rectangular building west of the airstrip — and the equally massive pair of blimp hangars. A surprising number of bird species have found these structures to be suitable breeding locations. The atlas database lists nine species of birds that have nested within the wind tunnel. Can you name them?

Answer on Page 11

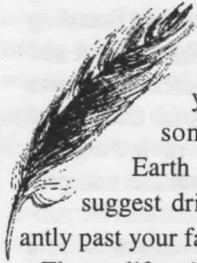
Visit BayAreaEarthDay.net for a list of upcoming Earth Day events or contact your favorite volunteer organization to find out how you can get involved.

Jessica Nusbaum is the coordinator of the regional Bay Area Earth Day Coalition. She can be contacted at (650) 962-9876 x302 or earthday@acterra.org.

Think globally, eat locally

by Kelly Crowley

SCVAS Environmental Advocate



Where did you eat lunch today? Are you still looking for some way to celebrate Earth Day? Well, I would suggest driving (or biking) defiantly past your favorite fast food place.

The proliferation of fast food restaurants is a brilliant example of all that is wrong with corporate America's treatment of the environment and unskilled workers. Ever increasing economies of scale to maximize profit margins have systematically destroyed small-scale ranching, gobbled up land at the fringes of cities, created new classes of marginalized workers in dangerous jobs, and changed the eating habits of an entire generation.

First off, I had better give thanks to Eric Schlosser, as I just recently finished reading his bestseller, *Fast Food Nation*. Many of the ideas and arguments I'm about to put forth I sensed, but was unable to articulate, or offer any substantial evidence of their truth until reading his book. It is a good read, and a highly recommended one for activists of any sort.

I started thinking about these issues when I moved to Indiana. As I drove across the country, I was struck by how similar everything looked. Every exit on the Interstate has a nearly-identical sampling of fast food eateries. If you're a picky eater, this is fantastic news, because a BigMac in California tastes exactly the same as a BigMac in Wisconsin. But if you're a small-time rancher, this poses a real threat to your way of life.

Hundreds of small ranches and meatpacking plants have been merged and consolidated, largely in response to McDonald's desire for product uniformity. After all, it is product uniformity that makes the California and Wisconsin

BigMacs identical. Consider a few statistics: Nearly 85% of the cattle slaughtered in the U.S. are slaughtered by four firms: ConAgra, Excel, National Beef, and Iowa Beef Packers. These four companies also control 20% of the nation's live cattle, either through company-owned feedlots or advance-purchase contracts. In addition, they can purchase cattle from huge ranchers through confidential agreements.

Independent ranchers have no idea what their cattle are worth, thanks to these confidential contracts. And if the price of cattle gets too high, the meatpackers simply have to flood the market with their own animals to drive the price back down. Market concentration of the beef industry today is at its highest level since the early 1900s, at which time a Federal Trade Commission inquiry determined that the five major meatpacking firms had long been participating in price-fixing and collusion.

It is a real shame that small-scale, free-range cattle companies are not more financially viable, because they tend to have less impact on the landscape. For example, at the Lasater Ranch in Colorado, which Schlosser cites in his epilogue, native grasses thrive, cottonwood trees grow along riparian areas, and antelope share the field with his cattle. Lasater and a few other innovative entrepreneurs in Colorado are trying to shift the direction the cattle industry has taken in response to the incredible demand for fast food hamburgers. Interestingly, their grass-fed cattle make for less fatty, more flavorful beef, which is often now considered a gourmet food item.

Much of this seems obvious and intuitive. A less obvious environmental impact of fast food chains is poor land use. I was surprised to see that an early McDonald's executive said, "We are not basically in the food business. We are in the real estate business. The only reason we sell fifteen-cent hamburgers is be-

cause they are the greatest producer of revenue from which our tenants can pay us our rent."

McDonald's Corporation is a landlord. It was one of the first companies to use satellite imagery for commercial purposes. Images were used to predict where sprawl was headed, to purchase land while it was relatively cheap, and ultimately to put a franchise within ten minutes' drive of every household in America. McDonald's Corporation owns the land on which most of its eateries sit, and leases the properties, at huge markups, to franchisees. Other fast-food chains and retailers, such as the Gap, have copied this overwhelmingly successful business model.

McDonald's also tightly controls what goes on at its franchises. It has standardized everything from the menu items to the architecture and inside appearance of all the buildings. In fact, the Corporation has fixed so many aspects of franchise operation that a franchisee's most significant variable cost is that of labor. Thus, wages are typically as low as the law will allow, and other benefits are virtually non-existent. Fast-food eateries depend on inexpensive laborers, usually high school students of low-income families. They are employed "at will," which often means working very early in the morning or late into the night, sometimes in violation of state labor laws. Turnover rates are extraordinarily high. None of this was as startling as the fact that these students could actually be risking their lives to work there.

Schlosser writes that four or five fast food workers are murdered every month, typically during a robbery committed by an irate former-employee. In fact, fast food restaurants are one of the more attractive robbery targets, because they keep thousands of dollars in cash in the registers. Convenience stores, such as 7-

cont'd next page

Think, eat *cont'd*

Eleven, keep little money in the register these days. Banks and gas stations often put their employees behind bullet-proof glass. Most other retail businesses now rely on credit card transactions.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the production chain, those who work in the slaughterhouses have, quite possibly, the "most dangerous job in America." The majority of these laborers are illegal immigrants. The working conditions are horrific, and the treatment of injured workers often unethical. What is the compensation for taking such a risky, undesirable job? About \$9 an hour.

But there is a glimmer of hope. Because of its enormous market power, McDonald's Corporation achieved more in several weeks than the Food and Drug Administration did in five years to enforce feed restrictions that may prevent "mad cow" disease. McDonald's was also more successful than animal rights groups at getting companies to stop mistreating cattle. If McDonald's were convinced that its customers demanded beef from locally-raised, grass-fed cattle or ethical treatment of slaughterhouse employees, things would probably change.

The point is that consumers are powerful. When a market is saturated, even one potential customer's decision is important to a business. During 2000, fast food sales were stagnant, and the industry gained no new customers. The market is saturated, and each American's decision about where to eat can send a message.

I think I will celebrate Earth Day, in part, by patronizing a unique, locally-owned restaurant, and by buying locally-grown produce. Because I want to send the message that I value family-owned ranches and farms, that I value employers who value their workers, and I value unique businesses that give character to my community. If you do the same, our message will be loud and clear.



Fundraiser *from Page 1*

For the SCVAS Board, our successes have also led to higher expectations. In 1998 the Board enacted a long-term plan with an emphasis on improving our conservation and education programs. That led to our expansion from two to four employees. We believe that we have shown the value of those lofty ambitions, but we also knew it would mean an increased focus on fundraising.

The annual appeal is our attempt to condense fundraising into the minimum time needed, allowing the Board, employees, and volunteers to focus on working for our members and the wider community of people and wildlife. As we are currently running at a deficit — eating into our reserve funds — we still need to increase our fundraising efforts. It may

mean we will need to increase our mailings to two per year, but that decision hasn't been made yet.

For now, however, we simply want to thank the many SCVAS members who contributed to our most recent appeal. More than 10% of our members responded — an impressive statistic for any direct mail appeal. For those of you who would still like to contribute, we still very much need you to. Contributions can be made through our website (www.scvas.org) or by using the form that comes on the back of your *Avocet* monthly. Finally, we are always looking for feedback from our members. Use the contact numbers in the *Avocet* to reach our staff or the Board and provide us with plaudits, criticisms, or suggestions.

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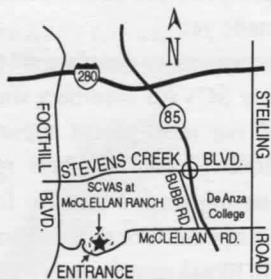
Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Barn Owl, Cliff Swallow, Common Raven, European Starling and House Sparrow were all documented as breeders in the NASA wind tunnel at Moffett Field between 1987 and 1993. Peregrine Falcon and White-throated Swift have been observed investigating the structure for possible nesting; Killdeer are suspected to nest on the roof; Black Phoebe and House Finch have nested nearby and are plausible, but undocumented, candidates.

(Thanks to Bill Bousman and Mike Rogers for pulling this info out of the database)

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

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

RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422

KEEPING CONNECTED: E-mail us at <e-network@scvas.org> so we can send informative brief notes of special concern.

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

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

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

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