



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

Nov. - Dec. 2002

SCVAS Protects Vasona Herons

Volunteer and Advocate negotiate with Park, Water Co. to save nestling

by Kelly Crowley

One late afternoon the last week of August, I stood on the bridge at Vasona Park peering through a scope at an empty Great Blue Heron nest. On my left side was a project manager with the San Jose Water Company; on my right was Linda Sullivan, dedicated monitor of the Vasona Great Blue Heron rookery for the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO).

Linda had e-mailed me only a week before, alarmed at the construction equipment and supplies that had appeared directly under the heron nest still containing the season's last chick. She had watched as the adult herons refused to return to their hungry chick amidst the construction noise, and she had worried that the chick would be scared off its nest before it was truly ready to fledge.

She talked to the rangers, who deferred to Parks & Recreation staff. Then, she pleaded with Parks & Rec staff, asking them to delay the project just a week, maybe two, until the last heron had left the nest. The staff refused, saying, "It's only one bird."

That's when Linda called my office. She had exhausted her resources, and hoped that the name "Audubon" might offer the

leverage she needed to save the bird. We made a few phone calls and wrote just one letter,

before the project manager at the San Jose Water Company agreed to delay the project until Linda gave him the "all clear."

Which is how I ended up standing on the Vasona Park bridge looking through a scope at an empty nest atop a eucalyptus tree. The last chick had successfully fledged. In all, the rookery had housed 8 nesting pairs and produced 19 chicks.

As we stood on the bridge processing the events of the last week, we slowly collected the park rangers who were passing by. "Linda! Do we still have a bird up there?" "Hi Linda! What do you have in the scope?"

Everyone nodded in agreement that the rookery was a real asset to the park, not to mention a growing attraction on the weekends when curious onlookers gather and ask, "What are you looking at?"

"I didn't know this was here," said the Water Company's project manager. "But I'm glad I know now. We'll stay far away if we ever have to come back on another project."

Many thanks to Linda for her hard work on behalf of SFBBO and the GBHEs (that's official nomenclature for "Great Blue Herons"). We're glad she thought to call us, and pleased we could help protect the herons. If you want detailed information about Linda's observations over the last nesting season, log onto www.okaponds.com.

*David Sibley
coming to
SCVAS Nov. 5!*

see page 4

**General Membership Meeting
"From Peregrine Falcons to Bald Eagles"
with Glenn Stewart
Palo Alto Cultural Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.
Wednesday Nov. 20, 7:30 PM**

From the photo it's obvious that Glenn Stewart is comfortable wrestling with a Bald Eagle. A long time staff member of the Predatory Bird Research Group at UC Santa Cruz, Glenn will be accompanied tonight by a tame Peregrine Falcon — a captive-reared bird in perfect health that has been raised especially to arouse public awareness of these spectacular raptors. This bird has never lived in the wild. But the



continued on Page 3

◆ *Holiday gifts available
at Nature Shop —Page 5*

◆ *Chestnut-sided Warbler in S.J.
—Field Notes, Page 6*

◆ *Christmas Bird Count info —Page 9*

◆ *15 acres of open space
no small matter in LAH —Page 10*

Nov.-Dec. 2002 Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

Saturday Nov. 2, 8:30 AM Grant Ranch County Park

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

Sunday Nov. 3, 8:00 AM Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Ann Verdi (408) 266-5108. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mt. View. All are invited but trip is designed for beginning birders.

Saturday Nov. 9, 8:00 AM Elkhorn Ranch

Half-day plus. Leader: Rick Fournier (831) 632-2473. Come bird one of Elkhorn Slough's premier walks. Property owners have granted day access for a group of 15 to bird the Moss Landing Wildlife Area. For enthusiastic birders, trip continues into afternoon. Meet in parking lot of Maloney's Restaurant located at Hwy 1 and north side of bridge in Moss Landing. Call leader to onfirm reservations. Shorebirds, ducks, passerines, vagrants. Bring food, liquids, dress in layers. **RC**

Sunday Nov. 10, 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 Hwy. Follow road for 1/2 mile, park in gravel lot at bend in road. **RC**

Wednesday Nov. 13, 8:30 AM Grant Ranch Co. Park

Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408) 265-9286. See directions under Nov. 2 listing. Freshwater ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Moderate 2-mile walk. **LO, RC**



Saturday Nov. 16, 8:30 AM Uvas Creek Park Preserve

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy go west on Tenth Street (Hwy 152 East exit) about a mile where it turns into 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 Nov. 17, 8:00 AM Oka Ponds/Los Gatos Creek Park

Half day. Leader: TBD (for info call Bob Reiling (408)253-7527). From Hwy 17 in Los Gatos take Lark Ave exit west. Turn right on Oka Rd., left on Mozart Ave then immediately right on Oka Lane. Meet just inside gate. **RC**

Wednesday Nov. 20, 9:00 AM Pescadero Marsh & State Beach

Half day. Leader: Sue James (650) 348-0315. Note: this is the third, not fourth Wednesday of Nov. Meet at first parking lot south of bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy 1. Shorebirds, loons, grebes, ducks, marsh birds. Bring your scope and several layers of warm clothes. **LO, RC**

Saturday Nov. 23, 8:00 AM Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve

Half day. Leaders: Leda Beth Gray (831)336-1127, Marion Smith. Trip limited to 16 participants by reservation only so call early to reserve space. \$5 fee per person. Be at Preserve gate between 7:45 and 8:00 only. (Do not arrive early; parking on Sand Hill Rd. is a traffic hazard.) From I-280 take Sand Hill Rd. west 2 miles to main gate on left. Moderately strenuous walking, 2-3 miles. Trip goes rain or shine.

Sunday Nov. 24, 8:30 AM Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Al Eisner [voice-mail (650)926-2018, eves. (650)364-3686]. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward hills then left on Toyon Ave., right on Penitencia Creek Rd. and continue into park. Meet in Rustic Lands parking area on right just before reaching "T" intersection. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk; be prepared for some mud! Possible entrance fee; **LO, RC**

Fri - Saturday Nov. 29 - 30, 9:00 AM Sac'to Valley Wildlife Refuges, Gray Lodge, Sutter Buttes

Full day and a half. Leaders: Mike Mammoser, Dave Cook & Frank Vanslager. For info contact Dave Cook (408) 275-1492. Meet at

Sacramento NWR headquarters on I-5 approx. 20 miles north of Williams. Take Road 68 (Norman Rd.) exit east from I-5, then immediately north on frontage road to Refuge. Bring spotting scope, full tank of gas. Allow 3 hours from South Bay (for overnight stay at Williams, confirm with Dave.) Ducks, geese, swans, cranes, and raptors. A great trip for beginners. (No children under 12, please.)

Saturday Dec. 7, 8:00 AM Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

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

Sunday Dec. 8, 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. As always, all are invited to attend but birding will be geared toward the beginning birder. Bring a spotting scope if you have one.

Wednesday Dec. 11, 9:00 AM Cambell Perc. Ponds/Los Gatos Creek

Half day, Leader: TBA. questions call (408) 996-9863. From I-280 (go south) or 85 (go north) on Winchester Blvd, then east on Hacienda, left on Dell, and right into park. Possible Hooded Mergansers. Entrance fee; easy 2-mile walk. **LO, RC**

Saturday Jan. 4, 7:30 AM County Chase

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Get a head start on your County Year List for 2003 with some vagrant chasing. Bring a full tank of gas, lunch, and field guides as we attempt to track down some of the unusual birds seen on Christmas Bird Counts in Santa Clara County. Meet in Alviso Marina parking lot. From Hwy 237 in San Jose take Gold St. north to end of street, bear left on Elizabeth St. then right on Hope St. to Marina parking lot. Be prepared to car pool. **RC**

Sunday Jan. 5, 9:00 AM Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Phyllis Browning (650) 494-6360. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mt. View. Birding geared toward beginning birders but all are encouraged to attend. Don't forget to bring your spotting scope

Plan Ahead:

Clay Kempf will lead a Panoche Valley trip on Saturday, 1/11/03.

Events Calendar

Tuesday Nov. 5, 7:30 PM
Board of Directors' meeting
McClellan Ranch Park.

Wednesday Nov. 6, 7:30 PM
Bay Area Bird Photographers
presents zoologist and photographer Roy Toft with "Birds in Motion" featuring diverse avian photos from around the globe. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Tuesday Nov. 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: **Osprey**.

Friday Nov. 15, 7:30 PM
"Birds of Los Gatos"
Freddy Howell, owner of the Wild Bird Center in Los Gatos and former SCVAS Board member, will speak and show slides on the birds of Los Gatos. She will also recommend bird books for all ages and discuss bird book selections at the Los Gatos Library. The event will be held in Los Gatos Town Council Chambers and is sponsored by Friends of Los Gatos Library. Doors open at 7 and refreshments will be served.

Wednesday Nov. 20, 7:30 PM
General meeting, Palo Alto
See Pg. 1 for details.

Wednesday Dec. 4, 7:30 PM
Bay Area Bird Photographers present entomologist and photographer Dennis Sheridan with his "Entomological Excursion to Ecuador" slide show. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

[Nov. 27/28: Office closed for Thanksgiving holiday]

Saturday Dec. 14, 10 AM - 2 PM
Holiday Open House
See Pg. 5 for details.

Sunday Dec. 15, all day
San Jose Christmas Bird Count

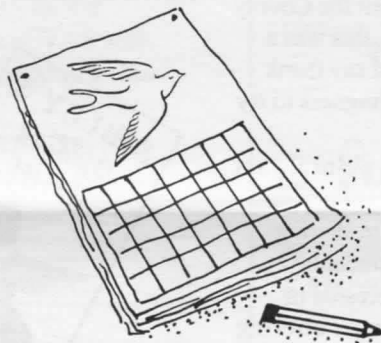
Monday Dec. 16
Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count

Saturday Dec. 28
Calero-Morgan Hill Christmas Bird Count

[December 25: Office closed for Xmas]

Plan ahead:

General Membership mtg.
"Breeding Birds of Alberta's Boreal Forest"
with Steve Shunk
Wednesday Jan. 15, 7:30 PM
Palo Alto Cultural Center



Mark your calendars:

Programs for the rest of the year, all to be held at Palo Alto Cultural Center, corner of Newell and Embarcadero Roads:

Wednesday Feb. 19 —
"California's *Important Bird Area Program*" with Dan Cooper, California's Director of Bird Conservation for National Audubon Society.

Wednesday Mar. 19 —
"Texas Birding" with Lee Hung & Mike Danzenbaker

Wednesday Apr. 16 —
"Common Insects and Their Relatives" with Bob Stewart

Wednesday May 21 —
"Birds of Cuba" with Al Jaramillo

Nov. Gen. Meeting

cont'd from Pg. 1

peregrine falcon recovery effort that the Predatory Bird Research Group at UCSC has fostered since its founding in 1975 measures success by the number of birds put back in the wild. The group was founded to save peregrines from extinction.

Tonight Glenn Stewart will bring us up to date and include current information on urban nest sites at the Oracle Corporate campus and on Bay Area bridges. Bald Eagle migrations across North America using satellite telemetry technology and Geographic Information System mapping are current studies that Glenn will also describe.

Having accomplished most of its goals with peregrine falcon management, the Predatory Bird Research Group now applies expertise to a wider range of species. Current studies involve administering a \$1 million grant from the California Energy Commission to study causes and solutions for raptor electrocutions on California transmission lines. The group also researches Burrowing Owl management, California Condor planning, and mitigation of impacts to endangered birds by birds of prey. The Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group (SCPBRG) has bred in captivity and released Harris' Hawks, Elf Owls, Aplomado Falcons, and has participated closely in the efforts to rebuild Bald Eagle and California Condor populations.

Glenn Stewart has been affiliated with the Predatory Bird Research Group as a biologist and project director since the organization was founded in 1975. During this time he has also served as a California State park ranger at Año Nuevo State Natural Reserve on the San Mateo Coast and as a biologist and public affairs officer for the Bureau of Land Management. He was a consultant to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service following the Exxon Valdez spill in Prince William Sound. He was the founding executive director for the Ventana Wilderness Sanctuary and implemented the successful program to re-establish Bald Eagles to the Central California region. He is now dedicated to reaching out to groups like ours to help us grasp the same goals of preserving birds of prey. This program, illustrated with excellent slides, is open and free to all members of the public.

Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz
SCVAS Programs Coordinator

November is a time when many of us think back over the past year and give thanks for our many good fortunes. With Thanksgiving in mind, I want to take a moment to thank all of SCVAS' hard working volunteers! There are many of you out there, and on behalf of the SCVAS Staff and Board, I wish you all a happy and health holiday season!

While I'm on the theme of thankfulness, I must acknowledge the Education Committee and the volunteers who helped to make this year's **Wildlife Education Day** better than ever. We attracted 500 attendees this year! Year after year, we expand the format for Ed Day - with your help, we were able to offer more hands-on activities, more presentations, and reach out to more youth of Santa Clara County. We appreciate all who gave their time to support this SCVAS tradition.

Another project that depends upon the power of our strong volunteers is the **Creek Mapping Project**. With over 40 volunteers working on four creeks throughout the County and giving approximately 835 collective hours, this was a huge project. I must take my hat off to you and say thank you for your time, your patience, and your willingness to try something that's a little bit new for us all!

To keep pace with our numerous programs, we're always looking for new volunteers. Many of our Education Programs need support from people interested in sharing their love of nature and the environment with students throughout Santa Clara County. If you are interested in **leading student field trips, giving slide shows, or offering in-class presentations**, please contact me today! All of our education materials come with background information or scripts to help prepare you. No experience with children or environmental education is needed, just a desire help spread the SCVAS message to our local schools.

Returning for a third year is **S.W.E.E.P.** (Storm Water Erosion Elimination Program) which is headed by Kelly, our Environmental Advocate. This watchdog project asks volunteers to monitor construction sites for Clean Water Act violations during the rainy season. You can help keep our creeks clean by keeping an eye on any "dirty" developers in your neighborhood or at your workplace. This project runs through April, so if you have some free time between now and next spring, please contact either Kelly or me.

We are also looking for volunteers at the beginning of November to help hand address envelopes for our **Year-end Fundraiser**. Every year we face the task of preparing over 4000 envelopes for this very important mailing. This is a great job to do either in the comfort of your own home or while enjoying the beauty of McClellan Ranch Park from the windows of our office. Contact me today so we can arrange a time for you to pick up your first bundle of envelopes!

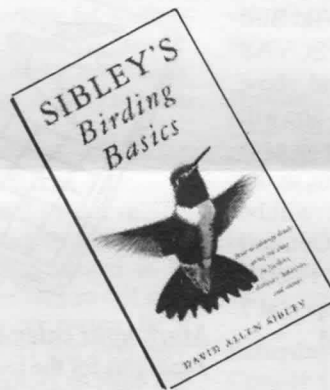
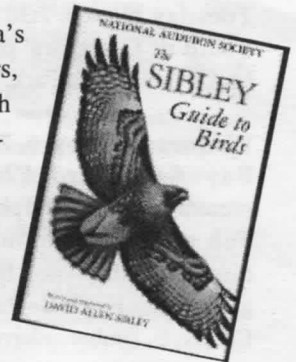
Jennifer Peritz, programs@scvas.org, (408) 252-3740

David Sibley to visit SCVAS

David Sibley, one of North America's pre-eminent bird authors and illustrators, will appear at SCVAS' McClellan Ranch Park offices in Cupertino for book signing and conversation on Tuesday, November 5 from 8:15 - 10 AM.

Sibley's newest book *Sibley's Birding Basics* is now available at our Nature Shop along with his other popular bird books *The Sibley Guide to Birds* and *Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*. Both have sold well nationally and are recognized for the author's beautiful artwork and information-packed text.

At 8:15 we will begin serving a light breakfast, followed by book signing and informal conversation with the author. Dropping in for just a few minutes is fine, but please RSVP by Mon. Nov. 4 so we can organize breakfast and parking.



David Sibley's newest book, *Birding Basics*, will be available for book signing on November 5.

Many thanks to our 11th Annual
Wildlife Education Day
Event Sponsors

The Mercury News

The Newspaper of Silicon Valley

Mayor Richard Lowenthal



Ideas for the Holidays!

Audubon Memberships

Give a gift that keeps giving this Holiday Season. A membership to SCVAS will do just that!

Each gift recipient will receive full membership benefits in the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) and/or the National Audubon Society (NAS). Benefits include special classes, field trips, activities, guest lectures and more! Plus, the recipient will receive the bimonthly *Avocet* newsletter, which is full of local news and events. Additionally, if you select NAS and SCVAS membership, the recipient will receive the award-winning *Audubon* magazine. We will also send a holiday greeting card to each recipient announcing this gift from you. Later, as a new member, the recipient will receive a coupon worth 20% off a single item in our Nature Shop.

As a thank-you from SCVAS for purchasing the gift membership, we'll also send you a coupon worth 20% off a single item in our Nature Shop. Plus, all the education and conservation programs at SCVAS will benefit directly from the increased membership in our chapter.

It's easy! Just fill in the following information (use additional paper if needed) and send it to SCVAS!

Recipient Name: _____

Recipient Address: _____

Recipient City, State and Zip: _____

Select: \$15 SCVAS, or \$20 NAS and SCVAS membership



Recipient Name: _____

Recipient Address: _____

Recipient City, State and Zip: _____

Select: \$15 SCVAS, or \$20 NAS and SCVAS membership



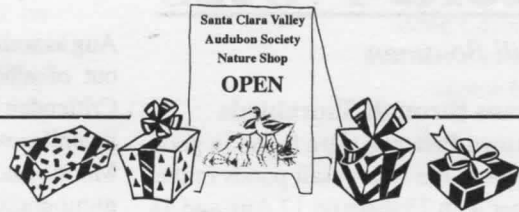
Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

Your City, State and Zip: _____

Your Phone: _____

Please list your phone in case we have a question about your order. Mail your list to SCVAS, 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, CA 95014. Enclose a check made out to SCVAS for the total amount and in the spirit of the holidays, you might consider including a donation to SCVAS with your order!





Nature Shop Holiday Open House


Saturday, December 14

10 am - 2 pm


Featuring Refreshments, Discounts and...


 the newest edition of *The National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America*


 David Sibley's latest book, *Birding Basics*

 Our great selection of other bird and nature books

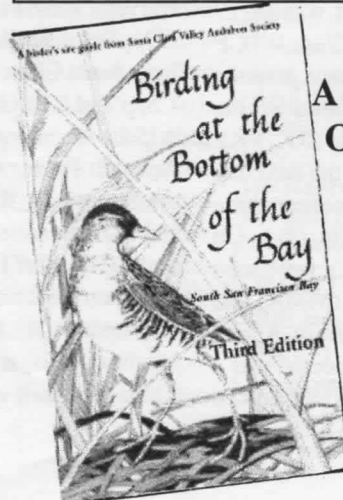
 Ornaments with bird and nature themes

 T-shirts and Jewelry

 Holiday cards and note cards

 Bird feeders, seeds and suets

The Nature Shop is also open Monday - Friday from 10 - 5 and Saturdays from 10 - 2.



A great gift!
Order *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay* on page 8!

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Pelicans through Shorebirds

Brown Pelicans were found in good numbers in the Alviso salt ponds in late summer with 73 there on 17 Aug and 78 counted on 14 Sep (MMR). An **American Bittern** flushed at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 29 Sep (RWR et al.) was the first of the winter season. A male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Calero Reservoir on 28 Sep (AV) was also the first one found this fall. A **Blue-winged Teal** in the New Chicago Marsh on 11 Sep (MDe) was the only one found in August and September. The first **Merlin** of the fall was near Page Mill and I-280 on 25 Sep (LCh et al.). An adult **Pacific Golden-Plover** in partial alternate plumage was found in the New Chicago Marsh on 1 Sep (DBr, PBr). This bird was seen more or less regularly through 15 Sep (m. ob.) and still showed extensive alternate plumage. A second bird, a basic-plumaged adult, was found nearby on 10 Sep (JW, CS) and remained at least through 22 Sep (v. ob.). A smattering of **Snowy Plover** was welcome after the scarcity of recent years. Two birds were found on the oxidation ponds at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 5 Aug (JAC, LSu) and were seen irregularly after that with one found at least to 19 Aug (KO). Two more birds were found north of the old Alviso Marina on 27 Aug (PK, RK), four were there the next day (RC), and at least one of these birds remained through 18 Sep (RWR, FV). The number of fall **Lesser Yellowlegs** seemed typical of recent years. A high count was of 19 birds at the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 1 Sep (MMR). A juvenile **Ruddy Turnstone** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 13 Aug (RK, PK). Two birds were found there the next day (JiD) and one to two birds were seen there irregularly through 20 Aug (m. ob.). On 17 Aug, two to three Ruddy's were seen on Salt Pond A14 in Alviso (MMR) and on 18 Aug a single bird was in Alviso Slough (MJ). Much less expected was a **Black Turnstone** in Alviso Slough on 18

Aug as well (MJ). A **Sanderling** molting out of alternate plumage was seen in Crittenden Marsh on 4 Aug (JiD). Three juveniles were seen north of the Alviso Marina on 13 Sep (RK, PK). Moderate numbers of juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found in early August. Three birds were seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 2 Aug (RWR, FV) and single birds remained here through 8 Aug (v. ob.). Two juveniles were seen in the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 4 Aug (MMR, MJM, JiD), where birds had been found in late July. A single juvenile was seen on Crittenden Marsh (MDe) on 15 Aug and another juvenile was on the Calabazas Ponds on

this year for Pectorals with juveniles found there 31 Aug–14 Sep (m. ob.) and a high count of at least eight birds on 10 Sep (JW, CS). Other locations included two birds on the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP on 1 Sep (MMR), one to two birds on the CCFS waterbird pond 10 and 23 Sep (RWR, FV), and one on Salt Pond A1 in Mountain View on 16 Sep (WGB). An adult **Stilt Sandpiper** was found on the ponds near Spreckles and State (New Chicago Marsh), Alviso on 17 Aug (MMR). This bird has remained at least through 18 Sep (m. ob.). A second bird, a juvenile, was found in the New Chicago Marsh on 11 Sep (JW, CS) and was still found there through 14 Sep (v. ob.). The female **Ruff**, first found in New Chicago Marsh in July, was found there occasionally in August and more regularly in September (m. ob.).

Black Turnstone, Heermann's Gull and Common Murres were overshadowed by a Chestnut-sided Warbler along Coyote Creek

18 Aug (MJM). The passage of **Baird's Sandpipers** was fairly good this year. A juvenile was found in Crittenden Marsh on 3 Aug (MJM) and numbers increased there peaking at five juveniles on 15 Aug (MDe) and tapering off to a single bird there on 20 Aug (KO). A single juvenile was seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP on both 16 Aug (WGB) and 20 Aug (RWR, FV, JiD). Six juveniles were seen on the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 1 Sep and a single bird was in Salt Pond A15 in Alviso on 14 Sep (both MMR). An adult **Pectoral Sandpiper**, found on the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 15 Aug (AME), remained through 20 Aug (v. ob.). The first fall juvenile was a bird found on tidal mudflats at the Palo Alto Baylands on 29 Aug (MJM), an unusual location for this sandpiper. The New Chicago Marsh was the favored location

Gulls through Murres

An immature **Heermann's Gull** flew by the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 17 Aug (MMR, NL). Typically for this rare South Bay visitor, it did not remain. This gull was last seen locally in November 1998. A **Common Tern** in basic plumage was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 11 Aug (AME) and remained to be enjoyed by many birders until 4 Sep (m. ob.). A peak count of 61 **Least Terns** staging on Salt Pond A2E was obtained on 3 Aug (MJM). The numbers there dropped in August, with the last birds noted on 11 Aug (MJM). Nearby on the Alviso salt ponds, at least 17 birds were found on 17 Aug and two were still there on 31 Aug (both MMR). A juvenile **Black Tern** was seen on the Sunnyvale WPCP oxidation ponds on 17 Aug (CL, KO). Two juveniles were found there by 20 Aug (JiD) and the number had reached four by 25 Aug (PLaT, JMe, DBr). Many birders had the chance to observe this rare fall migrant before the last birds departed after 4 Sep (DQ). Up to five adult **Black Skimmers** were seen on Salt Pond A16 in Alviso through 21 Aug (v. ob.). A grown chick was seen on 21 Aug (PD,

Field Notes *cont'd*

LSu) and appears to have fledged. The wintering flock at Charleston Slough started to re-establish when two birds were seen nearby on Salt Pond A2W on 12 Aug (MJM). This flock grew steadily and contained at least 13 birds by 23 Sep (WGB, v. ob.). A single bird was seen on the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 30 Aug (MJM), where they are less frequently found. A sickly juvenile **Common Murre** was found near Hook's Isle on 29 Aug (TM) and was dead by the next day (MMR). A second juvenile was found nearby in the Palo Alto Baylands on 30 Aug (RK, PK) and was rescued (*fide* DB). On 31 Aug, another murre was picked up near Newby Island (*fide* MJM). Most of our local records are of juveniles or adults who come too far down the Bay in August and apparently starve for lack of suitable food.

Swifts through Grackles

The fall migration of **Vaux's Swifts** seemed more dispersed and lower in numbers than in recent years. The highest count was 10 birds at Spreckles and State in Alviso on 29 Aug (RWR, FV). The male **Costa's Hummingbird** seen at a San Jose feeder in July was observed there again on 2 Aug and 3 Sep (JP). A single **Lewis's Woodpecker** in San Antonio Valley on 25 Sep (RWR et al.) was the only report this fall. The fall passage of **Willow Flycatchers** seemed normal along creeks flowing into the South Bay with a maximum of nine birds found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 2 Sep (MMR, MJM). One to two **Bank Swallows** were found in Alviso, with the first seen on 31 Aug (MMR) and two birds on 1 Sep (MJM, RK, PK, RWR, FV). The last migrant was found on 4 Sep (AME). Single birds were also seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 1 Sep (RJ) and 8 Sep (JMa, JL). An adult and juvenile **American Dipper** were observed in Alum Rock Park on 17 Aug (LM et al.). Multiple **Phainopepla** were seen north of San Antonio Junction on 25 Sep (RWR et al.).

Single fall **Nashville Warblers** were seen at the Alviso Environmental Education Center (EEC) on 11 Sep (LSu,

PD), along Alamitos Creek on 16 Sep (JMa), and on Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 26 Sep (WGB). The best find of the fall, a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was discovered along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 24 Sep (MMR, RK) and was seen by many through the end of the month. This is the fourth county record of this eastern vagrant. It was an excellent fall for the **Blackpoll Warbler**, another eastern vagrant. One bird was found in the same area as the Chestnut-sided on 24 Sep (MMR, RK) and was also seen later that day and the next day as well (MJM). A second bird was found at the end of Embarcadero Way in Palo Alto on 26 Sep (SBT, MMR) and probably the same bird nearby the following day (RWR, FV). Then, on 27 Sep, three Blackpolls were found where Alamitos Creek enters Almaden Lake (SBT, MJM). These birds were distinctive in that one was a bright adult, the second was dull plumaged, and the third lacked tail feathers. One or more of these birds was seen later in the day (PD, AV) and one or two on 28 Sep (JP, JMa, AV). An adult male **American Redstart** was found along Stevens Creek below L'Avenida on 15 Sep (MMR) to continue this fall's vagrant story line. Additionally, an adult female redstart was banded along Coyote Creek above Tasman on 20 Sep (SH). The report of a **Northern Waterthrush** along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 21 Sep (DW) was also a good find. Another waterthrush was found along Stevens Creek below L'Avenida on 30 Sep (MMR, WGB). A drab 1st-year **MacGillivray's Warbler** was seen on Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 2 Sep (MMR et al.) and another bird was found there on 22 Sep (PD, LSu). Scarce as a fall migrant, a **Chipping Sparrow** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 24 Sep (RK) and another bird was found along Stevens Creek below L'Avenida on 30 Sep (WGB). More rare, a **Brewer's Sparrow** was found in the fennel patch at the Palo Alto Baylands on 22 Sep (DK) and was seen there multiple times through 24 Sep (m. ob.). Another

"A Northern Waterthrush
along Coyote Creek
was also a good find."
sketch by BB-W



good fall vagrant was a male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** that turned up at a south San Jose feeder on 7 Sep (K&LF). An immature **Blue Grosbeak** lacking tail feathers was found along Stevens Creek below L'Avenida on 30 Sep (MMR, WGB). Our summer **Great-tailed Grackle** season wound down with two birds still at the Parkway Lakes on 2 Aug (KO, DQ) and a male on Almaden Lake on 15 Aug (JMa).

Observers: Deborah Bartens (DB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Dennis Braddy (DBr), Patricia Braddy (PBr), Roy Carlson (RC), Les Chibana (LCh), Jack Cole (JAC), Jim Danzenbaker (JiD), Miguel Demeulemeester (MDe), Peggy Don (PD), Al Eisner (AME), Karl & Linda Fowler (K&LF), Sherry Hudson (SH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Mark Jenkins (MJ), Dan Keller (DK), Roland Kenner (RK), Pat Kenny (PK), Jolene Lange (JL), Peter LaTourrette (PLaT), Nick Lethaby (NL), Calvin Lou (CL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), John Meyer (JMe), Tom Montoux (TM), Lisa Myers (LM), Kris Olson (KO), Janna Pauser (JP), Dave Quady (DQ), Mike Rogers (MMR), Bob Reiling (RWR), Cagan Sekercioglu (CS), Linda Sullivan (LS), Scott Terrill (SBT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Jay Withgott (JW), 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

Trip reports

Elkhorn Slough Sept. 8

Dense fog on the coast greeted this SCVAS fall season opener to Elkhorn Slough, but glorious sunlight soon broke through. Jetty Road quickly provided some splendid comparisons: two Clark's Grebes swimming beside two Western Grebes, a Common Murre near a Pigeon Guillemot between the jetties, Snowy and Semipalmated Plovers on the outer beach, various terns and gulls, and all three cormorants (Pelagics clinging to the sides of the bridge). As we left, itinerary-driven, the tide was returning and, tantalizingly, shorebirds were everywhere; maybe a trip solely to that fabled little road is the way to spend a day, just going back and forth and watching birds come and go as the tides turn.

A few species dribbled in through the eucalyptus patch at a rather quiet Moonglow Dairy as we birded along the bluff, again in enchanting light. Looking back, we saw Jetty Road immersed again in fog. Moonglow's Peregrine Falcon went by in a leisurely trajectory low over thoroughly alarmed shorebirds — some fled, some froze. We kept surveying the sandpipers there in hopes of finding Baird's; what we got for our efforts were lessons in the variety of hundreds of Least and dozens of Western Sandpipers.

We ended the day at Harkins Slough (losing a couple of cars en route? Uh-oh Frank, where are you?), where two White-faced Ibises and a Common Moorhen caught our attention, as did a young one-banded Killdeer and a fishing flotilla of White Pelicans. Finally and briefly we had our Baird's Sandpiper. A Great-tailed Grackle also made an appearance. Our list tallied about ninety species on this perfect late summer day. Inside each of our lists were those moments of special clarity that make a birder's day.

—Todd Newberry

Ogier Ponds Sept. 29

Twenty plus birders saw most of the target species on this trip to Ogier Ponds. Our first target bird, seen as the group gathered near the parking area, was a female Wood Duck perched in the far southwestern corner of "West Pond." This bird was later seen flying north. The brushy area north of the entrance road was very birdy and a walk through the area produced numerous warblers (Yellow, Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned, including a gray-headed form), sparrows (White-crowned, Song, Savannah, and Lincoln's), California Towhee, California Thrasher (heard only), Lesser Goldfinch, Anna's Hummingbird,

Bewick's Wren, a female Nuttall's Woodpecker and a Willow Flycatcher. Birds were so numerous that we later had to ignore them to maintain our schedule (after all, this was not a rare bird chase!).

Unfortunately the ponds north of the entrance road were fairly empty containing only American Coots, Pied-billed Grebes, Gadwall, a few Ring-necked Ducks and an American Wigeon. A Loggerhead Shrike was well seen as were American Crow, Red-tailed Hawk, White-tailed Kite and American Kestrel. Swallows flew high overhead defying identification as to species.

Later as we walked along the road to the Model Airplane Field an adult Red-shouldered Hawk perched in the snag on the western edge of West Pond, an immature Golden Eagle was spotted soaring low over the easternmost ponds (initially, some had trouble separating the eagle from nearby vultures) and a Spotted Sandpiper (one of two seen) was bathing near the inlet to West Pond. A Great Blue Heron and Great Egret posed on the distant edges of the ponds. A small group of Mallards was just upstream of the ponds and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet was seen in the trees nearby. At least two Green Herons flushed from the southernmost ponds and sharp-eyed Kirsten Holmquist found a Sora in the reeds on the far side of the southeasternmost pond (parts of the bird were eventually seen by all present). In the same pond a female Ruddy Duck was closely followed by three of her four recently hatched young.

As we mounted a small rise south of the pond, Roland Kenner volunteered to "bird-dog" the eastern edge of the pond and everyone soon got great views of an American Bittern he flushed, as it flew most of the length of the pond and landed out of sight in the reeds. Later as we headed north on the bike path a Hutton's Vireo was well seen and then as we neared our parked cars a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew east with its rapid flap-flap-glide motion. Big misses included Osprey, Common Merganser and gulls of any kind.

—Bob Reiling

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2002 CBC's coming in December

Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) are a holiday birding highlight for birders throughout North America. SCVAS sponsors four different CBCs (see map below), as volunteer bird-counters scour the habitats of 15-mile diameter count circles to record all birds seen and heard during a 24-hour period.

An early newsletter deadline precludes the listing of detailed contact information this year; interested participants should contact their section leader or compiler from prior years. (The SCVAS office will have more detailed contact info. in December.) Rain or shine, a CBC is a great day of birding, and the evening countdown dinner invariably yields some exciting bird findings and warm camaraderie. Here are brief rundowns of the local SCVAS-sponsored CBCs:

San Jose

Compiler Ann Verdi reminds us that the annual San Jose CBC will be held on Sunday, Dec. 15. The countdown dinner will return to the Leininger Center in Kelley Park after two years at a different location. There is a \$5 fee for all CBC participants who wish to be recognized in the officially published CBC database.

Palo Alto

On the following day, Monday Dec. 16, the Palo Alto CBC will take place. Matthew Dodder, who very capably assumed compilation duties three years ago, is unavailable this year, and a new compiler had not been recruited at press time. Birders are advised to contact their section leaders from last year to receive assignments for this year's CBC.

Morgan Hill

Yet another CBC reminder — the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 28. Last year we had rain and rarities—who knows what this year will bring? We have a huge area to cover and lots of birds to count, so we need all the eyes and ears we can get! Birders of all experience levels are welcome to take part.

Areas within the count circle needing coverage include Almaden Quicksilver and Santa Teresa County Parks; Almaden, Calero, Chesbro, and Guadalupe Reservoirs; the northern half of Anderson Reservoir; Almaden Lake Park; the northern Coyote Valley, including Ogier Ponds and Parkway Lakes; Coyote Ridge in the Hamilton Range; and the summit of

Loma Prieta. We could use help everywhere!

If you are interested in participating in the count please contact John Mariani before Dec. 27th at (408) 997-2066, or via e-mail at <redknot@worldnet.att.net>

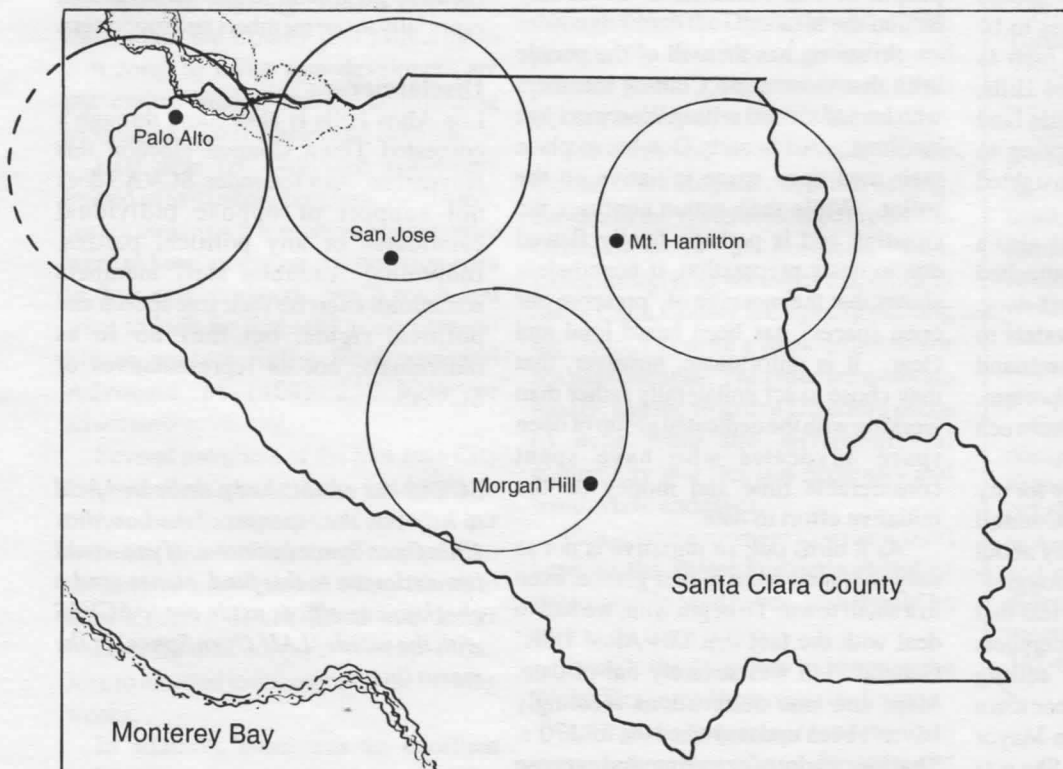
Mt. Hamilton

This year's CBC date has not been set, but compiler Don Schmoltdt and his cadre of hard-core birders will cover the rugged lands in the eastern part of Santa Clara County with their usual diligence some time between the 17th and 28th of December. Contact Don at (916) 739-8821 for information.

CBC Website

Ann Verdi passes along this valuable resource for real CBC fanatics:

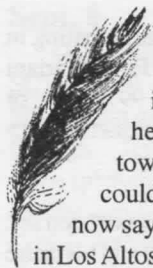
The official web site for all CBCs is <http://birdsource.cornell.edu/>. All of our local CBCs can be pulled up from this website, not only for this past year but also for previous years. All data for each CBC is shown including number of species seen, total number of birds, rare birds, and listing of all participants. It's a very comprehensive website!



This simplified map of Santa Clara County shows the approximate location of the count circles which measure 15 miles in diameter. BB-W

Westwind battle heats up in Los Altos Hills

by Craig Breon



In my nine years with SCVAS, I have never worked on an issue in Los Altos Hills. I had heard that the politics of the town was often divisive... and could get a little mean. I can now say that SCVAS is very active in Los Altos Hills, and yes, the political scene is "interesting," to say the least.

Like so many issues, an SCVAS member brought this one to our attention (thank you, Dianne). A small open space preserve and equestrian facility known as Westwind Barn was evidently threatened, not by developers, but by the town's own Council. I was told that a majority of Council members were considering selling the 15-acre Westwind site, and perhaps other parkland and open space areas as well.

Westwind's importance

While 15 acres may not seem like such a big deal compared to acreage at stake in many issues our chapter takes on, there's an important principle at play here. As we all know, our parks and open space preserves are vital in making this a beautiful place to live, and they should not be seen as potential resources to be sold. Still, with land values as high as they are in an area like Los Altos Hills, you can imagine that selling a little land here or there might prove tempting to some Council members (the short-sighted ones).

As it turns out, Westwind is also a lovely little preserve, essentially attached to the larger Byrne Preserve next door. Westwind contains some headwaters to Adobe Creek and a small area of wetland vegetation. Perhaps more important, Westwind serves as a corridor between other open space preserves.

With the scene set, I was ready for my first Los Altos Hills Town Council meeting last June. What can I say about the experience? Perhaps "Hooo, doggie!" would cover it. Not only was it clear that two or three of the Council members were in fact leaning toward selling Westwind and perhaps some other town properties, but the attitude of then-Mayor Toni Casey was a waker-upper. She was

rude and often disdainful of public input. To be fair, it was quite clear that many people in the audience had no love lost for her either. True small town entertainment!

After that first meeting, I was all the more interested in working on this issue. Since then our chapter has played an important supporting role to a group of local open space advocates, led by the hard-working Nancy Couperus (we all owe her a big "Thanks!" when this is over).

The initiative

We chose to use the initiative process to help preserve Westwind and many other town-owned properties. The concept is pretty simple: Before any town-owned properties are sold, there should be a vote of the people approving the sale. Given the value local open spaces have for a clear majority of the people in our region, this should protect these lands long-term. That concept may be simple, but getting from here to there has proved resource-intensive, detail-oriented, and, most recently, complicated in its ramifications. Still, the initiative is moving forward, and it appears that the people of Los Altos Hills are solidly behind the idea.

So strong has the will of the people been that those same Council members who leaned toward selling Westwind just last June voted in early October to place their own open space initiative on the ballot. While their action confuses the situation and is perhaps fatally flawed due to hasty preparation, it nonetheless shows that the message of "preserve our open spaces" has been heard loud and clear. It is unfortunate, however, that they chose to act unilaterally rather than working with the dedicated group of open space advocates who have spent considerable time and money on the initiative effort to date.

As it turns out, an initiative is not as easy as it may seem at first glance, even in a small town. To begin with, we had to deal with the fact that Los Altos Hills' General Plan was severely out-of-date. Maps and land designations seemingly haven't been updated since the mid 70's. That meant a lot of extra time and expense

for the experienced law firm hired to draft the initiative.

Next, we had to make sure that our initiative was tough, but not too tough. We had to be flexible enough in our language so that things like granting a simple trail easement across a property, or perhaps a utility easement, wouldn't require the town to hold a special election, which can be costly. This is very much in line with Audubon philosophy — be passionate advocates for your cause, but be reasonable and do your homework.

We'll keep you updated as this effort moves forward. For now it appears that we will be gathering signatures for the initiative in late October and into November, and there may be a special election on the Open Space Initiative next spring. Good progress so far, despite an unhelpful Town Council. If you would like to volunteer to gather signatures or help out in some way, just give me a call.

It strikes me that with the possible exception of Monte Sereno SCVAS has now either led or helped lead a conservation campaign in every jurisdiction in Santa Clara County during my nine years here. There's plenty of credit to go around in this achievement, especially to our members and supporters.

Disclaimer—

Los Altos Hills is also going through a contested Town Council election this November. As a reminder, SCVAS does not support or oppose individual candidates or any political parties. Individual Audubon staff members sometimes exercise their free speech and political rights, but they do so as individuals, not as representatives of SCVAS.

SCVAS has established a dedicated fund to help pay the expenses of the Los Altos Hills Open Space Initiative. If you would like to donate to this fund, please send a check to our offices made out to SCVAS with the words 'LAH Open Space' in the memo line.

Advocate's Corner

Vote "Yes" on Prop 50 on Nov. 5!

by Kelly Crowley

SCVAS Environmental Advocate

This is your reminder to get out and VOTE! Although SCVAS does not get involved in candidate races, we do occasionally endorse propositions and initiatives. This year we have endorsed Proposition 50, a \$3.44 billion bond measure that would fund a variety of water-related programs. Half of that money would go toward coastal protection and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, a state and federal project to restore fisheries, and improve water quality and supply in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta. Prop 50 will also fund safe drinking water programs and acquisition/restoration of coastal wetlands and watersheds. When you vote, vote "yes" on Prop 50!

Rainy Season, SWEEP Program Underway

On October 15th we officially began the rainy season! With any luck, the rains have actually begun by the time you are reading this update. Just like last year, we are again monitoring construction sites throughout the County (but primarily in San Jose) to make sure developers are preventing erosion and not contributing to siltation of our creeks and streams.

Last year six dedicated volunteers helped us expand our program. As always, we are seeking a few more volunteers who want to keep an eye on construction sites in their neighborhood. We'll teach you what to look for and lend you a camera! Please contact Kelly, Environmental Advocate at (408) 252-3740 or advocate@scvas.org.

Several members of the San Jose City Council were particularly interested in the stormwater report (available on our website), which detailed our findings from the last two rainy seasons. Many thanks to Ken Yeager, Chuck Reed and Linda LeZotte for their support. We expect San Jose to respond to our report in the coming weeks.

In addition, there was an excellent article featuring our creek monitoring

efforts in *The Metro*, a weekly South Bay publication. If you are interested in reading this article and have Internet access, go to www.metroactive.com and look in the archives section.

Call to Action: Support Water District's Resource Protection Effort

If you live near a creek in Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Los Altos, Santa Clara and other suburban neighborhoods you may have noticed that our creeks don't look much like creeks. Most of them are straight, concrete-lined channels, and where there is vegetation, often much of it consists of invasive species that choke out habitat for birds and other wildlife and contribute to flooding and poor water quality.

But indeed, times are changing. The Santa Clara Valley Water District is making a commitment to protect water quality and habitat in our creeks and streams via the implementation of a Water Resource Protection Ordinance (WRPO), through which the District would require permits for an array of activities and projects within 150 feet of a Santa Clara County waterway.

Although the exact details of the ordinance are not public as of this writing, the idea of the Water Resource Protection Ordinance is a fantastic one. Unfortunately, as we expected, cities in Santa Clara County are already pushing the District to write a weak ordinance or not pass one at all. The cities are speaking loudly, and the Board of Directors needs to hear from the environmental community that this is a necessary and worthwhile endeavor.

Please take a moment to write a short letter to the Water District's Board of Directors. In your letter, you should be sure to do three things:

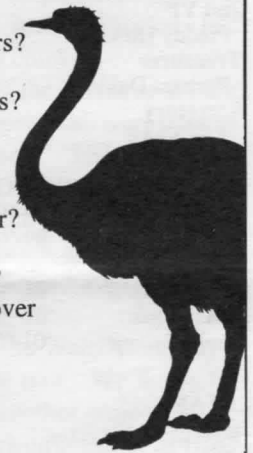
1. Ask the Directors to approve the Water Resource Protection Ordinance.
2. Urge the District not to succumb to pressure from the cities, and to write and

approve an ordinance that provides maximum protection for our creeks, streams and water resources.

3. Thank the Water District for taking action to implement its mission statement regarding protection of the environment. Send your letters to: SCVWD Board of Directors, 5750 Almaden Expressway, San Jose, CA 95118

Tour Kenya!

Are you —
Breathless
for Bee-eaters?
Drooling
over Drongos?
Hoping for
Hamerkop?
Longing for
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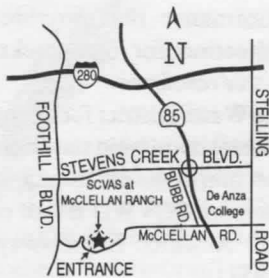
Golden Gate Audubon past president Steve Margolin is organizing a GGAS-sponsored two-week trip to Kenya, departing on January 18, 2003. Besides ostriches, turacos, hornbills, rollers, waxbills, widowbirds and whydahs, just for starters, there will be plenty of time to look at lions, hippos, zebras, rhinos, gazelles and wildebeests.

Cost is \$4,495 per person, double occupancy (including airfare from San Francisco). A one-week extension (\$2,695 per person) will take the group to Amboseli, Tanzania, the Serengeti and other exciting destinations. For more information or a detailed itinerary, call Steve Margolin at (530) 342-6476.

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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 bi-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.

2002 Volume 49, Number 8

Chapter Members in the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) receives the SCVAS newsletter, *The Avocet*

SCVAS Membership \$15

Joint Members in the national Audubon society (NAS) and Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society receive Audubon magazine and the SCVAS Newsletter, *The Avocet*

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