



# THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

Jan. - Feb. 2003

## Chalk one up for the good guys

### Volunteers lead grass-roots campaign to save open space in Los Altos Hills

by Craig Breon

While we can't quite claim victory for local open space yet, things in Los Altos Hills are looking up, way up—"hawk on a thermal" up.

As was reported in the last *Avocet*, the threat to sell some open space properties in this community rallied many caring people to mount an initiative to preserve open space and recreational lands and also change the make-up of the Town Council. I am elated to report that this grass-roots citizens' effort has been a huge success.

Signature gathering for the initiative began on October 31, Halloween. Yours truly, dressed in costume—aviator jacket and dorky-looking World War I leather cap—joined a dozen others on the streets of downtown Los Altos for the signature gathering kick-off. Stalwart SCVAS volunteer Ruth Troetschler was also on hand that day (thanks, Ruth).

One month later, on December 2, the backers of the initiative submitted 1240 signatures to the Town Clerk. Only 822 valid signatures were required, but you always want some extras just to be sure. Then, on December 5, the County Registrar of Voters issued a "Certificate of Sufficiency" affirming that more

than enough signatures had been collected. That started a 40-day time period in which the Town Council must decide whether to adopt the initiative or call for a special election. If they adopt the initiative, it has the same force of law as if we had won the special election.

Speaking of the Town Council, there are two new faces on the dais. Dean Warshawsky and Breene Kerr, the two candidates who supported the Citizens Open Space Initiative, won handily on election night. "Dean and Breene" (as the campaign labeled them) received 2409 votes and 2508 votes, respectively. Their opponents, supported by Council members who seemed to favor selling off some open space parcels, received 1005 and 1003 votes. It would be fair to say, then, that the good people of Los Altos Hills issued a mandate for open space preservation. It would also be fair to say that those same people would like to see a Town Council with a more open-minded, more respectful tone, which I think they will get.

Congratulations to Dean and Breene and the many people who worked hard for the open space initiative. Open space advocates hope the new Town Council will rescind the old council's resolution calling for a weaker open space measure to go to the voters, and instead adopt the Citizens Open Space Initiative, sparing the town the cost of a special election when we know what the results of that would be (victory!).

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### **General Membership Meetings:**

#### **"Breeding Birds of Alberta's Boreal Forest"**

**with Steve Shunk**

**Wednesday, January 15**

Palo Alto Cultural Center  
Newell & Embarcadero Rds. (NE corner)  
Refreshments 7:30 Program 8:00

#### **"California's Important Bird Area Program"**

**with Dan Cooper**

**Wednesday, February 19**

Palo Alto Cultural Center  
Newell & Embarcadero Rds. (NE corner)  
Refreshments 7:30 Program 8:00

*details on Page 4*

*New Birdathon  
event coming  
this spring!*

*see page 5*

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◆ *Young Audubon  
whale-watching outing—Page 3*

◆ *Long-tailed Duck in Mt. View  
—Field Notes, Page 6*

◆ *Turkey rumble—Page 9*

◆ *Bush administration  
trashing environment—Page 10*

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# Jan.-Feb. 2003 Field Trips

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

**LO = Lunch optional**

**RC = Heavy rain cancels**

## **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 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 the 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 carpool. **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 beginners but all are welcome. Scopes helpful.

## **Wednesday Jan. 8, 9:00 AM Ed Levin County Park**

Half day. Leader: Harriet Gerson (408)252-6244. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and I-680 (becomes Calaveras Rd.) to park entrance about 2 miles after I-680. Meet at parking lot on the right side of Calaveras Rd. Your best chance this spring to bird Milpitas' prime birding hotspot. Entrance fee. **LO, RC**

## **Saturday Jan. 11, 8:00 AM Panoche Valley**

Full day. Leader: Clay Kempf (831)761-8260. Meet at Paicines Store on Hwy 25 approx. 11 miles south of Hollister. Targeted species include Phainopepla, Mtn. Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle; possible Mtn. Plover, Bald Eagle, Vesper Sparrow, Greater Roadrunner and Chukar. Bring lunch, full tank of gas; carpooling strongly recommended (limited parking on narrow roads).

## **Sunday Jan. 12, 8:30 AM Oka Ponds**

Half day. Leader: Pat Kenny (408)725-0468. From Hwy 17 in Los Gatos take Lark Ave exit west. Turn right on Oka Rd, left on Mozart Ave then immediate right on Oka Lane. Meet just inside gate. **RC**

## **Saturday Jan. 18, 8:30 AM Ed Levin County Park**

Half day. Leader: TBD (Questions call (408)253-7527). Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and I-680 (becomes E. Calaveras Blvd in Milpitas then Calaveras Rd) to unpaved parking area on left side of Calaveras Rd just past Spring Valley Golf Course about 2 miles from I-680. **LO, RC**

## **Sunday Jan. 19, 8:30 AM Coyote Point/Foster City**

Half day. Leader: Al Eisner (days (650)926-2018; evenings (650)364-3686). Meet at parking lot adjacent to yacht club at Coyote Point. From 101 northbound exit at Dore Ave and immediately turn north along frontage road. After 1 mile follow road as it bears right around golf course. Enter park (not golf course) through kiosks (probable fee), continue along golf course fence to end of road. Shorebirds, waterfowl, some landbirds. Scopes useful. **RC**

## **Wednesday Jan. 22, 9:00 AM Charleston Slough**

Leader: Phyllis Browning (650)494-6360. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north of Hwy 101 in Mt. View. Bring your scopes. **RC**

## **Saturday Jan. 25, 8:00 AM Fremont Lagoons**

Half Day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. From I-880 north of San Jose take Gateway Blvd exit west, turn left on Fremont Blvd. Park in lot on right at end of street. Challenging gull IDs (possible Thayer's and Glaucous). Bring scope. **RC**

## **Sunday Jan. 26, 8:00 AM Ogier Ponds**

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408)747-0988. 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, onto un-named road. Meet at gated entrance to ponds. Ducks, marsh birds, raptors. **RC**

## **Saturday Feb. 1, 9:00 AM San Francisco's Southern Parks**

Half Day. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415)664-0983. Meet at Candlestick Pt. State Recreation Area for shorebirds, bay ducks, loons and raptors. We will then visit S.F.'s 2nd largest park, McLaren Park, for landbirds

and dabbling ducks. Other birdy parks may be visited, time permitting. From Hwy 101 exit just past Brisbane Lagoon at Candlestick/3Com Park off-ramp. Continue east along Harney Way, turn right onto Jamestown/Hunters Point Expwy. Watch for entrance to Candlestick State Recreation Area on right and enter (no fee). Meet at end of paved road that runs through park. **RC**

## **Sunday Feb. 2, 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. Birding geared toward beginning birders. **RC**

## **Saturday - Sunday Feb. 8 - 9 San Luis Obispo County**

Two days. Leader: Jim Royer (questions call Bob Reiling (408)253-7527). Two full days of birding by car caravan (bring a lunch, liquids, warm clothes, full tank of gas each day). Meet on Saturday the 8th at end of Coleman Dr. at Morro Rock in Morro Bay by 7:30 AM. Day 1 should include gulls, loons, grebes, ducks, Peregrine Falcon, rocky shorebirds, passerines. Optional Sat. evening group dinner. Gas up Sat. night. Day 2 starts at 6:00 AM at parking area on east side of Motel 6 near Hwys 1 and 41 for trip to Carrizo Plain for Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Mtn. Bluebird, Golden Eagle, Short-eared and Burrowing Owls, Sage Thrasher, Vesper Sparrow. Contact Jim Royer at [jcadroyer@aol.com](mailto:jcadroyer@aol.com) for questions and reservations. Show up 5-10 minutes prior to two morning meeting times or risk being left behind. Plan on cold temperatures on the Plain, possible sprinkles (heavy rain will cancel), mud, possible poison oak, and moderate walking. Enthusiastic beginners welcome, but expect a quick birding pace.

## **Sunday Feb. 9, 9:00 AM Pescadero Marsh and Vicinity**

Half day. Leader: Sue James (650)348-0315. Meet at first parking lot south of bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy 1. Shorebirds, gulls, grebes, ducks. Bring your scope. **LO, RC**

## **Wednesday Feb. 12, 9:00 AM Coyote Reservoir**

Half Day. Leader: Emilie Curtis (408)779-2637. See write-up for Sunday Feb. 16. **LO, RC**

## Field Trips *cont'd*

### Saturday Feb. 15, 8:00 AM Oka Ponds

Half day. Leader: Ann Verdi (408)266-5108. From Hwy 17 in Los Gatos take Lark Ave exit west. Turn right on Oka Rd, left on Mozart Ave and immediately right on Oka Lane. Meet just inside gate. *RC*

### Sunday Feb. 16, 8:30 AM Coyote Reservoir

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy take Leavesley Rd. east for 1.5 miles, turn left on New Ave, then right on Roop Rd. Go left at "T" intersection, then after 1.3 miles left again on Coyote Reservoir Rd. and on to Lakeview Picnic area. *LO,RC*

### Saturday Feb. 22, 8:00 AM Arastradero OSP

Half day. Leader: Rita Colwell (650)949-1869. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west, turn right on Arastradero Rd. and meet in parking lot about 1/2 mile on right. Moderate walking. *RC*

### Sunday Feb. 23, 8:30 AM Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408)275-1492. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd northeast toward hills, then left on Toyon Ave, right on Penitencia Creek Rd into park. Continue on under bridge, meet at far end of upper parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk on possible muddy trails. Resident breeding birds (possible Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, Canyon Wren), early migrants, lingering winter birds. *LO, RC*

### Wednesday Feb. 26, 8:00 AM Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford University.

Leaders: Jasper Ridge docents. Limit 16 participants by reservation only. \$5 fee. Call Rosalie Lefkowitz at (650)494-6358 to reserve space. Be at Preserve main gate (not Whiskey Hill gate) between 7:45 and 8:00 only; do not arrive early. From I-280 take Sand Hill Rd west 2 miles to main gate on left. Moderately strenuous walking, 2 to 3 miles. Trip goes rain or shine.

### Saturday Mar. 1, 8:30 AM Santa Cruz Coastal Hot Spots

Half Day. Leaders: Matt Brady & David Vander Pluym (831)502-9854, [zerogambit@hotmail.com](mailto:zerogambit@hotmail.com). Meet at Santa Cruz lighthouse on W. Cliff Dr. From Hwy 17 take Hwy 1 north, turn left on Bay St. then right on W. Cliff Dr. to lighthouse

## Events Calendar

Tuesday Jan. 7, 7:30 PM  
Board of Directors meeting,  
McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino.

Wednesday Jan. 8, 7:30 PM  
Bay Area Bird Photographers presents Mark Rauzon with "Tropical Seabird Conservation in American Samoa and Christmas Island." Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto. (Note: this is the 2nd Wed.)

Sunday Jan. 12, 3 - 5 PM  
Stormwater Erosion Elimination Program (S.W.E.E.P.) training for new volunteers, McClellan Ranch Park.

Tuesday Jan. 14, 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: Ring-billed Gull.

Wednesday Jan. 15, 7:30 PM  
General Membership meeting,  
Palo Alto Cultural Center. (See Pg. 4)

Wednesday Jan. 22, 7:30 PM  
Environmental Action Committee meeting, McClellan Ranch Park.

### General meeting clarification:

*Due to an oversight, recent Avocets have omitted the traditional "7:30 refreshments, 8:00 program" designation for general meetings. There has been no change in schedule; the 7:30-8:00 period remains as a refreshment and socializing time, and the evening's program will commence at 8:00. We apologize for confusion resulting from this omission. —Ed.*

on left. Dress in layers; for optional afternoon birding bring lunch, liquids and enthusiasm.

### Sunday Mar. 2, 8:30 AM Coyote Hills Regional park

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408)257-3647. Take Hwy 84/Dumbarton Bridge east toward Newark. Exit right on Thornton, then left over freeway as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre. Turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd. into park. Meet at far end of Quarry Parking lot 1/2 mile past park entrance. Entrance fee. *LO, RC*

Tuesday Feb. 4, 7:30 PM  
Board of Directors meeting,  
McClellan Ranch Park.

Wednesday Feb. 5, 7:30 PM  
Bay Area Bird Photographers presents "Adventures in Digiscoping" with Kenneth Peterson featuring discussion of using digital cameras with standard birding optics. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Tuesday Feb. 11, 9:30 AM  
Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Ferruginous Hawk.

Wednesday Feb. 19, 7:30 PM  
General Membership meeting,  
Palo Alto Cultural Center. (See Pg. 4)

Wednesday Feb. 26, 7:30 PM  
Environmental Action Committee meeting, McClellan Ranch Park.

### Young Audubon presents "Winter Whale Watching" Sunday, January 19 Tourist Wharf, Monterey Bay

9:30AM-12:00 noon

Join Young Audubon for a boat trip on Monterey Bay. The trip is scheduled during the peak of the Grey Whale's southern migration and may also yield views of sea otters, sea lions, porpoises, and of course sea birds! The cost for this 2-hour tour is only \$20 per person. This trip is first and foremost for children and their parents. Adults without children will be placed on a waiting list and are welcome to join us, depending on availability. Space is limited, so contact the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747 to reserve your space today! Once payment is received, SCVAS will send out detailed information packets for the trip. Rainy weather does NOT cancel this trip. Because the boat is pre-paid, no refunds are available.



# Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz

SCVAS Programs Coordinator

Happy New Year!!! As we welcome in 12 new months, I'd also like to welcome in any members or friends of SCVAS who are curious about volunteering. Now is the time to look forward and take the steps to get involved with the chapter. Volunteers are an integral part of the work we accomplish, from conservation campaign efforts to birding field trips to educational outreach to office and Nature Shop support. Whether your time commitment is big or small, your support is always greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank the over 50 new volunteers who joined the SCVAS team during 2002. Some of you returned to us after taking a break from volunteering, but most of you were new to our chapter's programs. We hope that you continue on with us in '03!

To give you an idea of the many programs, committees, or areas that need your help, I've posted a sample of open opportunities. If any spark your interest or if you'd like to get more details, please don't hesitate to call me for more information!

- Librarian
- Field Trip Leader (children and/or adults)
- Nature Shop/Office Assistant
- Slide show Presenter (children and/or adults)
- Special Events Coordinator
- Young Audubon Leader
- Fundraising/Development Assistant
- Education Outreach Presenter
- Armchair Activist
- Database Entry/Updates
- Educational Materials Development
- Environmental Action Committee
- Education Committee
- Storm Water Erosion Elimination Program
- McClellan Ranch Outreach
- Bluebird Recovery Program

Remember, when you make those important New Year's resolutions, I hope you'll consider the various volunteer opportunities that we have to offer. Whether working from home or out of our office, once a week or once a month, volunteering for SCVAS can be one of the most worthwhile decisions you make for 2003!

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



**Remember the  
Nature Shop  
for all your  
birding needs!**

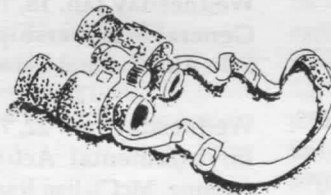


## "Breeding Birds of Alberta's Boreal Forest" with Steve Shunk Wednesday, January 15

Join Oregon naturalist Stephen Shunk for this slide show journey across Alberta's boreal forest. Steve will share encounters with singing Canada Warblers and stories of Boreal Chickadees; show you the floating nest of the Red-necked Grebes and the tightly woven cup of the Red-eyed Vireo. And for dessert, fantastic images from Jasper's Northern Rockies.

A wide swath of dense forest land dominates Northern Alberta, where Aspen, Balsam Poplar and White Birch from the south are joined by Jack Pine, Black Spruce and White Spruce, which dominate further north. An abundant water supply feeds this combination of deciduous and coniferous forests, with high-volume, slow-moving rivers, large lakes, and thousands of swamps, bogs and fens. This is Alberta's boreal forest.

The region's habitat diversity attracts a boggling array of nesting bird species, including 24 different waterfowl, more than 20 "eastern" warblers, over a dozen species of sparrows, and eight species each of shorebirds, Larids and flycatchers. Steve is a former SCVAS member whose enthusiasm for birding and nature study will surely make this a memorable evening.



## "California's Important Bird Area Program" with Dan Cooper Wednesday, February 19

Dan Cooper, hired by National Audubon, protects California's most important bird areas through a program now part of a worldwide effort. It is coordinated by BirdLife International to identify and preserve sites deemed most critical to birds. California's IBA (Important Bird Areas) program began as a volunteer-driven effort in the mid 1990s, and was greatly expanded into a fully-funded research project in 2000. A team of dozens of technical advisors, including chapter members, birders, and agency employees) contributed hundreds of hours granting interviews, providing data and reviewing sites. Approximately 150 IBAs have been identified. The final draft of the California IBA Report was posted on the Audubon California website in late 2001, and publication is anticipated in 2003.

Dan Cooper is California's Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society, and is based in Marin Co. He is the author of Audubon's California Important Bird Areas report. A lifelong California birder and naturalist, Dan came to Audubon with a strong background in conservation biology, having conducted fieldwork throughout the U.S. and Latin America. After receiving his B.A. from Harvard University (Biology), he went on to complete an M.S. at the University of California, Riverside (Biogeography), where he studied the effects of urbanization on the distribution of birds in the Los Angeles Basin. His research has appeared in several journals including *Biological Conservation* and *Western Birds*.

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# All-New “Spring Roundup” SCVAS Birdathon is Coming!

Planning for a completely new, revitalized, greatly expanded AND totally fun Spring 2003 Birdathon is now underway at SCVAS. With your help over the next few years, we intend to make the SCVAS “Spring Roundup” one of the best, and most enjoyable, birdathons in Northern California.

We start on that path in Spring 2003. The “Spring Roundup” will be a fun way for you to help support SCVAS’ local education and conservation programs while also getting outdoors with your friends and enjoying one of your favorite pastimes – birdwatching.

There will be several categories and levels of competition, terrific prizes for the top teams and team leaders in each category, and an eye-popping Grand Prize! To top it all off, SCVAS will host an Awards Party in May 2003 to congratulate the winners and celebrate with all of the Spring Roundup participants and their generous sponsors. About the only thing that won’t change is the time of the year for the birdathon – a 3-week window at the end of April and beginning of May. With Spring migration in full swing, it’s a perfect time to go birding, and the total number of species possible in Santa Clara County alone is over 170! If you add adjoining counties, as we will be doing for one of our most competitive categories, totals approaching 200 species are possible. That’s truly a Big Day, or perhaps a Big Weekend, by any yardstick!

Complete details and rules for the SCVAS Spring Roundup are being formulated now and will be published in the March *Avocet*. The competition will include time-based categories of up to 12 hours, 24 hours and 48 hours. We envision the 12 and 24-hour levels to be restricted to Santa Clara County, but the 48-hour category (i.e., Friday midnight to Sunday midnight, for example) could also include any of the counties adjoining Santa Clara County. That’s a VERY large area with many habitats – so, get out your maps and start planning!

Other categories may include a sort of “Big Sit,” patterned after one sponsored

by Portland Audubon, and an award for the “most unique” birdathon team. The definition of “most unique” is wide open and depends on your imagination. We also encourage our members to consider forming Corporate teams at their workplaces. That might turn into a “corporate” competition category for bragging rights to the top birders in Silicon Valley.

SCVAS welcomes your suggestions for more team categories and, of course, for prizes of all sorts. At present we plan to award prizes to all participants on the top 3 teams in each category. In addition, there will be great prizes for the team that finds the “rarest” bird species and for the team that brings in the largest donation for their efforts.

Since we are in the planning stages for this fully revamped 2003 birdathon, SCVAS wants to hear your suggestions as soon as possible. We especially

welcome your ideas on getting great prizes donated and on novel ways to make this event really fun for all concerned. We want the Spring Roundup to be accessible to all of our members, regardless of birding skill levels. The primary goals are to have FUN with your friends and neighbors, get a shot at some exciting prizes, and raise funds for SCVAS education and conservation programs in our local communities. What could be better than that?

If you have suggestions for the Birdathon Committee (or, even better, if you’d like to join the committee), please contact Dave Drake or Leda Beth Gray (831)336-1127 or <dd4dmc@earthlink.net> or Craig Breon (408)252-3748 or <craig@scvas.org>. Let’s work together to make this the best Spring birdathon in Northern California!

## *A pleasant surprise in San Jose —for frogs and people*

If you drive Highway 101 between San Jose and Morgan Hill, you likely enjoy the scenic foothills of the Diablo Range. Our chapter has recently been working on a proposed development project—called the Metcalf Road Property—that would intrude upon that view, harm wildlife habitat, and create a possible traffic nightmare for the currently quiet community of Basking Ridge.

The Metcalf Road Property is about 250 acres immediately east of the freeway and just south of the intersection of Highways 101 and 85. While the land appears typical of the brown hills of the Diablo Range, a closer look shows it rich in natural resources. Much of the land is steeply sloped and contains serpentine soils—with all the rare plants and potential habitat for the endangered Bay Checkerspot Butterfly that serpentine often supports in this area. In addition, some small ponds and ephemeral streams on the site provide breeding grounds for

the threatened Red-Legged Frog as well as California Tiger Salamanders.

The developers of the this site—the firm of Braddock and Logan—propose more than 200 single family homes clustered near the freeway to avoid the steeper slopes. The property is currently zoned for much lower densities, so the developers are trying to push the limits here. Generally, San Jose is so pro-development that this kind of project sails through, but thanks to an alliance between SCVAS and the people of Basking Ridge, the San Jose Planning Commission recently voted to reject the proposal. We now face a City Council meeting in late December to see whether this victory for the environment and the local community stands or is overturned.

The Basking Ridge community of approximately 600 families faces the prospect that if the Metcalf Road development is approved as proposed,

*cont’d. on Page 11*

# Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

## Loons through Phalaropes

A **Pacific Loon** showed up at Calero Reservoir on 2 Nov (KO) but did not remain. The first **Common Loon** of the season was on Almaden Reservoir on 26 Oct (AV). Another bird was found on Calero Reservoir on 2 Nov (KO). Numbers of **Brown Pelicans** dropped off in the fall, but 17 on the Alviso salt ponds on 16 Nov (MMR) was a good total for this late in the season. **American Bittern** have been found widely in October and November. One bird was seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 9 Oct (KH et al.). Another was in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 16 Oct (LM et al.). A sometimes cooperative bird was found along the San Tomas Aquino Creek channel below Hwy 101 on 30 Oct and remained in this urban area at least through 18 Nov (MJM). Single birds were also found along Guadalupe Slough in Alviso on 4 Nov (MO'B) and in the Mountain View Forebay 19-29 Nov (RL, LCh, AME, KH). Somewhat late for this Central Valley species, a **White-faced Ibis** was seen in outer Charleston Slough on 11 Oct (JW) and probably the same bird was seen over the Palo Alto Baylands the next day (PH). A few **Greater White-fronted Geese** have shown up this fall. Seven birds were found on the Calabazas Marsh on 11 Oct (RWR, FV). A single bird over Alviso on 18 Oct (PG) was not unexpected, but one on Kelly Lake at Henry Coe SP on 20 Oct (JY, AL) is only the second record for the park. One to two immature birds were found at Calero Reservoir 27-28 Oct (MJM, MMR). An unusually tame immature, first found at Cottonwood Lake on 11 Nov (MJM), has settled down with the domestic geese there. Four birds were seen on the Coyote Creek GC on 25 Nov (PD). Four **Ross's Geese** were found on Calero Reservoir on 23 Nov (JMa) and had increased to six by 28 Nov (WGB). The Almaden Reservoir wintering **Wood Duck** flock had increased to 73 by 19 Nov (AV). An eclipse male **Eurasian Wigeon** was on the Sunnyvale Water

Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds on 1 Oct (MMR). The first bird in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) was not found until 3 Nov (AV et al.). Single birds were found there in November (v.ob.) with two seen on 24 Nov (PD). **Blue-winged Teal** have been found in a variety of locations from a single bird at the Palo Alto Baylands wastewater outfall on 17 Oct (RS) to four birds found at the Lockheed-Martin ponds near the Sunnyvale WPCP on 6 Oct (RK, PK) and 26 Oct (PK, KH, FV et al.). The largest concentration has been in the Palo Alto FCB with 11 counted there on 24 Oct (RWR). The first **Redheads** of the fall season were two in the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 26 Oct (PK, FV et al.). A count

## *A Long-tailed Duck and a Tropical Kingbird brought excitement to the fall*

of 148 on the Alviso salt ponds on 16 Nov (MMR) is a predictor of large concentrations locally again this winter. As concerns ducks, November closed out with a bang as a female **Long-tailed Duck** was found on Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto FCB on 30 Nov (AG). This bird or possibly another was found on Salt Pond A1 later the same day (KO). One of these ducks may have been present earlier in the month (BM). A possible male **Common x Barrow's Goldeneye** was seen at Shoreline Lake on 14 Nov (RWR, FV). By 21 Nov a normal male **Barrow's Goldeneye** was present as well (WGB), and both birds were well described (MMR). November brought in wintering **Hooded Mergansers** with high counts of 10 birds at the Oka percolation ponds on 9 Nov (LSu) and 10 at the Palo Alto GC pond off Geng Road on 17 Nov (WGB, MDd, BC). Counts of 53 **Common Mergansers** on Calero Reservoir on 20 Nov (AV) and 67 on Chesbro

Reservoir on 23 Nov (MJM) were higher totals than in recent autumns. An immature **Ferruginous Hawk** was seen at Calero Reservoir on 2 Nov (JMa, AV) and is the only record so far this fall. A few **Prairie Falcons** are wintering near the bay edge (v. ob.). A bird inland at Calero Reservoir 27 Oct-3 Nov (MJM, JMa, AV, LSu) is less expected. A juvenile **Pacific Golden-Plover** was found on the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on 1 Nov (WGB, MMR) and has remained there at least through 29 Nov (WGB). This is the first wintering Golden-Plover locally since a few "Lesser" Golden-Plover wintered in Alviso in 1968 and 1970. Particularly scarce in recent autumns, a single **Snowy Plover** was found north of the Alviso Marina on 12 Nov (KPa).

A few **Lesser Yellowlegs** lingered into October. A single bird was on the Lockheed-Martin ponds 2-6 Oct (MMR, RK, PK) and eight were in the New Chicago Marsh on 11 Oct (RWR, FV). At least three birds remained on New Chicago through 19 Oct (PG et al.). We often have good numbers of **Pectoral Sandpipers** coming through in October. This year, however, we had few late birds with one at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 6 Oct (RK, PK) and another at New Chicago Marsh on 11 Oct (RWR, FV). The female **Ruff** found in the New Chicago Marsh earlier in the season was seen again on 15 Oct (SW *vide* MMR) and on 12 Nov (RWR, FV). On the later date, an immature female was found as well (RWR, FV), which is the second bird of the season. A single juvenile **Red-necked Phalarope** on Salt Pond A12 in Alviso on 16 Nov (MMR) was a surprise as there are few birds past September. The previous late record I have for this phalarope is 20 Oct (last year).

## Roadrunners through Goldfinches

A **Greater Roadrunner** frequented a residential area in eastern Morgan Hill over the last three weeks of October and then in again in late November (JP). A **Short-eared Owl** was seen in the Palo Alto FCB at dusk on 25 Nov (WGB) for the only report so far this season. **Vaux's Swifts** are sometimes still coming through



## Field Notes *cont'd*

in early October. One to two along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 1 Oct (MMR) were the only late birds this fall. A single **Pileated Woodpecker** was calling along the Santa Cruz Mountain crest at Sanborn-Skyline CP on 2 Nov (CE *fide* DLSu). Two birds were heard along Summit Road further south on 17 Nov (DLSu). Uncommonly late breeding of one of our commonest flycatchers, the **Black Phoebe**, was observed in San Jose 25-27 Nov (EFe). Two fledglings, still very dependent, were watched as they were repeatedly fed by adults. The latest breeding we had observed during the county atlas was of a fledged young on 1 Aug. Jeff Davis notes that there is an old record of young in a nest as late as 28 Sep along the Eel River in the 1930s. This is clearly an unusually late record. An immature **Tropical Kingbird** was found near the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 12 Nov (RWR, FV) and stayed at least through 15 Nov (m. ob.). Molting of wing coverts and rectrices were carefully described (MMR, MJM), showing it to be a hatching year bird. This is the eighth record for the county. Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** reported from Sanborn-Skyline CP on 2 Nov (CE *fide* DLSu) were the only reports for the fall season. Conventional wisdom suggests that this should be an irruptive winter, but it certainly doesn't look this way so far. Two **American Dippers** were seen in Alum Rock Park on 12 Oct (RWR, FV et al.). This may be a good fall and winter for **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, at least based on the 40 birds seen at Sanborn-Skyline CP on 2 Nov (CE *fide* DLSu) and the 25-30 found along Summit Road on 17 Nov (DLSu). A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** on the ITT lands in Palo Alto on 2 Nov (MJM) was either late or attempting to winter. A male **Phainopepla** was seen south of Colorado Creek on Mines Road on 11 Nov (WGB). A male **Nashville Warbler** marked the tail end of the fall migration along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 4 Oct (RK, PK). The **Chestnut-sided Warbler** found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 in September was last seen on 4 Oct (RK, PK). An immature male **Black-throated Gray War-**

**bler** was seen in Santa Clara on 5 Nov (MJM) and is probably wintering. Two **Hermit Warblers** were found in November: one at Ed Levin CP on 12 Nov (KPa) and an adult male at Summit and Las Cumbres roads on 17 Nov (DLSu). A fairly good fall for **Blackpoll Warbler** finished with one of the Alamitos Creek birds found in September seen there on 1 Oct (PK, RK, JMa) and a hatching year bird banded at CCFS on 12 Oct (RCO). Another good vagrant for fall was a **Black-and-White Warbler** in the parking lot of the Santa Clara Valley Water District buildings off Almaden on 7 Oct (BA). It has been a good autumn for the *Spizella* sparrows. Adding to September's **Brewer's Sparrow**, a late **Chipping Sparrow** was at the Palo Alto Hills GC on 28 Oct (AME) and an immature **Clay-colored Sparrow** was found along San Tomas Aquino Creek above Hwy 101 on 4 Nov (RWR, FV) and was seen there at least through 6 Nov (m. ob.). Always rare in the fall, an adult **Grasshopper Sparrow** was seen near Calero Lake on 22 Oct and an immature was at Monte Bello on 25 Oct (PK, RK). A **White-throated Sparrow** was found at the Palo Alto Baylands on 16 Oct (MMR) and was found there irregularly through 2 Nov (WGB, AME, MJM). A drab bird was found along San Tomas Aquino Creek below Hwy 101 on 3 Nov (WGB) and was seen there through 12 Nov (v. ob.). Feeder birds include one that came to a San Jose feeder on 31 Oct (JAC) and another in Los Altos Hills on 23 Nov (PC). The tailless immature **Blue Grosbeak** found at the end of September was seen again on 1 Oct (ViT). A three-day wonder, an immature **Yellow-headed Blackbird** joined the blackbird flock at the Calero Reservoir stables on 27 Oct (MJM) and was seen through 29 Oct (v. ob.). Although we've a few winter records for this blackbird, this is the latest fall occurrence. A female **Hooded Oriole** visited a Milpitas feeder on 17 Oct and a male was there the next day (RL). Possibly the same male was seen three weeks later on 12 Nov (JL). Three **Red Crossbills** were seen at Sanborn-Skyline CP on 2 Nov (CE *fide* DLSu); 15 were also seen at Castle Rock SP the same day. A few **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were hanging on this fall on



"A White-faced Ibis was seen in outer Charleston Slough on 11 October..."  
Drawing by Bonnie Bedford-White

the west side. A male was seen at Calero Reservoir on 5 Oct (JMa, JLa, AV) and a female/immature was there on 29 Oct (MMR). Twenty-four at the Palo Alto Hills GC on 28 Oct (AME) was an unusual concentration. However, during a day's hike in Henry Coe SP on 20 Oct, they were considered 'numerous' (JY, AL).

*Observers: Brian Acord (BA), Bill Bousman (WGB), Les Chibana (LCh), Brian Christman (BC), Patty Ciesla (PC), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RCO), Matthew Dodder (MDd), Peggy Don (PD), Al Eisner (AME), Chris Emmons (CE), Eric Feuss (EFe), Andy Gibb (AG), Phil Gordon (PG), Kirsten Holmquist (KH), Penny Howell (PH), Roland Kenner (RK), Pat Kenny (PK), Jolene Lange (JLa), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Janet Little (JL), Randy Little (RL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Brooke Miller (BM), Lisa Myers (LM), Matt O'Brien (MO'B), Kris Olson (KO), Jannette Panknin (JP), Kathy Parker (KPa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Rich Schermerhorn (RS), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LS), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Jeff Wall (JW), Stuart White (SW), and James Yurchenco (JY).*

**RARITIES:** Please drop me a note:  
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bousman@merlin.arc.nasa.gov

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# Field Trip Reports

## Sunnyvale

Oct. 26

On Saturday, October 26, Frank Vanslager led an SCVAS field trip at the Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility. The weather was great and we saw lots of interesting birds. Several American Pipits walked in the dried grass on the side of the old dump hill. In the ponds west of the dump we saw three kinds of teal: Cinnamon, Green-winged, and Blue-winged. We had nice looks at a Sora which stood quietly for us and then swam across the water behind some reeds.

A Peregrine Falcon perched in one of the towers then swooped over a pond many times. We saw a couple of Dunlin next to some Least Sandpipers for a nice size comparison. In the main West Pond we saw lots of ducks including two male Redheads, one male and one female Canvasback, and one Bufflehead. In the East Pond we saw several Bonaparte's Gulls and Ring-necked Ducks. Along the fence were several Loggerhead Shrikes and Say's Phoebes.

We saw many other birds in addition to these highlights. It was a great field trip thanks to Frank!

—Pat Kenny

## Charleston Slough

Nov. 3

Several SCVAS birders enjoyed a beautiful fall morning at Charleston Slough on Sunday, Nov. 3, and here are a few highlights.

We arrived when the slough was still at low tide to enjoy good close-up views of Dunlin and Least Sandpipers foraging in the mudflats side by side for good comparison of size and bill shape. A bit further out 19 Black Skimmers were seen either roosting on their favorite island or wheeling and charging about in squadron-formation. Other shorebirds seen included Marbled Godwit, Willet, Black-bellied Plover, Greater Yellowlegs, and dowitchers *sp.*, among others. Gulls included Ring-billed, California, Herring, and Glaucous-winged.

Both Eared and Horned Grebes were seen: two Eared Grebes, one in Adobe Slough and one at Shoreline Lake, and

one Horned Grebe at Shoreline Lake.

Ducks were plentiful with most males now in fine breeding plumage. Good numbers of Canvasback were seen in the far reaches of the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin, along with four Lesser Scaup. A male Eurasian Wigeon was in Adobe Slough along with numbers of American Wigeon, N. Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, N. Pintail, Gadwall and Cinnamon Teal. Further out in the Palo Alto FCB at least 12 Redheads were seen west of Adobe Slough. A female Common Goldeneye was at Shoreline Lake, as were a few Surf Scoters.

Among other birds noted were a Common Moorhen in the Coast Casey Forebay and at least two Ring-necked Pheasants. I seemed to miss both, although most in the group were able to catch glimpses of them. I guess that's the way with field trips—you can't see everything!

With the good eyes and ears of all we were able to tally almost 60 species. A very pleasant morning.

—Ann Verdi

## Los Altos Hills

*cont'd from Page 1*

A very special thanks goes out to Nancy Couperus, who put on one of the most dazzling efforts of volunteerism I have ever seen on the local level: heart, soul, and nearly every waking hour into either the initiative effort or the election. Nancy brought skill, a great attitude and a sense of humor into the fight to make her community better. If we had half a dozen or so Nancys in each local town, the Valley of the Heart's Delight might still deserve that name. It should also be mentioned that Nancy's daughter Jennifer has been a long-time volunteer for PLAN (People for Livable and Affordable Neighborhoods). I wonder when the scientists will map the gene for progressive activism?

Thanks also to Diane D'Urso, who I mentioned before as the SCVAS member who got me involved in this thoroughly enjoyable open space effort (but this time I spelled her name right).

Chalk one up here for the good guys.

## Peregrine Falcon monitors wanted

In an effort to quantify the level of recovery of the Peregrine Falcon population in California and renew baseline studies on an annual, statewide basis, the UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group (SCPBRG) plans a survey for spring 2003. We need the help of people who know of peregrine nest sites and who are willing to make at least two visits to the sites this spring.

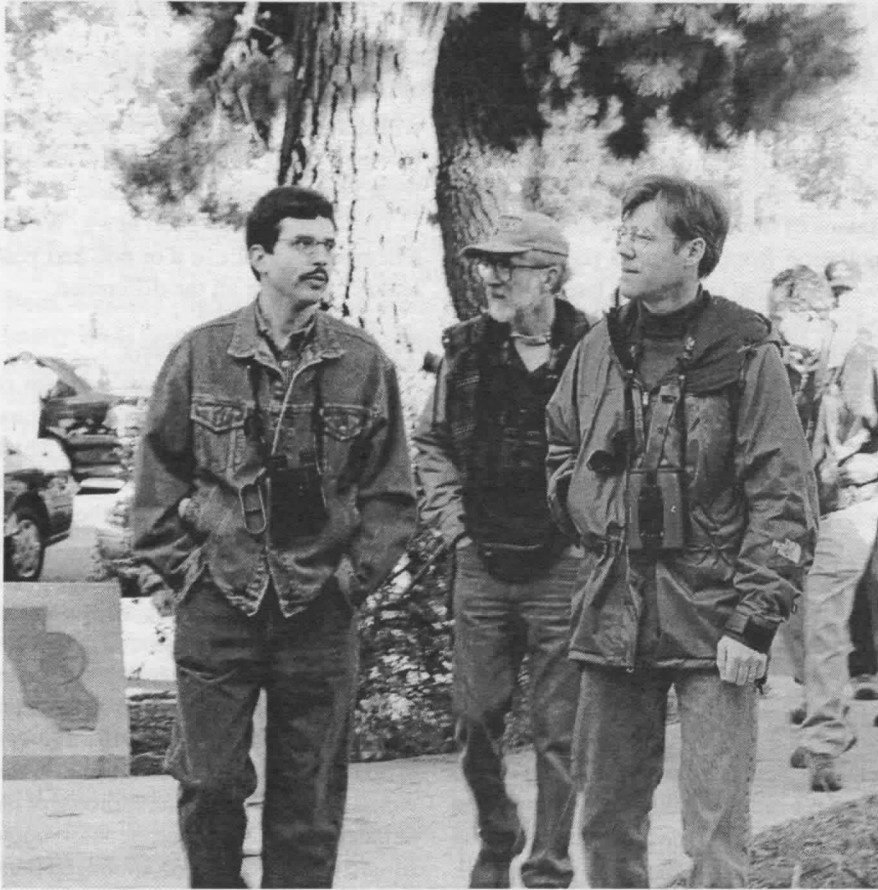
The recovery of the peregrine falcon population in North America has been called the most successful wildlife conservation project in history. In 1964 no peregrines were known to remain east of the Mississippi River. A 1970 survey of peregrines in California revealed just two pairs nesting successfully. After more than two decades of recovery and management work, peregrines were removed from the federal endangered species list on August 20, 1999. They remain listed as state endangered and fully protected in California.

Given known increases, we estimate there are more than 250 breeding pairs of peregrine falcons in California today, but no comprehensive survey has happened since 1992. Since the breeding season comprising intense courtship through fledging is approximately 100 days long, and peregrines often nest in very remote areas, we are asking for help from those who know of, or suspect, peregrine breeding activity in their area. If you wish to report a site known to you, or even better, wish to commit to observing the site, please contact us. (Peregrine falcon nest sites are sensitive so all nest territory locations remain confidential.)

Contact us at [falconet@cats.ucsc.edu](mailto:falconet@cats.ucsc.edu) to express an interest in participating and describe the site you wish to observe. Or, go to, [www.scpbrg.org](http://www.scpbrg.org) and click on the "Peregrine Survey" button to learn more about survey protocol and guidelines, and peregrine falcons in general.

*The UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group is a non-profit organization supported by contracts, grants and gifts. We wish to thank Orion Telescopes and Binoculars at TELESCOPE.COM for their support of this project through product donations.*





*Noted bird author David Sibley (r), pictured here with SCVAS past President David McIntyre (l), volunteer Jim Liskovec, and others, came to McClellan Ranch last November for a book-signing and breakfast hosted by the chapter. Over 100 SCVAS members dropped by to meet Sibley and have him sign their copies of *The Birds of North America*, *Bird Behavior and Habits*, and the recently released *Birding Basics*. Our members were thrilled to meet the man who has set a new standard for field guides and artwork. We are pleased to be able to offer special events like this to our members, and will try to schedule another such event in the coming year.*

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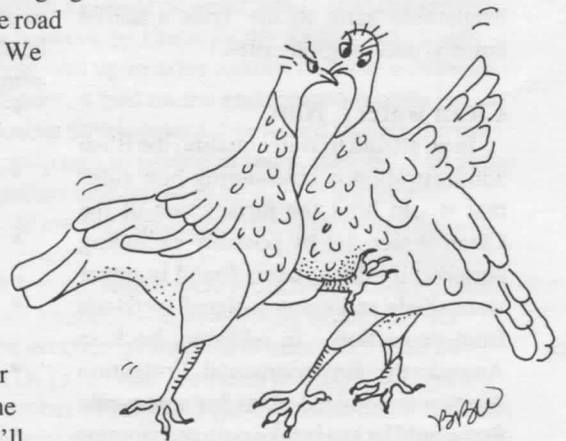
## *Turkey rumble in Coe Park*

*by James Yurchenco*

Amy and I spent Sunday, December 1 at Henry Coe State Park. Although no unexpected birds were seen, we witnessed a fascinating natural spectacle. While walking along Coyote Creek early in the morning, we observed a flock of sixteen female/immature Wild Turkeys foraging in a field next to the ranch road (we'll call them the Jets). Around a corner on the road we came upon another flock of about sixteen female/immature birds: the Sharks. We stopped to watch the birds.

The Sharks called and the Jets stopped foraging and froze. The Sharks called again and the Jets turned and ran across the field to the road where they confronted the Sharks. A wild melee ensued; both group and personal combat took place between the two gangs. Some birds paired off and started beating each other with their wings; others engaged in vicious beak-to-beak combat, alternately locking beaks and pecking each other on the neck and throat. Breast to breast, they pushed and shoved at each other like bull elk in rutting season. The non-combatants milled about hooting and hollering, egging the fighters on.

This went on for quite a while as the tide of combat moved back and forth over the road and nearby embankments. The birds seemed mostly oblivious to us. The fighting was still going on when we left; whether the Sharks or the Jets won, we'll never know. Ironically, a mile up the road, we came upon a group of half a dozen adult males, peacefully coexisting and gobbling in unison.

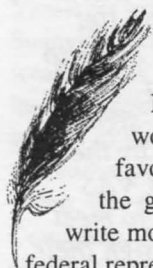


*James Yurchenco and Amy Lauterbach are avid birders and hikers who enjoy pursuing both pastimes at Henry Coe State Park.*

# Bush wreaks environmental havoc

by Kelly Crowley

SCVAS Environmental Advocate



For those of you still trying to come up with a New Year's Resolution that won't leave you craving your favorite foods or passed out on the gym floor, here's an idea: write more letters to your state and federal representatives.

Thanks to the Bush administration's not-so-subtle attack against all things environmental, you have plenty to write about these days.

Just in the last six months, Bush and various members of his administration have changed rules and regulations that impact land use, water quality, air quality and more.

Under the leadership of Gale Norton, for example, the Interior Department pushed for the sale of oil drilling leases in the Beaufort Sea off the coast of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Interior Department also, over the objections of the Senate and California Legislature, and without input from the nearby Quechan Indian Tribe, removed a major obstacle to the operation of a large gold mine in Imperial County. (President Clinton's Interior Secretary, Bruce Babbitt, had tried to end the latter project, on the grounds that it would cause irreparable harm to the Tribe's sacred cultural and religious sites.)

## Clean water? Not!

In an affront to water quality, the Bush administration is considering new rules that would limit the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act by possibly excluding periodically dry streams found in upper watersheds and some isolated wetlands from protection. In addition, back in August, the Environmental Protection Agency announced plans for a new rule that would let states take polluted streams off the clean-up list without actually reducing the amount of pollution, and potentially allow factories and sewage treatment plants to discharge more pollutants.

Or maybe you remember the so-called "Clear Skies Initiative," which Bush announced in February 2002. When the details of this initiative, meant to reduce pollution from coal-fired power plants, were unveiled six months later, clean air advocates were rightly upset. Not only did the initiative solely rely on a pollution-trading program, but also it made it much harder for downwind states to regulate the states upwind causing interstate pollution. His initiative also failed to address the problem of carbon dioxide emissions, the pollutant primarily responsible for global warming.

At least President Bush does not pretend to be a friend of the environment. He backed out of the Kyoto agreement, an international treaty on global warming which the U.S. "supported" but never ratified. And he skipped out on the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the most important environmental meeting of 2002. Which is probably just as well, seeing as the rest of the world is not too keen on his environmental policies. Even in his absence, he was chastised for putting the interests of corporate polluters ahead of environmental issues.

## Headline news

Just in case the list of hits against the environment from the second half of 2002 was not enough to inspire you to set pen to paper, here's a very small sampling of headlines about other actions the Bush administration has taken:

- "Administration to Leave Tongass Rainforest Open to Clearcutting"
- "EPA Allows Mine Waste to be Dumped in Rivers"
- "Administration Dodges Salmon Protections"
- "Bush Announces Rollback of Power Plant Pollution Rules"
- "BLM Backs Gas Drilling in National Monument"
- "Wild Forest Protections Weakened Again"
- "Snowmobiles in Yellowstone"
- "Bush Reopens Sensitive Waters to Polluting Personal Watercraft"

The headlines go on and on and on. I

will spare you the rest, so you don't have to reach for a fourth piece of leftover fruitcake to settle your stomach.

But there is some good news. We are a democracy, believe it or not, and your letters can make all the difference.

## Tell 'em what you think

For example, take Bush's dream of opening the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration, which was narrowly defeated in a Senate vote last year. Unlike many of the actions mentioned above, it will take a change in legislation to open the Refuge, not just a rule change in an agency's regulations. There is enough opposition in the Senate to oil drilling in the Refuge that a filibuster is likely, if (but more likely, when) the law comes to the floor again. Similarly, to make major changes to the Clean Water Act, Bush would need the approval of the Senate, and again, one senator could filibuster such a law or an amendment. But a senator is only likely to filibuster a law if they know their constituents care deeply about the issue. That's where your letters come in.

Your letters are also important in convincing our representatives that laws are needed to prevent some environmental protections from being enacted and then repealed time and time again as the political tides in the agencies change with the administrations in the White House. Citizens' letters also have an effect on what happens at the agency level. Sometimes our state representatives will have the leeway to enact laws and rules that are tougher than those proposed by the federal government. In fact, our state representatives may be our biggest allies in coming years, as in the recent example of the state fighting to end federal oil leases off the coast of Santa Barbara.

As a chapter, we have written to various department heads and representatives on your behalf, often thanks to the efforts of our dedicated volunteer letter writer Dr. Rao. But brief handwritten letters from constituents are just as, if not more, effective. For the New Year, resolve to

*cont'd next page*

## Metcalf Rd. development contested *cont'd from Page 5*

cut-through traffic from both Highway 101 and the older Monterey Highway could be channeled through their community, as commuters avoid clogged freeways to reach the growing job center known as the Edenvale Redevelopment Area. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for this project notes that traffic from Monterey Highway alone could add nearly 2000 new trips daily on Basking Ridge Avenue, and the EIR failed to even evaluate the traffic from Highway 101 (an oversight that we have pointed out and are currently appealing to the City Council to correct).

Meanwhile, we are working with both the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Regional Water Quality Control Board to protect the sensitive habitats on the site. The proposed development would be located to within 30 feet of a pond occupied by the frogs and salamanders, while we are demanding a 300-foot setback.

This combination of community activism pressure from Audubon has had a surprising effect on the San Jose Planning Commission. In general, members of the Commission are known to be supporters of Mayor Gonzales, who starting two years ago decided to make over the Commission in his own pro-development, anti-environment image. Nonetheless, the Commissioners saw the value of our arguments and voted six to one to reject the project. In this case, the Commissioners seemed highly engaged in the debate over issues raised by Audubon and others, and their vote came besides a staff recommendation favoring

the project. Perhaps as the Commissioners are gaining experience, they are also becoming more independent in their thinking, which would be welcomed by neighborhoods and community organizations throughout the city.

There's more work to be done here before we can declare victory, but it looks like the community will benefit greatly from the final product of our work, with the cut-through traffic cut off completely. In addition, we have already

gained some additional acres of open space to preserve both the beautiful views of the area as well as the sensitive wildlife, and we will likely gain more open land before this project is allowed to move forward. The people of Basking Ridge have been a pleasure to work with, and without their efforts we would never have gotten as far as we have. Luckily, they seem to feel the same way about Audubon. Even in San Jose, you can fight City Hall . . . and sometimes win.

### Perspective

## What Audubon Has Taught Me

*Dr. D. Lakshmanara Rao*

Let me say at the outset that I am from India, and that I have been writing letters on environmental issues for the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society from 1999 onwards. When I got in touch with Craig and let him know that I was prepared to do any work connected with writing requiring language skills, he wanted me to help him write letters to State and Federal politicians on environmental issues.

I have written letters on a wide variety of issues, and by and large it has been a rewarding and educative experience. Since the late 1980's, I have evinced interest in issues of the environment, especially as they affect public health, but did not find many venues in my country for making a citizen's voice heard by lawmakers. But when I started writing letters for Audubon on issues like Clinton's "Roadless Forests" proclamation, or the proposal to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to petroleum drilling, I realized how alert and vocal public opinion can have positive impact on political decisions and thus help preserve the environment.

One thing that strikes me about the situation here is that awareness of environmental implications of major decisions by governments and corporations is fairly widespread, though effective public participation in environmental activism is not enthusiastic. I remember the campaign a couple of years ago to stop the setting up of a windmill power generation network by Enron in the Santa Cruz mountains. The environmental community was up in arms against it as the windmills posed a danger to the California Condor, a bird on the endangered species list. I also wrote a number of letters opposing development that would impact Burrowing Owls. When I mentioned this campaign to people in India, they laughed at the idea of a campaign to protect a common bird found in all old buildings and hollow tree trunks. *[Editor's Note: of course this is not true of Burrowing Owls, but you get the idea.]*

Among other subjects on which I wrote letters were reducing arsenic content in drinking water, banning the use of Fenthion—a bird-killing pesticide—for mosquito control, and opposing the erection of antenna towers more than 200 meters high for a new radio station (KYCY) near wetlands in Milpitas. This experience has taught me quite a number of things. I have learned that there is an enormous scope to the issues of improving the environment and the quality of life on the planet, but this can be achieved in however modest a measure by active involvement and not by staying aloof. This lesson in life has been made possible by my volunteer work for the Audubon Society. I must add that Craig Breon and his colleagues have contributed in no small measure to this continuing education of mine.

## Advocate *cont'd*

put down the fruitcake, pick up a pen and be a part of our democracy. The health of our environment depends on it.

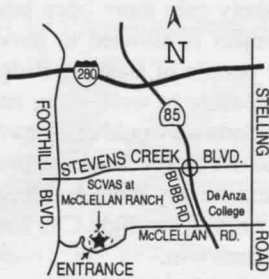
One of the easiest ways to make this resolution happen is to join our Armchair Activists. Armchair Activists receive monthly newsletters (via snail mail or email) that contain background information on one national and one local issue, sample letters and appropriate address information. Please contact Jill Clay at <j.clay@mindspring.com> for more information.



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**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 50, Number 1**

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SCVAS Membership \$15

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