



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

Mar. - Apr. 2003

Birdathon promises prizes, fun

Join SCVAS' big Spring fundraiser— win a spotting scope!

The January *Avocet* announced the hatching of the 2003 Spring Roundup Birdathon, an event designed to celebrate the annual Spring migration and be a FUN-raiser for our members as well as an important FUND-raiser for SCVAS. The SCVAS Birdathon Committee has been busy feeding and caring for this nestling and we are proud to announce that the 2003 Birdathon is about to take wing! This "fledgling" brings with it the prospect of a win-win-win event: participants will be sure to have a great time birding, help support SCVAS education programs, and have a good chance to take home some terrific prizes. You definitely don't want to miss this one!

Some of the outstanding prizes offered include a Nikon spotting scope and tripod system, top-rated Swift Audubon series and Celestron binoculars, a weekend at Lake Tahoe, lots of complimentary tickets to first-rate entertainment events and a B&B in Olema CA, and wonderful gifts from the finest local wineries and wildlife artists. SCVAS is extremely grateful for the donation of prizes by the sponsors and we urge our members to patronize those organizations and companies whenever possible. (See the 2003 Birdathon "Early Bird" Sponsor list on Page 5.)

What is a Birdathon?

A Birdathon is a uniquely Audubon way of enjoying one of our favorite hobbies while helping to support present and future educational programs at SCVAS. We hope that the Spring Roundup Birdathon will evolve into one of the best birdathons in northern California. With your help we can make that happen.

The Birdathon period will run from April 12 to May 12. Here's how it works:

1. Register and sign up for an SCVAS-led or a self-guided trip by April 10 (late registrations for guided trips are accepted based on space).
2. Get sponsors to make pledges to you, and/or sponsor yourself.
3. Count birds for up to 48 consecutive hours.
4. Collect pledges from your sponsors after the birding is done.
5. Celebrate with supporters of all the Birdathon teams at a special Awards Ceremony in June when prizes are awarded.

You can take part in the 2003 Spring Roundup by becoming a birding participant or by making a pledge. If you opt to involve yourself as a birding participant, you can bird with a team of friends, or sign up for one of our guided trips (planned trips are half day and whole day outings led by some of California's finest birders). Birders of all skill levels are welcome! The process is similar in any case: you get pledges, go birding, collect your pledges, and then have a great time at the Birdathon awards ceremony. If you would like to simply make a pledge to a team, call Susan Bell at our SCVAS office (408) 252-3747 for information.

*Complete 2002
CBC results for
4 local counts*

See pages 10-12

Competition Categories and How to Win Prizes

The 2003 Spring Roundup will have four levels of competition for prizes. They are:

- ◆ The "Big Sit"—counting species in a small region of your choice in Santa Clara County.
- ◆ The "Big Roundup"—counting species within Santa Clara County in any continuous interval up to 24 hours.
- ◆ The "Monster Roundup"—counting species may be done in Santa Clara Co. and any of the adjoining counties (e.g., Santa Cruz, San Mateo, San Benito, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Alameda and Merced) in a continuous 48-hour period.
- ◆ The "Most Unique Birdathon"—no rules except that it must occur on planet Earth during the birdathon time window. Let your imaginations run wild!

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◆ *Mar. & Apr. General Meeting
details—Page 5*

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battle the elements—Page 10*

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of Burrowing Owl —Page 13*

Mar.-Apr. 2003 Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

Saturday Mar. 1, 8:30 AM Santa Cruz Coastal Hotspots

Half day. Leaders: Matt Brady & David Vander Pluym (831)502-9854, e-mail 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 on left. A rare opportunity to see places the younger birders like and any "good" birds therein. Dress in layers. Those interested in some optional birding should bring lunch, liquids and their 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**

Saturday Mar. 8, 8:00 AM Lower Windy Hills OSP

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

Sunday Mar. 9, 8:00 AM Ed Levin Co. Park (South)

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

Wednesday Mar. 12, 8:30 AM Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd northeast toward hills, then left on Toyon Ave, right on Penitencia Creek Rd into park. Turn left at "T" intersection, meet at

far end of last parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk; possibly muddy trails. **LO, RC**

Saturday Mar. 15, 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 about a mile (becomes Uvas Parkway). Turn left at Miller Ave (first 4-way stop), drive over Uvas Creek and turn left into Christmas Hill Park. Park in first aisle to right. A fairly easy but long walk. **LO, RC**

Sunday Mar. 16, 9:00 AM Stanford Campus

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

Saturday Mar. 22, 8:30 AM Grant Ranch Co. Park

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

Sunday Mar. 23, 8:00 AM Almaden Quicksilver Co. Park

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

Wednesday, Mar. 26, 8:30 AM Arastradero Preserve, Palo Alto

Half day. Leader: Rosalie Lefkowitz (650) 494-6358. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd west, turn right on Arastradero Rd (approx. 1/2 mile) and meet in parking lot 1/2 mile on right. Moderate walking. **RC**

Saturday Mar. 29, 8:00 AM

Almaden Lake Park/Alamitos Creek
Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - call Bob R. 253-7527). Meet in west parking lot of Almaden Lake Park. From Highway 85 take Almaden Expwy south. Park is on east (left) side of Almaden Expwy. Continue just past Coleman Rd (and the park), return northbound on Almaden Expwy to park entrance on right. Approx. 3 miles of easy walking. Waterfowl, raptors, variety of riparian birds. **LO, RC**

Sunday Mar. 30, 8:00 AM Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Al Eisner (after Mar. 25, (650) 364-3686, days & voice-mail (650) 926-2018). 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 T intersection and underpass. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Possible Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, Canyon Wren if we are lucky, early migrants, lingering winter birds. Be prepared for some mud! Possible entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Saturday Apr. 5, 8:00 AM Stevens Creek Co. Park

Half day. Leader: Pat Kenny (408) 725-0468. From I-280 in Cupertino take Foothill Expwy exit south 2.1 miles (becomes Stevens Canyon Rd), turn left into first (Chestnut) park entrance, meet in first parking lot. Outstanding riparian birding spot; migrants and local breeding birds. \$4 entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Sunday, Apr. 6, 8:30 AM Gilroy Hot Springs Road

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Limited to 23 participants, reservations only. Meet at intersection of Gilroy Hot Springs Rd and Canada Rd for carpooling (6-car limit). From Hwy 101 take Leavesley Rd east through shopping center, turn left on New Ave, then right on Roop Rd. Once in foothills bear left at fork in road and continue about 4 miles to Canada Rd. Migrants, breeding birds. *Please note change to Daylight Savings Time—"spring forward" or be late.* **RC**



Field Trips *cont'd*

Wednesday, Apr. 9, 8:00 AM

Rancho San Antonio

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

Saturday Apr. 12, 9:00 AM

Birding By Ear at Hidden Villa

Half day. Leader: Garth Harwood (650) 879-0724. Emphasis on bird song, but be sure to bring binoculars and scopes. From I-280 in Los Altos take El Monte Rd past Foothill College, turn left at Moody Rd; after approx. 1.7 miles, left into Hidden Villa. Meet at first parking lot beside entrance. \$5 per car parking fee. *LO, RC*

Sunday Apr. 13, 8:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - call Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527). Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd north off Hwy 101 in Mt. View. All are welcome, but birding will be geared toward beginners. Scopes helpful. *RC*

Saturday Apr. 19, all day

Are you a Varied Twitcher or a Wacky-capped Chickadee? Join a Guided Birdathon team! See article on Page 1.

Sunday Apr. 20, 8:30 AM

Ed Levin Co. Park (North)

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

Saturday Apr. 26, 8:00 AM

Arastradero Preserve

Guided Birdathon with Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. To join "Kirsten's Kestrels" Birdathon team, see article on Page 1.

Sunday Apr. 27, 8:00 AM

Grant Ranch Co. Park and Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring

Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408) 275-1492. Limited to 20 participants, call Dave for reservations. A rare opportunity to bird closed areas of the park and view firsthand

the results of Bluebird Nestbox Monitoring program. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave northeast, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd and go approx. 9 miles to park. Meet at Hall's Valley Lake parking lot on left.

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

Leader: Roxie Handler (408) 730-1745. See directions under Apr. 5 listing. A great place for local breeding birds. Possible entry fee. *RC*

Saturday May 3, 8:00 AM

Stevens Creek Co. Park

Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - Call Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527). See directions under Apr. 5 listing.

Sunday May 4, 7:30 AM

South Coastal San Mateo Co.

Half day Plus. Leader: Al Eisner (650) 364-3686, days and voice mail (650) 926-2018. Trip begins with a "sea watch" at Pigeon Point until 8:15 AM (optional starting time). Meet at large pullout on Pigeon Point Rd immediately north of lighthouse (about 28 mi. north of Santa Cruz, 22 mi. south of Half Moon Bay.) We'll then bird other habitats in the Pescadero area. Highlights: good variety of breeding (and singing) songbirds, resident marsh birds, migrating seabirds and shorebirds. *LO*

Sunday May 4, 1:00 PM

Butterfly Watching

Half day. Leader: Garth Harwood (650) 879-0724. From I-280 in Los Altos take El Monte Rd past Foothill College, turn left at Moody Rd; after approx. 1.7 miles turn left into Hidden Villa. Meet at first parking lot beside entrance. \$5 per car fee. Close-focusing binoculars, "Local Butterflies" guide (available at McClellan Ranch Park for under \$10) recommended. Moderate walking. *RC*

Saturday May 10, 8:30 AM

Mines Rd. and Vicinity

Trip starts in Del Puerto Canyon, working west to San Antonio Valley and Livermore. From I-580 go east over Altamont Pass to I-5, south on I-5 to Patterson exit, then west on Del Puerto Canyon Rd. Meet at first pullout (look for Don's "BAJA OWL" license plate). Possible Costa's Hummingbird, Phainopepla, Lewis's Woodpecker, Lawrence's Goldfinch. Bring full tank of gas, lunch and liquids.

Events Calendar

Tuesday Mar. 4, 7:30 PM

Board meeting, McClellan Ranch Park.

Wednesday Mar. 5, 7:30 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers presents Ted Cheeseman's "Evolution and Natural History in the Galapagos" slide show. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Tuesday Mar. 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: Ash-throated Flycatcher.

Thursday Mar. 13, 4:00 PM

Education Committee Meeting, location TBA

Wednesday Mar. 19, 7:30 PM

General meeting, Palo Alto. Program begins at 8:00. Details on Page 5.

Wednesday Mar. 26, 7:30 PM

Environmental Action Committee meeting, McClellan Ranch Park.

Tuesday Apr. 1, 7:30 PM

Board meeting, McClellan Ranch Park.

Wednesday Apr. 2, 7:30 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers presents John Cang's "Dual Purpose Photography Locations" slide show. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Tuesday Apr. 8, 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: European Starling.

Thursday Apr. 10, 4:00 PM

Education committee meeting, location (TBA).

Saturday Apr. 12, 10 - 2

Earth Day, Xmas Hill Park, Gilroy.

Wednesday Apr. 16, 7:30 PM

General Meeting, Palo Alto. Program begins at 8:00. Details on Page 5.

Wednesday Apr. 23, 7:30 PM

EAC meeting, McClellan Ranch Park.

Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz

SCVAS Programs Coordinator

According to the US Department of Labor's newly released survey, 59 million Americans participated in volunteer work between September 2001 and September 2002. That is equivalent to over 1 in 4 people – were you one of them? Judging by the many wonderful people who pass through our office supporting our numerous programs, volunteerism is alive and well at SCVAS.

If you're curious to learn more about volunteering with SCVAS, remember that our programs and projects are flexible. We can work to find an opportunity that's just right for you. I've picked a sampling of current volunteers needs. Take a look and call me to discuss which one is best for you!

- **Wetlands Discovery Program Field Trip or In-class Leader**

Work with 4th and 5th graders from throughout the county, either in class or in the field, to teach them the value of (and threats to) our local wetland areas. We provide training and co-leader to help ease you into the program.

- **Birdathon**

Big plans are underway for this spring's Birdathon! We need your help to lead a team, solicit prizes, organize the award ceremony, or coordinate other participants. Be a part of our first ever "Spring Roundup" and help the chapter to raise funds while having fun.

- **Bird Sanctuary Program**

Help to further develop this program, which encourages and rewards home owners and businesses that "birdscape" their property. Volunteers are needed to help publicize the program and develop additional outreach materials.

- **Taxidermy**

Volunteers are needed to help prepare bird study skins or to teach others this highly sought skill. If you have experience with study skins or have interest in learning how to prepare them, please contact me today!

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

Get Your "BABOB" Bird Guide!

If you are interested in discovering the wonderful birding areas people are talking about, *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay* ("BABOB") includes maps, directions, and tips on how to bird local areas. To purchase, contact our Nature Shop, (408) 252-3747 or order online, www.scvas.org. Nature Shop hours are: 10-5 PM Mon.-Fri, Sat. 10-2 PM. Shipping is available.

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Earth Day 2003 Celebration Christmas Hill Park, Gilroy

April 12, 10 AM - 2 PM

Co-sponsored by SCVAS and
the City of Gilroy

Fun for the whole family!

Free Food!

Compost Give-away!

Plant a tree!

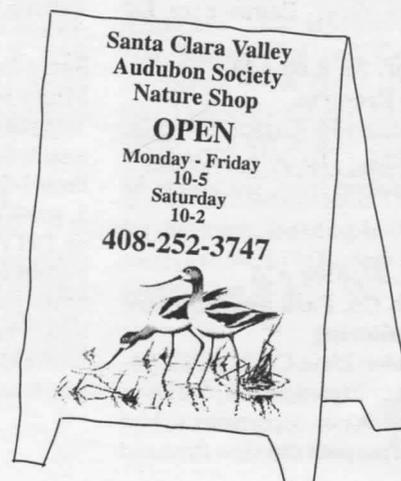
Build a Birdhouse!

Live Animals!

Family Birdwalks!

Free Games & Activities!

For details, call Jennifer at (408) 252-3740



March, April General Meetings

Wednesday March 19
“Spring Birding in South Texas”
with **Mike Danzenbaker**
and **Lee Hung**

Long-time SCVAS members Mike Danzenbaker and Lee Hung will present a program on birding in South Texas. During Spring migration the Gulf coast of Texas is a prime location for viewing warblers, orioles, thrushes, buntings and other neotropical migrants. It is also a great place for nesting waterbirds. Two endemic endangered species occur on the Edwards Plateau, and a number of Mexican species wander into the Rio Grande valley.

Mike started birding on the east coast when he was very young. After moving to California in 1985, he started photographing birds in earnest. He has traveled to every continent for birds. To see more of his bird images, check out his website: <<http://www.avesphoto.com>>www.avesphoto.com, which contains more than 1000 images of birds. Lee has been a birder for nearly 20 years, and has a great deal of experience birding in exotic locations.

General meetings for March and April will be held at the Palo Alto Cultural Center, Newell & Embarcadero Rds., Palo Alto. Doors open at 7:30; programs begin at 8:00.

Wednesday April 16
“Common Insects and Their Relatives”
with **Bob Stewart**

Former Marin Co. biologist Bob Stewart has been a teaching naturalist for over 40 years and is the author of two excellent butterfly books. He promises colorful stories about creatures which can be found in your own backyard. There are an overwhelming 28,000 species of insects in California, including many common species seen every day by birders and botanists. Bob will use sharp, close up photographs to identify species, organized into groups according to their role in the world; i.e., plant eaters, nectar/pollen feeders, predators and scavengers. Awareness of insects and spiders make food chain connections between plants and birds more evident and will enhance your observational powers. Bob recalls Red-breasted Sapsuckers eating cottony scale, insects on willows in the Sierra, Black-capped Chickadees foraging on willow lichens in Arcata, and a fall vagrant Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher that spent a week near Bolinas Lagoon eating black and yellow garden spiders.

Annual Fundraiser Bursts Thermometer!

Thanks to you, you, and you-and-you-and-you, our annual end-of-the-year fundraising letter for 2002 was our most successful yet! More than 400 contributors showed their commitment to SCVAS conservation, education, and birding programs, bringing in a grand total of \$74,000, surpassing our previous record of \$72,000 in 2000, and well above the 2001 total of \$57,000.

We want to especially thank those SCVAS devotees who contributed to the Avocet Circle. Their pool of \$20,000 in matching funds for new or increased donations surely helped us reach out to more SCVAS members. (Our policy has been not to report donor's names, so we will not do that here. However, we know some people would like to be thanked by name in the *Avocet*, so later this year the Board will revisit that policy.)

As part of our chapter's efforts to provide more and better services to our members and the larger community, we must become more professional as fundraisers as well. We will continue to strive to minimize the amount of staff time spent on fundraising. The SCVAS Board is increasingly taking the initiative in this work, which further allows our staff to focus on the accomplishments we report to you regularly in the *Avocet* and then in summary at the end of the year. In fact, this year's Birdathon has been organized almost entirely by Board members and volunteers.

When you give your time or money to SCVAS, we hope you realize that we steward these resources carefully. This year we made some difficult budget cuts and found additional resources through grants and corporate sponsorships, allowing us to maintain our staffing and strategically improve specific programs.

Many Audubon chapters around the country are largely volunteer-based birding clubs (nothing wrong with that). While we continue a high level of birding activities for our members, the resources you provide us have enabled the SCVAS Board to fulfill a much more ambitious vision. Thanks for being an integral part of that vision.

—Craig Breon

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The ALEUTIAN GOOSE FESTIVAL: **“A Celebration of Wildness”**

March 21-24, 2003 Crescent City, CA

The 5th annual Aleutian Goose Festival celebrates the return of Spring and the world's population of Aleutian Canada Geese. Once on the Endangered Species List with only 800 birds, this magnificent goose now numbers 40,000+ and has joined the elite group of species that have recovered enough to be removed from the endangered list. Festival guests are treated to the sight of tens of thousands of these birds lifting off Castle Island at dawn, filling the sky over the Pacific Ocean.

The 4-day festival features 75 workshops and field trips, including near shore ocean trips, pelagic trip, driftboats on the Wild & Scenic Smith River for birding-geology-redwood ecology, spotted owl, marbled murrelet, fire ecology, birding by kayak on Lake Earl Coastal Lagoon, Tolowa Native American Heritage, wildlife photography, optics by Swarovski, salmon and steelhead, and more.

For registration and general information:

email soar2@northcoast.com; website www.redwoodlink.com/soar
phone 707-465-0888

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

Generally our rarest loon, **Pacific Loons** were found in surprising numbers in December and January. An immature at Almaden Lake 13-15 Dec (RWR, FV, v.ob.) appears to have preceded the strong storms of 14-16 and 20 Dec, but all of our other birds were likely storm borne. Two birds were on Lake Elzman on 15 Dec (DLSu), an immature was at Calero Reservoir on 17 Dec (MJM), another immature was on the Parkway Lakes on 28-29 Jan (MMR, MJM), a long-staying immature was at the Coyote Creek Golf Course ponds from 28 Jan (MJM) through the end of January (m.ob.), an immature was on the Los Gatos Creek percolation ponds on 29 Dec (MMR, MJM), and an immature on the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 1 Jan (MJM) and Salt Pond A1 on 2 Jan (WGB) was probably the same bird. Our only **Common Loon**, on the other hand, was a bird on Calero Reservoir on 16 Dec (JiD). A **Red-necked Grebe** was found on Calero Reservoir on 13 Dec (JiD). This somewhat elusive bird was still being seen well into January (m.ob.). A juvenile **Brandt's Cormorant** found on a percolation pond in Los Gatos Creek CP on 29 Dec (RK, PK) stayed only a day or so, but was enjoyed by many. This is the ninth county record for this littoral cormorant. An **American Bittern** was seen in the Mountain View Forebay on 2 Dec (DH). Single birds were seen along Alviso Slough on 14 Dec (MMR), 27 Dec (RK, PK), and 26 Jan (CJC). A different bittern, perhaps, was at the Alviso Marina on 6 Jan (RWR). The Ogier Avenue ponds also provided a single bird on 28 Dec (MJM et al.). An immature **Greater White-fronted Goose** wintering at Cottonwood Lake in Hellyer CP was seen throughout most of the period (m.ob.). Another immature bird was found between Shoreline and Byxbee Park 1-29 Dec (DSt, v.ob.). Four birds were found at the Coyote Creek GC on 28 Dec (MJM) and nine were over Llagas Creek at

Bloomfield Road on 15 Jan (MP). An adult showed up with the Canada Geese at the Arzino Ranch 25-29 Jan (MMR, MJM). Two **Snow Geese** were seen over Anderson Reservoir on 28 Dec (GHt et al.). Two more were found on Salt Ponds A5 and A7 on Snowy Plover surveys on 6 Jan (MMR). Six **Ross's Geese** continued at Calero Reservoir through 1 Dec (AV, KO). An immature was at Los Gatos Creek CP 9-17 Dec (LSp, v.ob.). **Eurasian Wigeons** were widespread in the winter period. A male continued in the vicinity of the Palo Alto FCB at least through 5 Jan (m.ob.). Three males were on the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds on 7 Dec (RWR, FV et al.). A single male was on Crittenden

A Rusty Blackbird in a suburban mall was the big excitement of the season

Marsh on 16 Dec (MMR) and two to four males were on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso 27 Dec-3 Jan (RK, PK, MMR). In the south county two males were along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 16 Jan (MP). A single male was in the Palo Alto estuary on 22 Jan (AV). Unlike the Eurasian Wigeons, **Blue-winged Teal** were more local. One to seven birds were found in the Palo Alto FCB during the period (m.ob.) with a high count of seven on 17 Dec (RWR, FV). A solo male was in the Palo Alto estuary on 1 Jan (MJM). A male **'Eurasian' Green-winged Teal** was found along Stevens Creek below Crittenden Lane on 10 Dec (RK, PK). This male has been seen here or in the adjacent tidal marsh through the end of January (m.ob.). A second **Long-tailed Duck** was found in Salt Pond A1 on 1 Dec (RK, PK, FV) to augment the one found at the end of November. One or both of these birds were seen through 3 Dec (m.ob.). The male **Barrow's Goldeneye** at Shoreline Lake remained

at least through 16 Dec, Christmas count day, but was not seen after that (v.ob.). The male hybrid **Common x Barrow's Goldeneye**, however, has remained here into January (MMR).

Raptors through Gulls

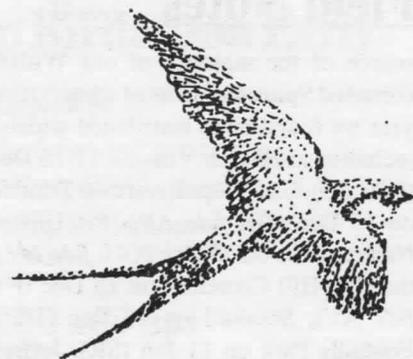
An adult **Bald Eagle** was found at Calero Reservoir on 13 Dec (RK, PK) and has been seen there through January (m.ob.). An adult **'Harlan's' Red-tailed Hawk** was found along the Guadalupe River above Montague on 15 Dec (ADeM *vide* AV). This is the seventh winter this bird has been seen here. A second **'Harlan's'** was seen soaring near Skyline Ridge OSP on 29 Jan (RSTh). Two adult **Ferruginous Hawks** were found in the Isabel Valley on 19 Dec (MMR, MJM). An adult has returned to a winter roost site near New and Rucker in Gilroy (BB-W) and has been seen regularly in January (v.ob.). An adult over the Coyote Creek GC on 25 Jan (LM) may be a different bird. The immature **Pacific Golden-Plover** wintering on the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh and nearby was seen through 1 Jan (v.ob.). This immature or perhaps a second bird was seen flocking with Black-bellied Plovers on Salt Pond A6 in Alviso on 7 Jan (MMR, RK). South Bay **Snowy Plover** surveys in early January resulted in only four birds found in the county, all on Salt Pond A6 in Alviso on 7 Jan (MMR, RK). The greatest bulk of the South Bay birds were on Ravenswood Point (KO, CMS). A single **Lesser Yellowlegs** found on the New Chicago Marsh on 5 Dec (RWR, FV) was the only one seen this winter. **Red Knots** do not normally winter in the South Bay so a single bird in the Palo Alto estuary on 5 Jan (JiD) was of interest. A search for knots at the Stevens Creek mouth was successful when one was found there on 8 Dec (RK). Over the next eight days, this spot was covered extensively (v.ob.) and a high count of 124 was obtained on 11 Dec (MMR). The birds appeared to move elsewhere after that although a single knot was found there on 14 Jan (FV). Twenty-two birds on the San Francisquito Creek delta on 16 Dec

(MMR) were more expected. **Sanderling** were found in good numbers this winter, perhaps because of the mid-December storms. Two birds were first found north of the Alviso Marina on 15 Dec (MMR) and two to four birds have been there irregularly through the end of January (m.ob.). Seven birds over Stevens Creek on 16 Dec (WGB) and four more were seen on the San Francisquito Creek delta the same day (MMR). The Alviso salt ponds were favored in late December and January with seven found on public trails on 27 Dec (RK, PK), 24 in Salt Pond A8 on 6 Jan (MMR), three in A7 on 6 Jan (MMR), and 43 on A6 on 7 Jan (MMR). Two birds were seen at the Stevens Creek mouth 14-27 Jan (RWR, FV, MMR). **Red Phalaropes** in the South Bay are a sure sign of storm severity. A single bird was found at the Stevens Creek mouth on 16 Dec (MMR) and was in that area through the next day (JiD, RWR, FV). A single bird was also inland on Searsville Lake on 16 Jan as well (TAC, MS). On 17 Dec another bird was found on the Los Gatos Creek CP percolation ponds (RK, PK). Six birds were on Calero Reservoir on 18 Dec (AME, MJM) and the same day a single bird was found on Lake Cunningham (MMR). Lake Cunningham seemed fairly suitable as the birds there increased to three by 24 Dec (D&PB) and at least two birds remained through 29 Dec (v.ob.). The Alviso salt ponds eventually became the magnet for these storm-driven waifs and 18 were found there on 27 Dec (RK, PK). The numbers dropped in early January (v.ob.) with four birds last seen on 8 Jan (RGJ). Neither of "our" **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** have shown up this winter, but a third-winter bird seen on 26 Jan (JiD) near the Stevens Creek mouth will be our third county record if accepted by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC).

Roadrunners through Goldfinches

A **Greater Roadrunner** found on Crothers Road on the San Jose CBC on 15 Dec (BB-W, DJ, SVS *vide* AV) has been the most cooperative in memory. This bird has remained in this location through at least 23 Jan (MJM) and has been enjoyed by many local birders. The

Short-eared Owl wintering in the Palo Alto FCB has been seen irregularly through 24 Jan (v.ob.). A male **Rufous Hummingbird** along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 25 Jan (MMR, MJM) was early. A female *Selasphorus* hummingbird was also found at Edenvale Garden Park the same day (MJM). Parties in the Isabel Valley on the Mt. Hamilton CBC on 19 Dec recorded at least 34 **Lewis's Woodpeckers** (MMR, MJM, GHt). None were found in San Antonio Valley. A **Red-naped Sapsucker** seen at Hidden Villa on 15 Jan (GH *vide* SCVAS) is the first to be found in three winters. One to two **Pileated Woodpeckers** have been found in the Monte Bello OSP in December and January (v.ob.). A single bird at the crest near Skyline OSP on 29 Jan (RSTh) is likely a different resident. There was a scattering of **Tree Swallows** in December and January. One to four birds were at Lake Cunningham 15-26 Dec (BR, v.ob.). Two were over the Lockheed-Martin ponds on 1 Jan (MJM) and two were at Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 20 Jan (MJM). More inland, three were at Calero Reservoir on 26 Jan (MJM) and several were seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds the same day (KH et al.). **Violet-green Swallows** were found in greater numbers with representative high counts of 31 at Lake Cunningham on 15 Dec (MJM) and 12 over Llagas Creek at Bloomfield Road on 11 Dec (MP). **Barn Swallows**, once unheard of in winter, were also found widely. Two were along Stevens Creek on 10 Dec (LSu, PD). One to three birds were at Lake Cunningham 15-27 Dec (MJM, WGB, KPa). One was over the Mountain View Forebay on 26 Dec (PG). Three were at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 27 Dec (MMR) and three more were seen at Los Gatos Creek CP on 1 Jan (RGJ, MMR). In the south county one was over Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 16 Jan (MP). A **Canyon Wren** was found in Henry Coe SP on 1 Jan (JY, AL) during a day hike. **American Dippers** in typical locations included two at Alum Rock Park on 15 Dec (HF, JP, BS, JS), one at Croy and Uvas Creeks on 28 Dec (JY, WGB), one on Herbert Creek also on



*"Barn Swallows, once unheard of in winter, were also found widely."
sketch by Bonnie Bedford-White*

28 Dec (KS, KH, TR), and two on Stevens Creek 27-31 Jan (RK, FV, MMR). Three **Phainopepla** were found in the Isabel Valley on 19 Dec (MMR, MJM). Much less expected was a female found in the Guadalupe Oak Grove Park on 30 Dec (JP) and 12 Jan (AV). Always a good find in winter, a male **Yellow Warbler** was seen at Lake Cunningham on 15 Dec (J&SLi *vide* AV). Wintering **Black-throated Gray Warblers** included one in Santa Clara's Central Park on 15 Dec (AVd, MD *vide* AV), one on Crossman Avenue in Sunnyvale on 15 Dec (JiD *vide* AV), and an adult in Joseph Grant CP on 23 Jan (SR). Two **Hermit Warblers** were found in Edenvale Garden Park on 28 Dec (TO, DW *vide* JMa) and one was refound on 12 Jan (AME). Good birds in Edenvale Garden Park attracted birders as well. Two female **Western Tanagers** were found there on 18 Jan and one was seen again on 25 Jan (MJM). A wintering **Chipping Sparrow** was seen at the Palo Alto Hills GC on 16 Dec (AME). A few **Grasshopper Sparrows** winter locally as indicated by a single bird found on Coyote Ridge on 28 Dec (RH et al.). A **Swamp Sparrow** was found at the Palo Alto Baylands on 31 Dec (MMR, RK, PK) and was refound on 1 Jan (MJM) and 2 Jan (MMR). Although feeders are the

continued on Page 8

Field Notes *cont'd*

source of the majority of our **White-throated Sparrows** in most winters, this year we found birds distributed widely, including at Hidden Villa on 11-16 Dec (LSu, PD), Guadalupe River near Trimble on 15 Dec (DK *fide* AV), the Ulistac Natural Area on 15 Dec (GHt *fide* AV), the Oak Hill Cemetery on 15 Dec (FV *fide* AV), Stanford on 16 Dec (DSt), Foothills Park on 11 Jan (SR), Jeffrey Fontana Park on 18 Jan (MJM), and Fair Oaks Park on 26 Jan (MMR). The gold mine, however, was Edenvale Garden Park where an adult and immature were found on 26 Dec (JMa), four birds were seen on 28 Dec (TO, DW *fide* JMa), and single birds were seen there more or less regularly through 20 Jan (m. ob.). Feeder birds were found in San Jose (JAC), Los Altos (RCo), and Gilroy (BB-W).

The biggest excitement of the season was a female **Rusty Blackbird** found in a mall at the northwest corner of Lawrence Expressway and El Camino on 12 Jan (ChI, CyI). This strip mall queen was seen here regularly and enjoyed by many at least through 26 Jan. This is the first county record of this eastern vagrant. So next time you go shopping . . . A local wintering spot of one of our other rare blackbirds was found on 28 Dec when two male and two female **Great-tailed Grackles** were seen at the Coyote Creek GC (MJM). Three males were seen there on 1 Jan (MMR, MJM, AME) which suggests at least five birds total. Some of this group has remained through January (v. ob.). A few wintering orioles have been found in January. An immature male **Hooded Oriole** came to an east San Jose feeder on 28 Jan (PB). A male **Bullock's Oriole** was found in Edenvale Garden Park on 20 Jan (RWR, FV, RK) and was seen again on 25 Jan (MJM). A few **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found on the Mt. Hamilton CBC on 19 Dec with 22 in Isabel Valley (MMR, MJM, GHt) and five in San Antonio Valley (WGB). One Lawrence's was found in Henry Coe SP on 1 Jan (JY, AL).

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

Birdathon *continued from Page 1*

The top three prizes will be awarded to those individuals who deliver the most pledge money regardless of the category of competition, followed by the teams that find the most species in each category, and the most unique birdathon. After those prizes are distributed, there will be plenty of fine prizes for the pledge and total species winners and runners-up in each category. Both the self-guided and the guided teams are eligible for prizes. Our sponsors have been very generous; few participants should leave the awards ceremony empty-handed.



Observers: Bonnie Bedford-White (BB-W), Peg Bernucci (PB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Dennis & Patricia Braddy (D&PB), Ted Chandik (TAC), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RCo), Chuck Coston (CJC), Jim Danzenbaker (JiD), Al DeMartini (ADeM), Peggy Don (PD), Michelle Drake (MD), Al Eisner (AME), Howard Friedmann (HF), Peter Grace (PG), Garth Harwood (GH), Donna Heim (DH), Rick Herder (RH), Karen Hesse (KH), Kirsten Holmquist (KH), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Chris Illes (ChI), Cyndie Illes (Cyl), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Dorothy Johnson (DJ), Dan Keller (DK), Roland Kenner (RK), Pat Kenny (PK), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Jim & Sue Liskovec (J&SLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), Lisa Myers (LM), Kris Olson (KO), Tadd Ottman (TO), Kathy Parker (KPa), Janna Pauser (JP), Mark Paxton (MP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Bob Roadcap (BR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Taylor Ronsvall (TR), Steve Rutledge (SR), Marion Smith (MS), Bonnie Spacek (BS), Jackie Spacek (JS), Larry Spivak (LSp), Kep Stone (KS), Dick Stovel (DSt), Cheryl Strong (CMS), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LSu), Ron Thorn (RSTh), Frank Vanslager (FV), Sue Van Stee (SVS), Andrea Vedanayangam (AVd), Ann Verdi (AV), Debbie Wong (DW), and James Yurchenco (JY).

Pledges

You can sponsor yourself and ask your friends, family, neighbors and business associates to make pledges. Sponsors may choose to support your team with a per species pledge or with a lump sum donation. For self-guided trips we ask that each team member competing for prizes have at least \$25 in pledges.

If you decide to sign up for one of the guided Birdathon trips described below, we ask that the sum of your pledges total a minimum of \$1 per species. This does not mean that each sponsor must pledge you that minimum—it is the sum of all the various pledges you get. For instance, if Rusty Blackbird pledges you 25¢ per species and Olive Warbler pledges \$1 per species, your pledge total is \$1.25 per species. Do the best you can and don't be afraid to shoot for the moon! (The top prizes go to those who get the most pledge \$\$). Don't be intimidated by the minimum amounts—each year rookies express surprise at how easy it was to meet or exceed the minimums.

Guided Birdathons

Leave the planning to us! Join one of the guided birdathons below and compete for the top prizes of most money raised. Sign up for one of the guided birdathons by calling the SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747. There's a guided trip for every birding skill level. More guided trips of various lengths will be added depending on the level of participation. Remember that if you can't join one of these teams, you still can plan your own birdathon—even do it in your own backyard at any convenient time in the birdathon window.

Saturday Apr. 19th — The Varied Twitchers. A rare opportunity to join expert birder **Mike Rogers** on a dawn to dusk tour of Santa Clara County hotspots. Join Mike for a high-energy trip, starting with pre-dawn owling and racing around the county to find as many birds as possible. Expect 120 - 140 species. Intermediate to advanced level birders. Carpooling encouraged.

Birdathon *cont'd*

Saturday Apr. 19th — The Wacky-Capped Chickadees' Big Sit! Funny hats will be the order of the day at this wacky gathering led by SCVAS board member **Debbie Thompson**. Bring a hat, lawn chair and refreshments and sit for a few hours at Shoreline Park to see how many birds we can count. A door prize will be awarded to the best hat of the day. Expect 35 - 50 species.

Saturday Apr. 26th — The Birdnutz. Are you nuts about birds? Then join **Les Chibana** of Birdnutz Trips on a whirlwind trip around Santa Clara County, starting with owling and trying to rack up as many birds as possible. Expect 90 - 130 species. Intermediate to advanced level. Carpooling encouraged.

Saturday Apr. 26th — Kirsten's Kestrels. If you don't have time for an all day birdathon, join **Kirsten Holmquist** for a morning birdathon at Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto, a birding hotspot in northern Santa Clara County. Expect 45-60 species. For intermediate and advanced birders.

Saturday Apr. 26th — The Wild Western Bluebirds. Especially for beginning birders, a morning at Almaden Lake Park with SCVAS member and veteran guide, **Ralph Schardt**. Ralph enjoys showing the birding ropes to beginners so this will be a fine learning experience as well as a fun Birdathon. Expect 45-80 species.

Registration Information

If you've never participated in a Birdathon, rest assured it's really easy and great fun to get involved, and we stand ready to guide and advise you through the process. For more details on the Birdathon, or to see a current prize list and download the 2003 registration form simply visit our website at www.scvas.org; call Susan Bell at (408) 252-3747; send an email to scvas@scvas.org; or drop by the Nature Shop at 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino.

2003 Spring Roundup Birdathon Early Bird Sponsors

We are pleased to announce the following generous businesses and individuals as "Early Bird" sponsors of the 2003 Spring Roundup Birdathon:

Golden Eagle (\$500 and up)

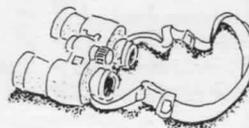
Birdnutz Birding Trips (www.birdnutz.com)
Swift Instruments, Inc. (www.swift-optics.com)
The Wild Bird Center, Los Gatos (www.wildbirdcenter.com/los/)
Wild Birds Unlimited, San Jose (<http://stores.wbu.com/sanjose/>)

Great Egret (\$150 - \$499)

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Ralph Schardt, SCVAS member
Whole Foods Markets, Los Gatos, Cupertino, Campbell (www.wholefoods.com)

Western Bluebird (\$50 - \$149)

Flint Center, Cupertino (www.flintcenter.com)
Floy Zittin (www.floyzittin.com)
Going Birding, Inc. (www.goingbirding.com)
Opera San Jose (www.operasj.org)
Petersen Photography, Ltd. (<http://www.petersenphotography.com/>)
Redwood Bluegrass Associates (www.rba.org)
Stanford Lively Arts (<http://livelyarts.stanford.edu>)
Tapestry, A California Bistro, Los Gatos (www.tapestrybistro.com)
Villa Montalvo, Saratoga (www.villamontalvo.com)
West Bay Opera, Palo Alto (www.wbopera.org)



2002 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Species	SJ 12/15/02	PA 12/16/02	MtH 12/19/02	Cal-MH 12/28/02
Pacific Loon	-	-	-	2
Pied-billed Grebe	56	118	13	80
Horned Grebe	4	7	-	3
Eared Grebe	2666	229	2	57
Western Grebe	41	32	-	43
Clark's Grebe	8	22	-	4
<i>aechmophorus</i> , sp	16	27	-	-
American White Pelican	165	166	-	15
Brown Pelican	25	50	-	CW
Double-crested Cormorant	234	117	1	214
American Bittern	1	-	-	2
Great Blue Heron	42	20	2	15
Great Egret	50	50	-	22
Snowy Egret	39	106	-	16
Green Heron	3	1	-	3
Black-crowned Night-Heron	163	44	-	23
Greater White-fronted Goose	-	1	-	5
Snow Goose	2	-	-	2
Ross's Goose	-	-	-	1
Canada Goose	750	598	-	231
Wood Duck	8	-	4	119
American Green-winged Teal	39	327	-	64
Mallard	1463	1184	105	805
Northern Pintail	8	484	-	-
Blue-winged Teal	-	6	-	-
Cinnamon Teal	77	40	-	2
Northern Shoveler	3088	3063	-	-
Gadwall	221	275	55	387
Eurasian Wigeon	-	4	-	-
American Wigeon	376	1100	140	37
Canvasback	62	2263	-	29
Redhead	47	28	-	2
Ring-necked Duck	44	359	75	210
Greater Scaup	206	78	-	33
Lesser Scaup	132	148	-	86
<i>aythya</i> , sp	122	5403	-	-
Surf Scoter	26	136	-	CW
Common Goldeneye	26	96	-	70
Barrow's Goldeneye	-	1	-	-
Bufflehead	308	673	158	191
Hooded Merganser	8	46	-	21
Common Merganser	16	-	-	66
Red-breasted Merganser	31	2	-	-
Ruddy Duck	1800	7621	58	365
Gadwall x Mallard	-	1	-	-
Barrow's x Common Goldeneye	-	1	-	-
duck, sp	31	500	3	-
Turkey Vulture	147	44	-	83
Osprey	-	-	-	6
White-tailed Kite	28	28	-	25
Bald Eagle	-	-	-	CW
Northern Harrier	42	29	1	8
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	10	2	12
Cooper's Hawk	17	3	CW	15
<i>accipiter</i> , sp	6	2	-	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	55	21	-	32
Red-tailed Hawk	150	82	21	101
Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk	1	-	-	-
<i>buteo</i> , sp	6	-	-	-

Species	SJ 12/15/02	PA 12/16/02	MtH 12/19/02	Cal-MH 12/28/02
Ferruginous Hawk	-	-	2	1
Golden Eagle	6	1	8	10
American Kestrel	76	19	1	73
Merlin	15	3	2	4
Peregrine Falcon	3	2	-	3
Prairie Falcon	4	-	1	-
falcon, sp	2	-	-	-
Ring-necked Pheasant	15	3	-	-
Wild Turkey	22	13	8	116
California Quail	77	83	107	145
Clapper Rail	-	5	-	-
Virginia Rail	19	8	-	4
Sora	6	2	-	2
Common Moorhen	8	2	-	4
American Coot	2480	1696	301	1979
Black-bellied Plover	1	676	-	-
Pacific Golden-Plover	-	1	-	-
Snowy Plover	9	-	-	-
Semipalmated Plover	-	1340	-	-
Killdeer	169	35	22	171
Black-necked Stilt	830	404	-	-
American Avocet	907	2935	-	-
Greater Yellowlegs	43	41	7	1
Lesser Yellowlegs	-	-	-	-
yellowlegs, sp	2	-	-	25
Willet	77	1811	-	-
Spotted Sandpiper	3	-	-	-
Whimbrel	-	10	-	-
Long-billed Curlew	116	395	-	-
Marbled Godwit	25	266	-	-
Red Knot	-	24	-	-
Sanderling	13	11	-	-
Western Sandpiper	885	6660	-	-
Least Sandpiper	512	973	-	-
Dunlin	254	417	-	-
<i>calidrid</i> ("peep"), sp	61	1733	-	-
sandpiper, sp	14	-	-	-
Short-billed Dowitcher	-	4	-	-
Long-billed Dowitcher	125	79	-	-
dowitcher, sp	373	692	-	-
Wilson's Snipe	49	-	1	3
large shorebird, sp	-	-	-	17
Red Phalarope	CW	2	-	-
Bonaparte's Gull	1819	1065	-	5
Mew Gull	922	3	-	17
Ring-billed Gull	1964	671	-	121
California Gull	6531	2244	-	2081
Herring Gull	6779	110	-	1118
Thayer's Gull	31	2	-	8
Iceland Gull	-	-	-	-
Lesser Black-backed Gull	-	-	-	-
Western Gull	86	21	-	-
Glaucous-winged Gull	2993	111	-	4
Glaucous-winged x W. Gull	2	-	-	-
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	-
gull, sp	7561	2413	-	1113
Forster's Tern	52	181	-	-
Black Skimmer	-	21	-	-
Rock Dove	2429	668	-	1124

Species	SJ 12/15/02	PA 12/17/02	MtH 12/19/02	Cal-MH 12/28/02
Band-tailed Pigeon	42	78	17	20
Mourning Dove	1042	256	20	635
Greater Roadrunner	1	-	-	-
Barn Owl	1	1	-	3
Western Screech-Owl	8	3	1	12
Great Horned Owl	6	5	-	9
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	-	-	1
Burrowing Owl	7	3	-	-
Northern Saw-whet Owl	-	-	-	-
White-throated Swift	-	25	-	8
Anna's Hummingbird	332	148	3	312
Belted Kingfisher	21	4	7	17
Lewis's Woodpecker	-	-	34	-
Acorn Woodpecker	63	68	64	84
Red-breasted Sapsucker	10	3	-	7
Nuttall's Woodpecker	92	61	14	98
Downy Woodpecker	21	7	1	12
Hairy Woodpecker	1	8	5	3
Northern (Red-sh) Flicker	178	98	35	106
Pileated Woodpecker	-	1	-	-
Black Phoebe	267	158	24	181
Say's Phoebe	20	3	2	20
Horned Lark	5	-	-	83
Tree Swallow	1	-	-	-
Violet-green Swallow	37	5	-	-
Barn Swallow	1	-	-	-
Steller's Jay	110	101	13	82
Western Scrub Jay	383	290	195	368
Yellow-billed Magpie	305	-	139	93
American Crow	369	196	73	779
Common Raven	44	120	30	13
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	169	463	CW	185
Oak Titmouse	48	164	121	200
Bushtit	985	1075	121	698
Red-breasted Nuthatch	-	-	-	-
White-breasted Nuthatch	16	21	37	39
Pygmy Nuthatch	-	17	-	-
Brown Creeper	1	6	-	3
Rock Wren	4	-	2	4
Canyon Wren	-	-	-	-
Bewick's Wren	26	61	18	52
House Wren	-	-	-	-
Winter Wren	1	1	-	-
Marsh Wren	59	18	-	7
American Dipper	2	-	-	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	6	7	2	-
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	265	142	26	153
Western Bluebird	39	51	169	103
Townsend's Solitaire	-	-	-	-
Hermit Thrush	47	45	17	26
American Robin	588	1370	83	3091
Varied Thrush	14	79	-	23
Wrentit	18	43	24	30
Northern Mockingbird	105	23	-	36
California Thrasher	6	14	CW	12
American Pipit	43	62	-	127
Cedar Waxwing	493	796	1	1233
Phainopepla	-	-	3	CW
Loggerhead Shrike	30	4	-	4

Species	SJ 12/15/02	PA 12/16/02	MtH 12/19/02	Cal-MH 12/28/02
European Starling	3382	661	262	1061
Hutton's Vireo	4	15	-	8
Orange-crowned Warbler	12	2	-	-
Yellow Warbler	1	-	-	-
Yellow-rumped Warbler (form?) (Myrtle)	766	194	-	101
(Audubon's)	13	21	-	3
Black-throated Gray Warbler	225	274	1	174
Townsend's Warbler	2	-	-	-
Hermit Warbler	21	50	-	7
Common Yellowthroat	-	-	-	2
Spotted Towhee	56	32	-	7
California Towhee	46	38	43	54
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	228	230	87	204
Chipping Sparrow	3	-	-	5
Lark Sparrow	-	1	-	-
Sage Sparrow	343	-	-	16
Savannah Sparrow	-	-	4	-
Grasshopper Sparrow	111	77	10	36
Fox Sparrow	-	-	-	1
Fox Sparrow, Eastern form	62	16	67	30
Song Sparrow	1	-	-	-
Lincoln's Sparrow	178	74	3	69
White-throated Sparrow	83	4	-	5
Golden-crowned Sparrow	3	2	-	4
White-crowned Sparrow	1237	713	332	719
sparrow, sp	1729	505	91	1025
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	292	57	-	30
Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco	349	497	674	216
Nutmeg Mannikin	-	1	-	-
Red-winged Blackbird	-	-	-	30
Tricolored Blackbird	1476	690	563	2685
Western Meadowlark	51	30	174	11
Brewer's Blackbird	355	163	69	389
Great-tailed Grackle	966	540	232	2209
Brown-headed Cowbird	-	-	-	4
blackbird, sp	112	1	-	32
Purple Finch	403	170	323	461
House Finch	2	7	4	34
Pine Siskin	1625	515	8	848
Lesser Goldfinch	-	5	-	-
Lawrence's Goldfinch	361	230	18	378
American Goldfinch	-	-	141	-
goldfinch, sp	170	28	-	200
House Sparrow	-	-	3	-
	239	18	12	88
Total Species	160	157	76	139
Total	72,478	65,467	5,522	31,673

Key: sp = species undetermined
CW = Count Week

SJ = San Jose: compiled by Ann Verdi
PA = Palo Alto: compiled by Al Eisner
MtH = Mount Hamilton: compiled by Don Schmoltd
Cal-MH = Calero-Morgan Hill: compiled by John Mariani

Data entry and chart format by Bonnie Bedford-White.

Stormy weather marks 2002 Bird Counts

San Jose Dec. 14

The San Jose CBC was held on Sunday, Dec 15, 2002 — the day after a powerful storm system that blew through the Bay Area. In the aftermath we encountered intermittent rain, muddy trails, impassable roads, downed trees and windy conditions. As a result our count was down from previous years with a total of 160 species.

We missed some birds normally seen on the count such as Bald Eagle, and the Lesser Black-backed Gull did not return to Lake Cunningham this season. Nonetheless we picked up some species that we don't always find every year — American Bittern, Redhead and Surf Scoter in the Alviso sector, and N. Pygmy-Owl, Greater Roadrunner and American Dipper in the Alum Rock sector.

Other highlights include the following: two Snow Geese in the Alviso salt ponds; the Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk back for its seventh winter along Guadalupe River; Tree, Violet-green and Barn Swallows all reported from Lake Cunningham (Violet-green Swallows were also reported from Sunnyvale); one Yellow Warbler found at Lake Cunningham; two Black-throated Gray Warblers (Santa Clara and Sunnyvale); Red/Eastern Fox Sparrow at Guadalupe River; and three White-throated Sparrows. Also a count week Red Phalarope was found at Lake Cunningham — our only storm-driven bird of the count.

Many thanks to all who came out on this soggy yet successful count day.

—Ann Verdi

Palo Alto Dec. 15

The best word for the Palo Alto count was "windy." Most parties had only brief rain, but winds up to 30 mph or more were encountered by everyone, with substantially stronger gusts at higher elevations. The result was depressed totals of species and individual birds (for example, most owling was wiped out by wind or difficult road access). The total of 157 species was somewhat below average.

Nonetheless, some interesting birds were found. The stakeout Pacific Golden-

Plover at lower Stevens Creek was a new species for the count. Two Red Phalaropes — one at the mouth of Stevens Creek, the other on Searsville Lake — were the vanguard of the storm-driven "invasion" documented by Bill Bousman in his column. One Chipping Sparrow (at the Palo Alto Hills Golf and Country Club) and 5 Violet-green Swallows (by the Sunnyvale wastewater ponds) also represented species seen only rarely on this count. Rounding out the "rare birds" were the wintering Greater White-fronted Goose (seen at Byxbee Park) and two species which appear to have become rare but regular parts of our avifauna in the last few years: one Pileated Woodpecker at Montebello OSP, and a flock of 13 Wild Turkeys at Rancho San Antonio.

I flagged two species as having high counts: Semipalmated Plover, dominated by a flock of 1100 near the Dumbarton Bridge; and Ring-necked Duck, which returned to numbers we haven't had for over a decade. We did well with some more-unusual duck species: Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Barrow's Goldeneye (just one — is this species on the decline here?) and a couple of interesting hybrids. White-throated Sparrows were found at Hidden Villa and Stanford, and a Slate-colored Junco was also at Stanford. We managed to miss Wood Duck, Common Merganser and Wilson's Snipe, and came within 1 of missing Brown-headed Cowbird!

Finally, strong thanks are due Jack Cole and the region coordinators for organizing the count, and the 71 participants who hung in there in far from ideal weather.

—Al Eisner

Mount Hamilton Dec. 19

28 observers saw 76 species, plus three more species during the Count Week, on Dec. 19, the 26th Mt. Hamilton CBC. The number of species and individuals tallied was about average for our bad weather counts. We missed Bald Eagle for the second consecutive year. In 2001, the eagles returned to Isabel Valley shortly after the bird count, and that may be the case this year as well. (One wonders if this could be an indication of global warming, or a new pair of eagles wintering in the area?)

Birds missed for the first time ever on the Count were Red-breasted Sapsucker,

California Thrasher, (found during Count Week), and Lark Sparrow. The other Count Week species were Cooper's Hawk and Chestnut-backed Chickadee.

The real story was the snow! Five inches had accumulated on the summit by 5 PM, and eight inches by the following morning. Sally and I drove back to Sacramento via the east side (they had just plowed the road) and Del Puerto Canyon Road. We could not believe the amount of water everywhere. There were creeks flowing in San Antonio Valley that I didn't know existed! Should be a great wildflower show this spring.

After 26 years, this was my final effort as compiler for the Mt. Hamilton CBC. My sincere thanks to all who have helped me on this very special bird count over the years.

—Don Schmoldt

Calero-Morgan Hill Dec. 28

Despite drenching rain, and a low turnout compared to previous years, those who participated in the fourth annual Calero-Morgan Hill Christmas Bird Count managed to count 31,673 individual birds of 139 species.

Highlights included some species new to the count, such as Pacific Loons and Great-tailed Grackles in Coyote Valley, and Hermit Warblers at Edenvale Park.

—John Mariani

The fourth annual Calero-Morgan Hill CBC marked a farewell to Count co-founder John Mariani, who moved to Texas in January. John and co-compiler Ann Verdi did a great job of organizing participants, who managed to get in several hours of excellent birding before yet another rainstorm blew in around 2 PM.

Thanks to John for his energy in establishing this new CBC as an important central California birding event. We look forward to Ann Verdi's capable leadership as she assumes compiler duties next year (Kirsten Holmquist will take over Ann's job as San Jose CBC compiler). —Ed.

“Listing” the Burrowing Owl

CA Endangered Species Act a last resort for protection?

by Craig Breon
SCVAS Executive Director

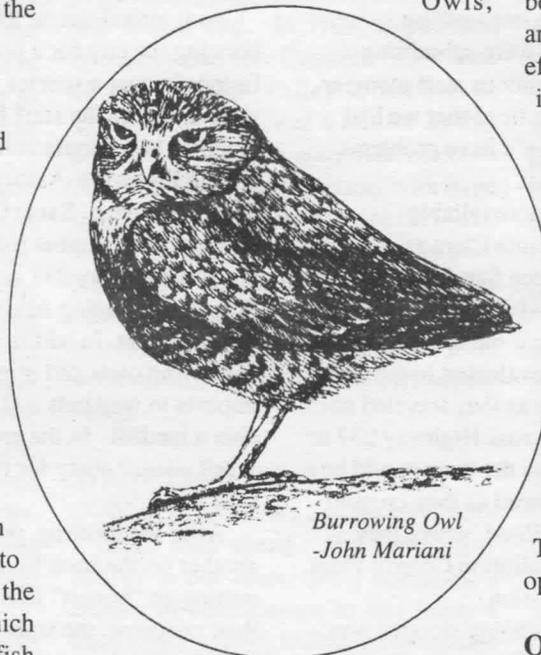
By the time you read this article, we may have filed a petition with California’s Fish and Game Commission to list the Burrowing Owl as either an Endangered or Threatened species in California. I’ll be the first to say that this is a bold move—almost surely the boldest we will take this year—and with uncertain outcomes. We did not come to this decision easily. I want to explain to you how we got to where we are, and what the steps are from here.

The basics

On February 4th, the SCVAS Board voted to become a petitioner in this effort. Joining us will likely be a number of conservation organizations, including the Center for Biological Diversity, the San Bernardino Audubon Society, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Defenders of Wildlife. The first draft of this petition was produced many years ago by a group of scientists associated with the Burrowing Owl Consortium, an organization that meets twice yearly to discuss owl issues. More recently, the Center for Biological Diversity, which specializes in rare and endangered fish and wildlife issues, has worked with a variety of Burrowing Owl experts to complete, update, and improve on the original draft. At this point, we feel the petition contains adequate justification to list the owl.

Once we file the petition, the Fish and Game Commission will have 90 days to make an initial determination as to whether the Burrowing Owl “may warrant listing.” That language is key—it is not a final determination, but if we pass the “may warrant” test, then the owl will become a candidate species and will get one year’s protection—as if it were listed—while the Department of Fish and Game staff and ultimately the Commission make a final determination.

We are relying on portions of the California Endangered Species Act (CESA—pronounced “see-sa”) that states that a species warrants listing if it is “in serious danger of becoming extinct throughout all, or a significant portion of its range” (for Endangered status) or “although not presently threatened with extinction, is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future in the absence of the special protection and management efforts required by [CESA]” (for Threatened status). Many populations of Burrowing Owls,



Burrowing Owl
-John Mariani

including ours here in the Santa Clara Valley, may live or die based on the Commission’s interpretation of these phrases.

CESA or ESA?

Why did we choose to try to list the Burrowing Owl only in California, rather than using the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)? We have more complete information about the owls in California than we do throughout their range in the western United States. Most likely, the owl should be listed nationally, but we simply don’t have the information needed to try that . . . yet.

CESA is arguably less protective than the ESA. Without getting into the arcane

language of what it means to “take” a species, suffice it to say that courts have interpreted the federal ESA as protecting not just the individuals of a species and their nesting sites, but their critical habitats as well. Unfortunately, courts have not made that same interpretation for CESA. As a result, we end up in a position where, even if they get listed, the owls will get enhanced protection as individuals, but owl habitats will still be vulnerable.

Threatened or Endangered?

While technically there is a difference between a species listed as Threatened and one listed as Endangered, the practical effect is nearly the same. Once a species is listed, it becomes increasingly difficult to build in areas where individuals of that species or their nesting sites will be disturbed. In this case, we are dealing with a species that almost exclusively dwells in valleys—the same places we prefer to build homes, farms, and businesses. Unlike the listing of a species tucked away in remote mountainous terrain, if we are successful in listing the Burrowing Owl, there will be some impacts to development in parts of California. That means we will have some serious opponents!

Opposition

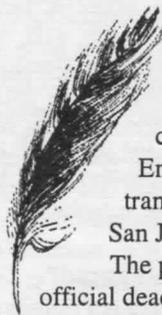
We can expect some landowners, farmers, developers, and local governments to vigorously oppose our listing petition. They will attack our science, and most likely our scientists as well. One argument we expect to hear is that the population of Burrowing Owls in the Imperial Valley of Southern California is large, stable, and shows little or no signs of decline, therefore the species is not threatened with extinction. However, remember the language I mentioned earlier: threatened with extinction over “a significant portion of its range.” The Imperial Valley represents approximately 2% of California’s land mass, but likely contains more than 70%

cont’d on Page 15

Owls get a break at Arzino Ranch

by Kelly Crowley

SCVAS Environmental Advocate



I had a moment of utter exasperation in early January, which, thankfully, was allayed into calm relief by early February. Just after the new year, Craig came into my office and handed me an Environmental Impact Report for a transmission line project in Santa Clara and San Jose.

The project hearing date was looming, the official deadline for comment well past, and we were just now submitting our letter on this project, which was going to have "significant unavoidable impacts" on Burrowing Owls. The only reason we were submitting comments at all was because a conscientious staff member with Santa Clara's Municipal Utility noticed that we had nothing on record yet, and imagined we'd have problems with the project. He imagined correctly.

The project was meant to provide more reliable electricity service to the residents of Santa Clara via a new transmission line that would run between San Jose's newly permitted Los Esteros power plant in Alviso and Santa Clara's Northern Receiving Station, near the intersection of Tasman and Lafayette. The proposal evaluated in the EIR would have "undergrounded" the lines as they traveled north and east along the Guadalupe River, across Highway 237 to Nortech Parkway. At Nortech Parkway the lines would be brought above ground and travel overhead as they crossed the Arzino Ranch area to Los Esteros Road, where they would circumvent San Jose's Water Pollution Control Plant, and terminate at the Los Esteros substation.

The very place where the undergrounding stopped was where buried lines would be critical to the Arzino Ranch burrowing owls' survival. Predators would surely perch on overhead transmission lines and towers, potentially decimating that population of owls. In addition, the overhead lines' proximity to the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge meant that possibly large numbers of migrating birds would have deadly encounters with this project.

I was frustrated and tense as I thought about it. When were burrowing owls going to catch a break from the ever-advancing train of extinction? Why in the world was the Audubon Society so late in getting information about this project? Now, certainly we would be at odds with the City of Santa Clara over a project in which it had already invested months of time and plenty of money. If only they had consulted us earlier in the process, we might have been able to find an alternative route that would satisfy both our needs.

Luckily, the EIR was a good one. It did not gloss over the potential impacts to the burrowing owl and other avian

species, but rather clearly identified them as significant unavoidable impacts. Knowing the Santa Clara Council, we thought we had a decent shot at getting the project changed.

Since 1998, when we worked with People for Open Space to save Ulistac Natural Area from development, we have had the ability to reach a large number of politically active, environmentally minded Santa Clara residents. This, the Council knows. By the time we figured out the date of the hearing, we had less than a week to get the grassroots mobilized. Nonetheless, we managed to get word out. Some people wrote letters. A couple showed up at the hearing, with very little advance notice.

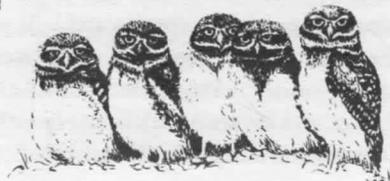
As it turned out, at the hearing we were no longer berating the city for a poorly planned project that would further impact a species on the brink of local extinction. We were thanking the staff for good work!

After last-minute collaboration with their consultants (David Powers & Associates), the Water Pollution Control Plant and others, Santa Clara city staff recommended an alternative alignment (identified in the EIR) that largely hugged Highway 237 as it traveled east from Nortech Parkway, avoiding Arzino Ranch and the Water Pollution Control Plant. In addition to reducing the impacts to burrowing owls and migratory birds, it avoided possible impacts to wetlands and the risks associated with excavating near a landfill. In the end, the Santa Clara City Council voted unanimously for the alignment recommended by its staff.

After the meeting, people stood around patting one another on the back for a job well done: the consultants for writing an "honest" EIR, SCVAS and the public for voicing their concerns, the staff for listening to the public's concerns and altering the original design of the project.

I like to think that the roots of this win are several years old. The win on Ulistac gave us access to a wonderful constituency in Santa Clara, and opened the eyes of the Council and city staff to the value of the local environment. Or, if you're the more cynical type, the Council knows that many people who voted them into office "give a hoot" about wildlife and open spaces, and that those people can organize and mobilize. Either way, it's true what they say: success breeds success.

Although I feared the worst at the outset, this project turned out to be an all-too-rare moment of collaboration and goodwill that will help keep me motivated and hopeful about the future of this valley



*Burrowing Owl family
-Emélie Curtis*

Burrowing Owl listing cont'd from Page 13

of our Burrowing Owls. To say the least, it is risky to place all of our owl eggs in one basket. We need healthy populations in diverse locations around the state, and we need to know that over time those populations can interbreed and adapt to changed circumstances. At this point, we can show that outside of the Imperial Valley, almost all sizable populations of Burrowing Owls in California are declining, or lost already.

The last resort

We do not turn to CESA easily. Listing any species is difficult, expensive, and controversial. People often refer to CESA or the ESA as an emergency room—the last resort. We agree, and in fact we have tried any number of other measures to protect this species. Frankly, we have had meager success.

First, good people banded together to fight individual development projects on important owl habitats. Some of SCVAS' long-standing members may recall that SCVAS and others fought Mission College over destruction of owl habitat back in the 80's. Since then, we have fought one development battle after another in Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, and of course many, many times in San Jose. Most of the time the developments proceed apace and the owls are shoved to the side.

This is not to ignore some impressive achievements. In the Alviso area of San Jose, we have established land for owls. The City of Santa Clara agreed to try to create additional habitat in their city, and Morgan Hill promised to enact a Burrowing Owl plan for their city, but then failed to do so (we'll get them yet). We have also been successful in forcing developers to purchase and preserve land elsewhere when they disturb local owl colonies. I sometimes joke that the city of Byron, California (east of Livermore, where a few owl preserves have been established) should erect a sign saying "Thanks to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and others, Byron is not just another suburb." Perhaps the saddest thing is that we have had more

success fighting for owls in the Santa Clara Valley than virtually any other part of the state.

Beyond fighting individual development projects, we tried regional and statewide planning. On the local level, our best chances were utterly and unjustly destroyed by Mayor Ron Gonzales in San Jose, when he killed the city's four year effort to develop a city-wide owl plan. On the state level, Burrowing Owl experts approached the head of the state's Resources Agency years ago, asking that the state become proactive on this issue, specifically to avoid having to list the owls. That avenue was a dead end. In 1999, Republican Assemblyman Jim Cunneen (now head of the Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce) sponsored a bill for us that could have led to a statewide effort to protect the owl. After passing with large majorities of both Democrats and Republicans in both houses of the state legislature, the bill was short-sightedly vetoed by Governor Davis. In other words, we tried to preserve these owls without resorting to CESA, but we largely failed.

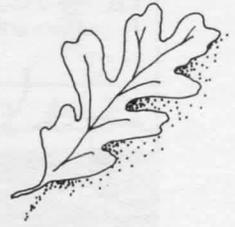
Where From Here?

Wish us luck. We and the owls have a tough road ahead. We have many factors in our favor: good scientists, a history of commitment to this issue, a charismatic species to champion, capable conservationists to work with, and a membership that cares deeply about this issue. Perhaps most of all we have the Burrowing Owls themselves—a remarkably tenacious species that can adapt to life in close proximity to people and the world we create around them. We have done significant injustice to these birds, but it is not too late to turn that around.

[Note: SCVAS is still selling limited edition Burrowing Owl portraits, created by well-known photographer David Liittschwager. They can be seen at our offices or on our website. All proceeds from the sale of these portraits will go toward owl protection locally and throughout the state.]

Forests and Birds

While the nation is preoccupied with thoughts of war, terrorism and the economy, too little attention has been paid to the serious harm caused by the Bush Administration's anti-environment campaign.



The Forest Protection Committee of the Sierra Club's Loma Prieta Chapter is working to increase public awareness of the severe threat to our National and State Forests, and we need help urgently.

Bird and nature lovers should be especially concerned about the "Healthy Forests Initiative," which would permit invasion of our National Forests by logging interests under the guise of preventing forest fires. If they succeed in this, we fear a lack of surveillance on harmful forestry practices, such as clear-cutting and use of herbicides to kill brush (and resident wildlife). Loss of snags, "diseased" trees and overhead canopy will destroy nest sites, shelter and food sources for birds and other fauna; siltation from road building and chemical run-off will impact aquatic life downstream, with additional loss of avian food.

Audubon Society members can join our mission to protect forest ecosystems by using phone, fax, e-mail and "snail mail" as suggested below:

1) To Senator Dianne Feinstein, urge her to support Senator Boxer's "California Wild Heritage Campaign," SB 2535, intended to give the protection of wilderness status to numerous National Forests and waterways within California.

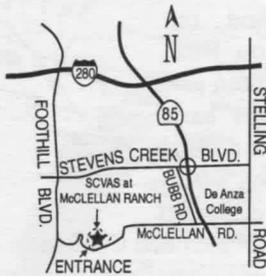
2) To both Senators Boxer and Feinstein, and your various House Representatives, request their opposition to Administration efforts to override the "Roadless Area Conservation Rule" and to oppose implementing the "Healthy Forests Initiative."

3) To Governor Gray Davis, express outrage that the California Forestry Board continues to allow Timber Harvest Plans that permit use of clear-cuts and herbicides on State and private lands.

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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.

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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.

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