



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

July - Aug 2003

Twitchers, tickers run wild

Birdathon teams raise \$16K for education; top contestants snag prizes

by David Drake

If you combine a wonderful cause like educating Santa Clara County children about the natural world with stacks of great prizes and the terrific spring birds that were waiting to be counted, you'd expect to have a productive Birdathon. Well, calling it "productive" would be the understatement of the year.

Frankly, we were thrilled by the outstanding success of the first SCVAS Spring Roundup Birdathon. Twelve teams with more than 60 participants entered the 4 competitive categories, gathered pledges from their friends and neighbors, and then went birding during April 12 to May 12. The results were nothing less than spectacular!

As of the Birdathon awards dinner on June 3, over \$16,000 had been raised for SCVAS youth education programs — and the pledge checks are still coming! Our perennial SCVAS champions, the Wry Wrentits and the Wrong Terns, were joined by several new teams to set a fundraising record that more than doubled our previous high.



Harriet Gerson of the Wry Wrentits Birdathon team receives her prize from SCVAS President Dave Drake at the Birdathon Awards dinner June 3 at McClellan Ranch

More Birdathon photos, reports

See Pages 2,8-9,11

The generosity of our prize donors along with the Birdathon team members who made it all happen by working diligently to gather pledges will translate directly into more children being treated to the beauty, excitement, and mystery of the natural world that surrounds us. There will be more busloads of school children heading out to local wetlands and to the streams that flow from our coastal mountains to the Bay. And, they will have better equipment and better educational materials to help them learn.

All of that should make our prize donors and Birdathon participants very proud. Because of your dedication and generosity, some of the leaders of tomorrow will have a better appreciation of birds, wildlife, and the need to protect their habitats.

The fun of getting out and birding with old friends and meeting new birders was capped at the Birdathon awards dinner where we presented prizes, talked about the great birds that were found, and relived the amusing adventures that inevitably are a part of any Birdathon. The Grand Prize was awarded to Harriet Gerson, a longtime SCVAS member and the leader of the Wry Wrentits, for personally gathering pledges totaling \$1,711. Harriet selected a travel and birding package that included nights at the Pt. Reyes Seashore Lodge and the Olema Inn coupled with a morning of birding with Rich Stallcup of the Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory. Way to go, Harriet! Second and third place finishers were Laurie Roberts and Lisa Myers, who gathered \$1,219 and \$1,008, respectively. Laurie walked off with the Kowa Prominar 60mm fluorite spotting scope and tripod and Lisa was trying to decide where she would go with her two round-trip tickets to anywhere that Southwest Airlines flies. What a nice predicament.

The "most unusual" birdathon competition was won by the Birdamarathoners team of Debi Jamison, Steve Patt, and Grant Hoyt. They started at the headwaters of Stevens Creek and walked the entire length of that beautiful stream system,

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◆ SCVAS' Ed. programs reaching thousands—Page 3

◆ Flycatchers rule! —Field Notes, Page 6

◆ Dragonfly ID class offered—Page 9

◆ Craig is multi-tasking —Advocate's corner, Page 10

July - Aug. 2003

Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

Saturday, July 12, 8:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy. 101 in Mountain View. A trip designed for beginning birders, but all are encouraged to attend. A good trip to check out your spotting scope.

Saturday, August 9, 8:30 AM

Año Nuevo State Reserve

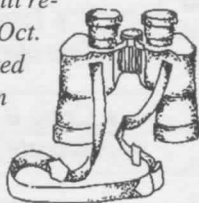
Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Plan on a 3 to 4 mile walk (half of it in sand), fog, bright sun and wind. Bring a scope, lunch, liquids, and dress in layers. Bank Swallow, Marbled Murrelet and early returning shorebirds possible, Black Swift if we are very lucky. The entrance is along Highway 1 about 30 miles south of Half Moon Bay, 20 miles north of Santa Cruz. There is a \$5 per car parking fee; meet at the far (south) end of the parking lot.

Saturday, August 23, 8:00 AM

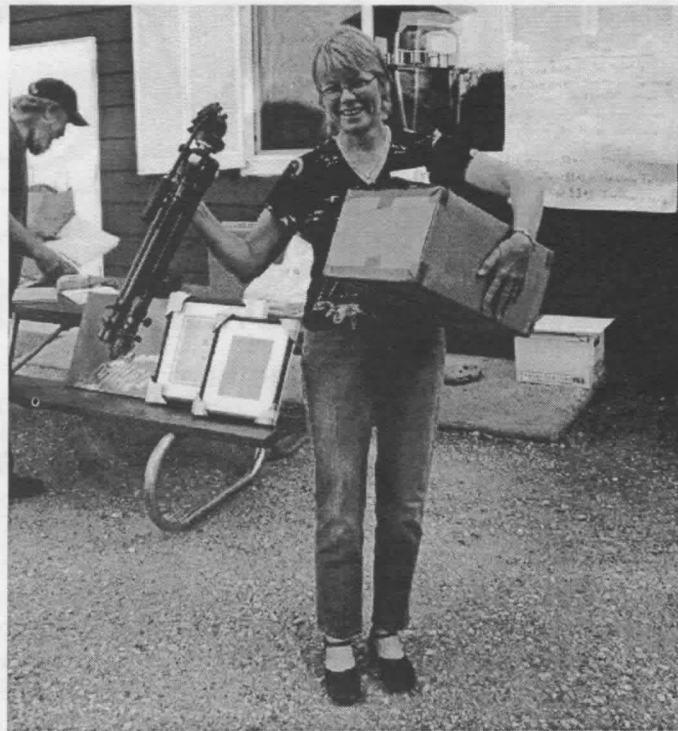
Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Phyllis Browning (650) 494-6360. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy. 101 in Mountain View. A trip designed for beginning birders, but all are encouraged to attend. A good trip to check out your spotting scope.

A full schedule of field trips and regularly scheduled events, including the Eve Case Bird Discussion Group, Bay Area Bird Photographers, and monthly General Meetings, will resume with the Sept. - Oct. Avocet. An abbreviated Events Calendar is on Page 4. Enjoy your summer birding!



The Avocet 2



Laurie Roberts of the Wrong Terns Birdathon team took home a Kowa scope and tripod for her fundraising efforts on behalf of SCVAS Education programs



Kids' Corner



Looking for something to do in the hot summer sun? How about spending some time with SCVAS and Young Audubon! For those kids and families who are interested in exploring the outdoors and discovering more about the plants and animals around you, take a look at the summer schedule of exciting Young Audubon events listed below. Please note the minimum age suggestion for each event. All children must be accompanied by a parent or adult. For questions or to register for any of the Young Audubon events, please contact Jennifer at (408) 252-3740.

Kids are For the Birds! – Enjoy a bird and nature walk with trained SCVAS volunteer field trip leaders at a local wetlands area. The walk will focus mainly on shorebirds, but will also cover a sampling of terrestrial birds and plant life. Leaders will also review proper binocular use.

Date: Thursday, July 10, 10 -11:30 AM

Location: Charleston Slough, Mountain View

Maximum Attendees: 48 Minimum Age: 8 or entering 3rd grade

Non-refundable Fee: \$5

Creek Exploration – Come explore Stevens Creek and discover what flows in a living stream. See what water bugs and other critters live in the riparian habitat. In addition to learning how to identify various larvae using magnifiers and microscopes, we'll also learn the value of protecting our creeks.

Date: Saturday, August 9, 10 AM - 12 noon

Location: McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Maximum Attendees: 20 Minimum Age: 6 or entering 1st grade

Non-refundable Fee: \$5

SCVAS Education Programs Reach 4797 Children and Adults this School Year!

by Jennifer Peritz

Fifth graders staring wide-eyed at a Peregrine Falcon only four feet away. Kindergartners passing feathers and remarking on their softness. High schoolers viewing brine shrimp under a microscope for the first time. Families exploring creek-dwelling insects and learning the value of riparian habitats. Third graders learning to use binoculars. SCVAS members learning to identify the calls and songs of common birds. Fourth graders discovering the beauty of the wetlands and the amazing birds that live there.

SCVAS' Education Programs offered all this and more to the nearly 4800 children and adults who participated in our programs this last school year. The goal of SCVAS' Education Committee is "to educate Santa Clara County residents, especially children, in order to gain an understanding and appreciation of the diversity, delicate balances, and dynamic interactions of the Bay Area's ecosystems as they relate to birds and other wildlife." This is a big goal, and each year we work hard to make sure it's met.

Our approach is three-fold; we reach out to students in the school setting, families in the non-school setting, and adults through night classes. What an amazing job to have! It's my personal pleasure to develop and coordinate our education programs and the volunteers who lead them. It's truly incredible to watch the impact of our programs on children, adults, and even our volunteers.

The most extensive of our in-school programs is the Wetlands Discovery Program, which has taken over 4000 school children to the Baylands since 1989. Geared toward introducing students to the value and of diversity of wetland habitats, this program has grown to reach approximately 700 fourth and fifth graders each school year. Students are first introduced to the various types of wetlands and the birds that live there through volunteer-produced flashcards, a slide show, and a detailed vocabulary list. Then, two or three volunteers and I head to the school for a hands-on preparation ses-

sion. This includes nine stations that further expose the children to the plants and animals of the wetlands and the ways in which people use the wetlands. Volunteers also teach the students how to use binoculars, as SCVAS lends a pair of binoculars to each student. Lastly, students examine the food chain of a salt pond during our Brine Shrimp Laboratory, a component reintroduced to the program this spring. This is an up-close—and often first time—opportunity for students to observe living organisms under a microscope, four of which were generously donated by Swift Optics.

All of these activities help prepare the students for the main component of this program—the field trip. SCVAS volunteers lead groups of 8-14 students for a 2-hour walk around the wetlands of Charleston Slough. Students census the birds that they see, noting the species and the behavior. Many aspects of the in-class activities are revisited on the field trip, such as identifying various plants or special beak adaptations. Students and teachers describe in their own words the value of these trips:

◆ "Thank you Audubon Society for taking us in the trip. We loved it! Did you? I liked the birds and the insects we all saw. We had a great time."

~ Franklin, Grade 4

◆ "That was one of the greatest field trips. Maybe I could come again next year with my family."

~ Dorothy, Grade 4

◆ "My students are more appreciative of all living things. I thought all the activities (classroom and field trip) were excellent. The students really liked the brine shrimp lab experience."

~ Ms. Petroski,

Los Arboles Elementary School

In addition to our Wetlands Program, volunteers offer a variety of other in-class activities. Through these programs, which range from slide shows to building nestboxes to bird skin and nest presentations, volunteers increase our outreach by serving an additional 645 students

each year. These valuable programs help us to spread SCVAS' message of the appreciation and stewardship of birds and our natural resources.

Thanks to a unique partnership started this year with Glenn Stewart of the UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, we introduced 3500 elementary and middle school students to Sophie, a captive-bred Peregrine Falcon. Learning the story of this once endangered species taught students the dangers of pollution and pesticides and also the results and rewards of hard working conservationists. We look forward to continuing this partnership and organizing presentations for an additional 15 Santa Clara County schools next year.

Our youth programs do not stop at the classroom. Our Young Audubon program reaches beyond schools and targets children and their families. Young Audubon offers quarterly field trips, workshops, or special events. Last January, 17 families joined SCVAS on a Whale Watching Tour in Monterey Bay. Because enrollment in Young Audubon is free, over 150 families have already signed up! Be sure that you don't miss this summer's awesome Young Audubon activities (see Page 2 for details).

The Education Committee's goals would not be complete if we didn't offer education opportunities for adults, as well. While adult education is a fledgling program, we have offered six adult education classes during the past year. Topics ranged from Beginning Birding to Birding by Ear to Birds of the Sierra Nevada to Pen and Ink Bird Art. We strive to find friendly, competent, well-informed instructors. We also do our best to keep prices low to encourage newcomers to the world of birding. In addition to our usual classes, this summer SCVAS is partnering with Villa Montalvo to offer a workshop in Nature and Art (see Page 5 for details).

Positive changes are on the way for our education programs. Thanks to a generous grant from the Center for Venture

continued on Page 5

Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz
SCVAS Programs Coordinator

Volunteerism and the Work Place

Between work, family, and the numerous other commitments we make in our busy lives, many people think there's no way they can add volunteering to their busy schedule. If you're one of those overworked people, this article is for you, with tips on how you can combine your work life with Audubon by becoming a volunteer.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, nearly one out of every three working people volunteer. For some, volunteering may mean contributing time at one major event each year (such as our Christmas Bird Count or maybe our End of the Year Fundraiser). Others may choose to volunteer seasonally (perhaps with our Young Audubon Program) or monthly (possibly at our General Meetings). Whatever your time availability may be, we have a volunteer position to match it! Read on to see how some of our current volunteers have combined their work with SCVAS volunteer opportunities.

Chuck Wade has volunteered with SCVAS' Cavity-nesting Program for over 7 years. Chuck lends support to SCVAS by coordinating the cutting and pre-drilling of 100 nestboxes for children to build at our special events, such as the Earth Day Celebration in Gilroy and Wildlife Education Day. In addition, he helps to build another 100 boxes for use in nestbox trails throughout the county. How is it possible that he accomplishes all this and works full time? He recruits help from those at his work, and he picks up new volunteers from the community at each event!

Each summer Chuck organizes the science and engineering undergraduate summer interns at the IBM Almaden Research Center in a weekend service-learning project. He also recruits his co-workers, neighbors, and friends to help in the large-scale production of nestboxes. The students participate in an environmental remediation project and SCVAS gains greatly. Often at events such as Wildlife Education day, he recruits new volunteers, from those who show an interest, to salvage wood and saw it into parts. By taking advantage of the people power at his work and by networking with as many others as possible, Chuck is able to contribute greatly to the chapter.

Lee French first came to our Wetlands and Woodlands Discovery Program about a year and a half ago. Because this program offers field trips to elementary school students, volunteers are needed to lead trips on weekday mornings. This volunteer opportunity would seem impossible for someone who works full time, yet for the past three seasons, Lee has rarely missed a trip. Thanks to his accumulated vacation time and an understanding and supportive supervisor, Lee is able to take time off without losing pay. SCVAS is very fortunate that Lee chooses to utilize some of his vacation days – half days, 12 times each year – with us. He has become a pillar in the program and without his support (and the support from his company), the students

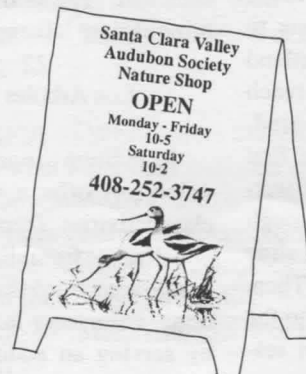
would lose the opportunity to peer through his scope or hear his enthusiastic descriptions of the wetland birds.

Many companies support their employees' volunteer efforts. Some will reimburse workers for the time they spend helping non-profits, such as SCVAS, and others will even donate directly to the organization. **Donna Sadowy**, who works full-time during the week, volunteers in the Nature Shop on Saturdays. It is important that SCVAS be available to our members on weekends, so our Saturday Nature Shop volunteers aid us in offering a valuable service to the community. Donna is the newest of our Saturday volunteers and has been a reliable and resourceful addition to the crew. In addition to supporting us with her time, Donna's company, AMD, supports SCVAS financially by reimbursing us for the hours that she works with us! Donna researched her company's policies and found that not only do they value her efforts as a volunteer, but also they reward our organization with a financial contribution.

If you're a full time worker who is interested in volunteering, take ten minutes or so to research your company's policies on volunteer work. You may find there are programs at your work place that will support you as you help to support SCVAS

Last, but absolutely not least, I must take advantage of my column this month to acknowledge seven very special volunteers. Each year, I have the delightful duty at the June potluck of announcing those volunteers that the staff has chosen to receive a "Special Mention" for their services to SCVAS over the past year. You can imagine what a difficult task it is to single out just a few volunteers! This year, we would like to thank and acknowledge: **Lee French** for leading children's field trips; **Cedric de la Beaujardiere** for participating in the GPS data collection and GIS data correction of our Creek Mapping Project; **Don Price** for his continued, meticulous financial advice and accounting skills; **Jill Halloran** for coordinating the Armchair Activists and participating on the Environmental Action Committee; **Dick Blaine** for monitoring nestboxes and data entry; **Donna Ducey** for her weekly bookkeeping support; and **Linda Johnson** for her support of numerous children's education programs. Thank you for sharing your time, skills, and knowledge with the rest of the chapter!

For information on how YOU can become a volunteer, please contact Jennifer at (408) 252-3740 or programs@scvas.org.



SCVAS Nature Shop
*reminds you that all
your summer feeder
and birding supplies
are here!*

Meet our newest SCVAS Board member *Drawing Birds* with Edward Rooks

By Debbie Thompson

I recently had a chat with our newest member of the Board of Directors – **Ralph Schardt** who joined the board in April. I thought I would introduce him to you.

Ralph grew up in Seattle where he was interested in nature and the outdoors at a very young age. He says it was a challenge becoming an Eagle Scout in one of the rainiest spots in the U.S. – and all without the advantages of Gore-tex.

He later joined the Navy and moved to San Diego where he focused on electronics. After leaving the Navy, he moved to the Bay Area and enjoyed a 20-year career in high-tech. During his long career he kept his interest in the outdoors. He sometimes showed up at his high-tech company with a canoe on the top of his SUV, inciting funny comments from co-workers.

Nature finally enticed him to change career tracks – so he quit the world of high-tech and went back to college pursuing environmental studies. With his B.S. in hand, he is now working on a master's degree while teaching an environmental studies class part-time at San Jose State. True to his love of learning, Ralph figures he will just keep taking classes forever.

Although he always enjoyed the outdoors, Ralph was first roped into birding while driving along a logging road in Northern California with his wife. He almost ran off the road when he spotted a Bald Eagle swoop down on a river and catch a huge fish. "That was it," he said, "I invested in a good pair of binoculars and dove into birding."

Ralph is now an avid birder and, among other things, leads bird walks for different groups. One of his favorite memories is of seeing a Lazuli Bunting while leading a field trip along Highway 35. "It was one of those magical moments. A woman in the group became very emotional and almost cried after seeing that beautiful bird." It's experiences like these that make Ralph believe that learning about nature is for people of all ages. He convinced me, "All you have to do is introduce folks to the amazing world of birds, and I believe they will become hooked."

We hope Ralph has a long involvement with SCVAS introducing the wonderful world of birds to many folks.

Events Calendar

Thursday July 10, 10 AM - 11:30 AM
Kids are for the Birds, Charleston Slough. Registration required (see Pg. 2)

Thursday July 10, 4 PM - 6 PM
Education Committee Mtg., McClellan Ranch

Saturday Aug. 2, 9 AM - 1 PM
Dragonfly Class, Foothill Park. Registration required (see Page 9)

Saturday Aug. 9, 10 AM - 12 NOON
Creek Exploration, McClellan Ranch, Registration required (see Page 2)

Sunday Aug. 10, 1 PM - 4 PM
Drawing Birds Workshop, Villa Montalvo. Registration required (see notice at right)

Get Your "BABOB" Bird Guide!

If you are interested in discovering the wonderful birding areas that people have mentioned, 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 AM - 5 PM Mon.-Fri, Sat. 10 AM - 2 PM. Shipping is available.

This drawing workshop, offered in collaboration with Villa Montalvo and conducted by award-winning artist Edward Rooks, introduces students to a variety of bird species and provides expert instruction in sketching bird morphology. Participants will learn basic bird anatomy for artists, correct proportions, and placement of parts of birds. Through a slide presentation and active observation of birds at Montalvo, students will garner a better understanding of identifying and portraying birds. To register, contact the Montalvo Box Office at (408) 961-5858.

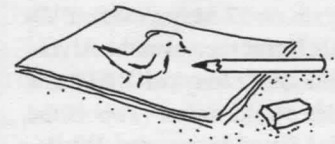
Cost: \$15

Date: Sunday, August 10, 1 - 4:00 PM

Location: Villa Montalvo

Limit: 20 students

Recommended for ages 12 and above.



Education outreach

from Page 3

Philanthropy (CVP), our programs will be improved, restructured, and expanded. More details will come soon, as we finalize our proposal to the CVP, but here are some clues about our future education plans. We hope to increase the people power devoted to the education programs, develop a Kids' Corner website, and formalize our Teacher Resource Center. By building upon our current programming, the Education Committee will strengthen our current offerings and expand them to a greater audience.

Education is the path to the future. SCVAS hopes to green that path by introducing early on the values of environmental stewardship. As a bumper sticker philosopher once said, "The best way to predict the future is to help create it." Thanks to funding from individual donors, large grants, and SCVAS campaigns like the Birdathon, the future of our education programs are looking bright!

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Gulls

In some springs, alternate-plumaged **Common Loons** are observed inland on their migration north. This year a single bird was seen on Lexington Reservoir on 18 May (DLSu). "Oversummering" or early returning **Am. White Pelicans** have become more regular in recent springs. The peak count this year was 79 on the Alviso salt ponds on 29 May (MMR, MJM). Far less expected, however, was the adult **Brown Pelican** seen on the Alviso salt ponds on the same day (MMR, MJM). **American Bittern** have been found irregularly along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road this spring and are likely nesting. A single bird was seen on 3 Apr (WGB), two in courtship flight were observed on 3 May (MJM), and a single bird was seen again on 27 May (RWR, FV). A **Cattle Egret** seen over the Alviso salt ponds on 12 May (MO'B) was a reminder of old times. This is the first bird found in a year. **White-faced Ibis** invade most often in May, although not every year. A single bird was found along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 23 May (JMy) and 27 were there on 27 May (RWR, FV). Six were seen over Alviso on 27 May as well (DW). Occasionally wintering geese linger into April so the injured **White-fronted Goose** at Cottonwood Lake, Hellyer CP on 5 Apr (MJM) and the adult at Arzino Ranch on 12 Apr (PJM) are expected. However, an adult **White-fronted Goose** found at the Arzino Ranch on 27 May (MJM) was a surprise and it is not known if this is one of the birds that wintered here. A late **Snow Goose** found in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 7-8 Apr (SR, RWR, FV) was unusual. A male **American Wigeon** on Guadalupe Slough on 30 May (MMR, MJM) is unusual for the summer. **Blue-winged Teal** were found in the Palo Alto FCB through 27 Apr (v. ob.) with a high count of four birds on the latter date (GHt, DSt). A pair of birds was seen in the Palo Alto estuary on 22 Apr (AME) and a single male was in the Sunnyvale Baylands Park 24-28

Apr (RS, DW). Two male **Green-winged Teal** in the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on 30 May (WGB) are probably oversummering. Two male **Canvasbacks** in Guadalupe Slough on 30 May (MMR, MJM) are atypical. **Ring-necked Ducks** occasionally linger into April, but rarely into May, so a female at the old Gilroy sewer ponds on 3 May (MJM) and a pair in Halls Valley on 10 May (MMR, RGJ) are of interest. An adult **Bald Eagle** seen briefly near Calero Reservoir on 6 May (JP) was most unusual and only the third recorded in the county for the period of May to September. Conventional wisdom holds that the last of the migrating **Soras**

Flycatchers tried to monopolize the rarities list with Hammond's, Gray and Dusky Flycatchers and Cassin's Kingbird

pass through by the middle of April so a skulking bird in San Antonio Valley on 27 Apr (GHt, DSt) was very late. There are few breeding records of this secretive rail in the county in the last few decades. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was seen along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road 25-27 May (JiD, RWR, FV). This shorebird is very rare anywhere in May or June. Migrant **Solitary Sandpipers** are also rare spring visitors and usually inland, as was the single bird reported along the Arroyo Bayo on 27 Apr (KHi). Although we sometimes see a small number of **Red-necked Phalarope** moving through in early May, this year a single bird was found on the late date of 30 May in Salt Pond A5 in Alviso (MMR, MJM). An adult **Mew Gull** at the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant on 15 May (WGB) was very late, if not summering locally.

Swifts through Kingbirds

The first **Vaux's Swift** of the season was a single bird at the Stanford dish on 14 Apr (MMR). After that, birds were found widely but in low numbers. The high count of the spring was five birds at Almaden-Quicksilver CP on 9 May (AV). **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** have been found in reduced numbers this spring. The first was banded at Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 3 May (SH *fide* MMR). Single males were subsequently seen on Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 8 May and Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 11 May (both MMR). The rarest of our regular migrant hummingbirds, a male **Calliope Hummingbird** was found at Ed Levin CP on 19 Apr (MMR, MJM, et al.), a female was banded at CCFS on 30 Apr (RCo), and a male was in a San Jose yard on 7 May (JiD). A fairly typical passage of **Rufous Hummingbirds** occurred in April (v. ob.) with a high count of seven males at Ed Levin CP on 19 Apr (MMR, MJM, et al.). A few birds were found into May with two males at Santa Teresa CP on 6 May (JP), a male in a San Jose yard on 7 May (JiD), and a late male in a Morgan Hill yard on 11 May (RH). Two **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were again seen in Deer Valley in Joseph Grant CP on 20 Apr (MMR), which raises the possibility of breeding again on this side of the Diablo Range. Birds were seen regularly this spring in the San Antonio Valley with a high count of four on 17 May (MDd et al.). Vocalizing **Pileated Woodpeckers** have been found in a number of areas this spring. One bird was heard at Monte Bello OSP on 19 Apr (MJM, MMR et al.), another was heard in Upper Stevens Creek CP on 19 May (GHa), one or two were calling along Skyline Boulevard south of Las Cumbres Road on 20 May (DLSu), one was near the Saratoga Summit CDF station on 23 May (DLSu). A silent **Willow Flycatcher** at Smith Creek on 30 Apr (WGB) was very early for this normally late May or early June migrant. The first **Hammond's Flycatcher** of the spring was found in

Field Notes *cont'd*

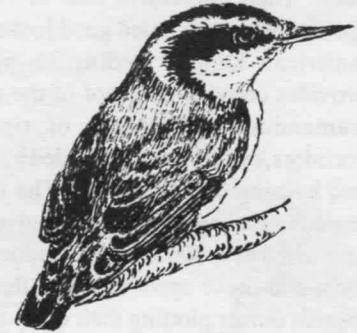
Henry Coe SP above Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 13 Apr (MJM). A number of birds were found at Smith Creek 18 Apr-4 May (v. ob.) with a high count of at least three on 21 Apr (WGB). Not all birds were in the Diablo Range as a single bird was at Monte Bello OSP on 19 Apr (MMR, MJM et al.) and two birds were banded at CCFS on both 3 and 4 May (SH *fide* MMR). Much less expected was a **Gray Flycatcher** along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 11 May (MMR), our first spring bird since 1997. Almost as rare, a **Dusky Flycatcher** was seen at Smith Creek on 1 May (MMR, RGJ). A **Cassin's Kingbird** was found near the Stanford dish on 11 Apr (BA *fide* PMB) and was seen again on 13 Apr (J&MMe). Another bird was found at San Felipe Lake on 29 Apr (MP), just over the county line.

Nuthatches through Goldfinches

There was no movement of irruptive **Red-breasted Nuthatches** this spring. The first record of local breeders was a bird heard in knobcone pines on Summit Ridge on 13 May (DLSu). Calling birds were found along the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains through the end of May (v. ob.). **American Dippers** continued along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road with ambiguous evidence of nesting during April (v. ob.). However, adults were observed feeding young in two locations about a mile apart on 10 May (GHt et al.) suggesting that two pairs nested. Two **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were seen in Upper Stevens Creek CP on 19 May (GHa) and one or more were singing at the Long Ridge OSP trailhead on 23 May (DLSu). These are likely from our local breeding population. Visits to San Antonio Valley this spring were generally productive for **Phainopepla** (v. ob.). The high count was of three males and a female on 30 Apr (WGB). There was a nice passage of **Nashville Warblers** this spring with 13+ birds found in various areas (m. ob.). The first bird was a singing male at Smith Creek on 12 Apr (MJM) and the last was in Joseph Grant CP on 11 May (KO). Spring migrant **Hermit Warblers** also had a

good showing with at least 25 birds. The earliest was an adult male at Monte Bello OSP on 19 Apr (MMR, MJM et al.) and the latest one at Smith Creek on 17 May (MMR). On 10 May seven birds were found at Smith Creek and two more were over by Twin Gates (MMR, RGJ), indicating the peak of the migration. The first birds noted singing on territories in the Santa Cruz Mountains were found at Sanborn-Skyline CP on 14 May (JiD). Two were found singing to the south on Skyline Boulevard on 20 May (DLSu) and 24 May (MMR). Ten to 14 **MacGillivray's Warblers** also indicated a good movement this spring. The first was seen at Smith Creek on 12 Apr (MJM) and the last to come through was a male along Coyote Creek above Gilroy Hot Springs on 11 May (MMR). Three **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 28 Apr (WGB) and one to four birds were heard or seen regularly through the end of May (m. ob.). A single bird was heard below the Stevens Creek Reservoir on 14 May (JiD) and another was along Coyote Creek above Metcalf Road on 20 May (RWR, FV). **Grasshopper Sparrows** appear to have become more common in the last decade. During April and May singing birds were observed in Ed Levin CP, Santa Teresa CP, Joseph Grant CP (both Halls Valley and the ridge west of Smith Creek), and Henry Coe SP (m. ob.). It is likely that many more birds are in unvisited grasslands, particularly in the southeastern county. An immature **White-throated Sparrow** was in a Los Altos yard on 15 Apr (GHt, KHt). Another yard bird was in the Campbell area in mid-April (JVM). One at Smith Creek was seen from 22 Apr to 1 May (RWR, FV, JAC, MMR, RGJ). A late bird was in Halls Valley on 10 May (MMR, RGJ). A **White-crowned Sparrow** (*gambelii*) has remained in a Palo Alto yard through the period and is exceptionally late (PMB). After an absence of three years we have once again had a spring invasion of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** at the Arzino Ranch in Alviso.

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



Red-breasted Nuthatch
by Emélie Curtis

Two birds were first found on 8 May (MMR) and by 13 May at least 70 birds were present. Subsequently, the number of blackbirds dropped quickly and only single birds were found over the next two weeks, with the last sighting on 27 May (DW). The **Great-tailed Grackle** found at the Parkway Lakes in late March was seen through the spring (v. ob.). A female was present as well on 31 May (MJM). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were seen in small numbers in such locations as Ed Levin CP, Joseph Grant CP, along San Felipe Road, San Antonio Valley, and Henry Coe SP. The exception was a flock of 20 birds seen at the San Antonio Junction on 17 May (MDd).

Observers: Bill Ayres (BA), Bill Bousman (WGB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RCo), Jim Danzenbaker (JiD), Matthew Dodder (MDd), Al Eisner (AME), Garth Harwood (GHa), Rick Herder (RH), Kevin Hintsa (KHt), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Karen Hoyt (KHt), Sherry Hudson (SH), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), John & Maria Meyer (J&MMe), John Moore (JVM), Jean Myers (JMy), Matthew O'Brien (MO'B), Kris Olson (KO), Janna Pauser (JP), Mark Paxton (MP), Sidd Ramachandramurthi (SR), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Rosalie Strait (RS), Dick Stovel (DSt), David Suddjian (DLSu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), and David Weber (DW).

Spring Birdathon a huge success from Page 1

ending at the Bay two days and 26 miles later. Their impressive total of 98 bird species, which included good looks at an American Dipper feeding its young, provides convincing proof of the of the tremendous importance of riparian corridors, even those surrounded by roads and housing developments. The Birda-marathoners had a great birding adventure and raised over \$900 for youth education. Debi and Steve spent much of the June awards dinner plotting their entry for the most unusual birdathon of 2004. We can't wait to find out what novel plan they will hatch next Spring. (You can read theirs and other birdathon reports on our website <www.scvas.org>.)

The top three teams were the always tough to beat Wry Wrentits, who brought in \$3,500, followed by the Wrong Terns (led by Bobbie Handen) at \$2,500 and the Rock Wrens (led by Leda Beth Gray) who delivered more than \$1,600 to the Birdathon coffers. All of the team members received great prizes and the complete list of prize winners in all categories is posted on our website.

Finally, we can't forget to mention that "Best Birds" #1 and #2 found during the birdathon were a **Least Bittern** spotted by the Megatiks (Sequoia Audubon) in Merced County and a **Calliope Hummingbird** that was found late in the day in Santa Clara County by the Varied Twitchers. The Calliope hummer also inspired a new prize category, "Most Fanatic Birdathon Birder." This prize was awarded to the almost tireless Mike Rogers, leader of the Varied Twitchers, for his 200-meter Olympic caliber sprint across a rough grassy field after 16 hours of birding, to grab his spotting scope so that all of his team members could get scope-filling views of the Calliope. In order to be sure that Mike always has his peak energy reserves, we awarded him a gift certificate for 2 pounds of See's candies.

In summary, it's hard to imagine how the 2003 Spring Birdathon could have been more successful or more fun. If you weren't a part of the fun this time and you feel that you really would like to support SCVAS programs to teach children to

appreciate and understand the natural world, we suggest that you consider joining us next year for the 2004 Spring Roundup Birdathon. We'll reserve chairs for you and your friends at the awards dinner.

Birdathon reports

Rock Wrens

For the past 48 hours Leda Beth and I have been eating, sleeping and breathing — BIRDS!! We completed our Monster Birdathon yesterday (May 11) at about 8 PM at Loch Lomond near Zayante with a pair of cooperative, vocalizing Osprey. The Osprey brought our total species count to 165. We were dead tired at that point.

We did the Monster Birdathon in part because we had heard that members of Sequoia Audubon had fielded a team in that category but, we hadn't heard that any other teams were competing. We were especially bothered by the notion that Sequoia Audubon would win the category (fourth best prize) simply because they had no competition. We felt that the SCVAS banner needed to at least be in the race. Despite getting 165 species, we suspect that we did our birdathon too late in the Spring migration. We had a tough time getting many of our common winter residents, because they have departed during the last couple of weeks. We concluded that our total would have been higher in mid to late April. Nevertheless, it was GREAT fun!!!

Highlights were:

In Stanislaus County: Poorwill, Northern Pygmy Owl, Western Screech and Great Horned Owls, Rock and Canyon Wrens, Phainopepla, Blue Grosbeak (male and female), Yellow Warbler, Wood Duck, and tons of beautiful Western Tanagers, Northern Orioles and Horned Larks. And snow on the top of Mt. Hamilton!

In Santa Clara County: Yellow-headed Blackbird, Tricolored Blackbird, Black Skimmer (actually skimming), Hooded Oriole (at McClellan, of course), Vaux's and White-throated Swifts, Burrowing Owl, Eared Grebe, American White Pelican and Clapper Rail (which responded instantly to a tape at dusk).

In Santa Cruz County: Marbled Murrelets at 5 AM, nesting Pigeon Guillemots and Brandt's Cormorants, Brown Pelican, Pileated Woodpecker, Hermit and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglet, lots of Winter Wrens, Black Oystercatcher, Caspian Tern, Wandering Tattler, Red-throated and Pacific Loons — and bird #165, the Osprey.

In San Mateo County: Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser, Greater Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plover, California Thrasher and a lone Long-billed Curlew.

All in all, it was a terrific 48 hours for which the weather was pretty much always perfect, especially for owling at 4 AM along Del Puerto Canyon Road. (Once we got the Northern Pygmy Owl going it wouldn't stop calling!)

—Leda Beth and Dave

Wrong Terns

The 13th *Tern Out* for the "Wrong Terns" Birdathon team (Bobbie Handen, Allen Royer, Laurie and Rick Roberts, Freddy Howell, Jennifer Peritz, and Nick Zoffel) — was terrific: 7 Wrong Terns and 76 bird species!!!

The Wrong Terns have three main goals: have fun, eat well, and raise lots of money for our Audubon chapter's education programs (considering we're all part of the Education Committee, it makes sense). Having fun is easy when you're birding, especially when you *tern* around after a wonderful breakfast to see a flock of Cedar Waxwings across the street. We did our first birding in Bobbie's back yard where a Nuttall's Woodpecker is nesting in a hole in her tree.

Next, we *terned* to Alum Rock Park where there was a *tern* in the weather. The rain poured down, but we soldiered on, seeing Black-headed Grosbeak, House Wren, and a Western Tanager. We got a great look at a *maternity* ward when we saw a female American Robin sitting on her nest. Also, *turning* our way were four male Wild Turkeys strutting for the approval of two shy hens. Before leaving, we stopped by YSI, where Allen asked the staffer if we could come in out of the rain. As we *terned* the corner, there she was with a beautiful Barred Owl on her hand. (No, we didn't count it!)

Then, on we trekked to the Coyote Creek Field Station where Allen is a bird bander (it pays to know people in high places). As we slowly drove on the levee, after making our only wrong *tern*, Jennifer said from the back seat "that bird looks sort of kingbirdyish." Sure enough, we *terned* our heads to see a pair of Western Kingbirds! Four types of swallows played in the air above us as we walked the mist net trail. They flashed their brilliant colors as they quickly *terned* and flew past us. At the end, a view of a White-tailed Kite awaited us.

Lunch inside the field station, as it poured outside, was quite elegant with table, chairs, wine, international cheeses, hummus, pita, well you get the picture. Of course, it would not be a Wrong Tern event without cheesecake for dessert!

Next stop was Charleston Slough for skimmers, nesting avocets, and a snipe in amongst the plastic bottles sent into the slough by the storm waters. Since we're not *nocturnal* types, we ended at 4 PM with a ramble up the Heintz

“Introduction to Dragonflies and Damselflies”

Saturday, Aug. 2, 9 AM – 1 PM

Palo Alto's Foothills Park

by Leda Beth Gray

SCVAS is pleased to offer our first class on dragonfly identification on Saturday August 2, from 9AM to 1PM at Palo Alto's Foothills Park. “Dragonflying” goes really well with birding, because when it gets hot and the birds have pooped out, the dragonflies become active. I've dabbled around with this myself using Common Dragonflies of California by Kathy Biggs, and now the brand new book by Tim Manolis— Dragonflies and Damselflies of California (both available at the SCVAS Nature Shop).

Watching dragonflies is a whole lot of fun for a number of reasons, including that it is similar to birding — you look for specific features of the dragonflies and compare them to those listed or illustrated in field guides. Also like birds, dragonflies have other clues to their identification, including particular habitat requirements and particular habits. For example, some species will land on the ground and others will land on vegetation. Some will be found more around streams and others near lakes or ponds.

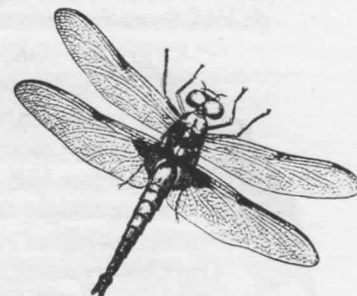
The aspect of dragonflying that is the most fun for me is the excitement of identifying a new species. I don't get that thrill too often anymore with birds, and it is great to have a new way to experience this excitement. I also enjoy watching them and their activities. It can be a challenge following a dragonfly with your binocs, but sometimes they are cooperative and will perch for some period of time and allow you to study them. They have their own little world that seems to be much speeded up compared to ours. They tilt their heads around fast as they watch for prey or predators, they eat fast, they zing around fast. I think they get a lot of living done in a short amount of time.

Also like birds, dragonflies come in different colors and markings. Many are absolutely stunning with bright colors or dramatic markings. If you're patient, you can even get one sighted in a birding telescope, and the views can be spectacular.

The class will be taught by photographer and biologist Robert Behrstock. Bob has photographed dragonflies and butterflies along the Eastern seaboard and from the Florida Keys to Oregon, finding many state records and several U.S. records in the process. During the last four years he's been a presenter and field trip leader at butterfly and dragonfly festivals in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Hundreds of his bird and insect photos have been published in a variety of venues including calendars, newspapers, travel books, bird and insect field guides, CD-ROMs, and publications such as *Audubon*, *Smithsonian*, *Birding*, *WildBird*, *BBC Wildlife*, and the *Handbook of Birds of the World*. We are excited and honored to have such a distinguished professional present this class for SCVAS members.

We have obtained special permission from the City of Palo Alto to hold this class at Palo Alto's Foothills Park, normally reserved for the use of Palo Alto residents only. There will be a lecture in a classroom facility, followed by an easy one-mile walk to a nearby lake where participants will look at dragonflies. Participants should wear shoes they don't mind getting wet. They will need binoculars (close-focusing, if possible). A hand lens and a field guide are also recommended.

The cost will be \$25 for SCVAS members and \$30 for non-members. To sign up, call the office at (408) 252-3747. Participants will be limited to 15, so be sure to sign up early. We must get a minimum of 7 participants for the class. To cancel and receive a refund, we must be notified at least one week in advance of the class date. You may want to bring a lunch or snack because if conditions warrant, we may linger past 1:00.



trail, the new part of Belgatos Park.

It *terned* out to be another great count day. The saying is true, that one good *tern* deserves another. Because of your help, our education programs will continue and expand as we attempt to save this planet and involve young people in this important endeavor.

—Bobbie Handen

Megatiks

On May 1, 2003, the Megatiks (Francis and John Toldi, Adam Winer) ran our spring Birdathon route for the SCVAS Birdathon. Since we run a multiple county count, we entered ourselves in the “Monster Roundup” division. We recognize that the rules allow 48 hours for the count, but our plans and habits provide for a 24-hour count, so we stuck with that.

Our total for the day was 188 species. Each year provides some new twist on the infinite variation of bird distribution. We started before dawn on the San Mateo County coast. The owls were vocal, but for some reason rails were completely silent. Instead of the usual dozen or more Virginia Rails (with a Sora or two) calling at Pescadero Marsh, the only bird sound was a distant and early-rising Marsh Wren. The dawn chorus in the Gazos Creek area was rich in species as usual, and our list grew quickly.

Our first setback (there are always a few on any Big Day) was at Pigeon Point. Visibility was good, unlike last year's “fog fest.” The problem was it was so dead still that nothing pushed the seabirds in to shore. We could see shearwaters far off on the distant horizon, but the only ones that came in close enough for identification were Sooties. Wintering gulls all left early this year, so we felt lucky to come away with Bonaparte's and a single Glaucous-winged Gull to go along with the common Westerns. Other birds fell into place, and we left the coast around 10:30 AM with close to a respectable 100 species.

Our next setback was at Coyote Point. Initially we were thrilled with the better-than expected landbird activity behind Coyote Point Museum. Western Tanager, Pygmy Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, Cooper's Hawk — all good birds, and all missable on a Big Day. We went out to our fail-safe shorebird spot, only to see no shorebirds at all. Where were they? I've never missed them, ever. With diligent searching of the rock jetties (and use of too much precious time) we found a peculiar assortment: 1 Wandering Tattler, 1 Spotted Sandpiper, 1 Black Turnstone, 2 Ruddy Turnstones, 1 Surfbird, 1 Black Oystercatcher, but no masses of roosting or feeding sandpipers. Bizarre.

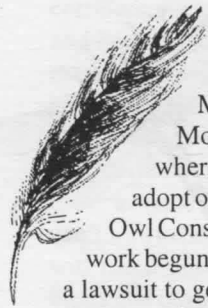
Like the wintering gulls, most of the diving ducks had left for the season. Nevertheless, as we made our way down the San Mateo and

continued on Page 11

A summary of summer projects

Exec. Dir. wearing the Advocate hat again

by Craig Breon
SCVAS Executive Director



OK, so here I am at yet another local government hearing (see *May Avocet*), this time the Morgan Hill City Council, where tonight the Council will adopt our region's first Burrowing Owl Conservation Plan, culminating work begun in 1999. Though it's taken a lawsuit to get us here, it seems we can now move forward with the city in trying to make the plan work. I look forward to that, though honestly, with just a few owls left in this part of the county, it's going to be tough to establish a viable, long-lasting colony.

When I arrived at 7:30, Mayor Dennis Kennedy told me it would be a long night. I'm used to that, but this part of the job can be one of my least favorite. In this case I'm sitting through a lengthy discussion of a new Ford dealership: the city staff presenting a (hopefully) objective view of the proposal, the neighbors opposed in varying degrees of coherence and reasonableness, the project proponent and their consultants professionally assuring in tone, deemphasizing the impacts of the development and touting what a fabulous economy Morgan Hill will have if they only have the wisdom to approve this project. The human drama can be engaging, and when I'm involved with the issue even the details and nuances arouse my intellect. However, when you've seen about 2749 of these hearings over ten years, you just want to get to your issue and then go home.

To make the waiting productive, I thought I would catch *Avocet* readers up on a few of the conservation projects we've been working on lately.

Wish us Luck

On or before July 17, the California Fish and Game Commission will make a preliminary determination that is crucial to our chances of listing the Burrowing Owl (see *March Avocet* for details). We

could all try a little prayer or good thoughts for a favorable decision; the owls can certainly use the help. Not that listing is a panacea, but it would be a strong step forward.

Water District Grants a Success

The Santa Clara Valley Water District recently awarded SCVAS a total of approximately \$17,500 for two projects. The first will allow us to continue the work we started in 1998, improving communication between local creek activists and allowing them to report on both their issues of concern and their good efforts to an audience throughout the County. Look for the next issue of *Creekside News* in September.

The second grant I find really exciting. We will spend a good amount of effort in the next year investigating the issue of mitigation monitoring and enforcement. To put that in non-planner talk, we are going to track the promises made by developers and governments when they approve projects, and see if they follow through. I can promise you right now, we are going to find a lot of flaws in the system. Hopefully, we can correct many of the problems we find, and since we intend to focus primarily on promises relating to wetlands, riparian habitat, and water quality, and to a lesser extent on rare and endangered fish and wildlife, I predict good things for the world around us from this project.

The Water District awarded grants to many other good projects, mostly intended to improve watersheds. You can see the entire list of grantees on the District's website <www.valleywater.org>. I am continually impressed at the District's attempts to become the most conservation-oriented local government in the region. It has a long way to go (don't we all, when you think about it), but deserves praise and encouragement.

Speaking of the District

The Water District has accrued \$4.2 million in its account dedicated to stream and wetlands restoration projects (which stems from the "Clean, Safe Creeks" tax measure). As chair of the District's Environmental Advisory Committee, I

should be well-positioned to help steer those funds towards projects that will make a real difference for wildlife and habitat (and people) in our region. My current thoughts are that south county streams are where we can get the biggest bang for our public bucks, but I hope to also advance the concept of recreating wetlands from illegally filled lands in the New Chicago Marsh area of Alviso. If you have projects you think are worthwhile, by all means, let me know.

McClellan Ranch/Blackberry Farm Master Plans

Cupertino is considering the future of these two parks along Stevens Creek. To its credit, the city asked the public to be VERY involved by providing anyone who asked with a kit to create their own vision for the parks. The kits came complete with maps, an aerial photo, templates for various park attributes, and a video or DVD with information about the importance of the creek and other factors to consider. Individuals and community groups submitted 105 vision kits.

With input from the SCVAS conservation committee and the Board, and after numerous conversations with other activists, I submitted our vision both in map and written form. It took quite some time to come up with the appropriate mix of conservation initiatives and practicality, but I think we have struck a good balance. I billed the theme for our vision as "The western side of Stevens Creek is the focus of habitat restoration, while the eastern side remains vibrant with recreational and educational opportunities."

Our challenge now is to forge a coalition with other conservation and education-minded local activists to see if we can develop a larger, shared vision that we can then advance through the town process. With a little hard work ahead of us, we may be able to achieve substantial creek restoration and improved environmental education facilities at McClellan Ranch. (Just in case any Cupertino council members are reading this, SCVAS also needs a little more office space for our growing programs.)

New Advocates

Two talented new advocates have been hired recently in the South Bay. Jessica Fitchen is working for Greenbelt Alliance, and Brian Schmidt for the Committee for Green Foothills. The Sierra Club is supposed to be hiring an organizer in the near future, which will then bring us back up to a complement of four local professional land use advocates. Hopefully, these folks will stay on for some time, as the turnover in recent years has hurt the local conservation movement overall. Please support these organizations in addition to SCVAS. When we have the staff, volunteers, and resources to work closely together, we accomplish a lot more.

Well, my issue is about up at the City Council, so I will simply list a few of the other projects we are working on:

- The Habitat Conservation Plan for Santa Clara County
- The restoration plan for Cargill's salt ponds
- Eliminating loopholes in the County's zoning regulations that allow too much development in hillside and agricultural lands
- Ensuring that natural resource management and restoration are important components of the Master Plan for the County's new park, called Harvey Bear Ranch, near San Martin
- The Institute golf course in Morgan Hill
- The preservation of Soap Lake, which straddles Santa Clara and San Benito Counties and has recently been named an "Important Bird Area" by the National Audubon Society
- Advocating against any new dams in Santa Clara County
- Helping the Water District create new watershed stewardship plans
- Filing Public Records Act requests on projects impacting Burrowing Owls in the South Bay
- My working vacation to the Arctic Sea near Greenland (more on this in a future *Avocet*)

That's it for now. Plenty of work, some frustrations, many accomplishments. Thanks, as always, to the many Audubonians who make this all possible. It's now 10:45, and our Burrowing Owl issue is about to begin. Tonight will be a sweet, if sleepy-eyed, step in the right direction.

Birdathon reports

from Page 9

Santa Clara County bayshore we found a number of good species. Some of our missing shorebirds—including the often elusive Red Knot—were loafing around in the shorebird pond at Redwood Shores. The always cooperative Burrowing Owls in Alviso made it an even 144 species as we left the Bay Area a little after 1:00 PM.

We drove east to Livermore and parts south. Clouds were gathering overhead, but fortunately it was still warm and not too windy as we made our way up Mines Road. We found the usual specialties with modest effort. Displaying Rufous Hummingbird, Lazuli Bunting, Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Phainopepla are always a treat. Lawrence's Goldfinch were tough this year. A single female was the only one we saw. The hills were still green with a profusion of gorgeous wildflowers. Lewis' Woodpecker was particularly conspicuous this year.

As we turned on to Del Puerto Canyon Road the clouds finally came together and a light rain started to fall. The rain chased us down the hill—then we drove on and it fell behind. We had to work hard for our Canyon Wren, but finally found one on about our 10th stop. Costa's Hummingbird, Rock Wren and others were in their "proper" spots. The strange Blue Grosbeak that frequents the end of Del Puerto Canyon near Interstate 5 was present. Why does this bird like to hang out in the thistles and grasslands, miles from the nearest riparian area?

Our time discipline earlier in the day paid off handsomely now. We had sufficient time to drive to Santa Fe Grade and the Volta Ponds, picking up good species along the way. Yellow-headed Blackbirds are thick this year. At Gun Club Road, we were thrilled to hear a Least Bittern, never an easy bird to locate. An obliging Great-tailed Grackle held forth at the Volta Ponds. Cattle Egret, a late-lingering gang of Redheads, and Blue-winged Teal were all along Henry Miller Road. As the rain and dusk caught us, we just had time for a quick tour of Merced National Wildlife Refuge. Even in the failing light the trees were thick with migrants. American Bitterns blooped and burbled in the reeds. Gradually the night sounds increased. It was a magical place to end our day.

We contemplated making a few stops for some of our missed birds—Common Poorwill, Barn Owl, perhaps Sora or even Clapper Rail. Instead, fatigue set in and we decided 188 would have to do.

Thanks to our sponsors for their generous support of our effort and to Santa Clara Valley Audubon for organizing this year's event. We'll see you all next year!

—Francis Toldi for John Toldi and Adam Winer, *The Megatiks* (*Sequoia Audubon*)

Almaden Eagles

Grant Webb and Ann Verdi kicked off the SCVAS Spring Birdathon as the "Almaden Eagles" team on Saturday, Apr. 12 covering the Almaden area only. The day felt more like a CBC than a Spring Birdathon but since this was the only day that fit our schedules, we decided to make a run for it anyway.

Our day began with dank, misty, drizzly stuff but a couple of rainbows were encouraging. For one brief shining moment when we were at Chesbro Reservoir the rains and winds stopped, but shortly afterwards the stormy weather picked up again with a vengeance as the main front moved through and at about 1:30 PM we decided to call it quits for the day.

We ended up with 72 species for the day and here are a few highlights. At the McAbee entrance to Quicksilver CP we had Warbling Vireo, Hutton's Vireo, Bewick's Wren, and Western Bluebird. Next stop was Hicks Road where two Canada Geese were at Guadalupe Reservoir (unusual for this location). Near the confluence of Guadalupe & Rincon Creeks we had Black-headed Grosbeak, Downy Woodpecker, Orange-crowned Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, and our only Lesser Goldfinch of the day. A Green Heron was along Herbert Creek and further upstream we found a pair of Belted Kingfisher where we've found American Dipper in the past (but not this time). Behind the New Almaden Community Center, a Pacific-slope Flycatcher was heard calling. At a brief stop at the Stile Ranch Trailhead off Fortin Road, we found Western Kingbird, Allen's Hummingbird, Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Western Meadowlark.

Birds of interest at Calero Reservoir included Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, Common Merganser and one Eared Grebe. A few Wild Turkeys were in the horse corral. At Chesbro Reservoir we found Wood Duck, Gadwall, Greater Yellowlegs, Tree Swallow, more Common Mergansers, and Yellow-billed Magpie. Along McKean/Uvas Road we saw a fly-over Common Raven, and the Golden Eagle hunkered down on the nest on the transmission tower protecting two baby eaglets.

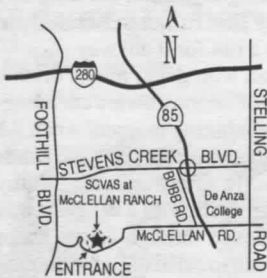
By then the wind and rain were really picking up so we hurried through our last two stops. We picked up Black-crowned Night-Heron and egrets on the roosting island at Almaden Lake but we did not walk down Alamitos Trail for orioles or mannikins. Our last stop was at the SCVWD office. Guadalupe Channel was flooded—no shorebird habitat; also no ducks on the nearby pond other than a few Mallards. Our last birds of the day were Common Yellowthroats in the Guadalupe Channel willows and Cliff Swallows around the fish ladder.

We had a lot of "misses" for the day and many of our stops were rather cursory as we were trying to get to as many habitats as possible before the weather completely deteriorated, but no apologies. We did the best we could under the circumstances and raised some funding for Birdathon projects. —Ann Verdi

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

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

RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422

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

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

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

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