



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

May-June 2004

Audubon at home

Your yard is an important bird habitat — landscape and maintain it accordingly

by Nancy Teater

Many yards in the Bay Area are landscaped using the “one of these and one of those” plan. Since most things grow well here, those cute little bushes and trees that were planted a few years ago may now be a hodgepodge that is difficult to maintain and not particularly attractive. If this describes your yard and you’re thinking of making some changes, you can find many resources to help you create a healthy yard that is safe for people and pets and attractive to birds and other wildlife.

One such resource is a new section of National Audubon Society’s website called “Audubon At Home” <www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/>. Audubon suggests what I’ll call the “more and less” approach: *more* bird feeding, native plants, water features, and nest sites; *less* invasive plants, turf lawn, free-roaming cats and impervious hardscape such as concrete.

If you’re like me, you hate those how-to articles that make you feel guilty because you’re not doing what you’re “supposed” to do. So I have a confession: I have very few native plants.

When I re-landscaped my yard seventeen years ago, we were experiencing the second year of a seven-year drought, so I

wanted to plant native and Mediterranean plants to minimize water use. They did great for the first few years, but were soon shaded out by my large California Live Oak, redwood tree, and my neighbor’s Deodora and Incense Cedars. The natives are now on their last gasp because they don’t get enough sun. Only the Western Sword Fern flourishes; I have replaced the others with plants more suitable for shade. However, with the oak and redwood, I do have some nice habitat. My birding yard list includes resident Bewick’s Wren, Oak Titmouse, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, House Finch, California Towhee, Anna’s Hummingbird, and Western Scrub-Jay as well as visiting Nuttall’s Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, Black Phoebe, Lesser and American Goldfinch, White-crowned Sparrow, and Hermit Thrush.

In addition, I use few pesticides. In fact, one of my azaleas is so infested with thrips that a more regular program of spraying with horticultural oil would be very beneficial. I also have a very large compost bin and use a lot of mulch to keep down watering requirements and weeds. I have six bird feeders and one bird box, which I think I hung up too late because no one has explored it. Maybe next year.

**Annual Potluck
Dinner June 9
—all members
welcome! — Page 4**

My point is that if you enjoy birds, there are many things you can do to provide a friendlier habitat, but you need not do it all and certainly not all at once.

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General Membership Meeting “Birds, Bats, and Butterflies of Belize” with Dave Johnston

**Palo Alto Arts Center, Newell & Embarcadero Rds.
Wednesday, May. 19**

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Dave Johnston will share many images of birds and his current passion, bats, with stories about pursuing some of the more elusive species. He has co-authored several papers on the bats of Belize and will bring us up to date with some of his latest research.

The tiny country of Belize is home to about 540 species of birds and many hundreds of species of butterflies, and of the 145 species of mammals, over half of them are bats. Join Dave for a slide presentation of these Neotropical fauna. Dave will take us into the butterfly world of mimicry and deception as he discusses the strategies and life histories of many of the common butterflies. Learn how females of some *Heliconius* butterflies mate while still a chrysalis, or how some species feed on certain plants as precursors to synthesizing sex attractants.

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May - June 2004 Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

NF = No facilities available

Saturday May 1, 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 Mtn. View. Trip designed for beginning birders but all are encouraged to attend.

Sunday May 2, 8:00 AM Stevens Creek County Park

Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - call Bob Reiling 408 253-7527). From I-280 in Cupertino take Foothill Expwy exit south 2.1 miles, becomes Stevens Canyon Rd., turn left into first (Chestnut) park entrance and meet in first parking lot. Superb riparian birding spot for local breeding birds. Possible \$4 entrance fee. **LO**

Saturday May 8, 8:30 AM Mines Rd. and vicinity

Full day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Starting in Del Puerto Canyon, we'll work our way west to San Antonio Valley. From I-580 go east over Altamont Pass to I-5, south on I-5 to the Patterson exit, and then west on Del Puerto Canyon Rd. Meet at the first pullout. Possible Costa's Hummingbird, Phainopepla, Lewis's Woodpecker, Lawrence's Goldfinch. Bring full tank of gas, lunch and liquids.

Sunday May 9, 7:30/8:15 AM South coastal San Mateo County

Half day Plus. Leader: Al Eisner (650) 364-3686 days, voice mail (650)926-2018. Trip begins at 7:30 with sea watch at Pigeon Point; latecomers meet us at 8:15 at large pullout on Pigeon Pt. Road immediately north of lighthouse, approx. 28 miles north of Santa Cruz, 22 miles south of Half Moon Bay. We'll then move on to other habitats in the Pescadero area. Good variety of breeding (and singing) songbirds, resident marsh birds, migrating seabirds and shorebirds. Scopes helpful. **LO**

Wednesday May 12, 8:30 AM Calero Reservoir, McKean Rd.

Half day. Leader: Gail Cheeseman (408) 741-5330 and Phyllis Swanson (408) 274-2349. Meet at Ranger Station about 1 mile south of boat dock. Breeding woodland birds. **LO**

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Saturday May 15, 8:30 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408) 275-1492. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward hills then left on Toyon Ave, right on Penitencia Creek Rd and continue into park. Drive left through overpass and meet at far end of parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Resident breeding birds, Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting if we're lucky. Possible entrance fee. **LO**

Sunday May 16, 8:00 AM Arastradero OSP

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west, turn right on Arastradero Rd. and meet in parking lot about 1/2 mile on right. Moderate walking with some elevation change.

Wednesday May 19, 8 AM Monte Bello OSP

Leader: Rita Colwell (650) 949-1869. Note that this is the third Wednesday in May. Meet at large Monte Bello OSP parking area on left side of Page Mill Rd about 7 miles southwest of I-280. Possible Grasshopper Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Ash-throated Flycatcher. Be prepared for any kind of weather. Moderate, but hilly walking. **LO**

Saturday May 22, 8:00 AM Almaden Quicksilver County Park

Half day. Leader: Ann Verdi (408) 266-5108. A short loop of 1.5 miles on Mine Hill, Guadalupe and Senador Mines Trails. W. Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, W. Tanager, newly-fledged titmice, chickadees, juncos, woodpeckers. Take Almaden south past Blossom Hill Rd. and Coleman Rd; turn right at next exit (McAbee Rd.) and follow until it dead-ends at park entrance. Pierce dairy farm is on right, parking along street. Meet at trailhead entrance. **RC**

Sunday May 23, 7:30 AM Upper Grant Ranch/Smith Creek

Half day. Leader: Grant Hoyt (650) 969-7892. Emphasis on birding by ear. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave east, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd. Continue past main Grant Ranch Co. Park entrance another 2+ miles to Twin Gates parking area on left. Possible Horned Lark, Grasshopper and Lark Sparrows, Lazuli Bunting, oak woodland and riparian species. Moderately strenuous 3-mile hike.

Saturday May 29, 8:30 AM Monte Bello OSP

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. From I-280 in Palo Alto take Page Mill Rd west toward Skyline Blvd (Hwy 35) for approx. 7 miles; meet at Monte Bello OSP parking area on left. Possible Lazuli Bunting, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Chipping and Grasshopper Sparrows. **Be prepared**, it can be cold, wet and foggy. **LO**

Sunday May 30, 8:00 AM Skyline Ridge OSP

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Meet at northeast corner of Skyline Blvd (Hwy 35) and Page Mill Rd (the corner nearest San Francisco and the bay — do not park in Russian Ridge parking lot!). Moderately strenuous walking with some elevation change. Possible Chipping Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Tanager. Bring extra layers of clothing as temperatures can vary wildly even at this time of year. **LO**

Saturday June 5, all day Palo Alto Summer Bird Count

Contact your section leader from last year, or call the SCVAS office for more information.

Sunday June 6, 8:00 AM Russian Ridge OSP

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408) 257-3647. See directions for meeting place under May 30 listing above. **NF**

Wednesday June 9, 8:30 AM Russian Ridge OSP

Half day. Leader: Shirley Gordon (408) 996-9863. At junction of Page Mill and Skyline Blvd (Hwy 35) go southwest on Alpine Rd. approx. 1 mile; meet in parking lot on right. Grasshopper Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting. **LO**

Saturday June 12, 8:00 AM Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408)247-5499. For directions see May 1 write-up.

Sunday June 13, 8:30 AM Stevens Creek County Park

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408)288-7768. See directions under May 2 listing.

Field Trips *cont'd*

Saturday June 19, 8:30 AM
Rancho del Oso, Big Basin State Park
Half day plus. Leader: Grant Webb (408) 578-0409. Take Hwy 17 to Santa Cruz, then go north on Hwy 1. Meet at beach parking area along Hwy 1 just north of Waddell Creek Bridge at milepost 36.30, 2 miles south of Ano Nuevo State Reserve and 7 miles north of Davenport. Long but fairly level hike (approx. 5 miles) along Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail looking for Swainson's Thrush, Winter Wren, Wilson's Warbler, and woodpeckers. Bring lunch and liquids (in backpack if possible), dress in layers.

Sunday June 20, 8:00 AM
Alamitos Creek and Lake Almaden
Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - call Bob Reiling (408)253-7527). From Hwy 85 take Almaden Expwy south then left on Camden Ave. After 4-way stop, as road bears right, park in small lot on left just before Graystone Lane. About 3 miles of easy walking. *LO*

Saturday June 26, 8:30 AM
Alum Rock Park
Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408)747-0988. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward hills then left on Toyon Ave, right on Penitencia Creek Rd and continue into park. Meet in Rustic Lands parking area on right just before reaching T intersection and underpass. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Possible Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting. Entrance fee; *LO*

Saturday July 10, 8:00 AM
Charleston Slough
Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - call Bob Reiling (408)253-7527). For directions see write-up for May 1st.

Saturday August 7, 8:30 AM
Ano Nuevo State Reserve
Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. 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, early returning shorebirds, possible Black Swift. Entrance is along Hwy 1 about 30 miles south of Half Moon Bay, 20 miles north of Santa Cruz. \$5 per car parking fee; meet at far (south) end of parking lot. *LO*

Events Calendar



Saturday May 1, 10 - 2
South County Earth Day Festival, Christmas Hill Park, Gilroy.

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

Wednesday May 5, 7:30 PM
Bay Area Bird Photographers presents Doug Cheeseman with a slide show on birds and marine mammals of New Zealand's sub-Antarctic islands. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Friday May 7, 7 - 8 PM
"Migratory Birds of the Refuge" Bird Walk with Clyde Morris, Refuge Manager. Environmental Education Center, Don Edwards NWR, Alviso.

Saturday May 8, all day
Int'l. Migratory Bird Day celebration including bird walks, banding demos, kids' activities, etc. For full schedule, visit: www.desfbay.fws.gov/tideline/IMBD.htm.

Tuesday May 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: Snow Goose.

General meeting May 19 "Birds, bats & butterflies of Belize" *cont'd from Page 1*

Dave has been a member of SCVAS for many years, serving as President from 1988-1990. He currently teaches in the biology/ecology department at the University of Santa Clara. He is well known for his many years directing the Youth Science Institute in Los Gatos and other positions in the field of ecology in the county. He has traveled extensively in Belize and in other parts of Central America.



Wednesday May 12, 6:30 PM
Special presentation: "Parrots of Telegraph Hill" at McClellan Ranch. Mark Bittner, author of "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill" will give a talk and slide show followed by a book-signing. A wine and cheese social at 6:30 will precede the presentation. Books will be available for purchase. Limited to 40; call to reserve a spot (408) 252-3747.

Thursday May 13, 4 PM
Education Committee mtg. location TBA.

Wednesday May 19, 7:30 PM
General membership meeting, Palo Alto (see Page 1).

Saturday May 22, 9 AM
New member bird walk, McClellan Ranch.

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

Tuesday June 1, 7:30 PM
Board of Directors meeting, McClellan Ranch.

Saturday June 5, all day
Palo Alto Summer Bird Count. Contact your section leader from last year, or call the SCVAS office for more information.

Tuesday June 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. Bring a lunch, enjoy the birds, and plan next year's discussion schedule.

Wednesday June 9, 6 PM
Annual Potluck dinner, McClellan Ranch Park. See Page 4 for details.

Thursday June 10, 4 PM
Education Committee meeting, location TBA.

Tuesday June 22, 6 PM
Birdathon Awards dinner, McClellan Ranch. BIG PRIZES!!!

Wednesday June 23, 7 PM
EAC meeting, McClellan Ranch.

Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz

SCVAS Programs Coordinator

In many ways, May and June signals the end of the Volunteer year here at SCVAS. The school year ends, so the education volunteers go on hiatus. The birding slows down, so our field trip leaders take a break. Opportunities arise for travel, so many office and conservation volunteers head off on vacation. Most importantly in June, as we segue into summer, SCVAS hosts our June Potluck here at McClellan Ranch Park.

The potluck is an opportunity to celebrate the beginning of a new fiscal year, to vote in new Board Members, to mingle with other members, and to recognize just a handful of our volunteers who've contributed outstanding efforts to the chapter over the past year.

Volunteers are the backbone of our many programs. They all give so much of their hearts, their time, and their talent that it is never easy to choose just a few people to recognize. It is my pleasure to thank and acknowledge the following volunteers:

- ◆ **Gordon Barret** – for leading children's field trips and presenting in school activities with incredible energy and enthusiasm;
- ◆ **Bonnie Bedford-White** and **Perry Thorwaldson** – for the time and graphic skills they contribute each month for the *Avocet*, brochures, printed materials, and much more;
- ◆ **Donna Sadowy** and **Christine Wolfe** – for their continued support on Saturdays in the Nature Shop and at outreach events;
- ◆ **Bill Bousman** – for his dedication to maintaining an accurate record of birds throughout the county and compiling data for the Breeding Bird Atlas and the Field Notes section of the *Avocet*;
- ◆ **Lakshmana Rao** – for his great commitment of time to research and write letters on behalf of our chapter on important conservation campaigns;
- ◆ **Bobbie Handen** – for her incredible devotion to SCVAS' education program as Chair of our Education Committee.

It's also important at this time to give a BIG thank you to all of our volunteers and to invite those of you who are curious to learn more about volunteering to get involved. Things may slow down in the summer, but we always have open positions. I've listed just a few current opportunities below, but please contact me if you're interested in getting involved with any of our conservation, birding, or education programs!

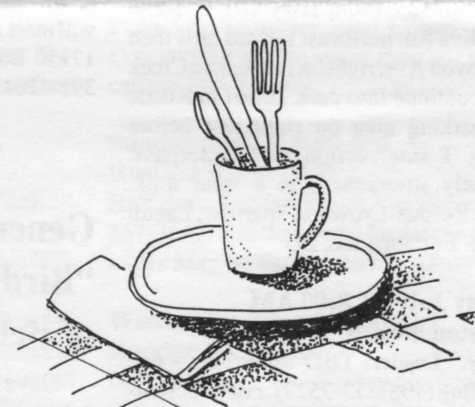
General Meeting Support – Help to set-up and sell Nature Shop items, greet members, and prepare refreshment trays. This is a great way to support the chapter while getting to enjoy entertaining and educational presentations.

Inventory Nest Collection – Identify nests and create information cards with bird names and data to accompany nests. Sort through current collection to remove old samples. Create an index of nests in collection.

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SCVAS Executive Director Craig Breon and Wild Bird Center owner Freddy Howell with Nikon spotting scope donated by Nikon as top Birdathon prize



Annual Potluck Dinner Wednesday June 9, 6 PM

All members are invited! Join your SCVAS birding friends, volunteers, staff and Board of Directors for our annual get-together at beautiful McClellan Ranch Park along Stevens Creek in Cupertino. Bring a main dish, casserole, salad or hors d'oeuvres to share — SCVAS provides beverages and desserts. Bringing your own plates and cups helps reduce use of wasteful plastic and paperware.

To learn how YOU can get involved with the chapter and our programs, contact Jennifer at (408)252-3740 or programs@scvas.org.

Spring bird classes

The following classes are sponsored by the SCVAS Education Committee. To register, call the office at (408) 252-3740. All cancellations require 72-hour prior notification for refunds.

Beginning Birdwatching — Part 2

Instructor: Lisa Myers

Due to many requests, a second Beginning Birdwatching class will be offered in June. This class will review different bird plumages, different parts of birds, bird songs and call notes, and habitat variations. Students will also explore in more detail the vocabulary associated with the birding world. Class includes 3 nights of lecture at SCVAS headquarters in Cupertino and 2 weekend field trips. Geared toward the beginning birder. Binoculars needed for the field trips. Minimum 9 students, maximum 20.

Fee: Members \$40, non-members \$45

Dates: Class: 6/7, 6/14, 6/21; 7-9 PM; Field trips: Sat. 6/12, Sun. 6/20 (Father's Day), 8:30-12:30.

One-day Passerine Workshop

Instructor: Lisa Myers

Well over half the birds of our world belong to the order *Passeriformes*. These birds are also known as "perching" birds or "songbirds," and include many common birds we find in our gardens. During this time of year many passerines migrate back to our area to breed and raise their young. We will spend the first 3 hours of this workshop in the field looking for as many passerines as we can find, then return to the Audubon headquarters for lunch. We will spend the remaining time in the "classroom" reviewing this order of birds, examining slides of the most common species found here this time of year. Geared toward beginning to intermediate birders. Bring your liquids, snacks and lunch along with a pair of binoculars. Minimum 7 students, maximum 15.

Fee: Members \$20, non-members \$25

Date: Sunday May 23, 8:30 AM - 2 PM

The following poem was written by a Young Audubon member who joined Education Chair Bobbie Handen on a trip to observe the initial attempt to release captive-bred California condors into the wild at Pinnacles Nat'l. Monument earlier this spring.

"Condor Release"

by Duncan Keller

For years, the condor has been waiting

Anticipating

The day to be free

From the captivity

But now, today

This dream comes true

To rule the skies again—

Or so we think . . .

It's six o'clock, we're on our way

This is the day

All citizens of Audubon

Have yearned to see

We're set to go

Camera: check, jacket: check

Binoculars: double-check

We zip through Hollister

Then pass through rolling hills

When we've reached the mountains

We enter the Pinnacles

This monument is a sanctuary

For creatures of all sorts

From deer

To sparrows

To wild beasts

And soon to condors

We begin a grueling hike

To a plain-like grassy summit

I gaze up at the massive cage

Atop a higher summit

I listen to some speeches

From some figures of importance

The last one explains

That condors will be returned to the wild

By soft release

Through a minute trap

They will eventually stumble through

Tossing them into the wild yonder, blue

We wait, and wait

And wait and wait

Finally it's too late to stay longer

We take our leave and head home

The bottom line was:

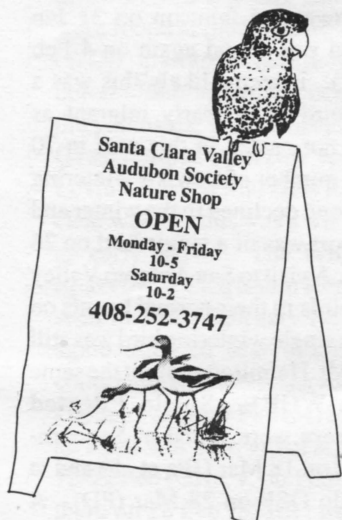
They wanted to abandon hopes of the wild blue

They thought "Let's take the easy way

Let's stay

Get three square meals a day

Why don't we take the easy way!"



Don't miss Mark Bittner's talk and book signing, The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill, on Wednesday, May 12 at 6:30 PM

-See details on page 3

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Bitterns through Waterfowl

Wintering **American Bitterns** usually leave in February so single birds found on the Santa Clara Valley Water District ponds on 15 Feb (JPa, KO) and Guadalupe Slough on 16 Feb (MMR, MJM) were probably the last of the wintering birds. One seen on the Ogier Avenue ponds on 27 Mar (JMy) may well remain to breed. Four **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found at the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) drying ponds on 4 Feb (MMR, MJM). South of the county line, 20 birds were counted on 21 Mar near San Felipe Lake (SRo) and some were still present on 27 Mar (JLu). High numbers of **Eurasian Wigeon** continued in late winter with 14 birds counted on Salt Ponds A9 and A10 in Alviso on 1 Feb (MMR, MJM). The numbers here dropped off with five found on A9 on 15 Feb and only two on 7 Mar (both MMR, MJM). A male was seen in Salt Pond A2W in Mountain View on 9 Feb (RWR, FV), a female was in the Palo Alto estuary on 12 Mar (DVP) and a male was at the old Gilroy sewer ponds on 16 Mar (WGB). Two hybrid Eurasian X American Wigeon were found on Salt Pond A10 on 1 Feb (MMR, MJM). **Blue-winged Teal** were not reported in February, but a pair was found in Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 15 Mar (BJ), another pair was at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park 21-24 Mar (RS), and three to four birds were in the vicinity of Matadero Creek below Hwy 101 on 29 Mar (DH). A male '**Eurasian**' **Green-winged Teal** was found again in the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh 4-21 Mar (PH, WGB, DW). Surprisingly, two were found in this area on 13 Mar (MMR). Another male of the Eurasian race was seen in Adobe Creek of the Palo Alto FCB on 15 Mar (BJ). An adult male **Common X Barrow's Goldeneye** has been found irregularly at Shoreline Lake, being seen on 2 Feb (MMR), and 5-12 Mar (DH, MMR, DVP). Two female **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were

seen on Shoreline Lake on 9 Mar (DH) and these birds plus an immature male were observed 11-15 Mar (MMR, DVP, BJ).

Hawks through Skimmers

The adult **Bald Eagle** wintering at Calero Reservoir was last seen 7 Mar (AV). Of the two **Ferruginous Hawks** found at Santa Teresa and Richmond earlier in the winter, one was seen at least through 14 Feb (JPa et al., v. ob.). The adult roosting at Rucker and New in Gilroy was last seen on 12 Feb (BB-W). Another Ferruginous was at Half and Condit in Morgan Hill on 20 Feb (LSp). A light-

A Sandhill Crane at the southern edge of the county and a wintering Hammond's Flycatcher were the season's rarities

phase immature **Rough-legged Hawk** was seen over the intersection of I-280 and Page Mill Road on 4 Feb (RCi), but apparently did not linger. This is the first we've had since the winter of 2000-2001. A **Prairie Falcon** over the Charleston Road marsh on 9 Feb (DB) was the only report for late winter. A single **Sandhill Crane** was found near San Felipe Lake in San Benito County in early March. On 27 Mar, it was seen to take flight and fly into Santa Clara County for the first record since 2000 (JLu). Two **Snowy Plovers** were found on a closed refuge pond in Alviso on 1 Feb (MMR), but none were seen in subsequent surveys. Few **Lesser Yellowlegs** are found in winter so one at the Sunnyvale Baylands on 15 Feb (MJM) and another at the old Gilroy sewer ponds on 28 Mar (AME) are of interest. **Sanderling** were found on both public and closed salt ponds at Alviso in late winter, with a high count of 38 on the ponds along the Alviso Slough Trail on 1 Feb (MMR, MJM). Approximately 17

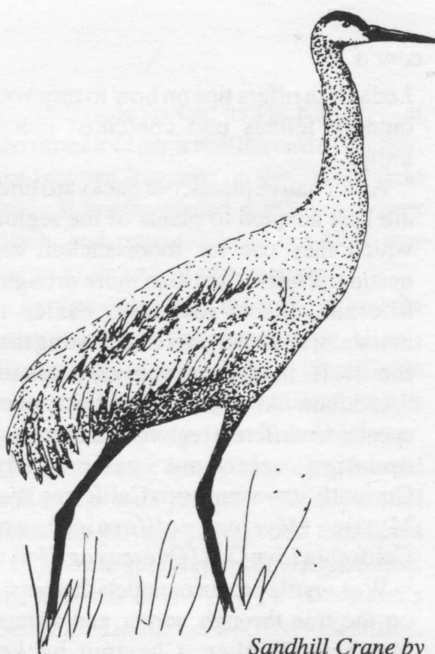
birds on closed ponds between Alviso and Guadalupe sloughs on 4 Mar (MMR, MJM) were the latest observed. Two basic-plumaged male **Ruffs** were seen at the New Chicago Marsh throughout the period. An adult **Glaucous Gull** was reported from Almaden Lake on 25 Jan (SNGH *vide* MMR) and this bird was seen intermittently through 15 Feb (m. ob.). Three 1st-winter Glaucous Gulls were found on the Alviso salt ponds north of the marina on 1 Feb (MMR, MJM) and one was seen again on 10 Feb (MJM). The **Black Skimmer** flock at Charleston Slough has stayed at about 16 birds (v. ob.) during the period, but 22 were counted on 13 Feb (CO).

Roadrunners through Grackles

A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen north of the junction in San Antonio Valley on 5 Mar (WGB). A **Short-eared Owl** was found along the outer Alviso Slough on 21 Mar (MMR, MJM) and is the first for this winter. **Vaux's Swifts** usually return in the second week in April, so a single bird at the Fremont Older OSP on 31 Mar (FV) was very early. Also very early was a female **Calliope Hummingbird** on Summit Ridge near the end of Mt. Bache Road on 23 Mar (RT, MB). Single male **Rufous Hummingbirds** were found at Ed Levin CP on 18 Mar (RL) and at Alum Rock Park on 24 Mar (KB). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was seen along Cañada Road southwest of Jamison on 31 Jan (MMR) and was found again on 4 Feb (RWR, FV). It seems likely this was a wintering bird or an early migrant as birds have not nested in this area in 70 years. The number of Lewis's wintering at Alpine Pond declined in the winter and the last report was of a single bird on 26 Feb (GHa). A visit to San Antonio Valley found six birds in their normal haunts on 5 Mar and a single wintering bird was still east of the Mt. Hamilton summit the same day (both WGB). Single **Pileated Woodpeckers** were found at Sanborn-Skyline CP on 18 Mar (JPa et al.) and at Monte Bello OSP on 28 Mar (PD). A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was captured

Field Notes *cont'd*

at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 7 Jan and was recaptured on a number of occasions through 4 Feb (SH). It was also seen there 4-9 Feb (v. ob.). This is our first winter record for Hammond's. A singing **American Dipper** was found along Penitencia Creek in Alum Rock Park on 7 Feb (AME) and two were seen there on 20 Mar (D&PB). A **Golden-crowned Kinglet** was seen along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 5 Feb (RWR, FV), but none after that. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** recaptured at CCFS on 11 Jan (*fide* MMR) likely wintered at this location. Single birds were seen near the station on both 14 and 15 Feb (L&WG, MJM). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was found at Hidden Villa on 17 Feb (GHa) and was seen there more or less regularly through 22 Feb (m. ob.). A male **Phainopepla** east of Smith Creek on 5 Mar (WGB) was the only one found in late winter. The elusive female **Nashville Warbler** found on the San Jose CBC at Overfelt Gardens was seen once again on 26 Feb (KB). The **Northern Water-thrush** wintering in the Charleston Road marsh was seen irregularly in February (v. ob.) and was last heard on 10 Mar (WGB). Wintering **Western Tanagers** continued in a number of locations. A male and female were found along the Alamos Creek Trail on 6 Feb and the female was seen again on 13 Mar (JPa). A female was seen at the Edenvale Garden Park on 8 Feb (MJM) and another tanager was seen again at the Overfelt Gardens on 28 Feb (DW). Six **Lark Sparrows** were found at the Stanford dish on 2 Feb (WGB) in an area where they've wintered before. This sparrow, once common on the peninsula, is now decidedly rare. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was seen in Ed Levin CP on 24 Mar (RWR), but it is not clear whether this was a wintering bird or an early arrival. The **White-throated Sparrow** at Charleston Road marsh was seen in early February (v. ob.) but not again until 26 Mar (PMB). Another continuing bird was observed in Edenvale Garden Park on 8 Feb (MJM). Similarly, an adult was seen again at Hidden Villa 13-22 Feb (GHa, v. ob.) but an immature there on 18 Feb (MMR) was apparently new. Also new, a White-throat was found



*Sandhill Crane by
Bonnie Bedford-White*

in Los Gatos Creek CP on 22 Mar (GBa et al.). One came to a feeder in Milpitas on 7 Mar and remained through the month (RL). One to three **Great-tailed Grackles** were found at the Coyote Creek GC through 7 Mar (v. ob.). A male was seen at Lake Cunningham on 16 Mar (KB), perhaps exploring for a new breeding territory.

Observers: Gordon Barrett (GBa), Bonnie Bedford-White (BB-W), Kim Blythe (KB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Dennis and Patricia Braddy (D&PB), Matt Brady (MB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Daniel Bump (DB), Rich Cimino (RCi), Peggy Don (PD), Al Eisner (AME), Lois and Wally Goldfrank (L&WG), Garth Harwood (GHa), Donna Heim (DH), Peter Hosner (PH), Steve Howell (SNGH), Sherry Hudson (SH), Bob Juhl (BJ), Randy Little (RL), John Luther (JLu), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Jean Myers (JMy), Kris Olson (KO), Carlin Otto (CO), Janna Pauser (JPa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rovell (SRo), Larry Spivak (LSp), Rosalie Strait (RS), Ryan Terrill (RT), David Vander Pluym (DVP), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), and Dave Weber (DW).

RARITIES: Please drop me a note: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025, or: barlowi@earthlink.net

Trip Reports

McClellan Ranch Park

March 27

A successful bird walk for new SCVAS members was held Saturday, March 27 at McClellan Park Ranch led by membership chair Laurie West Roberts and committee member Susan Bell. The misty morning gave way to blue sky and billowy white clouds, making a perfect day to walk the trail. The McClellan Park Ranch acreage is nestled into the curves of Stevens Creek, giving an incredible sense of wilderness right in suburban Cupertino.

As we began our walk, deer bounded across the meadow and a Red-shouldered Hawk soared overhead calling "keeyuuur, keeyuuur, keeyuuur." Other bird highlights included Brown Creeper, Great Egret fishing in the creek, Spotted Towhee, many Song Sparrows, titmice juncos, chickadees, Black Phoebes and brilliant Bullock's Orioles.

In the meadow we bumped into a group of treasure seekers at the base of a tree. They had been "geocaching" and, using a GPS, discovered a treasure right there at McClellan Park Ranch. What fun! We topped it off with Audubon's yummy shade-grown coffee, bagels, cream cheese and strawberries.

If you missed this walk, try to make it to the next one. It is worth it if for no other reason than to see the beautiful grounds of McClellan Park Ranch. Our next walk will be on Saturday, May 22, 9 AM at the Ranch. Be sure to check out the gift shop after the walk where you will receive a 10% local membership discount for your purchases.

Alum Rock Park

April 4

Sixteen birders shared in this "morning's" SCVAS field trip to Alum Rock Park in San Jose. The weather was excellent: partly cloudy, and never too hot. I put "morning" in quotes because we were actually out until close 1:30 PM, but we were constantly surrounded by birds, and had a couple of unexpected highlights. Our route took us east from the Rustic Lands area along the North

continued on Page 9

Audubon at home

To begin making changes in your yard, Audubon suggests a habitat inventory that helps you assess your needs and identify features and creatures in the yard today. The worksheet for this assessment is similar in many respects to the analysis that a landscape designer would do, with an emphasis on how to create a healthy yard that is hospitable to wildlife.

Second, develop a habitat action plan by identifying and prioritizing tasks to be accomplished. One of these is fairly easy: pesticide use reduction. A healthy yard requires a conservative approach to pesticides — use as little as possible to avoid exposing children, pets, and yourself to toxics, and to protect beneficial critters such as spiders.

Audubon partners with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to improve backyard habitat and includes a pointer to the NRCS “Backyard Conservation” section

www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/. NRCS asks gardeners to use the concept of thresholds, or how much plant damage you’re willing to tolerate. It’s not necessary to eliminate every pest in the yard, just to hold their predation to a reasonable level. Simple approaches to pest control can be very effective. For example, a strong spray of water will knock aphids and scale off citrus plants and roses. These sucking insects are herded by ants, which like the sugary nectar that the pests secrete. An application of a sticky product called Tangle Foot around the base of the plant will keep ants away and the herds under control.

Another practice that’s particularly important for birds is to keep your cats indoors. In a 1997 *Avocet* article, www.scvas.org/keepcats.html Leda Beth Gray explains that even well-fed cats have a heavy impact on birds, especially fledglings, which have a tough enough time making it through their first year anyway. Indoor cats generally live longer than their indoor-outdoor cousins, who face danger from cars, communicable diseases, fights, and discarded food that can make them sick. You can also cut your veterinary bills because indoor cats need fewer shots and don’t carry in fleas.

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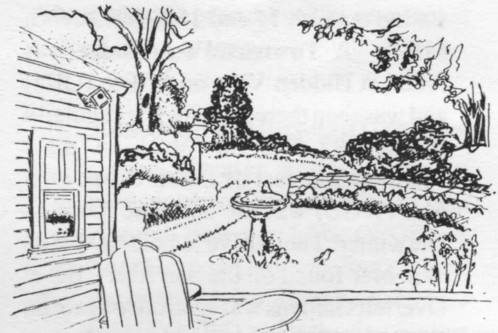
Leda Beth offers tips on how to turn your outdoor felines into contented indoor kitties.

As for native plants, our backyard birds are best adapted to plants of the region, which they use for food, shelter, and nesting. Natives are also more drought-tolerant, insect-resistant, easier to maintain, and often more interesting than the stuff that everyone else plants. “Audubon At Home” suggests plant species for different regions of the country, updating selections periodically. Currently it recommends California Wax Myrtle (*Myrica californica*) and California Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*).

Wax myrtle produces nutlets that persist on the tree through winter and attracts Northern Flicker, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Tree Swallow, California Towhee and Spotted Towhee, among others. Few people have enough room for a big oak tree, but those who do are visited by Oak Titmouse, Nuttall’s Woodpecker, chickadees, and about 30 other species.

Many other resources are available on gardening with native plants. These include the Santa Clara Valley Chapter of the California Native Plant Society www.stanford.edu/~rawlings/blazcon.htm, the *Sunset Western Garden Book*, Yerba Buena Nursery in Woodside, and native plant demonstration gardens at many locations in the Bay Area.

So don’t feel guilty. If you’re short of time, money, and patience, pick one or two projects that will move you away from a “one of these and one of those” yard and toward a healthy yard with a “birds welcome here” environment.



Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Statement of Income & Balance Sheets – Years ended May 31, 2002 and 2003

	5/31/2002	5/31/2003
Statement of Income		
TOTAL REVENUE (includes net Nature Shop sales, Investment Income, Memberships and Program Revenues):	\$35,614	\$41,875
SUPPORT (includes Gifts and Memorials, Birdathon, Direct Mail Letter, Sanctuary, contributions to Restricted Funds, Earthshare of California distributions, and miscellaneous Program Support	\$117,586	\$133,359
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	\$153,200	\$175,235
EXPENSES:		
Total Program Expenses	\$191,373	\$162,280
Total Fundraising Expenses	\$9,671	\$13,538
Total General & Administrative Expenses	\$43,482	\$51,734
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$244,526	\$227,553
NET INCOME OR (LOSS) FOR YEAR	\$(91,326)	\$(52,318)
Asset, Liabilities, and Surplus		
TOTAL ASSETS (includes Cash, Deposits, Prepaid Expenses, Accounts Receivable, Fixed Assets, Inventory, and Investments, at market value):	\$657,991	\$603,636
LIABILITIES (includes Accounts Payable, Salaries and payroll Taxes Payable, Sales Taxes Payable, and Deferred Income)	\$15,063	\$13,026
SURPLUS (includes Funds Designated to meet Long-term Needs, Restricted Funds, and Undesignated Surplus)	\$642,928	\$590,610
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND SURPLUS:	\$657,991	\$603,636
STATEMENT OF SURPLUS:		
Surplus, Beginning of Year	\$734,255	\$642,928
Excess of Income over Expenses, Current Year	\$(91,326)	\$(52,318)
Surplus, End of Year	\$642,928	\$590,610

Trip Reports *cont'd*

Rim Trail, then upstream past the Sycamore Grove picnic area (we looked for Dippers, but didn't find them) and finally back down the creek trail.

With migrants arriving early this year, I had hoped for higher numbers of spring birds than in recent years on this trip. This proved to be true in two cases: *Selasphorus* hummingbirds and Black-headed Grosbeaks. We began at Rustic Lands with the usual active bunch of about five or six Bullock's Orioles and with the sound of the first of four or five singing grosbeaks for the day (we later got good looks at one), all over a noisy background of the ubiquitous Steller's Jays. A pair of Red-shouldered Hawks was building a nest in a eucalyptus just west of Rustic Lands, marking the start of a good raptor day: a couple more (probably different) Red-shouldered, several Red-tailed Hawks (including two near a nest high on the hill), at least two White-tailed Kites, up to two Sharp-shinned Hawks and five Cooper's Hawks, and at least three American Kestrels, including a pair. Frank Vanslager also saw a larger falcon heading off, but didn't get a solid ID. Lastly, a Great Horned Owl was high in a tree across the creek from Alum Rock.

Heading up the North Rim Trail below Eagle Rock, we heard a Rufous-crowned Sparrow was heard singing, and the group eventually got excellent looks at two of them. Another inhabitant of the scrub, California Thrasher, was not so cooperative this year, with two or three heard singing but not clearly seen. Northern Rough-winged Swallows were often noted. Violet-green Swallow was the only other swallow species seen, but we had nice views (as well as earfuls) of several White-throated Swifts.

A stop by the west end of the Todd Quick Trail proved amazingly productive, beginning with that first thrasher song, and going on to the three Hooded Orioles (including an adult male) in a small pine above the hillside palm trees, which in turn were hosting a group of Acorn Woodpeckers. An Ash-throated Flycatcher was also heard and seen uphill. But the star was a Rufous Hummingbird,

an adult male spotted by Pat Kenny — at the time I told her it was the bird of the day, the first one I've seen on this annual field trip. It briefly visited a monkey-flower patch, and provided brief but clear rear views to about half of our group.

Farther east along the trail, in an area where we typically see one male Allen's Hummingbird, we had good identifiable views of two, plus an additional one or two male and one female *Selasphorus*, sp. Then, as we were descending the east end of the trail, just past where the trail joins the private paved road that veers east into the hills, Pat (again!) first spotted the real star of the day: a Townsend's Solitaire. The bird, collectively identified, was in a large oak on the south edge of this paved road just east of the start of the trail proper. It remained there for at least 20 minutes at about 11:30, posing in its typical near-vertical posture, occasionally flycatching, occasionally flicking its wings. It seemed to be content moving about in this one tree.

Toward the end of our solitaire-observation time, we all suffered what I consider a mass lunch-time hallucination: a Wild Turkey "flew" by along the hillside just below eye level. Down near the creek we had at least six singing House Wrens, several (as usual) defending old lampposts; one's mate was carrying material into a nest hole in one of these. Farther downstream we had good looks at a singing Townsend's Warbler. Other warblers today included Yellow-rumped and two heard-only singing Orange-crowned.

Finally, as we crossed the high bridge over the creek by Alum Rock, we had excellent looks at a Bobcat as it nonchalantly padded its way up the closed old entrance road — a fitting conclusion to a very interesting day of birding. Thanks, as always, to all the participants, both for the excellent company and the excellent bird-spotting.

— Al Eisner



Gilroy Hot Springs

April 10

"Notables" during today's SCVAS field trip to Gilroy Hot Springs/Canada Roads included an adult male Western Tanager on Gilroy Hot Springs Rd. about 100 feet east of its junction with Canada Rd, calling Northern Pygmy-Owls at each of two houses located on the west side of Canada Rd. 1/4 to 1/2 mile south of the junction (houses are about 1/4 mile apart and calling ceased just before 9:30 AM) and 30-50 American Pipits 1.5 miles south of the Jamison Rd. junction.

Golden Eagles continue to occupy a nest in a eucalyptus tree on the M & M Ranch. I should also note that Emelie Curtis had Lawrence's Goldfinches Thursday on the fence about 100 feet south of the entrance to the ranch. Big misses for the day were Common Merganser and Cassin's Vireo.

—Bob Reiling

Honey Lake

March 13 - 14

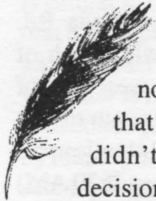
Just a brief note here to mention the fantastic Honey Lake/Eagle Lake weekend trip led by Bob Hirt. Balmy, spring-like conditions enhanced the comfort level of the 20 participants, and the Sage Grouse came through with their spectacular breeding-ground performance, as advertised. Waterfowl and raptors were abundant, and area specialties like Lewis's Woodpecker, Black-billed Magpie, Mountain Bluebird, Cassin's Finch and a rare Northern Shrike were a treat.

If you haven't experienced the birds of northeastern California in late winter/early spring, consider making the 5-6 hour drive to Susanville (north of Reno) and birding the region for a couple of days. It's not likely that the weather will be sunny and warm as it was this year, but the Sage Grouse display is worth the trip even in cold weather. If SCVAS sponsors the field trip next year, sign up! Bob Hirt is an excellent birder and outstanding trip leader who has been birding Honey Lake for over 20 years. We thoroughly enjoyed this year's outing thanks to the birds, the weather, and the camaraderie of our fellow SCVAS birders.

—Grant and Karen Hoyt

Up Against the Big Boys

by Craig Breon
SCVAS Executive Director



In a recent conversation with a fellow conservationist, I noted one aspect of this work that would be amusing if it didn't also lead to such bad decisions. The observation is this — when a politically influential developer or company argues in front of a City Council or other governmental body, they frequently avoid sound, intellectual arguments. In fact, they can get away with arguments so pitiful that I couldn't imagine making them with a straight face. Nonetheless, the Council will nod approvingly, pretending that the nonsense they've just heard is just as legitimate as any other reasoned position. On the local scene, political muscle often allows you not only to pass "Go" for your project and collect a million dollars, but to pocket a "Get out of Idiocy Free" card as well.

Case in point: In San Jose, opposing sides are lining up over whether to rezone much of Cisco's Site 6 from Campus Industrial to Residential. SCVAS is aligned with Alviso residents and city department staff in opposing the rezoning. On the other side lie several of the big boys of San Jose politics. Will power politics win out over communities and common sense? I hope not.

Cisco Site 6

In the spring of 2000 Cisco proposed a 2.1 million square foot office complex on about 150 acres in Alviso (known as Site 6 — this was about six months before the bigger fight over Site 7 in Coyote Valley). With the support of many Alviso residents, SCVAS fought hard for open space on the proposed Cisco site — open lands for Burrowing Owls and parklands for the people. In the end, we were pretty successful; open space on the site increased. Approximately 20 acres were preserved for Burrowing Owls and a rare plant (Congdon's tarplant), and more than 20 acres were set aside for a community

park, which would also serve to buffer the nearby homes and an elementary school from the Cisco site.

Cisco began to build, then the economy tanked, and Cisco pulled the plug on Site 6. Since then, their buildings on the site — only half-constructed — have sat empty. Given that the South Bay has more than 10 million square feet of office space sitting empty, and Cisco's growth has slowed dramatically, there seems little likelihood that Site 6 will be needed by Cisco or wanted by any other company for some time to come.

Enter KB Homes (one of our biggest local housing developers) with a proposal to rezone 76 acres of Site 6 for housing, allowing approximately 500 residential units. Sounds good, perhaps — surely our region still needs housing. However, there are a few obstacles, namely the people of Alviso, the Alviso Master Plan, and those pesky Burrowing Owls and wetlands.

Alviso Master Plan and Site 6

Five years in the making, the Alviso Master Plan, approved in 1998, laid out some simple concepts. First, Alviso would develop — a lot. Second, most of that development would be light industrial (read high tech campuses) and commercial uses. One thing the people of Alviso made clear — they did not want to be overwhelmed by new residents. This was a legitimate attempt to maintain the unique nature of their community.

Clearly, the KB Homes proposal runs smack into this fundamental concept of the Alviso Master Plan, and against the wishes of most Alviso residents. In addition, homes on Site 6 would result in harmful impacts to local Burrowing Owls and wetlands. Besides the owl lands set aside by Cisco in 2000, Arzino Ranch lies just next door to Site 6. Arzino Ranch supports up to a dozen pairs of owls. The people, dogs, and cats from 500 nearby homes might just doom those owls and also hasten degradation of adjacent wetlands, which in winter fill with abundant waterfowl and shorebirds.

While it might seem counterintuitive at first, office buildings are typically better neighbors for sensitive wildlife areas than are residential communities.

So it would seem that rezoning Site 6 is an uphill battle, especially with the opposition of San Jose's Planning Department (wants the site reserved for future job growth), Environmental Services Department (opposes new residences so close to the City's sewage treatment plant), and, apparently, Councilman Chuck Reed, who represents the district. Only impressive reasoning could overturn all these forces, right? Well, let's look at the opposition.

KB Homes has political muscle. Cisco Systems has Gold's Gym political muscle. These two companies have teamed up with others such as the land development company Gipson Speno (muscle-bound folks) and a host of influential consultants, all the way up to Henry Cisneros, former Secretary for Housing and Urban Development under President Clinton. With friends like these, a sow's ear can definitely pass for a silk purse.

The key here may be whether Mayor Ron Gonzales throws his weight behind the proposal. You may have read recently that the Mayor controls the legally questionable Silicon Valley Leadership Political Action Committee, which allows him to bypass limits on local campaign contributions and pay for all sorts of things, from buying access to even more influential politicians to paying for those nice lunches and hotel rooms while traveling (see <<http://www.mercurynews.com/mlid/mercurynews/news/8240921.htm>>.) Taking a look at the donors to the Mayor's PAC reveals some of the same names involved in the Cisco Site 6 dispute — and I do not mean the average resident of Alviso or the Burrowing Owl activists. Developers Gipson Speno and KB Homes are both in for a cool \$5,000. Of course it takes more than the Mayor's vote to pass a project like rezoning Site 6, but he wields considerable influence over some other Council members.

On to the Lame Arguments

Recently I was treated to a preview of some of the arguments to come over Cisco Site 6. The scene was San Jose City Hall, and the issue at hand was a set of proposed new policies to govern rezoning of industrial lands for other uses. Proposals for such rezonings have come from all over the City, as land owners realize that building houses still makes for plenty of profit, while office properties are going nowhere. Some of these proposals have already been approved.

While Site 6 was not specifically a part of the agenda, I showed up to talk about the issue and, if possible, to create momentum against the project in hopes that it might eventually die under the weight of its own stupidity. Besides myself, representatives of Cisco, KB Homes, Gibson Speno, and various consultants turned out as well, all of us there to talk about a project that wasn't even on the agenda. Out-gunned and out-manned, I turned to my only weapons — truth, justice, and, of course, ridicule of my opponents (I believe I called them "inane").

Here's why that ridicule was deserved. One of the pro-rezoning consultants argued that the Cisco site really wasn't a good site for industrial development, and thus logically should become a housing site. Sounds plausible on the surface, but there's zero reality behind that statement. The site is large (San Jose almost lost the eBay headquarters because it had so few large sites left for a growing company). The site is appropriately zoned, flat, has much of its needed infrastructure installed, sits right next to a freeway onramp, and is minutes away from either the bulk of Cisco's current buildings (if Cisco should decide to expand) or the campuses of much of the rest of high tech's biggest companies. To argue that Site 6 is unsuited for an industrial campus is akin to arguing that the computer is really a lousy business tool, and we should go back to carbon paper and the abacus. But there they were, straight-facedly venturing into Alice's Adventures in Incoherent Analysis.

The absurdity continued when the Cisco Systems representative took the podium. To place her comments in context you

have to harken back to the year 2000 and the fight over Cisco's massive Coyote Valley campus — 6.6 million square feet of office space on nearly 500 acres for 20,000 new employees — but no housing. At the time, SCVAS and others in opposition to the project pointed to, among many other problems, the lack of housing regionally, as Silicon Valley experienced the biggest job boom in California since the Gold Rush. The answer from Cisco and others came back as follows (paraphrasing), "San Jose has an adequate housing supply to accommodate all planned future job growth." This was repeated ad nauseum by various parties.

To more fully appreciate this irony, understand that since 2000 housing development has continued at a brisk pace, while job growth has been stagnant to negative. Though it is still tough to buy a house at a reasonable price, there is undoubtedly less housing pressure now than in 2000.

So, in the face of this history, could Cisco's representative reverse their earlier position and claim that housing was now the critical need that, evidently, it was not in 2000? Sure enough, there she was, talking about the "crucial need for housing" in the Valley.

Let's try to comprehend Cisco's chain of logic that led to that testimony before the Council. Did the Cisco spokesperson think that all the politically aware people in the room, including the Council, had lapsed into amnesia for the last three years? Perhaps she thought that if she said these entirely inconsistent words fast enough, people would think they had heard it wrong, and give Cisco the benefit of the doubt. My interpretation is this: Cisco believes that it can say whatever it wants, no matter how intellectually dishonest, because it is Cisco, and its profits are more important than sound planning, conservation, or the wishes of a community like Alviso.

I just wish these people would, or could, give us the straight scoop. Most public and private companies are, first and foremost, about making profit for their owners or investors. That is as it should be, or at least as it is. There should be

nothing wrong with saying, "We want to make more money, and this is how we intend to do that." Then let other people like me give the opposing argument on behalf of the community and the land, and let the Council decide. Put me down as preferring to oppose greed rather than dishonesty or sheer idiocy.

The Cisco Site 6 issue may come before the San Jose City Council some time this summer. You might want to show up. If nothing else, it should be a good evening of linguistic Houdini-ism.

SCVAS Settles Penitencia Creek Lawsuit

In the November/December issue of the *Avocet*, I reported on a potential lawsuit regarding home development near Penitencia Creek in East San Jose. The main issue was whether the development as proposed might interfere with an environmentally progressive flood control option for that reach of the creek. After a failed attempt to avoid litigation through discussions with the developer and the City, we indeed did file the lawsuit.

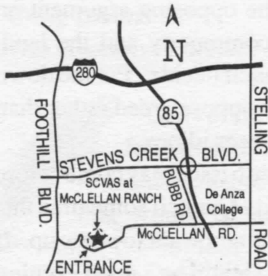
I am pleased now to report that we recently settled that lawsuit. While the terms of the settlement are confidential, there are a couple things I can say. First, we tried to protect the natural resources of the creek, and made some progress toward that. Second, we did not, in the end, expend SCVAS' financial resources pursuing this litigation, although it did take a considerable amount of my time. Finally, neither side gets everything they want in a settlement, but here both our Board of Directors and the developer felt that this settlement was a better option than going to court.

As I have mentioned before, our chapter tries to avoid litigation. When we do sue, we try to be responsible in representing the interests of our members. We will continue to both fight hard for the people and wildlife of our region, and do so with good judgement.

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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

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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.

2004 Volume 51, Number 3

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