



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

July-August 2004

Snipe Hunters Edge Wry Wrentits

Birdathon teams bring in \$24K, take home big prizes

by Ralph Schardt and Craig Breon

Wandering throughout Santa Clara County, checking those nooks and crannies for a particularly hard-to-spot species, nearly fifty participants in SCVAS 2004 Birdathon brought home a wealth of good times and more than \$24,000 for the chapter. As the final tally is being counted, we are thrilled to report the preliminary results and congratulate everyone who participated on a job well done!

While checks are still trickling in, we have achieved our original goal of \$20,000, and total donations to date are over \$24,000! As you all know, this is great news for our environmental education programs. Of course, hard work deserves great reward, and our prize list this year is quite remarkable. Without going into too much detail, let's take a look at the top five winners of the Spring 2004 Birdathon. (At press time, the Birdathon Committee was still working with winners to choose prize awards.)

First Prize – Most Money Raised by an Individual:

Laurie West-Roberts (\$2,703.00), Team: Snipe Hunters
Award: Two roundtrip Southwest Airlines tickets to anywhere they fly.
Donor: Southwest Airlines

Second Prize – Second Most Money Raised by an Individual:

Harriet Gerson (\$2,234.00), Team: Wry Wrentits
Award: Two nights for two guests in their finest room, The Captain's Inn, Moss Landing, CA.
Donor: The Captain's Inn

Third Prize – Third Most Money Raised by an Individual:*

Dotty Calabrese (\$2,172.85), Team: Wild Women Birders
Award: Kowa Optimed TSN-601 Spotting Scope with 20-60x eyepiece (includes cover).
Donor: Kowa Optimed, Inc.

Fourth Prize – Fourth Most Money Raised by an Individual:

Laurie Cuesta (\$1,640.90),
Team: Wild Women Birders
Award: Nikon 60mm Fieldscope IIIa Spotting Scope with eyepiece and accessories.
Donor: Nikon USA.

Fifth Prize – Under 18 Years of Age, Most Money Raised:

Ten year-old Robert Clarke (\$171.50)
Team: Freddy's Wild Birders
Award: Pentax DCF HR II 10x42 Binoculars.
Donor: Pentax USA.

Additional prizes awarded at the Birdathon dinner in June included a custom made kayak, ocean kayaking lessons for two, KGO helicopter ride over the Bay Area, overnight stays at Pt. Reyes Seashore Lodge, birding tours, autographed photographs, more binoculars, wine, cinema tickets, Stanford sports event tickets, art prints, and tickets to plays, among others.

As our education, conservation, and birding programs have expanded over the last few years — and done so in tough economic times — we've needed to expand our fundraising capacity. While the annual appeal letter remains the backbone of our efforts, it simply is not enough to fully fuel the ambitions and accomplishments of our chapter. As a result, two years ago the SCVAS Board decided to expand the modest Birdathon we had been hosting for many years, adding prizes and new categories, and most of all injecting enthusiasm. What's more, the Board decided to take this effort on themselves, leaving the chapter's staff largely free to build upon the community services we offer to the people and the land of our region.

Everyone at SCVAS wants to express our deepest gratitude to all who participated in the Spring 2004 Birdathon. It was fun, it was hard work, and it was competitive. Most importantly, because of you and the prize donors, it was a HUGE success! Thank you everyone and congratulations to you for helping fund next year's environmental education programs.

*—SCVAS Vice-president Bob Hirt led a team that would have placed 3rd, but as a Chapter officer, Bob withdrew himself from prize competition.

Goodbye and good luck to Jennifer Peritz

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July-Aug. 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 July 10, 8:00 AM Charleston Slough

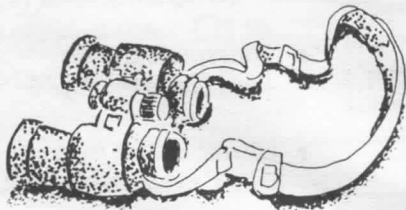
Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - call Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527). Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mountain View. Birding will be geared toward the beginning birder but all are encouraged to attend. Don't forget to bring your spotting scope and your enthusiasm. **RC**

Saturday August 7, 8:30 AM Año 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**

Saturday, August 21, 8:30 AM Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Roxie Handler (408)730-1745. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mountain View. Birding will be geared toward the beginning birder but all are encouraged to attend. Don't forget to bring your spotting scope and your enthusiasm. **RC**



Almaden Eagles Birdathon report

On Sunday, April 25 the "Almaden Eagles" team (Grant Webb, Rich Page, Janna Pauser, Ann Verdi) hit the road for the annual SCVAS Birdathon. On our "big day" we covered the Almaden area only, and this year we came up with 103 species.

Our bird-of-the-day was a stunning male Costa's Hummingbird found by Janna Pauser at Calero County Park. The bird was seen perched on a small under-hanging limb on a laurel tree at the entrance to the levee trail by a small picnic area used by the horse corral folks.

Here are some other highlights of our day:

Quicksilver CP/McAbee Entrance: Great Horned Owl, Common Poorwill, and a pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks;

SCVAS member Meg Caldwell appointed to Coastal Commission

Longtime SCVAS member and supporter Meg Caldwell of Saratoga was recently appointed to the California Coastal Commission by Governor Schwarzenegger. The Coastal Commission oversees land use issues up and down the entire coastline of California, with a mission of ensuring orderly development, protecting the beauty and natural resources of the Coast, and securing public access to our beaches. Without the Coastal Commission, great birding areas like Pescadero Marsh and Elkhorn Slough might have succumbed to development pressure long ago. The Commission is only as good as its commissioners, and the Governor could not have chosen better than Meg, who has been teaching environmental law and land use planning at Stanford Law School for some years now. Our best wishes to Meg. She has a tough and vitally important job ahead of her.

Hicks Rd: Olive-sided Flycatcher, W. Wood-Pewee, Hairy Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and nesting House Wren;

Almaden Reservoir/Twin Creeks: A nesting pair of American Dippers at the first bridge where Herbert Creek and the creek coming down Barrett Canyon join. Also of interest were Yellow Warbler, W. Tanager, Wood Duck (4 here and another one at Chesbro Reservoir), more W. Wood Pewees, and Ash-throated Flycatcher (also found on Mt. Umunhum);

Santa Teresa CP/Stile Ranch Trailhead: Rufous-crowned Sparrow and W. Kingbird;

McKean Rd: We were happy to find the two young Golden Eagles doing well at their nest site and being attended to by an adult bird;

Chesbro Reservoir: Our first Osprey of the day — also 24 Common Mergansers;

Calero CP: Besides our prize (the Costa's Hummer), also of interest was a Clark's Grebe;

Almaden Lake: Besides Killdeer, here we found our only shorebirds of the day: Least Sandpiper and Spotted Sandpiper. Also a flock of Cedar Waxwings. Both Caspian and Forster's Terns were here.

SCVWD Ponds: The most interesting bird seen here was a Loggerhead Shrike found by Grant Webb. Those of us who bird this area frequently have never seen a shrike at this location. Also our second Osprey of the day and more Cedar Waxwings. Our final bird of the day was a Hooded Oriole seen flying to and from a palm along Meridian Ave. We had a good day, even though it became very warm in the afternoon. We all ended up with red faces.

—Ann Verdi

Files of a P.I.— Investigations in Mitigation Monitoring

By Kim Yuan-Farrell
SCVAS Conservation Assistant

Little did I know when I applied for SCVAS' conservation internship last October that I would spend the next nine months sneaking around golf courses and construction sites, interviewing planners all over California, and investigating environmental law enforcement. These past months have proven to be both exciting and enlightening — and, I'd like to think, fruitful too. In addition to learning a great deal, I have completed several projects in mitigation monitoring, exploring new ground in tracking the fulfillment of developers' commitments and continuing SCVAS' valuable efforts in stormwater inspection.

My work in post-approval monitoring is relevant to the California Environmental Quality Act's (CEQA's) final stages of authority over development. Prior to approval, each public and private development project that falls under the discretion of a public agency must undergo a process of environmental review in which environmental impacts are determined and disclosed, such as the negative impacts to creek habitat or the removal of mature trees.

During this review process, comments by the public and relevant regulatory agencies are sought and considered. At the end of the review, project applicants must accept as conditions of approval measures deemed necessary to alleviate or compensate for resulting environmental impacts.

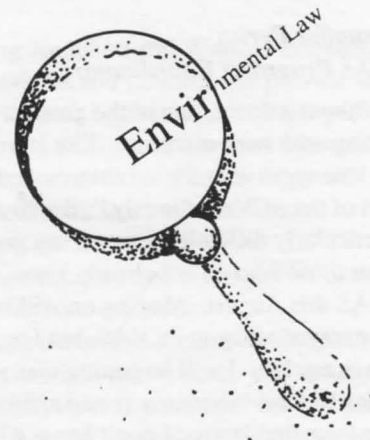
Regulatory agencies and conservation advocates and organizations invest significant resources to shape projects and these associated mitigation measures. However, after a project has been approved and has received its necessary permits, agencies and local jurisdictions devote far fewer resources to ensure that mitigation responsibilities are actually fulfilled. Unfortunately, the failure to mitigate properly translates directly to degradation of habitat, wildlife, and our natural resources.

Over the last three years, SCVAS has become increasingly interested in investigating the implementation of mitigation measures, specifically those involving water quality, rare species, and wetland and riparian habitat.

Compliance monitoring begins

Three years ago, during the 2000-01 rainy season, SCVAS staff and volunteers began an effort to monitor active winter construction sites for compliance with the Clean Water Act. This work involves inspecting construction sites for the proper erosion control devices to protect our waterways from siltation. I continued this stormwater monitoring effort this past winter, visiting over eighty active winter construction sites in Santa Clara County and reporting fifteen as potentially in violation of the Clean Water Act. I was pleased to find that city inspectors responded quickly to reports of possible violations, often conducting multiple follow-up visits to noncompliant sites. Still, these sites represent a significant number of projects potentially polluting our creeks, and responsibility for enforcing the law should fall on the shoulders of cities and regulatory agencies instead of nonprofits like SCVAS.

A larger portion of my internship time has been dedicated to investigating long-term mitigation requirements, those that usually follow project completion, such as restoring riparian habitat, creating wetlands, or building artificial replacement burrows for burrowing owls. On occasion, SCVAS has become aware of development projects that have not satisfied one or more mitigation measures, and we have successfully dealt with these situations through litigation and less adversarial means. Craig and the Board decided to try to ascertain how widespread mitigation failure is, which led to the creation of my internship. Thanks to a grant by the Santa Clara Valley Water District, I have investigated mitigation implementation and monitoring for over twenty projects, most over five years old.



This investigative process consists of requesting and reviewing numerous documents, making inquiries with various local jurisdictions, regulatory agencies, consulting firms, and individuals, and visiting project sites—a complicated endeavor as I will explain later. Most of the projects I have researched are largely in compliance with mitigation measures, but several are still in question, and I have identified one project in glaring noncompliance with requirements to restore and create riparian habitat along two creeks running through the property.

Perception vs. reality

While it was exciting to identify a project with mitigation failures (I started fantasizing myself a true muckraker!), I feel relieved that the majority of projects investigated are fulfilling their responsibilities, especially considering that much of the compliance is catalyzed by developer good-will or, perhaps more realistically, by developers' *perceptions* that responsible agencies are watching them closely. I stress perceptions because over the course of my work I have come to understand that many cities and resource agencies have not been tracking and enforcing compliance as they are required to do by CEQA. This leads me to the final and most exciting portion of my work.

Early on in November, I started to realize the difficulty of completing even the first steps of investigating a project; I could hardly follow the paper trail detailing layout and timing of

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Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz

SCVAS Programs Coordinator

Without a doubt, one of the greatest parts of my job is working with our volunteers. I've learned so much from the time I've spent with the volunteers, and I've treasured being a part of the SCVAS "family." Because of these feelings, it is particularly difficult for me to say goodbye.

For those who do not already know, I will be leaving SCVAS this August. Moving on will be bittersweet, as I will miss everyone here at SCVAS, but I look forward to the next stage in my life. I will be getting married in September and moving to Ohio where my fiancé and I have already purchased our first home. I don't know what job opportunities I will find out there, but I know nothing will replace the memories I've created with the volunteers and staff here at SCVAS. I hope to continue in non-profit work or in the educational sphere. My parting thoughts are with SCVAS, its programs, and its devoted volunteers — you, the volunteers, drive our programs and make them happen; I wish you all the very best to continue with great success!

With that in mind . . . I can't help but list just a few of the upcoming volunteer opportunities that need YOUR support:

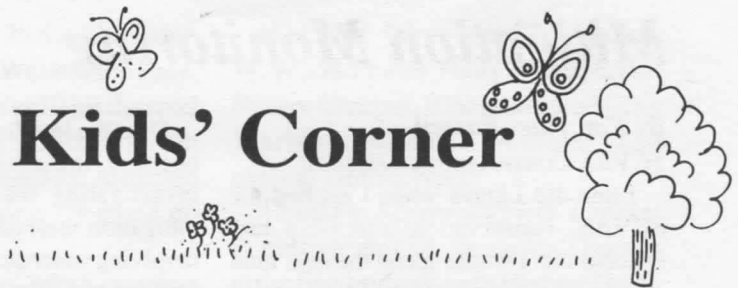
Publicity Coordinator – A volunteer is needed to help publicize the many outstanding programs offered each month by SCVAS. In particular, we are hoping to contact newspapers about our general meetings and some field trips using our existing media list. If interested, this volunteer could also further our public relations efforts by helping to develop media contacts and writing press releases for SCVAS' campaigns and events.

General Meeting Support – Volunteers in this position help to prepare for general meetings by bringing supplies from the office, such as our Nature Shop merchandise, to the general meetings. Other tasks include arranging the cookies and beverages, setting out brochures and other literature, and greeting members as they arrive. This is a great opportunity to work with other volunteers and to attend the lectures and slide shows. Schedules can be arranged monthly or every other month.

Summer Outreach – Each summer we receive a number of requests for educational programs such as our slide shows. SCVAS reaches out to senior centers, summer camps, and day camps. All of our programs are scripted or have a training program. This commitment would have flexible scheduling and each outreach opportunity would be 1 to 3 hours in length.

If you have any question regarding these or other volunteer opportunities, please contact the Programs Coordinator at (408) 252-3740.

The Avocet 4



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.

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, July 24, 10 AM -12 noon

Location: McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Maximum attendees: 20

Minimum age: 6 or entering 1st grade

Non-refundable fee: \$5

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.

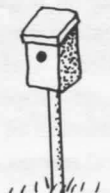
Date: Saturday, August 21, 10 -11:30 AM

Location: Charleston Slough, Mountain View

Maximum Attendees: 24

Minimum Age: 8 or entering 3rd grade

Audubon by Appointment! – Would your family love to go on a guided bird walk, but the above dates just don't work for you? Call us to schedule a personal walk with one of our trained volunteers. We can explore parks in your own neighborhood or go to a birding hot spot. Trips will vary depending on volunteer availability. Call the number above for details.



Celebration and Transition

Yin and yang — a clichéd concept at times, but one that often rings true. In light, darkness . . . in joy, sorrow . . . in opportunity, loss.

This September, our own Programs Coordinator Jennifer Peritz will be wed to Nicholas Zoffel. Since Nick is getting his Ph.D at Bowling Green University, Jennifer will move to Ohio, where they recently purchased a little house on the outskirts of Toledo. I often overhear Jennifer in the office chatting excitedly with a volunteer about furnishings, the garden, what sort of job she will be looking for. A new union, a new chapter in her life unfolding, a new place to explore and make feel like home. We can do nothing but wish her all our best and ask that she write from time to time, and drop by for a visit.

Of course, this means that SCVAS loses Jennifer's talents and warm personality. A small, three-person office like ours will be thrown into a different dynamic, and the scores of volunteers who have come to count on and work closely with Jennifer over the last three years will have to adjust to a new face and new ways.

Jennifer, a former student of mine at Santa Clara University, came to SCVAS in the summer of 2000 as an intern, compiling and editing *Creekside News*, our periodic publication on local creeks and creek activists. When I became Executive Director in October of that year, Jennifer took on the role of Conservation Assistant, wading into the development issues of the Valley with surprising skill. She intended to apply for my old position as Environmental Advocate, but when the Board created the Programs Coordinator position in 2001, Jennifer decided that education and volunteers better suited her skills and inclinations.

Since then, the Programs Coordinator role has flourished. Shaped around Jennifer's unique qualities, the position has come to handle an increasing number of diverse tasks.

Programs such as Young Audubon and Wildlife Education Day now serve more students and families and provide for a richer experience than we ever before offered. New programs such as Earth Day in Gilroy and our adult education classes have taken off under her skillful leadership, with constant support and hard work from our Education Committee. In her three-year stint with SCVAS, Jennifer's impact on our education and volunteer programs can hardly be overstated.

Perhaps more than the impressive abilities she brought to the work, our volunteers, staff, Board, and members will miss Jennifer's people skills — even-tempered, enthusiastic, truly caring for the personal lives around her as well as how they fit into this larger organization. On so many occasions I have seen Jennifer respond to others with professionalism and warmth, leaving them with the understanding that they are important not only to the success of the chapter, but important to her personally.

As I write this, we are in the midst of hiring a new Programs Coordinator.

More than 45 candidates applied; we have interviewed eleven; we think we have

found three or four who could do the job well. We have to constantly remind ourselves that we are not looking for a new Jennifer — that would be futile — but for a new, accomplished individual to take on this position and make it his/her own.

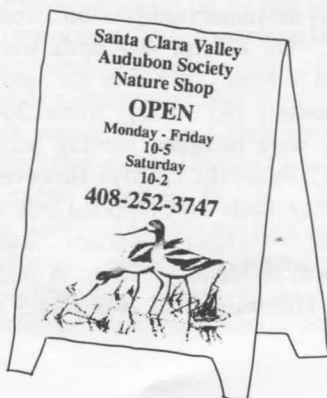
To Jennifer and Nick, peace and productivity in your new community. To Jennifer, our deeply felt appreciation. "Special" barely begins to describe you.

Note: Sometime in August, we will be having a picnic to celebrate Jennifer's departure and welcome the new Programs Coordinator. Look for the date on our website (www.scvas.org) or e-mail Jennifer at programs@scvas.org if you would like to join us.

—Craig Breon



Jennifer Peritz



*Books, jewelry, bird seed and more...
You'll find it all at our Audubon Store!*

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Pelicans through Waterfowl

There have been a smattering of oversummering **American White Pelicans**, but the first group in three digits was a flock of 100 in closed salt ponds near Alviso on 15 May (MMR, MJM, RGJ). Much more surprising, however, was a flock of 33 **Brown Pelicans** seen over the Alviso Marina the same day (RGJ, MMR). Brown Pelicans rarely arrive in the South Bay before early June. An **American Bittern**, killed by a car in early April near Ross Creek and Union, seemed out of place (LWR). One along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield on 2 May (MMR, MJM) was in an area where they have nested previously. **Great Egrets** have expanded their urban breeding range. Three to four nests were found on an island in Lake Cunningham on 4 Apr (SB, PS) and two nests were discovered in a colony of **Snowy Egrets** and **Black-crowned Night Herons** at the Palo Alto Duck Pond on 8 May (JT). The Lake Cunningham island is a new site and is also being used by up to 16 pairs of night herons. By 16 May, a single Snowy Egret was also nesting in this colony (SB, KDeM, JH). A single **White-faced Ibis** was found in Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 31 May (MMA), but was not seen after that. The last **Eurasian Wigeon** of the winter season were four males seen on Salt Pond A9 in Alviso on 8 Apr (MMR, MJM, RGJ). One to five **Blue-winged Teal** were at the old Gilroy sewer pond through 2 May (v. ob.). The pair that wintered in the Sunnyvale Baylands Park was last seen on 1 Apr (RS, DW). One to two birds remained in the vicinity of the Palo Alto FCB through 18 Apr (v. ob.). A male at Calero Reservoir on 3 May (AV) was apparently the last of the spring migration. Winter aggregations of **Common Mergansers** usually break up by mid-March so 24 birds found on Chesbro Reservoir on 25 Apr (AV et al.) were surprising.

Hawks through Terns

It was an astounding spring for **Swainson's Hawks**, unlike anything we have seen in decades. Single birds were seen moving north over Stevens Creek CP on 17 Apr (JMy, MMR et al.), about 45 min. apart. On 26 Apr a loose group of four adults was seen moving northward over Bell's Station on Hwy 152 (DLSu). A single bird was over Alum Rock Park on 8 May (LMy et al.). Rounding out the season, an intermediate morph was seen along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 29 May and then interacted with a second bird (MJM)! Perhaps their

*Spring rarities included
Black-headed Gull, Dusky
Flycatcher, and Lapland
and Chestnut-collared
Longspurs*

migration was pushed a bit more toward the coast this year or, hopefully, these birds are doing better in California than in recent years. Last spring we missed the calls of the small population of **Mountain Quail** in the Santa Cruz Mountains, but we did better this spring. One was first heard on the upper slopes of Black Mountain on 12 Apr (GHa) and two were heard there on 9 May (MMR). On 13 May a single bird was heard on the Bald Mountain Trail on Mt. Umunhum (RK, PK) and on 15 May one was calling near Lands End along Summit Road (DLSu). The latter observation is as far south as we've ever recorded this species in the Santa Cruz Mountains. As expected, none were seen. Completely out of place was a **Common Moorhen** seen at the Mallison Pond in San Antonio Valley on 4 Apr (FT). We have few records of moorhens anywhere away from the valley floor. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was seen north of the Alviso Marina on 4 Apr (RGJ) and was one of our rare spring sightings. Even less often found in the

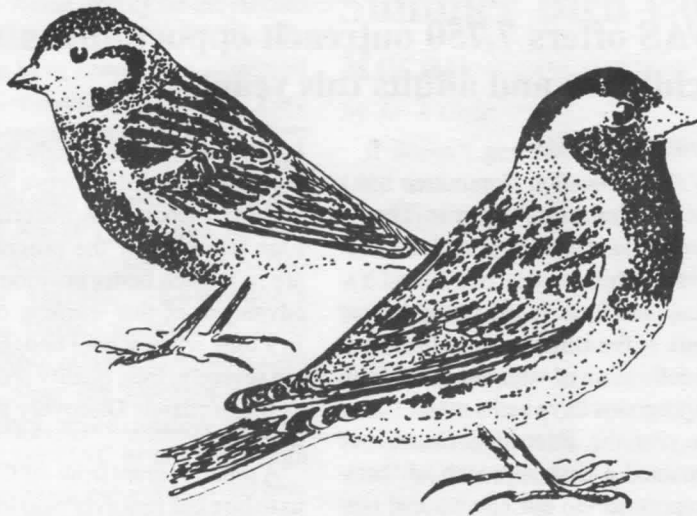
spring, an alternate **Ruddy Turnstone** was found on an island in Salt Pond A16 in Alviso on 2 May (LSu) and by 4 May at least three birds were present (WGB, KB, v. ob.). The two wintering **Ruffs** were last seen at New Chicago Marsh on 4 Apr (KO). However, a single bird was again seen there on 17 Apr (DH et al.). In some springs we see a small movement of **Red-necked Phalaropes**, while in other years none occurs. This year there was a particularly good passage with birds seen in Alviso from 30 Apr to 27 May (m. ob.). The peak of the passage was marked by a count of 220 birds on Salt Pond A16 on 19 May (MMR). The best bird of the spring migration was a **Black-headed Gull** that was found among the Bonaparte's Gulls in the drying ponds of the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant on 6 Apr (RWR, FV). Unfortunately for those who stood vigil over the next few days, this second county record was a one-day wonder. A **Least Tern** was found in Salt Pond A5 in Alviso on 15 May (MJM, MMR, RGJ) for only our second May record. This species generally goes directly to its breeding areas and we normally we do not record it until early July when adults and young of the year stage in the South Bay before heading for their winter quarters.

Roadrunners through Warblers

A **Greater Roadrunner** was found near the Metcalf motorcycle park on 9 Apr (MS). One of our rarest migrants, four **Black Swifts**, in groups of three and one, were seen flying over the intersection of Page Mill and Alpine Roads on 30 May (RK, RWR et al.). After our early **Vaux's Swift** in late March, there was hardly any movement until the third week in April. On 22 Apr 40+ birds were estimated to have flown over the Sierra Road summit (RL, KO), while 30+ migrants were recorded moving north over Hall's Valley (LCh, LMy). However, by late May, birds were reported only as pairs in the Santa Cruz Mountains and are likely local residents (v. ob.). A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was found at

Field Notes *cont'd*

Calero CP on 25 Apr (JP, AV et al.) for one of our earliest records ever. This rare hummer is most often found in July and August. Male **Rufous Hummingbirds** were seen along the western edge of the Diablo Range in locations such as Alum Rock Park and Ed Levin CP from early April to 8 May (v. ob.). One was found deeper in the Diablo Range in the San Antonio Valley on 8 Apr (WGB) and one was in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains in the Almaden Valley on 19 Apr (JP). A very late migrant was one found along Mt. Umunhum Road on 19 May (AV). **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were found in San Antonio Valley in ones and twos in April and May and sometimes were missed altogether (v. ob.). **Pileated Woodpeckers** are being found more frequently in the forests along the Santa Cruz Mountains with birds nearly as far south as Mt. Madonna CP (DLSu). Much more surprising, however, was a wandering bird seen over downtown Mountain View on 10 Apr (BA *fide* PMB). Although a regular fall migrant, **Willow Flycatchers** are much less frequent in spring, so a bird along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 26 May (WGB) is of interest. Fewer **Hammond's Flycatchers** were found this spring with one at Monte Bello OSP on 17 Apr (MMR, MJM et al.) and two singing at Smith Creek on 18 Apr (MJM). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was banded at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 2 May (*fide* MMR). **Say's Phoebes** occasionally nest in drier portions of the Diablo Range. An adult feeding a fledgling in San Antonio Valley on 22 May (WGB) is the first nesting record in several years. **Cassin's Kingbirds** have not nested in the south county since 2000, but occasional vagrants show up so one found at Joseph Grant CP on 10 Apr (MDd et al.) was a good find. **American Dippers** were found in typical locations with pairs found on Penitencia Creek in Alum Rock Park, along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road, and on Herbert Creek above Almaden Reservoir (v. ob.). Nesting was indicated at both the first and third locations. Singing **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were found along Skyline Boulevard from the Grizzly Flat trail



*Chestnut-collared Longspur and Lapland Longspur in breeding plumage.
-Sketch by Bonnie Bedford-White*

head to Long Ridge OSP on 23 May (DLSu). The second **Townsend's Solitaire** of the year was found at Alum Rock Park on 4 Apr (AME et al.) on an SCVAS trip. A **Sage Thrasher** was found along the railroad tracks at New Chicago Marsh on 10 May (DW, v. ob.), but was gone the next day. There was good spring passage of **Nashville Warblers** with up to six birds at Smith Creek 16-24 Apr (MJM, RWR, FV et al.), one along Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 27 Apr (MJM et al.), and one a mile below Hwy 101 on the Pajaro River (DLSu). **Hermit Warblers** came through a bit earlier than usual and in fewer numbers. The earliest was a male at Monte Bello OSP on 17 Apr (MMR et al.), while the latest was one on Summit Road on 15 May (DLSu). The passage of **MacGillivray's Warblers** was on the low side this season with singing birds at Smith Creek on 21 Apr (MMR) and 24 Apr (MJM, D&PB) and a bird banded at CCFS on 2 May (*fide* MMR). **Yellow-breasted Chats** seemed a bit early, but in typical numbers. A singing bird was found along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield on 24 Apr (RWR, FV) and birds were found there through 15 May (v. ob.) with a high count of three singing birds on 2 May (MMR, MJM). Single singing birds were also found near the intersection of Sierra and Felter roads in the Diablo Range on 24 Apr

(D&PB) and along the Pajaro River below Hwy 101 on 27 Apr (DLSu).

Sparrows through Finches

Black-chinned Sparrows are back (sort of). One was heard on the Bald Mountain Trail near Mt. Umunhum on 13 May (RK, PK) and one was seen there on 18 May (RWR, AV). Two were heard on Loma Prieta on 15 May (SR). Santa Cruz Mountain **Lark Sparrows** have become very scarce in recent years so one at the Arastradero Preserve on 17 Apr (GHa, DM) and another on Monte Bello Ridge on 1 May (GHa) are of interest. **Grasshopper Sparrows** have returned to many typical locations. Two were at Santa Teresa CP on 8 Apr (JP), two were singing at Ed Levin CP on 9 Apr (MMR) and have been found there irregularly through the end of May, two were singing in Halls Valley on 10 Apr (MDd et al.) and have also been found there into May, a singing bird was at the Sierra Road summit on 17 Apr (MMR et al.), at least three were found on 21 Apr (RWR, FV), a single bird was heard in Henry Coe SP on 30 Apr (RWR, FV), and two were along Metcalf Road on 30 May (MMR). Lingered **White-throated Sparrows** included one at a

continued on Page 9

Local education programs nearly double

SCVAS offers 7,750 outreach opportunities for children and adults this year!

by Jennifer Peritz

SCVAS' Education Committee has a lot to be proud of this school year. Thanks to the addition of a grant from the Center for Venture Philanthropy (CVP) and Yahoo!, support from funds raised by our members at the Birdathon, and the continued dedication of volunteers, our education programs have had a major boost.

This year the Education Committee implemented a new approach of "multiple exposures" to our educational outreach. The idea was to offer students repeated contact with environmental education concepts in hopes of creating a deeper connection to and appreciation of the natural world. In order to do this, we had to increase our coordination efforts, partner with other organizations (such as the Predatory Bird Research Group in Santa Cruz), add to our volunteer base, expand program resources, and ramp up staff time. This wasn't an easy task, but the Ed Committee and volunteers have done an excellent job on following through! Results can be measured not only in the increase of outreach opportunities offered, but also in the response of the students. We are proud to have offered nearly 7,500 opportunities to schoolchildren this year, but it's even more rewarding to hear one of the students say, "Hey, I remember you! You're the lady who taught us about birds."

The most extensive of our in-school programs is the Wetlands Discovery Program, which has taken nearly 5,000 school children to the Baylands since 1989. This program has a built-in multiple exposure component, as it includes both a visit to the classroom to prepare students followed by a field trip to explore the wetlands. The demand for this program continues to grow as more and more schools are exposed to it. This year our goal was to reach 10 schools, totaling 20 classes and 640 students. Instead, we offered field trips to 26 classes, reaching over 800 students with this in-depth program. These programs are fully funded

by SCVAS, thanks largely to a grant this year from Yahoo! Because SCVAS pays for bus transportation, materials, and staff time required for the program, schools are in a much better position to take full advantage of this learning opportunity. In a time when school budgets are being cut severely, free, quality programs such as the Wetlands Discovery Program are invaluable.

A separate grant from the CVP allowed us to hire our first ever paid intern, Jackie Olson. Jackie contributed over 300 additional staff hours to our ed programs this year, working on curriculum development, special events (like Wildlife Education Day and the Earth Day Celebration), classroom presentations, and SCVAS' largest school field trip program, the Wetlands Discovery Program. Jackie's keen talent not only affected the students, but also her presence freed up time staff time for me, the Programs Coordinator, to recruit and train new volunteers, reach out to teachers, and supervise other programs. The extra staff support has been one of the keys to improving and expanding our education outreach.

Another key element to our growing success is our volunteers. Altogether, SCVAS volunteers have spent a total of over 600 hours leading Santa Clara County schoolchildren. Many education volunteers have been with SCVAS for years — some for over a decade! Others have joined our ed programs just this past year and made SCVAS their primary volunteer organization. These volunteers share their love, respect, and knowledge of nature and the environment. Their strong commitment forms the heart and soul of our programs.

Our youth programs do not stop at the classroom. The Young Audubon program reaches beyond schools and targets children and their families. Young Audubon offers quarterly field trips, workshops, and special events. This past year families enjoyed creek exploration,

nestbox building, whale watching, and of course, birding field trips! A new element added this year to Young Audubon is "Audubon by Appointment" where families can sign up for guided bird walks with one of our trained volunteers. For more details on this and our awesome summer activities, see Page 4.

Adding new resources and materials to boost current programs has broadened our programs without increasing the need for volunteer or staff time. One example is the new Education Outreach website (www.scvas.org/edoutreach). This online resource is aimed at three audiences — youth, teachers, and adult learners. It offers opportunities to explore wetland habitats, download scripted slideshows, get details about adult education classes, and much more. The youth component of this site, funded through the CVP, is designed as a follow up to our Wetlands Discovery Program and will reinforce concepts students learned on the field trip, including interactive displays of habitat, migration, and physical and behavioral adaptation.

SCVAS' Education Committee also places a great value on Adult Education, and this year our Adult Education classes have had an incredible growth spurt. Thanks to the popularity of our instructors and general increased interest in birding, our classes have been filled to capacity and beyond. Over 250 people have participated in this year's adult education offerings. Classes ranging from Beginning Birding to Intro to Dragonflies to family specific classes have attracted both new and experienced birders to our chapter. We strive to offer not only a variety of topics, but also a variety of teaching methods including classroom-oriented, field-oriented, and combination classes. We've also offered one-day workshops and multi-class sets. Not only are these classes valuable learning opportunities, but they also act as a stepping-stone for many people to become more involved in the chapter. After being attracted to the SCVAS classes, many

cont'd next page

Field Notes *continued*

Milpitas feeder until 11 Apr (RL), one singing in a Los Gatos yard on 2 Apr (JD), and one in a Sunnyvale yard 11-16 Apr (MMR). A bird banded earlier was recaptured at CCFS on 14 Apr (*fide* MMR). A bird with a wing injury was first seen in a San Jose yard on 20 May (LWR) and has remained there into June. A surprising and seemingly late adult male **Lapland Longspur** was found at the Sierra Road summit on 17 Apr (MMR et al.). It was refound and seen by many 21-23 Apr. Previously, wintering birds have not been seen after 4 Feb. An added longspur surprise was an adult male **Chestnut-collared Longspur** found within closed ponds in Alviso on 22 Apr (MMR, MJM). It is possible that this is the same bird that was found in this area in November. A smattering of **Blue Grosbeak** records was tantalizing, but none appear to have stayed long. An adult male was seen along Coyote Creek on 19 Apr (MMR), a female was along the Pajaro River below Hwy 101 on 27 Apr (DLSu), and a male was singing at Ed Levin CP on 31 May (MJM). A singing male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was found along Disk Drive in Alviso on 21 Apr (MMR). A few birds were found

Ed. programs *cont'd.*

people sign up for membership or ask about volunteer opportunities.

Over the past three and a half years, I've had the pleasure of watching these programs grow and evolve. Seeing this development, I'm very proud of the direction and progress of our education efforts. As I've explained in my *Volunteer Ventures* column (page 4), I will be leaving SCVAS this August. With the guidance of the Education Committee and the dedication of volunteers and adult education instructors, I have great confidence that SCVAS' education programs will continue spreading the values of environmental education and stewardship and will carry on a positive influence on future generations.

there over the next few days, with seven to nine birds found nearby on the Arzino Ranch 4-7 May (RWR, FV, WGB, KB, KO). There have been a few, scattered reports of **Great-tailed Grackles**. Five birds have been on a farm near San Felipe Lake 10 Apr-10 May (*fide* AS). One male has been seen at Lake Cunningham again on 14 Apr (FV, SB) and 16 May (SB et al.). A single male was in Alviso on 5 May (MJM). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** started to occur in good numbers in April in typical Diablo Range locations. Near the junction in San Antonio Valley, approximately 32 were seen on 28 Apr (JAC et al.) for a high count. A pair along San Felipe Road near Pacheco Creek on 12 May (MP) were the only birds reported from the valley floor. A single bird over Sierra Azul OSP on 30 May (MMR) was the only found in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A female building a nest near the junction in San Antonio Valley on 8 Apr (WGB) was the only report of breeding.

Observers: Bill Ayers (BA), Kim Blythe (KB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Dennis and Patricia Braddy (D&PB), Summer Brasuel (SB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Les Chibana (LCh), Jack Cole (JAC), Karen DeMello (KDeM), Matthew Dodder (MDd), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Garth Harwood (GHa), Donna Heim (DH), Jan Hintermeister (JH), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Roland Kenner (RK), Pat Kenny (PK), Randy Little (RL), Molly Malone (MMA), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Dean Manley (DM), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LMy), Kris Olson (KO), Janna Pauser (JPa), Mark Paxton (MP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Laurie Roberts (LWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Siobhan Ruck (SR), Mark Selden (MS), Anne Spence (AS), Rosalie Strait (RS), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LSu), Phyllis Swanson (PS), Francis Toldi (FT), James Turley (JT), Frank Vanlager (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

24th Palo Alto Summer Bird Count Recap

by Jack Cole

It doesn't get much better than this. OK, there was a little wind, but an otherwise warm and sunny day greeted birders on June 5th for the 24th annual Palo Alto Summer (Breeding) Bird Count. From the pre-dawn owls to the nuthatches at the countdown dinner at Ruth and Gene Troetschlers' home in Los Altos, birders tallied over 150 species (the final compilation by Bill Bousman is ongoing). A 20-year average of 145 species indicates that this was one of our most successful counts.

Among the more uncommon species sighted were: Fox Sparrow (would be a first for the count if approved), Eurasian Wigeon (probable injured bird), Golden-crowned Kinglet (more likely on the west slope), Wild Turkey (expanding and more likely each year), Black Skimmer (more likely outside this count circle in summer), Red-breasted Merganser (about 4 summer records, probably injured), Peregrine Falcon (regular in winter, but a non-nester... so far), Vaux's Swift, Bufflehead (also probably injured) and Common Poorwill.

The Palo Alto count circle, also used for the Christmas count, is centered near Stanford University. A wide variety of habitats are covered, including urban parks, salt ponds, grasslands and redwood forests. Approximately 40% of the count is in San Mateo County. A faithful band of birders has sustained this count since it was first organized by David Houle back in 1980. However, there is always room for more counters, which would provide more extensive coverage in existing and new territories. If you were not part of the count this year, we hope that you will consider joining us on the first Saturday in June next year and every year.

Thanks again to all who participated! It was a great day!!



Ulistac's link to global biodiversity

by Kelly Crowley

Ulistac Outreach Coordinator

Did you know that taking a weekend morning to help restore the habitat at Ulistac Natural Area in the heart of industrial Santa Clara is like going to a Philippine rainforest?

Well, okay, Ulistac doesn't exactly look like a rainforest, and your chances of seeing the endangered Flame-templed Babbler (*Dasycrotapha speciosa*) are zero. But the ecological importance of restoring (not to mention protecting) California native habitats is about equal to that of restoring the equatorial rainforests in the Philippines, Colombia and Borneo.

Like those rainforests, the California Floristic Province (of which Santa Clara is a part) is a "biodiversity hotspot" according to Conservation International's Center for Applied Biodiversity Science. That means the region from southern Oregon to the northern portion of Baja California is home to a tremendous number of endemic species, has been significantly altered by humans, and has lost 70% of its original natural vegetation. Although there are only seven endemic bird species in the California Floristic Province, 48% of the plant species found here are endemic. That is, of the over 4,400 plant species found in California, just over 2,100 are found nowhere else in the world.

At Ulistac, volunteers are working hard not just to restore a tiny (41 acres) piece of this precious California native habitat, but also to educate others about native plants, habitat restoration and the storied history of Santa Clara.

This past spring, our most remarkable volunteer work session was an April event co-sponsored by Toyota and California Audubon, who turned out the year's largest group of volunteers to plant 15 large trees donated by Toyota. Our first Wildflower Walk, also back in April, was a sunny, volunteer-filled community event, and gave us a strong foundation for what we hope will be Santa Clara's biggest Earth Day event. SCVAS Executive Director Craig Breon took fantastic

pictures of the event, which should be posted on our website (www.scu.edu/envs/ulistac) soon.

In addition, we had three Eagle Scout candidates complete their projects at Ulistac, which means irrigating the restoration areas is infinitely easier, and that the big gap in the Bird and Butterfly Garden is now full of young native plants.

Any of the 300 volunteers currently on our mailing list (and many of you are SCVAS members), will probably testify to the fact that working at Ulistac in any capacity is a fun and rewarding experience, if only for the interaction with the many dynamic community members and enthusiastic students already involved in the project.

Opportunities to get involved abound, and range far afield from just doing habitat restoration at our bi-monthly events. We are currently looking for a volunteer program coordinator to run our docent program activities. We are also looking for new docents, field trip leaders and restoration volunteers.

Many thanks to SCVAS members who have supported the Ulistac Natural Area Restoration Project since its inception. If it's been a while, you should take a moment to visit the open space and see how your vision has, quite literally, blossomed. For those who have yet to discover Ulistac, take a quick trip to the park some morning or afternoon and you'll likely be surprised at what a group of dedicated volunteers can accomplish in just four short years, not to mention what a display that pair of White-tailed Kites can put on. Next time you're in the SCVAS Nature Shop, pick up a free copy of the Ulistac Natural Area Bird Checklist to take with you. (We try to keep a few copies there, and a few at the park entrances.)

To get involved, contact Kelly Crowley, Ulistac Outreach Coordinator at: (408) 554-5419 or kcrowley@scu.edu.

Note: Kelly will be on leave from August 15th to November 1st, having qualified to swim five individual events

in the 2004 Paralympics. (The Outreach Center will be open during that time.) Since 2002, Kelly has earned 17 national titles, and set over 20 American records and two World records. The Paralympic Games are the second-largest sporting event in the world, and are the most competitive sporting arenas for athletes with disabilities. The 2004 Paralympic Games will be held September 17th-September 29th in Athens, Greece. Check the U.S. Paralympic website www.usparalympics.org for information and results of this year's games. To learn more about Kelly's swimming career, visit: www.teamkelly.org.

Gilroy Adopts Agricultural Mitigation Policy

by John Hewitt

Preservation of agricultural land in the south Santa Clara Valley took a big step forward on May 17 when the Gilroy City Council passed the county's first Agricultural Mitigation Policy. This passage followed approximately a year and a half of discussion by a Task Force composed of members of the City Council and Planning Commission, representatives from the Open Space Authority and Santa Clara Land Trust, farmers, and interested citizens of Gilroy including SCVAS's Norman Watenpaugh.

The goal of the Policy is to ensure the viability of agriculture and promote agri-tourism in the Gilroy area through the preservation of arable land and reduced urban encroachment. While Save Open Space Gilroy was the lead environmental group providing input on the Policy, SCVAS also contributed to its successful development and passage through letter-writing and participation at City Council meetings.

cont'd. next page

SCVAS intern's sleuthing efforts pay off *continued from Page 3*

implementing mitigation measures. Nor could I find documents indicating that mitigations were being monitored by the agency responsible for the projects I was investigating at the time: the City of San Jose. The city had few of the documents it is required to track in order to ensure mitigation compliance. It failed to fulfill its legal commitments and, thus, failed to ensure adequate protection of the environment.

CEQA requires developers to complete long-term monitoring of certain mitigations, such as newly created wetlands, to ensure that the intent behind mitigation measures is fulfilled (e.g. that wetlands destroyed are replaced with fully-functioning wetlands of equal or superior value). In turn, agencies are required to ensure compliance by tracking these projects' mitigation efforts, working with developers if problems arise, and using various means to force violating developers into compliance. Thus, failure of mitigation implementation indicates a twofold breakdown: a failure on part of

the developer to implement and monitor mitigation measures, and a failure of the lead agency to monitor and enforce compliance. The latter indicates a flaw in the entire system of enforcement.

Planning Dep't. comes through

After several weeks of my requesting documents and receiving few, Craig decided to ask San Jose's Planning Department for a regular contact person with whom I could work so I need not re-explain my efforts upon each visit. To our great surprise, department leaders responded by admitting to the city's mitigation monitoring weaknesses and asking for our collaboration in improving their monitoring efforts. For the next two months, I researched mitigation monitoring strategies, reading relevant articles and documents and interviewing planners with various jurisdictions across the state. By the end of December, I produced and submitted to the department a document delineating the key features involved in effective mitigation

monitoring. And during a discussion in January, Planning agreed to implement a number of the suggested features, including my strongest suggestion: the addition of a department staff position dedicated to mitigation monitoring. The department presented an outline of San Jose's new mitigation monitoring program to many of the city's largest developers at the Developers' Roundtable meeting in April, and the program and

"...Planning agreed to implement a number of the suggested features including ...the addition of a department staff person..."

staff position are scheduled to be installed soon. We look forward to watching the program's growth and effectiveness.

I am very pleased with the Planning Department's progress toward improving its monitoring as well as the staff's proactive initiative in forming a working relationship with SCVAS. I feel very positive about having worked on mitigation monitoring from a preventative approach in addition to the reparative, case by case basis. Now, hopefully, future projects in San Jose will be more likely to succeed in compensating for environmental impacts.

Mission accomplished

I leave my internship at SCVAS feeling that my last nine months have been spent productively and meaningfully. Our creeks and rivers should be a bit clearer. Our Audubon chapter has learned valuable information about mitigation monitoring, which we hope to share with other jurisdictions and agencies. And SCVAS has helped shape the future of environmental conservation in San Jose.

I would like to thank the Santa Clara Valley Water District for supporting this project through the Watershed Stewardship Grant. A warm thanks to SCVAS volunteers John Hewitt and Sherrie Wren and to Craig and SCVAS for the wonderful opportunity to learn about conservation from within a wonderful organization.

Gilroy policy *cont'd.*

In brief, the policy says that for each acre of farmland that is developed, one acre of farmland must be preserved. However, there are several exceptions to this rule. For instance, a buffer zone is required between a new development and any adjacent agricultural land. A maximum of 100 ft. of this buffer is exempt from mitigation. Public facilities such as parks, recreational facilities, permanent open space and public schools are not required to be mitigated, and roads that serve the entire community and do not benefit just the development are mostly exempt. Also, specific plan areas such as the Hecker Pass area west of Gilroy are singled out as being able to provide on-site mitigation if approved by the City Council.

Lands that will be required to mitigate are those within the Gilroy area that are deemed as a significant loss if urbanized. Lands to be preserved lie generally on the eastern side of Gilroy within the Santa

Clara County agricultural preserve. These latter areas are termed "Preferred Areas."

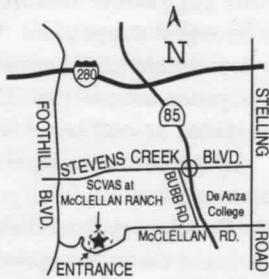
Developers have three options for accomplishing mitigation. First, they may purchase land within the Preferred Areas. Second, they may purchase development rights on agricultural land within these areas or third, they may pay an in-lieu fee which will be based on the lowest appraisal of development rights in the Preferred Areas. In the first and second cases, ownership of the land or development rights will necessarily be transferred to the Open Space Authority or some other City-approved agency.

The Gilroy Agricultural Mitigation Task Force, City Staff and City Council should be commended for writing a policy that is fair to all stakeholders. It serves the interest of the whole community by establishing a procedure whereby preservation of agricultural land is inextricably tied to development. This policy can be a model for other cities where agricultural land is being lost to urbanization.

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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.

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