



# THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

November - December 2004

## Getting old, but . . . retiring? — never!

### SCVAS Fall Fundraiser coming to your local mailbox as Chapter nears 80th birthday

Right around Thanksgiving you will be receiving perhaps our most important communication of the year. As in previous years, we'll be telling you of what SCVAS has accomplished this past year with your donations, announce some of our goals for next year, and ask you to give.

Back in 1925, a small group of birders gathered together in the Santa Clara Valley of orchards and gardens and decided to form an Audubon chapter. SCVAS was officially founded in 1926. That means we are rapidly approaching our 80<sup>th</sup> birthday — with a lot to celebrate.

Please remember that this is the only time this year we will be asking you for a donation. We try to focus on our mission of conservation, education, restoration, and birding, and we try to minimize the amount of time and resources we spend fundraising. That makes this one letter all the more important. Last year we raised \$72,000 — about one-third of our annual budget. This year our target is \$75,000.

The letter is more than just a fundraiser, however. It is our chance to let you know of the many achievements we have had in the last year. You will read about restoration of Stevens Creek, fighting the Institute Golf Course and Sargent Ranch,

taking kids from across the County to the Baylands, building and installing bluebird nestboxes in parks and open space preserves, offering more field trips and hosting adult education classes, and celebrating nature with children and adults. Our philosophy is simple—let people know about the good work we do, and then ask them to support those good works for another year.

Next year will bring a host of new issues and opportunities. We will be closely involved with plans to restore 16,000 acres of salt ponds in the South Bay. We'll be vigilant in monitoring development schemes for Coyote Valley. We will help shape the future of the Water District, Open Space Authority, and other agencies as they prepare to spend millions of taxpayer dollars on open space acquisition and stream and wetlands restoration. We'll launch a new education experiment, collaborating with two other environmental organizations to deliver focused services to local schools. As always, we intend to improve and expand our services. These plans rely heavily on a stable source of funding from our members.

When you receive our annual letter, please open and read it. We are very proud of our accomplishments, and we want you to

be just as proud of your support. Thanks in advance to the more than 400 of you who will respond to our letter with an investment in the future aspirations of SCVAS.

— your Audubon Chapter

**General Membership Meeting**  
**“Año Nuevo: BioGem in the Bay Area”**  
**with with Frank Balthis**  
**Palo Alto Arts Center, Newell & Embarcadero Rds.**  
**Wednesday, Nov. 17**  
**Doors open 7:30; program 8:00**

Naturalist and photographer Frank Balthis, a resident of Bonny Doon, will present a slide lecture featuring the remarkable natural wonders of Año Nuevo State Reserve. Situated in San Mateo County on the Pacific Flyway, Año Nuevo is noted for its Northern Elephant Seals, but also provides habitat for Rhinoceros Auklets, Marbled Murrelets, San Francisco Garter Snakes, Red-legged Frogs, Steller's Sea Lions, Sea Otters and much more. Frank has been working with wildlife biologists and photographing the Reserve for 25 years. His program will highlight changes in the landscape, wildlife and scientific knowledge of the area. You will visit the mysterious Island, see huge shifts in the sand dunes, and learn where elephant seals go at sea. His work has been published by the Audubon Society, National Geographic Society, National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, UC Press and others.

*Exec. Director,*  
*Craig Breon*  
*is moving on*

— Page 11

- ◆ *Annual Holiday Open House — Page 3*
- ◆ *Meet SCVAS' two new interns — Page 5*
- ◆ *Los Gatos waterthrush — Field Notes, Page 6*
- ◆ *Christmas Bird Count dates & info — Page 8*

# Nov. - Dec. 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 Nov. 6, 8:30 AM

### Grant Ranch Co. Park

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

## Sunday Nov. 7, 8:00 AM

### Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Ann Verdi (408) 266-5108. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mtn. View. Trip is designed for beginning birders; all are invited. A good place to get familiar with your spotting scope.

## Wednesday Nov. 10, 8:30 AM

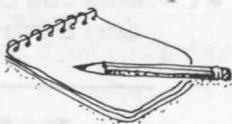
### Almaden Quicksilver Co. Park

Half day. Leader: Ann Verdi (408) 266-5108. A short loop of 1.5 miles on Mine Hill, Guadalupe and Senador Mines Trails for oak woodland species: woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees, juncos. 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; park along street. Meet at trailhead entrance. **RC**

## Saturday Nov. 13, 8:30 AM

### Arastradero Preserve

Half day. Leader: Jim Liskovec (650) 969-5542. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west approx. 1/2 mile to Arastradero Rd. Turn right and meet at parking lot 1/2-mile on right. Woodland and grassland species, good assortment of raptors. Two miles of moderate walking. **RC**



## Sunday Nov. 14, 8:30 AM

### Uvas Creek Park Preserve

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy go west on Tenth Street about a mile where it turns into Uvas Parkway. Turn left at Miller Ave., drive over Uvas Creek and turn left into Christmas Hill Park. Park in first aisle to right. A fairly easy but long walk. **LO, RC**

## Wednesday Nov. 17, 9:00 AM

### Pescadero Marsh & Beach

Half day. Leader: Sue James (650) 348-0315. Note that this is the third, not the fourth, Wednesday of November. Meet at first parking lot south of bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy 1. The tide conditions will be very good; we should have exposed rocks visible on the coast and a nice sandy beach in the estuary. Bring your spotting scope and several layers of warm clothes. **LO, RC**

## Saturday Nov. 20, 8:30 AM

### Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. 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. Continue under bridge and meet at far end of upper parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk; trail can be muddy. Possible entrance fee. **LO, RC**

## Sunday Nov. 21, 8:00 AM

### Oka Ponds

Half day. Oka Ponds/Los Gatos Creek Park. Leader: TBD (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 17 in Los Gatos take Lark Ave exit west. Turn right on Oka Rd, left on Mozart Ave and immediately right on Oka Lane. Meet at gate. **RC**

## Friday-Saturday Nov. 26-27, 9:00 AM

### Sacramento Valley Wildlife Refuges, Gray Lodge, Sutter Buttes

Full day and a half. Leaders: Mike Mammoser & Frank Vanslager, for information contact Mike (408) 578-2429. Meet at Sacramento NWR headquarters on I-5 approx. 20 miles north of Williams. Take Road 68 (Norman Rd.) exit

east from I-5, then immediately north on frontage road to Refuge. Bring spotting scope, full tank of gas. Allow 3 hours from South Bay. [For overnight stay at Williams, confirm with Dave Cook at (408) 275-1492.] Ducks, geese, swans, cranes, raptors. A great trip for beginners. (No children under 12, please.)

## Wednesday Dec. 1, 8:30 AM

### Calero Reservoir

Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408) 265-9286. Note: this is the *first* Wednesday of the month. Go south on Almaden Expwy until it ends, then right on Harry, left on McKean; approx. 4 miles to Ranger Station and equestrian entrance on right (about 1 mile south of boat ramp). Meet at Ranger Station parking area. Wintering waterbirds. **LO, RC**

## Saturday Dec. 4, 8:00 AM

### Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

Half day. Leader: TBD, questions call (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 take Hwy 237 east, exit North on Caribbean Dr., turn right on Borregas Ave then left to parking area. A great place to study ducks; scopes highly recommended. A fairly easy but long walk. **RC**

## Sunday Dec. 5, 9:00 AM

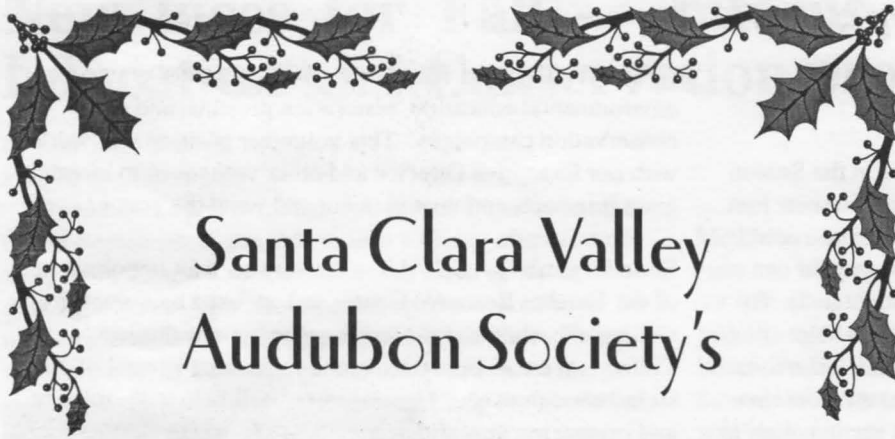
### Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Dick Stovel (650) 856-6105. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mtn. View. As always, all are invited to attend but birding will be geared toward the beginning birder. Bring a spotting scope if you have one.

## Saturday Jan. 1, 7:30 AM

### County Chase

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Get a head start on your 2004 County Year List with some vagrant chasing. Bring a full tank of gas, lunch, and field guides as we attempt to track down some of the unusual birds seen on the Christmas Bird Counts in Santa Clara County. Meet in Alviso Marina parking lot. From Hwy 237 in San Jose take Gold St. north to end, bear left on Elizabeth St. then right on Hope St. to Marina parking lot. Be prepared to carpool. **RC**



# Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's

## Holiday Open House Saturday, December 11 10:00am-2:00pm

Enjoy refreshments!

Learn about our Conservation, Education,  
and Birding programs!

Discounts on our Nature Shop items!

For more details,  
please contact Susan at (408) 252-3747

SCVAS Office and Nature Shop  
McClellan Ranch Park  
22221 McClellan Road  
Cupertino, CA



## Events Calendar

**Wed. 11/3, 7:30 PM**  
**Bay Area Bird Photographers (BABP)** features David Cardinal with a slide show on "Animals of Central Alaska." Lucie Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

**Tues. 11/9, 9:30 AM**  
**Eve Case Bird Discussion Group** meets at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: White-faced Ibis.

**Wed. 11/17, 8 PM** (doors open at 7:30)  
**General Meeting, Palo Alto.** (see Page 1)

**Tues. 12/14, 9:30 AM**  
**Eve Case Bird Discussion Group** meets at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264, Topic: Killdeer.

**Sun. 12/19**  
**San Jose Christmas Bird Count (CBC)**

**Mon. 12/20**  
**Palo Alto CBC**

**Sun. 12/26**  
**Calero-Morgan Hill CBC**

**Sun. 1/2**  
**Mt. Hamilton CBC**  
For CBC details see Page 8.



## Holiday Wish List

We are seeking donations of several items for our education and volunteer programs and for the front office. Donations are tax deductible — not to mention greatly appreciated! Please contact Kim at (408) 252-3740.

- ◆ Slide projector
- ◆ Portable projection screen with stand
- ◆ Two computer monitors compatible with Macintosh G4 desktop computers.

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# Volunteer Ventures

by Kim Yuan-Farrell  
Programs Coordinator

For many, November and December usher in the Season of Giving. SCVAS provides a number of opportunities for you to embody that holiday spirit. For example, you could donate much-needed second-hand items to be used in our education and volunteer programs (Wish List, Page 3). By giving monetarily to our Annual Fundraiser, you help support many important conservation and education efforts in our community (Page 1). Or you could donate your time by volunteering in a variety of ways, such as participating in the Christmas Bird Counts (Page 8), which is likely to satisfy that hunger for birding as well! These are all meaningful things we can do during this season too often remembered for the shopping and bustle.

For more information on volunteer opportunities, check out the listings below or join us at the Holiday Open House on December 11.

**Fundraiser Support** – Every year we hand-address, stuff, stamp, and seal almost 4,000 envelopes to send to members for our Annual Fundraiser. This is a huge effort, and we can't do it without your support! We will have an envelope stuffing party here at McClellan on Saturday, Nov. 13. This is a fun opportunity to help the chapter and meet other members. Snacks will be provided. Call for details!

**Cavity Nest Monitors** – In the Cavity Nester Recovery Program, SCVAS volunteers monitor nestboxes to track use and the larger success of recovery efforts for cavity nesting birds, such as bluebirds and chickadees. Monitoring involves weekly data-collecting visits to nestboxes as well as box maintenance. A minimum one-year commitment is encouraged. No experience is necessary, as we will provide training materials. In addition to contributing to an important effort, this work can be greatly rewarding personally as you watch the inhabitants of your nestboxes make their homes and raise young. We welcome new monitors and are specifically seeking volunteers for the following: 1) installing and monitoring a set of nestboxes along a trail near Tulare Hill in South Santa Clara County and 2) monitoring nestboxes at Arastrodero Park that are already installed and have been successful for several years.

**Young Audubon Coordinator** – Young Audubon offers Santa Clara County children and families fun, educational opportunities outside of the classroom. The coordinator will help plan, publicize, and deliver exciting quarterly workshops, field trips, and special events, such as the Earth Day celebration in Gilroy and whale-watching trips coming up in January! Good organizational and people skills and a desire to connect kids to nature are important for this position.

**Grant Writing and Research**—SCVAS writes grants for environmental education, restoration projects, and our conservation campaigns. This volunteer position will work with our Executive Director and other volunteers to research grant prospects and then plan out and write the grants.

**Slide Organizer** – SCVAS' slideshows are an important part of the Teacher Resource Center and are used by volunteers visiting classrooms and outside organizations throughout the County. We will be restoring and improving several of our slideshow carousels. This volunteer will help with ordering and organizing new and current bird slides into carousels and our larger slide collection. This position could be either short- or long-term.

Please contact Kim at (408) 252-3740 or [programs@scvas.org](mailto:programs@scvas.org) for more information on how YOU can become a volunteer. Happy Holidays!

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## Let's Learn about Ducks! — New Adult Ed class with Lisa Myers

*The following class is sponsored by the SCVAS Education Committee. To register please call the office at (408) 252-3740. Cancellations require 72-hour prior notification for refunds.*

Lisa Myers is excited to offer a three-week course on Ducks and the *Anatidae* family of birds, including ducks, geese, and swans. Worldwide there are over 154 species of birds that belong to this family, and we can find 45 of these species right here in the greater Bay Area! These birds are beautiful additions to the winter landscape. We'll review all the *Anatidae* that you may encounter on your birding adventures, listen to their vocalizations, and learn how they travel between the Arctic Circle, the Bay Area, and beyond.

Fee: Members \$35, Non-members \$40

Dates: Monday evenings: 11/15, 11/22, 11/29; 7-9 PM

Minimum: 8 students; Maximum: 20 students

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## Holiday Shopping Convenience!

**Open Monday - Friday**

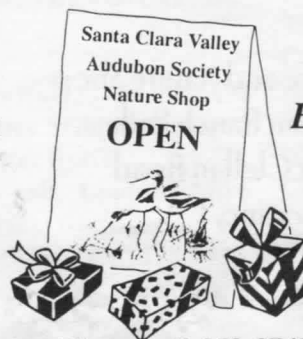
**10am - 5pm**

**Extended Saturday Hours**

**10am - 5pm**

**November 6, 13 and 20**

**December 4 and 11**



Please call 252-3747 for additional extended hours.

# New faces for Fall — interns bring energy to Education and Conservation programs

By Kim Yuan-Farrell  
Programs Coordinator

Thanks to the power outage throughout Cupertino at the end of September, I was able to take a Friday afternoon off away from the usual office business to clean up the intern desk by window-light. It was exciting to prepare for our two new interns, Carolyn Christianer and Nathan Hale. These two have a lot of fresh energy and solid experience that will



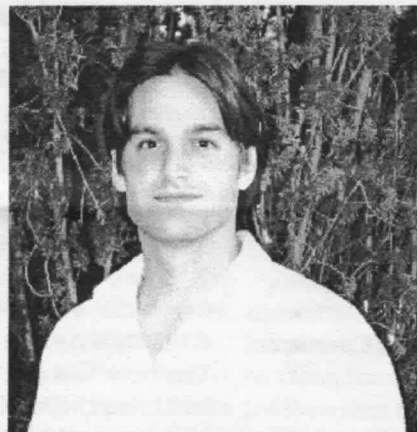
Carolyn Christianer

Carolyn has an impressive amount of experience in environmental science and education at parks in Florida, Arizona, and Western Australia. With this experience as well as a friendly demeanor, motivation, and good sense of humor, Carolyn was an attractive candidate for the Education and Outreach Intern position. We knew this individual would need to jump right in during this busy time of year, and she has done just that.

help invigorate our education and conservation efforts.

Carolyn comes to us as a recent graduate from Northern Arizona University where she earned her bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences with an emphasis in management. An Ohio native,

As I write, Carolyn is in her second week of work here at McClellan, and she is catching on very quickly. She jumped right into her new role, visiting local elementary schools during her first week to give presentations about California Native Wildlife to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in preparation for our Wildlife Education Day Poster Contest. In addition to contributing to the massive preparations for Wildlife Education Day, Carolyn will work with me and many SCVAS volunteers in our in-class programs and field trips, including the Wetlands Discovery Program. She will also focus on developing and improving SCVAS education programs, such as our Teacher Resource Center. Carolyn's internship will give her additional valuable experience in environmental education and curriculum development and enable me to spend more time recruiting volunteers, developing programs, and working on our collaborative efforts with other organizations in providing



Nathan Hale

educational services to the South Bay community. I am confident that Carolyn will prove to be a wonderful addition to the Education team.

We are excited to welcome Nathan as SCVAS' new Conservation Intern. This young San Jose resident is a senior at UC Santa Cruz, majoring in

Environmental Studies. He is very passionate about environmental issues and enjoys nature writing, and he is a great fit for this position. He has knowledge of environmental policy, land management, and conservation biology and is very personable and capable. Nathan's primary role will be as *Creekside News* Assistant Editor. He will work with Editor Leighton Nakata in producing the next issue of the newsletter and will also plan and coordinate the Creek Conference coming up in December. Nathan will also work on other conservation projects under Craig's guidance, including research on development projects, learning how to comment on an Environmental Impact Report, and work in mitigation monitoring. We look forward to Nathan's writing and his enthusiasm for exploring career options in conservation.

I am excited to watch as Carolyn and Nathan grow in their new positions and bring fresh perspectives and ideas to our efforts. Please join me in welcoming them to SCVAS.

## Thank you!

### John W. Meyer and friends

SCVAS would like to thank all the students, friends, and colleagues who donated in honor of Professor John W. Meyer of Stanford University on the occasion of his formal retirement. To date, nearly \$2,000 has been donated in his name.

Dr. Meyer was a Professor of Sociology and evidently quite well-liked, if this gesture is any indication. Dr. Meyer is also an avid birder, has been an SCVAS member for more than a decade, and has generously contributed to SCVAS in past years during our annual fundraising campaign.

We wish Dr. Meyer all our best for his retirement, and thanks again to his friends for their generosity.

*(John, if retirement seems a little slow, we know a nice organization looking for field trip leaders.)*

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# Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

## Waterfowl through Hawks

A **Cackling Goose** was seen over Coyote Creek near Metcalf Road on 11 Aug (MJM) and is probably a bird that had been summering locally. Three **Blue-winged Teal** were found at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) oxidation ponds on 12 Sep (MDD) and were the first since early July. A male was found at Calero Reservoir on 24 Sep and a pair was there on 28 Sep (both AV). The only reports of nesting **Lesser Scaup** were of two-plus broods at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds 21-23 Aug (MJM, WGB). A male **Hooded Merganser** on a lake in Rinconada Hills on 25 Sep (LSu) was early. A drawdown of closed salt ponds in Alviso attracted large numbers of piscivorous birds. High counts were obtained on 28 Sep of 1860 **American White Pelicans**, 111 **Brown Pelicans**, 910 **Double-crested Cormorants**, 279 **Great Egrets**, and 412 **Snowy Egrets** (MMR, MJM, RGJ). September was most unusual in that single individuals of our two coastal cormorants turned up inland. A **Brandt's Cormorant** was found on the Ogier Avenue ponds on 18 Sep (AT, FV, KH et al.) and remained until 21 Sep (v. ob.). On 19 Sep, a **Pelagic Cormorant** was found on Shoreline Lake (MDD, KDD, MJM) and also stayed through 21 Sep (v. ob.). A surprising juvenile **White-faced Ibis** was found inland at ponds east of Casa de Fruta on Hwy 152 on 19 Sep (DLSu). A fall migrant **Swainson's Hawk** was seen over Milpitas on 5 Sep (DW).

## Shorebirds through Skimmers

An adult **Pacific Golden-Plover** in mostly alternate plumage was found at the New Chicago Marsh on 19 Aug (DM, ChW, DKi) and remained a day. A juvenile was found in closed salt ponds in Alviso on 28 Sep (MMR, MJM, RGJ). Single **Snowy Plovers** were found in closed salt ponds in Alviso on 5 Aug (SCR, WGB) and in New Chicago Marsh on 11 Aug (DW). **Lesser Yellowlegs**

were less widespread this fall, although found regularly in New Chicago Marsh. A high count of 29 birds in the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 29 Aug (MMR, SCR, MJM) was a good total for recent years. A **Wandering Tattler** was seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP oxidation ponds on 21 Aug (MJM) but did not remain. July's **Ruddy Turnstones** stayed at Salt Pond A16 into August, with one bird seen 1 Aug (MJM, DM) and two there on 11 Aug (JBH). Of greater interest, a single **Black Turnstone** was found at Salt Pond A16 on 11-12 Aug (JBH, m. ob.) and

## *A sometimes-cooperative Louisiana Waterthrush in Los Gatos teased, taunted and thrilled observers over a 10-day period*

four birds were seen there on 19 Aug (DM, DW, v. ob.). A final **Black Turnstone** was nearby on Salt Pond A13 on 21 Aug (MDD, KDD). This is the best invasion since 1997. The Stevens Creek mouth has been reliable this fall for **Red Knots**. Three to nine birds were found there 24-29 Aug (FV, m. ob.) and then at least 30 were seen there again on 21 Sep (RWR, FV). A single bird was in a closed salt pond in Alviso on 28 Sep (MMR, MJM, RGJ). New Chicago Marsh was the best place for juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** in early August. Three were there on 1 Aug (MJM, DM, RK, PK, DW) and single birds were found there irregularly through 18 Aug (v. ob.). Single juveniles were also seen in Salt Pond A14 on 7 Aug (SCR) and in a closed salt pond on 28 Aug (MMR, RGJ, MJM). The single juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** found in New Chicago Marsh in late July remained at least through 2 Aug (m. ob.). A single juvenile was found on the Salt Pond A9/A10 dike on 11 Aug (MMR), three were at the CCFS waterbird pond

on 29 Aug (MMR, SCR), and a single bird was in the New Chicago Marsh again on 15 Sep (DW). The first **Pectoral Sandpiper** of the season was an adult at the New Chicago Marsh on 1 Sep (JMD). At least three adults and a juvenile were seen there the next day (v. ob.). Numbers at New Chicago peaked on 17 Sep when eight Pectorals were counted (RWR, FV) and a few birds remained through the end of the month (v. ob.). Elsewhere, a single juvenile was seen inland at Coyote Reservoir on 26 Sep (MJM) and at least 15 were seen at the CCFS waterbird pond on 30 Sep (RWR, FV). We've become somewhat blasé about 'our' **Stilt Sandpiper**, which normally shows up at New Chicago Marsh in August. This year an adult in partial alternate plumage was found there on 17 Aug (RWR, FV, DW, DM et al.) and this bird was seen by many observers through 18 Sep, as it completed its molt into basic plumage. The male **Ruff** seen through much of July in New Chicago Marsh remained there for the period (m. ob.). A second male was found on 8 Sep (MMR) and has also continued. July's female was seen regularly until 7 Sep (m. ob.), but was not seen during the rest of the month. A juvenile **Sabine's Gull** was found at the CCFS waterbird pond on 30 Sep (RWR, FV). A 2nd-summer **Common Tern** was seen on Salt Pond A13 on 5 Aug (RWR, FV) and may have been one of the birds found on these salt ponds in July. A basic adult **Black Tern** was at the Sunnyvale WPCP oxidation ponds on 21 Aug (MJM, MMR) and a second bird was seen over Salt Ponds A2E and B1 on 29 Aug (KO). Four or so adult **Black Skimmers** on the islands in Salt Pond A16 appear to have fledged at least one young based on a fledged bird seen nearby on Salt Pond A13 on 5 Aug (RWR, FV). Two precocial young from a nest on the north side of Salt Pond B1 were first observed on 26 Aug (DM, FV et al.) and were still healthy on 21 Sep (RWR, FV). The wintering flock on Charleston Slough appeared to reestablish 18 Sep, and 22 were counted on 21 Sep including two juveniles (GB, JH, RWR, FV).

## Field Notes *cont'd*

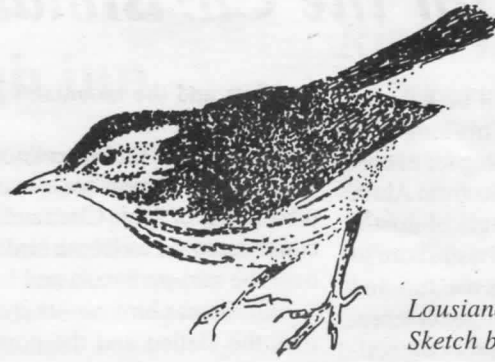
### Roadrunner through Phainopepla

A **Greater Roadrunner** was found near the Alviso Marina on 7 Sep (JTH et al.) and remained here through the end of September (m. ob.). There is little precedent for a bird so far from the Diablo Range and it is quite a mystery how it got there. Less mysterious was a roadrunner off Hellyer Road in the foothills on 9–10 Sep (BJ). The fall dispersal or migration of **Vaux's Swifts** seemed underway with six birds along the Alamitos Creek Trail on 1 Aug (JPa). Notable concentrations in September included 55 over the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 21 Sep (MMR) and 27 over Monte Bello OSP on 24 Sep (GHa). Two late **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were seen along Coyote Creek below Montague on 14 Aug and single female/immatures were seen at feeders in eastern Morgan Hill on 16 Aug and 12–13 Sep (all SCR). A male **Rufous Hummingbird** found along the Alamitos Creek Trail on 1 Aug (JPa) was very rare for fall. The first of the passage **Willow Flycatchers** was a bird banded at CCFS on 18 Aug (*vide* MMR). Single birds were found in riparian areas near the bay in August and September with counts of two birds at the Alviso EEC on 2 Sep (AV, RWR), and Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 25 Sep (MMR et al.) and 30 Sep (RWR, FV). Away from the Bay a single bird was along Pacheco Creek at Casa de Fruta on 24 Sep (DLSu). A pair of **Rock Wrens** was found at the Coyote Reservoir dam on 26 Sep (MJM). Wintering **Cedar Waxwings** usually return at the end of September. Two adults and a juvenile were seen in Oak Meadow Park in Los Gatos on 17 Aug (SC *vide* JPa) and must have bred nearby. Single birds at Homestead High School in Sunnyvale on 28 Aug (MMR) and along the Guadalupe River above Montague on 29 Aug (MMR, SCR, MJM) were also early. A female **Phainopepla** along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 31 Aug (KO) was particularly unusual on the west side of the valley.

### Warblers through Siskins

A few **Nashville Warblers** were found this fall, unlike last year. A single bird was seen along the Guadalupe River

above Montague on 29 Aug (MMR, SCR, MJM). Then, over a two-day period single birds were found at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 21 Sep (SCR), at the fennel patch at the Sunnyvale WPCP the same day (KPa), along Alamitos Creek Trail on 22 Sep (JPa), and along the Guadalupe River Trail below Coleman on 23 Sep (AV). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, an eastern vagrant, was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 17 Sep (SCR). A female **Hermit Warbler** at the Hickory Oaks Trailhead off Skyline on 26 Aug may have been an early migrant or a dispersing bird from the small Santa Cruz Mountain breeding population. Along Coyote Creek, in Hellyer CP, a **Northern Waterthrush** was found on 18 Sep (MMR). The big news of the fall, however, was the **Louisiana Waterthrush** that turned up along Los Gatos Creek near Oak Meadow Park on 9 Aug. Found in the morning (JPa, JBr) it was believed to be a Northern Waterthrush. Refound that afternoon, it was determined to be a Louisiana instead (SBT, LT), the first for our county and possibly only the third one found in Northern California. The Louisiana tended to be secretive and flighty and many found it hard to find and study over the next ten days, but persistence paid off and it was seen by dozens of California birders. It was last seen on 18 Aug (JPa et al.). **MacGillivray's Warblers** have become scarce in recent autumns. This year two were banded at CCFS on 5 Sep and an adult male was found at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 21 Sep (MMR). More scarce than the MacGillivray's in fall, two **Yellow-breasted Chats** were banded at CCFS, the first on 4 Sep and the second on 12 Sep (*vide* MMR). Two **Chipping Sparrows** were found at a small pond off Page Mill



Louisiana Waterthrush  
Sketch by Bonnie Bedford-White

Road at Monte Bello OSP on 27 Sep (GHa). A **Brewer's Sparrow** was seen at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 22 Sep (KPa) but did not remain. Another Brewer's was found along Gilroy Hot Springs Road near Hunting Hollow on 26 Sep (MMR et al.) and is one of the few we have found in the south county. Monte Bello was good for other sparrows—two **Vesper Sparrows** were found near the same pond as the Chipping Sparrows two days later on 28 Sep (GHa). Earlier, an adult **Grasshopper Sparrow** was at this location on 30 Aug (GHa). Two **Red Crossbills** were over Charcoal Road off Skyline on 26 Aug (DLSu). No **Pine Siskins** were found last winter, so a juvenile seen near Alamitos and Hicks roads on 13 Sep (AV) was of considerable interest.

*Observers: Gordon Barrett (GB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Joan Brauch (JBr), Shao Cheng (SC), Mike Danzenbaker (JMD), Kelly Dodder (KDd), Matthew Dodder (MDd), Janet Hanson (JTH), Garth Harwood (GHa), Jan Hintermeister (JH), Kristin Holmquist (KH), John B. Hutz (JBH), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Roland Kenner (RK), Pat Kenney (PK), Dave Kiehl (DKi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Dean Manley (DM), Kris Olson (KO), Kathy Parker (KPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LSu), Linda Terrill (LT), Scott Terrill (SBT), Alan Thomas (AT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Dave Weber (DW), and Chris Wolfe (ChW).*

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

# Get ready for the Christmas Bird Counts

## San Jose

The San Jose CBC will be held on Sunday, December 19th. This long running local count has something for everyone. It covers diverse habitats from Alum Rock Park to the urban jungle of downtown San Jose; from the Alviso shore to Calaveras Reservoir. Join the fun and contribute to 105 years of citizen science. Birders of all experience levels are welcome and needed. The countdown dinner will be at the Leininger Center in Kelley Park. There is a \$5 charge to cover the cost of CBC results publication.

If you are interested in participating in the count, please contact Kirsten Holmquist before December 10 at (408)747-0988 or via email at <kirro@earthlink.net>.

## Palo Alto

Make your plans now for a day of birding on Monday, December 20, as we count birds from the Bay to Skyline Drive. Our count circle, centered near Stanford, covers a wide variety of habitats, offering something for everyone. The circle is divided into eight regions, and an experienced team of leaders for each region is poised, with your help, to comb the

mudflats and the mountains for rarities and resident birds.

In addition to the better known birding locales of the region, we also cover many urban areas of Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, so we welcome birders from all over the mid-peninsula and beyond.

Christmas bird counts are for everyone, the skilled and the novice. If you have participated in this count in the past, you may wish to contact your region coordinator and confirm your availability and territory. If you are new to the area or the count, please contact me and I will find a spot suitable to your skill level, time commitment and our coverage needs.

Rain or shine, to borrow from a local sports team, it's a great time out! Call me! Jack Cole (408) 996-0434 <SNOYOWL@YAHOO.COM>

## Calero-Morgan Hill

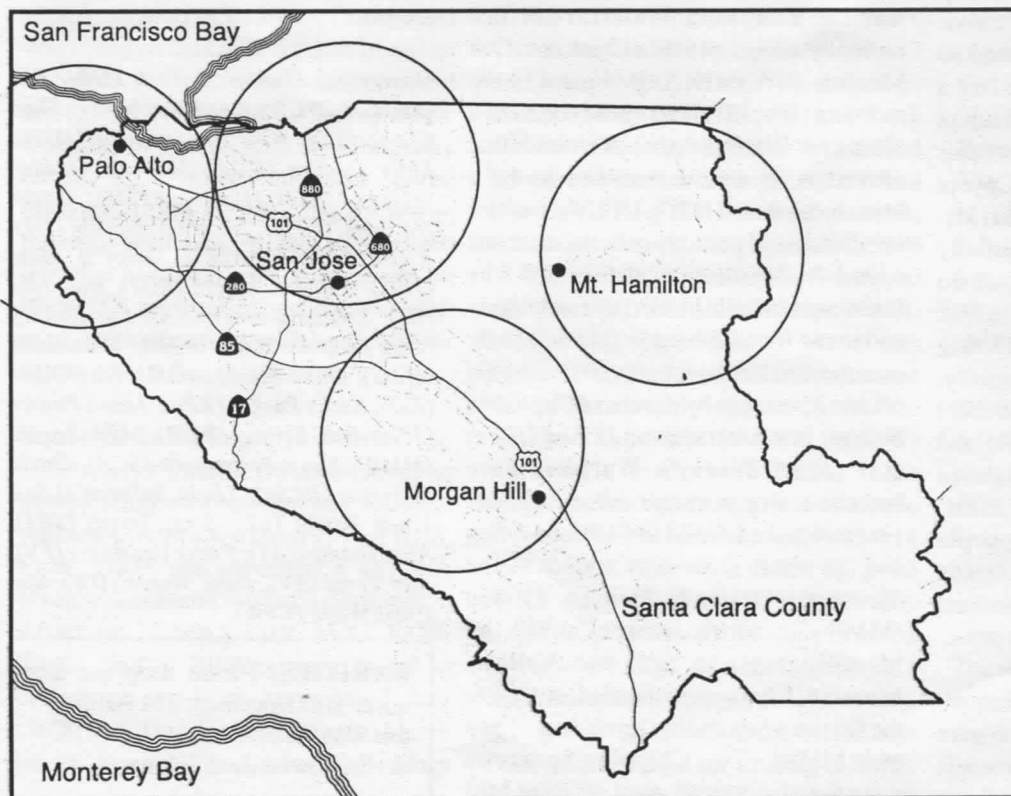
The Calero-Morgan Hill CBC will be held on Sunday, Dec 26 — a good opportunity to work off that holiday dinner and avoid the malls. Our coverage includes the hills, valleys and waterways of South Santa Clara County. For those who enjoy some hiking, locales such Almaden/

Quicksilver CP, Santa Teresa CP, Coyote Ridge, and portions of the Sierra Azul will get you up into the hills. For those who prefer the flatlands, we also count at Edenvale Garden Park, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, Guadalupe Oak Grove Park, and Coyote Valley (a very important area to census in light of impending major development). Riparian coverage includes portions of Coyote Creek, Guadalupe Creek, Alamos Creek, Llagas Creek and Uvas Creek. And then there are the reservoirs (Anderson, Almaden, Calero, and Chesbro Reservoirs) plus Almaden Lake. Special birds from last year's count include Greater White-fronted Goose, Bald Eagle (in two locations), Ferruginous Hawk, Greater Roadrunner, Vaux's Swift, Yellow Warbler, Western Tanager, and Great-tailed Grackle. Please plan to join us for an exciting day of counting — we welcome newcomers as well as veteran CBC'ers. The countdown dinner will be held at the New Almaden Community Club this year. For more information, details, and/or to sign up for the count, please contact Ann Verdi by email: <wodu10@aol.com> or by phone (408) 266-5108.

## Mt. Hamilton

The 28th Mt. Hamilton CBC will be held on January 2, 2005. This is our county's most remote count circle, centered on the eastern slope of Mt. Hamilton, far from the teeming Santa Clara Valley. The weather and terrain can be rough, and birds scarce, but the opportunity to bird in relative solitude is attractive to many. Contact Bob Hirt at (408) 821-2723 or <bobhirt@aol.com> if you're up for some adventurous bird counting!

*Map of Santa Clara County showing the location of the 4-count circles drawn by Perry Thorwaldson*





# Bed, breakfast . . . and birding! at new Elkhorn Slough inn

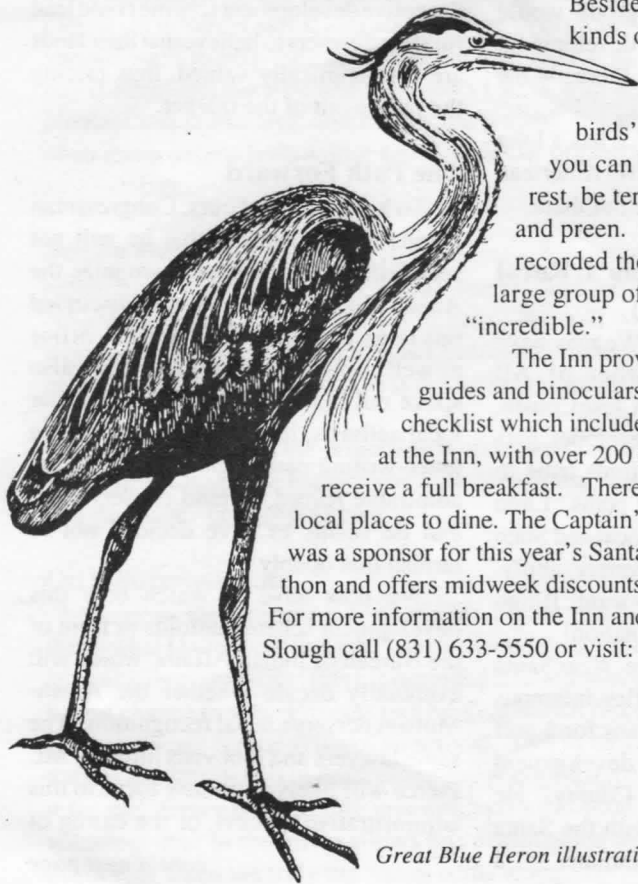
Birding enthusiasts can experience a lovely getaway weekend with excellent birding within a short drive of the South Bay. As many of you know, Elkhorn Slough on Monterey Bay is one of the West Coast's richest birding spots. Over 300 species of birds have been recorded on the slough, and the Moss Landing Christmas Bird Count ranks in the top ten every year for number of species recorded (number one in the nation in 1994). You can leave your responsibilities behind and, in less than two hours, begin your birding escape.

At the opening of Elkhorn Slough is the quaint village of Moss Landing. Moss Landing has a new "birding bed and breakfast" called the **Captain's Inn at Moss Landing**. Many of their rooms feature outstanding views of the tidal marshes and sand dunes. The rooms are situated to give you good birdwatching. The Elkhorn Slough watershed features varied habitats and a wide range of avian diversity, from raptors to waterfowl to songbirds, in a compact area. You can find freshwater ponds next to salt marsh mudflats, oak woodland overhanging tidal channels, and open grasslands graduating into open sea. The slough has reserves with walking access, guided boat tours with Elkhorn Slough Safari, birding classes led by local experts, and Monterey Bay pelagic birding trips. Numerous species of shorebirds, waders, diving ducks, and sea-going species are here, including herons, loons, grebes, scoters, avocets, willets, Brown Pelicans, gulls, terns, and sandpipers.

There are plenty of uncommon-to-rare sightings as well. For example, just last summer black skimmer, red knot, brant, phalaropes, least tern, snowy plover, osprey, peregrine falcon, Lincoln's sparrow, lesser yellowlegs, black-crowned night heron, green heron, and spotted sandpiper were all observed. A covey of California quail passes by the Inn's windows most mornings and evenings.

Besides seeing many different kinds of birds, this relaxing, easy chair setting allows you to enjoy the birds' activity over the day, as you can leisurely watch them feed, rest, be territorial, chase the tide, and preen. One excited guest birder recorded the fishing coordination of a large group of white pelicans as "incredible."

The Inn provides bird identification guides and binoculars in the rooms, and a bird checklist which includes birds sighted from or at the Inn, with over 200 species. All guests receive a full breakfast. There are also many good local places to dine. The Captain's Inn at Moss Landing was a sponsor for this year's Santa Clara Valley Bird-a-thon and offers midweek discounts to SCVAS members. For more information on the Inn and links to Elkhorn Slough call (831) 633-5550 or visit: [captainsinn.combirdy.html](http://captainsinn.combirdy.html).



Great Blue Heron illustration by Bonnie Bedford-White

## Honoring Pajaro River Watershed

The Pajaro River Watershed was recently honored in the greater community through art inspired by the graceful Pajaro River. A traveling exhibition entitled "Rumme Living River," opened at the Pajaro Valley Arts Council gallery early this year then moved to the Gavilan College Library in Gilroy with satellite shows in Hollister, Morgan Hill, and San Juan Bautista. The idea behind the project is to help people to know their watershed and therefore take responsibility for its protection.

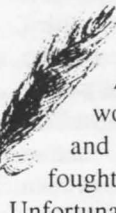
As the river and its tributaries face a long list of daunting environmental challenges, the exhibition honestly portrays the river's blemished enchantment. Rumme, a Mutsun/Ohlone word referring to the water, movement, sound, and granite bed of a river, appropriately informs on the content of the show. Professional artists, speakers, students and community members depict the rumme of the Pajaro through a beautiful and attentive multimedia portrayal.

Though the show officially closed on Oct. 30<sup>th</sup> with the celebration of "River Day," its curators, Jennifer Colby and Lois Robin, may grant requests for showing parts of the exhibit, provided it be for an appropriate location. For further opportunities to view the exhibit, a comprehensive CD of the exhibit, along with other useful links, have been made available on the project website: [www.mmpublishing.com/pajaroriver/](http://www.mmpublishing.com/pajaroriver/). Featuring a quality presentation of most of the imagery from the exhibit, the CD contains a narrated slide show of the birds of the Pajaro River, commentary from Native Americans to whom the watershed holds direct cultural importance, and interviews with several naturalists and scientists working with the river.

For more information visit the website listed above or email: [pajaroriver@mmpublishing.org](mailto:pajaroriver@mmpublishing.org).

# Sargent Ranch gateway at risk again

by Craig Breon  
Executive Director



The Nature Conservancy wants it. The Open Space Authority and County Parks would love to have it. SCVAS and other local conservationists fought to protect it two years ago. Unfortunately, we have to do so again.

Sargent Ranch sits at the bottom of Santa Clara County, just before you pass over the Pajaro River and into Santa Cruz or San Benito Counties. 6500 acres of wildlands, cows, and — oddly — a few oil derricks. As detailed below, the owner of this property has devised a unique approach to development. SCVAS moved quickly to oppose his project, won a temporary victory, and is now planning the path forward to protect Sargent Ranch.

Wayne Pierce bought the ranch a few years ago. In 2002, he brought forward a proposal for 140 homes and two golf courses on the site. Trouble was, the hills, valleys, and creeks are zoned "Ranchlands," meaning the County intends for the land to stay in ranching and open space, with few homes. Under current County rules, Wayne might have the right to build about 20 homes, and only over the course of many years.

Audubon and other local conservation organizations fought Mr. Pierce's previous development proposal. It violated County plans and policies and heavily impacted sensitive wildlife and habitats; approval would set a dangerous precedent for other ranches throughout the County. On the day Mr. Pierce's application was to go to the Board of Supervisors, Wayne withdrew the application rather than face a 5-0 vote against his project. The land was safe for the moment — but development scenarios bubbled below the surface for two years, and then came bursting up, bigger and badder than before.



## Tribal Ambitions

Developer Wayne Pierce now champions the cause of the Amah-Mutson Band of the Ohlone, a Native American group. The group is not recognized as a tribe, but has applied to the federal government for recognition. Wayne has hired the high-powered lobbyists and attorneys needed to front for the Amah-Mutson. Lobbyists approached local Congressmen Honda and Pombo—two key players if federal legislation were to be proposed to help the tribe.

If Mr. Pierce can manipulate tribal recognition, he stands to grow very rich (make that richer) at our County's expense. Although not released to the public, Mr. Pierce and the Indian group evidently have drafted a development agreement where the tribe, if recognized, would take over Sargent Ranch and then have free reign over development issues. Besides their own residential, commercial, and industrial areas, as well as all the accompanying roads and infrastructure, the Native group would evidently grant extensive development rights to, you guessed it, Mr. Pierce — the champion of their cause.

I wonder if Wayne Pierce has a long history of supporting Native American causes? Just leave that one out there.

## Undermining California's Rural Lands and Wilderness

Sound dramatic? It is. We may have found, if not "The Mother of All Loopholes" then at least the Close Cousin. Developer buys land. Developer gets turned down. Developer finds tribe to use to further development plans. Land gets recognized as tribal. Local and State land use restrictions no longer apply. Developer builds what they want. Bingo — developer as sovereign nation!

It's happening elsewhere. Near Santa Barbara in the Santa Inez Valley, infamous developer Fess Parker's plans for a golf course and luxury housing development were turned down by the County. He now may be teaming up with the Santa Inez Band of Chumash Indians — a

federally recognized tribe — to sell his lands to the tribe, have them declared tribal lands, and then lease them back to build what he wants.

Imagine what havoc may be played with California's rural lands if these two proposals or others like them go forward. Unscrupulous developers would approach current or proposed tribes with grandiose schemes, and you can hardly blame the tribes for jumping at the new land and profits. Meanwhile, the decades of effort spent by California counties to limit develop on rural, private properties could be thrown out the (luxury home) window.

Worse than that might be the effect on rural land values. If a property like Sargent Ranch — worth perhaps \$20 million under current County standards for development — could build to the hilt under tribal rules, what is the value? If County Parks, or the Open Space Authority, or The Nature Conservancy, or an agricultural land trust, wanted to buy such a property, what would they have to pay? This deceptive development scheme could lead rural landowners to believe that their lands are astronomically valued, thus pricing the public out of the market.

## The Path Forward

To his credit, and ours, Congressman Honda has announced that he will not seek federal legislation to recognize the Amah-Mutson group. SCVAS discussed this issue with staff from Honda's office as well as other local politicians; we also spoke out in the press and alerted other local activists, leading to an impromptu letter-writing campaign. Honda has an admirable record on land conservation, and he seems to have decided not to tarnish that openly.

We now have to watch how this development scheme unfolds in front of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which will eventually decide whether the Amah-Mutson deserve tribal recognition. The same lawyers and lobbyists hired by Mr. Pierce will likely shift their focus to this administrative process, or the easing of

*cont'd next page*

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# I'm outta here — in a good way

by Craig Breon



In January, I gave the SCVAS Board one year's notice that I would be taking off to go traveling around the world. At this point, my resignation will likely come sometime in February or March of next year. Then I plan to drive around the U.S. for a few months, followed by six months' traveling in Central and South America and Africa (the later part, hopefully, with my

friend Diane). I'm thirty-nine years old, and the timing seemed right.

The timing seems right for our chapter as well. I've been here eleven years. In that time, we have grown from a large birdwatching organization with strong volunteer programs in conservation and environmental education, to a great birding organization with a professional staff guiding the conservation and education programs . . . and increasing ambitions. Board members, staff, volunteers, and donors — all have been involved in our efforts to become increasingly relevant to our community, and to provide services that our members and the larger region recognize and appreciate.

Sometimes, I think that what I'm about to do is crazy. With SCVAS, I have work that is constantly challenging, calling on different skills, and allowing me to explore various ways to help the people and the land around us. My pay is adequate; the staff and volunteers I work with are pleasant and productive; and I enjoy the warmth and support of so many people both within and outside our organization.

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## *Sargent Ranch cont'd-*

restrictions on determining tribal status, and no doubt congresspeople will be leaned on to help. We will continue working with many volunteer activists and the other conservation organizations in the area to address this serious loophole in land use laws.

Both this land and the principles at stake are central to our mission. Please let me know if you want to help with your time or a donation: [craig@scvas.org](mailto:craig@scvas.org)

## **On a Personal Note**

Tragic as the outcome could be if Mr. Pierce gets his way, this is what I love about this job. It is intellectually complex and emotionally compelling; there is beautiful land at stake, and we have a chance to win. Projects like Sargent Ranch represent a great challenge for the skills of an activist. This in turn makes the less thrilling details of fundraising and administration worth it for me. Every membership renewal, every donation, every volunteer hour in the office allows this organization to play a major role when the truly big issues come along.

Nonetheless, this is the right thing for me to do. I've been abroad two years before: first when I was 19 studying in England and exploring Europe, and then when I was 22 teaching in China. Both those years were vital in my personal development. I want that again. I also want to take a lot of hikes and naps, and read a bunch of books that look nothing like an Environmental Impact Report.

When I return from my travels, I will likely be penniless, homeless, and jobless. A good way to force me to think about what I want to do next. There's always the chance I could come back to SCVAS or another Audubon chapter. I've also been considering starting my own nonprofit to support my work. Doing so might allow me to work on even a wider variety of issues than I do now, and perhaps focus on fewer projects, but spend more quality time on them (one of the few frustrations of this job is having to move from project to project so quickly).

Perhaps the most important thing to me right now is ensuring that SCVAS moves forward confidently, continuing to improve our programs and services, growing more ambitious in our conservation efforts. I take pride in being a part of what made the chapter as vibrant and successful as we now are, and I have a stake in this chapter's future, even if I may not be a big part of that future.

The Board had taken the first steps to ensure that SCVAS remains bold and forward-looking. In early October, we began the search for a new Executive Director (see [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org) for the job announcement). The Board wants most to find a proven leader with a passion for the conservation movement. There are a variety of skills and backgrounds that can fit this position. No doubt the next Executive Director will, along with the Board, take this organization in some new directions. I really look forward to seeing that.

In addition to the new Executive Director, the Board plans to hire a part-time advocate sometime next year. Although the Executive Director will have considerable conservation duties, it will be great to have an employee who focuses solely on conservation issues again, as I used to before becoming our first ED.

I hope you understand that you—our members and supporters—are going to be crucial in the next steps of this organization. We will need new Board members with a vision of where we should go next. We will need more donors and volunteers to see that new vision come to fruition. We have the opportunity to change, grow, and take on new challenges. We want and need you to be a part of that.

In the next couple months, you will hear more about my plans and the plans for SCVAS. Please feel free to offer us your advice on our future course. I can be reached at 408-252-3748 or [craig@scvas.org](mailto:craig@scvas.org).

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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.

**RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422**

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

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

SCVAS is the chapter of the National Audubon Society for Santa Clara County.

**2004 Volume 51, Number 6**

**Chapter Membership** in the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) receives the SCVAS newsletter, *The Avocet*

\$ 20: One Year SCVAS Membership  \$ 35: Two Year SCVAS Membership  \$ 10: Living Lightly One Year Membership

**Additional Gift:**  \$ 50  \$ 100  \$ 250  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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Check here if you would like a free copy of *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay*, our gift to new members!

Check here if you don't want your name and address shared with other organizations. **Make all checks payable to SCVAS.**