



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

July - August 2005

Coyote Valley on Fast Track?

by Nancy Teater
Environmental Action Committee Chair

Have you ever read a newspaper article about a complicated land use and conservation issue, complained that government officials and developers were paving over all the open space, and decided there was nothing you could do? I have. I used to say, "There are groups that follow these things and protect us from runaway development."

But I'm now a member of one of those groups. The SCVAS Environmental Action Committee (EAC) has jumped into the middle of the deep water that is the Coyote Valley planning process. We oppose any development in Coyote Valley on both environmental and economic grounds, but the plans are well along, so we're swimming hard to understand the issues most relevant to Audubon. More importantly, we're developing a strategy that will have maximum impact on preserving the Valley's wildlife and agricultural heritage.

Demographics and Politics

California's population continues to grow rapidly, and new residents must live somewhere. Those of us who arrived here in the last decades of the 1900s have driven the sprawl that formed Santa Clara Valley. It is a sprawl that one land use planner I talked to calls "shameful."

People who have jobs here but can't afford the Valley's million-dollar homes and expensive condos commute from the Central Valley, Hollister, Santa Cruz, and elsewhere. Have you been out to the East Bay or Tracy lately? Without some

controls, these areas will soon be replicas of the Santa Clara Valley.

The high-density housing described in the Coyote Valley Specific Plan offers an alternative to this sort of development, and is described by San Jose as a "smart" community, with a carefully planned balance of housing, "industry-driving" jobs, retail space, recreation, transportation, and a permanent greenbelt.

How concerned should we be that Coyote Valley will soon be paved over? It depends on who you ask. In a May 10 article in the *San Jose Mercury News*, Mayor Ron Gonzales was quoted as saying, "I think development will take place in other parts of San Jose long before Coyote Valley." Others speculate that landowners and developers are driving the planning process forward rapidly, without adequate environmental review, and that Gonzales is bowing to that pressure with an eye to his political future.

Whether development is just down the road or several decades off, we can't afford to ignore a project that will eventually affect 7,000 acres of agricultural land and wildlife habitat.

Coyote Valley Specific Plan

Consultants to the City Planning department have been preparing the Coyote Valley Specific Plan for two years. The CVSP for South San Jose includes an area of about 7,000 acres

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"Bon Voyage Craig, Welcome Brenda"

Silent Auction Fundraiser

August 7, 2005 from 1 - 6 PM

Maison du Lac in the Santa Cruz Mountains

\$50 per person • \$80 per couple

This event is free of charge to those donors who contributed \$250 or more in response to our annual appeal letter last December.

Space is limited and tickets must be bought in advance.
RSVP by calling (408) 252-3747.

*Art exhibits
feature Grayson,
Amazon culture*

*See Pages 2-3
for details*

◆ *Summertime adult
education classes —Page 5*

◆ *Nighthawks, grosbeak
— Field Notes, Page 6*

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July - Aug. '05 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 9, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd north off Hwy 101 in Mtn. View. All are encouraged to attend but birding will be geared toward beginners.

Saturday August 6, 8:30 AM

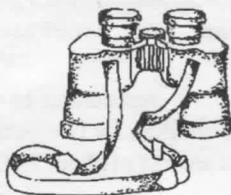
Año Nuevo State Reserve

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. Possible Bank Swallow, Marbled Murrelet, early returning shorebirds, Black Swift if we're lucky. Entrance is along Hwy 1 about 30 miles south of Half Moon Bay or 20 miles north of Santa Cruz. \$5 per car parking fee; meet at far (south) end of parking lot. LO

Saturday August 21, 8:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. For directions see write-up for July 9th.



Thanks to additional Fall Fundraiser donors

Joe Altimus and Molly Molloy, Jitze and Nancy Couperus, Carolyn and Gordon Davidson, M. Dieckmann, Russ and Marilyn Fowler, Gary Harris, Amy Monbourquette, Steve Patt and Debi Jamison, Christine and James Russell, Elinor Spellman, Scott and Gayle Spencer, Eugene and Ruth Troetschler, and our donors who wish to remain anonymous.

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“Audubon of the West”: Commemorating Andrew Jackson Grayson

July 9 – September 3, 2005

Andrew Jackson Grayson followed the arduous Overland Trail to California in 1846 to find a new life for himself and his family. What he discovered instead was his old love of art and nature. Though little-known today, Grayson (1818-1869) became the foremost field ornithologist and bird painter of his era. His life and extraordinary work is the subject of the traveling exhibition, “Audubon of the West: Andrew Jackson Grayson.”

In 1846 Grayson, his wife, and their infant son joined the migration west. In California, Grayson had a colorful career as a shop-keeper and real estate speculator. The turning point of his life came when he saw John J. Audubon’s monumental work, “Birds of America”, which did not include birds of the west. Inspired, Grayson set out to make a systematic depiction of the birds from Sierra Nevada to the Pacific Ocean.

“Audubon of the West” explores Grayson’s life and art and examines such themes as the study of birds, bird painting, and bird watching. The exhibit is a magnificent example of the interaction among fine art, history, and science. The exhibit was originated by the Napa Valley Museum, and the tour is organized by the California Exhibition Resources Alliance (CERA).

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Introducing...

Young Audubon Summer Workshops!

Nature Exploration for Youth Ages 8-up
* outdoor activities * crafts * presentations *

Riparian Wonderland

Tuesday, July 19 * 1 PM - 4 PM

Bird Brainsy

Live Raptor Presentation by Sky Hunters Environmental Education!
Tuesday, July 25 * 9 AM - 12 PM

McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Space is limited so call (408) 252-3740 for more information and to register today

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“Vanishing Worlds: Art and Ritual in Amazonia”

Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University

May 25 - August 21, 2005

This exhibition of 150 art objects from the ceremonies and daily life of indigenous peoples of the Amazon River basin is organized by the Houston Museum of Natural Science. Beyond the beauty and rarity of the objects on display, the exhibition reflects various aspects of tribal society, including:

Threatened Environment

The Amazon River basin — one of the planet’s most diverse ecosystems, with lush rainforests, savannas, and an astonishing array of plant and wildlife — is home to some of the world’s oldest surviving cultures. The unique and fragile works in this exhibition reflect the threatened existence of their creators, as well as the crisis of the rainforest environment in which they were created.

Pre-Contact Cultures

Evidence suggests that people have inhabited the Amazon River basin for at least 15,000 years, and the indigenous groups of the region are among the last peoples of the New World who retain intact much of their cultures prior to contact with Europeans.

Ancient Rituals

Objects linked to rituals and ceremonies central to the life of Amazon peoples offer insights into the natural, historic, and cultural heritage of the Americas. Explore basic rituals for name-giving, initiation into adulthood, remembrance of the dead, harvest, healing, and shamanism through maps, photographs, and text panels that explain the function of individual pieces within the tribal ceremonies.

Hours: Open Wednesday - Sunday 11 AM - 5 PM, Thursday until 8 PM

Location: Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University

Free admission and programs

Tours of the Exhibition: Thursdays at 12:15, Saturdays and Sundays at 2

Catalogue: A catalogue of the exhibition with more than 100 color reproductions is available in the Cantor Arts Center Bookshop.

Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University will show the exhibition first. Then it will travel nationally (venues to be announced), eventually returning to the organizing institution, the Houston Museum of Natural Science, for viewing there.

*“Using brilliantly colored feathers of some 40 species,
including parrots, macaws and herons,*

*the Amazonian Indians created objects that call upon a range
of physical and magical forces...*

*showcasing an array of more than 150 pieces from ritual objects
to full body costumes, masks, feather headdresses and body ornaments...”*

-from The Cantor Arts Center website

Ed. Committee’s New Teacher Resource Center

by Bobbie Handen

Education Committee Chair

This article is part of the ongoing Education Committee information describing the activities of the Education Committee.

The Teacher Resource Center (TRC) provides enrichment materials for the classroom teacher using curriculum information sheets combined with instructional activities and background information. Teachers using the TRC may check out Education Kits (organized one-hour units), slide shows, taxidermied birds, field guides, videos and Audubon Adventures (a curriculum produced by the National Audubon Society). Teachers can use these materials to supplement their current lesson plans or as a self-sustained unit.

The TRC is becoming a portable program as well with reproducible material that can be adapted and adopted to fit the school curriculum and meet California State Standards. The instructional materials are being expanded with the use of Cornell University bird slides and growing variety of education kits.

The Teacher Resource Center is continuously evolving and becoming a more and more important part of the Education Committee’s infrastructure.

Visit Our Library!

Heading off on vacation and need a field guide specific to that location? Well, close that wallet — we might have the book you’re looking for! The SCVAS Library in our office at McClellan Ranch Park contains over 1300 donated books, CDs, and videos related to birds, birding, and the environment. Our members may check out books and are encouraged to borrow birding guides to take on vacation. We also subscribe to a dozen birding periodicals, including *American Birds*, *Bird Watchers Digest*, *Birding*, and of course *Audubon Magazine*. So, stop by to check out our collection!

Volunteer Ventures

by Kim Yuan-Farrell
Programs Coordinator

Every June at our Annual Potluck, SCVAS staff recognizes a handful of our chapter's wonderful volunteers for their dedication and service over the year. Choosing notable individuals to acknowledge is no easy task as our organization is fortunate to have an abundance of generous, talented, and dedicated volunteers. Here are the fabulous folks we recognized this year:

- ◆ **John Callahan** – for teaching schoolchildren about birds and habitat with enthusiasm and dedication in schools and on field trips and for serving as financial advisor to our new executive director
- ◆ **Jack Cole** – for his always affable disposition and generous commitment to organizing the Palo Alto Breeding and Christmas Bird Counts
- ◆ **Kirsten Holmquist** – for her time and hard work organizing the huge San Jose Christmas Bird Count
- ◆ **Freddy Howell** – for her help and guidance in the Nature Shop, the ideas, energy, and smiles she brings to our Education Committee, and her engaging leadership on monthly field trips
- ◆ **Grant Hoyt** – for the time and talent he contributes so generously to editing and assembling *The Avocet*, our award-winning newsletter
- ◆ **Jim Liskovec** – for his initiative and zeal organizing the "Oil on Ice" film screening, engaging youth in activism, and leading field trips for all ages
- ◆ **Eleanor Sherman** – for the warmth, knowledge, and wonder at nature that she shares with children in our school and field trip programs and at events
- ◆ **Connie West** – for her cheerful willingness to help with a multitude of tasks at events, general meetings, and in the office where she regularly helps with the inventory and membership

A warm thanks to these volunteers as well as the numerous others who have enabled our chapter to carry out another successful year of conservation, education, and birding. You really are the backbone of our work.

If you're interested in exploring volunteer opportunities at SCVAS, please check out a few options below and call or email me. I'd love to help you find a good match for your talents, interests, and time.

Membership Committee Chairperson – We need a committee chairperson to lead the planning and preparation of membership events. Our Membership Committee coordinates fun socials and engaging programs for SCVAS members throughout the year. Through General Meetings, the Holiday Open House, Coffee Chats, and special events, Membership keeps our chapter connected and informed, and invites others to learn more about Audubon and the joys of birdwatching.

Slide Sorter – Enjoy looking at birds? Of course you do! This is an Audubon newsletter, right? Well, you can see dozens of beautiful birds on slides as you help sort through and organize bird and wildlife slides donated by our generous members. These slides will be added to our Teacher Resource Center slide collection, available to Santa Clara County educators and SCVAS volunteers in outreach programs. Scheduling is flexible, and you can determine the length of your commitment to this project. Because not all slides are labeled, we are seeking volunteers experienced with identifying birds.

Field Trip Coordinator – We still need to find a coordinator to schedule field trips for the fourth Wednesday of each month (except Dec., June-Aug.). This coordinator will recruit leaders for eight trips each year and help them submit brief notices for *The Avocet's* Field Trips section. This job is usually not time-consuming, and no experience is required as training and resources will be provided.

Diversity Committee – Do you think it's important to reach out to communities and populations not widely engaged in birding, conservation, and environmental education? I am pleased to announce that we have just established the Diversity Committee, dedicated to inviting and engaging minority and other populations in our chapter's programs. The Diversity Committee's first meeting will be held at 7 PM on Tuesday, July 19th here at McClellan Ranch. We invite anyone interested in this effort to join us. Please RSVP by calling (408) 252-3747 by July 15th.

Contact Kim at (408) 252-3740 or programs@scvas.org for more information about these listings or to discuss how you can become a volunteer.



Don't forget to purchase all of your birding supplies at our Nature Shop where we now feature a "Seed Card." When you buy 4 bags of seed you get the 5th bag free!

Adult Education Classes

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

An Introduction to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Santa Clara County with Bob Behrstock

Close-focus binoculars and a new generation of field guides are encouraging interest in dragonflies and damselflies – colorful, energetic, and valuable aquatic insects whose activity picks up just as the morning's birding slows down. About 110 kinds of dragonflies and damselflies are known in California, and roughly half of them may be found in Santa Clara County. Local wetlands including fish and livestock ponds, water treatment basins, streams and even ornamental backyard ponds offer naturalists a rich and initially confusing assortment of species, many of which may be identified with binoculars. Bob's talk presents a beginner's introduction to dragonflies and damselflies, differentiating them, discussing something of their life history, behavior, and habitats, and providing some suggestions for recognizing them in the field. Slides of a number of species native to the region will be presented. Following the talk, there will be a short walk to a nearby pond that usually hosts a variety of dragonflies and damselflies. This class was very popular the last two times SCVAS offered it, so register now to reserve your space!

Date: Sunday, 7/24 9 AM - 1 PM

Location: Foothills Park, Palo Alto

Fee: Members \$25, non-members \$30. Limit 15

Photographer and biologist Bob Behrstock has photographed dragonflies and butterflies along the Eastern seaboard and from the Florida Keys to Oregon, finding many state records and several U.S. records in the process. Bob has authored or co-authored more than 40 popular and scientific papers concerning fishes, birds, dragonflies, and butterflies in the U.S. and Latin America, and prepared several of the family accounts for *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior*. Hundreds of his bird and insect photos have been published in a variety of venues including calendars, newspapers, travel books, bird and insect field guides, CD-ROMs, and publications such as *Audubon*, *Smithsonian*, *Birding*, *WildBird*, *BBC Wildlife*, and the *Handbook of Birds of the World*. We are excited and honored to have such a distinguished professional present this class for SCVAS members.



Bay Area Birds: Up Close and Personal with Steve Rutledge

Steve will guide students in exploring a wide array of habitats in the greater Bay Area. The itinerary will be based on bird activity and weather, but locations may range from Point Reyes to Monterey. We will visit mudflats along the Bay, rocky outcrops along the San Mateo coast, and various woodlands in the hills. Emphasis will be on learning about not only bird identification but also the many facets of birds' lives. Field trips will take place during the fall migration season, so students will learn about the seasonal movements of birds. Trips will be supplemented by two evening classes to review the birds seen and discuss their biology. Bring lunch and binoculars on field trips, and be prepared to pay for occasional admission fees to parks and to share gas expenses. Proceeds from your tuition will be split between SCVAS' education programs and bird conservation efforts.

Field Trips: Saturdays 9/17, 9/24, 10/8, ~~10/15~~ 8 AM - late afternoon. ^{10/11} ^{10/1}

Classes: Tuesdays 9/27, ~~10/18~~ 7 - 8:30 PM

Location: McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Fee: Members \$40, non-members \$45. Limit 12

Steve Rutledge has a background in Environmental Biology (M.S., 1981) and has continued his study of field ornithology in recent years. He has birded in about two dozen US states or Canadian provinces, as well as about a dozen countries. He is currently developing a systematic program to help beginning and intermediate birders with identification skills, to enhance an appreciation of nature, and encourage involvement in avian conservation. His small classes are informal, light-hearted, and fun!

Beginning Birdwatching with Lisa Myers

We've still got a few spaces in this class. If you are looking for a fun-filled environment in which to learn more about different species in your backyard and in North America, this is the class for you! Lisa will review field guides, optics, ethics, taxonomy, verbiage, and more. You'll become knowledgeable in finding and using key field marks on a bird to help you identify local species. Then, you will practice out in the field what you've learned in the classroom.

Classes: Mondays 7/11, 7/18 7 - 9 PM

Field Trip: Saturday 7/16 8 AM - Noon

Location: McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Fee: Members \$30, non-members \$35. Limit 22

Lisa Myers is one of our most popular instructors. She has a special knack for teaching birding basics to beginners as she shares her enthusiasm and knowledge of birds in a relaxed and supportive style.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Waterfowl through Phalaropes

An immature **Greater White-fronted Goose** in a park near Monterey Highway in Morgan Hill on 30 Apr (SCR) was possibly a late migrant. Spring **Cackling Geese** included one at Vasona Reservoir on 12 Apr (LSu) and a bird over the Palo Alto Baylands on 2 May (WGB). A male **Blue-winged Teal** was seen in the old Gilroy sewer ponds 15 Apr-14 May (v.ob.), but no females were there as in March. Another male was along Artesian Slough on 23 Apr (MMR et al.). A 1st-summer **Common Loon** was found on Shoreline Lake on 19 Apr (AV) and remained through 6 May (PDe, v.ob.). An **American Bittern** was seen at San Felipe Lake on 7 May (DLSh) in an area where they've nested previously. We've had a minor incursion of **White-faced Ibis** in May with one seen in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 17 May (SRa), another near the Gilroy Water Treatment Facility (WTF) on 20 May (RWR, FV), and one in the Mountain View Forebay on 31 May (PMB). A 2nd-year **Bald Eagle** was seen over Moffett Field on 28 Apr (MMR). We seldom find any Bald Eagles from April to October. An adult **Swainson's Hawk** over the Ulistac Natural Area on 18 May (MJM) was a good find and the first migrant we've had this year. Although **Prairie Falcons** nest in the Diablo Range, they are rarely found along the valley floor during the breeding season. Single birds along Coyote Creek near Coyote on 8 May (MJM) and along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 11 May (SCR) were both unusual sightings. Surveys for **Snowy Plovers** on closed Refuge salt ponds between 10 Apr and 26 May (MMR et al.) obtained a high count of 20 plovers on 10 Apr, but more importantly tallied four broods (10 young) on 26 May. There appeared to be a mid-April push of **Lesser Yellowlegs** through the Alviso area with one bird on closed salt ponds on 10 Apr (MMR et al.) and one to three birds at the Arzino Ranch on 15-21 Apr (AME, MMR). A **Solitary**

Sandpiper, always a rare treat, was found in a seasonal pond near Smith Creek on 19 Apr (RWR, FV, RK, PK). **Ruddy Turnstones** are less often found in spring so one on a closed salt pond in Alviso on 1 May (MJM, MMR, RGJ) was appreciated. Late **Sanderlings** were also on the closed ponds, with 38 on 10 Apr (MMR et al.) and six on 23 Apr (MMR et al.), as viewed from the Alviso Marina. A few **Red-necked Phalarope** continued to move through the South Bay in April, with 21 on closed salt ponds in Alviso on 10 Apr and four birds 21-23 Apr (MMR et al.).

Two Lesser Nighthawks along the Bay were rare migrants; a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Hidden Villa was an eastern treat

Owls through Warblers

A **Long-eared Owl** was found roosting once again at Ed Levin CP on 23 Apr (MMR et al.). Two **Lesser Nighthawks** were seen over the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on 26 Apr (SRa) for our first records since 1996. Although this nighthawk once nested along Coyote and Uvas creeks, its breeding range has retracted significantly in the southern Coast Ranges in the last 100 years. They still nest in the Central Valley with breeding records as far north as Yolo and Sacramento counties. The first **Vaux's Swifts** included six over Almaden-Quicksilver CP (JMy et al.) and one over Twin Creeks (AV), both on 13 Apr. Small numbers were seen after that, but no major passage was noted. Birds seen in May may represent local breeders rather than migrants. **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were found along the Guadalupe River below Curtner on 2 May (MMR) with three males and two

females observed. Birds were regular at this location subsequently and single males were seen along Coyote Creek 3-15 May as well (RWR, FV, MJM). Migrant **Rufous Hummingbirds** continued to be found in April with a peak count of five males in Joseph Grant CP on 16 Apr (MMR) and the last birds seen at Hidden Villa on 21 Apr (GHa). **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were found regularly in San Antonio Valley in April and May with a peak count of 4-5 birds on 12 Apr (RK, PK, PD). Migrant **Hammond's Flycatchers** included birds at Smith Creek on 16 Apr (MMR) and 23 Apr (MJM), Henry Coe SP on 16 Apr (MJM et al.), and one banded at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 1 May (*fide* MMR). Less expected was a **Dusky Flycatcher** at Monte Bello OSP on 23 Apr (MMR et al.). An adult **Say's Phoebe** with a nest with young in the San Antonio Valley 18 Apr (WGB) was within the local breeding range of this species. A bird at Calero Reservoir on 23 Apr (LMy et al.) was well outside of the local range and was also late for a wintering bird. Two **Cassin's Kingbirds** on private land off Hwy 152 east of Gilroy were found on 11 May and a nest in eucalyptus was discovered on 17 May (both SCR). These nesting birds were seen through the end of May (RWR, FV, MMR). Single **Red-breasted Nuthatches** in a Los Altos yard on 3 Apr (GHt, KHt) and at Lake Cunningham on 8 Apr (SB) were the last of the past winter's substantial invasion. However, many birds were found in areas in the Santa Cruz Mountains where they are known to nest. **Brown Creepers** were seen nesting in Cuesta Park in Mountain View 3-9 May (MMR) where unexpected. There are few nest records from the valley floor. Single **American Dippers** were found at Alum Rock Park on 22 Apr (KB) and along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on 30 Apr (MJM), both locations where they are resident. One found along Los Gatos Creek near Main Street in Los Gatos on 18 May (LMy) was in a cemented section of the creek where unexpected. Resident

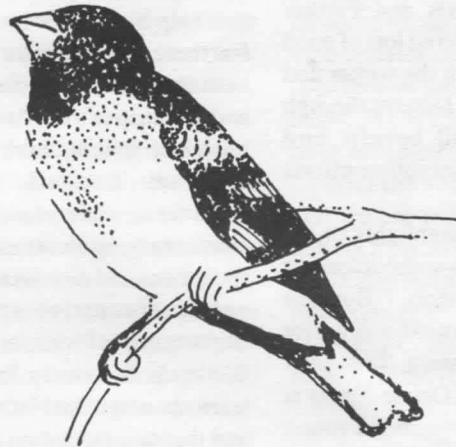
Field Notes *cont'd*

Golden-crowned Kinglets were found along the Santa Cruz Mountain crest. One was singing northwest of Mt. Madonna Road on 14 May, five were singing in different locations along Skyline Boulevard from Hwy 9 to the Grizzly Flats Trailhead on 15 May, and four were along Skyline Boulevard between M.P. 6.20 and 10.57 on 21 May (all DLSu). One nest was found on the latter date. A pair of **Phainopepla** were found in the San Antonio Valley on 12 Apr (RK, PK, PD) and five to six birds were there on 17 Apr (SRu). The passage of **Nashville Warblers** went more quickly this year. One to three birds were at Smith Creek 9-22 Apr (MMR, WGB). Other Diablo Range birds included a bird at Henry Coe SP on 16 Apr (MJM et al.) and at Gilroy Hot Springs and Canada roads on 24 Apr (MJM). In the Santa Cruz Mountains single birds were seen at Monte Bello OSP on 23 Apr (MMR et al.) and in Upper Stevens Creek CP on 24 Apr (KH, RP). On the valley floor one was on Fishburne Avenue near Santa Teresa Boulevard on 24 Apr (YM) and another was banded at CCFS on 30 Apr (SFBBO). The passage of **Hermit Warblers** was quite good this spring. In the Diablo Range one to four birds were seen at Smith Creek 15-30 Apr (v.ob.) and in the Santa Cruz Mountains passage birds were recorded 16 Apr-15 May (v.ob.). The one migrant on the valley floor was found at the Ulistac Natural Area on 9 May (PK, RK). By mid-May, possibly territorial birds were found along the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains from Summit Road to Castle Rock SP (DLSu). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was singing along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 20 Apr (MPa) and multiple birds were found there through 14 May (v.ob.). At least four were singing there on 24 Apr (MJM). A single chat was banded at CCFS on 24 Apr (SFBBO).

Sparrows through Goldfinches

Grasshopper Sparrows were found in typical breeding locations. They were found regularly in Ed Levin CP 23 Apr-7 May (v.ob.), on the Sierra Road summit 7 May (AME, MJM), at Monte Bello

OSP on 29 May (GHa), at the Metcalf Road summit on 29 May (MMR), and on Coyote Ridge on 29 May (SCR). Surveys on a small section of normally closed Coyote Ridge tallied nine singing birds. This extensive area of grasslands probably holds far more birds. A **Fox Sparrow** at Lake Cunningham on 18 May (KB) was quite late. **White-throated Sparrows** found in April included an immature at McClellan Ranch on 27 Apr (JLi) and an adult in a Los Altos yard on 29 Apr (GHt, KHt). A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** lingering in another Los Altos yard on 15 and 27 May (RT) was also quite late. A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** feasting on ripening cherries at Hidden Villa on 26 May (GHa) was our only eastern vagrant. A male **Blue Grosbeak** was found along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 2 May (MMR) and was the only one seen this spring. Only a few **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were found this spring, with a female-type at the Arzino Ranch on 24 Apr (AME), two at Byxbee Park on 13 May (TD *fide* LCh), and a female at the Gilroy WTF on 17 May (SCR). The male **Great-tailed Grackle** found at Lake Cunningham in March was seen again 20



A Rose-breasted Grosbeak is normally found in the midwest and eastern part of the United States, so having one show up at Hidden Villa in late May was quite unusual.

— sketch by Bonnie Bedford-White

Apr (KB). Another male was found near the Palo Alto Duck Pond 23-26 Apr (NT et al., v.ob.). A third male was at San Felipe Lake on 17 May (SCR) and three to four birds were near the Gilroy WTF 20-24 May (RWR, FV). Multiple **Purple Finches** were found at Cuesta Park in May and breeding was confirmed on 12 May when a begging fledgling was observed (MMR). Although this finch is often found on the valley floor when the oak trees are flowering in March, we have no previous records of breeding from the valley floor. **Red Crossbills** continued to be found in April and March in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A flock of 16-18 were in Upper Stevens Creek CP on 12 Apr (RWR, FV), 19 were at Monte Bello OSP on 4 May (GHa), 25 were at Castle Rock SP on 15 May (MMR), 16 were along Skyline Boulevard near Black Road on 21 May (DLSu), and 30-40 were near Alpine Pond on 22 May (RWR et al.). This winter's **Pine Siskin** invasion appears to have nearly come to an end, although there are a few loose ends. Small flocks continued to be found in the

continued on Page 8

Birding for the birds

by Steve Rutledge

Adult Education Instructor

We recently completed two SCVAS classes, Meet the Locals and Farther Afield. Both classes featured lots of good birding that covered both the winter and spring seasons (running January through April). And both will benefit bird education and bird conservation efforts (see below).

I can't tell you the highlights of the thousands of birds we saw without leaving out many special moments. But one image that sticks in my mind was a bare tree with several Western Tanagers, crowned by a Bullock's Oriole sitting at the very top. Also, I remember a sunset sky filled with Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes, Black Oystercatchers calling as they flew above the crashing waves, and a baby Oak Titmouse hiding among the fallen leaves. Among our extended scope views were a hybrid Northern Flicker, a singing Bewick's Wren with its tongue sticking out, the fluttering turquoise throats of Brandt's Cormorants, and an extremely close California Clapper Rail.

To focus a little more closely on just one day, our visit to Point Reyes began with the high calls of a tree full of Cedar Waxwings in the gray before dawn, and ended with the sweet song of a Winter Wren in the gathering evening. In between were great views of Caspian Terns diving over Bolinas Lagoon, Wood Ducks swimming on languid Five Brooks Pond, three species of loons on Drakes Bay, a Great Horned Owl in the cypress trees by the Fish Docks, and the big colony of Common Murres near the Point Reyes Lighthouse.

These trips were both birding adventures and excursions in the classroom of nature. The birds that we encountered provided introductions to many themes in ornithology, with the following examples only a few among many. We learned about the repertoires of Song Sparrows and the dialects of Nuttall's White-crowned Sparrows. We studied the structural differences between Greater and Lesser Scaups and between Horned and Eared Grebes. We discussed the effects that El Nino years have on the

nesting success of Brandt's Cormorants.

While the classes were both fun and informative, they were also fundraisers that help birds. The student tuition fees for these classes were divided equally between SCVAS' education programs and the instructor. Audubon programs introduce school children to local birds and their habitats. For example, volunteers visit classrooms to show elementary students taxidermied bird specimens and discuss adaptation, native versus non-native species, and the importance of conservation. In the Wetlands Discovery Program, students learn about wetland habitats and wildlife and then are guided on field trip tours of wetland ecosystems in Mountain View where they explore the habitat and its inhabitants with SCVAS' volunteers and binoculars. Most of our chapter's education programs are provided for free to public school classrooms, so fundraising from Adult Education classes and other sources is important to sustain SCVAS' environmental education efforts.

I have arranged for my share of the proceeds to be donated to the American Bird Conservancy's Conservation Counterparts Program in Baharuco National Park, Dominican Republic. This park, in south-central Hispaniola near the Haitian border, contains many remarkable birds. Among the 26 Hispaniolan endemics found in Baharuco are the endangered Bay-breasted Cuckoo and the incredibly cute Narrow-billed Tody. Baharuco also protects many neo-tropical migratory birds, including the vulnerable Bicknell's Thrush and Swainson's Warbler. The class contributions will help protect the park and its birds from many threats, including encroachment by slash-and-burn agriculture and collection of birds for the pet trade. You can learn more about this American Bird Conservancy program at <http://www.abcbirds.org/counterparts/project-bahoruco.asp>.

Many birds are in trouble and need our help. Please consider participating in future SCVAS programs where we go birding not just for ourselves but also for the birds.

Field Notes *cont'd*

Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range into early May, as occurs in most invasion years. However, a flock of 300 to 500 birds in Upper Stevens Creek CP on 24 Apr (KH, RP) was exceptional and was likely a collection of birds moving north. Feeder birds declined in the valley in April with the last birds seen in Los Gatos on 25 Apr (JD). However, birds continued to come to feeders on Mt. Hamilton as late as 22 May (EG). Courtship or possible nesting behavior was seen at Cuesta Park in Mountain View (MMR) and on Mt. Hamilton (LB), but we never obtained confirmation of breeding. **Lawrence's Goldfinches** are not found every year in the Santa Cruz Mountains, so one to two males at Arastradero Preserve 4 Apr-27 May (GHa, CJC) were of interest. Breeding Lawrence's returned to San Antonio Valley by 18 Apr (WGB) with a peak count of 12-16 on 24 May (MO'B, MMcG). Two birds at Coyote Reservoir 1 May (SCR) were away from typical breeding locations.

Observers: Lotus Baker (LB), Kim Blythe (KB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Summer Brasuel (SB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Les Chibana (LCh), Chuck Coston (CJC), Penny Delavoyras (PDe), Ted Dolton (TD), Peggy Don (PD), Jean Dubois (JD), Al Eisner (AME), Elinor Gates (EG), Garth Harwood (GHa), Kirstin Holmquist (KH), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Karen Hoyt (KHt), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Roland Kenner (RK), Pat Kenny (PK), Jim Liskovec (JLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Michael McGrath (MMcG), Yvonne Micko (YM), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LMY), Matt O'Brien (MO'B), Rich Page (RP), Mark Paxton (MP), Sidd Ramachandramurthi (SRa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBO), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Siobhan Ruck (SRu), Debi Shearwater (DLSH), David Suddjian (DLSu), Linda Sullivan (LSu), Nancy Teater (NT), Ruth Troetschler (RT), Frank Vanslager (FV), and Ann Verdi (AV).

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

Spanish-speakers now have a bird guide!

On May 23, the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's members experienced a great event. Kenn Kaufman visited us and gave a talk on his Spanish field guide, *Guía de Campo a las Aves de Norteamérica*, and on his recent edition of the English version, *Field Guide to Birds of North America*.

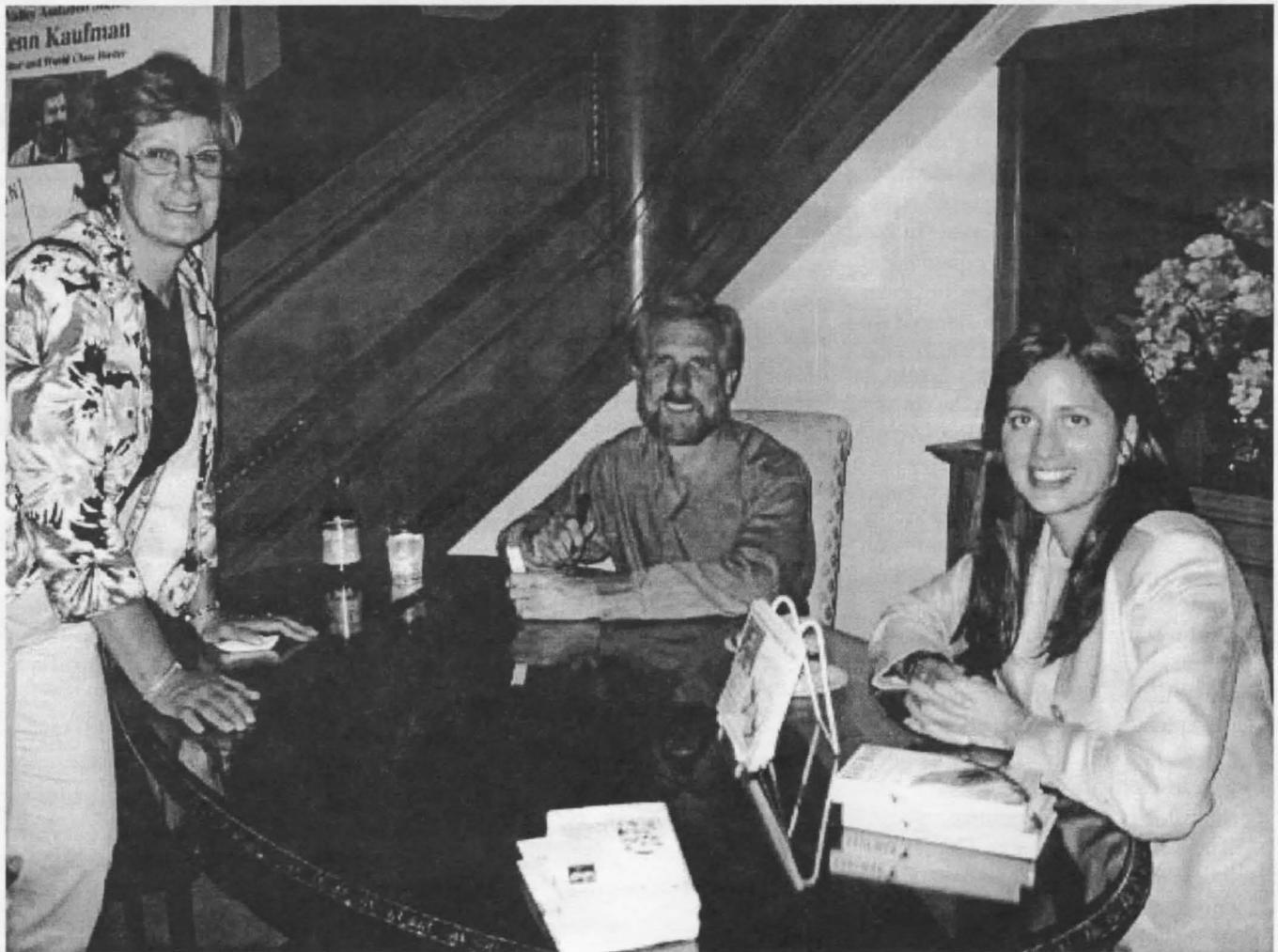
His talk was more than a simple description of the development of both guides, it was also a call to action and reflection. In a very gracious way, Kaufman criticized the high standards that experienced birders often set to newcomers. His new Spanish language guide is a strategic outreach tool to involve more people to conservation efforts.

For us, the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, the Spanish version of this guide is a gift. For many years, this chapter has been providing our high quality services to underserved communities, and now with a Spanish field guide like Kaufman's, our efforts have been complemented. During this new year (05-06), the Education Committee along with the office staff will develop new resources in Spanish and will continue our good work with Hispanics communities.

The Kaufman event was also great to spread the word of our diversity goals for this year. Reporters from newspaper and news television showed a genuine interest in our goals, and offered us their

future support. One great example is the strong partnership recently created with Telemundo (Channel 48), which opened its doors to our Audubon Chapter to provide updates on our progress to Spanish speakers in the Bay Area in a frequent basis. We are very thankful for that, and have accepted their invitation.

With the support of many stakeholders, we are moving forward and establishing a precedent that was long needed in the Bay Area. If you wish to be part of this exciting movement, come to the first Diversity Committee meeting on July 19 in McClellan Ranch at 7 PM.



SCVAS President Debbie Thompson (left) and Executive Director Brenda Torres-Barreto join noted birder and field guide author Kenn Kaufman at the May 23 book-signing event

Coyote Valley *continued from Page 1*

for the development of a minimum of 25,000 residential units, 50,000 industry jobs, approximately 1.5 million square feet of retail space, a permanent greenbelt, flood and transportation infrastructure, and a variety of public facilities and services. The Specific Plan area is bound by Tulare Hill to the north, U.S. Highway 101 to the east, the City of Morgan Hill to the south, and the Santa Cruz Mountain Range to the west.

The City's General Plan has for decades included several conditions designed to ensure that development within the City occurs when and where it makes sense. The economic requirements, or "triggers" for Coyote Valley are a land use plan that will accommodate 50,000 jobs and at least 25,000 homes, a two-to-one ratio.

In early May, Mayor Gonzales and City Councilman Forrest Williams wrote a memo proposing "practical guidelines for the timing and phasing of future development" and that industrial and housing development could be started "by the willing." The conservation community, including SCVAS, Committee for Green Foothills and Sierra Club, is alarmed by the memo, believing it would weaken the development triggers, enabling development to occur earlier.

Input to the Plan

Throughout the planning process, the City has received input in several ways: Task Force:

Task Force members can make significant recommendations for the plans. Members include Mayor Gonzales, Councilman Williams, County Supervisor Don Gage, landowners, developers and others. Task Force members are appointed by San Jose city officials.

Technical Advisory Committee:

The Technical Advisory Committee includes representatives from Santa Clara County agencies, conservation organizations, realtors, housing developers, and others. SCVAS Executive Director Brenda Torres-Barreto attends. Committee members receive information and

can make comments, but their input carries less weight than that of the Task Force.

Public Scoping Meetings:

These meetings are required by the California Environmental Quality Act to give the public an opportunity for comment. They are held at San Jose City Hall or the Coyote Valley Golf Course.

An Environmental Impact Report process is underway. In addition to the CVSP, a number of alternatives are being considered. One is a vision document prepared by the Greenbelt Alliance called "Coyote Valley: Getting It Right." The document advocates alternatives to specific elements of the CVSP such as flood control, street layout, and public transportation. The Draft EIR is scheduled to be completed by September, and following a public comment period, will be released over the winter. Planning Commission and City Council meetings to review the EIR will be held in the spring.

A Common Sense Alternative

SCVAS joins with other environmental groups in strongly supporting additional development in Central San Jose and North First Street as an alternative to Coyote Valley. Some proposals are being discussed for these two areas, and without doing an economic analysis, it seems to me that adding housing where

there is existing infrastructure and public transportation makes much more sense than building a new city the size of Mountain View in an agricultural area where everything needs to be planned and built from scratch.

SCVAS is working closely with the Sierra Club, Committee for Green Foothills, Greenbelt Alliance and others to educate ourselves and develop strategies that will have the greatest impact. We sent a joint letter to the planning staff this past March and plan to send another this summer. We will advocate strengthening the "triggers." In addition, we might join with other groups to hire a consultant who could make substantial comments on the EIR. As a last resort, we would consider litigation.

Speak Up!

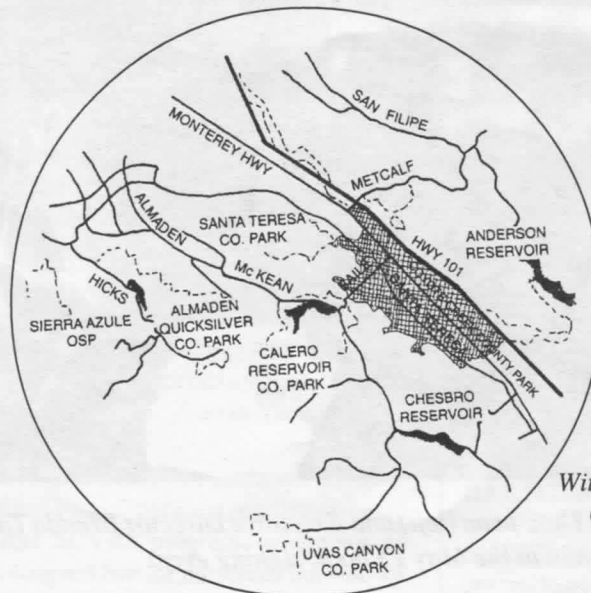
Write to the Task Force members asking them to ensure that the environmental review for Coyote Valley results in a "smart" development. Send a copy to SCVAS as well.

Send your comments to:

Coyote Valley Specific Plan Task Force
c/o Sal Yakubu, Principal Planner
San Jose City Hall, 801 North First Street
San Jose CA 95110

Email: salifu.yakubu@sanjoseca.gov

Fax: 408-277-3250



Within the Calero-Morgan Hill Christmas Bird Count circle shown here, the shaded area is the land included in the Coyote Valley Specific Plan

Book Reviews

The Singing Life of Birds by Donald Kroodsma, 2005

Kroodsma could very well be the world's best bird listener and will open your eyes anew to the symphony of bird song. When this bioacoustic authority says he learned hundreds of individual bird songs by seeing, I had to read more. For all of us who have looked at sonograms and gained little from the experience nor a greater understanding in identifying bird song, this is the book. Kroodsma's dissection of the sonogram with dozens of examples, both in text and in the accompanying CD, is ground breaking. You will not look at sonograms or hear a song sparrow the same way again.

He guides your discoveries by starting with the robin. We all know and love the song of the robin, but after you read with your eyes, you will hear it again for the first time. The patterns, the complexity, and the beauty of its song are greatly more appreciated and enjoyed. Kroodsma builds on this recognizable song into a symphony of meaning, for the robin singing, robins listening, and human listener. He leads you down an evolutionary road of how birds acquire their songs, why individuals within a species acquire unique songs, why songs change from location to location, and change over time.

A few families of *Passeriformes*, the order of songbirds, have very recognizable songs. The flycatchers and phoebes have simple, harsh, unchanging songs from region to region. Many of these difficult to identify flycatchers are best identified by song. Kroodsma explores this phenomenon by tracing the evolution of songbirds, proposes a few postulates, and then goes to Costa Rica making many interesting observations and conclusions regarding these fascinating aerial insectivores.

Why are males the dominate singers? We think of territoriality and mate selection. We also read of nest siblings who are genetically different — so much for the old male territorial dominance concept. Kroodsma proposes that the females are choosing one male songster to secure territory for successful breeding and rearing and other males for a diverse genetic mix of offspring.

Follow Kroodsma discoveries starting with his 3:30 AM walks recording singers from Point Reyes to Martha's Vineyard and to southern Florida. Well, maybe read the book and listen to the beautiful songs on the CD. The Singing Life of Birds will improve your understanding of bird song, but more importantly, it will enhance you enjoyment as you walk among the world's feathered singers.

—Bob Nansen, bird listener

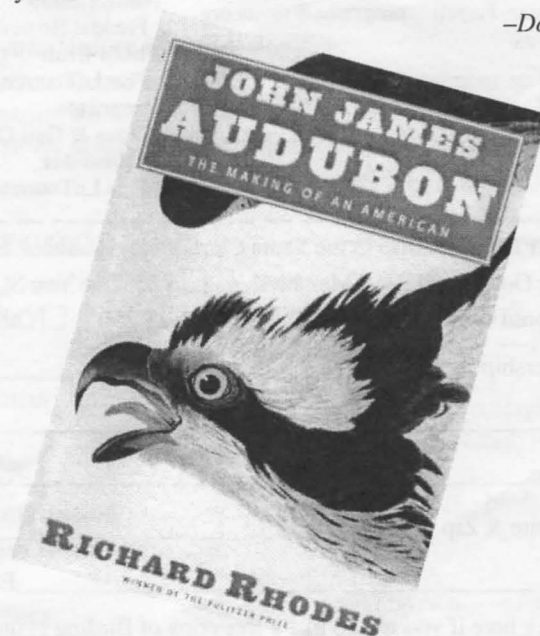
John James Audubon, The Making of an American by Richard Rhodes, 2004

I would like to recommend to our members that they read the new (2004) biography of Audubon published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York. The title of the book is John James Audubon, The Making of an American, by Richard Rhodes. It is a beautifully written and well-researched book covering John James Audubon's life from his origins in Haiti and upbringing in France to his decline and death in New York. It discusses his development as a painter, his travels and expeditions in search of all of the birds of North America, and his efforts to have his paintings engraved and published and to find subscribers in Britain and America for his work.

It provides numerous excerpts from letters and writings of Audubon, his wife, and friends that illuminate his life and times, including descriptions of life at that time in various American and European cities. His descriptions of various modes of travel from flatboats on the Mississippi to stage coaches in Britain are wonderful. I was particularly interested in Audubon's description of the launching of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway on August 28, 1830.

Finally, his descriptions of the bird life that existed in America in the early 1800's, including whooping swans on the Eastern seaboard, the flights of passenger pigeons, ivory-billed woodpeckers and Carolina parakeets will be of special interest to today's birdwatchers. His devotion to his wife Lucy despite many painful separations, the loss of two infant daughters, and his closeness to his two sons as discussed in the book show him to be a real and appealing personality, not just an icon for today's birders. I would like to have been his friend.

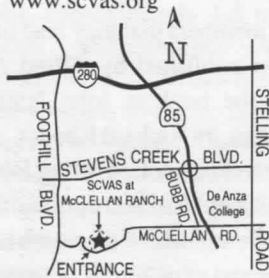
—Don Price



Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society
 22221 McClellan Road
 Cupertino, CA 95014

Phone: 408-252-3747
 Fax: 408-252-2850
 E-mail: scvas@scvas.org
 www.scvas.org

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OFFICERS

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Debbie Thompson 408/227-4604

1st VP

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joan Leighton '03-'06 408/252-3747

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Rita Norton '04-'07 408-395-5435

STAFF

Executive Director 408/252-3748

Brenda Torres-Barreto brenda@scvas.org

Office Manager 408/252-3747

Susan Bell scvas@scvas.org

Programs Coordinator 408/252-3740

Kim Yuan-Farrell programs@scvas.org

Office Fax 408/252-2850

E-mail scvas@scvas.org

Website www.scvas.org

CHAIRPERSONS

Avocet

Editor: Grant Hoyt 650/969-7892

Graphics and Print Preparation

Bonnie Bedford-White 408/261-8210

Bay Area Audubon Council Delegate

Nancy Teater 650/321-0252

Christmas Bird Count

Kirsten Holmquist 408/747-0988

Education

Bobbie Handen 408/356-4263

Environmental Action

Nancy Teater 650/321-0252

Field Trips: Weekend

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Field Trips: Weekday

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Webmaster petelat1@stanford.edu

Pete LaTourrette 650/961-2741

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.

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