



# THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

November - December 2005

## Exploring So. County's Soap Lake

### Bolsa de San Felipe designated as Audubon "Important Bird Area"

by Nancy Teater

Chances are you've driven past Soap Lake without knowing what it is called, since there are no signs and only a couple of small turnouts off the side of the road. It's that large, watery expanse on the south side of Highway 152 on the way to Pacheco Pass that swells and shrinks depending on rainfall. You might have stopped to look at the ducks, geese, or raptors that find a home there during the winter. Next time you're down that way, linger awhile, because Soap Lake (or San Felipe Lake, as it is also called) has been designated as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and its partner BirdLife International.

Soap Lake is part of a large floodplain called Bolsa de San Felipe ("bolsa" means "sac" or "pocket") and is seasonally home to ten sensitive species: Northern Harrier, Ferruginous Hawk, Long-billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Least Bell's Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Tricolored Blackbird.

#### Important Bird Areas

The National Audubon Society <[www.audubon.org/bird/iba/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/)> and BirdLife International <[www.birdlife.org/](http://www.birdlife.org/)> are working to identify a network of sites that provide critical habitat for

birds. This effort, known as the Important Bird Areas Program (IBA), recognizes that habitat loss and fragmentation are the most serious threats facing populations of birds across America and around the world.

By working through partnerships, principally the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, to identify those places that are critical to birds during some part of their life cycle (breeding, wintering, feeding, migrating) Audubon hopes to minimize the effects that habitat loss and degradation have on bird populations. Unless we can slow the rapid destruction and degradation of habitat, populations of many birds may decline to dangerously low levels. The IBA program is a global effort to identify areas that are most important for maintaining bird populations, and focus conservation efforts at protecting these sites.

#### Bolsa de San Felipe IBA

Santa Clara County includes portions of three California IBAs — Bolsa de San Felipe in the southernmost part of the county; San Francisco Bay-South; and East Diablo Range. Bolsa de San Felipe lies between Highways 101, 152, and 156. The closest cities are Hollister and Gilroy. A natural, seasonal lake, Soap Lake is fed by Llagas Creek, Uvas Creek, and Pacheco Creek and empties into the Pacheco River. Pacheco Creek, just north of the Bolsa supports one of the most extensive sycamore riparian wood-

*Christmas  
Bird Counts  
coming up!*

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*continued on Page 7*

- ◆ *Holiday Open House* — Page 5
- ◆ *Nestbox monitoring results* — Page 9
- ◆ *Fighting the "Extinction bill"* — Page 10
- ◆ *Burowing Owl breeding records needed* — Page 10

### General Membership Meeting "Birding and the Internet— the Ultimate Field Guide?"

with Mitchell Waite, [WhatBird.com](http://WhatBird.com)

Palo Alto Arts Center, Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Wednesday, Nov. 16

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

There are many exciting things happening on the Internet today that birders should be aware of. Mitchell Waite, the creator of [Percevia.com](http://Percevia.com), a bird identification site, will talk about how the Internet can enhance your birding experience. He will present his new site, [WhatBird.com](http://WhatBird.com), and explain why over 60,000 bird enthusiasts visit it each month. Why is the Internet important to birders? Numerous reasons: the ability to supplement field guides and identify birds, communities to share experiences, forums

*continued on Page 11*

# Nov. - Dec. '05 Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

NF = No facilities available

## Wednesday Nov. 2, 12 noon

### City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leaders: Freddy Howell and Elaine Gould. Contact organizer Silviana Ruiz (408) 730-7545 to attend. All are welcome, but birding will be geared toward beginners. Bring binoculars (loaners will be available). Learn about the birds of this closed landfill. **RC**

## Saturday Nov. 5, 8:00 AM

### Grant Ranch County Park

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave northeast, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd., go approx. 9 miles to park. Meet at Hall's Valley Lake parking lot located on left after main park entrance. Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Moderate 2-mile walk. **LO, RC**

## Sunday Nov. 6, 8:30 AM

### Mount Madonna County Park

Half day. Leader: Mark Paxton (831) 637-3039. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy take 10th St west, right on Hwy 82, and left on First St (Hwy 152, Hecker Pass Hwy). After approximately 6.4 miles turn right and meet in Sprig Lake parking lot. Half-day birding walk, gently climbing on the way out, descending on return trip, covers mixed oak woodlands, grasslands, chaparral, coastal Redwood and Douglas Fir forest. Dress in layers, bring lunch and liquids. **RC**

## Wednesday Nov. 9, 8:30 AM

### Chitactac-Adams County Park

Half day. Leader: Jean Myers. Heavily wooded riparian corridor in this 4 1/2 acre park between rural Gilroy and Watsonville. From Hwy 101 south in Morgan Hill exit Tennant Road west, turn left onto Monterey Rd. In two blocks, turn right onto Watsonville Rd, go 6 miles to Park on right, across from Burchell Road. Meet in parking lot. We may carpool to other locations. **LO**

## Saturday Nov. 12, 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 right and becomes Uvas Parkway. Turn left at Miller Ave, drive over Uvas Creek, turn left into Christmas Hill Park; park in first aisle to right. Fairly easy but long walk. **LO, RC**

## Sunday Nov. 13, 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. Trip is geared toward beginning birders but all are invited.

## Wednesday Nov. 16, 9 AM

### Pescadero Marsh & State Beach

Half day. Leader: Sue James (650) 348-0315. *Note this is the third, not fourth, Wednesday of November.* Meet at first parking lot south of bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy 1. Tide will be high at 9:30; we may scout the beach after the estuary. Bring spotting scopes, dress in layers. **LO, RC**

## Saturday Nov. 19, 8:30 AM

### Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward hills then left on Toyon Ave, right on Penitencia Creek Rd into park. Continue under bridge and meet at far end of upper parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk; be prepared for some mud! Possible entrance fee. **LO, RC**

## Sunday Nov. 20, 8:00 AM

### Oka Ponds

Half day. Leader: TBA, questions call (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 17 in Los Gatos take Lark Ave exit west. Turn right on Oka Rd, left on Mozart Ave and an immediate right on Oka Lane. Meet at gate. **RC**

## Friday - Saturday Nov. 25 - 26, 9 AM

### Sac'to 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 exit east (toward Princeton) from I-5, then immediately north on frontage road to Refuge. Bring spotting scope, full tank of gas. Three-hour drive from South Bay. Ducks, geese, swans, cranes, and raptors. Trip is highly recommended for beginning birders. (No children under 12 please.)

## Wednesday Nov. 30, 8:30 AM

### Calero Reservoir

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

## Saturday Dec. 3, 8:00 AM

### Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

Half day. Leader: TBA, 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. Fairly easy but long walk. **RC**

## Sunday Dec. 4, 8:00 AM

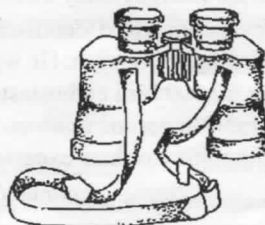
### Charleston Slough

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. All are invited to attend but birding will be geared toward beginners.

## Wednesday Dec. 7, 12 noon

### City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leaders: Freddy Howell and Elaine Gould. See Nov. 2 listing for directions.



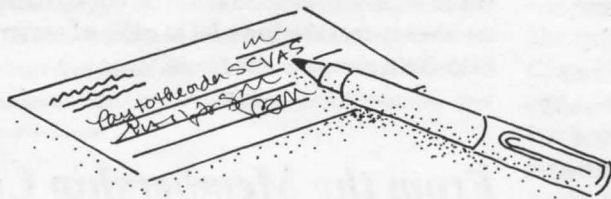
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## Annual Appeal Letter is on Its Way...

We want to let you know that our annual Fall Fundraising appeal letter will be arriving in your mailbox soon. This is our chance to share with you the results of your past support as well as our new projects for the upcoming year.

As you know, SCVAS relies heavily on donations from its members to support both its day-to-day operations and its education and conservation programs. This year we have set an ambitious fundraising goal that will allow us to substantially expand some key programs as well as increase our influence and impact in local conservation efforts. This upcoming year marks our organization's 80th anniversary. We hope you will recognize our considerable accomplishments to date and decide to support future efforts. Thank you!



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## Field Trips *continued*

### Sunday Jan. 1, 7:30 AM County Chase

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Start your 2006 County Year List with some vagrant chasing! Bring full tank of gas, lunch, and field guides as we track down some of the unusual birds seen on Christmas Bird Counts in Santa Clara County. Meet at Alviso Marina: From Hwy 237 in San Jose take Gold St. north to the end, bear left on Elizabeth St. then right on Hope St. to Marina parking lot. Be prepared to carpool. **RC**

### Wednesday Feb. 23, 9:00 AM

**Redwood Shores and Radio Road**  
Leader: Rose Green (650) 493-8378. From Hwy 101 north take Holly Street/Redwood Shores offramp and head toward the Bay. Meet in parking lot at Nob Hill Market on right side of Redwood Shores Parkway just past Pacific Athletic Club. Spotting scopes helpful. **LO, RC**

## Holiday Wish List

Here's another opportunity to give to your favorite Audubon chapter during the holiday season. We would appreciate any of the following items in good working order, to be put to use in our education and conservation programs.

DVD Player  
Digital Projector  
Motorola Two-Way Radios (Walkie Talkies)  
Battery-powered Lantern/Light (LED or Florescent)  
Mobile File Cabinet

Donations are tax deductible.  
Please contact Kim at (408) 252-3740.  
Thank you and Happy Holidays!

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## Events Calendar

Wed. 11/2, 7:30 PM

### Bay Area Bird Photographers

features Jeff Poklen's presentation "About Being with Birds." Lucie Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto

Sat. 11/5, 10 AM - 3 PM

### Creeks Leaders Meeting

Groups and individuals interested in local creek issues will discuss the content of SCVAS' next *Creekside News* publication. Lunch will be served. RSVP required: (408) 252-3748 or [brenda@scvas.org](mailto:brenda@scvas.org).  
McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Tues. 11/8 9:30 AM

**Eve Case Bird Discussion Group** will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave, Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Cedar Waxwing

Sat. Nov. 12, 9:30 AM

**Fundraiser mailing party** (see Pg. 4)  
McClellan Ranch Park

Wed. 11/16, 7:30 PM

**General Meeting**, "Internet Birding"  
Palo Alto Art Center (see Page 1)

Wed. 11/23 7:30 PM

**Environmental Action Committee mtg.**  
McClellan Ranch Park

Thurs. 11/24 & Fri. 11/25

Office closed for Thanksgiving Holiday

Wed. 11/30 7:00 PM

**Owl class** (see Page 5)  
McClellan Ranch Park

Tues. 12/13 9:30 AM

**Eve Case Bird Discussion Group** will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave, Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: House Sparrow

Wed. 12/28 7:30

**EAC Meeting**, McClellan Ranch Park



# Volunteer Ventures

by Kim Yuan-Farrell  
Programs Coordinator

Events during the past year have provided us with much food for thought, beckoning us to reexamine our ideas about our communities, the natural world, our lives and perspectives, and our relationship with nature. They have also given us a chance to reflect and feel fortunate for the many things we have. This Thanksgiving, many of us will likely feel thankful for friends and loved ones in our lives. Our staff here at Audubon feels very thankful for the many inspirational and generous individuals we have gotten to know through our work at this organization — volunteers who not only make SCVAS' programs and activities succeed but who also enrich our workplace and lives. From the Board of Directors to our committees to the day-to-day volunteers, it is truly a pleasure. Thank you!

For those of you feeling the holiday spirit and looking for volunteer opportunities, read about the Christmas Bird Counts (Page 8), check out the opportunities below or contact me to discuss your interests:

◆ Environmental Action Committee Member – Did you know that SCVAS is one of the oldest conservation organizations in the South Bay? That's right. Our chapter has led many important battles to protect birds, wildlife, and habitat, and promote positive development in Santa Clara County. You can be part of this exciting team of volunteers working with our Conservation Advocate, researching development issues, representing Audubon at city council meetings, advising our Board of Directors in current efforts, and engaging the public in discourse and action. The EAC meets monthly at McClellan Ranch Park. Contact me to join now or learn more.

◆ Fundraiser Mailing Party – Yes, that's right – a party! Every autumn we hand-address, stuff, stamp, and seal more than 3,000 envelopes to send to SCVAS members for our Annual Fundraiser. This is quite an undertaking, so we need YOUR support! On Saturday, Nov. 12, we will host an envelope stuffing party here at McClellan Ranch Park. This is a fun opportunity to help the chapter and meet other members. This fast-paced yet relaxed event lasts approximately 3 hours during the morning and will include snacks and raffle prizes. Call (408) 252-3740 to sign up!

**The SCVAS Nature Shop  
is a great place to find  
holiday gifts!  
Parking is convenient  
and you can avoid the  
crowds at the mall!**



## SCVAS welcomes intern

The success of our intern program continues as we welcome our fifth Education and Outreach Intern, Shannon Cosentino-Roush. Shannon is majoring in Political Science with a minor in Environmental Studies at Santa Clara University. A Lifetime Girl Scout and former YMCA camp counselor, she has experience educating and delivering activities for youth, which is proving valuable in her presentations to schoolchildren and leadership of Wetlands Discovery Program field trips. Shannon hopes to attend law school following graduation in June but is eager to gain additional experience in environmental education and work in a nonprofit setting.

Shannon brings fun and fresh ideas to our education programs. She is passionate about protecting the environment and imparting knowledge and values of stewardship to young generations. In addition to acting as a leader in classrooms and on field trips, Shannon spends time in the office developing and improving our educational materials. This allows me to focus on program development, volunteer recruitment, and collaborative efforts with other educational organizations in the County. We're pleased to have Shannon on our education team and can see already that she has a lot to offer whatever environmental field she'll pursue in the future.

—Kim Yuan-Farrell

## From the Membership Chair

As the new Chairman of the Membership Committee, I would like to solicit your help in increasing the local SCVAS membership base. We are embarking on several new programs under the leadership of Brenda Torres-Barreto and need to increase our membership base to fund and staff these activities.

Members are our most valuable resource since they know and care about our activities and educational programs. We would encourage you to make others aware of our activities so they too can get involved.

Many of you are members of the National Audubon Society and receive their colorful and interesting magazine as part of your membership. SCVAS gives these individuals full membership privileges including a subscription to *The Avocet* and all other membership benefits, but only receives a small amount of the membership fee to help defray our costs. This amount basically covers the cost of printing and mailing *The Avocet*. If you believe the other activities and benefits of SCVAS including our educational outreach programs are worth preserving, I ask that National Audubon members consider also joining the local chapter. Yearly membership in the local chapter is only \$20 and we believe the benefits to you and the community will far exceed this amount.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article, and I sincerely appreciate any help you can provide in increasing our membership base.

—John Callahan  
Chairman, Membership Committee

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# Spring 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 re-funds.

## **Silent Hunters: An Introduction to Local Owls** with Karen Hoyt

Learn about the basic biology of owls, their evolutionary history, and how to identify local species by their physical characteristics and vocalizations. Karen will introduce you to two beautiful live owls – a Great Horned Owl and a Barn Owl – to help demonstrate the fascinating features of these nocturnal raptors. You will learn about silent flight, owls' facial disks, hearing and eyesight, their role in an ecosystem, and migratory versus non-migratory species' reasons for adaptation.

Date: Wednesday 11/30, 7-9 PM

Location: Conference Room at McClellan Ranch in Cupertino  
Fee: \$15; minimum 15 students, maximum 20

*Karen Hoyt is a long-time birder, wildlife rehabilitator specializing in birds of prey, bird-bander, and volunteer with Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. In 2004 she founded SkyHunters Environmental Education, a non-profit educational outreach program that brings live birds of prey into local classrooms to teach awareness and respect for wildlife, conservation, and environmental protection.*

## **Interactive Lecture Series on 15 Families of Birds** with Lisa Myers

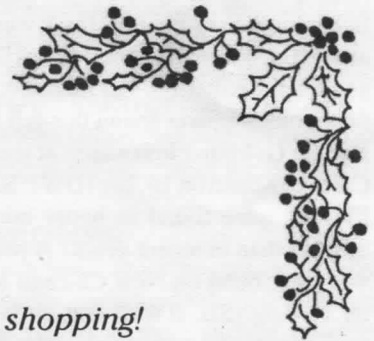
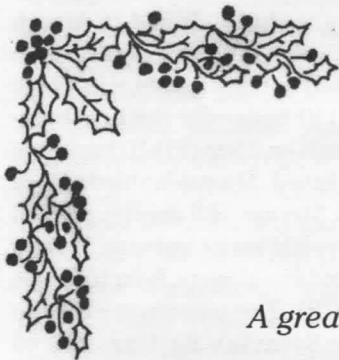
This six-week lecture series concentrates on 15 different families of birds. Lectures, visual presentations, bird vocalizations, and weekly handouts will concentrate in depth on the different bird species found in the West that make up each family. Presentations are geared for the beginner to intermediate birder. Everyone will get a better understanding of the behaviors associated with each family, their migration patterns, preferred habitat and simply how each group of birds lives! For your convenience, you may sign up for the entire series or select the specific lectures that interest you the most:

1) Ducks, Geese and Swans; 2) Grebes & Herons; 3) Hawks, Eagles & Vultures; 4) Swifts, Kingfishers & Woodpeckers; 5) Jays (Corvids) and Swallows; 6) Wrens and Blackbirds

Dates: Wednesdays, 1/11 – 2/15 (six evenings) 7-9 PM

Location: Conference Room at McClellan Ranch in Cupertino  
Fee: Entire 6-week series \$100, Individual lectures \$20 each; Minimum 8 students, maximum 22.

*Lisa has been a birder for most of her life. She teaches classes and conducts workshops throughout the Santa Clara Valley. She strives to introduce new people to birding and to Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. Lisa's classes are very creative and offer a fun, non-intimidating environment in which all can learn. Lisa also has her own business, Let's Go Birding. Her goal is to provide people with exciting opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and the avian world.*



## Holiday Open House

Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>  
10:00 AM until 2:00 PM

*A great opportunity to finish (or begin!) your holiday shopping!*

*Enjoy holiday refreshments **and a special one day discount!***

*Browse through our books, jewelry, ornaments and other bird related gift items.*

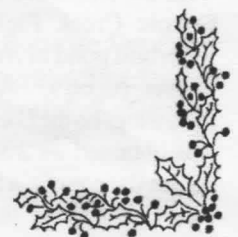
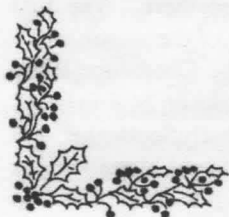
*Enjoy a special display of paintings and photography by local artists.*

*Visit with our staff and learn about current Santa Clara Valley Audubon conservation projects and discuss important birding areas.*

### *Gift Certificates Available*

*All proceeds go to our education and conservation programs.*

For more details, please contact Susan at (408) 252-3747  
SCVAS Office and Nature Shop • 22221 McClellan Road • Cupertino, CA



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# Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

## Waterfowl through Shorebirds

The first **Blue-winged Teal** of the fall season were 5–6 males in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 29 Sep (RWR, FV) and a single bird at the edge of the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) oxidation ponds on 30 Sep (PKe, RKe). A count of 105 **Brown Pelicans** on closed Refuge ponds in Alviso on 24 Sep (MMR, MJM, RGJ) was a high count for this summer. An **American Bittern** was seen along the Guadalupe River near the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) ponds on 18 Sep (AV, MJM, ViT) and is probably a fall migrant or wintering bird. Single **White-faced Ibis** were seen at the New Chicago Marsh on 6 Aug (AME) and 31 Aug (MMR) and in the Lockheed-Martin ponds on 7 Aug (MJM). It is possible that this was just a single bird moving about the South Bay. Clearly different were 18 birds over the Palo Alto estuary on 2 Sep (SCR). An adult light morph **Swainson's Hawk** was seen along Bloomfield Road on 11 Sep (DLSu) and fits the pattern of fall migrants. The only golden-plover found this fall was a **Pacific Golden-Plover** seen at the New Chicago Marsh on 16 Aug (DW). **Snowy Plovers** were found in better numbers this fall than in recent years. A juvenile was first found on New Chicago Marsh on 17 Aug (SB, RWR) and birds were found there and elsewhere in the Alviso area over the next month (m.ob.). Twenty-four birds were counted on closed Refuge ponds on 27 Aug (MMR, MJM) and 22 birds were seen north of the Alviso Marina on 22 Sep (RWR, FV). However, a survey of Refuge ponds on 24 Sep failed to find any birds. **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found in about average numbers from the Lockheed-Martin ponds to the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond in August and early September (m.ob.). A high count of 17 yellowlegs on the Lockheed-Martin ponds was obtained on 2 Sep (PJM). Always rare in the county, a **Solitary Sandpiper** was found along the Guadalupe River

near the SCVWD ponds on 13 Sep (SBT) and remained until 21 Sep (m.ob.). Equally rare, a juvenile **Wandering Tattler** was found on rip-rap on the bay edge beyond the outer Palo Alto FCB on 3 Sep (MMR). A juvenile **Ruddy Turnstone** on Salt Pond A2E on 27 Aug (MMR, MJM) was the only bird seen this fall. Single **Black Turnstones** on the bay side of the outer Palo Alto FCB on 3 Sep (MMR) and at Charleston Slough on 4 Sep (AR *fide* RWR) may have been the same bird. **Red Knots** continued to be found on a falling tide at the Stevens Creek mouth in August with a high count of 22 on 27 Aug (MMR, MJM). Single

*A Philadelphia Vireo  
photographed along  
Stevens Creek was  
a first county record*

juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were seen at the New Chicago Marsh on 7 Aug (SCR) and 10 Aug (RWR, FV) and two juveniles were found there on 14 Aug (SCR). The first **Baird's Sandpipers** of the fall passage were five juveniles at the New Chicago Marsh on 15 Aug (RWR, FV, PD). Numbers declined through the end of the month (v.ob.) with the last bird seen being a singleton on 1 Sep (DW). The first **Pectoral Sandpiper** of the season was one seen at Charleston Slough on 4 Sep (AR *fide* RWR). One to two juveniles at the New Chicago Marsh through the end of the month (v.ob.) was fewer than we usually see in September. A juvenile **Stilt Sandpiper** was found on Salt Pond A3N on 27 Aug (MMR, MJM). Another juvenile was seen at the New Chicago Marsh on 30 Aug (MJM) and remained at least through 22 Sep (m.ob., RWR, FV). The biggest shorebird excitement of the season was undoubtedly the juvenile **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** found along the Salt Pond A16 levee on 5 Sep (MMR). This bird, the first since 1999, was seen through 8 Sep by many

observers as it fed on small insects in the levee vegetation. Apparently a one-day wonder, an adult female **Ruff** was adjacent to the Stilt Sandpiper at New Chicago Marsh on 31 Aug (WGB).

## Jaegers through Wrens

A dark morph juvenile **Parasitic Jaeger** was found on closed Refuge ponds in Alviso on 24 Sep (MMR, MJM, RGJ), five years to the day since the last of these oceanic birds was seen in the county. A juvenile **Franklin's Gull** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP oxidation ponds on 19 Aug (MMR) and delighted many observers through 2 Sep. An **Elegant Tern** was seen with Forster's Terns on closed Refuge ponds on 24 Sep (MMR, MJM, RGJ). **Least Terns** continued to stage through August with a high count of 127 birds on Salt Pond A2E on 19 Aug (RWR, FV). Eighteen birds, the last of the season, were found in scattered locations from Alviso to Salt Pond B2 on 27 Aug (MMR, MJM). A **Black Tern** was found foraging at Crittenden Marsh on 18 Aug (JF, WGB) and was seen there and in nearby Salt Pond A2E through 20 Aug (v.ob.). **Vaux's Swifts** were found widely as fall migrants, with a high count of 110 birds over the Lockheed-Martin ponds on 2 Sep (PJM). Immature **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were evident at Morgan Hill feeders this fall with up to eight males and nine females documented on videotape from 16 Aug to 21 Sep (SCR). Two immatures were also seen at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 21 Sep (MMR). Also found at the Morgan Hill feeders was a female **Costa's Hummingbird** 6–16 Aug (SCR). Four **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were reported from the San Antonio Valley on 19 Aug (WGB, JF). A female **Pileated Woodpecker** was found at Hidden Villa on 24 Aug (GHa, JB) and is likely a dispersant from the local population as they are not known to be resident there. The first **Willow Flycatcher** of the season was a single bird along the Guadalupe River north of Almaden Lake on 24 Aug (AV). Numbers peaked in early September with at least nine birds found along various local creeks and other sites on 3 Sep

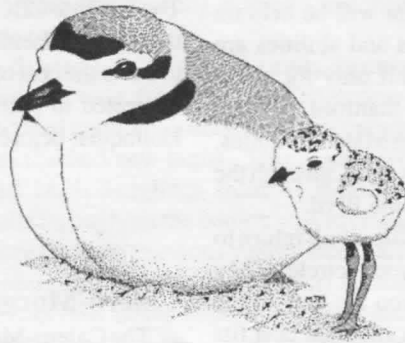


## Field Notes *cont'd*

(MMR, MJM). A "different" vireo was photographed on Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 24 Sep (TGr) and was identified as a **Philadelphia Vireo**, a first record for the county. It could not be re-found the next day. A female **Purple Martin** seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 17 Sep (MDo et al.) was a late migrant. Two **Bank Swallows** at Moffett Field on 31 Aug (MMR) were the only ones found this fall. There has been a surprising early movement of **Red-breasted Nuthatches**. Birds heard near Skyline Boulevard in mid-August (LCh) and at Sanborn-Skyline CP on 29 Aug (JPa, BHe) may be local dispersants, but single birds at Lake Cunningham on 30 Aug (SB), the Alviso EEC on 1 Sep (DW), in Morgan Hill on 5 Sep (SCR), at an Almaden feeder on 6 Sep (BHa), and a Santa Clara feeder on 10 Sep (*fide* KB) fit no previously observed pattern. A **Canyon Wren** was found near Willson Camp in Henry Coe SP on 11 Sep (MMR).

### Warblers through Goldfinches

We have few fall records of **Hermit Warblers**, so a juvenile banded at CCFS on 14 Aug (DWO) was of interest. A **Blackpoll Warbler** was seen at the Alviso EEC on 4 Sep (SCR) and is the earliest record we have. Another bird was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 30 Sep (PKe, RKe). An immature male **American Redstart** was seen in urban Mountain View on 24 Sep (DLSu). A **Northern Waterthrush** was found at the Charleston Road Marsh on 4 Sep (CW) and was seen there again on 25 Sep (SCR, MJM). It seems likely that this is a bird returning to this location to winter. Two more waterthrushes were seen along the Guadalupe River between Montague and Trimble on 7 Sep (SCR) and single birds were seen there again on 9 Sep (PB), 14 Sep (SCR), and 22 Sep (SCR). A **Brewer's Sparrow** was found along the Guadalupe River Trail north of Blossom Hill on 30 Sep (JPa). A juvenile **Grasshopper Sparrow** was seen at Monte Bello OSP on 26 Aug (GHa). A juvenile **Blue Grosbeak** was found along the Guadalupe River between Montague and Trimble on 3 Sep (MMR). An adult



"Snowy Plovers were found in better numbers this fall than in recent years..."  
Drawing by Mike Mammoser

**Indigo Bunting** showed up at Monte Bello OSP on 15 Aug (GHa) and appeared to be a pure Indigo, with no visual evidence of Lazuli Bunting hybridization. A **Pine Siskin** seen at Monte Bello OSP on 12 Sep (GHa) may be a dispersant from the declining local population. The five **Lawrence's Goldfinches** seen along Colorado Creek and the northern San Antonio Valley on 19 Aug (WGB, JF) were the only ones reported this season.

*Observers: Josh Bennett (JB), Kim Blythe (KB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Summer Brasuel (SB), Phil Brown (PB), Les Chibana (LCh), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Peggy Don (PD), Al Eisner (AME), John Furse (JF), Tom Grey (TGr), Barbara Harkleroad (BHa), Garth Harwood (GHa), Bev Hesse (BHe), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Janna Pauser (JPa), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Allen Royer (AR), David Suddjian (DLSu), Scott Terrill (SBT), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Frank Vanlager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Dave Weber (DW), Debbie Wong (DWO), and Chis Wolfe (CW).*

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

## Soda Lake *cont'd*

lands on California's Central Coast.

The lake is surrounded by pastureland and agricultural fields that extend to the west and south. The southwest portion is a raised area known as the Flint Hills which feature extensive grassland and scattered seasonal wetlands. Land in the area is privately owned and exploration by biologists has been limited.

Riparian thickets support many of the nesting lowland bird species that were once common north to the San Francisco Bay but that have now been widely extirpated, including Yellow Warbler and a large population of Yellow-breasted Chat.

### Birding the Area

Public access is limited so most birding is done from public roads. Local birders use the two small turnouts on Highway 152 and San Felipe Road between 152 and Pacheco Creek. Look for three large eucalyptus trees that sit between apple trees and wine grapes and attract an interesting mix of birds in the spring including Yellow Warbler, Western Kingbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole and various swallows. A trip to this part of the county could be combined with Uvas Reservoir and Uvas Creek in southwest Gilroy (see Sites 34 and 35 in Birding at the Bottom of the Bay).

### Conservation

Each year, more houses, especially ranchettes, continue to claim open space in the region as more surface water is drawn for agriculture and the rapidly growing human population. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is exploring land acquisitions and conservation easements with some property owners in the area and SCVAS is partnering with Audubon California and TNC to introduce our chapter members and other birders to Bolsa.

*Information on Bolsa de San Felipe was taken from Important Bird Areas of California, by Daniel S. Cooper, Audubon California, 2004.*

# Mark your calendars for 2005 CBC's!

## Palo Alto

The 2005 Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count will be held on Monday, December 19. Birders of all ages and abilities are invited and encouraged to participate, even if only for a few hours. Our count circle is centered near the Stanford campus, and encompasses parts of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. We have a wide array of habitats, from the bayfront, through the urban areas, and up into the hills along Skyline Blvd.

A faithful and experienced cast of team leaders will return to head up each of the eight regions within the count circle. They will be contacting past participants, but if you are new to the Count, please let me know, and I will find a spot that best fits your birding experience level. The Christmas Bird Count is a highlight of the Audubon year: you don't want to miss it! So make plans now to join in the fun — you'll be glad you did.

—Jack Cole, Compiler  
408-996-0434

e-mail: SNOYOWL@Yahoo.com

## San Jose

The San Jose CBC will be held on Sunday, December 18th. Bird identification skills are great but other skills are important too, such as: 1) spotter, able to point and say "Bird!" and 2) tallyman, able to make small marks on increasingly grubby bits of paper. We have such a diversity of habitats that there is something for everyone's pleasure. If you prefer shoreline, oak woodlands, lakeside, or riparian, we can accommodate you. So, come have fun and contribute to an important, ongoing biological census.

The San Jose CBC countdown dinner will review all birds seen for the day at the Leininger Center in Kelley Park. There is a \$5 charge to cover the cost of the national CBC result publication. If you are interested in participating in the count, please contact Kirsten Holmquist before December 10.

—Kirsten Holmquist, Compiler  
408-747-0988

e-mail: kirrose@earthlink.net

## Calero-Morgan Hill

The Calero-Morgan Hill CBC will be held on Friday, Dec 30. This is an inland count encompassing the southern part of Santa Clara County from the Santa Cruz Mountains in the west to the Diablo foothills in the east with valleys, reservoirs, riparian corridors, and urban areas in between. Some areas of interest where help may be needed include Quicksilver County Park, Santa Teresa County Park, Coyote Creek riparian, Ogier Ponds, Coyote Valley, Almaden Lake, and Edenvale Garden Park. The countdown dinner will be held at the New Almaden Community Center again this year.

Please let me know as soon as you can if you are interested in participating. I need to know of your interest in the Count before Dec 27 as I will not be able to take last minute sign-ups. We have good team leaders on board, and Janna Pauser is organizing the countdown dinner. I'm very grateful for all the support shown so far, and I hope you will consider joining these dedicated birders on Dec 30.

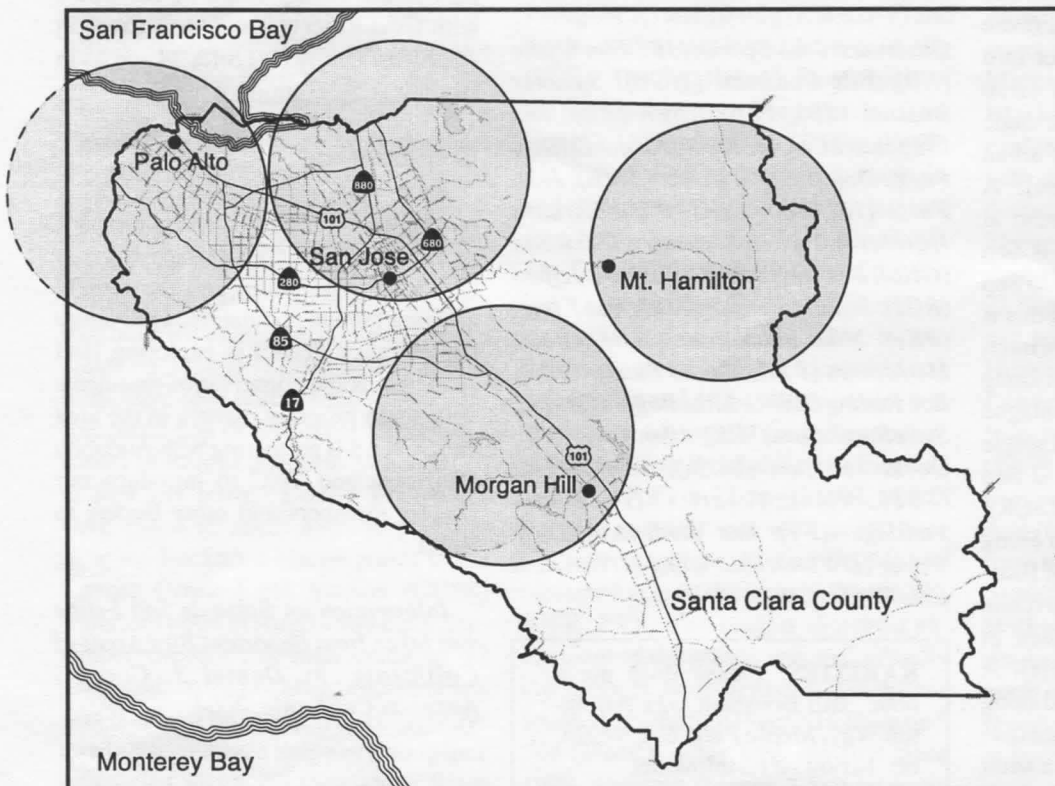
—Ann Verdi, Compiler  
email: wodu10@aol.com  
408-266-5108.

## Mount Hamilton

The 2005 Mount Hamilton CBC will be Monday, January 2, 2006. Mark your calendars. Section leaders, contact me if you are available. This "should" be a snow-free year (law of averages). I can't be that unlucky...right?

—Bob Hirt, Compiler  
10325 Dempster Avenue  
Cupertino, Ca 95014  
(408) 821-2732 (cell)

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





# Monitoring program big boost to cavity-nesters

by Kim Yuan-Farrell and David Tex Houston

As cavity nest monitors clean out their nest boxes this fall, they can reflect back on a season of diverse experiences. Many volunteers will recall their first weekly treks of the season to check nest boxes for signs of new inhabitants, the excitement of finding the beginnings of a grassy bluebird nest, a twiggy wren nest, or a feather-lined swallow nest. They'll remember the anticipation of waiting for the first brood of eggs to appear and the reward of discovering those five tiny, brown-speckled Chestnut-backed Chickadee eggs nestled in fur and feather-lined moss. Those monitors will smile as they think back of that protective mother chickadee hopping from branch to branch as she scolded the benevolent intruder counting eggs at her nest and the fulfillment of watching tiny hatchlings transform into mature birds before their eyes. A few volunteers will remember the mysteries of eggs left unhatched or perhaps the disappointment of a box ransacked by a predator.

With each season come successes, excitement, mysteries, disappointments, and surprises. This year, our Bluebird Re-

covery Program monitors can also remember the exciting numbers reached this nesting season.

Started in 1997 to help cavity-nesting birds recover from habitat destruction-induced population decline, this program has reached new highs. This season we had 1821 fledglings from 41 different trails throughout the county—an exciting increase from previous years! Backyard birders also added to this number. A total of 543 nest boxes from these trails and back yards were monitored and reported during the 2005 season. Eleven different species were recorded, from Chestnut-backed Chickadees to Barn Owls.

The Bluebird Recovery Program was also successful in a number of other ways. Volunteers built over 300 nest boxes from reclaimed wood. More than 6 new monitors joined the program, and a number of larger boxes for cavity-nesting raptors were installed. A new expanded webpage for the program provides invaluable information and resources for novice and veteran monitors, and we launched an electronic data reporting and compiling system to facilitate data collection. In

addition, monitors took part in a mid-season meeting to discuss future program strategies, something that we hope to continue in the future and possibly also in the off-season.

Many thanks are due to the volunteers who are making these recovery efforts successful—from those who monitor nest boxes to our nest box builders to our behind-the-scenes program developers to those who coordinate these wonderful volunteers. Kim will take the liberty of speaking on behalf of native cavity-nesting birds and those who enjoy watching them in saying “We are lucky and grateful to have you!”

If you would like to be a part of this exciting effort to bring back cavity-nesters or just want to learn more about the program, please contact Kim Yuan-Farrell at (408) 252-3740 or [programs@scvas.org](mailto:programs@scvas.org) or visit the Conservation pages of our website: [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org). Also, look in the January/February *Avocet* for the dates of the next nest box monitor training and in future issues for nest box tours to see the program in action.

## Santa Clara County Bluebird Recovery Results 1997 to 2005: Chicks fledged from boxes monitored by volunteers

<u>Species</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
WEBL	90	274	189	204	271	432	369	398	474
VGSW	52	175	198	89	107	295	183	219	222
OATI	5	122	167	173	133	249	192	180	311
CBCH	5	13	50	96	106	127	114	104	208
ATFL	25	17	54	60	84	128	95	105	101
BEWR	0	27	23	33	38	29	19	52	69
HOWR	11	18	3	13	44	61	44	61	104
WBNU	10	5	4	20	6	29	25	31	64
TRSW	31	46	55	54	73	166	128	192	254
HOFI	0	0	0	4	10	0	0	0	2
AMKE	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	0
WESO	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	3	0
BNOW	0	0	0	4	4	11	16	2	12
WODU	0	0	0	0	0	6	20	7	0
ACWP								0	0
<b>Totals</b>	229	697	747	754	877	1535	1208	1354	1821
Trails	17	20	21	23	23	42	36	34	41
Boxes	230	295	338	395	420	492	484	522	543
Species	8	9	10	12	12	12	12	13	11

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# Protecting the 1973 Endangered Species Act

Brenda Torres-Barreto  
Executive Director

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society is very disappointed that the House of Representatives passed Rep. Richard Pombo's bill (H.R. 3824) for the amendments of the 1973 Endangered Species Act. On the other hand, we are grateful that local representatives Anna Eshoo and Mike Honda registered crucial votes against Rep. Pombo and Dennis Cardoza's so-called "Extinction Bill" which would weaken protections for our nation's endangered species and habitats.

As many of you know, the Endangered Species Act (the Act) has been very successful for the past 32 years providing an effective tool for conservation of the environment. It is also considered America's only legal safety net for the protection of our most vulnerable birds and wildlife, including our nation's symbol, the Bald Eagle. As a matter of fact, only 9 of the 1,800 species protected by the Endangered Species Act have gone

## Help Burrowing Owl studies— local breeding records needed

by Ruth Troetschler

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society members have supported conservation of Burrowing Owls for many years. Some of you may have participated in field surveys to determine their population, distribution and nesting success. You may be aware that in 2003 the California Fish and Game Commission voted not to list these owls as endangered in California. However, this does not mean that the Department of F&G has forgotten the species.

Under the direction of Esther Burkett, Department of Fish & Game, Habitat Conservation Planning Branch, Sacramento. EBurkett@dfg.ca.gov, the Department is attempting to draft a conservation strategy for the Burrowing Owl in California. Since there is limited Federal money, and state funds must be matched 25%, the Department can use the help of citizen birders.

Many of you carefully observe and list the location and breeding of Burrowing Owls locally. If you have such records for 2005 or even previous years, the Department of F&G would appreciate reports of BUOW breeding sites and fledging success on the form located at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/html/animals.html>. This form can be downloaded with directions as pdf files and sent to the address on the form. The SCVAS Environmental Action Committee would appreciate receiving a copy of these forms for our records. We could even use new members to help in these or other conservation efforts. Contact Executive Director Brenda Torres-Barreto to volunteer.

Beginning in May 2006 you may want to participate in the the upcoming Statewide Burrowing Owl Survey being coordinated by the Institute for Bird Populations under the direction of Dave De Sante. *The Avocet* will have details of this survey in a future issue.

extinct. The Bald Eagle, the California Condor, and the Whooping Crane are just a few of the hundreds of species whose populations have increased while being listed under the Act as threatened or endangered.

Congressman Pombo's "Extinction Bill" abandons responsible protection of vulnerable wildlife in favor of concessions to developers and corporate interests. This bill eliminates the Endangered Species Act's requirement to protect critical habitat areas, and requires the federal government to use taxpayer dollars to pay developers for complying with the Endangered Species Act's prohibition on killing or injuring imperiled wildlife, and sets no limits on these payments.

The SCVAS considers this an environmental policy and management issue, not a political issue. This is also the opinion of Pete McCloskey, former Republican Member of Congress and co-author of the Endangered Species Act who publicly said: "*The Endangered Species Act protects the web of life that is America's natural heritage. Without it, we may not be blessed with the American bald eagle, the California condor or the Pacific salmon. We have a duty to prevent the extinction of species and the Act has done that well. Recovery of species will take time and that effort deserves full funding. Congress should reject any proposals, including the bill currently before the House of Representatives, that would weaken the protections for our nation's endangered species or the lands they need to recover.*"

Unfortunately, the House approved the Extinction Bill on September 27, and it is now the responsibility of U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, plus State Senators Joseph Simitian, Elaine Alquist, and Abel Maldonado, to save the Endangered Species Act. SCVAS truly hopes to win this battle over Pombo's bill. We owe it to our children and grandchildren. Once species are gone, we cannot bring them back.

If you wish to send a letter urging key politicians to oppose the "Extinction Bill", please visit our newly revised website <[www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org)> to find updates of this issue and information on how you can help save the Endangered Species Act.



Burrowing Owl by John Mariani

# Global Warming and Wildlife

As the dominant species on Earth, we have the responsibility of caring for the planet's unique and life-sustaining ecosystems of forests, oceans, grasslands, and human societies. The fate of the Earth is our own fate and by burning fossil fuels we are destroying our home and the home of the plants and animals that share the planet. Just as parents are responsible for helping their children to grow up healthy and happy, so are we responsible for being good stewards to the natural resources we inherited.

There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that heat-trapping gases caused by burning fossil fuels, like oil and coal, have modified the temperature on Earth. The level of carbon dioxide (the primary heat-trapping gas) in our atmosphere has increased by over 30% since the Industrial Revolution with a corresponding 1.1° Fahrenheit increase in the average global temperature and a 5° F average increase at the poles.

The change in climate caused by global warming will have irreversible consequences on all aspects of our lives, including flooded coastal zones, an increase in the frequency and severity of storms, worsening droughts and heat waves, species extinction, and geopolitical instability. Californians will not escape the potential havoc brought on by climate change nor will the wildlife with whom we share the planet.

As global temperature continues to rise, scientists from around the world are documenting rapid and dramatic shifts in

the life cycles of plants and animals. For example, animals are migrating, mating, producing young, and emerging from hibernation sooner than in the recent past. According to a 2004 report from the Pew Center for Global Climate Change, over 800 species exhibited significant changes in their phenologies and/or distributions over the past 20-140 years. For example:

- Mexican Jays in southern Arizona are breeding approximately 10 days sooner than they did in 1971;
- The body size of white-throated wood rats in New Mexico has decreased by an average 16% in response to raising temperature;
- Barn Swallows nationwide are nesting 9 days sooner than they did in 1959; and
- Red-winged Blackbirds are arriving at their breeding grounds in northern Michigan 21 days earlier than they did in 1960.

These species-level phenological changes could cause a mismatch in the timing of animal and plant interactions, which could transform entire communities as plants and animals in the same habitat respond differently to the change in climate caused by global warming. Although climate change is a global problem, impacts on wildlife will be most apparent at the local and regional level. Wildlife in the San Francisco Bay Area are beginning to show signs of environmental stress. For example, over the past 60 years the ranges of intertidal invertebrates (e.g., limpets and snails) shifted northward as sea and air temperatures have risen. The distribution of California's Edith's Checkerspot Butterfly is contracting — 80% of all populations in the southern portion of its range have become extinct.

North America's wetlands support a rich abundance and diversity of wildlife that have many important economic, ecological, recreational, and aesthetic values. Sea level rise could have significant impacts on wildlife habitat in the major deltas. Additionally, rising temperature and the likely decline in winter precipitation will result in a significant reduction in Sierra Nevada snowpack. Eighty percent of California's annual precipitation falls during the winter. The Sierra Nevada snowpack is a critical source of water during the late spring and summer when 75% of California's water use occurs. As snowpack declines and stream flow becomes less reliable, changes in seasonal flow patterns could affect the salinity patterns in San Francisco Bay estuaries, resulting in changes in the aquatic food webs. The San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary's wetlands feed and shelter millions of waterfowl, shorebirds and seabirds every year including half the migrants along the Pacific Flyway.

Viable solutions to global warming exist today. We can take immediate steps to address the anticipated impacts by increasing the energy efficiency of our homes and businesses, by using and promoting renewable energy sources like wind and solar for our electricity, and by promoting mass transit and increasing the fuel efficiency of our vehicles. The time for action is now, before the window of opportunity closes.

—Stan Van Velsor

Global Warming Program Coordinator  
Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club

## “Internet birding” *cont'd from Page 1*

to ask questions, and sites that present bird illustrations, photos, sounds and videos. But that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Consider Google. By typing the name of a bird on the Google search page you can find literally millions of websites that have information on that bird, some far more extensive than what you find in a book. Or if you don't know the name of the bird you can enter a set of keywords such as “small black bird with red eye that eats peanuts.”

Google will find every website that contains that string of characters on its page. And Google does not skimp on answers — we entered the above term into Google and got back 3,020,000 web sites! Google sorts the results of the search in terms of “relevancy,” putting the sites most likely to have the information you want at the top. Indeed, the first link in Google for that term was “Birds that eat Peanuts.”

If that's all the internet offered, it wouldn't be much of a leap beyond the paper-based book; however three important features separate these web sites from book-based field guides:

1. The sites provide sound capability by offering actual bird calls you can listen to.
2. A few sites provide video galleries where you can view birds in motion.
3. Some sites offer “forums” for sharing your experiences with other birders, and get help IDing that elusive bird you saw. A few even have “experts” available to provide identification aids.

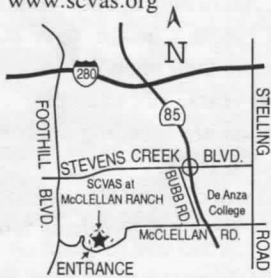
Don't miss this special opportunity to learn all about birding on the Internet at the general meeting, November 16!



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

**2005 Volume 52, 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

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**7XCH C14**

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