



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

March - April 2006

SCVAS Spring Birdathon Wants YOU!

**Big day of birding + big prizes =
big benefit for all members**

by Dotty Calabrese

Everyone, from beginner to expert birder, can participate in the 2006 SCVAS Spring Birdathon. Anyone can win fabulous prizes — from spotting scopes, binoculars and birding trips to entertainment tickets, vacation home getaways, excellent wines, and much more!

The Spring Birdathon is a major fundraising event for SCVAS' environmental education programs, raising over \$25,000 in 2005. Your participation can help us raise more in 2006! Here are the basics of how to join in the Birdathon fun, raise money, and compete for a prize.

1. Check www.scvas.org for Birdathon rules, information, and prize lists. Download the Registration and Results Forms. Check back, as the prize list will be updated often.

2. Talk to your birding friends about forming a Self-Guided Team and pick a day to bird between April 1-23. Register your team by calling Susan at the SCVAS office (408)252-3747, or call the office to join a Guided Team led by an expert birder (See Page 13).

3. Plan your birding day with your Self-Guided teammates. You can design a relaxed and restful Birdathon or one that is creative and energetic. For example:

- Spend four hours on a Saturday snacking in lounge chairs on your patio counting species at your feeders (4-hour Birdathon category).
- Race around Santa Clara County from before dawn until after dark, birding in as many habitats and locations as is humanly possible in a 24-hour period (24-hour Birdathon category).
- Create a unique Birdathon that fits your team (4-hour or 24-hour Birdathon category).

4. Raise money - at least \$25. It's so much easier than you think. Most people you know will be delighted to support your efforts for a worthy environmental education program with a small or large tax-deductible donation. Call, e-mail, or write all your friends, family, co-workers, neighbors and acquaintances to ask for pledges or donations. Sound too hard? Read the fundraising tips in your Birdathon packet and/or attend the free

fundraising workshop at the SCVAS office on Monday, March 13 at 7:00 PM. You'll find out how easy it can be. Remember, the top prizes will go to the top Birdathon individuals

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General Membership Meeting

"The Magic of Malheur: Oasis in Oregon's Great Basin Desert"

with Steve Shunk

Palo Alto Arts Center, Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Wednesday, Mar. 15

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

At the heart of Southeast Oregon's "sagebrush ocean" lies a place that defies the imagination. Snowmelt from the north and south flows into an expansive marshland surrounded by miles of forbidding desert. Huge lakes define more than 100,000 acres of shallow wetlands. Upland, riparian, and grassland habitats broaden the invitation to a huge diversity of birds and mammals. This is the place they call Malheur.

Join Oregon naturalist Stephen Shunk for a grand tour of Malheur Refuge and Steens Mountain. Steve will share the bizarre courtship of the Sage Grouse and the epic migration of the Swainson's Hawk, and show you the sunsets and scenic vistas that make the magic of Malheur.

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*Twitchers,
Shrikes, and
Snipe Hunters...*

see Page 10

◆ *Slaty-backed Gull*
— *Field Notes, Page 6*

◆ *Complete 2005 CBC results*
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◆ *ESA forum highlights*
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◆ *Earth Day event*
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Mar. - Apr. '06 Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

NF = No facilities available

Wednesday Mar. 1, 12 noon

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leaders: Freddy Howell and Elaine Gould. Contact organizer Silviana Ruiz (408) 730-7545 to attend. Donald M. Somers Water Pollution Control Plant, junction of Borregas and Caribbean. Meet at trailhead at north end. Birding geared toward beginners. Bring binoculars; loaners also available. **RC**

Saturday Mar. 4, 8 AM

Windy Hill OSP

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. Meet in parking lot at Sausal Pond edge of Preserve. From I-280 in Portola Valley take Alpine Rd south (toward hills) about 2.9 miles to first stop sign, turn right on Portola Rd and go 0.8 miles to parking lot on left side of road just past The Sequoias. **RC**

Sunday Mar. 5, 9 AM

Stanford Campus

Half day. Leader: Dick Stovel (650) 856-6105. From Hwy 101 in Palo Alto take University Ave exit west through downtown and into Stanford campus (University Ave becomes Palm Dr). Meet at end of Palm Dr at entrance to Main Quad. Local breeding birds and early returning migrants should be active. Recommended for beginning birders. **RC**

Wednesday Mar. 8, 8:30 AM

Stevens Creek Park

Half day. Leaders: Gail and Doug Cheeseman. (408) 741-5330. From Hwy 280 take Foothill Blvd. south about 2 miles. Turn left into Chestnut parking area. \$4 entry fee. **LO, RC**

Saturday Mar. 11, 8:30 AM

Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right on unnamed road toward Model Airplane Park where power towers cross Hwy. Follow road for 1/2 mile and park where it bends to the right. **RC**

Sunday Mar. 12, 8 AM

Arastradero OSP

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd west; turn right on Arastradero Rd, meet in parking lot about 1/2 mile on right. Moderate walking. **RC**

Saturday & Sunday Mar. 18 & 19

Honey Lake, Eagle Lake & vicinity

Leader: Bob Hirt (408) 821-2732. A weekend trip to a remote corner of northeast California to see Sage Grouse on their booming grounds. Other expected species include eagles, hawks, geese, ducks, cranes, woodpeckers and mountain specialties such as Townsend's Solitaire, Cassin's Finch, Mountain Bluebird, and Pinyon Jay. Trip limited to 20 participants, please call leader for further details and to reserve a space.

Saturday Mar. 25, 8:30 AM

Grant Ranch Co. Park

Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408) 265-9286. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave northeast, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd. and go approx. 9 miles to park. Meet at Hall's Valley Lake parking lot (first lot on left after passing Main Entrance on right. Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Moderate 2 mile walk. **LO, RC**

Sunday Mar. 26, 8 AM

Stevens Creek County Park

Half day. Leader: Pat Kenny (408) 725-0468. See directions under Mar. 8 listing. Excellent riparian habitat for migrants, early returning breeding birds. \$4 entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Saturday Apr. 1, 8:30 AM

Gilroy Hot Springs Rd.

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Trip limited to 16 participants, call Bob to reserve a space. Maximum 6 cars; be prepared to carpool. Meet at intersection of Gilroy Hot Springs Rd and Canada Rd. From Hwy 101 take Leavesley Rd east through shopping center, turn left on New Ave then right on Roop Rd. Once in foothills bear left at fork in road (Roop Rd), continue about 4 miles to Canada Rd. Migrants, breeding birds of south Santa Clara County. **RC**

Sunday Apr. 2, 8:30 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Al Eisner (650) 364-3686 evenings, (650) 926-2018 days. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd northeast toward hills, go left on Toyon Ave, then right on Penitencia Creek Rd. Meet in "Rustic Lands" parking area on right just before T intersection and underpass. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk; trail may be muddy. Possible Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, American Dipper, early migrants, lingering winter birds. *Note change to Daylight Savings Time—spring forward or be late.* Entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Apr. 5, 12 noon

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leader: Freddy Howell and Elaine Gould. Contact organizer Silviana Ruiz (408) 730-7545 to attend. See Mar. 1 listing for details.

Saturday Apr. 8, 8 AM

Ed Levin County Park (South)

Half day. Al Dieckmann (408) 379-5641. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and 680 (becomes Calaveras Rd) past Spring Valley Golf Course; meet in parking lot to right of park entrance. Entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Sunday Apr. 9, 8:30 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408) 275-1492. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd north of Hwy 101 in Mtn. View. All are encouraged to attend but birding and discussions will be geared toward the beginning birder. **RC**

Wednesday Apr. 12, 7 AM

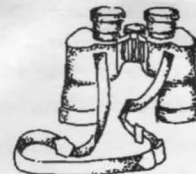
Rancho San Antonio OSP

Half day. Leader: Jim Liskovec (650) 969-5542. Rise and shine, birders—trip begins at 7AM! Emphasis on bird song. Some strenuous walking on hilly trails. From Hwy 280 take Foothill Expwy-Grant Rd exit turning south onto Foothill Blvd. Turn right on Cristo Rey Dr; left into park; continue on to large parking area. Bring lunch and water. Meet by restrooms. **RC**

Saturday Apr. 15, 7:30 AM

West Pinnacles National Monument

Leader: Rick Fournier (831) 632-2473, Awarbler@aol.com. Trip limited to 15 participants. Beautiful high peaks, wildflowers and birds. From valley floor to Chaparral Campground we'll pass through a variety of habitats until we reach an elevation of 1400 feet, then explore Juniper Canyon and Balconies trail, finishing up in Balconies Caves looking for Townsend's Big-eared Bats. Directions: Take Hwy 101 South through Salinas to Soledad; take W. Pinnacles turn off. Exit right over freeway on Hwy 146 to stop sign. Meet in Carl's Jr. parking lot at 7:30. Bring lunch, liquids and a flashlight for exploring the Balconies Caves. **PLEASE CARPOOL.** Bring FRS radios. \$5 entrance fee.



Field Trips *continued*

Saturday Apr. 15, 8 AM Hidden Villa

Leader: Jim Liskovec. Registration required: (650) 949-9704. Emphasis on birding by ear, when bird song is at its peak in the oak woodlands. For ages 12 and up—beginners welcome. Wear hiking shoes, bring binoculars (loaner binoculars available for those without). Park in upper lot, meet at green tent. Parking fee of \$5/car. *RC*

Sunday Apr. 16, 8:30 AM Ed Levin County Park (North)

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Take Hwy 237 east, crossing I-880 and 680 (becomes Calaveras Rd), turn left on Downing Rd to park entrance. Meet in parking lot on far, northeast side of Sandy Wool Lake. Migrants, local breeding birds in Milpitas' prime birding hotspot. Trail is steep in places. Entrance fee. *LO, RC*

Saturday Apr. 22, 8 AM Arastradero OSP

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd west; turn right on Arastradero Rd and meet in parking lot about 1/2 mile on right. Moderately strenuous hiking. *RC*

Sunday Apr. 23, 8 AM Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford University

Half day. Leader: Marion Smith. Trip limited to 16; call Marion at (650) 493-7210 to reserve space. \$5 fee per person. Meet in parking lot on right side of Sand Hill Rd as you head toward Preserve (near I-280 freeway). Carpooling now required from lot to Preserve entrance. Caravan from parking lot between 7:50 and 8:00 only, when gate will be open. (*Do not leave earlier—parking outside Preserve gate not allowed.*) Main gate is on left about 2 miles west of I-280 on Sand Hill Rd. Trip involves 2 to 3 miles moderately strenuous walking. Trip goes rain or shine.

Wednesday Apr. 26, 8:30 AM Christmas Hill Park Nestbox Walk

3 hours. Leader: Norman Watenpaugh (408) 842-5069. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy go west on Tenth Street about 1 mile; 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 2 mile walk; focus on nesting chickadees and titmice. *RC, LO*

Saturday Apr. 29, 8:30 AM Almaden Lake Park, Alamos Creek

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. Meet in west parking lot of Almaden Lake Park. From Highway 85 take Almaden Expwy south. Park is on east (left) side of Almaden Expwy. Continue just past Coleman Rd (and the park), return northbound on Almaden Expwy to park entrance on right. About 3 miles easy walking. Waterfowl, raptors, variety of riparian birds. *LO, RC*

Sunday Apr. 30, 8 AM Stevens Creek County Park

Half day. Leader: Grant Webb (408) 578-0409. From I-280 in Cupertino take Foothill Expwy south 2.1 miles (becomes Stevens Canyon Rd), turn left into first (Chestnut) park entrance and meet in first parking lot. Migrants, local breeding birds. \$4 fee. *LO*

Saturday May 6, 8:30 AM Mines Rd. and vicinity

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

Sunday May 7, 8:30 AM Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Roxie Handler (408) 730-1745. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mountain View. Trip for beginning birders but all are encouraged to attend.

Events Calendar

Wed. 3/1, 7:30 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers features Bruce Finocchio with wildlife photos from Carmel Valley; also slides from South Africa. Lucie Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto

Tues. 3/7, 4 PM

Ed. Committee Mtg. (location TBA)

Mon. 3/13, 7 PM

Birdathon Fundraising Seminar
McClellan Ranch Park

Tues. 3/14, 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: Common Loon

Wed. 3/15, 7:30 PM

General Meeting, Palo Alto (see Pg. 1)

Wed. 3/22, 7 PM

EAC Mtg., McClellan Ranch Park

Wed. 3/29, 7 PM

Maria Ruth, author of "Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet" will speak at 7:30, with book signing immediately after.

Tues. 4/4, 4 PM

Ed. Committee Mtg. (location TBA)

Tues. 4/11, 9:30 AM

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

Wed. 4/19, 7:30 PM

General Meeting Palo Alto (see Pg. 5)

Wed. April 26, 6:30 PM

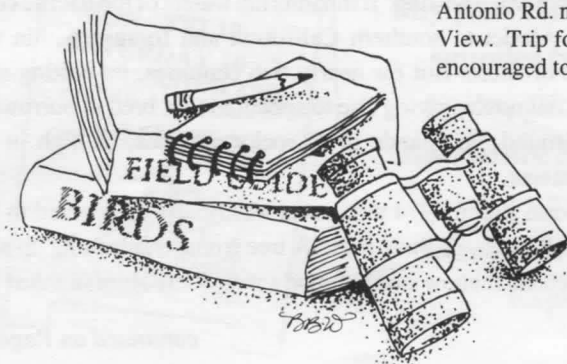
Volunteer appreciation dinner
McClellan Ranch
(see *Volunteer Ventures*, Page 4)

Sat. 4/29, 10 AM - 2 PM

Earth Day Festival (see Page 15)

Sat. May 6, 11 AM - 3 PM

South Bay Bird Fest 2006, Alviso
Guided walks, hands-on activities, crafts, street fair, and more. Call (408) 262-5513 or visit www.fws.gov/desfbay/birdfest.htm for more information.



Volunteer Ventures

by Kim Yuan-Farrell
Programs Coordinator

Last year over 65 million Americans stepped up to make their communities a better place by volunteering. Each year hundreds – yes, hundreds! – of individuals contribute, free of charge, their talent and time to helping SCVAS. Some of these volunteers help us for a couple of hours one day out of the year at a special event. Others dedicate many hours each day, week, or month, supporting our infrastructure and our staff in carrying out our education and conservation work. All of these contributions, large and small, are generous acts of kindness that make our community a better place for people and wildlife.

In honor of volunteers across the country and within our very own organization, SCVAS is celebrating **National Volunteer Week** from April 23-29. Veteran volunteers: please stop in the office to say “hi” and let us show our appreciation. Potential new volunteers: now is a great time to explore our many opportunities and see what might be a good fit for you. Any current or new volunteers who stop in the office during National Volunteer Week are likely to get a little token of our appreciation. And on Wednesday, April 26 at 6:30 PM, please join us for a **Volunteer Appreciation Tapas Dinner**, a veritable feast of delicious appetizers! This will be a wonderful – and delicious – opportunity to meet other SCVAS members and find out what

Share the fun

I’m sure we can all remember the various factors that first got us interested in birding and how belonging SCVAS has provided additional opportunities to develop and enjoy that activity. To make more individuals aware of the pleasures of birding, SCVAS is actively looking for the best way to get the message across.

Given the wide range of cultures in the Bay Area, we would appreciate input from members regarding the cultural viewpoints they are familiar with and their help in giving SCVAS the opportunity to speak to groups of that cultural viewpoint. We’re looking for ambassadors to different ethnic and other groups, including high school students and retirement home residents, who could suggest and arrange SCVAS informal meetings with those groups so we can share our enthusiasm and make such groups aware of the programs we currently offer. We need to better understand the interests and perspective of such groups to help develop new programs within our mission that could be tailored to their interests and needs.

Your willingness to participate in this effort, and any other ideas you have to share the fun with others, would be most welcome. If interested, please leave your name, contact information, and area(s) of interest with Susan at the office.

—John Callahan, Chairman
Membership Committee

they love most about volunteering. Our dinner will take place at McClellan Ranch Park. Space is limited, so please RSVP no later than April 19. (408) 252-3740 or programs@scvas.org.

Just two of the current positions available:

Treasurer – Serve as our chapter’s chief financial officer, overseeing our funds and acting as Finance Committee Chairperson. This position is ongoing. The time commitment involves several hours each month. Finance management experience required. Call (408) 252-3740 for more information.

Field Trip Coordinator – Schedule our fourth Wednesday of the month field trips (not December, June or August). This coordinator will recruit field trip leaders for eight events per year and help leaders submit brief notices for *The Avocet’s* Field Trips section. This job is usually not very time-consuming and no experience or specific skills are required. Training and background will be provided.

Special book-signing event

Wednesday March 29, 7 PM

McClellan Ranch Park

SCVAS is pleased to host

guest speaker **Maria Mudd Ruth**, author of

“Rare Bird; Pursuing the Mystery of the
Marbled Murrelet”

Doors open at 7; the author will speak at 7:30

book-signing immediately after

Space is limited, RSVP to Susan 408-252-3747

In her book Rare Bird: Pursuing the Mystery of the Marbled Murrelet, Maria Mudd Ruth has written a compelling tale of avian mystery and its unfolding. The Marbled Murrelet, a “chunky, baked potato of a bird,” is a seabird that, unlike other seabirds, nests in mossy depressions on the high limbs of trees in old growth forests — up to forty-five miles from the sea. It’s an elusive bird, hard to view close up at sea and even harder to glimpse when nesting. It inhabits the waters of the Pacific coast from Alaska to southern California and forages within two miles of shore. But for nearly two centuries, its nesting sites were unknown, giving rise to speculation it bred in burrows in the ground, on islands or in rocky crevices, or high in the mountains.

It wasn’t until 1974 that a nest was finally discovered in Big Basin Redwoods State Park. A tree trimmer, cleaning up after a spectacular snow storm, found a web-footed bird in a nest 148

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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.

Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask with Lisa Myers

Lisa will cover all those topics many birders are too shy to discuss. How do the different birds continue their species? Do birds have sex? Some males have many females, but did you know that some females have many males? Who helps with the child rearing and who leaves town!? There are all kinds of fancy words to describe the details behind avian procreation and copulation. Don't be shy; sign up now!

Dates: Class: Thursdays, 5/4 and 5/11 7-9 PM

Field trip: Sunday 5/7 8 AM-12 PM

Location: Conference Room, McClellan Ranch in Cupertino

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

Minimum 8 students, maximum 24

Beginning Birdwatching Workshop with Lisa Myers

In this half-day workshop, Lisa will introduce you to everything you need to know to get into the sport of birdwatching. Become familiar with field guides, birding ethics, optics, and Bay Area hot spots. Lisa will review the different families of birds and what field marks to look for and will touch on taxonomy. Then you'll get to practice what you have learned in the field during an hour and a half of birding at McClellan Ranch.

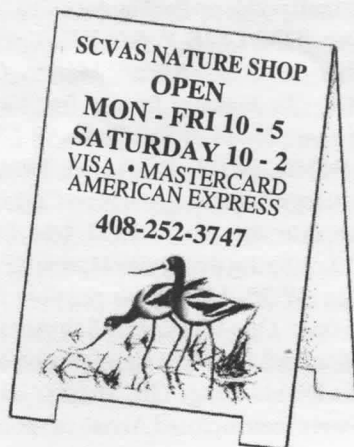
Date: Saturday, 4/29 8 AM- 12:30 PM (lecture and field)

Location: Conference Room, McClellan Ranch in Cupertino

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

Minimum 8 students, maximum 24

Lisa has been a birder for most of her life. She teaches classes and conducts workshops throughout the Santa Clara Valley. She strives to get new people into the sport and introduce them to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. Lisa's classes are very creative and offer a fun and 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.



Buy your birding supplies (seed, books, gifts) at the Nature Shop where we now take American Express!

General Membership Meeting "Breeding Birds of the Santa Cruz Mountains" with David Suddjian

Palo Alto Arts Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Wednesday, Apr. 19

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

A rich community of breeding birds live in the forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains, including many species that are of conservation concern. We suspect populations of some are changing, but there is little solid information available to assess these changes. David Suddjian will report on the findings of the first 4 years of a long-term monitoring program designed to track our dynamic bird populations in forests throughout Santa Cruz County. This ambitious grassroots effort employs expert birding eyes and ears to survey birds along 51 routes each spring. The project has been supported by grants from SCVAS.

March Gen. Meeting *continued from Page 1*

The region surrounding Malheur National Wildlife Refuge boasts over 340 bird species, including eastern breeders like Bobolink, Eastern Kingbird and Blue-winged Teal. The confluence of desert and marshland invites nesting birds as varied as Franklin's Gull and Sage Thrasher. Spring brings white waves of Snow and Ross's Geese, and fall sees the passage of more than 15 raptor species and 25 different shorebirds. Over 30 different warblers have been documented between the fall and spring peaks. Wintering birds include Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, and abundant Rough-legged Hawks, with large flocks of Tundra Swans joining the resident Trumpeters.

The primary source of the region's water is the snowpack from Steens Mountain, a thirty-mile-long fault block that rises more than a mile above the Alvord Desert at the south end of Malheur Refuge. "The Steens" hosts breeding birds such as Black Rosy-Finch, Red naped Sapsucker, Mountain Bluebird, Cassin's Finch, and Dusky Flycatcher. Fall raptor migration on the mountain occurs in epic proportions, while huge galleries of quaking aspen paint a rainbow of fall colors against the sagebrush expanse.

Former SCVAS board member Stephen Shunk fledged as a birder in the Santa Clara Valley where he began teaching birding classes in 1992. Now, through his company, Paradise Birding, Steve leads birding tours throughout the Western U.S. He co-founded the East Cascades Bird Conservancy in 2002, through which he leads numerous volunteer field studies in Oregon. Steve was also the project coordinator for the Oregon Cascades Birding Trail. In his spare time, Steve leads the Sisters and Santiam Pass Christmas Bird Counts, and is currently writing the Peterson Series Guide to North American Woodpeckers.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Waterfowl through Hawks

Compared to recent winters, there has been a drought of the rarer brown and white geese in December and January. Single **Greater White-fronted Geese** included one at the Sunnyvale GC on 11 Dec (ChW), an immature at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 19 Dec (MJM), and one at the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP on 4 Jan (RCh). Five **Snow Geese** were at Shoreline Park 11-13 Dec (FV, DWe), but were not found later. Two immatures were at Drawbridge, north of the county line on 18 Dec (BW, MW *fide* KHo). An immature **Ross's Goose** was seen again at Calero Reservoir on 1 Dec (AV) and one was also seen near Bloomfield and Frazier Lake roads on 24 Dec (SCR). A group of seven **Tundra Swans** stopped briefly on Salt Pond A2W on 7 Dec (DSt) and another seven birds were seen over San Felipe Road on 6 Jan (ADeM). Two to eight male **Eurasian Wigeon** were found in Salt Pond A9 in Alviso, 4-18 Dec (MMR, MJM) and, on 19 Dec, single males were in the Palo Alto FCB (JMe) and Salt Pond A2W (WGB). With the new year, a male was seen again in the Palo Alto FCB on 1 Jan (MMR, MJM), one was in Salt Pond A2W on 5 Jan (JMy), and a third was found in the Palo Alto estuary 17-26 Jan (PBr, m.ob.). **Blue-winged Teal** continued at the Lockheed-Martin ponds with four males on 19 Dec (MJM) and a pair there on 1 Jan (RWR et al., MMR, MJM). Eight birds were in the Palo Alto FCB on 19 Dec (JMe) and two males were seen in Adobe Creek on 23-24 Jan (JBH, WGB). A male '**Eurasian**' **Green-winged Teal** was found on a Los Altos GC pond on 16 Dec (CJC). An intergrade male was found near the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh 19 Dec 05-30 Jan 06 (WGB, GL, RWR, FV). The greatest concentration of **Redheads** was of 72+ birds in the Alviso salt ponds on 4 Dec (MMR, MJM) and seven were still there on 22 Jan (WGB). Inland, a female was seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds 27 Dec 05-29 Jan 06 (MJM, m.ob.). Towards

the end of the period, four to 14 were found at Crittenden Marsh 27-28 Jan (RWR, FV, DMA). A count of 256 **Ring-necked Ducks** on the Arroyo Hondo arm of Calaveras Reservoir was a high count (AR et al.). **Barrow's Goldeneyes** first showed up at Shoreline Lake on 11 Nov when two females were seen (RKe, PKe). A male was noted as well on 20 Nov (MDo, BCh) and all have been regular there into January (m.ob.). Immature birds were seen there as well in late December and a third female was seen 28 Dec 2005-1 Jan 2006 (MMR, MJM, RWR et al.). **Common Mergansers** are most

A Slaty-backed Gull, seen briefly in Alviso, was a county first; a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper stayed longer

often found on inland reservoirs, so nine birds on Shoreline Lake on 28 Jan (DMA) were unusual. Counts of 204 **Red-breasted Mergansers** on 4 Dec and 188 on 18 Dec on the Alviso salt ponds (MMR, MJM) were higher numbers than occur there in most winters. Our only loons this winter were single **Red-throated Loons** that appeared on Lexington Reservoir on 26 Dec (DLSu) and Calero Reservoir on 28 Dec (SCR). Neither bird was refound. An apparently oiled **Red-necked Grebe** was reported from the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 7 Jan (*fide* RCh). By 9 Jan it had succumbed (v.ob.). Two **American Bitterns** were found at the edge of the South Bay at Triangle Marsh on 18 Dec (MMR). Inland, two birds were seen along Coyote Creek on 30 Dec (RWR, RKe, PKe) and a third was at the Ogier Avenue ponds (KHo, RP *fide* AV). One-to-two birds were also at the Ogier Ave. Ponds 1-8 Jan (MMR, KHo et al.). The adult **Bald Eagle** that has wintered at Calero Reservoir in past years was first seen there again on 14 Dec (AV) and has remained through the period

(m.ob.). Two adults and a 1st-year bird were seen along the northern arm of Anderson Reservoir on 30 Dec (SCR, RHe). An adult, a near-adult, and an immature were in the Isabel Valley on 2 Jan (MMR, MJM) and one adult was in the San Antonio Valley the same day (WGB). A **Ferruginous Hawk** was seen on Marsh Road on 18 Dec (RbC, RCo, JA *fide* KHo) and may have been one of the birds found there in the fall. An adult near Richmond Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard was found again on 24 Dec (MJM) and was here more or less regularly into January, as in previous years. Single birds were seen near the Metcalf Road summit on 30 Dec (MMR, CJC) and on the San Felipe Ranch later in the day (MMR). A bird at the Coyote Creek GC on 1 Jan (MMR, MJM) was different from the Santa Teresa adult. Two adults were seen in the Isabel Valley on 2 Jan (MMR, MJM).

Rails through Gulls

A **Black Rail** was found at the Palo Alto Baylands on the high tide of 1 Dec (BGE et al. *fide* DBa). Likely the same bird was found on 31 Dec (MMR, SK, m.ob.) and 1 Jan (KPa, AV). A **Sora** near the San Antone Junction on 2 Jan (JE, MC *fide* BH) was unusual for the Mt. Hamilton CBC, whereas the **Common Moorhen** found in the Isabel Valley the same day (MMR, MJM) is the first winter record from the interior of the Diablo Range. **Snowy Plovers** returned to Salt Pond A8 in Alviso with 13 there 4-15 Dec (MMR, MJM). Only one was seen in the closed salt ponds on the San Jose CBC on 18 Dec (DMcI, VS-Y *fide* KHo), with another north of Alviso Marina CP (MMR). In January, four to five birds were again found in Salt Pond A8 1-13 Jan (MMR, MJM, RGJ). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** lingered in the New Chicago Marsh near the Alviso EEC 4-26 Dec (v.ob.). A bird at the Alviso Marina CP 9-10 Dec (WGB, MJM) was possibly the same one. One found near San Antone Junction on 2 Jan was a surprising record for the Diablo Range (JE, MC *fide* BH). Two were seen in closed Alviso salt ponds

Field Notes *cont'd*

on 8 and 13 Jan (MMR, MJM, RGJ). Over most of December and January, 27-70 **Sanderling** have been found in closed salt ponds in Alviso (MMR, MJM, RGJ). One bird was north of the Alviso Marina on 18 Dec (MMR). A juvenile **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was found east of the Alviso Marina on 7 Dec (MTy, CC *fide* JH). This bird was sometimes cooperative and sometimes not, but many people got to see it before it left sometime after 18 Dec (m.ob.). A "wreck" of **Red Phalarope** occurred just after Christmas. On 26 Dec, birders out and about found these birds widespread: 13 at Crittenden Marsh (MJM, DWe, RKe, PKe), eight at Lexington Reservoir (DLSu), three in Adobe Creek (DC), three in the percolation ponds at Bubb and San Tomas (LMY), two in Salt Pond A2W (WGB), two in the Sunnyvale Baylands Park (RS), one in the New Chicago Marsh (RWR), one in the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds (RWR), one in the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) ponds (AMcD), and one in the old Los Altos sewer ponds (DWe). Subsequent locations included one in a pond in the Shoreline amphitheater parking lot on 27 Dec (AME) and one at Chesbro Reservoir on 30 Dec (WGB). Birds were mostly gone by the next day, but lingered at Crittenden Marsh with six there 4 Jan (WGB, MJM), and one on Salt Pond A8 on 8 Jan (MMR, MJM, RGJ). This has been a remarkable winter for **Slaty-backed Gulls** along the coast and Alvaro Jaramillo worked his gull magic at Alviso, finding an adult Slaty-backed on the levee at Salt Pond A16 on 14 Jan for a first county record. This pond is used by the many gulls that dine at the nearby Newby Island dump. It has been a good January for **Glaucous Gulls**. A 1st-winter bird was found on the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 6 Jan (RWR, FV et al.). Another 1st-winter bird was seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds 8-9 Jan (KH0 et al., KPa). At Salt Pond A16, two 1st-winter birds were seen on 21 Jan and one on 28 Jan (both SCR), and a 2nd-winter bird was found on 21 Jan (SCR) and 28 Jan (MMR).

Poorwills through Orioles

A **Common Poorwill** heard near Loma Prieta on 9 Jan (DLSu) is likely a resident bird. The sapsucker news of the winter was a male **Red-naped Sapsucker** found next to Almaden Reservoir on 18 Jan (AV) and seen at least through 23 Jan (KPa, RWR, FV). A **Cassin's Vireo** was banded at the Coyote Creek Field Station on 25 Jan (*fide* RCo) and was recaptured there 29 Jan (*fide* RLe). This appears to be only the third winter record. **Tree Swallows** were found widely in December and January. High counts included 72 on the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 18 Dec (WGB, EA), 40 on nearby Salt Pond A18 the same day (CJC), and 30 over Lake Cunningham on 22 Jan (MJM). A few **Violet-green Swallows** were found as well with one on Salt Pond A18 on 18 Dec (CJC), one at Lake Cunningham on 18 Dec (J&SLi), one at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 18 Dec (SEM *fide* KH0), and two over the Oka percolation ponds on 2 Jan (JT). Less expected were a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** over Chesbro Reservoir on 30 Dec (WGB), a **Barn Swallow** along Coyote Creek south of the model airplane park the same day (KH0) and another Barn Swallow over the Lockheed Martin ponds on 4 Jan (KPa). It was not a winter for **Red-breasted Nuthatches**. A few were found where they are resident, otherwise the only birds were one along San Tomas Aquino Creek north of Tasman on 18 Dec (GHt) and again on 17 Jan (MJM) and one in a Los Gatos yard on 21 Jan (KPa). Two **Pygmy Nuthatches** found on Mt. Hamilton on 2 Jan (BH, CL) are likely of the Sierran subspecies, as the birds in the Santa Cruz Mountains are mostly sedentary. Wintering **House Wrens** included one on Salt Pond A8 on 4 Dec (MMR, MJM), one beside the old cannery at Alviso Marina CP on 10 Dec and 8 Jan (MJM, MMR, RGJ), one to two birds at the Alviso EEC on 23 Dec and 20 Jan (MJM), and a surprising bird on the east side of Mt.



"A Black-headed Grosbeak was seen along San Francisquito Creek near Stanford West on 19 Dec and is a rare winter record."

-Illustration by John Mariani

Hamilton on 2 Jan (HH *fide* BH). **American Dippers** included single birds near Twin Creeks on 27 Dec (KPa), 26 Jan (AV), and 28 Jan (MJM, WGB); one along Uvas Creek above Croy Creek on 30 Dec (WGB), and one on Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on 9 Jan (RKe, PKe). Wintering **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** included one at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 27 Dec (MJM) and a second along the Calero Creek Trail on 29 Dec (JPa). **Phainopepla** were found on 2 Jan on the Mt. Hamilton CBC, with two near San Antone Junction (JE, MC), one further south in the valley (WGB, RP, KS), and two in Isabel Valley (MMR, MJM). A **Yellow Warbler** seen along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 19 Dec (MMR) had been there since October. Another wintering Yellow Warbler was at Geng Road and San Francisquito Creek on 26 Jan (RW). A 1st-winter female **Black-throated Gray Warbler** has been coming to a feeder in Campbell 5 Dec-27 Jan (CK, DD). A

continued on Page 10

2005 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Species	SJ 12/18/05	PA 12/19/05	MtH 1/02/06	Cal-MH 12/30/05	Species	SJ 12/18/05	PA 12/19/05	MtH 1/02/06	Cal-MH 12/30/05
Greater White-fronted Goose	-	1	-	-	Cooper's Hawk	12	19	1	15
Snow Goose	2	-	-	-	<i>accipiter</i> , sp	7	2	-	-
<i>chen</i> , sp	-	-	-	CW	Red-shouldered Hawk	25	50	3	47
Cackling Goose	1	4	-	-	Red-tailed Hawk	96	114	21	129
Canada Goose	827	936	-	554	Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk	-	-	-	-
Wood Duck	7	5	41	128	Ferruginous Hawk	1	-	2	3
Gadwall	140	369	1	27	<i>buteo</i> , sp	-	1	-	-
Eurasian Wigeon	1	2	-	-	Golden Eagle	8	4	3	9
American Wigeon	881	1028	76	21	American Kestrel	52	42	12	115
Mallard	1281	1120	250	954	Merlin	8	8	-	7
Blue-winged Teal	-	12	-	-	Peregrine Falcon	5	10	-	4
Cinnamon Teal	84	58	-	11	Prairie Falcon	-	-	-	3
Northern Shoveler	4519	5740	-	15	falcon sp.	2	-	-	-
Northern Pintail	60	241	-	-	Clapper Rail	-	17	-	-
Green-winged Teal (American)	97	400	-	14	Virginia Rail	21	11	-	6
(Eurasian)	-	CW	-	-	Sora	22	8	1	4
(American x Eurasian)	-	1	-	-	Common Moorhen	8	3	1	9
Canvasback	369	968	-	29	American Coot	2705	5335	755	1126
Redhead	68	-	-	1	Black-bellied Plover	84	25	-	-
Ring-necked Duck	272	151	36	87	Snowy Plover	2	-	-	-
Tufted Duck	-	-	-	-	Semipalmated Plover	15	167	-	-
Greater Scaup	452	2236	-	104	Killdeer	126	24	17	208
Lesser Scaup	257	1588	1	77	Black-necked Stilt	479	205	-	4
<i>aythya</i> , sp	271	9456	-	-	American Avocet	543	1726	-	2
Surf Scoter	14	137	-	-	Greater Yellowlegs	34	11	1	11
Bufflehead	202	301	41	151	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	-	1	-
Common Goldeneye	77	175	2	72	Willet	46	2033	-	-
Barrow's Goldeneye	-	5	-	-	Spotted Sandpiper	1	2	-	2
Hooded Merganser	13	37	3	7	Whimbrel	-	18	-	-
Common Merganser	60	85	9	143	Long-billed Curlew	74	158	-	-
Red-breasted Merganser	191	4	-	-	Marbled Godwit	311	2179	-	-
Ruddy Duck	2264	14702	11	66	Sanderling	12	-	-	-
duck, sp	49	2501	-	-	Western Sandpiper	3323	4055	-	-
Ring-necked Pheasant	7	6	-	-	Least Sandpiper	879	1680	-	7
Wild Turkey	391	65	12	274	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	-	-	-
California Quail	135	234	382	338	Dunlin	169	674	-	-
Red-throated Loon	-	-	-	CW	<i>calidrid</i> , sp	1470	5350	-	-
Pied-billed Grebe	169	191	13	70	Short-billed Dowitcher	-	5	-	-
Horned Grebe	2	2	-	1	Long-billed Dowitcher	139	112	-	1
Red-necked Grebe	-	-	-	-	dowitcher, sp	1097	694	-	-
Eared Grebe	649	124	-	43	Wilson's Snipe	42	4	11	8
Western Grebe	116	5	-	CW	Red Phalarope	-	-	-	1
Clark's Grebe	12	4	-	1	Bonaparte's Gull	354	224	-	-
<i>aechmophorus</i> , sp	10	8	-	-	Mew Gull	129	5	-	24
American White Pelican	104	38	-	35	Ring-billed Gull	1459	745	-	184
Brown Pelican	24	82	-	-	California Gull	5916	1702	-	3617
Double-crested Cormorant	448	360	4	331	Herring Gull	986	106	-	836
American Bittern	3	-	-	3	Thayer's Gull	21	6	-	57
Great Blue Heron	38	18	5	17	Western Gull	117	123	-	-
Great Egret	92	60	1	36	Glaucous-winged Gull	121	131	-	5
Snowy Egret	114	126	-	29	Western x Glaucous-w Gull	-	44	-	1
Green Heron	2	5	1	9	gull, sp	5440	1994	-	4268
Black-crowned Night-Heron	157	42	-	9	Forster's Tern	26	69	-	-
Turkey Vulture	179	16	-	173	Black Skimmer	-	30	-	-
Osprey	-	-	-	9	Rock Pigeon	2292	742	-	1560
White-tailed Kite	21	49	1	78	Band-tailed Pigeon	1	12	20	58
Bald Eagle	-	-	4	4	Mourning Dove	948	404	1	1015
Northern Harrier	28	21	1	3	Barn Owl	5	4	-	5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	6	9	2	5	Western Screech-Owl	1	8	-	19

Species	SJ 12/18/05	PA 12/19/05	MtH 1/02/06	Cal-MH 12/30/05
Great Horned Owl	2	3	-	9
Northern Pygmy-Owl	-	-	-	1
Burrowing Owl	7	2	-	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	-	CW	-	2
White-throated Swift	-	18	-	CW
Anna's Hummingbird	140	359	1	332
Belted Kingfisher	16	10	8	29
Acorn Woodpecker	38	145	40	160
Red-breasted Sapsucker	2	3	4	9
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	-	1	-	-
Nuttall's Woodpecker	56	80	25	116
Downy Woodpecker	7	10	-	21
Hairy Woodpecker	4	19	6	10
Northern (Red-Shafted) Flicker	89	104	49	190
(Yellow-Shafted) Flicker (intergrade)	1	-	-	-
	2	-	-	1
Pileated Woodpecker	-	CW	-	-
woodpecker sp	-	-	-	3
Black Phoebe	280	239	42	254
Say's Phoebe	23	9	6	43
Loggerhead Shrike	16	4	-	12
Hutton's Vireo	5	30	-	11
Steller's Jay	81	265	23	88
Western Scrub-Jay	186	403	189	370
Yellow-billed Magpie	88	-	67	139
American Crow	763	304	21	705
Common Raven	49	106	19	80
Horned Lark	40	-	-	168
Tree Swallow	82	6	-	1
Violet-green Swallow	5	-	-	-
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	-	-	-	1
Barn Swallow	-	-	-	1
swallow sp	16	6	-	-
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	118	543	-	249
Oak Titmouse	28	187	108	221
Bushitit	690	1045	46	736
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	2	1	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	20	33	31	80
Pygmy Nuthatch	-	CW	2	-
Brown Creeper	5	21	1	8
Rock Wren	1	-	1	21
Bewick's Wren	36	120	13	90
House Wren	1	-	1	-
Marsh Wren	1	20	1	1
Winter Wren	1	4	-	-
American Dipper	1	-	-	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	-	3	-	-
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	208	307	27	298
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	-	-	-	CW
Western Bluebird	39	75	232	158
Hermit Thrush	64	138	23	58
American Robin	795	1818	237	1229
Varied Thrush	1	33	21	11
Wrentit	9	82	20	31
Northern Mockingbird	75	30	-	57
California Thrasher	5	26	11	9
European Starling	2900	930	424	1735
American Pipit	192	119	-	4
Cedar Waxwing	239	643	-	410
Phainopepla	-	-	3	-

Species	SJ 12/18/05	PA 12/19/05	MtH 1/02/06	Cal-MH 12/30/05
Orange-crowned Warbler	1	1	-	1
Yellow Warbler	-	1	-	-
Yellow-rumped Warbler (form ?)	570	633	2	297
(Audubon's)	138	212	-	158
(Myrtle)	6	8	-	3
Townsend's Warbler	18	72	-	28
Black-throated Gray Warbler	-	-	-	1
Northern Waterthrush	-	CW	-	-
Common Yellowthroat	43	23	-	3
American Redstart	-	-	-	1
Wilson's Warbler	1	-	-	-
Black-headed Grosbeak	-	1	-	-
Spotted Towhee	33	145	29	65
California Towhee	210	282	63	169
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	-	-	-	57
Lark Sparrow	5	-	11	85
Sage Sparrow	-	-	3	-
Savannah Sparrow	156	73	51	43
Fox Sparrow	72	57	31	30
Song Sparrow	189	85	2	76
Lincoln's Sparrow	98	10	2	10
Swamp Sparrow	-	-	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	1	3	-	1
Golden-crowned Sparrow	2028	1704	459	714
White-crowned Sparrow	1533	917	132	907
sparrow, sp	315	57	-	21
Grasshopper Sparrow	-	-	-	3
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	535	911	822	459
Black-headed Grosbeak	-	1	-	-
Red-winged Blackbird	637	570	465	1530
Tricolored Blackbird	104	-	4	10
Western Meadowlark	458	296	80	489
Rusty Blackbird	-	CW	-	-
Brewer's Blackbird	1179	253	194	1080
Brown-headed Cowbird	48	2	-	72
blackbird, sp	217	164	320	1088
Bullock's Oriole	-	-	-	1
Purple Finch	-	17	17	2
House Finch	647	817	22	690
Pine Siskin	2	-	-	-
Lesser Goldfinch	90	150	42	297
Lawrence's Goldfinch	-	-	-	-
American Goldfinch	301	170	-	51
goldfinch sp	-	11	-	-
House Sparrow	187	88	1	32
Nutmeg Mannikin	-	-	-	9
Muscovy Duck	1	-	-	-
Total Species	161	156	91	147
Total	62,085	90,861	6,203	33,940

Key: sp = species undetermined
 CW = Count Week

SJ = San Jose: compiled by Kirsten Holmquist
 PA = Palo Alto: compiled by Al Eisner
 MtH = Mount Hamilton: compiled by Bob Hirt
 Cal-MH = Calero-Morgan Hill: compiled by Ann Verdi

Data entry and chart format by Bonnie Bedford-White.

Field Notes *from Page 7*

male was found along Alamitos Creek south of Graystone on 30 Dec (BB et al.). A female or immature **American Redstart** was found along Coyote Creek near the Coyote Creek GC on 10 Dec (MJM) and was seen regularly through the end of January (m.ob.). The **Northern Waterthrush** at the Charleston Road marsh was last seen in September. It was found again on 21 Dec (MMR) and was found irregularly through the end of January (m.ob.). It appears that this is at least the third winter that this bird has wintered here. A spectacular male **Hooded Warbler** was seen visiting birches in an area of condominiums near Stevens Creek Boulevard and Albany Street on 12 Dec (DY) and was photographed on 17 Dec (JL). It was not found subsequently. Wintering **Wilson's Warblers** included males on Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 18 Dec (EA WGB) and near the Charleston Road marsh 6-30 Jan (PLaT, DMa, RWR, FV DWe). A bright male **Western Tanager** was seen in downtown Los Altos on 7 Dec (SR) and 13 Dec (GHa) and was probably the same bird. Three **Grasshopper Sparrows** were found on southern Coyote Ridge on 30 Dec (SCR, RHe) and were probably wintering there. A **White-throated Sparrow** continued at a Los Altos feeder through 19 Dec (RbC, RCo). The only other yard bird was one in Los Altos on 26 and 31 Jan (GHt). Other birds included one in the Overfelt Gardens on 18 Dec (AV, RP), one on Palo Alto Avenue above Middlefield 19 Dec 05-6 Jan 06 (MDo, KDo, PMB, LSt), one on the Stevens Creek Trail near Evelyn on 19 Dec (J&SLi), one on St. Marks Drive in Morgan Hill on 30 Dec (ADeM fide AV), one at the Alviso Marina on 1-8 Jan (MMR, MJM, v.ob.), one at the Coyote Reservoir on 1 Jan (LA), and two on Pastoria Street in Sunnyvale on 11 Jan (JDe). A **Black-headed Grosbeak** was seen along San Francisquito Creek near Stanford West on 19 Dec (DSt) and is a rare winter record. The only **Great-tailed Grackle** seen this winter was one at the Coyote Creek GC on 7 Jan (P&DKi). A female or immature **Hooded Oriole** in



Whale watchers Daniel, David, and Rebecca Moll enjoy the boat ride to see migrating Gray Whales in Monterey Bay this January. Thanks to funds raised by last year's Birdathon, ten participants from families in need were able to join the trips through Young Audubon scholarships. Photo by Kim Yuan-Farrell.

female or immature **Bullock's Oriole** at Edenvale Garden Park on 30 Dec (BB et al.) were the only orioles found this winter.

Observers: Linda Adams (LA), Emily Allen (EA), John Arnold (JA), Bruce Barrett (BB), Deborah Bartens (DBa), Bill Bousman (WGB), Phil Brown (PBr), Phyllis M. Browning (PMB), Doty Calabrese (DC), Brian Christman (BCh), Roy Churchwell (RCh), Rob Colwell (RbC), Rita Colwell (RCo), Cliff Cordy (CC), Chuck Coston (CJC), Mike Cussen (MC), Al DeMartini (ADeM), Joe Devine (JDe), Kelly Dodder (KDo), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Denise Doetsch (DD), Jimm Edgar (JE), Al Eisner (AME), Bruce Elliott (BGE), Janet Hanson (JH), Garth Harwood (GHa), Rick Herder (RHe), Howard Higley (HH), Bob Hirt (BH), Kirsten Holmquist (KHo), Grant Hoyt (GHt), John B. Hutz (JBH), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Penny & Dave Kiehl (P&DKi), Sandy Koonce (SK), Chris Kruger (CK), Peter LaTourrette (PLaT),

(RLe), Judy Leonard (JL), Jim & Sue Liskovec (J&SLi), Calvin Lou (CL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Dean Manley (DMa), Amy McDonald (AMcD), David McIntyre (DMcI), John Meyer (JMe), Steve Miller (SEM), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LMY), Rich Page (RP), Kathy Parker (KPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Michael Pollack (MP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Allen Royer (AR), Steve Rutledge (SR), Kathy Scott (KS), Vicki Silvas-Young (VS-Y), Dick Stovel (DSt), Lennie Stovel (LSt), Rosalie Strait (RS), David Suddjian (DLSu), Jim Thomas (JT), Mike Tyner (MTy), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Bill Walker (BW), Dave Weber (DWe), Mary Wisniewski (MW), Ron Wolf (RW), Chris Wolfe (ChW), and Donna Yokote (DY).

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

Palo Alto CBC results

The Palo Alto CBC on Dec. 19, 2005 found 90,861 birds of 156 species. This is at the low end of recent counts, with last year's 169 toward the high end. While advance weather forecasts had threatened rain, this only occurred at very early hours for the highest elevations. Counters in those areas also had to put up with some fog and wind; conditions lower down were overcast but mild.

Several factors account for much of the difference from last year. First, weather hampered owling at the upper elevations, and we missed the species typically found only there. Second, the tidal schedule at the mouth of San Francisquito Creek didn't provide a good opportunity to find our most difficult shorebirds. Third, last year was an invasion year for irruptive finches (and some other species); this year was quite the opposite. For example, Pine Siskins (which we usually get in at least small numbers) dropped from 845 to zero! And of course we didn't find any of the really rare finches, such as Red Crossbill and Lawrence's Goldfinch.

On the plus side, we tallied three species new to the Count. One was a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker along San Mateo Drive in Menlo Park —

congratulations to Carol Masterson, Martha O'Neal and Joe Macho for that find. The second was a Black-headed Grosbeak found by Dick Stovel at Stanford. Also new, but much more expected, was the recently-split species Cackling Goose, with three found at Bayfront Park and one at a Santa Clara Co. salt pond.

Other interesting finds included a Greater White-fronted Goose at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant; 2 Eurasian Wigeon (low); 12 Blue-winged Teal; 5 Barrow's Goldeneyes at Mountain View Shoreline Lake (6 was our past high); an intergrade Green-winged Teal (American x Eurasian) in the Stevens Creek area; 30 Black Skimmers at and near Charleston Slough (our highest count ever); 6 Tree Swallows at the Lockheed ponds (plus 6 unidentified swallows elsewhere); an Orange-crowned Warbler at the Lockheed ponds; a long-present Yellow Warbler along Stevens Creek; and three White-throated Sparrows. Not a rarity, but 3 Golden Eagles in one tree (including an immature) was a treat by Felt Lake.

Like the skimmer, another fairly recent arrival, the Wild Turkey, reached a new high; while the long-term increases of

Canada Goose, Red-shouldered Hawk and American Crow also resulted in new high counts. New highs of Brown Pelican, Common Merganser (by a lot) and Golden-crowned Sparrow were less obviously tied to persistent trends. On the other hand, for the second year in the row (after a precipitous decline) no Tricolored Blackbirds were found. We missed both Redhead and Pygmy Nuthatch for the first time in many years, while counts of Black-bellied Plover, Killdeer and Greater Yellowlegs were well below numbers found for the past 20 or more years.

Five additional species (plus the Eurasian form of Green-winged Teal) were seen during Count Week. The long-staying Rusty Blackbird at Bayfront Park, not found despite an intensive effort, was last reported to the Bird-Box on December 16. In contrast, the returning Northern Waterthrush at the Charleston Road marsh turned up on December 21 after a long silence.

I'd like to particularly thank Jack Cole for organizing the whole effort, especially challenging due to unfilled vacancies in two of eight regional-coordinator slots. And thanks of course to the other regional coordinators and to all of our enthusiastic counters.

—Al Eisner, compiler

Count Burrowing Owls This Year

by Nancy Teater

We're calling on SCVAS members to participate in a new citizen science project during the 2006 and 2007 breeding seasons. The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) www.birdpop.org is organizing a statewide census that will assess Burrowing Owl distribution and abundance throughout the entire breeding range of the species in California. The survey comes at a time when the Fish & Game Department and other organizations badly need updated information for use in formulating a comprehensive conservation strategy to safeguard the species across its range in the state.

The Institute is asking for volunteers to help the more populated areas of the state and will hire field workers to survey the desert and Great Basin portions where volunteers would be difficult to recruit.

The IBP did a similar census in the early 1990s but the census this year will survey an area nearly twice the size of the 1990s census because of the addition of the desert and Great Basin Regions.

How will the data be used?

First, the California Dept. of Fish and Game, Conservation Planning Branch, is drafting a conservation strategy for the owl, which is currently a Species of Special Concern. Since funds are limited, the census will aid Fish & Game in determining where conservation efforts should be focused.

Second, the census may provide the data needed to re-petition the California Fish & Game Commission for Threatened or Endangered Species listing for the owl, a step that would give it much

better protection. The Institute for Biological Diversity, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and others petitioned the Commission in 2003, but the petition was rejected for lack of proof of species decline.

How you can participate

Contact Bob Wilkerson or Rodney Siegel as soon as possible at owl@birdpop.org or 415-663-2051.

- Volunteer to coordinate other surveyors in your area of interest,
- Volunteer to census one or more 5-km by 5-km blocks in Spring of 2006
- Provide the organizers with information on the locations of Burrowing Owl breeding sites in your area.

Up close and personal

by Steve Rutledge

Every bird is worthy of deeper study. Take one of our regular shorebirds, the Long-billed Curlew (surely one of our cutest birds). Why does it have such an absurdly long bill? How can it even preen its feathers? And what is such a quintessential shorebird doing breeding in the short-grass prairie of Colorado? More importantly, why is the curlew a bird of conservation concern? These are the kinds of questions we address in our birding classes. Our goal is not to maximize the number of species seen, but rather to get to know the birds more intimately. We consider many aspects of avian biology, ranging from feeding behavior to taxonomic affinities to conservation status.

When considering field identification, we emphasize aspects of birding that are not well-covered in the field guides. In our recent class *Up Close and Personal*, we studied birds in flight, with emphasis on our autumn raptors. We were able to contrast the huge plank-like wings of a Golden Eagle with the graceful gull-like wings of a White-tailed Kite. We compared the swift and direct flight of a Merlin to the more buoyant fluttering of an American Kestrel.

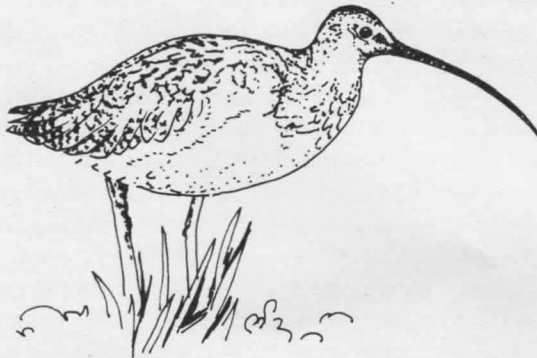
We also focused on bird vocalizations. For example, we compared the sweet whistles of a Golden-crowned Sparrow with the more quavering and complex notes of a White-crowned Sparrow. And slowed-down recordings enabled us (in the classroom) to distinguish between different dialects of the coastal race of the White-crowned Sparrow.

Shorebirds provided an opportunity to explore still another aspect of field identification: the importance of size and shape. We compared a variety of shorebird bills, from the straight rapier of the Long-billed Dowitcher (which is longer in the female) to the up-turned bill of the American Avocet (which is more curved in the female). The classes address why the bills of birds come in such different shapes and sizes.

Birds need our help, with many species suffering serious declines because of human-induced habitat disruption. Half the proceeds from my recent class were donated to conservation efforts (the other half benefits SCVAS's education programs). One beneficiary was the Jocotoco Foundation, a conservation group in Ecuador that is purchasing key bird habitats. I am excited about contributing to this group because Ecuador is an incredibly bird-rich country (with over 1600 avian species in an area about the size of Colorado). Furthermore, the Jocotoco Foundation is able to buy land for as little as \$100 per acre (when was the last time the Bay Area saw such prices!?). You can learn more at www.fjocotoco.org.

We also supported New Jersey Audubon's Red Knot program. This amazing shorebird undertakes remarkable annual migrations, breeding on islands north of the Canadian mainland and wintering as far south as Tierra del Fuego. A key migration stopover site (Delaware Bay) is no longer able to support large numbers of Red Knots due to the collapse of the horseshoe crab population. It is feared that the *rufa* subspecies of the Red Knot could be extinct by 2010. See www.njaudubon.org for more information.

In our next class we will continue to expand our birding horizons.



Long-billed Curlew
Bonnie Bedford-White



The Sierra Club presents:
**Seminar on
Watershed Protection**

March 25, 7 to 10 PM

Los Gatos Neighborhood Center
Main Street, Los Gatos

Topics:

**Impact of Logging on Watershed
San Jose Water Co. Logging Proposal
Redwood Forest Ecosystem
Protecting Communities from Fire**

Live music and photography of the
Los Gatos Watershed will be
provided by local artist Miena Yoo.
visit: <http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/>

The SCVAS Environmental Action Committee encourages you to attend this Sierra Club event to learn about a new, proposed logging operation in the Santa Cruz mountains. If approved, it will affect birds, wildlife, and Los Gatos Creek habitat above Lexington Reservoir.

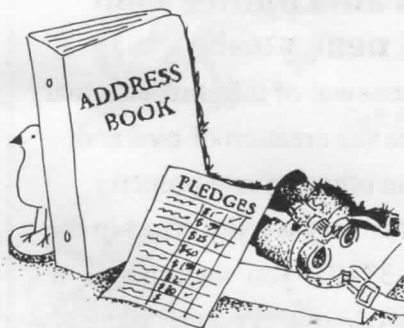
“Go Guided”— the easiest way to join SCVAS’ Spring fundraiser!

Too busy to plan a Birdathon? No problem, we’ve done all the work for you! We are looking for folks of all birding abilities and ages to join one of our Guided Birdathon teams below. All you have to do is raise the minimum requirement of \$25 (or, you can donate this yourself), grab your binoculars and then go birding! You and your team are eligible to compete for all prizes. The best prizes will be given to individuals that raise the most money, so anyone can win. Past years have shown that raising as little as \$200 can win you a prize! Space on all Birdathon teams is limited 8 birders, so you should call the SCVAS office at (408)252-3747 early to register. The registration deadline is one week before the trip date. Each leader will contact you with complete trip details.

The Shrikes **With Dave Cook**

Saturday, April 8
4-hour Birdathon

Dedicated to beginners, this team gives you a chance to make your mark by raising money for SCVAS’s education programs while identifying many birds. Beginners can compete with experts in this Birdathon by raising more money. Join Dave, an experienced beginning field trip leader, on an exciting four-hour tour of several spots known for their abundance of bird species. Expect to see about 50 species — not too bad for a morning’s work!



The Fantastic Feathered Fledglings

Sunday, April 9

This is a special Birdathon for youths aged 7 to 14 at a location especially suited for young fledgling birders. We reduced the minimum pledge requirement to \$15 for each youth for this one Guided Birdathon Team only. This is a great opportunity to teach your kids the value of raising money for a good cause. This Birdathon should take about two hours and binoculars will be available. All youths must be accompanied by a parent. Expect to see about 30 species of birds.

The Varied Titchers **with Mike Rogers**

Saturday, April 22
24-hour Birdathon

This is a high intensity 24-hour Birdathon for intermediate and advanced birders. It’s a great opportunity to join one of the Bay Area’s premier birders, Mike Rogers, for a full big-day of birding that everyone only dreams about. Start with owling in the early morning and then bird all day until sunset. This team has won the 24-hour “most species seen” award several years running. Finding 157 bird species last year provided all the team members with well-earned bragging rights.

The Rock Wrens **With Bob Hirt**

Date TBA
24-hour Birdathon

Join long-time expert birders Bob Hirt and David McIntyre for a fun day in the field. They’ll get an early start for owls in the western foothills, zigzag their way down to the Bay for ducks and shorebirds, and then up the eastern slope for greatest habitat diversity, ending after dusk. This team usually gets a lot of pledge dollars per species so will try to maximize the species count. If you want to help challenge The Varied Titchers for the top spot, this is the team for you! Expect to see over 120 species.

The Snipe Hunters **With Laurie West-Roberts**

Saturday, April 15
24-hour Birdathon

Ever been on a snipe hunt? Well, snipe really do exist and this team has a chance of finding one, along with Burrowing Owls and Golden Eagles, too. Beginners are welcome and binoculars will be supplied, if needed. They’ll visit local parks covering a great variety of habitats throughout Santa Clara County to maximize the species count. Starting early, they will share a potluck lunch and most likely continue birding after dusk. Expect to see 80 - 90 species, maybe more.

The Wacky-Capped Chickadees **with Debbie Thompson**

Sunday, April 16
4-hour Birdathon

You will have lots of fun with SCVAS Board President Debbie Thompson identifying birds at a few select birdy sites. This is a great short Birdathon for birders of all levels who are too darn busy to spend the entire day birding and running around, but still want to join in the competition. Expect to see over 50 species.

Birdathon *from Page 1*

who raise the most money. Still uncomfortable asking for money? Then just donate at least \$25, and you’re ready to join the Birdathon.

5. Go birding with your team on your Birdathon day and have fun!

6. Collect your pledges and be sure to turn in the money you’ve raised, with pledge sheets and results form, to the SCVAS office by May 15 to be eligible for prizes.

7. Attend the free Birdathon Awards dinner on Tuesday, June 6, and find out if you’ve won a prize. Participate in bird contests and games and maybe win another prize. Share Birdathon stories with other participants over a relaxed, informal dinner. Feel great that you have raised so much money for youth environmental education, and had such a good time birding!

Recovering, rethinking Endangered Species Act

Highlights from Jan. 28 event in Alviso

by Juliana Chow
Conservation Advocate Intern

On the clear, windy morning of January 28th at Alviso's Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, SCVAS hosted another successful environmental advocacy event. More than fifty participants went birding on the levees and along the salt marshes of the Refuge before meeting at the Environmental Education Center (EEC), to hear perspectives on the state of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), from policy to practice.

Gulls, white pelicans, great blue herons and others accompanied the birders as they wound their way past what is one of California's largest restoration projects of salt ponds to marshes. Al Jaramillo's group got a quick biology lesson about reverse sexual dimorphism in many bird species, while other groups caught a glimpse of a merlin feasting on a white-crowned sparrow.

Back in the EEC auditorium, speakers attested to the successes of the ESA such as the recovery of the bald eagle and the fact that 99% of listed species have not gone extinct. Of utmost concern is the need to sustain biological diversity and environmental health. Protecting endangered species is an essential part of living well and thriving on earth.

Both Trent Orr, legal counsel for Earthjustice, and Lynne Trulio, burrowing owl expert and scientist, criticized the recently passed House bill sponsored by Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA) for reducing the role of science in the listing and recovery plans of endangered species.

Still, participants and speakers recognized the need for other improvements to strengthen the Endangered Species Act. Carolyn Remick of Sustainable Conservation explained how the tangle of paperwork with multiple government agencies can be streamlined to help landowners balance conservation and business on their property. Lack of funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also cripples its ability to guide and carry out conservation efforts.

The scientific and environmental communities have also shifted focus from species-specific hotspots to landscape and habitat-level conservation since the 1990's. Chris Yuan-Farrell asked whether the Endangered Species Act could move in that direction also. According to Orr and Sarah Matsumoto, field director at the Endangered Species Coalition, changes to the Act would be too risky in the current political climate.

Orr also pointed out the charisma of species that have caught the nation's attention and whose recovery has provided tangible results for conservation. Ecosystem services that Trulio referred to are invaluable necessities whose economic values don't seem to elicit the same emotional response as the bald eagle or grizzly bear.

In answer to a question from Debbie Jamison, speakers explained that habitat conservation planning (HCP) is also risky business. Counties have the option of drawing up HCPs in order to designate land for development and conservation. Orr summed up, "What is lost is lost forever and what is won will be fought over again." The National Wildlife Federation, however, supports HCPs in order to encourage landowners to conserve endangered species.

Despite the bureaucratic and political difficulties, habitat-level conservation is moving forward. Earlier in the discussion, Clyde Morris, manager of the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge, had noted that

recovery plans in the works are for multiple species, not just endangered species. Current practices by FWS support both habitat-level conservation and adaptive management to monitor the success of the recovery plans for the entire ecosystem.

Ultimately, even what is lost can be fought over again as restoration and recovery plans like the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project at Alviso revive discussion and open the field for new possibilities.

For more information about the Endangered Species Act, go to our website (www.scvas.org) and click on the link next to "Speak Up!" or come over to McClellan Ranch and browse our collection of ESA-related materials.

We are very grateful to our volunteer field trip leaders Les Chibana, Bob Hirt, Kirsten Holmquist, and Al Jaramillo, and to our guest speakers Sarah Matsumoto, Clyde Morris, Trent Orr, Carolyn Remick, and Lynne Trulio, for taking the time to share their expertise. Big thanks to our volunteers Candice Basham, Debbie Jamison, Jim Liskovec, Chris Yuan-Farrell, and Jerry and Ginny Kaminski for their help in making the event go smoothly. Thank you to Starbucks for their coffee donation and Noah's for their bagel donation that were a welcome treat both before and after the birding. And many thanks to our Environmental Action Committee for their advice and input.

Bird Sanctuary Program coming soon to a back yard near you!

We are pleased to announce the renewal of the Bird Sanctuary Program, a program that encourages the creation of bird and wildlife habitat in back yards and on other private property. Look for more information about this very worthy effort in the May/June *Avocet* or call (408) 252-3740 if you want more information about how to get involved now. You can bring a little Audubon to your home!

Murrelet author to speak from Page 4

feet above the ground. He didn't know what he'd found, but others did — a Marbled Murrelet chick. The chick tumbled to the ground and survived only a few hours, but its discovery exhilarated those who cared about the marbled murrelet and stimulated curiosity and a desire to know more about this enigmatic bird.

Maria Ruth, a long-time nature writer, became intrigued by how little was known about this bird, so much so that she moved her whole family from Virginia to southern California to be close at hand for further study. She became certified to survey Marbled Murrelet populations, spent frigid pre-dawn hours in remote locations on bird counts, and went out on Puget Sound in an inflatable boat to help

capture birds for banding and blood sampling. She wanted to experience personally what she was to write about.

With greater knowledge of the Marbled Murrelet came the awareness of its rapidly declining population — from habitat loss, pollution from oil spills, predation by Steller's jays and the common raven, and from gill-net fisheries. In 1992 the Marbled Murrelet was officially listed as a federally threatened species. Then began the expensive, complex and politically difficult task of putting a recovery plan into place. Ruth details the recovery process in a section she titles "Hope." Her passion for the little bird that stole her heart moved her to active involvement with efforts on its behalf and makes this an engrossing read for all who love birds — or just a good story.



Marbled Murrelet
by Bonnie Bedford-White



South County Earth Day Festival!

Saturday, April 29
10am-2pm

Live Animals ♦ Fun for All Ages ♦ Free Food
Free Activities ♦ Nature Organizations
Compost & Woodchip Giveaway

Christmas Hill Park in Gilroy
Call (408) 252-3740 or visit www.scvas.org for details

Sponsored by SCVAS and the City of Gilroy



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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.

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

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

Additional Gift: \$ 50 \$ 100 \$ 250 Other _____

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

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