



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

May - June 2006

New Initiatives for Burrowing Owl

by Nancy Teater

SCVAS members feel a special passion for Burrowing Owls. These engaging birds have charmed many of us who are distressed at the continuing habitat loss and animal and human activities that threaten owls in our county. In the past, SCVAS and other organizations have used legislation, lawsuits, public relations, and petitions to plead their case. While we have made some progress, much remains to be done.

SCVAS, the Center for Biological Diversity, the Institute for Bird Populations, the Burrowing Owl Consortium, the California Fish & Game Department and others are working on several fronts to conserve burrowing owls in California. SCVAS volunteers and other conservation groups are reaching out to owners of private land, where about 90 percent of the state's burrowing owl population is believed to be located.

Our volunteers are participating in a 2006 and 2007 census sponsored by the Institute for Bird Populations and being coordinated in the county by SCVAS member Ruth Troetscher (see below for information on how you can participate). The Burrowing Owl Consortium, a group of biologists and conservationists, has met twice a year since 1990 to share scientific information and collaborate on owl conservation

throughout the state. SCVAS will chair the September 2006 meeting. The California Department of Fish and Game, Conservation Planning Branch, is drafting a statewide conservation strategy for the owl.

*Executive
Director
leaving SCVAS*

see Page 11

Owl conservation in Santa Clara Valley—recent history

Burrowing owls are designated as a Species of Special Concern in California, and are covered by the International Migratory Bird Treaty as well as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which currently provides the strongest protection. CEQA requires that every state and local agency review the environmental impacts of all projects undertaken or permitted, unless the project is exempted.

If an agency determines that the project does not have the potential for any significant environmental impact, it may prepare a "negative declaration," and in the mid-1990s the City of San Jose and other south bay cities generally issued negative declarations for impacts to burrowing owls, even if the land to be developed had active burrows.

SCVAS, California Fish and Game, and burrowing owl researchers protested this practice, so San Jose began collecting "mitigation fees," which were used to purchase credits in burrowing owl mitigation banks (habitat) in Byron,

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General Membership Meeting "Madagascar Highlights"

with Lee Hung and Mike Danzenbaker, Barbi and Dave Kutilek

Quinlan Community Center

10185 North Stelling Road, Cupertino

(note the new location for this meeting)

Wednesday, May 17

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

"Madagascar Highlights" is a photo and video presentation with Lee Hung & Mike Danzenbaker and Barbi & Dave Kutilek, with each couple doing 30 minutes. The 60 minute presentation combines both still photography and video, highlighting Madagascar's endemic lemurs, chameleons, and birds, as well as views and scenes of the countryside itself. Over 80% of its wildlife and fauna is endemic, found only on this island country in the Indian Ocean off the eastern coast of Africa.

Mike Danzenbaker and Lee Hung are long-time SCVAS members who have been traveling extensively both domestically and abroad in pursuit of viewing and photographing birds. Mike has been seriously photographing birds since he moved here

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May - June '06 Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

NF = No facilities available

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, west at the Patterson exit (Diablo Grande Pky) and then right on Del Puerto Canyon Rd. Meet at the first pullout. Possible Costa's Hummingbird, Phainopepla, Lewis's Woodpecker and 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 the end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mountain View. A trip designed for beginning birders but all are encouraged to attend. Spotting scope helpful.

Wednesday May 10, 8:30 AM Rancho Cañada del Oro OSP

Half day. Leaders: Janna Pauser (408) 997-1727 & Phyllis Swanson. From Hwy 85 exit Almaden Expwy. Follow Almaden to southeast to end; right on Harry 1 block, then left on McKean. Take McKean 6+ miles past Calero Reservoir, turn right on Casa Loma Rd. Meet at parking lot at end of road (2 miles). We'll bird along a quiet road, easy walking. Bring water. Birds of oak woodland and riparian habitats. **LO, RC**

Saturday May 13, 8:00 AM Stevens Creek County Park

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. 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. A top riparian birding spot in the South Bay for migrants and local breeding birds. \$5 entrance fee. **LO**

Sunday May 14, 8:00 AM

The Avocet 2

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 a half-mile on the right. Moderate walking.

Saturday May 20, 8:00 AM

Almaden Quicksilver County Park

Half day. Leader: Al Dieckmann (408) 379-5641. Short loop of 1.5 miles taking Mine Hill, Guadalupe and Senador Mines Trails. W. Wood-pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher, W. Tanager are likely, as well as newly fledged titmice, chickadees, juncos, woodpeckers, etc. Take Almaden south past Blossom Hill Rd and Coleman Rd; turn right at next exit (McAbee Rd.) and follow until it dead-ends at entrance to park. Pierce dairy farm will be on right, parking is along the street. Meet at the trailhead entrance. **RC**

Sunday May 21, 8:00 AM

Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Meet at northeast corner (nearest San Francisco and the Bay) of Skyline Blvd (Hwy 35) and Page Mill Rd. Do not park in Russian Ridge parking lot. Moderately strenuous walk with some elevation change. Possible Chipping Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Tanager. Bring extra layers of clothing as temperatures can vary wildly even at this time of year. **LO**

Saturday May 27, 8:00 AM

Monte Bello Open Space Preserve

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. From I-280 in Palo Alto take Page Mill Rd west, toward Skyline Blvd (Hwy 35) for approx. 7 miles and meet at Monte Bello OSP parking area on left. Possible Lazuli Bunting, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Chipping and Grasshopper Sparrows. Be prepared, it can be cold, wet and foggy. **LO**

Sunday May 28, 7:30 AM

Smith Creek/Twin Gates Birding by ear

Half day. Leader: TBD (Questions, call Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527). From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave northeast, turn right on Mt. Hamilton Rd, go past main entrance to Grant Ranch County Park (approx. 9 miles). Continue uphill another two miles to Twin Gates parking lot on left. Probable Horned Lark, Grasshopper Sparrow, woodland and riparian breeding birds. Moderately strenuous hike over rolling hills.

Saturday June 3, No trip Palo Alto Summer Bird Count

Sunday June 4, 8:00 AM

Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. Meet at northeast corner (nearest San Francisco and the Bay) of Skyline Blvd (Hwy 35) and Page Mill Rd; we'll then drive to where we will park for the trip. Do not park in Russian Ridge parking lot. Bring extra layers of clothing in case it's foggy and cold. Possible Grasshopper Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting. **NF**

Saturday June 10, 8:00 AM

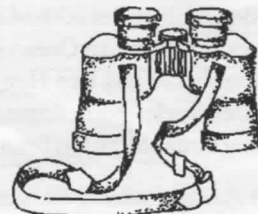
Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. For directions see write-up for May 7th.

Sunday June 11, 7:30 AM

Alamitos Creek and Lake Almaden

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. From Highway 85 take Almaden Expwy south then left on Camden Ave. After 4-way stop as road bears right, park in small lot on left just before Graystone Lane. Expect about 3 miles of easy walking. **LO**



Field Trips *continued*

Saturday June 17, 8:00 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. Continue into park to far end of upper-most parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk looking for resident breeding birds.

Sunday June 18, 8:30 AM

Mt. 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 and descending on the return trip. Mixed oak woodland, grassland, chaparral and coastal forest habitats for excellent variety of birds. Bring lunch and liquids.

Saturday June 24, 8:30 AM

Stevens Creek County Park

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. See May 13 writeup. \$5 fee. *LO*

Sunday June 25, 8:00 AM

Rancho del Oso (coastal Big Basin SP)

Half day plus. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. Take Hwy 17 to Santa Cruz, then go north on Hwy 1. Meet at beach

parking area along Hwy 1 just north of Waddell Creek Bridge (MP 36.30; 2 miles south of Ano Nuevo State Reserve, 7 miles north of Davenport). Long but fairly level 5 mile hike along Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail looking for Swainson's Thrush, Winter Wren, Wilson's Warbler, woodpeckers. Carry lunch and liquids (in backpack if possible), dress in layers.

Saturday July 1, 8:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mountain View. Birding will be geared toward the beginning birder.

Saturday August 5, 8:30 AM

Año Nuevo State Reserve

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Plan on a 3 to 4 mile walk (half of it in sand), fog, bright sun and wind. Bring a scope, lunch, liquids, and dress in layers. Possible Bank Swallow, Marbled Murrelet, early returning shorebirds, Black Swift. Entrance along Hwy 1 about 30 miles south of Half Moon Bay or 20 miles north of Santa Cruz. \$5 parking fee; meet at far (south) end of parking lot. *LO*

Saturday August 20, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. See write-up for July 1st.

Events Calendar

Wed. 5/3, 7:30 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers

features Mike Danzenbaker with "Birds of Panama" slide show. Lucie Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto

Sat. 5/6, 11 AM - 3 PM

South Bay Bird Fest, 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 info.

Tues. 5/9, 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: Great Horned Owl

Wed. 5/17, 7:30 PM

General Meeting, Cupertino (see Pg. 1)

Note new location.

Wed. 5/24, 7:30 PM

EAC Meeting, McClellan Ranch Park

Tues. 6/6, 6 PM

Birdathon Awards Dinner

McClellan Ranch Park. We will announce all the winners and award the prizes. There will be food, beverages, door prizes, raffles, quizzes, games and fun for all! Please RSVP by calling our office at (408) 252-3747 by Friday, June 2.

Tues. 6/13, 10 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. Bring lunch. First hour: Bird Discussion planning for next year; 11:00 picnic lunch.

Wed. June 21, 6 PM

Annual Pot Luck

McClellan Ranch Park (see item at left)

Annual Meeting and Potluck

Wednesday June 21, 6 PM

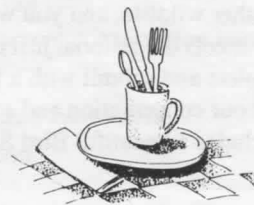
McClellan Ranch Park

Join your fellow SCVAS members for the annual potluck dinner and volunteer recognition awards. Meet the Audubon staff, Board members and officers, and do some birding while you dine. Bring a main dish, casserole, salad or hors d'oeuvres to share — SCVAS provides beverages and desserts. Bringing your own plates and cups helps reduce use of wasteful plastic and paperware.

Elections for SCVAS Board of Directors and Officers

Please attend our Annual Meeting and Potluck on June 21, 2006 to vote in the annual elections for the Board of Directors. New directors and officers will take office on July 1, 2006. SCVAS members in good standing may participate in the voice vote at this Annual Meeting. The majority of votes will determine the winner.

SCVAS is always looking for new Directors and Officers to help set the direction of the chapter. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact our office at (408) 252-3747.



Volunteer Ventures

Volunteer revitalizes bird sanctuary program!

by Kim Yuan-Farrell

Programs Coordinator

Between one-half and three-fourths of land in the United States is privately owned. This means that private landowners have a significant role to play in land management and stewardship. While we tend to think of giant private corporations as the major players here, individuals have an opportunity to act as stewards and affect change as well.

In the mid 1990's SCVAS established a program to encourage individuals, from homeowners to apartment-renters, to create bird- and other wildlife-friendly habitat in their back yards and balconies. Bird Sanctuary Certificates were awarded to program applicants who demonstrated that they maintained bird-friendly habitat in their outdoor space by providing food, shelter, water, and using native plants and safe environmental practices in their gardening. Successful applicants received periodic bulletins with tips and ideas for their yard habitat, while unsuccessful applicants were given information and advice about how to improve their outdoor areas. With organizational changes and an emphasis on other projects and initiatives, this program went largely dormant in the late 90's.

I am pleased to announce that the Bird Sanctuary Program will flourish again! Having wished to revitalize this very worthy program but having many other programs and projects competing for my time, I was thrilled last fall to meet Dana Stern, a long-time member and Nature Shop visitor, who was sincerely interested in seeing this program renewed. Dana had found the old Bird Sanctuary application amidst other SCVAS literature. Soon after applying to have her yard certified as a sanctuary, she decided that she wanted to make this renewal happen. Over the past months, Dana has contributed time, energy, ideas, and enthusiasm to planning and preparing for the reintroduction of the Bird Sanctuary Program. Dana is a busy mother and homemaker, but she found a way to fit this into her life.

Now, thanks to her, I invite you to consider your outdoor space for certification under our program. YOU can contribute to the patchwork of habitat that will sustain our local, native wildlife. YOU can fight the habitat destruction and fragmentation that contributes to declines in migrant songbird populations. If your yard, patio, or balcony needs some work, we have helpful information and resources available to guide you in transforming it into a space that birds, other wildlife, and you will enjoy. If your yard already meets the criteria, just contact me for an application to complete and submit with a \$20 fee (to cover costs and support our conservation and education programs) or a \$50 fee (includes a beautiful Bird Sanctuary Plaque for your

garden). In addition to receiving a quarterly bulletin, members of the program will be able to participate in tours of other sanctuaries and other opportunities.

To apply for Bird Sanctuary Certification or further involvement with this exciting effort, please contact me at (408) 252-3740 or programs@scvas.org.

Many thanks to Dana Stern for her enthusiastic donations of heart and elbow grease!

Thanks to our 2006 Spring Birdathon Golden Eagle Sponsors—

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

www.cheesemans.com

All-day pelagic boat trip for four people out of Monterey. See great seabirds, whales and dolphins with one of our chapter's biggest supporters and fantastic trip leaders. Check out their great international ecology tours on their website.

Southwest Airlines

www.southwest.com/

Airline Tickets

Two Airline Tickets to anywhere in the US. Here is your chance to visit that birding hotspot of your dreams.

SCVAS members Bob and Deb Hirt

Mexican time-share stay

Add those tropical birds to your life list or just relax on the beach during a week-long stay at your choice of locations in Mexico. Enjoy a fully furnished two-bedroom condo with room for two couples and the full amenities of a luxury hotel.

Golden Eagle Sponsors contribute prizes worth over six hundred dollars. Visit our website, www.scvas.org, for a complete list of all our sponsors along with other Birdathon information. Please patronize our generous sponsors, who help make our Spring Birdathon so successful in raising money for youth environmental education and conservation programs.



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

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.

Wings and Songs of Spring

with Steve Rutledge

In these field classes, Steve will introduce migrating, nesting, and singing birds. The small class of 6 participants is designed to give each student more personal attention in developing birding skills. Field seminars will take us to nearby environments to sample the diversity of avian lives. Although classes are low-key, with relatively late starts and short days, we will have time to become more familiar with the natural history of many local birds.

Proceeds from this class will benefit both SCVAS education programs and also a bird conservation program selected by the instructor (previous class fees have aided avian conservation in places as far apart as Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, New Jersey, and Texas!). Class fees do not include entrance fees or gas money for drivers.

Dates: Sundays 5/7, 5/28, 6/4 8 AM-2 PM

Location: All sessions meet at McClellan Ranch in Cupertino

Fee: \$30; maximum 6 students

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

Beginning Birding by Ear

with Ron Arps

Improve your approach to birding by ear and hone your skills. Class discussions will focus on methods used to remember and identify bird sounds, such as descriptive terms or sketches of their sound patterns. These techniques will then be applied to bird recordings, learning the sounds of some local passerine species. On weekends, the class will take field trips, practicing live identification of the bird sounds recently learned. Bird sound resources (books, software, CDs) and sound recording (equipment, techniques, etc.) will be introduced along the way.

Dates: Class: Tuesdays 5/16, 5/23 7-9 PM

Field: Sundays 5/21, 5/28 8-11 AM

Location: Class: McClellan Ranch, Cupertino

Field: McClellan Ranch Park, Stevens Creek Park

Fee: \$35 members, \$40 non-members

Minimum 6 students, maximum 14

Ron enjoyed birding as a boy and began bird sound recording soon after college. This eventually led to helping start the Nature Sounds Society, and giving classes on bird song identification for Nature Explorations Tuolumne. Invited to teach bird sounds at Stanford's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, he stayed on afterwards as a volunteer. He uses sight and sound for bird identification during monthly surveys, occasionally gives bird sound walks, and continues his hobby of bird sound recording. For beginners, in addition to introducing them to local bird sounds, his goal is to teach how best to learn new bird sounds on their own. He loves to share the joy of knowing birds by their sounds, not only as a birding skill but as an everyday pleasure.



Discover Kids' Corner Online!

Check out the awesome Kids' Corner section of our website. You can become a bird expert, an environmental activist, or just have a lot of fun!

Visit www.scvas.org and click Kids' Corner on the horizontal menu. Avery the Avocet will guide you through the site, where you can:

- Explore wetland habitats and wildlife, learning amazing facts about migration, adaptation, and local birds
- Download and print your very own Bird Flashcards for 6 native species
- Learn about a new bird each month, including its diet, field marks, behavior, and fun facts
- Take action to protect the earth by writing a letter to government officials about current conservation issues
- Discover exciting kid-friendly activities that are coming up
- Sign up to receive notices about our quarterly Young Audubon activities for kids and their families
- Tell us what kinds of events, field trips, and other activities you would like to attend

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Waterfowl through Gulls

Four adult **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at the entrance of the Gilroy sewer ponds on 15 Feb (RWR, FV). Two adult birds were with the Canadas at the Palo Alto Muni GC on 25 Feb (MJM). An immature was at the Arzino Ranch on 1 Mar (MJM). An adult at the Coyote Creek GC on 11 Mar (MJM) was seen there through 16 Mar (SCR, WGB) and was probably the same bird as found along Bailey Road on 29 Mar (RWR, FV). A single **Snow Goose** was found with Canadas at Shoreline Park at the edge of Salt Pond A2W on 21 Feb (FV, GL) and remained at least through 1 Mar (m.ob.). Nine immature Snow Geese were seen on Salt Pond A16 in Alviso on 5-6 Mar (MJM, DWe) and one at Arzino Ranch on 7 Mar (DWe) was likely from this group. A male **Eurasian Wigeon** in the Palo Alto estuary since mid-January remained there and a second male was seen on 27 Feb (DWe). Both remained through the end of March. A female was seen on Salt Pond A16 on 4 Feb (SCR) and single males were there 9-12 Feb (MJM, DWe). Another male was in the Gilroy sewer ponds 15 Feb (RWR, FV). **Blue-winged Teal** have been found in small numbers widely in the last two months. Two males were in Adobe Creek on 8 Feb (WGB), a male was at the Gilroy sewer ponds on 15 Feb (RWR, FV), two to three males were at the Lockheed Martin ponds on 6 Mar (RWR, FV), and a pair was at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 22 Mar (MJM, GB). A female **Redhead** continued at the Ogier Avenue ponds through 12 Feb (MJM), but none were reported after that. A male and female **Barrow's Goldeneye** continued to be seen at Shoreline Lake through 17 Mar (WGB, FV). Two female **Hooded Mergansers** were seen on Stevens Creek at Deep Cliff GC on 29 Mar (DJ, SP) and one of these or a third bird was downstream at McClellan Ranch the same day (BP). Most hoodies are gone by the end of March, but a few may stay into April.

The adult **Bald Eagle** wintering at Calero Reservoir was last seen on 2 Mar (AV). Single adults were also seen at Coyote Reservoir on 10 Feb (LA) and in Hall's Valley on 4 Mar (MDo et al.). A **Prairie Falcon** was seen in the Coyote Valley on 3 Mar (RWR, FV) and another was seen over Almaden-Quicksilver CP on 25 Mar (MJM). A few birds are found in winter away from the Diablo Range.

A good count of 23 **Snow Plovers** was obtained on closed salt ponds in Alviso on 4 Mar (MJM). At the end of the month, on 26 Mar, only 13 were seen (MMR, MJM). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was seen at the Arzino Ranch in Alviso

Late winter rarities included

*American Redstart,
Hooded Warbler,
and Summer Tanager*

on 19 Feb (MJM). One on an Alviso salt pond on 4 Mar was believed to have wintered there (MJM). **Sanderlings** were again found on closed salt ponds in Alviso with 42 counted on 4 Mar (MJM) and 26 on 26 Mar (MMR, MJM). **Glaucous Gulls** continued to be seen at Salt Pond A16 through early March. At least two different 1st-winter birds were seen from 3 Feb to 1 Mar (SCR, WGB, MJM, AV). A 2nd-winter bird was seen there on 3 Feb (SCR). Second-winter birds were also seen at the CCFS waterbird pond on 13 Mar (SCR) and the Palo Alto estuary the same day (WGB).

Roadrunners through Goldfinches

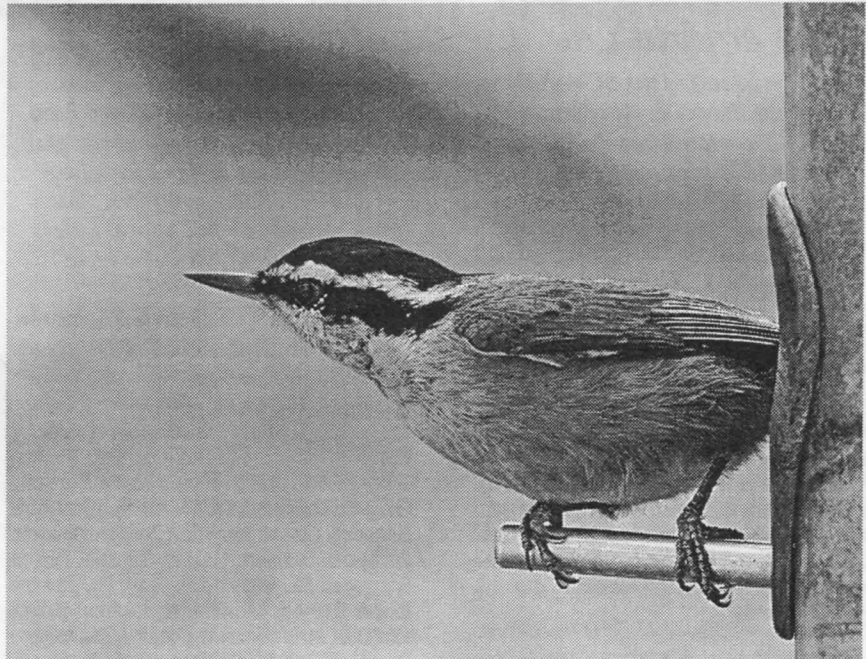
A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen in the foothills off Hellyer Avenue east of Hwy 101 on 15 Mar (BJ). A **Long-eared Owl** was found in the Diablo Range on 13 Mar (MMR) in an area where it was believed to be nesting. Two **Common Poorwills** heard calling at Almaden-Quicksilver CP on 8 Feb (JR et al.) were probably resident. A male **Rufous Hummingbird** was found in Fremont Older

OSP on 9 Mar (RK, PK) and seen through 13 Mar (v.ob.). Other males were seen along Adobe Creek above the RR tracks on 24 Mar (MMR), at an Almaden Valley feeder on 25 Mar (JPa), and at Stevens Creek CP on 30 Mar (MJM). Two **Pileated Woodpeckers** were found in Upper Stevens Creek CP on 9 Feb (RWR, FV) and a third was heard the same day in Monte Bello OSP (GHa). A **Western Wood-Pewee** both seen and heard at Ed Levin CP on 13 Mar (KPa) was most unusual, as the median arrival date for this species is 19 Apr and few birds are found before the second week in April. Supposedly an off winter for **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, a few birds have been found away from their breeding sites. A Red-breasted Nuthatch at a Stanford feeder since October was joined by a second bird on 26 Mar (TGr). One was near the Henry Coe SP headquarters about 11 Feb (JY, AL) where they are seldom found. Another was in a Los Altos yard about 25 Feb (BR), one was at Lake Cunningham on 1 Mar (JPa), and one was heard along Stevens Creek in Los Altos about 7 Mar (JLi). **American Dippers** were found at expected locations in February. One was along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road on 6 Feb (FV), another was seen along Penitencia Creek in Alum Rock Park 7-26 Feb (PBr, MDo et al., MMR, KS), three were along Los Gatos Creek above Los Gatos on 11 Feb (LMY), and one was below Twin Creeks on Alamos Creek on 13 Feb (AV). One to two **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 10-25 Feb (MJM, v.ob.) and one was banded there on 25 Feb (SFBBO). Another was seen along the Guadalupe River at the Ulistac Natural Area on 20 Feb (RWR, FV, RK, PK, DMA). Otherwise it has been a poor winter locally for this kinglet. At least one male **Phainopepla** was seen on a trip to the San Antonio Valley on 8 Mar (DD et al.).

Orange-crowned Warblers are often the earliest of our arriving passerines. One singing in Almaden-Quicksilver CP on 14 Feb (JPa), following a warm spell, seemed particularly early considering the

Field Notes *cont'd*

cold and rainy weather that followed, but this bird has remained on territory. However, two birds found in a fennel patch at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 29 Mar (MJM) are likely wintering birds of a different subspecies. A **Yellow Warbler** was banded at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) on 22 Mar (GB). Although singing birds occasionally arrive as early as the last week in March, it seems likely that this was a wintering bird. The **American Redstart** along Coyote Creek near the Coyote Creek GC was last seen on 4 Feb (MJM). At this time it was showing some black spotting on the breast, indicating it was an immature male. The **Northern Waterthrush** at the Charleston Road marsh was last seen on 8 Feb (RWR, BJ). A male **Hooded Warbler** was found and photographed 4-10 Feb (KP, KM) near I-280 and Lawrence Expressway. Again, this bird of considerable taste was found only within a gated community and no further than 800 m. from where the January bird was seen. An immature male **Summer Tanager** was found in a Palo Alto yard near Adobe Creek and the railroad tracks 20-29 Mar (CO, v.ob.) and favored peanuts. A **Western Tanager** heard at Stanford 13 and 23 Feb (KP) was probably a wintering bird. Coyote Reservoir had two **White-throated Sparrows** with one at the campground continuing to at least 4 Mar (LA, v.ob.) and one found near the dam on 17 Feb and 16 Mar (RWR, FV, WGB). Another bird was seen along San Tomas Aquino Creek on 21 Mar (MJM). Feeder birds included one in South Palo 24 Feb and 13 Mar (KP), one at a Stanford feeder on 17 and 21 Mar (DL), and one continuing in a Los Altos yard through 31 Mar (GHt). A male **Great-tailed Grackle** was seen at the Palo Alto Baylands 29 Mar (MJM), but did not stay. A female oriole in a Cupertino yard first seen and photographed in January was seen again on 18 Feb and 19 Mar (MP). Expert opinion is divided on whether this bird was an **Orchard** or **Hooded Oriole**. There is agreement, however, that this is one of the most under-appreciated id. problems. After a winter without **Lawrence's Goldfinches**,



Tom Grey photographed this Red-breasted Nuthatch in his Stanford campus yard during mid-March

two were seen at Joseph Grant CP on 4 Mar (MDo et al.) and in San Antonio Valley on 8 Mar (DD et al.).

Observers: Linda Adams (LA), Gina Barton (GB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Phil Brown (PBr), David Diller (DD), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Tom Grey (TGr), Garth Harwood (GHa), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Debi Jamison (DJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Garrett Lau (GL), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Dave Lewis (DL), Jim Liskovec (JLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Dean Manley (DMA), Kay Matthews (KM), Lisa Myers (LMY), Carlin Otto (CO), Steve Patt (SP), Kathy Parker (KPa), Kay Partelow (KP), Janna Pauser (JPa), Michael Pollack (MP), Bob Power (BP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Jennifer Rycenga (JR), Byron Ryono (BR), San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO), Kep Stone (KS), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Dave Weber (DWe), Ron Wolf (RW), and James Yurchenco (JY).

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

Gen. Meeting *from Page 1*

in 1986. They now have well over 3000 bird images from all over the world on their website, www.avesphoto.com. Their photos have graced the covers and articles of *Birding*, *Audubon*, *Birder's World*, *WildBird*, *Living Birds* and other magazines, and many bird books and calendars.

This evening they will team up with Dave and Barbi Kutilek who are also members of SCVAS. Dave and Barbi first went to Africa five years ago and fell in love with the splendor and wildlife diversity. They have gone back every year since, seeing and experiencing different places on each trip, plus doing lots of photography of the wildlife and culture. Their most recent trip was to Madagascar. Dave's fast-paced video takes you from the congested city center of the capital city, Antananarivo, to the terraced rice paddies in the east, to the dry spiny forest in the south. Madagascar is a unique country, like no other place to experience—this will be a wonderful presentation from four of our very talented members that you will not want to miss!

We couldn't do it without you!

On behalf of the SCVAS Board and Staff, I would like to express our sincere thanks to all of you who donated to the 2005 Fall Fundraiser. I am proud to report that 467 of you donated over \$65,000! Our volunteers, staff and board continually strive to put each donated dollar to work in improving and expanding our many conservation and education programs. Each donation counts, no matter how small. If you missed our fall appeal letter, it's not too late to join the following group of wonderful folks who have already donated!

*—Debbie Thompson
President, Board of Directors*

Avocet Circle

These generous major donors of \$1000 or more in the past fiscal year have made an extraordinary commitment to save local wildlife and educate our community on how to be better stewards. We are pleased to recognize them as members of the Avocet Circle;

Alan & Irene Adler, Keith Anderson, Doug & Gail Cheeseman, Gordon & Linda Ferguson, Bill Lane Jr, David McIntyre & Antoinette Konski, M. Kent & Rita Norton, Steven Patt & Debi Jamison, Robert Stephens & Julie Packard.

Major Donors

This year, your local contribution helped us continue to run our environmental programs. We'd like to thank the following major donors for their gifts of \$250-\$999;

Michael E. Baggett, MD, Ann Bender, Janet Bertaina, Gail Brownell, Linda Brownrigg, Helen Charpentier, David & Barbara Cook, Robert Cook, Constance Crawford, Carolyn & Gordon Davidson, Matthew Dodder, Lindy Fung, Sherman Gromme, Jim Heckenbach, John & Nancy Hewitt, Bob & Deb Hirt, Sarabelle Hitchner, Diane Horn, John & Freddy Howell, Grant & Karen Hoyt, Sue Hunt, James & Kathryn Johnson, Robert Knourek, Pete & Sue LaTourrette, Barry & Ginger Langdon-Lassagne, Hank & Maria Lawson, Joan Leighton, Kristine Long, Clint McClintic, S. B. Meyer, Mary Murphy, Greg & Jean Myers, Franklin & Susan Orr, John Perkins, Elizabeth Rizzi, Stephen B. Robie, Thomas Snell, Jana Sokale, Nancy R. Teater, Eugene & Ruth Troetschler, Bruce & Kim Tolley, Bart & Nancy Wescott, Bill Walker & Mary Wisniewski, Nicholas & Anne Ward, Mariquita West, John Wills.

Individual Donors

Gifts of all sizes help ensure the conservation of local and migratory wildlife, as well as precious habitats in Santa Clara County. We'd like to thank the following donors for their gifts of \$1-\$249;

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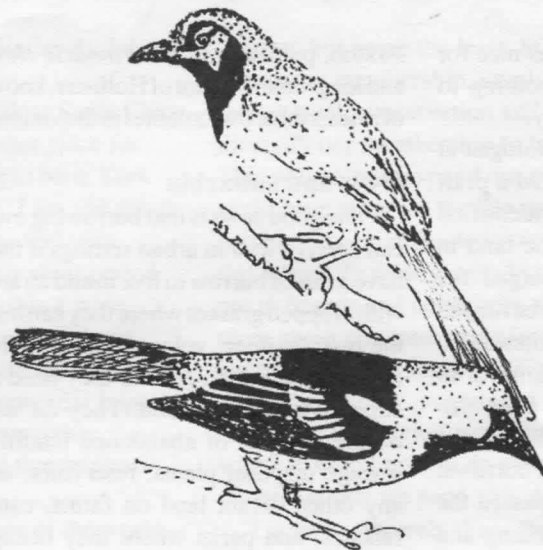
Five Birding Lessons From South Texas

By Steve Rutledge

1. Watching birds can help birds. A lot. In February, I taught SCVAS' first out-of-state birding class. The class cost only \$400 per participant, a modest sum when you compare it to tours offered by the big birding tour groups. Yet we were still able to raise over \$600 for Audubon's local education efforts. We also raised the same amount (over \$600) to benefit bird habitat in South Texas. Money will go to the Valley Land Fund, where it will be used to purchase and enhance habitat for migrant birds on South Padre Island.

2. An out-of-state tour makes it easy to rack up new birds. This was especially true of our class in South Texas, one of North America's premier birding destinations. Many of our participants picked up more than three dozen life birds. They did so while staying at a comfortable B&B in nice bird habitat. We shared nice group dinners, including one meal where we walked across a bridge into Mexico.

Richter, Robert Roadcap, Philip Robertson, Joy Robinson, Michael Rogers, Jim & Connie Rogers, George & Nancy Romer, Richard & Mary Rorty, Deborah Rose, Gary Rose, Annemarie Rosengreen, C. Robin Ross, James E Runyeon, Jr, Byron & Elizabeth Ryono, Donna Sadowy, Mrs. Dorothy Sager, Grace Sain, Betty Saito, Serena Salomon, Stanley M. Salomon, Elizabeth Salzer, Mark & April Scarsford, Robert & Polly Savoie, Ruth Scarborough, Linda Schafhauser, Robert Schauer, John & Josephine Schmidt, Jo Schoenholzer, Russell & Patricia Schonberg, Mae Schrank, Leslie Schroeder, Laverne Shaffer, Mark Shaw & Michelle Caplette, Gertrude Shearer, Gloria Shidler, Stephen Shunk, William Siegle, Tibby Simon, Mollie Sinclair, Nedra Skyles, Melanie A. Sloane, Richard & Marjorie Smallwood, Katrina M. Smathers, Clint & Marilyn Smith, Mary & Katy Smith, Mary W. Smith, Robin Smith, Scott & Gayle Spencer, Julie Stevens, Jack & Janis Stiles, Madeleine Stovel, Carolyn Straub, Neil Stuverude, Linda Sullivan, Mark & Leila Sutherland, Phyllis Swanson, Randall & Linda Swanson, Andres & Kathy Switky, Gary Takushi, Lillian Tanabe, Fan Tao, Ted Tawshunsky, William Taylor, J. Holley Taylor, Joyce Taylor, Sue Tempey, Michael Tennefoss & Tina Seelig, Anne Thatcher, Alan & Karen Thomas, Charles & Jean Thompson, Carol Toppel, Brenda Torres-Barreto, Joyce Todd, Leslie Train,



"The Altamira Oriole and the Green Jay were the only [favorite] birds that were listed by a majority of birders." sketch by Bonnie Bedford-White

3. Never believe a weather forecast. The week we went to South Texas, the weather report said that the highs were supposed to be in the mid-80s. (I should know by now not to believe the meteorologists. I had just returned from Ecuador, where people would just laugh if I asked for a weather forecast. They told me that the only people that lie more than politicians are the weather reporters.)

But when a huge Arctic air mass moved further south into Texas than expected, I was unprepared. Temperatures dropped from 75 to less than 50 degrees in a matter of hours. While we were studying three species of orioles (Altamira, Audubon's, and Hooded) all together at some feeders, I was shivering so much that I had trouble getting a steady view through my binoculars.

Catherine Trejo, Gerald & Virginia Tuft, Mike & Ellen Turbow, Lynn Ubhaus, Gerald & Martha Uelmen, Alex Vago, Elaine Van Bruggen, J. G. & Suzanne Van Stee, Joseph and Elaine Varga, Fred Vasquez, Ann Verdi, Tom & Linda Vlastic, Ann Vollmer, Chuq Von Rospach, Alan & Sandra Walther, Ted & Jane Wassam, Bruce Watts, Grant Webb, Kathleen Weber, Robert & Helene Weil, Connie West, Milton West, William Wheeler, Telle Whitney, Winfield Whitney, Carl Widmer, Janice Wiens, Sunil Wijeyesekera, Virginia Willcox, Carolyn Williams, Sarah Williamson, William & Linda Wilson, Christine Wolfe, Bernard & Nancy Wood, Rose Wright, Mrs. Betty Wyatt, Nick & KC Yatsko, Nancy Yeend, Edith Young, Deme Yuan, Karin Zimmermann, David & Floy Zittin.

4. Not everyone loves the same birds. While waiting in the airport for our return to San Jose, our group of 8 made a list of their five favorite birds of the trip. The Altamira Oriole and the Green Jay were the only birds that were listed by a majority of birders. All together, a total of 19 species made these lists. Some birds, like the Vermillion Flycatcher and the Northern Cardinal, were chosen for their vivid colors. Others, like the Black-crested Titmouse and the Black-bellied Whistling Duck, were chosen for their cuteness. Others, such as the Sprague's Pipit and Stilt Sandpiper, were chosen because they presented identification challenges. One bird, the Plain Chachalaca, was chosen simply because it is so unusual.

5. Sometimes opportunity knocks more than once. Interested in going on our trip to South Texas next year? Call SCVAS' Programs Coordinator at (408) 252-3740 to get on our list of prospective students. We'll update you as plans develop.

SCVAS' Education Committee is grateful to Steve and the other generous Adult Education instructors who enable our organization to provide enriching classes for our members and the general public while helping to raise money in support of our Education Programs. Check out the latest classes on Page 5.

Burrowing owl *continued from Page 1*

Contra Costa County. This was nice for the owls in Byron, but did nothing to preserve owls in the South Bay.

In 1998, Jack Barclay, a biologist at Albion Environmental, prepared a draft owl management plan that identified several hundred acres of public land in San Jose that could be managed for burrowing owls. The plan was to be funded with a fee, but developers protested so loudly that they convinced the mayor to stop work on the plan. The plan also included an ordinance prohibiting the disking of land with active owl burrows. The City Council eventually passed the ordinance, after a lot of reminding and encouragement from former SCVAS Executive Director Craig Breon.

SCVAS also joined with the Center for Biological Diversity and others to petition the California Department of Fish and Game to list the bird as an endangered species, but the Fish and Game Commission rejected the petition in December 2003. When the current Burrowing Owl census is completed, it may provide the data needed to re-petition the Commission for threatened or endangered listing status.

Where are they located?

In the South Bay, Burrowing Owls occur in a J-shaped distribution running from about Palo Alto south around the end of the bay and up along the east side to Oakland. The center of abundance is in an arc just inland from the edge of the south bay marshes. Owl numbers decline from there to the south part of the County. In 1997, Jack Barclay estimated there were 120 to 140 pairs of owls in Santa Clara County.

The largest burrowing owl colony in the county is at the San Jose International Airport, where Barclay has banded about 600 different owls over a ten-year period. He reports that the owl colony at the airport increased from a low of seven pairs in 1991 to a high of 40 in 2002.

We are particularly interested in the owls that live in the Bolsa de San Felipe Important Bird Area where Santa Clara and San Benito Counties meet. Mark

Paxton, publisher of the *Pinnacle News* and long-time resident of Hollister, knows of at least three owl colonies in the vicinity.

Owls and suburbia

The good news is that burrowing owls can survive well in urban settings if they have a raised burrow to live in and an area with cropped grasses where they can hunt the insects, mice, voles and lizards that make up their diet. Nor do they need an expensive neighborhood. They do well on the margins of abandoned landfills, sewage disposal plants, reservoirs, and any other vacant land on farms, cattle ranches, and parks where they occupy natural and artificial burrows.

The upcoming November election will bring change to San Jose city government, so it may be time to revisit the habitat conservation plan developed by Albion Environmental. We have also been told that San Jose is not enforcing the disking ordinance, and city staff members with whom we spoke did not know that such an ordinance exists.

Owls and agriculture

According to the Center for Biological Diversity, about 90 percent of remaining burrowing owls are found on privately-owned land, including Santa Clara county. The county has no disking ordinance, so SCVAS is reaching out to local farmers and ranchers who may be receptive to protecting owls on their property. According to Mark Paxton, land values

are so high that many farmers and ranchers have turned to organic farming, producing products such as organic leaf crops, chickens, walnuts, eggs, etc. We believe that organic farmers may be open to voluntary protection of owls, especially if they are reminded that raptors make good economic sense because they keep rodents in check.

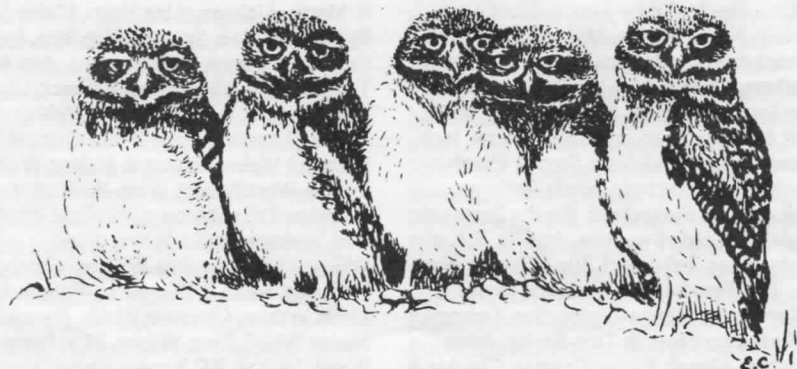
What you can do

Volunteer to count Burrowing Owls for the Institute of Bird Populations census. Ruth Troetschler, who participated in two different owl census projects in the 1990s, is coordinating volunteers for Santa Clara County (see the March/April 2006 *Avocet*, page 11). Contact Ruth at 650-948-4142 or rebugging@batnet.com.

Do you know about owls that are threatened by disking? Contact biologist John Nores, California Fish and Game, at 408-591-5174 (cell phone) or SCVAS volunteer Nancy Teater at nrt@hamilton.com, 650-321-0252.

Do you live in the south part of the county or have contacts in the agricultural community? We would like to talk to individuals who are interested in wildlife protection to determine the best way to reach farmers, ranchers and other owners of large properties.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to Jack Barclay, Albion Environmental, and Mark Paxton, Pinnacle newspaper publisher, for providing information for this article.



Burrowing Owl family by Emélie Curtis

Farewell from Brenda Torres-Barreto

To my friends, the members of Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society:

After a year and three months of hard work at Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, life has found another place for me. In August of this year, I'll be relocating to New York with my family to pursue new opportunities. I am sad about leaving this remarkable organization, but also feel very happy for all the work that we got done in this short period of time. Your support was key; it made possible a wide array of accomplishments that otherwise would not have been achievable. My experience working with SCVAS gives me great hope as I have come to realize the potential impact that an engaged citizenry can have on its community. Furthermore, I am very proud to have shared this responsibility with you.

From my experience working in other parts of the world and my interaction with other nonprofit organizations, I've become more conscious of the high level of sophistication of social work in our community. We ought to continue leveraging the commitment of our members and the proficiency of our leadership to pursue our mission of preserving local habitats for wildlife and our own enjoyment.

During this past year we have set the foundation necessary to expand our services and serve a broader community in the coming years. We identified the areas we needed to strengthen and then focused on improving member communication, achieving fiscal stability, and increasing our membership. In the tradition of 52 years of effective member communication strategies, which have included several generations of our newsletter, this past year we have renovated and expanded our website and are in the latter stages of redesigning *The Avocet* to make it more appealing and effective.

Thankfully we continue to benefit from a sound financial position. However, achieving fiscal stability for our chapter is an ongoing project and as a membership organization, the support of our community will define our future. Through the years you have all been supporting us in many ways, and we are immensely grateful for your loyalty. This year SCVAS has sought some alternative funding sources including corporate giving programs, United Way, eScrip, and FreePledge. The first two have been very effective in supporting other organizations' work, but we haven't been able to tap their full potential mainly because we don't ask our members to disclose where they work. After some careful deliberation, we are now encouraging our members to help us identify any opportunities that their employers might offer to organizations like ours. Please contact us with any leads so we can reach out to the many responsible corporate citizens in the area and help them allocate their contributions to where they will have the greatest impact. We also encourage you to visit our website to learn how you can support us at no cost by enrolling your credit cards in eScrip and doing your online shopping through FreePledge.

Last, but never the least, SCVAS would like to keep increasing membership, involve more volunteers into our recreational, conservation and educational work, and diversify our membership to better represent our community. This will help us expand our services, and be more effective in the long term. In the last issue of the *Avocet*, our Membership Chairman invited you to share the fun, and I think this is exactly what we ought to do. I encourage you to reach out to friends and colleagues and encourage them to learn more about our great organization. After all, who doesn't have a great time serving the good?

Many exciting projects are out there waiting for our chapter to take action, and during the coming years I assure you that Audubon will do exactly that, take action. Just remember that we need you. Audubon is its membership.

I want to sincerely thank our board members, staff (Susan and Kim), and nature shop volunteers. Their passion and devotion for this chapter is one of the most beautiful expressions of love that I have experienced in this field. My first months in this position were less stressful thanks to Bob Hicks and John Callahan; they both helped me move forward with our grants strategy and finances. Also, volunteers like Bobbie Handen, Elaine Gould, Karen Hoyt and Allen Royer are great champions of environmental education in this region and they deserve my appreciation and respect. When I talk about action and devotion, I need to mention other champions as well, such as Environmental Action Committee members Nancy Teater, Debbi Jamison, Ruth Troetschler, Chris & Jeanne Salander, and Candice Basham, among others. I also had the opportunity to work very briefly with the nestbox builders, as well as with those volunteers who bring lots of fun to our members and community every year — Doug & Gail Cheeseman, Tex Houston, Dick Blaine, and Norman Watenpaugh, the bird counts leaders and our field trip coordinators. For our enviro-entrepreneurs who decided to follow me during our diversity campaign, "mis respetos". Some of them are Larry Volpe, Trey Reasonover, Cynthia Padula, Howard, and Gordon Barrett. My sincere thanks to the first volunteer I met when I came on board, Grant Hoyt, for helping us express our good work every other month, through the editing of *The Avocet*. On this subject, my gratitude to Bonnie Bedford-White for making everything that we do look so professional. Without all of you, the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society would not exist, and I would not have had this marvelous experience.

I learned a great deal by working with this enduring and passionate organization. I'm taking this passion with me, and leaving an organization with bright future and an unyielding commitment to expanding its impact.

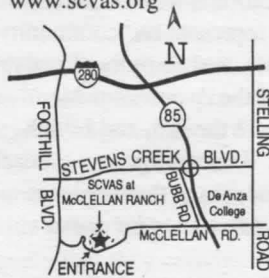
I feel empowered and eager to discover more passion in this world. Thanks, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, and good luck in the road ahead.

Always, Brenda

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

2006 Volume 53, Number 3

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

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***The Avocet* 12**