



# THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

September - October 2006

## Conservation issues, local to global

### Know your acronyms!

by Bob Power  
Executive Director

Getting to know our organization and understanding our role in the Santa Clara Valley's conservation efforts means learning a whole new set of acronyms. Here's a brief rundown of some of the groups and projects I've committed my efforts to since I joined SCVAS in June:

◆ **SBSPRP:** Along with John Gurley of California Audubon, I sit on the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project stakeholders forum. We are the voice(s) for Audubon on this extraordinary project guiding the development of the restoration plan for lands purchased from Cargill Salt in 2003. Development of the plan has been ongoing for two and a half years and will culminate in the publication of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) in early 2007. Adoption of that plan will result in a series of implementation projects. John and I will continue to influence the restoration of this habitat as well as the development of enhanced public access plans. Your help will be appreciated when the opportunity for public input is announced.

◆ **CVSP:** The Coyote Valley Specific Plan (CVSP) is a massive planning project, certainly the most important in Santa Clara County's history. SCVAS has taken the position recommending that no development occur in the Coyote Valley, a beautiful agricultural and open space landscape south of Santa Teresa County Park. As long as this planning effort continues, we'll stay involved as environmental stakeholders to influence the preservation of wildlife corridors, riparian habitat, and open space that will preserve the nature of this historic valley.

◆ **BDSFIBA:** The Bolsa de San Felipe Important Bird Area sits in the southernmost part of Santa Clara County between Gilroy and Hollister. Our Environmental Action Committee has identified the monitoring of activity in this area as one of our top five environmental priorities. Committee meetings will be held regularly in the Gilroy area to stay in touch with local advocates and local knowledge of the area. Please join us for our September meeting in Gilroy on September 27<sup>th</sup> (location to be announced). Additionally, we're working with the Sierra Club and The Nature Conservancy to coordinate a workshop focused on south county conservation issues later this fall. Stay tuned!

**SCVAS'**  
**80th**  
**Anniversary!**

*see Page 10*

### General Membership Meeting

### "Birds of Ecuador"

with John Moore

Wednesday, Sept. 20

Palo Alto Arts Center, Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Despite its relatively small size, Ecuador has a wide range of habitats and is home to some of the most biologically diverse flora and fauna in the world, including a high percentage of endemic species. Ecuador is home to over 1,600 species of birds, one of the richest avifaunas in the world. Nowhere else is there such incredible avian diversity — 17% of the world's total number of birds — found in such a small country. For this reason, Ecuador has been designated as one of the earth's 17 "mega-diverse" countries.

San Jose resident John Moore has a huge collection of bird songs and actively uses his recordings for land conservation in Ecuador. Tonight's photo presentation is about the birds of Ecuador and the 8 reserves in Ecuador owned by Foundation Jocotoco. The presentation will highlight the target bird species

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◆ *New Programs Coordinator*  
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◆ *Little Stint!*  
— *Field Notes*, Page 6

◆ *Debbie Thompson honored*  
— Page 9

◆ *Belize trip benefits SCVAS*  
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# Sept. - Oct. '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 Sept. 2, 9 AM**

### **Point Reyes**

Full day. Leader: Peter LaTourrette (650) 961-2741. West coast's most active vagrants trap, where birds and weather are always exciting and unpredictable! From Hwy 1 in Marin Co. take Sir Francis Drake Blvd west approx. 14 miles, turn left to Drakes Beach, meet in parking area. Bring lunch, liquids, full tank of gas; be ready for fog, wind, sun and lots of difficult to ID birds. Carpool from Drakes Beach.

## **Sunday Sept. 3, 8:30 AM**

### **Alum Rock Park**

Half day. Leader: Al Dieckmann (408) 379-5641. 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, drive under bridge and meet at far end of parking lot. Possible entrance fee; moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. **LO**

## **Wednesday Sept. 6, 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 Sept. 9, 9 AM**

### **Charleston Slough**

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. From Hwy 101 in Mtn. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way parking area, meet at entrance nearest San Antonio Rd. Trip recommended for beginners but all are encouraged to attend.

## **Sunday Sept. 10, 8 AM**

### **Ogier Ponds**

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right toward Model Airplane Park (street is unnamed). Follow road for 1/4 mile, park in gravel lot at first bend in road (meet at gate if entrance is locked).

## **Wednesday Sept. 13, 9 AM**

### **Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough**

Half day. Leader: Norm Kikuchi (831) 459-9424. Meet at Jetty Rd. and Hwy 1 just north of Moss Landing. Gulls, terns, ducks, shorebirds, raptors. **LO, RC**

## **Saturday Sept. 16, 8 AM**

### **Moss Landing & vicinity**

Full day. Leader: Todd Newberry (831) 426-8741. Full-day trip (8 to 3-ish) to Jetty Rd, Moonglow Dairy, Reserve HQ, Kirby Park, and possibly East Struve Slough (Watsonville). Meet at kiosk on Jetty Rd (Moss Landing) off Hwy 1 at 8 AM sharp. Gulls, terns, ducks, shorebirds, raptors; wandering rarities can show up in these late summer weeks. Dress in layers, bring lunch and liquids.

## **Sunday Sept. 17, 8 AM**

### **Arastradero Preserve**

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. From I-280 take Page Mill Rd. west approx. 1/2 mile to Arastradero Rd. Turn right and meet at parking lot located 1/2-mile on right. Woodland, grassland species, good assortment of raptors. Two miles moderately strenuous walking. **RC**

## **Saturday Sept 23, (times below)**

### **Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands**

Full day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. To carpool, meet at Page Mill Rd/I-280 Park'n'Ride at 8 AM. All others meet at tunnel entrance near parking area on Hawk Hill around 9 AM. Directions to Hawk Hill: after crossing Golden Gate

Bridge, exit just past Vista Pt., cross under Hwy 101 and turn right just before entrance back onto 101 south. Drive up hill to highest point and park. Migrating raptors; possible Broad-winged Hawk. Weather conditions highly variable—dress in layers, bring lunch and liquids. **NOTE:** This will be our only field trip to Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands this fall. Heavy fog may change itinerary.

## **Sunday Sept. 24, 8:30 AM**

### **Coyote Hills Regional Park**

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. Take Hwy 84 (Dumbarton Bridge) east to Newark. Exit right at Thornton, then go left on overpass, as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre; turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd into park. Meet at far end of Quarry parking lot located on left, 1/4 mile past park entrance. Entrance fee probable. **LO, RC**

## **Saturday Sept. 30, 8 AM**

### **Grant Ranch County Park**

Half day. Leader: Pat Kenny (408) 725-0468. 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 on left, after main park entrance. Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds, possible Golden Eagle. Moderate 2-mile walk, **LO, RC**

## **Sunday Oct. 1, 8:30 AM**

### **Carmel River**

Half day plus. Leader: Norm Kikuchi (831) 459-9424. Take Hwy 1 south to Carmel, turn left at Rio Rd., then immediately right into Crossroads Shopping Center. Meet near Crossroads Cinema at back of shopping center near river. After birding Carmel River and lagoon we may chase locally reported vagrants in nearby areas. Bring lunch and liquids or buy food at meeting place. Temperatures vary; bring extra layers of clothing. Rubber boots optional (there may be puddles in the riverbed).

## Field Trips *continued*

**Wednesday Oct. 4, 12 noon**

### City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leaders: Freddy Howell and Elaine Gould. See Sept. 6 write-up for details. *RC*

**Sunday Oct. 8, 8:00 AM**

### Windy Hills 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, go 0.8 miles to parking lot on left just past The Sequoias. *RC*

**Wednesday Oct. 11, 7:30 AM**

### Local Hot Spots

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Note early start! Meet at Alviso Marina. From Hwy 237 in San Jose take Gold St. north to end of street, bear left on Elizabeth St. then right on Hope St. to Marina parking lot. A chance to visit some of the local hot spots you hear about and, we hope, to see some 'good' birds.

**Saturday Oct. 14, 7:30 AM**

### Local Hot Spots (see Oct. 11 write-up)

**Sunday Oct. 15, 9:00 AM**

### Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mtn. View. All are invited but trip is geared toward beginners. Bring a scope if you have one; friends and non-members are always welcome.

**Saturday Oct. 21, 7:30 AM**

### Elkhorn Slough & vicinity

Half day plus. Leader: Rick Fournier <Rimbirding@aol.com>. Meet in parking lot north of Elkhorn Slough Bridge just off Hwy 1 in Moss Landing at Sea Harvest Restaurant. Seasonal and regional specialties, reported vagrants. Plan on birding through lunch (stopping at Phil's Snack Shack) and finishing up early afternoon. Bring food and liquids, dress in layers.

**Sunday Oct. 22, 8 AM**

### Arastradero Preserve

Half day. Leader: Al Dieckmann (408) 379-5641. See write-up for Sept 17th.

**Saturday, Oct. 28, 8:30 AM**

### Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

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

**Sunday, Oct. 29, 8:30 AM**

### Western San Francisco

Half day. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. Note change in Daylight Savings Time—"fall back" or be an hour early for this trip. From I-280 take 19th Ave to Golden Gate Park. When entering park on 19th Ave be in left lane; take Crossover Dr. to 25th Ave to Geary Blvd, then left on Geary. Meet in parking lot at Mirrie Way above Sutro Baths and Cliff House. *LO, RC*

**Saturday Nov. 4, 8 AM**

### Grant Ranch County Park

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. See write-up for Sept. 30. *LO, RC*

**Sunday Nov. 5, 8:00 AM**

### Gilroy Water Treatment Facility

Half day. Leader: Mark Paxton (831) 637-3039. Access to facility by special permit—trip limited to 15 people in four vehicles, by reservation only. Carpooling required. Meet at McDonald's, Chestnut St. and E. 10th St. in Gilroy between Hwy 82 (Monterey Hwy) and Hwy 101; carpool from there. Wide variety of birds. Bring lunch and liquids. *RC, NF*

## Events Calendar

**Tues. 9/12, 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: Summer birding experiences

**Thurs. 9/14, 7 PM**

**Cavity Nester Recovery Program (CNRP)** meeting, McClellan Ranch Park

**Wed. 9/20, 7 PM**

**General Meeting**, Palo Alto Art Center (see Pg. 1)

**Tues. 9/26, 6:30 PM**

**Birdathon Committee** meeting, McClellan Ranch Park

**Wed. 9/27, 7:30 PM**

**EAC Mtg.**, McClellan Ranch Park

**Tues. 10/10, 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: Whiskered Auklet

**Wed. 10/18, 7 PM**

**General Meeting**, Cupertino Community Center, 10185 Stelling Rd Cupertino (see Pg. 11)

**Sat. 10/21, 8 AM**

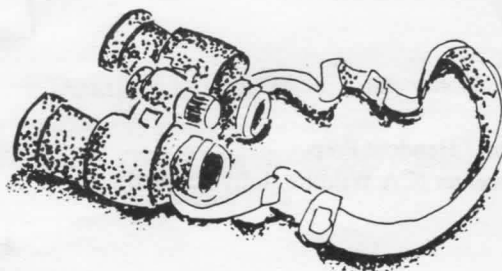
**Early Bird Shorebird walk**, Charleston Slough

**Sat. 10/21 10 AM – 2 PM**

**Wildlife Education Day**, McClellan Ranch Park

**Wed. 10/25 7:30 PM**

**EAC Mtg.**, McClellan Ranch Park



# Volunteer Ventures

By Toby Goldberg

SCVAS Programs Coordinator

During my Programs Coordinator training, Kim Yuan-Farrell emphasized one recurring theme: the tremendous value of SCVAS' volunteers in keeping our organization alive and active. I am amazed at the dedication shown by those volunteers I have had the pleasure of meeting! We depend on you, our members, to support our chapter's events, activities, and programs. And, of course, we appreciate your varying skills and interests.

With that in mind, please check out the following volunteer opportunities. I'm ready and excited to help you find a position that suits your interests, skills, and schedule. You can fill your calendar with volunteering as you please; your time commitment is determined by you.

Wetlands Discovery Program Docent – This program shares the wonder and importance of wetland habitats with third through sixth graders throughout Santa Clara County. Volunteers guide students in exploring wetland wildlife and habitat both in the classroom and in the field. This program is rewarding for both volunteers and the hundreds of South Bay children who participate (12 schools and 772 students in 05 - 06!). No experience is necessary, as we will provide training for both field and class sessions. All a potential docent needs is a love of nature and a desire to share it with children.

80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Support – 006 is a big year for the Santa Clara Audubon Society - it marks the 80th anniversary of the creation of this chapter! Of course, we hope to commemorate this occasion with great style and panache, but in order to do it properly we will be depending on the support of our volunteers! There are numerous pre-day planning and coordination needs, as well as day-of set up/take down needs; the more hands helping out the more fantastic this celebration can be! The date of the event is Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Wildlife Education Day Support – Our largest annual event, Wildlife Education Day hosts a plethora of ways in which you can volunteer. With wonderful interactive booths, educational presentations, live animals, a poster contest, raffle, and much more, this fun-filled affair will require volunteer support weeks before the event as well as on the big day – Saturday, October 21. Check out these exciting and varied ways YOU can help:

Prior to the Event:

- Poster Contest Coordinator
- Publicity
- Mailing Support / Handout Prep
- Classroom Presenter (CA Wildlife, fully-scripted)

Day of Event:

- Setup
- Registration
- Nature Arts & Crafts
- High School Volunteer Coordinator
- Nest Box Building Station
- Event Photographer
- Parking
- Cleanup

Field Trip Coordinator – SCVAS is proud to offer birding trips to various locations free of charge to our members and the public. These outings are fun, social, casual affairs scheduled by our dedicated Field Trip Coordinators and led by volunteer leaders. We currently need a coordinator, beginning January 2007, to schedule trips on the fourth Wednesday of the month. 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.

*If you are interested in any of these positions or if you have questions about how you might be able to help, please contact Toby at (408) 252-3740 or [programs@scvas.org](mailto:programs@scvas.org).*

## Visit the SCVAS Nature Store for New Books and Videos!



- Birding Babylon: A Soldier's birding journal from Iraq
- City Birding: True Tales of Birds and Birdwatching in Unexpected Places
- Hawks From Every Angle: How to Identify Raptors in Flight
- Voices of North America Owls: A 2-CD audio guide with nearly 200 recordings of North American owl species.

*And much more...we invite you to come and take some time to browse around the Nature Shop!*

# Introducing Toby Goldberg

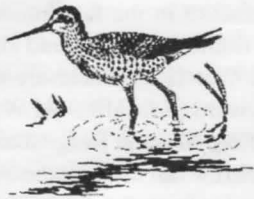
Upon relocating back to the SF Bay area from Santa Barbara, my first thoughts were on how to connect with my local Audubon chapter! Imagine my delight when, upon first encountering the fabulous SCVAS website, I discovered that there was a full-time position available! Being familiar with the National Audubon Society, I couldn't believe my good fortune and was eager to apply. Now, coming to know all the wonderful SCVAS members, I am so excited to begin my time as the new Programs Coordinator and am eager to continue meeting and getting to know all the amazing people that are the heart and soul of this chapter.

My educational and professional experiences have, both literally and figuratively, taken me all over the map. Throughout my rambles and travels, one thing has remained fixed: my love of nature and my desire to see it protected. I feel extremely fortunate, therefore, to be able to work with such a well-established organization dedicated to bringing that love and awareness to the community. While I am truly awed at the scope of the SCVAS outreach programs, I am also energized by the thought of being able to contribute to the continued good work that SCVAS accomplishes. I look forward with great anticipation to building upon the strength of current SCVAS programs, and I hope to continue the trajectory of growth and development set in motion by the



cadre of dedicated SCVAS volunteers. I know that I will continue to depend on their knowledge, experience and enthusiasm as I take on the new role of Programs Coordinator.

Attempting to fill the shoes of those who've come before is always a daunting task – Kim has done so much for this organization and has left a strong legacy behind her. But I am confident that with the foundation already established, and with the support and guidance of our Education Committee, SCVAS programs will fly to new heights. I look forward to meeting and interacting with all the SCVAS members who will make that possible. Please feel free to contact me with questions about the volunteer or educational programs at (408) 252-3740 or [programs@scvas.org](mailto:programs@scvas.org).



FUN ACTIVITIES for KIDS & ADULTS

## 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Wildlife Education Day!

Build a Birdhouse  
Live Animals . . . birds, reptiles, & more!  
20+ Nature Organizations

Make a Bird Feeder  
Learn about CA Wildlife & Habitats  
Fabulous Raffle Prizes  
Educational Presentations

**Saturday, October 21, 2006**

10am-2pm

McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino

"Early Bird" ~ Shorebird Walk

8:00 am • Charleston Slough

RSVP Required. Call (408) 252-3740

!!! Poster Contest !!!

Prizes and Awards announced • 1:00 pm

For details, call (408) 252-3740 or visit the SCVAS website

Submission deadline 10/6



General Parking @ Monta Vista High School w/ FREE SHUTTLE SERVICE  
Disabled Parking ONLY @ McClellan Ranch Park, HEAVY Rain Cancels

# Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

## Waterfowl through falcons

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** was at Moffett Field on 3 Jun (MMR) and this pair or another was seen in closed salt ponds in Alviso on 23 Jun (MMR, MJM, RGJ). A pair of **Redhead** was seen in Crittenden Marsh on 3 Jun (MMR) and a second pair was in Salt Pond B2 the same day (MJM). A pair in the Lockheed Martin ponds on 2 Jul (FV) was likely one of these two pairs. We have paired birds in one of every three or four summers. The only report of breeding **Lesser Scaup** was two broods in the outer Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 29 Jul (SCR). A female/immature **Bufflehead** in outer Salt Pond A2W on 3 Jun (WGB) was the only report for the summer. The basic-plumaged **Common Loon** found in late May at Shoreline Lake remained through 1 Jun (CVR). Normally, large numbers of **American White Pelicans** return to the South Bay by late July, but the high count of the season was only 12 birds in Alviso on 14 Jun (WGB), typical of "oversummering" birds. There was an amazing invasion of adult **Little Blue Herons** in June, albeit brief. Bird #1 was found at Almaden Lake on 9 Jun (MJM, RWR) and remained until 17 Jun (v.ob.). Bird #2, also found on 9 Jun (WGB), was seen on Salt Pond A16 through 11 Jun (MDo, KDo, DWe). Finally, bird #3 was a one-day wonder at the marsh at Coyote Ranch on 10 Jun (MJM). Roughly at the same time, a **Cattle Egret** hung around the heronry at Almaden Lake 8-15 Jun (GBa, JBa, v.ob.). Two nestling **Bald Eagles** were found dead in their nest on the west shore of Calaveras Reservoir on 20 Jul (HJP). It appears that this nest and one close by had been used for at least five years. This is the first record of nesting by this species in Santa Clara County. **Golden Eagles** are rarely seen away from their territories during summer, so one seen along Zanker Road on 10 Jun (GL) was unusual. At least one juvenile **Peregrine Falcon** fledged from a nest on Salt Pond AB1 and was seen on 3 Jun (MJM).

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## Shorebirds through hummingbirds

This summer has been one of the best for **Snowy Plovers** in recent years. Eighteen were counted on closed salt ponds on 23 Jun (MMR, MJM, RGJ), including at least three broods under protection of the adult males. Some of these birds may have moved over to the pond north of Alviso Marina CP and New Chicago Marsh in July. First found there on 11 Jul (RWR, FV, RKe, PKe), high counts included at least 8 on 18 Jul (RWR et al.), 11 on 22 Jul (MMR), and 20 on 29 Jul (SCR). A few birds were locally pro-

*First county record of  
breeding Bald Eagle;  
mega-rarity Little Stint;  
singing Bell's Vireo*

duced, as a male and three very small precocial young were seen north of the marina on 29 Jul (RKe, PKe). An early **Solitary Sandpiper** was found in the South County Regional WasteWater Authority treatment ponds in Gilroy on 28 Jul (RKe, PKe). The fall passage of **Lesser Yellowlegs** started on 13 Jul when a bird was found at the New Chicago Marsh (RWR, FV). Numbers climbed through July with 19 counted there on 29 Jul (SCR) including 5 juveniles, which were the first of the season. An alternate-plumaged **Ruddy Turnstone** seen at the New Chicago Marsh on 18 Jul (RWR et al.) was a good find. Adult **Semipalmated Sandpipers** showed up at the New Chicago Marsh in July. The first bird, found on 16 Jul (MJM, MMR), remained until at least 20 Jul (MMR). A second adult was seen there on 20 Jul and a third on 21 Jul (MMR). The big news of the summer was an adult **Little Stint** found on 16 Jul (MBr, MJM, OJ, et al.). This very orangey Siberian bird was well described and photographed. It was likely seen on 19 Jul (AV) and was last found on 20 Jul (SCR). This is the first record for

the county and one of the few adults ever found in California. Salt Pond A2E was again the location for staging **Least Terns** this summer with a vanguard of 79 birds on 4 Jul (MJM, DWe). The peak count was the next day with 113 birds (RWR, FV), but numbers dwindled considerably by the end of July. In most years birds remain well into August. One to two alternate-plumaged **Black Terns** in New Chicago Marsh and Salt Pond A16 6-10 Jun (MJM, RWR, FV, MDo, KDo) were late spring migrants. Two birds there on 22 Jul (MMR) may have been failed breeders or early fall migrants. The invasion of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** is probably lapping on our door. One was seen near Old Almaden Road and Capitol Expressway on 16 Jun (SCR) and another was heard in Los Gatos on 29 Jul (KPa). A tailless **Greater Roadrunner** was seen along Hellyer Avenue in the eastern foothills on 14 Jun (BJ) where seen before. One on Metcalf Road on 29 Jun (MJM) was also in a location where found before. Surprisingly, a single bird was seen at Ed Levin CP on 11 Jul (RL). This species' range has retracted in the last hundred years. It was found in the Oakland Hills before World War II and there are egg sets from Hayward (*vide* RJR). Al Wool found eggs along Mission Ridge during the 1930s, but in the last 25 years the most northern records along the front of the Diablo Range have been on the north side of Alum Rock Park and south of Calaveras Reservoir. Owling in Monte Bello OSP on 3 Jun (SCR) resulted in two **Long-eared Owls** calling southwest of Stevens Creek and at least six **Northern Saw-whet Owls**. Later in the morning, a third Long-eared Owl was flushed in the upper Adobe Creek drainage above Hidden Villa. Ten **Black Swifts** were foraging over Monte Bello Ridge on 3 Jun (SCR) and one was seen there on 5 Jun (GHa). A single bird over Fair Oaks Park in Sunnyvale on 12 Jun (MMR) may have been forced into the lowlands by clouds along the ridges to the west. Small numbers of **Vaux's Swifts** in June and July are all local breeders. The high count was of 7 along Alamitos Creek south of Camden

## Field Notes *cont'd*

on 4 Jul (JPa). A juvenile bird with an adult in the Almaden Valley on 21 Jul (JPa) was clearly a bird of the year. The only report of **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** was of a male, a female, and two fledglings along the Guadalupe River below Curtner (AV).

### Woodpeckers through goldfinches

Reports of **Lewis's Woodpeckers** included an adult and a fledgling being fed in San Antonio Valley on 27 Jun and two more birds along Del Puerto Road the same day (both DMA). Two birds were also seen in the valley on 8 Jul (ALE, GB). Breeding **Pileated Woodpeckers** included a female with three young along Skyline northwest of Gist Road on 15 Jun and another female with three young along the Old Santa Cruz Highway northeast of the summit on Hwy 17 on 28 Jun (both DLSu). The earlier record is the first for Block 8515. A **Bell's Vireo** was heard singing repeatedly along Coyote Creek near the Coyote Creek GC on 20 Jun (MJM), but could not be refound. This is the third county record. One to two **Bank Swallows** were seen at the New Chicago Marsh on 16 Jul (MJM, MBr, OJ) and were probably failed breeders or early fall migrants. A **Pygmy Nuthatch** with a nest with young in a eucalyptus was found again this year along San Francisquito Creek near Stanford West on 3 Jun (DSt). This nuthatch, more characteristic of the coastal slope, occasionally nests on the flat lands in urban areas. The **Canyon Wren** found at Henry Coe SP in the spring was seen once again on 6 Jun (RWR, FV). Breeding **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were seen along Skyline this summer. A group of six was northwest of Gist Road on 5 Jun (DLSu) and one was carrying food. A group of eight was seen further north on 13 Jul (DLSu) and some of the young were begging.

It was an unusual season for late or out-of-place migrants. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was well seen near the Gate 5 pond at Monte Bello OSP on 19 Jun (GHa). There are no prior records for the county from the second week of May through September. A **Sage Thrasher** was found on Monte Bello Ridge on 3



*Although two nestling Bald Eagles were found dead in their nest at Calaveras Reservoir, this is the first record of nesting by this species in Santa Clara County. Watercolor and ink sketch by Bonnie Bedford-White*

Jun (SCR). The latest prior spring records were the second week of May. A male **Phainopepla** was seen in San Antonio Valley 27 Jun (DMA) and was accompanied by a fledgling. A **Hermit Warbler** was singing near Horseshoe Lake in the Skyline Ridge OSP in San Mateo County on 3 and 20 Jun (GHa) and three birds were found along Skyline Boulevard in both Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties on 5 Jun (DLSu). These are probably all breeding birds. However, a likely juvenile seen in Ed Levin CP on 31 Jul (DWe) is unusually early. The Coyote Creek Field Station has banded a juvenile as early as 14 Aug and we have a few sight records from that period as well, but none so early. An exciting vagrant, a singing **Ovenbird**, was found along Skyline Boulevard on 5 Jun (DLSu) and was moving downslope towards Saratoga. The **Yellow-breasted Chat** along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield was found again on 13 Jun (SCR, DQ). One to two singing **Grasshopper Sparrows** were in the Monte Bello OSP 1-3 Jun (GHa). Other locations where these sparrows were found were Coyote Ridge, 2 on 4 Jun (SCR) and Joseph Grant CP, 6 on 13 Jul (WGB). **Golden-crowned Sparrows** are occasionally found in summer. An adult bird was seen at the Palo Alto Duck Pond on 7 Jul (JG, TAC). [As an aside, Dr. Joe Greenberg, 87, is a past president of SCVAS.] An injured adult was photographed there on 15 May (TGr) and is possibly the same bird. A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was found just over the line in Santa Cruz County near Skyline and Black Road on 18 Jun (LSt).

Single male **Blue Grosbeaks** continued to be seen at Ed Levin CP on 1 Jun (KPa) and 10 Jun (AME). A **Great-tailed Grackle** was a one-day wonder at the Gates of Heaven Cemetery in Cupertino on 2 Jun (CJC). A male and female continued to be seen at the Coyote Creek GC on 4 Jun (SCR) and 20 Jun (MJM). The female was carrying food for nestlings on the second occasion. Two **Red Crossbills** were over Skyline and Black Road on 5 Jun (DLSu). Few **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found in the Diablo Range this summer: two were in the San Antonio Valley on 9 Jun (BC) and two were along Mines Road on 8 Jul (ALE, GB). However, they were more common than usual in the Santa Cruz Mountains with four at Monte Bello on 3 Jun (GHa, SCR), one over Skyline Ridge OSP on 20 Jun (GHa), a male at the Arastradero Preserve on 23 Jun (GHa), and one over Monte Bello on 23 Jun (GHa). One over Stevens Creek above Crittenden Lane on 3 Jun (MMR) was the only one found on the valley floor.

*Observers: Gordon Barrett (GBa), Jeannie Barrett (JBa), George Bing (GB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Matt Brady (MBr), Ted Chandik (TAC), Bill Clark (BC), Charles Coston (CJC), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Kelly Dodder (KDo), Art Edwards (ALE), Al Eisner (AME), Joe Greenberg (JG), Tom Grey (TGr), Garth Harwood (GHa), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Oscar Johnson (OJ), Bob Juhl (BJ),*

*continued on Page 9*

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# Analyzing H5N1 Bird Flu

Ruth Troetschler

Those of us who are interested in birds cannot help but be concerned about the ongoing fears and predictions concerning "Bird Flu"—specifically the lethal A strain known as H5N1. Until now we may not have known that there are over 144 different strains of avian influenza virus that circulate at low levels in wild bird populations, usually causing only mild illness in birds and no illness in humans.

So what's the difference now? Perhaps more than a little fear. In the last hundred years, all serious pandemics of human influenza have originated in Southeast Asia, where bird flu was discovered.

The surface of the influenza virus bristles with antigenic proteins which allow the virus to attach to body cells and take control of the genetic mechanisms therein. These antigens change readily, such that new human strains appear every year. Typically genetic drift produces new antigens similar to the original, so that existing antibodies confer some resistance. But when the virus picks up one or more genes from an animal virus, the resulting "antigenic shift" can yield an entirely new antigenic coat which is resistant to existing antibodies, and therefore more lethal.

Most influenza viral-coat changes occur in southeast Asia where ducks live close to pigs and humans. Pigs become infected with avian influenza virus after eating duck droppings and catch human flu from a farmer's sneeze. If the pig is infected with both viruses at the same time the genetic material can mix, creating the new strain that may find its way to the respiratory tract of the farmer and thus to others in the community. In this situation, pigs serve as the "mixing vessels" for the creation of new influenza viruses that threaten human health. Only type A influenza viruses can change this way because they are the only type that persists in both animal and human populations.

In winter 1918-19, a pandemic now known to contain H1N1 genes from humans and pigs killed 20 million people worldwide and millions of US pigs, who likely caught the disease from humans.

In 1968, a new influenza strain arose in which seven of the flu RNA segments came from prevailing human type A coat proteins, and the remaining segment was a avian flu type A virus—a major genetic shift. This Hong Kong flu caused a major pandemic. The avian coat protein in this virus was H5, a strain notoriously lethal to chickens.

The "Bird Flu" H5N1 strain was first recognized in Hong Kong in 1997. It was the first time that the avian H5N1 strain had been found in people, and it was enormously lethal to poultry. It is believed that if this lethal strain evolves so it can be easily transmitted human to human, a pandemic will occur. This may or may not happen, but meanwhile people who raise poultry or use poultry products are at special risk because this strain is massively lethal to poultry and some of their human handlers who catch it from the flock.

There are several ways in which H5N1 can spread: movements of infected poultry (and poultry products); movements of caged wild birds in trade; and movements of migratory wild birds. H5N1 has caused deaths among wild waterbirds at several locations in Asia and later in the Middle East and in Europe. These outbreaks show that wild birds are able to carry the virus long distances, though there is no evidence of spread from Asia to the Americas. Little is known about the lethality of the virus on wild birds and how efficiently they spread it. Culling of wild birds or destruction of their habitat would be at best ineffective, probably counterproductive, and could distract from more suitable interventions.

There is strong circumstantial evidence that movements of poultry or poultry products are responsible for outbreaks in India, Nigeria, Egypt and elsewhere. Tight controls are obviously needed within the poultry industry. Controls on the movement of untreated poultry and poultry products, on the re-use of inadequately cleaned transportation crates, on the use of infected poultry manure as fertilizer in agriculture and as feed in fish-farms and pig farms, and on the trade in wild birds. Untreated poultry

manure could be an effective way of spreading the virus. The FAO recommends that the feeding of poultry manure/poultry litter should be banned in countries affected by or at risk from avian influenza, even if correctly composted or dried with heat treatment. Gardeners should avoid these products until the problem is eliminated.

Live animal markets probably play a major part in spreading influenza virus. In Hong Kong in 1997 approximately 20% of the chickens in live poultry markets were found to be infected with H5N1. H5N1 was found in Vietnam markets three years before the 2004 outbreaks in chicken farms. Live poultry markets in the US were considered the "missing link in the epidemiology of influenza" in a 1992 outbreak. These markets are also a likely source of infection of captive birds since domestic and caged birds are kept in close proximity. There should be a continued moratorium on trade in wild birds originating from affected regions.

There is a huge international trade in poultry. The legal trade involves millions of hatching eggs and poultry shipped to destinations world-wide. In late 2005 illegal chickens from China were intercepted in Italy the UK. Recent reports reveal that poultry meat is being illegally imported from Asia into the US. These incidents indicate continuing lapses in government border controls despite widely publicized risks.

Activities such as birdwatching and feeding garden birds should be completely safe if simple common sense precautions are followed. Avoid touching carcasses of wild birds, and wash hands with soap and water after filling or cleaning bird feeders. Frequently disinfect birdbaths and feeders. These measures are advisable in any case as birds can carry other pathogens.

In countries where H5N1 outbreaks have occurred, people working with poultry or other captive birds need to take stricter precautions and avoid contact with wild birds as much as possible.



## Conservation issues *continued from Page 1*

◆ **APWRA:** You may or may not be aware that Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (joined by the Marin, Ohlone, and Mt. Diablo Audubon Society chapters) is supporting Golden Gate Audubon's CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) lawsuit against the County of Alameda for its failure to conduct an EIR in the Altamont Pass Wind Resources Area (APWRA). At issue is reducing or eliminating the killing of raptors by wind turbines. Due to the nature of litigation and negotiation, much of what is going on is confidential, but I did want to let you all know that negotiations are continuing in a positive framework. Discussions are focused on proposals for reducing bird kill in both the short and long term. Alameda County has appointed a scientific review committee (SRC). The

SRC will serve a critical function in guiding and recommending mitigations to reduce bird kill.

◆ **AIT:** I won't get on a soapbox. I won't use the bully pulpit. I won't even whine. I'll just say, if you haven't seen "An Inconvenient Truth", it's time. If you have seen it, it's time to take a friend who hasn't. If you have seen it and life's to-do list has erased your good intentions that you resolved to implement on the drive home from the movie, take a look at the website: <http://www.climatecrisis.net/takeaction/>. The conservation arena can be

overwhelming, but there's so much we can do, individually and together. See the movie. Take a friend. Take some action.

◆ **SCVAS:** Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society needs to add to its committed, involved, and dedicated volunteers who form the Environmental Action Committee. Help us be more effective in conserving the precious resources of Santa Clara Valley. Take a look at our website if you haven't recently. Call Nancy Teater (650) 321-0252 or myself (408) 252-3748 for background info. We'd love your support and involvement.

## Field Notes *cont'd.*

Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Garrett Lau (GL), Randy Little (RL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Dean Manley (DMA), Kathy Parker (KPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Hans J. Peeters (HJP), Dave Quady (DQ), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Linda Stinchfield (LSt), Dick Stovel (DSt), David Suddjian (DLSu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Chuq Von Rospach (CVR), and Dave Weber (DWe).

*Taxonomic note: The forty-seventh supplement to the AOU checklist of North American Birds was published in July. Locally, only the ordering of birds was affected. The jaegers are a family again and are placed between terns and alcids. Some of the shorebird and tern genera have been changed and the species have been re-ordered. If you bird further afield, then you may discover that the split of Blue Grouse into Sooty Grouse and Dusky Grouse gives you a new life bird without you leaving your computer terminal.*

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

## Debbie Thompson

### *Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Medal of Honor, 2006*

- Board of Directors, 1998 - 2006+
- President, 2004 - 2006
- Membership Chair, 1998 - 2003
- Birdathon Chair, 2005 and 2006, both record-breaking years for fundraising
- Personnel committee: wrote personnel policy
- Prolific *Avocet* contributor
- Event creator for new members
- Wrote new Chapter bylaws



At the June 22, 2006 Annual Membership Meeting and dinner, Debbie Thompson was honored with the Chapter's Medal of Honor award. Debbie had just completed her third term as Chapter President, but her accomplishments did not stop there. During 2006 she was not only the key leader for the Chapter but also our record-breaking Birdathon Committee Chair, our Personnel Committee Chair, our Nominating Committee Chair, and the Bylaw Project Chair! She participated effectively in our Education, Conservation, and Christmas Bird Count activities.

Debbie and her husband, Steve, have hosted board and staff recognition dinners and organized monthly meetings, the Annual Dinner for chapter members, and the Birdathon Awards Dinner. They have been major financial sponsors of SCVAS in addition to the incredible time they have donated. Debbie managed all this and worked as a full-time engineer with a local high tech company while still maintaining that beaming, friendly smile. Most of you have probably met her since she attends all the monthly membership meetings and is our greeter. Next time you go, say and "hello" and thank her, as we do, for all she has given to SCVAS.

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# Birding Belize Benefits SCVAS

## Wonderful Wildlife and Temples in Belize and Tikal

March 22 - April 3, 2007

Gail and Doug Cheeseman have been leading international natural history tours since 1975. For many years Gail and Doug have been intimately involved in and generously supportive of the mission and goals of Santa Clara Valley Audubon. I was absolutely delighted when they offered to make the proceeds of their 2007 trip to Belize a donation to the conservation programs of our chapter. This is a wonderful gift on the part of the Cheesemans and an outstanding opportunity to experience the birding trip of a lifetime under the care and leadership of Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris and their experienced and exceptional guides lined up for this tour. I could go on and on, but I suggest you read for yourself the description of this phenomenal trip. Don't hesitate too long to call the Cheesemans. Space is limited and won't last long.

—Bob Power, Executive Director

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### Adult Ed. class

The following class is 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.

### Raptors of the Western States with Lisa Myers

Raptors are a favorite among birders and non-birders alike. September finds us in the middle of the raptor migration as they head south from their northern breeding grounds to their wintering grounds. During this two-week class we will review the eagles, kites, buteos, harriers, accipiters, falcons & osprey, their different hunting styles and food preferences. We'll also learn where to find each species and the key field marks. Class includes one field trip. Recommended text: Hawks from Every Angle: How to Identify Raptors in Flight; available from the SCVAS Nature Shop, McClellan Ranch.

Dates: Class: Mondays 9/18, 9/25, 7-9 PM; Field trip: Sat, 9/23, 8-12 noon

Location: Conference Room, McClellan Ranch in Cupertino

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

**The Avocet 10**

Belize is a hot destination for the passionate birder because it offers primary tropical forests no longer found in many other tropical countries. With the possibility of seeing 400 species of birds, Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris has put together a fantastic Belize itinerary whereby proceeds will be returned to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. Pulling from three decades of experience leading wildlife tours, Doug and Gail Cheeseman have designed a wildlife expedition led by Joe Garel and Dr. Dave Johnston that includes exceptional neotropical birding; mammal, reptile and plant life observation; and exploration of the archeological ruins of Tikal in Guatemala.

The following gives you an idea of what is in store for this two-week adventure. You will begin by birding Crooked Tree Sanctuary, the first wetland sanctuary established in Belize, administered by the Belize Audubon Society. Next stop is the vast Rio Bravo Reserve at La Milpa. Rio Bravo represents approximately 4% of Belize's total land area and is home to 400 species of birds, 200 species of trees, 70 species of mammals and 12 endangered species. La Milpa is also the third largest archaeological site in Belize. You'll then move on to the Mountain Pine Ridge where you'll stay beside a beautiful waterfall with numerous crystal pools that empty into the Privassion River. While here you'll visit the unique and well regarded Belize Zoo, home to hard-to-see native Belizean species.

The tour then moves to the west edge of Belize where you'll travel over the border to Guatemala. Here you'll spend two incredible days amidst the temples and wildlife of Tikal. Your next destination takes you to the Vaca Plateau in the Mayan Mountains. A canoe trip down the Macal River allows for birding from a different perspective. You'll end your trip on the Placencia coast where you'll spend two days exploring the Gladden Spit Marine Reserve. One attraction we'll search for at Placencia will be the Whale Sharks that can be found here this time of year. Cost is reasonably priced \$3990, and includes two weeks in the peak season at quality lodges located in close proximity to wildlife; vehicles; one domestic flight; park fees and leadership throughout; plus all meals from dinner March 22 through breakfast April 3. Airfare is separate: approximately \$550. Limit 12 people. \$780 single supplement. To learn more about the trip call Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris, 408-741-5330 or 800-527-5330.

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Save the Date!

## Come celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the founding of our Chapter

Join us on Sunday, October 1st  
at the beautiful Maison Du Lac in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Event highlights will include: A pre-dinner Bird Walk  
BBQ Dinner \* ~ Keynote Speaker ~ Special Recognitions

Due to space limitations, R.S.V.P. is required by September 15th.  
Dinner is free\* but we are requesting a \$10 - \$25 donation at each guest's discretion.

For details and more information visit  
our web site [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org) or call us at 408-252-3747

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## General Membership Meeting "Central Valley Winter Birding"

with Lisa Myers  
Quinlan Community Center,  
10185 Stelling, Cupertino  
Wednesday, Oct. 18

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Winter in California is a fantastic time to be a birder. California's Central Valley stretches 500 miles between Bakersfield in the southeast to Redding in the northwest and 80 miles across between the Sierras to the east and the coastal ranges to the west. Join Lisa Myers as she presents the different species that winter in the northern parts of Central Valley.

Lisa, owner of Let's Go Birding, is also an active SCVAS adult education teacher, is on the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and works part-time for Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris. She has been leading birding adventures through the Central Valley for years and has a passion for the species that depend on this area. As a Chico State alumnus, she also became very familiar with the farm roads of this area as she tried to avoid the CHP on her commutes back and forth between school and the Bay Area!

The Central Valley once contained 4 to 5 million acres of wetland habitat, but due to farming and the increase in development only 5% of this habitat remains today. Despite this loss of habitat this area continues to be a vital wintering area for 60%

## Sept. General Meeting *from Page 1*

in each reserve, which encompass all the critical areas of Ecuador except the Eastern Lowlands. Local bird photographer Mike Danzenbaker ([www.avesphoto.com](http://www.avesphoto.com)) has collaborated with John to include some of his fantastic photos from the Eastern Lowlands.

John has been recording bird vocalizations for almost 20 years. He has published recordings in CD and cassette featuring birds from Lake Tahoe, Belize and Ecuador. His delightful recording, "A Walk at Chan Chich" has sold over 3000 copies. For the past 10 years he has been collaborating with several ornithologists to publish a complete set of vocalizations of the birds of Ecuador. In November 1997 he joined Dr. Robert Ridgely (author of *The Birds of Ecuador*) on a recording trip to Southern Ecuador, which resulted in the discovery of the Jocotoco Antpitta. The *London Times* called it the greatest ornithological discovery of the decade. The discovery was the impetus for the formation of Foundation Jocotoco in which John is a director and member of the Executive Committee. To date the foundation has raised over \$2 million to purchase and manage over 20,000 acres of endangered habitat. Visit John's website at [www.johnvmoorenaturerecordings.com](http://www.johnvmoorenaturerecordings.com).

of the waterfowl that migrate through following their ancestral routes along the Pacific Flyway. In addition to the waterfowl one can also find exceptional wintering raptors, shorebirds and passerines.



### AUDUBON AT HOME: SCVAS' Bird Sanctuary Program

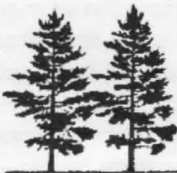


**Every Backyard Is Important:** Whether small or large, your yard, patio, balcony, or even rooftop area can play a crucial role in protecting native wildlife by contributing to a critical matrix of suitable habitats buffering and connecting developed spaces to natural areas.

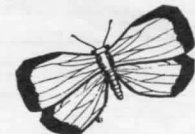


### Become Sanctuary Certified!

- Guidelines, "How-to's" and Applications now available
- Beautiful Garden Plaques available with a \$50 donation
- Members can tour other Sanctuaries - get ideas and see conservation in action!



Certification is only \$20 (to cover costs).

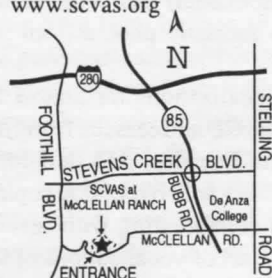


Contact the Programs Coordinator at (408) 252-3740 or [programs@scvas.org](mailto:programs@scvas.org) to apply or for more information.

Wild birds are essential to biodiversity - our planet's way of maintaining its own health. Like canaries in a coal mine, our declining bird populations are warning us that our environmental health is in jeopardy.

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**GENERAL MEETINGS** are held on the third Wednesday of each month except July, August and December and are open to the public.

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

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

*The Avocet* is published bi-monthly by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, CA 95014. Deadline is the 25th of two months prior. Send submissions to: *The Avocet*, c/o SCVAS at the above address.

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

**2006 Volume 53, Number 5**

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

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

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

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

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