



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

January - February 2007

Counting Burrowing Owls in Santa Clara County

by Ruth Troetschler

In 2006 volunteers from SCVAS and other local birders participated in a Burrowing Owl (BUOW) census coordinated by The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP). Locally 28 teams (37 people) searched in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and San Benito Counties between May 15 and July 15. All 5 km x 5 km blocks known to contain breeding owls in the 1980s were searched, as well as a number of "random blocks."

What did we find? The top BUOW breeding sites in SC County were located at airports. Jack Barclay recorded 26 breeding pairs (98 total) at San Jose Airport, and Moffett Field had 12; one pair was seen at Reid Hillview Airport, and Palo Alto Airport had none. (The most successful airports are actively managed for BUOWs —Jack Barclay will tell us how at an upcoming Wednesday meeting; watch the calendar). Mountain View's Shoreline Park, also managed for owls, supported 5 pairs, while Sunnyvale Baylands Park and Palo Alto's Bixby and Baylands Parks contained none. One pair nested near the Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility.

In the Alviso-San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge Education Center block, 11 BUOW pairs were scattered about this still somewhat rural city, including several at Arzino Ranch. Fi-

nally, at previously owly Mission College, 1 pair of owls raised 3 young. In addition, we know of 2 pairs at another golf course that was not included in the census.

Two BUOWs were injured, and at least one killed, near Gilroy where urban development is intruding into agricultural land.

That's it! Though all census teams searched far and wide, 6 teams found 56 BUOW pairs in 6 census blocks and 22 teams found none. Each of our stalwart teams completed the survey except for a couple of random blocks in the hills where access was impossible. Next year the census will continue. If you know of other BUOW nesting sites in these counties, please let me know of their location, and plan to join us next year.

Previously SCVAS members volunteered for a 1991-93 IBP census. How do results this year compare with the previous local census data? The October 1993 *Avocet* states that 280 pairs were found in the first 2 years of the IBP census, and I recently tallied 124 pairs located in SCVAS's 1987 census. Thus our 2006 data suggest there are 80% fewer owls than 12 years ago, and 55% less than 9 years ago. We found acres of empty business parks and residences in the locations where the owl formerly thrived.

*Remembering
Norman
Watenpaugh*

see Page 8

continued on Page 8

General Membership Meeting "Behavior Accounts of East African Birds and Mammals" with Doug Cheeseman

Wednesday, Jan. 17

Palo Alto Arts Center, Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Doors open 7:30: program 8:00

Doug Cheeseman has a great love for photographing East African bird and mammal behavior. Tonight he will give a power point presentation using a new, top-of-the-line RGB Color Canon Digital Projector. Gail and Doug Cheeseman have been leading safaris to Africa since 1978 and have led over 50 safaris. The last three years Doug has been "shooting digitals." The presentation will have interactions between male Kori Bustards, kleptoparasitism with Ground Hornbills on a Ruppell's Griffon Vulture, anti-predation behavior in herbivores, plus fascinating social patterns, instinctive and learning behaviors observed by Doug over the years in East Africa.

◆ *Special Sunday presentation
in Campbell*

— Page 5

◆ *Zone-tailed Hawk!*

— *Field Notes, Page 6*

◆ *Spring Birdathon news*

— Page 10

◆ *Mitigation monitoring*

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Jan. - Feb. '07 Field Trips

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

NF = No facilities available

Wednesday Jan. 3, 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 Jan. 6, 8:30 AM

Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right 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). **RC**

Sunday Jan. 7, 7:30 AM

County Chase

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

Saturday Jan. 13, 8:00 AM

Panoche Valley

Full day. Leader: Clay Kempf (831) 761-8260. Meet at Paicines Store on Hwy 25 approx. 11 miles south of Hollister. Oak woodland, open grassland via back roads into unique habitat. Phainopepla, Mtn. Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle; possible Mtn. Plover, Bald Eagle, Vesper Sparrow, Greater Roadrunner, Chukar. Bring lunch, full tank of gas; carpooling strongly recommended.

Sunday Jan. 14, 9:30 AM

Butterfly watching, Ardenwood Park

Half day. Leader: Moe Magoski (408) 410-7567. From I-880 in Fremont take Hwy 84 west toward Dumbarton Bridge, then take Ardenwood Blvd exit to right; follow signs to parking lot. Monarch and other butterflies. Bring butterfly field guides, close-focusing binoculars. Children welcome. **LO, RC**

Sunday Jan. 14, 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 Mt. View. Birding geared toward beginners. **RC**

Saturday Jan. 20, 8:00 AM

Almaden Lake Park, Alamitos Creek

Half day. Leader: TBD (questions - call Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527). Meet in west parking lot of Almaden Lake Park. From Hwy 85 take Almaden Expwy south. Park is on east (left) side of Almaden Expwy. Continue just past Coleman Rd (and the park); return northbound on Almaden Expwy to park entrance on right. About 3 miles easy walking. Waterfowl, raptors, riparian birds. **LO, RC**

Sunday Jan. 21, 8:30 AM

Foster City and Coyote Point

Half day. Leader: Al Eisner (days and voicemail: (650) 926-2018; evenings: (650) 364-3686). From Hwy 101 take E. Hillsdale Ave toward bay, turn right on Shell Blvd (just after passing lagoon). Park in Leo Ryan Park lot on right, just beyond community center. Shorebirds (including "rockbirds"), waterfowl, landbirds. Scopes useful. **LO, RC**

Saturday Jan. 27, 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 and continue into park. Pass under bridge and meet at far end of upper parking lot. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Possible Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, Canyon Wren. Be prepared for some mud! **LO, RC**

Sunday Jan. 28, 9:00 AM

San Francisco's southern parks

Half day. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. Meet at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area for shorebirds, bay ducks, loons and raptors. We'll then visit San Francisco's McLaren Park for land birds and dabbling ducks. From Hwy 101 exit just past Brisbane Lagoon at Candlestick/3Com Park off-ramp. Continue east along Harney Way, turn right onto Jamestown/Hunters Point Expwy. Watch for entrance to Candlestick State Recreation Area on right and enter (no fee). Meet at end of paved road that runs through the park. **RC**

Friday - Sunday Feb. 2 - 4

Morro Bay/Carrizo Plain

3 days. Leader: Rick Fournier (831) 632-2473; e-mail: Rimbirding@aol.com. Great birding, lodging and restaurants sum up this fabulous weekend. We'll bird throughout San Luis Obispo County starting on the coast, finishing up at the powerful yet peaceful landscape of Carrizo Plain. Early birding will start on Friday 7:30 AM, meeting on the backside (facing the harbor) of Morro Rock. We'll then head south to bird Oceano Campground, Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area and Santa Maria Rivermouth. For those arriving Saturday, we'll again meet at 7:30 at Morro Rock spending the day birding in and around Morro Bay. Sunday will be dedicated to Carrizo Plain, heading home in the afternoon. Bring food for lunches, be prepared for cool, wet weather. A joint Monterey/SCVAS trip limited to 15 participants. Call to confirm participation. **Rain will not cancel** Morro Bay portion of trip; heavy rains on Sunday may cancel Carrizo Plain portion of trip.

Wednesday Feb. 7, 12 noon

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leaders: Freddy Howell and Elaine Gould. See directions under Jan. 3 listing.

Saturday Feb. 10, 8:00 AM

Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. See directions under Jan. 6 listing.

Field Trips *continued*

Sunday Feb. 11, 8:30 AM

Coyote Reservoir

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy take Leavesley Rd east for 1.5 miles, turn left on New Ave then right on Roop Rd. Go left at "T" intersection, then after 1.3 miles left again on Coyote Reservoir Rd to Lakeview Picnic area. **LO, RC**

Saturday Feb. 17, 9:00 AM

Pescadero Marsh and vicinity

Half day. Leader: Sue James (650) 348-0315. Meet at first parking lot south of bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy 1. Shorebirds, gulls, grebes, ducks possible. Scopes helpful. **LO, RC**

Sunday Feb. 18, 8:00 AM

Arastradero OSP

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

Saturday Feb. 24, 8:30 AM

Merced & San Luis Wildlife Refuges

Full day. Leader: Grant Webb (408) 578-0409. Meet at parking area near first observation platform in Merced National Wildlife Refuge. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy take Hwy 152 east past Los Banos, (no services past Los Banos, check your gas gauge), approx. 20 miles, then north 7 miles on Rte. 59 to Sandy Mush Rd; turn left approx. 8 miles to Merced Refuge on left. Allow 2.5 hrs driving time from San Jose, more if it's foggy. Raptors, ducks, geese, Sandhill Cranes, White-faced Ibis possible. Primarily a driving bird trip; FRS radios set to channel 11 sub code 22

will prove valuable. After Merced, caravan to San Luis NWR for lunch and more birding. Dress in layers, bring lunch, liquids, full tank of gas. **RC**

Sunday Feb. 25, 8:30 AM

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. Take Hwy 84 (Dumbarton Bridge) east toward Newark, exit right on Thornton, then left over freeway as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre. Turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd into park. Meet at far end of Quarry Parking lot 1/4 mile past park entrance. Entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Saturday Mar. 3, 7:30 AM

Santa Cruz coastal hot spots

Half day (optional plus). Leader: Todd Newberry (831) 426-8741. Meet 7:30 at Santa Cruz lighthouse on W. Cliff Dr. From Hwy 17 take Hwy 1 "north" (toward Half Moon Bay), turn left on Bay St just after MacDonald's, go to its end, turn right onto W. Cliff Dr; follow bluff-top to lighthouse. Dress in layers; Todd's trips go rain or shine. At 8:00 we'll be on W. Cliff Dr checking inter-tidal shelves as we approach Natural Bridges overlook.

Sunday Mar. 4, 9:00 AM

Stanford Campus

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



Cavity Nesters Recovery Program

- Have you ever wondered why some of our local bird populations are declining?
- Have you ever wished you could do something to help but don't know what?
- Do you enjoy being outside and communing with Nature?

If you answer "Yes" to any of the above, then the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program (CNRP) may be just the thing for you! What is the CNRP, you ask? Come to our informational meeting and find out!

McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Saturday, February 10th

10:30 AM - NOON

Training sessions for new monitors will be held on March 3 and 4

at 9 AM & 1 PM

(only one session is required)

See also "Volunteer Ventures" (pg. 4)

Call (408) 252-3740 to RSVP.

Events Calendar

Wednesday 1/10, 7:30 - 9 PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers presents Ashok Khosla's "Zen and the Art of Seeing Birds." Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd. Palo Alto.

Tues. 1/9, 9:30 AM

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group meets at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Northern Pygmy-Owl

Sun. Jan. 14, 8 PM

Special General Meeting, Campbell (see Page 5)

Mon. 1/15, 10:30-12:30 & 1-3 PM

Whale-watching at Monterey Bay (see Page 5)

Wed. 1/17, 7:30 PM

General Meeting, Palo Alto Art Center (see Page 1)

Sat. 2/10, 10:30 AM - 12 PM Cavity Nesters Recovery Program (CNRP) Info session

Tues. 2/13, 9:30 AM

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group meets at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Wilson's Warbler

Wed. 2/21, 7:30 PM

General Meeting, Palo Alto Art Center (see Page 4)

Sat. 3/3, 9-Noon & 1-5 PM

Nest Box Training (session 1 and 2)

Join us for a Nest Box Workshop where you can learn how much fun it is to monitor a nest box trail or backyard box. You only need to attend one session. Meet at the Arastradero Preserve parking lot. Wear sturdy shoes and earth-toned clothing (greens and browns preferably) and bring water. We'll clean out and repair nest boxes in preparation for this spring's residents. RSVP to David 'Tex' Houston at 650-303-2777 or tex009@sbcglobal.net

Sun. 3/4, 9-noon & 1-5 PM

Nest Box Training (session 3 and 4)

See information above

Volunteer Ventures

By Toby Goldberg
SCVAS Programs Coordinator

Welcome to 2007 (and here I was finally getting used to writing 2006...!) Here at SCVAS we've made many resolutions for the New Year to make our programs better than ever. As the winter season gets into full swing and we start thinking ahead to spring, opportunities abound to focus your New Year's enthusiasm for making a difference! We hope you'll consider sharing some of that passion with us — we have a lot of programs and events that need strong support, and we know that you, our dedicated members and volunteers, have what it takes to make this a fantastic year! I'm always happy to discuss the opportunities below or any others that you might be interested in, so please don't hesitate to call or email me — I look forward to hearing from you!

Cavity Nest Box Monitor — You can help save cavity-nesting birds of Santa Clara Valley from population decline. Now more than ever, your help is crucial to this effort! Increasing habitat loss and degradation has left native cavity nesters such as Western Bluebirds, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, and Barn Owls, without natural cavities in which to raise their young. Fortunately, our team of dedicated nest box volunteers is bringing these populations back. In 1997, the Santa Clara County California Bluebird Recovery Program fledged 229 birds of 8 different species. In 2005, we fledged 1,821 birds of 11 species! As a nest box monitor, you can help families of these and other cavity-nesters make their homes and raise their young. You may install nest boxes yourself or monitor pre-installed boxes. Monitoring involves consistent, weekly visits to boxes to record their use and can be very personally rewarding (see, for example, last issue's CNRP report). A minimum one-year commitment is strongly encouraged. No experience is necessary, as we will provide training materials and guidance. See the Events Calendar (page 3) for information and training session dates.

Field Trip Coordinator — SCVAS is proud to offer birding trips to diverse locations free of charge to our members and the public. These outings are fun, social, casual affairs led by volunteer leaders. We currently need a Coordinator to schedule trips on the fourth Wednesday of the month (not Dec, June-August). This coordinator will recruit field trip leaders for eight events per year and help leaders submit brief notices for *The Avocet's* Field Trips section. This job is not time-consuming, and no experience or specific skills are required.

Taxidermist/Specimen Box Builder — It's time to clear out the freezer! We've got a lot of fine, frozen specimens that are waiting to be transformed into beautiful educational tools. We just need a skilled hand to taxidermy these birds. We are also looking into coordinating some taxidermy classes for those who might be interested in learning the art for future projects. In conjunction with the preparation of specimens, we are also in need of someone to help build some clear, protective cases for our mounted specimens.

The Avocet 4

Wetlands Discovery Program Docent — This program shares the wonder and importance of wetland habitats with 3rd-6th graders throughout our county. Volunteers guide students in exploring wetland wildlife and habitat both in the classroom and the field. This program is rewarding for both volunteers and the hundreds of South Bay children who participate — 235 students this past fall alone, and we expect three times that in the spring! No experience is necessary, 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.

Contact Toby at (408) 252-3740 or programs@scvas.org to volunteer for one of these positions or explore the many other possibilities.

Join SCVAS for a tour of Año Nuevo State Reserve!



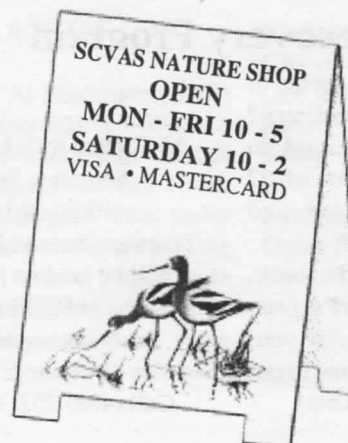
Año Nuevo State Reserve is the site of the largest mainland breeding colony of the Northern Elephant Seal in the world. The males battle for mates on the beaches and the females give birth to their pups on the dunes.

During the breeding season, daily access to the reserve is available via a limited number of guided walks only. SCVAS is making reservations for a date in mid to late February.

Cost/person: \$5 for SCVAS members; \$7 for non-members. There is a \$6/car parking fee — carpooling is encouraged!.

For more details, including exact date, see our website, www.scvas.org, or call (408) 252-3740.

Space is limited! Priority given to families with children.



Holiday Clearance Sale

All ornaments,
cards and
children's items are
20% off
while supplies last!

Happy New Year!

Special Sunday Event:

“Alaska’s magic: from rainforests to Arctic tundra” with Steve Shunk

**Sunday January 14,
Campbell Community Center
Multipurpose room (M-50)**

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Co-sponsored by SCVAS and Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter

Oregon naturalist Steve Shunk leads wildlife tours across western North America through his company, Paradise Birding, and is currently writing the Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America. He co-founded the Oregon Birding Trails program and coordinated development of its flagship project, the Oregon Cascades Birding Trail. Steve also co-founded the East Cascades Bird Conservancy, through which he leads numerous field studies in Central Oregon’s East Cascade Mountains.

From the puffins and kittiwakes of the Kenai Fjords to the jaegers and Snowy Owls of Barrow’s back yard, Steve brings the essence of Alaska, including experiences with oil tankers and Hoary Redpolls, to us for a special Sunday evening program.

At midnight on March 24, 1989, the largest ship of its kind ever built on the American west coast struck Bligh Reef in the northern limits of the Gulf of Alaska. The *Exxon Valdez*, fully laden with over 50 million gallons of Alaskan North Slope crude oil, dumped more than 10 million gallons into the pristine waters of Prince William Sound. For much of the world, this environmental and socioeconomic catastrophe defines Alaska. A quarter-million seabirds perished in the spill, but the area is again beautiful. Five million shorebirds and nine million waterfowl stop at the Copper River Delta every spring on their way to breeding grounds on the North Slope. More than 50 million seabirds of 38 species breed in 1,300 different colonies around the Alaskan coastline.

Steve visited Valdez and Prince William Sound in 1990, the second summer after the oil spill. He then returned in 2006, adding a jaunt to the North Slope, where, at the top of the world, the Aleut lifestyle still depends heavily on the abundance of natural resources of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. From the rainforests to the arctic tundra, Alaska’s magic is still very much alive.

Leasing in part of the area rich in oil and natural gas ended nearly two decades ago in the outcry after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989. But with natural gas prices higher, the Interior Department’s Minerals Management Service proposed reopening the North Aleutian Basin.

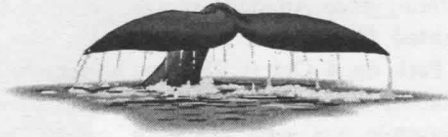
The Campbell meeting is very timely. On Dec. 3 the *San Jose Mercury News* noted that President Bush is deciding whether to lift a ban on oil and gas drilling in federal waters off Alaska’s Bristol Bay, home to endangered whales and sea lions and the world’s largest sockeye salmon run.

Location: 1 W. Campbell Ave. at NE corner of Winchester and Campbell. From 85 take Winchester exit east and from 17 take Hamilton exit north, then Winchester west to Campbell.

YOUNG AUDUBON’S

Winter Whale Watching

~boating adventures for children and their families~



Monday, January 15

10:30am-12:30pm & 1-3pm

Fisherman’s Wharf, Monterey Bay

\$20/person for SCVAS members

\$25/person for non-members

Observe the magnificent Grey Whale during the peak of its southern migration!

Other sealife you’ll be likely to spot include otters, sea lions, dolphins, and, of course, sea birds!

Scholarships available for families in need.

Space is limited!

Call (408) 252-3740 to reserve your space today!

General Membership Meeting

“Birds of Botswana”

with Grant Reed

Wednesday, Feb. 21

Palo Alto Arts Center,

Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Grant Reed presents a slide show about the birds of Botswana, with a little geography, ecology and natural history of the areas thrown in. He will take you from southern Botswana’s desert areas through the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans and into the Okavango Delta and finish in the Chobe/Linyanti region.

Grant is Director of Letaka Safaris, the author of “*Okavango Spirit of Life*” and narrator of “*From Dust to Dust - The Story of Lake Ngami*.” Apart from his 15 years of guiding experience in 5 African countries, he also holds a post-graduate degree in Nature Conservation and is currently working on his PhD. Grant holds the highest level of guiding qualification in southern Africa (Field Guide Association of Southern Africa) and is a recognized trainer and evaluator for FGASA. Grant lectures both in Botswana, as well as abroad, primarily on birds and ecology of Botswana and on conservation in Southern Africa.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Waterfowl through Hawks

Our feral Canada Geese are a magnet for rare wintering geese. An adult **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found at Shoreline Park on 4 Oct (CVR) and remained through at least 13 Oct (WGB). A single juvenile was seen at Calero Reservoir on 25 Oct (AV) and variable numbers were found through late November (v.ob.) with a high count of 5 birds on 19 Nov (GBa). Two adults and an immature were found at the pond off Geng Road in Palo Alto on 9 Nov (MDo) and have remained with the Palo Alto Muni GC geese through the end of the period (m.ob.). An immature **Snow Goose** was also with the Muni GC on 9 Nov (MDo) and was seen there at least through 17 Nov (v.ob.). The big news in small geese was the adult **Brant** found at the Geng Road pond on 11 Nov (MV, VM et al.) and this bird had remained with the golf course flock through the end of the period. This coastal bird was last found locally in March 2000. **Eurasian Wigeon** have been found in typical numbers this season with two males at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds on 7 Oct (RWR, FV), a female at the South County Regional Waste Water Authority (SCRWA) ponds in Gilroy on 18 Oct (SCR), in the outer Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 6 Nov (WGB), and at the Palo Alto Baylands on 25 Nov (BJ). A transient flock of 5-6 female **Blue-winged Teal** at Almaden Lake on 3 Oct (JPa, AV) was unexpected. Three birds found on Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto FCB on 7 Oct (PD) were typical and have been found in 1s and 2s here irregularly since (v.ob.). Nineteen birds seen at the SCRWA ponds in Gilroy on 19 Nov (SCR) were a high number for recent years. Thirteen **Redhead** seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 8 Oct (MJM) were the only report of the season. **Ring-necked Ducks** have returned to their freshwater haunts with the largest concentration being 91 birds on the SCRWA ponds on 18 Oct (SCR). A pair

on the Palo Alto estuary on 6 Nov (WGB) was on salt water where they generally do not occur. A pair of **Barrow's Goldeneyes** was found on Shoreline Lake on 21 Nov (WGB) and one or both have remained through the end of the month (v.ob.). An apparent male **Common X Barrow's** was seen there on 27 Nov (MJM). An **American Bittern** was seen along the Guadalupe River near the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) ponds on 27 Oct (PD) and been found there through at least 8 Nov (v.ob.). Other birds were found at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 26 Nov (DWe, MJM) and the

A Zone-tailed Hawk over the Santa Cruz Mountains is a new record for the County

Calabazas ponds north of Hwy 237 on 29 Nov (RWR, FV). Single **Cattle Egrets** (or maybe one bird) have been found locally. The bird previously reported at the Arzino Ranch was seen there at least through 17 Oct (m.ob.). Another bird was found on the ITT lands off Faber Lane in Palo Alto on 21 Oct (DSt). Seen only a few days, this egret was missed for most of November, but reported again there on 25 Nov (BJ) and has been seen occasionally at the Duck Pond (v.ob.). An adult **Bald Eagle** flying south over Anderson Lake on 9 Nov (ECu) was the first of the season. A **Swainson's Hawk** at Ed Levin CP on 17 Oct (RLi) was a late migrant. A spectacular find was a juvenile **Zone-tailed Hawk** over Summit Road southeast of Hwy 17 on 7 Nov (DLSu). This is a first county record for both Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. A **Ferruginous Hawk** east of Bailey Road and Hwy 101 on 7 Oct (LMy et al.) was early. Another Ferruginous returned to a roost in Gilroy on 11 Nov (BB-W) and one seen in the Coyote Valley on 28 Nov (BP) may be one of the birds that has wintered there in past years.

Shorebirds through Woodpeckers

A juvenile **American Golden-Plover** was found at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 6 Nov (SCR, RGJ) and was seen at least through 12 Nov (m.ob.). This is the latest record we have in the county. One to two **Snowy Plovers** remained in the area of New Chicago Marsh through 30 Oct (v.ob.). Fourteen were counted on closed salt ponds in Alviso on a survey on 4 Nov (MJM). Few **Lesser Yellowlegs** linger into November, so a high count of 9 birds in the New Chicago Marsh on 4 Nov (MJM et al.) was unusual and at least two were still there through 15 Nov (v.ob.). Seven Lessers tallied at the CCFS waterbird pond on 9 Nov (MMR) may have been different birds. More than 128 **Red Knots** were found at the Stevens Creek mouth on an uncovering tide on 31 Oct (RWR, FV), but the next day only one was there (DMa). A single **Sanderling** was on closed salt ponds in Alviso on 4 Nov (MJM). Numbers of **Pectoral Sandpipers** normally peak in September. Surprisingly, we found only a single bird in September this fall. October was no better with a juvenile at New Chicago Marsh on 24 Oct (MJM), which lingered through 4 Nov (m.ob.). A juvenile was found at the CCFS pond on 6 Nov (SCR, RGJ), three were there on 7 Nov (WGB), and one to two birds were found through 16 Nov (m.ob.). Two birds were at Crittenden Marsh on 7 Nov (PJM). Also late this fall were **Stilt Sandpipers**. None were found in September or October but a basic adult was found in New Chicago Marsh on 3 Nov (MJM) and remained there at least through 11 Nov (v.ob.). A juvenile was seen as well on 6 and 8 Nov (SCR et al.). A mixture of **Ruffs** were found for this period. Two to three of the females found in September remained at New Chicago Marsh into early November. A male was found there on 30 Oct (MJM, DWe) and possibly a second male showed up a day or two later. However, the two males were never seen at one time. The 1st-winter **Franklin's Gull**, found in September at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds, remained at least through 4 Oct (DA). A

Field Notes *cont'd*

Franklin's seen the next day (KO) in New Chicago Marsh was likely the same bird. A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen on Mines Road at the northern edge of San Antonio Valley on 17 Nov (WGB). The fall passage of **Vaux's Swifts** tailed off in late September and a few birds were found in early October with the last report of a Vaux's over the SCVWD ponds on 6 Oct (AV). There was apparently good oak mast production in San Antonio Valley this fall as 7 **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were seen there on 3 Oct (BP), 12 on 8 Nov (KPa), and 29 on 17 Nov (WGB). An immature **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was found in Ed Levin CP on 12 Nov (DWe) and has been reported through the end of the month.

Flycatchers through Goldfinches

Late **Willow Flycatchers** on 1 Oct included four along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 (SCR, MMR) and one along Guadalupe River near Blossom Hill Road (MJM). A **Tropical Kingbird** was found along Zanker Road in Alviso on 6 Nov (SCR, RGJ), but was gone the next day. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** has continued in a Los Altos neighborhood through 26 Nov (GHt). One reported at Monte Bello OSP on 4 Oct (GHa) may be from a resident population. So far, there is no sign of a winter irruption of this species. Four **American Dippers** were found between Los Gatos and Lexington Dam on 23 Nov (LMY). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** are showing a moderate incursion. The first found was one at Arastradero Preserve on 6 Oct (MJM). Three were seen along Coyote Creek on 8 Oct (SCR) and two birds were banded there later in the month (SFBBO). One to four birds were found in Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 12 Oct-1 Nov (PKe et al.). At least four were recorded at Monte Bello OSP on 12 Nov (MMR) and 18 were tallied in the pines above the Henry Coe SP headquarters on 23 Nov (SCR). A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was banded along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 21 Oct (SFBBO) and was seen there again on 28 Oct (MJM). This bird may attempt to winter along the creek. A **Sage Thrasher** at the Ulistac Natural Area in Santa Clara on 13 Oct (PKe) was



Zone-tailed Hawk
Bonnie Bedford-White

a good find. The only **Phainopepla** this fall was a male in San Antonio Valley on 3 Oct (BP). October built on September's find of an adult **Tennessee Warbler** with an immature found along the Guadalupe River near Blossom Hill Road on 1 Oct (MJM). The bird remained through at least 3 Oct (m.ob.). Two **Nashville Warblers**, a rare fall migrant, were found along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 12 Oct (MMR). The **Northern Parula** found in September along Stevens Creek was last seen on 6 Oct (PD). A **Northern Waterthrush**, wintering again in the Charleston Road marsh, was seen on 18 Nov (EL et al.). A late **MacGillivray's Warbler** was banded at CCFS on 1 Oct (SFBBO). An injured **Wilson's Warbler** seen along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 16-17 Nov (MMR, JT) may be attempting to winter. The second **Green-tailed Towhee** of the fall was found at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 24 Nov (BW). A third **Clay-colored Sparrow** for the season was found beside the fennel patch at the Palo Alto Baylands on 16 Oct (DWe). A **Brewer's Sparrow**, also the third for the fall, was seen along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 8 Oct (SCR). A **Grasshopper Sparrow** seen in the weedy fields at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 1 Nov (MJM) may be wintering. Two **Swamp Sparrows** have been found, one along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 8 Oct and the other off Turlock Avenue southwest of San Martin on 11 Nov (both SCR). **White-throated**

Sparrows have shown up in typical numbers. The first was near Felter and Sierra Roads above Alum Rock Park on 24 Oct (RCo, JBr et al). Single birds were also along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 30 Oct (MMR), at Monte Bello OSP on 8 Nov (GHa), at Almaden-Quicksilver CP on 14 Nov (JPa), near Calero Reservoir on 18 Nov (MDo, BC), at the Ulistac Natural Area on 22 Nov (SCR), and at Rancho San Antonio on 30 Nov (RLi). The only feeder birds so far is one in Los Altos, first seen on 26 Nov (BM). **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** are less frequent in the fall so the continuing immature male at the Arzino Ranch through 5 Oct (v.ob.) and a female along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 8 Oct (SCR) are of interest. A female **Great-tailed Grackle** was seen at the Coyote Creek GC on 17 Nov (MJM), the first record since the nesting birds were finishing up in June. A **Red Crossbill** was noted over Monte Bello OSP on 4 Oct (MJM). Between one and three **Lawrence's Goldfinches** have continued to be present at Monte Bello OSP at least through 16 Nov (GHa, MMR). Birds have been scattered in the Diablo Range with a male seen in San Antonio Valley on 8 Nov (KPa), 20 in Henry Coe SP on 13 Nov (JY, AL), and 15 birds along Mines Road on 17 Nov (WGB).

continued on Page 8

Burrowing Owls

from Page 1

Statewide in the 2006 IBP census, 219 surveyors logged 3,245 hours. These volunteers plus IBP interns located 595 BUOW pairs statewide, yielding data which California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) personnel are already requesting. IBP will analyze the data after next year's counts are completed. IBP already knows that BUOWs are concentrated in the Imperial and middle Central Valleys and Southern Interior regions, and, that only effort will protect the species from urban development statewide.



Burrowing Owl
by John Mariani

Next issue: *Precipitous disappearance of local Burrowing Owls*

Field Notes *cont'd.*

Observers: David Armstrong (DA), Gordon Barrett (GBa), Bonnie Bedford-White (BBW), Bill Bousman (WGB), Julie Bryson (JBr), Brian Christman (BC), Rita Colwell (RCo), Emélie Curtis (ECu), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Peggy Don (PD), Garth Harwood (GHa), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Pat Kenny (PKe), Eugenia Larson (EL), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Randy Little (RLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Dean Manley (DMA), Virginia Marshall (VM), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Brooke Miller (BM), Lisa Myers (LMY), Kris Olson (KO), Kathy Parker (KPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Bob Power (BP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO), Dick Stovel (DSt), David Suddjian (DLSu), Jim Thomas (JT), Manny Varas (MV), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Chuq Von Rospach (CVR), Bill Walker (BW), Dave Weber (DWe), and James Yurchenco (JY).

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

We will miss you, Norman

SCVAS members were deeply saddened to hear of Norman Watenpaugh's recent death in October. Many of you knew him as I did — dedicated and consummate volunteer, conservationist, field trip leader, educator, and bluebird trail monitor. *The Gilroy Dispatch* often quoted Norman and aptly nicknamed him the "Birdman of Gilroy."

I remember when Norman came to the SCVAS office many years ago, toting one of his well-designed barn owl boxes. He explained to us how he became interested in barn owls over 20 years ago after hearing how effective they are at keeping rodent populations in check. After some research, Norman thought he could build and erect houses to benefit both farmers and owls. That was Norman — when he saw a problem he set about trying to solve it. Norman's barn owl boxes led him to become interested in bird boxes of all types. Participating in the California Bluebird Recovery Program, he erected, maintained and monitored an impressive 120 bluebird boxes in and around Gilroy for the past ten years.

Norman was also a conservationist with a passion for preserving agricultural land. As a long-time engineer and head of maintenance for Gentry Foods in Gilroy, Norman often spoke to local farmers and understood their issues. An active member of Save Open Space Gilroy, he fought to preserve the rural farming heritage of the south county. Norman was also an active member of our Environmental Action Committee.

Norman was an educator and popular volunteer. We could always count on him to help during special events such as Wildlife Education Day. He was a main force in helping SCVAS grow Gilroy Earth Day to reach more and more children each year. He was also a volunteer for other organizations, such as the Fleurs Garden Club, where he kept the Gilroy Senior Center garden in bloom.

In honor of Norman, SCVAS has set up a special Volunteer Memorial Fund to receive donations in memory of volunteers. These volunteers will be listed on a memorial page of our website. When making a memorial donation, please indicate the special volunteer that you want to memorialize. The monies in the fund will finance an important new or continuing program during the year. Also, Norman's Gilroy nest boxes will need to be monitored, so volunteering to help with the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program (more information on pages 3 and 4) would be a very fitting tribute to this fine man.

We will all sorely miss Norman's bright energy and presence at SCVAS. His spirit will continue on at SCVAS in our hearts for a very, very long time. We salute you, Birdman of Gilroy, you are a true and inspirational gentleman.

—Debbie Thompson



The 2007 SCVAS Spring Birdathon Wants YOU!

Everyone, from beginner to expert birder, can participate in the **2007 SCVAS Spring Birdathon**, a major fundraising event for SCVAS conservation efforts and youth environmental education, raising over \$26,000 in 2006. Your participation could help raise even more in 2007.

Anyone can win fabulous prizes, from optics and birding trips to entertainment tickets, exotic resort getaways, excellent wines and much more, by raising money and being a top fundraiser! Top fundraisers get their choice of prizes.

Anyone can join in by self-donating at least \$30.

Anyone can sponsor a team. Check www.scvas.org after February 1 to pick a Birdathon team to sponsor. Call the office to make a tax-deductible donation to that team. Receive a report about that team's Birdathon Day.

Here are the basics of how to join in the Birdathon fun, raise money, and compete for a prize.

1. Check www.scvas.org for Birdathon rules, information, and prize list after February 1. Check back, as the prize list will be updated often.
2. Talk to your birding friends about forming a Self-Guided Team together for the 2007 SCVAS Spring Birdathon, pick a day to bird between March 30 and April 23. Register your team by calling Susan at the SCVAS Office, 408-252-3747.
Or, call to join a Guided Team led by one of our many expert birders. Check the website after February 1 for the list of teams.
3. Plan your birding day with your Self-Guided teammates. Create a 4-hour or 24-hour Birdathon that fits your team. You can design a relaxed and restful Birdathon or one that is creative and energetic. For example:
 - Spend four hours on a Saturday snacking in lounge chairs on your patio counting species at your feeders (4-hour Birdathon Category)
 - Race around Santa Clara County from before dawn until after dark, birding in as many habitats and locations as is humanly possible in a 24-hour period (24-hour Birdathon Category)
4. Raise money - at least \$30 per team member. It's so much easier than you think. Most people you know will be delighted to support your efforts for a good environmental education program with a small or large tax-deductible donation. Call, e-mail, or write all your friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, acquaintances, to ask for pledges or donations. Sound too hard? It's not! In recent years, our top fundraisers each raised from \$350 to over \$3,700. You can, too—we'll teach you how. Read the fundraising tips in your Birdathon packet and/or attend the fundraising workshop at the SCVAS office on Monday, March 12. You'll find out how easy it can be.
5. Bird with your team on your Birdathon Day and have fun!
6. Collect your pledges and be sure to turn in the money you've raised, pledge sheets, and results form to the SCVAS office by May 15, to be eligible for prizes.
7. Attend the free Birdathon Awards Dinner on Tuesday, June 4, and find out if you've won a prize. Participate in bird contests and games and maybe win another prize. Honors also go to the "best bird" found and the "most species" seen. Share Birdathon stories with other participants over a relaxed, informal dinner. Feel great that you have helped fund SCVAS conservation efforts and youth environmental education, and had such a good time birding.

Bird Sanctuary Program: Ideas for patios & balconies

By Toby Goldberg
SCVAS Programs Coordinator

First of all, let me welcome all of you who have requested information about this program and especially those who have chosen to make their back yard areas a sanctuary for native wildlife. Your contribution to protecting native birds and other wildlife may seem small at first, but combined with other like-minded folk, your efforts will play a significant, positive role in protecting our native species. If you have questions or topics you'd like to see covered in *The Avocet*, we'd love to hear from you!

The Bay Area is one of the best places in the country to live; it also happens to be one of the most expensive. As a result of an increasingly large rental market and the high demand for ever-shrinking housing plots, garden and patio areas are becoming smaller and smaller. However, we'd like to emphasize that even with limited yard space, you can still create an oasis that provides food, water and resting areas for wildlife trapped in an otherwise concrete desert.

This can be achieved through container gardening and layering plants and small trees for a vertical habitat. The key is to use space efficiently. Here are some tips from "An Invitation to a Healthy Apartment" pamphlet, available from SCVAS Nature Shop. As a general rule, bigger containers are better and will give roots to grow, but appropriate plants can be found to fit any space. Always include a bottom layer of rocks or pieces of broken pots for good drainage and to guard against overwatering. Birds are very adaptable and will nest on balconies in hanging plants, baskets or nest boxes. However, make sure your small area is also a safe haven — pets and children must be kept at a distance, and make sure to decorate or screen off windows to prevent lethal collisions. And, as always, we would encourage you to include as many native California plants in your garden or patio plan as possible.

For more information, contact us at (408) 252-3740, programs@scvas.org.

Craig Breon to spearhead SCVAS mitigation monitoring

Former Executive Director Craig Breon has once again joined forces with Santa Clara Valley Audubon, launching a new project building on his past work with Kim Yuan-Farrell: to implement an in-depth study of the environmental protections required of developers by local governments and see that those protections are working.

Summary

This project confronts the following questions:

- Are developers and local governments keeping their promises to the people to protect the environment from the potential harm of development projects through mitigation measures?
- Can a small conservation group such as an Audubon chapter find and correct problems with mitigation monitoring at the local level?
- If we can make changes at the local level, how do we share our successes with other organizations, so that they too can reclaim natural resources otherwise lost to them as well?

The problem

In addressing land use issues, the conservation community focuses the lion's share of its resources on the front end of development projects. Should the project be approved? Is the environmental documentation analyzing the project sufficient to allow local governments and the public to adequately evaluate the proposal? Should the project be changed or additional protections be required to reduce or compensate for environmental impacts?

Once a project is approved, how do we know that the promises made in that approval will be kept? Due to scarce time and resources, conservation organizations typically move on to the next issue, rarely following up on those promises, although at stake are the integrity of key natural resources such as wetlands, riparian areas, habitats for rare and endangered fish and wildlife, or clean air and water.

Although a California law dating to 1989 requires local jurisdictions to approve a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan simultaneously with project approval, most local governments lack a well-funded and coordinated program to ensure the public that promises made have been kept. As a result, California loses natural resource values—though no attempt has been made to quantify the magnitude of that loss.

Addressing the problem

We've launched a unique effort to tackle this often overlooked question of whether the public can rely on the development approval process to protect our resources in the long term. Our efforts will be lead by Craig Breon, former SCVAS Executive Director, as a consultant to the organization. SCVAS will investigate past public and private

development projects for compliance with approval documents and state and federal law. Where problems are found, we'll propose a variety of approaches to redress those wrongs. This project is based on past SCVAS efforts, recent research, and interviews with local planners, consultants, attorneys, activists, and government employees.

By project completion, we expect that not only will many individual mitigation issues be identified and corrected, but that SCVAS will have worked with several local cities and counties to improve their processes for mitigation monitoring and enforcement, thus ensuring the project's impact into the future. In addition, an evaluation will be made of what approaches were most effective in addressing the problem of mitigation monitoring and recommendations will be made on how to translate the work of this project into information that other community organizations can use to address similar problems in their areas.

We thank these members for their generous contributions, Fall 2006

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Through the eyes of a child: A new look at Wildlife Education Day

By Nancy Scarborough, Education Intern
and Toby Goldberg

On October 21, 2006, an amazing day dawned with sunshine and warmth, perfect for over 60 intrepid "early birds" treated to a guided walk at Charleston Slough in Mountain View. Meanwhile, in the foothills of Cupertino, a fantastic convergence took place at McClellan Ranch. Organisms of all kinds assembled in every corner: under blue awnings or the shade of trees, on picnic tables in the sun, and inside the nature museum. There were insects in Bugville, reptiles and amphibians in front of the old Milk Barn, birds of prey in the meadow and even sharks in the shade of the oaks. Humans were well-represented with 26 environmental organizations, 100 dedicated volunteers and more than 500 eager participants from young to old.

Here is an insight into Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's **15th Annual Wildlife Education Day** from Michael, an eager five-year-old participant:

Q. How did you like Wildlife Education Day?

A. I liked it a lot.

Q. What things did you enjoy doing?

A. Lookin' at the worms that didn't like sun. They tried to get in the dirt. They eat dirt. I got to make a bird house. I made it green and red. I used wood. I used the drill.

Q. Did you see any birds?

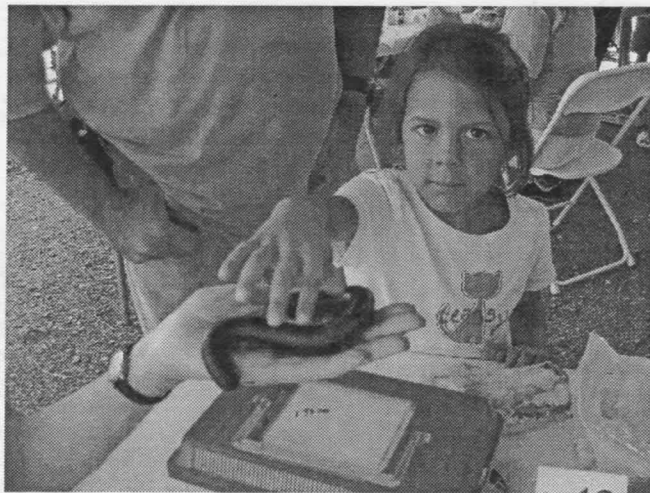
A. Yes, we saw the Red-tailed Hawk very close. And we saw an owl. It had to step on this pole.

Q. Did you see any other animals?

A. We saw a leopard shark. I was so scared! It was slippery. It had a fin on the back.



*This was one rabbit that definitely got the long end of the brush
- all day long!*



A brave young participant learns all about millipedes from YSI.

Q. What was your favorite thing about the whole day?

A. I liked making a bird house. We put it in the corner, outside on the balcony.

Q. What kind of birds do you think will make a nest in it?

A. Little birds.

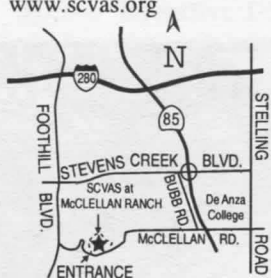
When asked whether he would return next year Michael gave an enthusiastic thumbs up. And that is the point of wildlife education, to plant the seeds for future participation, to nurture the desire for continued learning, and to promote the establishment of a life-long connection with nature and wildlife.

Events like these are only possible through the support of SCVAS volunteers, community members and our donors and sponsors. We would like to extend a special "Thank You" to our Early Bird bird walk leaders, the SCVAS Education Committee and Board of Directors, all the SCVAS, high school, and community volunteers who assisted throughout the day, the poster contest participants for sharing their beautiful artwork with us, **Mayor Richard Lowenthal** for his continued sponsorship, **FedEx Kinko's on Homestead** for their generous discount, **Reneé Rodriguez of Santa Clara County's Social Services Agency** for providing us with portable tents & canopies, and the following businesses for their kind donations:

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

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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.**

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