

THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

July - August 2008

What Were the Creeks Like Before We Came?

By Bill Bousman

(Editor's Note: This is the 3rd essay in a multi-part series highlighting the connection between stream restoration and the restoration of bird populations. These essays are part of a collaborative effort by SCVAS, the Creeks Coalition, and other interested parties.)

On a spring day, along Coyote Creek in its lower reaches, I sit beneath the Fremont cottonwoods, live oaks, and thick growths of willows along the riparian corridor. Seeds from the cottonwoods come drifting about me and I can sometimes hear nearby insects over the drone of Interstate 880. What was it like before settlement? Were the trees larger and the undergrowth thicker? Or was it entirely different?

Sometimes called "historical ecology," the functioning of landscapes and ecosystems before and during settlement is of interest both to geographers and ecologists. We are fortunate in the Santa Clara Valley to have before us a massive study of the Coyote Creek drainage basin completed in 2006. This study summarizes what we know or can guess about Coyote Creek, from where it leaves the Diablo Range at Anderson Dam downstream to its mouth in South San Francisco Bay. The study was prepared by the San Francisco Estuary Institute for the Santa Clara Valley Water District <<http://www.sfei.org/HEP/reports/coyotecreek1.htm>>.

Before the era of dam construction in the 1930s, our big streams, such as Coyote Creek and the Guadalupe River, flooded in the winter and, in its upper reaches, went dry over most of the period of summer drought. There were pools in spots along the streambed and the water table was never very far down, even in the dry stretches. But there were few lengths where the water flowed at the surface and was shaded by riparian trees and undergrowth. In the lower reaches, upwelling groundwater returned flows to these streams. The smaller streams, such as Adobe, Permanente, Matadero, and many others also flooded in the winter and dried out in the summer, but few of these streams ever reached the Bay. Most disappeared into the alluvial fans that marked where these streams came out of the foothills. Often the waters percolated down into the alluvial fans until they reached an impervious clay layer, at which point they moved out to the edge of the fans and formed freshwater swamps with thickets of willows. A few mid-sized

streams, such as San Francisquito Creek reached the Bay during occasional winter floods, but most of the time terminated in freshwater swamps at the Bay edge.

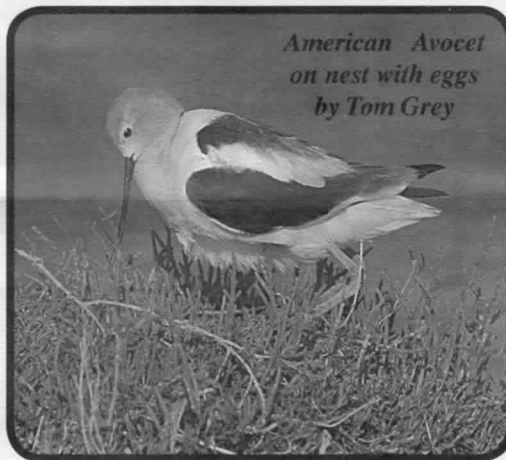
When the Spanish came, they placed the Santa Clara Mission near the Guadalupe River less than a mile from its present location. They built the San Jose Pueblo upstream at the confluence of Los Gatos Creek and the Guadalupe River. Along

**Spring
Birdathon
Reaches a New
Record!**
see Page 5

this stretch there was plentiful water during the summer dry period. The Spanish built a small earthen dam on the Guadalupe and a 3-km canal transported the water to the mission fields and orchards. But the winter floods were devastating and both the mission and pueblo were flooded in the early years. Because of these floods, the Santa Clara Mission was twice moved to higher ground away from the river.

Upon American settlement, the big discovery was the aquifer that was beneath the Santa Clara Valley. The artesian pressure was sufficient that a well drilled in San Jose in 1854 spouted water nine feet above the ground and the excess flowed down Fourth Street (and was declared a public nuisance). But the artesian head dropped as more people drilled into the aquifer. Brewer (1966) described the valley in the midst of the great drought from 1855 to 1866: "... how dry it looked! Hundreds of windmills pump water from the wells for the cattle and for irrigating the lands, but the streams are dry, and sand and clouds of dust fill the dry air." As the water table dropped, pumping

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*American Avocet
on nest with eggs
by Tom Grey*

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- *A Good Season for Rarer Shorebirds* — Field Notes, Page 6
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July-August '08 Field Trips

(Full details for all of our upcoming field trips and events are also available on our website at www.scvas.org.)

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

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

NF = No facilities available

Wednesday July 2, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leaders: Freddy Howell and Elaine Gould or Bobbie Handen. 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, July 12, 8:00 AM

Charleston Slough

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

Saturday, August 2, 8:30 AM

Ano Nuevo State Reserve

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

Wednesday Aug. 6, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. See July 2nd listing for details.

Saturday, August 23, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. For directions see write-up for July 12th.



Events Calendar:

Sat. 7/12; 9AM-2PM

Young Audubon Summer Activity:

"Canoes in Sloughs"

Palo Alto Baylands

(see page 8 for details)

Thur. 8/7; 9:30-11AM & Fri. 8/8;

7AM-5:30PM

Adult Education Class and Field

Trip: Swainson's Hawks with Bob

Power

(see page 3 for details)

Fri. 7/18; 7-9:30PM

California Native Plant Society

(Santa Clara Valley Chapter)

General Meeting

"The Natural World of Sierra

Nevada: Art & Science" with John

Muir Laws, naturalist, illustrator,

author, educator

Los Altos Library (13 S. San Antonio

Road, Los Altos)

See the CNPS website at [www.cnps-](http://www.cnps-scvas.org)

[scv.org](http://www.cnps-scvas.org) for more details.

Sat. 8/16; 8:30-10:30AM

Young Audubon Summer Activity:

Bird Banding with SFBBO

Coyote Creek Banding Station

(see page 8 for details)

Sat. 8/16; 7AM-5:30PM

Adult Education Field Trip:

Swainson's Hawks with Bob Power

(see page 3 for details)

Sun, 9/7; 7AM-4PM

Stevens Creek 50K/SCVAS

Benefit Run

Runners and Volunteers are needed to participate in this fun event through the Santa Cruz Mountains. Runners are asked to donate a small registration fee, the proceeds of which go to benefit SCVAS' education and conservation programs. Go to <http://www.stevenscreek.com/stevenscreek50k.html> for more details about the race and how to register.

(see page 4 for more information on volunteering for this event)



T-shirts, Hats, Field Guides, Breeding Bird Atlases, and so much more!

The SCVAS nature shop has just what you need for that next trip, birthday gift, or just about any occasion!

Adult Education Classes

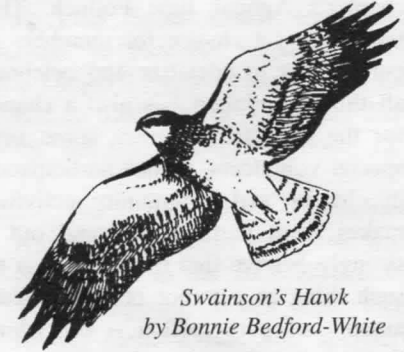
The following classes are sponsored by the SCVAS Education Committee. To register please call the office at (408) 252-3740. All cancellations require 72-hour prior notification for refunds.

Information about our upcoming classes is also available on our website at www.scvas.org.

Swainson's Hawks with Bob Power

Swainson's Hawks congregate in the lower Sacramento Valley in late summer as they prepare to leave for Mexico and Argentina for the winter. They rest up and gorge themselves in preparation for the trip, taking advantage of the rich riparian and agricultural resources of Yolo County. We see Swainson's Hawks (knock on wood) in a wide variety of morphs/plumages. This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know Swainson's Hawks on a more intimate basis. Perhaps the most graceful, often the most beautiful, clearly the long-distance migration sweepstakes winner (Alberta to Argentina); you owe yourself a good visit with these magnificent raptors.

Participants have the choice of signing up for either a workshop/field trip combo, or for 1 of 2 "field-only" options. The in-class workshop on August 7th will cover the natural history and identification of Swainson's Hawks, as well as an overview of other species we might expect to see in a typical August field trip to Yolo County.



Swainson's Hawk
by Bonnie Bedford-White

Note for all field trips: Class sizes are limited to 15. You must be willing to carpool and share fuel expenses with a minimum of 3 other people to attend any of these field trips. We will have a maximum of 4, 4-person vehicles on each field trip.

Workshop/Field Trip Combination:

Dates: In-class Workshop - Thurs. 8/7, 9:30-11:00AM;
Field Workshop - Fri. 8/8, 7AM (South Bay departure) to approx. 5:30PM (South Bay arrival).

Location: In-class Workshop - Conference Room, McClellan Ranch, Cupertino;
Field Workshop - Agricultural lands south of Davis.

Fee: \$50 SCVAS members; \$60 non-members.

Field Workshop Only (session #1):

Date: Sat. 8/2

Field Workshop Only (session #2):

Date: Sat. 8/16

Field Workshop Times: 7AM (South Bay departure) to approx. 5:30PM (South Bay arrival)

Field Workshop Location: Agricultural lands south of Davis.

Field Workshop Fee: \$30 members; \$40 non-members.



White-faced Ibis
by Tom Grey.

Students participating in the Wetlands Discovery Program this Spring were treated to some special views at Charleston Slough in Mountain View. An Avocet pair watching over their baby, and a visiting White-faced Ibis were two of the highlights!



American Avocets with chick
by teacher Sherry Dees.

We thank these members for their generous contributions, April 2008 through May 2008

Partner

Jitze and Nancy Couperus.

Supporter

Marilynn Gallaway, Bruce and Cynthia Gaya, Rose Green, David Presotto and Caryl Carr, Elinor Spellman, Andrew and Kathy Switky, Riley and Virginia Willcox.

Individual

Joe Altimus and Molly Molloy, Dr. and Mrs. Bishop, Ken and Lana Bone, Netzalli Can, Chris Carneghi, Anne Carpinetti, Rick Dahlhauser, Aidan Doyle, Pamela Estalio, David Fichtner, Rose Green, Walter and Pat Hartinger, Janet Hedley,

Kathryn Hickey, Caroline Houston, Gyton Jinkerson, Jay and Teri Johnson, Roger Kidd, Dave Kutilek, James and Mary Lamb, Aldora Lee, David Lewis, Rachel Lowenberg, Cecily Magyar, Ken and Patsy McKay, Philip and Beth Merritt, Carolyn Mitchell, Elena Moreno, Barry and Erin Moss, Susan Nakahira, Gordon Poole, Leon Pauser, Nadine Redding, Carolyn Roeber, Dina Scheel, Robert Sexton, Laverne Shaffer, Gertrude Shearer, Dorothy Sloan, Marjorie Smith, Roy and Joyce Snyder, Dieter and Susan Walz, Lindsey Wolf, Bernard and Nancy Wood, Lori Young, David and Floy Zittin.

Volunteer Ventures

by Toby Goldberg
Programs Coordinator

Summer is a time for many wonderful activities, not the least of which is our chapter's Annual June Potluck. This fun event - a chance for members of our chapter to socialize and celebrate all things Audubon - is also a chance for the staff to recognize some very special volunteers, whose participation in chapter and community activities makes them particularly stand out. I strongly believe that there really is no such thing as a minor or insignificant amount of participation - everything that our volunteers do, from our committee members to those that help address envelopes, is so critical to the functioning of our chapter! And given a chance, of course, I would have every volunteer come up for a special honor. However, we wanted to give some extra special recognition to just a few of our wonderful, amazing volunteers who have truly gone above and beyond the call of duty this year and throughout their terms of service with the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society:

David (Tex) Houston - We honor and recognize Tex for his many (many!) years of service as the Santa Clara County Nest Box Coordinator. Tex was instrumental in getting so many aspects of the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program (SCVAS' local version of the California Bluebirds Recovery Program) established, functioning, stream-lined and organized that we've lost count! Tex has participated in everything from walking nest box trails and collecting data, coordinating major nest box building projects, to providing natural history and ornithological information and advice; in general, he has spent the last several years providing irreplaceable passion and support for this program. We wish Tex a very fond (albeit bittersweet) farewell as he moves into other phases of his life.

Bill Bousman - in recognition of the last 20 (plus!) years that he has dedicated to researching, coordinating, writing, publishing and marketing the *Breeding*

Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County - an important publication that will help educate members of the community for years to come!

Matthew Dodder - for his long years of service on the SCVAS Board of Directors, and for all the effort and time he dedicated to helping bring the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County* to publication, and for his passionate support of SCVAS' Educational and Conservation programs.

Sabrina Johnson - for the many hours (and headaches) she has dedicated to getting SCVAS' newsletter, *The Avocet*, edited and published, for her patience with last-minute deadlines, and her willingness to step in and help out with all of our graphics and publishing needs.

A warm thanks to these volunteers, as well as the numerous others not listed here, who have enabled our chapter to carry out another successful year of conservation, education, and birding.

If you feel inspired to contribute to SCVAS, please check out just a few of the many available opportunities listed below and contact the Programs Coordinator at (408) 252-3740 or programs@scvas.org. We'd love to help you find the right match for your time, talents, and interests! You may also view the most current volunteer positions online at www.scvas.org.

Nature Shop Assistants - We are still in need of a few more volunteers to give some time in the Nature Shop. Specifically, we are looking for additional help with our Saturday coverage - either one Saturday a month (from 10-2) on the third Saturday of each month, or floaters (who can sub if needed). No previous experience needed - we'll train you in everything from inventory to point-of-sale.

Wetlands Discovery Program Docents - This program shares the wonder and importance of wetland habitats with 3rd-6th graders throughout Santa Clara County. Volunteers guide students in exploring wetland wildlife and habitat both in the classroom and out in the field. This program is rewarding for

our volunteers and for the hundreds of South Bay children who participate (almost 1000 this year!). 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.

Summer Office Cleanup and Data Entry - In a spurt of ambition, we've set ourselves a handful of office cleanup, files organization, paperwork sorting, data entry, and other administrative projects that we'd love to finish up during the summer (our slightly quieter time) before things start getting busy again. But, we need some additional hands. If you have some free time this summer and want the satisfaction of creating order out of chaos, we'd love to put you to work! We have a variety of projects that will fit anyone's level of interest, physical abilities, time availability and/or love of getting dirty.

4th Wednesday Field Trip Coordinator - SCVAS is proud to offer wonderful birding trips to interesting locations free of charge to our members and the public. These outings are fun, social, casual affairs scheduled by our fabulous Field Trip Coordinators and led by volunteer leaders. We currently need a Coordinator to schedule trips on the fourth Wednesday of the month (not December, or 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 usually not very time-consuming. Some familiarity with local birding sites is helpful, but training, background and contacts information will be provided.

Stevens Creek 50K/SCVAS Benefit Run - Volunteers are needed on Sept 6, 7, & 8th to help with a fun event for local runners that also helps raise money for SCVAS' many educational and conservation programs. Volunteer tasks will include course marking, staffing Aid stations, and more. Please go to <http://www.stevenscreek.com/stevenscreek50k/stevenscreek50kvolunteer.html> for more details on how you can help. Register through the main "Stevens Creek 50K" race page to volunteer.

Birdathon 2008: Our Biggest Ever!

by Mary Wisnewski

SCVAS Birdathon Committee

If you visited any county hot spot on a weekend from mid-March to late April, you probably saw them – the 2008 SCVAS Spring Birdathon teams. Nineteen teams competed this year to see the most birds in Santa Clara County, with 46 individuals contributing their fundraising efforts and soliciting hundreds of donations for SCVAS educational and conservation programs. The sheer number of participants explains why you kept running into especially disheveled-looking birders trotting (not walking) towards the next species to be ticked off, urged on by the firm tones of their team leader.

The intensity of competition made 2008 our best Birdathon ever, raising over \$58,000. Congratulations go out to all the fundraisers, especially our top five individual fundraisers - Matthew Dodder, Bob Hirt, Dotty Calabrese, Doug Cheeseman and new fundraiser Dave Presotto. Amazingly, these five birders brought in \$26,000 - nearly half of the Birdathon total. Matthew Dodder was also the leader of the team that raised the most money as a group – the DeDucktions with their impressive \$12,127.

By the generosity of our prize sponsors, we were able to offer Birdathon prizes to all birders who raised over \$400 this year. The prize list included airline tickets, vacation getaways, optics, whale watching trips, art, and some very fine wine. Prizes were awarded at the June 10th Birdathon Celebration Dinner at McClellan Ranch. Our Golden Eagle sponsors each donated over \$600 in prizes: Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris, Bob and Deb Hirt, Nancy Teater, and Southwest Airlines, and a full list of all prize sponsors is available online at scvas.org.

But wait – what about the birding results of the contest? Birdathon teams can compete in either a 4-hour window or a full 24-hour “big day” contest. In the 4-hour competition, team Super sMeW led by Stephanie Ellis took first place with 102 species. Sharon Lutman's Unbarred Becards and Bob Power's Hi-Speed Rails tied for second with 88 species, and Debbie Thompson's Chickadees, with 84 species, placed third.

In the full 24-hour Birdathon, our perennial champs the Varied Twitchers, led by Mike Rogers, bested all comers by counting 165 species on April 19, 2008. Congratulations to Mike and team members Richard Jeffers, Mike Mammoser, Lisa Myers, Doug Roy, and Pritam Baruah. In second place, Matthew Dodder's DeDucktions had 146 species, while Bob Hirt's Rock Wrens took third with 141 species. For details on how they did it, look up the trip reports posted to the South Bay Birds mailing list. One tip for next year: in the dark, it's all about birding by ear!

Two new awards were added to the contest this year. The

Cheeseman Cup challenges local companies or organizations to field a team for the Birdathon. The winners receive a beautiful engraved cup for display at their office, and a full year's bragging rights. The first winner of the Cheeseman Cup is the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO), represented by Stephanie Ellis' Super sMeW team. Our second new award recognizes the “greenest” Birdathon. This award went to Barry and Ginger Langdon-Lasagne and the Jack Sparrows, who picked up trash, carefully planned their route to minimize driving, and still managed to count 129 species for the day.



The Super sMeW team displays their Trophy - our first ever Cheeseman Cup award!

The Birdathon Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2008 Birdathon. The competing teams and their leaders made it fun. Our sponsors provided our prizes and food for the Birdathon dinner. The office staff took charge of logistics (the counting, the counting!). And of course, our Birdathon donors generously put up the money that made the event a success.

In the coming year, Santa Clara County children and outdoor spaces will benefit from your generosity as SCVAS helps bring environmental education to area schools and youth events. Your contributions to the Birdathon make all the difference in the lessons we can offer our youngest citizens and the conservation projects we can undertake. So thank you, and congratulations, one and all.

So many participants, so many sponsors, so many prizes...



... so much fun!!!

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Waterfowl through Herons

Late **Eurasian Wigeon** included single males on Pond A16 in Alviso on 12 Apr (AMcD) and on Pond A17 on 3 May (WGB), or perhaps they were the same bird. **Blue-winged Teal** continued to be found at the South County Regional WasteWater Authority (SCRWA) ponds in Gilroy through 23 Apr (v.ob.) with a high count of 4 males and 3 females on 9 Apr (SCR). A pair were seen near the Alviso EEC through 20 Apr (v.ob.) and may have been the same pair there in February. A pair was also seen at the Lockheed Martin ponds on 18 Apr (RGJ) and 3 birds were found at the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) and nearby Mountain View Forebay on 19 Apr (MMR et al.). **Redheads** were seen on closed refuge ponds in Alviso; a pair on 27 Apr and an injured female there on 26 May (MMR, MJM, RGJ). A pair was found at the SCRWA ponds on 28 May (JMy). A female **Common Goldeneye** on the Ogier Avenue ponds on 10 May (RPh) was late. A late **Red-throated Loon** was found on Shoreline Lake on 16 Apr (FV) and remained until 25 Apr (m.ob.). There are only a handful of previous records from April. More typical, a **Common Loon** was found at Almaden Lake on 20 Apr (AV et al.) and remained through 23 Apr (v.ob.). Another bird was seen on closed refuge ponds in Alviso on 27 Apr (MMR, MJM, RGJ). An **American Bittern** was found at Grant Lake on 12 Apr (AME) and another bird was found at the Mountain View Forebay on 20 Apr (LN). Both were at locations where birds were seen during the winter season. A **Cattle Egret** was found at the Palo Alto Baylands on 27 Apr (ViT et al.) and was seen again at the Duck Pond heronry on 6 May (fide CVR). May is when **White-faced Ibis** are on the move as evidence by 127 counted at the SCRWA (Gilroy) drying ponds on 13 May (MJM) and 10 in the outer Palo Alto FCB on 16 May (SZ). Both flocks moved on, but an adult settled in the Mountain View Forebay on 26 May (FV) and was enjoyed by many through the end of the month.

Eagles through Terns

The pair of **Bald Eagles** at a nest in the Calaveras Valley were seen at that site regularly through 27 Apr (m.ob.). But in a half hour of observation on 10 May (BP), no eagles were seen there and it is possible that this nest has failed. Elsewhere, a 2nd-year bird was seen in Halls Valley on 6 Apr (JH) and an immature was at Chesbro Reservoir on 8 Apr (JPa). Two migrating **Swainson's Hawks** were found this spring, one in the Coyote Valley over Coyote Ranch Road on 1 May (RPh) and a second over Joseph Grant CP on 3 May (LMY et al.). A **Prairie Falcon** at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 1 Apr (B&GL-L) was late for a bird away from the Diablo Range; no others were reported. Closed refuge ponds west of

It was a good spring for the rarer shorebirds, with a Black Turnstone and a Stilt Sandpiper.

Alviso Slough have been the metropolis for **Snowy Plovers** for many years. A survey on 30 Mar counted 27 and nesting was observed there through the period (MJM, MMR, RGJ). A single snowy was in New Chicago Marsh on 20 Apr (JT). The Refuge has lowered the water levels in ponds A12 and A13 this year and this has created many islands suitable for nesting. These have been used by Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Forster's Terns, and Snowy Plovers. A male with a precocial youngster was in the impoundment north of the Alviso Marina CP on 27 Apr and a bird was on a nest in A13 the same day (MMR, MJM, RGJ). A nest was also observed in A12 on 8 May (MJM). Birds remained throughout this area during the period (v.ob.). It was a good spring for uncommon shorebirds. A **Solitary Sandpiper** was found over closed refuge ponds in Alviso on 27 Apr (MMR, MJM, RGJ). Another was seen along San Tomas Aquino Creek above Scott on 30 Apr (ChW). Single **Lesser Yellowlegs** were recorded on closed refuge ponds in Alviso on 30

Mar, 27 Apr, and 22 May (MJM, MMR, RGJ). Single birds were also seen at the SCRWA (Gilroy) treatment ponds on 1 Apr (RWR, FV) and 23 Apr (MJM). Another bird was seen in Alviso near Elizabeth Street and the RR tracks on 20 Apr (JT). A **Black Turnstone** was found on Pond A16 in Alviso on 10 May (WGB) and was seen through 12 May (v.ob.), our first spring record. A mostly alternate **Red Knot** was seen at the Stevens Creek mouth on 13 May (MMR). A late **Sanderling** was found on Pond 12 in Alviso on 8 May (MJM) and was in its striking alternate plumage. Very rare in spring, an alternate **Stilt Sandpiper** was seen on closed refuge ponds in Alviso on 27 Apr (MMR, MJM, RGJ). **Wilson's Phalaropes** are rarely found on their spring passage, so three birds on Pond A13 in Alviso on 27 Apr (MMR, MJM, RGJ) are of interest. In contrast, we do have a good passage of Red-necked Phalaropes in their breeding plumage in most springs. This year they were particularly plentiful, the high count being 800 birds on Crittenden Marsh on 12 May (WGB). **Glaucous Gulls** continued into April, as they do in some years, all were seen on Pond A16 in Alviso. A 2nd-winter bird was reported there on 5 Apr (BP, LWR et al.) and two 1st-winter birds were seen on 19 Apr (MMR et al.). Single alternate **Black Terns** showed up at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) ponds on 1 May (JT) and the SCRWA (Gilroy) treatment ponds on 8 May (WGB).

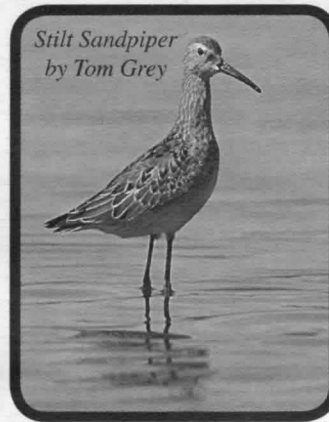
Collared-Doves through Goldfinches

Eurasian Collared-Doves were found widely this spring with individual birds from the Pacheco Creek valley to the Monte Bello Open Space Preserve (OSP). A high count was of five birds near the New Chicago Marsh on 25 Apr (MJM). A first breeding record is possible this year. A **Greater Roadrunner** was heard singing north of the junction in San Antonio Valley on 7 Apr and one was seen near the cattle guard there on 21 May (both WGB). The last of the **Short-eared Owls** wintering in the Coyote Valley was seen on 8 Apr (RPh et al.). Single **Black Swifts** moving north were seen at

Field Notes *cont'd*

Hidden Villa on 22 May (GHa), over Sunnyvale that evening (MMR), and over Linda Vista Park in Cupertino on 24 May (DCa). Four **Vaux's Swifts** over the Almaden Valley on 15 Apr (JPa) were likely returning breeders. In the weeks following there was a rush of migrating birds with representative high counts of 20 birds over the SCRWA (Gilroy) ponds on 23 Apr (MJM) and 16 over the Guadalupe River on 4 May (AV). The first **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** of the season returned to the Guadalupe River below Curtner Road on 11 Apr (MMR) and included both a male, and a female building a nest. Therushof**RufousHummingbirds** continued into the first week of April this year and then tapered off quickly. The last passage bird was seen at Ed Levin CP on 20 Apr (SCR). The wintering **Lewis's Woodpecker** at the Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto remained to 22 Apr (MS). A single bird was seen in Pacheco Pass SP on 13 Apr (PJM) and was a presumed wintering bird. In the San Antonio Valley, nesting birds were seen 23-27 Apr (LF et al.) and the high count for the period was of seven birds 1-3 May (DQ). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was found in Stevens Creek CP on 5 Apr (PLD) and was seen at least through 12 Apr (m.ob.). The consensus appears to be that this was a female, but with almost no white on its throat. Nesting **Pileated Woodpeckers** were found in Mt. Madonna CP on 8 Apr (DP), the farthest south that they have nested so far. Young were apparently able to thermoregulate by 13 May (DP) and three nestlings were seen poking their heads out to be fed by 30 May (JJ). **Willow Flycatchers** are regular in their fall migration, but spring migrants are found only every two or three years, so a vocal bird along Coyote Creek west of Bear Mountain in Henry Coe SP on 25 May (MMR) was unusual. The first passage **Hammond's Flycatcher** of the spring was at Henry Coe SP on 6 Apr (MJM). Along Gilroy Hot Springs Road, three different birds were found on 9 Apr (MJM et al.). Single birds were heard or seen along the eastern edge of Halls Valley on 10 Apr (MMR) and 26 Apr (MDo et al.).

One to three birds were at Smith Creek irregularly 10-25 Apr (MMR, AR, MJM et al, RGJ). A **Cassin's Kingbird** in a San Martin yard on 27 Apr (LA) was the second this spring. But a check of eucalyptus groves where they have nested in the last decade all turned up empty (SCR). A family group of four **Canyon Wrens** was seen in Larios Canyon above Coyote Reservoir dam on 31 May (MMR). A pair of **American Dippers** has continued to be found along Stevens Creek Canyon Road above Mt. Eden Road (m.ob.). Nine **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were found singing along Hwy 152 east of Hecker Pass on 16 Apr (DLSu). This kinglet has moved into nearby forests in recent years. A male **Phainopepla** was seen above Smith Creek on 10 Apr (RKe, PKe fide MMR), none have been found elsewhere. The **Nashville Warbler** passage was quick. Two singing birds were found at Smith Creek on 17 Apr (MMR, AR) and approximately six more birds were there through 28 Apr (v.ob.). One bird was found at Twin Gates in Joseph Grant CP on 18 Apr (RWR) and a singing bird was along Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 1 May (MJM). In the Santa Cruz Mountains single birds were at Monte Bello OSP on 20 Apr (BH et al.) and on Black Mountain the same day (MMR). The only bird on the valley floor was one banded at Coyote Creek Field Station on 23 Apr (SH). A pair of **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, the female carrying food, were seen on Skyline Boulevard and Green Forest Road on 18 May (AMcD), representing part of our small breeding population. Single Hermit Warblers were found along Charcoal Road 14 and 20 Apr (RKe, PKe) and were likely migrants, although they have nested there. Elsewhere in the Santa Cruz Mountains, an adult was seen at Stevens Creek CP on 20 Apr (MW, SE, BH et al.) and a late bird was along Casa Loma Road on 12 May (JPa). In the Diablo Range the first migrant was detected on 21 Apr at Smith Creek (MJM, SE, MW),



Stilt Sandpiper
by Tom Grey

seven birds were found singing there on 25 Apr (MMR, RGJ), and at least six birds were there the next day (WGB, MDo et al.). At least one more bird was along the east side of Halls Valley on 26 Apr (MDo et al.). Another passage bird was found at Henry Coe SP on 28 Apr (RH). This spring's migration of **MacGillivray's Warblers** was the best

in five years. An early bird was found in Stevens Creek CP on 5 Apr (PLD), the only other bird in the Santa Cruz Mountains was one heard singing at Rancho Canada del Oro Open Space Authority Preserve on 11 and 19 May (JPa). In the Diablo Range a male was at Smith Creek on 15 Apr (WGB), two were there on 3 May (PB), one was along Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 1 May (MJM), and one was in Henry Coe SP on 4 May (MMR). On the valley floor a single bird was singing along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 15 May (SCR). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was found along Coyote Creek above Metcalf Road on 28 Apr (RPh) and remained there for a couple of days. A second bird, a kilometer to the south beyond Coyote Ranch Road, was found on 30 Apr (MO'B) and has continued there through the end of May (v.ob.). Also found on 28 Apr was a bird singing in Foothills Park (MS). A singing chat was found along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield on 8 May (WGB). Three singing birds were there on 15 May (SCR) and one has remained through the end of the month (v.ob.). Additional birds found were one along the Pajaro River below Hwy 101 on 10 May (MJM) and one on the upper saddle at Loma Prieta on 16 May (KA), which must be our high-altitude migrant of all time. Ten of the **Chipping Sparrows** wintering at Jeffrey Fontana Park in San Jose were seen again on 3 Apr and two were still there on 9 Apr (both JPa). Lingered **White-throated Sparrows** included one at Alum Rock Park on 5 Apr (FV fide AME), the wintering bird

continued on page 9

Where Were the Creeks...

continued from page 1

costs grew. Moreover, the land started to subside as the water was removed from the aquifer and the sand and gravel of the aquifer could no longer support the land above. The dams we see today were built to recharge that aquifer. The recharge stopped but could not reverse the subsidence.

For the fish, the dams changed everything. Steelhead, well adapted to winter floods and summer drought, lost spawning areas and summer rearing habitat to the new dams. The new reservoirs warmed the water, and that newly warmed water degraded the stream habitats below the dams. One way or another, exotic fish were added to the reservoirs and mostly displaced native species. Only well

above the reservoirs did native fish assemblages remain intact. But fish were not the only species harmed by the dams. A number of birds are adapted to natural disturbance, particularly that caused by floods. On Coyote Creek, where the Parkway Lakes are today, the creek was scoured yearly by floods. The gravelly plain of the creek was formed of cobbles and stones of all sizes. The herbaceous plants growing in the scoured creek bed were more typical of the Lower Sonoran Life Zone than the Upper Sonoran communities that are found in so much of the Santa Clara Valley. And each year Lesser Nighthawks nested there, until the Coyote Dam was built.

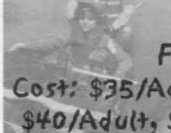
What can we do to reverse the damage of these dams? That is our big question.

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Audubon-at-Home:

SCVAS' Bird Sanctuary Program

Mid-Summer Reminders

by Toby Goldberg

SCVAS' Programs Coordinator

As we head into one of the peak travel seasons, don't forget to give a bit of thought to the birds in your garden as you travel! July and August are still breeding season for some of our late-nesting (or multiple-clutching) birds; there's a good chance that there will still be parents and young searching for food and, most importantly, water sources. If your birds have come to depend on your feeders and bird baths, make sure to keep those filled while you're

away - ask a neighbor or friend to check on them at least once a week, and keep all your feathered friends happy.

If you have gardened with native plants (which we hope many of you have), make sure to avoid over watering! Except when they are first getting established, native plants use significantly less water than non-natives, and will do poorly if over watered, even (or especially) in the height of summer. If you aren't sure what the watering regimen for your particular plants is, ask your local landscaper or come into the SCVAS Nature Shop to look through our BSP Reference Binder.

Finally, take advantage of some of those long, quiet summer days to start thinking about any improvements and/or changes you might want to carry out in your backyard areas; the autumn rains are the best time to get new plants established.

Happy Gardening (and Birdwatching)!

Field Notes

Continued from Page 7

at Ed Levin CP on 8 Apr (DWe), and a bird heard singing at Smith Creek on 21 Apr (MJM et al.). A male **Blue Grosbeak** was seen at Ed Levin CP on 20 Apr (SCR), but not afterwards. At least one adult male was found along the Pajaro River below Hwy 101 with observations on 6 May (RWR, FV) and 31 May (MMR). A male was also along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 15 May (SCR). More surprising, a female-type bird was at the Coyote Reservoir dam on 31 May (MMR). Independently, observers saw **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** moving through the New Chicago Marsh on 12 May (50 female/immature, DWe and 7 males, 2 females, MJM). A few lingered into the next day. **Great-tailed Grackles** have continued to be seen in the vicinity of the Ogier Avenue ponds and the Coyote Creek GC in the period (RPh) with a maximum of two males on 15 Apr. Singles have been seen at the Alviso

EEC on 24 Apr (MJM), the Sunnyvale WPCP on 2 May (RWR, FV, MJM), and along the Guadalupe River Trail near Coleman on 6 May (AV). A very late male **Cassin's Finch** was seen just over the county line along Summit Road west of Uvas Canyon CP on 10 May (LLu, CLu). A few **Lawrence's Goldfinches** have returned. Two or more birds were seen along San Felipe Road near Pacheco Creek on 3 Apr and 15 May (SCR). One to four birds have been seen in the San Antonio Valley 21 Apr to 21 May (MJM et al., v.ob.). A single bird was at Ed Levin CP on 22 Apr (B&GL-L). In the interior of the Diablo Range two to four birds were seen west of Bear Mountain in Henry Coe SP on 25 May (MMR). Small numbers, these, but on 25 May, 15 to 18 birds were seen along the southern approach road to Coe Park north of Bell Station (LSp).

Observers: Linda Adams (LA), Kumaran Arul (KA), Pritam Baruah (PB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Dotty Calabrese (DCa), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Peggy Don (PLD), Al Eisner (AME), Stephanie Ellis (SE), Leslie Flint (LF), Garth

Harwood (GHa), Rick Herder (RH), Jan Hintermeister (JH), Bob Hirt (BH), Sherry Hudson (SH), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Jim Johnson (JJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Barry & Ginger Langdon-Lassagne (B&GL-L), Cindy Lieurance (CLu), Leslie Lieurance (LLu), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Amy McDonald (AMcD), Peter Metropulos (PJM), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LMy), Leslie Neft (LN), Melanie O'Brien (MO'B), Janna Pauser (JPa), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Dennis Porter (DP), Bob Power (BP), Dave Quady (DQ), Bob Reiling (RWR), Alma Rogers (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Marty Sidor (MS), Larry Spivak (LSp), David Suddjian (DLSu), Jim Thomas (JT), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Chuq Von Rospach (CVR), Dave Weber (DWe), Laurie West-Roberts (LW-R), Mary Wisnewski (MW), Chris Wolfe (ChW), and Steve Zamek (SZ).

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



South County Earth Day Festival 2008



A big "Thank You!" to the City of Gilroy Community Services for co-sponsoring Earth Day 2008 and for their generous support of the event with food, raffle prizes, volunteers, tables, chairs and canopies!

Right: Thanks to the generosity of the Gilroy Lion's Club, kids (of all ages...) enjoy learning how to build birdhouses.



Left: SCVAS Volunteer and Education Committee Member, Ginny Kaminski, talks to event participants about feathers, feet, beaks and wings

Right: Children & families get ready for a bird walk through the park, led by SCVAS Volunteers



We'd also like to thank all of the following for their generosity in supporting Earth Day 2008:

- The Gilroy Lion's Club for their preparation, donation, and coordination of the beautiful nest box building supplies
- Papa Murphy's Pizza for their delicious food
- South Valley Disposal and Recycling for their beautiful raffle prizes

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continued on next page

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and Laurie Roberts, Joanne Rodgers, Annette Rudy, Teresa Scagliotti, Lola Schaefer, Barbara Schotzko, Ted Simonson, Patricia Skavdahl, Tate and Curtis Snyder, Patricia and George St. Germain, Merie Stineman, Marna Taylor, Louise Terry, Larry and Eve Thomas, James Tobias, Jim Tomich, Kent Treiber, Emi Tuvey, Pete and Virginia Van Kuran, Susie Vertin, Drew Vranicar, Mark Wagner, Ruth Weimann, Ann Weismann, Carleen West, Nancy Wildanger, Liesel Wilson, Vic Witt, Alan Woertinik, Linda Wortisna, Bruce Wyant, Sylvia Yarian, Rachel Young, Bev Young.

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Buen Viaje!



SCVAS says goodbye - and safe travels - to our Diversity Intern, Stephanie Wells. Stephanie, a student at San Jose State, has been working with us throughout the year to outreach with our Spanish-speaking community members

and to help us translate needed materials. Her cheer, diligence and willingness to help out in every way have made her a true pleasure to work with. We wish her all the best as she spends her summer in Central America.

Thanks for everything, Stephanie!

Toda!

The SCVAS staff and Education Committee want to also express our gratitude for the hard work and dedication of our Education and Outreach Intern, Alice Tankel. Alice, a native of Israel, has been working with us since the Fall. She has been an invaluable



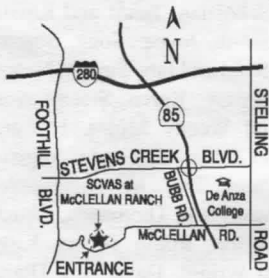
resource for our Wetlands Discovery Program, all of our many outreach events, and for just keeping our educational programs flowing smoothly (and keeping the Programs Coordinator from going completely insane)!

Thanks for being a part of the team, Alice!

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