



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

September - October 2008

Birds Along Our Urban Creeks

By Steve Rottenborn

(Editor's Note: This is the 4th essay of a multi-part series highlighting the connection between stream restoration and the restoration of bird populations. This is part of a collaborative effort by SCVAS, the Creeks Coalition, and other interested parties.)

Even before I arrived in California to pursue my graduate degree, I knew that my research would focus on riparian bird communities. I had read much about the importance of riparian habitats to birds and of the threats facing these valuable habitats, and the birder in me was well aware of the attraction these habitats can have for rare birds. As I began exploring the streams of the Santa Clara Valley, I was impressed by the mature riparian vegetation lining these streams even in heavily urbanized areas, but several questions came to mind. How valuable were these urban streams to birds? Did the presence of mature cottonwoods and willows guarantee a diverse riparian bird community, or did birds avoid heavily urbanized areas even where habitat quality was ostensibly high? How did urbanization affect patterns of bird diversity and abundance? These questions have implications for riparian bird conservation in the face of future development and habitat restoration in the Valley and elsewhere, and I devoted my dissertation to elucidating these issues.

In 1994 and 1995, I conducted surveys at a number of points along streams and in the upland urban/suburban matrix on the Santa Clara Valley floor. At each survey point, I measured variables associated with vegetation characteristics

as well as surrounding land use and urbanization. After crunching the numbers, several patterns emerged, some expected and some not.

As expected, I found bird abundance and species richness to be substantially higher along urban creeks than in the surrounding urban/suburban areas. Although well-vegetated upland parks and residential areas supported many native bird species, a number of species on the urban valley floor occurred primarily in riparian areas. Along creeks, bird communities were most heavily influenced by the type and structure of vegetation. Well-developed native riparian habitats supporting a ground layer, understory, and tree canopy provided numerous layers of vegetation that supported high numbers of species. Sites with dense vegetation supported the largest numbers of individuals. In contrast, reaches of creeks with little woody riparian vegetation supported few birds. Well developed riparian woodlands in heavily urbanized areas supported more riparian species than channels with little riparian vegetation in less developed settings.

After vegetation characteristics were accounted for statistically, relationships between bird community composition and surrounding land use were teased out. Bird species richness, and the number of rarer, riparian-associated species, were highest in riparian habitats adjacent to open space or agricultural lands, intermediate next to residential lands, and lowest beside industrial/commercial areas. Riparian corridor width, proximity to bridges and buildings, and

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General Membership Meeting "Bhutan, the Land of the Thunder Dragon and Beautiful Birds!" with Doug Cheeseman

**Palo Alto Arts Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.
Wednesday, Sept. 17th
Doors open 7:30; program 8:00**

The amazing, remote Himalayan kingdom and now democracy of Bhutan is an incredible destination for its beauty and culture. Buddhism is reflected in all aspects of daily life in Bhutan, including a close affinity with nature. All animals in Bhutan are protected by the Buddhist ethic, which prohibits killing. Bhutan was closed to the outside world until 1960 and tourists were not allowed until 1974. Doug visited Bhutan in April this year and will do a power-point presentation of the birds and mammals, plus some of the culture and incredible scenery

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**Mitigation
Monitoring
Yields Great
Results!
- see Page 10**

- ◆ *Volunteer Needs & Fall Intern Search*
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Sept. - Oct. '08 Field Trips

(Full details for all of our Field Trips are also available online 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 Sept. 3, 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 Sept. 6, 8:00 AM

Arastradero Preserve

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

Sunday Sept. 7, 9:00 AM

Point Reyes

Full day. Leader: Peter LaTourette (650) 961-2741. Our annual trip to the west coast's most active vagrant trap where birds and the weather are always exciting and unpredictable! From Hwy 1 in Marin County take Sir Francis Drake Blvd. west approx. 14 miles and turn left to Drakes Beach. Meet in the parking area. Bring lunch, liquids, a full tank of gas, and be ready for fog, wind, sun and lots of difficult to ID birds. Be prepared to carpool from Drakes Beach.

Wednesday Sept. 10, 8:30 AM

Lake Almaden and Los Alamitos Creek Trail.

Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408) 265-9286. Meet in EAST parking lot of Almaden Lake Park. From Hwy 85, take Almaden Expwy south. Turn left on Coleman, right on Winfield Blvd., parking lot is about a block south on right. Possible fee. Easy walking. Waterfowl, raptors, riparian birds. **LO.**

Saturday Sept. 13, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. From Hwy 101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way parking area. Meet at the entrance nearest San Antonio Road. This trip recommended for beginning birders but all are encouraged to attend. Bring your spotting scope and a friend.

Sunday Sept. 14, 8:30 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408) 275-1492. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward the hills then left on Toyon Ave. and right on Penitencia Creek Rd. Continue on into the park. Drive under the bridge and meet at the far end of the parking lot. Possible entrance fee, trip is a moderately strenuous 3-4 mile walk. **LO, RC.**

Saturday Sept. 20, 8:00 AM

Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: TBD, questions call Bob Reiling @ (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right towards the Model Airplane Park (street is unnamed). Follow the road for 1/4 mile and park in the gravel lot at the first bend in road (meet at the gate if the entrance is locked). **RC.**

Sunday Sept. 21, 8:00 AM

Moss Landing & vicinity

Half day. Leader: Norm Kikuchi (831) 459-9424. Meet in the parking lot north of the Elkhorn Slough Bridge just off Hwy 1 in Moss Landing at the Sea Harvest Restaurant. Weather conditions can be highly variable so dress in layers, bring lunch and liquids. Highlights: Shorebirds, waterfowl and early migrants.

Saturday Sept 27, 9:00 AM

Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands

Full day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 891-3187. Going north on Hwy 101, after crossing the Golden Gate Bridge exit just past the Vista Point, cross under Hwy 101 and turn right just before entrance back

onto Hwy 101 south. Drive up hill to the highest point and park. Meet at the parking area or at the Hawk watch on top of the hill. Highlights: Migrating raptors including the possibility of seeing a rare Broadwing Hawk. Weather conditions can be highly variable, dress in layers, bring lunch and liquids. NOTE: This will be our only field trip to the Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands this fall. Heavy fog in the headlands will likely cancel the trip.

Sunday Sept. 28, 8:30 AM

Coyote Hills Regional Park

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

Wednesday Oct. 1, 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. See write-up from Sept. 3.

Saturday Oct 4, 7:30 AM

Sunnyvale Baylands Park

Half day. Leader: Pat Kenny (408) 725-0468. From Hwy 237 take the Lawrence Expwy/Caribbean Dr. exit toward Caribbean Dr. Turn right into the park at the first stoplight north of Hwy 237. Meet in the first parking lot to the right of the entrance kiosk. Possible parking fee. **LO, RC.**

Sunday Oct 5, 8:00 AM

Carmel River

Half day plus. Leader: Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Take Hwy 1 south to Carmel, turn left at Rio Rd., and then immediately turn right into the Crossroads Shopping Center. Meet near the back, southwest corner of the shopping center near Safeway and the river. Bring lunch and liquids or buy food at the meeting place. Temperatures vary, so bring extra layers of clothing. Rubber boots optional as there may be puddles in the riverbed.

Field Trips *continued*

Wednesday Oct. 8, 8:00 AM

Sunnyvale Baylands Park

Half Day. Leader: Pat Kenny (408) 725-0468.

From Hwy 237 take the Lawrence Expwy./ Caribbean Dr. exit toward Caribbean Dr. Turn right into the park at the first stoplight on Caribbean Dr. north of Hwy 237. Park in the first parking lot to the right of the entrance kiosk. Possible \$5.00 parking fee. Shorebirds & ducks. **LO, RC.**

Saturday Oct. 11, 8:00 AM

Windy Hills OSP

Half day. Leader: Jim Johnson (408) 996-3506. Meet in the parking lot at Sausal Pond edge of the preserve. From I-280 in Portola Valley take Alpine Rd. south (toward hills) about 2.9 miles to the first stop sign, turn right on Portola Rd. and go 0.8 miles to the parking lot on the left side of the road just past the entrance to The Sequoias. **RC.**

Sunday Oct. 12, 8:00 AM

Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. For directions see the write-up for Sept 20.

Saturday Oct. 18, 7:30 AM

Elkhorn Slough, Moss Landing, Moon Glow Dairy, Zmudowski State Beach

& Pajaro River Mouth.

Half day plus. Leader: Rick Fournier, Rimbirding@aol.com. Meet in the parking lot north of the Elkhorn Slough Bridge just off Hwy 1 in Moss Landing at the Sea Harvest Restaurant. With fall at hand we will bird the above environs for seasonal and regional specialties as well as reported vagrants. Plan on birding through lunch (stopping at Phil's Snack Shack) and finishing up early afternoon. Bring food and liquids. Dress in layers.

Sunday Oct. 19, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. See write-up for Sept 13th.

Saturday Oct. 25, 7:30 AM

Local Hot Spots

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

Saturday Oct. 25, 8:00-10:00 AM

"Early Bird" Shorebird Walk Charleston Slough

RSVP required at 408-252-3740. As part of Wildlife Education Day (see

page 10), we'll share the wonder of the wetlands with local families. Great for children and beginners.

Sunday Oct. 26, 8:15 AM

Arastradero Preserve

Half day. Leader: Jim Johnson. (408) 996-3506 See write-up for Sept 6th.

Saturday Nov. 1, 8:30 AM

Grant Ranch County Park

Half day. Leader: Alan Thomas (408) 265-9286. From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave. northeast, turn right on Hamilton Rd. and go approximately 9 miles to the park. Meet at Grant Lake (aka Hall's Valley Lake) parking lot, which is the first parking lot on the left side of the road (do not enter the Main Park Entrance on the right). Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds and possible Golden Eagle. A Park entrance fee will be required for the last half of the trip. A moderate 2-mile walk, **LO, RC.**

Sunday Nov. 2, 8:30 AM

Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

Half day. Leader: TBD, questions call Bob Reiling @ (408) 253-7527. From Hwy 101 take Hwy 237 east, exit North on Caribbean Dr., turn right on Borregas Ave. then left to the parking area. This is a great place to study ducks. Trip is fairly easy but a long walk is possible. Scopes are highly recommended. **RC.**

Events Calendar:

Tues. 9/9, 9:30AM

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group - meets at the home of Pat and Jean Du-bois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264

Topic: Summer Birding Experiences

Sat. 9/13, 12-2PM

CD Release and Farewell Party for Grant and Karen Hoyt

McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino
(see CD information on page 11)

Wed. 9/17, 7:30PM

General Meeting

Palo Alto Arts Center
(see page 1)

Sept. 20th - Oct. 12th

COASTWEEKS - a three week celebration of our coast and waterways with over 175 events throughout the

state, including a Coastal Clean-up Day on Sept. 20th. Go to www.coastforyou.org for details.

Thur. 9/25, 7-9PM

Cavity Nesters Recovery Program (CNRP) End-of-Season Meeting

McClellan Ranch Park

This is your chance to share successes, (or disappointments) and learn what happened to our local birds over the past season.

Sun. 9/28, 8:30AM-3:30PM

SFBBO's "A Special Day with Raptors"

Spend the day with raptor specialists, Bob Power and Lisa Myers, at Hawk Hill in the Marin Headlands while helping raise money for SFBBO's fall challenge. \$200 per person, breakfast, box lunch and t-shirt included. RSVP required. Go to www.sfbbo.org for details.

Thur. 10-9 - Sun. 10/12

Western Field Ornithologists Annual

Meeting (San Mateo, CA)

Carla Cicero of UC Berkeley; "The Grinnell Resurvey Project: A Century of Avifaunal Change in California."

Don't miss this chance to attend this valuable meeting (not often held in the Bay Area)! For details and to register, go to www.westernfieldornithologists.org.

Tues. 10/14, 9:30AM

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group - meets at the home of Pat and Jean Du-bois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264

Topic: Black-crowned Night Heron

Wed. 10/15, 7:30PM

General Meeting

Palo Alto Arts Center
(see page 5)

Sat. 10/25, 10AM-2PM

Wildlife Education Day

McClellan Ranch Park
(see page 10)



Volunteer Ventures

by Toby Goldberg
SCVAS' Programs Coordinator

As I'm sure you are all aware, our economy is doing some very unsettling things lately, which is having a lot of unexpected consequences. One such consequence is that schools are cutting back on many of their "extra" programs, including outdoor education and field trips. Fortunately for us, we provide almost all of our school and youth programs for free, making our programs very popular. As a result, however, we need more educational volunteers than ever before to keep up with the demand (but isn't it great to be wanted?!)

Another unexpected consequence is that more and more people are finding it necessary to put their "free" time back into part-time (or full-time) employment, decreasing the pool of available volunteers. This of course makes anyone that does have free time, and that is interested in helping out our chapter, that much more needed and that much more valuable (*with deepest heartfelt thanks to all of our AMAZING volunteers who already do so much!*)

So, if you've ever thought about contributing some of your free time to helping keep this chapter vibrant and involved in the community, now is definitely the time to take action! We have opportunities that fit every interest and schedule. From one-time events to weekly field trips, from public speaking to weeding in the garden - **WE NEED YOU!**

Here are just a few of the many opportunities coming up: "Wetlands Discovery Program" Docent (Note: this one comes up a lot because we always need a LOT of volunteers to help keep this program running smoothly!) - This program, our flagship educational program, shares the wonder and importance of wetland habitats with third through sixth graders throughout Santa Clara County. In fact, SCVAS is well known for this well-designed and engaging program, and we often have more schools inquiring than we have room for! Volunteers guide students in exploring wetland wildlife and habitat both in the classroom and out in the field. This program is rewarding for both volunteers and the hundreds of South Bay children who participate (12 schools and 955 students in 07/08!). No experience is necessary, as we will provide training for both field and class sessions. All a po-

tential docent needs is a love of nature and a desire to share it with children.

"Wildlife Education Day" Support - As our largest annual event, Wildlife Education Day fields an abundance of ways in which you can volunteer. With wonderful interactive booths, environmental organizations, educational presentations, live animals, a poster contest, raffle, and much more, this fun-filled affair will require a lot of volunteer - see the flyer on page 10. *All help, large and small, is needed! Go to www.scvas.org for more details.*

Educational Presenters - With the school year approaching, we will need more volunteers ready to fill requests for educational presentations in classrooms throughout Santa Clara County. You can use slideshows, stuffed birds, and real nests to teach youth about local birds and their habitat. These presentations are engaging and come fully scripted. No experience is necessary though teaching and birding experience are helpful. Time commitment is flexible, and scheduling is based on classroom and volunteer availability.

Native Plant Garden - Join us in making and keeping the Nancy Hertert Memorial Native Plant Garden at McClellan Ranch Park beautiful! We need volunteers to help plant, weed, water, plan, obtain plants, propagate, label, and more! We'll hold periodic committee meetings to plan for the future of the garden, and new faces (and ideas) are always welcome!

There are many more opportunities listed on our website - just go to www.scvas.org, and click on "Get Involved." If you are interested in any of our positions or if you have questions about how you might be able to help, please contact Toby at (408) 252-3740 or programs@scvas.org.

Special thanks to the following Birdathon Sponsors inadvertently left out on our last round of thank-yous:

DeAnza Coyotes

Dave Cook and Barbara Hutchings

De-Duck-Tions

Dawn Sekimura, Vivek Tiwari

Rock Wrens

Betty Mohlenbrock

Rushing Thrushes

Judy Huey

Wrong Terns

Carl Cookson, Gary Dillon, Ruth Fox, Stan Gould, Kathy Haydel, Ovilee Kennedy, Shirley Lee, Bobbi Lotman, Suzanne Lowd, Sharon Mathog, Tibby Simon

Fall Education & Outreach Intern Needed

As we do each fall, we will soon begin our search for a part-time Education & Outreach Intern to help us deliver the many programs we offer to local schools, community groups, and neighborhoods.

If you or someone you know is outgoing, enjoys working with children, wants to learn more about the world of environmental education, and wants to help us continue to offer high-quality programs, give us a call! We are looking for someone available during the day for about 10-15 hours per week, but the exact schedule can be flexible (although Tuesday and Thursday mornings will be required). Some experience with environmental science, biology, education, or working with children is desirable, but we will train the right candidate. Note: this is a paid position.

More information is available online at www.scvas.org - click on "About Us" - or contact the Programs Coordinator, Toby, at 408-252-3740 or programs@scvas.org

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. More information can be found on our website, www.scvas.org.

Gardening with Native Plants with Jeffrey

Caldwell (California Native Plant Society, SCV Chapter)

Would you like some guidance in designing, planting, and cultivating California native plant gardens successfully? Jeffrey Caldwell, a biologist and horticulturalist with much experience creating native plant gardens that attract and support native birds and other wildlife, will be offering this class at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. The class includes discussion of the aesthetic qualities, wildlife values and other values of easy-to-grow species suited for the local area. Supportive handouts will be provided and there will be opportunities for specific questions.

Dates: Wednesdays, 9/10 & 9/17; 6-9PM. Location: McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino. Fee: \$30 members of SCVAS or CNPS; \$35 non-members. Min: 8 students; Max: 22 students

Biodiversity, Native Plants, and the Home Gardener with Arvind Kumar

(California Native Plant Society, SCV Chapter)

This class will focus on the importance of biodiversity, the unique position of California in the world, the critical role of native plants and how we are losing them to human pressures. We will also examine what the average home gardener can do to support biodiversity by planting native plants and promoting habitat, and will discuss the specific plants one can introduce to the home garden and their benefits.

Dates: Saturday, 9/13; 9AM-12PM. Location: McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino. Fee: \$15 members of SCVAS or CNPS; \$20 non-members. Min: 8 students; Max: 22 students

The Amazing World of Raptors with Lisa Myers

(Let's Go Birding! www.letsjobirding.com)

This four week class will focus on the meat-eating, flesh-ripping group of birds which impress so many people - the "raptors" (also known as hawks, eagles and owls). We'll learn all about the raptors that can be found in the west and at what time of year. We'll also discuss hunting styles, flight patterns and various behaviors. We'll review key field marks so you can determine a falcon from a bute and an accipiter from an owl. We'll also learn the different calls of each Owl species so you can recognize the owls calling in your neighborhood at night. Class includes one morning field trip so we can go out and find all the raptors that frequent our area by day.



Dates: Class: Mondays, 9/29, 10/6, 10/13, & 10/20; 7-8:30PM; Field Trip: Sunday, 10/12; 9AM-1PM. Location: Meet at McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino. Fee: \$65 members; \$75 non-members. Min: 8 students; Max: 20 students

Shorebirds: Basic Plumage, It can't be that hard with Bob Power

From instantly identifiable to perpetually perplexing, we'll look at the common and uncommon shorebirds of the San Francisco Bay, spending more time on the trickier sandpipers and dowitchers whose basic plumage causes moaning and groaning. The field trip will be a leisurely and flat stroll to Ora Loma Marsh where we'll be putting our identification skills to work. 3 miles roundtrip.

Dates: Class: Thursday, 9/18; 9:30-11AM; Field Trip: Friday, 9/19; 12-4PM. Location: Workshop: Conference Room, McClellan Ranch, Cupertino; Field trip: Hayward Regional Shoreline, Winton Avenue Staging Area. Fee: \$50 members; \$60 non-members. Class size limited to 15. Carpooling is strongly encouraged.

General Membership Meeting

"Pitch-In To Reduce Climate Change (It's Not Hard!)"

with Julia Levin, Global Warming Campaign Director for National Audubon Society

Palo Alto Arts Center

Newell & Embarcadero Rds.

Wednesday, Oct. 15th

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Julia will focus on solutions to climate change – what actions you can take at home, in our communities, and in policy. All is not gloom and doom! Individuals and groups like Audubon can make an enormous difference on climate change to reduce emissions and better protect our environment, economy and public health. We will learn about the opportunities and benefits of action on climate change.

For the past four years, Julia has been Audubon's California Policy Director, where she helped to develop statewide guidelines on wind power and wildlife protection, pass a \$5.4 billion conservation and water bond, and restore important California ecosystems. Prior to Audubon, Julia was the California Policy Coordinator for the Union of Concerned Scientists, where she led successful campaigns to establish the California Climate Registry and the California Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). Julia also helped advocate for policies to reduce vehicle emissions, increase energy efficiency and build public understanding of global warming. She received her B.A. in International Relations from Brown University and her law degree from the University of California, Hastings College of Law in 1991.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Waterfowl through Herons

Of our rare geese, **Cackling Geese** are the most likely to show up in summer, so a single bird at Shoreline Lake on 7 Jun (WGB) and four birds on Pond A16 in Alviso on 12 Jun (MJM) were not completely unexpected. A male **Blue-winged Teal** found in the Lockheed Martin ponds on 7 Jun (MJM) was the only report this summer. A pair of **Redhead** were seen on closed refuge ponds off Sunnyvale on 7 Jun (MJM) and three birds were in closed ponds in Alviso on 28 Jun (MJM, RGJ). For the second summer, we have had an early June record for **Common Goldeneye**, this time a female on ponds AB1 and A2E on 7 Jun (MJM). I have only five previous summer records for this duck. Equally rare in summer, a female **Red-breasted Merganser** was seen on a closed refuge pond in Alviso on 28 Jun (MJM, RGJ). The first surprise of surveys in Henry Coe SP to examine the effect of last summer's fire on bird populations was the discovery of an **American Bittern** on 14 Jun (RGJ). Although largely beyond our comprehension, the bird's presence is probably not related to the fires; this is the first record for Coe. A **Cattle Egret** seen near the Alviso EEC on 19 Jun (MJM) was the only report for the season. The Mountain View Forebay **White-faced Ibis** was last observed on 1 Jun (PB, WGB). A single bird was at Almaden Lake on 7-8 Jun (JPa, AV, PLaT). **Virginia Rails** are seldom encountered in summer, so a bird calling in the Lockheed Martin ponds on 7 Jun (MJM) is of interest.

Plovers through Terns

An adult female **Pacific Golden-Plover** was found in the New Chicago Marsh on 19 Jul (JT, RWR, FV) and was seen there irregularly through 22 Jul (v.ob.). Closed refuge ponds in Alviso remained the metropolis for **Snowy Plovers**. A peak count included at least 14 birds there on 28 Jun (MJM, RGJ). Birds also nested in the impoundment that is north of Alviso Marina CP with at least two nests there 25 Jun-12 Jul (v.ob.). It is likely that they also nested east of the Alviso Marina as well. Good numbers of snowies were found in the northwest corner of New Chicago Marsh, which apparently was favored after young hatched at other sites. Up to nine birds were found there

regularly 8-30 Jul (v.ob.). Three banded young and two unbanded were there on 26 and 29 Jul (MJM). The first adult **Lesser Yellowlegs** to arrive were two seen at the New Chicago Marsh on 12 Jul (MJM). Up to four birds were found in the vicinity through the end of July (m.ob.). **Ruddy Turnstones** were seen on the islands in Pond A16 on 17-22 Jul (WGB, m.ob.). The high count was of four birds on 18 Jul (MMR, DMa, FV), all were in alternate plumage. A single **Red Knot** was found

*July has brought
a sample of rare
shorebirds, but the
biggest surprise were
Diablo Range records of
American Bittern and
Black Swifts.*

at the Stevens Creek mouth on 26 Jul (JT, FV). A **Least Sandpiper** and a **Dunlin** were at the San Francisquito Creek mouth on 7 Jun (MMR), very unusual for June. A mostly alternate-plumaged **Dunlin** was found in Pond A16 on 18 Jul (MMR, DMa). This species is a late migrant that normally molts into its winter plumage near its breeding grounds, they are seldom found locally before late September. An early adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** was found in the New Chicago Marsh on 17 Jul (MJM), but did not remain. An adult female **Ruff** was seen on Pond A16 in Alviso on 16 Jul (MAA, SM, FV, ADeM) and remained there through the end of the month (m. ob.). **Least Terns** showed up at their staging area on Pond A2E on 10 Jul when 3 were found (MJM) and numbers have built through the month (v.ob.). By 16 Jul there were at least 21 in the pond (MMR). None were found in other locations. A basic-plumaged **Black Tern** was found on Pond A16 on 3 Jul (WGB) and has remained through the end of the month (m.ob.). **Black Skimmers** attempted to nest in Ponds A1, AB1, and A12. The nest failed in Pond A1, but at least one young has survived from the AB1 attempt (seen 26 Jul, FV, JT) and a juvenile seen with 1-2 adults on Pond A16 on 27-28 Jul (RWR,

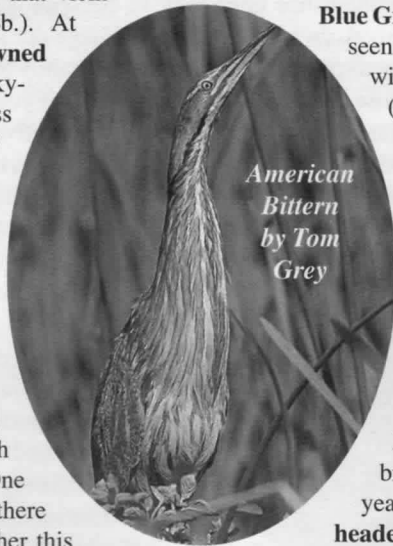
LGr, AKe) may represent a successful fledging from a nest on Pond A12.

Doves through Goldfinches

Two **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were found in East Palo Alto on 6-7 Jun (AME), the first records for the Palo Alto SBC in 28 years. Also on the SBC, a **Long-eared Owl** was heard calling at Hidden Villa on 7 Jun (GHa), in the depth of the night. Two to three **Black Swifts** were seen in Henry Coe SP on 14 Jun and at least two were there again on 29 Jun (RGJ). The presence of this coastal migrant in the interior of the Diablo Range is inexplicable, as is the repeated observation. This is a first record for Coe Park. Resident **Vaux's Swifts** were seen over urban and foothill areas centered on Saratoga and Los Gatos as in past years. But these birds were found to the northwest as far as Jasper Ridge Biological Reserve with 2 seen on 27 Jun (RGJ) and as far south as Almaden-Quicksilver CP with 1 on 3 Jun (JPa). The largest number seen, 12 at Vasona CP at the end of the month (JPa), were likely staging birds starting their fall migration. A nesting **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was found along Guadalupe Creek off Hicks Road on 26 Jun (JPa, SCh), but the nest was later abandoned. The location is about 8-10 km farther upstream than previous nests found in the county. A juvenile **Costa's Hummingbird** showed up at a Morgan Hill feeder on 30 Jun and has remained at least to 16 Jul (SCR, MJM). An adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** was at this same feeder on 29-30 Jun and another adult male there on 15 Jul had an extensively green back as expected for **Allen's Hummingbird**, although male Allen's have generally left by June (both SCR). Three **Pileated Woodpecker** young successfully fledged from a nest in Mt. Madonna CP on 9 Jun (DP). An **Eastern Kingbird** found in Bayfront Park on 6 Jun (LGr, JF, AME) was a first record for the Palo Alto SBC. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was in a Los Altos yard 18 Jun-2 Jul (K&GHt). This is well away from known breeding areas and does not fit the fall movement that starts in late August during irruptive winters. For some years we have encountered **Pygmy Nuthatches** breeding on the valley floor in Palo Alto and Menlo Park, in part attracted by the extensive planting of Monterey pines. Single birds found on 7 Jun in Shoup Park in Los Altos (LF et al.) and at Rengstorff Park in Mountain View (AV) suggests that this montane nuthatch may be finding something at-

Field Notes *cont'd*

tractive in other urban flatland areas. The **Canyon Wrens** found in Larios Canyon above Coyote Reservoir dam at the end of May were found in that vicinity through 19 Jun (v.ob.). At least three **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were along Skyline Boulevard across from Castle Rock SP on 5 Jun (MMR), they are rare breeders in Santa Clara County along the Santa Cruz Mountain crest. A **Hermit Thrush** was found on the west side of Almaden Lake on 15 Jun (JPa) and remained there through 17 Jun (JPa, AV). One was heard south of there on 11 Jul (JPa). Whether this was one of our wintering birds unable to migrate or one dispersing from the coastal breeding population is unknown. Two hatch-year **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were seen near Mt. Sizer, Henry Coe SP on 29 Jun (MMR et al.) and undoubtedly hatched locally. There are a few historical nesting records of this species in the Diablo Range, but none were found there during the atlas field work. In the Santa Cruz Mountains, where they are rare but regular breeders, two singing males and a female carrying food were seen along Skyline Boulevard across from Castle Rock SP on 5 Jun (MMR). One dispersing to Monte Bello OSP on 26 Jun (GHa) is also a part of the local breeding population. A singing **Hermit Warbler** was found along Skyline Boulevard across from Castle Rock SP, also on 5 Jun (MMR). A singing **Yellow-breasted Chat** was found again south of Coyote Ranch Road on 2 Jun (TGr). Another continuing bird was one singing along Llagas Creek above Bloomfield Road on 8 Jun (SAG). But one singing near the entrance to Coyote Lake on 16 Jun (FO) was at a location where they've not been found this year. A male **Western Tanager** was seen feeding a fledgling along the Alamitos Creek Trail on 7 Jul (JPa) at the remarkably low elevation of 240 feet. Three years ago, a tanager was seen carrying food in this vicinity. **Chipping Sparrows** are now rare in the Santa Cruz Mountains. One was singing in Monte Bello OSP on 2 Jun (GHa), three were nearby in the Skyline Ridge OSP on



*American Bittern
by Tom Grey*

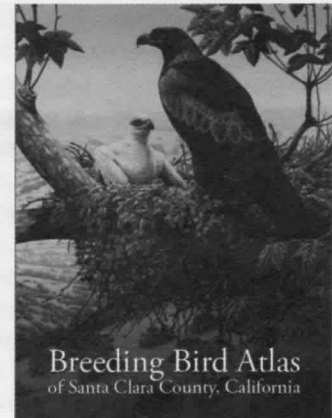
7 Jun (GHa et al.), and one to five birds were at Monte Bello on 26-31 Jul (GHa). The only **Grasshopper Sparrows** reported were an adult and two immatures in Santa Teresa CP on 16 Jun (JPa).

Blue Grosbeaks continued to be seen along the Pajaro River with observations 1-21 Jun (MJM, WGB, TGr), two to three males and two females were recorded on 19 Jun (WGB). A female was again seen near the Coyote Reservoir dam on 16 Jun (FO). A male was seen along Fisher Creek at Richmond Avenue in the Coyote Valley on 7 Jul (RPh). No proof of breeding was obtained this year. An adult male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was found near Pond A4 in Sunnyvale on 11 Jun (BMA). I have only two previous summer records for this blackbird. A singing male **Great-tailed Grackle** was along San Francisquito Creek at the Palo Alto Muni GC on 7 Jun (MMR, W&LG, JPo). Two birds were at the Coyote Creek GC on 27 Jun (MJM) and on 30 Jun a male, female, and three fledglings were seen nearby on Riverside Drive (RPh). Seven birds were found along Artesian Slough on 17 Jul (WGB) and three birds were nearby on 30 Jul (DWe, MJM). Three **Red Crossbills** were seen on Summit Road in Redwood Estates on 11 Jul (DLSu). Three **Pine Siskins** at Monte Bello OSP on 11 Jul (GHa) were the only observation this summer. **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were scarce this summer with only a few birds found in Henry Coe SP during bird surveys (v.ob.). The only breeding recorded was of two adults with two fledglings there on 29 Jun (SCR).

Observers: Mary Ann Allen (MAA), Pritam Baruah (PB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Shao Chen (Sch), Al DeMartini (ADeM), Al Eisner (AME), Jeff Fairclough (JF), Leslie Flint (LF), Steve Glover (SAG), Wally & Lois Goldfrank (W&LG), Laurie Graham (LGr), Tom Grey (TGr), Garth Harwood (GHa), Karen & Grant Hoyt (G&KHt), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Anne Kelley (AKe), Pete LaTourrette (PLaT), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Bill Maney (BMA), Dean Manley (DMA), Sonny Mencher (SM), Frances Oliver

(FO), Janna Pauser (JPa), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Jeff Poklen (JPo), Dennis Porter (DP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), David Suddjian (DLSu), Jim Thomas (JT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), and Dave Weber (DWe).

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



*Breeding Bird Atlas
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Come in and check us out!

Audubon-at-Home:

SCVAS' Bird Sanctuary Program

Native Plants Just May be the Answer

by Toby Goldberg, SCVAS' Programs Coordinator

Water and Energy – the definite buzz words (or “Ugh!” words) of the past year here in California. As supplies have decreased and/or prices have increased, many of us have reached the point where we flinch when we open our utility bills. Unfortunately, maintaining our landscaping can sometimes consume a large portion of both of those resources. Water, in particular, can be a “double whammy” - a scarce resource in itself, it is also a significant source of energy consumption. After all, the water has to get from its source (usually the Sierra Nevadas) to your tap here in the Santa Clara Valley and be purified/regulated. All those pumps, purification procedures, etc., takes energy!

One solution, I suppose, would be to stop using these resources in our landscaping altogether and let our yards and gardens turn to weeds and dirt. Of course, there are better options – ones that will help keep utility bills under control while still allowing us to enjoy the beauty of a well-maintained yard AND provide healthy (and critically needed) habitat for our birds and wildlife.

I refer, of course, to the joys of gardening with Native and other habitat-appropriate plants. If you have the choice (i.e. you are either in the process of selecting items to put into your garden or you are at a stage where you can replace some

of your garden), native plants or other non-invasive Mediterranean-climate-adapted plants are a wonderful and beautiful way to save water and energy. Native plants use significantly less water throughout the year, require much less maintenance once they've become well established, do not invade and damage our surrounding open space areas, and provide healthy food and shelter for all of those native birds we love to see! If you can't work with native plants, there are also a lot of non-native, but non-invasive (i.e. they won't escape into, and take over, neighboring wild areas) plants that can serve. It's just important to pick the right ones!

If you are feeling overwhelmed about how to do that – both in order to conserve water/energy and to attract the right wildlife – we have the solution! If you're looking for a quick answer, come into the SCVAS nature shop and browse through our “Bird Sanctuary Program” Resource Binder or go onto our website and check out the resources available online (go to www.scvas.org and click on “Conservation” then “Audubon-at-Home.” If you'd like a little more help, join us at one of the Gardening classes that we offer on a periodic basis. There are two available this Fall at the SCVAS office, both taught by experts from the California Native Plant Society (see page 5 of this issue for more details).

If you would like more information about creating healthy habitat in your backyard or patio, or becoming certified with the Bird Sanctuary Program, contact the SCVAS' Programs Coordinator at 408-252-3740 or programs@scvas.org



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Celebrate Urban Birds!

Citizen Science Project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology - An Anytime, Anywhere Celebration of Nature in the City

by Karen Purcell, Project Leader

Nature has the power to soothe and enthuse. More people are finding that out as they join the free, year-round "Celebrate Urban Birds!" citizen-science project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. From schools, hospitals, and senior centers, to wellness programs, scout packs, and military bases, participants are reaping the benefits of a closer connection to the natural world and a new appreciation for city birds.

People of all ages and backgrounds participate in Cel-

brate Urban Birds through gardening, cultural activities and citizen-science. For the citizen-science part of the project, participants watch city birds for 10 minutes, check off 15 target species of birds, and send the information through the mail or the Internet to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Once enough data are gathered, scientists hope to learn more about how birds survive in cities and how they use urban green spaces such as parks, rooftop gardens, and even potted plants on balconies for food, resting sites, and shelter.

For more information on how to participate, or for special events and contests, visit www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org.

{Editor's note: One great way to support Urban Birds is to get your garden/backyard Sanctuary Certified! Certification information available from the SCVAS office or on our website - www.scvas.org - in the "Conservation" section.}

Birds and Urban Creeks *continued from page 1*

percent cover by artificial surfaces around a survey point all showed significant relationships with bird community composition. In general, more bird species, more rare and riparian-associated species, and more individuals were present in broad riparian corridors far from buildings and bridges, while narrow riparian corridors hemmed in by development and interrupted by numerous bridges supported fewer species and individuals.

While these results make sense intuitively, examination of patterns on the species or species-group level produced some unexpected results. Given concerns about the problems plaguing neotropical migrants (i.e., species that breed in North America and winter in the tropics), I had expected these species to be particularly sensitive to urban influences. Rather, the less mobile permanent residents, such as California Quail, California Thrashers, and Song Sparrows, seemed to show the strongest negative responses to urbanization. These residents are subjected to urban stressors (e.g., activity by people within the riparian corridors, predation by non-native and urban-adapted predators, and the lack of immigration corridors imposed by the surrounding urban landscape) year-round, and they were less likely to occur along the most heavily urbanized stream segments than were long-distance migrants. The abundance of Black-chinned Hummingbirds along these urban streams was also a surprise. Formerly recorded breeding only along lower Coyote Creek, this species was quite common in cottonwood-dominated habitats centered in downtown San Jose. Finally, a study of Red-shouldered Hawk nesting biology produced unexpected results - the species nested in non-native trees, mostly eucalyptus, more often than expected based on their availability, and fledging success was higher in these non-native trees than in natives.

My research elucidated patterns of bird distribution along our urban streams, but important questions remain unanswered. What are patterns of productivity and survivorship (rather than just diversity and abundance)? How important are these urban riparian habitats to bird populations on a regional scale - are productivity and survivorship high enough to sustain our urban riparian bird populations, or do these habitats represent population sinks that "drain" immigrants from more productive areas? This latter question has vital implications for future conservation and restoration efforts in Santa Clara County - how much

funding for riparian habitat restoration (e.g., through the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan being developed) should be spent in urban areas versus South County streams that are not as hemmed in by development? Restoration that supports the species found along our urban creeks plus more sensitive species such as Swainson's Thrushes, Yellow-breasted Chats, and (perhaps in the future) Least Bell's Vireos will help to sustain riparian bird populations in the long term better and over a broader area than restoration that maximizes local diversity (e.g., in the urbanized northern Santa Clara Valley) but does not support more sensitive species. Restoring riparian habitat in urban areas would benefit local riparian bird populations in areas more easily accessible to nature enthusiasts, but regional bird populations would benefit more from larger-scale riparian restoration in less developed areas. A future article in this series will discuss such tradeoffs.

CNRP Monitors:

The end of the breeding season is upon us, so don't forget to submit your data!

The online database is the preferred method for receiving year-end data, but emailed or mailed-in data sheets are also accepted. Contact us at programs@scvas.org with any questions.



Sept. General Meeting *(continued from page 1)*

of Bhutan. 165 species of mammals and over 600 species of both birds and orchids are found in Bhutan.

Bhutan, known to its inhabitants as "The Land of the Thunder Dragon," has over 60% of the country forested in native vegetation, the size of Switzerland with over 20 peaks that are 23,000 ft. Because of the unique variety of plants and animals found within Bhutan, ecologists consider this eastern Himalayan kingdom to be an area critically important to global efforts to preserve biological diversity. After the show Doug will be happy to have a lively question and answer session.

Mitigation Monitoring Has Many Rewards

by Craig Breon

Sometimes a law just isn't a law. It's there on paper, and some people adhere to it some of the time, but without any effective incentive to enforce that law, it simply limps along; unless, of course, someone else is diligent in pursuing the law to its end.

When I first proposed my project on mitigation monitoring to the SCVAS Board, I admitted that the work would likely be frustrating, but I felt that the gains to be made could easily justify the project and perhaps lead other organizations to explore this relatively little known side of land use in California. With my project nearing its end, I can say of those predictions—BINGO—more frustrating than I had predicted, but the gains have been rolling in.

To back up for a moment, this work has focused on tracking large, local developments from the past, exploring whether promises to protect natural resources on the sites were kept, and, if they were, were they successful. From the work to date, I believe I can draw these conclusions: When a local government has an incentive to enforce the laws on mitigation monitoring, they do a relatively good job. This is especially true when fees to the city or county are part of the permit conditions but also where city services can be improved as part of the development, such as traffic improvements. When you veer into protection of natural resources, the evidence for compliance is spottier. Resource protection just doesn't rise to the needed level of importance in most planning offices—often understaffed and overworked. In addition, working with natural resources is often more complex than, say, building inspections.

Case in point: Boulder Ridge Golf Course on the nose of Almaden Ridge. As this project was quite controversial when first approved in the mid 90's, you might think that the County would oversee the site closely. However, it took years for a conservation easement to be placed over portions of the land, and then only due to the diligence of vigilant neighbors. Years ago, the neighbors also asked about promised tree planting. According to them, the developer, Rocky Garcia, assured them that all work promised was completed. It appears the County never checked this claim. The planting had largely not been done, and more than 500 trees will still need to be planted. I have been working with the local neighborhood associations to see that such commitments are completed and to scrutinize a proposed facility expansion. In addition, I investigated a small wetlands enhancement on the site and water quality concerns. Recently I received an email from one neighbor saying that "as if by magic" trees were being planted on the site. In addition to any actual resource values enhanced on the property, such incidences allow me to explore further the system for tracking development projects in local jurisdictions and to suggest improvements.

Here are a few other projects where we have made progress recently:

- At the Cinnabar Hills Golf Course in San Jose, wetland and upland habitats for Tiger Salamanders will be permanently protected and a better water source secured.

- The Institute Golf Course in Morgan Hill—my nemesis project—is close to finalizing a deal for acquiring approximately 50 acres of off-site riparian and serpentine habitats. I am still at odds with them over restoration of riparian and wetland habitats on site.

- Valley Christian School in San Jose will have to remedy their failed serpentine habitat mitigation. Most likely, they will be forced to buy some serpentine lands in the hills.

- San Jose continues to improve their system of tracking developments, looking at old projects for performance while adding technology and staff to look at current and future projects in a more organized and effective manner.

- This fall should see the large-scale planting of riparian habitat along two or three creeks in East San Jose. This accomplishment was first reported last year when the City found the funding (\$800,000) to correct a decade-old error, and thus I will not elaborate on it here.

I hope the reports that wrap up this project find receptive ears. I plan a simple discussion of the applicable law, a more detailed look at some of the most common hurdles I encountered, and my somewhat successful attempts to surmount those, case studies to illustrate the issues I have encountered, examples of how to write a Public Records Act request, and recommendations for future work. Central to this last point will be a recommendation for a rather small amendment to the applicable law, clarifying the responsibilities of local governments in this area.

Ideally, my report(s) will be used by other conservation organizations to look at some of the larger developments in their regions, and perhaps some local planning departments might benefit from looking at my recommendations for systematic reform.

Thanks!

We wish to thank the generosity of the following contributors for their financial support, June 2008 through July 2008.

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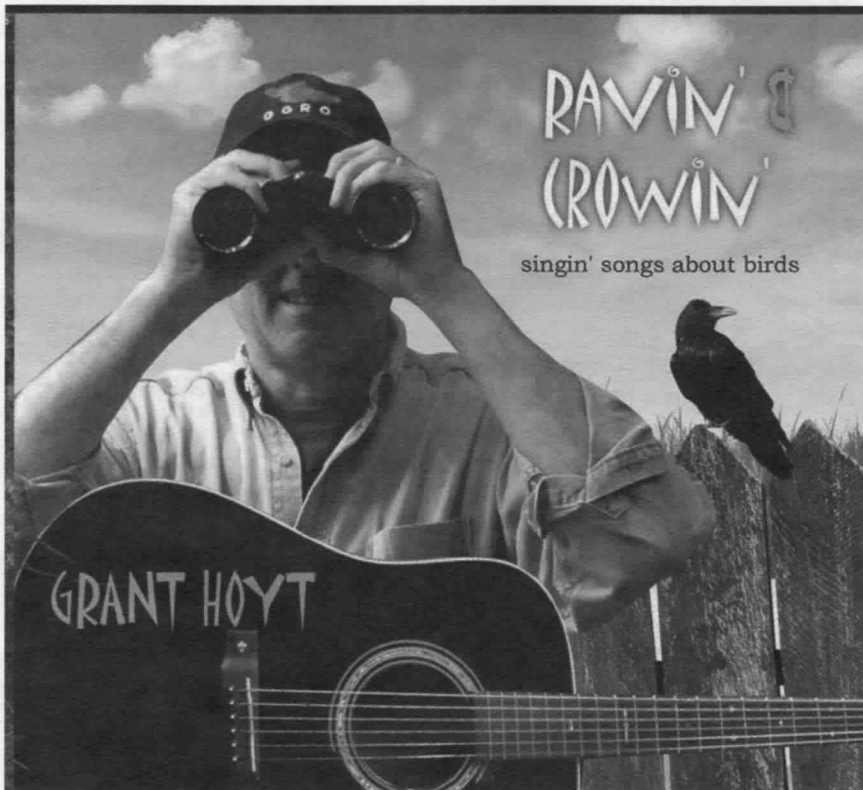
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CD Release and Farewell Party for Grant and Karen Hoyt

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By Grant Hoyt

As an avid birder and amateur rock musician, Grant became inspired to combine his love of both pursuits and record an album of songs about birds and birding. Here are 12 original bird-themed tunes; maybe if you play them for a non-birding friend, they'll get hooked on birding by these musical offerings.

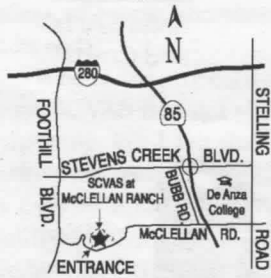
Join us for live music and a CD signing on Saturday Sept. 13, 12-2PM, at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino.

Light refreshments will be provided.

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The SCVAS Board Welcomes New Director...

The members of the SCVAS Board of Directors and the SCVAS staff would like to extend a hearty welcome to our newest Board member and Treasurer, Pete LaTourrette. Perhaps best known for his role in the Bay Area Bird Photographers group, Pete has been involved with SCVAS for many years, and we are excited to have him join our Board. We look forward to great things!

... and Says "Goodbye" and "Thank You" too.

Schedules change, responsibilities grow and people's lives move into new directions. After many years (and many pints of sweat!), SCVAS bids farewell to Board Member Dave Cook. Dave has been an invaluable member of our organization, and his participation on our Board will definitely be missed. Fortunately, SCVAS Board members never really disappear - Dave is focusing his attention on our Conservation projects, such as the Burrowing Owl Advocacy Group and the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program. So, while he may no longer wear the official title of "Board Member," we suspect he'll be just as busy. Thanks for everything, Dave!

STAFF

Executive Director 408/252-3748
Bob Power bob@scvas.org
Office Manager 408/252-3747
Susan Bell scvas@scvas.org
Programs Coordinator 408/252-3740
Toby Goldberg programs@scvas.org
Office Fax 408/252-2850
E-mail scvas@scvas.org
Website www.scvas.org

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Avocet Editors: Sabrina Johnson & Toby Goldberg

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS meetings are open to all members. Call the office at (408) 252-3747 for times and directions.

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