

THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

July-August 2009

Birdathon 2009 – Participation at an All-Time High!

By Bob Power, SCVAS Executive Director

The 2009 Birdathon season officially kicked off with the showing of Opposable Chums (the World Series of Birding big-day documentary from Cape May) at McClellan Ranch in February. In March the sign-ups accelerated and before it was all over on April 26th, 141 adventure-seeking birders filled out the rosters of 21 teams for the largest participation in SCVAS birdathon history. This major benefit event for the chapter's education and conservation programs had little chance of equaling last year's phenomenal \$58,000+ effort. The continued downturn in the economy and news from our most accomplished fundraisers that their key sponsors were cutting back all pointed to a likely "good but not great" fund-raising scenario. But lo and behold the dust has settled and a phenomenal \$55,000+ has been raised, with pledges still rolling in. Your efforts as a birdathon participant, fundraiser, or sponsor mean the world to us and we can't thank you enough.



Barry Langdon-Lasagne gets ready to enjoy his Birdathon prize - a session with "I Fly SF Bay"

Competition was fierce between big day teams with 7 teams out on the last 4 weekend days of the March 27th to April 26th Birdathon window. The Varied Titchers, led by Mike Rogers, took top honors with 164 species identified in a 24-hour period. The Rock Wrens, led by Bob Hirt, were second with 150 species and took honors for Best Bird with a Solitary Sandpiper on Summit Rd.

Not to be overlooked were the efforts of Lori Cuesta, Cathy Priest, and Anne Creevy in pioneering the first year of the Big Sit as a new way to experience the fun of a birdathon event. The Sitting Ducks barely edged ahead of the Yellow-rumped Squatters with 52 species seen vs. 51 species seen, but more importantly, these 3 new teams combined raised over \$2,400.

Individual fundraising was extraordinary, despite those rumors to the contrary, with 17 participants raising over \$1,000. The top five fundraisers were Bob Hirt, David McIntyre, Dotty Calabrese, David Presotto, and Matthew Dodder. With the top two individual fundraisers teamed up on the Rock Wrens, it's no surprise that the Rock Wrens took the team fundraising honor with a whopping \$12,500 raised, breaking the previous team fundraising record set just last year.

By the generosity of our prize sponsors*, we were able to offer Birdathon prizes to all birders who raised over \$300 this year, as well as door prizes at the June Birdathon dinner that closed out the Birdathon season. The prize list included vacation getaways, optics, whale watching trips, art, and fine wine.

The Birdathon Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2009 Birdathon. The competing teams and their leaders made it fun, the office staff took charge of logistics, and of course, our Birdathon donors who made this year's event a major success.

Special Thanks to Our Golden Eagle Sponsors:
Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris, Bob and Deb Hirt, Nancy Teater, David Presotto and Caryl Carr, Kowa Optimed, and the Wild Bird Center of Los Gatos.

Birding and Boating and Banding - Oh My!
Summer is the time for Young Audubon Nature Adventures!
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From left to right: Debbie Thompson, Pati Rouzer, Lori Cuesta, and Laurie West-Roberts. Birdathon Team Leaders received special recognition (and a hat!) at the Birdathon Dinner.

- ❖ SCVAS Says Goodbye to Bobbie & Carl Handen – Page 4
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- ❖ Brandt's Cormorants Grab the Spotlight! – Field Notes, Page 6

July - August '09 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 July 1, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leader: Freddy Howell. 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 11, 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.

Wednesday Aug. 5, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. See July 1st listing for details.

Saturday August 8, 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**.

Saturday August 22, 8:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. For directions see the write-up for July 11th.



Taking a fun vacation this summer? The SCVAS Nature Shop has what you need to make it an extraordinary birding experience! Check us out!



SCVAS is proud to host a gallery of beautiful bird paintings by local artist Floy Zittin. Floy's work emphasizes technical accuracy, principles of Oriental brushwork, and freshness.

Come by the office today to view these unique and stunning works of art. (Note: 30% of the proceeds from Floy's paintings go to benefit this chapter)



Events Calendar:

Sun. 7/19; Approx. 11AM-1PM

**Young Audubon Summer Adventure:
Elkhorn Slough Safari**

Monterey Bay

(see page 11 for details)

Sat. 7/25; 10AM-2PM

**Young Audubon Summer Adventure:
SCVAS "Bird Day"**

McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

(see page 11 for details)

Sat. 8/8; 8:00-10:00AM

**Young Audubon Summer Adventure:
Bird Banding with SFBBO**

Coyote Creek Banding Station

(see page 11 for details)

Sat. 8/15; 7AM-5:30PM

**Adult Education Field Workshop:
Swainson's Hawks with Bob Power
Davis & Yolo County**

(see next page for details)

Plan Ahead:

Sat, 9/12; 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)

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.

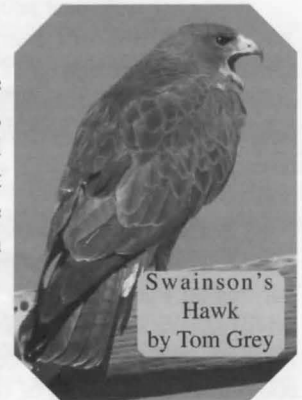
Swainson's Hawks with Bob Power

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. This is a wonderful opportunity to see Swainson's Hawks (knock on wood) in a wide variety of morphs/plumages, and get to know them 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.

Date: Sat. 8/15; 7AM (South Bay departure) to approx. 5:30PM (South Bay arrival)

Location: Agricultural lands south of Davis. **Fee:** \$30 members; \$40 non-members.

Class sizes are limited to 15.



Important Note: 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 this field trip.

Audubon-at-Home:

SCVAS' Bird Sanctuary Program: Summer 2009 Updates

By Toby Goldberg, SCVAS Programs Coordinator

2009 marks the 3rd year of the re-initiation of the SCVAS' Bird Sanctuary Program (BSP), a program that encourages the creation of bird and wildlife habitat in backyards, patios and on other private property. We're pleased to say that the program has grown in some unexpected ways. Originally intended as [mostly or only] a certificate program for gardens, it has now also become a wonderful educational forum for the community. Members of the BSP committee have presented their goals and ideas for the program, in partnership with the California Native Plant Society, to hundreds of Santa Clara County residents. We also share information about this program with members of the community at each festival and event we are invited to attend. And the word is definitely getting out there!

Community members are not only seeing the need for, but are getting excited about, making their backyard spaces into healthy areas of refuge for our local wildlife. And with all the recent news about Colony Collapse Disorder in Honey Bees, the state-wide drought and subsequent water restrictions to be enacted, and petroleum costs beginning to rise again, the BSP's emphasis on sustainability, efficiency and conservation is hitting a

chord with many people trying to reduce both their ecological footprint and the economic input of their landscaping.

Of course, there's also the plain fact that watching birds is enjoyable and extremely satisfying - something that more and more people are recognizing. I know that I could watch the Bewick's wren who has been determinedly trying to attract a mate to his nest - in the nestbox just outside my office window - for *hours*. And seeing those silly plump little Quails toodling down the walkway always makes me smile. And of course, I'm always a little in awe at the beauty and delicacy of our local butterflies as they land on the blooms to feed. Having a backyard or garden space that attracts these local visitors, therefore, not only does something GREAT for the many species - birds, bees, bats, bugs, butterflies (and so much more!) - that share this planet with us, but it also does something great for each one of us, too. And, thankfully, that fact is becoming more and more recognized, and more and more appreciated.



A Nuthatch visits the suet feeder at the SCVAS office
© William Walker, 2008



Chickadees in the McClellan Ranch Native Plant Garden
© William Walker, 2008

Thanks for Everything!

It's hard to believe that another Spring has come and gone (every year seems to go by faster than the last!), and with the end of spring comes the end of our Spring Education Intern position. This year, we bid a fond farewell and a hearty congratulations to Anne Butterfield as she finishes up her time with us and graduates from Santa Clara University. Over the course of her internship, Anne shared her passion for the environment with over a thousand students - the next generation of environmental stewards! - and countless more members of the community. We wish her the best of luck in her travels, plans for grad school and whatever else life might bring.



Volunteer Ventures

by Toby Goldberg

Programs Coordinator

There are just some people to whom one can not say "Thank You" enough! I'm sure everyone has someone like that in his or her life - someone who goes so far "above and beyond the call of duty" that the phrase itself becomes meaningless. These are the people that help with everything, who throw themselves wholeheartedly into any project, and who quickly become absolutely indispensable.

Looking at the amazing list of SCVAS volunteers, I personally think that most of them fall into this category. During our annual Potluck Dinner in June, however, I am asked (and privileged) to select a few volunteers of particular note to honor for their outstanding service to this chapter. While I still wish I could have honored all of our volunteers, there were a handful that clearly stood out this year, and we formally acknowledge them here:

Bobbie & Carl Handen - SCVAS' chance to honor this amazing couple is a decidedly bittersweet one, as we are simultaneously saying goodbye to them as they prepare to move to the Sacramento area. The length of time the Handens have dedicated to keeping this chapter running can be numbered in decades. A former SCVAS board member and Education Committee chairwoman, Bobbie was instrumental in making this chapter the active, dynamic and well-organized one it is today. She literally was the heart-blood of this chapter, participating in (and helping to coordinate) almost every event, educational program, and activity that came along. And where there was Bobbie, there also was Carl, an "unsung hero" of the volunteering world. Whether helping by directing traffic or helping support Bobbie so she was able to devote so much time keeping this chapter strong, Carl's contribution was equally valued and appreciated. The SCVAS Board, Staff and Education Committee count ourselves extremely fortunate to have known and worked with the Handens, and we are extremely saddened to have to bid this wonderful couple "farewell." But, we know that they are moving on to a wonderful and rewarding phase of life, and we wish them all the best.

The "Garden Crew" - If you have walked past the SCVAS Nature Shop in the last year or so, you'll have noticed a startling and amazing transformation. Thanks to the dedicated hard-work from Cheryl Turner and her crew of gardeners, the "Nancy Hertert Memorial Native Plant Garden" is a true thing of beauty. The SCVAS staff has been enjoying the increased bird and lizard populations resulting from a healthy, balanced garden, and we know that it is all thanks to the committed effort from so many people. We particularly want to thank the following:

Cheryl Turner - the heart, brain, and soul behind the almost miraculous transformation from an abandoned-looking plot to

the carefully designed and meticulously executed explosion of color we see today. It is because of her passion, dedication, commitment, creativity, and persistence, that the entire community has been blessed with such a wonderful resource!

Ginny & Jerry Kaminski, Elaine Varga, Joy Desai, Karen Swenson - I can't even count how often these five could be found on hands-and-knees pulling weeds, spreading mulch, transplanting, plotting, measuring, mapping, and so much more - always with a smile and a friendly attitude. I think anyone would agree that all their hard work has paid off, and we all count ourselves lucky to be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Of course, there were many others who participated in our chapter's activities this year, and we wish to thank each and every one of them! Their passion and dedication continually amaze us, and our whole chapter is so much stronger for their hard work.

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.

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.



Bobbie Handen has led the "Wrong Terns" - the Education Committee's Birdathon Team - for many years of successful fund-raising

Nature Shop Assistants - If you're comfortable with a retail setting, or want to become comfortable, we are still in need of a few more volunteers to give some time during the week in the Nature Shop. No previous experience needed - we'll train you in everything from inventory to point-of-sale. And we'll keep it fun and friendly, too!

Stevens Creek 50K/SCVAS Benefit Run - Volunteers are needed on Sept 12th (and possibly the 11th and 13th, too) 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.

Return of the Advocate

by Bob Power, SCVAS Executive Director and the SCVAS Board of Directors

For several years our Board of Directors has been quietly working to raise the funds to hire an Environmental Advocate for our chapter. While our work in the advocacy arena has never faltered, our effectiveness has not been quite as great as we would like since we were able to fund a full-time environmental advocate to lead this effort. A non-stop series of environmentally significant long-range planning projects in the county and Craig Breon's continued work with his Mitigation Monitoring project have made it abundantly clear that the chapter needs a staff person focused solely on environmental issues.

On Tuesday, May 5th, Santa Clara Valley Audubon's Board of Directors decided to move into the next phase of its plan to hire an Environmental Advocate for our chapter by approving a recruitment and hiring plan for this position. We have posted a job announcement and are conducting a thorough hiring process, the end result of which will be a terrific new addition to our staff and significantly increased ability for our chapter to further support its mission. We hope to have the Environmental Advocate on board by the end of this summer.

Since we have thus far been able to find sufficient funding to cover 80% of the cost of the position for three years, we have decided to be conservative in our planning for this new position. We have chosen to jump-start filling this critical need by bringing the Environmental Advocate in now on a four-fifths time basis for three years. We hope to raise enough additional capital soon to be able to increase this position to full-time status. For now, we have adequate funding to ensure three years of steady advocacy at this part-time level. The Board believes that this conservative approach is in keeping with the current economic climate and looks forward to the opportunity to make this a full-time position when the economy picks up and as we accumulate additional support for this position. This plan was formally announced to the SCVAS membership at our annual meeting in June and we are now actively recruiting to fill this position.

The Environmental Advocate Campaign team would welcome any donations in support of this position.

Santa Clara County Open Space Authority Ruling

An 8-year legal battle has ended and the result is a potential \$50 million in refunds to Santa Clara County property owners. Parcel fees were collected on behalf of the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority (OSA) but the fees were struck down by the California Supreme Court in 2008. The owners of over 300,000 parcels will now be told that they are allowed to request their fees be refunded.

Areas affected include Santa Clara County, San Jose, Campbell, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, and Santa Clara. Depending on years of ownership for an affected landowner, refunds could range from approximately \$20 to \$120. While it's not clear how far an individual could stretch that refund, it is very clear the impact the refunds could have on open space acquisition and habitat restoration in our county. Careful consideration of the option to request this refund is warranted.



Join Cheesemans' Ecological Safaris on a voyage of discovery to an awe-inspiring world devoted to nature, wildlife,

science and peace. From the stunning vistas of Tierra del Fuego to the busy penguin rookeries of the Falklands, from the dramatic landscapes of South Georgia to the ice-covered terrain of the Antarctic, this safari will have you completely captivated. Board the comfortable and safe 87-meter ice ship, the MV Polar Star, for an expedition offering 25 days on the ship, and an unparalleled seventeen landing days in the Southern Ocean (including 7 days along the Antarctic Peninsula). During days at sea, staff naturalists on the ship's bridge and stern share sightings of whales and seabirds, including many of the world's species of albatross and nesting Snow Petrels. Maximum time on shore will be available for photography, wildlife experiences and exploring the landscapes of the great Southern Oceans. This trip is sure to leave you breathless for years to come!

Join Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris for a special Antarctic Adventure that you'll never forget!!



Where: The Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia, and Falkland Islands

When: December 28, 2009 to January 25, 2010

What: A non-smoking expedition for wildlife enthusiasts looking to spend maximum time in the field.

Expedition Leaders: Doug, Gail and Ted Cheeseman as Expedition Leaders. **NOTE:** This will be Doug and Gail's last

trip to the Falklands, so this is an excellent chance to take advantage of their 16 (or more!) years of Antarctic experience.

Size: 92 participants, not including our expedition staff - everyone can go ashore at the same time, without requiring time-limited shifts.

Continuing decades of support for SCVAS conservation programs, a portion of the proceeds from this trip will be donated to the SCVAS chapter.

For costs, more information or to reserve your space, go to www.cheesemans.com, email info@cheesemans.com, or call (800) 527-5330 (toll-free) or (408) 741-5330 (local).

Field Notes (April-May 2009)

by Bill Bousman

Brandt's Cormorants are a strictly littoral species. They are difficult to miss on any visit to the coast, but inland at the south end of the Bay they are very rare. We have had only 10 records of this cormorant in the county until this spring. Starting about 11 Apr a couple of dozen starving birds have been picked up in urban areas and taken for rehabilitation, although many have subsequently died. Others have been found by birders at local impoundments and reservoirs and many of these have appeared to be okay. On just one day, 6 May, 13 birds were seen on Lexington Reservoir (SCR), more than all of our previous county records! Along the coast many dead Brandt's have been found along the beaches. It appears that most of these birds have starved to death. Other species of cormorants appear okay, but there is something in the food chain preferred by Brandt's that has failed on the California central coast. The ocean giveth and the ocean taketh away. Ocean birds have evolved with the years of plenty and the years of want. Their present famine and dispersal has been a feast for birders in the South Bay, but not one we ever anticipated or desired. It is difficult to see a connection between the failure of the Brandt's Cormorant food chain and the **Brown Pelicans** that have lingered through the spring in the South Bay and on a few inland reservoirs. But in 30 years of records we have never found Brown Pelicans in the months of March and there are only two records for April. Yet the total number of birds this spring probably exceeds a half dozen, nearly as unexpected as the dispersal of Brandt's Cormorants.

Waterfowl through Ibis

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** seen on a closed refuge pond on 25 Apr (MMR, MJM) was late. One to three **Blue-winged Teal** were regularly found in Artesian Slough near the Alviso EEC through 26 Apr (m.ob.). One to two birds were in Adobe Creek 18-19 Apr (MMR et al., BP et al.) The numbers of birds in South County Regional WasteWater Authority (SCRWA) treatment ponds in Gilroy declined in April with a pair noted there on 28 Apr (MJM) and a male on 30 Apr (RWR, FV). A hybrid

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Northern Shoveler was found again, this time at the Geng Road pond on the Palo Alto Muni GC 18-22 Apr (MMR, SMe). Five **Redheads** were seen at Calaveras Reservoir on 18 Apr (MMR et al.), the only report for the period. A female-type **Red-breasted Merganser** found on closed refuge ponds on 30 May (MMR, MJM, RGJ) was likely an oversummering bird. A basic-plumaged **Common Loon** was found on Shoreline Lake on 24 May (CL, CW) and two birds were there on 30 May (ViT), both remained for the period. An **American Bittern** was

Unusual patterns in the distribution of Brandt's Cormorants and Brown Pelicans nearly overshadowed the first county record of a Gull-billed Tern.

seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 26 Apr (RPh et al.), this may be a resident bird rather than a lingering winterer. Absent since last fall, a **Cattle Egret** in breeding plumage turned up near the Duck Pond in the Palo Alto Baylands on 22 May (MDo) and has remained through the period. We expect a few **White-faced Ibis** to show up in spring. The first was seen over Charleston Slough on 16 Apr (ER). Seven were counted on Pond A16 in Alviso on 16 May (AV, MJM, DMa). A single bird was found on the Mountain View Forebay on 23 May (KS et al.) and remained through the next day (v.ob.).

Eagles through Terns

The nesting pair of **Bald Eagles** on the west side of Calaveras Reservoir successfully raised at least one young, which fledged on 18 May (*vide* RPh). The juvenile remained at the tower nest through the end of the period (m.ob.). Although we think of Bald Eagles as closely tied to water and favoring fish as their preferred prey, these birds were seen feeding California Ground Squirrels to their nestling (CVR, LVR). Elsewhere in the county an adult was seen along Coyote Ridge on 3 Apr (SCR) and one was on the west side of Mt. Hamilton on 2 May (JMy). Sub-adult birds were found

widely compared to past years. One was at Calero Reservoir on 1 Apr (AV) and based on photos is likely the same as a sub-adult seen on Coyote Ridge on 3 Apr (SCR). A sub-adult was at Chesbro Reservoir on 16 Apr, but one in the Almaden Valley on 25 Apr was a different bird (both JPa). An immature bird was also seen along a ridge west of Calaveras Reservoir on 26 Apr (MDo et al., CVR, LVR), but did not interact with the nesting birds. A second-year bird was at Calero Reservoir on 26 Apr (RPh et al.). From 1980 to 2006, I have only three records of Bald Eagles for April and May, an adult and two sub-adults. A second-year **Swainson's Hawk** was seen near Hwy 101 and East Dunne in Morgan Hill on 14 Apr (ADeM). An alternate **Pacific Golden-Plover** was found on closed refuge ponds on 25 Apr (MMR, MJM) for our first certain spring record. (There are a number of spring records of "Lesser Golden-Plover," back before the split, and some of these were likely Pacific.). Although a male **Snowy Plover** was found on closed refuge ponds on 25 Apr (MMR, MJM), the water on these ponds was apparently too high and nesting birds have moved into New Chicago Marsh. From two to eight birds were seen there 23-31 May (JT, ST, v.ob.). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was found along Sierra Road on 19 Apr (BH, DMo et al.). Individual Solitary's are found in remote locations in most Aprils. Four **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found in the vicinity of the Palo Alto FCB on 19 Apr (BH et al.) and eight were tallied on closed refuge ponds on 25 Apr (MMR, MJM). Additional sightings on closed refuge ponds on 25 Apr included two alternate **Ruddy Turnstones** and one-to-two alternate **Sanderlings** (MMR, MJM). More expected in the fall, an alternate **Stilt Sandpiper** was seen at the edge of the New Chicago Marsh on 30 May (MMR, MJM, RGJ). Similarly, an adult **Ruff** found on closed refuge ponds on 25 Apr (MMR, MJM) was unusual for spring. Few **Wilson's Phalaropes** pass through in the spring so a single bird seen on 19 May (AS) is of interest. The last of the wintering **Glaucous Gulls** included two 1st-cycle birds and a 2nd-cycle found on Pond A16 and A18 in Alviso 16-17 Apr (MMR, MDo). The major excitement of the period was a **Gull-billed Tern** seen and photographed in the Palo Alto estuary on 3 May (JMD, LH). This bird was not seen again in Santa Clara County, but

Field Notes *cont'd*

one recorded at Redwood Shores in San Mateo County about two weeks later was likely the same one. This may be the first acceptable record for Northern California. An alternate **Black Tern** seen on Pond A 16 in Alviso on 15 May (MJM) was a treat.

Roadrunners through Kinglets

A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen on a SCVAS trip to Alum Rock Park on 28 Mar (AME et al.). Another was found along Quimby Road in eastern San Jose on 31 May (JAC). The only **Black Swifts** found during this spring's migration were four over Monte Bello OSP on 15 May (GHa). The first **Vaux's Swifts** of the season were singles over Almaden Quicksilver CP (JPa) and the Stevens Creek mouth (FV), both on 3 Apr. Since then, birds have been mostly seen in ones and twos. A flock of 20 over Belgatos Park in Los Gatos on 3 May (JPa) was a high count of passage birds. The first **Black-chinned Hummingbird** of spring was heard along the Guadalupe River below Curtner on 8 Apr (MMR) and both males and females were found there through the end of the period (v.ob.). A female on a nest was seen on 17 May (AV). A male Black-chinned along Coyote Creek below Hwy 237 on 11 Apr (MSi) was the only report from another location. The **Rufous Hummingbird** migration continued into April with birds seen at various locations from Joseph Grant CP to the Almaden Valley (m.ob.). The last passage male was one at Joseph Grant CP on 28 Apr (OH). One-to-four **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were seen in the San Antonio Valley 30 Apr-31 May (SMe et al., JMy et al., MDo et al., JAC). Two birds found on a burn survey route in Henry Coe SP on 3 May (SCR) were likely migrants. Reports of **Pileated Woodpeckers** from areas where they have nested in the past were few (v.ob.). Continuing a pattern of birds dispersing to the flatlands, a bird was seen in urban Los Altos at an elevation of about 100 feet on 23 Apr (J&CS). The first passage **Hammond's Flycatcher** was seen at Alum Rock Park on 4 Apr (MDo et al.). About 15 birds were noted through 3 May, mostly in the Diablo Range (v.ob.). But on the west side of the valley single birds were found at Edenvale Garden Park on 10 Apr and Rancho Cañada del Oro OSP on 16 Apr (both JPa). **Purple Martins**

no longer appear to nest in the county and even migrants have become scarce—we saw none last year. One bird was seen this spring over San Felipe Lake on 14 Apr (ADeM), both in Santa Clara and San Benito counties. **Bank Swallows** are just as rare, particularly in spring, so one-to-two birds seen at the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on 5 May (RGJ) were a good find. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in Cupertino, present since last fall, was heard again 11-13 Apr (DJ). Another nuthatch was found in Ed Levin CP 10-12 Apr (RWR, FV, AME). One in Mountain View on 7 May (MDo) was late for a spring migrant. Other birds were found in the Santa Cruz Mountains where they nest (v.ob.). **Pygmy Nuthatches** continued to be found in the Santa Cruz Mountains (v.ob.), but were also observed in flatlands and the foothills where they are rarely found. One heard at the Veterans Hospital in Menlo Park on 23 May, just over the county line, was in mature pines and is probably part of a local population that has been present for years nearby in planted Monterey pines. Birds near Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto the same day were in eucalyptus, which they sometimes use along the coast, but this represents a new habitat use for them in Santa Clara County (both GHa). A **Canyon Wren** was found singing along a burn survey route in Henry Coe SP on 16 May (WGB), not far from where birds nested during the atlas period. **American Dippers** continued to be found along Stevens Creek above Mt. Eden Road in April (v.ob.). A singing bird was found again along Los Gatos Creek in Los Gatos on 2 Apr (JPa). A pair nested in Uvas Canyon Park and the nest was carefully monitored 24 Apr-25 May (DP) and it appears that all three young fledged successfully. A juvenile bird was found along Bonnetti Creek in Sanborn-Skyline CP on 9 May (BP), birds were not found nesting there during the atlas. Single **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were found in Sanborn-Skyline CP from 4 Apr to 21 May on four occasions (v.ob.). Presumably, these are resident birds.

Warblers through Goldfinches

A few **Nashville Warblers** were found during their spring passage. The first was seen along Gilroy Hot Springs Road on 11 Apr (MDo et al.). One was found at Smith Creek 24-25 Apr (MMR, RGJ, STr), with another at Joseph Grant CP on 24 Apr (MMR, RGJ). A bird in Belgatos Park in Los Gatos on 1 May (JPa) was the only record from the Santa Cruz Mountain foothills. Two birds were on a burn survey route in Henry Coe SP on 3 May (SCR). The last record was of a singing bird in downtown San Jose at the confluence of Los Gatos Creek and the Guadalupe River on 14 May (J&SLi). The first of the migrant **Hermit Warblers** was seen at Stevens Creek CP on 4 Apr (PKe et al.), the last birds were in Sanborn-Skyline CP on 21 May (JPa). About 17 were recorded in the Diablo Range, including a high count of 11 males along a burn survey route in Henry Coe SP on 3 May (SCR); 12 were found in the Santa Cruz Mountains.



Brandt's Cormorant
by Tom Grey

Single singing male **MacGillivray's Warblers** were found in Anderson Lake CP on 2 May (SCR) and on two separate burn survey routes in Henry Coe SP on 3 May (SCR, RGJ, MJM). A singing **Yellow-breasted Chat** was found at the SCRWA treatment plant on 24 Apr (AME) and one-to-three or -four singing birds were found there at least through 18 May (v.ob.). A chat found in a San Jose yard on 30 Apr (MJM) was a surprise, and a singing bird was found at the edge of Artesian Slough in Alviso on 17 May (AME). At least four **Chipping Sparrows** were seen again at Jeffrey Fontana Park on 10 Apr (JPa), overlapping with spring migrants in both the Diablo Range and Santa Cruz Mountains (v.ob.). Five singing **Black-chinned Sparrows** were found on a burn survey route in Henry Coe SP on 3 May, but were not there on a subsequent survey (MMR). Lingered **White-throated Sparrows** were noted in an Almaden Valley yard on 9 Apr (JPa) and at Joseph Grant CP 17-18 Apr (MDo et al.). A **White-crowned Sparrow** in another Almaden Valley yard on 23-24 May (BHa) was either a very late lingerer or is

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Field Notes

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oversummering. Two male and a female **Blue Grosbeak** were found along the Pajaro River below Hwy 101 on 31 May (MMR) in an area where they have nested in recent years. Astonishing numbers of **Lazuli Buntings** have turned up on burn survey routes in Henry Coe Park, 392 were tallied on three survey routes on 3 May (MMR, SCR, RGJ, MJM), most of them singing males. Of all our county summer residents, this species appears to respond most strongly to habitat disturbance. A male **Indigo Bunting** was found in Alum Rock Park on 20 Apr and was seen there again on 6 May along with 30 or so Lazulis (both JJo). A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was seen next to Grant Lake on a SCVAS trip on 19 Apr (STr et al.). With the horses gone from the Arzino Ranch, the area is now less attractive to migrating Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Nonetheless, 1-5 birds were seen in the area from 25 Apr to 11 May (ACr et al., v.ob.). A pair of **Great-tailed Grackles** were seen at the Coyote Creek GC on 7 Apr (MJM) where they have nested in the past. A singing male was at the Ogier

Avenue ponds on 8 and 24 Apr (RPh, SCR). Single males were also seen nearer the Bay, with a singing bird seen on Geng Road in Palo Alto on 18 Apr (MMR et al.), one in Artesian Slough on 26 Apr (MJM et al.), and one near Adobe Creek on 21 May (KPa, KGr). There were a smattering of reports of **Pine Siskins** on the move in the Santa Cruz Mountains and along the valley floor. More impressive were a number of large flocks in the Diablo Range: 100+ birds were tallied at Smith Creek on 25 Apr (JT, STr) and 148 were counted on a burn survey route in Henry Coe on 3 May (MMR). The first **Lawrence's Goldfinch** recorded since January was a single at Ed Levin CP on 17 Apr (JT) followed by three at Twin Gates on 28 Apr (RWR, FV). Two burn survey routes in Coe Park recorded 11 on 3 May (MMR, SCR), a subsequent survey on one of these routes on 22 May tallied 26 birds (MMR). At least four birds were found in Halls Valley on 17 May (LMY, JPa et al.) and at least two of these birds were seen nest building on 21 May (MJM). The only record from the Santa Cruz Mountains was a single Monte Bello OSP flyover on 29 May (GHa).

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Jack Cole (JAC), Anne Creevy (ACr), Mike Danzenbaker (JMD), Al DeMartini (ADeM), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Al Eisner (AME), Kat Greene (KGr), Barbara Harkleroad (BHa), Garth Harwood (GHa), Bob Hirt (BH), Owen Holt (OH), Lee Hung (LH), Debi Jamison (DJ), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Jim Johnson (JJo), Pat Kenny (PKe), Cindy Lee (CL), Jim & Sue Liskovec (J&SLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Dean Manley (DMa), Sonny Mencher (SMe), Dominik Mosur (DMo), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LMy), Kay Partelow (KPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Dennis Porter (DP), Bob Power (BP), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Edward Rooks (ER), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Ken Schneider (KS), Joel & Carol Sidel (J&CS), Marty Sidor (MSi), Ashutosh Sinha (AS), Jim Thomas (JT), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Steve Tracey (STr), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Chuq Von Rospach (CVR), Laurie Von Rospach (LVR), and Curt Wohlgenuth (CW).

RARITIES: Please drop me a note:
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Menlo Park, CA 94025,
or: barlowi@earthlink.net

A Sad Farewell to Eileen Bowden

By Elaine Gould and the SCVAS Education Committee members

SCVAS members who knew Eileen Bowden were shocked and tremendously saddened at the news of her untimely death. On April 28, 2009, Eileen, a school nurse in the Santa Clara Unified School District, immediately came to the aid of a school coach who had collapsed on an athletic field. After applying resuscitation until paramedics arrived, Eileen stood up and then collapsed and died of a massive heart attack at the age of 59.

With her husband, Allen Royer, Eileen was a member of SCVAS. She participated in the Christmas Bird counts; was active for several years on the Education Committee and with the Education Committee's Birdathon Team. Eileen was a nature lover and world traveler who met Allen through Doug and Gail Cheeseman. We remember Eileen for her constant enthusiasm, sparkling smile and for her excellent and devoted mothering of their daughter, Joanna, who accompanied Ed. Committee members whale watching or hiking in her backpack or stroller from the time she was an infant.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Joanna and Allen and to Eileen's mother in New Jersey and to Eileen's sisters, Barb and Rosemary and their families.

SCVAS' Educational Programs Going Strong!

Anyone who that has helped with the Birdathon or any of our other fund-raising efforts knows that a good percentage of the money we raise goes to support our educational programs. So, here's a little update on what's been happening with our programs this year:

- SCVAS' Wetlands Discovery Program has been connecting elementary students with nature in an experiential, hands-on setting for more than 20 years. This past school year, SCVAS Staff and volunteers reached out to over 1000 students to give them an outdoor experience they'll remember for years to come.
- Over 800 students learned about California Native Habitats and Wildlife as part of our Wildlife Education Day Poster Contest.
- Over 500 members of our community - children and parents alike - learned about the wonderful world of California Native wildlife at Wildlife Education Day, with SCVAS and our friends at organizations like Youth Science Institute, Wildlife Center of Silicon Valley, and many more.
- Hundreds more students learned all about birds in their classrooms, through our skins & nests presentations, bird walks, and by building nest boxes for our local cavity nesting species.

And that's just some of what we accomplished - and just for one year! The contributions that members of this chapter have made to support these programs over the years have touched the lives of tens of thousands of children, parents, and teachers throughout the County. On behalf of all of them, we extend our thanks!

We wish to thank the generosity of the following contributors for their financial support, April through May 2009

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Thanks to all of our Birdathon Teams and their many, many supporters for a very successful Birdathon!

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The Avocet 9

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(continued from Page 9)

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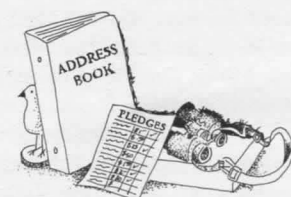
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Yellow-Rumped Squatters:

Katherine Greene, Gordy Iwata, RW Lawrence, Kay Matthews, Brooke Miller



SCVAS' Young Audubon Program invites you to share a summer of learning and exploration with us and our friends!

Elkhorn Slough Safari

Nature Boat Tours in Elkhorn Slough

LOCATION: Moss Landing; DATE: Sun, July 19th;

TIME: 11AM - 1:15PM; AGES: For all ages 3** and up!

COST: \$30/person for SCVAS members; \$35/person for non-Members

Join Capt. Yohn Gideon and SCVAS for a two hour boat cruise for an in-depth (and fun!) look at the slough's ecology, its fascinating history, and birding in the company of a naturalist guide. You can relax and enjoy a roomy, stable ride and refreshments on a coast guard certified 27 foot pontoon boat, the Safari, departing from Moss Landing, California. This is a great activity to take the whole family on!

**All children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian for the activities indicated

McClellan Ranch Bird Day

Bird watching, Bird walks, bird crafts, and so much more!

LOCATION: McClellan Ranch, Cupertino; DATE: Sat, July 25th;

TIME: 10AM - 2PM; AGES: 5-7 and 8-10

COST: \$20/child for SCVAS Members; \$25/child for non-members

(There is a multiple-child discount)

If your children are fascinated by the natural life around them, then this day is one not to miss! We will explore local bird (and other wildlife) activities, including: birds and birding arts and crafts; a feeder watch to catch a glimpse of some of the amazing species that come to our very door; a creek walk to explore the local flora and fauna; story time and puppet shows (including a chance for the older children to let their theatrical and creative juices flow!); Barn Owl pellet dissections; and more!

Priority will be given to groups with Children.

Scholarships for all activities are available for families in need*

Space is limited for all activities, so sign up early!

Bird Banding

"Conservation in Action!" with SFBBO

LOCATION: McCarthy Ranch, Milpitas; DATE: Sat, Aug. 8th;

TIME: 8AM-10:15AM; AGES: For all Bird Lovers, ages 7** and up!

COST: \$10/person for SCVAS Members; \$15/person for non-members

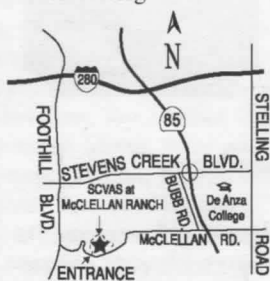
Come share in a very special opportunity to witness live bird banding demonstrations by experts from the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO). An invaluable tool for conservation, restoration and mitigation research, this bird banding activity will allow participants to view a wild bird up close and personal, as well as tour an area of active habitat restoration.

*To sign-up or apply for a scholarship, call (408) 252-3740. For more information, send an e-mail to programs@scvas.org, or check out our website at www.scvas.org

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Matthew Dodder	'08 - '11
Ashok Khosla	'09 - '12
Stephanie Ellis	'08 - '11
Boyce Burge	'08 - '11

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday	10 AM - 5 PM
Saturday	10 AM - 2 PM

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.

RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422

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Avocet Editor: Toby Goldberg

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