



# THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

September-October 2009

## Ten Years of Life, Love and Birding: An Interview with Matthew Dodder, SCVAS Board Member and Palo Alto Adult School Instructor

By Toby Goldberg, SCVAS Programs Coordinator

When I first met Matthew Dodder, what I noticed most was his friendly smile and the persistent twinkle in his eyes. Upon getting to know him better, it quickly became obvious that twinkle was the forerunner to a great deal of dedication and passion for the topics he loves best: birds and birding. As he reaches his ten-year mark as a birding instructor, he and I had a chance to discuss what birding and teaching has meant to him.

**Our Annual Fall Festival  
– Wildlife Education Day  
– is almost here!  
– Page 8**



*How and when did you get interested in birds/birding? Was there a pivotal “bird moment” when you knew this was the hobby for you?*

It was the [New England] blizzard of 1978, I was 14 and lived in Boston. I became concerned about how the birds would find food under 4-feet of snow. When a bright red Cardinal visited the seeds I’d thrown on the ground, I looked for an illustration of it in a mini Golden Guide. It was a male, but there was no image of the female, simply the description “female much duller.” I had to find the female... It was urgent. I was hooked immediately.

I’d have to say, [though], birding isn’t really a hobby. It’s a passion. And it’s changed everything about what I read, how I vote, where I travel, how I pack and what memories I bring home. It’s had a positive effect on every part of my life. But because I’m always birding, I can honestly say that it hasn’t improved my driving...

*What attracted you to teaching bird classes?*

When you’re out in the field and someone asks you about a bird they saw, it’s wonderful to be able to answer their question. It’s better still, when you can show them something through your telescope. So that’s when I knew that if the opportunity arose, I’d want to teach birding. It was the best way to share something I love.

Back in 1999 I answered an invitation posted on SBB for a beginning birding instructor at [Palo Alto Adult School]. I called the office immediately and got an interview with the principal the next day. I had no clear plan, and no teaching experience, and

I had only a rough outline of topics I wanted to cover, but I had endless enthusiasm. At that time, I’d been a birder for 22 years already, but hadn’t a clue how to teach the subject. I’ve had a greater respect for educators ever since. Soon the class moved beyond introductory material, and we were working at subtle identifications and target species. It was really exciting to see the class develop.

*(continued on page 11)*

### General Membership Meetings

Palo Alto Arts Center

Newell & Embarcadero Rds

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Wed, September 16<sup>th</sup>

**“Action in Africa”  
with Doug Cheeseman**

Doug will have an energetic and exciting program discussing social and survival behavior in African birds and mammals, using Doug’s personal images from their annual trips to East Africa, and sometimes Botswana and Zambia.



*(cont. on page 5).*

Wed, October 21<sup>st</sup>

**“iBird”  
with Mitchell Waite**

“Finally a field guide as light as a feather!” With so much news about the iPhone/iPod Touch, it’s time to hear again from Mitchell Waite, creator of the website “Whatbird” and the iPhone application “iBird.”

*(cont. on page 11).*



- ❖ Annual End-of-Season CNRP Meeting  
– Page 3
- ❖ Gardening for Habitat; Raptors; and Shorebirds - Classes for all Interests!  
– Page 5
- ❖ A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher Tops the List!  
– Field Notes, Page 6
- ❖ Tribute to Emelie Curtis  
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# Sept.-Oct. '09 Field Trips

(Full details for all of our Field Trips are also available online at [www.scvas.org](http://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. 2, 12:00 PM

### City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leaders: 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 Sept. 5, 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 plus miles of moderately strenuous walking. **RC.**

## Sunday Sept. 6, 9:00 AM

### Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Vicki Silvas-Young (408) 293-7124. From Hwy.101 in Mt. View take San Antonio Rd. north to Terminal Way parking area. Meet at the entrance nearest San Antonio Rd. This trip recommended for beginning birders but all are encouraged to attend. Bring your spotting scope and a friend.

## Wednesday Sept. 9, 8:30 AM

### Lake Almaden & Los Alamitos Trail

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

## Saturday Sept. 12, 8:00 AM

### Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Jim Johnson (408) 996-3506. 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.**

## Sunday Sept. 13, 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 Co. 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.

## Saturday Sept. 19, 8:00 AM

### Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right 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. 20, 9:00 AM

### Hawk Hill/Marin Headlands

Full day. Leader: Nick Yatsko (408) 247-5499. 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 Hawkwatch area on top of the hill. Highlights: Migrating raptors including the possibility of seeing a rare Broad-winged 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.

## Saturday Sept. 26, 8:00 AM

### Ulistac Natural Area and Guadalupe River

Half Day. Leader: Pat Kenny (408) 725-0468. From Montague Expwy drive 0.4 mi north on N 1st St. to River Oaks Pl. Turn left onto River Oaks Pl. and drive to the end of the road and park along the street. **RC, NF.**

## Sunday Sept. 27, 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. 7, 12:00 PM

### City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. Leaders: Freddy Howell. Contact organizer Silviana Ruiz (408) 730-7545 to attend. See write-up from Sept. 2nd.

## Saturday Oct. 3, 8:00 AM

### Moss Landing & vicinity

Half day. Leader: Todd Newberry, Santa Cruz Bird Club (831) 426-8741. 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.

## Sunday Oct. 4, 8:00 AM

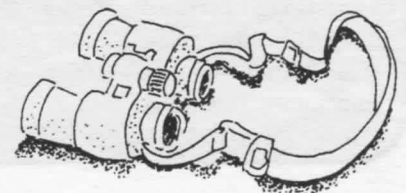
### Windy Hills OSP

Half day. Leader: Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. Meet in the parking lot at the 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.**

## Saturday Oct. 10, 8:00 AM

### Carmel River

Half day plus. Leader: Kathy Parker (408) 358-2832. 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*

**Sunday Oct. 11, 8:00 AM**

### Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: Rich Page (408) 377-1092. For directions see the write-up for Sept 19th.

**Wednesday Oct. 14, 8:30 AM**

### Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Eleanor Bassler (650) 856-6326. Meet at Terminal Way, end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mtn. View. Spotting scopes helpful. Returning shorebirds and ducks.

**Saturday Oct. 17, 8:00 AM**

### Elkhorn Slough, Moss Landing, Moon Glow Dairy, and other favorite local birding spots

Half day plus. Leader: Rick Fournier - Awarbler@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 looking for returning ducks, shorebirds, wintering land birds and reported vagrants. Plan on birding through lunch (stopping at Phil's Snack Shack) finishing up early afternoon. Bring food and liquids. Dress in layers.

**Sunday Oct. 18, 9:00 AM**

### Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Vicki Silvas-Young (408) 293-7124. See write-up for Sept 6th.

**Saturday Oct. 24, 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. 24, 8:00-10:00 AM**  
**"Early Bird" Shorebird Walk at Charleston Slough**

RSVP required at 408-252-3740. As part of Wildlife Education Day (see page 8), we'll share the wonder of the wetlands with local families. Great for children and beginners.

**Sunday Oct. 25, 8:15 AM**

### Arastradero Preserve

Half day. Leader: Jim Johnson. (408) 996-3506. See write-up for Sept 5th.

**Saturday Oct. 31, 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. This will be a moderate 2-mile walk, **LO, RC**.

**Sunday Nov. 1, 8:30 AM**

### Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. 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. **Note:** Daylight Savings Time, fall back or be an hour early for this trip. **RC**.

I heard that the SCVAS Nature Shop is having a 30% off sale on books...

and all proceeds from the Nature Shop go to benefit SCVAS programs.

SCVAS NATURE SHOP  
 OPEN  
 MON - FRI 10 - 5  
 SATURDAY 10 - 2  
 VISA • MASTERCARD  
 ACCEPTED  
 408-252-3747

Also: Owl Boxes, beautifully crafted by Matthew Ohara for his Eagle Scout project, and with the cooperation of the Wild Bird Center in Los Gatos, are once again available for sale through SCVAS. Call the office - 408-252-3747 - for more information.

## SCVAS Events Calendar:

**Tues. 9/8, 9:30AM**

### Eve Case Bird Discussion Group

- meets at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264

Topic: Summer Birding Experiences and Interesting Bird Facts

**Thurs. 9/10, 7-9PM**

### Cavity Nesters Recovery Program (CNRP) End-of-Season Meeting McClellan Ranch Park

All monitors are invited to attend. We'll all introduce ourselves, talk about the season, get a chance to ask questions,

look at the data that has been submitted and bring closure to the 2009 nest box season. Please remember to submit your data online before the 10th! Go to <http://www.eichlerrealtor.com/birds/>



**Tues. 10/13, 9:30AM**

### Eve Case Bird Discussion Group

- meets at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264

Topic: Yellow-Billed Magpie

**Sat. 10/24, 10AM-2PM**

### Wildlife Education Day

### McClellan Ranch Park

(see page 8)

**Thurs. 10/29, 7-8:30PM**

### Environmental Advocate "Meet-n-Greet"

### McClellan Ranch Park

Come join the SCVAS staff and Board as we welcome and get to know our new Environmental Advocate, Shani Kleinhaus. Light refreshments will be served.



# Volunteer Ventures

by Toby Goldberg, SCVAS Programs Coordinator

One of my favorite themes from the Obama Administration thus far has been the emphasis on giving back to the community. As a presidential candidate, then Senator Obama called public service a responsibility of citizenship and said Americans should "think about what you can do to shape the country that we love." As the newly elected president, he then initiated the "National Call to Service" program with an emphasis on volunteer work.

Appropriately, the kick-off service period occurred over the MLK holiday weekend in January, but support for the concept has continued. For example, there is a new website designed to help link potential volunteers with organizations and projects in their area ([www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov)). And the first week of August, 2009, kicked off the "United We Serve" initiative, designed to promote volunteer participation in the area of energy efficiency, conservation, and environmental protection during Energy and Environment Week.

As a volunteer-driven organization, SCVAS depends heavily on the support of our highly motivated volunteers, and I'm grateful to see this need acknowledged on a national level. But I also know that it's not the large flashy initiatives, for the most part, that motivate volunteers to join our ranks; rather, it's a steady dedication

and deep-seated love for the natural world around us that draws people to join our many committees, programs, events, and activities, and to give so much of their time and energy. For that passion and quiet dedication, we thank you all!

*With the school year starting, we have lots of opportunities for volunteer participation – especially in leading field trips, educational presentations, and event assistance. But we also have opportunities for people to help in the office, work with our committees, and more. Here are just a few pressing needs, but these, and many more, are also listed on our website under "Get Involved" (on the left-hand side of the home page, under "About Us").*

**Wetlands Discovery Program Docent** – Share the wonder and importance of wetland habitats with 3rd through 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 both volunteers and the hundreds of South Bay children who participate (over 1000 in 2008/2009)! No experience is necessary - we will provide training for both field and class sessions. All a potential docent needs is a love of nature and a desire to share it.

**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 support weeks before the event as well as on the big day – Sat., Oct. 24 (see the flyer on page 8). **All help, large and small, is needed! Go to [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org) for more details.**

**Family Field Trip Leaders** – During the Spring and Fall, SCVAS receives many requests for after-school and weekend field trips for families. We need additional volunteers who are comfortable leading small groups (up to 15 people) for about 2 hours, focusing on birds, habitat, and community interactions, particularly around Charleston Slough in Mountain View. Experienced birders and/or field trip leaders are desired, but we will train anyone who is interested, and pair new leaders with "veterans" until they become comfortable leading trips on their own. Time commitment is flexible, and based upon seasonal requests and volunteer availability.

**Publicity, Marketing, & Media Assistants** – SCVAS always has a number of events, activities and classes, that we want to share with the community, but we need help getting the word out! We're looking for volunteers willing to work with us on a variety of media-related tasks throughout the year, including posting information on online calendars, updating our SCVAS website, etc. In particular, we'd like to expand our publicity and outreach for our Monthly General Meetings. This is a great opportunity to help get SCVAS' name out into the community!

## Audubon-at-Home:

### SCVAS' Bird Sanctuary Program

*Autumn Reflections – We CAN Make a Difference!*

By Toby Goldberg, SCVAS Programs Coordinator

By now, the sound of us beating the drum about the need for backyard habitat is a familiar one. The issue is still a pressing one, however, as demonstrated by a commentary submitted to the Cupertino Courier in July. Dale Bryant, executive editor of The Resident, a local community newspaper, wrote: "The fact is for those of us who've lived through a couple of generations, songbirds and butterflies are already becoming a distant memory. Youngsters may never even know they existed."

Sometimes, the solutions may seem out of reach, or the scope of the problem can seem overwhelming. But there are things that individuals can do in their own backyard spaces that have immediate and positive effects.

At the recent "McClellan Ranch Bird Day" in July, children had a chance to explore the wildlife present in the [relatively small] Native Plant Garden in front of the SCVAS Office and Nature Shop. As they stood quietly watching, the garden was visited by a variety of birds, lizards, bees, butterflies,

bugs, and beetles.

Even though the garden may not look as colorful and vibrant as it will once the rains start, it still provides all the necessary components for a healthy habitat – a variety of chemical-and-pesticide-free food, clean water, and safe shelter for many different species - and an opportunity for delight for all ages.

Likewise, we hear from our Bird Sanctuary Program participants about all the friendly visitors they are enjoying in their own gardens: Monarch Butterflies visiting the milkweeds, warblers, Bushtits and other small insectivores keeping the plants free of pests, Hummingbirds helping to pollinate (and enjoying) the Manzanitas, nesting birds of all kinds successfully raising their young – even migrating/breeding California Newts! And of course, so much more that isn't readily apparent.

The take away message, therefore, is there IS something we as individuals can do, right now, and on whatever scale we are able. Small, easy, and economical steps - such as those taught in Jeffrey Caldwell's class (see next page) - in our own sphere of influence, can make a big difference, and help keep the wonderful sounds of our wildlife neighbors around for the next generation to enjoy, too.



A Gulf Fritillary visits the garden of BSP participant Cheryl Turner

# 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](http://www.scvas.org).

**Fall is the best time to start getting our gardens going; here is a great class to help you do that in a sustainable, habitat-appropriate way:**

## **Habitat Gardening with Jeffrey Caldwell** (California Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Valley Chapter)

Every landscape is habitat – learn how to enhance your existing garden or make a new one with more carrying capacity for creatures you care about! Jeffrey Caldwell, a biologist and horticulturist with extensive experience creating landscapes that attract and support native birds and other wildlife, will be offering this class at McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino. Jeff will discuss results of the latest research on creating habitat for pollinators and native songbirds, with consideration for making life more pleasant for people as well. Supportive handouts will be provided and there will be opportunities for addressing your specific questions and interests.

**Dates:** Thursdays, 9/17 & 9/24; 6:30-9PM; **Location:** McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

**Fee:** \$30 members of SCVAS or CNPS; \$35 non-members; **Min:** 8 students; **Max:** 22 students

Jeffrey Caldwell, B.A. Biology. Professional experience includes native plant propagation and nursery management, working as a revegetation specialist, conducting biological impacts studies, environmental mitigation planning and monitoring, and commercial and residential landscape maintenance and design. He has been lecturing and writing about creating wildlife habitat since the 1980s.

## **The Amazing World of Raptors with Lisa Myers** (Let's Go Birding! [www.letsjobirding.com](http://www.letsjobirding.com))

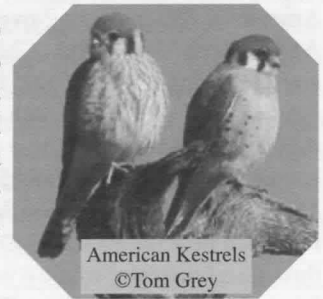
This three week class will focus on the meat eating, flesh ripping group of birds which impress so many people, the "raptors". This class will focus on the diurnal raptors which include hawks, falcons and eagles. We'll concentrate on the 20 species that can be found in the west and talk about their food preferences, hunting styles and their behaviors. We'll review key field marks so you can determine a falcon from a buteo or vulture or how they all differ from an accipiter! Class includes a field trip so we can go out and find all the raptors that frequent our area. Class is set for beginners to intermediate.

**Dates:** Class: Mondays, 10/5, 10/12, & 10/19; 7-9PM; Field Trip: Saturday, 10/10; 9AM-1PM

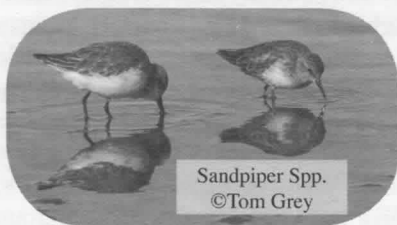
**Location:** Meet at McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino; **Fee:** \$40 members; \$45 non-members;

**Min:** 8 students; **Max:** 20 students

Lisa has been a birder for most of her life. She teaches classes and conducts workshops throughout the Santa Clara Valley. She strives to get new people into the sport and introduce them to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. Lisa's classes are very creative and offer a fun and non-intimidating environment in which all can learn. Her goal is to provide people with exciting opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and the avian world.



American Kestrels  
©Tom Grey



Sandpiper Spp.  
©Tom Grey

## **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 at Redwood Shores' Radio Rd. ponds, where we'll be putting our identification skills to work.

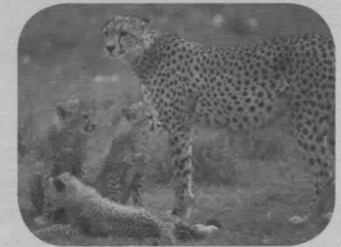
**Dates:** Class: Thursday, 10/1; 9:30-11AM; Field Trip: Friday, 10/2; 11AM-3PM; **Location:**

Workshop: Conference Room, McClellan Ranch, Cupertino; Field trip: Redwood Shores' Radio Rd. ponds; **Fee:** \$40 members; \$50 non-members. Class size limited to 15. Carpooling is strongly encouraged.

## **September Gen. Mtg: "Action in Africa" with Doug Cheeseman** (cont. from page 1)



Doug and Gail Cheeseman have been leading African wildlife safaris since 1978 and for Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris since 1981. They have led over 50 safaris to Africa with the majority to Tanzania and Kenya and Doug has been doing safari slide shows for SCVAS for 30 years. Doug's images can be seen on the following web site: [www.peterarnold.com](http://www.peterarnold.com).



Photos © Doug Cheeseman

# Field Notes

(June-July 2009)

by Bill Bousman

## Waterfowl through Ibis

Occasional in summer, a **Cackling Goose** was seen with Canadas next to the Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh on 6 Jun (WGB) and was found the next day near Shoreline Lake (MMR). A female or immature **Common Goldeneye** was seen in Pond AB1 on 6 Jun (MJM). Two **Common Loons** continued at Shoreline Lake through 8 Jun and at least one remained through 12 Jun (m.ob.). The last of the dispersing **Brandt's Cormorants** included a single bird at Shoreline Lake through 16 Jun (m.ob.) and one at Lexington Reservoir on 17 Jun (SCR). An **American Bittern** flying over Pond A16 in Alviso on 28 Jul (CM, JAC) was a surprise. Although bitterns occasionally nest in the south county, they are rarely found in June and we have no records in the county for July. The breeding-plumaged **Cattle Egret** remained near the Palo Alto Duck Pond through 6 Jun (v.ob.) where it was recorded for the Palo Alto SBC. Four **White-faced Ibis** were found in the Mountain View Forebay on the evening of 23 Jun (SR). A single bird was found in the North Pond of the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) on 5 Jul (JP, NK) and remained there for three days (v.ob.).

## Eagles through Murres

The juvenile **Bald Eagle** raised in the nest on the west side of Calaveras Reservoir was last seen there on 13 Jun (CVR). A juvenile **Sharp-shinned Hawk** near the Alviso EEC on 29 Jul (JD) was well away from known nesting areas, we have only a handful of summer records for the valley floor. Diablo Range **Prairie Falcons** included one on Route #1 of the burn recovery studies in Henry Coe SP on 12 Jun (JY, AL), one in San Antonio Valley on 14 Jun (MMR), and one on Route #13 in Coe on 6 Jul (WGB). Calling **Virginia Rails** were heard in the Lockheed Martin ponds 6-9 Jun (MJM) and at a sag pond at Monte Bello OSP on 18 Jun (WGB), both places where they may occasionally nest. Another calling adult was seen in a wetland near the Pajaro River on 27 Jun (SCR) and this time

a downy black chick was also seen, only the second certain breeding record for the county. **Snowy Plovers** continued to be found during the period in New Chicago Marsh and the nearby impoundment that is north of the Alviso Marina CP (m.ob.). Birds nested in a number of areas and young were successfully hatched from some of these nests. The peak count in the period was of 18 birds on 27 Jul (MMR, MJM, RGJ). An early alternate **Lesser Yellowlegs** was found in the New Chicago Marsh on 23 Jun (RWR, FV). A single bird showed

*A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher high-lighted the summer period. Remarkable breeding records included the second by Virginia Rail and the first certain nesting of Indigo Bunting.*

up with the Greater Yellowlegs in Artesian Slough and nearby Pond A16 on 9 Jul (FV) and numbers increased to at least three by the end of the month (v.ob.). Two **Ruddy Turnstones** were found on Pond A16 on 13 Jul (FV, RWR, DWe), but after that they were hit-or-miss through the end of the month with two there on 19 Jul (MDO, KDo), and a single on 26 and 30 Jul (DWe). Early **Red Knots** included four on Pond A17 in Alviso on 19 Jul (MMR) and one near the Stevens Creek mouth on 30 Jul (RWR, FV, PLD). A female **Ruff** showed up on Pond A16 on 26 Jul (DWe), but was not found again. No staging **Least Terns** were found in July for only the third time in almost 30 years of records. A basic **Black Tern** was seen in the southeast corner of Pond A1 in Mountain View on 6 Jun (WGB). Two days later an alternate Black Tern was at the same spot (GHa). Another alternate Black Tern was found on Pond A16 on 21 Jun (AS) and was found there irregularly through the end of the period (m.ob.) at which point it had started its molt (RWR, AV). A third alternate Black Tern was seen in Pond AB1 on 10 and 15 Jul (RF). It is possible that all the sightings of alternate birds were a result of one single,

wide-ranging bird. **Black Skimmer** pairs successfully hatched two young each at nest sites in Ponds AB1 and A16 (m.ob.). Pairs were found at a few other locations, but no nesting was observed. An adult **Common Murre** was in the southeast corner of Pond A1 on 7 Jun (SR, MS, RCo), but did not stay. We have no prior spring records, nor summer records before August.

## Doves through Kinglets

**Eurasian Collared-Doves** have been found regularly in Alviso in recent years. At least two juveniles were observed at State and Spreckles on 26 Jun (BHi). This suggests breeding, although the presence of juveniles is not considered proof of breeding by breeding bird atlas protocols. One of the houses in this area of Alviso also has a dovecote, so the provenance of these birds is somewhat muddled. As is typical, **Vaux's Swifts** were seen in small numbers along the east side of the Santa Cruz Mountains from Almaden Valley to Monte Bello OSP. A nest was noted in a house chimney in the Almaden Valley on 25 Jun (J&MH) when the nestlings became vocal. These birds apparently fledged sometime before 22 Jul (JPa). We suspect that most of the local summering birds are nesting in chimneys, but it is still rare that a nest is found. A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was heard on Route #8, Henry Coe SP on 22 May (MMR). An immature male was at a Morgan Hill feeder on 16 Jun (SCR). A male **Rufous Hummingbird** showed up at another Morgan Hill feeder on 20 Jun (RH). An adult male **Allen's Hummingbird** near Loma Prieta on 27 Jun (JT) is considered late. Four **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were seen in San Antonio Valley on 12-14 Jun (RWR, FV, MMR), including one at a nest. A group of at least 10 birds were seen to the north on Mines Road on 31 Jul (RCi et al.) and may have been dispersants or migrants. An adult male **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was found on the levee between Pond A1 and Charleston Slough in Mountain View on 6 Jun (WGB), the second record for the county. Last seen near the Lakeside Café, it did not linger for others to enjoy. Two male and a female **Purple Martin** were seen near the 'lower saddle' on Loma Prieta Ave. on 6 Jun (RWR, FV). At least four different birds were seen at various times

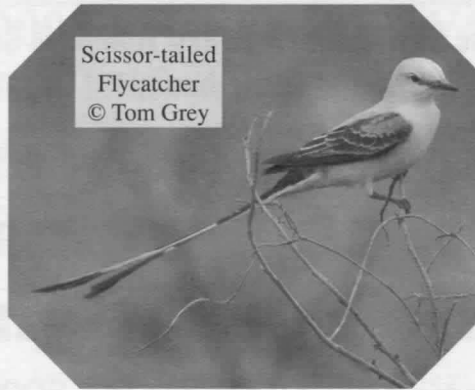


## Field Notes *cont'd*

through the end of the period and some were seen to investigate nest holes, but no nesting evidence was obtained (m.ob.). This is an area where we have prior nesting records (1995 and earlier). A juvenile Purple Martin was at Monte Bello OSP on 26 Jul (GHa) and was likely an early migrant. A **HY Rock Wren** was seen on closed refuge ponds on 25 Jul (MMR, MJM, RGJ). Birds occasionally winter at the edge of the South Bay. An **American Dipper** was found along Moody Gulch on 25 Jun (RPh), we had none there during the atlas. A family group of two adults and six fledgling **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were found along Skyline Boulevard at M.P. 16.42 on 23 Jun (DLSu). A **Variied Thrush** was found at Rengstorff House in Mountain View on 6 Jun (RWR, FV), a consequence of a search for the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher found earlier in the day. This is only our third record for the period of May to August. A male **Phainopepla** was seen on Route #12, Henry Coe SP on 12 Jun (SCR). Another bird was along County Line Road in Coe about 21 Jun (BM).

### Warblers through Goldfinches

Santa Cruz Mountain **Hermit Warbler** records included one singing along Skyline Boulevard near the Hickory Oaks Trailhead to the Long Ridge OSP on 23 Jun (DLSu) and a female near there on 29 Jun (WGB). A female/immature was at the Gate 5 pond in Monte Bello OSP on 10 Jul (GHa). These are all birds that are part of the local breeding population. A singing **Black-chinned Sparrow** was found along Willow Ridge in Henry Coe SP about 21 Jun (BM). An adult **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was along Summit Road near Maymens Flat on 18 Jul (BHi), just over the line in Santa Cruz County. An adult **Blue Grosbeak** was seen along the Pajaro River below Hwy 101 on 1 Jun (RWR, FV) where found in late May. A singing male was seen there again on 13 Jun (WGB). Possibly the same bird was on the San Benito side of the river on 7 Jun (PH, JTa). As a follow-on to the male **Indigo Bunting** at Alum Rock Park in the spring, two males were



found in Monte Bello OSP in the summer period. The first, the 'orchard Indigo' was found on 6 Jun near the old orchard below the main parking lot (ViT, AS) and also off the White Oak Trail (GHa et al.). This male, well photographed, was a SY male that showed gray and white patches, as it had not completed its alternate molt. On 11 Jun, it was determined that the male was mated with a female Lazuli Bunting and they had young in a nest somewhere near the Stevens Creek Nature Trail (WGB). Similar observations were made on 13 Jun (MJM), this is the first certain confirmation of breeding by this bunting in the county, although it appears the nesting was not successful. This male continued to be found singing near the orchard through 27 Jun (v.ob.). On 12 Jun a second male Indigo Bunting was found, the 'Gate 4 Indigo' (GHa). This bird, also a SY male, lacked the splotchiness of the orchard Indigo. The Gate 4 Indigo was found regularly through 4 Jul (v.ob.), most of the time in Santa Clara County, but sometimes across the line in San Mateo County. To accentuate this extraordinary year for Indigo Buntings in the Santa Cruz Mountains, another adult male was found singing along the Achistacha Trail in Long Ridge OSP near the Santa Clara County border on 23 Jun (DLSu). Single male **Great-tailed Grackles** were found, one singing near the Ogier Avenue ponds on 5 Jun (GHa) and another at the Lockheed Martin ponds on 6 Jun (MJM). Burn recovery routes in Henry Coe SP reported moderate numbers of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** with high counts of 28 on Route #8 on 12 Jun and 32 on the same route on 28 Jun (both MMR). In the Santa Cruz Mountains, single birds



were found on Monte Bello Ridge on 6 Jun (JRy) and just over the county line in the Long Ridge OSP on 23 Jun (DLSu). At the Gate 5 pond at Monte Bello OSP two birds were found on 17 Jul and four were there on 28 Jul (both GHa).

Observers: Bill Bousman (WGB), Rich Cimino (RCi), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RCo), Joe Devine (JD), Kelly Dodder (KDo), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Peggy Don (PLD), Ron Fulks (RF), Garth Harwood (GHa), Peter Headland (PH), Rick Herder (RH), John & Marty Herzing (J&MH), Bob Hirt (BHi), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Nancy Kenyon (NK), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Bruce Mast (BM), Charlie Moores (CM), Jean Palmetter (JP), Janna Pauser (JPa), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Sidd Ramachandramurthi (SR), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Jennifer Rycenga (JRy), Marty Sidor (MSi), Ashutosh Sinha (AS), David Suddjian (DLSu), Jane Tatchell (JTa), Jim Thomas (JT), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Chuq Von Rospach (CVR), Dave Weber (DWe), and James Yurchenco (JY).

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

## The SCVAS Board Welcomes Two New Directors

Wonderful things are happening at SCVAS! Over the last couple of years, we've been honored to add an amazing array of talented and dedicated individuals to our Board of Directors, and this trend continues this summer with the addition of Tom Grey and Tom Merigan. With their passion for birding, bird photography and education, both bring a great wealth of experience to our organization, and we are excited to welcome them to the board.

Birdhouse Building!



Environmental Presentations!



Join the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and local Nature and Environmental Organizations

Environmental Groups from around the Bay Area!

for

Raffle Prizes!



Nature Arts and Crafts!

# the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Wildlife Education Day!

Saturday, October 24, 2009

10am-2pm

McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino



"Early Bird" Shorebird Walk

8:00 am @ Charleston Slough  
RSVP Required for walk *only*

Annual Wildlife Poster Contest

Prizes and Awards announced @ 1:00 pm

Submission deadline 10/9

Live Animals - Birds of Prey, Snakes, and Insects!



HEAVY RAIN Cancels

For details or reservations, call (408) 252-3740, or visit [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org)

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

## 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. This is a paid internship!

More information is available online at [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org) - click on "About Us" - or contact the Programs Coordinator, Toby, at 408-252-3740 or [programs@scvas.org](mailto:programs@scvas.org).

## Outside Events

Tues. eve's 9/15-10/20 (& 4 Sat. morn's)  
Birding Basics class with Anne Creevy  
Palo Alto High School

The class is open to beginners and advanced beginners, a number of whom are returning students eager to learn more about the birds in our neighborhoods. Registration begins on August 14 at the Palo Alto Adult School (phone number: (650) 329-3752; web: [paadultschool.org](http://paadultschool.org)).

Thurs. 9/24-Sun. 9/27  
Fifth Annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival "Bridging The Americas"  
Watsonville, CA



The festival offers over 50 expert-led field trips, specialized birding outings for beginners, "slough safaris" of the Elkhorn Slough via kayak, a trip to Pinnacles National Monument, vagrant chasing at the Carmel River mouth, pelagic trips of the Monterey Bay, excursions to the Big Sur Ornithology Lab to view California Condors and other activities. Astellar line-up of expert birders leading day trips as

well as evening presenters are sure to please even the most discriminating birders. For more information or to register, go online to [www.montereybaybirding.org](http://www.montereybaybirding.org).

### Planning Ahead:

Nov. 19-22

13th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium;

Stockton, CA - at the Hilton Stockton

Attend workshops with raptor expert Bill Clark, birding pros Jon Dunn and Joe Morlan, as well as other informative folks. Evening programs include Murrelet Halterman on Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Stephen Shunk on "The Magic of Birding". For more info, check the website at [www.cvbs.org](http://www.cvbs.org) or contact Frances Oliver at [hummer52@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hummer52@sbcglobal.net) or (209) 369-2010.



# 2009 Friends of SCVAS

Gifts received between June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 and July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009, including gifts to our Environmental Advocate Campaign.

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### Organizational Support:

Bank of America Matching Gifts, Google Matching Gift Program, HP Company Foundation, Juniper Networks' Company Matching Gifts Program, Rotary Club of San Jose, SAP Matching Gift Program, The United Way

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

### Datasets

Kathi & Paul Kendrick, Mike Mammoser, Troy Rahmig

## Welcome New SCVAS Volunteers!

The SCVAS staff would like to extend a warm welcome to all of the new volunteers that have joined our ranks over the last year – all of whom have hit the ground running! To name just a few: Jonathan Arzeno, Cheryl Chapin, Rhece Dinh, Curt Hutchings, Ashley Johnson, Rebecca Stoddard, and many others. To these, and anyone who I've forgotten to mention – THANK YOU! We are excited to work with you and get to know you. We also extend a big Thank You to all those volunteers that have increased their participation, taken on larger roles, and helped fill in the gaps where needed.

You are all so much appreciated!



### 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.

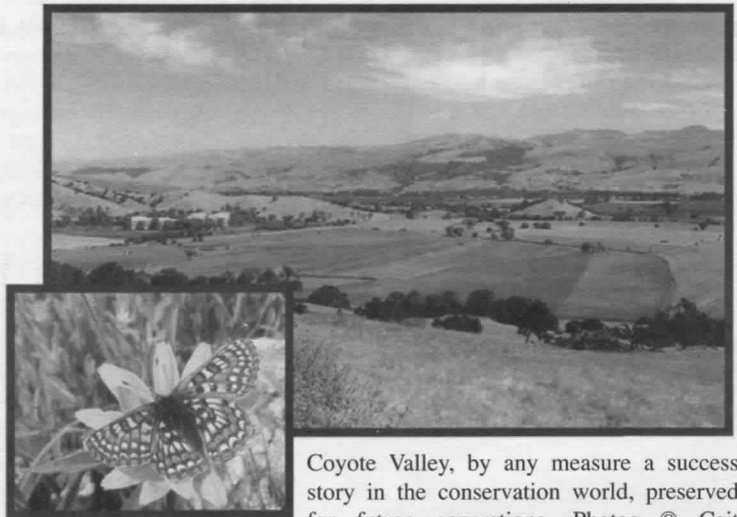
For costs, more information or to reserve your space, go to [www.cheesemans.com](http://www.cheesemans.com), email [info@cheesemans.com](mailto:info@cheesemans.com), or call (800) 527-5330 (toll-free) or (408) 741-5330 (local).

# THINK OF YOUR BEQUEST TO THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY AS AN INVESTMENT.

**HERE ARE SOME OF THE DIVIDENDS:**



Jim Liskovec, a Wetlands Discovery Program volunteer, teaches local school children about habitat, conservation, and of course, the birds!



Coyote Valley, by any measure a success story in the conservation world, preserved for future generations. Photos © Cait Hutnik (Coyote Valley) and Stu Weiss (Bay Checkerspot Butterfly) for Green Foothills.



Protected Burrowing Owls at Shoreline Park in Mountain View. © Tom Grey

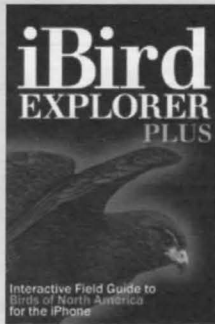
Please support our education and conservation work by including a bequest in your will, or by naming the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society as a beneficiary of your retirement assets.

**[WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING WORDING: I bequeath \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or \_\_\_\_\_%) of my residuary estate to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, a not-for-profit environmental conservation and education organization, with its primary office located in Cupertino, CA, for its ongoing programs in environmental conservation and education.]**

For more information, please contact Bob Power, SCVAS Executive Director, 22221 McClellan Rd, Cupertino, CA 95014; bob@scvas.org; 408-252-3748.

## October Gen. Mtg (cont. from page 1)

iBird for iPhone/iPod Touch is a great product, and it keeps getting better. The premier product is iBird Pro (914 birds plus lots of information and songs). There is also iBird Plus with fewer extra features. iBird 15 is a free demonstration version (15 birds). There are also specialty products for the various geographic areas of the USA, and also one for Canada. With iBird you have a bird book in your



pocket with pictures, maps, information, and songs. Pete LaTourrette said that he has a copy. Maybe Mitch is using some of Pete's beautiful bird photos. Kendric Smith, a long time member of SCVAS, is working with Mitch as a beta tester. The New York Times featured an article on iBird. Mitch lives in Marin County, and has agreed to come down again to talk to us. Do come to hear about his great iBird software! You'll find the website at <http://www.ibirdexplorer.com/>.

## Emelie Curtis 1928-2009



Emelie Curtis illustrations grace many back issues of *The Avocet*, are featured in *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay*, and *Breeding Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County, California*. Emelie had the first breeding confirmation of both Common Merganser and Spotted Sandpiper in the county, and would often illustrate her bird reports with her beautiful sketches and artwork.

She will be missed.

## An Interview with Matthew Dodder

(cont. from page 1)

**Do you have any favorite or particularly memorable tales from the past 10 years as an instructor?**

We've had only two field trips cancelled (one of which left my future in-laws stranded in Merced NWR without an instructor... But that worked out all right I guess, because they invited me over for dinner... twice. And soon their daughter showed up in class. Since then the four of us have traveled to Texas and Costa Rica on birding trips.

Other than that, I'd say having the Dusky Warbler show up at Antonelli Pond the day before we were due to visit there was pretty memorable. A few emails on Friday night meant that we could move our rendezvous a few yards down the block and add an ultra-rarity to our day list. Incredible! We've seen a lot of exciting birds over the years, like Brown Booby, Horned Puffin, Snowy Owl, Yellow-green Vireo, Yellow-throated, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Green Warblers, Harris's Sparrow, and Bobolink. A total of 340 California species for the group. Our trips to Yuba Pass have [also] been a wonderful tradition, as have been our experiments with Costa Rica and Ecuador.

**What advice would you give for new new instructors thinking about teaching a class?**

For anyone embarking on the teaching trail, I do have some advice.

**ON IMAGES:** 1) Use Google images to find bird photos for your class. (Type in Pectoral Sandpiper and voila!). 2) Don't believe all the Pectoral Sandpiper photos you find on Google images... 3) If your class says "that's not a Pectoral Sandpiper", tell them that was a test. 4) Recruit as many photographers for your class as possible, and phase out Google images...

**ON FIELD ID:** 1) If you see a day roosting Nighthawk in Alviso, quietly move away from your group and get a closer look. 2) Once you see the Dos Equis label on the side of the "Nighthawk", return to your group and say nothing at all.

**ON PLAYBACK:** 1) Make sure you turn your iPod *off* after each use. 2) If you hear a Yellow-breasted Chat, check your iPod *AGAIN*.

**ON BEHAVIOR:** 1) If someone tells you they've seen a Yellow-throated Warbler at Nunes Ranch, give them the benefit of the doubt. 2) When speeding to Nunes Ranch, make sure your group is actually behind you (and that you keep all four wheels on the ground at all times). 3) Do not yell "Wood Ducks!" until everyone has reached the pond.

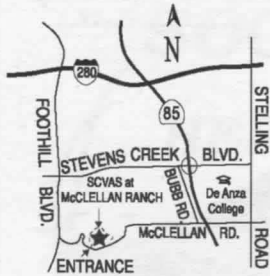
**ON SCHEDULING:** 1) Don't cancel a Merced trip because it's raining in Mountain View. 2) If you do cancel a Merced trip make sure you call everyone in your class and let them know personally. 3) Don't forget to call your future in-laws when you cancel the Merced trip...



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

**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**

**GIFTS:** SCVAS welcomes gifts, including those made in honor of or in memory of friends or relatives. Such gifts will be used at SCVAS' discretion for its programs and activities unless specified otherwise by the donor. Tax-deductible donations may be made in the form of a check made out to SCVAS and sent to our Cupertino address.

SCVAS is a private, non-profit corporation affiliated with the National Audubon Society

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

**Avocet Editors:** Toby Goldberg

**2009 Volume 56, Number 5**

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

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*Come by the office to pick up your free copy of **Birding at the Bottom of the Bay**, our gift to new members!*

**Make all checks payable to SCVAS.**

*Please note: As a generally policy, SCVAS does not share personal information with other organizations.*