

THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

November-December 2013

Carol Bartle Hughes Leaves a Lasting Legacy

by Diane Hart

SCVAS Board Member

You may not remember meeting long-time Los Altos resident Carol Hughes at an SCVAS general meeting or birding event. By the time she died last March at the venerable age of 95, Mrs. Hughes had outlived most of the people she had met during her 26-year teaching career and her travels to distant lands with her husband Peter, a professional photographer.



Campers at Summer Nature Days 2013 explore some of the signs that animals leave behind

Nonetheless, Carol Hughes remembered SCVAS when she last updated her estate plan in 2005. In that plan she specified that SCVAS receive 2.5 percent of the value of her estate. With the sale of her portfolio and house, her gift to the SCVAS Legacy Fund has mounted to more than \$100,000.

The Legacy Fund was created in 2012 to ensure that SCVAS remains a powerful advocate for birds and their ecosystems through education and conservation initiatives. Recently, the Fund was tapped to expand SCVAS's summer camp program. This weeklong wildlife education experience immerses school-aged children in the natural world, while providing outdoor education leadership training for young adults working as camp counselors.

Carol Bartle Hughes now joins the growing circle of generous benefactors who have included SCVAS in their estate plans. Their gifts are creating a lasting legacy benefitting both current and future generations of birds and those who care about their survival.

It's Almost Time for the Annual Christmas Bird Count! Come Join in the Fun!

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African Penguins
© Nancy Neal Yeend

General Membership Meetings Cubberley Community Center, Rm H1

Palo Alto - Middlefield & Montrose Rds
Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Wednesday, November 20th

"The Jackass Penguins"

with Nancy Neal Yeend and Debbie Thompson



Magellanic Penguins
© Debbie Thompson

This program will be a unique blend presenting different aspects of two related penguin species. The Jackass Penguin is an alternate name for the *Spheniscus* genus of four penguin species from South America and South Africa. They were given this knick-name because of their braying call similar to donkeys. The African Penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*) is confined to southern African waters. The Magellanic Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) is a South American penguin, breeding in coastal Argentina, Chile and the Falkland Islands, with some as far north as Brazil. The Galapagos and Humboldt Penguins round out this genus.

Nancy will share her unforgettable journey to South Africa, where she spent two weeks assisting a research project and learning about these fascinating, but endangered, birds. Debbie - who spent some time watching penguins in South America - will present the life history of the interesting burrow-nesting penguins illustrated with photos and videos.

(Additional information and detailed directions available at www.scvas.org or by calling the SCVAS office)

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Nov-Dec '13 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

Saturday Nov. 2, 8:00 AM

Moss Landing & vicinity

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

Sunday Nov. 3, 8:00 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward the hills, then left on Toyon Ave., then right on Penitencia Creek Rd. and continue on into the park. Drive under the bridge and meet at the far end of the parking lot. **Difficulty Level:** This trip is a moderately strenuous 3-4 mile walk. **Notes:** Probable entrance fee. Daylight Savings Time Change - fall back or be an hour early for this trip. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Nov. 6, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leaders:** Freddy Howell and Allen Royer. Contact organizer Silviana Ruiz to attend; (408) 730-7545. **Directions:** Donald M. Somers Water Pollution Control Plant, junction of Borregas and Caribbean. Meet at Trailhead at north end. **Difficulty Level:** Birding geared toward beginners. **Notes:** Bring binoculars; loaners also available. **RC**

Saturday Nov. 9, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. **Leader:** Dick Stovel (650) 856-6105. **Directions:** Meet at Terminal Way at the end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mountain View. **Difficulty Level:** This is a trip that is geared toward the beginning birder but all are encouraged to attend. **Notes:** Bring a scope if you have one, friends and non-members are always welcome.

Sunday Nov. 10, 8:00 AM

Uvas Creek Park Preserve

Half day. **Leader:** Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 in Gilroy, go west on Tenth St. about a mile where it turns right and becomes Uvas Pkwy. Turn left at Miller Ave., drive over Uvas Creek and turn left into Christmas Hill Park and park in the first aisle to the right. **Difficulty Level:** This trip is a fairly easy but long walk. **Notes:** Low water conditions in the creek may require an alternate birding destination in the Gilroy area. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Nov. 13, 8:30 AM

New Almaden Township

Half day. **Leaders:** Larry Spivak and Janna Pauser 408-569-9264 **Directions:** From Hwy 85 in San Jose, take Almaden Expwy south for 4.3 miles and bear right onto Almaden Rd., through New Almaden township. Park in Almaden-Quicksilver Co. Park Hacienda parking lot on your right. **Highlights:** We'll bird through New Almaden township on Almaden and Bertram Rds. and see what species fall brings to this area. **Difficulty Level:** Easy walking. **RC**

Saturday Nov. 16, 9:00 AM

Oka Ponds

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From Hwy 17 in Los Gatos take Lark Ave. exit west. Turn right on Oka Rd., left on Mozart Ave. and an immediate right on Oka Lane. Meet at gate. **RC**

Sunday Nov. 17, 8:00 AM

Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

Half day. **Leader:** Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 take Hwy 237 east, exit North on Caribbean Dr., turn right on Borregas Ave. then left to the parking area. **Highlights:** A great place to study ducks, and scopes are highly recommended. **Difficulty Level:** Trip is a fairly easy but can be a long walk. **RC**

Saturday Nov. 23, 8:00 AM

Western San Francisco

Half day. **Leader:** Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. **Directions:** From I-280 take 19th Ave. to Golden Gate Park. When you enter the park on 19th Ave. be in the left lane and take Crossover Dr. to 25th Ave. to Geary Blvd. then left on Geary. At 39th Ave., Geary becomes Point Lobos Ave. continue west on Point Lobos past the light at 48th Ave. and turn right into the new Marrie Way parking lot. **LO, RC**

Special Thanksgiving Weekend Trip: Sacramento Valley Wildlife Refuges, Gray Lodge, Sutter Buttes

Friday – Saturday, Nov. 29 – 30
(beginning at 9:00AM on Friday, Nov 25)

Full day and a half. **Leader:** Mike Mammoser (408) 421-1485. Trip limited to 15 people; call leader to reserve a space. **Directions:** Meet at Sacramento NWR headquarters (entrance fee) on I-5 approx. 20 miles north of Williams. (It's recommended that people meet and carpool from McDonald's 2nd parking lot in Williams as carpooling and use of FRS radios, set to Ch 11, will allow for best viewing possibilities on this trip). Take Road 68 exit east (towards Princeton) from I-5, then immediately north on frontage road to Refuge. **Notes:** Bring spotting scope, full tank of gas. Allow for a 3-hour drive from the South Bay. **Highlights:** Include ducks, geese, swans, cranes, and raptors. **Difficulty Level:** Trip is highly recommended for beginning birders.

Field Trips *continued*

Sunday Nov. 24, 8:30 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. **Leader:** Steve Tracey (408) 966-3860. For directions see the Nov 9th write-up.

Sunday Dec. 1, 8:00 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** For directions see the write-up for Nov. 3rd. **Notes:** Probable entrance fee. **Difficulty Level:** This trip is a moderately strenuous 3-4 mile walk. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Dec. 4, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leaders:** Freddy Howell and Allen Royer. Contact organizer Silviana Ruiz to attend; (408) 730-7545. See directions from Nov 6th.

Wednesday Dec. 11, 8:30 AM

Los Capitancillos Ponds West

Half day. **Leaders:** Ann Verdi and Janna Pauser 408-569-9264 **Directions:** From Hwy 85, go south on Camden Ave. Just past Blossom Hill Rd., turn left on Singletree Way as soon as you pass Beacon School. Park on Singletree Way at PG&E substation. Meet at the trail entrance on the right, just past the power plant. **Highlights:** We'll bird the ponds for wildfowl and gulls. **Difficulty Level:** Easy walking. **RC**

Saturday Jan. 4, 7:30 AM

County Chase

Half day. **Leader:** Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Get a head start on your 2014 County Year List with some vagrant chasing. **Notes:** Bring a full tank of gas, lunch, and field guides as we attempt to track down some of the unusual birds seen on the Christmas Bird Counts in Santa Clara County. Meet near the entrance to the Alviso Marina parking lot. **Directions:** From Hwy 237 in San Jose take Gold St. north to the end, bear left on Elizabeth St. and then right on Hope St. to the Marina parking lot. Be prepared to carpool as parking may be limited at some sites. **RC**

Sunday Jan. 5, 8:00 AM

Los Capitancillos Ponds

Half day. **Leader:** Ann Verdi (408) 266-5108. **Directions:** See directions from Dec 11th. **Highlights:** We will bird ponds that are often filled with a wide variety of waterfowl and Gulls, a nearby creek for riparian birds as well as other areas closely associated with the ponds that attract birds. **RC**

Sunday Jan. 12, 8:00 AM

Panoche Valley

Full day. **Leader:** Clay Kempf (831) 761-8260. Meet at Paicines Store on Hwy 25 approx. 11 miles south of Hollister. This is one of our better "out of the county" field trips traversing oak woodland and open grassland via back roads into a

unique habitat. **Highlights:** Targeted species include Phainopepla, Mountain Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk and Golden Eagle; other possibilities include Mountain Plover, Bald Eagle, Vesper Sparrow, Greater Roadrunner and Chukar. **Notes: Bring lunch and a full tank of gas;** carpooling is strongly recommended due to limited parking on the narrow roads. **IMPORTANT:** Do not expect to use the restrooms at the Paicines Store, as their use is limited to paying customers (we encourage patronage of local businesses).



Looking for that perfect gift for the birder in your life? Come check out the SCVAS Nature Shop's stock of field guides, bird literature, nature gifts, and more!

SCVAS Events Calendar:

Tues. 11/5

ELECTION DAY

Your voice matters -

Don't Forget to VOTE!



Wed. 11/6 & 12/4, 7:30-9PM

The Bay Area Bird Photographers

Meeting - Lucy Evans Baylands

Interpretive Center - East Embarcadero

Rd., Palo Alto

11/6 - "A Few Warblers at Last and

Some Other Birds" with Larry Selman

12/4 - "A Year (or Two) in the Life of

a Nature Photographer" with Eleanor

Briccetti

Details available online; go to

www.scvas.org/babp

Tues. 11/12 & 12/10, 10:00AM

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group

- meets at the home of Pat Dubois,

17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos

(408) 395-4264

Topic 11/12: Albatrosses

Topic 12/10: Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Mon. 11/11, 1-7PM

Volunteers Wanted!

SCVAS' Annual Fundraiser Mailing

Party (see details online)

McClellan Ranch Preserve

Call 408-252-3740 to help out.

Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's)
Need your Help!!

Sun. 12/15

San Jose CBC

Mon. 12/16

Palo Alto CBC

Sat. 12/28

Calero-Morgan

Hill CBC

Sun. 12/29 (TBC)

Mt. Hamilton CBC

See page 9 or go to our website (www.scvas.org) for more details:



Conservation Corner

By Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate

It's been a busy season in the Environmental Advocacy world. Here's what we've been working on:

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Reform of 2013:

In August 2012, Governor Brown said, "CEQA reform is the Lord's work." Senator Michael Rubio (who since resigned to become a Lobbyist for Chevron), the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, and other business interests picked up the glove and proposed a long list of changes. These changes would have dramatically limited the reach of the state's signature environmental protection, significantly limited the access the public (that's us) has to information, and eroded our ability to effectively engage in planning processes that affect our environment. The alarm sounded in the environmental community, and with hundreds of organizations all across California, SCVAS joined in opposition to weakening the law that provides already-limited protections to our natural resources, health and quality of life. We instead asked for the law to be strengthened.

The legislative session ended last month. Only some of the 'reforms' were signed into law. These include changes that would expand an existing CEQA exemption for "infill projects" in "transit priority areas" to facilitate residential and mixed-use residential/commercial projects, and remove or relax mitigation requirements for traffic, parking, and aesthetics impacts of urban development.

The most egregious "reforms" did not materialize in 2013. However, none of the proposed changes that would have strengthened the law were granted. We expect the fight for CEQA to resume next year, and we promise to continue to advocate for the most basic and logical reforms that would strengthen, rather than weaken environmental law: enforcement of mitigation measures, and a reasonable shelf life for approved environmental documents, to name just a couple.

Almaden Lake Reconfiguration:

The Almaden Lake project, in planning at the Santa Clara Valley Water District, has drawn the attention of many of our Almaden Valley members. The District proposed the diversion of Almaden Creek into a narrower stream, and asked the public to weigh in on what should be done with the sides of the new stream – fill in the lake, or retain one or two smaller lakes? SCVAS asked for wetlands, islands, and riparian ecosystems. We also asked for the creation of a complex and diverse bird habitat in and around the lake.

As we engage with the District, we learned that there are no clear solutions, and the regulatory landscape is more complex than we originally assumed. First, the Clean Water Act (locally enforced by the Regional Water Resource Quality Board) mandates that the Santa Clara Valley Water District stop methyl mercury (that is formed in the lake) from reaching the Almaden River. Thus, the lake must be completely separated from the creek. Separation would also help Steelhead – a threatened fish species - migrate upstream to its spawning areas.

It also became clear that if one or two lakes are maintained



Almaden Lake North
©Moteza Danesh

on the sides of the creek, a solution must be found for the water to circulate or flow through them, since a stagnant body of water is not an attractive option to anyone. Additionally, any recreation activities along the new creek – whether in remaining lake(s) or on filled areas, would be the responsibility of the City of San Jose to maintain and operate - and depends on Parks and Recreation funding from that city.

We continue to engage in the planning process and continue to advocate for waterscape and islands, wetlands and riparian habitats.

Sunnyvale Landfill:

Burrowing owls used to nest in Sunnyvale's Landfill and Baylands. These days, they occasionally visit in winter. Earlier this year, Sunnyvale City Council voted to prioritize the preparation of a Burrowing Owl Preservation Plan for the Sunnyvale Landfill and the Sunnyvale Baylands. The City did not provide a budget for the study. Recently, the city started looking at the potential to locate sport fields, a community farm, an "Animal Assisted Happiness" facility, a dog-park, a bicycle motocross BMX area and more on the landfill. We are alarmed since the landfill hills are home to abundant wildlife species and provide a corridor for their movement along the Bay. The landfill also preserves an important and dwindling habitat for many bird species, including egrets, hawks, and grassland species including Burrowing Owls.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society is not opposed to recreation improvements that are compatible with the preservation



Burrowing Owls
©Tom Grey

of habitat and the rehabilitation of burrowing owls at the landfill. However, we believe that it is premature to plan recreation activities at this time. It is important that the City prepares and implements a Burrowing Owl Protection and Preserva-

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SCVAS Field Seminars with Bob Power - 2014

The SCVAS Staff and Board are always dreaming up, planning, and coordinating outdoor educational adventures that we think will captivate the birder in anyone. We are very excited, therefore, to be able to present our roster of Field Seminars for the coming year - we hope that you'll join us for one (or both) of these adventures! Additional information is also available online at www.scvas.org - click on "Calendar." Call the SCVAS office at 408-252-3747 to register.

The Breeding Birds of Yuba Pass, Sierra Valley, and the Gold Lakes Region

Session 1: Sunday June 8th to Wednesday June 11th

Session 2: Friday June 13th to Monday June 16th

The northern Sierra offers a spectacular array of nesting birds, from Black-backed Woodpeckers and Hermit Warblers to Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Vesper Sparrows. We typically see 100+ species of birds during this workshop; few are species available to study in the South Bay, but all are stunning. With a four-day trip, we're able to explore these unique habitats at leisure.

Class size is limited to 11. We organize carpools each morning and will have a maximum of three vehicles. Please do not sign up for this workshop if you're not prepared to carpool around the Yuba Pass / Sierra Valley region. Carpooling expenses are shared by the participants (typically \$5/person/day). Transportation to Yuba Pass, lodging, and meals are the responsibility of each participant. Detailed itinerary will be forwarded upon registration.

Fee: \$125 members; \$160 non-members

Ecuador – That Place On Your Dream List

with Charlie Gomez, Niño Morales, and Bob Power

November 10th – November 24th, 2014

Ecuador is referred to as the birding mecca of the neotropics, and for good reason. No nation in the world has as great a diversity of birdlife in as small an area as Ecuador. The country holds approximately one-sixth of the world's bird species in an area about the size of Colorado, and gives birders the possibility of spotting more different species in two weeks than they would have just about anywhere else.

This 13-day tour, sandwiched between travel days to and from Ecuador, will take us from the outskirts of Quito into the western reaches of the Amazon and back again. Among many



Andean Condor
©Tom Grey

highlights, we'll have four nights at the Napo Wildlife Center, an ecotourism project that includes the conservation of over 53,000 acres of

the most pristine Amazon Rain Forest within the Yasuni National Park.

Participants can expect to see a fabulous cross-section of between 300 and 400 of the country's specialty birds. From cloud-forest reserves and national parks to high mountain ecosystems, we'll be searching for endemic and exotic birds from Andean Condor to Sword-billed Hummingbird, immersing ourselves in a dozen of the country's finest birding destinations along the way. We hope you will make plans to join us on this fantastic adventure.

Participant Limit: Minimum of 8, maximum of 12.

Fees: \$4395/person, double-occupancy. \$600 single supplement. (**Fees do not include airfare, bar bills, incidentals.** Fees do include all park entrance fees, tips for guides and drivers, and a tax deductible donation to SCVAS)

Deposit: \$500 (must be received by May 1st)



Toucan Barbet
©Tom Grey

About the leaders:

Carlos Gomez, or as he is better known, Charlie, started his birding career working with Gary Stiles, the author of *Birds of Costa Rica*. He has guided birding and other natural history groups for Costa Rica Expeditions for two decades. Before that, he was Station Manager at the Organization for Tropical Studies' La Selva Biological Station and has been called "legendary" in the Washington Post. An excellent naturalist and avid birder with a B.S. in biology from the University

of Costa Rica, Charlie's tireless enthusiasm on the job has made him Costa Rica's most requested guide and our favorite guide en todo el mundo. He's got Ecuador dialed too. No worries, Charlie's the best.

Niño Morales is well known as Charlie's birding partner and favorite driver. But Niño takes no back seat to Charlie in birding terms and is an outstanding talent, working in tandem with Charlie to locate birds and, more importantly, connect our guests to those birds. Niño's skill and expertise in the field will be

an extraordinary, value-added component to this trip.

Bob Power has been SCVAS' Executive Director since 2006. Bob has taught birding classes and workshops for the past ten (or more) years and delights in helping field trip participants not only find birds but confidently identify them. Bob's life-long interest in raptors translates to a contagious enthusiasm for birds of prey in the field. Ensuring all guests see their life Andean Condor is high on Bob's priority list.

Field Notes

(August 2013-September 2013)

by Bill Bousman

Ducks through Falcons

Blue-winged Teal are often not found until late September, but three were at the South County Regional WasteWater Authority treatment ponds in Gilroy on 15 Aug (RWR, FV). Oversummering **Redhead** were seen again, this time with three birds on Pond A16 on 1 Aug (WGB). Wintering **Red-breasted Mergansers** normally arrive in late October. Occasionally birds oversummer, the likely explanation of a female/immature in a closed refuge pond on 25 Aug (MMR, MJM). An **American Bittern** flying over Pond A16 in Alviso on 1 Aug (WGB) was a surprise, we have few summer records from along the Bay. Few **White-faced Ibis** summer locally so the birds in the vicinity of the Lockheed Martin channel through 8 Sep (m.ob.) were surprising. The highest count was of eight birds on 3 Aug (AA). Those birds that were photographed appeared to be second-year birds. One bird was found elsewhere near the Alviso EEC on 31 Aug (DWe). An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** was seen over Los Altos on 29 Sep (BM). Most of our few records are of fall migrants. The **Swainson's Hawk** youngster successfully fledged from the nest along Coyote Creek on 6 Aug (RPh). The first **Ferruginous Hawks** of the season were seen in Coyote Valley on 28 Sep (LMY et al., SSu), an adult and an immature. The first **Merlin** of the fall was found at Vasona CP on 29 Aug (PDU, KBu). A **Prairie Falcon** in the Coyote Valley on 30 Sep (MJM), away from the Diablo Range, was the only record for the period.

Shorebirds through Alcids

A juv "**Lesser**" **Golden-Plover** was seen over Pond A16 on 31 Aug (SCR, MMR), but could not be found again so as to confirm the species. **Snowy Plovers** were found in good numbers in August with up to 21 birds in the vicinity of New Chicago Marsh and 16 in the vicinity of the dried triangular pond north of Crittenden Marsh (m.ob.). But as more water was let into New Chicago Marsh in late

August, those birds moved on. At least three chicks or young birds were seen in the Alviso area (MJM, WGB) and at least five were in the triangular pond (MMR, MJM). **Lesser Yellowlegs** were fairly well distributed both in time and space, but mostly in low numbers. Some high counts included four in the Lockheed Martin ponds and channel on 27 Aug (WGB), four in New Chicago and Pond A16 on 31 Aug (SCR, MMR), and four in New Chicago Marsh at the end of Gold Street on 29 Sep (MMR et al.). The only fall **Ruddy Turnstone** was an alter-

Rare vagrants marked the season: Virginia's Warbler, Canada Warbler, and Orchard Oriole. All were third county records.

nate bird in Pond A16 on 8 Aug (MJM). Less expected was a **Black Turnstone** in Pond A9 on 10 Sep (WGB). **Red Knots** are found in the largest numbers in fall and early winter. Breached Pond A6 is particularly attractive with 46 counted there on 17 Aug (MMR). At major high tides, these birds appear to roost on Pond A9 across Alviso Slough and 80 were tallied there on 17 Sep (PDU). Good numbers were also found on closed refuge ponds with a count of 33 on 25 Aug (MMR, MJM). Away from Alviso, eight birds were found on Charleston Slough on 19 Sep (RWR, FV). Only two juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found during the period, both in New Chicago Marsh. The first was there on 10 Aug (MJM) and the second on 31 Aug (MMR, SCR). One to two decades ago there were many Septembers where we might see 30 to 60 **Pectoral Sandpipers**, but no more, I guess. This fall there were two. One was in Pond A9 in Alviso 5-11 Sep (PDU, MMR). The other was found in the Mountain View Forebay on 17 Sep (KDeM, KPa) and enjoyed by many through 24 Sep. The number of **Least Terns** staging on Pond A2E dropped in August with two

birds there last seen on 25 Aug (MMR). Four to 13 **Least**s were seen in the Alviso pond 1-8 Aug (MH, WGB), and two were seen over the Stevens Creek mouth on 3 Aug (WGB). A juvenile **Black Tern** was found on Pond A2E on 2 Aug (DPe, PDU) and was well seen and photographed at least through 14 Aug (m.ob.). A juvenile seen on Pond A16 on 17 Aug (SCR) may be a second bird. Always rare, singleton **Common Terns** were found on Pond A16 on 31 Aug (SCR, MMR) and on Charleston Slough and Pond A1 on 18-19 Sep (MDo, RWR, FV). **Elegant Terns** found on Pond A2E in July continued through 14 Aug (m.ob.) with a high count of five on 10 Aug (MMR, ARo). More Elegants were found on the Alviso ponds 17 Aug-13 Sep with a high count of 34 on 11 Sep (MMR). Four birds were found on closed refuge ponds on 25 Aug (MMR, MJM), a single was on Pond A16 on 31 Aug (SCR, MMR), and two were on Pond A1 on 19 Sep (RWR, FV). The second **Black Skimmer** chick hatched on Pond A16 did not last past 6 Aug (v.ob.). A juvenile **Parasitic Jaeger** was found on Pond A14 in Alviso on 11 Sep (PDU) and remained there at least through 21 Sep (m.ob.). This is our first Parasitic since 2008. The **Pigeon Guillemot** found in Pond A14 at the end of July was enjoyed by many through 8 Aug (m.ob.).

Roadrunners through Dippers

A **Greater Roadrunner** was seen at Hwy 130 and Smith Creek on 14 Sep (RN). Northeast of Hellyer Avenue, another was found on 17 Sep (BJ). The fall migration of **Vaux's Swifts** seemed slow, but was brightened considerably with at least 60 birds seen over the Guadalupe River below Coleman Avenue on 26 Sep (JPa). Fall **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** included a male along the Guadalupe River below Coleman on 22 Aug



Black-chinned Hummingbird

©Tom Gray

Field Notes *cont'd*

(AV) and female/immature birds on the Alamitos Creek Trail on 3 Aug (JPa) and at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 31 Aug (DWe). A HY male **Costa's Hummingbird** established territory at a number of waverly sages on the west end of the arch bridge at Vasona CP this fall. It was first reported on 24 Sep (fide PDU) and birders began to avidly study this desert hummer on 29 Sep (PDU et al.). That excitement brought forth some photographs of the bird taken at the same spot on 15 Aug (OA) — quite a story. Most of our records are from July to September. Likely HY Rufous-Allen's Hummingbirds show up every fall and we had multiple records over the period. But one HY female **Rufous Hummingbird** in a San Jose yard on 20 Sep (HD) was photographed as it spread its tail, well enough that we could determine the species. The only report of **Lewis's Woodpeckers** was of two in San Antonio Valley at the Lazy Z Ranch on 17 Sep (WGB, VF). Although there are a couple of late July banding records, a **Willow Flycatcher** at the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) ponds on 11 Aug (AV) was the earliest observed arrival we've had. We've had good numbers in September and perhaps a few will linger. A **Say's Phoebe** along Moffett Field on 4 Aug (MMR, NMa) is likely part of the family that nested there this summer. The first winter arrival was at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 3 Sep (GZ) and was quite early. **Western Kingbirds** are scarce fall migrants, so one near the SCVWD ponds on 21 Sep (JPa) and another in Coyote Valley on 29 Sep (MMR et al.) were of interest. The only **Red-breasted Nuthatches** noted were at Monte Bello OSP on 6 Sep (GHa) and at Mt. Madonna CP on 20 Sep (JMy). These were likely local residents, there have been no irruptive records this fall (it is an off year). An **American Dipper** near the fish ladder on Los Gatos Creek above Lexington Reservoir on 20 Aug (GKe) was a location where they've not been reported. One along Upper Penitencia Creek in Alum Rock Park on 28 Aug (SCR) was from an area where they've nested in the past, but have not been seen in recent years. A bird along Los Gatos Creek above Los Gatos



on 6 Sep (H&DMcD) was from a historical location.

Warblers through Goldfinches

A **Northern Waterthrush** was found at the Charleston Road marsh on 28 Sep (DWe). This is the 12th winter that one or more birds have been at this location. Three **Tennessee Warblers** have been found this fall. The first was seen at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park 2-8 Sep (MMR, v.ob.). The second, a HY bird, was along the Guadalupe River Trail below Coleman Avenue on 12 Sep (AV, JPa). The third was again at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 20-22 Sep (PKe, RKe, v.ob.) and was reported to be whiter on the underparts than the earlier bird. Although we may find a few more in October, only one **Nashville Warbler** was found by the end of the period, a female at La Rinconada Park in Los Gatos on 28 Sep (SP). A highlight of the fall was a **Virginia's Warbler** found on the north side of the Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant on 24 Sep (RKe, PKe). It was seen, sometimes with difficulty, over the next two days by many observers. This is the third county record. Typically, September is a good month for fall **MacGillivray's Warblers**, but only one was found this fall, a HY bird in a Morgan Hill yard (SCR). A female or immature **American Redstart** was seen at the Ulistac Natural Area on 12 Sep (PW) and a rapid report allowed a few observers to see the bird that day, it was not found the next day. Competing with the Virginia's Warbler seen later in the month, a **Canada Warbler** at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 2 Sep (SCT, GZ, DW, m.ob.) was another vagrant highlight. Two **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found by the end of September. One was in the community garden at the McClellan Ranch Preserve on 25 Sep (PDU) and the second along

the Guadalupe River Trail near the fish ladder below Coleman Avenue on 27-30 Sep (AV, m.ob.). Lake Cunningham has become the center of **Great-tailed Grackles** in recent years. A tally of 84 on 18 Sep (SCR) is the highest count so far in the county. Our special oriole year went the next step when a female or immature **Orchard Oriole** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 94-26 Sep (MMR, m.ob.) and was well studied and photographed. This bird was found during a follow-up search for the Virginia's Warbler. Surprisingly, another Orchard Oriole was found at the McClellan Ranch Preserve 26-27 Sep (MMR, v.ob.), again in a follow-up search for the Clay-colored Sparrow. These are both examples of the famed "Patagonia Rest Stop" effect. Two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were seen at Monte Bello OSP on 6 Sep (GHa). At least 69 birds were found along Mines and San Antonio Valley road on 17 Sep (WGB, VF), all near limited water resources.

Observers: Arvind Agrawal (AA), Ozzie Altus (OA), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KBu), Helen Daley (HD), Karen DeMello (KDeM), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDU), Volney Ford (VF), Garth Harwood (GHa), Marcel Holyoak (MH), Bob Juhl (BJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Greg Kerekes (GKe), Nateri Madavan (NMa), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Hugh & Deb McDevitt), Brooke Miller (BM), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LMy), Rod Norden (RN), Kay Partelow (KPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sergey Pavlov (SP), Don Pendleton (DPe), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Bob Reiling (RWR), Alma Rogers (ARo), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Shravan Sundaram (SSu), Steve Tracey (SCT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Pingang Wang (PW), Dave Weber (DWe), and Gena Zolotar (GZ).

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

Conservation Corner

cont'd from page 4

tion Plan FIRST, and evaluates proposed recreation development in terms of compatibility with preservation of wildlife habitat and a Burrowing Owl Preservation Plan.

Ulistac Natural Area Threatened:

The last 40 acres of open space area in the City of Santa Clara was preserved on January 20, 1997 and designated as the Ulistac Natural Area (UNA). Originally inhabited by the Ohlone Indians, then the Spanish missionaries, and later used as a pear orchard, a golf course, and finally a natural area, Ulistac has been through it all. The land was slated for development in the late 1980s, but the developer withdrew when real estate values dropped in 1990. The area was left untouched for seven years and during this time, plants began to grow back and wildlife began to return. Finally, due to pressure from the public with leadership from People for Open Space and Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Santa Clara City Council voted to preserve the site and recreate a natural area there. Now, Ulistac is threatened again, as the City of Santa Clara is considering the reloca-

tion of a soccer facility to the center of the natural landscape, threatening the recovery of the habitat and the birds, butterflies and wildlife it revived.

The Ulistac Natural Area Restoration Project was, and continues to be, community-driven. Fifteen years, hundreds of volunteers and thousands of volunteer hours produced an ecological gem in the City of Santa Clara. As volunteers removed invasive species and planted California native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers, butterflies reappeared, birds recolonized the area, and migrating birds started spending the winter. Over 140 species of birds have been observed in Ulistac Natural Area's woodlands, grasslands, wetland and riparian habitats along the Guadalupe River. In 2013, California quail returned to nest at Ulistac. People from all over the region come to enjoy the diverse California native plant habitats and the ecosystems they support.

We are engaged in advocacy efforts and are working closely with the newly formed group "Save Ulistac" and other environmental groups and government agencies.

Please let Shani know if you interested in receiving updates and action alerts on any of the above issues (shani@scvas.org).

Volunteer Ventures

by Toby Goldberg
Programs Coordinator

There are a lot of impressive anniversaries and milestones circulating around the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society headquarters this year, and we have a lot to be proud of: 2013 marked our 3rd year offering a summer nature camp program for children aged 6-11, and the 1st year with a full five-day schedule; the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program has successfully brought its 17th breeding season to a close (see text at right); we've just completed our 22nd annual Wildlife Education Day festival; we've started our 25th year of Wetlands Discovery Programs; and we've reached our 87th anniversary as a chapter.

What do all of these - and the many other accomplishments not mentioned here - have in common? Hopefully, the answer is obvious - our volunteers! Whether helping in the office, speaking out at City Council meetings, leading field trips, sorting through owl pellets, posting our events online, or making bird feeders, every one of our volunteers contributes to the strength and longevity of our programs, the impact of our message, and our influence in the community. We are profoundly grateful to each one that has chosen to make sharing his/her time with our chapter a priority.

If you've thought about getting involved (e.g. the Christmas Bird Counts are almost here - and can always use more volunteers! See page 9 for details...), or would like to learn more about how our organization could use YOUR talents and skills, check us out online at www.scvas.org - click on "Volunteer" - or contact me at 408-252-3740 or programs@scvas.org.

I'd love to chat with you!

Cavity Nesters Recovery Program Season End Report

The SCVAS monitors wrapped up the 17th breeding season of the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program in September. Thanks to the hard work by Mike Azevedo, our County Nest Box Coordinator, and Dick Blaine, our data guru (and not so incidentally, the President of the California Bluebirds Recovery Program - yes, he does both!) we were able to bring the season to a close with mostly good news.



Our biggest challenges this year were an extremely dry year - which had a noticeable effect on the abundance of appropriate insects for our Cavity Nesting Species - and a controlled burn at Arastradero Open Space Preserve which greatly increased the nestling mortality of our boxes on that property. However, many of our monitors also recorded a good year for Bluebirds, indicating that their recovery continues to strengthen, as well as for both Bewick's and House Wrens, Ash-throated Flycatchers, and Tree Swallows.

We simply can't say enough good things about our dedicated monitors! Their consistent hard work over the years has really helped to make this into a robust - and meaningful - conservation program. And we hope that the joys of seeing their birds successfully fledge outweigh any of the sorrows from failed nests.

If this sounds like a program you'd like to know more about, if you'd like to make a difference in local bird species populations, please contact us. The more monitors we have, the more we can help.

For detailed information about this program, go online to www.scvas.org/cnrp.

The Christmas Bird Counts are Almost Here!

Join us for another year of fun, adventure, and excitement as we help add to the body of bird research and knowledge throughout the country! Contact the compiler of the region you are interested in (see below). *BIG NEWS* - there is no longer a \$5 fee to participate!

SAN JOSE:

Yes, it is almost that time of year again - time to get down and dirty in service of the feathered folk. The San Jose Christmas Bird Count will be held this year on Sunday, December 15th. Birders of all experience levels are welcome and needed. Bird identification skills are great but other skills are important too, such as:

1) spotter, able to point and say "Bird!"

and

2) tally-man, able to make small marks on increasingly grubby bits of paper.

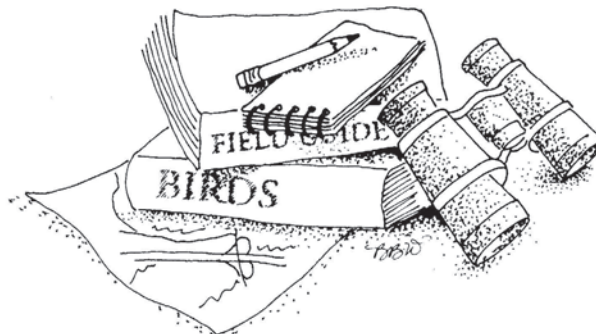
We are blessed with habitats to suit anyone's fancy: shoreline, oak woodlands, lake-side, or riparian, we can accommodate you. So, come have fun and contribute to an important, on-going biological survey.

The countdown dinner will review all birds seen for the day. The Leininger Center in Kelley Park is the host location. Donations to help off-set the cost of a yummy pizza dinner are, of course, welcome. If you are interested in participating in the count, please contact Kirsten Holmquist before December 10th at 408.747.0988 or via email at kirsten.holmquist@comcast.net.

PALO ALTO:

Monday, December 16th, is the date you should set aside to join the Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count. It's FREE, it's fun, and whether you are a novice or an expert, you're sure to have a rewarding experience. This count, centered near Stanford, includes the trails, parks and preserves from the bay to and beyond Skyline Drive. Parts of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties are included. On a CBC, every sparrow, every gull and indeed, every bird is important, and there is always the thrill of finding something uncommon or rare.

For more information on how you can be part of this exciting day, contact Jack Cole at 408-996-0434 or Snoyowl@Yahoo.com.



CALERO-MORGAN HILL:

This year the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC will take place on Saturday, Dec 28, 2013. Of our four local counts, this mid-south inland count is the only one that takes place entirely in Santa Clara County. The circle includes the Diablo Range foothills in the east to portions of the Santa Cruz Mountains in the west with valleys, parks, riparian corridors, and reservoirs in between the two ranges. Some areas of interest include a riparian stretch of Coyote Creek (including Ogier Ponds), Almaden Lake Park, Santa Clara Water District Headquarters, Santa Teresa County Park, Quicksilver County Park, Mt. Umunhum, Edenvale Garden Park, Guadalupe Oak Grove Park, Coyote Valley, and inland reservoirs including Almaden, Calero, Chesbro, and a portion of Anderson Reservoir. While the purpose of the CBC is to census all our wintering and resident birds, some special birds seen on previous counts have included Snow Goose, Greater Roadrunner, Rufous Hummingbird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and American Redstart.

If you're interested in this mid-south Santa Clara County adventure, please contact AnnVerdi, Compiler/Organizer, via email wodu10@aol.com or phone (408)266-5108. Hope you can join us.

MT. HAMILTON:

Mark your calendars for December 29th (still TBC). We hope to have a great count again through the Mt. Hamilton and San Antonio Valley area. Count leaders are especially needed. Contact Bob Hirt - 408-821-2732 (cell) - as soon as possible to participate.

Young Audubon Winter Adventures for 2014

Our annual excursion to see those strange and wonderful Elephant Seals at Año Nuevo State Park is almost here!



Space is limited, so be sure to sign-up early!

Elephant Seal Walks at Año Nuevo State Park
President's Day Weekend: Mon, February 17th
Times still TBD (check back after Dec 20th)



Ages: 7-years-old and up

Cost: \$7/person for members; \$9/person for non-members

More details will be available online after Dec 20th (www.scvas.org) and in the Jan/Feb newsletter.

***And stay tuned for our Day-of-Service event on January 20th, 2014!
Details coming soon!***

SCVAS' WINTER WISH-LIST

'Tis the season - when the SCVAS office starts thinking about the coming year, and what we might need to accomplish all of our goals. And thanks to the generosity of our members, our wish-lists often get fulfilled - for which we are extremely grateful!

As we approach 2014, we're starting to notice some gaps in our needs-vs-haves, and once again are turning to our membership first for help. So, if you have any of the following items, and might be interested in donating them to a very good cause, please let us know:



- **Bird gifts or art**
(to be used for event raffles, prizes, and more)

- **Apple laptops** (OS 10.6.8 or higher)
The more program requests we get - which is a great thing - the more we need reliable portable computers...



*Please contact us at 408-252-3747 or scvas@scvas.org for more information or to make a donation.
In-kind donations are tax deductible.*

Outside Events of Interest:

SCVAS always loves to support fun, educational and bird-related activities wherever they are! Here are a few that we've learned about, and that we think our members might enjoy:



Tundra Swan
© Ashok Khosla

Swan Tours in Yuba County CA Dept. Fish & Game

Nov-Jan; 9:30AM & 1:00PM
Before winter takes hold in the Arctic, more than 100,000 tundra swans migrate along the Pacific

Flyway from their remote and solitary breeding grounds to spend winter in California. The swan tour offers participants a spectacular opportunity to encounter these stately, elegant birds, which weigh more than 20 pounds with a 5.6 foot wingspan. Go to www.dfg.ca.gov/regions/2/swantours/ for details and to register

17th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium Thur-Sun, Nov 21-24

Stockton Hilton Hotel, Stockton CA
Join birders from around the state (and the world!) for engaging programs and bird-filled trips. With key-note speakers Ed Harper, Ed Pandolfino, Kimball Garrett, Ted Beedy, and Keith Hansen, there will be a birding powerhouse to learn from each evening.

Go to <http://www.2013cvbs.org> for details and to register



2013 Friends of SCVAS

Gifts received between August 1st, 2013 and September 30th, 2013

\$1,000-\$10,000

Anonymous

\$500-\$999

Patricia Brennan
Phil and Joan Leighton
John and Clysta McLemore
Franklin and Susan Orr

\$250-\$499

Emily Allen
John and Georgiana Flaherty
Rodney Forseth
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Eric Goodill
Peter and Diane Hart
Jane Hiatt
Steve McHenry and Carolyn Straub
John Moore
David Steuer and Barbara Shufro
Steve and Debbie Thompson
Cheryl Turner

\$100-\$249

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Apple Campus 2: Birds Welcome

by Shani Kleinhaus, SCVAS Environmental Advocate

Apple Inc. has always strived for innovation, aesthetics and harmony in their products. These values are also inherent in the design of Apple Campus 2 and the environment that will surround it. In contrast to the strikingly modern new campus design, natural ambience dominates the areas around the buildings: orchards, oak woodlands, grasslands and ephemeral water features will replace asphalt and concrete, and embrace the buildings in habitat for birds and butterflies.

Apple sought SCVAS's input early on as the company was working on the concepts that directed the development, and identified the issues to be examined in an environmental impact review. We

immediately expressed our delight at the proposed conversion of asphalt and concrete hardscape to habitat landscape. But we also had questions and concerns: Will birds collide with the glass surfaces of the new building? Would existing street trees be removed in a way that may harm nesting birds? What are the criteria for selection of native plants and trees? How would operation and maintenance protocols protect birds? Will water be available for birds? Would nest boxes for cavity nesting species be an option? And more.

Apple has been responsive and responsible. At our request, Apple elected to contribute Nitrogen Deposition Fees to the Habitat Conservation Plan. In ad-

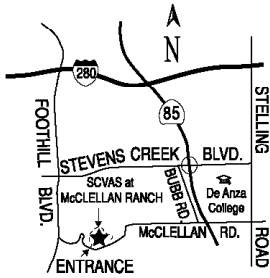
dition, the company is working internally as well as with SCVAS to resolve the issues we brought up and to add features that would benefit birds. On the existing campus, Apple has initiated a partnering with SCVAS and with the American Bird Conservancy to develop a bird-strike monitoring program. This program is the first step in the effort to learn and implement protocols for preventing bird strikes on Apple Campus 2. Many other commitments have been made, and additional benefits for birds are being explored.

The natural landscapes of Apple Campus 2 can be expected to attract resident birds and to create a new and enticing stopover place for migratory birds. We look enthusiastically forward to continued collaboration as the new campus develops, and birds come to occupy the new habitat.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society
 22221 McClellan Road
 Cupertino, CA 95014

Phone: 408-252-3747
 Fax: 408-252-2850
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STAFF

Executive Director

Bob Power

408/252-3748

bob@scvas.org

Office Manager

Susan Bell

408/252-3747

scvas@scvas.org

Programs Coordinator

Toby Goldberg

408/252-3740

programs@scvas.org

Environmental Advocate

Shani Kleinhaus

650/868-2114

shani@scvas.org

Office Fax

408/252-2850

Office E-mail

scvas@scvas.org

Website

www.scvas.org

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday

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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.

RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422

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2013 Volume 60, Number 6

Chapter Members in the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) receive the SCVAS newsletter, *The Avocet*.

\$25 Song Sparrow (Student) \$35 American Avocet (Individual) \$60 California Quail (Family) \$100 Burrowing Owl

\$250 White-tailed Kite \$500 Peregrine Falcon \$1000 Golden Eagle Other _____

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*Come by the office to pick up your free copy of **Birding at the Bottom of the Bay**, and our **Breeding Bird Atlas** (if joining at the Burrowing Owl level or above).*

Send this information, and make all checks payable, to: SCVAS, 22221 McClellan Rd, Cupertino, CA 95014

Please note: As an organizational policy, SCVAS does not share member information with other organizations.