

THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

March-April 2015

Saying Goodbye to a Legacy: Susan Bell Looks Back

by Diane Hart

SCVAS Board Vice President

When Susan Bell walked into the SCVAS Office to apply for a job 15 years ago, she encountered what could be considered a bad omen. On the path before her lay a dead bird. Fortunately for us all, Susan was not deterred. She took the job as office manager and, in her words, soon went from knowing little about birds to becoming the answer person for all bird questions.



Susan quickly learned that the SCVAS Nature Shop was far more than a place to buy birdseed. It was where members came to socialize and see themselves as part of a birding community. It was also the first place people called for answers to their questions about birds. Over the years she helped beginning birders identify countless birds from sketchy descriptions and blurry photos. She directed callers with birds snatched from the jaws of cats to wildlife rescue organizations. She counseled families about what to do with their once adorable baby ducks or chicks now that they are grown and less adorable. She even advised Target on how best to remove a hummingbird from one of its stores.

During her time with SCVAS, Susan saw the office staff triple in size from two and a half employees—all sharing the same precious computer—to seven employees and even more computers. Susan credits this growth “first to our volunteers. If it wasn’t for them, what we do would not be possible. We depend on them 100 percent. And second to our Legacy Society. The funds members have left to SCVAS in their estates have enabled us to greatly expand our education and advocacy activities.”

Looking ahead, Susan plans to spend most days caring for her new grandson. “I hope to teach

Jack about birds, the environment, and how important it is to respect nature,” she says. We will miss Susan, who has been the face and voice of SCVAS for as long as most of us can remember. But we wish her well as she embarks on this next stage of her life.



General Membership Meetings Cubberley Community Center, Rm H1 Palo Alto - Middlefield & Montrose Rds Doors open 7:30; program 8:00



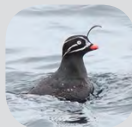
Wednesday, March 18th

“The Great Migration and other Serengeti Miracles” with Doug Cheeseman

Doug Cheeseman will discuss the wealth of wildlife in the Serengeti with his stunning photography. Doug has been leading African wildlife safaris to Tanzania and Kenya since 1978. In 1998 Doug retired from many years of teaching zoology and ecology at De Anza College to photograph and lead wildlife safaris around the world full-time.

Top Left - Cheetahs
Photos ©Doug Cheeseman

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



Wednesday, April 15th

“Attu: Extreme birding in the Aleutian Islands” with Julio Mulero

Attu, a place that needs little introduction to birders, has been the site of many first North American records due to its proximity to Asia. During this talk you’ll learn about birding in Adak and follow a 3-day pelagic trip to and from Attu with all the amazing birds found along the way.

Top Right - Whiskered Auklet
Bottom Right - Gray-crowned
Rosy Finch
Photos ©Julio Mulero



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of Birds and Spring!

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March-April '15 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

Sunday Mar. 1, 8:30 AM

Coyote Valley OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Rick Herder; (408) 779-3985. **Directions:** From 101 in San Jose take Bailey Ave. West, turn left on Hale Ave. (Santa Teresa), then right on Palm Ave. and park in the lot at the end of the street (in the preserve beyond the barrier). Early risers will meet at 7:30 AM on the Western portion of Laguna Ave. in Morgan Hill, the first right after turning onto Hale Ave. **Highlights:** We will bird the lower elevations of the preserve to the west in search of recent spring migrants, Hawks and Eagles. **Notes:** Trail can be rough and decorated with "cow pies." **Trip limited to those over 12 years of age. RC**

Wednesday Mar. 4, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leaders:** Freddy Howell and Allen Royer. Contact the landfill coordinator, Silvana Ruiz, at (408) 730-7545 with questions. **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.

Saturday Mar. 7, 8:00 AM

Windy Hill OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Kirsten Holmquist; (408) 747-0988. **Directions:** 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 Sequoias. Meet in the parking lot at Sausal Pond edge of the preserve. **RC**

Sunday Mar. 8, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

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

Wednesday Mar. 11, 8:30 AM

Mendoza Ranch, Coyote Lake County Park

Half day **Leader:** Jim Johnson; (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 in Gilroy, take Leavesley Rd. east for 1.5 miles, turn left on New Ave. then right on Roop Rd. Go left at the T-intersection and continue .9 miles to Mendoza Ranch parking lot on your left. We'll bird a short time here before continuing to Lakeview Picnic area in Coyote Lake Park. **LO, RC**

Saturday Mar. 14, 8:00 AM

Rancho Canada Del Oro

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson; (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 take Bailey Ave. West, turn left on McKean Rd., after approx 2.4 miles turn right on Casa Loma Rd. and after approx 1.6 miles park in the lot on the left. **Alternate route:** From Hwy 85 take Almaden Expwy South turn right on Harry Rd. then immediately left on McKean Rd., after 6+ miles turn right on Casa Loma Rd. and after about 1.6 miles park in the lot on the left. **Highlights:** We'll bird along the Serpentine trail to the Longwall trailhead and look for breeding birds on this level open trail. **Difficulty level:** Easy walking. **Notes:** Bring water, limited facilities. **LO, RC**

Sunday Mar. 15, 8:00 AM

Grant Ranch County Park

Half day. **Leader:** Rich Page; (408) 377-1092. **Directions:** From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave. NE, 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). **Highlights:** Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds and possible Golden Eagle. **Note:** A Park entrance fee will be required for the last half of the trip. **Difficulty level:** Trip involves a moderately strenuous 2-mile walk. **LO, RC**

Friday, Saturday & Sunday Mar. 20-22

Honey Lake, Eagle Lake & Vicinity

Leader: Bob Hirt; (408) 821-2732. **Highlights:** A weekend trip to a remote corner of northeast California to see Greater Sage Grouse on their booming grounds (leks). Other expected species includes eagles, hawks, geese, ducks, cranes, woodpeckers and other mountain specialties such as Cassin's Finch, Townsend's Solitaire, Pinyon Jay, and Mountain Bluebird. **Note:** Trip is limited to 20 participants. Please call leader for further details and to reserve a space on this very unique birding adventure.

Saturday Mar. 28, 7:30 AM

Gilroy Hot Springs Rd

Half day. **Leader:** Bob Reiling; (408) 253-7527. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 turn left on Leavesley Rd. and park behind McDonalds on the right (corner of Arroyo Circle) and we will carpool from there. **Note:** FRS radios tuned to channel 11 will be especially useful during the driving portion of this trip. **Highlights:** migrating and breeding birds of southern Santa Clara County. **RC**

Sunday Mar. 29, 8:00 AM

Shoreline Lake and Environs

Half day. **Leader:** Frank Vanslager; (650) 961-1505. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 take Shoreline Blvd. North past the golf course to the end of the road. Meet in the parking lot near the boathouse. **Highlights:** Ducks, gulls, some shorebirds, and a few riparian birds. **Difficulty level:** A moderately long, but level, loop trip. **RC**

Wednesday Apr. 1, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leaders:** Freddy Howell and Allen Royer. See details from March 4th.

American River Trail Bicycle Birding Trip: Sacramento to Folsom and Return April 3-4

Leader: Cynthia Berg, 650-515-6493, or birdergirl@gmail.com. The paved American River Bike Trail begins near the Sacramento Amtrak Station at Fifth and I streets and meanders 23 miles along the river to the town of Folsom. The trail is fairly flat.

On Friday, April 3 we will start from the Santa Clara Great America Amtrak Station at 6:54 a.m. putting our bicycles on the train. The train originates in San Jose and also stops in the East Bay so people getting on elsewhere can be accommodated. The train experience is quite wonderful travelling through the delta and the 'town' of Drawbridge.

The plan is to overnight at the Larkspur Landing Hotel in Folsom and return via bike the following morning (8:30), returning on train #743 arriving in Santa Clara at approx. 6:30 pm. **Participants must make their own hotel reservations.**

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR BIKE IS IN RIDING CONDITION, that you are carrying spare tubes and pump and that you have the necessary riding experience and stamina. **Advance reservations are necessary for this trip.**

Max of 10 participants - contact leader to sign-up. Forecast heavy rain may cancel.



Saturday Apr. 4, 8:15 AM

Stevens Creek County Park

Half day. **Leader:** Pat Kenny; (408) 725-0468. **Directions:** From I-280 in Cupertino take Foot-hill Expwy exit South 2.1 miles (it becomes Stevens Canyon Rd.). turn left into first park entrance and meet in the Chestnut Picnic Area parking lot. **Highlights:** A top riparian birding spot in the South Bay for migrants and local breeding birds. **Note:** Entrance fee required. **LO, RC**

Sunday Apr. 5, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. **Leader:** Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. **Directions:** See details from March 8th.

Field Trips *continued*

Saturday Apr. 11, 8:00 AM

Picchetti Ranch

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson; (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From I-280 in Cupertino take Foot-hill Blvd. South 3.3 miles (it becomes Stevens Canyon Rd.). Turn right on Monte Bello Rd. and go about a mile, turn left past Winery entrance into the preserve parking lot. **Difficulty level:** Trip is a moderately strenuous walk past an old orchard, a seasonal pond, and Oak woodlands.

Sunday Apr. 12, 8:00 AM

Ulistac Natural Area

Half day. **Leader:** Steve Tracey; (408) 966-3860. **Directions:** From Hwy 237 take Great America Pkwy South for about 0.8 miles, turn left on Tasman Dr. for about one mile, turn right on Lick Mill Blvd. and meet at the South entrance to the park on the left. **Highlights:** We will look for migrants and local breeding birds in diverse habitat that does not require an entrance fee. **NF**

Saturday Apr. 18, 8:00 AM

Ed Levin County Park (North)

Half day. **Leader:** Bob Reiling; (408) 253-7527. **Directions:** Take Hwy. 237 East, crossing I-880 and I-680 (237 becomes Calaveras Rd.), turn left on Downing Rd. to the park entrance. Meet in parking lot on the far, northeast side of Sandy Wool Lake (near the dog park). **Highlights:** We will look for migrants and local breeding birds in Milpitas' prime birding hot spot. **Difficulty level:** Be aware that the trail is steep in places. **Note:** Entrance fee required. **LO, RC**

Sunday Apr. 19, 8:15 AM

Arastradero OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Frank Vanslager; (650) 961-1505. **Directions:** From I-280 take Page Mill

Rd. west (toward the Santa Cruz mountains), turn right on Arastradero Rd. and meet in the parking lot about a half-mile on the right. **Difficulty level:** Trip involves moderately strenuous hiking. **RC**

Wednesday Apr. 22, 8:30 AM

New Almaden Township

Half day. **Leader:** Janna Pauser; (408) 569-9264 or jannapauser@gmail.com. **Directions:** From hwy 85 in San Jose, take Almaden Expy south for 4.3 miles. Keep right at Y and drive through New Almaden township. Park in Almaden-Quicksilver C.P. Hacienda parking lot on your right, which opens at 8am. We'll bird through New Almaden township on Almaden and Bertram Roads. **Difficulty level:** Easy walking. **Note:** This is the fourth Wednesday of the month, waiting for spring arrivals. **LO, RC**

Saturday Apr. 25, 8:00 AM

Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve

Half day. **Leader:** Sonny Mencher, soccerquiz@yahoo.com or (650) 814-8028. **Notes:** Trip is limited to 20 people; contact Sonny to reserve a space. There is a fee of \$5 per person for this trip. **Directions:** Meet in the parking lot on the right side of Sand Hill Rd. as you head West toward the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Preserve (near the freeway at the intersection of Lawler Ranch Rd. and Sand Hill Rd.). Participants will form carpools (required!) to minimize the number of cars on the Preserve. Caravan with a leader from the parking area between 7:50 AM and 8:00 AM only (PARKING/WAITING OUTSIDE THE GATE IS NOT ALLOWED!) From I-280, the main gate is on the left side of the road about 2 miles West (away from the freeway) on Sand Hill Rd. **Difficulty:** Trip involves 2-3 miles of moderately strenuous walking, and goes rain or shine.

Sunday Apr. 26, 8:15 AM

Mt. Diablo State Park, Mitchell Canyon

Half day. **Leader:** Pete Dunten; (650) 210-6764. **Directions:** From I680 in Walnut Creek take exit 46B to Ygnacio Valley Rd., go East for 7.3 miles then turn right on Clayton Rd. and a mile later right onto Mitchell Canyon Rd. The park opens at 8 AM, we will meet at 8:15 AM in the parking lot. **Highlights:** Mitchell Canyon is a great place to visit in the spring looking for migrating Empids and Hummingbirds. **RC**

Saturday May 2, 8:30 AM

Mines Rd., Del Puerto Canyon & Vicinity

Full day. **Leader:** Bob Reiling; (408) 253-7527. We'll start this trip in Del Puerto Canyon, working our way west to San Antonio Valley. **Directions:** From I-580 go East over Altamont Pass, to I-5, South on I-5, West at the Patterson exit (Diablo Grande Pkwy) and then right on Del Puerto Canyon Rd. Meet at the first pullout. **Highlights:** Possible Costa's Hummingbird, Phainopepla, Lewis's Woodpecker and Lawrence's Goldfinch. **Notes:** FRS radios tuned to channel 11 will be especially useful during the driving portion of this trip. Bring a full tank of gas, lunch and liquids.

Sunday May 3, 8:00 AM

Hidden Villa

Half day. **Leader:** Garth Harwood; (650) 949-8643. **Highlights:** Bird the farm, gardens and wild land edges of this unique facility with Hidden Villa's Environmental Education Director. There will be special emphasis on learning to bird by ear. **Directions:** From I-280 in Los Altos take El Monte Rd. past Foothill College, turn left at Moody Rd then after approx. 1.7 miles left into Hidden Villa. Meet at the first parking lot beside the entrance. **Note:** A \$5 per car parking fee is required. **LO, RC**

SCVAS Events Calendar:

Sat. 3/7; 10:00AM

Off-Site Nest Box Training

Arastradero Open Space Preserve, Palo Alto. A chance to see the CNRP monitoring in action - and ask your questions of CNRP expert and long-time volunteer, David "Tex" Houston. **Please RSVP to Tex directly at 650-303-2777 or 350co2now@gmail.com.**

Wed. 3/4 & 4/1; 7:30-9:00PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers

Lucy Evans Nature Center, Palo Alto
Topic 3/4: "Birds of India" with Vajapeyam Sukumar
Topic 4/1: "From Feathers to Fur" with Sue Petterson

see www.scvas.org/babp for details

Tues. 3/10 & 4/7; 10AM

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

Topic 3/10: Bird Poop

Topic 4/14: Western Meadowlark

Wed. 3/11 & 4/8; 3-4:30PM

Nature Journaling with John Muir Laws

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino
Free workshops for all ages! No RSVP required, but please be on time.
See www.scvas.org for more details.

Thur. 3/12; 6:30PM

Birdathon Kick-Off Party

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino
For anyone involved in a Birdathon Team - as

a participant or a sponsor. Join us for laughs, food, friends, and tips to make your birdathon experience a great one! Please RSVP to 408-252-3747 or online at www.scvas.org/birdathon.

Sat. 3/28 through Sun. 4/26

Birdathon Begins!

Don't forget to register your team or sign up to sponsor - SCVAS is counting on you!
See page 8 for details.

Sat. 4/25; 8-10:30AM

Young Audubon Bird Banding

See page 14 for details

Thur. 4/30; 4:30PM (Dinner at 6:30PM) Volunteer Appreciation Dinner & Birdwalk

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino
See page the SCVAS website for details

Conservation Corner

By Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate

As always, the SCVAS Environmental Advocacy team is engaged in conservation projects throughout our County (and beyond):

We continue implementing habitat enhancement and surveys in partnership with the City of **San Jose** at the Regional Wastewater Facility (RWF) – see baynature.org/articles/never-mind-game-heres-superb-owl-san-jose/ for a Superb-Owl story! If you would like to **volunteer for Burrowing Owl** habitat restoration or to participate in our monthly surveys (usually 1st Saturday of the month), please contact owls@scvas.org

SCVAS members in **Los Altos** alerted us to the bulldozing of a creek by a developer hoping to fill this waterway to make room for the development of 30 homes. We supported neighbors and alerted the responsible agencies (CA Department of Fish and Wildlife; the California Water Quality Control board). It was determined that this action was a violation and the developer now has to restore the riparian vegetation in the creek. City Planners and the developer are now aware of the regulations that govern grading and fill of state waterways.

In **Cupertino**, we continued to lead a coalition of environmental groups in advocacy for a nature-oriented master plan for the Stevens Creek Corridor (between McClellan Road and

Stevens Creek Boulevard). We engaged dozens of residents who wrote to decision makers or attended City Council meetings and Park and Recreation Commission meetings. We also worked with staff, commissioners and council members, encouraging them to focus on the integration of nature and agriculture heritage, history and recreation in this special place (and to abandon plans for spine roads and playing fields). Our efforts were successful! Councilmembers removed sport fields and a new spine road along the creek from consideration, supported a new design for the golf course, and expressed an interest in diverting intensive recreation activities to other areas of Cupertino. We thank the City's leadership and staff for looking to preserving the birds and wildlife that thrive along the creek.

With other environmental groups (California Audubon, the Sierra Club, the Center for Biodiversity, defenders of Wildlife and the Nature Conservancy), we continue to fight against the development of an industrial scale solar farm in **Panoche Valley**. We litigated the approval of an inadequate Environmental Impact report (EIR) for project by the Board of Supervisors of San Benito County in 2010, and lost our lawsuit and an appeal. Now, a new EIR has been released. We are glad that permitting agencies also saw the deficiencies, and required additional review. We continue to oppose the solar development due to expected irreversible damage to migratory birds and endangered species.

To volunteer with our Environmental Action Committee, please contact shani@scvas.org

Volunteer Ventures

by Toby Goldberg, Programs Coordinator

2015 brings many changes to the structure of SCVAS, and we want to express our gratitude to those staff and volunteers who are stepping down from their many years of service with our chapter. As we do so, we also welcome our new volunteers, and extend an invitation to all of our members and friends to consider participating in new ways:

Saying Goodbye: Field Notes Compiler, Bill Bousman. After 35+ years, Bill Bousman has announced his retirement from the bi-monthly Field Notes. We've appreciated his attention to detail and hard work on this project throughout the years, and wish him many more years of great bird sightings!

Welcome Aboard! SCVAS welcomes Peter Dunton as the new Field Notes Compiler! A long time birder (and familiar name to many of us in the birding community around the Bay Area), we're excited to add him to our birding and newsletter team.

Saying Goodbye: Jack Cole, Palo Alto Bird Count Coordinator. After more than 15 years, Jack has announced that he will be stepping down as coordinator for both the Summer and Christmas Bird Counts in Palo Alto, effective immediately. Thanks for all your hard work, Jack – Citizen Science won't be the same without you!

A Birding Opportunity: For anyone interested in birds, birding, citizen science, and working with a great group of dedicated birders, please consider filling Jack's shoes and taking over the Palo Alto Bird Counts! The peak of the efforts are in May and November, and you'll have lots of support from veteran counters and the Christmas Bird Count compiler, Al Eisner. Contact the

SCVAS office for more details if interested.

We would like to extend a special thank you to all of our 2014 Bird Count Coordinators and Compilers – they are some truly amazing folks! Although there are surely some names we're missing from this list, here are some details we think you'll be impressed with:

- **Bob Hirt** has been participating in the Emeryville Crescent CBC for 40 years, the San Francisco CBC for at least 30 years, and has been the Mt. Hamilton CBC Coordinator/Compiler for 11 years. That's a WHOLE lot of birding!!
- **Ann Verdi** started out compiling the data for the San Jose CBC in 1995, then took over the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC in 2003. So we can thank her for the strength of *both* counts over the years!
- **Kirsten Holmquist** took over the San Jose CBC in 2003, and has been handling some of the unique preparatory challenges with great aplomb ever since. There's no ruffling *this* birder's feathers...
- Even though she doesn't even live in Santa Clara County anymore, **Bonnie Bedford-White** continues to assist the birding efforts by compiling the entire Santa Clara County Christmas Bird Count data into a format that is easy to read and access. We call that some long-distance birding dedication!
- **Al Eisner** has been the Palo Alto CBC data compiler for the last 12 years – keeping us organized and aligned with the National Audubon Society data collection practices.

Of course, there are many opportunities to volunteer with SCVAS in addition to the Bird Counts – everything from leading field trips, to helping plan our annual events. If you're interested in supporting this Chapter with a gift of your time, please check out our website – www.scvas.org and click on "Volunteer" – or contact Toby at programs@scvas.org or 408-252-3740.

Adult Education Classes - Spring 2015

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.

Beginning Bird Watching with Larry Spivak

This course is for anyone interested in birds but feels like they lack basic bird identification skills. We'll start by studying birds in backyard settings, at local parks and in local nature preserves to learn how to identify them based on body type, size, color, identification clues, habitat and behavior. We'll learn a systematic approach to gathering information about a bird you have seen that will help you find it later in a field guide. Topics will include choosing and using binoculars, using field guides, identifying bird groups, identification clues, body part identification, habitats, behavior and field marks. We will also discuss reference materials, books, magazines, other local organizations and internet sites to help you more fully enjoy our local avian population.



American Avocet
© Tom Grey

Class Dates: Wed 3/25, 4/1, 4/8, 4/22; 7:00-9:00 PM. **Class Location:** McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino.

Field Trip Dates: Sun 3/29, 4/12, 4/26; 8:00-11:00 AM. **Field Trip Locations:** Local Birding hotspots (exact locations TBA)

Fee: \$65/SCVAS members, \$85/non-members. **Class Size: minimum 8 maximum 12.**

About Larry Spivak:

Larry has always been interested in wildlife including birds and began his birding life list in December 1994 with a Great Egret. He has been an avid birder ever since, and will probably have a story to tell for every bird he has seen.

He was recently asked to teach a beginning birding class to adults in Palo Alto which he accepted and is now working on the second session of that class. Larry is a member of the Environmental Volunteers of Palo Alto and has been teaching elementary school children about birds, animals, water, plants and various other topics for nearly five years. He is an avid supporter of Audubon and has belonged to SCVAS for about 15 years.

Support SCVAS with SVGives on May 5th!

WHAT IS SVGives?

SVGives is one day of giving in which you can donate to your favorite nonprofit. We hope that will be us!

This 24-hour online fundraising effort is hosted by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation and will offer thousands of nonprofits like SCVAS the chance to raise millions of dollars. Your support on May 5, 2015 will directly support our mission – to preserve, enjoy, restore and foster public awareness of native birds and their ecosystems, mainly in Santa Clara County. It's easy to donate, and we'll tell you how it works. Check our website soon for updates!



Staff Changes at SCVAS

As many of you know, we're shaking things up a bit here in the SCVAS office. We are grateful for the support of all of our members and volunteers as we go through these transitions:

Stephanie Ellis has stepped down as our Executive Director and moved into the role of Interim Director of Development.

Welcome to **Cindy von Ofenheim**, the new Office Manager. Cindy comes to us from Portland, where she was an active member of the Portland Audubon Society. We're already enjoying her friendly smile and can-do attitude. Come into the Nature Shop and say hello! She's looking forward to meeting everyone and learning about the local birds.



Jeanne Labozetta takes the reins as our Interim Executive Director, helping us to bridge the transition as we seek for a full time candidate. She comes with many years of experience, and we're looking forward to working with her.

Field Notes

(December 2014-January 2015)

by Bill Bousman

Geese and Ducks

Single **Snow Geese** were seen at Parkway Lakes on 4 Dec (CEd) and the Coyote Reservoir on 6 Jan (CLa, JMD). An immature **Ross's Goose** was found in Shoreline Park on 15 Dec (WGB) and remained in the general area through the end of the period. Seven male **Eurasian Wigeon** were seen on their favored Pond A14 in Alviso on 14 Dec (MMR), and a few remained into January (v.ob.). A male was found in Isabel Valley in the interior of the Diablo Range on 29 Dec (MMR, MJM, NMa), only the second record for the Mt. Hamilton CBC (and Isabel Valley). A male was seen on Coyote Reservoir on 6 and 8 Jan (KPa, MJM). Two were at the South County Regional WasteWater Authority (SCRWA) treatment ponds in Gilroy on 6 Jan (CLa) and singles were there later in January (v.ob.). A single male was again on Almaden Reservoir on 12 Jan (AV). Three **Blue-winged Teal** were seen in the Parkway Lakes on 4 Dec (CEd). Artesian (Mallard) Slough in Alviso continued to be a good place with one to three birds during the period (m.ob.). An adult male was in Pond A14 on 14 Dec (MMR). In the south county, the SCRWA treatment ponds in Gilroy hosted from two to eight birds from 5 Jan (DN) onwards (v.ob.). **Redhead** were found widely in small numbers except for the 380 birds tallied on Pond A18 in Alviso on 23 Dec (MMR). **Ring-necked Ducks** sometimes occur in large numbers. About 100 birds were seen on Almaden Reservoir on 13 Jan (BAM) and the same count was obtained on Grant Lake on 27 Jan (CLa). But imagine the 800+ birds estimated on Coyote Reservoir in January 1999! The long-staying female **White-winged Scoter** on closed refuge ponds was seen again on 14 Dec (MJM, DMcI, DaS, LCr) and 18 Dec (MMR, MJM). The male hybrid **Common X Barrow's Goldeneye** was seen again on the Los Capitancillos percolation ponds on 3-4 Jan (RPa *vide* AV, JPa et al.). One to two female/immature **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were seen on Pond A12 in Alviso on 4 and 14 Dec (WGB, SCR). Another female type was seen on a closed refuge pond on 14 Dec (MJM, DMcI, DaS, LCr). An inland bird on Almaden Reservoir on 11 Jan (BAM) was surprising.

Loons through Shorebirds

Exceptionally heavy rains fell on the Bay area on 11 and 12 Dec. The next day a juvenile **Red-throated Loon** was found in the Los Gatos Creek percolation ponds (KBu). The following day, 14 Dec, was the San Jose CBC and a total of seven Red-throateds were recorded in the

Alviso area (m.ob.). Of the seven, most probably left or dispersed as the weather improved. But one on Pond A16 remained there through at least 18 Jan (m.ob.). A juvenile was found on Shoreline Lake on 19 Dec (GZ) and remained there at least until 28 Jan when two were present (WGB, m.ob.). Birds were also on nearby Pond A1 from at least 23 Dec to 19 Jan, three were counted there on 15 Jan (JStP). Beyond the original inland bird on the Los Gatos Creek percolation ponds, other inland birds were on Calero Reservoir on 27-28 Dec (RCP, MMR), and on the Alamos percolation pond at the west end of Chynoweth on 30 Dec (JPa). Apparently, all of the storm-strewn birds were juveniles. A juvenile **Pacific Loon** was found on Pond

The Solstice Brought Some Extraordinary Rarities Including a Slaty-Backed Gull, Ovenbird, and the First County Record of Lucy's Warbler

A16 on 16 Dec (WGB, GZ, RWR, CLa) and another on Shoreline Lake on 3 Jan (GZ). The latter bird remained on the lake through the end of the period (m.ob.). A **Common Loon** was found on the Almaden Reservoir on 6 Dec (DN), but left the next morning (EO). Following the storm, at least two Commons were on Pond A4 in Sunnyvale or nearby on 14 Dec (DN, SEM, GZ, SCR) and remained there through 18 Dec (v.ob.). The winter brought two **Red-necked Grebes**, both to inland locations. The first was seen on Coyote Reservoir on 9 Dec (SRs, JLD *vide* SCR) and remained there for the period (m.ob.). The second was found on Calero Reservoir on the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC on 27 Dec (RCP) and stayed only through 6 Jan (m.ob.). The long-staying **Pelagic Cormorant** in the outer Alviso ponds was seen again on 14 Dec (SCR), 14 Jan (WGB), and 18 Jan (MMR et al.). Surprisingly, an immature Pelagic Cormorant was found on Calero Reservoir on 1 Jan (MMR), remaining through 5 Jan (v.ob.). The **American Bittern** wintering in the Mountain View Forebay was seen throughout the period (though often missed). Other bitterns were found on the Pond A11 levee on 14 Dec (SCR) and at Calero Reservoir on 14 Jan (JPa et al.). Four or more **Ferruginous Hawks** have been seen in Coyote Valley during the period, a mixture of adults and juveniles and light morphs and dark morphs (m.ob.). Elsewhere, two Ferruginous were near Calaveras Reservoir on 14 Dec (R&RCO, TO *vide* KHo), one was northeast of Hellyer Avenue on 27 Dec (CLa, BAM, MAA), and one was at Ed Levin CP on 3 Jan

(SCR). One or two **Black Rails** were heard near Alviso Slough, one opposite Pond A12 on 14 Dec (SCR), one farther out the slough on 18 Jan (SEM) and 22 Jan (MJM, SM). High water discouraged wintering **Snowy Plovers** in our part of the South Bay. Nine were in Pond A13 in Alviso on 14 Dec and two more were in Coyote Slough that day (MMR). Twenty birds were found on Pond A13 on 18 Dec (MMR, MJM), but only one was there by 11 Jan (PDU). One-to-two **Lesser Yellowlegs** remained in the section of New Chicago Marsh adjacent to Gold and Elizabeth streets through at least 22 Jan (m.ob.). Single birds were also on Pond A12 on 4 and 14 Dec (WGB, SCR), and in a flooded field southeast of Spreckles and Grand on 14 Dec (SCR). **Sanderlings** were only seen on Pond A13 this winter with a count of 26 on 14 Dec (MMR). Numbers dropped as the water levels rose and only three were there on 18 Jan (MMR et al.). The **Wilson's Phalarope** lingering in New Chicago Marsh next to Gold and Elizabeth streets was found again on 14 Dec (v.ob.) and was last seen on 9 Jan (CLa). **Red Phalaropes** occasionally winter off the central California coast, so we anxiously await winter's storms to see if they will bring these ocean masters ashore. One was on Pond A12 on 14 Dec (SCR, MMR), but was gone by the end of the day. Yet that bird or another was found in Pond A16 on 27 Dec (JL).

Gulls through Wrens

An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was in New Chicago Marsh the morning of 18 Dec (SCR), but could not be found in the afternoon. The big gull surprise for January was the discovery of a **Slaty-backed Gull** at Vasona CP, first seen on 28 Jan and identified on 30 Jan (GZ). My guess is that this large Asian gull was feeding at the Guadalupe Landfill and coming to the Vasona Reservoir to bath in the afternoon. This is the third county record for this rare wintering gull. Our only winter period **Black Skimmer** was a single bird at Charleston Slough on 3 Jan (GZ). The **Greater Roadrunner** in the vicinity of the boat launch area at Coyote Reservoir was seen five times during the period (v.ob.). A single bird was seen northeast of Hellyer Avenue on 20 Dec (CLa) and along Silver Creek Road near Heartland Way on 27 Dec (JB *vide* MMR). Single **Short-eared Owls** were seen on Laguna Avenue in Coyote Valley during the period (v.ob.). A **Vaux's Swift** was observed at Felt Lake on 15 Dec (PDU), only the seventh record for the period November to February. An **Allen's Hummingbird** was found along Summit Road near Loma Prieta on 19 Jan (AMR), nearly a month early. Wintering **Lewis's Woodpeckers** continued to be found in substantial numbers, particularly in the Coyote Valley and near Calero Reservoir (m.ob.). It is worth noting that at least 29 Lewis's were tallied in San Antonio and Isabel valleys on 29 Dec (MMR, MJM, NMa, WGB, RPa) where they are found year round. The

Field Notes *cont'd*

puzzle of our rare sapsuckers continued during the period. There is no consensus concerning a well photographed sapsucker at Ed Levin CP with characters of both **Yellow-bellied** and **Red-naped**. To confuse the issue, a different sapsucker photographed there on 24 Jan (BAM) was certainly a male **Yellow-bellied**. A female **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Rancho San Antonio OSP 15-29 Dec (JBa, DMe, LSJ, m.ob.) was also controversial, but there the consensus is holding. Photographs of typical male **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were obtained at Rancho Canada del Oro OSP from 16 Dec to 1 Jan (JPa, DF, v.ob.) and Almaden Lake Park from 27 Dec to the end of the period (JC, BT, GMcC, v.ob.). The only **Pileated Woodpecker** during the period was one in Uvas Canyon CP on 21 Dec (SMcH et al.). The Ogier Avenue ponds were good for **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** this period with one-to-two birds there 25 Dec to 1 Jan (MJM, LCr). Two birds were also seen in Morgan Hill on 27 Dec (B&TH). The CBCs provided a good chance to see **Barn Swallows**, this year more common than the expected Tree and Violet-greens. Substantial counts were 30 at the Alviso EEC on 12 Dec (GZ, DN), 10 at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 14 Dec (SEM, GZ, DN), and eight near the Alviso Marina CP that day as well (MMR). Lowland **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued in low numbers. One was in urban Mountain View 9 & 12 Dec (GZ et al.) and another at the Charleston Road marsh 15 Dec to 19 Jan (MMR, NMa, v.ob.). A **Canyon Wren** was found at the Coyote Reservoir dam on 9 Dec (SRs, JLD *fide* SCR). Two wrens were found the next day (B&TH, RWR) and one or both delighted many through the period. Wintering **House Wrens** included one along the Guadalupe River near the Santa Clara Valley Water District dam on 4 Dec (JPa), at Alamitos and Hicks roads on 1 Jan (JPa), along the San Francisquito Creek Trail on 3 Jan (JL), and at Calero CP on 15 Jan (JPa).

Gnatcatchers through Evening Grosbeaks

Wintering **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** included one to two birds near the Calero Reservoir spillway 27 Dec to 6 Jan (RCP, m.ob.) and one to two birds at the base of the Stile Ranch Trail 27 Dec to the end of the period (GHa, v.ob.). A pair of **American Dippers** were already courting in Los Gatos Creek above the town from 20 Jan to the end of the period (JPa, m.ob.). Four **Mountain Bluebirds** were found on private land in the southeastern county on 8 Jan (SCR). A **Phainopepla** was found along Arroyo Honda on 14 Dec (PDu, ARy *fide* KHo). A male was seen in Isabel Valley on 29 Dec (MMR, MJM, NMa). A third bird was found along the Canada de Pala Trail in Joseph Grant CP on 3 Jan (CED). Rounding out these wintering birds was a male on Roop Road 13 Jan to the end of the period (DN, GZ, v.ob.). Curiously, one or more birds

have wintered near there since early 2012. An **Ovenbird**, apparently on its winter territory, was found on the tree line between power lines and the light industrial area southeast of Charleston Road marsh on 11 Jan (MMR) and has remained during the period (m.ob.). This skulker does not move far from the tree line and only occasionally rewards birder's persistence. The Ovenbird is our first winter record, previous records have been split between late spring and fall. And, if you have the appetite for skulkers, a **Northern Waterthrush** showed up in Charleston Road marsh on 15 Dec (MMR), but heard only. It was finally seen on 19 Jan (JL), but it is a shy bird. This is the 14th year a bird has been found in the marsh. A **Lucy's Warbler** showed up in a gated apartment complex near Ulistac and was photographed there on 29 Dec (SPL *fide* PDu), a first record for the county. It has not been seen subsequently. A side benefit of the search for this rare warbler was the observation of a wintering **Nashville Warbler** on 31 Jan (SCR), one shows up about one year in two. Much less expected was a wintering **Northern Parula** in the Stanford quad on 15 Dec (RFu et al.). This is our ninth county record and the first for the winter period. The **Yellow Warbler** found in the Palo Alto Baylands in November remained through at least 22 Jan (m.ob.). Wintering **Black-throated Gray Warblers** are slightly more common than Yellows. A 1st-winter female was found in Charleston Road marsh on 15 Dec (MMR, NMa) and has occasionally rewarded Ovenbird searchers at least through 19 Jan (v.ob.). A male was seen in Willow Glen on 29 Jan (BAM). Wintering **Chipping Sparrows** have been found more-or-less regularly in either Jeffrey Fontana or TJ Martin parks during the period with a high count of four on 20 Dec (JPa). The only **Bell's Sparrows** noted during the Mt. Hamilton CBC on 29 Dec (WGB, RPa) were two in the San Antonio Valley. Wintering **Grasshopper Sparrows** included one on the northwestern side of Calero Reservoir 3-6 Jan (SCT, AV, WGB) and another on the Stile Ranch Trail on 20 Jan (MJM). The wintering **Swamp Sparrow** at the Palo Baylands continued through 22 Jan (v.ob.). Another wintering bird was along Alviso Slough below the marina on 14 Dec (SCR). Over the period, 13 **White-throated Sparrows** were found, from Ed Levin CP to Sanborn-Skyline CP, but most have been on the flatlands (m.ob.). Two additional birds were at feeders. A **Western Tanager** was heard again in Mountain View on 22 Dec (MDo). A male was in a Campbell yard on 3 Jan and perhaps the same bird there again on 29 Jan (LMy). A 1st-winter male **Black-headed Grosbeak** was at a Los Altos feeder on 6 and 21 Jan (JT *fide* PDu). A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was in Halls Valley on 27 Jan (CLa), only our second January record. High winter counts of **Great-tailed Grackles** were 36 on the Ogier Avenue ponds on 27 Dec (KHo, RPa), followed closely by 35 on Lake Cunningham on 14 Dec (JPa *fide*



(KHo). Presumably, an immature **Bullock's Oriole** in the vicinity of the Sunnyvale WPCP on 16 Dec (BAM) and 20 Dec (JL), and near the Sunnyvale West Channel on 31 Jan (SCR) were the same overwintering bird. A late report of a male **Cassin's Finch** on the summit of Mt. Hamilton on 5 Nov (EG) was the first since 2008, most records are from November. The high count of **Pine Siskins** in the period was of 100 at Jeffrey Fontana Park on 20 Dec (JPa). The only report of **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was of two in San Antonio Valley on 29 Dec (WGB, RPa). A small invasion of **Evening Grosbeaks** occurred with four to five on Diericx in Mountain View on 17 Dec (JMD, LH). By New Year's Day, they were being found in Sunnyvale on a number of streets with Chinese pistache (Heatherstone, Knickerbocker, Mango, Maranta, etc.). Some high counts included 29 over Diericx on 4 Jan (GZ et al., ViT) and 17 on Mango and Knickerbocker on 11 Jan (DD). There were no reports after 13 Jan.

Observers: Mary Ann Allan (MAA), Jim Barrett (JB), Joyce Bartlett (JBa), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KBu), Julie Chamberlin (JCh), Rob & Rita Colwell (R&RCo), Lea Crisp (LCr), Mike Danzenbaker (JMD), David Diller (DD), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Jon Dunn (JLD), Pete Duntun (PDu), Craige Edgerton (CED), Diane Finke (DF), Rob Furrow (RFu), Elinor Gates (EG), Beth & Tom Hamel (B&TH), Garth Harwood (GHa), Kirsten Holmquist (KHo), Lisa Hug (LH), Linda Johnson (LSJ), Caroline Lambert (CLA), Jasen Liu (JL), Nateri Madavan (NMa), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Steve Mammoser (SM), Gini McCreary (JMcC), Steve McHenry (SMcH), David McIntyre (DMcI), Donna Meyer (DMe), Brooke Miller (BAM), Steve Miller (SEM), Lisa Myers (LMy), David Nickerson (DN), Tom Olson (TO), Eric Ongman (EO), Rich Page (RPa), Kathy Parker (KPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Stephan Pleines (SPL), Bob Power (RCP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AMR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rose (SRs), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Allen Royer (ARy), Dale Stahlecker (DaS), Jason St. Pierre (JStP), Bob Toleno (BT), Jack Tomlin (JT), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Steve Tracy (SCT), Ann Verdi (AV), and Gena Zolotar (GZ).

Welcome Aboard to the new Field Notes Compiler, Peter Duntun!

RARITIES: Please drop me a note: Pete Duntun, pduntun@gmail.com

The 2015 SCVAS Spring Birdathon Wants YOU!

The annual Spring Birdathon is SCVAS's major fundraising campaign of the year and raises money for our Conservation and Education programs. It runs from March 28 through April 26, 2015 and includes Guided and Self-Guided Birding Teams. Help us preserve natural spaces and introduce kids to nature! Here are some of the ways you can participate:

1. Donate: Sponsor an individual team member by visiting www.scvas.org.birdathon to make your donation online. You can also mail a check made payable to SCVAS (please note the name of the individual to be sponsored on the check) to our office at: 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, CA 95014.

2. Birdathon - Join a Guided Team: Join one of our guided 4-hour, 24-hour or Big Sit teams (see below) and fundraise for SCVAS. Visit our website, www.scvas.org.birdathon, to pick and register for a team. These teams fill up quickly so sign up early. Each individual must either donate or raise \$50.

3. Birdathon - Create a Self-Guided Team: Fundraise for SCVAS by getting your fellow birders and friends together and make your own 4-hour, 24-hour or Big Sit team birding within Santa Clara County. Your outing must be between March 28 and April 26, 2015. Visit our website, www.scvas.org.birdathon, to register your team. Each individual must either donate or raise \$50.

Win Prizes: Both the Guided and Self-Guided teams compete for most bird species counted and most money raised. You can ask sponsors to donate a lump sum or a set amount per bird species counted. Be a top fundraiser and win one of our great fundraising prizes. Check the website to see the list of great 2015 prizes. For more information on how to join a Guided or Self-Guided Birdathon team, raise money and compete for prizes, go to www.scvas.org.birdathon.

For more, see "Birdathon Guided Teams" next page

We will get the Birdathon started with a "Kick-Off Party" to be held at SCVAS headquarters on March 12th at 6:30PM.

Live music - provided by "John Henry's Farm" - and light refreshments will be provided. Check the website for more details.

SCVAS Spring Wishlist

While dogs may age 7 years for every one of ours, we've begun to realize that *computers* age about 20 years for every human year. Which makes the collective age of our office computers something that rivals the Live Oak trees here at McClellan Ranch Preserve...

If you're looking for a way to support SCVAS with an in-kind donation, please consider the gift of technology. Specifically, Apple computers that are running **Mac OS 10.9 or higher**. Our financial and donor tracking software - not to mention



those of us that have to use them - will be forever grateful!

Contact Cindy in the main office at scvas@scvas.org or 408-252-3740.

The Cavender's Gift to Sustain SCVAS

You may have seen Ann and Morse Cavender at an SCVAS General Meeting or field trip not all that long ago. If you had talked with them, you might have learned that they were avid travelers, orchid fanciers, and animal lovers. Or that after a distinguished career at SRI, Morse, with Ann's help, created an independent consulting practice that served clients as diverse as The South African Wool Board and 20th Century Fox.

Sadly, the Cavenders have left us, with Ann passing away in 2012 and Morse in 2013. We recently learned they remembered SCVAS, leaving a substantial gift "to be used for its general support and/or for its mission." Their generosity has earned the Cavenders an honored place in the growing circle of 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 all who care about them.

The SCVAS Legacy Fund

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society Legacy Fund supports the SCVAS in its efforts to foster public awareness of native birds and their ecosystems. The fund is dedicated to helping SCVAS meet future environmental challenges and undertake new educational and conservation initiatives in its fulfillment of this mission. Including the Legacy Fund in your estate planning is one of the best ways you can ensure that SCVAS remains a powerful advocate for birds and their habitats. Your bequest will create an enduring gift so that future generations are able to enjoy the natural beauty of the Santa Clara Valley area.

Go "Guided" - Join one of our Prearranged Spring Birdathon Teams

We are looking for all levels of birders to join one of our prearranged Big-sit, 4-hour, or 24-hour (maximum count time) Guided Birdathon teams. All you have to do is raise the minimum requirement of \$50, grab your binoculars and go birding! Beginners can out-compete experts for great prizes by gathering more donations. Space on guided teams is limited. Additional details - including registration information, deadlines and team descriptions - available online at www.scvas.org/birdathon.

Persistent Picidae

Lisa Myers

Saturday, April 11

The Picidae will start at 7:30 AM and count until dusk in select spots around Santa Clara County. This is the perfect team regardless of your birding skill level - everyone is welcome, you'll have a great time and team members are gracious and helpful for all who wish to participate. If you need a pair of binoculars, let Lisa know and they will be provided. Team limited to 20. Full day. 100+ species.

24-hour Birdathon Teams

(for any team out for more than 4 hours)

The Fledglings

Pati Rouzer

Saturday, April 18

This team, led by an avid birder and international trip leader, welcomes young birders ages 8-16. Birders must have basic binocular and ID skills, interest to bird for six hours, and a willing parent to accompany them. Begin at 7:30 AM, break for a 30-minute lunch and continue to approximately 2:00 PM.

Rock Wrens

Bob Hirt

Saturday, April 18

Join this long-time birder and SCVAS Board President for an active day in the field. Start early for owls in the western foothills, zigzag to the Bay for shorebirds, and then climb up the eastern slope, ending after dusk. Bob is ready to help beginning birders join the excitement! Predawn-to-dusk. 140+ species.

Varied Twitchers

Mike Rogers

Saturday, April 25

This is a high intensity day with one of the Bay Area's premier birders. Start your big-day early with owling and continue until sunset. Joining this team is a perfect way to celebrate John J. Audubon who was born on this day in 1785! Predawn-to-dusk. 160+ species.



Cupertino Creek Cruisers

Deborah Jamison

Sunday, April 19

(rain date April 26)

Take a leisurely one-mile stroll along Stevens Creek from McClellan Road to Stevens Creek Blvd. as we conduct the Creek Cruiser's twelfth annual spring bird survey. After the first four Birdathon hours, you are invited to continue on for about two hours more to complete the survey by birding

4-hour Birdathon Teams

the Stockmeir property where Cupertino's creek restoration project is newly completed! We will attempt to see or hear 50 species.

Mean Green Birding Machines

Rob Furrow

Sunday, April 19

Go green and go mean! This whirlwind bayside *biking*

adventure starts by Crittenden Marsh and heads over to Charleston Slough, encompassing a surprising array of habitats. The MGBM will bike roughly 10 miles at a moderate pace. It's not about speed, it's about enthusiasm for the birds! High-performance road bikes are not recommended for these trails - use your own judgment. Bird and bike from 6:45 AM

to 10:45 AM. 80+ species.

Oh-my Godwits - Photography Team

Beth Hamel

Saturday, April 11

This team will attempt to photograph 110 species in a 24 hour period - we move fast, but we have fun! Please join us for any or all of that awesome day outside. Beginning birders and beginning bird photographers welcome! 110+ species.

Data Sets

Stephanie Ellis

Stephanie will migrate over to Charleston Slough in Mountain View for a morning of shorebirds in an area perfectly situated between multiple habitats to see how many species can be seen from one circle! The Big-sit Birdathon is perfect for those who don't want to spend a lot of time chasing around town. 8 AM to noon. 40+ species.

Big-sit Challenge Birdathon Teams (Sun, April 12th; 8AM-12PM)

Cheeky Chickadees

Debbie Thompson

The Chickadees will join the Big Sit challenge this year to compete to see the most bird species from one circle. Location to be announced. 8 AM to noon. 40+ species.

Eagle Eyes

Gena Zolotar

Gena will take-over for Bob Power to continue this Big-sit Challenge team. They will be counting from the north face of Coyote Lake at the dam. 40+ species.



2014 Christmas Bird Count Summaries

Palo Alto CBC

by Al Eisner, Compiler

The Dec. 15 Palo Alto CBC was beset by rain, but at all but the highest elevations this was primarily before 8 AM and for up to two hours midday, with other periods dry. Despite differences in the weather, however, we achieved the same total species count, 161, as in each of the two previous years. The large storm four days earlier did have an impact, affecting habitat in overfull wetlands near the Bay, but perhaps also bringing in the Loons noted below. The number of participants dropped to 89 from last year's impressive 119 (Come on, folks!).

This was a year for widespread Varied Thrushes (seen by nearly 3/4 of all parties) and Pine Siskins, and our third-highest-ever total of Band-tailed Pigeons. But we missed all of our "regular vagrant" waterfowl: Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal and Barrow's Goldeneye! Also missing were seven other regular species: Ring-necked Pheasant, Common Gallinule, Ruddy Turnstone, Wilson's Snipe, Black

Skimmer, Barn Owl, and Pileated Woodpecker. These were partly compensated for by a good number of unusual species; descriptions provided were vetted by our rare bird committee (aka Mike Rogers).



Most unusual were the count's first Northern Parula, found by Rob Furrow's party at Stanford, and the count's first identified Vaux's Swift (we have one previous record of a chaetura swift, sp.), seen by Pete Dunten at Felt Lake. The Shoreline Great-tailed Grackles would also have been firsts, but decided to not cooperate (hence only a count-week species). An adult Bald Eagle at Felt Lake (Pete and Al Eisner) was only the

third in the count's history. An impressive 39 Violet-green Swallows were tallied: 25 by Sophia Christel at Searsville Lake, plus 2 near the Bay, 10 by us at Felt Lake, and 2 at the nearby Palo Alto Hills golf course. Rarer were two Barn Swallows (third count appearance): 1 by Mike Mammoser near the Sunnyvale WPCP, and 1 identified by Pete Dunten at Felt Lake.

A Ross's Goose was at Shoreline (Bill Bousman), a Red-naped Sapsucker at Rancho San Antonio (identified via Caroline Lambert's post-count photographs) and one each Red-throated and Common Loons at the private Bear Gulch Reservoir (San Mateo Co., Bob Power). Lark Sparrows were located near the Stanford Dish (Chris O'Connell), while Mike Rogers found the "stakeout" Yellow Warbler and Swamp Sparrow at the Palo Alto Baylands, and added both Northern Waterthrush and Black-throated Gray Warbler at the Charleston Road marsh.

Thanks, as always, to Jack Cole for organizing the counters, and to all those who participated, rain or (not shine but) clouds.

San Jose CBC

by Kirsten Holmquist

Coordinator and Compiler

The San Jose count went forward this year under cool but clear conditions. We broke 180 for the first time ever with 182 species recorded. Our previous high was in 2012 with 179. Many thanks to all the volunteers who contributed their time and energy to make this happen.

This year, a rail stole the show. Making an appearance for the first time since the 1970's and only the second time ever, Steve Rottenborn had a Black Rail calling on the southwest side of Alviso Slough. Ridgeway's / Clapper Rail also made its first appearance on the count in almost 20 years, courtesy of Mike Rogers at Triangle Marsh.

Two geese were found: Greater White-Fronted Goose (1, Lake Cunningham, Karen Burnson) and Cackling Goose (4, Lake Cunningham, Ron & Barbara McDow; 1, Warm Springs trail head, Mary Wisnewski, Bill Walker, Mike Azevedo & Randall Sage; 1, San Jose WPCP,

Charles Coston, Sandra Gant & Michael Bothe). Several unusual ducks were also sited: White-winged Scoter (1, Pond A-8, Mike Mammoser, David McIntyre, Dale Stahlecker & Lea Crisp – another species that has only been reported once before in the 1970's), Eurasian Wigeon (7, Pond A-14, Mike Rogers), Barrow's Goldeneye (2, Pond A-12, Steve Rottenborn; 1, Pond A-5, Mike Mammoser et al), and Blue-Winged Teal (1, Pond A-14, Mike Rogers; 2, Mallard Slough, Steve Tracey, Bruce Barrett, Kate Gudmundson & Bruce Berman; 1, Coyote Lagoon, Kirsten Holmquist & Arnel Guanlao). A Pelagic Cormorant was teased out of the Double-Cresteds between Pond A-11 and A-14 by Steve Rottenborn. Exceptional raptors included Ferruginous Hawk (2, Calaveras Reservoir, Rob & Rita Colwell and Tom Olson) and Osprey (1, Lake Cunningham, Janna Pauser).

We had some exceptional shorebirds as well. Mike Rogers and Steve Rottenborn found a Red Phalarope on Pond A-12 while a Wilson's Phalarope was seen by Bruce Barrett and crew. Lesser Yellowlegs were

seen at a couple locations (2, near Alviso Marina, Bruce Barrett et al; 2, Warm Springs trail head, Bill Walker et al). A Common Loon was found by Steve Miller, Gena Zolotar, and David Nickerson near the WPCP. More surprising was the large numbers of Red-throated Loons hanging around. Mike Rogers and Steve Rottenborn combined to nab 5, Steven Tracey et al found one on Pond A-16, and Mike Mammoser et al found another on Pond A-8.

Phainopepla came back to the count after an absence of several years with a single individual seen by Pete Dunten and Allen Royer at Arroyo Honda. A few White-throated Sparrows were recorded: 1, Ed Levin County Park, Bob Power; 1, Coyote Creek riparian, Ann Verdi. Steve Rottenborn managed to find a Swamp Sparrow along Alviso Slough. Great-tailed Grackles made an appearance in two locations: 35, Lake Cunningham, Janna Pauser; 3, Sunnyvale Baylands, Steve Miller et al. Lastly, Violet-Green and Barn Swallows were noted by many parties throughout the count circle.

Count Summaries *cont'd*

Calero-Morgan Hill CBC
Ann Verdi
Coordinator and Compiler

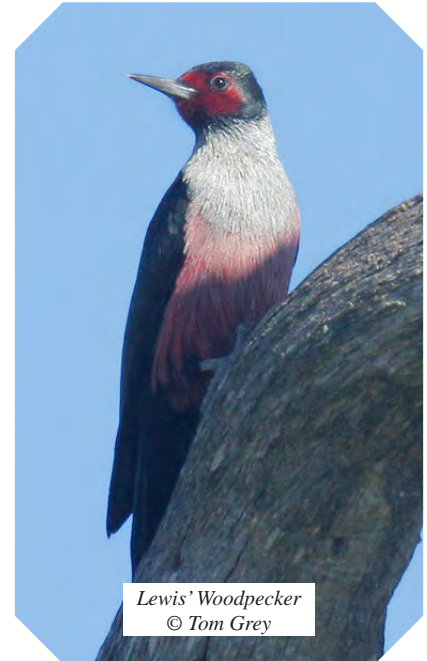
The Calero-Morgan Hill CBC was held on Dec 27, 2014 under fair skies, cold in the morning but warming up to the 50's by mid-day. We ended up with 148 species on count day which is a bit higher than our average. However, due to prolonged drought conditions overall numbers were down for some species. Dry wetlands appear to have affected the numbers of some waterfowl such as Common Merganser, while diminished resources also appear to have affected the numbers of some land birds such as Red-winged Blackbird.

Perhaps because of these conditions, the results of this CBC were interesting and somewhat unusual, especially with the irruption of several species. The fall incursion of Lewis's Woodpeckers continued into the winter, and 19 were tallied for the count with most sightings centered around Coyote Valley and nearby vicinity. Over 700 Varied Thrush were seen throughout the count circle with over 400 alone counted in the San Felipe area. Over 100 Pine Siskins were also counted. And then

there were all those Band-tailed Pigeons (where did they come from...?). Close to 1500 were recorded on count day, but the actual number may be higher.

We added two new species for this count - a Red-necked Grebe seen at Calero Reservoir, and a Red-naped Sapsucker seen at Almaden Lake Park.

Here is a run-down of additional highlights: one Greater White-fronted Goose at a pond near Metcalf Rd & Monterey Hwy - two Cackling Geese (one seen in the same pond and one seen in Coyote Valley) - a male Red-breasted Merganser at Calero Reservoir - a Red-throated Loon also at Calero Reservoir - 14 raptor species seen in Coyote Valley, including Bald Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon and Prairie Falcon - one Greater Roadrunner in the San Felipe area - one Burrowing Owl on Coyote Ridge - one Short-eared Owl along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley - swallows noted include three N. Rough-winged Swallows (one at Ogier Ponds and two in Morgan Hill), two Barn Swallows at Ogier Ponds, plus a count week Violet-green Swallow at Ogier Ponds - two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at Calero County Park - two Chipping Sparrows at Jeffrey



Lewis' Woodpecker
© Tom Grey

Fontana Park in suburban Almaden - and 36 Great-tailed Grackles at Ogier Ponds.

As always, my thanks to the leaders of each sector and to all participants for a successful count day. Your efforts were definitely worth it. For now - good birding in 2015.

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Mt. Hamilton CBC
by Bob Hirt
Mt. Hamilton CBC Compiler

Mount Hamilton is spectacular when the weather is clear and cold. We got both this year again on our December 29, 2014 count day (as low as 22 F degrees). Views of the Sierra on one side and the Pacific on the other. We had black ice in spots on the East slope and ground fog so very careful driving was needed. No snow this year though. Kirsten Holmquist found her Townsend's Solitaire in the same spot as the last two years. Mike Rogers, Mike Mammoser and Nateri Madavan found 5 Ring-billed Gulls at the Isabel Reservoir for a count first and a Eurasian Wigeon as well. Charles Coston picked up an Orange-crowned Warbler for another

unusual species for up there. Another "possible" Cassin's finch (unphotographed) had to be listed as a *Carpodacus* sp. The count had one of those Sierra specialties reported one time in the past.

We found 102 species (average for us) and 6,894 individuals (low). Ducks and water birds were down since many of the ponds on the ranches were frozen. Quail were much lower than normal, but Band-tailed Pigeons were at record levels (458). Lawrence's Goldfinches had an off-year with only 13 found versus 356 last year. Oak Titmouse at 333 was an eight year high. Lewis' Woodpecker numbers (30) were low.

Thanks to our leaders and the participants for a great count again. Special thank you to Elinor Gates for again hosting the Compilation Dinner at her home atop the mountain.



Eurasian Wigeon
© Tom Grey

2014 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Species	SJ 12/14/14	PA 12/15/14	MtH 12/29/14	Cal-MH 12/27/14	Species	SJ 12/14/14	PA 12/15/14	MtH 12/29/14	Cal-MH 12/27/14
Greater White-fronted Goose	1	-	-	1	Red-tailed Hawk	142	58	35	134
Ross's Goose	-	1	-	-	Ferruginous Hawk	2	-	-	7
Cackling Goose	6	-	-	2	buteo, sp	1	-	-	-
Canada Goose	1747	665	14	270	Golden Eagle	20	2	8	18
Wood Duck	6	28	2	68	Black Rail	1	-	-	-
Gadwall	341	143	2	19	Ridgway's (Clapper) Rail	1	1	-	-
Eurasian Wigeon	7	-	1	-	Virginia Rail	48	4	1	-
American Wigeon	3083	47	194	5	Sora	68	1	1	2
Mallard	1224	932	77	674	Common Gallinule	4	-	-	2
Blue-winged Teal	5	-	-	-	American Coot	10337	1946	270	711
Cinnamon Teal	110	5	-	-	Black-necked Stilt	419	330	-	2
Northern Shoveler	6534	3417	1	2	American Avocet	3009	1498	-	-
Northern Pintail	5315	103	-	-	Black-bellied Plover	312	323	-	-
Green-winged Teal	1506	195	-	10	Snowy Plover	11	-	-	-
Canvasback	914	1365	2	3	Semipalmated Plover	25	255	-	-
Redhead	14	20	-	-	Killdeer	63	13	12	150
Ring-necked Duck	53	195	35	74	Spotted Sandpiper	9	2	-	10
Greater Scaup	365	399	-	19	Greater Yellowlegs	50	64	3	1
Lesser Scaup	1221	240	-	26	Willet	383	1142	-	-
<i>aythya</i> , sp	810	2041	-	-	Lesser Yellowlegs	4	-	-	-
Surf Scoter	62	24	-	-	Whimbrel	-	5	-	-
White-winged Scoter	1	-	-	-	Long-billed Curlew	163	135	-	-
Bufflehead	1695	428	85	99	Marbled Godwit	303	5282	-	-
Common Goldeneye	476	190	-	12	Sanderling	26	-	-	-
Barrow's Goldeneye	3	-	-	-	Dunlin	1870	579	-	-
Hooded Merganser	29	51	7	13	Least Sandpiper	1119	1226	-	-
Common Merganser	17	12	37	46	Western Sandpiper	1031	12835	-	-
Red-breasted Merganser	146	2	-	1	peep, sp	1220	21510	-	-
Ruddy Duck	9055	5525	126	298	Short-billed Dowitcher	3	3	-	-
duck, sp		910	2633	10	Long-billed Dowitcher	55	40	-	-
California Quail	115	87	164	215	dowitcher, sp	2386	895	-	-
Ring-necked Pheasant	2	-	-	-	Wilson's Snipe	57	-	-	4
Wild Turkey	175	54	29	176	Wilson's Phalarope	1	-	-	-
Red-throated Loon	7	1	-	1	Red Phalarope	1	-	-	-
Common Loon	2	1	-	-	Bonaparte's Gull	464	810	-	-
Pied-billed Grebe	142	74	19	40	Mew Gull	80	13	-	1
Horned Grebe	64	8	-	2	Ring-billed Gull	2304	271	5	44
Red-necked Grebe	-	-	-	1	Western Gull	172	23	-	1
Eared Grebe	4955	282	-	13	California Gull	3035	677	-	4663
Western Grebe	224	65	-	27	Herring Gull	3529	19	-	3654
Clark's Grebe	108	3	-	1	Thayer's Gull	308	4	-	326
<i>aechmophorus</i> , sp	2	16	-	-	Glaucous-winged Gull	319	48	-	42
Double-crested Cormorant	962	420	9	144	Glaucous-winged x Western	1	3	-	-
Pelagic Cormorant	1	-	-	-	Glaucous x Herring Gull	1	-	-	-
American White Pelican	138	7	-	2	gull, sp	6570	980	-	1320
Brown Pelican	9	6	-	-	Forster's Tern	70	10	-	-
American Bittern	1	CW	-	-	Rock Pigeon	1395	565	11	585
Great Blue Heron	58	21	5	32	Band-tailed Pigeon	844	1087	458	1480
Great Egret	96	46	1	23	Eurasian Collared-Dove	85	37	14	131
Snowy Egret	149	88	-	16	Mourning Dove	595	227	40	300
Green Heron	5	2	-	5	Greater Roadrunner	-	-	-	1
Black-crowned Night-Heron	337	63	-	4	Barn Owl	-	-	-	4
Turkey Vulture	370	67	3	242	Western Screech-Owl	2	3	1	6
Osprey	1	-	-	3	Great Horned Owl	13	7	9	15
White-tailed Kite	22	10	-	6	Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	1	-	-
Bald Eagle	7	1	3	5	Burrowing Owl	4	2	-	1
Northern Harrier	40	7	1	23	Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	4	4	4	Vaux's Swift	-	1	-	-
Cooper's Hawk	12	7	2	16	White-throated Swift	185	2	5	60
<i>accipiter</i> , sp	1	1	-	1	Anna's Hummingbird	312	211	21	372
Red-shouldered Hawk	16	30	1	45	Belted Kingfisher	13	6	6	20

Species	SJ 12/14/14	PA 12/15/14	MtH 12/29/14	Cal-MH 12/27/14
Lewis's Woodpecker	-	-	30	19
Acorn Woodpecker	252	252	299	681
Red-naped Sapsucker	-	1	-	1
Yellow-bellied/Red-naped Sapsucker	1	-	-	-
Red-breasted Sapsucker	15	6	6	18
Nuttall's Woodpecker	70	74	39	130
Downy Woodpecker	16	5	2	16
Hairy Woodpecker	4	9	11	11
Northern (Red-Shafted) Flicker	170	85	56	126
Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker	-	1	-	-
Northern (Red x Yellow) Flicker	-	-	-	2
Northern Flicker, unidentified form	-	-	15	-
woodpecker, sp	4	-	-	-
American Kestrel	57	11	7	53
Merlin	8	2	3	6
Peregrine Falcon	12	9	-	4
Prairie Falcon	1	-	1	2
<i>falco</i> , sp	1	-	-	-
Black Phoebe	303	179	11	193
Say's Phoebe	43	9	4	50
Loggerhead Shrike	9	4	1	7
Hutton's Vireo	8	10	1	14
Steller's Jay	105	196	19	226
Western Scrub-Jay	347	361	299	695
Yellow-billed Magpie	136	-	93	81
American Crow	736	1038	28	596
Common Raven	113	133	82	132
Horned Lark	11	-	-	157
Violet-green Swallow	23	39	-	cw
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	-	-	-	3
Barn Swallow	37	2	-	2
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	138	429	3	168
Oak Titmouse	77	283	333	276
Bushtit	895	686	68	542
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	2	-	-
White-breasted Nuthatch	52	71	97	169
Pygmy Nuthatch	-	12	-	-
Brown Creeper	9	36	2	9
Rock Wren	6	-	-	9
House Wren	1	-	-	-
Pacific Wren	1	2	-	1
Marsh Wren	120	10	-	2
Bewick's Wren	68	133	11	80
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	-	-	-	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	5	3	6	-
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	203	154	32	268
Wrentit	8	33	37	67
Western Bluebird	199	147	97	212
Towson's Solitaire	-	-	1	-
Hermit Thrush	102	160	28	363
American Robin	2843	2086	204	1891
Varied Thrush	123	326	36	731
California Thrasher	7	19	37	24
Northern Mockingbird	88	25	3	100
European Starling	1811	429	438	1273
American Pipit	76	47	1	53
Cedar Waxwing	1065	582	-	142
Phainopepla	1	-	3	-
Northern Waterthrush	-	1	-	-
Orange-crowned Warbler	5	4	1	1
Common Yellowthroat	91	21	-	4

Species	SJ 12/14/14	PA 12/15/14	MtH 12/29/14	Cal-MH 12/27/14
Northern Parula	-	1	-	-
Yellow Warbler	-	1	-	-
Yellow-rumped Warbler (form ?)	1225	118	11	771
(Audubon's)	160	306	22	129
(Myrtle)	3	38	-	5
Black-throated Gray Warbler	-	1	-	-
Townsend's Warbler	18	95	-	10
Spotted Towhee	55	114	64	177
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	12	-	-	20
California Towhee	306	330	78	309
Chipping Sparrow	-	-	-	2
Lark Sparrow	97	6	1	24
Sage Sparrow	-	-	4	-
Savannah Sparrow	250	54	20	136
Fox Sparrow	37	25	-	22
Fox Sparrow (Sooty)	-	-	23	-
Fox Sparrow (Slate-colored)	-	-	2	-
Fox Sparrow (unidentified form)	-	-	29	-
Song Sparrow	410	75	6	101
Lincoln's Sparrow	58	9	-	17
Swamp Sparrow	1	1	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	2	3	-	1
White-crowned Sparrow	1752	909	310	1210
Golden-crowned Sparrow	969	1188	285	1277
sparrow, sp	-	106	107	1559
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	609	1142	1110	887
(Slate-colored)	-	-	-	2
Red-winged Blackbird	330	135	66	286
Tricolored Blackbird	1	-	125	349
Western Meadowlark	671	337	144	287
Brewer's Blackbird	397	495	193	1328
Great-tailed Grackle	48	CW	-	36
Brown-headed Cowbird	160	52	-	99
blackbird, sp	127	77	40	155
Bullock's Oriole	CW	-	-	-
House Finch	1244	603	38	669
Purple Finch	6	23	75	24
<i>Carpodacus finch sp.</i>	-	-	1	-
Pine Siskin	57	56	3	122
Lesser Goldfinch	215	222	32	265
Lawrence's Goldfinch	-	-	13	-
American Goldfinch	49	5	-	80
goldfinch, sp	-	4	4	7
Evening Grosbeak	-	CW	-	-
House Sparrow	108	16	12	48
Total Species	181	161	102	149
Total individual birds	107,092	87,862	2,692	35,245

Key:

sp= species undetermined

CW = Count Week

SJ = San Jose: compiled by Kirsten Holmquist

PA = Palo Alto: compiled by Al Eisner

MtH = Mount Hamilton: compiled by Bob Hirt

Cal-MH = Calero-Morgan Hill: compiled by Ann Verdi

Data entry and chart format by Bonnie Bedford-White. Listing order has been adjusted to reflect the most recent ABA checklist: version 7.7, September, 2014

Spring and Summer Adventures for Children

Keep your eye on the calendar for these fun Young Audubon activities for children and families coming up soon! Space may be limited - so don't wait to sign up!



Conservation in Action: Bird Banding with SFBBO

Saturday, April 25th
8:00am-10:00am

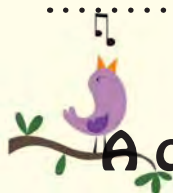


Join us at the peak of the spring migration for a special opportunity to witness live bird banding demonstrations by experts from the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO).

Location: Coyote Creek Field Station (near McCarthy Ranch), Milpitas

Cost: \$25/family (or \$8/child and \$10/adult)

**** Children MUST be accompanied by a parent or guardian**



Wingding Family Fest:

A celebration of Spring and All Things Winged!

Saturday, May 9th
10:00am-3:00pm

Join SCVAS and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District for a FREE event for all ages at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve. No advance registration required, though some activities have limited space.

Highlights will include bird and nature walks, geocache walks, arts-and-crafts, and some live bird guests!



Summer Nature Days

(in partnership with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and Shoreline at Mountain View)

Outdoor Day Camps for Grades 2-6

July 20th-July 24th
9:00am-3:00pm



Come explore with us at McClellan Ranch Preserve, Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve, Shoreline Lake, and Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve

Don't wait to register - Summer will be here sooner than you think!

Full details and registration information available online (go to www.scvas.org - click on "Kids' Corner")

2014-2015 Friends of SCVAS

Gifts received between December 1st, 2014 and January 31st, 2015

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Foundation Support

We would like to give a huge organizational thank you to the Michael Lee Environmental Foundation for their very generous 5 year commitment to Wildlife Education Day.

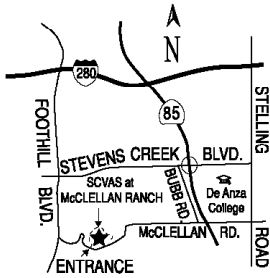


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Board of Directors Elections

The Nominating Committee of the SCVAS Board of Directors is calling for member petitions for new members of the Board of Directors pursuant to Section 6.02 of the Bylaws. Petitions must be delivered to the SCVAS office by March 31, 2015.

Voice vote elections will be held during our Annual Meeting and potluck on June 17, 2015 at our office in McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino.

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'12-'15

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'12-'15

Vivek Khanzode

'14-'17

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

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10 AM - 5 PM

Saturday

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Office Fax

408/252-2850

Office E-mail

scvas@scvas.org

Website

www.scvas.org

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

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

Avocet Editors: Toby Goldberg, Cara Kuhn
Avocet Line Drawings: Bonnie Bedford-White

2015 Volume 62, Number 2

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.