



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

March-April 2016

We invite YOU to join the Spring Birdathon!



Santa Clara County bird fans: it's almost time for our annual Spring Birdathon -- our annual birding contest and primary fundraiser for the year, with exciting prizes! Proceeds support SCVAS Conservation and Education programs, bringing more kids to nature!

To entice birders of all ages and skill levels to compete, we offer options to suit everyone (see below). So get ready for the **2016 Spring Birdathon contest window March 26 to May 1**. You can sign up, read the contest rules, ask questions, and learn about our prizes at: www.scvas.org/birdathon



Option 1: Join a guided team
Our guided teams showcase spring in Santa Clara County. (see page 6). Pick a team, leader, or intensity level that suits you -- from all-day races to 4-hour "Big Sits" and register online for a \$50 donation.

Option 2: Form your own team

It's easy! Choose at least 2 team members, a birding date, a (goofy) team name, and a birding location. It could be your family, your birding friends, your lunch-time walking pals -- anyone! Pick a category for your team, register, go birding together, and record your total species and dollars raised.
Note: You must register to qualify for prizes.

- "Big Sit"** - spend up to four hours inside a 30-foot radius circle. Chairs allowed!
- 4-hour birding** - start the timer and go birding for up to 4 hours
- "24-hour" birding** - any outing longer than 4 hours counts, up to a full day
- Photographers** - go get those bird photos, on a 4-hour or 24-hour trip

We ask you to raise \$50 (or more!) for each team member through fundraising or your own contribution -- it's for a good cause!

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

Wednesday, March 16th
"Ebird: Innovating Citizen-Science, Big Data Research, And Bird Conservation"
with Brian Sullivan

Join Brian Sullivan as he talks about how eBird connects a world-wide network of birders, their millions of observations, and data science to help save birds. Learn how a novel approach to crowdsourcing and bird lovers are creating a vast data resource for science and conservation.



Left: Red-shouldered Hawk; Photo ©Brian Sullivan. Right: "Filling the Tub"; Photo ©M. Prather.

(Additional information and directions available at www.scvas.org or by calling 408-252-3747)

Wednesday, April 20th
"Important Bird Areas: Owens Lake in Owens Valley"
with Andrea Jones



Audubon has fought for a conservation agreement at Owens Lake in the eastern Sierra for the past six years. This is one of the important sources of water for Los Angeles and Andrea Jones will tell the story of the birds that migrate through Owens Valley and her work to protect them.

Field Notes (December '15-January '16)

CBC Parties Find Some Winter Gems - Including Red Crossbills and an Orchard Oriole!



Orchard Oriole
Photo courtesy Will Brooks

Full Field Notes lists are available online: go to www.scvas.org/fieldnotes

Please send notice of rarities to Pete Dunten via email at pdunten@gmail.com

Mar-Apr '16 Field Trips

(Full details for all of our Field Trips are also available online at www.scvas.org)

Please carpool if possible; bring binoculars, field guides, layered clothing.

LO = Lunch optional; **RC** = Heavy rain cancels; **NF** = No facilities available

Wednesday Mar. 2, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leaders:** Freddy Howell and Allen Royer. No RSVP necessary, but contact the landfill coordinator, Silviana Ruiz, for directions or more details (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. **RC**

Saturday Mar. 5, 8:00 AM

Windy Hills 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. 6, 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. Bring your spotting scope and a friend. **RC**

Wednesday Mar. 9, 8:30 AM

Mendoza Ranch/Coyote Lake Cty 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 here briefly before continuing to Lakeview Picnic area in Coyote Lake Park. **LO, RC**

Saturday Mar. 12, 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. (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.). After approx 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. **RC**

Sunday Mar. 13, 8:00 AM

Grant Ranch County Park

Half day. **Leader:** Rich Page (408) 377-1092. **Directions:** From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave. northeast, turn right on Hamilton Rd. and go approximately 9 miles to the park. Meet at Grant Lake (aka Hall's Valley Lake) parking lot, which is the first parking lot on the left side of the road (do not enter the Main Park Entrance on the right). **Highlights:** Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds and possible Golden Eagle. **Notes:** Spring forward or be an hour late for this trip. 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**

Saturday Mar. 19, 8:00 AM

Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

Half day. **Leader:** Bill Pelletier (408) 623-4686. **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**

Sunday Mar. 20, 8:00 AM

Ogier Ponds

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

the entrance is locked). **Note:** Viewing distances can be distant and use of a scope is recommended. **RC**

Saturday Mar. 26, 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. 27, 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:** Expected species include ducks, gulls, some shorebirds, and a few riparian birds. **Difficulty Level:** A moderately long, but level, loop trip. **RC**

Saturday Apr. 2, 8:00 AM

Stevens Creek County Park

Half day. **Leader:** Pat Kenny (408) 725-0468. **Directions:** From I-280 in Cupertino take Foothill 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. **RC**

Sunday Apr. 3, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. **Leader:** Allen Royer (408) 288-7768. **Directions:** See the write-up for March 6th.

Wednesday Apr. 6, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leaders:** Freddy Howell and Allen Royer. No RSVP necessary, but contact the landfill coordinator, Silviana Ruiz, for directions or more details (408) 730-7545 with questions. See write-up for Mar. 2nd for details. **RC**

Saturday Apr. 9, 8:00 AM

Picchetti Ranch

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From I-280 in

Field Trips *continued*

Cupertino take Foothill 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. 10, 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**

Saturday Apr. 16, 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. **RC**

Sunday Apr. 17, 8:00 AM

Windy Hills OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Kirsten Holmquist (408) 747-0988. See the write-up for March 5th.

Wednesday Apr. 20, 8:30 AM

Rancho Canada Del Oro OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Janna Pauser (408) 569-9264. **Directions:** See write-up for March 12th. **Difficulty Level:** Easy walking. **Notes:** Bring water, limited facilities. **LO, RC**

Saturday Apr. 23, 8:00 AM

Ulistac Natural Area

Half day. **Leader:** TBD (408) 253-7527. **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 habitats.

Sunday Apr. 24, 9:00 AM

Birding-by-Ear at Hidden Villa

Half day. **Leader:** Garth Harwood (650) 949-8643. Bird the farm, gardens and wild land edges of this unique facility with Hidden Villa's Director of Education. **Directions:** From I-280 in Los Altos take El Monte Rd. past Foothill College, turn left at Moody Rd., then left into Hidden Villa after approx. 1.7 miles. Meet at the first parking lot beside the entrance.

Notes: An \$8 per parking fee is required and carpooling is encouraged. **RC**

Saturday Apr. 30, 8:30 AM

Mines Rd., Del Puerto Canyon & vicinity

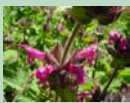
Full day. **Leader:** Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. We'll start this trip in Del Puerto Canyon, working our way west to San Antonio Valley. **Directions:** From I-580 go East over Altamont Pass to I-5 South. Go west at the Patterson exit (Diablo Grande Pkwy) and then right on Del Puerto Canyon Rd. Meet at the first pullout. **Highlights:** Hoped for highlights include possible Costa's Hummingbird, Phainopepla, Lewis's Woodpecker and Blue Grosbeak. **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 1, 7:50 AM

Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Stanford University

Half day. **Leader:** Sonny Mencher e-mail soccerquiz@yahoo.com. **Notes:** Trip is limited to twelve people; E-mail Sonny to reserve a space (those without e-mail call (650) 814-8028). **Directions:** Sonny will send you directions to the meeting spot where people are expected to form their own carpool (*required*). Be ready to caravan with the leader at 7:50 AM. **Difficulty Level:** Trip involves 2-3 miles of moderately strenuous walking, and goes rain or shine.

Special Joint CNPS/SCVAS Program:



Beginner's Bird and Plant Identification Walk Series at Lake Cunningham Park

Session #1: First Day of Spring - Mar. 20, 9:00-11:00 AM

Do you love being outdoors, especially on the First Day of Spring? Have you wanted to learn the names of birds and plants around you? Join us for a beginner's bird and plant identification walk through Lake Cunningham Park. Lake Cunningham is a major destination for waterfowl and migratory birds, and its native garden draws many birds for its habitat value. On this walk, Vicki Silvas-Young will show you how to identify the common birds of our area, as well as the native plants they depend on for food, shelter, and nesting places. **Directions:** Meet in the Marina parking lot at 9am. **Difficulty Level:** The distance is 1.2 miles round trip on a level path. **Notes:** Bring a hat, water, and binoculars. Wear comfortable walking shoes. Parking fee is \$6.



Space is limited. RSVP to arvind.kumar@cnps.org for directions and details.

Photos courtesy of Arvind Kumar



The Avocet would like YOUR Feedback!

You've probably noticed that the SCVAS newsletter looks a little different - maybe it's a little slimmer, more colorful, or more streamlined? We'd love to know what you think about it - is something missing? Think we should add more? Anything we should eliminate? Stories you'd like to read about? Please let us know!

Send your feedback to programs@scvas.org, or take our online survey - go to www.scvas.org (scroll down to "What's New").

2016 New Members of SCVAS

*Those who joined December 1, '15 -January 25, '16.
We look forward to a great year with your support!*

Emily Ward	Kenneth St Martin
Anna Berman	James Rumbaugh
Andrea Wilder	Max Stoaks
Sherry Howd	Ken Lauanders
Hiroko Okuyama	Mr. James Patterson
Karen Adamski & Family	Marilyn McCarthy
Marlene Macek	Jean Schaffert
Piper Lomax	Elizabeth Sutherland
Gordon Frolich	Sharon Bryan
	Balaji Krishnamoorthy

YOU are invited: join today!



The Nature Shop has NEW specialty items for you! Choose between cozy jackets, comfy denim shirts, triple-billed caps and hot/cold travel mugs! Come visit!



The SCVAS Staff would like to thank all of our members, friends, and neighbors who support our Nature Shop. We hope to see you again soon!

Volunteer Ventures Has a New Face!

We're pleased to announce that Cindy von Ofenheim, the SCVAS Office Manager, will be taking over as our Volunteer Coordinator. You'll be hearing more from her in the months to come. If you would like to volunteer or have any suggestions for future events, please let her know (scvas@scvas.org, or 408-252-3747).



Save the Date:

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and Awards Ceremony; Thursday, May 12, 6:00pm

Keep an Eye Out for More Details!

SCVAS Events Calendar:

Wed. 3/2 & 4/6; 7:30-9:00PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers

Lucy Evans Nature Center, Palo Alto

Topic 3/2: "Japanese and American Tropical Islands" with Mark Rauzon

Topic 4/6: "Bird Photography tour to Barrow Alaska--June 2015" with Tom Ingram

see www.scvas.org/babp for details

Tues. 3/8 & 4/12; 10AM

Eve Case Bird Discussion Group - now meets at the home of Rosalind Roberts: 100 Kathy Ct., Los Gatos, 408 395 6631

Topic 3/8: Bluebirds

Topic 4/12: Ravens

Wed. 3/9 & 4/13; 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. 3/10; 6:30PM

Birdathon Kick-Off Party

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino

For anyone involved in a Birdathon Team (participant or a sponsor). Join us for laughs, food, friends, and tips to make your birdathon experience a great one! An entertaining slide show from last year's photography birdathon will be playing in our conference room throughout the evening. **And don't forget - the Birdathon begins Sat. 3/26!** Don't forget to register your team or sign up to sponsor - SCVAS is counting on you! See page 4 or online (www.scvas.org/birdathon) for details.

Tue. 3/15; 3:30-5:00PM

After-School Program begins

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino

Explore birds, bugs, bats, and more. Weekly fun science activities for students

in grades 6-8. Details available online at www.scvas.org/KidsCalendar

Thur. 4/7; 12-1:30PM

Egret Office Hours Begin!

Shorebird Way, Mtn View

Join us for our weekly

viewing and exploration

of the Egret Rookery

on the Google Campus.

Volunteers especially wanted! Contact programs@scvas.org for more details.



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

Young Audubon Bird Banding

Coyote Creek Field Station, Milpitas

For children and families ages 8 and up.

Details available on next page or online at www.scvas.org/KidsCalendar

SCVAS Adult Education: Spring 2016

The following classes are sponsored by the SCVAS Education Committee. To register please call the main SCVAS office at (408) 252-3747. Cancellations require 72-hour prior notification for refunds. Information about our upcoming classes and field seminars is also available on our website at www.scvas.org.

Bird Poetry Workshop with Megan O'Brien



Birds are often a source of inspiration for many art forms - painting, photography, sculpture and even music. One such art form that is often overlooked, but that can lend itself to wonderful sweeps of creativity, is poetry. If you love birds and the spoken word, or just want to liberate your birding imagination by giving it a voice, join us for this special one-night workshop to help you learn how to tap into your own wells of bird-themed inspiration.

The workshop will focus on the works of well known nature poets, such as Emily Dickinson, Marianne Moore, Julie Zickefoose, and more. Participants will explore how to use words to express feelings about birds, and will be invited to share their written endeavors with each other in a safe and friendly environment. All skill levels are welcome, and participants are encouraged to bring poems written previously to share with the group. Let your creativity take flight!

Date: Wednesday, March 23rd; 7:00-9:00PM

Location: McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino

Fee: \$10 SCVAS members; \$15 non-members

Name That Bird Tune: Tips and Tricks for Demystifying Bird Song with Jim Liskovec



This short course is intended to focus on the tools and methods of learning bird song at this prime time of year. We will explore the What, How, and When of bird song, and discuss resources available for the learning process. We'll listen to recorded

bird song and then practice our listening skills on two morning field trips. Our activity will foster a greater appreciation for the importance of bird songs and add to your enjoyment of birding. Some basic birding experience required.

Dates: **Class:** Mon 4/4, 6:30-8:30PM; **Field:** Wed 4/6 & 4/13; 6:30-8:30AM.

Location: **Class:** McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino; **Field:** Rancho San Antonio OSP.

Fee: \$30 members; \$35 non-members. **Class limited to 12 participants**

Spring Adventures for Children and Families

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!

Full details and registration information available online (go to www.scvas.org/KidsCalendar)



Conservation in Action: Bird Banding with SFBBO

Saturday, April 30th; 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 21st; 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!

Birdathon *cont'd from page 1*

Option 3: **Donate!**

If contests are not your cup of tea, **your dollars can still make a difference for local wildlife education!** Just stay home watching the feeders and donate online or by check. Note which team or birder you are sponsoring -- we'll add your contribution to their contest total. Mail checks payable to **SCVAS** to 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, CA 95014 or donate online at www.scvas.org/birdathon

Birdathon has two goals: recognize the **best birding results** and **reward champion fundraisers**. We challenge you to **ask your family, friends, neighbors, and favorite business owners to support your team**. Every little donation adds up to support the Conservation and Education programs at SCVAS.

Questions? Contact the birdathon committee at: birdathon@scvas.org.

Guided Teams For The Spring 2016 Birdathon -- Which One Will You Join?

Our guided birdathon teams have picked the juiciest routes, the silliest themes, and amazing Santa Clara County trip leaders to tempt you to join up. We are looking for all levels of birders for these teams -- all you have to do is raise the requested donation of \$50, grab your binoculars and come birding with us! **Space on guided teams is limited, so sign up today!**

Registration forms, a **list of all of the exciting guided trips**, and full details are at www.scvas.org/birdathon.



Team options include:

24-hour Guided Teams (*Newcomers please note: any team over 4 hours goes in this category. Some teams even include Owling...*)

4-hour Guided Teams (*4 hours of fast birding fun!*)

Big-Sit 4-hour Guided Teams (*perfect for those who don't want to spend a lot of time chasing around town.*)

Join one of the amazing bird teams already assembled or create one of your own! See current teams and dates below.

Guided Birdathon Teams for 2016:

(teams as of February 1st)

24-hour Guided Teams

(anything more than 4 hours)

The Fledgling - Young Birders team, led by Pati Rouzer. Saturday March 26 or April 2, 7:30 am - 2:00 pm. *50+ species*



Rock Wrens, led by Bob Hirt. Sunday April 24, pre-dawn to dusk. *140+ species*

Persistent Picidaes, led by Lisa Myers. Sunday April 24, 7:30 am - 12:00 pm. *100+ species*

Varied Twitchers, led by Mike Rogers. Saturday, April 30, pre-dawn to dusk. *160+ species*

Ultrabirders - Trail-Running Birders, led by Steve Patt. Saturday April 23, dawn to dusk. *More than 1 species per mile*

4-hour Guided Teams

Mean Green Birding Machines - Biking Team, led by Rob Furrow. Saturday April 2, 6:45 - 10:45 am. *80+ species*

A-focused Covey - Photography Team, led by Julio Mulero. Sunday April 3, 7:30 - 11:30 am. *60+ species*

Shutterbirds - Photography Team, led by Steve Patt. Saturday April 9, dawn to dusk. *100 species*

Cupertino Creek Cruisers, led by Deborah Jamison. Sunday April 17 (rain date April 24). *50+ species*

Wandering Kestrels - with Melanie O'Brien. Saturday, April 23, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm. *80+ species*

Big-Sit 4-hour Guided Teams

Citizen Data Sets - Big Sit Team, led by Mary Wisnewski. Sunday April 3, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm. *40+ species*



More teams are being added every day - go online to www.scvas.org/birdathon to see the updates and register!

2015 Christmas Bird Count Highlights

Palo Alto CBC

Compiled and Coordinated by Al Eisner

Wet conditions created some challenges for the 2015 Palo Alto CBC (Dec. 21) - we missed 17 species which had been found on more than 70% of counts over the previous 15 years, and the resulting species total of 155 was

2 below the lowest for that period. (Three of the misses were found on better-weather days during count week.)

However, there were some interesting count records as well - we had particularly high counts for Cedar Waxwings, Pine Siskins, and especially American Robins. On a perhaps-less-pleasing note, we also

achieved a new high for American Crow, and also for Eurasian Collared-Dove. There were two species new to the count - Great-tailed Grackles and an Orchard Oriole were definite highlights. Other rarely-seen species were Bald Eagles, Lark Sparrows, and a Red Crossbill. Thanks to all the participants for braving the conditions! ***Read more online.***

San Jose CBC

Compiled and Coordinated by Kirsten Holmquist

The San Jose count went forward this year under cold and overcast conditions. Most of the rain however held off until the end of the day. We had an average year for recent times with 174 species seen. Many thanks to all

the volunteers who contributed their time and energy to make this happen.

Highlights of this count year, a Black Rail, some exceptional shorebirds, a Ruff, and a Red-throated Loon.

Surprisingly, the only goose represented on the count this year was Cackling Goose, but several unusual ducks were also sited:

Eurasian Wigeon, Barrow's Goldeneye, and Blue-Winged Teal.

Only one exceptional raptor was found (a Ferruginous Hawk), but a Blue-Grey Gnatcatcher proved intriguing. Sapsuckers made a good showing with two rarities recorded: a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Red-naped Sapsucker. ***Read more online.***

Calero-Morgan Hill CBC

Compiled and Coordinated by Ann Verdi

The Calero-Morgan Hill CBC was held on Dec 27, 2015 on a day characterized by the prolonged drought conditions of this inland count circle just prior to the welcome rains of January. Hills and fields were dry, as were dry creeks and ponds and lower water levels at the larger reservoirs. None-the-less we ended up with 150 species for the day - a good number for this count.

Water birds were affected by the dry conditions, especially dabbling ducks (even Mallards); however, diving ducks held

their own in the larger reservoirs. Gulls were also tallied in lower numbers this year, partly because the count was held on a day when local landfills were not open. On the positive side, we found several water birds of interest: a Greater White-fronted Goose, a female Red-breasted Merganser and three Red-necked Grebes, and two Forster's Terns (while not an unusual species throughout the Bay Area, this was a first for our count),

Land birds of note included the following: five Bald Eagles, a Greater Roadrunner, Burrowing Owl and Short-eared Owl, a Lewis's Woodpecker and a

Red-naped Sapsucker, three swallow species, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and a male Phainopepla. A strikingly handsome Black-throated Sparrow found at Santa Teresa County Park is the fifth record for Santa Clara County, and was arguably the "star" bird of this year's count. Rounding out special birds of the count were three Grasshopper Sparrows, and over 40 Great-tailed Grackles. While we didn't encounter an invasion year of species like last year, we did record over 400 Common Ravens, over 4800 American Robins, and over 700 Tricolored Blackbirds. ***Read more online.***

Mt. Hamilton CBC

Compiled and Coordinated by Bob Hirt

We had our count on December 28, 2015 and experienced cold weather throughout the day. Most of the smaller ponds were frozen and the water birds went to better areas. At least we stayed dry and had only minor weather related access problems since the roads were icy in places.

The result was a complete count. We

had a very low species count coming in at a only 94, and only 5,865 individual birds for the day - both of which were 10 year lows. As to individual species we had a cyclical down year for Lawrence's Goldfinches, and the worst total for the Lewis' Woodpecker since 2008. With NO Band-tailed Pigeons reported this year (after last year's record all-time high) and Acorn Woodpeckers also at an all-time low, it is clear that the bumper acorn crop from 2014 was missing. Also very low

this year were the sparrows and finches. We missed Lark and Sage Sparrows completely. Varied Thrush was another miss. The large reservoir on Isabel Ranch attracted lots of Bufflehead, and the count for all areas was an all-time high - one of the few bright spots. Ending on a high note, we were able to find a Townsend's Solitaire in front of our host, Elinor Gates' house at the end of the long, cold day. ***Read more online.***

Full summaries (including numbers, locations and participants), and CBC data are available online:

Full Summaries: www.scvas.org/pdf/CBCSummaries_2015.pdf

Full CBC County Data (compiled by Bonnie Bedford-White): www.scvas.org/pdf/CBCData_2015.pdf

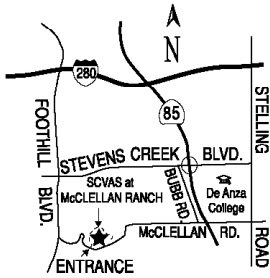
Editor's Note:

We wish to extend a special thank you to ALL of our count coordinators, but especially to Kirsten Holmquist (San Jose) and Ann Verdi (Calero-Morgan Hill), who will both be retiring as count coordinators this year. Their contributions to the Christmas Bird Count over the years have been immeasurable, and we will be sorry to no longer be working with them. We do welcome Beth and Tom Hamel as the new coordinators for the Calero-Morgan Hill count and look forward to a great year with them at the helm!

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2016 Volume 63, Number 2

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

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