



# THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

September-October 2016

## Coyote Valley Threatened – Again

By Shani Kleinhaus and contributions by Alice Kaufman of the Committee for Green Foothills

Just south of San Jose, residential sprawl gives way to Coyote Valley and the lolling hills that surround it. At 7,400 acres, the valley is breathtaking in its beauty and is critically important for resident and migratory bird species, wildlife, and water supply. For decades, SCVAS has fought to preserve Coyote Valley and protect it from urban sprawl. It is heartbreaking that the valley is, yet again, under threat of new development.

Within Coyote Valley lies 1,444 acres of farmland, wetlands and streams. Altogether, this land provides a pallid, but ecologically important, image of the historical grassland, oak-savanna, willow groves, wetlands and meandering creeks that once formed the landscape. But even this pale image may soon fade into a landscape where Red-winged Blackbirds no longer sing, Ferruginous Hawks no longer forage, and critical wildlife movement corridors are no longer permeable to Greater Roadrunners, bobcats and deer.

We envision a restorative future, rather than an industrial one. In this article we will discuss a brief history of Coyote Valley and the importance of this area to the birds and mammals that utilize it as a habitat, as well as the humans who rely on it as a water source and appreciate its intrinsic value.

*cont'd on page 4*

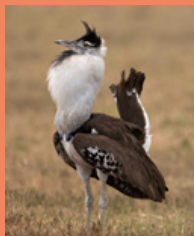


### Monthly Speaker Series

#### Cubberley Community Center, Rm H1

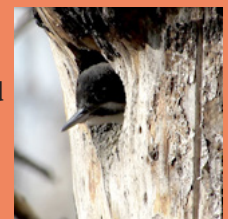
Palo Alto - Middlefield & Montrose Rds

Doors open 7:30 PM; program 8:00 PM



**Wednesday, September 21, 2016**  
**Wet and Dry: The Two Seasons of The Serengeti's "Great Migration" with Doug Cheeseman**

Serengeti, a word from the Masai, translates to "Endless Plain." Doug will cover the movements of predators and prey, the changes in bird populations throughout the two seasons, and the dry season survival strategies of non-migratory animals. He will use photos to explain some of the fascinating behaviors that keep this perpetually moving circle going.



**Wednesday, October 19, 2016**  
**Searching for Gold Spot: The Wild That Follows Fire with Maya Khosla**

Many people believe that forests are destroyed after wildfire – and so those forests are logged. "Searching for Gold Spot" is a film about the amazing comeback of life in burned areas that are allowed to regenerate. Maya follows scientists and firefighters through the Sierra Nevada, Cascades Range and beyond.

*(Additional information available at [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org) or by calling the SCVAS office)*

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# September-October Field Trips

(Full details for all of our Field Trips are also available online at [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org))

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

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

## Saturday Sept. 3, 8:00 AM Alviso Environmental Education Center

Half day. **Leader:** Bill Pelletier, (408) 644-5583. **Directions:** From Hwy 237 take Zanker Rd exit north and then a hard right onto Grand Blvd and meet in the EEC parking lot. Meet at the first parking lot if the gate is closed. **Highlights:** Possible Hooded Oriole, Red-tailed Hawk, Black-necked Stilt, American White Pelicans, American Avocet and a variety of shorebirds. **Difficulty:** Flat, easy walking on graded dirt and boardwalk.

## Sunday Sept. 4, 8:15 AM Arastradero OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Rich Page, (408) 377-1092. **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:** Trip involves moderate to strenuous hiking.

## Wednesday Sept. 7, 12 PM City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leaders:** Freddy Howell and Allen Royer. No RSVP necessary, but contact the landfill coordinator, Silvana Ruiz (408) 730-7545, for directions or more details with questions. **Directions:** Donald M. Somers Water Pollution Control Plant, junction of Borregas and Caribbean. Meet at trailhead at north end. **Difficulty:** Birding geared toward beginners. Notes: Bring binoculars; loaners also available. **RC**

*The Avocet 2*

## Saturday Sept. 10, 8:00 AM Coyote Valley OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Rick Herder, (408) 779-3885. **Directions:** Take Hwy 101 south, exit right (west) onto Bailey Rd. Turn left on Hale/Santa Teresa Blvd. In 0.8 miles, turn right on West Laguna Ave and park. **Highlights:** Raptors possible. **RC**

## Sunday Sept. 11, 8:00 AM Picchetti Ranch OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson, (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From I-280 in 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:** Trip is a moderately strenuous walk past an old orchard, a seasonal pond, and oak woodlands.

## Tuesday Sept. 13, 12 PM Calero County Park

Half day. **Leader:** Bill Pelletier, (408) 644-5583. **Directions:** 101 South to Bailey Ave and turn right onto Bailey Ave at the end of the ramp. Turn left on McKean Rd at the dead end. Calero County Park will be on your right. Park before the county yard near the end on the right.

## Wednesday Sept. 14, 8:30 AM Vasona Lake County Park

Half day **Leader:** Janna Pauser, (408) 569-9264. **Directions:** From Hwy 17 exit at Lark Ave, go west to University Ave. Turn left onto Blossom Hill Rd and use main entrance. Turn into first parking lot on your left after kiosk. **Highlights:** We'll bird the south end of this popular Los Gatos Park where we should see Western Tanagers, migrating warblers and some fall arrivals. **Notes:** Gate opens at 8 am, parking fee \$6 without S.C. county park pass. **Difficulty:** Easy walking.

## Saturday Sept. 17, 8:00 AM Natural Bridges State Park

Half day. **Leader:** Norm Kikuchi, (831) 251-0666. **Directions:** Take Hwy 17 to Santa Cruz and turn right on Mission St/Hwy 1 towards Half Moon Bay. Drive to the edge of town and turn left on Swift St then right on Delaware Ave. Meet at the back entrance to the park at the intersection of Delaware Ave and Natural Bridges Dr.

## Sunday Sept. 18, 9:00 AM Charleston Slough

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

## Sunday Sept. 18, 9:00 AM Bird & Plant ID Walk Lake Cunningham Park

Half day. **Leader:** Vicki Silvas-Young. RSVP to Arvind Kumar at [arvind.kumar@cnps.org](mailto:arvind.kumar@cnps.org) to reserve your spot and to receive directions and details. **Highlights:** We will see waterfowl, migratory birds, and a CA native garden. **Difficulty:** The distance is four miles round trip on a level path. **Notes:** Bring a hat, water, your bird and plant list, and binoculars. Wear comfortable walking shoes. Parking fee is \$6. Space is limited.

## Saturday Sept. 24, 8:00 AM Ogier Ponds

Half day. **Leader:** Kirsten Holmquist, (408) 747-0988. **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). **Notes:** Viewing distances can be distant and use of a scope is recommended. **RC**

## Sunday Sept. 25, 8:30 AM San Luis Reservoir SRA San Luis Creek Area (O'Neill Forebay)

Half day. **Leader:** Pete Dunten, (650) 210-6764. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 take Hwy 152 east into Merced County; turn left into the park entrance below the

dam, pay a \$10 per vehicle entrance fee and meet at South Beach Parking. **Notes:** During an approximately three mile hike, we will see what's on the water and what's up in the trees along the Forebay.

**Saturday Oct. 1, 8:00 AM  
Moss Landing & Vicinity**

Half day. **Leader:** Norm Kikuchi, (831) 251-0666. **Directions:** Meet in Moss Landing next to the Sea Harvest Restaurant in the big parking lot and boat launch ramp just north of Hwy 1's Elkhorn Slough bridge. **Highlights:** Shorebirds, waterfowl and other migrants. **Notes:** Weather conditions can be highly variable so dress in layers. Bring lunch and water.

**Sunday Oct. 2, 8:00 AM  
Ulistac Natural Area**

Half day. **Leader:** Bill Pelletier, (408) 644-5583. **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**

**Wednesday Oct. 5, 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. Call (408) 730-7545 with questions. *See write-up for Sept 7th for details.* **RC**

**Saturday Oct. 8, 8:00 AM  
Alum Rock Park**

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson, (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd northeast toward the hills then left on Toyon Ave, right on Penitencia Creek Rd and continue on into the park. Pass under the bridge and meet at the far end of the upper parking lot. **Difficulty:** This is a moderately strenuous 3-4 mile walk. A \$6 vehicle entry fee will be required. **LO**

**Sunday Oct. 9, 8:00 AM  
Uvas Creek Park Preserve**

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

**Wednesday Oct. 12, 8:00 AM  
Santa Clara Valley Water District**

Half day. **Leader:** Janna Pauser, (408) 569-9264. **Directions:** 5700 Almaden Expwy. From Hwy 85 exit South Almaden Expwy and drive .35 miles past Blossom Hill Rd. Headquarters are on the east side of roadway. Turn left into driveway across from Via Monte (traffic signal) and drive to visitors parking at north end of parking lot, near street. Parking fills up fast so please carpool. We will bird the park-like property with pond and

check the Guadalupe River for fall arrivals. **Notes:** Early start time. Lack of water may necessitate caravan to alternate location at Almaden Lake. **Highlights:** Waterfowl, sparrows and late migrants possible. **Difficulty:** Easy walking. **RC**

**Saturday Oct. 15, 8:00 AM  
Stanford Campus**

Half day. **Leader:** Tom Grey. **Directions:** Meet at Stanford Arboretum nearest the intersection of Campus Dr & Palm Dr. Join us for a walk around the arboretum and surrounding neighborhoods for a chance to snap a photo of some local birds.

**Sunday Oct. 16, 8:00 AM  
Oka Ponds**

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson. **Directions:** Take 17 South to Lark Ave exit, turn right onto Oka Rd, then turn left onto W. Mozart Ave and turn right onto Oka Ln. We will meet at the park entrance at the end of this road. Please be respectful in parking in and around this neighborhood.

**Saturday Oct. 22, 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 Oct. 23, 8:00 AM  
Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility**

Half day. **Leader:** Dave

Zittin, (408) 515-7104. **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:** Trip is fairly easy but can be a long walk. **RC**

**Tuesday Oct. 25, 7:00 PM  
Owl Outing**

**McClellan Ranch**  
We will make the rounds to local owl hot spots around the SCVAS office and see how many we can count. This trip involves a carpool, so we will need driver volunteers, and space is limited. Call Bill Pelletier with questions at (408) 644-5583.

**Saturday Oct. 29, 8:00 AM  
Miller-Knox Regional Shoreline**

Half Day. **Leader:** Stephen Berlyant, (415) 420-3680. **Directions:** 900 Dornan Dr. Richmond, CA. Take 880N to 80E to 580W to exit 13B toward Point Richmond. Take exit 8 onto Canal Blvd and turn right onto Cutting Blvd and at the end of the road turn left onto S Garrand Blvd and continue onto Dornan Dr and the destination will be on your left in about ½ mile.

**Sunday Oct. 30, 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. *See write up for September 18th for details.* **RC**



## **Déjà vu**

The history of Coyote Valley is one of repeated development attempts. It began in the 1980's, when the San Jose City Council designated North Coyote Valley for industrial development, Mid-Coyote Valley as urban reserve, and South Coyote Valley as protected greenbelt.

In 1999, North Coyote Valley narrowly escaped being entirely converted into the Coyote Valley Research Park, including a 688-acre Cisco campus. Litigation by SCVAS and the Sierra Club delayed implementation, and in the early 2000's, economic conditions stopped it altogether. Soon thereafter, the Coyote Valley Specific Plan was proposed to develop both North and Mid-Coyote Valley for industrial, commercial, and residential land uses. This attempt was again met with strong opposition from the community, and so in 2010, the city council reaffirmed that the area would be an urban reserve and off limits to development until 2040. North Coyote Valley, however, is still designated for industrial development.

Now, with the economy booming, development proposals for North Coyote Valley have begun to reappear. In 2015, Gavilan College began construction of the "Coyote Valley Campus" on Bailey Avenue. Panattoni Development Company has filed an application for a 30-acre, 400,000 -square-foot distribution center with loading docks for 84 trucks on Monterey Road. In April 2016, the 570-acre site of the Coyote Valley Research Park was sold to the Brandenburg Development Company. Though development applications have not yet been submitted as of the time this article was written, we expect they are coming soon.

## **Birds**

Over 215 species of resident and migratory birds have been observed in the mosaic of habitats in North Coyote Valley. Take, for instance, the Ferruginous Hawk, that breeds in Montana yet spends six months of each year in Coyote Valley to build up its fat reserves in preparation for a long migration and breeding season. Or the Swainson's Hawk that has not bred in Coyote Valley since 1894. These species and many more can be found in North Coyote Valley. South Coyote Valley has been found to be poor in species richness and diversity (though this area has been designated a "greenbelt" for conservation), and while the area is important as a wildlife corridor, conservation efforts must focus on areas with the most species at stake. North and Central Coyote Valley must be the priority!

## **Animals**

Coyote Valley is a critical habitat for many mammal species. De Anza College's 2012 study, "Safe Passage for Coyote Valley," as well as the 2016 study, "Coyote Valley Linkage Assessment Survey," published by California Department of Fish and Game, Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, and Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District, both show that animals such as deer and mountain lions migrate across the valley using Coyote Creek corridors and culverts. These animals surpass the Highway 101 barrier and also utilize Fisher Creek corridors and culverts under Monterey Road in North Coyote Valley. Coyote Valley also provides breeding and foraging habitat for animals such as bobcats and coyotes. This area is both a habitat and a gap in the urban character of our valley that allows migration and dispersion between the Santa Cruz Mountains to the west and the Diablo Range to the east.

## **Water**

North Coyote Valley is also crucial to water supplies for San Jose residents. At 322 square miles, the Coyote Watershed is the county's largest. Geological formations and soil conditions in North Coyote Valley allow this area to function as a sponge and absorb rainwater into the aquifers that San Jose residents rely on for local drinking water supply. Because the aquifer here is unusually high, it is susceptible to pollution. Therefore, protecting North Coyote Valley is critically important to promoting water security in the face of global climate change.

## **Protecting Coyote Valley**

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's official policy is that there should be no development in Coyote Valley. For decades, we have fought urban sprawl into the valley and are again engaging in education and advocacy efforts that focus on the value of Coyote Valley and protecting it from development. Together with our partner organizations, we hope to help San Jose residents and their representatives start seeing Coyote Valley as a place where an ecologically resilient landscape can be employed to secure water resources, preserve biodiversity, and bring back nature and beauty into our lives.

## **What You Can Do**

Please send an email to [advocate@scvas.org](mailto:advocate@scvas.org) and specify your interest in Coyote Valley – we will notify you when action is needed. Also, please join a Coyote Valley birding trip (See Field Trips on page 2). You may also join the "I Love Coyote Valley" online community via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. And please – tell your friends and neighbors about the valley and the threats to its future.

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## New Faces of SCVAS

Kelly Alfrey, Outreach Coordinator



Kelly Alfrey is the new Outreach Coordinator! She graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a B.S. in Animal Science. Prior to joining SCVAS, Kelly worked on commercial crabbing vessels out of Dutch Harbor, Alaska, where she enjoyed watching Bald Eagles and Steller's Eiders while monitoring marine life. She is happy to have migrated back to sunny California and is eager to promote conservation within the Bay area and expand SCVAS' community presence! Stop by the office to welcome Kelly in her new position!



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## SCVAS Events Calendar

**Wed. 9/7 & 10/5; 7:30-9:00PM**

***Bay Area Bird Photographers***

Embarcadero Room - Rinconada Library  
1213 Newell Rd, Palo Alto, CA

Topic 9/7: "BYOP (bring your own photos)" Program

Topic 10/5: "Brazil's Pantanal" with Doug Cheeseman

Go to [www.scvas.org/babp](http://www.scvas.org/babp) for details

**Tues. 9/13 & 10/11; 10:00AM**

***Eve Case Bird Discussion Group***

Meets at the home of Rosalind Roberts, 100 Kathy Ct., Los Gatos. Call Rosalind with questions at (408) 395-6631.

Topic 9/13: Black Phoebe

Topic 10/11: American Bittern

**Thurs. 9/15 & 10/13; 11:30-1:00PM**

***Nature Journaling with John Muir Laws***

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino

Free workshops for all ages! No RSVP required; please be on time. See [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org) (click on "Calendar") for more details.

**Thurs. 9/15, 7:00-9:00PM**

***Cavity Nesters Recovery Program End-of-Season Potluck***

Environmental Education Center, McClellan Ranch Preserve  
All monitors and those interested are invited to attend. Please bring a main dish, casserole, salad or hors d'oeuvres to share. SCVAS will provide beverages and dessert. We'll discuss the 2016 breeding season and take a look at this year's data. Please remember to submit your data online before the 15th!

**Sat. 10/22; 10:00-3:00PM**

***Wildlife Education Day and Harvest Festival***

Blackberry Farm

Fun, family-friendly event to celebrate all wildlife: feathered, furred, scaled and shelled. *Details on page 9 or online.*

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## Volunteer Needs

Here are some opportunities that might be of interest:

### **Conservation**

**Burrowing Owl Surveys:** Volunteers are needed to count the Burrowing Owls that reside in the buffer lands in San Jose on the 1st Saturday of every month, from 9am-1pm. We will be walking and surveying approximately 300 acres of Burrowing Owl habitat to count the number of owls and map their locations. All skill levels are welcome. This is a great opportunity to see this special species. If you are interested in participating, contact Ralph Schardt at [rschardt@scvas.org](mailto:rschardt@scvas.org) at least three days prior to each survey date. See SCVAS website for more details.

**Environmental Action Committee:** Volunteers are critically needed to help with writing and public speaking in support of important and time-sensitive issues. Contact Shani at [shani@scvas.org](mailto:shani@scvas.org).

**Education** (contact [programs@scvas.org](mailto:programs@scvas.org)):

**Wetlands Docents - In-Class Programs:** Volunteers assist elementary students in a series of stations focused on the wetland habitat, birds, and changes in the bay. As a Wetlands In-Class Docent, you are also encouraged to volunteer for other school activities as they are scheduled. Training is provided.

**Wetland Docents - Field Trips:** Volunteers lead groups of students around Charleston Slough on bird and nature exploration walks to discuss topics students learned at school. Training provided.

Of course, there are many more opportunities available. Please check out our website or contact the Executive Director, Ralph at (408) 252-3748 or [rschardt@scvas.org](mailto:rschardt@scvas.org).

We need YOUR help! Volunteer NOW!

# Field Notes

(June-July 2016)

by Pete Dunten

## Ducks through Bald Eagles

The Redhead is a very rare breeding bird in the county, and as many as three were found at the south end of the bay on dates between 6 Jun and 12 Jul (SHa, WGB, MJM, MMR, RJ), though no evidence of nesting was reported. One of the nice finds on the Palo Alto Summer Bird Count held on 4 Jun, was a late-to-depart Ring-necked Duck on Bear Gulch Reservoir (RCP, SSm). Both Scaup typically leave by the first week of May, though small numbers of Lesser Scaup have been known to nest at the south end of the bay. Lingering Greater Scaup included six males on Alviso salt pond A10 on 26 Jun and a single male on Salt pond A3W on 24 Jul (both MMR, MJM, RJ). Lesser Scaup were reported on eight dates between 26 Jun (MMR, MJM, RJ) and 28 Jul (WGB) with a high count of five on 24 Jul (RJ, MMR, MJM). One to two individuals of another duck uncommon in the summer, Common Goldeneye, were spotted at locations along the south edge of the bay on five dates between 3 Jun (DN) and 28 Jul (WGB). A Red-breasted Merganser found on Salt Pond A1 during the Palo Alto Summer Count on 4 Jun was a nice surprise (WGB). What was likely the same bird was found

*Another pair  
of Bald Eagles  
raise a family in  
the county!*



Juvenile Bald Eagle  
Tom Grey

again on Salt Pond A2E as late as 9 Jul (WGB). A single Horned Grebe spent the summer locally at the Sunnyvale WPCP, where it was noted on 6 Jun (SHa) and 12 Jul (WGB). Clark's Grebes attempted nesting on closed refuge ponds again this year. Though nests with eggs were seen on four dates between 4 Jun and 24 Jul, no hatchlings have been spotted (MJM, MMR, RJ). A lone White-faced Ibis visited the Sunnyvale WPCP between 10 and 13 Jun (WGB, ChJ). A pair of Bald Eagles successfully fledged two young at Felt Lake in late June, and the two immatures were seen several times in July from spots bordering the lake (RF, TGr, AJ).

## Plovers through Terns

A Golden-Plover at Alviso Salt Pond A13 on 26 Jun was pegged as a Pacific Golden-Plover with the help of its characteristic flight call (MMR, RJ, MJM). A calling Pacific Golden-Plover was found at the same location again on 21 Jul (AR). Four Black Oystercatchers on closed refuge ponds 26 Jun set a record high count for the county (MMR, MJM, RJ). For many shorebirds embarking on fall migration, the adults leave first, followed by the immatures in fresher

plumage. The first immature Least Sandpipers of the fall reached the Gilroy SCRWA on 27 Jul (WGB). Single Semipalmated Sandpipers passing through on their way south stopped at New Chicago Marsh on three dates: 26 Jun (RJ, MMR, MJM), 9 Jul (SCR), and 25 Jul (ChJ). The late July sighting was the first immature of the fall. Immature Western Sandpipers joined older birds in New Chicago Marsh on 22 Jul (WGB). The first Sanderling of the fall was at Gold St and Elizabeth St in Alviso on 24 Jul (BM). Red Knots noted at the tail end of spring migration included 44 on 4 Jun and 33 on 5 Jun on closed south bay refuge ponds (both MJM). The high counts of hundreds of Knots in the spring occur further north in the bay in Alameda and San Mateo counties. A Dowitcher staying for the summer was seen at Mallard Slough on 3 Jun (DN), and the first returning dowitchers of the fall



Pacific Golden-Plover  
Tom Grey

were a group of five in New Chicago Marsh on 20 Jun (MJM). The first Wilson's Phalaropes to return were five in New Chicago Marsh on 15 Jun (ChJ). The phalaropes will stay for a time to complete their molt before continuing south for the winter. The high counts of Wilson's Phalaropes were 550 at New Chicago Marsh on 28 Jun



## Field Notes *cont'd*

(WBr) and 363 at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 12 Jul (WGB). The first immatures were noted on 12 Jul (WGB). Single immature Herring Gulls were at Salt Pond A3W on 4 Jun and the Sunnyvale WPCP on 18 Jun (both MJM). Caspian Terns had a successful year at Alviso Salt Pond A16, with the high count of 141 including 28 young birds on 28 Jul (WGB). The first Elegant Tern of the season, an immature, was found at Salt Pond A3W on 27 Jul (AR). The first report of Least Terns staging on Salt Pond A2E was on 24 Jul, when six birds were counted (MJM, MMR, RJ). Although the boardwalk is gone, its supporting posts remain and provide perches for the terns. As many as six Least Terns stayed through the end of the month (m. ob.). Four Least Terns were also noted at Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 25 Jul (TU), a location they're not known to remain for any length of time.



Black and White Warbler  
Steve Rottenborn



Greater Roadrunner  
Tom Grey

### Roadrunners through Goldfinches

A Greater Roadrunner was found in Henry Coe SP on 1 Jul (BK) and another at the fire station along Mines Rd in San Antonio Valley on 16 Jul (KWi). Loggerhead Shrikes were reported from four locations, with one along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley on multiple dates in Jun and Jul (DN, WGB), one seen from Arastradero OSP on 17 Jul (RHo), one along Hellyer Ave on 18 Jul (JPa), and two at the Gilroy SCRWA on 27 Jul (WGB). A survey of Mount Thayer on 9 Jun tallied seven Purple Martins (AJ). Mt Thayer is one of the known nesting locations of this species in the Santa Cruz range. A Martin was also at Calero Reservoir on 6 Jul (PDU) and two were over the Los Capitancillos ponds on 12 Jul (AVe). A Bank Swallow was over Calero Reservoir on 3 Jul (PDU) and 5 Jul (ChJ). These dates suggest the bird was a dispersant that had left its breeding colony. Another was found 24 Jul at Mallard Slough (BM). The last-to-depart Cedar Waxwings typically leave in early June. This year the latest waxwings were singles at Monte Bello OSP on 10 Jun (GHa) and along San Francisquito Creek near Geng Rd on 16 Jun (DPe). A

singing Black-and-white Warbler 4 Jun on private land along Llagas Creek in the south county was only the third record for Jun (SCR). Adding to the unseasonal records, a Golden-crowned Sparrow was found at Chitactak-Adams CP on 26 Jul (GM). A Yellow-headed Blackbird visited Alviso Salt Pond A16 at the tail end of spring migration, 13 – 14 Jun (CW, WGB). Lawrence's Goldfinches were found in small numbers in Jun and Jul, with a high count of four in Henry Coe SP on 1 Jul (BK).

**Observers:** Bill Bousman (WGB), Will Brooks (WBr), Pete Dunten (PDU), Ron Fulks (RF), Selimah Harmon (SHa), Garth Harwood (GHa), Richard Hopf (RHo), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJ), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Bryan Kett (BK), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Gary Martindale (GM), Brooke Miller (BM), David Nickerson (DN), Janna Pauser (JPa), Don Pendleton (DPe), Bob Power (RCP), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Scott Smithson (SSm), Tom Unsicker (TU), Ann Verdi (AVe), Kiki Widjaja (KWi), Cynthia Worthington (CW)

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

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# SCVAS Classes and Excursions: Fall 2016

We are pleased to offer the following classes to our members and community. Information about our upcoming classes and field seminars is also available on our website at [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org).

## Outdoor Photography for Beginners Series with Ralph Schardt

### *Outdoor Photography for Beginners Photo Class #1*

Cost: \$25 Non-members, \$15 Members, per class

Location: McClellan Ranch – Meet at SCVAS

Wednesday, September 7th 8:30am-10:00am

Wednesday, October 12th 8:30am-10:00am



Ralph Schardt

Join Ralph, our Executive Director and published photographer, to learn more about how to use your camera for outdoor photography. This class will be focused on beginners and people who want to learn more about setting up for various types of outdoor photography – concentration on basic camera settings and preparing for outdoor photography projects. Charge your batteries, bring your camera, a hat, and a good pair of hiking shoes. Any outdoor activity in conjunction with this class will be easy to moderate. Photo Class #1 required to sign-up for Photo Class #2. Two classes available for September and October.

### *Outdoor Photography for Beginners Photo Class #2*

Cost: \$25 Non-members, \$15 Members, per class

Location: McClellan Ranch – Meet at SCVAS

Wednesday, September 21st 8:30am-10:00am

Wednesday, October 26th 8:30am-10:00am

*This is the second class in a series of two.*

*\*Photo Class #1 is a pre-requisite.*



Ralph Schardt

This class with Ralph will concentrate more on field work – both preparing for outdoor shooting, along with finding an interesting topic/subject to photograph. The focus for this class will be to practice checking your camera settings for a particular type of project, things to take with you on an extensive outdoor photography project, and practice in the field to find projects and setup to shoot them. Bring your camera with charged batteries, hiking shoes and hat, tripod or monopod if you have one. Also bring a wide-angle lens and a telephoto lens if you have them. If you are bringing a fixed lens camera, you will receive instruction on how to use your camera in both wide-angle, telephoto and close-up settings.

## Birding by Ear with Bill Pelletier

Cost: Free

Location: McClellan Ranch – Meet at SCVAS

Every Thursday at 7:00 PM starting September 1st through October. *Check website for dates.*



Tom Grey

Weekly 90-minute field class held at the McClellan Ranch. Bill Pelletier will take your birding to the next level by teaching the calls and songs of our local birds. Call Bill Pelletier with questions at (408) 644-5583.





# SCVAS and the City of Cupertino present the 25th Annual Wildlife Education Day



*Nature Arts and Crafts!*

*Birdhouse Building!*

*Live Animals - Birds of Prey, Fish, Snakes, Insects, and more!*

**Saturday, October 22, 2016  
10:00am - 3:00pm**

**FREE!  
ALL Ages Welcome!**

**Blackberry Farm, Cupertino**



**"Early Bird"  
Shorebird Walk**

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

*Logo Art by Julianne Chen, 7th Grade*

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

## Calling All CNRP Monitors!

The end of the breeding season is upon us, so don't forget to submit your data! Our End-of-Season meeting, on Thursday, September 15th at 7PM (*see page 5 for details*), depends on having information to share. This year we are celebrating the season with a potluck! Please bring a dish of your choice and SCVAS will provide beverages and dessert.

Your data is one of the main reasons for this program – this information helps us to plan future conservation programs, and make decisions about the Cavity Nesters Recovery program as a whole.

The online database is the preferred method for receiving year-end data – go to [www.cbrp.org](http://www.cbrp.org) OR go to the SCVAS website ([www.scvas.org/cnrp](http://www.scvas.org/cnrp)).

Contact Kelly, the SCVAS Outreach Coordinator, at [outreach@scvas.org](mailto:outreach@scvas.org) with any questions.



## Attention Amazon Shoppers!!

Did you know that by simply shopping at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) you can support SCVAS at no cost to you? AmazonSmile is an easy way to donate to SCVAS every time you make online purchases through Amazon. It's a shopping spree you can feel good about!

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# A Colorful Look at Avian Life-SEEING RED

*An opinion piece by SCVAS' Field Trip Coordinator, Bill Pelletier*

The chilling stare from the crimson eyes of a White-tailed Kite sends shivers up my spine every time I see it. While most birds have dark eyes, there are different eye colors exhibited across bird species. Yellow eyes are most common in raptors and owls, but red eyes are rare in birds, adding to their mystique. This article will explore the mystery of red eyes found in some of our local birds.

With help from our SCVAS members, I have identified twenty local birds (and you may discover more) within Santa Clara County that have red eyes at some point in their life.

## 20 RED-EYED BIRDS SEEN IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

- (4) *Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, Eared Grebe, Horned Grebe*
- (3) *Pacific Loon, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon*
- (2) *Black-crowned Night Heron, Tricolored Heron*
- (3) *Red-breasted Merganser, Virginia Rail, White-faced Ibis*
- (3) *Wood Duck, Canvasback, American Coot*
- (3) *Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, White-tailed Kite*
- (2) *Rock Pigeon, Spotted Towhee*

It is noteworthy that fifteen of the twenty species listed are water birds, yet within those species there is still diversity. Diving birds like grebes and loons all have red eyes at some point in their life. The American Coot has dark eyes as a juvenile that turn bright red as they mature. However, mergansers are confounding in that only the Red-breasted Merganser has sharp red eyes while the other species have different eye colors. Even more perplexing are ground birds - Rock Pigeon and Spotted Towhee - that exhibit red eyes for no apparent reason. So, why do certain birds have red eyes?

## FEEDING & BREEDING

As with most adaptations, red eyes are most likely related to improved chances of survival and reproduction. Raptors' yellow or red eyes are an adaptation for improved distance vision and depth perception, allowing greater first strike accuracy in targeting prey at great distances. Bird-hunting hawks in particular require an extra level of depth perception, since their prey are flying free in space instead of being restricted to a two-dimensional surface. The local Accipiters: the Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk, may have such beautiful red eyes because they are used for both improved vision in hunting and as criteria when choosing a mate - their eyes change from yellow to red throughout maturity. Changing eye color is common in some birds (and sometimes humans), with many raptors exhibiting this trait. We see a lot of Cooper's Hawks on our field trips and we can estimate age by their plumage, but even more accurately by their eye color.

With regard to diving birds, both sexes of grebes seem to have red eyes all the time, with the exception of the Pied-billed Grebe. It has been posited that these red eyes are an adaptation for improved night vision, as with Black-crowned Night Herons. If this were true, then why wouldn't owls have red eyes? It turns out that the main factors for improved night vision are the size and shape of the eye, which allow more light onto the light sensing fovea at the back of the eye. An owl's eye, in addition to having more light sensing rods, is larger and more oblong than other types of birds to let in more light.

## PHYSIOLOGY

The three main physical characteristics affecting eye color in birds are the pigment in the iris, the refraction of their complex lensing structure, and an oil found inside the cone receptors of a bird's eye.

A bird that would survive only with a serious advantage in depth perception may flourish even when feeding requires striking accuracy in three-dimension. This would be true for deep divers and bird-hunting hawks, since they are tracking prey that can change direction in a free space. Other fish-eating birds without red eyes, like the Belted Kingfisher, osprey, egrets, pelicans and terns, for example, tend to eat from the surface of the water, thus eliminating the need for this level of depth perception. Raptors have two foveae in each eye - one central and one temporal - giving them four signals to the brain for long distance acuity and depth perception. Greater attack speeds mandate increased visual acuity, which is achieved in part by the additional fovea, but also a viscous, often colored oil in the structure of the color-sensing cones that helps to filter certain frequencies of light. The oil can be yellow, orange or even red, owing to the level of carotenoid in the oil pigments. The eyesight of these raptors must be astonishing for them to feed, but the depth perception required to catch a fish in deep water or a bird in flight is another matter entirely. This conjecture may explain raptors and diving birds and may be interesting for further study, but is not conclusive.

There seems to be no clear pattern to the species of birds that have red eyes or why they might have them, other than breeding, but I find it an interesting topic for further investigation. I would encourage all of you to share your experiences of other red-eyed birds you may have noticed and any ideas you may have on the topic. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, and in the eyes of the birds!

Happy birding!



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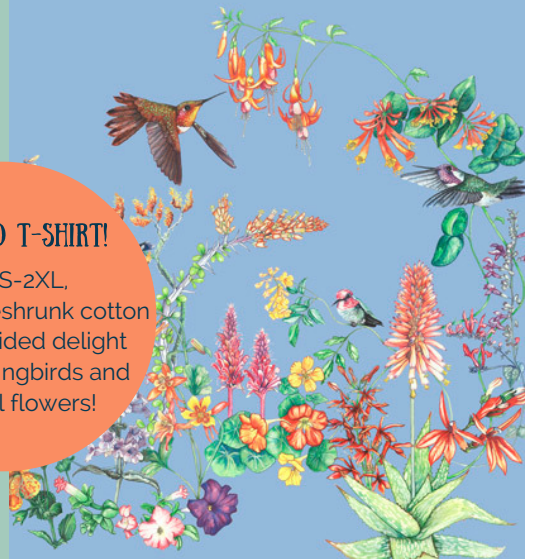
*Written and Illustrated by David Allen Sibley*

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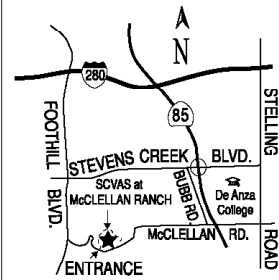


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## 2016 New Members of SCVAS

*Those who joined June 2nd -August 1st.  
 We look forward to a great year with your support!*

Thirumaleshwara Bhat	Edward LaHay
Ailen Chang	Anne McCreevy
Ruthanne Crowley	Heather Monley
Sandra Derby	Joan Passarelli
Deanna Forsythe	Sam Safran
Kathleen Fung	John Sellers
Tish Hoehl	Shannon Thibert
Melissa Johnson	Christine Wichems

YOU are invited: join today!

## Go Paperless!



Sign up to receive your newsletter via email and enjoy these benefits:

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Contact the SCVAS office at [scvas@scvas.org](mailto:scvas@scvas.org) to start your paper-free membership today!



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#### Website

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

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

#### NATURE SHOP HOURS

**Monday - Friday**

**10 AM - 5 PM**

**Saturday**

**10 AM - 2 PM**

Please call (408) 252-3747 for special requests.

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

Details available on the SCVAS website.

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

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