

Cavity Nesters Recovery Program: Conservation, One Box at a Time

by Mike Azevedo, Santa Clara County Nestbox Coordinator



Western Bluebird by Mike Azevedo

All birds need a place to raise their young, but where do they make their nests? For woodpeckers, home is a hole or “cavity” that they excavate in sick or dying trees. Once woodpeckers move out, birds that we call “secondary cavity-nesters” are able to move in and raise their young. Some of these birds include the Western Bluebird, Oak Titmouse, and Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Unfortunately, their homes are getting harder to come by, as sick and dying trees are often removed in our increasingly urban environment. Though the loss of these trees can have severe impacts on the environment, nest boxes can sometimes act as a substitute for lost cavities, giving birds a second chance at finding a home.

Cavity-nesting birds have faced challenges for decades. In March of 1963, an episode of the TV show “Lassie” focused on the plight of the bluebird. Lassie heroically rescued a family of bluebirds just as explosives were about to destroy the nest in the name of progress. For many, the warning fell on deaf ears. It took a crusader named Larry Zeleny to push for a national movement to save the bluebird. In 1976, Zeleny wrote *The Bluebird: How You Can Help Its Fight for Survival*, and then in 1978, the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) was formed with Zeleny at the helm. The organization then went on to develop successful nestbox designs and

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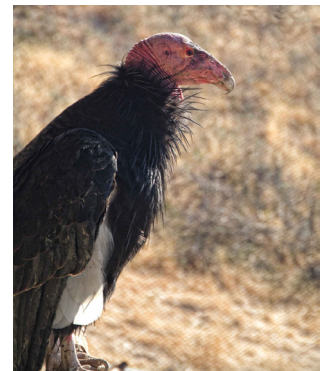
Monthly Speaker Series

Cubberley Community Center, Room H1, Palo Alto - Middlefield & Montrose Roads
Doors open 7:30PM; Program begins 8:00PM

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

"Condors' Return to Pinnacles" with Ralph Schardt

Join us for a photo-chronology covering the Condor reintroduction project at Pinnacles National Park by photographer and naturalist Ralph W. Schardt. He will discuss what brought this amazing bird back from the edge of extinction, as well as give us an update of the Condor program currently running in National Parks and other public lands in the western United States. Ralph is the current Executive Director of SCVAS, and has been a freelance nature photographer for over 25 years.



November-December Field Trips

(Full details 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, Nov. 1, 12:00PM City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leader:** Allen Royer. Contact landfill coordinator, Silvana Ruiz, with questions at (408) 730-7545. **Directions:** Donald M. Somers Water Pollution Control Plant, turn into Borregas and then turn left at the T intersection. Meet under the pepper tree across from the Portapotty. **Difficulty:** Birding geared toward beginners. **Notes:** Bring binoculars; loaners available. **RC**

Saturday, Nov. 4, 8:00AM Ulistac Natural Area

Half day. **Leader:** Chris Johnson, (831) 601-8260. **Directions:** From Hwy 237 take Great America Pkwy south for about 0.8 miles, turn left on Tasman Dr for about one mile, right on Lick Mill Blvd and meet at the south park entrance on the left. **Highlights:** We'll look for migrants and local breeding birds in diverse habitats. **RC**

Sunday, Nov. 5, 8:00AM Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant

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:** Great place to study ducks. Scopes highly recommended. **Difficulty:** Fairly easy but long walk. Trip will be cancelled if trails are muddy. **RC**

Wednesday Nov. 8, 8:30AM Santa Clara Valley Water District 5700 Almaden Expwy

Short half day. **Leaders:** Eve Meier & Janna Pauser, (408) 569-9264. **Directions:** From Hwy 85 exit South Almaden Expwy and drive 0.65 miles to Via Monte. Turn left into driveway and park in visitors parking at north end near headquarters. We will bird the park-like property with pond and check the Guadalupe River for waterfowl, sparrows and late migrants. **Difficulty:** Easy walking. **RC**

Saturday, Nov. 11, 8:00AM 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 about 9 miles to the park. Meet at Grant Lake (aka Hall's Valley Lake) parking lot, first parking lot on the left (do not enter the Main Park Entrance on the right). **Highlights:** Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds, and possible Golden Eagle. **Difficulty:** Involves a moderately strenuous 2-mile walk. **Notes:** Park entrance fee required for last half of trip. **RC, LO**

Sunday, Nov. 12, 8:15AM Alum Rock Park

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson, (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd northeast toward hills then left on Toyon Ave, right on Penitencia Creek Rd and continue into park. Pass under bridge and meet at far end of upper parking lot. **Difficulty:** Moderately strenuous 3-4 mile walk. **Note:** Vehicle entry fee required.

Wednesday, Nov. 15, 12:30PM Shoreline Riparian to Baylands

2.5 hours. **Leader:** Ralph Schardt, (408) 624-7845. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 take Shoreline exit and head for the bay. Turn right on Criteden Rd and continue to the end. Parking is available on the right in the Nursery - look for Audubon Trip Leader to know where to park. Carpool if possible. We will hike along a trail that is in the area next to Stevens Creek where it comes out to the bay. **Highlights:** Riparian birds as well as raptors and shoreline birds. **Difficulty:** Easy walk with places to stop on bridges over the creek for better access to birds and scoping. **Notes:** Bring binoculars and/or cameras. **RC, LO, RSVP Required:** Go to <https://goo.gl/forms/ZM564dFKmifT4zms2> or find the trip on our calendar at scvas.org

Saturday, Nov. 18, 8:00AM Charleston Slough

Half day. **Leader:** Nick Yatsko, (408) 891-3187. **Directions:** Meet at Terminal Way at the end of San Antonio Rd, north off Hwy 101 in Mountain View. **Notes:** All are encouraged to attend but birding will be geared towards beginners. **RC**

Sunday, Nov. 19, 8:30AM Ed Levin County Park

Half day. **Leader:** Ralph Schardt, (408) 624-7845. **Directions:** Take Hwy 880 to the Calaveras Rd Exit in Milpitas. Head east (towards the hills) and turn left at the Ed Levin Park sign. Meet at the upper parking lot (overlooking the lake). **Highlights:** We'll look for migratory birds, shorebirds, raptors, flycatchers, corvids - you name it, we've seen it at Ed Levin! We saw Golden Eagles and Bald Eagles during last year's Christmas Bird Count! **Difficulty:** Easy walk around the lakes and trees. **Notes:** Bring water, binoculars and/or cameras. **RC, LO, RSVP Required:** Go to <https://goo.gl/forms/rMhx6kJA0tk3v2ls1> or find the trip on our calendar at scvas.org

Sunday, Nov. 26, 8:00AM Arastradero OSP

Half day. **Leader:** Kirsten Holmquist, (408) 747-0988. **Directions:** From I-280 take Page Mill Rd west; turn right on Arastradero Rd, and meet in the parking lot about a half-mile on the right. **Difficulty:** Moderately strenuous hiking. **RC**

Saturday, Dec. 2, 8:00AM Pichetti Ranch

Half day. **Leader:** Dave Zittin, (408) 515-7104. **Directions:** From I-280 in Cupertino take Foothill Blvd south 3.3 miles (becomes Stevens Canyon Rd). Turn right on Monte Bello Rd and go about a mile, turn left past winery entrance into preserve parking lot. All birding levels welcome! **Difficulty:**

Field Trips

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Moderately strenuous walk past an old orchard, seasonal pond, and oak woodlands. **Notes:** Trip will be cancelled if trails are muddy. **RC**

Sunday, Dec. 3, 8:00AM

Los Capitancillos

Short half day. **Leader:** Rich Page, (408) 377-1092. **Directions:** Exit Camden Ave from 85, drive south 1.1 mile and left at Singletree Way, 1 block south of Blossom Hill Rd. Park near PG&E substation 2 blocks east of Camden. We will walk along the Los Capitancillos Ponds to Meridian and back along the creek. **Highlights:** Ponds should have a variety of waterfowl and gulls. **Difficulty:** Easy walking. **RC**

Wednesday, Dec. 6, 12:00PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leader:** Allen Royer. Contact landfill coordinator, Silvi-

ana Ruiz, with questions at (408) 730-7545. See write-up for Nov. 1.

Saturday, Dec. 9, 8:00AM

Little Uvas OSP (undeveloped)

Half day. **Leader:** Rick Herder, (408) 930-1029. **Directions:** West side of Uvas Rd, 3.2 miles south of Oak Glen Ave, Morgan Hill. Look for Open Space sign. **Highlights:** Explore undeveloped OSP within Calero-MH CBC count circle. Small ponds and oak woodland. **Difficulty:** Moderate.

Sunday, Dec. 10, 8:30AM

Ed Levin County Park

Half day. **Leader:** Ralph Schardt, (408) 624-7845. See write-up for Nov. 19. **RSVP Required:** Go to <https://goo.gl/forms/rMhx6kJA0tk3v2ls1> or find the trip on our calendar at scvas.org.

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 8:30AM

Los Capitancillos Ponds West

Short half day. **Leaders:** Phyllis Swanson and Eve Meier, (408) 569-9391. See write-up for Dec. 3.

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 12:30PM

Shoreline Riparian to Baylands

2.5 hours. **Leader:** Ralph Schardt, (408) 624-7845. See write-up for Nov. 15. **RSVP Required:** Go to <https://goo.gl/forms/ZM564dFKmifT4zms2> or find the trip on our calendar at scvas.org

Saturday, Dec. 16, 8:00AM

Oka Ponds

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

SCVAS Events Calendar

Wed. 11/1 & 12/6; 7:30-9:00PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers

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

Topic 11/1: "The Quest to Photograph One of the Rarest Birds in North America" with Julio Mulero

Topic 12/6: "Borneo: A Journey into the Wild" with Charlie Ryan
See scvas.org/babp for more details.

Thurs. 11/9; 12:00-1:00PM

Birding Google Campus

Meets at the Permanente Creek trail head on Charleston Rd. We have partnered with Google to offer guided bird walks on the Mountain View campus. Googlers, Audubon members, and the general public are invited. Park anywhere on campus. Please carpool if possible. Contact Mackenzie Mousing with questions at (408)394-0330 or mackenzieSCVAS@gmail.com. See calendar at scvas.org for more details.

Tues. 11/14 & 12/12; 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 11/14: Swallows

Topic 12/12: Golden Eagle

Fri. 12/15; 11:30AM-1:00PM

Nature Journaling with John Muir Laws

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino

Free workshops for all ages! No RSVP required; please be on time. ***Please note that these classes will now be held on Fridays*** See calendar at scvas.org for more details.

Christmas Bird Counts Need Your Help!!

See page 5 for details or go to www.scvas.org/cbc

Sun. 12/17 - San Jose Sat. 12/30 - Calero-Morgan Hill

Mon. 12/18 - Palo Alto Tues. 01/02 - Mt. Hamilton



Young Audubon Events

Community Service Day at McClellan Ranch

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: Monday, January 15

Start out the new year by helping your local environment! We'll work with Grassroots Ecology to remove weeds, do water quality testing, and learn about pollution prevention at McClellan Ranch.

For more info and to RSVP: Find the event on our calendar at scvas.org or contact Kelly Alfrey at outreach@scvas.org.

Elephant Seal Walks at Año Nuevo State Park

April Date TBD

Stay tuned for more details in our Jan-Feb Avocet Issue. Join us for an annual tradition!! Come see the Elephant Seals!

AGES: 7 years old and up, children under 18 should be accompanied by an adult.

inspire bluebird advocates across the country, including the California Bluebird Recovery Program.

The bluebird is one of those birds that you remember. You would have noticed that beautiful blue songbird as it hunted in the grass on a sunny morning while you walked to school as a child. When you think back on those fond memories, it might dawn on you that you have not seen bluebirds in years. For a period of time, that was certainly the case in downtown San Jose. I began my career with the City of San Jose in 1992 and never saw a bluebird during my first fifteen years. Western Bluebirds could be seen in the foothills around the valley, but you would not expect to see them around suburban areas, let alone more urban locations. Famously, Silicon Valley was first known as "The Valley of Heart's Delight," an agricultural hub with plenty of undeveloped land and older trees with natural cavities. Unfortunately, rapid development began, and farmed fields were taken over by housing and industry.

In 1997, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society embarked on a project to improve the chances that cavity-nesting birds would find suitable nesting sites. The Cavity Nesters Recovery Program (CNRP) was founded that year as an offshoot of the California Bluebird Recovery Program, and just a few years later, the effort was beginning to pay off. From *Breeding Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County, California* written by Bill Bousman in 2007, the Western Bluebird's section began: "A common breeder in our oak woodlands and grasslands, the Western Bluebird has recently begun nesting within Santa Clara County's urban habitats as well." Graphs in the book indicating population trends as measured by Christmas and Summer Bird Count records showed general declines up until 2005, but the last few years were clearly looking up. Since then, the San Jose Christmas Bird Count numbers have remained strong, but the real story is what has happened in Downtown San Jose and around the valley. Where they once were absent, the Western Bluebird is now commonplace. Every single day, bluebirds are now found sitting on fences, hovering over the grass, and sparking those memories of old.

But SCVAS's program was concerned about more than just the Western Bluebird. CNRP set out to help the populations of all cavity-nesting birds. Two incredible success stories include those of the Tree Swallow and Violet-green Swallow. San Jose Christmas Bird Count results illustrate these stories well. The Tree Swallow was seen in the count in good numbers (40) in 1951. They were not seen again until 1967, then 1972, and a few years in single digits until 1995. That all changed in 1998 - since then, Tree Swallows

have been seen in fifteen of the last nineteen counts, and were only missed recently in the midst of the drought. The 2016 Christmas Bird Count saw a record number of Tree Swallows: 294. Violet-green Swallows have reacted similarly to CNRP efforts. Beginning in 1972, the Violet-green Swallow was seen in single digits in seven counts (with the lone exception of 1975 when 12 were seen) - that was it. Then, just four years after CNRP's inception, the group began installing nest boxes in earnest and the future of the Violet-green Swallow began to look up: 30 were counted in 2001, 37 in 2002, and though the numbers are somewhat erratic, the bird has only been missed in two of the last eleven years, with 2016 showing a record high of 68 birds. Of course, Christmastime is not



Tree Swallow Nest by Mike Azevedo

a great time to count swallows, but it is amazing to see that these two species have become much more abundant since the inception of the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program.

What started as an effort to save bluebirds has evolved into a comprehensive undertaking to support all cavity-nesting species across Santa Clara County, the state of California, and beyond. Each February, CNRP holds training sessions for volunteers interested in monitoring nest boxes throughout the cavity-nesting season (around March-August). Data collected by nest box monitors contributes to nationwide studies of cavity-nesting bird populations, and helps us understand the effects of our work. If you are interested in learning more about this program, visit scvas.org/CNRP or contact Mike Azevedo at geochelone@aol.com. To join the CNRP Google Group, email Kelly Alfrey at outreach@scvas.org.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME
OF THE YEAR



Join us for another year of adventure in this fun Audubon tradition. Contact the compiler of the region you are interested in (see below) and help us document the birds of our county. Participation is free and all are encouraged to join!



Yellow-rumped Warbler by Mike Azevedo

San Jose - Sunday, December 17

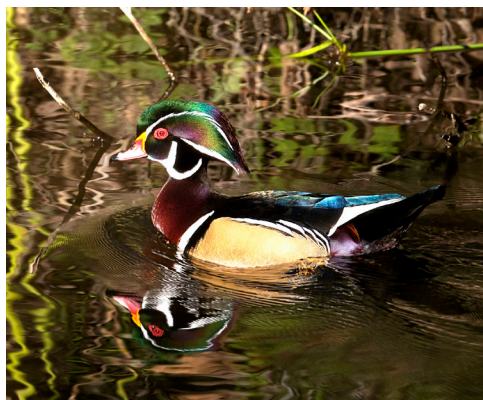
Birders of all experience levels are welcome and needed. Bird identification skills are an asset but spotters (who just look for birds in the sky, trees, and bushes) and recorders (who tally the number of birds of each species) are also valuable! Some count all day, while others only take part for a few hours. The day is followed by the optional Countdown Dinner for those who are up to hearing stories of rare sightings from theirs and other groups. It is a great experience! If you are interested in participating, please contact Mike Azevedo at geochelone@aol.com.

Great-tailed Grackle, 2016 CBC by Bill Bousman



Palo Alto - Monday, December 18

This annual census covers a radius from the Bay to the Santa Cruz Mountains, with four regions in each of Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. We welcome eager birders at any level of experience. If you want to participate in the same region where you have counted previously, please contact your region coordinator soon. Note that Chris O'Connell has taken over from Bob Power as coordinator for region 3 (San Mateo County lowlands west of Hwy 101); if you do not know how to reach him, Al (below) can put you in touch. If you are new to this count or would like to explore a different region than before, please contact Al Eisner (eisner@slac.stanford.edu). In order to find you a good spot, we need to hear from you at least two weeks before the count (the sooner the better).



Wood Duck by Beth Hamel

Calero-Morgan Hill - Saturday, December 30

This count covers city parks, county parks, creeks and reservoirs in mid-south Santa Clara County and the Almaden area. If you are interested in participating, please contact Beth Hamel at Beth.Hamel@gmail.com.



California Quail by Bob Power

Mount Hamilton - Tuesday, January 2

We hope to have a great count again through the Mt. Hamilton and San Antonio Valley area. Count leaders are especially needed. Contact Bob Hirt at (408) 821-2732 (cell) – as soon as possible to participate.

Field Notes

(August-September 2017)

by Pete Dunten

Geese through Terns

The first **Greater-white Fronted Geese** to return were three at Penetencia Creek Park on 28 Sept (RWR). A female **Blue-winged Teal** with five ducklings on 21 Aug was a nice find at Charleston Slough (GL). Although teal are present year-round in the county, this is only the second time breeding has been documented. A raft of 27 **Common Mergansers** on Shoreline Lake on 22 Aug was unexpected (GL); groups of the mergansers this large are typically found on our reservoirs after the

Waterbird Pond. A single **Solitary Sandpiper** was at the Mountain View Forebay on 2 Sept (WGB). **Black Turnstones** are found about one year in two during the fall. Five Black Turnstones at Charleston Slough on 14 Aug (WBr) tied the county record for highest count in a day. Another was seen on Alviso Salt Pond A17 on 26 Aug (SPz). The **Little Stint** found in New Chicago Marsh at the end of July remained through 1 Aug (MJM, m. ob.). The southward passage of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** which started in early July continued through the end of August, with sightings at New Chicago marsh, Charleston Slough, and the Palo Alto FCB. Singles were seen in New Chicago Marsh through

at the CCFS Waterbird Pond from 4 Sept to 6 Sept (MJM, MMR, m. ob.). While fall shorebird migration can be spectacular, bringing thousands of birds to the South Bay, it is also a good time of year to look for uncommon gulls. A **Franklin's Gull** resting on Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 25 Aug was a nice find (RFk). **Elegant Tern** numbers increased in Aug and Sept, with high counts of fifty on 17 Aug on Salt Pond A2E (FV) and seventy at Charleston Slough and adjacent Pond A1 on 11 Sept (GL). Up to five were still present on the last day of Sept at the Sunnyvale WPCP (RFu et al.). A **Common Tern** at Salt Pond A2E on 2 Aug was only the second found this fall (WBr). The number of **Least Terns** staging on Salt Pond A2E tapered from twenty on 2 Aug (WBr) to one on 25 Aug, the last date they remained in the South Bay (WGB). A southward-bound **Black Tern** also visited A2E between 9 Aug (DW) and 13 Aug (m. ob.).



Chestnut-sided Warbler by Jason Vassallo

breeding season. **White-faced Ibis** visited New Chicago marsh on three dates, with 14 on 26 Aug (FV, m. ob.) and ten on both 1 Sept (MJM) and 29 Sept (GL). A **Swainson's Hawk** over Campbell on 27 Aug (LM) was the only one recorded during the period. A group of 24 **Sandhill Cranes** on the move were over Monte Bello OSP on 23 Sept (JY, AL), and on the opposite side of the county, two were at Newby Island on 26 Sept (VH). Fall brought **Lesser Yellowlegs** in impressive numbers, first eight at the Palo Alto FCB on 18 Aug (WBr), followed by counts of 29 (MJM, MMR) and 28 (MJM) on 4 and 5 Sept at the CCFS

26 Aug (SCR). The high count was three at the Palo Alto FCB on 18 Aug (WBr). The first **Baird's Sandpiper** heading south was along the edge of Pond A3W on 12 Aug (PhB). One was found at the Palo Alto FCB on multiple dates between 16 Aug (JL) and 21 Aug (m. ob.). Numbers of **Red Knots** this fall were low, with singles at the San Francisquito Creek mouth on 9 Aug (WBr) and 5 Sept (WGB) and a group of five on a closed refuge levee on 27 Aug (MMR, MJM). Some years hundreds of knots are noted in the South Bay in the fall. Single **Stilt Sandpipers** stopped at Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 21 Aug (DW) and

Swifts through Pipits

Fall migration brought the spectacle of hundreds of **Vaux's Swifts** in the air over Los Capitancillos Ponds late in the day on 30 Aug (JPa). Fall also ushers in arriving birds that winter here. The first **Red-breasted Sapsucker** of the season was at Ulistac NA on 12 Sept (SMn, CLa, BM). The first **Prairie Falcon** in Coyote Valley was one along Laguna Ave on 8 Aug (JnM). The second arrival in the lowlands was one at Ed Levin CP on 20 Aug (WHS). The first **Merlins** to arrive were one at Shoreline Lake on 19 Sept (RBU) and one at Stevens Creek CP on 28 Sept (FV). **Willow Flycatchers** were widely reported beginning on 20 Aug when one was at Almaden Reservoir (JPa). One to three were found on many dates through the end of Sept. Fall migration brought a **Purple Martin** to Palo Alto Baylands on 4 Sept (GL). **Bank Swallows** passed through the county on their way south, with singles stopping at Charleston Slough on 18 Aug (WGB) and 8 Sept (GL). Returning **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were noted on 19 Sept at Pearson-Arastradero Preserve (RBU) and on 20 Sept outside of Gilroy

Field Notes *cont'd*

(JMy). A **Townsend's Solitaire** along the Grizzly Flat Trail in the Santa Cruz range near the western edge of the county on 27 Sept was the earliest to arrive in the fall (AR). A **Sage Thrasher** on a closed refuge levee on 19 Sept was also the earliest fall arrival for the county (AR, ES). The first **American Pipits** to arrive were two at Don Edwards NWR on 16 Sept (JVs).

Warblers through Pine Siskin

Warbler migration is well underway. On 4 Sept a **Northern Waterthrush's** distinctive calls were heard and recorded at Ulistac NA (ChJ). A **Tennessee Warbler** was another drop-in at Ulistac NA on 12 Sept (ChJ, BM, SMn, CLa). Single **Nashville Warblers** were at the Don Edwards EEC on 31 Aug (WGB), at West Valley College on 13 Sept (OA), and along the Guadalupe River Trail near Coleman Road on 24 and 25 Sept (JPa, BM). Two **MacGillivray's Warblers** turned up at the CCFS on 3 Sept (DWn). Single MacGillivray's were found on 12 Sept along Stevens Creek near La Avenida (PKe) and on 16 Sept along the Guadalupe River below Trimble (SCR). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** stopped at Sunnyvale Baylands between 19 Sept (PKe) and 21 Sept (m. ob.). A **Blackpoll** delighted many at Ulistac NA from 28 Sept (PLa) to 30 Sept (m. ob.). An immature **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at the Stanford Dish on 6 Aug (GL). Our local population is the source of birds seen in August. A few Yellow-rumped Warblers nest in the Santa Cruz range, and some dispersal typically occurs after nesting. The first migrants of the fall were single birds which arrived on 3 Sept at Lake Vasona CP (KWn) and 4 Sept at Ulistac NA (MBu). **Hermit Warblers** were also on the move in August, with four noted at Henry Coe SP on 12 Aug (JAc), one there on 14 Aug (RN), and one at Rancho Canada del Oro on 29 Aug (WGB). **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found on 3 Sept at CCFS (DWn) and on 30 Sept in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose (BM).

The two chats found this fall is about triple the long-term average for fall migrants. A **Green-tailed Towhee** found suitable habitat below Anderson Dam on 8 Sept (SCR). The last year one occurred in the county was 2014. A **Brewer's Sparrow** at the Alviso Marina graced a Big Half Day effort on 17 Sept (MMR et al.) and stayed through 19 Sept (m. ob.). It was the first in the county since 2011. Five

Observers: Jeff Acuff (JAc), Ozzie Altus (OA), Philip Ball (PhB), Bill Bousman (WGB), Will Brooks (WBr), Mike Buccieri (MBu), Robert Buchsbaum (RBU), Rich Ferrick (RFk), Rob Furrow (RFu), Victoria Heyse (VH), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Garth Harwood (GHa), Winnifred Homer-Smith (WHS), Pat Kenny (PKe), Caroline Lambert (CLa), Peter LaTourrette (PLa), Garrett Lau



Brewer's Sparrow by Jason Vassallo

Chipping Sparrows returned to the native plant garden next to TJ Martin Park at the north end of Almaden Valley on 16 Sept (JPa). This marks the eleventh consecutive year Chipping Sparrows have wintered there. A **Black-throated Sparrow** at CCFS on 3 Sept (DWn) was our first fall record. Others have been found in December and stayed for a longer time. A **Fox Sparrow** outside Gilroy on 23 Aug was an early arrival (JMy). The next noted were two at Don Edwards NWR on 16 Sept (JVs). A male **Summer Tanager** brightened Chitactac Adams Heritage Park outside Gilroy on 17 Sept (WP, KON). Seventeen **Red Crossbills** flew over Monte Bello OSP on 5 Sept (GHa). Crossbills were abundant the winter of 2015-2016 and absent the winter of 2016-2017. **Pine Siskins** are also irruptive, and were scarce the winter of 2016-2017. This fall there were reports of one to three Siskins from five locations between 14 Sept and 25 Sept.

(GL), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Jasen Liu (JL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JnM), Sonny Mencher (SMn), Brooke Miller (BM), Jean Myers (JMy), Lisa Myers (LM), Richard Norton (RN), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Janna Pauser (JPa), William Pelletier (WP), Sergio Perez (SPz), Rob Reiling (RWR), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Emma Stevens (ES), Frank Vanslager (FV), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Dave Weber (DW), Kathryn Wendel (KWn), Dan Wenny (DWn), James Yurchenco (JY)

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

Conservation Corner: What Our Environmental Advocacy Team is Working On...

by Shani Kleinhaus and Mackenzie Mossing

Cannabis Cultivation: What Does it Mean for our Waterways?

California's legalization of cannabis has brought unforeseen implications that may threaten natural resources throughout the state. The state is now developing rules for cannabis cultivation and the current draft policy allows marijuana growers to develop roads and other infrastructure without environmental review, and to bypass the Clean Water Act on federal and state levels. We are greatly concerned with encroachment into waterways and their sensitive ecosystems without CEQA review and without biological opinions by government agencies that examine impacts to endangered species. We outlined our concerns in a letter to the State Water Resources Control Board hoping that the state will make changes for a better final policy. Santa Clara County supervisors adopted a moratorium that temporarily bans commercial cannabis cultivation in unincorporated areas of our county, but this may change in the near future, so we will remain vigilant.

A Win for Wildlife in Los Altos Hills

A long-term engagement with the community of Los Altos Hills focused on the proposed nine-home Stirling subdivision on nineteen acres at the headwater of Matadero Creek. We were concerned with fencing that could block wildlife movement and with the loss of habitat and mature oak trees. Advocacy can be effective! The developer is now looking to preserve oaks and habitat, and to minimize fencing to allow permeability and enhance habitat.

Preservation or Parking Lot?

McClellan Ranch Preserve has been SCVAS's home for over twenty years. We have fought hard in the past to preserve its natural beauty and ecological integrity from proposals that threatened to pave and build along Stevens Creek. Considering our history with Cupertino, we were dismayed to learn recently that there is a proposal to pave the west side of Steven's Creek to serve as overflow parking for the preserve. The plans showed an abysmal setback from the creek (less than twenty feet!) and did not include any restorative efforts. We wrote a letter to the City urging them to evaluate other solutions for parking, implement a fifty-ft setback from the creek and restore habitat along the riparian corridor.

Private Home Pushing the Limits

This summer, Audubon members in the Cupertino community alerted us to a proposal for a 9,000-square-foot home in the hillsides on Lindy Lane. While we do not always take issue with private home development, we sprang into action when we learned the project proposed to destroy nineteen trees, including many native oaks. We were also concerned that approval of this project would set a precedent for more urban sprawl into the hillsides. Through letters and conversations with staff and planning commissioners, we urged the City to reduce the project's footprint and the number of trees that would be removed. The City also heard overwhelming opposition from the community. The Planning Commission has since asked the developer to return with a significantly smaller design.

The Fight to Save Coyote Valley Continues

In Coyote Valley and Santa Teresa Hills, we continue to dedicate efforts to review, comment and oppose inappropriate development and to promote the preservation of Coyote Valley and the Santa Teresa Hills nearby. We are currently following development proposals for a home and access road, mobile home resort, and warehouses, as efforts continue to develop the valley floor and the hills that surround it.

Fun and Learning in Overfelt Gardens, East San Jose

Our nature exploration of Overfelt Gardens on September 23rd was a huge success! Nearly fifty people (including local community members, families, and San Jose State students) divided into groups and explored the park's history and biodiversity. We used the iNaturalist and eBird applications on our smart phones to document every life form that we found. In total, 900 observations recorded 193 species, including 23 species of birds, 38 insects, 12 galls, 15 lichens and mosses, 1 reptile, 4 mammals, and 100 species of trees and plants (see <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/overfelt-park-bioblitz>). Bird highlights included a Willow Flycatcher, Wilson's Snipe, Belted Kingfisher and Black-throated Gray Warbler! We thank San Jose Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco and her staff, San Jose Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services, San Jose Parks Advocates, and San Jose State University for their collaboration and participation in this event. We are also grateful for the volunteers who lent their time and expertise to help us create a fun, educational experience for everyone.



Bioblitz participants identifying bees and butterflies

SCVAS Classes & Excursions

We are pleased to offer the following excursions to our members and community. For more information, please call the SCVAS main office at (408) 252-3747 or visit our website at www.scvas.org and click on the class in our calendar.

Outdoor Photographer Refresher with an Introduction to Digiscoping



Anna's Hummingbird by Ralph Schardt

Dates: Thursday, November 2nd and Tuesday, December 5th

Time: 8:30-10:00AM

Location: McClellan Ranch - Meet at SCVAS

Cost: Free! for members, \$15 non-members

Register: <https://goo.gl/forms/rZOYRFcGCbwhGVEg1> or find the event on our website calendar

Note: Rain cancels, with refund or credit for future classes.

Description: Explore outdoor photography opportunities at McClellan Ranch with our Executive Director, Ralph Schardt. We will review photography equipment needed for outdoor conditions and how to take advantage of natural light. You'll learn to take better nature and landscape photos with a few easy examples. A brief introduction to digiscoping will follow. Wear layers and clothing appropriate for an easy hike on level, but unpaved trails.

Bird Identification Workshop with Los Gatos Birdwatcher



Fox Sparrow by Chuq Von Rospach

Dates: Wednesday, November 29th

Time: 7:30-8:30PM

Location: Los Gatos Birdwatcher, 792 Blossom Hill Road, Los Gatos

Cost: Free!

Register: <https://goo.gl/forms/e44ttDvUzHIJ1saC3> or click on the event from our website calendar at www.scvas.org

Note: Bring your field guide.

Session #2: Cedar Waxwing, Hermit Thrush, Varied Thrush, Fox Sparrow, Merlin

Description: Lisa Myers will be hosting bird identification (by sight and call) workshops at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher. These one-hour workshops will focus on five different bird species that we can expect to see and hear in our own backyards each month.

Beginner's Bird and Plant Identification Walk Series



Spined Turban Gall by Pam Frey

Date: Saturday, December 16th

Time: 9:00AM-12:00PM

Location: Lake Cunningham

Cost: Free! Parking fee is \$6

Register: Contact Arvind Kumar (chhprahiya@gmail.com) to RSVP

Note: Bring a hat, water, bird and plant list, binoculars, and walking shoes. *Co-sponsored by SCVAS, California Native Plant Society, and Open Space Authority*

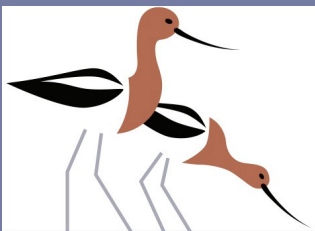
Session #4: First Day of Winter

Description: Do you love being outdoors? Do you want to deepen your appreciation of nature by learning the names of birds and plants around you? At the onset of winter, join us for a beginner's bird and plant identification walk through Lake Cunningham Park - a major destination for waterfowl and migratory birds, and home to many resident birds. Vicki Silvas-Young will show you how to identify common local birds and the native plants they depend on for food, shelter, and nesting places. Trip distance is four miles round-trip on a level path.

Join our Board!

SCVAS is seeking new Board members and welcomes expressions of interest from anyone who supports our mission. We would especially like to talk to you if you have experience in fund-raising or business operations of nonprofit organizations.

If you would like to explore the possibility of joining the Board, please contact Peter Hart, Nominating Committee Chair, at peterhart@gmail.com.



**Santa Clara Valley
Audubon Society**
Established 1926

Friends of SCVAS

Gifts received August 1st, 2017 through September 30th, 2017

Gift (Up to \$99)

William Miner
Diane Bates
Sandra Erickson
Phil Lindsay
Mr. Robert & Susan Christiansen
Mr. Gary L. Harris
John Bonds
Geary & Joan Ridings
Carol Klemstein
Carol Ann Graves
Rita Norton
Maureen Draper
Marilyn Walthers
John Hodge
Jennifer Seguin
Marion Farber
William Pelletier
Dave Johnston
Atul Chaudhari
Steve McHenry & Carolyn Straub
Joan Passarelli
Jan Raissle & Susanne Mulcahy
Douglas & Sarah Larson
David Cook & Barbara Hutchings
Bradford & Janice Santos
Arvind Kumar
April Pufahl
Vivek & Leena Khanzode
Deborah & Forest Weld
Art & Ann Muto

Avocet Sponsor (\$100-\$249)

Sheryl Walters
Ruth & Ed Satterthwaite
Kitty Trejo & Marti Wright
Dr. David Weissman
Dina Saari
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Richard Page
Stephen Rosenthal
Jan Hintermeister
Dave Poeschel
Charles & Jean Thompson
James Little

Burrowing Owl (\$250-\$499)

Stephanie Karp
Rob & Rita Colwell
Peter & Patricia Biocini
Chris & Pam Mossing
Ralph & Julie Schardt
Ruth Troetschler

Peregrine Falcon (\$500-\$999)

The Emily Fund
Robert Hirt
Phil & Joan Leighton
Jitze & Nancy Couperus
Marlene Macek
Anonymous

Golden Eagle (1000+)

Alan & Irene Adler
Susan Welch
Peter & Diane Hart
Pete & Sue LaTourrette
Don McDougall

We would also like to send out a huge thank you to the Los Gatos Birdwatcher for helping SCVAS purchase new binoculars for our Wetlands Discovery Program! Lisa Myers gave us great advice on waterproof binoculars for our program and found us an incredible deal on ordering a major quantity. SCVAS and the Los Gatos Birdwatcher have collaborated many times over the years, and we are thankful for this partnership. Please help us express our gratitude by shopping at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher!

Thank you, Lisa!

Nature Shop

HOURS:
M-F 10AM-4PM
Sat 10AM-2PM

Here at SCVAS, we are so grateful for our customers who support the Nature Shop! All proceeds from sales support SCVAS conservation and education programs.



\$5.50

Sarah Boddy
Holiday Cards



As a thank you, we would like to extend this special offer: Take home a FREE SCVAS Trivet with every \$35.00 spent in the shop! AND because we think this item is just too perfect as a hostess gift, thank you gift, or holiday gift, all SCVAS trivets will be offered at \$5.00 each during November and December.

Happy holidays!



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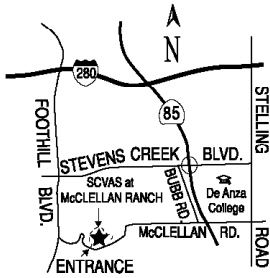
Trivet reg \$10.00

now \$5.00

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 E-mail: scvas@scvas.org
www.scvas.org

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New Members of SCVAS

*Those who joined August 1st - September 30th, 2017.
 We look forward to a great year with your support!*

Kathryn Barclay
 Carol Ann Graves
 Karen Hawkins
 Petya Hristova
 Nina Kramer
 Ping Li
 Andrew Mattioda
 William Miner

Cara Moretti
 Amye Ominsky
 John Richardson
 Carol Ross
 Jay Shain
 Lucy Tompkin
 Ingrid Totic
 Trevor Van Loon

And thank you to those who renewed their membership!

Go Paperless!

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

- Save resources - eNewsletters save trees, postage, fuel (and more)!
- No waiting for the mail - get your newsletter up to 2 weeks sooner!
- Get a FREE SCVAS pin!

Contact the SCVAS office at scvas@scvas.org to start your paper-free membership today!

STAFF

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Education Programs Coordinator

Kelsey Frey, programs@scvas.org
 (408) 252-3740

Office Fax (408) 252-2850
 Office E-mail scvas@scvas.org
 Website 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 - 4 PM
Saturday 10 AM - 2 PM

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

Details available on the SCVAS website.

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

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

OFFICERS

President Diane Hart
Treasurer Don McDougall
Vice President Gabrielle Feldman
Secretary Joan Leighton

DIRECTORS

Mike Armer Vivek Khanzode
 Tom Grey
 Peter Hart
 Bob Hirt