



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

November-December 2018

Yes on Measure T: Another Opportunity to Protect Coyote Valley

by Dashiell Leeds and Shani Kleinhaus



Coyote Valley by Ralph Schardt

SCVAS has been fighting development in Coyote Valley for decades, with the hope of saving this important habitat for birds and wildlife, and restoring historical landscapes of wetlands, oak woodlands, and valley floor grasslands. In June, we successfully campaigned against San Jose Measure B and averted residential development in Coyote Valley. However, the risk of industrial development in North Coyote Valley remains.

On November 6, San Jose voters will have the opportunity to vote YES on Bond Measure T to secure and preserve land in North Coyote Valley. Measure T will allow the City to allocate \$50 million dollars for the purchase of land in Coyote Valley, which will then be preserved to prevent flooding and water quality contamination. San Jose has recognized Coyote Valley's critical role as a natural floodplain and aquifer, and seeks to protect the land from construction and industrial development. Outside the scope of Coyote Valley, Measure T also allocates funds for urgently needed infrastructure improvements in San Jose, such as repairing deteriorating roads, bridges, and sewage systems.

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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

River Otters: Heralds of a Healthy Watershed Wednesday, November 14 with Megan Isadore

Megan Isadore, Co-Founder and Director of the River Otter Ecology Project, will discuss research and community science investigating the River Otters' return to the Bay Area. Included will be plenty of video of the unique and charming behavior that makes River Otters such excellent ambassadors for river and wetlands restoration and conservation efforts.



November-December Field Trips

(Full details are also available online at www.scvas.org)

Carpool if possible; bring binoculars, field guides, layered clothing. LO = Lunch optional; RC = Heavy rain cancels; NF = No facilities available; KF-AA = Kid friendly, all ages; KF-10+ = 10 years and older; KF-14+ = 14 years and older

****Please note: Online registration is required for all field trips.****

Please RSVP by going to scvas.org/FieldTrips, then find your trip and follow the easy registration directions.

A confirmation email will follow. If you have any questions, please call

Kelsey Frey at (408) 252-3740 or email at programs@scvas.org.

Saturday, Nov. 3; 8:00AM

Moss Landing & Vicinity

Half day. **Leader:** Norm Kikuchi, (831) 251-0666. **Directions:** Meet in Moss Landing next to 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 water. Early start time. **RC, KF-10+**

Wednesday, Nov. 7; 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, KF-10+**

Friday, Nov. 9; 12:00PM

Shoreline Lake

(Drop In Birding!)

Two hours. **Leaders:** Kelly Alfrey and Eve Meier, (408) 569-9391. **Directions:** From 85 N, take exit 24C to Shoreline Blvd, and turn right on N Shoreline Blvd for 2.2 miles. Our table will be at the grassy hill to the left of the café. **Highlights:** Binoculars will be available for public use to see migrating and local ducks and shorebirds. **RC, KF-AA**

Saturday, Nov. 10; 3:00PM

Coyote Valley OSP

(Drop In Birding!)

Two hours. **Leader:** Chuq Von Rospach, (408) 221-0797. **Directions:** We will meet in the visitor parking lot at Coyote Valley OSP. Take Hwy 101 to Bailey Rd and

take Bailey West (right turn off of freeway). Turn left on Santa Teresa Blvd and follow to Palm Ave and turn right. This road ends at Coyote Valley OSP parking lot.

Highlights: Golden Eagle, Bullcock's Oriole, Rock Wren, Northern Flicker, Red-winged Blackbird, and many others. **Difficulty:** We will be sitting and birding. This trip is open to all levels of birding, including families and beginners. **Notes:** Water and binoculars are essential; cameras are welcome. No dogs. **LO, RC, KF-10+**

Sunday, Nov. 11; 8:00AM

Sunnyvale Water Treatment 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. **RC**

Wednesday, Nov. 14; 8:30AM

Los Gatos Creek Park

Half day. **Leader:** Eve Meier, (408) 569-9391. **Directions:** From San Tomas Expwy, go south on Winchester (toward Los Gatos), left on E Hacienda, left on Dell, right into park. Meet by restrooms. **Difficulty:** Easy few mile walk on level ground. **Notes:** Parking fee. **RC**

Saturday, Nov. 17; 9:00AM

McClellan Ranch Preserve

Half day. **Leaders:** Julie Amato and Mary Ann Robertson, (408) 252-3747. **Directions:** From 280-N exit on Foothill Blvd, turn left, then left again on McClellan Rd. Park in the overflow lot at 22243 McClellan Rd. Meet at the bird feeders in front of the SCVAS office. **Highlights:** Explore the plants, birds,

and other living things that call McClellan home during the fall. You'll observe and learn about some of the key species that live here on this short, leisurely walk along Stevens Creek. Naturalists of all levels are welcome! **Difficulty:** This is a 1- to 1.5-mile walk on level ground. **Notes:** Bring binoculars if you have them. You are welcome to bring your camera and take pictures. **RC, KF-10+**

Sunday, Nov. 18; 9:00AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. **Leader:** Allen Royer, (408) 288-7768. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 in Mountain View take San Antonio Rd north to Terminal Blvd parking area. Meet at entrance nearest San Antonio Rd. **Notes:** For beginning birders but all are encouraged to attend. **KF-10+, RC**

Sunday, Dec. 2; 10:00AM

Coyote Creek Trail, Milpitas

Two hours. **Leaders:** Deb Kramer and Kelsey Frey, (408) 981-6965. **Directions:** From 237 W or E, get onto N McCarthy Blvd and drive to Alviso Milpitas Rd. Meet in the Coyote Creek Trail parking lot off Ranch Drive. **Highlights:** We hope to see migrating waterfowl and songbirds. **Difficulty:** Easy walk north of the parking lot along a dirt trail. **RC, KF-AA**

Wednesday, Dec. 5; 12:00PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

One hour. **Leader:** Allen Royer. Contact landfill coordinator, Silvana Ruiz, with questions at (408) 730-7545. See write-up for Nov. 7. **RC**

Saturday, Dec. 8; 9:00AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. **Leader:** Allen Royer, (408) 288-7768. See write-up for Nov. 18. **KF-10+, RC**

Field Trips

cont'd

Wednesday, Dec. 12; 8:30AM

Coyote Creek Trail, Silver Creek Valley

Half day. **Leader:** Eve Meier, (408) 569-9391. **Directions:** From CA-85 South, take Blossom Hill Rd exit east (left) and continue 2.4 miles onto Silver Creek Valley Rd. Make a U-turn at Piercy Rd, then immediate right into Silver Creek parking lot. **Notes:** We will start at the parking lot and walk north. **Difficulty:** Easy walking on paved trail. **RC**

Saturday Dec. 15; 8:00 AM

Ogier Ponds

Half day. **Leader:** Mary Wiznewski, (408) 887-0738. **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). **RC, KF-10+**

A Special Note on Field Trips

We have been extremely lucky to have so many exceptional long-time trip leaders. Their support has been incredible and they have taught us so much. At this time we are reevaluating our trip protocols to make them safer and more efficient, and in this process some of our leaders have chosen to step down. Though we are sad to see them go, we understand their decision and thank them for their inspiring work. We also welcome new leaders and continue to welcome feedback from both trip leaders and participants. Birding is fun and we want to keep it that way. To learn more about our field trips or how to become a leader, please email Kelsey Frey at programs@scvas.org.
Happy birding!



Looking to dig a little deeper into California ecology?

Check out some of the upcoming classes at West Valley College. For more information, contact Leticia Gallardo at leticia.gallardo@westvalley.edu.

California Plants and Animals

Biol 014 CRN 32878; MW 2:05-5:15PM

Curious about local wildlife? Come learn about the amazing diversity of California's natural landscape. Explore plant and animal diversity through lectures, labs, and field trips. This course may be used to obtain UC California Naturalist Certification.

Field Ecology

Biol 058 CRN 32894; F 10:15AM-12:20PM

Curious about California deserts? This course explores desert plant and animal communities of the Mono Basin, Owens, and Death Valley. Course meets on campus 2/01 through 4/12 and travels to the Eastern Sierra and Death Valley and camps at various locations 3/29 through 4/03. This course may be used to obtain UC California Naturalist Certification.

Young Audubon

For more information and to register, go to scvas.org/YoungAudubon.



Christmas Bird Count for Kids at Ed R. Levin County Park Sunday, December 16; 9:00AM-1:00PM

Get your family outside and learning about local birds! We'll be counting birds and contributing to citizen science by submitting our findings to eBird. See you out there!

Community Service Day at McClellan Ranch

Monday, January 21 (MLK Day!); 9:00AM-12:00PM

Start out the new year by helping your local environment! We'll work with Grassroots Ecology to remove invasive weeds and learn about the habitats at McClellan Ranch.



****RSVPs are required for the events above. Please RSVP at scvas.org/YoungAudubon.****

A Crucial Place for Wildlife

The open space of North Coyote Valley is crucial to the lives of many species. Over 224 species of birds have been observed in the area. One can often see large flocks of mixed blackbirds sweeping across the sky. Water sources and alfalfa provide a feeding ground for many different species of insectivores. One might spot the raptors of Coyote Valley—hawks, eagles, vultures, falcons, and owls—swooping down to feed on mice. A fortunate spectator might catch a glimpse of a rare Ferruginous Hawk, or even a Burrowing Owl that spends its winters in Coyote Valley. Among the birds observed in Coyote Valley, 22 species are of special concern, threatened, or endangered.

Mammals also rely on Coyote Valley. Deer and Mountain Lions use Coyote Creek as a pathway to move across the valley. Bobcats and Coyotes also use the valley as a breeding and foraging habitat. For many species, Coyote Valley functions as a bridge between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range.



Western Meadowlark by Ralph Schardt

Water Quality and Flood Prevention

The natural ecosystem of Coyote Valley is essential to the lives of humans as well. The Coyote Creek Watershed covers over 320 square miles, and is the largest watershed in the Santa Clara Basin. Open space in Coyote Valley naturally absorbs and filters rainwater to recharge underground aquifers. In a future made uncertain by climate change, we must do everything in our power to protect naturally occurring sources of clean water for future generations.

Coyote Valley Open Space also acts as a giant sponge, absorbing storm water that would otherwise flow into Coyote Creek. On February 22, 2017, San Jose experienced a massive storm, causing water to overflow Anderson Dam and spill into Coyote Creek. When Coyote Creek could not hold all of the water, it surged over the creek's banks, forcing the evacuation of over 14,000 people and causing over \$100 million in property damage. Had Coyote Valley been built out, this devastation would have certainly been far worse. Global climate change is causing more extreme weather patterns to occur more frequently and a flood on the scale of February 2017 is likely to happen again. We must protect Coyote Valley, for it is truly our last line of defense in the event of another major storm.

Peace of Mind for a Valley Under Siege by Developers

As has been previously reported in *The Avocet*, Coyote Valley has been under the shadow of devastation since the 1980s, when the City of San Jose first designated the ecologically diverse area of North Coyote Valley for industrial development. Since then, Coyote Valley has been repeatedly threatened by massive construction projects, which have been resisted by community members, SCVAS, and other environmental organizations.

In 1981, the ROLM Corporation sought to build a new manufacturing plant in Coyote Valley. ROLM withdrew its proposal after pushback from community members and environmental organizations. In 1983, 5,000 acres of residential development were proposed. Although the

City decided not to allow residential construction, it designated North Coyote Valley as a site for industrial development. In 1999, Cisco attempted to build a 6.6 million square-foot campus in Coyote Valley. Thanks to litigation by the Sierra Club and SCVAS, this project was delayed and ultimately defeated. In 2000, San Jose created the "Coyote Valley Specific Plan," which called for

massive industrial, commercial, and residential construction. After meeting strong resistance from the community and from environmental organizations, San Jose backed away. North Coyote Valley, however, kept its designation as a site for industrial development.

If Measure T passes, Coyote Valley may no longer be targeted for industrial development. Instead, the City may join forces with open space agencies in recognition of the crucial role that the Coyote Valley plays in the lives of San Jose residents. In complete reversal of San Jose's decades old industrial policy, the siege of Coyote Valley will finally be lifted. After decades of struggle, this vulnerable land may be permanently protected.

Looking to the Future

In Measure T, the City of San Jose has embraced the philosophy of using green infrastructure and nature to protect the city. This is a major reversal of previous policy, and is a worldview that can bring us forward into a more sustainable future. We encourage San Jose residents to vote YES on T. For more information and to volunteer for the campaign, see safersanjose.org.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Birders of all experience levels are needed to help with Christmas Bird Count! This annual Audubon tradition is the nation's longest-running citizen science bird project. We need YOU to keep it going! Pick a count area below and contact the coordinator for that region to get started. Participation is free and all are encouraged to join!

Savannah Sparrow by Mike Azevedo



San Jose - Sunday, December 16

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.

Harris's Sparrow by Don Pendleton



Palo Alto - Monday, December 17

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. To participate in the same region where you have counted previously, please contact your region coordinator soon. Note that Ann Hepenstal has taken over from Rob Furrow as coordinator for region 4 (Santa Clara County lowlands west of Hwy 101), and (for the second year) Chris O'Connell coordinates the corresponding San Mateo Co. region 3; if you do not know how to reach them, 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). To find you a good spot, we need to hear from you at least two weeks before the count (the sooner the better).

Vermilion Flycatcher by Beth Hamel



Calero-Morgan Hill - Saturday, December 29

This is a perfect day to walk off those holiday meals (although we do end the day with a wonderful countdown dinner...) This count covers city and county parks, creeks, and reservoirs in mid-south Santa Clara County and Almaden area. Will the handsome Vermilion Flycatcher return to our circle? Is the Zone-tailed Hawk still here? Come count every Turkey Vulture to see! Last year's special birds included a Red-naped Sapsucker, Grasshopper Sparrows, Lewis's Woodpeckers, and Burrowing Owls. Volunteers are needed in the areas where those birds were spotted. If you are interested in participating, please contact Beth at Beth.Hamel@gmail.com.

A Snowy Christmas Count by Bob Hirt



Mount Hamilton - Wednesday, January 2

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

Calling all families and young birders!

We're hosting a Christmas Bird Count for Kids on Sunday, December 16. See details on page 3.

Field Notes

(August-September 2018)

by Pete Dunten

Geese through Shorebirds

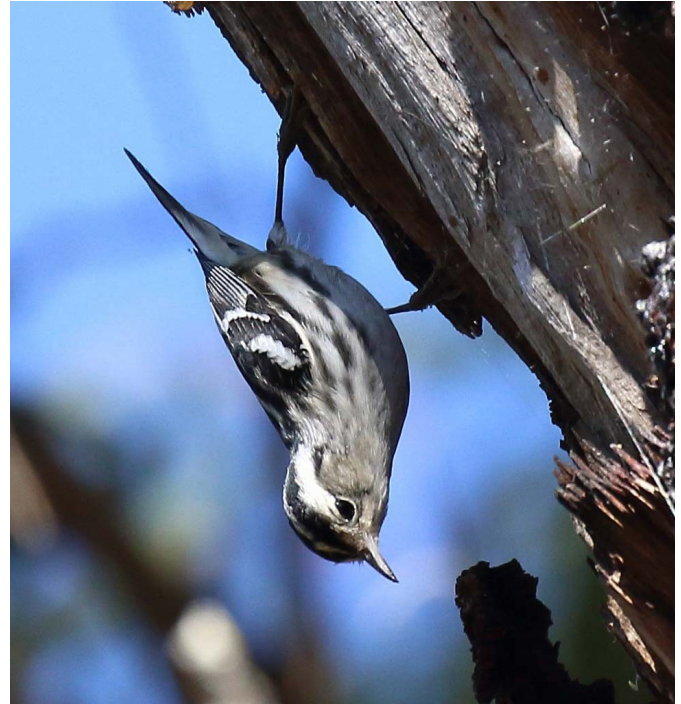
Greater White-fronted Geese returned this fall on 7 Sept, when thirteen flew over the EEC at Don Edwards NWR (LL). A skein of 29 flew over Ulistac NA (GL, BM, ChJ) on 23 Sept and 43 settled in at New Chicago Marsh on the same date (STu). The **Mute Swan** at Alviso Salt Pond A16 was seen through 12 Sept (TJ). Unseasonal **Common Goldeneyes** were reported on Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 8 Aug (EvM) and on Pond AB1 on 22 Aug (EvM, PL). **Brown Pelican** numbers were up this year, with a survey tallying 182 at the Alviso Salt Ponds on 30 Sept (MJM, RJ). 2007 and 2008 were the last years with such high counts. An early **American Bittern** was photographed at Alviso Marina on 25 Aug (LW). The second fall sighting of a bittern was at Mallard Slough on 18 Sep (GL). A single **White-faced Ibis** flew over Alviso (LL, DW) and Byxbee Park (FV) on 4 Sept. A group of ten was over the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin on 6 Sept (RCa). A **Zone-tailed Hawk** roosting with Turkey Vultures somewhere in the vicinity of Anderson Reservoir was only the third county record. The hawk was known to be present between 16 - 22 Aug (KWi, m. ob.), and likely in the area for a longer time. A survey on 26 Aug tallied an impressive 121 **Snowy Plovers** on the extensive dry areas of Alviso Salt Ponds A13 and A15 (MJM, RJ). The plovers had moved to nearby Salt Pond A12 on 30 Sept, when 119 were counted (MJM, RJ). Twelve **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the north VTA mitigation pond on 10 Sept was a good count (RJ). A solo **Solitary Sandpiper** on a small pond at the Pearson-Arastradero Preserve from 15 - 17 Aug was a nice find for a location that doesn't attract many shorebirds (RPa et al., GL, MDo). Single **Ruddy Turnstones** turned up at the San Francisquito Creek mouth on 21 Sept (GL) and along the Don Edwards NWR entrance road on 23 Sept (MMR, RJ). A **Wandering Tattler** at the Alviso Salt Ponds on 18 Aug (LL) was another nice find. Tattlers visit the county about one year in two, with most of our records in the fall. The second wave of **Semi-palmated Sandpipers** to pass through the county on fall migration are the birds hatched during the summer. The first immature arrived on 28 Aug at Don

Edwards NWR (LL). This was the latest arrival date recorded for this age class, by twelve days. A late thaw in the Arctic, delaying the start of breeding, may explain the late arrival of immatures this year. Their breeding habitat is "Low and sub-arctic tundra, near water." (Hicklin, P. and C. L. Gratto-Trevor (2010) in the BNA account) The high count was four on 2 Sept in the marsh at State St and Spreckles Ave (STu), and all had departed after 9 Sept when one was seen in the marsh at Grand Blvd and Spreckles Ave (STu). Five **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 3 Sep were a nice count (MH). The last year in which the number tallied in one day was in double digits was 2004. Two more Pectoral Sandpipers stopped at the SCRWA Ponds in Gilroy between 26 - 28 Sept (MJM, RWR). One to two **Baird's Sandpipers** were found in the Alviso area between 9 Aug and 4 Sept (m. ob.). Baird's Sandpiper is another arctic breeding bird, and the fall migrants on the west coast are immature birds. Their arrival date this fall was not delayed relative to other years. Their preferred nesting habitat is "Dry coastal as well as upland, well-drained, exposed tundra, typically the first snow-free sites available for nesting." (Moskoff, W. and R. Montgomerie (2002) in the BNA account). On 30 Sept, 38 **Red Knots** were noted on a closed refuge pond (MJM, RJ). Numbers peaked this year in the fall, in contrast to the last two years when the peak was in early June.

Gulls through Phainopepla

A first-cycle **Heermann's Gull** flew over Alviso Salt Pond A16 on 4 Aug and was caught on film (LL). Heermann's Gull is rare away from the coast and occurs in the county about one year in two, typically in the fall. **Elegant Tern** numbers increased towards the end of August, with 43 at Pond A2E on 21 Aug (RWR) and 53 tallied at four ponds bor-

dering the South Bay on 30 Sept (MJM, RJ). Two **Common Terns** were on the remnant of the levee separating Alviso Salt Ponds A10 and A11 on 30 Sept, and another was at a closed refuge pond the same date (RJ, MJM). One to two **Least Terns** were seen at Pond A2E through 19 Aug (FV, AME, LL), their numbers tapering off from a high count of only five



Black-and-white Warbler by Mike Mammoser

this fall. While present every year since records have been kept, the high count has been as low as five terns only once before, in 1995. A **Common Murre** on Alviso Pond A16 on 19 Aug was a one-day wonder (LL). A **Short-eared Owl**, one of the winter residents in the county, was spotted flying over the marsh next to Coyote Creek close to Alviso Pond A17 on 28 Sept (TR). **Vaux's Swift** numbers peaked on 15 - 16 Sept when up to 500 were over the Los Capitancillos Ponds in the early evening (JPa). Observers were treated to the spectacle of the flock beginning to spiral in a synchronized fashion before departing. The first **Red-breasted Sapsucker** returning for the winter was at the Santa Teresa Golf Course adjacent to the county park on 13 Sept (SPv). The first **Prairie Falcon** to arrive in the valley was at Anderson Reservoir on 24 Aug (BB). Not long after, the first **Merlin** was found at TJ Martin Park in San Jose on 29 Aug (JPa, RoB). **Willow Flycatchers** were widely reported beginning on 18 Aug, with migrants still passing through into October. The first arrival on 18 Aug was a single flycatcher along the Guadalupe River

Field Notes *cont'd*

Trail (JPa). Notable high counts were four along the Guadalupe River Trail between Trimble and Thamien Park on 29 Aug (WGB), three at the SCRWA Ponds in Gilroy on 31 Aug (MJM) and six at the Don Edwards NWR EEC on 9 Sept (STu). A single **Hammond's Flycatcher** stopped at Ulistac NA on its way south on 9 Sept (RJ). There were two sightings of **Purple Martins** distant from the Santa Cruz Mountains, where they are frequently seen near their nests. Four were at Calero Reservoir on 2 Aug (JPa) and one was at Ogier Ponds on 11 Aug (SCR). **Bank Swallow** migration was marked by a single swallow at Coast Casey Forebay on 21 Sept (GL). A **Townsend's Solitaire** frequented Juniper trees, a favored source of berries, at West Valley College in Saratoga between 10 Sept and 26 Sept (OA, m. ob.). Photos show the Juniper berries were fueling replacement of tail feathers (PSv, JVs). Another solitaire was present along Mines Rd in the San Antonio Valley on 28 Sept (WGB). A **Phainopepla** on the move visited Ulistac NA for a day on 28 Aug before continuing on its way (PLa).

Wood Warblers through Bobolink

Fall is the favorite season for some because it brings vagrant warblers from the east that have misoriented in their journey south. While the coastal counties find many more of these vagrants, a few pause in Santa Clara County and are found by diligent searchers. This September yielded a number of nice surprises. A **Black-and-white Warbler** stopped at Ulistac NA between 23 – 27 Sept (RPh, m. ob.). Single **Tennessee Warblers** were found on 14 Sept at Coast Casey Forebay (LL) and on 27 Sept at Ulistac NA (PB). A skulking **Hooded Warbler** showed itself only briefly at Coast Casey Forebay on 23 Sept (AVe). It was only the ninth county record, and the first in September. A stunning adult male **American Redstart** along Adobe Creek near the bay on 23 Sept was another nice bird that didn't linger (SSm). A **Blackburnian Warbler** at Vasona CP between 8 – 19 Sept delighted many observers (LM et al., m. ob.). It was only the fifth county record. A **Chestnut-sided**

Warbler dropped in at Ulistac NA on 22 Sept (STu). And rounding out the litany of eastern warblers, a **Blackpoll** was photographed at Ulistac NA on 21 Sept (DN) and seen again on 22 Sept (MJM). Some of our expected migrant warblers also passed through in low numbers. A **Nashville Warbler** visited Ulistac NA on 24 Sept (PB, ChJ, BM, JVs). **MacGillivray's Warblers** turned up at four locations, with one along the Guadalupe River Trail between 26 – 29 Aug (JPa, KB, AVe, BM), one at Vasona CP between 3 – 4 Sept (JPa, GL),



Green-tailed Towhee by Garrett Lau

one at the Don Edwards EEC on 3 Sept (MHo), and one at the wetland west of the Sunnyvale WPCP on 8 Sept (PKE, RKe). Single **Hermit Warblers** on migration were noted at four locations, with one at Ulistac NA on four dates between 10 – 26 Aug (PLa, PB, MJM, STu), one at Anderson Reservoir CP on 27 Aug (AD), one at Guadalupe River Park in downtown San Jose on 30 Aug (EF) and one at Vasona CP on three dates between 9 – 19 Sept (GL et al., BM, MBa et al.). A **Green-tailed Towhee** at the Don Edwards EEC upland on 7 – 8 Sept (GL, MDo) was unexpected. The strays that reach the county have been found in backyards and at elevations from the bayside to 1500' in the Diablo Range and 3700' near Loma Prieta. They've been found year-round except for mid-summer, with one in three records falling in September. A **Brewer's Sparrow** moved furtively around the SCVWD headquarters in Almaden Valley on 3

Sept (STu). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** posed for photos at Ulistac NA on 22 Sept (LL). Three **Chipping Sparrows** were at TJ Martin Park in Almaden Valley on 5 Sept (JPa). The park has been a time-honored location for overwintering for many years. A **Le Conte's Sparrow**, the county's first, was seen briefly near the Don Edwards EEC on 7 Sept (MJM). Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** in September was a good total. One was at the Don Edwards EEC on 9 Sept (GZ), the second was at Ulistac NA on 19 Sept (MJM), and the third was at the Don Edwards EEC on the same date (LL). One to two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** joined the mixed flock of blackbirds along Laguna Ave in Coyote Valley between 13 – 22 Sept (JPa, m. ob.). Two **Bobolinks** flew over the Alviso Marina on 11 Sept; an experienced observer recognized and recorded their flight calls (TJ).

Observers: Ozzie Altus (OA), Patrick Baglee (PB), Roberta Baker (RoB), Meg Barron (MBa), Bob Bolles (BB), Karen Burnson (KB), Richard Carlson (RCa), Dani Christensen (DCn), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Adam Dudley (AD), Al Eisner (AME), Erin Fisher (EF), Marcel Holyoak (MHo), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Tom Johnson (TJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKE), Peter LaTourrette (PLa), Garrett Lau (GL), Louise Liou (LL), Patricia Lynch (PL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Eve Meier (EvM), Brooke Miller (BM), Lisa Myers (LM), David Nickerson (DN), Rich Page (RPa), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sergey Pavlov (SPv), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Tobias Rohmer (TR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Scott Smithson (SSm), Peter Svensson (PSv), Steve Tucker (STu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Ann Verdi (AVe), Liam Waters (LW), Dave Weber (DW), Kate Wilmot (KWi), Gena Zolotar (GZ)

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

Conservation Corner: Check In With Our Environmental Advocate

by Shani Kleinhaus and Dashiell Leeds

As always, the SCVAS Environmental Advocate has been working on many issues throughout Santa Clara County. For this Conservation Corner, we chose to highlight a planning effort from Palo Alto.

Palo Alto Baylands: Should derelict infrastructure continue to blight wetlands?

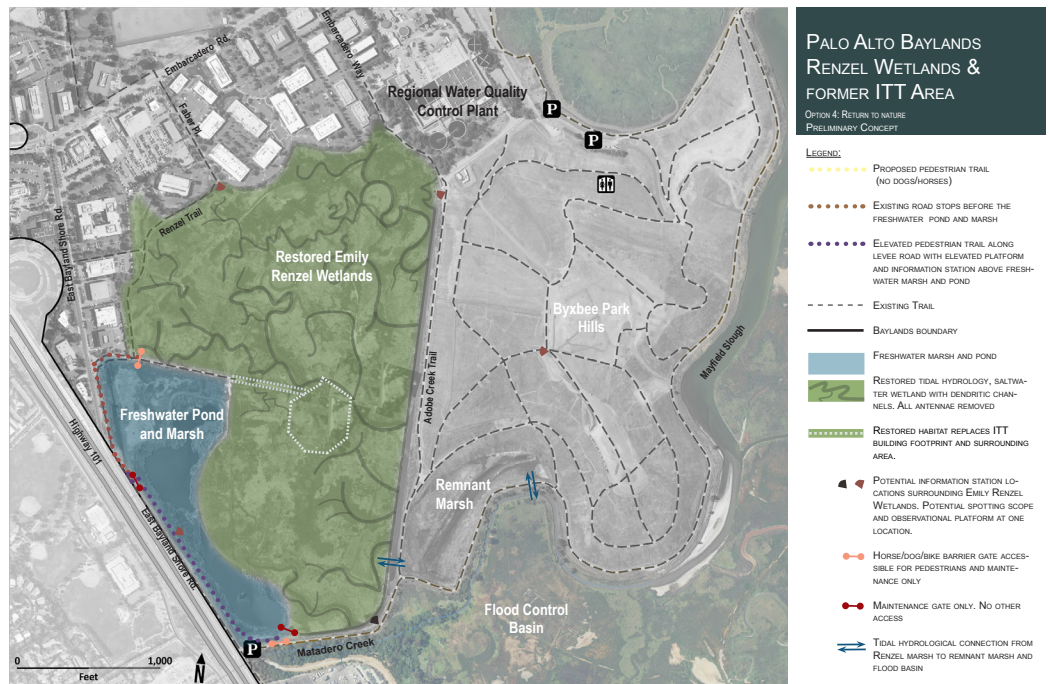
In 1921, the Federal Telegraph Company leased approximately 200 acres of saltmarsh in Palo Alto to build a radio-telegraph transmitting station and support ship-to-shore communications. The station was located in the marshlands because transmission bounced off the high water table and wetlands, so the wetlands were an ideal location for this function. The station was eventually sold to International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT), who operated it to transmit overseas cables, telephone calls, and other communications. Technology and the advent of satellite transmission later rendered the ITT facilities obsolete.

Over the years, most of the land was acquired by the City of Palo Alto to become an integral part of the Baylands and Emily Renzel Wetlands. However, 35.6 acres remained in control of ITT. Meanwhile, hydrological integrity was impaired, the marshlands were degraded and partially dried out, and the infrastructure fell to disrepair. In 2017, the City of Palo Alto purchased the remaining acres, and promptly dedicated the property to parkland.

Now, Palo Alto is considering the future of the 35.6 acres of the former ITT property. Our Advocate and several SCVAS members - including the honorable Emily Renzel herself - have been participating in the planning process. Central to our interest is the obsolete ITT infrastructure that is still present on the land. There is a very large sealed building and a field of 22 antennae. The building is unattractive, and it would cost millions to make it useful. Access and parking would negatively impact wildlife. The antenna field is a collision hazard to birds. The tall poles and buildings also provide raptors with perches to hunt the endangered animals of the wetlands. We are also concerned with the damage to the hydrological integrity of the site; tidal flow through the marshlands is in dire need of restoration.

Palo Alto is considering several options for the future of the property and the infrastructure in the wetlands. We support a variation of the option named "Return to Nature" (see *Option 4 photo*) in which the ITT building and all of the antennae are removed in an effort to return the wetland habitat to its natural state and to provide a contiguous area large enough to restore a functional marshland habitat. We also advocate for limiting human access to the outside perimeter of the site in order to regenerate a robust ecosystem and to protect it from fragmentation and disturbance. And naturally, we support restoring hydrological integrity to the marshlands.

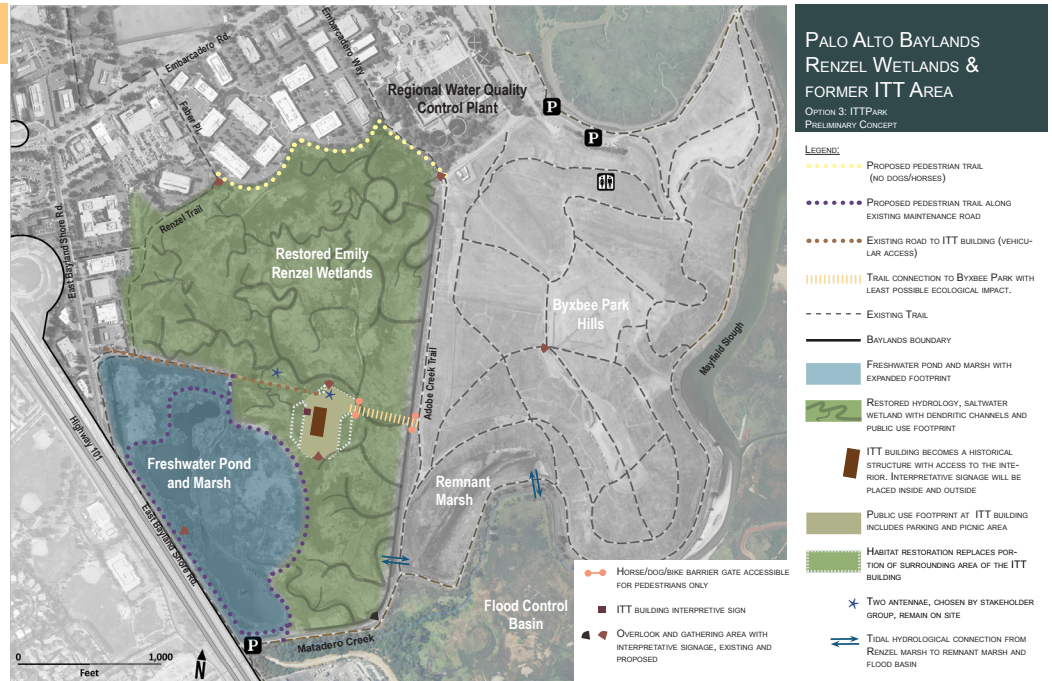
However, there are other options being considered that could harm the wetlands habitat. An option called "ITT Park" (see *Option 3 photo*) would keep the ITT building intact for historical value, even though it is the wetlands that are most historical. Pedestrian access would be encouraged and new trails would be built, bringing disturbance across the heart of the wetlands. The freshwater effluent treatment pond would have its footprint expanded, reducing the total area of the saltmarshes. Two antennae would be left standing. History buffs support keeping the infrastructure and activating the buildings. SCVAS and other nature-oriented stakeholders oppose this option because the buildings, new trails, and increased human activity will further disturb the habitat and prevent full restoration of the site for the benefit of birds and wildlife.



Palo Alto Baylands Option 4

Conservation Corner cont'd

Fortunately, Palo Alto is still early on in its planning process and there is still time to get involved! The City plans to hold two community/stakeholder meetings (dates TBD). The draft action plan will be completed this month, and the final plan in December. Palo Alto residents can help us advocate to restore the wetlands that reflected the radio waves, not the building where the radar sat! Please email advocate@scvas.org and we will keep you posted on opportunities to help advocate for the marshes!



Palo Alto Baylands Option 3

Events Calendar

Wed. 11/7 & 12/5; 7:30-9:00PM

Bay Area Bird Photographers

Embarcadero Room, Rinconada Library
1213 Newell Rd, Palo Alto

Topic 11/7: "Iceland and South Texas" with Richard Rhudy

Topic 12/5: "Birds of the Sierra Nevada" with Luis Villablanca

See scvas.org/babp for details.

Tues. 11/13 & 12/11; 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 11/13: Cedar Waxwing

Topic 12/11: Kingfisher

Fri. 11/16 & 12/14; 12:30-2:00PM

Nature Journaling with John Muir Laws

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino
Free workshops for all ages! No RSVP required; please be on time. See calendar at scvas.org for details.

Wed. 12/5; 12:00-1:00PM

Birding Google Campus

Meets at the intersection of Charleston Rd and Shorebird Way
Googlers, Audubon members, and the general

public are welcome. Park anywhere on campus. Please carpool if possible. Contact Carolyn Knight with questions at scvasbirdathon@gmail.com.

Young Audubon Activities

Wed. 11/28; 10:00-11:15AM

Toddler Explorers

McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino
Join SCVAS and Sierra Club - Loma Prieta Chapter for a free toddler discovery program including filling the bird feeders, creek exploration, and story time. *Toddlers must be accompanied by an adult.*
Space is limited, RSVP required - details and registration at scvas.org/YoungAudubon.

Sun. 12/16; 9:00AM-1:00PM

Christmas Bird Count for Kids

Ed R. Levin County Park, Milpitas
Details on page 3. RSVP required - go to scvas.org/YoungAudubon.

Christmas Bird Count Dates

See pages 3 and 5 for details or go to scvas.org/CBC

Sunday, 12/16 - San Jose

Sunday, 12/16 - Christmas Bird Count for Kids!

Monday, 12/17 - Palo Alto

Saturday, 12/29 - Calero-Morgan Hill

Wednesday, 1/2 - Mount Hamilton

SCVAS Classes & Excursions

We are pleased to offer the following classes to our members and community. For more information, please call the Office at (408) 252-3747 or visit our website at scvas.org.

White-faced Ibis by Chuq Von Rospach



Central Valley Birding Weekend with Lisa Myers

Dates: Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 1-2

Location: Sacramento and Colusa National Wildlife Refuges

Cost: \$379 single in room; \$630 couple sharing room; \$319 single sharing room

Register: Call the Los Gatos Birdwatcher to sign up (408) 358-9453.

Description: We'll spend the weekend birding North American hot spots as we visit the Sacramento and Colusa National Wildlife Refuges and open spaces in between. Here we will find the millions of birds that leave their northern breeding grounds to spend their winter in California. We'll spend the evening in Williams. Trip fee includes transportation, hotel, continental breakfast and snacks. Lunch, dinner, alcohol, and driver are not included. Rain does not cancel. We'll experience over 70 species including Tundra Swans, Ross's & Snow Geese, Greater White Fronted Geese, Sandhill Cranes, Bald Eagles, and White Faced Ibis. Space is limited. *Organized by Los Gatos Birdwatcher.*

Vicki talks bird identification by Arvind Kumar



Beginner's Bird and Plant ID Walk Series

Date: Sunday, Dec. 23 **Time:** 9:00AM-12:00PM

Location: Lake Cunningham Park - 2305 South White Road, San Jose; meet at the Marina building

Cost: Free! \$6 Parking fee is required.

Register: RSVP to chhaprahiya@yahoo.com to receive directions and details.

Description: First Day of Winter! Do you love being outdoors? Do you want to deepen your appreciation of nature by learning to identify the 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. Its native garden is home to many resident birds. On this walk, 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. Bring a hat, water, bird and plant list, and binoculars. Wear comfortable walking shoes.

Organized by California Native Plant Society, SCVAS, and Open Space Authority



Field Session at Charleston Slough by Kelly Alfrey

Get Started Birding in Santa Clara Valley

Classroom Session: Thursday, Jan. 10 at McClellan Ranch Preserve, Cupertino; 7:00-9:00PM

Field Session: Saturday, Jan. 12 at Charleston Slough, Mountain View (meet at the end of Terminal Blvd); 8:00-11:00AM

Cost: Free! **Register:** Find the class on our calendar at scvas.org and RSVP to reserve your spot.

Description: If you are curious about identifying and observing birds around your neighborhood, dig into your local environment with this introductory class. We'll cover birding basics - families of common birds, their habitats, how to tell them apart, and how to use binoculars. You'll learn where to find birds in different seasons and tides. Instructor Mary Wisnewski started birding just over twenty years ago after taking a class just like this one. She has long been a fan of SCVAS field trips, which introduced her to many of her favorite birding destinations in California. Mary is a longtime participant in local Christmas Bird Counts, Jack Laws' Nature Journal Club, and the SCVAS Birdathon. She has just completed a course in Ecology of the Sierra Nevada at West Valley College.

The Avocet 10

Nature Shop

Hours:

Mon-Thurs 10:00AM-4:30PM

Sat 10:00AM-2:00PM

Volunteers are wanted to run the shop on Fridays - please call the office for details and up-to-date Friday operating hours.

A great gift for kids - our assortment of plush birds make real bird sounds!



\$9

We have a variety of bird feeders for sale!



\$23

NOW
\$36



Hoodies are an extra 10% off!

We hope to see you in the shop soon! Stop by to say hello and let us help with your holiday gift shopping.

Friends of SCVAS

Gifts received August 1st through September 31st, 2018

Gift (Up to \$99)

Mary Ann Allan
Shubhi Asthana
Laurie Bechtler
Ann Bender
Michelle Dimas
George & Debra Doeltz
Marion Farber
Konrad Herman
Winnifred & Bruce Homer-Smith
Karen McCreddin
Susan McKuhen
Art & Ann Muto
Zachary Steuer

Avocet Sponsor (\$100-\$249)

Joyce Bartlett
Mary Kamprath
William Miner
Edward Perry
April Pufahl
Walt & Teresa Ruzzo

Michael Smith
Charles & Jean Thompson
Chuo Von Rospach
Sheryl Walters
Marilyn Walthers
David Zittin

Burrowing Owl (\$250-\$499)

Peter & Patricia Biocini
Rob & Rita Colwell
Ellyn Corey
Joan Leighton
Lilly Yoshida

Peregrine Falcon (\$500-\$999)

Stephanie Karp

Golden Eagle (\$1000+)

Alan & Irene Adler
Thomas Grey
Peter & Diane Hart
Elizabeth Rizzi
Richard & Delphine Roth



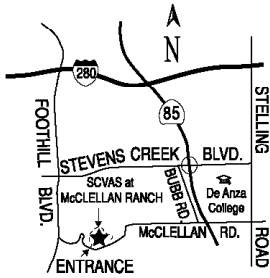
Attention Amazon Shoppers!!

Did you know that by simply shopping at 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!

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

Phone: 408-252-3747
Fax: 408-252-2850
E-mail: scvas@scvas.org
www.scvas.org

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New Members of SCVAS

*Those who joined August 1st - September 31st, 2018.
We look forward to a great year with your support!*

Maribel Andonian
Chris Benesh
Craig Fisk
Jessica Guenther
Ven Jandhyala
Diana Koch
Amethyst Ma
Tina Ponzetti
Rosalind Roberts

Richard & Delphine Roth
Susan Tenney
Min Wells
Linda Yelavich
John Zeisler

And thank you to those who renewed their membership!

Check it out!

If you receive the mailed version of our newsletter, your membership expiration date is listed above your name in the mailing address. We will still send renewal notices prior to your due date, but we thought you might appreciate having a date to keep in mind. Thank you for your continued support!

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Website www.scvas.org

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

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

Details available on the SCVAS website.

NATURE SHOP HOURS

Monday - Thursday 10:00AM - 4:30PM
Friday *Call Office*
Saturday 10:00AM - 2:00PM

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.

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Vice President Vivek Khanzode
Secretary Joan Leighton

DIRECTORS

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Gabrielle Feldman
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Bob Hirt

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