

The

AVOCET

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Fall 2020 • Vol 68 Num 4



Sunset Murmuration Ginger Langdon-Lassagne

Monthly Speaker Series

RICHARD TEJEDA

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SAVED BY NATURE

Wed, September 23 at 7 pm

via Zoom



Growing up in a drug and gang infested neighborhood in South San Jose, Richard, founder and Executive Director of Saved By Nature, is very familiar with how the lives of youth and adults can be improved by experiences outdoors.

More details at
scvas.org/events

The Need of Birds

Matthew Dodder, Executive Director

What is it about birds that reassures us? It would be great to know that now, with all the *everything* we've been dealing with—social unrest, politics, and the pandemic. The great murmurations of Western Sandpipers make us forget the news. The arrival of Yellow-rumped Warblers in the fall comforts us. Why? Each of our encounters with birds is capable of casting a calming spell, if only for a moment. The more we watch the pulsing wildlife outside our human bubble the longer the effect lasts.

Our lives are replete with complexity that we struggle to manage. Nature manages its *complexity* with apparent aplomb. The grace of several hundred Sandpipers responding to a threat quickly in a coordinated fashion is something we definitely don't see in human politics. The birds have managed to figure out our human problem, finding *order and patterns while dealing with chaos*. We are invited to reflect on their success.

The danger posed by a Peregrine Falcon provokes an instant defense from the Sandpipers that then ball together tightly and out-manuever the predator—most of the time at least. Eventually, one bird may fall out of formation and be eaten, but out of 500, this exchange will allow the life of both species to continue; a kind of *equilibrium* is achieved. The *ancient* predator-prey dynamic is balanced with a *timelessness* that contradicts the ugly and excessive ways humans often handle such things.

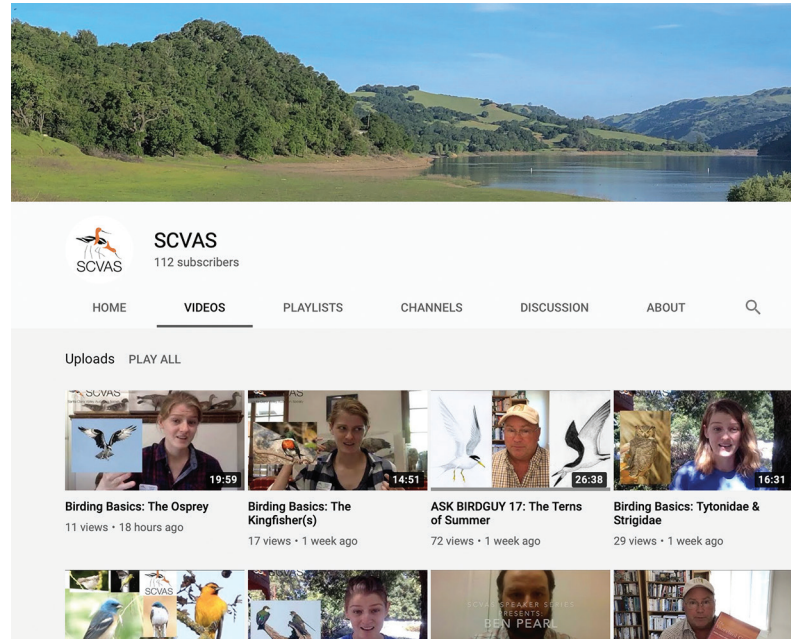
And when Yellow-rumped Warblers, which surprisingly weigh less than half an ounce, return to us from Canada in an annual cycle refined over the ages, we

Continued on next page

Continued from cover

are amazed. They spend the winter in our yards and we see something indistinguishable from the *miraculous*. Yet it is far from that; it is *real life*. How marvelous would it be if our own lives seemed as unbelievable and amazing as this familiar bird's mere arrival in fall?

These are what we need to know, the miracle, the reality, the complexity, and the tightly ordered patterns of birds. Clearly we need them, and just maybe, if we're lucky, they need us too. We can work to inspire others to care to learn from them. Spend these months of face coverings and social distance with a renewed appreciation for the birds around us. They have figured out the world's problems for us and have much to teach. ●



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

You might have noticed a few differences around the Ranch recently. The staff hasn't been there much for one thing. April, Carolyn, Shani and I have, however, been working from home since mid-March, meeting frequently via Zoom, and reporting to the office on a much-reduced schedule. Other than that, things have been pretty much the same... kind of.

April Austin continues to process memberships and donations as well as handle sales for the Nature Shop. For the time being though, purchases are being scheduled for curbside pickup instead of sold in the shop. We have not resumed in-store browsing, but we do have well stocked bookshelves as well as feeders, bird seed, and more. With many titles now cataloged on our website, one need only request an item to be added to your purchase.

Shani Kleinhaus continues her urgent work keeping city officials informed of potential issues their projects may create—constantly directing them toward more bird-friendly and bird-safe designs. Her work has not slowed down. If anything, it has increased as development projects ramp up despite the pandemic.

Carolyn Knight has been meeting regularly with the Education Committee and docents to discuss how long-standing programs like Wetlands Discovery can adapt to the new school year. In that effort, she has also been working behind the scenes to rewire our in-class presentations, ensuring they are compliant with new guidelines and readied for the demands of a distance-learning environment.

Our Summer “Vacation”

Similar efforts are being made by the Field Trip Committee to engage members with virtual field trips and self-guided tours. Eve Meier and her committee have done excellent work to maintain the excitement of the birding experience without any scheduled trips.

Matthew Dodder has been working with volunteers Julie Amato and Barry Langdon-Lassagne on a variety of grant proposals to fund planned events and future programs. The COVID environment we find ourselves in has made this an especially interesting project. Both Matthew and Carolyn have been creating video content for our YouTube channel and website to continue reaching our members even in the absence of field trips or adult classes.

Finally, we've had several successful speaker events using the online platform Zoom. These, plus the online Birdathon Awards Event, reassure us that a virtual Annual Meeting will be successful. We may even have a silent auction page assembled in time as well.

These are unpredictable times, exciting times, challenging times for sure. While I look forward to the return of normalcy, I am loving what we've learned while we worked to adapt—perhaps when we finally emerge from our Zoom chrysalides we will have become something even more beautiful.

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director

OUR CULTURAL EVOLUTION

On July 2, just two days before we celebrated our nation's independence, SCVAS posted an important message on our home page acknowledging that our culture is not free of racism, injustice or hatred, and that most importantly, we would not stand silent, and we would do more. We joined the chorus of a thousand other voices proclaiming we too will fight to change this reality. We will dig deep within our chapter's soul and find ways to help.

Undeniably, spring saw some of the most disturbing imagery within memory splattered across our news feeds, reminding us that too many people of color feel uninvited, discouraged, repressed. We are called to action by the Black Lives Matter Movement. So we ask ourselves, what can an environmental organization like SCVAS do? How do we confront these enormous issues? Can we make a difference?

The answer is yes, we can. And we will.

Several years ago our board of directors composed a Statement of Diversity and Inclusion that responded to concerns of that time. Recent events and our renewed awareness has led us to give it another look. Words matter, so we're revising the statement to better reflect our current values and understanding. Of course words are not enough. In an effort to turn these words into tangible actions, we are forging new partnerships with organizations—ones that do a better job of responding to the needs of our diverse communities. Additionally we are making progress in expanding our connections to other-abled community members as well as the LGBTQIA+ and non-binary communities.

All are encouraged to share our goal of preserving local birds and their habitats. We all live here. It is our home and we all play a part in its protection. Our message is simple: All are welcome and all are appreciated here.

Our new partnerships with Saved By Nature and Feminist Birders are helping us realize the goals in our statement, helping us fulfill our mission, helping us meet and work with underserved communities. We aspire to share the joys of birding and nature with everyone. Below is our updated Statement of Diversity and Inclusion. We hope it may guide us toward a more just and inclusive society:

Diversity is a Strength

Just as biodiversity strengthens natural systems, a diverse membership strengthens our efforts to protect birds and their habitats. We are committed to accept all ethnicities, lifestyles and gender identities among our staff, members, donors and partners. We ask you to join us in building a more inclusive community.

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director

Barry Langdon-Lassagne
Board President

SCVAS Board of Directors

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director



Season Premier

At this time of year I normally tell people about fall migration. During August to early September that usually means Shorebirds. In last year's installment of W2L4 I did just that: <https://scvas.org/what-to-look-for/fall-2019>

This fall though, I want to talk about Warblers and their journeys. If you are familiar with Roger Tory Peterson's "Confusing Fall Warbler" section of his field guide, you know that heart-quicken moment when you see an unfamiliar Warbler and wonder if it could possibly be a rarity. Peterson's color plate certainly gives us hope, since they all look so much alike! A second look reveals telltale differences between these confusingly similar birds.

But let's not get caught up in the quest for rarities yet. Fall sees thousands of Warblers in our area. Some, like Orange-crowned Warbler are present year round, but the fledged young pad their numbers now. As well, Yellow Warbler can be common during this time. Its eye ring (the most prominent facial feature this bird shows), subtle wing bars and yellow(ish) tail make Yellows easy to identify. Annoyingly though, the young may not look especially yellow. Townsend's Warbler will reappear for the remainder of winter, and shortly after it, the abundant Yellow-rumped Warbler. Can you spot both "Audubon's" and "Myrtle" varieties?

Lost?

So what about the rare ones? How do we explain their vagrancy? It's a common assumption that the rare Warblers we see here in autumn, species like Blackburnian, Blackpoll and American Redstart are here by accident—that they are lost, and don't **really** belong here. These non-breeding birds show up in the Bay Area each fall and are often referred to as "Eastern Warblers".

A quick look at Blackpoll Warbler's range map reveals something interesting though. The breeding range is not so much eastern as it is northern. If you trace a line from northern central Canada to northern South America where Blackpolls winter you see a gently curved path passing through the Bahamas, Cuba and the Caribbean. This is the long voyage Blackpolls take every year... twice in fact. What might happen if the bird's navigation system was somehow off? It might send the bird along the California coast instead.

Mirror-image misorientation is a theory proposed by Dave DeSante in the 1970s after his work on Southeast Farallon Island. While stationed there, he and other researchers monitored hundreds of "Eastern" as well as "Asian" Passerine vagrants, and he understandably wondered, **why are they here?** His PhD was based on this question, and the answer involved reverse charting these **wayward** birds' probable route to California. He noticed that if an imaginary mirror were placed from north to south from the birds' breeding range, the reflected image mimicked their **expected** journey. By this logic, these birds were not lost at all. They did not lack direction. Their brains—their guidance systems—had simply been mis-wired. They were exactly where their auto pilots told them to be—a reflection of their normal path. Further research suggested that many long-distance migrants show signs of this condition, and that these misoriented travels seem to correlate with age groups (younger birds often exhibiting it more). So, could it be these misoriented journeys are somehow part of a pioneering strategy? Part of the species' DNA? Remember also that the northbound journey of neotropical birds is usually more direct, driven by the urgency to breed, but the southbound journey is much less hurried—perhaps the best time to lose one's way... on purpose.

ID Checklist

Let's say you see a Warbler in fall you don't recognize. First, break it down. Features will present themselves fleetingly, and never in order. All things being equal though, I like to determine quickly whether it has **wing bars**. Wing bars are hard to hide and they tend to show up quickly. The presence or absence of wing bars eliminates half of the species you need to consider.

Next I try to get a look at the bird's **face**. Does it show a supercilium (consider Orange-crowned, Tennessee) or a strong eye ring (consider Nashville)? Each answer narrows your pool of options. Maybe it shows eye crescents (consider MacGillivray's), or maybe it shows no discernible facial features at all... Whatever you observe, it will be important in identifying your bird.

Photos L to R:
Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Tennessee Warbler,
American Redstart, Blackburnian Warbler Tom Grey



Yellow Warbler
Bill Walker



Palm Warbler
Bill Walker



Magnolia Warbler
Bill Walker

Somewhere in there I catch a glimpse of the bird's **breast**. Does it look yellow or white or tan (consider Palm)? Is it streaked, and if so, are those streaks heavy, thin, crisp or smudgy (streaks suggest a lot of birds, but eliminate many too)? I do what I can to notice if the tail shows any white, and whether that white falls on the outer feathers evenly, or if it is isolated to squares (consider Magnolia).

Like everyone, I've gotten used to looking up at Warblers. From that low vantage, their **tail pattern** is often visible, and in many cases it is diagnostic. Is it olive, gray or white? Does it show both dark and light areas? Is there a distinct pattern visible on the tail or even the **undertail coverts**? And while you're staring up at your bird, are those undertail coverts yellow or white?

Home Away

During migration, Warblers don't always show up in habitats that reflect their nesting haunts. Some spend their winters in vastly different biozones, eating very different foods from one season to the next. So what is home actually?

Home is actually where the bird is. After all birds don't carry anything and don't own property. They may travel great distances every year and so everywhere could be called their home, their habitat. Still, you are not likely to see a Yellow Warbler scrambling around in mud between pickleweeds nor a MacGillivray's way up in a tree. Their general behavior is usually consistent, whether ground foraging or treetop in persuasion, tail bobbing, walking, etc. But clearly their habitat changes like any train passenger's view through the window while en route. The traveller will disembark, perhaps to enjoy a layover in a spot well suited to the travelers' needs. In the case of Warblers, that spot might be any grove of trees located near the flight path, or "railway." Alder woodland, walls of flowering eucalyptus, creekside willows, and patches of fennel where insects are found—these all provide generous menus for weary travelers, and opportunities for eager birders. Among the proven locations to find fall Warblers are Ulistac Natural Area, Sunnyvale Baylands Park and any riparian stretch, willow grove or fennel patch you can find. I plan on being there!

So get out there this fall, visit the places Warblers might have stopped to fuel up, bring a field guide and keep an open mind. Not every confusing fall Warbler will be rare, but that still leaves **a lot** of room for confusion and possible discovery. ●



Thanks to the tremendous work of volunteer Dick Blaine, we now have a digital archive of our chapter's publications going back to 1929, only three years after our founding!

Dick prepared and scanned 449 past issues (well over 2,000 pages) of *The Avocet* (and its predecessor, *The Wren-Tit*). He notes that the very old issues from before 1930 were in excellent shape, being printed on high-quality paper, but newer issues, especially 1970 – 1985 were in poor condition due to the high-acid paper used for printing which turned the pages yellow and brittle.

We have created a place on our website to hold these archives for anyone to peruse. Most of the text is searchable inside each pdf, but due to the low quality of some issues, it may not be 100% accurate.

We still have gaps in our archive, and this is where you may be able to help us out! We are looking for missing issues from the following years: 1931 – 1946, 1976 – 1987 and 1998 – 2001. Also, if you have other back issues, check the quality of your copies against our archive; yours may be in better shape than ours, and if so we would love to borrow and scan them.

Here are some highlights from years past:

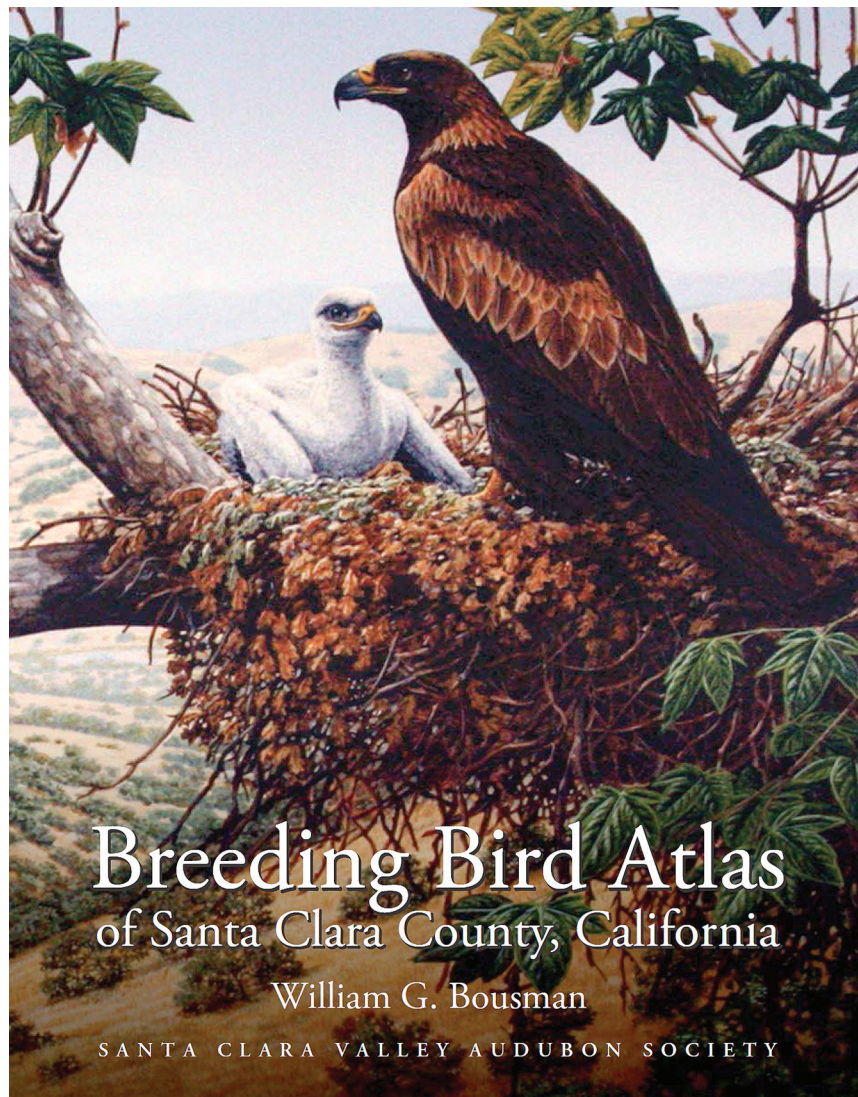
25 Years Ago

"A Great-tailed Grackle was seen the evening of 29 Apr (SBT) in Alviso and found the next day as well (MiF), but not after that. This is the second record for the county."

According to Bill Bousman's *Breeding Bird Atlas*, this was actually the third county record. Before this 1995 observation, there was a flyover of three birds in 1984 and a single bird sighted in San Jose in 1989. Great-tailed Grackle is now a fairly common breeder in our county. Two years ago, the bird was taken off the "reportable rarity" list for the Christmas Bird Count.

(SBT) is Scott B. Terrill and (MiF) is unknown, but might be Mike Feighner.

Images T to B (opposite page):
1929 Original Masthead, 1970 Masthead, 2012 Masthead



Breeding Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County, California

William G. Bousman

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

50 Years Ago

"Some clear views aired at a conference sponsored by the John Muir Institute, a new San Francisco-based national organization founded by David Brower were: The conservation movement must be merged as a strong, sophisticated and activist political force in this country. The growing destruction of the environment by unregulated technological 'progress' must become a political issue enlisting the power of mass support."

This was the year Earth Day was first celebrated. Strong environmental activism is evident in every issue from 1970, with impassioned pleas for the banning of DDT, a call to end oil drilling in the California Condor preserve, arguments against the many dumps filling the wetlands along the edge of the bay, a movement by *The People for Open Space* (which later became the *Greenbelt Alliance*) to establish Open Space Districts, and efforts by SCVAS and others that led to the creation of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

73 Years Ago

We don't have an archive entry for 1945, so we'll skip to 1947. Our journal was called *The Wrentit* back then.

"The rolling hills on the east side of the valley, which lie between the Pacheco Pass and Calaveras Lake are the stronghold of the Golden Eagle. To the student of natural history it is gratifying to know that here in the sparsely settled cattle country with its open ridges cut by intersecting canyons, the eagle has been holding his own well in recent years...As long as conditions remain unchanged in the Mount Hamilton range of mountains, we may be assured that the Golden Eagle will remain as our largest and most splendid bird of prey in Santa Clara County."

This "largest and most splendid bird of prey" now shares our skies with the equally majestic Bald Eagle, which was helped back from near extinction by conservationists and as of a few years ago, is now successfully breeding in our county. Happily, conditions in the Mount Hamilton range are in fact little changed from 1947. ●

For more of our fascinating history, go to <https://scvas.org/the-avocet-archives>

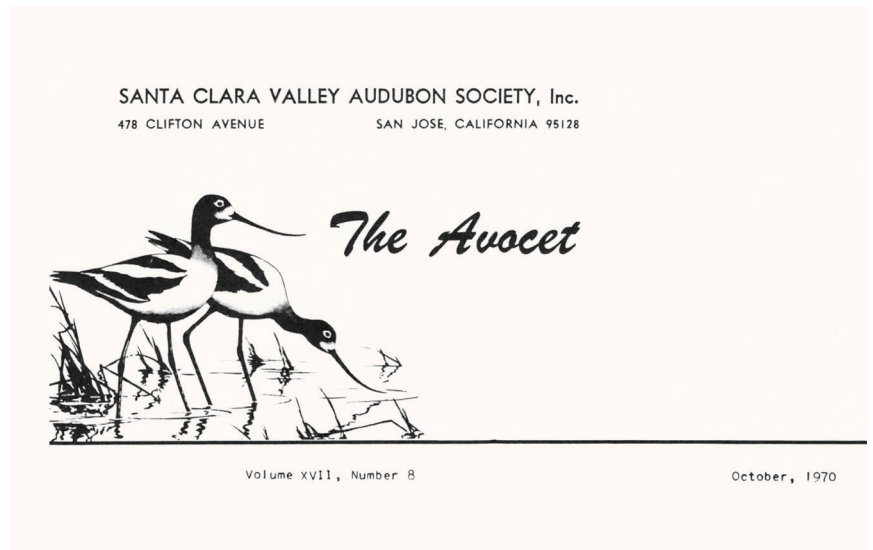
THE WREN-TIT

Bulletin of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Vol. 1

San Jose, California, January, 1929

No. 1



REMEMBERING KIM



Wildlife & Harvest Day Festival, where she assisted her husband, Chuck Wade, with the nest box construction program which he runs on behalf of SCVAS.

It is with great sorrow that Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society must announce the sudden passing of a dear member and friend, Kim Wade, this past June 20, at her home in Los Gatos.

In the years of our organization's acquaintance with Kim, she was a steadfast figure at our annual

A lifelong librarian and supporter of education, Kim attended Rivier University, studied library science at Simmons College in Boston, and earned a Masters in library science from Rosary College (now Dominican University). She and her husband have been residents of Los Gatos for the past 40 years, during which time they raised two sons, and Kim worked in the county libraries.

Greatly independent, Kim had a strong love of the outdoors, art, and music. Kim leaves behind her husband, Chuck Wade, as well as her two sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. It was a true privilege to interact with Kim in any degree, and her presence will be greatly missed in our community.

Donations may be made in her name to SCVAS or the Los Gatos Public Library. Her family also suggests that in lieu of donations, you take the time to reach out to your loved ones and communicate your appreciation of them, so as not to leave things unsaid.

MEET OUR NEW PRESIDENT

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director

Barry Langdon-Lassagne
Board President

Barry took on the mantle of Board President in July, after one year on the Board of Directors.

He steps into the shoes of the incomparable Diane Hart who after several years in that position, remains active on the board but happily, with a lightened load.

Barry and the Executive Director clicked right away when Matthew came on board. They work extremely well together and share a friendship and mutual admiration that promises to bring many ambitious ideas to reality. Among the many projects planned is a fully revised online version of *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay!*

Barry's inauguration into the birding world was an excursion through the hills behind the Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo campus in the Fall Quarter of 1982. Guided by Ginger, he witnessed new-to-him wonders: American Goldfinches gorging on thistles, Western Bluebirds feeding nestlings in oak cavities and a single Lazuli Bunting foraging among the rocky crags of Poly Canyon.

As they walked the trail back toward the dorms, the romantic young couple halted as a tiny bird flashed across their path and disappeared into the chaparral. "Oh, a Wilson's Warbler!" Ginger had identified the bird instantly. "How can you possibly know that?" Barry was skeptical. "Well, it's bright yellow with a black cap." Barry pointed the shared pair of hand-me-down binoculars in the last known direction of the mystery bird. In awe he saw it alight and pose on a branch: bright yellow with a black cap! This year, Barry and Ginger celebrate 38 years birding together.

Barry's first community involvement in birding in the Bay Area was when he and Ginger signed up to band birds at Coyote Creek Riparian Station from 1992 – 1994. They stopped soon after their first child, Elizabeth, was born. Emily came three years later. The joys of parenting and homeschooling kept birding mostly as a side activity during their daughters' early years.

In 2001 Barry responded to a request on the South-Bay-Birds mailing list looking for volunteers to write chapters for SCVAS's new edition of *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay*. Barry researched and wrote the Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve chapter. It remains, almost 20 years later, one of his favorite birding locations and a popular destination for our field trip attendees.



Barry and Ginger Langdon-Lassagne

In 2004, Barry took a major step into the competitive birding world and signed up for his very first Birdathon. He joined the Varied Twitchers and was amazed to see 158 species in a single day, including two lifers. He had never seen even 100 species in a single day before. He has participated in the Birdathon every year since, including leading several trips.

In 2012, Barry retired from his engineering job at Apple. In 2016, Barry again retired from his engineering job at Apple Inc., because the first time didn't stick. His background in technology has made him indispensable during SCVAS's website overhaul, as well as our go-to tech support at the Ranch.

In 2017, Barry published an iOS app called Birdathon for keeping track of bird checklists. It recently underwent another update which greatly enhanced its mapping features.

In 2019, Barry joined the Birdathon Committee, signed up along with Ginger to lead Audubon Field Trips and became the maintainer for our entirely redesigned website, scvas.org.

In 2019, Barry was invited to join the SCVAS Board of Directors where he remains today, as our new president. ●



Feathers
Matthew Dodder

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director

TRACK & FEATHER

Every once in a while we stumble upon intriguing outdoor mysteries—a feather, a footprint, a scrape. Animals leave clues of their presence all over the trail for the sharp-eyed and curious to discover and solve.

Recently, at the Sunnyvale Landfill hilltop overlooking the east and west ponds below, such a clue appeared. Beside the trail two feathers within a few yards of each other begged to be identified. Who could they belong to? See if you can figure it out... Your field guide will probably be enough, but here are some other helpful resources.

Answer will be posted in the next issue of *The Avocet*.

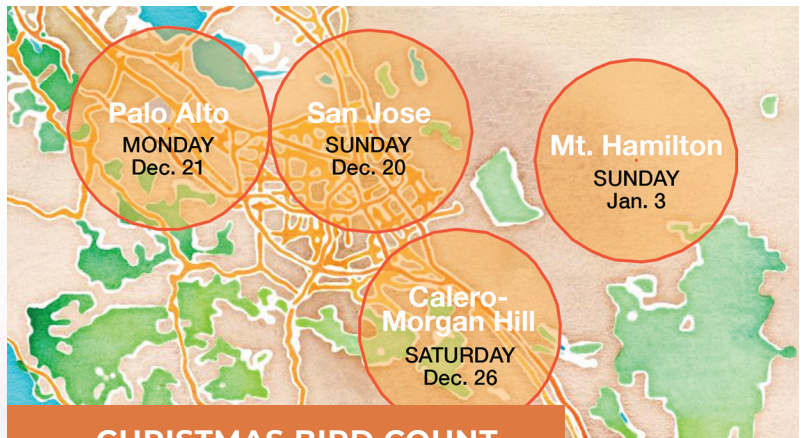
Books

Bird Feathers:
A Guide to North American Species
by S. David Scott & Casey McFarland

Websites

U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Feather Atlas
Slater Museum of Natural History's
Wing & Tail Image Collection

Note The collection or sale of feathers from native species is prohibited by law. If you find a feather, admire it and leave it behind.



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Palo Alto Circle
Mon, Dec 21

San Jose Circle
Sun, Dec 20

Calero-Morgan Hill Circle
Sat, Dec 26

Mount Hamilton Circle
Sun, Jan 3

NEW MEMBERS May – Jul

Thank you and Welcome!

Joyce Alarcon • Sreedhara Alvattam • June & Hans Andersen • Jeffrey Baldwin • Jeannette Blaschke • Janis Buck • Brenda J. Burchard • Diane Byrd • Jerome Catrouillet • Susan Cole • Victor & Joan Cupples • Roxanne Featherly • Elizabeth K. Fedde •

Continued on back cover



Conservation Corner

Shani Kleinhaus
Environmental Advocate

Advocacy During the Pandemic

Fall is a busy time for our Environmental Advocacy program, especially during election years. This year, the Environmental Action Committee is reviewing and evaluating several local ballot measures and state propositions, considering whether SCVAS should endorse, oppose, or remain neutral.

SCVAS has already endorsed one ballot measure for the November 2020 elections: The Open Space Authority extension of a \$24/year parcel tax in perpetuity. The Open Space Authority has excelled in its protection of public lands, especially in Coyote Valley. We hope that their work on restoring wetlands and habitat in the valley can continue, uninterrupted, for the near and the long-term future. The funds will allow the Authority continue its work to:

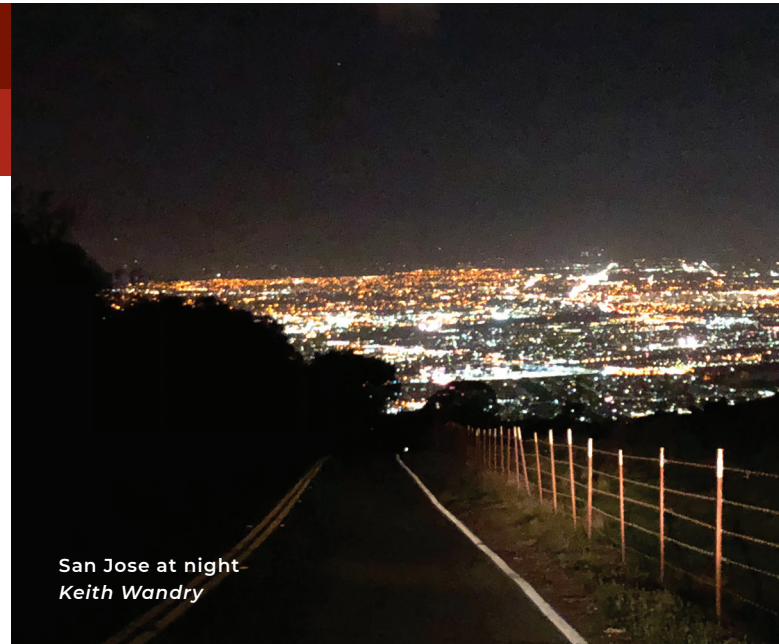
- ▶ Preserve our region's natural heritage by protecting scenic hillsides, open spaces, wildlife, redwood forests, and farmland
- ▶ Increase public access to open space and help maintain Authority preserves and trails and expand trail connections among local and regional parks
- ▶ Protect our water supplies and reduce pollution and toxins by preserving land around creeks, rivers, and streams
- ▶ Provide easy access to open space through urban open spaces and environmental education programs

Please stay tuned and check our October *Avocet* Online Newsletter for additional Ballot Measure endorsements and recommendations.

As we continue to advocate on projects and planning efforts throughout our county, we often question whether the pandemic has changed anything at all in the way our political system and government agencies plan for the future. Thus far, planning efforts have not slowed down, and even accelerated. Here are some of the ongoing projects we continue to work on, and some new ones:

Light Pollution and Our Birds

Light pollution has a strong impact on biological function. In birds, it interferes with innate behaviors such as breeding, migration and song. We continue to advocate for reducing



San Jose at night
Keith Wandry

light pollution as part of our work in Cupertino and in San Jose. In Cupertino we are following the progress of the Bird-Safe & Dark Sky ordinances. The City Council is expected to discuss the proposed ordinances on September 15 and we hope you can zoom in and encourage Cupertino to adopt strong ordinances to protect birds, habitat, and human health.

In San Jose, we provided input for better City-wide Design Guidelines. We are also advocating against an amendment to the Sign Ordinance. This proposed amendment will promote the proliferation of electronic billboards along freeways, and allow other types of programmable electronic signs in the city. The new signs will provide no economic benefits to the City of San Jose or local businesses, and only benefit the advertising industry and a few property owners along the freeways.

If you are a San Jose resident, please contact your Council member's office and ask your representative to put an end to this initiative. The more they hear from the voters in their districts, the better. Please contact advocate@scvas.org for additional information or directions.

No Slowdown in Planned Projects

The City of Sunnyvale is currently in the process of updating the Moffett Park Specific Plan. The plan area of Moffett Park covers 1,156 acres of industrial land and borders a sensitive wetland habitat along the San Francisco Bay. The intent of the plan is to greatly increase density and create a 24-hour mixed use district with office and housing and amenities for residents. Impacts on our Bay ecosystems and the birds that depend on them could potentially be substantial. If you are a Sunnyvale resident, please tell your City Council (as well as candidates for office) that the Specific Plan must protect and expand wetlands and bird habitats along waterways



Lockheed Ponds in Sunnyvale
Shani Kleinhaus



Say's Phoebe
Bill Walker

and the Bay. For more information, see <https://www.moffettparksp.com>

In Morgan Hill, we commented on a Draft Environmental Impact report for an industrial development that offered inadequate mitigation for impacts to nesting birds, and would risk polluting the local aquifer on Coyote Valley and/or the Llagas aquifer. We also submitted a comment letter on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the High Speed Rail segment between San Jose and Merced. The report dismisses what we consider unsurpassable and permanent harm to a wide range of animal and bird species including critically endangered species. If built as proposed and with no additional mitigations to the ones currently proposed, High Speed Rail could devastate our regional fauna.

We continue to advocate with the San Jose General Plan Update task force to change the designations of all public land in Coyote Valley from Industrial to Habitat and Open space.

With a large constellation of tribal and environmental groups, we continue to advocate with the San Jose General Plan Update task force to change the designations of all public land in Coyote Valley from Industrial to Habitat and Open space. For the privately owned lands in the valley, we seek Agriculture designation that should help avert development into the future. We sent a letter of support for State law (Senate Bill 940) that would clarify conflicts and facilitate protection of Coyote Valley from future housing development and sprawl.

Update on Our Newts

We have not given up on the Newts of Alma Bridge Road. Over 11,000 Pacific newts have been killed on Alma Bridge Road in just over 2 years. The newts have a lifespan of 14 years, and we believe that this extremely high mortality rate over time will affect our local population negatively. In Southern California, the California Newt has been listed as a species of special concern where similar conversion of land to human uses has resulted in habitat degradation and massive roadkill. We believe the same may be happening here. But even if the impacts to the population were found to be less than terminal to the local population, we should be doing all we can to reduce this carnage.

To try and advance solutions, we have been working with several local agencies to support a UC Davis grant application to the California Wildlife Conservation Board for Prop 68 funding. The funds would be used for the planning and design of raised roadway in two "hot spot" locations of Alma Bridge Road to provide safe undercrossing for Newt migration to and from Lexington Reservoir.

And One More Thing...

In July, we joined Audubon California and more than 100 environmental groups throughout the state in opposition to Assembly Bill 3279. This bill would have significantly undermined environmental, environmental justice, and other public interest petitioners' access to the courts and therefore access to justice. We are pleased that our joint efforts were successful, and the Bill was amended. ●

SAVED BY NATURE

A NEW PARTNERSHIP

Ann Hepenstal
Outreach Committee Chair

Do you consider yourself to be saved by nature? Many of our SCVAS

members feel a strong spiritual connection to the natural world, and find comfort and healing in birds and nature. The nonprofit group **Saved By Nature** brings that spirit to its work connecting people across the community to nature. SCVAS proudly announces a new partnership with Saved By Nature <https://www.savedbynature.org> and looks forward to our work together.

Saved By Nature founder Richard Tejada grew up in South San Jose and saw first-hand the impact of drugs, gangs, and the “revolving door” of the U.S. judicial system on families, neighborhoods and the youth. At age 25, he found nature.

Richard says, “Nature literally saved my life. I was supposed to be a statistic, but I couldn’t let that happen. I had to reinvent myself, and nature was a positive escape from the everyday negativity of my neighborhood. I made it out, and believe me, there were a lot of people that didn’t - all odds were against us. I think of that every day. Now I’m determined to change lives, and I plan to do that by using the same passions that transformed my life - that’s what this is all about.”

Richard graduated cum laude with a B.A. in Environmental Studies from San Jose State University, and in 2018, he founded “Saved By Nature.” The group’s mission is to expose, teach, and enlighten people of all backgrounds and abilities through environmental education; to welcome the community to the natural wonders & recreational opportunities of the outdoors; and to bring mental, physical, and spiritual healing through nature.

Saved By Nature focuses its work on seniors, at-risk youth, those living with disability, and underserved communities of color. They present outdoor homeschool lessons, run a Boys & Girls Club Summer Day Camp, coordinate elementary school field trips, and more. During COVID-19, Richard has taught himself videography and production skills and Saved By Nature has hosted virtual nature experiences and field trips to continue its work.

Similarly, the SCVAS Outreach Committee works to reach communities who aren’t yet members, make SCVAS a welcoming place for birders of all levels and backgrounds, and increase representation from all Santa Clara County demographics. The Committee recognized Saved By Nature as an organization with a shared purpose to connect people to nature.

SCVAS Director Matthew Dodder and Outreach Committee Chair Ann Hepenstal recently met with Richard Tejada and established a new partnership between SCVAS and Saved By Nature.

Together, we will reach into other communities and demographics beyond our current SCVAS members, and host exciting virtual nature experiences for the public.

SCVAS will host Richard on September 23rd for our virtual Speaker series. Richard will work with bilingual SCVAS volunteers to produce Spanish-language virtual birding videos. And, we’re exploring ways to increase the impact of our organizations’ youth programs (Wetlands Discovery Program, Youth Alliance in South County, Boys and Girls Clubs). Stay tuned for exciting announcements from this partnership! ●



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At-Promise Youth

VIRTUAL EVENTS VIA ZOOM

More details at scvas.org/events

John Muir Laws

Wed, Sep 16 at 7 pm
Artist, Instructor & Author

ANNUAL MEETING

Sat, Sep 19 at 7 pm

Richard Tejada

Wed, Sep 23 at 7 pm
Founder, Saved By Nature
See description on cover.

David Tomb

Wed, Oct 21 at 7 pm
Artist & Activist

John Richardson

Wed, Nov 18 at 7 pm
Photographer & Adventurer



Bird Notes

Please report rarities to
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Pete Dunten

Santa Clara County eBird Reviewer

Spring & Migration

White-faced Ibis occurred in each month during the period, with spring migration accounting for the majority of the records. One flew over Coast Casey Forebay on 5 May (DBI), the high count of 63 overflowed San Jose on 8 May (WP, KON), four were at Coast Casey Forebay on 21 May (LzF), and another large group of 22 passed over the Sunnyvale WPCP on 29 May (FP, BM). Single Ibis visited once in June (at New Chicago Marsh on the 19th (RWR)) and once in July (over A13 on the 26th (CG)). Migrant **Western Sandpipers** utilize San Francisco Bay as a stopover point in both spring and fall, and birds with numbered leg flags provide a glimpse into their life histories. One present at Alviso pond A13 on 29 Apr had been banded at Topolobampo in Sinaloa, Mexico on 13 Sept, 2019, then resighted at the Gulf of Santa Clara in Sonora on 29 Mar and 12 Apr, 2020 before its northward journey to San Francisco Bay later in April (PDU). A **Franklin's Gull** was a nice find on 21 May at the Sunnyvale WPCP eastern pond (ABU). The sighting was regrettably brief, all the more so given this was the first in the county since 2017. A **Dusky Flycatcher** was among the migrants passing over Loma Prieta on 2 May (JVs). They are found about one year in every two. A **Tropical Kingbird** was seen along San Francisquito Creek on 2 May (MDo). One to two spent the winter in the area of Byxbee Park, the Palo Alto airport, and San Francisquito Creek after arriving last October. A **Bank Swallow** at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 22 May towards the end of spring migration was a nice find (MJM). Two **Black-and-white Warblers** stopped for only a day, one at Rancho Canada del Oro on 6 May (JPa) and one at Christmas Hill Park in Gilroy on 5 Jun (AWa). A **Magnolia Warbler** on 4 Jun was another of the nice finds from the Loma Prieta spring migration watch (MJM). It was only the 10th record for the county. **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found in the last week of April and first two weeks of May. Between 2 - 6 May, one was along Llagas Creek at Old Oak Glen Ave (MDo, m. ob.). Another was along Llagas Creek at the Gilroy SCRWA from 4 - 5 May (RWR, FV). And two individuals were found along Los Alamitos Creek, one north of Camden on 8 May (MFa) and one south of Camden on 9 May (STu). An adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was a nice addition to a yard list near Summit Rd and Hwy 17 on 19 Jun, though unfortunately the Grosbeak didn't stay long (TGi). Ed Levin CP has hosted **Blue Grosbeaks** in past years, and on 28 Apr a female returned (TKP). She was noted again on 13 May (TKP).



Wilson's Phalarope
Garrett Lau



Northern Parula
Zane Pinkus



Black Skimmer
Eric Goodill

A male was singing at Almaden Quicksilver CP on 1 May (fide *eBird*). The last **Yellow-headed Blackbird** migrants this spring were two alongside Alviso pond A12 on 1 May (WBG) and a single blackbird in Mallard Slough adjacent to Alviso pond A16 on 25 May (FV).

Summer & Nesting

Lesser Scaups nested in the vicinity of Alviso pond A16, where a female with five ducklings in tow was seen on 11 July (STu). Most summers a few Scaup stay in the area and raise young, while the majority head north to breed. Young **Black Skimmers** were reported from two colony locations. On 1 Jul 32 adults and 7 young were on the small island in Shoreline Lake (WGB), and on 17 Jul there were 46 adults and 16 young (RPh). Young were also present at the smaller colony on one of the islands in A16 on 11 Jul (STu) and 26 Jul (GL). The distribution of **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** in the county during the nesting season was mapped during the field work for the county breeding bird atlas. The presence of both a male and female a mile and a half west of the Guadalupe River in Santa Clara on 9 Jul was unexpected (RJ), and a reminder that there is always more to add to the picture we have of local bird life. The **Vermilion Flycatcher** at J Grant CP that arrived on 13 Apr has remained into July, with the last report on 7 Jul (COv). A **Loggerhead Shrike** at Coyote Valley OSP on 20 Jun was a promising sign (MJM). Shrikes have become hard to find in the summer anywhere outside the Gilroy SCRWA area. A singing male **Northern Parula** at the entrance to Almaden Quicksilver CP in New Almaden was an exciting find on 21 May (JPa). Despite the long odds, the songster attracted a female Parula on 22 May (MMR), and both birds were present through 14 Jun (CG, m. ob.). 14 Jun was a banner day for Parulas, as another singing male was found in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose (BM). And on the 16th of June, two singing males were advertising for mates in Willow Glen (BM). One to two stayed in Willow Glen through 18 Jun (SPz, m. ob.), and in New Almaden the last report was of the male on 28 Jun (ZP). A female **Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler** chose an odd location to begin building a nest - on 18 May the warbler was seen adding to a nest in a Sycamore tree at Sunnyvale Baylands Park (SCR). Yellow-rumped Warblers have nested successfully in the county, at locations along the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains, and occasionally in the Diablo Range, but not at low elevations between the two mountain ranges.

Fall & Migration

A **Western Sandpiper** banded in Peru was at Alviso pond A15 on 20 Jul (PDU). For every 10,000 or so Western Sandpipers, one Semipalmated Sandpiper passes through the county during fall migration. Single **Semipalmated Sandpipers** stopped at Alviso pond A17 on 2 Jul (PDU) and pond A16 on 5 Jul (MSt, LSt). The first **Wilson's Phalarope** of the year



Almaden Quicksilver
Eve Meier

SELF-GUIDED FIELD TRIPS

New! SCVAS trip leaders have been developing a series of self-guided field trips. We will pick out a few special places to bird each month based where you can socially distance and enjoy the best of the birding season.

Visit <https://scvas.org/self-guided-field-trips> to see this month's selection. Regular field trips have been suspended but will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

was at the Sunnyvale WPCP eastern pond on 27 May (DW). On 19 Jun, the count of returning Wilson's Phalaropes was up to 42 in New Chicago Marsh (WGB, RWR). Peak counts typically occur in late July to early August. In early July a **Common Tern** visited Alviso pond A16, where colonies of Forster's Terns, Caspian Terns, and Black Skimmers are nesting. The Common Tern arrived on 5 Jul (MSt, LSt), about two weeks ahead of the expected arrival of the earliest fall migrants, and stayed through 14 Jul (COv, m. ob.). Three **Least Terns** were noted over pond A2E on 9 Jul (BP), and their numbers increased to eleven by 17 Jul (MMR) and 35 by 26 Jul (MDo). A2E has historically been a site the Least Terns stage at before fall migration. Single adult, male **Rufous Hummingbirds** visited feeders at locations on the western edge of the Diablo Range on 29 Jun (WP, KON) and 10 - 13 Jul (EGa). Sightings of adult males this late in the year are seldom reported.

Observers Dan Bloch (DBI), Bill Bousman (WGB), Adam Burnett (ABu), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Pete Dunten (PDU), Marion Farber (MFA), Liz Frith (LzF), Carter Gasiorowski (CG), Elinor Gates (EGa), Taylor Gilbert (TGi), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Garrett Lau (GL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Brooke Miller (BM), Liam Murphy (LmM), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Chris Overington (COv), Federico Pacheco (FP), Janna Pauser (JPa), Ben Pearl (BP), William Pelletier (WP), Sergio Perez (SPz), Tracy K Pham (TKP), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Zane Pickus (ZP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Lucas Stephenson (LSt), Mark Stephenson (MSt), Steve Tucker (STu), Frank Vanslager (FV), Jason Vassallo (JVs), Adam Wachtel (AWa), Dave Weber (DW)



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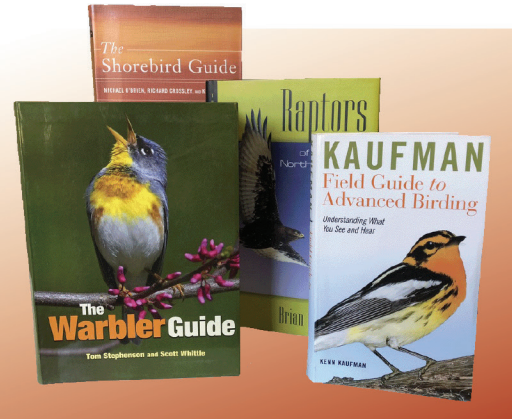
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Continued from page 9

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And thank you to
those who renewed!

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