

THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

November-December 2014

A Win for Wildlife: Gavilan College is Denied Permits for Proposed Campus in Coyote Valley

by Stephanie Ellis, SCVAS Executive Director

This summer, Gavilan College applied for wildlife permits as a Special Entity Participant to the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which would allow the first phase of their proposed Coyote Valley Campus at Bailey Avenue in San Jose to begin. A Special Entity Participant status would allow Gavilan to pay fees for “take” of habitat and endangered species. This project is highly controversial and has drawn opposition from environmental groups and responsible agencies. SCVAS consulted with the Habitat Agency as well as wildlife agencies and environmental groups beyond Santa Clara County to address environmental concerns, especially pertaining

to the significant impact the project would have on local wetlands. The proposed project would allow a “take” of 14% of the total wetland take allowed for the entire HCP. Fortunately, the Habitat Agency rejected Gavilan’s application to be considered a Special Entity Participant to the HCP, citing the project’s failure to meet four of the five criteria for acceptance.

Beginning in 2006, De Anza College Environmental Studies Department - both faculty and students - conducted research using wildlife cameras and field surveys to provide a view into the connectivity of Coyote Valley as a wildlife corridor to other areas. Findings from these studies drew attention to the importance of biodiversity in the Valley, and how Coyote Valley is a critical connection between the Diablo Range and the Santa Cruz Mountains. Despite being nearly cut off from the Diablo Range, animals from the Santa Cruz Mountains are making their way underneath U.S. Rt. 101 through large culverts to disperse into the Diablo Range. De Anza students are also currently conducting bird surveys to record species found in the valley, and have discovered an exceptionally high density of nesting raptors, including White-tailed Kites, Red-tailed Hawks and a pair of Swainson’s Hawks (the only known nesting site in Santa Clara County and first in over 100 years). Loggerhead Shrikes and Tri-colored Blackbirds also nest and utilize the Coyote Valley site where the campus development was proposed, both species sharing the conservation status of Species of Special Concern in the state of California due to loss of habitat and other environmental pressures.



Tri-colored Blackbird
©Tom Grey

The extensive wetlands within Coyote Valley are both a birder’s delight and a wildlife paradise. On any given day, the Valley may boast sightings of Bald and Golden Eagles, Long-billed Curlews and various species of ducks. A site of critical importance to wildlife, Coyote Valley deserves protection from future developmental impacts.

**The Annual
Christmas Bird
Count is Almost
Here! Come Join in
the Fun!**
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General Membership Meetings

Cubberley Community Center, Rm H1

Palo Alto - Middlefield & Montrose Rds

Doors open 7:30; program 8:00

Wednesday, November 19th

“The Echoes of their Wings:

The Life and Legacy of the Passenger Pigeon”

Talk and Book Signing with author Joel Greenberg



At one time, the Passenger Pigeon probably numbered in the billions, making it the most abundant bird in North America if not the world. The species often formed aggregations so vast they are difficult for us to imagine. Exploitation for food and recreation destroyed the species in the wild by the first few years of the 20th century. On September 1, 1914, Martha, the last of the species, died in the Cincinnati Zoo.

Joel Greenberg will explore the story of the Passenger Pigeon and highlight the important lessons that it presents to those of us in the 21st century

*(Additional information and detailed directions available
at www.scvas.org or by calling the SCVAS office)*

☞ *Annual Thanksgiving Field Trip to Sacramento Valley Wildlife Refuges*

— Page 2

☞ *Amazing Audubon Field Seminars for 2015*

— Beginning on Page 5

☞ *Fall Gave a Definite Pelagic “Flavor” This Year!*

— Field Notes, Page 6

☞ *Young Audubon Winter Adventures for Families*

— Page 10

Nov - Dec '14 Field Trips

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

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

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

Saturday Nov. 1, 8:00 AM

Moss Landing & vicinity

Half day. **Leader:** Norm Kikuchi (831) 459-9424. **Directions:** Meet in Moss Landing next to the Sea Harvest Restaurant in the big parking lot and boat launch ramp just north of Hwy 1's Elkhorn Slough bridge. **Notes:** Weather conditions can be highly variable so dress in layers, bring lunch and liquids. **Highlights:** Shorebirds, waterfowl and other migrants.

Sunday Nov. 2, 8:30 AM

Grant Ranch County Park

Half day. **Leader:** Rich Page (408) 377-1092. **Directions:** From I-680 take Alum Rock Ave. northeast, turn right on Hamilton Rd. and go approximately 9 miles to the park. Meet at Grant Lake (aka Hall's Valley Lake) parking lot, which is the first parking lot on the left side of the road (do not enter the Main Park Entrance on the right). **Highlights:** Fresh water ducks, oak woodland birds and possible Golden Eagle. **Difficulty Level:** This will be a moderate 2 mile walk. **Notes:** A park entrance fee will be required for the last half of the trip. Daylight Savings Time change, fall back or be an hour early for this trip. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Nov. 5, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

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

Saturday Nov. 8, 8:15 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward the hills then left on Toyon Ave. right on Penitencia Creek Rd. and continue on into the park. Drive under the bridge and meet at the far end of the parking lot. **Note:** Entrance fee required. **Difficulty Level:** Trip is a mod-

erately strenuous 3-4 mile walk. **LO, RC**

Sunday Nov. 9, 8:00 AM

Alviso Environmental Education Center

Half Day. **Leader:** Steve Tracey (408) 966-3860. **Directions:** From Hwy 237 turn left on North First St., right on Nortech Pkwy, left on Disk Dr. and continue straight into the un-named entrance to the Environmental Education Center along the southern edge of New Chicago Marsh and meet in the EEC parking lot. **Notes:** A chance to check out the impact of restoration work and take a nice long walk in an area that does not require an entrance fee. Light rain may require a change of venue.

Wednesday Nov. 12, 8:30 AM

Coyote Creek Trail; Silver Creek Road parking lot

Half day. **Leader:** Janna Pauser 408-569-9264 or jannapauser@gmail.com. **Directions:** From Hwy 85 south, take Blossom Hill Rd. to Silver Creek Valley Rd. Make a U-turn at Piercy Rd. In .5 mi, Silver Creek parking lot is immediately on your right (see the SCVAS Field Trip Calendar for detailed directions with a map). **Difficulty Level:** Easy walking. **RC**

Saturday Nov. 15, 9:00 AM

Western San Francisco

Half day. **Leader:** Alan Hopkins (415) 794-0281. **Directions:** From I-280 take

19th Ave. to Golden Gate Park. When you enter the park on 19th Ave. be in the left lane and take Crossover Dr. to 25th Ave. to Geary Blvd. then left on Geary. At 39th Ave., Geary becomes Point Lobos Ave continue west on Point Lobos past the light at 48th Ave and turn right into the new Marrie Way parking lot. **LO, RC**

Sunday Nov. 16, 7:30 AM

Ulistac Natural Area

Half day. **Leader:** Gena Zolotar (650) 930-0333. **Directions:** From Hwy 237 go south on Great America Pkwy then left on Tasman Dr. In 2 miles turn right on Lick Mill Blvd. and meet at the South entrance to the Ulistac Natural Area. **Highlights:** We will look for migrants and local breeding birds in diverse habitat that does not require an entrance fee. **NF**

Saturday Nov. 22, 8:00 AM

Uvas Creek Park Preserve

Half day. **Leader:** Bob Reiling (1408) 253-7527. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 in Gilroy go west on Tenth St. about a mile where it turns right and becomes Uvas Pkwy. Turn left at Miller Ave., drive over Uvas Creek and turn left into Christmas Hill Park and park in the first isle to the right. **Difficulty Level:** Trip is a fairly easy but long walk. **Note:** Low water conditions in the creek may require an alternate birding destination in the Gilroy area. **LO, RC**

Sunday Nov. 23, 8:00 AM

Sunnyvale Water Treatment Facility

Half day. **Leader:** Frank Vanslager (650) 961-1505. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 take Hwy. 237 east, exit North on Caribbean Dr.,

Special Thanksgiving Weekend Trip:

Sacramento Valley Wildlife Refuges, Gray Lodge, Sutter Buttes

Friday – Saturday, Nov. 28 – 29

(beginning at 9:00AM on Friday, Nov 28)

Full day and a half. **Leaders:** Bill Walker and Mary Wisnewski, 408.887.0738, mary@wisnewski.com. Trip limited to fifteen participants; contact Mary to reserve a space. **Directions:** Meet at Sacramento NWR headquarters (entrance fee) on I-5 approx. 20 miles north of Williams. (It's recommended that people meet and carpool from McDonald's 2nd parking lot in Williams as carpooling and use of FRS radios, set to Ch 11, will allow for best viewing possibilities on this trip). Take Road 68 exit east (towards Princeton) from I-5, then immediately north on frontage road to Refuge. **Notes:** Bring spotting scope, full tank of gas. Allow for a 3-hour drive from the South Bay. **Highlights:** Include ducks, geese, swans, cranes, and raptors. **Difficulty Level:** Trip is highly recommended for beginning birders.

Field Trips *continued*

turn right on Borregas Ave. then left to the parking area. **Highlights:** A great place to study ducks and scopes are highly recommended. **Difficulty Level:** Trip is a fairly easy but can be a long walk. **RC**

Sunday Nov. 30, 8:30 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. **Leader:** Steve Tracey (408) 966-3860. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 in Mtn. View take San Antonio Rd. north to the Terminal Way parking area. Meet at the entrance near San Antonio Rd. This trip recommended for beginning birders but all are encouraged to attend. **Notes:** Bring your spotting scope and a friend.

Wednesday Dec. 3, 12:00 PM

City of Sunnyvale Landfill

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

Saturday Dec. 6, 8:15 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. **Leader:** Jim Johnson (408) 996-3506. **Directions:** From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward the hills then left on Toyon Ave. right on Penitencia Creek Rd. and continue on into the park. Drive under the bridge and meet at the far end of the parking lot. **Note:** Entrance fee required. **Difficulty Level:** Trip is a moderately strenuous 3-4 mile walk. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Dec. 10, 8:30 AM

Graystone Park and Alamitos Creek trail

Half day. **Leader:** Janna Pauser 408-569-9264 or jannapauser@gmail.com. **Directions:** from Hwy 85 south, exit Camden Ave. south. Continue 4.8 miles. Turn right onto Mt. Carmel Dr. (one half mile after Almaden Expwy) and park on street. We'll check the pines in Graystone Park, then bird north on the Alamitos Creek trail. **Difficulty Level:** Easy walking. **LO, RC**

Saturday Jan. 3, 7:30 AM

County Chase

Half day. **Leader:** Bob Reiling (408) 253-7527. Get a head start on your 2015 County Year List with some vagrant chasing. **Notes:** Bring a full tank of gas, lunch, and field guides as we attempt to track down some of the unusual birds seen on the Christmas Bird Counts in Santa Clara County. Meet near the entrance to the Alviso Marina parking lot. **Directions:** From Hwy 237 in San Jose take Gold St. north to the end, bear left on Elizabeth St. and then right on Hope St. to the Marina parking lot. Be prepared to car pool as parking may be limited at some sites. **RC**

Sunday Jan. 4, 8:00 AM

Los Capitancillos Ponds

Half day. **Leader:** Rich Page (408) 377-1092. **Directions:** If coming from Hwy 85, go south on Camden Ave. just past Blossom Hill Rd. Singletree Way is the next left turn-off near Beacon School. Park on the street, we will meet at the trail entrance located on the right just beyond the power plant. **Highlights:** We will bird ponds that are often filled with a wide variety of waterfowl and gulls, a nearby creek for riparian birds as well as other areas closely associated with the ponds that attract birds. **Notes:** Drought conditions may require a change in venue. **RC**



Saturday Jan. 10, 8:00 AM

Panoche Valley

Full day. **Leader:** Clay Kempf (831) 761-8260. **Directions:** Meet at Paicines Store on Hwy 25 approx. 11 miles south of Hollister. This is one of our better "out of the county" field trips traversing oak woodland and open grassland via back roads into a unique habitat. **Highlights:** Targeted species include Phainopepla, Mountain Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk and Golden Eagle; other possibilities include Mountain Plover, Bald Eagle, Vesper Sparrow, Greater Roadrunner and Chukar. **Notes:** To pre-order a sandwich from the Panoche Inn e-mail the leader (ltjaeger@att.net) between Jan 4th and Jan 7th with your choice of bread, meat (chicken salad, ham, pastrami) cheese and toppings. Or bring your own lunch and a full tank of gas, carpooling is strongly recommended due to limited parking on the narrow roads. **IMPORTANT:** Do not expect to use the restrooms at the Paicines Store, as their use is limited to paying customers (we encourage patronage of local businesses).



Wintering Waterfowl Field Trip:

Sunday Dec. 7th, 1:30-3:30 PM

Palo Alto Baylands & Shoreline Park, Mtn View

Afternoon only. **Leader:** Stephanie Ellis, SCVAS' Executive Director; executivedirector@scvas.org or 408-252-3748. Want to sharpen your duck I.D. skills? Join us for a fun day viewing the abundance of waterfowl that spend their winter on San Francisco Bay. **Directions:** From 101, take Embarcadero Rd. East (towards the Baylands). At the stop sign at the very end of Embarcadero, take a left (staying on Embarcadero). Turn left, and park in the Duck Pond parking lot. **Notes:** Wear your woollies. Optional coffee/hot chocolate stop after the trip - on us! **Difficulty Level:** All are encouraged to attend, but the trip will be geared toward the beginning birder. **Trip is limited to 15; please contact Stephanie to sign-up.**

It's a great time of year to think about the perfect gift for the birder or nature lover in your life! The SCVAS Nature Shop has unique items that are sure to make anyone smile!

Conservation Corner

By Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate

Here are just a few of our Environmental Action Committee engagements and accomplishments:

The **Panoche Valley Solar Project** never ceases to surprise us. After a huge step forward (Power Purchase Agreement) the project took two steps back as the primary investor (Duke Energy) pulled out. What this means for the project is not clear. However, we continue to advocate against this project in the meantime.

In **San Jose**, we appealed the Chaboya Ranch project, in protest of a plan to lower a hill to facilitate the construction of homes on an adjacent property. The hill is designated open space as mitigation for the previously constructed Richmond Ranch. We see this as bad precedence and a threat to any open space hills adjacent to development projects.

We have also engaged in projects such as the Bay 101 Casino and Mixed Use Project, Communication Hill, and Heritage Oaks Memorial Park. We are working with neighbors in the Coyote Creek neighborhood as they participate in the design of the Shady Oaks Park Master Plan; we helped craft language for pre-construction bird-survey requirements for the General Plan. And we continue to advocate for Bird-Safe Building Design.

We facilitated the transfer of 20 acres of mitigation land near **Alviso** (on Disk Drive, by Jubilee Church) from Cisco Systems to the City of San Jose. This transfer increases the protected Burrowing Owl habitat in North San Jose to 200 acres! We continue to implement our partnership with the City by monitoring Burrowing Owls and improving their habitat in the Regional Wastewater Facility bufferlands.

In **Cupertino**, inadequate environmental review documents were prepared for the Parkside Trails project on Stevens Canyon Road. There was simply not enough information on how the 18-home project and a future trail would impact Stevens Creek and

its riparian habitat. We were effective in voicing our concerns, and the City will prepare a full Environmental Impact report.

In **Palo Alto**, a new General Plan, a Parks and Recreation Master Plan and a Master Plan for Byxbee Park are moving forward. The Byxbee Park Master plan will include areas for Burrowing Owls. In addition, we were successful in providing language for a design principle for a design competition for the Adobe Creek Bike and Pedestrian Bridge to the Baylands. This design principle will focus on conservation and on not harming birds.

Sunnyvale amended the City's Green Buildings Policy and at our request, the City Council voted to reference Bird-Safe Building Design Guidelines in the Policy.

The **City of Santa Clara** plans two colossal projects. The City Place Santa Clara Project and Centennial Gateway Mixed-Use Project would create a new City Center (17 stories high) on the landfill/golf course and the Levi Stadium. Concerned with impacts to natural resources and birds, we submitted scoping comments for the environmental review.

In **Morgan Hill**, we helped craft conditions for continued collection and transfer of Burrowing Owl development fees to the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan.

In **Santa Clara County**, we successfully opposed a General Plan amendment that would allow higher density development for the Pickett project on Uvas Road. This amendment could open the door to other development projects throughout Santa Clara County, and threaten creek corridors, hillsides, open space and habitat. After over a year of advocacy efforts by SCVAS and other environmental groups the developer withdrew his application.

And the new **Bird-Friendly Facebook Campus** received an "Best Innovative Sustainable Design" award – see here (we are on page 3 of the story): <http://www.bizjournals.com/sanjose/feature/structures/2014/09/2014/09/best-innovative-sustainable-design-winner-facebook.html?page=3>

Interested in getting involved? Contact shani@scvas.org.

Volunteer Ventures

by Toby Goldberg, Programs Coordinator

Each spring, the SCVAS Cavity Nesters Recovery Program monitors spend at least one day a week checking nest boxes throughout the county. Some years, the results are wonderfully heartening; some years, frustrations are more the norm.

2014 marked the 18th breeding season of the Cavity Nesters Recovery Program. Thanks as always to the hard work of Mike Azevedo, our County Nest Box Coordinator, and Dick Blaine, our data guru (and President of the California Bluebirds Recovery Program) we were able to bring the season to a close with a mixture of good and bad news*.

Our biggest challenges this year were another extremely dry year - which had a noticeable effect on the abundance of appropriate insects for our Cavity Nesting Species - and drastic swings in temperature at the beginning of the breeding season, resulting in nesting mortality for a lot of our early nesters. However, many of our monitors also recorded a good year for Bluebirds, indicating that their recovery continues to strengthen;

we'll have more information about the year's results as data continues to be submitted.

Regardless of the final results, however, these volunteers demonstrate the qualities which are common to all of the SCVAS volunteers: dedication and a passion for the birds! And we simply can't thank them enough. Of course, we hope that the joys of seeing their birds successfully fledge outweigh any of the sorrows from failed nests.

If this sounds like a program you'd like to know more about, and if you'd like to make a difference in local bird populations, please contact us. The more monitors we have, the more we can help. For detailed information about this program, go online to www.scvas.org/cnpr.

Interested in other volunteer opportunities with SCVAS? Check us out online (www.scvas.org - click on "Volunteer") or send an email to programs@scvas.org. We'll look forward to finding the perfect fit for your interests and availability!

*Some interesting trends were seen in the McClellan Ranch Preserve Nest Boxes this season. See the details on page 11.

SCVAS Adult Education: Adventure Travel with Bob Power in 2015

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

Lower Klamath / Tule Lake Eagles Thur – Mon, Feb. 5th – 9th

The lower Klamath Basin is a magnet for Rough-legged Hawks, Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles, and of course, Bald Eagles in abundance. While we attempt to identify all birds seen on this trip, the focus is raptors. We see geese in phenomenal numbers, multiple duck species, and often see the first few north-bound Sandhill Cranes.

Accommodations: Participants make their own reservations, but we recommend Verna's Winema Lodge - a northern California classic. There are other accommodations in the area, but you can't to beat the convenience, dining, price combo. The Winema Lodge is ideally situated and puts on a great dinner and breakfast.

Note: Participants must be prepared to either drive a carpool or ride in a carpool on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We will have a maximum of 3 vehicles, 4 guests per vehicle, as we wander around the backroads of the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges.

Fee: \$175 members; \$210 non-members. Trip limited to 11 participants.



Bald Eagle
Photo © Bob Power



Elegant Trogon
©Bob Power

Cave Creek Canyon and The Chiricahua Mountains May 19th – 26th

Cave Creek Canyon and the Chiricahua Mountains are famed for the presence of Elegant Trogon, Red-faced Warbler, Painted Redstart, Mexican Chickadee and the beauty of the sky islands of southeastern Arizona. From our base at the charming Cave Creek Ranch, we'll

explore the varied habitats surrounded by this enchanting mountain range. Join Bob to seek all of the area's specialty birds at one of North America's premier birding destinations. For an itinerary, e-mail: bob at scvas.org.

Fees: \$1795/person, double-occupancy. \$450 single supplement.
Deposit: \$300 due at registration.

2015 Seminars continue on page 8

SCVAS Events Calendar:

Tues. 11/4
ELECTION DAY
Your voice counts!
Don't forget to vote for open space - Yes on Q!



Wed. 11/5 & 12/3, 7:30-9PM
The Bay Area Bird Photographers Meeting - Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center - East Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto
11/5 - "Attu: Extreme birding in the Aleutian Islands" with Julio Mulero
12/3 - "Birds of Costa Rica" with Beth Hamel
Details available online; go to www.scvas.org/babp

Tues. 11/11 & 12/9, 10:00AM
Eye Case Bird Discussion Group - meets at the home of Pat Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave., Los Gatos (408) 395-4264
Topic 11/11: Northern Harrier
Topic 12/9: Scaups

Tues. 11/11, 1-7PM
Volunteers Wanted!
SCVAS' Annual Fundraiser Mailing Party (see details online)
McClellan Ranch Preserve
Call 408-252-3740 to help out.

Wed. 11/12 & 12/10; 3-4:30PM
Nature Journaling with John Muir Laws
McClellan Ranch Preserve

Free workshops for all ages! No RSVP required, but please be on time.

Sat. 12/6, 10AM-2PM
SCVAS' Holiday Open House
McClellan Ranch Preserve
A great time for some holiday shopping - for you or your loved ones!
See page 10 or online for more details.

Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) Need your Help!!
See page 9 or go to our website (www.scvas.org - under the Citizen Science section of our Birding pages) for more details:

Sun. 12/14 San Jose CBC	Sat. 12/27 Calero-Morgan Hill CBC
Mon. 12/15 Palo Alto CBC	Mon. 12/29 Mt. Hamilton CBC

Field Notes

(August-September 2014)

by Bill Bousman

Geese through Rails

The first **Greater White-fronted Geese** of fall were three over Pond A12 in Alviso on 27 Sep (MMR, MJM). An immature was seen the next day in the Ogier Avenue ponds (SCR). Two **Cackling Geese** at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 29 Sep (MJM) were also the first of the season. A non-breeding male **Eurasian Wigeon** was found on Pond A16 on 22 Sep (WGB). A female/immature **Blue-winged Teal** was seen at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 28 Sep (SCR), the only report for the period. The female-plumaged **White-winged Scoter** on closed refuge ponds was last seen on 17 Aug (MMR, MJM, RGJ). Few **Hooded Mergansers** are found in late summer, so a female/immature on the Gate 5 Pond at Monte Bello OSP on 20 Aug (GHa) was a surprise. Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** on closed refuge ponds on 27 Sep (MMR, MJM) were probably oversummering birds. Single **White-faced Ibis** were in Pond A16 in Alviso on 5-7 Sep (WGB, GZ) and over the Sunnyvale WPCP on 28 Sep (MMR et al.). Another single was in the Mountain View Forebay on 30 Sep (CL), and two to four birds were at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 28-29 Sep (SCR, MJM). A light morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** was seen along Laguna Avenue on 19 Aug (JPa et al.). A **Black Rail** was heard in Alviso Slough near Pond A11 on 3 Aug (GZ), apparently the last of our vocalizing birds in Alviso this year.

Shorebirds

An adult **Pacific Golden-Plover** in partial breeding plumage was seen along the RR spur in New Chicago Marsh on 23 Aug (PW) and was seen by many observers that day and the next. Surprisingly, a second adult (less than 30% adult plumage) was there on 24-25 Aug (MMR, MJM, RGJ, v.ob.). A calling **Golden-Plover** species was over closed refuge ponds on 27 Sep (MMR, MJM), but never landed. Fourteen adults and 10 young **Snowy Plover** were on the dried out panne between Crittenden Marsh and Pond A2E on 24 Aug (MMR, MJM, RGJ) and at least 11 birds were seen there on 28 Sep (MMR, MJM). Three adults and three chicks were in Pond A13 in Alviso on 24 Aug as well (MMR, MJM, RGJ). A **Solitary**

Sandpiper, first found in Alpine Pond on the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains, moved over to the Gate 5 Pond at Monte Bello OSP, where it was seen later in the day on 17 Aug (GHa). The **Lesser Yellowlegs** passage picked up in August and September with at least 26 birds from Alviso to Palo Alto. High counts included seven at the Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS) waterbird pond on 1 Sep (MMR) and seven at the Palo Alto Baylands on 10 Sep (MDo). An alternate **Ruddy Turnstone** was seen in Pond A9 in

was in Pond A16 on 4 Aug (BM). An adult and two juveniles were seen in New Chicago Marsh 23-25 Aug (MMR, SCT, v.ob.). Three were in Adobe Creek in the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin on 30 Aug, and a single bird was nearby in the Mountain View Forebay on 26 Sep (both CL). The first juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found in New Chicago Marsh on 7 Aug (BM). One or two were seen in Charleston Slough on 28 Aug (WGB, MJM) and possibly another was in the Mountain View Forebay on 1 Sep (KSc). A single juvenile was seen off and on in Pond A12 in Alviso on 13-16 Aug (BM, CL, SMe, v.ob.).

Jaegers through Falcons

A juvenile **Parasitic Jaeger** was found on Pond A4 in Sunnyvale on 28 Sep (JLi) and has been seen by many through the end of the month. If we are lucky, we find these juvenile birds in one fall every three years in our local South Bay ponds (but not so lucky for these disoriented pelagic migrants). Earlier, a juvenile **Long-tailed Jaeger** was seen over Shoreline Lake on 31 Aug (SCT), photographs were key to its identification. This is only our third county record. Two juvenile **Common Murres** were found in closed refuge ponds on 27 Aug (JStP), another pelagic species that does not do well in the South Bay. Rounding out the accidental oceanic birds, a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** was seen in the Sunnyvale WPCP on 20 Sep (KK1 *vide* PDu) and was present through at least 28 Sep (m.ob.). Surprisingly, a second juvenile was there and on nearby closed refuge ponds on 27 Sep (DWe, MMR, MJM). **Least Terns** remained on Pond A2E through 10 Aug when a high count of 11 birds was obtained (MJM). Two Least Terns were also seen that day on Pond A10 in Alviso (GZ). Four juvenile **Black Terns** were found on Ponds A9 and A10 in Alviso on 9 Aug (MHo) and were there through 13 Aug (v.ob.). Another bird was seen on Pond A3W on 9 Aug (BM). Two juvenile **Common Terns** were found on Pond A2E on 9 Sep (GZ, MMR) and appear to have remained there through 27 Sep (MMR, MJM, v.ob.). The first **Elegant Tern** of the season was an adult over Pond A10 on 8 Aug (WGB). It has been a record season for this species in the South Bay (and not over yet). Eighty-two birds were counted on various Alviso ponds on 27 Sep (MMR, MJM) and eight more were tallied that day on Pond A1 in Mountain View (CL). As in recent years, **Black Skimmers** disappeared in late

Juvenile Long-Tailed and Parasitic Jaegers Gave a Pelagic Flavor to Fall. A "Trail's" Flycatcher Was Perhaps Unique and a Green-tailed Towhee Was the First Since 2007

Alviso on 10 Aug (GZ). Its coastal cousin, the **Black Turnstone**, was found on Pond A16 on 22 Sep (WGB). **Red Knots** have been regular during the period in the outer Alviso ponds. A good tally was the count of 82 birds in Pond A9 on 1 Sep (MMR). We missed **Ruff** last year, so it was nice when a juvenile showed up in Pond A12 on 13 Sep (AM, SR, m.ob.). It has remained there through the period. A juvenile **Baird's Sandpiper** was seen in the Mountain View Forebay on 31 Aug (MMR), the second year in a row with only a single passage bird. It has also been a poor season for **Pectoral Sandpiper** with 13 sightings where typically there may be ten times that number. One



Parasitic Jaeger
©Tom Grey

Field Notes *cont'd*

summer, the last sighting was of five birds at Shoreline Lake on 1 Aug (WGB). But contrary to that trend, three were seen again on Charleston Slough and Shoreline Lake again on 30 Sep (CL). One of the Hellyer Avenue **Greater Roadrunners** showed up at Cobham on 16 Sep (BJ) to enjoy its reflection in a glassed-in breezeway. A **Black Swift** was seen over Monte Bello on 6 Sep (GHa), our second fall record—the first was of nine birds there two years ago. By late August, the **Vaux's Swift** migration was well underway, high counts included 75 swifts mixed with swallows over Alviso on 23 Aug (SCR) and 50 over the Sunnyvale WPCP on 4 Sep (BM). Ten lingering **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were along the Los Gatos Creek Trail between Meridian and Leigh on 11 Aug (JPa). Migrants included a female in a Los Gatos yard on 7 Sep (KBU, JPa) and an immature at Morgan Hill feeders on 13-14 Sep (SCR). An immature male **Costa's Hummingbird** was seen at a Los Gatos feeder on 7 Sep (KBU) and remained at least through 18 Sep. A female **Calliope Hummingbird** was reported from Vasona CP on 3 Sep (BM), there are few verified coastal records for this species. One to two **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were seen in San Antonio Valley on 6 Aug and 30 Sep (WGB). A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was photographed at Vasona CP on 22 Aug (JPa) and was likely seen there again on 10 Sep (JPa, FV et al.). Wintering birds normally arrive about 28 Sep, perhaps this is a bird that had dispersed from the small population that breeds on the west side of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The first **Merlin** of the fall was over a Morgan Hill yard on 28 Sep (SCR).

Flycatchers through Goldfinches

A hatch-year "**Trail's**" **Flycatcher** was banded at CCFS on 30 Aug and recaptured the next day (JS). The photographs obtained are sufficient to eliminate the western subspecies of Willow Flycatcher, but not the eastern subspecies (the alternative would be Alder Flycatcher). Hence, it is described as Trail's which was the name used when the Alder and Willow subspecies were considered a single species in the 1960s. A fall migrant **Bank Swallow** was at the west end of the Sunnyvale WPCP on the Moffett Channel on 11 Aug (WGB). Two or three birds were seen at the other end of the plant 22-27 Sep (WGB, v.ob.). This should be an invasion winter for **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, but the evidence is slim. At least one bird was

in a Morgan Hill yard on 17 Aug (RH). A leucistic bird was seen at Lake Cunningham on 16 Sep (PDU) and identified by voice. A **Rock Wren** was found at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 23 Sep (BM), occasional migrants or wintering birds are seen along the Bay edge. Five plus **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were along the John Nicholas Trail on 22 Aug (BM) and may be part of the resident populations. A single bird banded at CCFS on 3 Sep (*fide* MMR) was certainly a migrant or early wintering bird. A male **Phainopepla** was near the Mines Road crossing of Colorado Creek on 6-7 Aug (WGB, MHO). Less expected was a **Phainopepla** in the Ulistac Natural Area on the latter date (JSTP). Late in the period, at least two males and two females were at the Colorado Creek crossing feeding on chokecherries (WGB). A **Northern Waterthrush** was seen at the Gate 5 pond in the Monte Bello OSP on 26 Aug (GHa). This is a tie for the earliest fall arrival date, but most surprising, it is the first bird found away from the valley floor. A **Black-and-White Warber** was seen in Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 7 Sep (ChW). Single **Tennessee Warblers** were seen in the Baylands Park on 1 Sep (PKe, RGJ, GZ) and 24 Sep (PKe et al.). A third Tennessee was along Almaden Lake on 27-30 Sep (SCT, v.ob.). Single **Nashville Warblers** at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 28 Aug (VW) and 14 Sep (JLi) were the only ones found in the period. The only **MacGillivray's Warblers** were one along Stevens Creek below La Avenida on 16 Aug (MMR) and one banded at CCFS on 10 Sep (*fide* MMR). A female/immature **American Redstart** was seen at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 19 Sep (PKe, RKe). A **Palm Warbler** was found at the Baylands Park on 22 Sep (GZ). **Hermit Warblers** seen in Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 9 Sep (DWe), 12 Sep (WGB), and 15 Sep (BM, GZ) may have been multiple birds (or just one). A female was in a Morgan Hill yard on 28 Sep (SCR). That famed skulker, the **Yellow-breasted Chat**, was detected at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 5 Sep (GZ, v.ob.). A **Green-tailed Towhee** was banded at CCFS on 17 Sep (JS), the first in the county since 2007. It has been a good fall for **Vesper Sparrows**. The first was along Stevens Creek above Crittenden Lane on 29 Aug (MMR), our earliest fall bird. Next, a single bird was at Monte Bello OSP on 12 Sep (GHa, MW). The last was another bayside bird on closed refuge pond on 29 Sep (JSTP). Two **Grasshopper Sparrows** at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 28 Sep (SCR) were the only report this fall. A female **Rose-breasted**



Green-tailed Towhee
©Tom Grey

Grosbeak was seen and photographed at the Sunnyvale Baylands Park on 21 Sep (GZ, RBh, SCT, DWe). Single female-type **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were seen at the CCFS waterbird pond on 1 Sep (MMR) and at the Ogier Avneue ponds on 28 Sep (SCR). Observations of **Great-tailed Grackles** were limited to the Sunnyvale WPCP and Lake Cunningham. Sixty-eight at the latter location on 3 Sep (PDU) was a high count for the period. A male and female **Red Crossbill** were seen over the Gate 5 pond at Monte Bello OSP on 21 Aug (GHa), the only ones so far in 2014. **Pine Siskins**, nearly as rare, were at the same location 21 Aug-17 Sep (GHa). Up to 30 **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were along San Antonio Valley, Mines, and Del Puerto roads on 7 Aug (MHO), but none have been reported since in the Diablo Range. A male and female were at the Gate 5 pond in Monte Bello OSP on 6 Sep (GHa).

Observers: Raju Bhupatiraju (RBh), Bill Bousman (WGB), Karen Burnson (KBU), Matthew Dodder (MDO), Pete Duntun (PDU), Garth Harwood (GHa), Rick Herder (RH), Marcel Holyoak (MHO), Richard Jeffers (RGJ), Bob Juhl (BJ), Roland Kenner (RKe), Pat Kenny (PKe), Kathy Kleinsteiber (KKI), Caroline Lambert (CL), Jason Liu (JLi), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Andy Melnick (AM), Sonny Mencher (SMe), Brooke Miller (BM), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sheila Raymond (SR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Ken Schneider (KSc), Josh Scullen (JS), Jason St. Pierre (JSTP), Steve Tracy (SCT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Pingang Wang (PW), Dave Weber (DWe), Virginia Willcox (VW), Chris Wolfe (ChW), Matt Wyatt (MW), and Gena Zolotar (GZ).

RARITIES: Please drop me a note:
Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way,
Menlo Park, CA 94025,
or: barlowi@earthlink.net

Adventure Travel with Bob Power in 2015

(continued from page 5)

The Breeding Birds of Yuba Pass, Sierra Valley, Gold Lakes Region Session 1: June 7th – 10th; Session 2: June 12th – 15th

Fee: \$175 members; \$210 non-members

The northern Sierra offers a spectacular array of nesting birds, from Black-backed Woodpeckers and Hermit Warblers to Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Vesper Sparrows. We typically see 100+ species of birds during this workshop, few are species available to study in the south bay, and all are stunning. With a four-day trip, we're able to explore these unique habitats at leisure.

Class size is limited to 11. We organize carpools each morning and will have a maximum of three vehicles. Please do not sign up for this workshop if you're not prepared to carpool around the Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley region. Carpooling expenses are shared by the participants; typically \$5/person/day. Transportation to Yuba Pass, lodging and meals are the responsibility of each participant. Detailed itinerary will be forwarded upon registration.



Mono Basin and the Eastern Sierra Tues – Sun, June 23rd – 28th

The eastern slope of the Sierra offers a spectacular array of breeding, post-breeding and migratory birds, such as Williamson's Sapsuckers, Clark's Nutcrackers, Osprey and Green-tailed Towhees. With a six-day trip, we're able to explore a number of unique habitats including the alpine zone surrounding Saddlebag Lake, the high desert sage grasslands of the historic ghost town of Bodie, the extraordinary tufa formations of Mono Lake and the basalt columns of Devils Postpile National Monument. We paddle with Phalaropes on Mono Lake and hang out with Rosy-finches at Virginia Lakes. This is the quintessential east-side birding adventure.

Class size is limited to 11. We organize carpools each morning on location and will have a maximum of 3 vehicles for our field

trips. Please do not sign up for this workshop if you're not prepared to carpool each day. Carpooling expenses are shared by the participants and are not part of the base fee; typically \$5/person/day.

Fee: \$275 members; \$310 non-members. Fee covers: Kayaking, Bodie Entrance, Devil's Postpile Entrance, and Saddlebag Ferry.

Important Notes:

Altitude: Lee Vining is our daily departure point at 7,000 ft in elevation. We venture off one day to Saddlebag Lake, at 10,000 ft. and above. It is not unusual for participants to feel the effects of the altitude and to need a couple of days to acclimate.

Physical Activity: Each day involves some hiking at altitude. While at a birder's pace, it is still hiking at altitude. One morning is spent kayaking along the south shore of Mono Lake. Participants on this trip should be in reasonably good physical condition and should consult their doctor if altitude is a concern.

Galapagos Aboard The Nemo III: An Intimate Exploration of the Enchanted Isles With Alvaro Jaramillo and Bob Power

August 8th – 18th

The Galapagos are an archipelago of volcanic islands and islets that rise up from the bed of the Pacific Ocean 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) west of Ecuador. The flora and fauna that reached the islands' shores had to survive the hundreds of miles of ocean first. Not only are the Galapagos the 'origin of the Origin of Species', but they are one of the few places on the planet where you can observe these species at will, in comfort, with enough time to contemplate their remarkable characteristics.

From the Red-footed Booby to the Marine Iguana, from Darwin's Finches to Waved Albatross, our custom itinerary will take us to both northern and southern islands in order to observe as broad a spectrum of life on the enchanted isles as is possible in one trip. Our home base will be the Nemo III, a First Class motor sail Catamaran; allowing for a smaller group size, easy access to island destinations, snorkeling en route, and all the

comforts of the larger cruise ships. Darwin's voyage was "epic." This adventure will merely be thrilling. 12 participant maximum. Registration: bob@scvas.org; 510-390-1370. Information on a pre-tour adventure in Ecuador's highlands will be provided to those who are interested.

Fees: Category I -- \$6,000/participant; Category II -- \$5,800/participant. A deposit: \$1,000 is required at registration. There will also be a per participant small group surcharge (9 participants \$500, 10-11 participants \$400). Single Supplement of \$200.

Fees do not include airfare, bar bills, incidentals. Fees do include all park entrance fees and tips for guides and the crew of the Nemo III.

Bob Power has been leading birding adventures in California, Alaska, Arizona, and the neotropics for 10 years, introducing birders to extraordinary places and wonderful birds.

The Christmas Bird Counts are Almost Here!

Join us for another year of fun, adventure, and excitement as we help add to the body of bird research and knowledge throughout the country! Contact the compiler of the region you are interested in (see below). And there is no longer a \$5 fee to participate!

SAN JOSE:

Yes, it is almost that time of year again ... time to get down and dirty in service of the feathered folk. The San Jose Christmas Bird Count will be held this year on Sunday, December 14th. Birders of all experience levels are welcome and needed. Bird identification skills are great but other skills are important too, such as:

- 1) spotter, able to point and say "Bird!" and
- 2) tally-man, able to make small marks on increasingly grubby bits of paper.

We are blessed with habitats to suit anyone's preference: shoreline, oak woodlands, lake-side, or riparian, we can accommodate you. So, come have fun and contribute to an important, on-going biological survey.

The countdown dinner will review all birds seen for the day. The Leininger Center in Kelley Park is the host location. A donation will be welcome to help cover the cost of dinner. If you are interested in participating in the count, please contact Kirsten Holmquist before December 8th at 408.747.0988 or via email at kirsten.holmquist@comcast.net.

PALO ALTO:

The Palo Alto Christmas Bird Count is set for December 15th. If you have participated in the past, please contact your region coordinator and let them know you are on board again. Although we have a dedicated and experienced group of leaders and counters, there is always room for one more. If you are available and want to join in the fun, regardless of your birding experience or time commitment, contact me at snoyowl@yahoo.com or 408-996-0434. But please do it soon, as it is sometimes difficult to place volunteers at the last minute.

CALERO-MORGAN HILL:

The Calero-Morgan Hill CBC is scheduled for Saturday, Dec 27th, 2014. This mid-south county inland count is the only one of our four counts that takes place entirely within Santa Clara County. The count circle covers portions of the Diablo Range to the east and the Santa Cruz Mountains to the west and includes all of Coyote Valley, Coyote Creek riparian chain (including Ogier Ponds), county parks (Calero, Santa Teresa, Quicksilver, Uvas), city parks (Almaden Lake, Guadalupe Oak Grove, Edenvale), and reservoirs (Almaden, Calero, Chesbro, Anderson). While the purpose of the CBC is to count our familiar local and wintering birds, some special birds seen on previous counts have included Snow Goose, Glaucous Gull, Greater Roadrunner, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and American Redstart.

This year's count will be especially important as we will be conducting our census during unprecedented drought conditions. We'll need to document what birds are still out there and how they are coping. If interested in this citizen science adventure, contact Ann Verdi by email at aeverdi235@gmail.com or by phone at 408-266-5108.

MT. HAMILTON:

Mark your calendars for December 29th. 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 - 408-821-2732 (cell) - as soon as possible to participate.



Outside Events of Interest: Festivals, Conferences and More!

Swan Tours in Yuba County

CA Dept. Fish & Game

Nov-Jan; 9:30AM & 1:00PM

Before winter takes hold in the Arctic, more than 100,000 tundra swans migrate along the Pacific Flyway from their remote and solitary breeding grounds to spend winter in California. The swan tour offers participants a spectacular opportunity to encounter these stately, elegant birds, which weigh more than 20 pounds with a 5.6 foot wingspan. See www.wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/2/Swan-Tours

18th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium

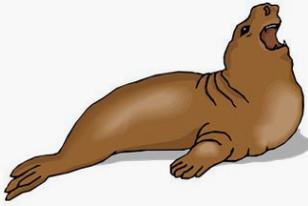
Thur-Sun, Nov 20-23

Stockton Hilton Hotel, Stockton CA
Join birders from around the state (and the world!) for engaging programs and bird-filled trips. With key-note speakers Ed Harper, Nat Seavy, and Joel Greenberg, and an amazing array of workshop leaders, there will be a birding powerhouse to learn from each day. For details and to register for this event, see www.2013cvbs.org

19th Annual San Diego Bird Festival March 5-8, 2015

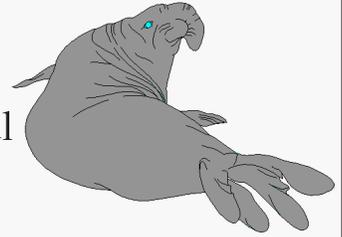
Marina Village at Mission Bay Park
Field Trips, Birding Workshops, an Optics Expo, a Banquet, Live Bird Presentations, Live Music, and Keynote Speaker Bernd Heinrich. This is an event not to miss! Registration opened October 1st, 2014 - so don't wait to register! Go to www.sandiegoaudubon.org/events/bird-festival for details and to register.

Young Audubon Winter Adventures for 2015



Join Us for an Annual Tradition:

A chance to view the weird and wonderful
Elephant Seals at Año Nuevo State Park!



Space is limited, so be sure to sign-up early!

**Elephant Seal Walks at Año Nuevo State Park
President's Day Weekend: Mon, February 16th**

Times still TBD (check back after Dec 22nd)

Ages: 7-years-old and up

Cost: \$7/person for members; \$9/person for non-members

More details will be available online after Dec 22nd (www.scvas.org) and in the Jan/Feb newsletter.

And stay tuned for our Day-of-Service event on January 19th, 2015!

Details coming soon!



*You're Invited to the SCVAS
Holiday Open House
at McClellan Ranch Preserve*



Saturday, December 6th

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

- Enjoy Holiday refreshments and a special one day discount.*
- Browse through our books, jewelry, ornaments, stuffed animals, and other bird related gift items.*
- Shop our display of artwork by local artists.*
- Visit with Staff*
- Live bird presentation at 11:00AM*
- Live Music from 12:00-2:00 PM with "John Henry's Farm" - Old-time Blues and String Band*

*All proceeds from this event go to our education and conservation programs
For more details, contact Susan at (408) 252-3747 or scvas@scvas.org*

No RSVP is necessary - but we hope to see you there!



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Gifts received between August 1st, and September 30th, 2014

\$10,000

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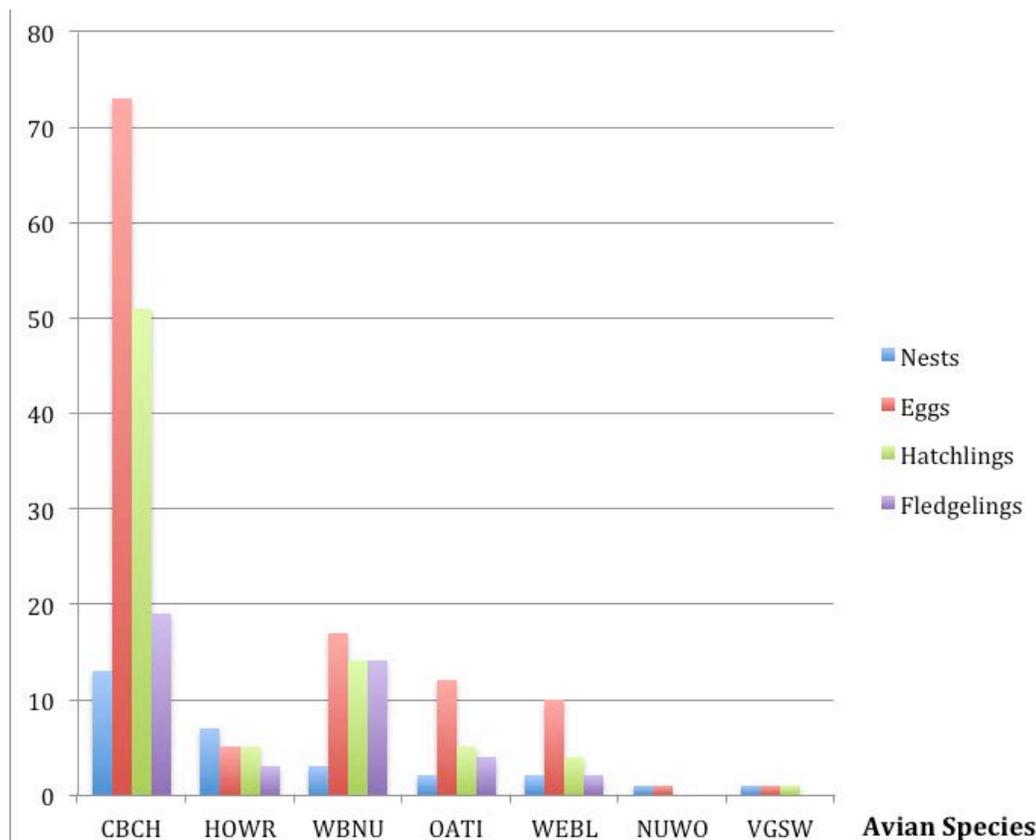
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We would also like to acknowledge a donation from Tiffany Choy and David Speer in honor of Bob Power.



At Left: Cavity Nesting Species Data Summary from McClellan Ranch Preserve in 2014.

Chestnut-backed Chickadees (CBCH) produced the most nests, eggs, and chicks resulting in the highest number of chicks fledged along the McClellan Ranch trail. Unfortunately, they also experienced the highest rate of nestling mortality.

On the other hand, White-breasted Nuthatches (WBNU) had a much lower nesting attempt rate, but also much higher percentage of success.

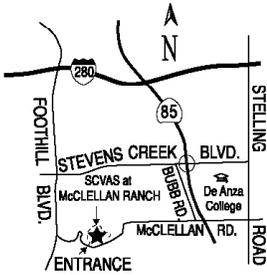
Other "typical" species seen at the Preserve in lower numbers included House Wrens (HOWR), Oak Titmice (OATI), Western Bluebirds (WEBL), and Violet-Green Swallows (VGSW). 2014 marked the first known nesting attempt of a Nuttall's Woodpecker (NUWO) in one of our boxes.

Many thanks to Christine Slocomb for this graph and for compiling the McClellan Ranch Nest Box data

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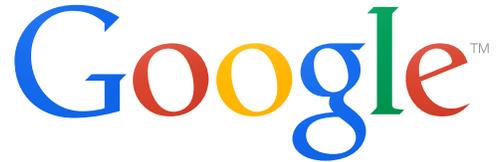


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Contact the SCVAS office at scvas@scvas.org to start your paper-free membership today!



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Monday - Friday	10 AM - 5 PM
Saturday	10 AM - 2 PM

GENERAL MEETINGS are held on the third Wednesday of each month except July, August and December and are open to the public.

RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422

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2014 Volume 61, Number 6

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Come by the office to pick up your free copy of *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay*, and our *Breeding Bird Atlas* (if joining at the Burrowing Owl level or above).

Send this information, and make all checks payable, to: SCVAS, 22221 McClellan Rd, Cupertino, CA 95014

Please note: As an organizational policy, SCVAS does not share member information with other organizations.