

The

AVOCET

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Fall 2022 • Vol 70 Num 4



White-throated Sparrow seen through the window. *Matthew Dodder*

PRESENTATION
MATTHEW DODDER
AUTUMN BIRDING
Mon, Sept 12, at 7:00
via Zoom



Fall is definitely the best time to go birding! Check our website for an exciting mid-September birding primer to get you ready for the upcoming migration season. Learn what to expect and where to search for it. More Seasonal Birding and County Habitat presentations will follow soon.

Also, watch our October calendar for a brand new 3-part class on SWIMMERS including Loons, Grebes, Cormorants and a few others. Ducks sold separately...

Register at scvas.org

Introducing Annie Yang

Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate

We are happy to announce that Annie Yang has accepted the role of the SCVAS Environmental Action Committee Chair. In this role, Annie supports our Environmental Advocate in communications with members and volunteers, participates in meetings with other environmental groups, and represents the EAC in front of city councils and commissions. She explains what drew her to the EAC.

“Several years ago, when I was living in New York City, a migrating bird hit a skyscraper and fell at my feet. Most people hurried past the dazed bird sitting on the sidewalk, chalking up the creature with its long beak to another one of the city’s strange urban pests. After I called the local Audubon chapter, the only option was for me to take the bird to a bird hospital 45-minutes away. I scooped up the bird in a bag and, as gently as I could, took it nervously on the subway. At the clinic, I learned that the bird, an American Woodcock, did not survive, and that several of them had been brought in during the last few days. This was a harsh reminder of how the built environment can negatively impact the existing natural ecosystem.

Coincidentally, when I moved to Cupertino, the City happened to be passing bird-safe design and lighting ordinances, so this was the perfect opportunity to join Shani and other EAC members who had been advocating for these ordinances. Being on the EAC the last two years has introduced me to different types of local threats to habitat and biodiversity and the means of protection through advocacy and partnerships with local governments, agencies, and organizations. While the work is vast, every small win feels rewarding.

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I hope that our work will lead to fewer incidents of another person anxiously trying to save an injured bird after a building collision.”

We thank Annie for her help, and thank Keith Wandry for his service in this role the past 4 years! Volunteers like Annie and Keith are the reason why SCVAS, a small and local organization, can be so influential in advocating for birds and nature across Santa Clara County.

There are plenty of ways to get involved with the advocacy efforts of our Chapter. For more information about what we do and how to help, visit: <https://scvas.org/getinvolved> ●



Bill Walker doing what he loves.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

As our Chapter grows, our staff remains small but increasingly aware of how crucial our dedicated volunteers are to this organization. Without our Field Trip Committee we would have no monthly schedule of walks, and without the volunteer field trip leaders we would have no field trips. Without volunteer instructors there would be no Wetlands Discovery Program or Oak Savanna Community Science Project or any school presentations. There would be no environmental advocacy and fewer to speak on behalf of bird habitat at city council meetings. No board of directors to guide us toward the future, no membership committee to grow our numbers, no development or event committees to help spread the word about SCVAS and its programs. In short, without a deep pool of volunteers, our voice would soften to a whisper and our strength would fade. So to all those who have donated their free time to help SCVAS grow to the strong organization it is, thank you! You make our future possible.

With that thought in mind, know that the future is calling on you again. In 2025 we will celebrate our centennial—an amazing one hundred years since our founding in 1925. Very few Audubon chapters can say they have been in existence that long so we must take advantage of this important birthday and pull out all the stops. What form will this event take? Well, we don't know yet. I imagine a year-long celebration and/or a birding festival with workshops, demonstrations, presentations, maybe even a bird-themed treasure hunt. Widespread publicity, centennial shirts, hats... the whole deal. We've got at least two years to plan the biggest event in our 100 year history! We'll have

It takes volunteers to raise a chapter.

to recruit leaders, find speakers, presenters and vendors... all that has to happen in the next 24 months. So at this point we're just brainstorming but there are definitely no bad ideas... We'll be forming a committee soon to figure out who can do what and how to make things happen. And we'll need volunteers...

There are many other volunteer opportunities in our future together such as the Avocet Content Coordinator to keep our publications fresh and relevant, and the Speaker Series Coordinator to challenge our listeners with bold new ideas. Both positions were announced in a recent email Update and if they happen to fill before this issue hits your mail box, don't worry. There are more opportunities to help our Chapter grow.

In closing, we found someone to take over as Environmental Action Committee chair! Annie Yang has volunteered for some time on this committee and now will take on more responsibility as Chair. She is already doing great work in this demanding position and we trust the EA Committee will flourish with her guidance. You can find more information about Annie on the cover of this issue as well as on our website.

A Chapter doesn't spring into being fully formed and perfect from the start—it takes a village of volunteers to make that happen!

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director



Meet the New President

I'd like to introduce Bill Walker, our new Board President. Bill has a colorful and varied background including music, birding, photography and decades of technology experience in Silicon Valley. He is a world traveler and keeps involved in social issues. I am looking forward to working with Bill as we grow this chapter and embark on new and exciting projects together! He has frequently contributed to our in-person and online events with his fantastic live performances. We are lucky to have him on our Board. Be sure to check out Bill's Friday Jazz Happy Hour (which just posted its 100th episode recently) each week on his YouTube channel. You won't be disappointed!

—Matthew Dodder, Executive Director

Here's a bit about Bill's background:

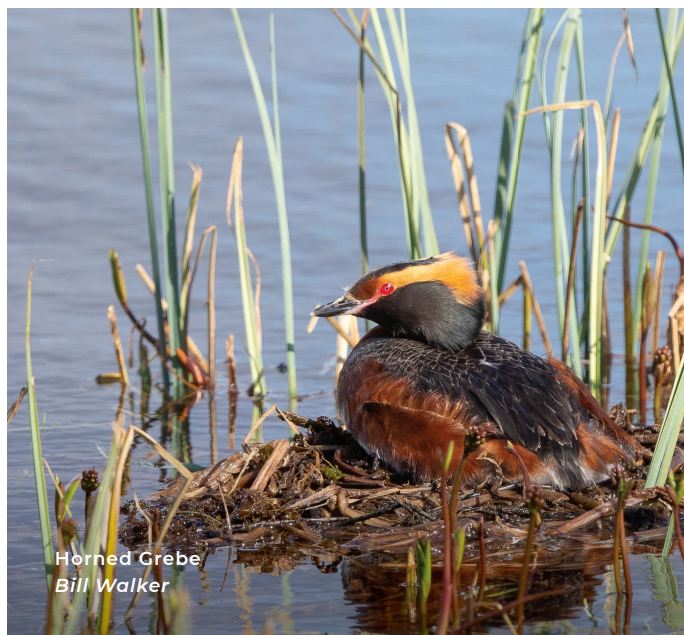
Bill Walker, newly elected President of SCVAS, has been birding in California since 1996 and photographing wild birds and their environment since 2003. He teaches bird photography at Google, Point Reyes Birding Festival, and the Coastside Land Trust.

His photos are published on Instagram and at birdwalker.com. Since joining the SCVAS board in 2019, Bill has been active with the Field Trip committee and is helping create video content for SCVAS's YouTube channel. He credits the SCVAS 2012 trip to Costa Rica with opening a door to birding travel, which has been very rewarding. Bill has worked in software engineering at Apple, Cisco, Mozilla and, most recently, Google.

Bill holds a PhD in Computer Science from University of Illinois, where he studied object-oriented software, jazz piano, and electronic music. Bill currently directs the choir at University Lutheran Church in Palo Alto.

"SCVAS field trips introduced me to amazing places in California like Sacramento NWR, Yuba Pass, and Gazos Creek that I've developed lasting relationships with." ●

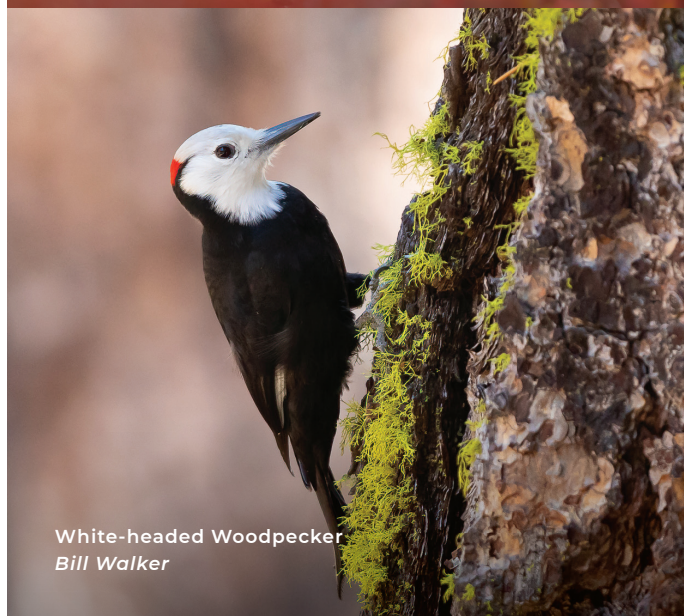
“My first Big Day back in 2001 prompted a series of amazing experiences stretching my concentration and endurance and field ID skills that have really helped me grow as a birder.”



Horned Grebe
Bill Walker



Swallow-tailed Gull
Bill Walker



White-headed Woodpecker
Bill Walker

WHAT TO LOOK FOR Matthew Dodder Executive Director



What next?

By now, it should be apparent that Shorebird migration is in full swing. As I write this—a full month before the issue gets mailed out—my guess is that a **Ruff** has already shown up at Don Edwards, probably also a **Pectoral Sandpiper**. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** has likely been discovered hiding somewhere among the many **Western Sandpipers**. Wilson's Snipe has already been spotted on the grassy berm at the intersection of Gold and Elizabeth, I would guess. The flocks of **Red-necked** and **Wilson's Phalaropes** are beginning to thin out, and the Dunlin, historically late summer arrivals, are already showing up. And if we haven't had a **Baird's Sandpiper** in the county by this time, it's time to start looking along the "cakey" dried edges of New Chicago Marsh. I probably don't need to mention to keep an eye out for the juveniles of all these species, especially the **Dowitchers**, which are uncharacteristically easy to identify when they are young.

We tend to see a large bump in **Yellow Warbler** numbers from August to October. Their numbers will be supplemented by drab first-year birds. It's important not to be lulled into thinking the abundant **Yellow-rumped**, **Townsend's**, and **Orange-crowned Warblers** are alone because it is precisely this time of year we may be surprised by a rarity like **Blackburnian**, **Blackpoll** or even **Bay-breasted Warbler**. Watch for the feeding flocks that pass through the fennel patches, willows, flowering eucalyptus or other insect-rich vegetation. I listen for noisy groups of **Chestnut-back Chickadee** or **Bushtit** to hunt for the odd warbler.

A few other birds to watch for in the September-October time frame would be **White-faced Ibis** which may visit our area after breeding in the Central Valley. Not surprisingly, they tend to show up in vegetated wetland areas like the Sunnyvale Salt Ponds, Moffett Channel, Lockheed Ponds, Palo Alto Flood Control Basin and New Chicago Marsh. The Breeding Bird Atlas (W. Bousman) has also documented nest building along Coyote Creek in the 1990s but, for the most part, breeding is considered "infrequent" in the County. Overuse of pesticides and habitat loss resulted in a huge drop in the species numbers in the twentieth century, but habitat management and a ban on DDT has helped them recover.

Similarly, **Willow Flycatcher** once bred in Santa Clara County, but has not done so since the mid-twentieth century. Habitat loss is primarily to blame. Instead we see them rather

commonly in September as they pass through during migration. They appear in willow groves and fennel patches often near water—oddly, I find them a lot near water treatment facilities... Lacking an eye ring, they may look a bit like **Western Wood-Pewee**, but for their incessant tail flicking and much shorter primary projection. They are also bulkier than other Empidonax species, and have a wide, squarish tail.

All of these thoughts are informed by our county checklist which shows when to expect these birds. The next revision, to be released in October, includes some new species—**Oriental Turtle-Dove** and **Nazca Booby**. Yes, you read that right... The recent appearance of **Least Bittern** at Calero Lake, a rare species in our county to say the least, was a wonderful summer surprise for local birders. To top it all, the birds nested and fledged at least two young which means it will get an asterisk beside its name in the checklist. It was a remarkable discovery and a new record to be added to our list of breeding birds. Like many of you, I visited the lake to see the birds and met dozens of other excited birders. As we baked in the sun and waited for one of the adult birds to fly into view, we chatted about all things bird.

Is it a "county bird" or a "lifer" for you?

Why do you suppose this bird is here now?

And this informal survey ended with:

What will the next addition to the county list be?

Of course, there are no wrong answers, just more thoughtful ones...

The suggestions I heard ranged widely as to which birds might become normalized here and for what reason, a common theme emerged—climate change. Related to that was the historic drought we are experiencing—birds need to search more widely to find freshwater marshes because many in the Central Valley are now dry. That might explain the Least Bittern's arrival. But vagrants like February's **Oriental Turtle-Dove** show up for still other reasons, some having to do with navigational errors or weather.

So if we take climate change, loss of habitat and/or a frontier spirit (and not vagrancy) as possible explanations for the appearance of a new species in our county, what do we get?

Photos L to R:

Baird's Sandpiper, Red-Necked Phalarope, Willow Flycatcher, Wilson's Phalarope, Yellow Warbler *Tom Grey*



Ruff
Tom Grey



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
Tom Grey



Neotropic Cormorant
Tom Grey



Red-necked Stint
Matthew Dodder

Several responders suggested “Southern Herons” like **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron**, **Reddish Egret** or even **Tricolored Heron**, all of which have been reported north of here in the Bay Area. My belief is that new County records will involve birds from the south and be the direct result of climate change which will impact habitats. As our area warms (and dries) birds just to our south may find suitable breeding habitat here. But will these new arrivals stay and become regular in our County?

Perhaps **Painted Redstart**... In the seventh edition of the National Geographic Field Guide, this charismatic bird’s map has changed to include a dotted line that includes all of Southern California... are we watching a range expansion? We saw it with Vermilion Flycatcher too.

Another suggestion was **Red-necked Stint**, an Old World species that would probably come from coastal Russia. Statistically, perhaps a strong possibility as a vagrant, but not likely to breed at our latitude. **Spotted Redshank** was also floated by a particularly optimistic birder. The occurrence map of **Black Vulture** suggests one might show up in Santa Clara County eventually, but I wonder how many individual birds are involved with those reports—maybe only one.

My personal guess, is **Neotropic Cormorant**. I like this option because the identification of the species is a subtle one. In fact, the bird is so similar to Double-crested Cormorant, differing mostly in size and length of tail, that for all we know, it might already be present in our area. Perhaps it visits us after breeding to the south, maybe small numbers show up in winter or even spend the year—unnoticed in the flocks of roosting Double-crested... Quite possibly you have another suggestion of what will be the next addition to our County list. I’d love to hear from you. In the meantime, I’m going to look through those all-the-same groups of bent-necked Cormorants more closely and hope. ●



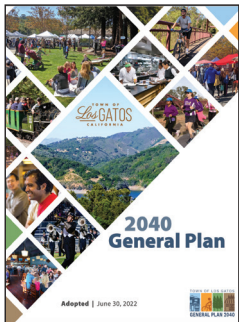
Conservation Corner

Shani Kleinhaus
Environmental Advocate

Mountain View: Biodiversity, wildlife, and the egrets of Shorebird Way

The City of Mountain View has made a groundbreaking decision in prioritizing Biodiversity in the City's Strategic Plan. The City has started exploring how this priority may be expressed in re-wilding Mountain View's parks, the urban forest, and city infrastructure. Mountain View is also preparing a Wildlife Management Plan for Shoreline Park, focusing on habitat connectivity and enhancements for birds and other species. This is good news for the Black Skimmers, White-tailed Kites, San Francisco Common Yellowthroat, Ridgeway's Rails and other species that are found in this birding hotspot!

And on Shorebird Way, Snowy and Great Egrets and Black-crowned Night-Herons have again raised a new cohort of noisy and feisty chicks in an exuberant display of life!



Los Gatos: Wildlife and habitat protection

In June, the Los Gatos Town Council approved the town's **2040 General Plan**. This plan retains the Town's Low Density neighborhoods, allows more housing in some areas but does not increase new

housing potential in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, and focuses the majority of the growth in "Community Growth Districts" allowing mixed use and higher density developments there. SCVAS participated in the public process that designed the plan, and as a result, the plan includes policies to protect wetlands and riparian corridors and to conserve and protect wildlife populations and their habitats.

We are looking for Los Gatos residents to help us take this work to the next step and advocate for prioritizing the development of a **"Dark Sky and Bird Safety"** ordinance. There has been interest in similar policies in Campbell and Los Altos. Residents who are interested in helping, please contact advocate@scvas.org.



Great Egret Welding, Kira Od

This nearly life-size welding (45" W x 25" H x 4" D) incorporated 55 pieces of laser cut stainless steel designed, welded, and patinated by artist (and EAC member) Kira Od of Sunnyvale. Kira explains her inspiration: "I have visited the Mountain View and Sunnyvale wetlands 5 – 6 days per week for 30 years. These beautiful hunters are part of my daily life".

Campbell: Library building on Oka Ponds

For those who enjoy nature and birds, Valley Water's percolation ponds in Campbell (Oka Ponds) are a special place. During the Pandemic, SCVAS produced a popular self-guided field trip to educate the public about this exceptional place, and encourage the public to explore, enjoy and learn. Because of the site's migratory and resident bird diversity and richness, Oka Ponds are considered an important birding hotspot in Santa Clara County.

Last year, we learned of a proposed development at the edge of the pond: an office building to provide space for County library employees. The development, less than 30-ft from the edge of the ponds, included expansive glass — a bird collision hazard. We were also concerned with the proposal from the Planning Commission so we wrote letters, and had conversations with the County library staff. As a result of our advocacy efforts, the project was redesigned to incorporate bird-safety glass treatments, native plant palette, and better lighting design. We thank the County librarian and County staff, as well as Campbell planning staff, Planning Commission, and City Council for their interest and willingness to improve the design to protect the birds of Oka Ponds.



Annie Yang

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District: Electric bikes

In July, Midpen’s Board of Directors considered whether to allow e-bikes on preserve trails that allow mountain bikes. Midpen had received many requests to allow e-bikes and had conducted two pilot studies, user surveys, and a study on the high-frequency sound emitted. Because of the known negative impacts of sound on bats, the currently unknown but potential harm to wildlife, and the real potential for damage due to increases in the number of bikes, we advocated against allowing e-bikes on preserve trails. In their careful review, some Board members also cited Midpen’s mission of preserving and protecting, which are prioritized over “environmentally-sensitive public enjoyment.” The board voted 4-2 to continue prohibiting e-bikes with the exception of the paved trails where the pilots were conducted. This a great win for the wildlife and habitats of our open space preserves. ●

Interested in more? Email advocate@scvas.org



Forest bike trail

The Matter of...

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director

When the news came down in July that Least Bitterns had been found breeding at Calero Lake, my heart

skipped a beat. This discovery represented not only a rare appearance of the species in our County—one I hadn’t yet seen in Santa Clara—but a new breeding record and an event not even hinted at in our 2007 Breeding Bird Atlas! Like many of you, I dropped what I was doing and rushed out to see this miracle.

Over the next few hours, days, weeks people came in droves. Birders, photographers, and civilians... Everyone wanted to see the birds. I became concerned about all the attention this remarkable family was attracting and worried someone might get too close and disturb the birds in an effort to get a better look. I even contacted the senior ranger at Calero Lake Park to discuss the possibility of roping off the area, or placing signs.

In the end, these measures were deemed unnecessary or even imprudent because setting up a boundary might make the matter worse by attracting even more attention to that corner of the lake... We’ll probably never know if that was the correct decision. But it does seem the birds have managed without our intervention, and as of August the downy young appear ready to fledge. So maybe it all worked out.

What is clear is that our community—birders, photographers and the general public—acted thoughtfully and prevented a disaster by communicating with each other. We shared our concern about the situation. The conversations were civil for the most part, and we all played a part. I commend this behavior and feel lucky to see it so regularly. Thank you to all those who stood back, restrained the powerful urge to get closer, watched the birds from a distance, and helped others understand that was the best way to enjoy this miracle! Let’s keep that going. ●



Least Bittern drawing
Matthew Dodder



THE FLEDGLINGS TEAM *Pati Rouzer, SCVAS Volunteer*

Youth Birding for Conservation, Environmental Education and Fun

10-year Anniversary: 2012 to 2022

2012 The Genesis. In the spring of 2012, Gena Zolotar, whose daughter Maya was becoming very interested in birds, and Leena Khanzode, a birder/artist whose daughters Mitali and Anaya were already well on their way to becoming keen birders, contacted me about forming a youth birding group. Our local Audubon, the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) was having their annual Spring Birdathon fundraiser, a perfect opportunity to get the word out for like-minded youths and raise funds for the Chapter's Environmental Education programs. The first Fledglings Team of Maya Zolotar and Mitali and Anaya Khanzode was born!

The initial Fledglings team was supported by parents Gena & Jeff Zolotar and Leena & Vivek Khanzode. Parents were allowed to spot, carry scopes, and photograph, but not ID! Mitali's leadership skills were evident from the first outing, maneuvering the group on trails, helping others (especially parents) get on birds and especially organizing pledges. It seemed evident that someday she would have CEO attached to her name. Leena and her bird photographer husband Vivek proved to be the cornerstones of the Fledglings Team over the decade.

Through my contacts at the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO), a long-time volunteer bander, Gerry Ellis,

guided the Team through a banding demonstration at their Coyote Creek Field Station. The expression on the kids' faces shows the intensity of the experience. Afterwards we birded the eastern foothills at Ed Levin and posed the Goofy Group shot. Leena helped the girls make a Fledglings pin. You can see it on the jackets and I still have mine.

A few months later the Fledglings Team and their support crew were invited to a National Audubon event to meet David Yarnold, CEO and President, and the National Audubon Board and staff.

2013 Gerry Ellis—All About Banding at the Coyote Creek Field Station/SFBBO. The birdathon and banding experience was so much fun we organized the team for SFBBO's California Fall Challenge fundraiser to learn more avian science. The word got out and tripled the team! We were joined by birder/photographer extraordinaire Vivek Tiwari, daughter Anika who had been volunteering for SCVAS's Environmental Education programs and son Vayun who was developing an interest in birds. Janice Pang brought our youngest member, Kieran (age 6), who was already quite keen and well versed in warbler molts. He impressed me with his Christmas wish list: a Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. Sergey Pavlov was our oldest Fledgling, bringing excellent spotting and identifications.

Olivia Ellison joined the Team as part of a school project to learn about the birds of the SF Bay. Maya wrapped up the day with a talk for the group at the Baylands.

Gerry Ellis once again was our extraordinary host at the banding station but this time set out an incredible display of specimens, measuring instruments and reference materials, walked the Team along the mist nets and demonstrated how to extract one of the captured birds. He demonstrated how to measure the wing chords and blow on the bird's belly to measure its fat stores. Thinking he could stump the Fledglings, Gerry held up small bird, asking if anyone knew what it was? No problem! Kieran immediately ID'd a McGillivray's warbler, which Sergey quickly confirmed. Gerry showed them how to carefully handle the birds and several kids released them – the experience to hold and release a wild bird is truly exhilarating! Support was provided by the Zolotars, Khanzodes, Darya Chudova, Janice Pang, Vivek Tiwari and Rich Ellison. The Team received SFBBO T-shirts that were quickly slipped on for our Goofy and group pics.

2014 Avian Science with Bander Josh Scullen/SFBBO. We organized another fundraiser for science back at SFBBO's banding station, CCFS with master bander Josh Scullen giving a demonstration. Because the kids were so advanced, it was a challenge to find sites, experiences or experts in the field for them. Josh's expertise was a perfect fit. New Team member Ozzie Altus was a strong contributor to spotting and IDing. Ozzie's keen hearing and knowledge of calls quickly located many species. Often I would see him looking in opposite directions from the group, already on a new bird. A grand day out with birding friends, well worth the early rise.

2015 SCVAS The Fledglings Team were in high demand for their successful fundraising and pledged two birdathons. This was our 4th year and the Fledglings were advanced birders. Vayun had always been quietly observant, noticing everything

and just taking it in. This year he showed up with a camera and telephoto lens that was 1/3 his height. This was the beginning of an amazing photography career he shared with his equally talented dad. The future would hold extraordinary birding photography adventures for them, and Vayun would lend his photography skills to avian conservation throughout the Americas. The 7 Fledglings and their support crew went out for SCVAS. Afterwards we gathered at the Khanzodes where I had prepared a bird quiz (turned out to be too easy) and the day was topped off by Vivek Khanzode's Famous Ice Cream Root Beer Floats.

2015 SFBBO Going Coastal. To introduce a new area and birds, Leena suggested Mark Kudrav, an avid birder and environmental instructor from neighboring San Mateo County. Fortunately, Mark agreed to be our guest leader for a coastal birdathon, guiding the Team to some of his favorite coastal birding spots and testing the Team's pelagic IDing from the bluffs. Scope use and sea birds – no problem! Name a bird whose name started with X? Anaya instantly responded – Xenops. Gabrielle Baum joined the Team for the foggy day with her dad Kevin, an apt spotter.

2016 SCVAS with Debi Shearwater. What would build upon the Team's experiences? A new area within reasonable driving distance, an expert in the field? How about Debi Shearwater in San Benito County? It hardly gets better than that! After some initial hesitancy and my describing the keen nature of the Team, she agreed. She was blown away and fell in love with the Fledglings. Debi designed an itinerary that included surveying a Tri-colored Blackbird breeding site and an obscure Swainson's nest in her home turf in San Benito County. And was that Janice Pang with a long telephoto lens?

Continued on page 10





FLEDGLINGS *Continued from page 10*

The Team and its support crew (i.e. parents) celebrated with a parking lot tailgate party with Vivek's Famous Ice Cream Root Beer Floats made right out of his vehicle. Janice's banana bread and double chocolate brownies kept the glucose flowing. Six Team members supported SCVAS's birdathon fundraiser, missing the Tiwaris who were birding somewhere that required a passport.

2017 The Rail and Rob. Leena efficiently organized a birdathon for SCVAS as I was obliged elsewhere. She contacted an outstanding birder, Stanford post-doc, green biker birder and all around delightful guy Rob Furrow to be the guest leader for the Team. 6 Fledglings went out with Rob to win the prize

for the rarest bird of the whole birdathon – a Black Rail! A real treat for Ozzie, Sergey, Mitali, Nathaniel, Kieran, and Anaya.

2018 Highest Team Count/4 hrs. Vivek Khanzode, already serving on the Board of Directors for SCVAS organized the Team for a lightning 4-hr trek with 5 Fledglings scoring the Team's highest count to date – 107! With their sharp eyes they also had 7 nests, another trip highlight (4 hummers, 2 swallows, 1 bushtit and 1 chickadee nest). Janice Pang stepped up to record species on the fly and Sergey whipped them into eBird. Hot shots Sergey, Ozzie, Kieran, Anaya and Mitali supported by Vivek Khanzode and Janice Pang raised funds for SCVAS' birdathon.



Blue-throated Hillstar
Vayun Tiwari

2019 First Lead by a Fledgling—Sergey. As all young eventually do, the Fledglings also moved closer to fledging. School activities reduced the group to 5 intrepid birders. Their maturing skills were on full display with leadership ability, technical expertise, photographic captures and cooperative group interactions. Focus, intense awareness, joy of birding and the pleasure of companionship continued as a thread through the Fledglings outings. SCVAS birdathon fundraisers included Mitali, Anika, Kieran, and Vayun. The group pic marked the growth over the years, bittersweet to know they would soon fledge.



2020 Oh No – COVID Strikes! Vivek Tiwari and son Vayun hold a placemark for the Fledglings with a SCVAS Father Son “Quarantined” 4-hour Photography team called the Spiderhunters. No, they weren’t hunting spiders, the name is from a group of birds in the Sunbird family that sparked Vivek’s love of birds in India. Vayun had been sharpening his bird photography skills with his Dad not only in his backyard patch but internationally. One of his photos from Belize won first prize in the youth division of the National Audubon Society Photography Contest. Vayun and his dad were interested in a newly-discovered bird in the highlands of Ecuador, the Blue-throated Hillstar. First seen in 2018 only a few photographs existed; this dad-son team make the journey to the high Andean paramo for one of the first good photos of the Hillstar! Vayun used his photo to help the American Bird Conservancy raise funds to protect its threatened habitat. Vayun also designs wall calendars with his photos that are sold to support conservation. A Fledglings tradition extends from local to international conservation.

2021 Quarantined Again. Covid didn’t stop this duo from another birdathon fundraiser for SCVAS. Vayun continued to gain recognition with the first place award in the National Audubon Photography contest youth category and being the featured youth birder/photographer in a Commonwealth Club of Silicon Valley/Silicon Valley Reads video presentation called ‘Connecting with Nature in a Pandemic’ where he was in conversation with David Yarnold, President, National Audubon Society and Andrea Mackenzie, General Manager, Silicon Valley Open Space Authority. 2021 was a busy year for Vayun who, along with a school mate, developed software to compile four decades of the Palo Alto Summer Bird Count. This year Vayun also gave presentations of photos from his travels at the Bay Area Bird Photographers, Sacramento Audubon and the Saratoga Retirement Community of photos from his travels.

Continued on page 14



Field Notes

Please report rarities to
pdunten@gmail.com

Pete Dunten

Santa Clara County eBird Reviewer

Geese through Woodpeckers

An immature **Brant** associating with Canada Geese was a surprise at the Sunnyvale WPCP on 9 Jul (KH). The high count of Brant for the county is only two; all records save one have been of a single Brant. The Brant has stayed through July. The record for length of stay was set last year by the Brant at Shoreline Park, which arrived in early Dec 2020 and remained through late Apr 2021. The only **Black Swifts** noted this spring were two over the Sunnyvale WPCP east pond on 11 May (GL). **Black Rails** continued to be heard at the Stevens Creek tidal marsh, and they continued to turn up in new locations. Two were heard calling from the marsh north of the Sunnyvale WPCP east pond on 11 Jul (DW). Two **Black Terns** passed over pond A14 on their way north on 14 May (WGB). Another appeared at Shoreline Lake on 20 May (ESc) and has remained through the summer. While favoring Shoreline Lake, the Tern has also spent time at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds and Coast Casey Forebay. The first **Least Tern** of the year was seen at Palo Alto Baylands on 13 Jul (RSW). The **Black Skimmer** colony at Shoreline Lake set new records this year for high counts of adults and adults plus young birds. On 25 May the count of adults was 118 (RPh). Fourteen additional Skimmers were counted at pond A16 on 27 May (MMR, RJ). The colony at Shoreline numbered 129 on 5 Jul, including 92 adults and 37 young, and 142 on 13 Jul, including 101 adults and 41 young (RPh). A **Least Bittern** was a lucky find at Calero Reservoir on 16 Jul (MJM). The Bittern was only the 8th county record, the last being one seen in July of 1993 by the same observer. A careful bird sleuth, noting the colors of the crown and back in flight, deduced two Least Bitterns were present, an adult male and a female (SCR). Photos of the female in flight show it is a Bittern in its second calendar year (THo). On 18 Jul two chicks were seen, confirming nesting for the first time in the county (EvM). A **California Condor** soaring with a group of Turkey Vultures over Hwy 17 at Bear Creek Rd on 28 Jun was a nice find (RPh). With Condor sightings in the Santa Cruz Mountains two years in a row we can hope a trend is starting. A pair of **Pileated Woodpeckers** at Hunting Hollow in Henry Coe SP on 14 May suggested the possibility of attempted nesting (CE, MHa et al.). The Woodpeckers nest in the hills above Berkeley and Oakland in Contra Costa and the northern part of Alameda counties but are scarce further south in the Diablo range.



Least Bittern feeding chick
Susan Weinstein



Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Garrett Lau



Brant
Garrett Lau

Flycatchers through Grosbeaks

One of the **Tropical Kingbirds** that spent the winter along San Francisquito Creek near Geng Rd remained through 2 May (WGB, MDo, COv). This marks the latest departure date for a wintering Tropical Kingbird. An **Eastern Kingbird** strayed west and stopped for a day at the kite-flying area of Shoreline Park on 30 May (CC). All of our spring records of Eastern Kingbird are one-day-only. **Yellow-breasted** Chats were found at seven new locations in May after the first arrival at the end of April. Three Chats were at J Grant CP on 3 May (TWo) and one to two were reported through 14 May (m. ob.). Single Chats were along the Calero Creek Trail on 4 May (MFa), at Ed Levin CP between 8 – 11 May (CS, m. ob.), in San Antonio Valley near the Fred Gehri Bridge on 14 May (MMR), at the end of Geng Rd on the same date (MJM, BH et al.), along Stevens Canyon Rd above the reservoir on 15 May (WP, KON), and at Debell-Uvas Creek Preserve on 20 May (EvM). Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, all colorful males, delighted observers at the northwestern end of Almaden Valley this summer. The first two favored bird feeders, one near Guadalupe Creek above Camden Ave in Los Gatos on 26 Jun (EIS) and a second on 30 Jun and 1 Jul on the north side of Camden Ave near Almaden Meadows Park (AmS, JPa). The third was discovered at Almaden Lake Park on 13 Jul (ATu). Its diet appeared to consist of lerps on eucalyptus leaves and eucalyptus flower buds (BM, ChJ). ●

Observers Bill Bousman (WGB), Caitlin Chock (CC), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Craige Edgerton (CE), Marion Farber (MFa), Michael Hawk (MHa), Bob Hirt (BH), Kirsten Holmquist (KH), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Chris Johnson (ChJ), Garrett Lau (GL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Eve Meier (EvM), Brooke Miller (BM), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Chris Overington (COv), Janna Pauser (JPa), William Pelletier (WP), Ryan Phillips (RPh), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Elena Scott (ESc), Amy Sechrist (AmS), Cooper Smith (CS), Elif Soyarslan (EIS), Alison Turner (ATu), Dave Weber (DW), Scott Winton (RSW), Teresa Wood (TWo)



Black Swift
Garrett Lau



Mystery feather photo by Pete Dunten

Matthew Dodder
Quiz Master

This issue's mystery feather was found near Felt Lake by Pete Dunten. It measures 6" in length and he left where it was found. The clue to this feather's identity can be seen in its size, pointed structure, and the dark speckling toward the base.

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

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.

Answer (SUMMER 2022)



Last issue's feather mystery was dropped by a Northern Harrier. It could have been lost in a confrontation with another predator, likely an adult Harrier. The three feathers were still connected and had a few spots of blood near the base. The darker color of the inner feather, and the honey-color of the outer feathers indicate it was an immature bird.

TRACK & FEATHER

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Gifts received May 1 – July 31, 2022

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FLEDGLINGS *Continued from page 11*

2022 Changing of the Guard. With the fledging of some of the original Fledglings Team to college, and others nearly fledged or branching, all busy with school activities, two youth birders took up the mantle to carry on the tradition but making it in their own way. Carter Gasiorowski and Massimo Bafetti ticked 152 species in 12 hrs raising over \$1,000 for SCVAS – go Team! In addition to their support team (aka parents) they benefited from tips along the way to locate target birds from long time birders (and birdathoners) Mike Rogers, Mike Mammoser, Mike Ambrose, Sara Chan, Matthew Dodder, Garrett Lau, Brooke Miller, Bill Pelletier and Bill Bousman. Carter described it thus 'I had the best day birding I've ever experienced as I participated in the Fledglings Birdathon. All day, as soon as I thought things were slowing down, another amazing bird would show up!'

The Support Crew. Gena Zolotar provided the initial spark and her deep knowledge of birding areas in Santa Clara County to guide the first years of the trips. Leena Khanzode deserves credit for being the steady, solid and creative rock of the Team. Vivek Khanzode shored up support with good cheer, spotting, schlepping the scope and camera, and carried the Team through the last few years when I was not available. The Khanzodes blessed the Fledglings with an abundance of love for families, friends and good times – and Ice Cream Root Beer Floats. Vivek's photos documented many of the Team's birds and outings.

Janice Pang was a steady support for the group, filling in any need, be it record keeping, driving, field snacks or just sharing the pleasure of enjoying whatever happened. Sergey's mom, Darya, made sure his schedule accommodated our trips, not missing a single one.

Vivek Tiwari was another solid component of the Fledglings success. He juggled work, family, and school schedules to ensure both kids could have the experience of birding with youth colleagues, supporting Vayun's photography career. Vivek's extensive taxonomical knowledge and passion for all birds remains inspiring.

Other parents who weren't bitten by the birding bug steadfastly got up early, drove their kids and birded for hours supporting them and the Team—thank you!

I'm thankful to see the Fledglings tradition continue and supported by SCVAS and CCSF/SFBBO. It's been a very special privilege to be a part of the Fledglings Team. ●

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SAVE THE DATE!

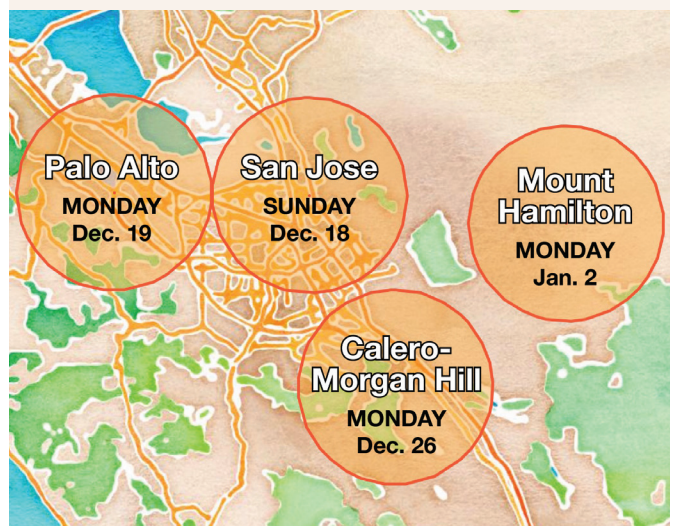
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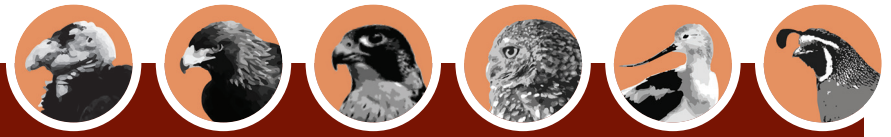
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Mon. Dec. 26, 2022

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Mon. Dec. 19, 2022

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Mon. Jan 2, 2023





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Please contact Eve Meier at fieldtrips@scvas.org for more information.



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