

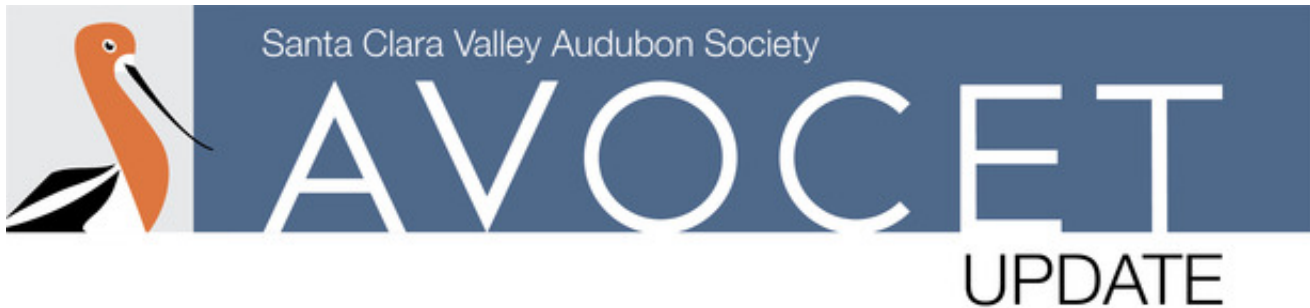
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American Avocets: Tom Grey

December 2022

There are a lot of things to be thankful for. I am thankful for our staff for their fantastic work they do and the dedication they have to make our Chapter strong and vibrant. I am thankful for the impact they each have had on our community. I am grateful for you, our members and the enthusiasm you have for our programs and the generosity you have shown us during this difficult year. And I am so thankful for our many volunteers that help us in countless ways. These blessings convince me that SCVAS is on the right track and making a positive difference for our local wildlife, open spaces and environmental education. This year we have many conservation stories to share and Shani Kleinhaus outlines them in Conservation Corner. I think you will agree that despite the good news on many fronts, there is still much to do and many challenges ahead. You will also find our usual Field Trips and Backyard Birds segments, as well as a new online class this January. Thank you again for a wonderful year, the many things worth celebrating, as well as the many projects that are still before us. Have a happy Thanksgiving!

~Matthew Dodder, Executive Director

Conservation Corner

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, SCVAS is celebrating several recent wins, and significant progress towards protections of birds, wildlife, and our environment.

We give thanks to the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, for the purchase of Tulare Ridge – a critical Monarch and Bay Checkerspot butterfly habitat and wildlife linkage in South San Jose north of Coyote Valley.

Tulare Ridge, and the Coyote-Alamitos Canal that delineates it, form an important piece in the Coyote Valley landscape mosaic. The site is a gateway, framing the exit from the urban expanses of San Jose to the City's largest conservation area, Coyote Valley. For five years, SCVAS has been fiercely fighting a proposed mansion and access road development on the Santa Teresa – Tulare Ridge along the Coyote-Alamitos Canal. Now we can say: we saved Tulare Ridge!

When we first saw the proposed development in early 2017, we expressed deep concern over the potential impacts to butterfly habitat and the curtailment of a critical wildlife linkage. Since then, with perseverance and tenacity, we worked with neighbors from the Los Paseos neighborhood, researched scientific documents, wrote letters, spoke at public meetings, advocated with San Jose City Council members, collaborated with other environmental groups, coordinated a wildlife-connectivity expert opinion, and even retained an attorney to ensure that San Jose was listening!



Bobcat with prey in the Coyote Alamitos Canal. Photo by Andrew Mattioda.

The ridge is mapped by the US Fish and Wildlife agency as Critical Habitat for the endangered Bay Checkerspot butterfly. Since we started opposing this development, Monarch butterflies and mountain lions have been declared candidates for listing as endangered species. Monarch butterflies will benefit from the abundance of their obligate host – Narrowleaf Milkweed - on the ridge. Bay checkerspot habitat can be enhanced and restored here to connect populations in Coyote Ridge to those in Santa Teresa Park. Mountain lions, always cautious of human activity, may benefit from the dark, uninhabited ridge leading to a safe under-crossing of Santa Teresa Blvd. Bobcats, foxes, deer and many other inhabitants of the ridge will continue to use the habitat, and to cross Santa Teresa Blvd safely.

We thank our partners in advocacy: the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, the Californian Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Valley Chapter, Green Foothills, and the many neighbors and friends who helped save Tulare Ridge.

We thank our panelists, partners and supporters who helped organize our symposium “Light at Night – a glowing hazard”, and the hundreds of people who attended.

The use of LED technology and energy saving lighting fixtures are bringing with them an unintended, yet pervasive and harmful effect: the over-lighting of our nights. On November 16, SCVAS, the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, and the Sierra Club Bay Alive Campaign presented a symposium to focus on the biological and physical effects of lighting up the night and to provide strategies that guard our health and environment while providing safe and practical lighting solutions.

Over 600 people registered for our symposium. After opening remarks from Assemblymember Alex Lee (D-24), the devastating impacts of light at night on birds, wildlife, and our ecosystems were presented by national experts:

- **Dr. John Barentine**, Executive Officer and Principal Consultant at Dark Sky Consulting
- **Dr. Travis Longcore**, Associate Adjunct Professor at the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability
- **Dr. Christine Sheppard**, Director of the Glass Collisions Program at the American Bird Conservancy
- **Ms. Mary Coolidge**, the BirdSafe & Lights Out Campaign Coordinator for Portland Audubon

Attendees, including elected officials, government representatives, professionals and members of the public, found the symposium informative and we received great reviews. We will have links to the presentations available soon – please stay tuned!

We thank the Open Space Authority, Peninsula Open Space Trust, and the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency, which agreed to allocate 100-acres of habitat in Coyote Valley for the purpose of the Re-introduction of Western Burrowing Owls to Coyote Valley.

The breeding Burrowing Owl population of the South San Francisco Bay Area is almost gone. In the past 6 years we lost 70% of the breeding adults – from 116 breeding adults in 2014 to only 33 adults in 2022. The owls have been extirpated from Mission College, Sunnyvale and the Warm Springs area, and have dwindled to almost none at the San Jose and Moffett airports. At present, local breeding populations persist solely due to intensive conservation efforts funded by the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency.

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society has been at the forefront of Burrowing Owl conservation over the past few decades. As we saw the population dwindle, we engaged in advocacy, monitoring and research. Currently, with funding from the Habitat Agency, we continue to engage in conservation efforts and the management of the Burrowing Owl population in Alviso, which in 2022 was the most successful and largest breeding population in the South San Francisco Bay Area.

We applaud the efforts of POST, the Habitat Agency, and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority and hope that the conservation efforts you are jointly embarking on will return breeding Burrowing Owls to Coyote Valley.

We hope these efforts will be successful in recovering a breeding population of Burrowing

Owls in the South Bay area.

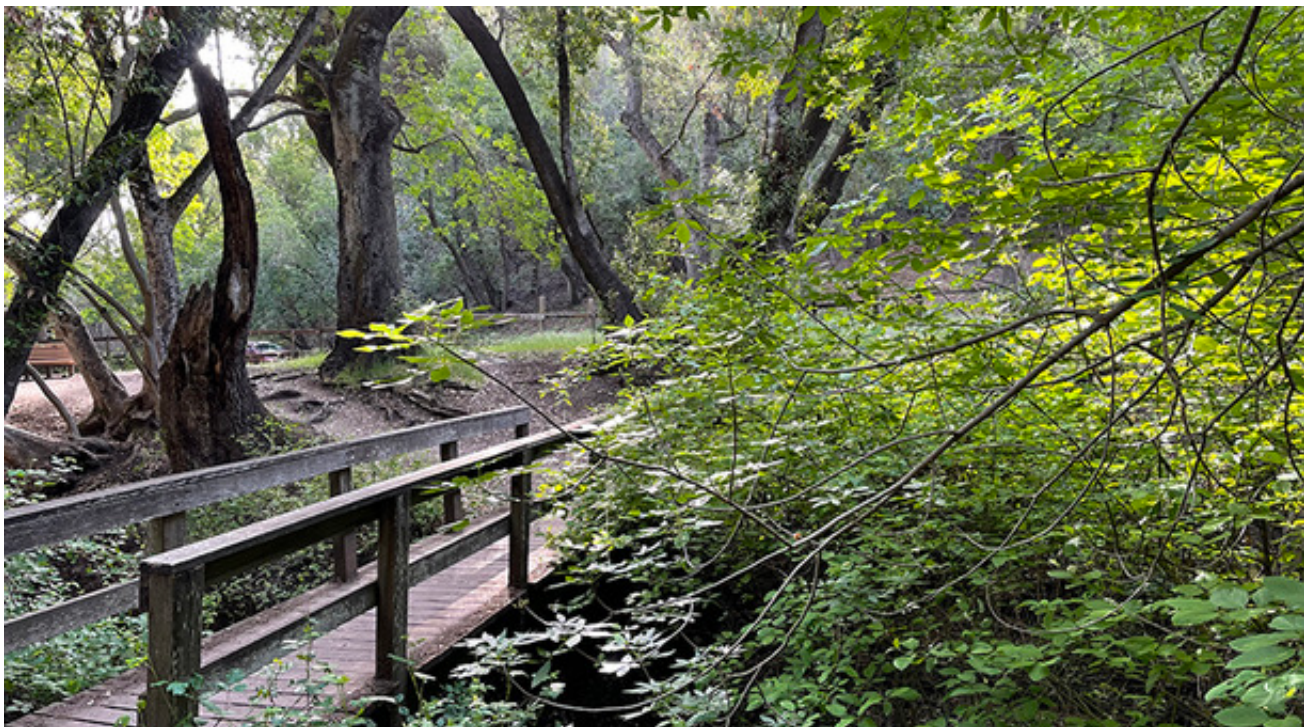


Burrowing Owl family. Photo by Tom Grey

We thank: Santa Clara County Supervisor Simitian, for the ongoing pressure on Lehigh Cement Plant in Cupertino. The first of three goals- closing the cement plant - has been achieved. We look forward to stopping all other environmentally harmful activities (such as rock grinding, mining and hauling) and to restoration and reclamation of the land.

Lastly, we must keep vigilant as threats are brewing for birds and open space.

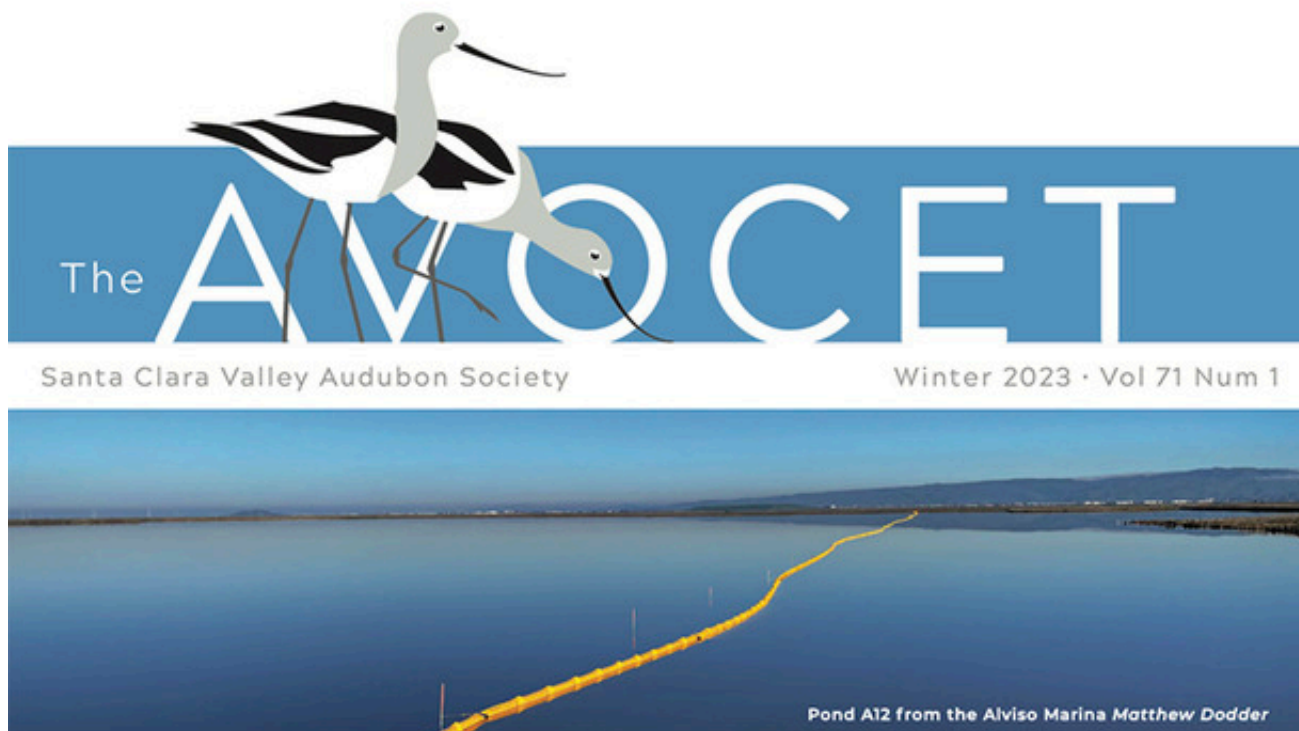
Does "threat to Coyote Valley" sound familiar? It seems that every win is temporary. Now, efforts to expand greenhouses (and associated light pollution), mushroom growing facilities, battery farms and green energy infrastructure are, well - mushrooming in the valley. Please stay tuned for our action alerts.



Stevens Creek by Matthew Dodder

Annual Appeal

It is that time of year again—when we show our support for organizations doing work we want to succeed. Our Annual Appeal letters should have arrived in your mailbox already, and we hope you will choose to donate generously. Our activities depend on your contributions and by supporting SCVAS, you are helping educate elementary and high school age kids about the environment and wildlife. You also empower us to have the impact we need if we are to protect our local habitats and educate the community on the importance of biodiversity. In short, without your help, we wouldn't be able to do what we any of these things let alone keep our lights on. So please take a moment and make your tax deductible donation today. We need your help to succeed. [Read the Appeal here.](#) [Donate here.](#)



Winter Issue of the Avocet

The new issue of the Avocet Quarterly is available for download. The printed copies should be available early December. You can download the pdf version (both single page format, and spreads) [here](#).



November Field Trip to Ulistac Natural Area led by Bob Bolles

Field Trips

In-person field trips for December and early January post on **Nov 28**. Locations covered

include Panoche Valley, Merced NWR, North Coyote Conservation Area, Cuesta Park, Ed Levin, and a variety of trips along the bay. Visit [field trips](#) for more information and to sign-up.

To help more people have a chance at getting a spot on our very popular field trips, **please limit your sign-ups to 2 trips per month.**

Trips filled-up? Check a day or two before your trip of interest goes out. Sometimes we have cancellations.



Northern Pintail by Vivek Tiwari

Self-Guided Field Trips

This December, how about an all day excursion to the remote and desolate Panoche Valley where you are likely to see Ferruginous Hawks and Mountain Bluebirds? Craving wintering ducks? Check out Charleston Slough or Los Gatos Creek Park? Or try one of our three new guides.

- [Panoche Valley](#) (Out-of County) by Matthew Dodder
- [Coast Casey Forebay](#) (Mountain View) by Mary Ann Robertson
- [Los Gatos Creek Park](#) (Campbell) by Brooke Miller

- [Ed R. Levin County Park](#) (San Jose) by Laura Coatney
- [NEW! Charleston Road Marsh](#) (Mountain View) by Adam Burnett
- [NEW! Chesbro Reservoir](#) (Morgan Hill) by Jennifer Oliver
- [NEW! Kevin Moran Park](#) (Accessible/Saratoga) by Lisa Myers

For more ideas of where to bird see our [complete collection of guides](#).

If you would like to write a guide for a location that you love to bird, please contact Eve Meier at fieldtrips@scvas.org.



Townsend's Warbler by John K. Edwards

All Around Town

The new [All Around Town](#) is here, and you've sent us your first audio submittals! Listen to a chatty group of Red-winged Blackbirds, a duetting pair of Great Horned Owls, and a House Finch with a whole lot to say. And winter warblers are back! Enjoy our monthly backyard bird report.

What birds have you observed near your home or neighborhood lately? Send your stories, lists, photos, videos - and audio submittals - to backyardbirds@scvas.org and we'll publish them in the next All Around Town. We are curious about all birds, so don't feel that you need to wait for a special sighting before writing in.

Project Feeder Watch

FeederWatch is underway, and it's not too late to join! Sign up for this community science project and count birds around town this winter. You don't need feeders or a yard - pick a birdy spot that's convenient for you. Learn more about FeederWatch in our [Avocet article](#)

and [sign up here](#).



Western Bluebird male (left) by Carol Ann Krug Graves and female (right) by Teresa Cheng

Backyard Bird of the Month

The [Western Bluebird](#) is our featured backyard bird for December. At this time of year, you'll find these birds in trees around your neighborhood, enjoying winter fruits and berries – look up!

Male Western Bluebirds are a brilliant azure blue on their heads, wings, and tail, with a rusty-red breast and a gray belly. Females are less brightly colored than males, often appearing more gray than blue, with a light copper wash on the breast. In the winter, bluebirds' feathers may seem duller than during the spring breeding season.

Western Bluebirds are year-round residents of Santa Clara County and nest here in the springtime. They are cavity nesters, and you can help them and other birds by putting up nest boxes. Find out more – how to build, maintain, and monitor nest boxes, and how to volunteer to monitor nest boxes throughout the county – at SCVAS's Cavity Nesters Recovery Program page.

For more about backyard birds, see our [Backyard Bird Grid](#), with links to ID tips and fun facts about common bird species in Santa Clara County.

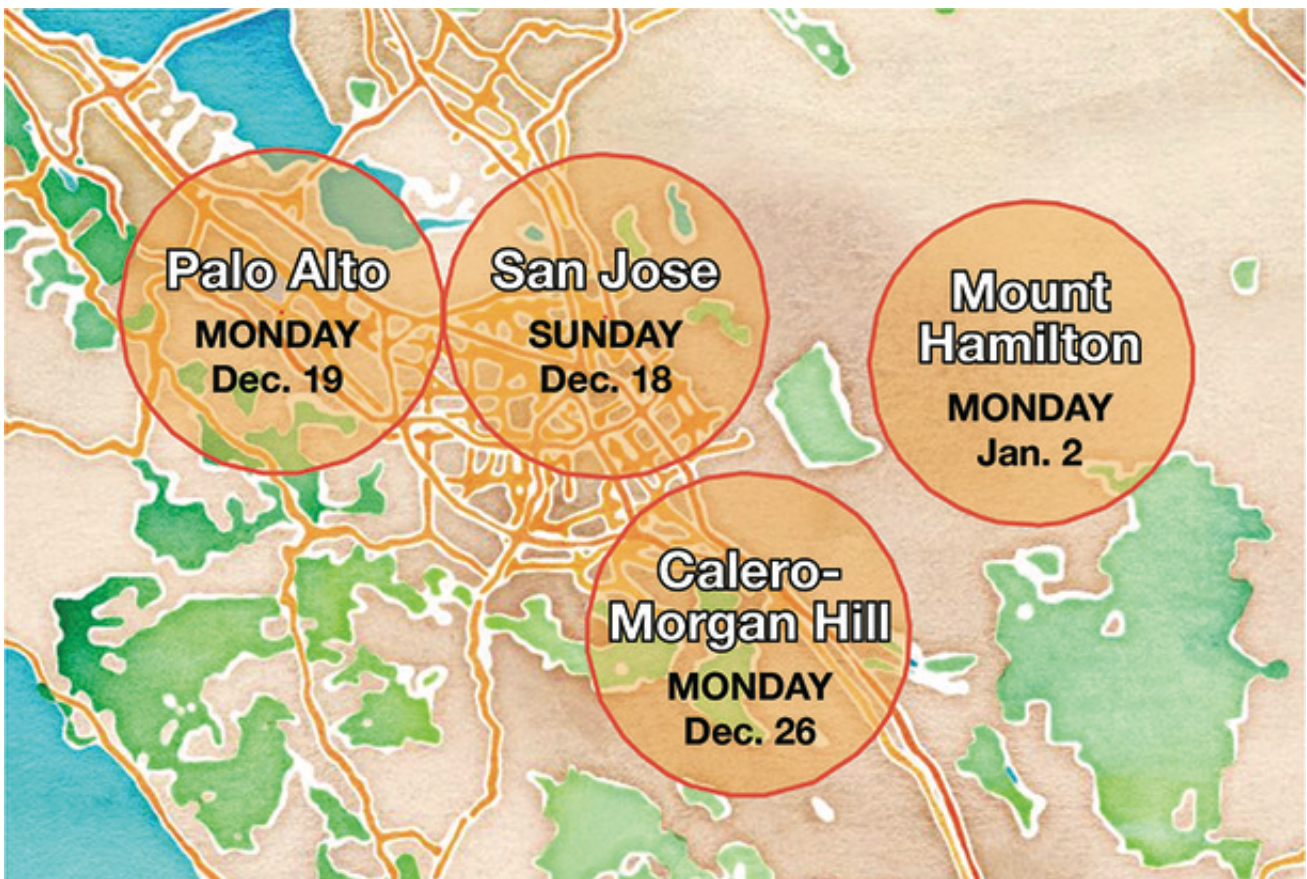


Gulls 2023

January 9,16,23 (via zoom)

Matthew Dodder (an admitted Larophile and Executive Director of SCVAS) will teach an online 3-session evening class on Gull identification. This beginner/intermediate-level class will focus on structure, topography, and age as keys to identification. Basically, the important tools you'll need to make Gulls fun and less frightening. We will discuss what to look for and how to notice differences between species our most common species. With any luck, we will succeed in decriminalizing this wonderful (albeit intimidating) family of birds and begin to feel better about the challenge they pose. Each registrant will gain access to a class-only chat room where they can ask related questions, make comments, share insights, or post photos. **This class is a revised and improved version of the 2020 class on the same subject.**

[Register Here](#)



Christmas Bird Count

This annual bird survey is a great time to get out birding and gather data on the number of individual birds seen for each species you find. Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society sponsors 4 "Count Circles" for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Typically participants go out in a small group (between 2 to 6 people) to cover an assigned territory. They report their data to the Count Compiler, and at the "countdown," get to hear about all the great birds that were found!

If you've joined the CBC in the past, please save the date, and contact your team leader or coordinator now to let them know that you want to join the 2022 CBC. If you're new to the count, contact the coordinator for the one you wish to join (note: while beginner birders may be able to help with CBC activities, this is not a teaching opportunity). Read more about the Christmas Bird Count and data from past counts on the SCVAS website [here](#), with information about the 2022 CBC "coming soon."

2022 Christmas Bird Count Dates and Contacts:

- **December 18** (Sunday): San Jose Count Circle - Mike Azevedo, geochelone@aol.com
 - **December 19** (Monday): Palo Alto Count Circle - coordinator Ann Hepenstal, paloaltocbc@gmail.com (compiler, Al Eisner)
 - **December 26** (Monday): Calero-Morgan Hill Count Circle - Rick Herder, rick.herder@gmail.com
 - **January 2** (Monday): Mount Hamilton Count Circle - Bob Hirt, hirttax@gmail.com
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Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

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