

The

AVOCET

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

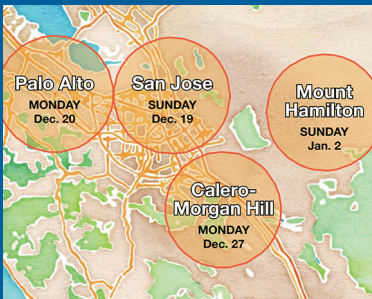
Winter 2022 • Vol 70 Num 1



Sunrise in North Coyote Valley Matthew Dodder

SPECIAL EVENT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Sun, Dec 19
Mon, Dec 20
Mon, Dec 27
Sun, Jan 2



It's right around the corner! Don't miss your chance to be apart of the biggest birding event of the year. Santa Clara County has four CBC circles to choose from and they will all need volunteers to maximize coverage.

See page 3 for details about each circle and contact information of the organizer or visit scvas.org/christmas-bird-count

We Look for Them

Matthew Dodder, Executive Director

I've written the *What To Look For* (or "W2L4") column in the Avocet for more than two years now, and it occurs to me after a few thousand words there's a way of interpreting that phrase I hadn't considered before. The emphasis this whole time has been looking for specific seasonal birds, perhaps finding something less common in the crowds of familiar birds. As a lifetime birder, I like that approach. The challenge is fun, and the pride felt when we accurately predict where something might show up is addicting.

But, *what to look for?* Why *are* we looking anyway? What's the purpose of all that looking?? I think it's simple, really. You see, it can't be that we're just enlarging our life lists, ticking off one species after another—almost like stamp collecting. But fittingly I suppose, it was the 1971 Wildlife Conservation stamp—the one with the California Condor, that first got my attention. Now *that* was a bird! Huge and ancient. Critically endangered. Likely to go extinct. As I carefully put the stamp in my 3-ring book, and examined it with a magnifying glass, I started to feel a deep anxiety. Animals in the mid-1970s weren't supposed to go extinct like they did in the Pleistocene, not like the Woolly Mammoth or the Giant Sloth! I couldn't believe I might never actually see this *living* animal alive, or that other birds featured on those stamps, like the Whooping Crane, might... disappear forever. I was a very gloomy 8-year-old.

So I set out at an early age to see everything I could before it disappeared or I went blind. The Condor, the Crane, the Quetzal, the Cassowary. It was a quest, for sure. And I remain on that quest today, as many of you are as well. But I've come to believe we are not simply looking for birds, we are looking *for* birds... Meaning,

Continued on next page

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we are looking on **behalf** of birds—trying to find what helps them survive—what they need—and make sense of what they very likely do not understand themselves.

Every Audubon member, every birder in fact, is both a supporter and a protector. To that end, we share our sightings every day, we post them to south-bay-birds, we enter them into the eBird database. We create maps. We help birds get noticed. We document increases and declines in numbers. We discover trends the birds cannot be aware of. We do this **for** them. That is **what** we are looking for. We are looking **for** birds as we **look** for birds.

It appears we enjoy this position; we certainly enjoy this job! Even though we are not all directly involved in conservation,

and we are definitely not all biologists, we all work for the benefit of birds. We educate those around us, our family, friends, neighbors and casual acquaintances, because when we help someone understand something, we make it possible for them to care about it as much as we do. Maybe it works.

As we head into the Christmas Bird Count season, after that the Birdathon, eventually the Summer Bird Count, every one of those sightings provides more detail—adds to the continuing story—of our local birds. Every day out in the field or walk around the block provides encounters with birds. We notice, we reflect, we add to our collective understanding, we encourage others to do the same, and with any luck, it helps the birds as much as it should. ●

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Forgive the laundry list style update... There's just a lot of things going on here at the Ranch. Here goes.

Our second *Wildlife & Harvest Video Festival* took place again between Halloween and Thanksgiving. We released almost 40 videos from a variety of wildlife and conservation organizations around the Bay Area. Most of the weekly video releases were geared toward young viewers, but many of the recordings were also appropriate for adults. Check our YouTube channel for all the festival videos.

scvas.org/wildlife-harvest

The *Kids Corner* page on our website has been resurrected with fresh content, including a *coloring book* of some of our local birds. Adults are also welcome to color, of course.

scvas.org/kids-corner

Since the fall *Avocet*, we also completed our online *Shorebird series* and *Warbler trilogy* which were well attended. The remote class included a private chat room on the Discord platform allowing attendees to post comments, questions, or photos for discussion. Then we offered a free *eBird workshop* and office hours which provided new users with hands-on experience of submitting a checklist, making changes to it and sharing it with others. We also gave a few sneak peeks at future *eBird workshops* which will launch after the new year. Come 2022, we'll be offering even more classes, including multi-part sessions on Sparrows and Raptors. Don't forget to take a look at our *online store*

Year Out. Year In.

scvas.org/store, where recordings of all our classes will be posted as well as our *brand new county checklist*.

scvas.org/county-checklist

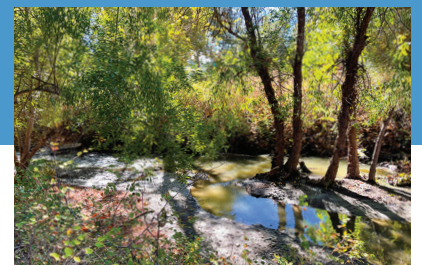
The *Christmas Bird Count* is coming up! As I alluded in my opening piece, this is one of the ways we can help our birds. See the story on the next page for details on how you can participate and support this important annual event. County health recommendations will apply of course, so be sure to check our site for details.

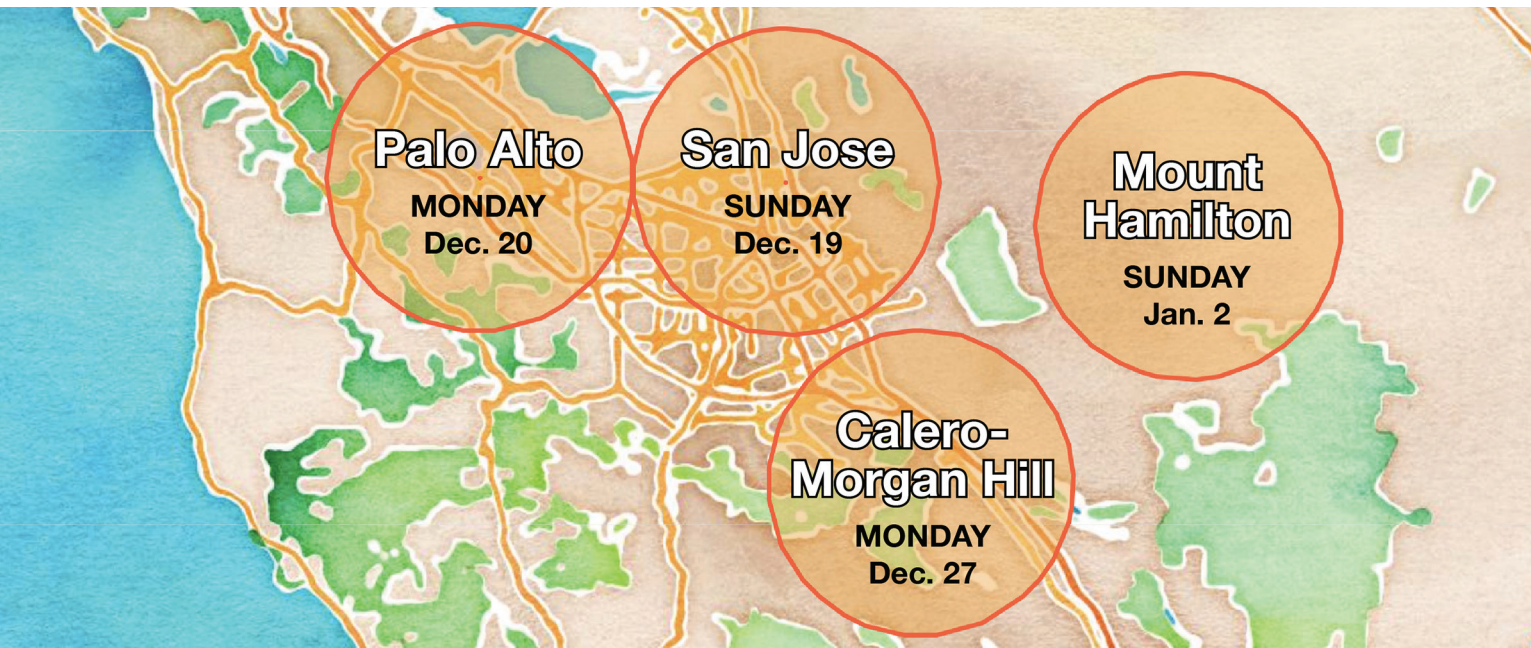
scvas.org/christmas-bird-count

Finally, it's time for our *Annual Appeal*. You have probably received our campaign letter already. We hope it communicates how much we rely on your support to do what we do. scvas.org As a non-profit dedicated to education, conservation and birding, we depend on your contributions to fund our programs and keep things running. To provide you with a picture of how we use your support dollars, you can view a pdf of our Annual Report, (released online this year to save printing costs).

scvas.org/financial We hope we have succeeded in our efforts to engage the public in the importance of healthy habitat and the birds that call this area home. We have you to thank for that!

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director





CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Lend your eyes, ears, birding knowledge or tallying skills to this year's Count! Every December–January, SCVAS sponsors several Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), part of a world-wide citizen science project coordinated by the National Audubon Society. Organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations and to help guide conservation action.

Some of our members have participated in Christmas Bird Counts for many years—thank you! Some of our members have not yet joined in—give it a try! The Counts need many people out in the field covering a preassigned territory and seek to spot all the birds they can (by sight or by sound), identifying the birds and tallying the number seen by species. While each CBC team needs at least one birder knowledgeable enough to identify the species, even beginner birders and nonbirders can help to spot birds, notice field marks, and keep the count data.

How to Join

View the dates below and check your calendar. While two of the counts are on weekdays, the other two are on the weekend! Each count has a compiler who organizes the teams and territories. Email that person as soon as possible to express interest so you can be assigned to a birding team.

Sun, Dec 19: San Jose

The San Jose count provides a wide range of habitats with a variety of different species. With urban parks, waterways, open spaces, the bayshore, mudflats and foothills, the San Jose count is home to a lot of birds. We have sectors from Sunnyvale to Alum Rock Park, and Evergreen to Alviso. If you

are interested in participating, please contact the compiler *Mike Azevedo* at geochelone@aol.com.

Mon, Dec 20: Palo Alto

The Palo Alto CBC covers an area ranging from the Bay to the Santa Cruz Mountains, including habitats ranging from baylands, to suburbia and city parks, to foothills. Whether you enjoy counting thousands of shorebirds, listening for owls in the early morning darkness, or chasing a flitting songbird, we can find you an interesting assignment. Contact compiler *Al Eisner* at eisner@slac.stanford.edu.

Mon, Dec 27: Calero-Morgan Hill

The Calero-Morgan Hill count in south Santa Clara County extends across the valley to foothills in both the Coast and Diablo ranges. It includes several creeks, lakes and wetlands as well as grasslands, chaparral, and oak woodlands. We'll be counting in city and county parks, open space preserves, water district reservoirs, and private properties, some not usually open to the public. Annual targets include both eagles, falcons, Burrowing Owl, Grasshopper Sparrow, and a surprising variety of gulls. If you'd like to participate, please contact compiler *Rick Herder* at rick.herder@gmail.com.

Continued on page 5

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director



It's probably news to exactly no one that birds move around a lot during fall and spring when breeding has just finished, or just about to begin. It's also probably obvious to everyone that the birds of winter are often completely different than birds of summer. There are lots of insectivores when it's warm and the bugs are out, and more seed-cracking species when it cools and all the plants throw their future selves to the wind. Basic stuff...

What is *not so basic* is the why things can't be a little more predictable. We have decades and decades of data that continues to improve our understanding of where birds are and are not. Yet we are still surprised by what shows up and where. Why is that? How does one know what to expect and where to look?

Here. There. Where?

First, fall and winter seem to be the Santa Clara County seasons most favored by rare birds. I've discussed some of the possible explanations for rare bird occurrences in the past. They include possibilities like these: "*Drift*" which is essentially when a bird is thrown off course by bad weather. "*Overshooting*" is when a bird travels too far. "*Dispersal*" occurs when a bird is unable to find the habitat where it expects to find it, so it moves to the next best place. "*Association*" occurs when related species find each other and remain together for the duration of the season. "*Irruption*" is when species occur in a region sporadically due to poor conditions in their normal range. "*Recurrence*" is like a skip in a record album (if you remember those)—after that first scratch in the vinyl groove (a rare bird's first appearance), the verse just repeats over and over.

As far as what we should look for this winter, I'd consider the influences mentioned above. Geese, for example are highly social and prone to "associate" with other species of Geese. We often find Cackling Geese, and Greater White-fronted Geese mixed in with Canada Geese. Similarly, Snow Geese and Ross's Geese are often found together, or with the more common species. Of course, they may show up without their friends, but in similar habitat—wet fields, large lawns or lake

shores. Many of these uncommon geese are much easier to find in the Central Valley than the Bay Area. They occasionally fly through our area with no intention of stopping, so keep your eyes on the skies and check that honking overhead. Want to find that wayward Brant again this winter? My bet would be to search the flocks at Shoreline Golf Course. Perhaps it will demonstrate two of the above behaviors—"recurrence" and "association".

Bird Interrupted

But winter is also a season frequently cursed by inclement weather, much of it further north. So it makes some sense that Evening Grosbeak, which occurs here somewhat irregularly, might fall into the "irruptive" category. Certainly Evening Grosbeaks, which fluctuate in numbers from year to year, often skip years entirely. Maybe that has to do with the difficulty of finding food in their normal range, or very harsh conditions to the north and east. To a lesser extent, perhaps Varied Thrush as well, which has high and low winter numbers in our county. I would check the Chinese pistache trees on Stanford Campus and downtown Los Altos beginning in December for the Grosbeaks, and berry bushes with nearby cover for the Thrush. Both species come here looking for something special—knowing exactly what that is...that's the hard part of finding them.

Regarding Sparrows, the quintessential "little brown jobs" (LBJs) we see along the winter trail. As with many non-breeding birds, Sparrows tend to find each other and forage together in the colder months. Undoubtedly this provides some safety for the individual bird who depends on the watchful eyes of the other members of its group to spot the Sharp-shinned Hawk or other threat. These flocks attract predators however, so it seems a kind of perpetuating cycle—nevertheless... many Sparrows can be found in mixed groups and among them one of my favorites—the Song Sparrow.

Uncommonly Cool

I'm quite fond of this species because it is so common. It's also widespread and variable, occurring in every state except Hawaii. Within that large range there are around

Photos L to R:

Cackling Goose *Chuq Von Rospach*, Ross's Goose *Tom Grey*, Brant *Tom Grey*, Snow Goose *Carter Gasiorowski*, Greater White-fronted Goose *Juliana Manoliu*



Summer Tanager
Tom Grey



Varied Thrush
Luis Villablanca



Evening Grosbeak
Tom Grey

26 distinct populations possessing unique features and behaviors. Some of these can be identified by sight... We even have four separate populations of Song Sparrow in the Bay Area, and two of these breed in Santa Clara County. There's the beautiful, deep chestnut and rufous-toned "Marin" Song Sparrow (*M.m.gouldii*) for example, which prefers creeks, streams and wooded edges away from the marsh, and the smaller, paler, and grayer "Alameda" Song Sparrow (*M.m.pusillula*) which never strays from the salty tidal zone along the shores of the Bay.

There are several other subspecies of Song Sparrow that occasionally winter in our area as well, including the larger *M.m.rufina* and *M.m.morphna*. These are large, dark reddish-brown with a somewhat "blurry" pattern that recalls our "Sooty" Fox Sparrows. These two rarer Song Sparrow visitors hail from the same northwestern coastal areas that our common "Sooty" Fox Sparrow does. It's odd that their colors and patterns are so similar to the Fox Sparrow's but not unexpected when you consider other species whose northwestern populations are darker than normal—think of the "Black" Merlin we occasionally see. This is a perfect demonstration of the ecological concept known as "Gloger's Rule" which predicts populations in more humid and shaded environments develop darker coloration providing greater resistance to the feather (and fur) degrading bacteria and microbes.

Ironically, one of the *winter* birds I'll be watching for is the Summer Tanager. Most reports for Santa Clara County are for fall and winter despite its name. One has to wonder why a bird that *should* be wintering in South America would decide to spend the season with us—*north* of breeding range... That's another story. ●

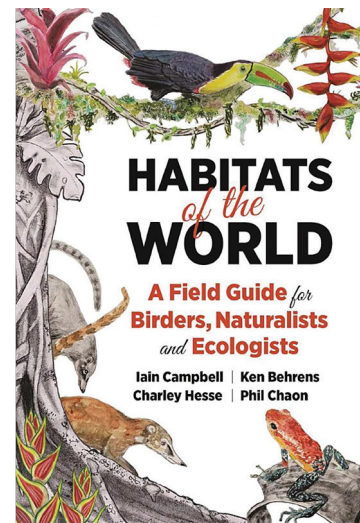
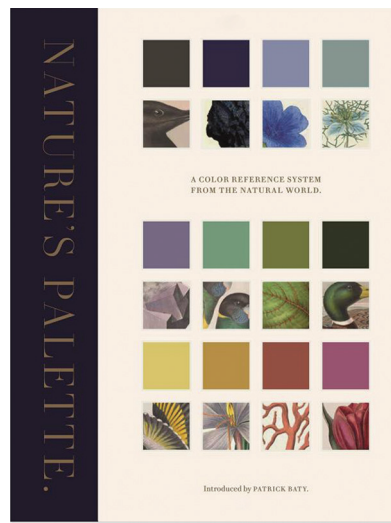
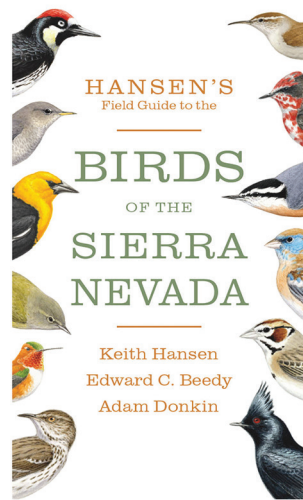
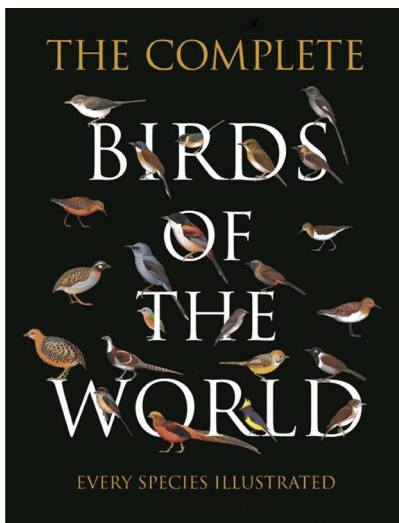
CBC *Continued from page 3*

Sun, Jan 2, 2022: Mount Hamilton

Henry Coe State Park... Lick Observatory... San Antonio Valley Road... Black Mountain... sometimes—snow! All of these are found within the Mount Hamilton Count Circle. We usually count ducks, shorebirds, California Quail, sparrows, eagles and Lewis's Woodpeckers. If interested, please contact compiler: **Bob Hirt**, bobhirt@aol.com ●

Learn more at scvas.org/christmas-bird-count and for maps, data from past years' counts, etc.

Note While the Covid situation is still changeable, we expect to host the count again this year. Of course we will follow local health guidance and procedures, and the count circle organizers will share the latest information at count time.



THE BIRDER'S BOOKSHELF

Currently our Nature Shop does not stock these books, but they can be found at your favorite bookseller.

The Complete Birds of the World

Norman Arlott, Ber van Perlo, Jorge Rodriguez Mata, Gustavo Carrizo, Alto Chiappe, Luis Huber
Princeton University Press, \$49.95 hardback

This book is exactly what the title suggests—every bird listed on the January 2019 IOC list of bird species, in taxonomic order, and beautifully illustrated. The colors are vibrant and accurately rendered, printing quality is high, and the binding feels solid & is sewn in signatures.

A good index is vital for this type of book, and I could find no flaws in either the scientific names index or in the English common name index. This hefty tome serves the needs of the avid world traveler, planning their next international venture, or the armchair enthusiast and student of nature art as well. Recommended for anyone who enjoys their birds in coffee-table book form! — *Ginger Langdon-Lassagne*

Hansen's Field Guide to the Birds of the Sierra Nevada

Keith Hansen, Edward Beedy, Adam Donkin
Princeton Press, \$19.95 hardback

As satisfying as the carefully hand-drawn illustrations are (the author is a mentor to John Muir Laws, no less), they are eclipsed by the exquisite prose that entices you to read about one more bird, no matter how many you've already examined. Great Horned Owl is "lord of the night," Red-tailed Hawk has a "linebacker's build," and Pacific Wren is "wedded to cool shadows." Descriptions are given for every bird that frequents the Sierras, including flight, voice, range (within the

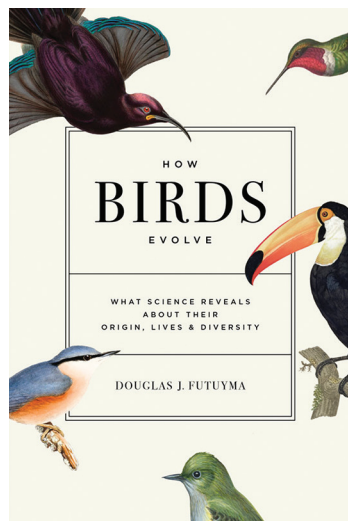
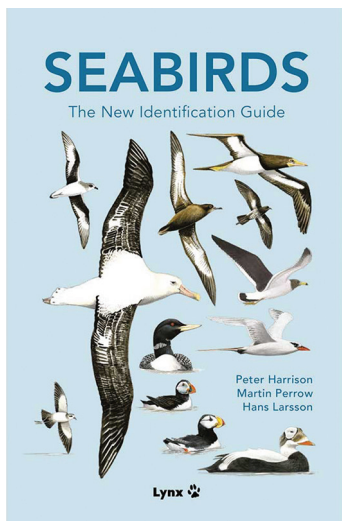
Sierra habitats), habits and similar species. Even the rarities get their own artwork and brief descriptions toward the back. You'll continually gain fresh perspectives and understandings from this focused field guide, then find yourself checking your calendar to figure out when you can escape to the mountains for your next birding adventure, with binoculars and this book in hand. — *Barry Langdon-Lassagne*

Nature's Palette

Patrick Baty
Princeton University Press, \$35.95 hardback

In the 19th century European naturalists were busy naming and classifying animals and plants, and some were also busy naming and classifying colors. In 1821 Patrick Syme expanding on an earlier work by Abraham Warner published a color reference, Werner's *Nomenclature of Colours*. This publication set a standard used by Darwin and others when describing new species. His guide included a color swatch for each color with a name and examples of the color's occurrence in animals (usually birds), plants and minerals. For example, 'Snow White' is the color of 'Breast of the black headed Gull' while 'Greenish White' is the color of 'Vent Coverts of the Golden crested Wren'.

The recently published *Nature's Palette: A Color Reference System from the Natural World* is an expansion of this guide. The book has one page devoted to each of Syme's 110 colors with the color swatch and 19th century prints of the animal, plant and mineral referenced in the original publication. The birds are largely represented by John Gould's publication *Birds of Europe* although there is at least one print by John James Audubon. It is a beautiful presentation overall, however



Seabirds: The New Identification Guide

Peter Harrison
Lynx Edicions, \$89 hardback

Covering more than 70% of the earth's surface, this massive one-volume "field guide" to every known species of seabird in the world is an incredible accomplishment that will take its rightful place as the new authoritative reference guide. The author's earlier effort (pub. 1983) remains an important work, but is not without issues. Some of the artwork appears coarse by today's standards; our growing understanding of pelagic species may be partly to blame. In this new book however, Harrison has partnered with world famous artist Hans Larsson whose work does stand superior against the author's own. The taxonomic organization of the book is expected, but the family introductions, field mark callouts, and focused ID panels are stunning. It's always preferable to have the maps and text near the illustration, which was not the case in the 1983 version. Highly recommended, but don't expect to take this book with you on the boat.

— **Matthew Dodder**

because some printing inks used 250 years ago were fugitive, the colors are muted. Even Scarlet Red (Mark on Head of Red Grouse) and Gamboge Yellow (Wings of Goldfinch) seem dull. There are also photos of 'curiosity cabinets' and scholarly essays on how Warner's reference was developed and used in botanical illustration and medicine.

Overall it is a fascinating immersion into the world of color standardization used in the natural sciences before color photography or Pantone and CMYK color standards.
— **Floy Zittin**

Habitats of the World

Iain Campbell, Ken Behrens, Charley Hesse, Phil Chaon
Princeton Press, \$35.95 Flexibound

Habitats of the World introduces the reader to the significant biotic habitats found on the earth's surface. The book describes seven zoogeographical regions, each with its own chapter. Each chapter contains descriptions of habitats found within that region. A habitat description starts with a summary, a map showing the range of the habitat, a graph of annual temperature and rainfall, and a detailed description of the habitat. Also included in each habitat write-up are descriptions of characteristic wildlife, endemic wildlife, and places where this habitat can be viewed by a visitor. The emphasis is on birds and mammals. I was particularly fascinated by the sections on endemics, which explain what promotes endemic species within each habitat.

There are hundreds of photographs, maps, and charts. This book is useful for bio-travelers, and it makes a good armchair reader for anyone interested in biology and the distributions of bio-habitats. This is a book about habitats, it does not emphasize political boundaries. A reader interested in the habitats of a given country would have to start at the top by determining the zoogeographic area in which the country occurs, and then drill down into the habitats found in that country. — **David Zittin**

How Birds Evolve

Douglas J. Futuyma
Princeton University Press, \$29.95 hardback

If you enjoyed Richard Prum's *The Evolution of Beauty*, or anything by David Quammen it means you are a curious reader and enjoy considering the details. Evolutionary biologist Douglas Futuyma escorts us through a series of curious situations, such as the unexpected relationship between Parrots, Falcons and Songbirds, or the development of outrageous mating displays, cooperative behaviors, color morphs and other variations within species, social systems and flight itself. In his words, biologists answer the questions as to "how" these situations came to be, while evolutionary biologists, like him, answer "why".

While not as irreverent as Quammen, Futuyma is easily as thorough and researched (see his footnotes and bibliography worthy of a textbook), and his narrative is smooth and convincing. The book is interspersed with black-and-white figures and a generous section of color photographs. Be prepared to sit quietly and marvel at the vast scale of his questions, and the intricate mechanics of evolution's answers. I always find that works like this force me to look differently at birds, and think more about behavior and adaptation than simple field marks. Recommended. — **Matthew Dodder** ●



Conservation Corner

Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate
Giulianna Pendleton, Advocacy Assistant

Gschwend Residence

SCVAS has opposed the *Gschwend Residence Project* in the Santa Teresa Hills, San Jose since 2018. The location of the proposed residence is within a critical wildlife corridor linkage between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. The driveway from Santa Teresa Blvd. to the planned house is adjacent to the Coyote-Alamitos Canal where it crosses Santa Teresa Blvd. This is one of the most important road-undercrossing culverts for wildlife to safely travel across Santa Teresa Blvd. The residence site has been identified as a critical linkage in the *Conservation Lands Network Linkage* as well as the *Valley Habitat Plan*. We believe that the residence and its driveway could permanently sever wildlife connectivity for the American Badger and Mountain Lion. In addition, the site is included in the *Critical Habitat Map* for the endangered Bay Checkerspot Butterfly, and includes stands of milkweed that are important if migratory populations of Western monarch butterflies are to persist.

The *City of San Jose* has prepared an Environmental Review (Mitigated Negative Declaration) for the project. We provided substantive comment letters and secured expert testimony from *Pathways for Wildlife*—a wildlife connectivity research group that has been studying wildlife movement and safe crossings in Coyote Valley and its vicinity for over a decade. We asked the *City of San Jose* to deny the Conditional Use Permit for this project, or require a full Environmental Impact Report for the project.

Tideline Ferries Protest

Earlier this year, we filed a formal protest along with the *Sierra Club* and the *Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge*, against *Tideline Marine Group*, a private commercial ferry operator. Tideline filed an application with the *California Utilities Commission* seeking approval for unlimited on-call boat service throughout the Bay and its navigable rivers and tributaries.

We were concerned that this service could disturb rafts of migratory diving ducks as well as bay marshes and the birds that depend on them. The company claimed that since there was no physical construction associated with this service, environmental review was not needed. We disagreed! The operations would have significantly increased the geography



of Tideline's service area, allowing ferries to venture into waterways running through or adjacent to the *Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge*. The proposed change to Tideline's service area and routes would have allowed unlimited regular or daily charters to employment centers and destinations in the South Bay, resulting in many ferry trips on certain routes in smaller waterways with adjacent sensitive tidal marsh and mudflat habitat, including habitat of the endangered Ridgway's Rail, which has previously been found to be impacted by ferry wakes.

Our formal protest succeeded! Tideline Marine Group withdrew the application for bay-wide service. Instead they applied for permission to add only South San Francisco to the cities they currently serve.

PG&E Retrofits Power Poles

A pair of Great Horned owls has been nesting at Rancho San Antonio year after year, providing birders with a wonderful opportunity to watch the parents raise their young. In June 2021, the single owlet fledgling was electrocuted at one of the power poles at Deer Meadow. Birders have asked PG&E to retrofit the power poles so that owlets, and other raptors, will not meet a similar tragic end. PG&E responded promptly and retrofitted the poles.

If you notice dead raptors at power poles in Rancho San Antonio (or elsewhere), please take pictures, note the location, and let us know so we can follow up with PG&E.

California 30x30

In October 2020, Governor Newsom called for an increase in the use of nature-based solutions to reach California's carbon neutrality goals. Known as California 30x30, the plan



aims to protect 30% of all public lands and water in California by 2030. SCVAS has been working with a large number of environmental, wildlife and open space groups to identify lands, waters and wildlife connectivity priorities and advocate for their inclusion in the plan. Our focus areas have been the San Francisco Bay, Coyote Valley, and wildlife connectivity at Pacheco Pass between Santa Clara and San Benito Counties. In San Benito County, we also highlighted rangelands surrounding Panoche Valley and Pinnacles National Park. Protecting habitat for birds and wildlife and migration corridors is critical at this time, as we are facing a global sixth mass extinction. We must protect biodiversity by protecting and expanding habitat and connectivity.

Newt Mortality

The day after the first winter storm on October 24th, “Newt Patrol” volunteers led by Dr. Merav Vonshak counted 100 dead newts, as well as many other species run over by cars. The Newt Patrol has been studying the newt population around Alma Bridge Rd. for several years, alerting us to the massive roadkill and to the threats to Pacific Newt populations in the area. Advocacy with Santa Clara County, POST, and MROSD has resulted in the commission of a 2020-2021 study by a consulting firm. We now look forward toward a long-term solution to reduce mortality and provide safe passage across the roadway.

Boston Properties

In September *San Jose City Council* approved the *Almaden Office Project* adjacent to the Guadalupe River. With an 18-inch setback from the river’s dripline and no feasible mitigation strategy, we are disappointed in Council’s decision. Council prioritized downtown development over riparian

habitat protections, weakening the city’s riparian corridor setback policy. We thank our friends at the Sierra Club for filing a lawsuit against the City of San Jose on this travesty.

RWF Outfall Lighting

The *San Jose-Santa Clara County Regional Wastewater Facility Outfall Bridge* is adjacent to Artesian Slough and the *Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge*, critical wetlands for migratory birds. San Jose was planning to add lighting to the bridge—bright, white light turned on 24/7. This type of lighting would harm insects, confuse migratory birds, and make wildlife more visible to nocturnal predators. Along with the *Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge*, we asked San Jose to install a switch so light can be used only when needed. Our request was accepted!

Los Gatos General Plan

Earlier this year *Los Gatos* included our recommendations for bird-safe design and dark sky policies within their *General Plan Update*. We are now calling for riparian lighting setbacks and considering habitat value of tree selection. Look out for Action Alerts for upcoming public meetings on this issue!

Cuesta Park Pollinator Garden

This year, we have been collaborating with *GreenspacesMV* to advocate with the *Mountain View Parks and Recreation Department* and create a pollinator garden in Cuesta Park. A motivated community is getting involved and, working with the *California Native Plant Society*, we have come up with a plant palette for the garden. Look for announcements for volunteer opportunities! We look forward to this community-led restoration project in a popular Mountain View park! ●



Little Critter Walk
Merav Vonshak

JOIN OUR FIELD TRIPS

SCVAS is eager to get you out there birding and enjoying nature! We welcome participants of any birding experience level, background, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, and physical ability.

Did you know we have four short and easy trips that repeat each month designed for newer birders? Check out our Charleston Slough, Palo Alto Baylands, Lunchtime Walk

at Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant and McClellan Ranch for Beginners trips.

Visit scvas.org/fieldtrips for our schedule and to reserve your spot! If a trip you are interested in has filled up, check again the night before the trip; sometimes spots open up.

See you out there!

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Ann Hepenstal
Outreach Committee Chair

Our SCVAS Outreach Committee works to help SCVAS reach communities who aren't yet members, to make SCVAS a welcoming place for birders of all levels, and to increase representation from all Santa Clara County demographics.

We use the [@SCVASAudubon](https://www.instagram.com/SCVASAudubon) Instagram and Facebook pages, scvas.org website, our *Avocet* newsletters and other channels to reach out and to publicize events and birding. And, we've established some partnerships to help us inspire more people to care about birds!

Let's Go Birding Together

The Billy DeFrank LGBTQ+ Community Center joined us to sponsor another Let's Go Birding Together event, with a birdwatching outing at Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge in Alviso during LGBT History Month. We had a great turnout, including several brand new birders, a bird photographer who drove in from Tracy, and a couple of birders who came from Oakland. We enjoyed a beautiful morning, a Peregrine Falcon flyover, abundant American White Pelicans, and more.



Saved By Nature

SCVAS has been working with Saved By Nature (savedbynature.org) for over a year now (did you miss SBN founder Richard Tejada's talk in the SCVAS Speaker Series?



Visit scvas.org to watch the recording). Recently we hosted an informational table and talked about birds at their Hispanic Heritage Celebration at Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve.

And come join SBN and SCVAS Director Matthew Dodder on their Community Hikes. savedbynature.org/community-hikes

- ▶ 1st Wednesday of the month, Coyote Valley OSP
- ▶ 3rd Saturday of the month, Rancho Canada del Oro OSP

How Can I Help?

Glad you asked!

- ▶ Follow us on social media! [@SCVASAudubon](https://www.instagram.com/SCVASAudubon)
- ▶ Get neighbors and friends inspired to care about birds
- ▶ Introduce them to Backyard Birding. This is a great place for them to learn a little bit about the birds around home, and to start sharing observations. scvas.org/backyard-birding
- ▶ Invite them to SCVAS events, especially the beginner birdwatching outings!
- ▶ Share information about SCVAS events and Backyard Birding news on your neighborhood [Nextdoor.com](https://nextdoor.com)
- ▶ When people on [Nextdoor](https://nextdoor.com) ask a question about birds or bird health, point them to information on scvas.org or other bird-knowledgeable information source

We're doing work right now on Birdability programs, birdwatching outings targeted at women, and continuing our existing partnerships. Look for more exciting outreach programs in the coming year! ●

Friends of SCVAS



Gifts received August – October 2021

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Mystery Feather
Matthew Dodder

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director

TRACK & FEATHER

This month's mystery feather was found on the entrance road to Stevens Creek Park at the first creek crossing. It was November, and the area was well-shaded, cool and damp. I was able to hear the bird call from somewhere off the road.

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

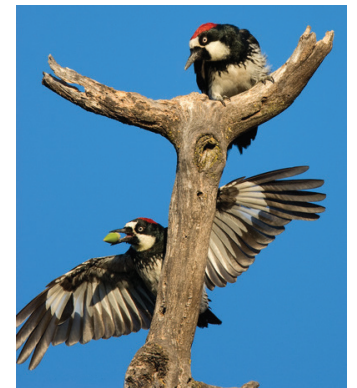
Books

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 (FALL 2021)

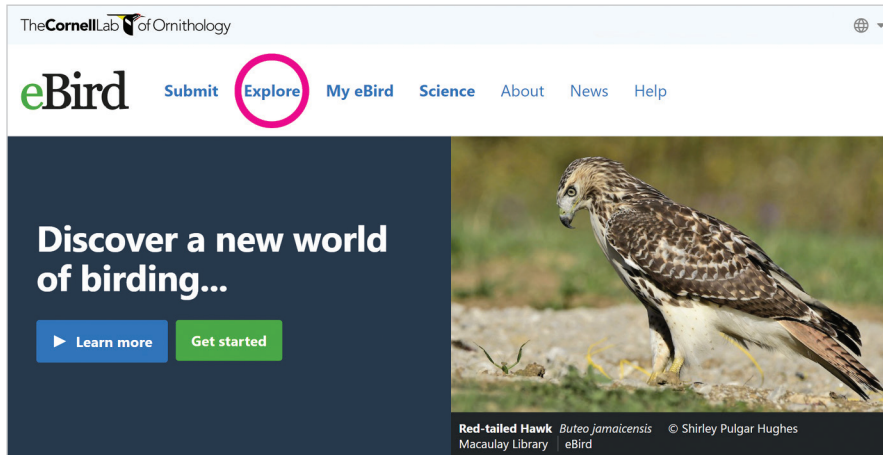
When you see a feather with a bold mark on it like the last mystery, imagine what a series of feathers would look like... In this case the bold white at the base and black at the tip of this primary, that means a white flash on the "palm" of the wing. The right primary came from an *Acorn Woodpecker*.
Image: Bill Walker



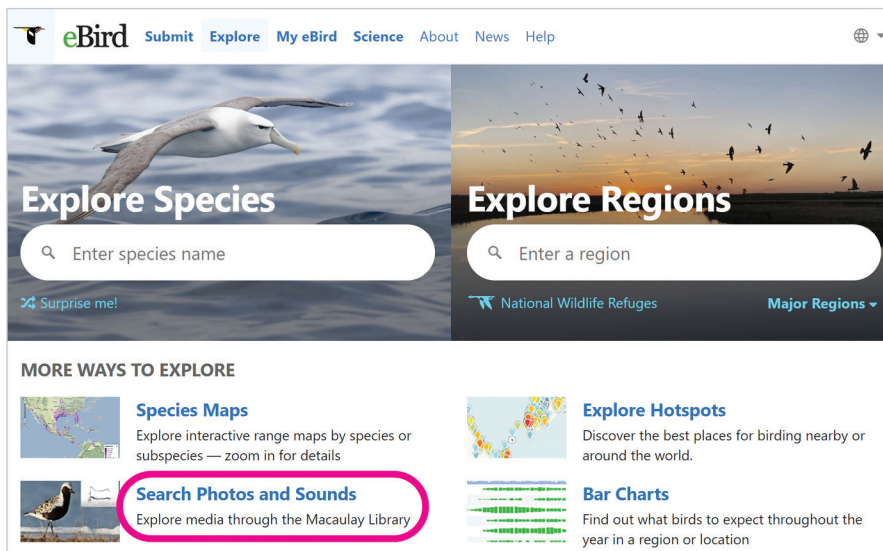
TECH TRENDS : E-BIRD

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director

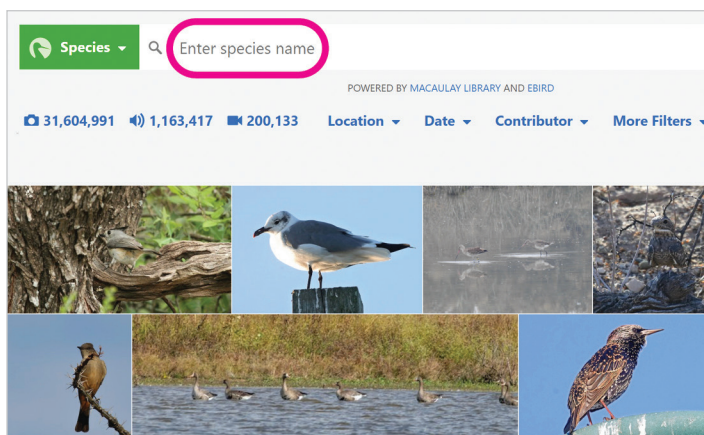
One of *eBird*'s most valuable resources is the huge collection of images, videos and sound recordings users have contributed. All of these are stored in the famous Macaulay Library for us to benefit from. Give this a try...



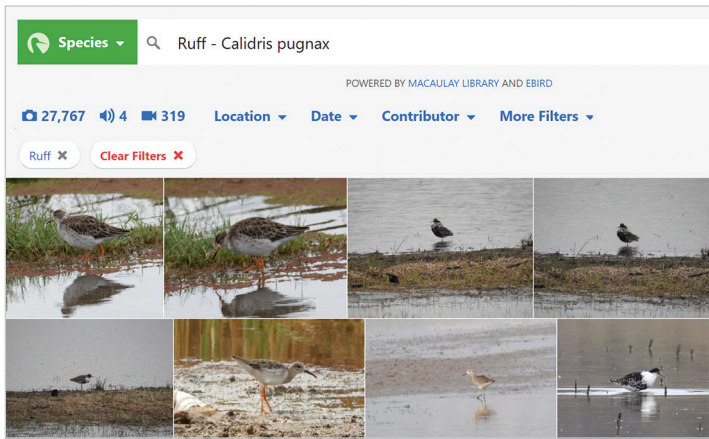
Step 1 Visit the *Explore* section of *ebird.org*



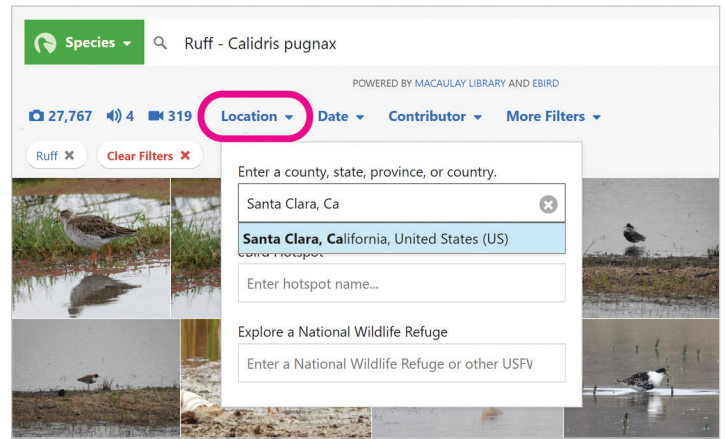
Step 2 Click on the *Search Photos and Sounds* lower down on the page.



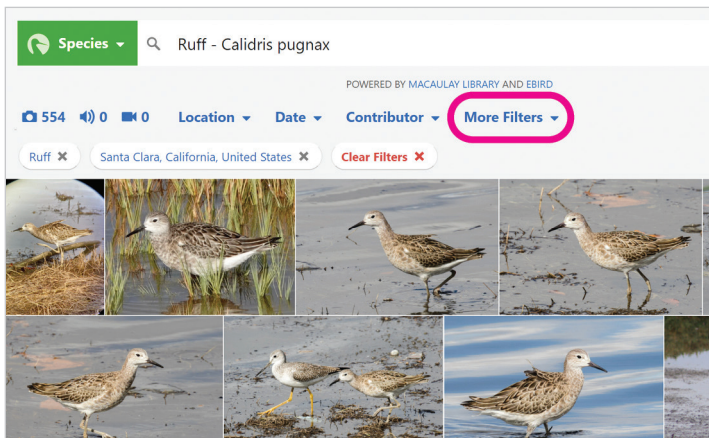
Step 3 You will then see a patchwork of random world-bird images and a search bar with a green *Species* button below the logo. Enter a bird you wish to see images of.



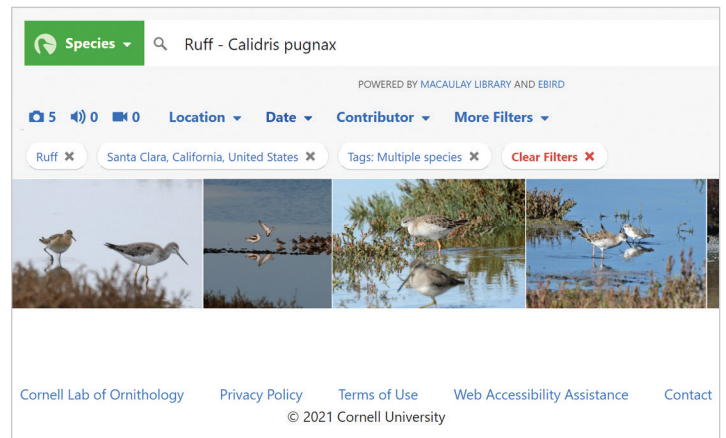
Step 4 I entered “*Ruff*” because December is a reasonable time to search for that species in Santa Clara County. I wanted to study ahead and make sure I would recognize it when the time came.



Step 5 But my search included world-wide reports of Ruff... Not very helpful. Some were even in breeding plumage! What I really want is to see photos of Ruff in California, or even Santa Clara County—during December... Just above the images, there are several filters (*Location*, *Date*, *Contributor*, *More Filters*) where you can restrict your search to only images that apply.



Step 6 Now, for me the best options can be found under *More Filters*. There you can limit the search results to *Multiple Species* which will give you an opportunity to quiz yourself.



Step 7 Can you see the Ruff among the Dowitchers and Yellowlegs? At any point, you can click on these images to display them at a larger size. Study up, and have fun! We'll be offering more eBird workshops soon! ●

NEW MEMBERS Aug – Oct

Thank you and Welcome!

Heather Anderson • Berry Armstrong • Sharrie Bailey • Tia Barth • Vaishnavi Bhat • Allison Cheng • Susan Cheung •

Karen Cohen • Theodore Coughlin • Betty DeLuco • Edward Fairchild • Anne Green • Carl S. Gutekunst • Kathryn Hall • Steven & Liza Hanks • Wayne & Judith Hooper • Alden Hughes • Utkarsh Jadhav • Sagar Joshi • Lindsay Joye • Mich Kao • Michele Kemmerling • May

& Paul Koski • Katie Lafky • Betty Lee • Anthony Lo • Xi Lu • Amado Lucas • J. Marie Lucero • Ryan Ludman • Kristi Luik • Katie Lydecker • Jenny March • Annie March • Heather Maylen • Ruth McDunn • Sheila McGann-Tiedt •
Continued on back cover



Bird Notes

Please report rarities to
pdunten@gmail.com

Pete Dunten

Santa Clara County eBird Reviewer

Hummingbirds through Sapsuckers

Studying hummingbird migration doesn't require a lot of field work if you happen to have hummingbird feeders! This fall's record of a migrant **Calliope Hummingbird** occurred at a feeder in the foothills of the Diablo Range (WP, KON). The date, 10 Sept, was the latest for a fall Calliope, and only the 4th fall record. Late summer and fall this year brought a nice variety of shorebirds to the south bay. A **Black Turnstone** turned up at Alviso pond A16 on 24 Aug (MAA) and again on 25 Aug nearby at pond A13 in the company of a Ruddy Turnstone (PDU). A **Ruff** arrived on 25 Oct at the Sunnyvale Baylands wetland (DW). Based on previous records, a lengthy stay would not be unusual.

An immature **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was a nice find on 15 Sept at Alviso pond A13 (GL). It was the first in the county since 2006. The bird was unfortunately only seen once. Pond A13 holds shorebirds during high tide on the bay, where they either feed or roost, and many more stop briefly on their commutes between the mudflats along the edge of the bay and high tide roosting sites. An immature **Stilt Sandpiper** on A13 during high tide on 17 Sept fit this pattern (PDU); it was found again on 26 Sept (MMR, MJM, RJ). Our last record was in the fall of 2017.

Baird's Sandpipers occurred on multiple dates this fall, starting with one at the San Jose/Santa Clara RWF ponds on 29 Aug (MJM, MMR). Up to four were along the edge of Alviso pond A13 between 14 and 20 Sept (PDU, m. ob.). **Pectoral Sandpipers** passed through during a protracted period from 24 Aug, when one was on Alviso pond A16 (MAA), and 23 Oct, when the last of a group of five remained at Sandy Wool Lake in Ed Levin CP (TKP, m. ob.). The high count this fall was eight at the San Jose/Santa Clara RWF on 15 Sept (MJM). Following the two late-July reports of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** (previous issue of *Bird Notes*), single birds were sighted on 15 Aug at Alviso ponds A16 and A17 (both CG) and on 26 Aug at pond A13 (MMR).

A distant **Jaeger sp.** was seen harassing terns over pond AB2 on 22 Aug (MDo). The immature **Common Tern** which spent the summer replacing its primary flight feathers was seen on several dates through 8 Aug in the vicinity of Shoreline Lake



Williamson's Sapsucker
Garrett Lau



Clay-colored Sparrow
Garrett Lau



Magnolia Warbler
Brooke Miller

(m. ob.). A **Common Loon** sporting the striking plumage of a first-winter bird was on the Guadalupe River at Blossom Hill Rd beginning on 27 Oct (JAb). A young **Brandt's Cormorant** arrived at Shoreline Lake on 9 Aug (DW) and has stayed there in the company of Double-crested Cormorants through the end of October (m. ob.).

A male **Williamson's Sapsucker** found at Vasona Lake CP on 4 Oct (CG) has stayed through the end of October and delighted many observers. The sapsucker is only the 7th recorded in the county. A **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Stanford's Escondido Village on 15 Sept (ABu) arrived close to the earliest date on record (12 Sept). The sapsucker presented a rare opportunity to see an immature's plumage before the black shield appeared across the upper breast. A bird in similar plumage was photographed last fall on 7 Oct at Ulistac NA.

Flycatchers through Warblers

The **Vermilion Flycatcher** at J Grant CP was last noted on 2 Aug (CBI). In previous years it has stayed at least until mid-August (17 Aug, 2020) or mid-Sept (18 Sept, 2019). A **Tropical Kingbird** at Palo Alto Baylands on 1 Oct was photographed extensively (SC). Photos of the kingbird in flight revealed the extent of its flight feather molt, a useful "photo-field mark" for separating Couch's and Tropical Kingbirds. One to two **Bank Swallows** could be picked out of the much larger group of (predominantly Violet-green) swallows on the wires near Alviso Marina between 26 Sept and 2 Oct (MJM, MMR, RJ). Single **Townsend's Solitaires** were found in the Diablo Range, one at J Grant CP on 22 Sept (LON) and one along Mines Rd 1.5 miles south of the Alameda County line on 23 Oct (JCh).

Clay-colored Sparrows stopped at three locations, with single sparrows at Lone Hill Park in San Jose on 11 Sept (MB), Vasona Lake CP on 21 – 21 Sept (SS, m. ob.), and the Stanford Farm from 7 to 12 Oct (PDU, m. ob.). A **Black-throated Sparrow** was photographed in Santa Cruz County at Loma Prieta on 22 Sept, and as often happens, the bird flew across the county line into Santa Clara County (AR). That short flight gave us our 4th county record. A **Lark Bunting** at the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area on 28 Aug was only the 7th county record (MDO, MHA, CKn).

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was a nice backyard bird in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose on 27 and 28 Aug (SPz). A small selection of vagrant warblers this fall included a **Northern Waterthrush** at Vasona Lake CP on 21 and 26 Sept (OA, MDO). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was also found on 21 Sept nearby at Los Gatos Creek CP (OA). Vasona Lake CP hosted an immature **American Redstart** on 27 - 28 Sept (GL, m. ob.). A **Magnolia Warbler**, the county's 11th, was an excellent find at Ulistac NA on 8 Oct (PLa). It was enjoyed by many on dates through 23 Oct.



Ed Levin County Park
Mike Ambrose

FIELD TRIP LEADERS NEEDED

SCVAS is growing our team of field trip leaders. We are looking for a diverse group of people who are enthusiastic about sharing their love of birds. We'll help you schedule the kind of field trips you want to lead, whether it's a walk for a special group, an accessible trip, a hike in your favorite park, a photowalk, or whatever type of trip you feel most enthusiastic about.

Contact *Eve Meier* at fieldtrips@scvas.org if you are interested in joining our team of field trip leaders.

Continuing on our tour through the fall warblers, we must return to Vasona Lake CP, the mecca for migrants this year. A **Blackpoll** was there between 27 Sept and 4 Oct (DSb, m. ob.). Finally, a **Palm Warbler** visited the area near the pirate ship at Shoreline Lake on 8 – 9 Oct (EHm, m. ob.).

Observers Jae Abel (JAb), Mary Ann Allen (MAA), Ozzie Altus (OA), Massimo Bafetti (MB), Curt Bianchi (CBI), Adam Burnett (ABu), Jim Chiropolos (JCh), Steve Collins (SC), Matthew Dodder (MDO), Pete Dunten (PDU), Carter Gasiorowski (CG), Eric Hamilton (EHm), Michael Hawk (MHA), Richard Jeffers (RJ), Carolyn Knight (CKn), Peter LaTourrette (PLa), Garrett Lau (GL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Brooke Miller (BM), Kitty O'Neil (KON), Leo O'Neill (LON), William Pelletier (WP), Sergio Perez (SPz), Tracy K Pham (TKP), Alex Rinkert (AR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Dessi Sieburth (DSb), Dave Weber (DW)



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Thank You & Welcome!

NEW MEMBERS Aug – Oct

Continued from page 13
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And thank you to those who renewed!

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Call the office to confirm.

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