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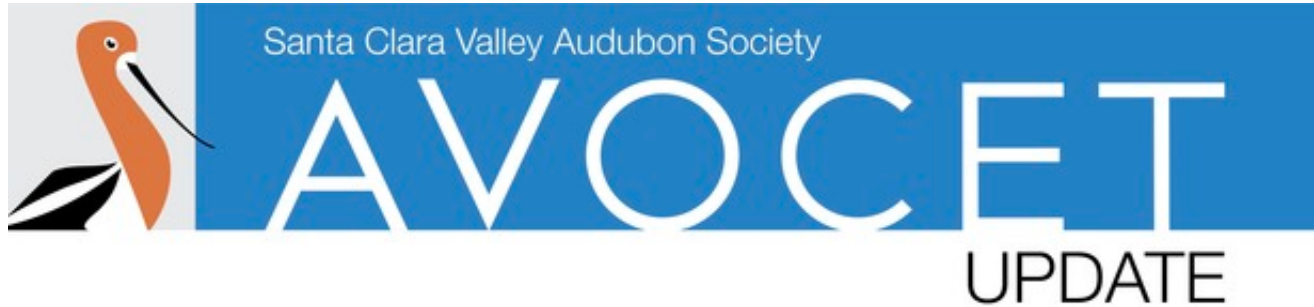


Photo by Chuq von Rospach

## July 2023

Welcome to summer! Before we know it, fall migration will begin and with it a host of seasonal arrivals. Among those are Terns and Shorebirds, subjects of two classes beginning in July. There are new field trips focused on seasonal birds, and new Backyard Birding stories to enjoy. We are also holding Board elections now, and members will be sent an email ballot to cast your vote. Finally, there is a very important message from our Board President, Bill Walker, and myself regarding our organization's name. Please read it and let us know your thoughts by answering the survey linked in the letter.

~**Matthew Dodder, Executive Director**



## **Dear Members of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society,**

As our organization approaches its one hundredth year, we find ourselves looking at who we are and who we can become. We are a community of birders and naturalists coming together to enjoy birds, conserve their habitat, and educate the public. We are dedicated to being a community that welcomes everyone in the South Bay who enjoys birds and working for their conservation.

Over the last few years, a better, more in-depth understanding of our organization's namesake has emerged. Many know John James Audubon was an artist and naturalist. However, he was also known to be a racist and slave owner. He desecrated Native American burial sites, he falsified field observations, and was more interested in adding to his collection than in conservation. While we recognize the important work done for birds by Audubon Society chapters over the past century, we must say forcefully that John James Audubon's actions clearly do not align with our organizational values.

Beginning with our annual retreat last fall, the Executive Director and Board of Directors have been reflecting on our name and how it can be an obstacle to fulfilling our mission. We believe we must now consider changing our name to remove that obstacle and free ourselves from that past.

The National Audubon Society has decided to keep its name. National Audubon has stated that each chapter is able to make its own decisions based on the unique needs and values of its community. We should take this opportunity to consider how we can best prepare for the future of birds and birding. Therefore, we are inviting all our members to participate in reevaluating our name and how it aligns with our values.

In the next few days, we will distribute a survey to allow members to weigh in on this issue. We hope that the survey results will provide us with valuable insights to help make an

informed decision about our name. We also welcome any additional feedback or suggestions that you may have.

Updating our name will help create a more welcoming environment for all members of our community. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this issue. Our core mission is to promote the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of birds and other wildlife by engaging all people in birding, education, and conservation. We believe confronting the troubling legacy of our namesake is one of several steps we should take to achieve that mission.

Thank you for your continued support of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. You will receive your email invitation to participate in the survey in the near future.

**Matthew Dodder**

Executive Director

**Bill Walker**

Board President

## Further Reading

- [Audubon, a complicated history](#)
- [What do we do about Audubon?](#)
- [The Myth of Audubon](#)



Field trip to McClellan Ranch led by Vinayak Hebbagil and Shweta Shidhore (June 10, 2023)

## Field Trips

July through early August in-person field trips drop on **June 28**. Visit [field trips](#) for more information and to sign-up.

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



Wilson's Phalarope: Dave Zittin

## Self-Guided Field Trips

We've come up with some great ideas for places you can bird on your own or with your household. Our self-guided trips direct you to where to bird and provide advice on which birds to look for in which habitats. Browse our [complete collection of guides](#) by location, park name or season.

Check out these two recommendations for July birding locations:

- [Sunnyvale Water Pollution Control Plant \(Summer\): Phalaropes in the East Pond](#)
- [Pond A2E and Crittendon Marsh \(Summer\): Totally Terns and Snowy Plovers Too](#)



## Young Birders Club

Are you a young birder with a passion for birds and nature? The Santa Clara Valley Young Birders Club (SCV-YBC) offers a friendly, inclusive local birding community of like-minded youth for all birding interests and experience levels. We provide volunteer, learning, and leadership opportunities for all students who have a passion for birds and the environment. Step up your birding game by giving back to the birding community, and combining your love for birds with music, art, baking, and more! As a birding club run by students, for students, we aim to foster a welcoming community for young birders and create more opportunities for students like us in the birding community.

Young birders aged 10-18 may join on their own, while birders aged 5-10 years old should join with a parent.

[Check out the YBC](#)



Hooded Oriole: Becky Ewens

## **Backyard Birding**

### **Send us your backyard bird sightings!**

What birds did you observe in your yard and neighborhood in May and June? Send your stories, photos, and sound clips to [backyardbirds@scvas.org](mailto:backyardbirds@scvas.org) and we'll publish them in the next All Around Town. The deadline for submittals is **Sunday, July 9**.

All Around Town is SCVAS's backyard bird report, a compilation of observations of the birds you find near home, work, and school. We can't wait to hear what you've spotted lately!



California Towhee: LC Boros

## Summer in the Backyard

As we head into the hottest months of the year, **you can help birds by providing them with water.**

You don't need a fountain or special receptacle to offer water to birds - a clean, shallow plant saucer will work well.

To reduce the spread of disease, be sure to change the water daily and clean the receptacle often, using safe cleaners like a weak vinegar solution (9 parts water to 1 part vinegar).

Tips on water containers, optimal water depth, and how to clean your container are [here](#) (scroll down to the section: "how to provide water to birds").



## **New Classes**

### **Terns**

**Elegant Aerialists of Santa Clara County**

**Monday, July 31**

7:00PM (via zoom)

Get ready for the summer push of Terns in our county. The lakes and ponds along the bay provide opportunities to see the common and not-so-common Terns on the South Bay. Join Matthew Dodder for a one session overview of our resident and migrant Terns with useful tips on how to differentiate confusing species, recommendations on where to focus your search, and reflections on a few rarities that have shown up in nearby counties.

[Register Here](#)





## Shorebirds

Parts 1, 2, 3

Monday, August 7, 14, 21

7:00PM (via zoom)

Each summer, millions of Arctic-breeding Shorebirds leave their northern nesting grounds and make their way toward southern wintering grounds. In Santa Clara County, we have many locations where dense clouds of these magnificent birds can be seen and admired as they arrive for the season. Others simply pass through on their way further south. Each species is truly unique yet identifying them can often be a challenge especially when they shed their colorful breeding plumage. Join Matthew Dodder for an online class focusing on Santa Clara County's diverse Shorebirds. Learn how to differentiate between the confusing "Peeps" and how to spot juvenile birds within the crowded flocks. We will dive first into the common species found here, and then move on to the rarer visitors and the challenges they present to birders. This class was first offered in 2021 and has been updated.

[Register Here](#)

## Conservation Corner

**In Mountain View, SCVAS supported the adoption of Google's North Bayshore Master Plan**, which looks for the construction of 7,000 residential units; 26 acres of public parks and open space; and 3 million square feet of office space, as well as community facilities and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Our organization has participated in planning processes in North Bayshore for over a decade. As trusted advisors to Google, we witnessed how they embraced nature and transformed North Bayshore from a standard office park to a beautiful, butterfly infused campus where monarch and swallowtail flutter, and a special place for birds where egrets and herons, black phoebes and bluebirds raise

their new generations. We look forward to implementation of the biodiversity-supporting elements of the North Bayshore Precise Plan and the Google Master Plan, especially the future Eco Gem which will replace buildings with a nature-themed park adjacent to the Charleston retention basin.



**Our advocacy efforts in Mountain View are entering a new and exciting phase:**

Mountain View is starting to explore how to enhance the city's urban landscapes for birds and pollinators and implement the City's Wide Biodiversity goal.

Supporting nature in an urban environment takes intent and attention. Not only do we want to transition landscaping towards California-native species that support all life cycles of birds and pollinators, but we want to change our landscaping maintenance practices and allow leaf litter to accumulate where possible, allow plants to grow in their natural form and densities (rather than square and round plants), and reduce maintenance work during the nesting season.

Shoreline Park and the Google campus in North Bayshore set a spectacularly beautiful example of embracing nature in a human-dominated environment, and we are looking forward to participating in the upcoming development of a new Urban Forest Plan, a new Park Master Plan, and enhancements of urban habitats. We hope you, our members and supporters, will participate and guide Mountain View in this exciting and unique effort.



**The City of Cupertino is in the process of preparing a Master Plan for Memorial park. Public engagement, as always, showed great support for integrating nature into future park design.**

To support biodiversity and integrate nature into a vibrant and colorful parkland, to provide habitat for songbirds and monarch butterflies, and to provide people with a joyful experience, we suggested that in non-turf landscape areas of the park, Cupertino should:

- 1) plant a variety of plants that have high habitat value, bloom in succession over all seasons, and are at least 80% California native trees and flowering plants from our region;
- 2) Plant at least 3 patches of 100-square feet each of native milkweed plants to support monarch butterflies; and
- 3) work with local ecology stakeholders to develop maintenance best practices that support biodiversity and are bird and pollinator friendly.

As the planning process continues, **we hope you, our members and supporters, will participate as plans move forward.**

**Palo Alto has neglected mitigation and reporting requirements following the construction of the new municipal golf course in 2014.** With other Environmental groups, our Environmental Advocacy team has participated in the CEQA process that allowed the reconfiguration of the golf course in 2014. We submitted a lengthy comment letter, concerned with the removal of hundreds of trees, the intentional introduction of an invasive golf course grass species that tolerates saline water, and encroachment of golfers into designated wetlands. Government agencies also commented, and in 2016 issued a long list of mitigations, conditions and reporting requirements for the creation, plantings and maintenance of mitigation wetlands on the golf course. Unfortunately, Palo Alto failed to implement the mitigations and to measure and report on success. The City is currently working with the California Water Quality Control Board to correct the problems, and we are working with the City, hoping for a good outcome for the wetlands and the species that depend on them.

On the bright side, the Palo Alto City Council has indicated that the anticipated new contract for the management of the Animal Shelter, release of feral cats will not be permitted.

Predation by domestic cats is the number-one direct, human-caused threat to birds in the United States and Canada. Cats have contributed to the extinction of 63 species of birds, mammals, and reptiles in the wild and continue to adversely impact a wide variety of other species, including those at risk of extinction. The ecological dangers are so critical that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists domestic cats as one of the world's worst non-native invasive species.

We thank the city of Palo Alto for recognizing that feral cats do not belong anywhere in our landscapes. Domestic cats should be pampered and cherished in our homes, and not be released to hunt birds and other small animals in the baylands, in parks and open space, along creeks or in our backyards.



## Nature Shop

Are you looking to spruce up your bookshelves? Or maybe you're in need of a new beach read for the summer? Stop by the SCVAS Nature Shop, **Monday-Friday, 10-4:30** to check out our selection of recycled books!



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