

The

AVOCET

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Spring 2022 • Vol 70 Num 2



Rancho Cañada del Oro Matthew Dodder

SPECIAL EVENT
BIRDATHON KICKOFF!
WITH SPECIAL GUEST
FREYA MCGREGOR
Wed, March 16 at 7 pm
via Zoom



As an occupational therapist and Birdability staff member, Freya understands how to modify the physical and cultural environments and adapt tasks and equipment to enable participation. Her work at Birdability is done through an occupational therapy lens and her 'dodgy' knee has been a motivator to improve accessibility those wanting to go birding.

More details at scvas.org

A Year in Review

Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate
Giulianna Pendleton, Environmental Advocacy Assistant

The SCVAS Environmental Advocates, Shani and Giulianna, cannot begin to express our gratitude and appreciation for all the work and support that our Environmental Action Committee (EAC) members have embraced in 2021, and the support of the SCVAS community at large.

This was the year we celebrated huge successes, such as the protection of Coyote Valley, the adoption of a Dark Sky and Bird Safe ordinance in Cupertino, the prioritization of biodiversity in the City of Mountain View and the start of a habitat garden in Cuesta Park, the allocation of state funds to design a wildlife bridge in the Pacheco Pass area, the adoption of Valley Water policy (tinyurl.com/5xp2j65j) to guide the development of creekside trails on this agency's property, and an urban-ecology focused plan for Google's development in downtown San Jose.

There were a few painful losses as urban "infill" continues to consume open space or encroaches on riparian buffers. San Jose's approval of a 16-story-2-block-long office project on the banks of the Guadalupe River, and the erosion of the 20-year creek protection policy in San Jose is a great disappointment to our team.

Here are a few of our many 2021 success stories, looking ahead to 2022 (and beyond), and volunteer opportunities for our members. For more opportunities to advocate for birds and nature in your community, please contact us at advocate@scvas.org.

Continued on page 6



Coffeeberry
Barry Langdon-Lassagne



Bush Monkey Flower
Barry Langdon-Lassagne



Valley Oak
Matthew Dodder

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

A student contacted me recently. He wanted an interview. He asked: what SCVAS does to help the environment? What we do with the donations we receive? And how can birdwatchers help the environment? Those are all great questions! And the answers should be top-of-mind for all for of us at SCVAS. Let me provide some now.

Our mission is to *"promote the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of birds and other wildlife by engaging people of all ages in birding, education, and conservation."* Everything we do is guided by that statement. Everything.

First, SCVAS helps the environment by introducing people to it. We guide the public on our free field trips—point out its many wonders, and help attendees understand they are a part of a larger ecosystem. For many, this may be their first active engagements they have with our local birds. Through our field trips and education programs we hope to inspire people to be curious, develop an understanding and a lasting concern for wildlife and the environment.

Second, our education program includes elementary school, high school and adult programs. Our education work overlaps with that of Outreach and our Speakers Series. In other words, we offer lifetime learning through trips, classes and presentations.

Third, our advocacy reaches local decision-makers and encourages them to work toward environmental policies.

Questions & Answers

We insert bird-safe design, habitat and smarter lighting practices early into urban master plan discussions. We give wildlife and the environment a voice. We also work to protect our threatened Burrowing Owl population, and provide nest boxes for Western Bluebirds and other cavity-nesting birds.

SCVAS has grown more than 30% in three years in membership, as we reach more people with outreach efforts, programs and environmental focus. We spend the majority of our revenue on our programs, and a very small amount on fundraising and administration. This formula has been working, but we rely on our members and donors for support and on our volunteers to help hold this chapter together.

Finally, what can the individual birdwatcher do to help the environment? Supporting SCVAS is a good start, but sharing your love of birds and green spaces with anyone you meet, helping them see the value of our native wildlife, will create new advocates for birds. Our members and staff are passionate about the birds, the environment, and our mission because everything we do is guided by them. *Everything.*

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director



SPRING BIRDS & PLANTS

Ann Hepenstal
SCVAS Volunteer

It's spring! As you get out into nature (or your backyard), take some time to notice the habitat as well as the birds, and note how the plants are changing with the seasons.

In the Wild

Here are few species to look for and enjoy as you tramp around local parks and wild places:

OAK TREES (*Quercus species*) The Bay Area hosts several species of oaks. The ones I see most frequently are Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*). Oak trees offer tremendous habitat value for birds, providing shelter, hosting insects to feed the young, producing acorns eaten by birds, hosting acorn granaries, and more. Valley Oaks are deciduous. At this time of year, enjoy the reappearance of the leaves, and their wide spectrum of green. Coast Live Oak put out some fresh leaves, and bloom in subtle but elegant "tassels."

CEANOTHUS There are 172 species of ceanothus native to California. Some species grow as low ground-cover; others as bushes; others can grow in a tree form. These "California lilacs" bloom in every shade of purple, as well as some white. Ceanothus typically have small, leathery evergreen leaves. We have several varieties in the Bay Area, including "Blueblossom Ceanothus" (*Ceanothus thysiflorus*) in the wild, and in cultivated landscapes like "Skylark Ceanothus". Some varieties of Ceanothus start blooming around December and then hand that duty over to other varieties to continue through the summer. Ceanothus provide cover and nesting habitat.

COFFEEBERRY A common understory plant, Coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*) has smooth green leaves, grows as a shrub, and is evergreen. While it flowers in the spring, you may not even notice its subtle small white flowers! The flowers yield a fruit that ranges from a reddish color to black, and are enjoyed by the fruit-eating birds.

MANZANITA (*Arctostaphylos species*) Like Ceanothus, Manzanita's growth habit ranges from ground-cover to trees, and 192 species are native to California! You may find the Woollyleaf Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos tomentosa*) in the Bay Area along with other varieties. Some Manzanitas start blooming in December and continue through the spring, featuring white/pinkish, tiny, vase-shaped flowers. Hummingbirds love these flowers—look for them nectaring on Manzanitas. The foliage provides excellent cover, and the birds eat the fruits when they appear.

MONKEYFLOWER In the Bay Area, you can often find Bush Monkey Flower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*) growing on hillsides and other wild places. While this variety has yellow blooms starting in the springtime, other Monkey Flower species produce red or pink flowers, and the nursery trade has cultivated even more options. Watch hummingbirds working these flowers!

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR Matthew Dodder Executive Director



The Birds

Beginning in March we will see a few clear signs of spring. I notice it strongly with the Hummingbirds. For me, the true signals of spring are the *Selasphorus* hummingbirds (Allen's and Rufous) which are both present in March. A popular spot to find these flame-colored, fire-carrying birds is Ed Levin Park in the flowering eucalyptus above the dog run. In the case of Allen's Hummingbirds we may see nesting there as well. We can watch for the male's red-hot courtship display, a strong indication he intends to breed here instead of continuing north like the very similar-looking Rufous Hummingbird. Toward the end of March, we might find Black-chinned Hummingbirds setting up shop along a few riparian sections, such as Guadalupe Creek off of Meridian Avenue. By mid-April, an occasional Calliope Hummingbird may pass through, often on our local hill tops.

With luck, we will see Swainson's Hawks arriving in Coyote Valley again in April where hopefully they will breed again. They hail from South America and funnel northward through Panama before fanning out over the western states of North America.

As far as Passerines go, the Pacific-slope Flycatcher will be the first, a month earlier than the Olive-sided Flycatcher and Western Wood-Pewee who are famously late migrants. The two *Contopus* species also begin their northbound journey from South America, delaying their arrival on the breeding grounds until mid-April.

Northern Rough-winged Swallows also begin to appear mid-February, undoubtedly trying to get a jump on the tight housing market (burrows and crevices are quickly snatched up in the competition). They are followed soon after by Barn and Cliff Swallows. Then Warbling Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, House Wren, Wilson's Warbler, etc... The truth is a *lot* of Passerines (especially insectivores) begin to arrive in March and April, and it's more than we need to discuss here. As my eyes continue down the list though I am struck by the reality that a new year brings with it a difficult task—to find all the birds all over again.

So, in this installment of W2L4, I would like to talk about something different—*us*, and how we look for birds. How we structure our outings, and how to make each year's birding enjoyable no matter how often (or how) you bird.

The Year

If you're a "year birder", every January 1st your "year list" is wiped clean. Thrown back to zero species. All that work... now at the bottom of the hill like the rock of Sisyphus. It's harsh, and eBird makes it obvious how much needs to be done to replenish your list. It's a game that many of us find thrilling, myself included. People write books about it, like *The Big Year* or *Kingbird Highway*.

However, this approach can also transform your year into a feverish pursuit of birds, driving one to watch for new alerts anxiously like you're waiting for a chance to buy tickets to *Hamilton*. Maybe I'm just speaking for myself...

The Birder

For many other birders however, the year-list isn't the driving force to go birding. It doesn't matter as much, or even at all. This school of thought empowers folks to go birding simply because they want to. Birding for them is not as frantic an endeavor, and right now that's seeming pretty *wonderful*. Birders of that orientation can bird any way they want—wherever, whenever they can, and work on their own schedule. I think there's bright gold in that mine and after a few years of being a year birder, I'm ready for a different challenge.

Ultimately though, both kinds of birding are valid and fun. You pick. Here are my thoughts about how this year could go.

Resolutions

What I have found with all this rushing around is I wasn't as eager to go birding *just* to go birding because of the urgent need to make every outing *count* and result in a tick on the list. It's clear now, I was practicing just one style of birding but no, *there is another*. It was fun... but I have a revised plan for this year. Here are some resolutions, which I may or may not keep, but I'm going to try:

- 1 I'd like to visit spots in Santa Clara County where no recent "year birds" have been reported. That could mean following less familiar sites on *Self-guided Field Trips* on *scvas.org*. Maybe bird areas that don't even have accounts yet.

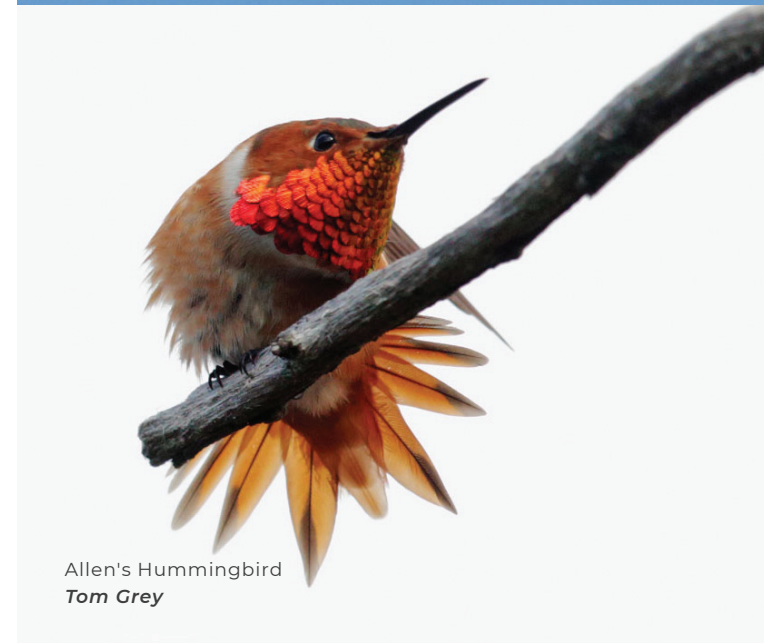
Photos L to R:
Caspian Tern, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Cliff Swallow,
Warbling Vireo, Barn Swallow Tom Grey



Swainson's Hawk
Tom Grey



Black Skimmer
Tom Grey



Allen's Hummingbird
Tom Grey

- 2 I'd like to bird *neighborhood parks*, especially those *walking distance* from our home or my office at the Ranch. I'm not going to feel bad if I decide to bird in a neighboring county—I hear they have good birds too...
- 3 I'd like to ride my *bike more*. There are many birders who create "green birding" lists. I think that sounds like an interesting, environmentally positive idea. Maybe it's not too late to *start a year list of just the birds I find on bike rides* or neighborhood walks, without fossil fuel.

In this installment of W2L4 I would like to talk about something different—*us*, and how we look for birds.

- 4 It's a given I notice birds everywhere I go. The store, the post office, the tire center... But I'm thinking now that it might be good to create *eBird lists for these micro-trips*. It would be an interesting project to do micro lists for those spots.
- 5 There are a lot of blue and green (underbirded) hotspots in this world, quite a few of them are in Santa Clara County. I think it would be fun to *try to fill the gaps* in those areas. There are entire months where no data exists at certain sites. It might be possible to find something new—make a new green bar on the eBird checklist for a month with no data. Maybe no one's reported a very common bird from an under-birded hotspot.
- 6 *eBird* has definitely advanced birding and it's gaining popularity. But *SouthBayBirds.io* remains indispensable for both local and visiting birders. We help everyone when we provide sentence-based accounts of where we find birds. Details like tide conditions, parking, traffic, a bird's condition or routine may not be easy to communicate on eBird, but very easy on our local email list. Let's make more of an effort to post in both locations.

The Takeaway

If any or all of these resolutions sound good to you, wonderful. I invite you to give them a try. As with any resolutions though, it's possible they might be broken at some point but still worth the effort. Perhaps we can keep the most important of them: Bird because you love it. Bird when you want to. Bird when you can. Bird to help others. Bird and be a little greener than the year before. ●

*Shani Kleinhaus, Environmental Advocate
Giuliana Pendleton, Advocacy Assistant*

Continued from cover

Artificial Light At Night (ALAN)

ALAN is emerging as one of the most widespread global threats to birds and ecosystems and environmental health.

SUCCESS Dark Sky and Bird Safe Ordinance in Cupertino ([tinyurl.com/2p97sec4](https://www.tinyurl.com/2p97sec4)) We thank EAC members Connie Cunningham and Rose Grymes for working tirelessly to promote a dark sky and bird safe ordinance in Cupertino! We thank the Cupertino City Council for passing this ordinance unanimously. This ordinance will control lighting and mandate bird-safe design treatments to all glass surfaces in "bird-sensitive areas."

LOOKING AHEAD We continue our work to encourage cities to include Bird Safety and Dark Sky policies and standards and minimize the proliferation of ALAN in our communities. We are making progress in Mountain View and in Los Gatos.

VOLUNTEER We are looking for Sunnyvale volunteers who are willing to lead advocacy efforts in this city. We are also looking for volunteers to speak at art commissions and monitor proposed art projects in our county, as we see more and more proposals for large, lit art installations in ecologically sensitive areas.

Birds, Biodiversity & Habitat

SUCCESS We partnered with GreenspacesMV, a Mountain View group that is striving for healthier, more natural communities. Joint advocacy resulted in the prioritization of biodiversity by the City Council, and in the establishment of a native plant garden taking shape in Cuesta Park. [greenspacesmv.org](https://www.greenspacesmv.org)

LOOKING AHEAD We are encouraged to be able to collaborate with a motivated, creative team! Native plant rehabilitation is critical for biodiversity protection for native wildlife, pollinators, and even the soil beneath us. This garden at Cuesta Park is an opportunity to engage community members in rehabilitation efforts, to educate park-goers on the importance of biodiversity and native habitats, and to restore native habitats at the local level. GreenspacesMV has garden workdays every Saturday and volunteers are welcome!



Coyote Valley agriculture
Eve Meier



Cuesta Park Pollinator Project
GreenSpacesMV



Hwy 152 seen from Pacheco Creek
Matthew Dodder

VOLUNTEER Join us at Cuesta park garden workdays! Fill out the brief volunteer interest form at [tinyurl.com/22naphyb](https://www.tinyurl.com/22naphyb).

Coyote Valley

SUCCESS Coyote Valley, an important open space for birds and wildlife, is protected! This achievement marks decades of advocacy from SCVAS and other regional organizations to preserve this area as open space and agriculture. Both San Jose City Council and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors took steps this year to ensure Coyote Valley will remain zoned as open space and for agriculture and free of major development.

LOOKING AHEAD The Open Space Authority (OSA) is embarking on a Master Planning process for Coyote Valley. The planning process will take years, and SCVAS will engage and speak for birds and habitat, for rewilding the Valley, and protecting Burrowing Owls.

VOLUNTEER Want to participate in public meetings to advocate for open space, wetlands and protected Burrowing Owl habitat? To receive updates on opportunities to get involved, go to [tinyurl.com/2p8yw4wj](https://www.tinyurl.com/2p8yw4wj).

Wildlife Movement

SUCCESS Wildlife Bridge, Pacheco Pass. We supported the Habitat Agency's proposal for grant money to fund a new wildlife crossing bridge over SR-152 in the Pacheco area. The Habitat Agency was awarded the funds to study wildlife crossings for Pacheco and find a suitable area for a wildlife bridge. We look forward to continuing to support this project!

(SAD) SUCCESS Newt mortality on Alma Bridge Road. Advocacy with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) and the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) helped

allocate funding for studies, stopped the development of a new parking lot on Alma Bridge Road, and motivated Midpen to prioritize work on this issue. Sadly, the studies show that the level of newt mortality on the road is likely to cause local extinction of Pacific Newts near Lexington Reservoir.

LOOKING AHEAD Newt mortality at this site is not an easy problem to solve. We must continue to advocate and speak up for these beautiful and vulnerable creatures.

VOLUNTEER Sign up with the Newt Patrol [bioblitz.club/newts](https://www.bioblitz.club/newts)

Valley Water Creekside Trail

SUCCESS In December 2021 the Valley Water Board of Directors adopted a policy that provides guidance for Creekside Trails—including stronger protection of riparian ecosystems and a provision to prohibit lighting except where necessary for safety or by law. SCVAS has advocated for Valley Water to promote stronger creekside trail protections for many years and we are pleased with this progress.

LOOKING AHEAD Trails along waterways and in sensitive open space areas continue to be a concern due to the impact of human activity on breeding birds, roosting bats, and wildlife movement through the landscape. There are ongoing efforts to create bike-highways ([tinyurl.com/ycke3yx7](https://www.tinyurl.com/ycke3yx7)), light creek trails up, and facilitate movement of electric bikes and other mobility devices everywhere, and while we are glad to see alternatives to car traffic, we have been vocal in opposing lighting along riparian corridors, and highlighting concerns for our ecosystems and wildlife.

Urban Development: Google

SUCCESS After a long planning process and evaluation, we supported Google's master plans for campuses in downtown

San Jose and in Mountain View East Whisman area. These are examples of responsible urban planning which focus on density in the urban core, prevent displacement, protect riparian ecosystems, integrate native trees and shrubs into urban design, and promote sustainability.

LOOKING AHEAD Google is developing master plans for Sunnyvale's Moffett Park ([moffettparksp.com](https://www.moffettparksp.com)) and Mountain View's North Bayshore ([tinyurl.com/yt545cen](https://www.tinyurl.com/yt545cen)). These areas are located near sensitive habitat and the bay, and we are looking forward to continued engagement in these processes.

Thank You

None of our achievements would be possible without the work of our EAC volunteers and collaboration with other local groups such as the California Native Plant Society, the Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, Green Foothills, Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful, GreenspacesMV, the Cupertino Chamber of Commerce and others, and we are thankful! We are also thankful to many agency staff and elected officials who have been supportive of our work, and of birds and wildlife and ecosystems in cities and in the open spaces around us.

There is a lot of work to be done in 2022 and, along with what's mentioned above, we plan to focus our efforts on Burrowing Owl conservation, advocating for safe wildlife crossings for newts at Alma Bridge Rd, dark sky and bird-safe design policies, greening our urban areas, and protecting creeks and waterways. ●

Get Involved in any of these efforts!
Please contact us at advocate@scvas.org

Friends of SCVAS

Gifts received Nov 2021 – Jan 2022

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AMERICAN AVOCET \$100 - 249

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SPRING *Continued from page 3*

Habitat at Home

You can create some habitat value at home by planting California natives. Whether you grow some in a pot on your patio, add a plant or two in your yard, or totally redo your landscaping to California natives—you can make a difference for the birds.

Spring is your "last chance to plant" before the dry season. Do your research, and take the plunge! Or—start planning now, and get ready to plant in October, the "planting season" as we await the winter rains to give your new habitat a great start.

Learn More and Get Started

- ▶ **Bloom California!** Great resource to get introduced to native plants and where to buy them. bloomcalifornia.org
- ▶ **Calscape.org** Search for plants native to your address or look up individual plants as well as learn how big the plant will grow, what it needs, what birds, butterflies, etc. it supports
- ▶ **California Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Chapter** offers periodic talks about native plants including how to select them, grow them, maintain them, etc. Each spring, free, self-guided tour of native plant gardens around the county. This year's tour: April 2 (northern area), April 3

(southern area). See gngt.org for information. This is a great way to get ideas! Their Gardening Resources page (cnps-scv.org/gardening/gardening-resources) provides information on Berries for Birds, Plants for Hummingbirds, Native Plant Professionals, Where to Buy Native Plants, and more. The chapter runs a native plant nursery where the public may purchase plants. Each fall, they host a native plant sale which also features educational events. See california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter.square.site/

- ▶ **East Bay Wilds website** offers information about native plants to grow in containers, including this list. tinyurl.com/2p8zpwht

- ▶ **Water rebates** Switch to native plant-based landscaping and you may qualify for a rebate. See Valley Water's rebate programs including lawn-removal and improved irrigation systems. tinyurl.com/mr32atdf
- ▶ **Las Pilitas nursery's website** Laspilitas.com offers great information on California native plants, their growth habits and photos. Also see information on plants and birds at laspilitas.com/bird.htm
- ▶ **Santa Barbara Botanical Garden** A little farther south of us, but still informative: see the "Native Garden Calendar" to get an idea of which plants do what at various times of the year (tinyurl.com/mr423jc8) and their plant lists for your garden (tinyurl.com/bdew8742) ●



REMEMBERING GAIL CHEESEMAN

Barry Langdon-Lassagne
Board President

Gail loved sharing her joy of nature and enthusiasm for life with

everyone she met. The outpouring of support our chapter has received since her passing and the stories you've sent give us a glimpse into the positive ways she has impacted all of us.

Gail's involvement in and staunch support of SCVAS goes back at least to the early 1970s. She led countless field trips, ran a nest record program, hosted pelagic and worldwide nature trips with her husband Doug, authored chapters in the first edition of *Birding at the Bottom of the Bay*, and with Doug chaired our Programs Committee for well over a decade. For our first Birdathon, in 1988, Gail helped form one of the four original teams, and she remained an active participant through 2020.

Many of you knew Gail from her and Doug's founding of Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris leading international adventures as well as local pelagic trips off the California coast, or from her extraordinary long involvement as a leader and supporter of our chapter, but my wife Ginger and I got to know Gail late in her life, simply as a fellow birder at our local preserves. Gail's cheerful disposition and her willingness to share her extensive knowledge of the natural world left a permanent impression on us. We first met Gail through Bill Pelletier and Kitty O'Neil.

Bill and Kitty had a special relationship with Gail. When Bill moved out from the east coast and was missing his family, Gail became his "west coast mom." Bill and Kitty formed a birding class nicknamed *The Sharpies* and Gail was active right from the beginning, regularly attending the classes (over a hundred!) and nearly all the field trips. Ginger and I joined *The Sharpies* in their third year, and Gail was there next to us in the classroom and out on the hikes.

Ginger remembers:

Gail taught me so much about the familiar birds of our beloved Bay Area. She was always glad to share what she knew and was generous with her time for explanations. I learned the wingtip pattern of an adult Ring-billed Gull from her, and the scolding chip call of the Common Yellowthroat. She was incredibly cheerful and active, even after her long and draining treatments for cancer. One day out at the coast, we were climbing down some stair-steep cliffs to view the seabirds; I offered to carry her scope & tripod, but she declined, saying 'Oh, thank you, but I use it as my walking stick to get down the slippery parts of the trail!' Gail was so joyful and full of knowledge and ingenuity like that.

Bob Hirt told me:

Although I only went on one international trip with Cheesemans' Ecology, I did go on several Pelagic trips

Photo: Gail in Africa

with Gail. Doug and Gail made these trips a delight with constant fascinating information during the trips about seabirds, whales and ecology of Monterey Bay. I'll never forget her smile, laugh and upbeat manner.

Bob Power, former Executive Director for SCVAS wrote in to say "Gail was a tireless advocate for the environment and a valued member of our environmental community. AND a keen and devoted birder. Although many of the pelagic trips we were on were focused on marine mammals, it was Gail who was always searching for jaegers, rare shearwaters, and albatross."

Kris Karnos first met Gail around the late '80s, joining her and Doug on many Monterey Bay pelagic trips, and a trip to Tanzania and Kenya in 2012, including Ndotu, which she remembers being Gail and Doug's favorite place. Kris says:

In recent years, we sometimes, by chance or by plan, met up at a march for science or other event to show up for social and environmental justice. I deeply admired Gail for her knowledge of and care for birds and wildlife in general, her commitment to responsible eco-tourism, and her patience with the human animals with which she so frequently interacted.

Kris remembers "a guide in Kenya dubbing her 'Mama Tembo' for her love of elephants." Kris also says:

I will miss her greeting with its New Hampshire accent on the other end of a phone call, the sight of her lean figure at the back of the boat identifying pelagic birds attracted to the chum, and I will deeply miss being able to share with her some new experience (whether hers or mine) with our wild fellow creatures.

Carolyn Straub also recalls Gail's love of elephants:

Gail would be most eloquent about the elephants in Africa—as frequently I would ask Gail and Doug if elephants were surviving the poaching. Confusing news reports. Gail would reassure us about all the elephants that they saw and say that there were still many! She saw

tons of elephants. It was comforting to hear from Gail at SCVAS meetings last year about a beloved mammal!

Larry Volpe fondly remembers Gail & Doug's many presentations and recalls:

As a kid I had Marlon Perkins and Jacques Cousteau as heroes and influences that shaped my world of advocacy for nature. As an adult, for the last 30 years, I had and will continue to have Gail and Doug. They are unrivaled in their knowledge of nature, their enthusiasm for sharing their knowledge and modeling for us how to advocate for our wild places. There are few places you can go in life to find such a person like Gail who talked the talk, but also walked the walk in being a wildlife warrior hero.

Debbie Thompson, past SCVAS Board president, says:

Thank you Gail for giving us the gift of nature and wildlife appreciation. Your enthusiasm was contagious and your unwavering passion for conservation was truly inspiring. We will forever treasure the many fond memories of time spent with you.

Late last year, Gail told Bill Pelletier that she'd love to see a Black-chinned Sparrow one more time before she died and Bill exclaimed "I'll take you now!" Gail replied "Silly, we can't go to Arizona," but Bill drove her to the back side of Loma Prieta in the Santa Cruz mountains and that day they found six Black-chinned Sparrows, to Gail's delight.

Kitty says "Gail was eternally optimistic. She never seemed to have a bad day." Her cheerful nature was contagious and she lifted everyone's spirits when she was around, both in class and on the trail. When birding in California, Kitty recalled "any time we saw a raptor or a vulture Gail would hark back to her adventures in Africa," pointing out the similarities between the African and California savannas and their related birds.

"Gail touched a lot of people more deeply than anyone knew," Bill reflected. ●

NEW MEMBERS Nov – Jan

Thank you and Welcome!

Shrish Agrawal • Diane M. Akers • Megan Albertelli • Corin Anderson • Ray Arnaudo • Joellyn Avery • Diana Baker • Erin Barrite • Sarah Barsch • Mary-Sonja Beasley • Max Belden • Theodore Bjornson • Alex Broskoff • Wendy Chase • Joyce Chen • Jessica Chen • Teresa Cheng • Paul &

Marijane Chestnut • James Clinkenbeard • Peter Cocotas • Sky Collins • Heather Cowper • Bonnie Crater • Wayne & Charlotte Crowell • Susan Davidson • Kim • Barbara Dehn • Doreen Deicke • Harry Dennis • Kay Donahue • Dave & Sharon Drager • Michele Drake • Edwin Duerr • Laurel Eby • Marilyn Emerich • Amy Fenton • Alejandra Flores • Anthony Fuccella • Doug Gillard • Craig & Teresa Gleason • Carole Gonsalves • Raju

Gottumukkala • Richard & Margaret Griffith-Perham • Patricia L. Hassel • Robyn Heinrich • Daryll Henrich • Kathleen Herington • Melissa Hero • Gail Hicks • Ida Holmes • Dale Horkman • Ruth Hutchins • Carol Irwin • Eleanor Jansen • Jessica Jasper • Harriet John • Lynne Johnson • Sheryl Johnson • Jessica Johnston • Sunshine Jowell • Ann Marie Kato • Carol Kendall • Jennifer Kitchen •
Continued on back cover



Field Notes

Please report rarities to pdunten@gmail.com

Pete Dunten
Santa Clara County eBird Reviewer

Swans to Woodpeckers

A flock of 12 **Tundra Swans** flew over San Jose on 13 Dec, destination unknown (MJM). A female or immature male **Tufted Duck** was spotted on 12 Nov amongst Lesser Scaup on Alviso pond A16 (JPt). With the Scaup greatly outnumbering the Tufted Duck, looking for it was like searching for Waldo in a 'Where's Waldo?' illustration. The Tufted Duck is the first in the county since the winter of 2004/2005. It has remained into January. A **White-winged Scoter** paused on pond A4 from 6 – 7 Dec (COv, m. ob.). One was also found on Alviso pond A11 on 6 Jan (RWR). A **Red-necked Grebe** was captured on camera at Coyote Lake on 5 Jan (HF). A pair of **Sandhill Cranes** flew over Portola Valley on 26 Dec (PCI & RCI). Most of our records are of flyover Cranes; the longest-staying individual spent close to three weeks in and near Thompson Creek during the winter of 2010/2011.

Our second **Ruff** of the fall was seen at the Gold St & Elizabeth St pond on 7 Nov (MDo) and at the State St and Spreckles Ave pond on 8 Nov (FV). A **Curlew Sandpiper** at Palo Alto Baylands on 20 Dec was a nice surprise found during the Palo Alto CBC (MMR). The sandpiper has remained through January; is the first to overwinter; and represents only the 6th county record. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on 31 Dec at Ogier Ponds was a nice find and the first of the winter (CG). A **Common Loon** was on Shoreline Lake, occasionally dodging kayaks, between 12 Nov and 22 Dec (LKO, m. ob.). The long-staying **Brandt's Cormorant** on Shoreline Lake was last reported on 19 Dec. The Cormorant arrived on 9 Aug and holds the record for length of stay in the county. A **Rough-legged Hawk** on 29 Oct along Canada Rd in the south county unfortunately moved on rather than stay (MJM).

The **Williamson's Sapsucker** at Vasona CP continued through January after arriving on 4 Oct. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was also found at Vasona CP on 7 Dec (COv), and it too has stayed through January. A **Red-naped Sapsucker** posed for photographs at Ulistac NA on 1 Nov (EFI) and 3 Nov (PLa). This was the second Red-naped Sapsucker found this winter; neither bird has been seen again. A **Lewis's Woodpecker** at Monte Bello OSP participated in the Palo Alto CBC on 20 Dec (DPy et al.). Lewis's Woodpeckers occur infrequently in the Santa Cruz Mountains.



Harris's Sparrow
Betty DeLuco, Bob McNamara



Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Bob Reiling



Curlew Sandpiper
Barry Langdon-Lassagne

Flycatchers to Grosbeaks

Single **Hammond's Flycatchers** were found at two locations, one in the late fall on 6 Nov in Henry Coe SP (FxC) and one wintering along the Guadalupe River above Ulistac NA beginning on 10 Jan (fide eBird). Also wintering along that stretch of the Guadalupe River was an **Eastern Phoebe**, first noted on 8 Jan (TKP). A migrant **Tropical Kingbird** was seen at the edge of pond A4 in Sunnyvale on 29 Oct (PW). Tropical Kingbirds historically were found in one of every three years. One to two have wintered in the vicinity of Byxbee Park, the Duck Pond at Palo Alto Baylands, and Geng Rd for the past three winters. One was reported at Palo Alto Baylands on 1 Oct, followed by a gap until 8 Nov when one was seen on the San Mateo County side of San Francisquito Creek (DPe), then two were seen at the Duck Pond on 13 Nov (EdP). One to two have been reported near Geng Rd through January. **Cassin's Kingbirds** were found in the south county in both November and January. The late fall records include one along Canada Rd on 29 Oct (MJM) and one in a Gilroy neighborhood west of Hwy 101 on 10 Nov (AP). January records include three locations, with one Kingbird at the Gilroy SCRWA on 6 Jan (MJM), two west of Hwy 101 on 9 Jan (AP), and one along San Felipe Rd on 13 Jan (GL). A **Townsend's Solitaire** at Sanborn CP delighted many observers in January after being discovered on 11 Jan (BM). A **Harris's Sparrow** at Palo Alto Baylands on 14 Nov (BtD & BbD) was the first in the county since 2013. It unfortunately was a one-day wonder.

Wilson's Warblers occasionally overwinter. Whether these are locally breeding birds or birds from more northerly populations is unknown—we simply don't have good photo documentation. A Wilson's Warbler was briefly seen on 6 Jan along the Guadalupe River above Ulistac NA (WGB). Another was found along the Penetencia Creek trail at the groundwater recharge ponds on 16 Jan (JPa). That individual was found again on 22 Jan and photographed (GL, SW), and the photos suggest it was from a more northerly breeding population, perhaps *pusilla* (fide PP). Documentation of more wintering Wilson's Warblers could be a challenging project, given their tendency to constantly be in motion. The theme of this installment of the Field Notes which stands out is that observers are successfully picking out and identifying uncommon birds even when the identification isn't straightforward. So it is fitting to end with a pair of Grosbeaks. A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was photographed at a feeder in a Los Altos neighborhood on 4 Dec and as late as 18 Dec (AnH, RWR). The same feeder attracted a female **Black-headed Grosbeak** on 17 Dec and later dates into January (AnH).

Observers Pamela Clark (PCI), Robert Clark (RCI), Felix Cloutier (FxC), Betty DeLuco (BtD), Bob DeLuco (BbD), Matthew Dodder (MDo), Erica Fleniken (EFI), Howard Friedman (HF), Carter Gasiorowski (CG), Ann Hep (AnH), Lena Kolesnikova (LKO), Peter LaTourrette (PLa), Garrett Lau (GL), Mike



Mystery Feather
Matthew Dodder

Matthew Dodder
Quiz Master

TRACK & FEATHER

The key to feather identification is *context*—in other words, where was the feather found? In this case, the mystery feather was found on Limantour Beach in Point Reyes in December. It was a gray and windy, post-Christmas weekend, and we found this delicate feather embedded in the sand, just a few yards from the surf.

Notice the two small white dots at the tip of the two inch long feather. If you think you know, let me know. Include a short description of how you arrived at your answer. Email director@scvas.org. Answer will be posted in the next issue of *The Avocet*.

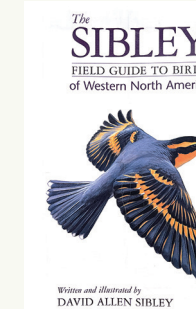
Books

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 (WINTER 2022)

Varied Thrush (secondary feather, right wing). **Image:** Cover of Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America



Mammoser (MJM), Brooke Miller (BM), Chris Overington (COv), Janna Pauser (JPa), Andy Pedler (AP), Don Pendleton (DPe), Ed Perry (EdP), James Petersen (JPt), Devin Peyton (DPy), Tracy K Pham (TKP), Peter Pyle (PP), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Frank Vanslager (FV), Pingang Wang (PW), Susan Weinstein (SW)

2021-2022 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Species	San Jose	Palo Alto	Mount Hamilton	Calero Morg-Hill
	12/19/21	12/20/21	1/2/22	12/27/21
Snow Goose	2	1	-	1
Greater White-fronted Goose	45	23	-	20
Cackling Goose	16	4	-	9
Canada Goose	2,111	1,245	65	977
Wood Duck	7	4	-	8
Blue-winged Teal	-	2	-	-
Cinnamon Teal	60	15	-	2
Northern Shoveler	4,448	13,722	5	15
Gadwall	394	248	-	67
Eurasian Wigeon	5	4	-	-
American Wigeon	3,245	1,991	101	30
Mallard	1,664	864	28	780
Northern Pintail	237	153	-	-
Green-winged Teal	3,004	1,475	-	5
Canvasback	1,109	1,519	-	-
Redhead	37	870	-	-
Ring-necked Duck	30	343	23	122
Greater Scaup	586	1,101	-	4
Lesser Scaup	833	563	-	14
<i>Greater/Lesser Scaup</i>	327	2,294	-	9
Surf Scoter	13	144	-	-
Bufflehead	598	362	52	116
Common Goldeneye	282	118	-	16
Barrow's Goldeneye	-	6	-	-
Hooded Merganser	31	30	49	33
Common Merganser	26	18	-	34
Red-breasted Merganser	49	-	-	-
Ruddy Duck	6,977	11,119	70	100
<i>duck sp.</i>	800	6,000	13	-
California Quail	236	143	245	344
Wild Turkey	61	125	28	256
Pied-billed Grebe	270	70	22	55
Horned Grebe	5	4	-	-
Eared Grebe	1,526	24	1	10
Western Grebe	171	22	-	26
Clark's Grebe	90	13	-	8
<i>aechmophorus sp.</i>	62	4	-	152
Rock Pigeon	1,018	444	-	470
Band-tailed Pigeon	15	701	9	111
Eurasian Collared-Dove	112	21	20	135
Mourning Dove	343	347	13	377
Greater Roadrunner	-	-	-	1
White-throated Swift	220	88	-	163
Anna's Hummingbird	425	658	5	220
Ridgway's Rail	-	3	-	-
Virginia Rail	25	3	-	-
Sora	43	7	-	1
Common Gallinule	11	6	-	-
American Coot	3,074	4,116	173	625
Black-necked Stilt	468	297	-	-
American Avocet	634	2,640	-	-
Black Oystercatcher	-	3	-	-
Black-bellied Plover	145	1,066	-	-
Snowy Plover	33	16	-	-
Semipalmated Plover	15	78	-	-
Killdeer	256	203	45	4
Whimbrel	2	15	-	-
Long-billed Curlew	30	209	-	-
Marbled Godwit	120	4,139	-	-
Ruddy Turnstone	-	5	-	-
Red Knot	-	12	-	-

Species	San Jose	Palo Alto	Mount Hamilton	Calero Morg-Hill
	12/19/21	12/20/21	1/2/22	12/27/21
Curlew Sandpiper	-	1	-	-
Sanderling	5	-	-	-
Dunlin	1,005	2,581	-	-
Least Sandpiper	4,771	920	-	-
Western Sandpiper	7,216	16,791	-	-
<i>peep sp.</i>	1,050	-	-	-
Long-billed Dowitcher	225	745	-	-
<i>dowitcher sp.</i>	910	1,172	-	-
Wilson's Snipe	137	-	4	4
Spotted Sandpiper	9	6	-	4
Greater Yellowlegs	81	59	9	5
Willet	35	1,884	-	-
<i>Greater/Lesser Yellowlegs</i>	2	-	-	-
Bonaparte's Gull	5	101	-	-
Short-billed Gull (formerly Mew Gull)	27	9	-	-
Ring-billed Gull	1,121	374	-	18
Western Gull	13	10	-	11
California Gull	2,381	837	-	1,936
Herring Gull	1,185	35	-	2,258
Loeland Gull (Thayer's)	90	4	-	136
Glaucous-winged Gull	243	15	-	341
Glaucous Gull	1	-	-	-
<i>Western X Glaucous-winged Gull</i>	-	-	-	65
<i>Herring X Glaucous-winged Gull</i>	2	-	-	-
<i>gull sp.</i>	4,297	858	-	852
Forster's Tern	-	243	-	-
Common Loon	-	1	-	-
Brandt's Cormorant	-	CW	-	-
Double-crested Cormorant	384	652	3	71
American White Pelican	210	298	-	1
Brown Pelican	-	2	-	-
Great Blue Heron	59	15	6	26
Great Egret	119	87	2	27
Snowy Egret	144	80	-	11
Green Heron	4	3	-	-
Black-crowned Night-Heron	368	205	-	22
Turkey Vulture	309	144	11	366
White-tailed Kite	9	16	-	19
Golden Eagle	9	-	8	12
Northern Harrier	34	24	-	10
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	5	-	10
Cooper's Hawk	17	20	2	16
<i>accipiter sp.</i>	-	1	1	3
Bald Eagle	6	4	5	10
Red-shouldered Hawk	22	47	-	43
Red-tailed Hawk	129	125	36	137
Ferruginous Hawk	2	-	4	4
Barn Owl	1	1	-	-
Western Screech-Owl	4	1	1	2
Great Horned Owl	6	19	11	1
Burrowing Owl	2	CW	-	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	-	1	-	-
Belted Kingfisher	13	5	5	6
Red-breasted Sapsucker	23	10	4	11
<i>sapsucker sp.</i>	-	-	-	2
Lewis's Woodpecker	-	1	35	2
Acorn Woodpecker	349	531	224	447
Downy Woodpecker	7	8	-	8
Nuttall's Woodpecker	78	97	16	88
Hairy Woodpecker	21	62	13	16
<i>Downy/Hairy Woodpecker</i>	1	-	-	-

Species	San Jose	Palo Alto	Mount Hamilton	Calero Morg-Hill
	12/19/21	12/20/21	1/2/22	12/27/21
Pileated Woodpecker	-	2	-	1
Northern Flicker	151	140	22	146
<i>Northern Flicker (Red-shafted)</i>	-	-	8	-
<i>Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)</i>	1	-	-	-
<i>Northern Flicker (intergrade)</i>	2	-	-	2
<i>woodpecker sp.</i>	2	-	-	-
American Kestrel	63	28	4	35
Merlin	9	11	2	5
Peregrine Falcon	15	12	-	2
Prairie Falcon	-	-	-	1
Black Phoebe	275	233	18	211
Say's Phoebe	53	26	3	33
Tropical Kingbird	-	1	-	-
Hutton's Vireo	5	27	-	8
Loggerhead Shrike	2	CW	-	3
Stellar's Jay	112	303	5	109
California Scrub-Jay	279	369	214	446
Yellow-billed Magpie	84	-	66	95
American Crow	733	2,324	23	724
Common Raven	135	323	54	419
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	160	836	1	193
Oak Titmouse	133	417	124	270
Horned Lark	CW	-	-	53
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	1	-	-	-
Tree Swallow	34	2	-	8
Violet-green Swallow	40	2	-	25
Barn Swallow	3	-	-	1
<i>swallow sp.</i>	92	3	-	-
Bushtit	497	1,003	20	403
Wrentit	14	142	10	24
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	242	377	27	166
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	-	-	-
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	4	-	-
White-breasted Nuthatch	87	202	63	159
Pygmy Nuthatch	-	102	-	-
Brown Creeper	3	68	3	6
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	-	1	-	-
Rock Wren	7	-	-	-
House Wren	1	1	-	-
Pacific Wren	-	4	-	-
Marsh Wren	65	13	-	-
Bewick's Wren	99	159	6	59
European Starling	1,890	1,029	317	1,856
California Thrasher	11	19	8	23
Northern Mockingbird	88	27	-	64
Western Bluebird	217	369	117	246
Varied Thrush	1	59	-	6
Hermit Thrush	77	169	4	68
American Robin	170	1,480	-	743
Cedar Waxwing	290	691	12	150
Phainopepla	2	-	1	1
Scaly-breasted Munia	-	-	-	CW
House Sparrow	113	9	-	50
American Pipit	159	193	-	181
House Finch	1,415	868	84	855
Purple Finch	4	87	3	27
Pine Siskin	11	225	26	2
Lesser Goldfinch	203	426	80	269
American Goldfinch	23	36	-	28
Chipping Sparrow	2	-	-	2
Lark Sparrow	3	1	-	59
Fox Sparrow	14	46	8	12

Species	San Jose	Palo Alto	Mount Hamilton	Calero Morg-Hill
	12/19/21	12/20/21	1/2/22	12/27/21
Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)	422	1,218	619	616
<i>Dark-eyed Junco (Slate Colored)</i>	-	-	-	5
White-crowned Sparrow	1,700	1,065	415	1,359
Golden-crowned Sparrow	874	1,010	255	1,021
White-throated Sparrow	2	1	-	3
<i>zonotrichia sp.</i>	-	-	-	81
Bell's Sparrow	-	-	2	-
Savannah Sparrow	315	111	5	27
Song Sparrow	293	105	2	38
Lincoln's Sparrow	64	16	3	7
California Towhee	253	306	59	272
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	13	-	-	19
Spotted Towhee	36	204	35	137
<i>sparrow sp.</i>	59	10	51	-
Western Meadowlark	375	498	95	318
Red-winged Blackbird	218	123	160	949
Tricolored Blackbird	3	-	73	268
Brown-headed Cowbird	60	3	-	86
Brewer's Blackbird	471	139	172	493
Great-tailed Grackle	80	-	-	110
<i>blackbird sp.</i>	50	47	35	-
Orange-crowned Warbler	7	4	-	-
Common Yellowthroat	66	16	-	6
Yellow Warbler	-	1	-	-
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1,176	1,228	26	648
<i>Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)</i>	6	84	-	23
<i>Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)</i>	53	576	1	46
Townsend's Warbler	11	55	-	3
Western Tanager	1	1	-	-
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	-	CW	-	-
Black-headed Grosbeak	-	CW	-	-
Total Species	166	166	80	136
Total Individual Birds	78,194	108,520	4,708	27,107

Key
bird names in italic: subspecies, hybrids and indeterminate species
sp.: species, as in "*swallow sp.*"
CW: Count Week—seen during the week of CBC not on the day of

San Jose compiled by Mike Azevedo
Palo Alto compiled by Al Eisner
Mount Hamilton compiled by Bob Hirt
Calero-Morgan Hill compiled by Rick Herder

Data reconciliation and aggregation by Barry Langdon-Lassagne.
Taxonomic order and names follow the eBird/Clements Checklist v2021 (24 August 2021).

30 January 2022



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Thank You & Welcome!

NEW MEMBERS Nov – Jan

Continued from page 11

David Knox • Brian Kruse •
Chetan Kulkarni • Linda
Lazor • Edward Lee •
Katherine Lew • Mandi Lin •
Susan Mann • Mikel Maron •
Janet Mathis • Kelly Mauser •
Jessica McDole • Karen
McHugh • George & Tamar
Mednick • Stephen Meier •
Shawn Moon • Minh Nguyen •
Trey Nickelsen • Charles Ogle •
Jeannine Parsons • Jeffrey
Pawlan • Gina Phillips • Thomas
Pinto • Steve Pollock • Joan S.
Reid • Elaine Roberts • Mischa
Rosenberg • Christopher R.
Ross • Biruta Rozentals • Karen
Rush • Laurie B. Shapley •
Inderjeet Singh • Georgia Stern •
Eric Meyer & Cathryn Stewart •
Lloyd & Linda Stimson • Bob
Strobe • James Tchobanoff •
Vandana Thirumale • James L.
& Linda M. Thomason • Mark
Truluck • Nancy Turek • Donna
Meier & Richard Vivenza •
Samrat Vuppalanchi • Scott
Wallace • Allison Wang • Kim
Watkins • Antony Wilson •
Bethany Worm • Kailai Xu •
Chengyan Zhan • Zia Zhu

And thank you to
those who renewed!

Join our Spring Birdathon!

Help raise funds for our education programs **March 26 – May 8.**

Online kickoff is March 16
before our **Speaker Series** with guest
Freya McGregor from Birdability.

Find team descriptions, rules, prizes and
more at scvas.org/birdathon

Cassin's Vireo. Photo by Luis Villablanca



GET IN TOUCH

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Nature Shop

Mon - Fri 10 AM to 4:30 PM

Board of Directors

Meetings are open to all members.
Bimonthly: 2nd Wednesday at 7:30 PM
Call the office to confirm.

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