

The

AVOCET

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Summer 2022 • Vol 70 Num 3



Giulianna during a shoot for one of her videos on light pollution. Photo by Matthew Dodder

SPECIAL EVENT ANNUAL CELEBRATION

Sat, July 23 at 7 pm
via Zoom



We can't wait to hold an in-person event again, but for the time being it seems prudent to plan another virtual gathering instead. We will have more details later, but you can expect a rundown of the year, as well as a possible auction, bird presentation and quiz. We'll introduce our new Board officers and Hear about our plans for the coming year!

*More details at
scvas.org/events*

My Year at SCVAS

Giulianna Pendleton, Environmental Advocacy Assistant

I am so grateful to have spent this past year as SCVAS's Environmental Advocacy Assistant. I have learned so much about advocacy and even more about myself and the place where I grew up. I found it fascinating that a small organization such as our SCVAS can have such an influential impact across Santa Clara County and even the state, and I think this speaks to the passion and dedication our team has for birds, nature and the community. The main thing I learned: advocacy is an ongoing effort. From education, to outreach, to research, to public speaking - advocacy requires all the tools in your toolbox, and a lot of common sense!

Positive Change

My time with SCVAS actually began as a volunteer trying to get more involved in my hometown. As Los Gatos updated their General Plan, I wanted to promote more environmental policies and programs. After meeting Shani Kleinhaus over Zoom, she helped me advocate for dark sky and bird safe design policies to be added to the General Plan Update - and I succeeded! The plan is currently being reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Town Council will consider it this summer. Now, more and more community members in Los Gatos are also speaking in favor of dark sky and bird protections in Los Gatos, amplifying our voice!

Shani and I have worked all across the County, and at the state level! After connecting with Assembly Member Alex Lee and talking about light pollution, he asked us to submit a bill proposal for reducing artificial light at night at the state level. It is now bill AB 2382 and SCVAS is a sponsor! This is an important initial step for implementing thoughtful outdoor lighting on state-owned properties in a state as big and influential as California.

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Barry and Ginger, looking wonderful!



Lawrence's Goldfinch
Barry Langdon-Lassagne



Swainson's Hawk
Tom Grey

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

As I mentioned in the Avocet Update for May, the past few months have been emotional. We suffered the loss of both Gail and Doug Cheeseman which was followed by an outpouring of moving stories from the many people who had experienced their friendship. There were multitudes of these! While many knew them longer than I, we all lost a part of our hearts when they left this world. (Refer to the Spring 2022 AVOCET for remembrances of Gail, and Allen Royer's new eulogy for Doug in this issue)

Giulianna Pendleton, who has been our Environmental Advocacy Assistant for the past year and accomplished so much during that time, is leaving SCVAS to pursue her law degree in Washington DC. She came to us as a volunteer for the EA Committee, gained experience and later became a staff member. We fully expect to hear from her again and wish her success. We have no doubt she will accomplish great things as her career develops! (See Giulianna's goodbye message on the cover of this issue)

And finally Barry and Ginger Langdon-Lassagne begin the process of relocating to California's Central Coast where they will start a new chapter in San Luis Obispo. They have promised to keep in touch, which makes me feel a little better about them being three hours away.

With each of these departures, I have strong emotions. But I want to take this opportunity to speak more about working with Barry who has been the Board President for two years. Barry was one of the reasons I knew the position of SCVAS Executive Director was right for me. He made no effort to conceal his excitement about

Don't want to say goodbye.

my accepting the job and I knew our shared interests and mutual fondness would make for a productive period in our chapter. As expected, for the past two years, and another year prior to that, Barry was a bold, creative, resourceful, and constant supporter of mine as well as co-designer of many of SCVAS's initiatives. Together Barry and I pledged to reach a more diverse community, and expand our education programs to include both high school and adult learners. Everything requires a team though, and these projects could only be accomplished with the enormous help of volunteers like Eve Meier, Ann Hepenstal, Julie Amato, Diane Hart and many others. This team, held together by the limitless optimism of Barry, succeeded in bringing rich media, like video and online presentations, to our members and YouTube channel, as well as make virtual events unexpectedly fun and engaging. Barry and I worked closely on everything. He was my go-to partner for help with tech issues as well. Email won't work? No problem. Barry can help. Website acting weird... Call Barry! Pretty much any time of day.

Barry and Ginger are dear friends, and I realize I need at least as much space to document her many contributions to SCVAS through her involvement with the EdCom, field trips, overall chapter morale and everything else. But that will have to wait. That time will come. In the mean time, no matter how far you both go, I still plan on text messaging you when Cricket and I want to recommend a good movie, or share what we had for dinner. And those texts just might come at any time of day.

Matthew Dodder
Executive Director



BIRDATHON STORIES

Compiled by Carolyn Knight
Education and Outreach
Manager, SCVAS

Birdathon is always an exciting time for SCVAS. A lot of that has to do with the time of the year; when you're a birder, spring is its own festival.

Part of the excitement also comes from the opportunity to actually bird with other people, an infrequent opportunity for the past few years. And beyond both of those things, Birdathon gives us a chance to be competitive, in a friendly for-a-good-cause sort of way. Because behind every team, no matter how many species they find or hours they put in, the money they raise is still going to the same purpose: keeping SCVAS's education programs running.

Birdathon allows us to offer programs for adults and children through the San Jose Public Library. It's what allows us to provide programming for low-income schools free of charge, so that we can share environmental education with students regardless of zip codes. It keeps our outreach efforts alive, so that we can meet new parts of our community and engage in new ways. And it helps us build our programs, keeping them up to date in terms of standards and audiences.

But we're birders and the fun part of Birdathon is the birding. So check out some excerpts from the stories of this year's teams, whether they pushed through a marathon day of birding, found lifers and year-birds, or if they decided to just try for a relaxing day birding at old favorites. Maybe it will inspire you to take part next year, or to support a team. If all it does is to convince you to do some birding in your free time, we'll still consider it a success.

DeDUCKtions

We only utilized 15 hours of that window but began birding a 4:30 a.m.. We had our first bird, **Common Poorwill** (which was awesome!!!), at the Stile Ranch Trailhead. From there we moved across the street to find **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Ranch San Vicente parking area. Best views ever!

Next south toward Gilroy for **Lawrence's Goldfinch** and **Swainson's Hawk** on San Felipe Road, but missed the **Cassin's Kingbird**. Big disappointment. Doh!!

...We made way too many stops but recovered **129 species with our core "in person" group**. Three additional team members birded independently and added another 8 species to the team's final total of **137 SPECIES**.

What was really cool is that everybody, and I mean EVERYBODY, added at least one unique species to our final team list! That's just amazing!! [Matthew Dodder](#)

Almaden Eagles

The Almaden Eagles team did our SCVAS Birdathon on Monday, Apr 25. We used the "Distributed" format for our day which worked out well as each of us took selected areas mostly in the Almaden area but also a bit further south to

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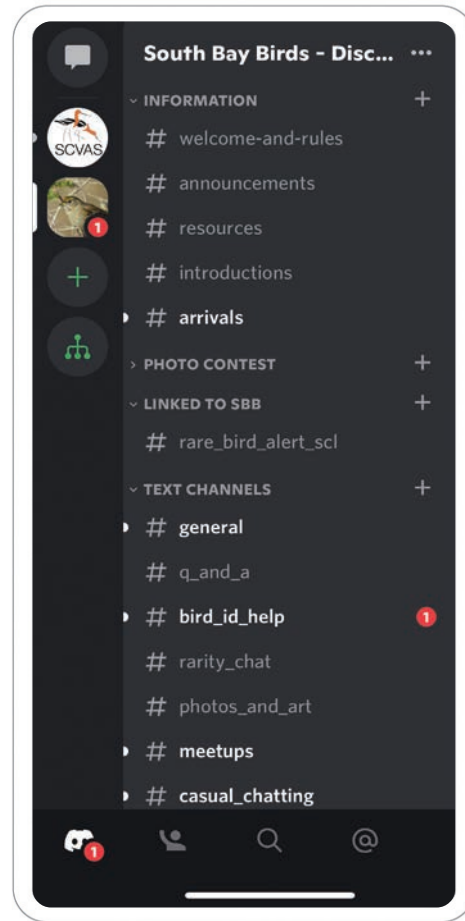
Are you a birder who wants to interact with the local birding community online? Do you want to be able to ask questions, share photos, or just chat with other birders? Then you should join the **South Bay Birds Discord® Server!** It's a new online space for birders to communicate, ask questions, and hang out. I'll talk all about it in this article, and about how you can join.

About Me

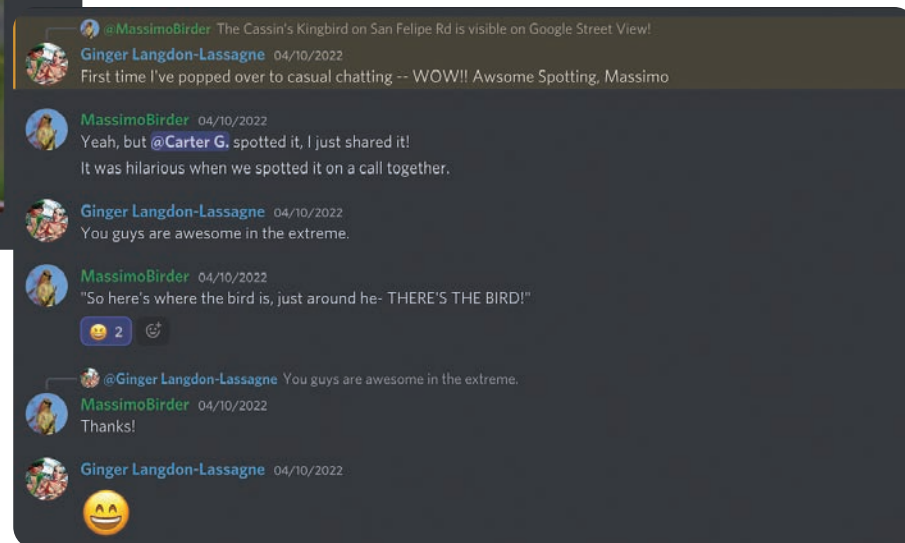
I'm a passionate young birder from San Jose, and an active member of the local online birding community. I've done some other interesting things with SCVAS, including a video interview with Matthew Dodder for a school project, which you can view on SCVAS's website. As a member of multiple Discord communities with my friends, I one day realized that I wished that the online interactions among the birding community online were more like the interactions I have with my friends online. Casual, quick, and fun. I spent a good while brainstorming ideas of how I could achieve this goal, and landed on the idea of making a Discord server for the local birding community.

How I Set It Up

Setting up the SBB Discord server was a surprisingly easy task, and I was able to get it set up and running quickly. Then, I sent out a message to South Bay Birds with the link. I wasn't expecting the response that I got. Many people showed their support for the project, and over 75 people joined in the 1st day! I set up a variety of channels for different purposes, and the basic design in the same today.



Screen shots of Massimo's Discord platform. The conversation is casual and fun.



Why We Use It

As a communication platform for birders, Discord is very unique. Compared to things like the South Bay Birds email list, which uses long emails that often don't provide a easy pathway for discussion, or the Silicon Valley Birding Facebook group, which is more for simply reporting and sharing sightings, Discord is much more versatile. On our server, there aren't very many restrictions on what people can share, you just have to use the right channel. Discord also allows for fast communication of info like rare bird sightings, and quick updates if, say, a rare bird flies to a different location.

How It Works

Discord is an online communication platform, originally intended for use by gamers to talk while playing games. Over time, it has been adopted for many different uses.

The interface is similar to platforms like Slack, where you have multiple "channels" on a server. Each channel has a different use. In the case of the SBB Discord, we have channels for bird ID help, photo sharing, casual chatting, and much more. The chat interface is similar to texting, and you can attach photos and other files to messages. You can also react to posts with a wide variety of emojis. For example, you could react to a funny post with a laughing emoji, or react to a photo you love with a heart emoji. If you want to mention a specific person, meaning that the message will appear highlighted to them, you simply type their username, but with an "@" at the start.

How It's Going

As of the writing of this article, the server has over 175 members, and it is a strong and fun community. The bird ID channel has been extremely successful, with almost every mystery bird shared there being identified by our passionate members. We also hold a monthly photo contest, with myself, Carter Gasiorowski, and Cedrik Von Briel being the judges. There's always a fun conversation on the Casual Chatting channel, and I love seeing people share their photos and artwork on the Photos and Art channel.

I hope the SBB Discord channel continues to grow as more people learn about it. It has been wonderful getting it set up and being a part of its development as well as all the great conversations and discussions that were started there. The real value of any platform, of course, is the people who use it. With the great number of people who have already shared their stories, photos, anecdotes, artwork, and jokes, you have already guaranteed its success! ●



Massimo Bafetti in the field.



Conservation Corner

Shani Kleinhaus
Environmental Advocate

Cover story Continued from page 3

Outreach

Engaging with our community and learning from fellow advocates has taught me how to intentionally collaborate with other community groups and create engaging campaigns. It was heartwarming and truly incredible when over 100 community members asked for better protections for the newts near Lexington Reservoir, and gratifying that the Midpen Open Space Board listened and took action! A plan to help the newts cross the road is currently in development.

Education

Throughout my time at SCVAS, including my first week on the job, I have had opportunities to speak with young students about pursuing a career in environmentalism, the importance of bird safe protections, and ways to reduce light pollution. All the students I spoke with were engaged, inquisitive, and eager to learn more about how to save our planet! This was a constant reminder that, in order to create lasting change through advocacy, we must include the youth.

One of my favorite aspects of this position has been constantly diving deeper into critical issues—and then being able to share these findings with our community.

Research, Research, Research

One of my favorite aspects of this position has been constantly diving deeper into critical issues - and then being able to share these findings with our community. After researching artificial light at night, for instance, I enjoyed creating a two-part video series on light pollution with our Executive Director Matthew Dodder. And with the help of incredible volunteers, we are expanding our awareness programs! Our volunteers are making presentations focused on bird migration, light pollution, biodiversity, and wildlife crossings to city councils and other public meetings throughout the County!

Throwing me into the deep end while still supporting me throughout, Shani has been an incredible mentor as I start my career in environmental conservation. There are very



Bell's Sparrow
Gena Zolotar

few jobs that I could have taken so soon after college that have allowed me the independence, mentorship, extensive skill development, and exposure to a plethora of issues that this one has. As I head to the George Washington University School of Law, I look forward to taking with me all that I have learned here. Time to go speak for the birds in D.C.! ●

Vote NO on the deceptive Ballot Measure A

The devil is in the details: The Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) has placed a deceptive Measure A on the June Ballot. Following a 4 yes (Directors Tony Estremera, Richard Santos, John Varela and Gary Kremen), 3 no (Directors Barbara Keegan, Nai Hsueh and Linda LeZotte) vote at the District Board meeting, this deceptive measure asks, "Shall the measure amending the Santa Clara Valley Water District Ordinance 11-01 to limit Board members to four successive four-year terms be adopted?" Board members are currently limited to three successive four-year terms, so a yes vote would extend rather than limit the term limits. SCVAS recommends a NO vote on Valley Water ballot Measure A.

Henry Coe State Park

Vigilance is needed: Last year, after a long fight to protect the biodiverse Tesla Park (near Livermore) from expansion of the Carnegie Vehicle Recreation Area, the State passed a law (SB155) to protect the park and its unique ecosystems. This was a big win for habitat protections! However, in doing so, the law lists Henry Coe State Park as a potential location for future expansion of off-road vehicle recreation. The environmental community, SCVAS included, is strongly opposed to the pulverization of Henry Coe State Park by off-road vehicles. The quiet solitude many of us find in the miles and miles of hiking trails at our beloved state park, and the birds and wildlife that depend on this important open



Breeze of Innovation
Urban Confluence Silicon Valley

space, must be protected. We are vigilantly watching and investigating any hint of off-road-vehicle introduction into Henry Coe.

San Jose Light Tower stalled?

The San Jose Light Tower (AKA Silicon Valley Urban Confluence Breeze of Innovation) seems to have stalled. Efforts by the promoters to increase interest in this environmentally-obtuse project at the confluence of the Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creek in downtown San Jose failed to capture the public's heart and imagination, and funding seems far from the needed \$150+ millions. We believe that the project as proposed is not feasible in this location, and continue to hope that the proponents will reconsider this proclaimed "gift" that takes more than it gives the San Jose community.

Alviso Hotel consumes open space and habitat

When the Topgolf project was approved a few years ago, we participated in the Environmental Review process and



Topgolf on Lower Guadalupe River
Matthew Dodder

commented on the loss of open space and habitat. The environmental review documents for that project expressed the intent to leave 6 acres of land undeveloped, and thus rejected the need for mitigation. Now, a new project - Alviso hotel - proposes to develop those same acres. This constitutes segmentation of CEQA review (segmenting a large project to small ones to avoid analyzing and mitigating the full impact) that is not permitted by law. The CEQA documents for the new hotel also dismissed concerns for a plethora of avian species, including burrowing owls. SCVAS submitted three letters on this project to the City of San Jose and appealed the Director Hearing's decision. We hope the project will fully compensate for the loss of open space and habitat. ●

Interested in protecting birds and their habitat in your community? Our Environmental Action Committee is looking to expand. Please contact shani@scvas.org.

NEW MEMBERS Feb – Apr

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Continued on back cover

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Zittin • Gena Zolotar



DeDUCKtions at dawn
Matthew Dodder

BIRDATHON *Continued from page 3*

places in Coyote Valley and Canada del Oro. Our team this year included Janna Pauser, Kirsten Holmquist, Marion Farber, Bobbie Baker and Ann Verdi. We had a successful day with a total of **115 species** - the highest number of species yet for the Almaden Eagles team as we cover a fairly limited area and we're not driving all over the county.

...It was a good day for all of us. We each found some special birds by going at our own time and pace, and we didn't end up totally wiped out at the end of the day. The "Distributed" concept for Birdathon teams has been good for us and we've also been able to increase our number of species both seen and heard over the past few years. [Ann Verdi](#)

The Fledglings

Yesterday, 4-9-22, I had the best day of birding I've ever experienced as I participated in the Fledglings Birdathon. All day, as soon as I thought things were slowing down, another amazing bird would show up!

The day began just after 7 a.m. as my dad and I arrived at the Smith Creek Fire Station. Not long after getting out of the car, an adult **Bald Eagle** flew over, not a bad start to the day! There was significant wind on the exposed Bonhoff and Manzanita Trails which kept the warblers down, but fortunately, key species like **Ash-Throated Flycatcher**, **Pine Siskin**, and **Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher** were still out and about.

Heading down to the creek, we ran into Mike Rogers, which was probably the most fortunate event of the day (more on that later). The valley where the creek runs was sheltered, making it much easier to find birds. The trees near the creek crossing were alive with birds, as **Warbling Vireos** and **Wilson's Warblers** sang from unseen perches, **Black-Headed Grosbeaks** noisily flew between the trees, and the song of **Townsend's Warblers** descended from the neck-breaking heights at the very top of the canopy. Before the creek crossing, we added a silent **Downy Woodpecker** and **Pacific-Slope Flycatcher** to the list for the day. The next stretch of the trail was quiet, but at the end of the path, song resumed with pairs of both **Hutton's** and **Cassin's Vireo**, plus a **House Wren** calling from some brush. [Carter Gasiorowski](#)

Curious Clickadees

We made our way to Milpitas to get the **Bald Eagle** at Curtner Elementary School and then stopped at Ben Rodgers Park to try for the recently sighted **Rufous Hummingbird**. We were successful in seeing what was a life bird for us, after several other attempts.

Our plan was to go to Ed Levin County Park next; however it only dawned on us once we reached it, that it was Easter and the park was super crowded. We decided to break for lunch and managed to get the **Great-Tailed Grackle**, **Tree Sparrow**, and a breeding plumage **Purple Finch**. Our list was missing a few south county specialties, so we drove to Coyote Valley, where we saw the **Western Meadowlark**, a distant **White-Tailed Kite**, and **American Kestrel**.

Our final leg of the day brought us back to the bay to look for waterbirds and it did not disappoint. Among others, at Palo Alto Baylands, we saw the **Cliff Swallows** were busy gathering mud for their nests, at Shoreline Lake the

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REMEMBERING DEAR FRIENDS

A PERSONAL HISTORY

Allen Royer
SCVAS Volunteer

I first met Doug and Gail Cheeseman in the early 1970s when

Doug and I were both on the SCVAS Board. We met in a large old home in Palo Alto around a massive table. Tony Look and Florence La Riviere were other board members at the time.

I was new to bird watching. Doug invited me to his home above Montalvo, which overlooked our valley, to band birds. He had mist nets and wire traps set up on his long lot. While we banded, Gail would make wonderful home-baked bread. Doug's students from DeAnza would also come up to band. Doug and Gail organized their first trip to Africa in 1978 and I went along. When they first traveled to an area, they collaborated with local experts. I returned to Africa with them in 1990—also going to Rwanda and Madagascar. I sat next to Doug when a lone Mountain Gorilla swiped his camera lens cover as we sat watching the gorilla group. Gail had been a French teacher and that really helped in Madagascar. Gail did so much to organize trips and was always a calm pleasure to know. In the

70s, Doug and Gail started leading trips on Monterey Bay to see marine mammals and seabirds. They helped a young Debi Millichamp, who later became Debi Shearwater, get started. Doug loved to teach. He prepared intensively for trips. He taught all day long and into the evening during trips. On Monterey Bay, he would finally relax after the trip by getting calamari at Abalonetti's. My last big trip with Doug and Gail was to the Russian arctic. Walruses, polar bears, great seabirds and a big storm! Doug was one of the few that didn't get seasick.

Doug was also one of my groomsmen along with my two brothers when I got married in 1994. Doug had introduced me to my wife at a lecture on elephants at the Cal Academy. My daughter, Joanna, thought fondly of Doug and Gail as well, saying "They were brilliant, kind, loving, and warm people who sought to educate others and show them such amazing adventures. I will never forget them. May they rest in peace and finally be able to see each other again." Some losses are hard to put into words, but I couldn't agree more with my daughter. ●



DT PLANTS AND THE BIRDS

Ann Hepenstal
SCVAS Volunteer

Many Californians are asking: how can I make my yard more drought-tolerant (DT), but still have an interesting landscape? The answer: California native plants!

As nature lovers, we'll reap the added benefit of adding habitat value as we add native plants to our landscaping. As birders, we can stop and admire the plant adaptations as we hike.

Adaptation and Habitat

California native plants evolved in place, adapting to the local microclimate where they grow. By adding to your landscape plant species that naturally grow nearby, you also add habitat that the local birds, pollinators, butterflies, and other life rely on for food and shelter. (See www.calscape.org and search by zip code to find the species local to where you live.)

Our native plants have evolved interesting adaptations which enable them to live through our rainless summers, including:

- ▶ **Deciduous summers:** If you're from back East, you immediately picture a deciduous tree as dropping its leaves in the fall—but no! The California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) and drops its leaves in the early summer, going dormant to conserve water. Native bees and butterflies nectar on its flowers. (You can meet this small tree when you're walking on the creek trail at McClellan Ranch, among other sites.)
- ▶ **Deep taproots:** Some native plants have developed long roots in order to find moisture deep in the soil. The California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) has a long taproot (and supports birds, butterflies, pollinators, etc.). Milkweed e.g. Narrow Leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) sends down a long taproot (and supports butterflies) as does the Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) which is one of our most important wildlife plants (supporting birds, butterflies, insects, mammals and more).
- ▶ **Special leaves:** Some plants have developed leaves which better retain water, or small leaves which let less water escape. Various ceanothus species such as "Blueblossom Ceanothus" (*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*) have tiny, thick leaves to minimize transpiration and support bees and butterflies (and give shelter to birds).

Your Landscape

Because California native plants have a variety of strategies for surviving in their local microclimate, you can select plants

which will make your landscape interesting all year long while adding habitat value for the birds and other creatures in your yard. Some ideas:

- ▶ **Buckwheat:** No, not the cereal buckwheat for kasha, but plants in the *Eriogonum* family! These plants come in various sizes and growth patterns, and offer summer/fall flowers along with nectar and host caterpillars. I especially love Rosy Buckwheat (*Eriogonum grande*) but you may want to experiment with the locally native Nude Buckwheat (*Eriogonum nudum*) simply because of its name!
- ▶ **California Fuschia:** *Epilobium* or California fuschia provides a lush green growth from January through spring, and later erupts in bright red flowers beloved by the hummingbirds that continue through the fall.
- ▶ **Dramatic Flowers:** While not locally native, the Desert Globemallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*) offers a dramatic apricot-orange flower and supports birds, bees and butterflies. And the Coulter's Matilija Poppy (*Romneya coulteri*) is often called the "fried egg plant" because that's what its flowers look like! It supports bees and butterflies, but fair warning—the plant grows tall and spreads enthusiastically!
- ▶ **Plan now:** The summer months are a great time to research plants and plan—and to convert your lawn to native plants.
 - Research plants using resources like Calscape.org, <https://www.laspilitas.com/garden/drought.html> and the others listed in the Spring 2022 Avocet.
 - Check with your local water company on available rebates for removing your lawn, upgrading your irrigation system, and adding native plants, e.g. Valley Water's rebates at tinyurl.com/mr32atdf.
 - Learn more about lawn removal e.g., <https://www.cnps.org/gardening/prepping-and-planting/grass-removal>.
 - Find more resources plus YouTube videos from the local chapter of the California Native Plant Society <https://www.cnps-scv.org>.
- ▶ **Plant later:** Wait until October-ish just before the fall rains. Planting then will give your plants the strongest possible start, when they're ready for rain and can send down a good root system during the rainy season. ●



Satomi Fujikawa
of the Birdcassos



Chipping Sparrow
Massimo Bacetti



Wrong Terms at Adobe Creek
Mary Ann Robertson

BIRDATHON STORIES *Continued from page 9*

Black Skimmers were back on their island, and at Charleston Slough/Coast Casey Forebay, a pair of **Cinnamon Teal** foraged while hundreds of **Western Sandpipers** were flushed by a **Northern Harrier**.

Since, amazingly, we hadn't seen a **Great Egret** in the day, we stopped at Shorebird Way Rookery as the sun set.

Vinayak Hebbagil

The Fledglings

I started the day off around 9 a.m., heading straight to Lone Hill Park. The moment I stepped out of the car, I quickly saw two of my first target birds, the **Chipping Sparrows**, foraging in the grass, along with a noisy mixed flock of **House Finches** and **Lesser Goldfinches**. I took a couple minutes to take some photos of the birds around the park, including a very nice-looking male **Western Bluebird**, and then headed over to my next stops, Guadalupe Oak Grove Park and Fontana Park.

Once we got to the parking lot of Guadalupe Oak Grove Park, I was immediately greeted by the calls of foraging **Acorn Woodpeckers**, and large and noisy flocks of **Tree Swallows**, **Violet-Green Swallows**, and **Northern Rough-Winged Swallows**. We walked the trail up the first smaller hill, and heard an interesting song being sung by a **California Towhee**. After we reached the top, we spent some time watching the swallow flocks, and spotted two **White-Throated Swifts** flying high above us. As we walked along the trail, we spotted a **Cooper's Hawk** flying over the trail being mobbed by the swallows. Massimo Bacetti

Lean Green Birding Machine

We started our watches at Rancho San Antonio while looking at a **Great Horned Owl** and two **Owlets**, and then toured the preserve adding 31 more species, highlighted by a lovely group of three **Ash-Throated Flycatchers**, and then the first **Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers** seen this year (by us) at this location. In the new retention basin just to the east of the park, two **Killdeer** joined the **Red-Winged Blackbirds**.

At adjacent Gate of Heaven Cemetery, the pond was sadly empty save for a lone **Canada Goose** in the smaller pond, but the skies were filled with **Cliff Swallows** and a smaller number of **Vauxs Swifts**. In the back of the property a pair of **Western Bluebirds** were tending a nest. On the way out, a nice surprise as a **Green Heron** appeared out of nowhere and gave us great views. Steve Patt

Persistent Picidae

This was the first time since Covid that the "Persistent Picidae" went out in the field for the 2022 SCVAS Spring Birdathon. And instead of driving around the county looking for new species we spent the entire morning at Joseph Grant County Park. It was a more relaxing way to see some great birds. It turned into quite a social event as participants enjoyed talking about the various wildlife we were seeing from the birds to the numerous wild pigs to fence lizards, butterflies and goats! Lisa Myers

Birdcassos

What a sunny, warm day to be out with the birds! I decided to split my 4 hours in half, observing as many birds as I could in the first 2 hours and then drawing as many as I could at my drawing table at home. I focused on Stevens Creek County Park, with quick stops at Gates of Heaven Cemetery, and Los

Altos neighborhoods as I drove home. When I opened my car door at Cooley Picnic Area, I was greeted by a symphony of birdsong: **Townsend's** and **Yellow-Rumped Warblers**, **Warbling Vireos**, **Dark-Eyed Juncos**, and **Song Sparrows** were singing in numbers. Getting a look at them, though, took a bit of time. Driving back along the Stevens Canyon Road got me waterbirds and raptors, including an adult **Bald Eagle** flying high over the reservoir. I picked up more woodland birds at Chestnut parking lot and the visitor center. **Hooded Mergansers** and **Buffleheads** were hanging out at the little pond at Gates of Heaven, along with numerous **Cliff Swallows**. The drive home netted one last species: a pair of **Western Bluebirds** at Grant Park. I was able to draw 35 out of the 38 birds I saw. Whew! Mary Ann Allan

To see all our artists' work, please visit: scvas.org/art-galleries

I usually draw landscapes and flowers, so when I was drawing the birds for the sketch-a-thon, I kept saying, "Can you just stay still?" Most of the time, I was balancing my sketchpad on a fence post with a pencil in one hand and my binoculars

in the other. Since I'm fairly new to birding, I appreciated this challenge because it was a great way to practice noticing details of each bird, especially after Matthew gave me advice on accentuating field marks to differentiate species. I added watercolors on top of my pencil drawings the last 30 minutes before my time ran out. The four hours flew by so quickly! I could have stayed out there for four more! Satomi Fujikawa ●

Go to scvas.org/spring-birdathon-stories



The Fledglings



Field Notes

Please report rarities to pdunten@gmail.com

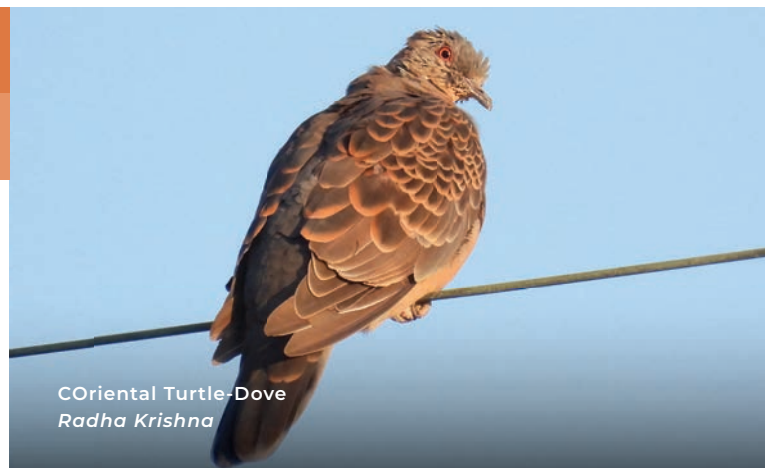
Pete Dunten
Santa Clara County eBird Reviewer

Doves to Boobies

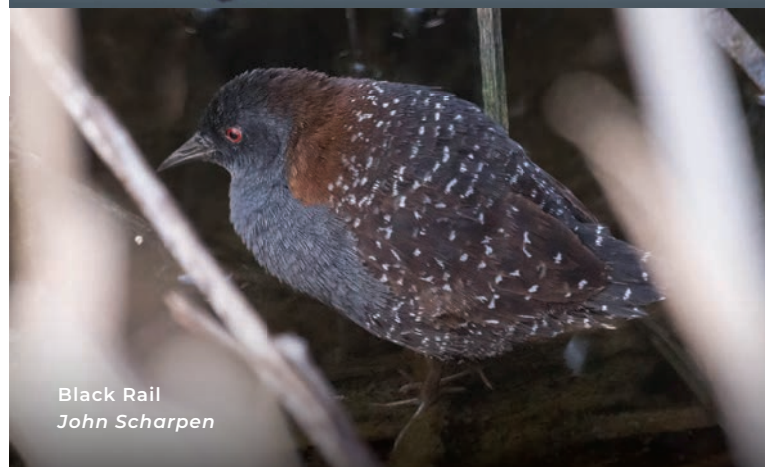
The first extraordinary record of the period was the appearance of an **Oriental Turtle-Dove** together with our local Mourning Doves and Eurasian Collared Doves at a yard in Palo Alto. The Dove was first seen on 2 Feb (ABr) and faithfully returned for birdseed through 22 Mar (m. ob.). The dove was a county first record, and third record for California. After their arrival in the south bay in 2013, **Black Rails** have been most consistently found at Alviso. One has been heard calling from Alviso Slough on several dates between 21 Jan and 11 Mar (SCR, JkR). This year Stevens Creek tidal marsh seems to be the preferred location for the rails. On 8 Feb a Black Rail was heard calling from marsh (WGB). Black Rails have been present in the marsh through April, with as many as eight heard calling on 20 Feb (MDo). Large groups of **Red Knots** have not been found in the county in spring historically, though they do occur regularly along the bayside in San Mateo county. This spring has been an exception, with 38 noted at the San Francisquito Creek mouth on 20 Apr (ABu) and as many as 50 on 24 Apr (BM). A **Solitary Sandpiper** on migration stopped at Ulistac NA on 8 Apr (EW) and 9 Apr (m. ob.) before continuing north. Ulistac NA hosted a Solitary Sandpiper in 2021 for a single day, on 29 Apr. Their stays during spring migration are often brief, a single day or perhaps two. Two **Elegant Terns** on the pilings at pond A1 moved the date of our earliest spring record to 10 Apr (ABu). They are regular in the fall but rare in spring. The second extraordinary record of the period was a deceased **Nazca Booby**, found along the bank of Los Gatos Creek above Lexington Reservoir on 30 Mar (KHg). Nazca Booby was not likely on anyone's list of the next ten species to be added to the county list. And if it were, the location in the Santa Cruz mountains would surely not have been expected..

Woopeckers to Flycatchers

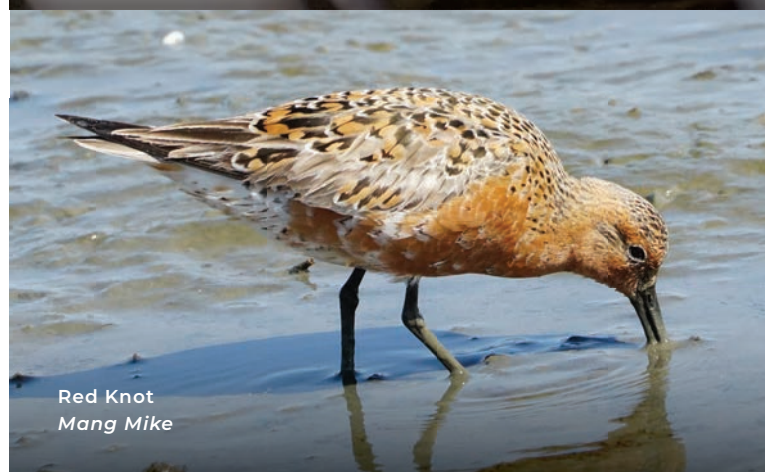
Another wintering **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** turned up at Casa de Fruta on 12 Mar (SN) and was seen again on 14 Mar (PDU). Our total for the winter was three individuals. The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker wintering at Vasona CP was last noted on 22 Feb (VT, RkR). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** wintered along the Guadalupe Creek Trail near Lavender Creek and Sycamore Creek. The sapsucker was noted on 5 Dec and 29 Jan (JPa) and again on 30 Jan – 2 Feb (AnW, GL, BM, SW, JH). As is often the case with sapsuckers, close scrutiny of



COriental Turtle-Dove
Radha Krishna



Black Rail
John Scharpen



Red Knot
Mang Mike



Lewis's Woodpecker
Malini Kaushik

photos raised the (unanswerable) question of whether another species might be represented in the bird's ancestry. The **Lewis's Woodpecker** at Monte Bello OSP, first noted on 20 Dec of last year during the Christmas Bird Count, stayed through 15 Apr (FV). The **Eastern Phoebe** along the Guadalupe River Trail near Riverview Park, first noted on 8 Jan, was last seen on 5 Feb (JL). A male **Vermilion Flycatcher** returned to J Grant CP on 15 Mar this year, for his fourth summer in the park (fide SouthBayBirds). There has been no sign of a mate, and with a longevity record of 5.5 years for the species, we wish him luck this year. **Tropical Kingbirds** broke records again this winter, with three found at Geng Rd near the Palo Alto Golf Course on 7 Feb (EE, KCK) and again on 11 Feb (ABu). Two remained on 21 Apr (DSb) and one was still present on 30 Apr (JTv). Another was found at Ed Levin CP between 18 Feb (WGB) and 8 Apr (CG, EvM). Time will tell if a **Cassin's Kingbird** found at the Stanford Dish on 27 Apr was a migrant or part of the species' breeding range expansion northwards in the county (SPv).

Swallows to Tanagers

A single **Bank Swallow** over Alviso pond A16 on 30 Apr was a nice find (DSb). The ratio of sightings in the spring versus fall is about 1 to 4. **Purple Martins** are found both as breeding birds in the Santa Cruz mountains and as passage migrants through the county. A pair of Martins were spotted over Grant Lake in J Grant CP on 9 Apr (MMR, GL) and a pair were noted again on 23 Apr in a southern part of J Grant CP (MMR). A group of six migrants were foraging over the fields in Coyote Valley on 11 Apr (MJM). **Townsend's Solitaires** turned up at three locations. One was at Anderson Reservoir on 12 Feb (SCR). One present at Sanborn CP since early January was last seen on 22 Mar (JSc). A third was found in Upper Stevens Creek CP on 24 Mar (DE). The first **Yellow-breasted Chat** of the year was singing in the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area on 30 Apr (MDo et al.). An **American Redstart** was photographed on 5 Feb along the Guadalupe River Trail near Thamien Park (JL). The photo shows the tail of the Redstart flying away, fittingly, as the bird was not seen again. Photos helped identify a hybrid **Townsend's x Hermit Warbler** present on 25 Mar in Quicksilver CP (JPa). And on 25 Mar an adult male **Summer Tanager** was found along Guadalupe Creek above Camden in Los Gatos (JPa). The Tanager was seen through 30 Mar (m. ob.). An adult male has wintered at this location for three of the last four winters.

Observers Bill Bousman (WGB), Andrew Bradshaw (ABr), Adam Burnett (ABu), Kaia Colestock (KCK), Matthew Dodder (MDo), David Ekdahl (DE), Elias Elias (EE), Carter Gasiorowski (CG), Joe Heinlein (JHn), Kelsey Higney (KHg), Radha Krishna (RkR), Garrett Lau (GL), Jasen Liu (JL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), Eve Meier (EvM), Brooke Miller (BM), Siera Nystrom (SN), Janna Pauser (JPa), Sergey Pavlov (SPv), Mike Rogers (MMR), Steve Rottenborn (SCR), Jake Ruygt (JkR), John Scharpen (JSc), Dessi Sieburth (DSb), Vivek Tiwari (VT), Jari Toivanen (JTv), Frank Vanslager (FV), Susan Weinstein (SW), Antony Wilson (AnW), Erica Wilson (EW)



Mystery Feather
Matthew Dodder

Photo by Matthew Dodder

Matthew Dodder
Quiz Master

TRACK & FEATHER

Some discovered feathers tell a story. This month's puzzle is a perfect example. Found at the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin this clump of feathers, connected at the base, can be identified to feather group, species and sex. Close examination may also suggest how these feathers came to be detached from the bird.

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 (SPRING 2022)



Last issue's feather appears to be from a Common Loon. All three of the expected loon species were foraging in the surf as we walked Limantour Beach. Common seems to be the closest in appearance.
Photo: Tom Grey



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