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Dedi was our driver for the day in Ubud, Bali

August 2023

Cricket and I visited Singapore and Bali earlier this month to celebrate our 20th anniversary. There were several birds we hoped to see, most notably the Javan Kingfisher, Mangrove Pitta and Oriental Pied-Hornbill—all would be lifers for us! By the time we returned to the Bay Area, we had seen each of them plus many more. It was a spectacular trip and well worth the 15-hour plane ride in our cramped economy seats. Despite the memorable bird sightings, the incredible food, and lovely scenery, one of the most rewarding moments of our trip was when I handed my binoculars to Dedi, our Indonesian driver. He had been curious about what we were looking at the whole day so I invited him take a look. He had never used binoculars before, and never seen the colorful local birds except from a distance. Now, he was able to see a brilliant Pink-necked Green Pigeon in its full glory just outside the Holy Water Temple. "Oh, I want to see more birds!" he exclaimed. More than almost any other moment during our vacation, that is the one I will replay in my mind forever. Birding is indeed a powerful, unifying force that stretches

across borders and brings us closer to one another. We are so happy to be a part of it!

You may recall the member survey that we distributed several weeks ago concerning the our Chapter's name. Specifically, the Board of Directors and I asked for your input about the the possibility of removing Audubon from our name. There were many responses, both in favor and opposed to a possible name change. We want to thank you for your input we assure you that the Board and I are carefully reviewing all of your comments and will let you know of any updates to the conversation as soon as possible.

Finally, as a non-profit environmental organization, we, like many other organizations, look for ways to be good environmental stewards. One of the steps we are taking to do this is to transition the AVOCET Quarterly to an all-electronic publication (at least for the foreseeable future). We are aware some members will find this difficult to adjust to, but it is necessary if we are to reduce our carbon footprint and paper use. Released from the constraints of a 16-page printed newsletter, the electronic release will allow us to explore new concepts for our publication like video content, interactive stories and more. While it will take time to fully embrace all the possibilities of this new format, I trust it will prove worthwhile. The Fall issue will be printed as usual, and the first all-electronic AVOCET will be released in January. We hope you will understand our need to make this change.

~**Matthew Dodder, Executive Director**



Laysan Albatross: Brooke Miller

Special Event SCVAS Pelagic (Half Moon Bay)

Join other SCVAS members on this co-promoted trip with Alvaro's Adventures. This trip leaves from Pillar Point Harbor in Half Moon Bay then heads off to deep waters where we will see a diversity of seabirds including Albatrosses, Shearwaters, Storm-petrels, Jaegers and more!

Monday, August 28, 2023. Cost \$185.

[Register here](#)



SCVAS Trip to Ed Levin led by Mike Ambrose, Sonja Kramer and Sarah Chan. July 2023

Field Trips

August through early September in-person field trips drop on **July 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.



Forster's Terns: Anar Daswani

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 this recommendation for August birding:

- [Palo Alto Baylands \(Fall through Early Spring\): Shorebirds along the Duck Pond Loop Trail and "Rail Alley"](#)



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 10-21 may join on their own, while birders aged 5-10 years old should join with a parent.

[Check out the YBC](#)



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](#)



Lehigh Quarry: Jitze Couperus

Conservation Corner

How to report intentional harm to birds and their habitat

SCVAS is often alerted by our members to actions that harm birds and their habitat. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife investigates cases of habitat destruction, pollution and poaching, and allows people to report violations anonymously. If you encounter someone polluting or destroying a creek, for example, you can report it at [CAL TIP - Californians Turn in Poachers and Polluters](#).

If you have evidence, please include it in your report.

What is happening at the Lehigh Quarry?

The Lehigh site currently has two primary uses. One encompasses the cement kiln and the manufacture, storage, and distribution of cement; the other involves the quarrying and processing of quarried material, some of which is transported off-site as aggregate, and some of which has historically been used on-site as feedstock for the cement kiln. The cement plant and quarry are both part of the Lehigh property, which encompasses 3,510 acres, 2,656 of which are in unincorporated Santa Clara County. The remaining land is within the cities of Cupertino and Palo Alto.

In March 2023, we rejoiced when Lehigh announced the cessation of cement production and stated that it does not intend to quarry new material from the pit or elsewhere on site. However, the company plans to continue processing already quarried material for sale as aggregate, and has recently submitted a new proposed reclamation plan amendment. **The proposed new reclamation plan is of great concern. Please see our alert for details, and [ACT TODAY](#).**

Meanwhile, [Supervisor Simitian](#) has brokered an agreement between Santa Clara County and the City of Cupertino, stipulating that the City and County will work together to ensure that Lehigh and any future owners of the property prevent and eliminate any conditions that could be considered a nuisance or pose a danger to public health or the environment. The agreement also requires that in order for development to proceed, reclamation, restoration, and environmental remediation of the site must be moving forward in compliance with all applicable laws, policies, and regulations. We will continue to follow the issues related to Lehigh and call on you to support our work to ensure that the 100-year environmental injury that Lehigh imposed on our communities and our landscapes is properly addressed. Again, please see our action alert [here](#) and act today!



Hope for Lake Cunningham?

Lake Cunningham is a man-made lake in East San Jose that has long suffered from poor water quality. SCVAS and other organizations have been advocating with the City of San Jose to devote significant funding to improve water quality in the lake.

In June 2022 we were successful in asking the City to use the remaining \$3.2 Million dollars from Measure T (a 2018 \$650 million disaster preparedness bond) to address improving water quality and restoring Lake Cunningham, stating:

"[Lake Cunningham] is an ecological and an environmental equity issue. The City Council has the opportunity to start rehabilitating this critical neighborhood lake that can transform both our nature and underserved communities in East San José."

However, in March 2023, the City reversed this allocation, but also accepted a grant from the Open Space Authority for a pilot wetland project. Our public comments included:

"Lake Cunningham is in a sorry state. It is toxic to fish and wildlife, and inhospitable to the eastside community that cares so deeply about it.

Worldwide, constructed wetlands are used as Green Infrastructure features to provide habitat for wildlife and clean water naturally and inexpensively. Using constructed wetlands to clean the water of Lake Cunningham will benefit both the community and the ecosystem.

Please authorize the City Manager to secure a grant from the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority for the design and environmental review of a Prototype Wetland Restoration Project, and direct staff to seek additional local, state, and federal grants. Please let the SCVAS know about opportunities to support grant applications for this purpose.”

The City of San Jose ended up diverting the 3.2 million dollars to public safety reserve, and looking elsewhere (Open Space Authority, state and federal budgets) to fund a pilot project for constructed wetlands. We are glad to learn that the state’s budget has allocated \$1.5 million to improving East San Jose, including Lake Cunningham. The [San Jose Spotlight](#) reports that San Jose Assemblymember Ash Kalra, who pushed for the funding in the state budget, said the money will mostly go toward restoring the wetlands in hopes of further improving the water quality in the lake.

Should bus shelters be kind to birds?

Please email us at advocate@scvas.org and express your opinion on this design of bus shelters (this one is located in the Stanford Industrial Park). We would like to use quotes from our members in our presentation to the City of Palo Alto and the VTA.





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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