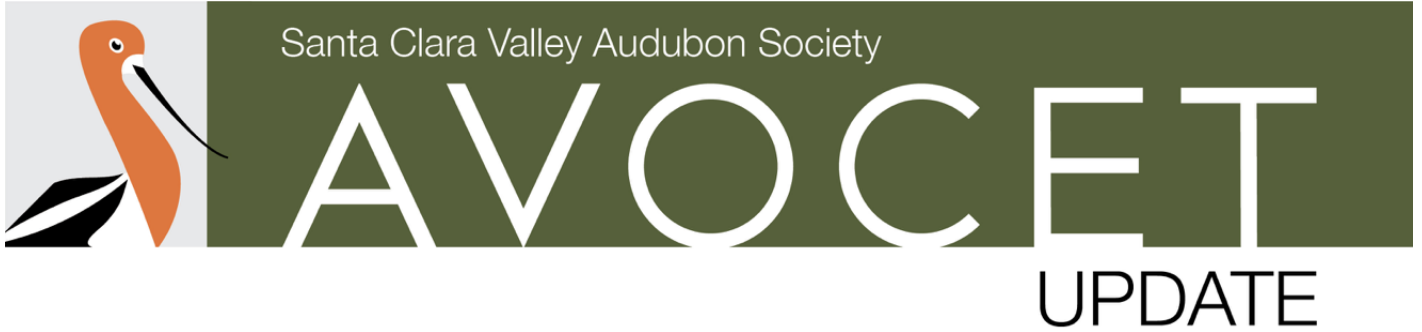


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Do you know this duck? if not, try our Waterfowl class this January Photo by Diane McCoy

January 2024

The new year promises to be busy with exciting field trips, new classes (including

"Blackbirds" in February), events and ongoing advocacy for our local birds, wildlife and wild landscapes. Thank you to all our members and supporters for your help in making all this possible. Thank you also to our incredible volunteers who are the backbone of this organization and cannot be thanked enough for all their dedication. Beginning in March, we will also hold our annual **Spring Birdathon**. Look for details regarding the kick-off gathering and the exact dates shortly. In the mean time, start thinking about how we can make this year's event even more successful, inviting and fun than last. Speaking of better-than-last-time, we will begin assembling the Spring AVOCET soon, so if you have an idea for article you'd like to submit, let us know. We are always looking for great new content and I am happy to discuss any story you might like to write. Finally, our offices and the **Nature Shop will be closed Dec. 25 — Jan. 1**. We will return to the Ranch on Tuesday, January 2 and look forward to seeing everyone again then. Have a happy, healthy, and safe holiday break filled with friends, family, and birds! See you in 2024.

Matthew Dodder

Executive Director



SCVAS Field Trip to Ed Levin County Park led by Howard Friedman and Sonja Kramer in December, 2023

Field Trips

In-Person and Self-Guided Field Trips

The next set of in-person field trips drop on **December 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.

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.



Birding journal by Ryan Ludman. Cedar Waxwings by Deanne Tucker

Backyard Birding

Our next backyard bird report will be our special year-in-review, and **we want to hear from you!**

In 2023, what were your best birding moments in your yard, around your block, or at your neighborhood park? Do you have a few favorite photos, videos, or sketches? What did you learn from birding close to home this year? Do you have any reflections to share with others?

Submittals for our “Best of Backyard Birding in 2023,” plus your neighborhood bird observations from November and December, are due by **Monday, January 8, 2024.**

Send your contributions to backyardbirds@scvas.org, and we'll publish them in the next All Around Town, our backyard bird report. Stories, images, and sound clips are

all welcome - we love your creativity!



Red-winged Blackbirds, photographed during the 2023 GBBC by Carol Ann Krug Graves

Great Backyard Bird Count

Mark your calendars for the Great Backyard Bird Count - **February 16-19, 2024!**

This annual event is a global count and celebration of birds found everywhere in the world, not just in your backyard. You can view 2023's results and our photo gallery [here](#).

Information about GBBC 2024 activities is coming in January.



North Coyote Valley Bioblitz

January 28

Explore the North Coyote Valley Conservation Area with SCVAS! Join us for a BioBlitz to explore the plants and animals that call this part of the Coyote Valley home! Gates will be closed after 9:20AM, please arrive on time.

We will be using iNaturalist to catalog organisms big and small and creating a publicly accessible project to document our findings. Naturalists will be on hand to help the public explore their surroundings and to direct discoveries.

You can learn more about BioBlitzes and the work of the BioBlitz Club [here](#).

This event has been made possible with the support of the [Open Space Authority](#).

Register Here



Waterfowl ID Class (online)

Registration Now Open

From Swans to Geese to Ducks, the ancient order of Anseriformes has long fascinated humans, even to the point of appearing in early cave paintings, and reinforcing their importance to early humans. Fortunately they are the easiest birds to observe, especially in winter, making December – March the perfect time to fully appreciate these iconic birds. From coastal bays to inland lakes and flooded farmlands they can be found by the hundreds or even thousands, providing birders ample opportunity to enjoy their enormous variety of colors, shapes, and behaviors. In this three-session online class, Matthew Dodder will discuss the taxonomy, diet and identification of the 35 species that occur in Santa Clara County with numerous comparison images. Special attention will be given to some of the rare and more difficult to identify species as well as hybrids.

Classes are online on three consecutive Monday nights, 7:00 – 8:30 PM (via zoom)

January 8 Part 1: Taxonomy, Morphology, and Behavior

January 15 Part 2: Divers, Dabblers, and Domestic

January 22 Part 3: Difficult Identifications

[Register Here](#)



Conservation Corner

Updates on recent and ongoing Environmental Advocacy work:

The Newts of Alma Bridge road: Exciting news and call for help.

In November, the California Wildlife Conservation Board awarded a \$2.1 million grant to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) for the Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project, aimed at protecting the health of local newt populations and promoting habitat connectivity. The grant will allow preliminary designs to be completed for newt passage improvements along approximately 5 miles of Alma Bridge Road near the Lexington Reservoir.

SCVAS has been advocating for newt crossings on Alma Bridge Road for several years, and we participate as stakeholders in the effort led by Midpen. We are also supportive of the Newt Patrol, Merav Vonshak's volunteer organization's effort to

continue and document newt mortality along Lexington Reservoir. Already this winter 606 fatalities have been documented. If you are interested in joining the road survey team, please contact meravvon@gmail.com

Increasing vehicular access to Henry Coe?

Financed by taxes from sales of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs), [Off-Highway Vehicle \(OHV\) Access Project](#) is a state initiative lead by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) Strategic Planning and Recreation Services Division, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division, and OHMVR Commission to identify new opportunities for additional OHV facilities in California as mandated by Senate Bill 155 (SB 155). While our Henry Coe State Park does not seem a prime target for such development at the moment, we must remain vigilant. Moreover, there seems to be an interest in increasing vehicle access to back country gravel roads at Henry Coe.

Please respond to this [online survey](#) before 1/10/2024. The survey does not provide an opportunity to oppose OHVs, but you can do your best in responding, and register opposition at the last question.

Lehigh's 2023 Reclamation Plan Amendment application: Supervisor Simitian is always vigilant!

Thanks to the hard work and leadership of Supervisor Simitian, the Lehigh Cement plant closed for good. But the Lehigh corporation continues to pursue their Reclamation Plan Amendment with the County. This Reclamation Plan Amendment proposes to change an existing reclamation plan (2012) to a) reduce the reclamation plan boundary area, b) import 42 million cubic yards (c.y.) of clean soil (fill) to refill the quarry pit as part of final reclamation design, and c) reclaim slopes along Permanente creek.

Now, the County has deemed the 2023 Reclamation Plan Amendment application incomplete. With other agencies, the county is asking for additional information regarding the reduced reclamation area, protection of fish and wildlife habitat, availability and management of clean soil (fill) and much more. The letter from the county is available [here](#). SCVAS will continue to follow this process and we look

forward to community meetings

Stanford adds visual cues for birds to transparent bus shelters

Fifty (!) transparent bus shelters were approved by the City of Palo Alto for the Stanford campus and the Stanford Foothills. Eighteen were constructed by the time we realized what was happening and reached out to Stanford with a request to retrofit the existing shelters, and modify the design of future shelters to provide for bird safety. We are glad to report that the university has retrofitted the existing shelters, and future shelters will be designed to minimize bird collisions.

Short Updates:

- **Reid Hillview Airport** : We supported the continuation of work to retire the airport in East San Jose. You may find our letter to County Supervisors [here](#).
- **Heritage Oaks Memorial Park** is seeking a permit for a cemetery in the hills west of Coyote Valley. [Here](#) are our comments at a recent public meeting, in which we asked for a new Environmental Impact Report for the project.
- Our campaign for protecting birds in the urban environment continues: the City of Los Altos is joining other cities (Palo Alto, Mountain View, potentially Sunnyvale) in starting a process for the development of Dark Sky and Bird Safety regulations.
- The California Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation Lecture Series Archive is available [here](#), with a large number of interesting videos on wildlife conservation issues in California.



Our office will be closed
Dec. 25 — Jan. 1
Happy Holidays



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