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COYOTE CREEK RIPARIAN STATION

Newsletter of the Coyote Creek Riparian Station

P.O. Box 1027 Alviso, CA 95002 (408) 262-9204

Volume 5 July, 1990 Number 3

A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

by Michael Rigney

Since its inception in 1982 as a tail-gate banding operation, Coyote Creek Riparian Station has flourished under the leadership of Dr. L. Richard (Dick) Mewaldt. CCRS has become an established bird monitoring station, banding 6,000 to 7,000 birds annually, and is on the cutting edge of riparian restoration and wildlife monitoring. Although Dick has depended heavily on the excellent cadre of volunteers and supporting members to accomplish this growth, such achievements would not have been possible were it not for Dick's determination, dedication and foresight. As many of you may know, CCRS is not the only group to have benefited from Dick's exemplary organizational prowess. Included in this long list of organizations are the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (which he helped found), the Avian Biology Laboratory at San Jose State University, the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and the Western Bird Banding Association.

At long last, Dick's health has begun to diminish his capability (but not his desire) to carry on as Station Manager. Reluctantly, the Board of Directors at their last meeting in April, accepted Dick's request to retire as Station Manager of CCRS. He will remain an ad hoc member of the Board in the role of Director Emeritus. Dick has assured us all that as long as he is able he will continue to provide guidance and support of CCRS which we have all depended on for so many years.

In the interim, I have been requested by the Board to assume many of Dick's roles as spokesman for CCRS in contracural and policy matters. As many of you are aware, I have worked with Dick for nearly 20 years on various projects. I can only say that I will try to continue and build upon the strong foundation which Dick has established for CCRS and hope that the Active and Regular members of this fine organization will continue to provide the essential support necessary to keep Dick's dream alive well into the 21st century.

Dick Mewaldt and one of the thousands of birds he has banded at CCRS over the past eight years.

OFF THE WALL - THE 1990 SPRING SEASON

by Bill Bousmann

I've taken data off the Summary Board for March, April, and May, and since a number of our spring migrants did not complete their passage until the first week of June, I have also included early June data as well. The Station was in operation 26 out of the 31 days in Marh, all of April, and three days were missed in May. Unless noted all of the data are for new captures.

I have plotted all of the new capture data as cumulative new captures over the year and I have used these plots to determine if a species shows largely migratory movement (as with Rufous Hummingbirds) or if there is a strong residential component (as with Allen's Hummingbirds). Those species which are clearly passage birds I've included in the table below. However, those that appear to be primarily residents in the spring I've included.

TABLE 1. Spring migrants - new capture data.

SPECIES	NO.	FIRST	10TH %	50TH %	90TH %	LAST
BCHU	7	2 May	-	25 May	-	4 Jun
CAHU	2	30 Apr	-	-	-	6 May
RUHU	39	16 Mar	27 Mar	4 Apr	6 May	10 Jun
WWPE	6	9 May	-	12 May	-	10 Jun
ATFL	5	22 May	-	30 May	-	2 Jun
SWTH	200	18 Apr	4 May	16 May	28 May	6 Jun
WAVI	9	17 Apr	-	7 May	-	26 May
OCWA	58	16 Mar	24 Mar	18 Apr	2 May	14 May
YWAR	26	24 Apr	2 May	24 May	2 Jun	13 Jun
MGWA	8	1 May	-	21 May	-	2 Jun
WIWA	119	27 Mar	10 Apr	8 May	21 May	26 May

The top five migrants in rank order this spring were Swainson's Thrush (SWTH) with 200 new captures, Wilson's Warbler (WIWA) with 199, Orange-crowned Warbler (OCWA) with 58, Rufous Hummingbird (RUHU) with 39, and Yellow Warbler (YWAR) with 26. These results are very similar to last year. For the migrant passerines there is very little change in numbers from last year despite the loss of riparian habitat and the shift in net lanes as a result of the flood control project.

Swainson's Thrush captures increased by 18%, numbers for Orange-crowned Warblers were unchanged, Wilson's Warblers dropped 22%, while Yellow Warblers dropped 57%. Only the latter appears to be a significant drop, but trends are hard to detect from only two years of data. However, it is noteworthy that all of the hummingbird numbers have dropped. The 60% drop in the Rufous Hummingbird is very close to the 45% drop in the number of Anna's Hummingbirds that were captured this spring. Here, it seems that the likely explanation for this decrease is the loss of the best patch of tree tobacco and the shift in the four net lanes which were so successful there last spring.

One must be careful in making conclusions from the changes in banding totals from year to year, but for the more common migrants we can probably trust the change in the median date as an indication of which species came through earlier and which came through later. The median date for Swainson's Thrush was four days earlier while the Orange-crowned Warblers came through six days earlier. The median date for Wilson's Warbler was seven days later while Yellow Warbler was unchanged. With many years of observations we may be able to detect significant changes in migratory peaks and even relate them to continental weather patterns or changes in the habitat conditions of wintering areas. For now we can just wonder if our experiences along Coyote Creek were observed by other banding stations along the West Coast.

We had a mixture of the more rare migrants this year. Calliope Hummingbirds (CAHU) were caught on 30 April and 6 May. No Willow Flycatchers (WIFL) were netted until 15 June which was a drop from last year's seven prior to the 15th. A single Nashville Warbler (NAWA) was banded on 22 April while the eight MacGillivray's Warblers (MGWA) banded between 1 May and 2 June were a treat for the banders. A White-throated Sparrow (WTSP) on 4 April was the only one banded this spring at the Station.

First records of note locally were Allen's Hummingbird on 17 February, Pacific-slope Flycatcher (Western Flycatcher for those of you not up on the new name changes) 28 March, Western Kingbird 24 March, and Black-headed Grosbeak on 16 April. Late departures include Ruby-crowned Kinglet on 2 April, Hermit Thrush on 1 June, Varied Thrush on 18 March, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler on 13 April, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler on 3 May, Fox Sparrow on 5 May (re-cap), Lincoln's Sparrow on 28 April, Golden-crowned Sparrow on 3 May (re-cap), White-crowned (Puget Sound) Sparrow on 3 May, and White-crowned (Gambel's) Sparrow on 6 May.

The late date for the Hermit Thrush is extraordinary as normal last dates are late April or early May. Also in the extraordinary category is a Winter Wren banded on 10 May. This, a month later than we have found this rare wren in the past as it moves from its wintering grounds to its breeding areas.

THE BLUEBIRD TRAIL AT IBM

by Daphne Wollman

**IBM, Almaden Research Center,
Coyote Creek Riparian Station**

INTRODUCTION

This is the second year of the Bluebird Trail at IBM's Almaden Research Center near Santa Teresa County Park. The Bluebird Trail is a joint project between IBM (volunteers) and CCRS (expertise). The current trail actually consists of two separate trails with a total of 27 traditional bluebird boxes and one American Kestrel nest box.

The longest trail is made up of 20 boxes (and the one Kestrel box) placed at 50 meter intervals along a ridge top situated in an oak woodland habitat (Ridge Trail). The remain ing seven boxes are split between two locations, both of which are in open meadow/grass land habitats (Lone Tree Hill and Serpentine Meadow). These locations are not completely free of human activity, but there are no house or culitvated fields nearby, and disturbance is minimal.

The trail was established in the spring of 1989 by Dick Mewaldt of CCRS and Dave Hildebrand, Dieter Thiel and Gary Keller of IBM. Based upon their observations and experi ences from other Bluebird trails, nesting activity by Western Bluebirds, Ash-throated Flycatchers and Violet-green Swallows was expected from late April to mid-June. Nest box activity was much greater (more nests and more species using the boxes) and more prolonged this year than last. In addition, two new species, Plain Titmouse and Bewick's Wren, have joined the list of tenants.

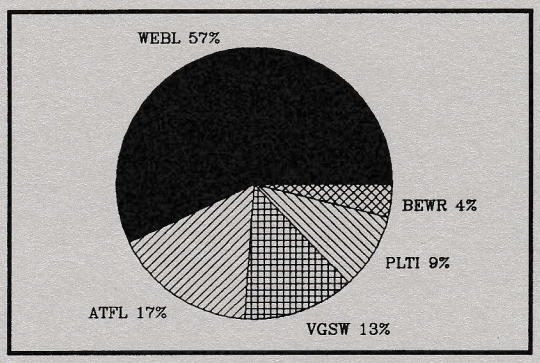
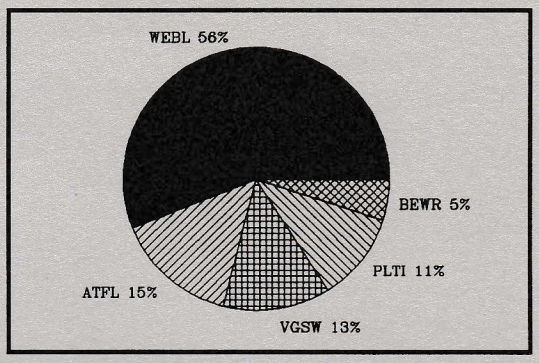


FIGURE 1. Percent use of nest boxes at IBM Almaden by species.



FIIGURE 2. Percent of total eggs laid by all species.

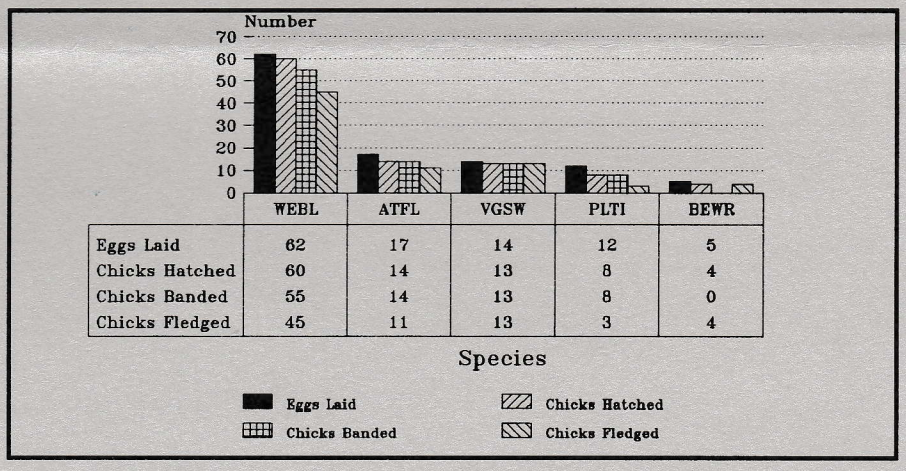


FIGURE 3. Clutch success of all species using nest boxes at IBM Almaden.

RESULTS

The 28 nest boxes provided shelter for 23 clutches. **Figure 1** depicts the percent use by species. Overall, 82% of boxes were occupied this year, but only one of the five boxes on the Serpentine Meadow trail was used. Both boxes on the Lone Tree Hill trail were occupied. The Ridge trail, however, was by far the most successful with 20 productive nests in the 21 boxes. Some boxes were used twice during the season while some were not used at all.

A total of 110 eggs were laid with an average clutch size of 4.7 eggs per nest. **Figure 2** represents a percentage breakdown by species of the total number of eggs laid. **Figure 3** presents a summary of nesting activity for the season. Ninety percent (99) of the eggs hatched (one clutch of 3 Ash-throated Flycatchers was still being incubated at press time.) and 90 chicks have been banded. One of three young bluebirds will be banded shortly. We believe 76 chicks fledged from all the nest boxes so far this year.

At each stage in the nesting cycle there were losses. Some of these losses were expected, others were not. A few eggs failed to hatch. One clutch of Plain Titmouse and the Bewick's Wren each contained one presumably infertile egg. One entire clutch of Violet-green Swallows did not hatch. In this case, something may have happened to one or both of the adults.

Predation played a somewhat unexpected role in reducing fledging success, especially in Western Bluebirds. In one incident, two bluebird eggs and the just hatched chicks were lost to predators. Two other clutches of bluebirds, including nine chicks, and an entire clutch of Violet-green Swallows were lost to a nest box-robbing raccoon. In order to prevent another episode of raccoon predation, wooden blocks 2" thick are being added to front of each box to make the inside inaccessible to raccoons. Three Ash-throated Flycatchers in one nest and one bluebird apparently succumbed to a disease or infestation.

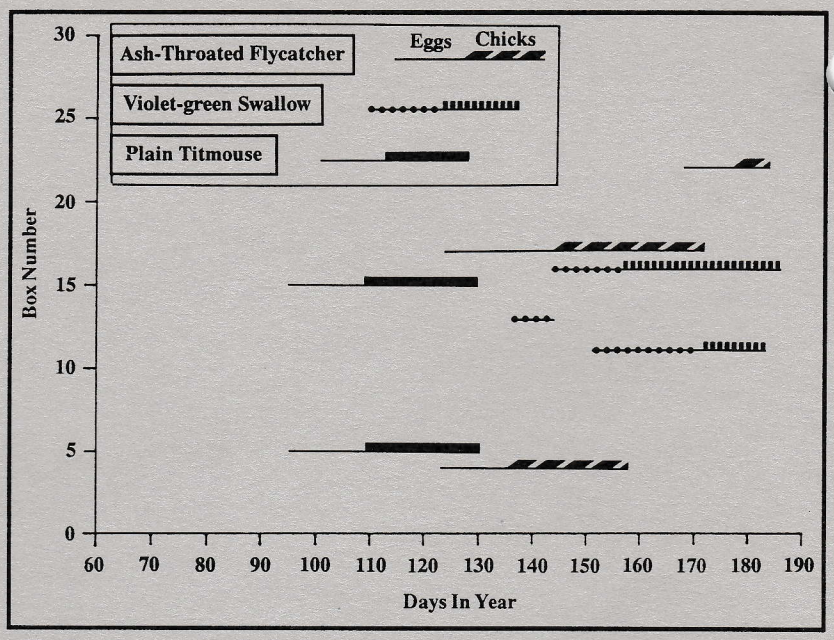


FIGURE 4a. Nesting chronology of the other three species known to have used the nest boxes at IBM Almaden.

As can be seen in **Figures 4a and 4b**,the nesting chronology of each species was somewhat different. Both the bluebirds and the flycatchers appeared to have second clutches (or there were some slow starters). While Western Bluebirds are known to have second clutches, it is somewhat unusual for Ash-throated Flycatchers. Because the nest boxes were generally checked only once a week, the actual incubation period and the amount of time chicks spent in the nest cannot be determined precisely. We did not collect nest chronology data for the Bewick's Wren nest which was discovered occupying one corner of the Kestrel box. On average, adults brooded for an average of 16 days and chicks fledged at 21 days.

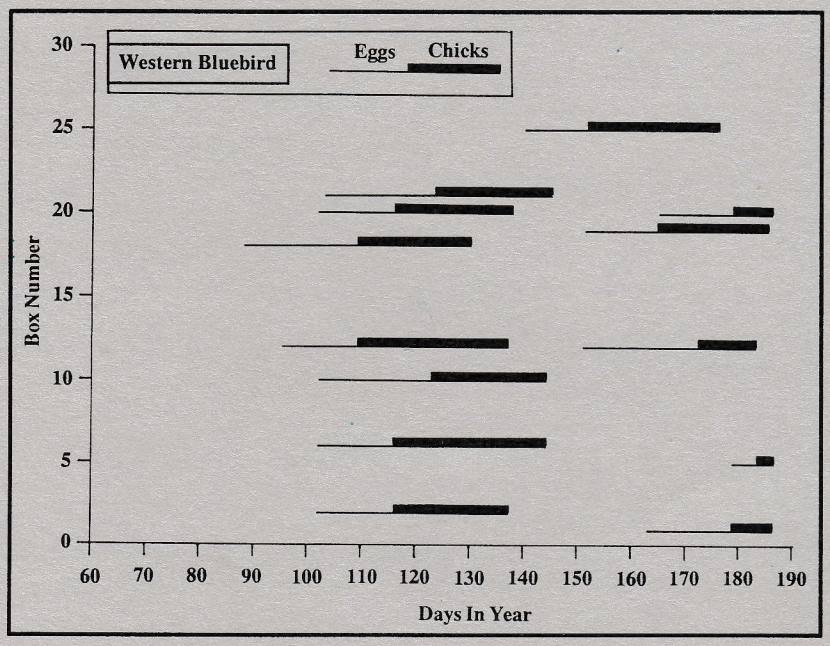


FIGURE 4a. Nesting chronology of Western Bluebirds at IBM Almaden.

The Bluebird Trail is continuing to grow in both numbers of boxes intstalled and scope. Approximately 30 - 40 new nest boxes are being installed (and may already be in before publication) in other locations on the Almaden property. These areas include a eucalyptus grove and strip of riparian habitat. These boxes will be ready well in advance of next breeding season.

Because of the relatively undisturbed nature of the area, and the variety of habitats available, fall migration should be exciting, with many different species passing through. We hope to set up and run mist nest in some of our more interesting habitats to see just who stops in for a visit at Almaden.

Editor's Note: Daphne Wollman was assisted in her work on the Bluebird Trail by other members of the Bluebird Team. This team consisted of Irene Bearsdley (co-chair), J.G. Van Stee, Suzanne Van Stee, Diter Thiel, and Gabriel Luka,

BIOLOGIST MOVING ON

by Michael Rigney

For the past two and one-half years CCRS has benefited from the hard work and skill of our first biologist, Blair Wolf. Blair has been accepted into a Ph.D. program at Arizona State University in Tempe. His major professor at ASU will be Dr. Glen Walsberg, a noted physiological ecologist. Blair and his new wife Deanna, will be settling into their house on the outskirts of Tempe around the middle of August before Blair begins his duties as a teaching assistant in the Zoology Department.

We would all like to take the opportunity to wish Blair well in his academic and career pursuits and thank him for all his diligent work on behalf of CCRS over the past several years. Besides his regular duties conducting surveys required under our wildlife monitoring contract, Blair took the lead in having a well-known local wildlife artist design our official T-shirts. He was also instrumental in getting our very successful hummingbird banding program going. Blair could always be counted on to man the nets when there was a shortage of volunteers on any particular day. His considerable talents and dedication to our program will be sorely missed.

Good luck Blair!!

BANDER TRAINING CLASS

by Maryann Danielson and Michael Rigney

The regular banding program at CCRS, which is essential to our goal of monitoring bird populations, is totally dependent upon active member participation. Some of our volunteer banders are involved in our program several times a week, others are only able to spare one or two days a month. All volunteers who meet the minimum requirement of two mornings per month participation are needed and welcomed. However, it is important that everyone stay abreast of the latest information on banding techniques and Station policy. Toward that end we are offering informational workshops on Thursday, August 23 and Sunday, August 26. Active Members are strongly urged to attend one of the workshops.

New staff, new ponds, new net lanes, a new computer system and the results of the 1990 breeding bird census will be part of the discussion at the bander workshop. In addition, there will be a review of the fine points of bird identification, ageing, sexing and the pre-basic molt as applied to fall birds.

We will also make an effort to schedule people for banding days well in advance so that we know which days we need to recruit people to work. Special events such as trail maintenance, tree planting and shorebird banding will also be discussed and planned.

These workshops will take place at the home of Michael and Theresa Rigney, 4316 Bayne Place, San Jose, from 7:30 - 9:30 pm on both days. Please plan to attend.

Do you know what bird this is? Come to the banding workshop and find out.

RECOVERIES OF CCRS BANDED BIRDS

by Rita Colwell

We recently received, from the U. S. Bird Banding Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland, the following reports of encounters with birds processed by CCRS.

- **MOURNING DOVE (1253-52857)**

Banded 24 April 1989 by Briget Ferguson, the bird had been shot 15 September 1989 in Calveras, CA.

- **RED-TAILED HAWK (1387-24208)**

This rehabilitated hatching year hawk was banded by Bruce Katano 05 July 1989. It was found dead on 19 January 1990 at Alum Rock Park.

- **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (1411-73510)**

This Puget Sound white-crowned sparrow was banded on 14 October 1987. It was recovered 02 May 1989 in Cedar Falls, WA by Dr. Frank Gotmark of the University of Washington.

- **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (1860-30550)**

Found dead by Gretchen Daily at Stanford University in December 1989, it had been banded 26 October 1989.

- **MOURNING DOVE (1253-52739)**

The dove, which was banded 09 May 1989 by Dr.Mewaldt, was shot at McCarthy Park, CA on 15 September 1989.

Reporting the recovery of banded birds to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is an important phase of any bird banding program. The information received from these recoveries aids in the continuing study and conservation of bird populations.

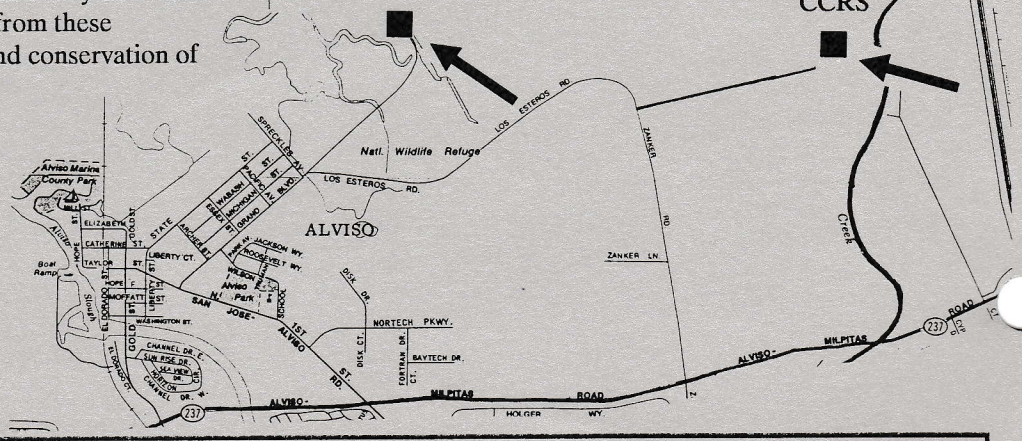
CCRS ANNUAL MEETING

by Michael Rigney

CCRS will hold its third Annual Meeting on September 22, 1990 at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge's Environmental Education Center in Alviso. A preliminary meeting of Active Members will take place at 8:30 to elect three members to the Board of Directors. The General Meeting will commence at 9:00 with a report on the year's activi ties by the President of the Board of Directors. Brief presentations by various committee members will follow the President's "State of the Station" address. To round out activites at the Education Center, a slide show of important events at the station will be given by the Station Manager.

We will then adjourn to the Coyote Creek Riparian Station for a catered lunch and tours of the various ongoing projects. We are hoping that all facilities will be located on our new "pad" by this time and it will be an opportunity for all members to see the shape of things to come at CCRS. The meeting will conclude at approximately 3:00 pm. We hope to all of you at this meeting to share the excitement we all have for our growing program.

AREA ENLARGED BELOW



BIRDING CLASSES OFFERED

Two classes for persons interested in learning more about birds and sharpening their identification skills, will be offered by Sequoia Adult School. The classes will be taught by Maryann Danielson, biologist, tour leader, bird photographer (and fellow CCRS bander). For further information, all (415) 369-6809.

BIRDING BASICS--for beginning and intermediate birders.

The fall quarter of this lecture/field trip series will concentrate on basic avian biology and identification and natural history of our fall waterbirds. Ten slide letures, starting Wednesday, September 12, will be held at the San Carlos Senior Center at 601 Chestnut Ave., San Carlos. Registration at the first class. Fee: $25 (lecture only). Field trips will be arranged with an additional fee.

FOLLOWING BIRDS THROUGH THE FALL SEASON--for intermediate and more advanced.

Major bird groups to be found in Northern California during the autumn months will high light this fall lecture/field trip series. The identification and natural history of lingering summer birds and returning shorebirds, warblers, sparrows and waterfowl will be covered. Ten slide lectures, starting on September 10, will be held at Little House, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park. Register at the first class. Fee: $25 (lectures only). Field trips will be arranged with an additional fee.

Maryann Danielson at work at CCRS

BANDER TIPS

by Bruce Katano

- ☑ Summer is the slow time of year at Coyote Creek. One can always do some thing else besides band. If you feel that some trail or net lane needs to be weeded or something needs to be cleaned or fixed (use common sense on this last one), by all means please do so. Hand tools are in the gray cabinet in the storeroom, shovels and hoes at the trailer side, cutters and shears are in the shed. Coyote creek has always relied on its volunteers to keep things moving and any amount of work you can do will be appreciated.

- ☑ Birds are beginning to molt their feathers. Remember, the number of primaries and secondaries for the different families of birds is on a list that is right next to the calendar. An explanation of molt is on page 12 of Pyle.

- ☑ If you own a mountain bike, bring it with you to the creek. You can make your net runs faster and get a bit of exercise in at the same time.

- ☑ When banding shorebirds (sandpiper, killdeer, etc.), please put the band on the tibiotarsus instead of the tarsometatarsus that you're used to. This keeps the band clear of the mud around the birds foot.

- ☑ Speaking of shorebirds, if you haven't been to the waterbird pond at the north end of our study area, go take a look. The pond has been drained slightly for shorebirds and you'll see juvenile stilts and avocets among others.

- ☑ Be a little paranoid when you close the nets. DID YOU GET THEM ALL?

MEMBERSHIPS IN CCRS

Member	$15 annually
Senior or Student	10 annually
Family	20 annually
Supporting	30 annually
Sustaining	75 annually
Corporate	100+ annually
Life	500 single payment*
Patron	5000 single payment*

Life Membership payments and 10% of all other membership payments and general contributions go into the CCRS Endowment Fund now earning about $175 per month. CCRS is a non-profit corporation with U. S. and California tax exempt status. Five dollars from the dues of each joint CCRS-SCCBB Atlas Member goes to the Atlas program. We acknowledge Memorial contributions in **RiparianNews**. We welcome bequests, including those of real property.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome 5 new members who joined us in the last three months:

Bousman, Mr. and Mrs. H. W.	Member
Carlson, C J	Member
Silliman, John R.	Member
Spacek, Bonnie	Member
Zeilinger, Malinda	Member

We are pleased to welcome Mark E. Sutherland of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department as our newestLife Member. Mark and his wife Liela are concentrating their Active service to CCRS in our riparian revegation program.

Life Membership payments in their entirely and 10%of all other membership payments and general contributions are placed in the CCRS Endowment Fund thereby assuring the future of Coyote Creek Riparian Station.

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ALVISO, CA 95002

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COYOTE CREEK RIPARIAN STATION

Coyote Creek Riparian Station is a non-profit California membership corporation with United States and California tax exempt status. CCRS is dedicated to research on, and to the restoration and management of, riparian and wetland habitats including the wildlife and other animals that live there. CCRS is located on City of San Jose, Department of Water Pollution Control limited-access land along the last two kilometers of the west bank of Coyote Creek where it meets San Francisco Bay.

Coyote Creek Riparian Station operates in cooperation with the Santa Clara Valley Water District, San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant, H. T. Harvey & Associates, John Stanley & Associates, San Jose State University, U. S. Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD., San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and the California Department of Fish and Game.

RiparianNews is published quarterly for the information of our CCRS membership, the personnel of the several cooperating federal, state, and local agencies, and for other organizations and individuals concerned with the flora and fauna of riparian and wetland habitats. Please let us know of persons or organizations who might benefit from or enjoy our **RiparianNews**.