

The Stilt

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The Newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory



VICKI JENNINGS

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Birder turned scientist

BIRDING FOR THE BIRDS

California Fall Challenge - 2001 Report

It's a wrap on the 5th Annual California Fall Challenge! This year's 23 teams birded California counties from Trinity to Orange, for our best yet coverage of 19 counties. Our decision this year to include only commonly seen species as each county's "par" changed the playing field, and encouraged more birding of little known counties. We revolutionized our fundraising plans and by all accounts, the results will be better than our previous efforts by 50% or more.

It's pleasing to us here at SFBBO that birders of all skill levels enjoy participating in the CFC. While the CFC is definitely a competitive event, it also is designed to get birders out in the field to enjoy the fall migration. If they turn up rarities and contribute to our knowledge of avian distribution during migration, that's a big bonus. That's the beauty of this type of event in California: the geography is so varied and the state covers such a nice chunk of the Pacific Flyway.

The Colusa team, led by Ed Pandolfino, won the competition for highest percentage of the county list with .6468 of the list. Ed came by last week to pick up their beautiful new Leica Televid spotting scope with 20/60 zoom eyepiece (from Leica Inc.) Ed continues his quest to distribute great optics to the most promising under-optic'd young birders. And he's was of our top fundraisers too. Go Ed!!

The 2nd place award, a Monterey pelagic trip from Cheeseman's Ecology Safaris, goes to the Merced team (aka The Fab Four) with a total of .5981. The "Most Species Seen" title was retained by Scott

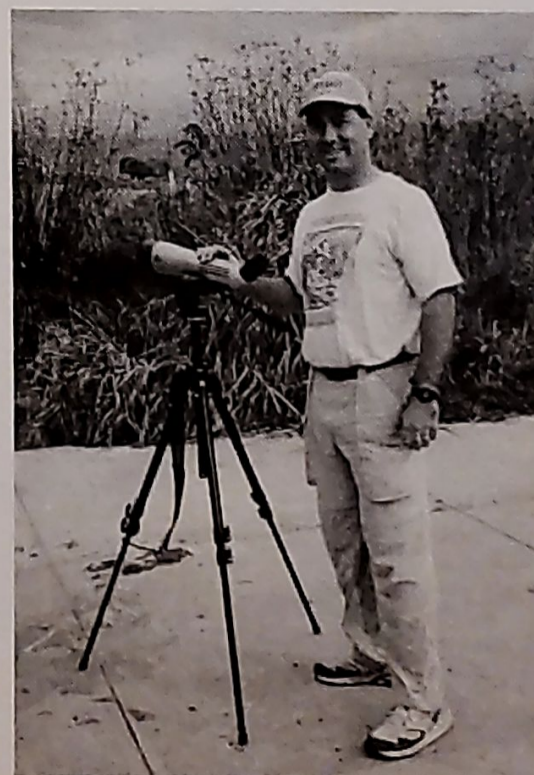
Terrill's Monterey team with an outstanding 161 species. Second place was so close in this category, and went to Stephen Alter and Bruce Aird in Orange County, with 160 species. Steve and Bruce also made valuable contributions to the perfecting of their county's list, submitting information directly to John Sterling, California's county birding czar and the generous provider of the CFC's official lists.

Thanks to you all for being part of the 2001 California Fall Challenge! See you in the field next fall and good birding!

The California Fall Challenge 2001 Committee

Lowell Saumweber, *Chair of the Madness*
Jan Hintermeister, *Treasurer Hunter*
Gerry Ellis, *Prospect Miner*

Continued on page 2



Dennis Cavallo exults in his new Leica Scope, first place prize in the 2001 California Fall Challenge.

SFBBO

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

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FALL CHALLENGE*Continued from page 1*

Karen DeMello, *Fundraiser Extraordinaire*
 Lou Young, *Talent Scout*
 Janet Hanson, *Green Eyeshades*

Fundraising Champions of the California Fall Challenge 2001

Gina Barton	\$2374
Jan Hintermeister	\$1975
Sherry Hudson	\$1874
Karen DeMello	\$1560
Robin Smith	\$1416
Harriet Gerson	\$1362
Ed Pandolfino	\$1175
Lou Young	\$1135

SFBBO gratefully acknowledges these very generous donors to the California Fall Challenge 2001

Major Sponsors

Discovery Voyages: *a one-week cruise for 2 in Prince William Sound*

Leica, Inc: *Televioid Spotting Scope with 20/60 Zoom Eyepiece*

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 Wild Bird Center

*In Memorial***Mrs. Fran Mewaldt**

We were saddened to hear of the recent death of Mrs. Fran Mewaldt, widow of SFBBO Founder Dr. Richard Mewaldt.

The Observatory sends its sincere condolences to the Mewaldt Family on the passing of this gracious lady and good friend of SFBBO.

QUARTERLY LANDBIRD RESEARCH PROGRAM REPORT**COYOTE CREEK FIELD STATION**

MIST-NET OPERATIONS: A total of 21 volunteers with 888 hours have banded 1813 birds of 55 species from September 1st to December 28th, 2002.

Highlight captures include:

Six Townsend's Warblers captured between Sept. 16th and Oct. 7th representing the total for the year. We captured two in 2000 and none in 1999. They are usually associated with coniferous habitats and typically migrate in higher elevations. They are regular migrants in small numbers and wintering bird in the county.

Two Hermit Warblers captured on Sept. 9th and 30th also representing the total for the year. This was the eighth and ninth record for CCFS. We captured none in either 2000 or 1999. They are also usually associated with conifers and typically migrate in higher elevations. A rare bird in both spring and fall migration at CCFS and elsewhere in the county, and less common than Townsend's Warblers. There are, however, some breeders along Skyline Road in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

One Gray Catbird captured on Sept. 26th. This was the first record for CCFS and second county record. There are only a few more than 100 records for the entire state, and in the region they tend to be coastal vagrants. When present, they usually come in waves of four or five individuals.

Two White-throated Sparrows captured on Oct. 14th and 21st. This was the first capture for the year. We captured none in 2000 and two in 1999. Rare, but regular migrant and irregular wintering bird with Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows. Some small populations winter in California, especially near the coast.

One Black-throated Gray Warbler captured on Oct. 7th and the first capture for the year. We captured none in 2000 and two in 1999. Rare, but uncommon to regular migrant in spring and fall. They are usually associated with oaks, migrate and breed locally a little higher up in eleva-

tion. They are also closely associated with Townsend's and Hermit Warblers.

One Red-breasted Sapsucker captured Oct. 14th and the third capture for the year. We captured none in either 1999 or 2000. They migrate through and winter in the county, and are more commonly seen in the foothills.

One Hammond's Flycatcher captured Oct 14th and the first capture for the year. We captured one in 2000 and none in 1999. If captured, usually it happens in October at CCFS. They are a regular, though uncommon, spring migrant in the Diablos, and much rarer in the fall migration. They molt their body plumage before they migrate south, causing their migratory timing to be later than other Empidonax flycatchers. Their typical route for migration is through the Sierras.

Five Varied Thrushes captured on Nov. 28th, Dec. 9th, 12th and 15th. These were the third through seventh captures for the year. We captured five in 2000 and four in 1999. They have been seen in small numbers during migration at CCFS and wet winters seem to bring them.

One Northern Saw-whet Owl captured on Dec. 5th, the first capture for the year. A breeder in the county, but rare at the station. When we used to open the field station nets earlier in previous years, we captured them regularly during winter months.

One Blue-gray Gnatcatcher captured on Dec. 16th. This was the second capture for the year and sixth record for CCFS. We captured none in 1999 or 2000. Usually associated with dry scrub, a regular breeder in the county, but rare at CCFS.

VEGETATION: We have been collecting vegetation data at CCFS since 1987, allowing us to link habitat types and structure to bird species. We wrapped up another season of gathering this data. It has been a busy year for us since vegetation data has not been collected since 1998. Many trees

have grown and the underbrush has increased. Thank you to all the volunteers who have crawled through blackberries and coyote brush and hugged many a tree in the name of science. Thanks, especially to Harold Fukuma, for his sense of humor while maneuvering through the coyote brush. We will collect data on winter plant growth and habitat characteristics again in early 2002.

DATA: We are checking and correcting mist-net data from 1998 to 2000, so that we can submit it to the Bird Banding Laboratory, a nationwide repository of banding data. We have also been in the process of entering all of the data from 2001 into the database. Many thanks to Irene Beardsley for designing and fine tuning our database to make it user friendly for both the biologists and volunteers, and to Rita Colwell for diligently entering and proofreading banding data. The time has also come for entering this year's vegetation data into the database. Anyone willing to assist in data entry will be warmly welcomed. Once all of this data is entered we can begin analyzing it for trends.

STREAMSIDE SONGBIRD AUXILIARY SITES

The Streamside Songbird grant was funded by the city of San Jose and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for a year-long study of riparian (creekside) habitats with overflow channels adjacent to them. Our five study sites that met these criteria were located on Coyote Creek and Guadalupe River. We have now completed the data collection part of the study and will soon compare population trends of birds at these five auxiliary sites with the population trends of birds at CCFS.

MIST-NETTING: A total of six volunteers plus staff banded a total of 812 birds of 43 species from September 1st to December 31st. The volunteers logged a total of 84 hours. We banded 591 and 221 birds on Coyote Creek and Guadalupe River, respectively. It may appear that the overall quantity of birds is greater on Coyote Creek, but we have three sites there, compared to two sites on Guadalupe River.

Highlights for our three Coyote Creek auxiliary sites include:

One Brewer's Sparrow captured on Oct. 2nd. They are a rare migrant for the county, usually found much further east on other side of Sierras.

One Western Wood Pewee captured on Sept. 13th. They are a regular migrant, but tend to be high up in the overstory and are therefore not caught regularly.

Three House Wrens captured on Sept. 14th and Oct. 2nd. They are regular migrants, especially in the fall and typically breed in Santa Cruz mountains.

Two White-throated Sparrows captured on Nov. 19th.

One Acorn Woodpecker captured on Nov. 19th. One was spotted at CCFS on September 9th by Mike Mammoser and Mike Rogers. They may be possible fall dispersers.

Highlights for the two Guadalupe River sites include:

One Nashville Warbler captured on Oct. 22nd. They are an uncommon to rare migrant in both spring and fall.

One White-throated Sparrow captured on Nov. 15th.

Two Oregon Juncos captured on Nov. 21st and Dec. 4th. They have been previously restricted to coniferous areas, but

are becoming more common especially near residential areas. They come into the valley more often in the winter.

Three House Wrens captured on Oct. 11th and Nov. 28th.

One Hutton's Vireo captured on Nov. 28th.

VEGETATION: This is our first year collecting data from the auxiliary sites. These sites were difficult because we had to start from scratch on mapping trees, labeling them and measuring them, in addition to collecting the other vegetation data.

DATA: Now we have almost a complete years worth of data to be entered from 2001 (for both banding and vegetation) in addition to the field station data. We will need to proofread this and submit it to the Bird Banding Laboratory, before we start to analyze everything.

The year has quickly come to its close, and we have many things to be excited about. We have been funded to begin an education program at the Coyote Creek Field Station, funded by Santa Clara Valley Water District. We have had three school groups come out so far for banding demonstrations. We will soon be designing a new pamphlet and an educational marquee for the field station.

— Sherry Hudson and Gina Barton

NEW YEAR'S WISH LIST

OFFICE:

Energy efficient freezer
Small energy-efficient refrigerator
Heavy duty rake
New photocopier
Digital camera
Interior design consultation

COYOTE CREEK FIELD STATION:

New signage
Design of new outdoor classroom

BIRDS OF THE BAYLANDS

PROGRAM:

New low-emission 15 hp outboard motor

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A BIRD BANDER?

We are offering a Beginning Bird Banding Class from September to November 2002. We are looking for energetic people to become a part of our bird banding team at Coyote Creek Field Station. Desired qualifications include bird identification skills, manual dexterity, good eyesight and somewhat physically active. For more information and an application, please call Sherry or Gina at 408-946-6548.

ALVISO BIRDING

The following is a treatise on Alviso birding, written by SFBBO Member Mike Mammoser for the new edition of "Birding at the Bottom of the Bay", the guide to Santa Clara County published by the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. The guide, edited by Betty Wyatt, will be available early in 2002 through the SCVAS bookshop. Betty has very kindly given SFBBO permission to preview Mike's chapter on the superlative birding of Alviso. Enjoy!

ALVISO

The Alviso section of San Jose has some of the best habitat in the county for attracting the uncommon, the unusual and the rare. The wide range of habitats includes salt evaporator ponds, salt marsh, brackish sloughs, freshwater ponds, vernal pools, mudflats, grassy pasture, riparian corridor, sewage ponds, and urban development. This variety of habitats, and the truly rare birds that seem drawn to it, can make a birding field trip here one of the most exciting of experiences.

The best times for birding Alviso are the migration periods (especially fall migration) and winter. Shorebirds begin migrating into the area in late July and continue through October (except for winter residents who remain). Passerine migration is concentrated in September and October in the fall, and April and May in the spring. Gulls start trickling in around late August and remain until April. Keep these general time frames in mind to maximize your efforts.

DIRECTIONS:

From either direction on Hwy. 237 in San Jose, exit at Great America Parkway. On the north side of Hwy. 237 a small connecting road runs to the east and intersects Gold/Lafayette. Turn left (north) on Gold and take it through two stop signs, a bend to the left and across the railroad tracks to a stop sign. Turn right and drive into Alviso Marina County Park.

SPECIALTIES AND

HOW TO BIRD THE AREA:

Alviso Slough Trail

From the northeast corner of the Alviso Marina parking lot, the Alviso Slough Trail loops for approximately 10 miles around the perimeter levees of seven salt ponds. The hiking is level but the distances are long. It can be beneficial to bring a bike for traveling this loop. If you do, be sure to practice the art of balancing a scope while riding, for a scope is essential here.

Check the bulrush growth in the abandoned marina for Virginia Rail and Sora in winter, and Marsh Wren year-round. Little Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Sabine's Gull have all been seen in this area.

The north (right) branch of the trail follows the railroad and runs along the edge of a narrow impoundment between the salt pond and the railroad tracks. When most shorebirds are present (winter and migration), this enclosure can serve as a high tide roost, bringing in Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, yellowlegs, Western and Least Sandpipers, Dunlin, and dowitchers. This is one of the few places in the county where Sanderling has been found. Both Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes can appear in this pond during migration, and one spring a Brant even appeared. In winter check through the Ring-billed, California, Herring, Western, and Glaucous-winged Gulls for the less common Thayer's and the rare Glaucous Gull.

Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet and Savannah Sparrow nest in or around the impoundment, and one year a pair of Snowy Plovers made a half-hearted attempt at breeding here.

The salt pond immediately north of the marina can host grebes in winter; mostly Eared, Western and Clark's. This pond hosted an amazing number of wayward White-winged Scoters one year. All these ponds can host Red-breasted Merganser in winter.

At the extreme northeast corner of the loop, the trail bears left along the edge of Triangle Marsh, which harbors Clapper Rail year-round, and American Bittern, Virginia Rail and Sora in winter. The local salt marsh Song Sparrow also occurs here. Watch for Northern Harrier year-round, and Short-eared Owl coursing over the marsh in the winter dusk.

The levee trail continues west along the marsh, following the bank of Coyote Creek to its confluence with Alviso Slough. The salt pond bordered by the trail here and the one immediately to its south hold the largest variety of birds. Ducks winter in the thousands, and have included such rarities as Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Green-winged Teal, Redhead, Tufted Duck, and Barrow's Goldeneye. The northern pond is a high tide roosting site for

shorebirds and one of the best places in the county to see Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling. As the tide recedes, the open mudflats along Coyote Creek can teem with tens of thousands of migrating and wintering shorebirds. Herons and egrets forage in this pond, and late summer is a good time to look for Little Blue Heron, which breeds in extremely small numbers at the nearby rookery. Pelicans of both species can usually be found on the levee that separates the two ponds and recently Double-crested

Cormorant have taken to nesting there (the interior levees are closed to public access). Both Red-throated and Common Loons have been reported. Rarities include Snow Goose, Tundra Swan, Sandhill Crane, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Parasitic Jaeger.

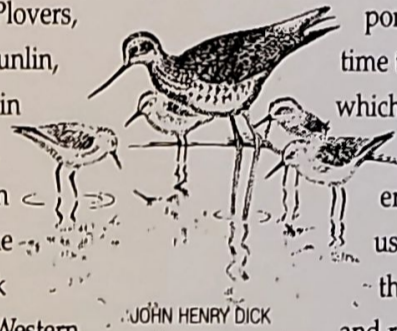
The loop trail continues south and east along Alviso Slough back to the marina. The slough's bulrushes have American Bittern and rails in winter and Common Yellowthroat year-round. The salt pond pipe outlets along here have attracted Black-headed and Sabine's Gull in the past.

State and Spreckles Streets

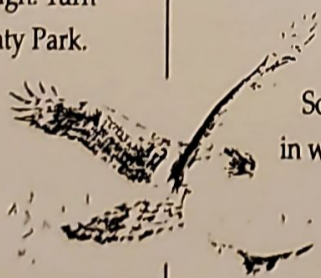
Exit Hwy. 237 at First St. and head north into Alviso. After 0.8 mile turn right onto Grand Blvd. In another 0.5 mile turn left onto Spreckles. Drive to State St. and park. The small pond in New Chicago Marsh on the east side of the road is a must-check location during fall migration for Stilt Sandpiper and Ruff. Other shorebirds that show up include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Western and Least Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers, and Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes. Vaux's Swifts and swallows of all species can appear here. This area has also hosted an American Golden-plover and Tropical Kingbird.

Arzino Ranch

Immediately southeast of the intersection of Grand and Spreckles is Arzino Ranch, a horse boarding stable and pasture. This is the best place in the county to find Cattle Egret in summer. The population of



JOHN HENRY DICK



this egret is small and difficult to find in some years. A small number of Burrowing Owls inhabit the pasture, and during breeding season large family groups can be seen clustered at burrow entrances. Ring-necked Pheasant and Loggerhead Shrike breed here. Golden Eagle and Prairie Falcon are occasional winter visitors.

For another view of Arzino Ranch, backtrack to First St., go south to

Nortech Pkwy. and turn left. The first street on the left is Disk Dr. Behind the Jubilee Christian Center is an overlook of Arzino Ranch. Along the boundary fence just east of the parking lot is a small vernal pool. When it's wet it can contain Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Curlew, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Common Snipe. The wet pasture attracts Canada Goose and the occasional Greater White-fronted, Snow or Ross's Goose. A winter Ruff was once found at this location. During spring migration look for Yellow-headed Blackbird among the Red-winged and Tricoloreds.

Continuing down Nortech Pkwy. past Disk Dr., the road ends at the entrance to Arzino, with a view of another large weedy pasture. Look for Loggerhead Shrike, Red-winged and Tricolored Blackbirds, Western Meadowlark, and Brewer's Blackbirds. An adult Little Blue Heron was once seen here, foraging in the tall grass.

Environmental Education Center (EEC)

Many of the best Alviso birding sites are the property of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and one of those is the refuge's Environmental Education Center. To get there, return to the intersection of Grand Blvd. and Spreckles (as described above). The entrance road to the EEC's parking lot is just east of this intersection.

New Chicago Marsh, to the west of the EEC, is a pickleweed salt marsh that attracts waterfowl and shorebirds. Canada Goose and local duck species breed here, augmented in winter by incoming migrants. Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet and Savannah Sparrow nest here as well. In winter Golden Eagle and Peregrine Falcon can occasionally be seen on the power towers along the entrance road, while White-tailed Kite and Northern Harrier can appear anytime. Black Tern has been seen during spring migration. Rarities have included Tundra Swan, Little Gull, Ruff, and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper.

North of the EEC is a large salt pond, whose perimeter levee is open to the public. American Avocet and Forster's Tern nest on the small dredge islands, and

in recent years a pair of Black Skimmers has joined them. Roosting winter gull flocks have included Thayer's and Glaucous Gulls. Check for the occasional yellowlegs and Least Sandpiper along the shore. The water usually contains Eared Grebes in winter and both phalarope species in migration.



To the east of the EEC is Mallard Slough, which heads north for a rendezvous with the mouth of Coyote Creek. A few hundred yards north of the EEC is the beginning of the largest heron rookery in the South Bay. Great Egret, Snowy Egret and Black-crowned Night-Heron nest in the hundreds among the bulrushes. In April and May check the birds carrying nesting material into the rookery for Little Blue Heron and Cattle Egret, both of which breed here in very small numbers in most years. The levee alongside the rookery is closed during nesting season. When the tide is out, the slough's mudflats attract shorebirds, including an occasional Semipalmated Sandpiper. Rails occupy the slough's bulrushes in winter, and recent sightings of Clapper Rail in this slough represent the easternmost extent of its range in Santa Clara County. These bulrushes also contain Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat and Red-winged Blackbird throughout the year.

Even the area right around the EEC building can be productive. Fox, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows are winter residents, while American Goldfinches breed here. Common Ravens have bred on nearby power towers. A Sage Thrasher was once found near the parking lot, and Magnolia Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, American Redstart and Northern Waterthrush near the cottonwood strip bordering the slough. One of the cottonwoods has a nest box that has harbored Barn Owls.

Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS)

Coyote Creek Field Station is a bird-banding facility of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, headquartered in Alviso. The station has a banding trailer on the west side levee of Coyote Creek, just north of Hwy. 237. From this vantage point it overlooks some of the most remarkable bird habitat in the county.

The riparian habitat between Hwy. 237 and Dixon Landing Rd. is some of the best left on the urban valley floor. It is surrounded by open space (agricultural, sewage ponds, urban), which may serve as a concentrating factor for passerine landbirds. Some of the more astounding finds include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Red-eyed

Vireo, Brown Thrasher, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, Palm, Blackpoll, Black-and-white, and Worm-eating Warblers, Northern Waterthrush, Kentucky, Connecticut, and Hooded Warblers, and Painted Bunting.

Both spring and fall migration can bring some of the best of the local birds as well, including Common Poorwill, Vaux's Swift, Black-chinned, Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds, Willow, Hammond's, Dusky, and Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Yellow, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, Hermit, and MacGillivray's Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Western Tanager, as well as vireos, grosbeaks, thrushes and orioles.

The weedy overflow channel adjacent to the creek attracts sparrows in winter. Among the more typical species there is the occasional rarity, such as Clay-colored, Brewer's, Swamp, or White-throated Sparrow.

With the abundance of birds, predators are ever-present. White-tailed Kite, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel breed along Coyote Creek. Red-shouldered Hawk is seen regularly and probably breeds nearby. Northern Harrier and Cooper's Hawks are constant visitors, along with Sharp-shinned in winter. Golden Eagle, Merlin, Peregrine and Prairie Falcons are occasional in winter.



North of the banding trailer is a 16.5 acre man-made mitigation pond. Black-bellied Plover, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Western, Least, Baird's, and Pectoral Sandpipers, Dunlin, Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers, Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes have all been found here. Rarer shorebirds include Semipalmated, White-rumped, Sharp-tailed, and Stilt Sandpipers, Ruff, and the occasional golden-plover.

Many western gull species rest and bathe here, and if they are looked at closely, the unusual may be revealed, such as an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull recently. Caspian and Forster's Terns are regular; even Common Terns have stopped by this pond over the years.

CCFS is on gated private property, owned by the Santa Clara Valley Water District. However, the bird banding program allows for conditional access by members of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. To contact the Observatory about membership, access and directions call 408-946-6548.

SFBBO'S 20TH YEAR CELEBRATION

Friends of the Bird Observatory celebrated its 20th Anniversary in high style at the South Bay Yacht Club, a well-known historical landmark in Alviso. Some friends, John and Nena Padley, even arrived by sailboat, thanks to a well-timed high tide.

The celebrants mixed plenty of pleasure with the business of SFBBO's Annual Membership meeting. Refreshments included a huge birthday cake, appropriately decorated with likenesses of local birds. Results of the California Fall Challenge were announced and prizes awarded, including the coveted perpetual Trophy to the winners of the county birding competition.

We took great pleasure in honoring outgoing Board Member George Oetzel, for his extraordinary contributions as Webmaster over the last three years.

George's dedication to the task has enabled SFBBO to bring its message of bird and habitat conservation to many new birders and inquisitive folks. We will miss him but wish he and his wife Marti all sorts of happiness as they plan retirement and travel.

Guests also enjoyed our first ever book sale, hosted by Librarian Bob Hole. SFBBO's Library is blessed by more book donations than we can use. Bob's

careful selection of duplicate and sellable titles will enable the Library to acquire other books and journals of more immediate use to our biologists and volunteers.

Member business consisted of the election of the Board of Directors nominated slate of candidates. The following were elected to three year terms of office:

Jan Hintermeister, Network Engineer,
Santa Clara

Vincent Hwang, MBA, San Jose

Mary Kuchlenz, Attorney at Law, Foster City

Mary Ann Mancuso, Human Resources
Consultant, Berkeley

Lowell Saumweber, MBA, San Jose

When asked about his decision to serve on SFBBO's Board of Directors, Lowell's reply was:

"I want to get involved with my community to preserve and conserve wildlife. As birds are my favorite species of wildlife, working with the SFBBO meets all our needs."

We heartily welcome our new Directors and look forward to introducing them to our Membership in future issues of *The Still*.

GOAL SETTING 2002 – BLAZING THE TRAIL AHEAD

Every fall, key SFBBO personnel meet to review the past year's accomplishments and to plan the coming year's activities and goals. This year, we were indeed fortunate to have the meeting facilitated by a member of the Stanford Alumni Consulting Team. Andrea Comey, of Acorn Consulting in Menlo Park, supplied her time and expertise to help our Board and Staff look to the future of SFBBO. Interestingly enough, the agenda began with a good look at SFBBO's 20-year history. Relatively new players were given insights into SFBBO's past and older players were surprised by some things they hadn't known, but the exercise succeeded very well at getting us all on the same page. Board and Staff then worked together to identify key issues currently facing the Observatory. The outcome was a clearly identified need for strategic planning. Our Board is now gathering the resources and materials necessary for this intensive project, which will chart the course of SFBBO's future. Our gratitude goes out to Stanford ACT and to Andrea, for guiding SFBBO through the first stage of this important effort.

An Avian Disease Prevention Program Biologist Reports on the Field Season

I got the chance this summer to run the Avian Disease Prevention Program, a challenging, but extremely satisfying endeavor. I get to take our wonderful volunteers out in an outboard motor boat and save a few lives in our birdie community. It's also a great opportunity to do some birding and see parts of the bay area that people don't normally get to see. We started in June, wearing shorts and watershoes to launch our inflatable boat into the sloughs of San Francisco Bay. By November, we switch to boots and warm jackets.

Avian botulism is a disease caused by a toxin released by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. This bacteria likes warm, anaerobic, protein rich environments, so dead animals are a preferred host. The disease spreads quickly through the waterfowl population. Birds with botulism die of exposure, starvation, or drowning brought on by a gradual paralysis. It is



Laurie Bechtler and Diana Bonogofsky enjoy cruising Artesian Slough as volunteers in SFBBO's Avian Disease Prevention Program.

usually easy to spot a bird with botulism because they will be unable to dive, fly, and/or hold their neck up. This type of botulism only effects birds, so we are in no danger of contracting the disease. It is our mission to prevent the spread of this disease by regularly patrolling the sloughs in this area for dead, sick, and injured birds. We pick up everything we can. The dead

birds are removed to prevent more deaths, while licensed rehabilitators attempt to get the sick and injured birds back to health and freedom.

Much to my dismay, we had disease problems in both Coyote Creek and Guadalupe Creek this summer, probably because of the scorching heat in June and then again in September. It's fairly under control now that it has cooled down, but it will need to be watched carefully. I'm afraid I have to leave SFBBO before the end of the season because of obligations to my education (compliments of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo). But I'll be back! Many thanks to Kappy Sprenger and Wildlife Rescue (rehabilitators), the volunteers of the ADPP, and the great staff at SFBBO for making my job so easy and so much fun!

– Michelle Melby
Biologist

Our thanks to these supporters of the Observatory...

MEMBERSHIPS

Our thanks to the following new and renewing members of SFBBO for the months of October, November and December 2001

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Gerry Ellis and Lou Young for numerous donations of materials for the comfort and efficiency of our new offices.

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Board meetings are held monthly and are open to the Membership. Call the Observatory for dates and times.

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SFBBO

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT ON . . .

TOM GOODIER

Dedication and commitment are two buzzwords we often hear nowadays but seldom witness, except in a case like volunteer bird bander Tom Goodier. Tom is working on his thirteenth year as a bander at the Field Station. We decided to honor those years of service in this newsletter and to chat with Tom about what bird-banding and the Observatory mean to him.

SFBBO: Are you indigenous to the south bay area?

TOM: I was born in San Mateo; I live about 5 miles, as the crow flies, from the hospital where I was born.

SFBBO: Why do you care about birds, and how did you get interested in banding?

TOM: I like birds because they're out in the open so you can see them, unlike mammals which stay mostly hidden. I got interested in banding in 1989 when I went to CCRS on a Maryann Danielson field trip. Now I could be less of a spectator and more of a participant in this activity of birdwatching.

SFBBO: Why do you volunteer at the Bird Observatory?

TOM: I like to work with the nice, intelligent people who volunteer there. I need something to do that has meaning. As a volunteer with SFBBO I am involved in scientific research which deals with the real world around us. I like banding out at CCFS because there is no poison oak, no rattlesnakes, and, most of all, I like the birds

SFBBO: What are your hobbies; what do you do when you are not bird banding at CCFS?

TOM: I just started taking ice skating lessons. I just bought a motorcycle.

SFBBO: What is your favorite bird, and why?

TOM: My favorite bird is the White-throated Swift. I've never handled one. I like the way they fly and the way they work so hard, constantly flying around.

SFBBO: What other types of organizations do you support?

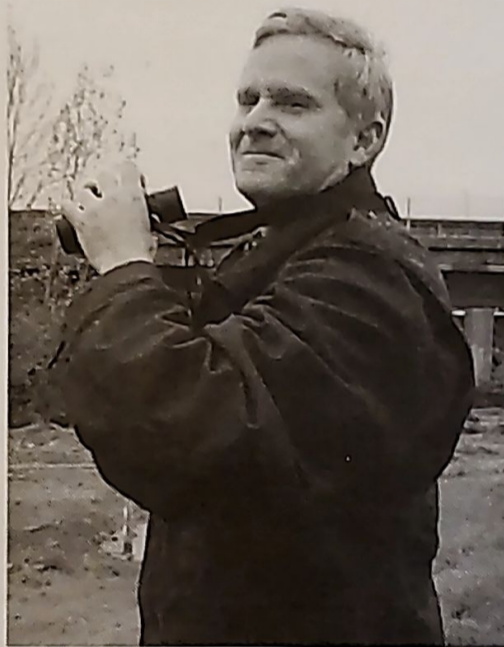
TOM: I support organizations like, SFBBO, the Peninsula Open Space Trust, The Sequoia and Santa Clara Valley Audubon Societies, and Save San Francisco Bay. These organizations all support saving the local natural habits.

SFBBO: OK, we have to satisfy our curiosity: How many tattoos do you have, and is there special meaning to them?

TOM: I have seven tattoos. They all represent nature. Two of them, the I'iwi and the Pu'u 'O'o volcano have to do with my love of Hawaii.

SFBBO: What was one of your more exciting banding challenges:

TOM: [In 1990 or 1991, he was present for the first county record of a Red-eyed Vireo. But he was not so sanguine about a Green Heron] No one told me that they go for your eyes. Lucky for me that I wear glasses.



Tom Goodier



San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

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