

# SEQUOIA NEEDLES

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County  
Founded 1949

Volume 59, No. 1  
September-October 2008

## CALIFORNIA SUMMER

### WILDFIRES: THE BIG SUR GALLERY FIRE AND CALIFORNIA CONDORS

BY SUE COSSINS

#### June 23, 2008 Coast Guard Helps

#### Rescue Condors from Big Sur Fire

(This article is paraphrased here but can be found in total at the Ventana Wildlife Society website [www.ventanaws.org/pressroom](http://www.ventanaws.org/pressroom))

The cause of the Gallery Fire was a dry lightning strike to a canyon just south of Big Sur on Saturday, June 21, 2008. Two days later, the rescue team performed a dramatic helicopter rescue of eight captive condors - seven chicks and one mentor bird from the rearing facility in Big Sur. Those eight birds are doing well and still residing in condor enclosures at the Pinnacles National Monument. They are scheduled to be brought back to Big Sur for release in October.

#### July 30, 2008 update from Alena Porte of the Ventana Wildlife Society:

The Gallery fire destroyed the condor rearing pens and release site. At first the wild condor flock scattered and the VWS biologists couldn't readily locate them. But they soon discovered, with radio telemetry tracking, that all but two of the

Big Sur flock, were safe. They survived the fire and smoke by staying close to the coastal area marine layer. Two of the three wild chicks were also found to be doing well. As of now the Gallery Fire is still burning, but has passed out of the condor area. Highway 1 has reopened.

An interesting anecdote is that a third nest had been located before the fire, high in a redwood tree, and the trackers had noticed the adult pair acting as if they were feeding a chick or chicks. The fire burned through the area, but just the lower part of the tree. The nest was out of reach of the flames, but not the smoke. Now that the fire has left the area, the adult birds are still present at the nest going through the motions of feeding a chick. It will be interesting to find out if the young survived.

The Ventana Wildlife Society is currently asking for donations to a Condor Emergency Fund to help rebuild the rearing pens. Contact the VWS @ 831-455-9514 or Executive Director, Kelly Sorenson ([kellysorenson@ventanaws.org](mailto:kellysorenson@ventanaws.org)).

**We hope you will plan to attend the SAS field trip, Wild Condors of Big Sur, on Sunday, October 12, 2008 to see the area for yourself. Leader Linda Kincaid writes, "fall weather is gorgeous and the best condor sightings in the past have been in fall."**



SAS Past President, Carol Masterson is shown on the right side of the photo with her Disaster Relief team. She is a Registered Nurse and spent several weeks this past summer caring for firefighters injured in the Northern California fires.

## Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

### September

Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM

**Program:** Birds Inside and Out

### October

Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM

**Program:** Natural History of Birds in Ecuador

### November

Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM

**Program:** Penguins of the World

*(See program details on page 2)*

## Upcoming Field Trips

*(See trip details beginning on page 3)*

### September

Sunday, 7 <sup>th</sup>	Burleigh H. Murray Ranch*
Sunday, 7 <sup>th</sup>	Pescadero Marsh*
Saturday, 13 <sup>th</sup>	Coyote Creek Field Station
Thursday, 18 <sup>th</sup>	Hawk Hill
Sunday, 21 <sup>st</sup>	Redwood City Library*
Sunday, 21 <sup>st</sup>	Pescadero Marsh*
Sunday, 28 <sup>th</sup>	Edgewood Park*

### October

Sunday, 12 <sup>th</sup>	Big Sur
Sunday, 19 <sup>th</sup>	Pescadero Marsh*
Sunday, 26 <sup>th</sup>	Edgewood Park*

### November

Sunday, 16 <sup>th</sup>	Pescadero Marsh*
Sunday, 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Edgewood Park*

*\* Beginner/Family Trip*

Check the field trip descriptions for any special information or requirements. Late comers may be

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Sequoia Audubon Society

## OFFICERS

**President**

Open

**Vice President**

Gary Deghi 650-726-1340

**Secretary**

Bernadetta Alderson 650-529-1137

**Treasurer**

Douglas Cook 415-621-1112

**DIRECTORS**

Robbie Fischer, Nelle Lyons, Sonny Mencher, Nancy Arbuckle, George Chrisman, Rita Jennings, Jennifer Rycenga

**STANDING COMMITTEES****Audubon Canyon Ranch Host**

Laurie Graham 650-589-2133

**Audubon Canyon Ranch Representative**

Francis Toldi 650-344-1919

Leslie Flint 650-573-6279

**Bluebird Recovery**

Susan Kritzik 650-851-4529

**Bookkeeper**

Fred McElhany 650-343-3219

**Christmas Count**

Al DeMartini 650-345-6988

Leslie Flint 650-573-6279

**Conservation Coordinator**

Robin Smith 650-325-3306

**Conservation Bayside**

Nancy Arbuckle 650-366-0750

**Conservation Coastside**

Gary Deghi 650-726-1340

**Education**

Nelle Lyons 650-726-8819

**Field Trips**

Carol Masterson 650-347-1769

**Hospitality**

Eileen Kay 650-592-4626

**Membership Database**

Steve Russell 650-306-9598

**Needles Editor**

Justine Carson 650-560-9776

**Programs**

Sue Cossins 650-347-9358

Paula Miller 650-341-5447

**PO Box 620292  
Woodside, CA 94062-0292  
650-529-1454  
office@sequoia-audubon.org  
www.sequoia-audubon.org**

Send comments and contributions  
to:

**sas\_editor@yahoo.com**



Printed on recycled paper

## MEETING PROGRAMS

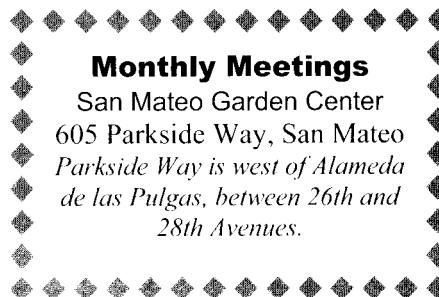
BY SUE COSSINS AND PAULA MILLER

### Birding Class: Avian Anatomy & Physiology: Know Your Birds Inside and Out!

By Stephanie Ellis

Thursday, September 11, 7:00 PM

Learn to appreciate birds beyond their field identification! This class will focus on "how a bird works" with slides that provide an overview of the avian skeleton, as well as the basics of the digestive, respiratory, circulatory, and reproductive systems as compared to those of mammals.



### Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

Parkside Way is west of Alameda de las Pulgas, between 26th and 28th Avenues.

Participants will also be introduced to adaptations of birds that enable a certain life style (such as salt glands in seabirds), how a bird responds to heat and cold stress (e.g., counter-current exchange blood flow in the legs), and the significance of bill shape, toe arrangement, feather structure and more! Join Stephanie Ellis for this fun and informative class to learn birds inside and out.

**Accompanying Field Trip:** Saturday, September 13 (See Field Trip listings)

### Natural History of Birds in Ecuador

By Rudy Gelinis

Thursday, October 9, 7:00 PM

Ecuador is about the size of Colorado yet nearly 1600 species of birds have been recorded there. This hour-long presentation describes how Rudy goes about exploring and studying this diversity. He has a wonderful collection of extraordinary photographs that he will use; many of these photos are included in a new book he recently co-authored, *Plumas: Birds in Ecuador*. The talk provides an introduction to what birds do for a living in Ecuador. We journey across the country, from the Pacific Choco rainforest to the Pacific deserts, then to the Andes and their respective high mountain landscapes and cloud forests, and finally to the Amazon

Basin. The talk is based around high quality bird photos, plus anecdotal stories from several years of leading bird and natural history tours and studying bird behavior in Ecuador and Peru. Natural history topics such as mixed species flocking, endangered and endemic species, nesting and foraging behavior, and biogeography distribution will be discussed.

The photos Rudy uses are of uniquely high quality and are not what are typically taken in a two-week photography tour to a Latin American country. He has spent years traveling all over this beautiful country in search of the most breathtaking plumages as well as rare and endangered species.

### Bio sketch by Rudy Gelinis:

"I began my career in ornithology when I was awarded a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship in 1997. After studying nesting Andean Condors in Argentina and penguins on the Falkland Islands, I settled in Ecuador. Over the past decade, as an active member of the Yanayacu Natural History Research Group in Ecuador, I have collaborated in numerous publications in refereed ornithology journals. In Ecuador I have studied the nests and breeding behavior of Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Red-winged Wood-Rail, Fiery-throated Fruiteater, five species of antpitta, Masked and Bluish Flowerpiercers, Barred Hawk, plus many dozens more. I have assisted in other ornithological works, including breeding bird surveys in the northeast U.S. and clay-lick use by parrots and macaws in the rainforest of southern Peru. Applying my strong background in botany and great interest in the entire natural world, I lead birding and natural history tours throughout much of Ecuador and Peru. In addition, I instruct university-level natural history courses in Ecuador and frequently offer ecotourism courses and assist in professional workshops for guides and park guards in Latin America."

*(Continued on page 5)*

## FIELD TRIPS

BY CAROL MASTERSON

### Burleigh H. Murray Ranch, Half Moon Bay

**Sunday, September 7, 9:00 AM – Noon**

Visit this historic ranch on the San Mateo County coast side. Join Ranger Nelle Lyons for this easy walk. This is a beginner and family trip looking for resident and migrant birds. We will learn about the natural history of this seldom-visited park. Learn about the early settlers to the San Mateo County. Dress in layers, and bring fluids, a hat, and walking shoes. Trail may be suitable for strollers (call in advance to verify conditions). No parking fee is required at this small parking lot. Binoculars are available to borrow.

**Directions:** From the intersection of Highway 1 and Highway 92 in Half Moon Bay drive approximately 1 mile south on Highway 1 and turn left (east) at the fire station onto Higgins-Purisima Road. Drive east about 1.5 miles and watch for the park entrance on the left.

**Leader:** Ranger Nelle Lyons 650-726-8804, voicemail box 5#

**Beginner/Family Trip**

### Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk

Co-sponsored by California State Parks & the Sequoia Audubon Society

**Sunday, September 7, 10:00 AM – Noon**

Come discover Pescadero Marsh. California State Park docents will lead a field trip each month from September through February, on the third Sunday, from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. (Note: There are two field trips in September: the first is in the morning.) This beautiful beach/marsh park has a mile-long shoreline, rocky cliffs, and of course, a world-famous marsh. The docents will point out the birds, other animals, and plants that inhabit this San Mateo County treasure. Wear clothing in layers for cold-and-windy to sunny weather, sturdy walking shoes, and a hat. Bring water, binoculars, and birding field guides. No reservations necessary. Heavy rain cancels.

Questions? Call Pescadero State Beach Ranger David Augustine, 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM Sunday through Wednesday (a

650-879-2170. Leave a message for a call back.

**Directions:** Go south from Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1 about 12 miles. Just past the bridge over Pescadero Creek, look for the south parking lot. If you get to the intersection of Pescadero Road and Hwy 1 you have gone too far.

**Beginner/Family Nature Hike**

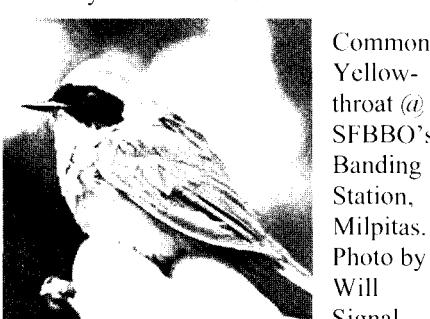
### Coyote Creek Field Station, Milpitas

**Saturday, September 13, 8:30 AM – Noon**

Join Stephanie Ellis for a visit to the Coyote Creek Field Station. This is the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory's long-term bird banding field station in Milpitas. Here you will have the opportunity to tour mist nets and watch a bird banding demonstration in a lovely, restored riparian habitat. Stephanie and Bird Observatory staff will discuss avian anatomy and physiology of birds in the hand.

**Directions:** Meet at the Borders bookstore parking lot in McCarthy Ranch, Milpitas at 8:30 AM.

**Maximum participants 15; RSVP required** to Stephanie Ellis at outreach@sfbbo.org or call 408-946-6548 x 12. There is a \$5.00 fee to cover the instructor's time. (Open to everyone, even if you were unable to attend the



accompanying birding class.)

Common Yellowthroat @ SFBBO's Banding Station, Milpitas. Photo by Will Signal

### Peak of Hawk Migration at Hawk Hill

**Thursday, September 18, 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM**

This weekday trip to Hawk Hill will let us experience hawk migration (fog willing). This is "Peak Week" and we should see lots of accipiters, falcons, and buteos. The weather is unpredictable so be prepared for cold, wind, or heat; bring

(Continued on page 4)

## Upcoming Field Trips

(Continued from page 1)

disappointed. For all field trips bring your binoculars, water, sturdy walking shoes or boots, sun block, and hat, and always dress in layers for hot sunny weather to cool windy conditions. While we make every attempt to stay on schedule, circumstances may dictate changes to field trip leaders, dates, or times.

For the latest schedule and updates always check the Sequoia Audubon web site, contact the trip leader, or call

**Carol at 650-347-1769.**

---

### Sequoia Audubon on the Web

Remember to check out our web site for updates on field trips, conservation news, and links to great birding sites.

[www.sequoia-audubon.org](http://www.sequoia-audubon.org)

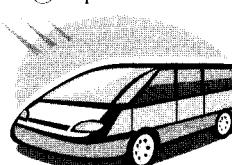
---

### Carpooling for SAS Events?

A Redwood City member recently pointed out, "Carpooling would save on gas, provide a companion, and might keep us from turning lazy and not attending after all."

Are you interested in carpooling to SAS events? If so, how should we get carpooling started for SAS events? How do we make it convenient and practical? How do we meet other SAS members in our neighborhood or along our route of travel that would be interested in carpooling?

If you have suggestions, please send them to:  
[office@sequoia-audubon.org](mailto:office@sequoia-audubon.org).



lunch and liquids. If we are fogged out, we will bird at Rodeo Lagoon and various vagrant traps in Fort Cronkite. Call 650-573-6279 for reservations, directions, and carpooling. Rain cancels.

**Leader:** Leslie Flint

#### **Bird Walk from the New Redwood Shores Library**

(Jointly sponsored by the Sequoia Audubon Society and the Redwood City Library)

#### **Sunday, September 21, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

Leader, Sonny Mencher, will meet you at the library and give a brief slide show about the birds in the sloughs and ponds of the area. He will then lead a leisurely walk from the library along the adjoining slough.

**Directions:** To 399 Marine Parkway, Redwood Shores. Highway 101 to Ralston/Marine Parkway exit. Go east approximately ½ mile. The building is on the left on the corner of Bridge and Marine Parkway, just past Oracle.

**Beginner/Family Walk**

#### **Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk**

#### **Sunday, September 21, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

For details, please see September 7 listing.

#### **Edgewood County Park**

#### **Sunday, September 28, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM**

Join us for three hours of birding this jewel of a county park!

Wetland, grassland, oak woodland, and chaparral plant communities offer varied habitats for living creatures found in the park. In addition to resident and fall migrant birds, deer, jackrabbits, and brush rabbits are frequently sighted. The cool wooded gullies of the eastern slope of the park are rich in ferns, mosses, and a thick layer of woody and herbaceous plants. The central portion of the park is dominated by a prominent ridge about 800 feet in elevation, affording outstanding views of Skyline Ridge, Huddart Park, the San Andreas Gulf Zone, the Crystal Springs Lakes, and the San Francisco Bay. This ridge typically supports chaparral on its warm western slope and oak woodland on its less exposed cool eastern slopes.

**Leader:** Marilyn Travis, 650-592-7733 (reservations not necessary)

**Directions:** From Hwy 280 in Redwood City, take Edgewood Road east about one mile to the park entrance on Old Stage Coach Road. Meet in the parking lot along Edgewood Road.

#### **Wild Condors of Big Sur**

With Linda Kineaid and Richard Calhoun

#### **Sunday, October 12, Noon – Dusk**

After a short briefing about condors, we will drive our own cars south on Hwy 1 to locations where the birds are seen regularly. All locations are near Hwy 1 and completely accessible. The event is suitable for all ages and abilities.

The Big Sur condor population is managed by wildlife biologists from Ventana Wildlife Society. Biologists provide supplemental food, monitor the health of the flock, and track the birds on a daily basis. Tour leaders Richard and Linda use the same telemetry equipment as the Condor Team, and can show you this integral part of wildlife management. They will also show you the best locations for spotting condors and answer any questions you have.

Bring binoculars, layered clothing, water, and snacks – there are few places in Big Sur to get supplies. Linda and Richard will provide spotting scopes. Condor photo CDs are provided courtesy of US Fish & Wildlife Service.

In the Pleistocene era, California condors numbered in the thousands. They ranged from British Columbia to Baja California and as far east as New York and Florida. Their numbers decreased as Europeans moved west, until there were only 22 condors remaining in 1982. In 1987, all remaining condors were brought into a captive breeding program, and their numbers have recovered dramatically. There are now over 300 condors in existence, with about 150 in the wild. We are very fortunate to have about 40 condors in Central California. On any given day, several of those birds are likely to be spotted along the Big Sur coast. For more information about the Big Sur Condors contact: [www.bigsurcalifornia.org/condors.html](http://www.bigsurcalifornia.org/condors.html)

#### **Limit 16 – Call Sue Cossins to register at 650-347-9358.**

Suggested donation is \$10 per person. All donations go entirely to supporting the Big Sur Condor Team and to purchase radio transmitters for the birds.

**Directions:** Meet at noon in the Big Sur area (exact location given at registration).

#### **Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk**

#### **Sunday, October 19, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

For details, please see September 7 listing.

#### **Edgewood County Park**

#### **Sunday, October 26, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM**

For details, please see September 28 listing.

#### **Pescadero Marsh – State Park Docent Nature Walk**

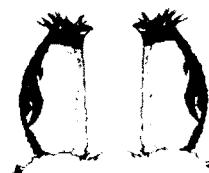
#### **Sunday, November 16, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

For details, please see September 7 listing.

#### **Edgewood County Park**

#### **Sunday, November 23, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM**

For details, please see September 28 listing.



(Programs, continued from page 2)

## Penguins of the World

By Debra Shearwater

Thursday, November 13, 7:00 PM

Everyone sees penguins in a different way. Ocean adventurers, exceptional divers, and amazing survivors, penguins have managed to adapt to the harshest climate on earth, spending their lives in the frigid seas and on ice and snow-covered slopes. Join Debra Shearwater for an in-depth look at these appealing creatures. She will discuss, using images, every species of penguin in the world — Emperors, Kings, Gentoos, Rockhoppers, Chinstraps, Adelies, Galapagos, Macaronis, Royal, and Little — eighteen in all.

Debra has personally traveled to all of the world's penguin breeding areas, save one — South Africa, which she shall see on a special voyage in 2009. Cape to Cape. Over the years she has captured thousands of images of these very special and delightful marine birds!

## OTHER BIRDING ACTIVITIES

### Redwood Shores Public Library Grand Opening

399 Marine Parkway, Redwood Shores

Saturday, September 6, 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM

SAS members Francis Toldi, Gary Deghi, and Carol Masterson were actively involved in designing the new library's interpretative center, which is focused on birds of the area. There will be an Audubon table on the outdoor deck overlooking Belmont Slough, with scopes, binoculars, and bird guides available for visitors. SAS volunteers will be on hand to show people around the interpretive center exhibits and help with bird identification.

Questions or interested in participating? Contact: Sonny Mencher at [sequoiaaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:sequoiaaudubon@yahoo.com) or 650-814-8028. To learn more about the new library and interpretative center go on-line to: <http://www.rclfndn.org/aboutfacility.htm>

### Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip with Shearwater Journeys - Fall Seabird Classic

Friday, September 12 - Special Sequoia Discount Price \$115 – regular price \$135

This fun, all-day pelagic trip is organized by Debra Shearwater, an expert in seabird identification. This is an excellent time of year to see Southern Hemisphere seabird rarities with possible sightings of Black-footed, Laysan, and Short-tailed Albatross, as well as Bulwer's Petrel. This is also a good time for Terns and Long-tailed Jaegers. We will also be on the lookout for Blue Whales and other marine mammals.

### Santa Cruz – Closer to Home Pelagic with Shearwater Journeys

Friday, September 26 - Special Sequoia Discount Price \$115 – regular price \$145

Join us for what should be a great fall birding trip. Along the shore we will look for Marbled Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots, and Common Murres. Along the sea canyons we will look for

Ashy and Black Storm-petrels. We will also look for Pink-footed, Flesh-footed, and Buller's Shearwaters, Red-necked Phalaropes, and Rhinoceros and Cassin's Auks. As always we will scan the Bay for whales, dolphins, porpoises, and sea lions. This is a great price for a fun trip on a very nice boat with a full galley.

Reservations are made on a first-come, first-served basis, and many trips sell out months in advance. Please indicate a second choice trip, in case your first choice is sold out. If making reservations for more than one person, include each person's name, address, phone/email. The USCG requires this. Please note these trips are some of the most popular trips of the year and fill up very quickly. Sign up ASAP. [http://www.mbnms-simon.org/sections/submarineCanyons/maps\\_graphs.php?sec=se](http://www.mbnms-simon.org/sections/submarineCanyons/maps_graphs.php?sec=se)

To make your reservation, send a check or money order to: Shearwater Journeys, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024. A return confirmation letter will be sent to you. This discounted rate is **non-refundable for any reason**. Because of rising fuel costs **there will be a fuel surcharge**. Please mention that you are with Sequoia Audubon for the discounted rates; don't miss out on this great deal. For more information check out <http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com/reserve.shtml>.

### 4th Annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival, Watsonville, CA

Friday – Sunday, September 26 – 28

For beginning to advanced birders. Field trips, workshops, exhibitors, evening socials, and keynote speakers. For more information, call 800-833-3494 or go to <http://www.montereybaybirdingfestival.org>

### Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival, Kern River Preserve, Weldon, CA

Saturday – Sunday, September 27 – 28

For information see <http://kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm>

### Western Field Ornithologists 33rd Annual Meeting

Marriot Hotel, San Mateo, CA

Thursday – Sunday, October 9 – 12

This conference features workshops, field trips, panel discussions, and much more. The Saturday evening banquet highlights keynote speaker Carla Cicero of UC Berkeley, whose topic will be The Grinnell Resurvey Project: A Century of Avifaunal Change in California.

Half-day and full-day field trips are offered. The full-day trips on Thursday and Sunday will visit Point Reyes, Half Moon Bay, the Hayward Shoreline, and the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory's Hawk Hill monitoring site. The two pelagic field trips are sponsored by Shearwater Journeys.

Workshops include: Field sketching with John Muir Laws, Ecological Transit of the San Mateo Peninsula with Alvaro Jaramillo, and GPS in field biology, to name a few. Bird and sound ID panels are also being offered.

Register online: [www.westernfieldornithologists.org](http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org). Sequoia Audubon Society members are being asked to attend and assist with this local birding conference. Contact Robbie Fischer

(Continued on page 8)

## SAS NEWS



### BLUEBIRD PROGRAM UPDATE

Susan Kritzik, San Mateo County Coordinator  
sgkritzik@sbcglobal.net

By now nesting season is about over. We actually have one Western Bluebird hen still on the nest, but she lost an earlier brood, apparently to snake predation. Speaking of snakes, one of our monitors had the dubious pleasure of opening a box and finding a large gopher snake curled up inside, no doubt digesting the remains of his meal! That must have been a shock.

This brings up assessing our boxes. Some may need to be replaced or repaired. I have a stockpile of 12 nestboxes of recycled redwood that were built by my generous and talented neighbor, John Greswold. They are all hanging type boxes, but could also be pole mounted. They have metal hole patches on them, so no worries about woodpeckers enlarging the holes. John will also repair boxes that aren't too far gone. Call or email me to arrange this. Also, please, if you have access to good quality redwood or cedar lumber, save it for recycling into new boxes.

If you have a box that has suffered from any predation, take action to prevent this from recurring next season. Either use a metal baffle for pole boxes or relocate the box. Once a predator learns the location of a box, it will go back again and again. Boxes that have not been used in two or three years may need relocating to a more bird-friendly site.

Lastly, we are always looking for new monitors to take over trails from retired or vacationing monitors. We are also interested in new trails if you know a good spot. Even if you only want to hang a couple of boxes in your backyard, we welcome you to join in observing the avian life cycle up close. It really adds a great dimension to birding!



### EDGEWOOD PARK BIRD CONSERVATION PROGRAM — Status Report 7/2008

By Lee Franks

In 2007, BCP Volunteers took 36 censuses in nine study plots. Of the nine plots, four are in 95.2 acres of oak woodland habitat, three are in 112.8 acres of grassland, and two are in 43.2 acres of chaparral. Survey results: Grassland - 0.46 birds/acre; Chaparral - 0.70 birds/acre; Woodland - 1.07 birds/acre.

These numbers are consistent with results in prior years, indicating that, overall, total bird populations look positive. However, when looking at individual species within the total, two stand out from the rest:

**California Quail** - down 185% from their peak in 2001

**Western Bluebird** - up 66% from their low in 2002

Increased utilization of the nest boxes in the Park explains why the Bluebird populations rose sharply. We continue to search for answers on why the Quail have essentially left the Park over the past five to six years.



### CONSERVATION COMMITTEE NEWS

By Nancy Arbuckle

**Light Brown Apple Moth Spraying Cancelled:** The State of California has announced that it will abandon aerial spraying over urban areas in its program to eradicate the light brown apple moth. In its place, a program of sterile moth release will be launched in early 2009. The State responded to the concerns and the voices of many Californians, including the Conservation Committee, in making this decision. Many groups met with the California Department of Food and Agriculture and other officials for months, urging them to replace spraying with ecologically sound and safer ground-level biocontrol programs. Sterile moths are a very positive solution for long-term management of pests like LBAM.

**Bair Island Update:** Restoration of Bair Island began just over one year ago under the auspices of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is a significant undertaking in that its goal is to reconstruct this former marshland to its original natural condition. The first step is to raise the elevation of Inner Bair Island two feet. This will ensure the re-establishment of native marsh vegetation once the levees are broken and bay water is re-introduced. Once the vegetation returns, it will provide habitat for a variety of birds and aquatic animals. Over one million cubic yards of dirt fill are required to raise the elevation on Inner Bair. Even with 200 truckloads of dirt being added per day, it will take an expected four to five years to achieve this goal. Clean fill is strictly required as is the use of dredged fill from the Port of RWC channel. Plans called for some public access during this period but because of significant vandalism, interference, and trespassing, the USFWS felt they had no choice but to close the area to the public until the first phase of the project is complete. It is unclear at this point when public access will be reinstated.

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Hospitality at Our Monthly Meetings**

Help to greet visitors and new members and assist with refreshments at our Thursday night monthly general meetings. Approximately three hours a month: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM at the San Mateo Garden Center. Contact: Eileen Kay (650) 592-4626

### **Educational Interpretive Center at the New Redwood Shores Library**

Books and birds - what could be better? A spectacular new public library is opening September 6, 2008. The library, located near Belmont Slough and the Bay Trail, will include a hands-on interpretive center with an emphasis on the birds found in the Redwood Shores area. Sequoia Audubon has been asked to assist with interpretive help in the library, field trips, and educational programs for kids and adults. This is a unique opportunity to work with the community to help introduce nature, conservation, and birding to a new generation. For more information, contact [sequoiaaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:sequoiaaudubon@yahoo.com).

### **Friends of Bayfront Park, Menlo Park**

Friends of Bayfront Park offer monthly opportunities for the public to look at birds close up and learn more about them. They would like SAS members to assist with these "Bird Mornings."

Please volunteer to be at the park on one of the following Saturdays, from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM, starting in September. You will set up along the entrance road by the tidal pond not far inside the park entrance. Depending on the tide, weather, and what's around, you may choose to stay near Flood Slough and the tidal pond to look at the birds there, or you may decide to lead a short walk to find birds in the grasslands and sloughs.

Drive to the park entrance at the traffic light at the intersection of Marsh Road and Bayfront Expressway.

Saturday, September 13, 2008	Saturday, January 10, 2009
Saturday, October 11	Saturday, February 14
Saturday, November 8	Saturday, March 14
Saturday, December 13	Saturday, April 11

Contact Chris MacIntosh for information: [cmaci@sbeglobal.net](mailto:cmaci@sbeglobal.net) or 650-325-7841.

## **URBAN NATURE OBSERVATIONS: PLAYING HIDE-AND-SEEK**

BY CORDELIA NAUMANN

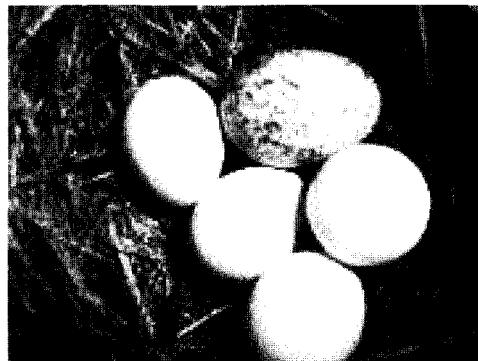
Looking out my back window I see many examples of how birds blend into their environment. The Mourning Doves, sunning themselves on the rocks below my rose bushes, are staying warm, but are also practicing a form of mimicry called crypsis. Crypsis is the ability of an organism to avoid observation.

After Stephanie Ellis' wonderful talk on bird reproduction during April's SAS meeting, I was intrigued with how the eggs of birds blend into their environment for protection of the nest and the young. According to Stephanie, as the egg moves down the female's oviduct, it squeezes against glands that produce pigments that form the color of the egg.

For many species of birds, the eggs' colors help to conceal them by blending into their environment, like a nest made of straw or a nest in the sand. The other fascinating thing about colored eggs is that some species, like murres, learn to recognize their own particular markings and reject eggs that don't match. Imagine that! A bird conscious of its own clothing.

However, certain birds that practice brood parasitism, like the Brown-headed Cowbird, may have evolved an egg coloration mimicking a number of their hosts' eggs. The Brown-headed Cowbird has 221 known hosts! The females usually only lay one egg per nest, but in some cases more than one female will use the same host nest. Over 140 different species of birds are known to have raised young cowbirds.

So, next time you are looking in a nest box, take a closer look at those eggs!



Conspicuous Brown-headed Cowbird egg in Eastern Phoebe nest.

SAS appreciates your tax-deductible donations which help fund the Chapter's education, conservation and ongoing activities

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Amount \_\_\_\_\_

SEND TO:

Sequoia Audubon Society  
PO Box 620292  
Woodside, CA  
CA 94062-0292

Thank You!

### Sequoia Audubon Society

PO Box 620292  
Woodside, CA  
94062-0292

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
SAN MATEO, CA  
PERMIT NO. 293

(Other Birding Activities, continued from page 5)  
robbie22@pacbell.net for more information.

### Wings Over the World – A Condor Release Event to Benefit Ventana Wildlife Society

Saturday, October 18

For information contact: Cathy Keeran 831-455-9514 or cathykeeran@ventanaws.org

### 12th Annual Sandhill Crane Festival

Hutchins Street Square, 125 South Hutchins Street, Lodi, CA  
Friday – Sunday, November 7 – 9

Features field trips, art show, nature tours, wild life demonstrations, and family activities. For information go to <http://www.cranefestival.com> or call 1-800-581-6150.

### 12th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium

Hilton Hotel, Stockton, CA

Thursday – Sunday, November 20 – 23

The California Central Valley hosts over 200 bird species, including 22 raptors, cranes, and thousands of wintering waterfowl. This event will offer workshops, field trips, a birder's market, and more.



Capitol Rail

**THE BIRD BOX**  
**RARE BIRD ALERT**  
**415-681-7422**

### Mission Statement

*The mission of Sequoia Audubon Society is to participate in environmental education, and conservation and in the restoration, preservation, protection and enjoyment of our native natural resources with emphasis on birds and their habitats.*

Printed on Recycled Paper

### Time Valued Material—Please Do Not Delay

Featured speakers include Hans Peeters – *Owls of California*; Jack Laws – author of *The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada*; Ed Harper – photos of valley birds; Jon Dunn – bird ID, and Joe Morlan – birding workshop. For more information and registration packets contact Frances Oliver, 1817 Songbird Place, Lodi, CA 95240-7826; 209-369-2010 or hummer52@sbeglobal.net. Or see <http://www.cvbs.org>.

### Now's the Time to Be Thinking About Joining the Annual Christmas Bird Counts

#### Crystal Springs Christmas Bird Count

**Saturday, December 20, 2008**

The Crystal Springs count is regularly one of the top ten in the nation for number of species identified. We need your help to exceed our count from last year. Better yet, sign up for both the Crystal Springs and the Año Nuevo counts.

#### Año Nuevo Christmas Bird Count

**Saturday, January 3, 2009**

Come help us make this the biggest bird count ever. This count has the potential to match or exceed the Crystal Springs Count in species diversity and numbers of birds, but is usually under-reported due to the small number of participants.

#### SIGN UP NOW

Coordinator: Leslie Flint at [lflint@earthlink.net](mailto:lflint@earthlink.net) or 650-573-6279.

To help with the CBC dinners contact Sue Cossins – [suecossins@earthlink.net](mailto:suecossins@earthlink.net) or 650-347-9358

Compiler: Al Demartini