

find was Yolo County's first **Gray Catbird** on the Conaway Ranch in the Yolo Bypass near Woodland, 12-15 June (AE, many observers). Other landbird highlights were first Yolo County nesting records of **Purple Martin** in Davis (CR), **Grasshopper Sparrow** in the western foothills on private property, and probable nesting of **Dark-eyed Junco** in Thompson Canyon (SH+).

Observers: Andy Engilis, Mike Feighner, Jim Gain, Steve Hampton, Jeri M. Langham (JML), Jim Lomax (JLo), John Luther (JLu), Ed Pandolfino, Chad Roberts, Kent Van Vuren, and Gary Zahm.

Announcements

President's Message

As the end of the year and my term as President of the CVBC approaches, I've spent some time thinking about the progress we've made towards achieving the goals that were established by the bird club back in the summer of 1997. Those goals were presented by interim President, Tim Manolis, in the first issue of the Bulletin. Tim wrote "the general goals of the CVBC are to foster collection and dissemination of information about, and promote interest in, the birdlife of the Central Valley. A major concern of the group in formulating these goals is the conservation of avian diversity in this region." While it may be difficult to accurately measure to what degree we've succeeded in the pursuit of these goals, certainly progress has been made.

Here are some facts and figures to help illustrate just how successful we've been: (1) our membership is at its highest level since our inception with over five hundred members; (2) nearly four hundred participants attended the 7th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium, which is now recognized as one of the premier birding events in the County; (3) we have a quarterly journal that the membership can be proud of and that continues to improve; (4) we maintain a popular listserv that is used by birders throughout the Central Valley; (5) we've developed a successful scholarship program and awarded our first scholarship earlier this year; (6) we recently completed the first Central Valley Bird checklist and plans are already underway to develop a more comprehensive version; and (7) we are fortunate to have a healthy budget and solid cash reserves in the bank. These kinds of accomplishments would make just about any non-profit, birding organization envious – let alone one that is only entering its eighth year.

Even more exciting than our list of accomplishments, is our future. In 2004, the CVBC will be lead by a talented and experienced board that includes members from as far north as Red Bluff and as far south as Fresno. Succeeding me as President will be our Vice President, John Sterling from Woodland. John is well qualified for the role, combining a remarkable understanding of the Central Valley avifauna (reflected in his quarterly contribution to the Bulletin on recent bird sightings) and what seems like an endless supply of energy when it comes to promoting birding and the bird club. Also returning to the board will be Bev Brock (Fresno), David Yee (Stockton), Joan Humphrey (Davis), and John Fulton (Los Banos). Joining the board will be Lynn Hemink (Fresno), a former President of the Fresno Audubon chapter and Bruce Deuel (Red Bluff), a former board member of Western Field Ornithologists and former Regional Editor for American Birds. Collectively, the qualifications and experience of the 2004 board members is truly impressive. Undoubtedly, these individuals and the active membership-at-large, will take the CVBC to even greater heights than those that we've been fortunate enough to achieve thus far.

Although I'm leaving the board with a sense of satisfaction gained by our achievements and prospect of a bright future for the CVBC, I would be remiss not to highlight the fact that there is still unfinished work to do. Specifically, I would like to see us increase our role in the conservation of declining Central Valley birds. My only regret as President was that I didn't do a better job of using the position to highlight this issue and to help develop a strategy for the CVBC to address it. I know that that not all members share this view. Some have argued that the CVBC should just be about birding and that conservation should be left up to other non-profit organizations and government agencies that generally lead those efforts. However, the words printed in the first issue of the Bulletin and reflected in our mission statement are clear and not open to interpretation. The CVBC has an obligation to help to conserve avian diversity in the Central Valley. In my view, we have two options: We can be content belonging to an organization that does little more for declining species than help document their decline, or we can be one that begins to take direct steps to help conserve their populations and their habitat.

To help meet the challenge of protecting rare and declining Central Valley birds, I urge the new board and the membership-at-large to work together to develop an effective conservation committee. I have no doubt that a CVBC conservation committee could be successful. If you are interested in playing a part in developing such a conservation committee, I encourage you to contact the members of the CVBC board. I also encourage you to consider writing an article for the Bulletin that addresses a topic related to bird conservation. By refocusing on our goal of contributing to bird conservation, we can be more than just part of a successful club, we can help preserve avian diversity in the Central Valley – the birds that inspired us to join this organization in the first place.

Leo Edson