

Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Conservation Efforts for Local Cavity-Nesting Birds

By Jenny Anderson and Christina Floyd

INSIDE Calendar of Events

Our Patches

Of Nests & Nesting



Santa Cruz Birds

SEABIRDS TRIPS

WHAT TIME IS IT?



The Santa Cruz Bird Club's Nest Box Project at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park is a joint project started in 2002 by the Bird Club's Conservation Officer at that time, Tonya Haff. The general goals of the project, which is run entirely by volunteers, were to provide more nesting habitat for local cavity-nesting birds, and to gather and report important information about the basic breeding biology of these birds. In particular, the project founders hoped to be able to attract and observe Western Bluebirds.

Our nest boxes, which are installed on PVC poles to discourage climbing predators, telescope up and down and are hinged to open, so that observers can monitor the progress and timing of nest building, egg laying, hatching and fledging. Volunteers check the boxes at least twice a week and carefully record observations, which are then reported to the Cornell Ornithology Lab and become part of a national database. The project has provided valuable site-specific information about the birds breeding at Quail Hollow Park, which we have found is slightly different from statewide observations reported through the California Bluebird Recovery program.

During the first few years of the project, regular occupants of our boxes included Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Oak Titmice, and Violet-green Swallows. Finally, in 2008, we had our first pair of WEBLs successfully fledge 5 chicks, and then proceed to have a second clutch and fledge an additional 4. David Sudjian reported that this was the first record of a successful Western Bluebird nest in the San Lorenzo Valley since 1986—twenty-two years! Once established, the WEBLs have returned to Quail Hollow every year, and to date we have fledged a total of 62 of this species. More bluebird sightings than usual have been reported throughout the county in recent years. We are not sure how many of these are "our" birds, but very likely some may be Quail Hollow fledglings or their descendants.

In 2011, we had our first



Western Bluebird, male at Quail Hollow- Jane Lear

over-wintering bluebirds at Quail Hollow (reported by Alex Rinkert). The next spring we began to band the WEBL fledglings with the hope of following their dispersal and documenting their return in subsequent years. We have seen “our” birds at Quail Hollow, and Alex has seen them at the old Sky Park airport, at Scotts Valley High School, and along Canham Road, all about 4-5 km from the ranch. We are currently in discussion with the science team at the University of California’s Hastings Reserve about color banding so that we can follow individual birds.

Watching these beautiful birds, we have learned that the female WEBL does most of the nest building, that both parents work together in the foraging and feeding process, and that fledglings from the first clutch often stay in the area and help with the second clutch. We discovered that WEBLs prefer the box opening NOT to face west. They will not occupy boxes that are close to each other but they don’t seem to mind a Violet-green Swallow as a neighbor. Since they are ground foragers, they like the box to be situated in open grasslands that have either been mowed, grazed, or that do not have tall grasses. Fence lines or wires, or the tops of their boxes, are popular perching places. WEBLs also “kite” from 4-6 feet off the ground when foraging.



Ash-throated Flycatcher eggs - Jane Lear

ty-nesting birds. Three years ago, the Bird Club asked us to add the Ash-throated Flycatcher as a target species. We have had at least one successful ATFL nest consistently since 2003 and we are now consciously locating boxes to accommodate this species. Since focusing on this bird, we have had two successful nests each of the past two years and have fledged a total of 45 ATFLs.

We have learned that the ATFLs arrive at the park somewhat later in the season, in late April or early May. Unlike WEBLs, which often take their time choosing a location and then build a nest one blade of grass at a time before populating it, the ATFLs start nest building within a week after arrival and fill it with their vermiculated eggs shortly thereafter. Their nests are not woven from grass and lined with feathers like the WEBL nests. A typical ATFL nest often includes mud, dung and horsehair and looks thrown together, as if they were in a hurry. They like to have a shrub near their box in which to wait and observe until the coast is clear, before they enter. And they prefer a location near the pond, where they snag big dragonflies for the nestlings; this delectable may require some maneuvering through the nest box hole.

Another possible target bird for the Quail Hollow Nest Box Project is the American Kestrel, whose population is on the decline nationwide. In 2007 David Suddjian reported that there were only two known nests in the county. One reason for their decline is be-



Western Bluebird, female, Ellis' property- Lisa Larson

Although the nest box project was initially focused on attracting and observing Western Bluebirds, the conservation work of the project extends to other local cavi-

cause trees with available cavities for nesting have been cleared. John Ellis had a successful kestrel nesting in a nest box on his property last year and posted on MBB detailed behavioral observations about courtship and rearing of the chicks. We have just learned that the Predatory Bird Research Project is planning a county-wide survey to locate breeding kestrels and possible nest box locations. Perhaps next year we will add a kestrel box at Quail Hollow.

Each year of the project our observations have become more thorough and sophisticated, our data more accurate and our curiosity more aroused. As we begin the 2014 season at Quail Hollow, the WEBLs are back and

REMINDER!

Meeting, Thursday, April 24 , Speakers: Zach Michelson and Teague Scott, Santa Cruz, Predatory Bird Research Group. Topic: ***"American Kestrels in Santa Cruz."*** 7:30 at the Natural History Museum, 1305 E Cliff Drive.



John Ellis' newly constructed Kestrel box - Lisa Larson

Western Bluebird, female at Quail Hollow - Jane Lear

they are off to an early start in their favorite box, setting records for a nest start (3/8) and a first egg of the clutch (3/22). Another pair is showing interest in a nest box by the pond and we are also hoping to get yet another pair to nest in a third box, where they nested last year. The Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Oak Titmice have begun laying eggs in their carefully-constructed moss and lichen nests. The Violet-green Swallows are seen swooping around, scoping out real estate, but they won't start nesting until May. We are awaiting the arrival of our Ash-throated Flycatchers. We look forward to the project continuing to unfold, whether it be tracking Quail Hollow bluebirds or adding kestrel nest boxes or both.

For more information or to come out and see this valuable project for yourself, visit our website at www.qhnestbox.org or call the Park Interpreter, Lee Summers, at 831-335-9348.

Chestnut-backed Chickadee at Ellis' property - Lisa Larson



Events Calendar

May - August 2014



Saturday, May 3
Loma Prieta

We will bird in chaparral habitat along the summit ridge that divides Santa Cruz and Santa Clara County. Specialties at this location we will try and find include Bell's and Black-chinned Sparrow, Purple Martin, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and mountain residents that prefer the higher elevation. Spring migrants may be encountered passing over the ridge, and surprises are always possible. Weather conditions are variable at the summit so prepare for both warm and cool temperature. Plan on 2-3 miles of mostly level walking.

Directions: If heading north on either Highway 17 or Soquel-San Jose Road, take a right onto Summit Road. Continue on Summit Road (which turns into Highland Way past Soquel-San Jose Road) and take a left onto Mt. Batche Road. Follow Mt. Batche Road for 0.95 miles and keep right at the Loma Prieta Avenue intersection to continue heading uphill. From this intersection, follow Loma Prieta Avenue 2.9 miles to its intersection with Summit/Mt. Madonna Road. There is a wide pullout at the summit where the field trip will begin. Meet at 7 am.

Leader: Alex Rinkert, 831-431-0830, arinkert12@comcast.net



Friday, May 9
Arana Gulch

We should find a mix of breeding birds ranging from Olive-sided Flycatchers to Hooded Orioles, and probably there will also be some spring migrants passing through.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the entrance on Agnes Street, by the end of Mentel Avenue (off the south side of Soquel Avenue two blocks east of Trevethan and Hagemann)

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



Saturday, May 10
Santa Ana Valley

We will begin on Quien Sabe rd, then along Santa Anita, Brown's Valley to Panoche rd, in search of Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagles and if lucky Bald Eagle. There are many other Oak Savannah Grassland birds that we will find. It's a long drive from SC so carpooling is a good idea.

Directions: Meet at 9 am in Tres Pinos at the Post Office. From SC take Hwy 1 South to Riverside Exit, to Main St, Rt over bridge to L on San Juan to 101, North on 101 to 156 to Union Rd, to Rt on Hwy 25 (Airline Hwy) two or three miles to Tres Pinos. The Post Office is just past the Flap Jacks Restaurant and shares the same parking lot.

Leader: Nelson Samuels, (831) 566-9026, samnelo@razzolink.com



Sunday, May 11
Mother's Day at Rancho Del Oso

Half-day trip. All songbirds regardless of sex are honorary mothers for the morning.

Directions: Leave Santa Cruz from Companion Bakery (near west end of town, at Mission St near Swift St) at 7:30. Late-comers join us at Waddell Creek Beach at 8 AM. From there we will walk in eventually to the forest.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741

Santa Cruz Bird Club programs and field trips are open to the public—non-members are welcome. People needing rides to field trip sites are advised to contact field trip leaders. Carpooling is encouraged. Dress in layers and bring liquids. Lunches are optional on half-day trips. Heavy rain cancels.

Field trips can pose hazards. Reluctantly, we have decided we must publish and implement this policy:

The Santa Cruz Bird Club or its field trip leaders cannot be responsible for damage, injury, or loss incurred by the acts or omissions of any member or visitor during Club field trips or during commutes to or from them.

Field trip participants must release the Club from any liability for such damage, injury, or loss.

Ordinarily, field trip participants sign a waiver releasing the Club from such liability, but in the absence of such a signed waiver, participation on a Club field trip in itself implies consent to and agreement with this waiver.



Friday, May 16
Watsonville Slough

This one will start off a little different than most of our field trips, as we will be doing a couple of survey routes for Watsonville Wetlands Watch's Project Tierra. This will serve as an introduction to these surveys for those who are unfamiliar with this citizen-science project, and will also be an initial training for anyone who may want to do some of these routes on their own later. Some general birding around the area will follow.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the Watsonville Wetlands Nature Center, 30 Harkins Slough Road (the south side of Ramsay Park) in Watsonville

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Thursday, May 22
SCBC Meeting @ 7:30 PM

Program to be announced (check the on-line calendar and MBB).

Location: Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History
1305 East Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz



Saturday, May 24
Upper UCSC Campus

Hermit Thrushes, Hermit Warblers, and Golden-crowned Kinglets are among the breeding birds we will likely hear (and possibly see) in the forests in this area. Expect a few miles of walking, with some hills.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the North Remote Parking Lot, at the north end of Heller Drive on the UCSC Campus.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, May 30
Neary Lagoon

We'll probably find mostly a mix of expected riparian species, but surprises are possible in late May.

Directions: Meet at the west entrance (off Bay and California) at 8:00 AM

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Sunday, May 31
Fremont Peak

Expected birds include Hermit Warblers, Cassin's Vireo, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Canyon and Rock wrens, and a lot more.

Directions: Meet at the Windmill Market in San Juan Bautista at 9:am and bird up to The Peak along San Juan Canyon to the State Park. There is a parking fee for the park so if some have passes, they would be helpful.

Leader: Nelson Samuels, samnelo@razzolink.com

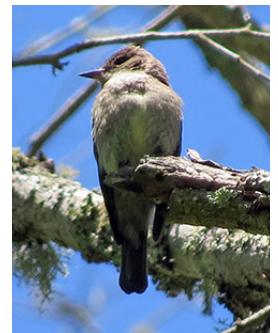


Friday, June 6
Felton

We may visit two or three spots in this area, likely including some portion of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park (entrance fee or state park pass required). The riparian forest along the San Lorenzo River in the Felton area can be very productive, with Nuttall's Woodpecker, Western Wood Pewee, Swainson's Thrush, and Yellow Warbler among the regular breeding species. If time and energy allows, we might also look at the pine/oak/chaparral mix near the Henry Cowell campground, where Hermit Thrush and Black-throated Gray Warblers are some of the expected birds.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM the parking lot at Felton Faire shopping center, at the intersection of Graham Hill Road and Mt. Hermon Road, on the side of the lot closest to Graham Hill.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Sunday, June 8
Beginning Bird Walk at Meder Canyon

Join us at a local park that should be quieter than the beach on a summer morning. We will look for resident and migrant nesters including Wilson's Warblers, Hooded Orioles and Pacific Slope Flycatchers.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the south end of the trail on Grandview Street, just past the Escalona Street intersection. To reach Grandview Street, turn north (inland) from Mission Street onto Swift Street. Swift Street makes a sharp left turn, and becomes Grandview.

Leader: Phil Brown, (831) 334-4249



Friday, June 13
Upper Struve Slough

This stretch of the slough can have an interesting mix of land birds. If spring rains are sufficient, some breeding ducks and other water and marsh birds are also a possibility.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM. To get to our starting point, go into the Watsonville Square Shopping Center (which includes the Nob Hill Market, etc.) which is on the north side of Main Street southeast of the intersection with Green Valley Road. Turn right after entering the parking lot, and continue to the extreme southeast part of the shopping center, where there is a small parking lot separated from the main parking area. The trail starts here.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Great Blue Heron Chicks - Mickey Rebecchi



Sunday, June 15
Father's Day at Elkhorn Slough

Half-day trip. All birds, even if ovulating, are honorary fathers for the morning.

Directions: Meet at Sea Harvest Restaurant parking lot, just north of Hwy 1 bridge across the slough, at 8AM. Late-comers join us along Jetty Rd. Prizes ("three cheers") for cutest/ugliest bird-babies.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741



Friday, June 20
Southeast DeLaveaga Park

A mix of natural and some not-so-natural habitats at the northeast corner of Santa Cruz, with an interesting mix of birds. We may find a few species of raptors, several kinds of woodpeckers, Olive-sided Flycatchers, Western Wood Pewees, Warbling and Hutton's Vireos, Swainson's Thrush, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and others. Expect a few miles of walking with some hills.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the trail head at the north end of Park Way (the section to the north of Highway 1), off Prospect Heights. Note that parking is limited in this area. There are a few parking spaces in a dirt lot by the park entrance, but these can be difficult for low-clearance vehicles. There is usually some on-street parking on Prospect Heights and nearby side streets. Car pooling is suggested.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, June 27
Moore Creek Preserve

A walk through mostly grasslands, but also some oaks, douglas-fir, and some other habitats. Depending on the weather, large flocks of swallows and sometimes swifts (possibly including Black Swift) may be foraging over the slopes. Expect 3-4 miles of walking with some hills.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM on Shaffer Road near the intersection with Mission Street. Parking can sometimes be hard to find here, so this is another spot where car pooling may be a good idea

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com

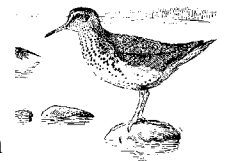


Friday, July 11
Natural Bridges State Beach

We should see some families of birds with young, and some mid-summer dispersants, and an early fall migrant shorebird or two are among the other possibilities.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com





Friday, July 18
Corcoran Lagoon

We'll walk around the lagoon and check the adjacent beach. A few fall migrant shorebirds are possible.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the northeast part of the lagoon by the Live Oak Library parking lot on Portola Drive.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, July 25
West Cliff Drive and vicinity

We'll look for breeding Pigeon Guillemots and the first arriving migrant rocky shore birds, and check Bethany Curve and/or Lighthouse Field to add a few land birds.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the intersection of West Cliff Drive and Woodrow Avenue.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Pigeon Guillemots - Pete Sole



Friday, August 1
Antonelli Pond & Terrace Point

Various hints of early fall movement may be evident by now, as well as breeding species.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM on the west side of Antonelli Pond, near the west end of Delaware Avenue.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, August 8
Meder Canyon

A mixture birds toward the end of their breeding season, and maybe some early migrants.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the south end of the trail on Grandview Street, just past the Escalona Street intersection. To reach Grandview Street, turn north (inland) from Mission Street onto Swift Street. Swift Street makes a sharp left turn, and becomes Grandview.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, August 15
Schwan Lake

We'll explore the live oaks, riparian, grassland, and other habitats of the upland portion of Twin Lakes State Beach. Migration should be picking up somewhat by now.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot of the Simpkins Family Swim Center, 979 17th Avenue.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, August 22
Lighthouse Field

This can be a good spot for migrants. Some locally uncommon species like Willow Flycatcher and Black-chinned Hummingbird may be around by now.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM on the inland side of the field near the intersection of Pelton and Laguna.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, August 29
Natural Bridges State Beach

All sorts of things could be moving by this date, and this is a good spot to find a varied mix.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com

OUR PATCHES

- By *Todd Newberry*

For almost fifty years I have visited my home birding patch, the UCSC Arboretum. “Back then” it was cattle land, hardly the stuff of a university campus. Even now, self-consciously rustic as UCSC is, the Arboretum feels like a place apart – the big place’s big garden. But, academic that I am, to me the Arboretum is a classroom without walls. Almost every visit rewards me with new lessons, especially ones about how to pose questions and seek answers about the plants and animals there. Best of all, the creatures themselves teach these lessons. In the Arboretum I put books aside and try to pose

questions that birds themselves might answer. Questions, I mean, that go beyond “what is it?” And that question poses its own intellectual challenges; identifications, after all, are crystallized interpretations.

So I spend lots of time in the Arboretum, because, as I wrote a while ago in its BULLETIN, my teachers nowadays live there, densely and diversely. Posing questions is a tough skill to learn. Good questions, like good answers, come slowly, at a pace the Arboretum encourages. For example, what does that tiny bird really perceive about its world, compared to what I perceive about mine? Stumped, we may, even without realizing it, change the question we began with or settle on answers that leave us as mystified as before (for example, “It’s in its genes” – huh?). And when we do think we have an answer, we do well to pause. I learned this when, back in my brash disserta-

tion days, I would tell the kind but redoubtable C. B. van Niel what I had “found out.” He would puff awhile on his pipe and then reply, “Hmm . . . and . . . how do you know?” As we try to make “natural history sense” of them in the Arboretum, its creatures/teachers continually ask us that daunting follow-up question.

Niko Tinbergen wrote about “watching and wondering” or its counterpart in listening quietly. Just mustering the patience to do this can feel arduous: just being silent and still – letting the habitat recover from the shock of our arrival, not hanging up on Nature when she puts us on hold. As great gardens do, the Arboretum provides the atmosphere for this vital patience. This tranquillity masks the Arboretum’s robust ways: its almost unnoticed diversity of insects, its reptiles, its mammals’ comings and goings, its seasonal changes, the arrivals and departures of migrants, the sequential blossoming of its flora. And through it all, those of us who long ago adopted the Arboretum as “our patch” have witnessed its transformation from the pasture it once was.

I like to think of the Arboretum as its own UCSC college, whose faculty, as I said, comprises plants and animals improbably gathered together and nurtured, and whose staff is the personification of generosity. We birders, if we are teachers in our own right, merely “nudge and point.” To me, that gesture of noticing and sharing is what is higher about higher education; a teacher’s experience nurtures a student’s discovery.

My patch is just one of many scattered about our extraordinary region. Many other patches have their habitual birders, as we know, for example, from posts on MBB. Neary Lagoon, Antonelli Pond, Natural Bridges, the Long Lab, Watsonville sloughs, Henry Cowell, Big Basin, Rancho del Oso, Wilder Ranch, Nisene Marks, Schwann, West Cliff, the skyline ridge, Sunset and Seacliff, DeLaveaga, Quail Hollow, Moon Glow . . . so many and then so many more, well-known and little-known. We live in an eco-deli! I hope other SCBCers will write about their favorite haunts, their patches, as I have here about the Arboretum. We can add to David Suddjian’s guide to our county’s birding sites with ALBATROSS accounts of ones that we have made our own: our patches and why.



Of Nests and Nesting

What can make one's heart soar? Watching the dedication of parents as they carefully prepare for the arrival of their young, nurture the eggs, and feed their chicks. It is always special and each breeding season brings new miracles.

I remember when Mourning Doves nested in a cute whale-shaped Terra-cotta pot on my deck railing. I would go out to refill the hummingbird feeder and water the potted flowers, moving ever-so-slowly and not making eye contact with the birds. Dad would sit by day, and I would witness the "changing of the guard" when I got home from work as Mom took his place. Once the babies hatched, I was astounded how quickly they grew and changed. One was considerably larger than the other. At that time, I was not as avid a birder as I am now, so I didn't know the exact day they "should" fledge. Sometimes it is just better to observe and enjoy than analyze.

One day I came home just in time to see the larger baby hop out of the pot onto the railing. The sibling followed. I watched anxiously. Both parents came to feed the babies. The larger one grew brave and flew to the tree across the driveway. The parents were also anxious—and excited, I felt. The smaller made it to the railing of my next-door-neighbor. Then to the tree! I was elated and saddened at the same time, realizing they would soon be gone. They did stay for a couple of days—parents continuing to feed—and then they were gone. This was when I still had only a film camera, so the photos are packed in a box somewhere. I still think of those doves and it makes me smile. ~ Lisa Fay Larson

DC Cormorant with nesting material -Andy Knorr



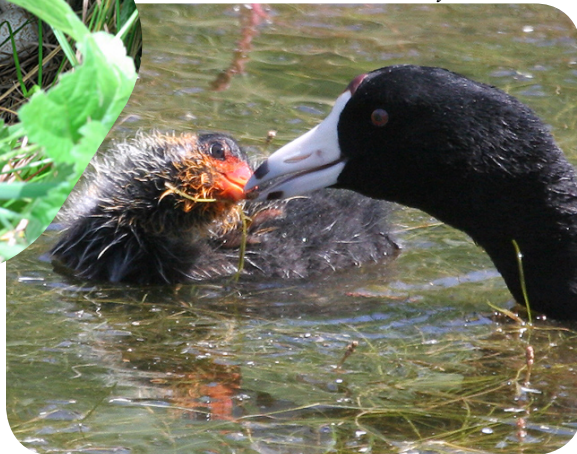
Anna's Mom nest in Greenhouse -Andy Knorr



*California Quail nest
- John Ellis*



Coot baby - Pete Sole



Wood Ducklings - Mickey Rebecchi

Santa Cruz Birds

By Steve Gerow

Including reports from January 1 to February 28, 2014

Extreme drought conditions continued in January, with no rain at all until the end of the month. Fortunately, February brought a relatively wet period, and water returned to Struve Slough and other areas that had gone dry, College Lake had water for the first time this season, and annual plants started growing in places that had been brown and dry. Waterfowl, shorebirds, etc. quickly occupied these restored areas of habitat, and things appeared a little closer to normal by late February, though it remained a very dry winter.

While there were a few significant rarities and some other unexpected finds, overall it was a sparse winter for rare-but-regular overwintering species, with only a few of the rarer warblers, and no tanagers or orioles reported. Also lacking was any hint of any irruptions by northern or montane species. Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins were mostly confined to parts of the county where they are resident, and there wasn't a single report of Red Crossbills in January or February.

After an apparent absence from the Pajaro Valley through the early part of winter, a few **Greater White-fronted Geese** appeared at newly-flooded College Lake in February, peaking at 10 on February 17 (GK, v.ob.). Several reports of up to 11 **Wood Ducks** at College Lake starting February 15 (AR, GK) were noteworthy for the Pajaro Valley. Another College Lake highlight was a male **Eurasian Wigeon** from February 13 into early March (GK, AR, v.ob.). The restless male **Gadwall X Mallard** hybrid that had been seen at several mid-county locations since late fall was found again and photographed at a new spot, lower Aptos Creek, on February 11 (LS). **Blue-winged Teal** were reported from several spots (v.ob.), for a total of perhaps 7-8 individuals. Roaring Camp's **Northern Pintail**, Westlake Pond's **Canvasback**, and the four **Redheads** at Shorebirds Pond at Pajaro Dunes all remained through the period (v.ob.). There were multiple reports of **White-winged Scoters** off the south county coast from La Selva Beach to Pajaro Dunes, with a high of 11 off Zils Road on January 17 (AR). Farther up the coast there was just one reported, off Waddell Creek Beach on February 23 (WBT). It was a good season for **Hooded Mergansers** in Santa Cruz County, including a notably high count of 43 in College Lake on February 25 (GK, BM, JBu). A **Common**

Merganser at Watsonville Slough on January 1 (BRe et al.) was rare for that location.

A flock of 45 **Wild Turkeys** were along Hazel Dell Road on January 1 (LG, WG, SG), a substantial group for one spot in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A concentration of 1300 **Red-throated Loons** near Manresa State Beach on January 25 was a large number for the county in winter (JG, CS). **Red-necked Grebes** were found in above-average numbers along the Santa Cruz County coast during January and February, including an exceptional total of 10 off La Selva Beach on January 11 (AR). It was also a good



Red-necked Grebe - Jeff Bleum

year for **Northern Fulmars**, with the largest total reported being 440, tallied from Terrace Point on January 6 (AR). Scoping from Terrace Point also produced a count of 35 **Pink-footed Shearwaters** on February 28 (AR), an exceptionally high number from shore in winter. **American White Pelicans** were present in larger than usual numbers in the Watsonville Slough system, with 117 in Harkins Slough on February 17 (RS, EL) being the largest total, but several other reports also exceeded 100.

A **Wandering Tattler** was along the Wilder Ranch coast on January 5 (JM), maybe the same one that was seen in Santa Cruz in December. Some exceptionally large flocks of **Least Sandpipers** were noted roosting on the dunes at Pajaro Dunes in January and early February, with a peak count of 1355 on February 1 (JG). Eight **Short-billed Dowitchers** were in Struve Slough on February 23 (PB et al.), with up to three continuing until February

28. While these winter nearby, they very rarely occur in Santa Cruz County outside of the migration periods; perhaps these were very early spring migrants. While **Marbled Murrelets** seemed quite sparse this season in regular locations off Santa Cruz and the north coast, more than usual were further down the coast, including a nice count of 26 off Seascape Resort on January 10 (AR). Four **Cassin's Auklets**, a species seldom seen from shore, flew past Baldwin Creek Beach on January 9 (AR). That same day off Baldwin, there was a nice movement of **Rhinoceros Auklets** up the coast, with 4420 tallied (AR).

The big Baldwin Creek Beach gull flock produced another 1st-cycle "**Kumlien's**" **Iceland Gull** candidate on January 22 (JP), which would be the 2nd or 3rd for Santa Cruz County if accepted by the California Bird Records Committee. At least one 1st-cycle **Glaucous Gull** was also there off and on until January 28 (v.ob.), and another 1st-cycle Glaucous Gull turned up at Harkins Slough from February 27 into mid-March (RW, v.ob.) A **White-winged Dove** at Struve Slough February 16-23 was especially rare for winter (PB, JW, v.ob.) The **Burrowing Owl** near Pajaro Valley High School was joined by a second one starting January 17 (GM, v.ob.), but no others were found in the county this winter. Scott's Valley's continuing **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was seen off and on into March (PM, DW, v.ob.) Three additional **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were found in the county in January and February, bringing the winter total to a remarkable five!

A **Prairie Falcon** at UCSC on January 10 was likely the same that was seen there in December (TS, ZM), and another was along the Pajaro River near the Santa Clara County line on January 12 (AR). **Tropical Kingbirds** were reported from four different sections of the Watsonville Slough System through January and February (v.ob.), but it's hard to say how many were actually there—perhaps



"Chipper" - LFL

just a couple of wandering individuals, or maybe there were more. Reports of **Loggerhead Shrikes** from various spots this winter involved around a dozen individuals (v.ob.), a good number compared to most recent winters. One along the San Lorenzo River levee in downtown Santa Cruz from January 19-28 (JG, v.ob.) was at an unexpected location. The continuing **Plumbeous Vireo** stayed around San Lorenzo Park until at least February 24 (DS, v.ob.).

A **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Harkins Slough on February 1 (JG) likely wintered locally. The first spring migrants showed up on February 23 (NZ), a bit earlier than average. Three reports of **Barn Swallows** in January fit a now-regular pattern of winter occurrence by this species (v.ob.). Single Barn Swallows at West Struve Slough on February 16 (PB, JW), and at Harkins Slough on February 17 (BRa, SG) could have been wintering birds, but maybe more likely represented the early vanguard of spring migrants (the first definite "spring" birds showed up in the last few days of the month). Two **Townsend's Solitaires** were in Castle Rock State Park on January 1 (AKr et al.) A **Nashville Warbler** was at Pinto Lake County Park on January 6 (GM), and one was found along Watsonville Slough on January 18 (AP). Wintering **Palm Warblers** in western Santa Cruz and Wilder Ranch continued into January (JG, SG, MC), both at fairly normal wintering spots for the species. Much more unusual was one at San Lorenzo Valley High School in Felton on January 13 (JS), possibly the first record for the San Lorenzo Valley upstream of Santa Cruz. A **Hermit Warbler** at San Lorenzo Park (v.ob.) was the only one reported this period.

A **Chipping Sparrow** visited a Capitola feeding station starting January 1 and staying through the period (LL), for the first wintering record for Capitola, and also unusual in the county for being a regular at a feeder. Another Chipping Sparrow was in Live Oak on

January 12 (GM), another unexpected location, and one was at Terrace Point on January 21 (LH). A rare winter **Vesper Sparrow** was at College Lake on February 13 (CS). College Lake is known for exceptional numbers of sparrows, and lived up to its reputation with a count of 960 **Savannah Sparrows** on February 15 (AR). Rare forms of **Fox Sparrow** noted this winter included a “**Red**” at the UCSC Farm on January 17-18 (JG), and a “**Slate-colored**” at Wilder Ranch on January 28 (SG, MC). About 19 **Swamp Sparrows** were found in the county from December through February (v.ob.); unexpected was one at the UCSC Farm on January 27 (AR, JG), well away from typical habitats. There were about



Zono Hybrid - John Garrett

37 **White-throated Sparrows** in the county this winter (v.ob.)

Some observers looking carefully through our wintering **White-crowned Sparrows** found more than expected of the subspecies ***gambelli*** in the county this season, with a high count of 175 at College Lake on February 15 (AR). This far northern subspecies winters abundantly just a bit inland in California, but is usually uncommon in winter on the Central Coast. Also unexpected in the *Zonotrichia* department were two different **White-crowned X Golden-Crowned Sparrow** hybrids, one at the UCSC farm on January 10, and one along the lower San Lorenzo River on January 19 (JG). One of the rarest finds of the winter was a **Dark-eyed Junco** of the “**Gray-headed**” form at the UCSC Arboretum from January 26-28 (RP, v.ob.). This is only the second record of this form in the county (the 1st was in 1962), and the first one to be documented with photos.

Wintering **Black-headed Grosbeaks** turned up in

DeLaveaga Park on January 27 (SG), and at an Aptos feeder on February 14 (RW). The **Red-winged Blackbirds** we see in Santa Cruz County at all seasons are mostly of the “**Bicolored**” form—the adult males lack a yellow border on their red “epaulets”, and the adult females and young birds are darker and more heavily marked than other forms. The “typical” (for most of the country) yellow-edged Red-wings do occur in migration and winter, but numbers reported are generally small. This year there seemed to be more than usual of these “typical” types here, with concentrations in the Pajaro Valley and the county’s north coast. The biggest group reported was 178 at College Lake on February 15 (AR). **Tricolored Blackbirds** seemed a bit more numerous and widespread this winter, including some reports of rather large flocks in the Pajaro Valley, where they have been just occasionally reported in recent years. Perhaps the rarest species found this winter was a **Rusty Blackbird** at Harkins Slough on February 28 (CS, v.ob.) which stayed well into March and was seen and photographed by many. This is the fifth record for Santa Cruz County.

Cited Observers: Jeff Bleam (JBI), Martha Brown, Phil Brown, Jerry Busch (JBu), Mary Crouser, Eric Feuss, John Garrett, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Laird Henkel, Gary Kittleson, Anna Kopitov (AKo), Anna Krieger (AKr), Lisa Larson, Earl Lebow, Nick Levendosky, Dave Lewis, Jeff Manker, Gary Martindale, Zach Michelson, Paul Miller, Bryan Mori, Andy Pedler, Jeff Poklen, Ryan Price, Bernadette Ramer (BRa), Bill Reese (BRe), Alex Rinkert, Richard Sandkuhle, Christian Schwarz, Teague Scott, Lisa Sheridan, David Sidle, Jeff Smith, W. Breck Tyler, Jeff Wall, Randy Wardle, David Wilhelm, Nickie Zavinsky



Rusty Blackbird at Harkins Slough - Lisa Larson



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Black-footed Albatross - LFL

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**“The bird of time has not far to fly,
And the bird is on the wing!”** *Anon*



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Please pay the dues now, while the envelope is in hand, so you won't miss the September/October issue of the *ALBATROSS* in the fall. *“Procrastination is the thief of time”* - Edward Young Night Thoughts 1742-1746

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A Program Officer is especially needed for the coming year, and/or someone to serve as President. It doesn't have to be just one person, either--two, or even more, people can share the duties! If you can help, please contact Steve Gerow at stephengerow@aol.com.

New SCBC Members Welcome!

Ralph & Abby Blair	Feb 2014
Terill Family	Feb 2014
Rhonda Nelson Family	Feb 2014
Jill, Rene, & Morgan Ohana	Mar 2014
Jacqueline Bates	Mar 2014
Stephanie Stainback	Mar 2014
Kathleen Hatfield	Mar 2014
Lynne & Gary Greene	Mar 2014
Leslie Read	Mar 2014

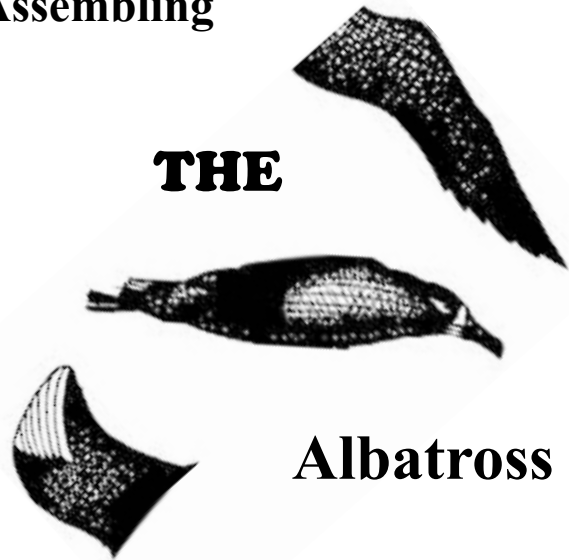


**Submission
DEADLINE for
Sept/Oct issue
of the Albatross
August 1, 2014**

Submission for the Albatross—Guidelines

Assembling

THE



Albatross

In addition to regular features—calendar, Santa Cruz Birds, photos—the newsletter can include almost anything related to birding in general and to local birding in particular. Depending on space, submissions of any of the following are welcome:

- Feature articles
- Birding event announcements
- Stories about birders, serious or comic
- Reviews of birding literature or guides
- Conservation & outreach reports/stories
- Birding tips, descriptions of local sites
- Filler tidbits: Quotes or images
- Photos of people at our events (jpg, tif)

If you wish to submit an article, please contact me about it **a couple of weeks before** the submission deadline.

I accept plain text, Word, or PDF files. Send items by email to: scbirdclubeditor@gmail.com

~Lisa Fay Larson, Editor

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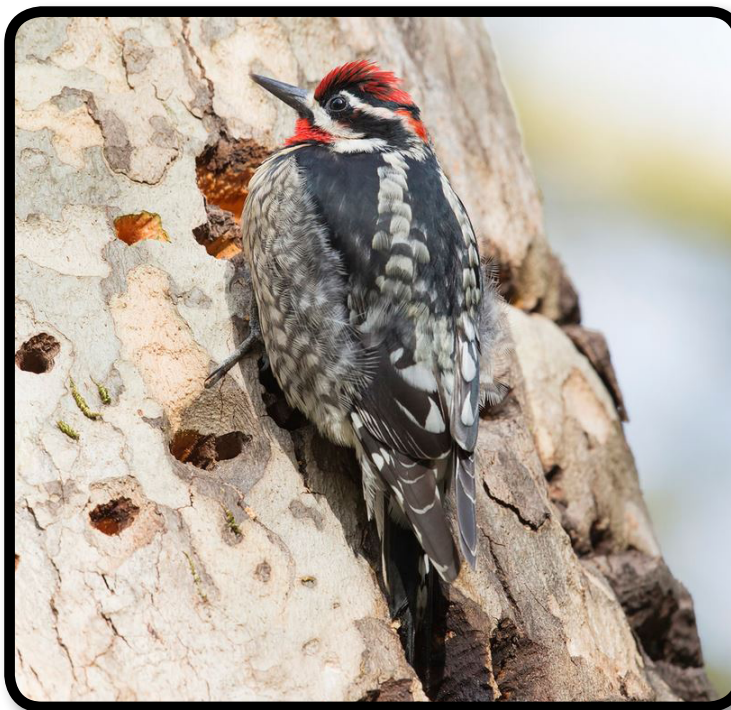
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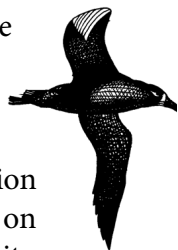


PARTING SHOT: "CONGENIALITY BIRD" - BETH HAMEL
RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER - HENRY COWELL REDWOODS SP



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