

# Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

## Natural History Lessons in the Real World

*A book review by Steve Gerow*

*The Natural History of the UC Santa Cruz Campus, Second Edition.*

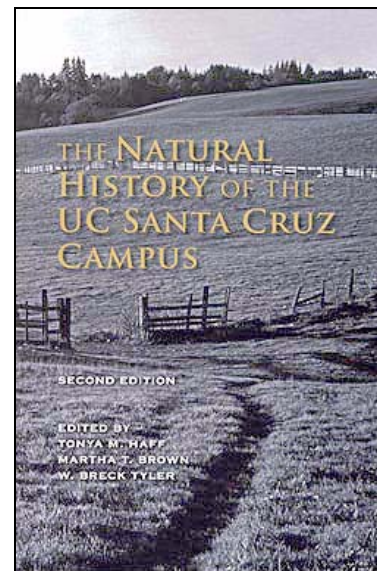
Edited by Tonya M. Haff, Martha T. Brown, and W. Breck Tyler,  
Environmental Studies Department, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2008

Back in the mid-1970s, when it came time to go off to college, I was happy to be accepted at UC Santa Cruz. The innovative programs and a relatively uncrowded campus appealed, but a major attraction for me was the natural setting—extensive forests, grasslands, and other natural habitats—what could be better for someone with an interest in birds and other aspects of the natural world?

Several years of wandering acquainted me with many of the campus' natural nooks and crannies, but as always, the more one knows about a place, the more questions arise. A few years after I had graduated, I walked into the Bay Tree Bookstore and noticed a new book, the first edition of *The Natural History of the UC Santa Cruz Campus*. Buying and reading this book were wise decisions—here were chapters on many of the subjects I was most interested in and other things I hadn't even thought about, packed with information, yet presented in a way that made for enjoyable reading. Here were some answers to some of my questions, but also sign posts pointing out new paths to investigate.

That edition has been long out of print, but several years ago the editors and authors of this new volume undertook the daunting task of creating an updated, second edition. The resulting work came out late this spring, and it is quite impressive. The good things about the first edition are still here, and there is so much more. The chapters from the first edition have all been extensively rewritten and in many cases newly written, but all retain the easy readability of the earlier work. Several new chapters were added.

The main text of the book is divided into ten chapters, each with a different author and a slightly different approach to the subject matter, but with enough stylistic similarity to give the book a unified feel. The first chapter, Human History, presents a nice overview of the history of the Santa Cruz region, with a focus on how human land use through various eras has affected the environment. The next



**In this issue:**

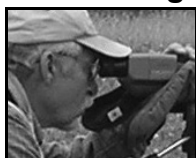
**Calendar of Events**

**Santa Cruz Birds**



**Outreach Notes**

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**Photo Album**

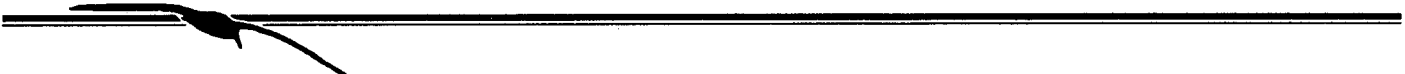
**Birding after Fires**



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Birding  
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chapter, Geology, is the longest in the book and is remarkably successful in presenting complex information in a way that is understandable to the non-geologist. Like much of the text, it uses the campus as a giant “nature trail” in a certain way—an outcrop here, a sinkhole there, the general terraced nature of the landscape, and more, become illustrations putting the lessons into the real world.

Chapters follow on plants, mushrooms, lichens, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Each, in its own way, offers general observations about the natural history of that group of organisms, shows how they fit into local habitats and uses abundant descriptions of specific things observable on campus to bring home the knowledge. As one reads through the book, these examples and anecdotes more and more make clear how the parts are affected by the whole and vice versa. All invite us to observe, to explore, and to learn more.

One finds out about many things unique to the campus and/or the Santa Cruz Mountain region—an example from the Amphibians chapter by Shawn R. Kuchta:

...at the bottom of the ravine...are the remnants of an old marble quarry...eventually you will find a UCSC treasure, the Santa Cruz Mountains Black Salamander. This salamander is *endemic* to the Santa Cruz Mountains, meaning it is found here and nowhere else.

But phenomena that one observes on the campus may also lead to more generally relevant questions—from the Birds chapter by Todd Newberry and Tonya Haff:

Flocks of Western Meadowlark winter in...campus grasslands...Why are these birds' outer tail feathers so white? For that matter, why are so many birds' outer tail feathers white?...Whatever your replies, how can you answer questions like these in ways that do not start with “maybe”? This is a challenge that is built into science, and it thrives at its most complicated in natural history.

Throughout this book, there are abundant useful illustrations and many fascinating sidebars. Did you ever wonder why some manzanitas have burls and some don't, how rattlesnakes manage to swallow such large prey, or what is considered by some to be the most boring bird song? You'll find all that here and much more! A campus map at the beginning of each chapter is another helpful feature.

The appendices of the first edition included some species lists for various groups of taxa, but there were some problems with the presentation. In that edition, for example, plants were ordered alphabetically by common name, so related species, even in the same genus, sometimes were scattered all over the list—you had to look in three spots to find the four *Viola* species that grow on campus. In this second edition the lists are now all presented in taxonomic order, which makes them much more logical and usable. In addition, these appendix lists are expanded, updated, and now annotated with habitat and abundance information and more. The new bird list is particularly nice, with a monthly bar graph illustrating seasonal abundance.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in any aspects of local natural history. Much of the information here is applicable to a larger part of the Santa Cruz Mountains region. It is a nice accessible introduction to many topics in the natural sciences, and the text is engrossing and often just plain fun to read.

### ***Santa Cruz Bird Club Connections and Contributions***

In addition to being a great book for local birders, The Natural History of the UC Santa Cruz Campus, Second Edition has several significant connections to the Santa Cruz Bird Club. The editors, Tonya Haff, Martha Brown, and Breck Tyler, are all club members, and Tonya (who also was the author or co-author of several of the chapters) is a former club president. Todd Newberry, co-author of the Birds chapter, is also a former club president. Two other former club presidents and some other bird club members (including current and former officers) helped with editing and proofreading or made other contributions to some sections of the book. Finally, a financial grant from the bird club helped with the funding of this project.

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# Events Calendar

## September - October 2008

NOTICE: Please Check the SCBC Big Year calendar online for the latest calendar updates and any rescheduling information— [http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/Big\\_Year\\_Calendar.html](http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/Big_Year_Calendar.html)



**Friday, August 29**  
**West Santa Cruz**

This is the peak time of year for fall migrant Black-chinned Hummingbirds. We'll check some regular spots for them, including Natural Bridges, Bethany Curve Park, and Lighthouse Field.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

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



**Saturday, August 30**  
**Watsonville Sloughs**

A half day trip to the wetlands of Watsonville in search of migrant shorebirds; Baird's, Pectoral, Solitary, and Semipalmated Sandpipers are possible.

**Directions:** Meet at the unpaved lot at the Red Roof Inn on Beach St. near the Lee Rd. intersection at 8:00 a.m.

**Leader:** Roger Wolfe, [rogwolfe@cruzio.com](mailto:rogwolfe@cruzio.com)



**Wednesday, September 3**  
**Open Itinerary**

An open itinerary allows us to wait until the day of the trip to decide where to go for this half day outing, depending on what spots are hot and what rarities may be around. This trip may go anywhere along the coast, at mid-county or in the Pajaro Valley. Possible rare shorebirds and landbirds. Bring a snack in case we bird through lunch.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Aptos Wells Fargo Bank, 7701 Soquel Dr. (intersection with State Park Drive),

**Leader:** David Suddjian, [liturgist@stjoscap.org](mailto:liturgist@stjoscap.org)



**Friday, September 5**  
**Bethany Curve and Lighthouse Field**

These areas can be good this time of year for interesting migrants such as Black-chinned Hummingbird, Willow Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak, etc. We'll also check the coast along West Cliff Drive.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at West Cliff and Woodrow

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



**Sunday, September 7**  
**Beginning Bird Walk**

**Directions:** Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Delaware entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

**Leaders:** Wally and Lois Goldfrank, (831) 423-5136



**Friday, September 12**  
**Natural Bridges and Vicinity**

We may cover parts of Natural Bridges, Antonelli Pond, the Terrace Point fields, Younger Lagoon, and/or other nearby areas, depending on the weather, what's known to be around, and the whim of the participants.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

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

*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.*



Saturday, September 13

**Big Year at Sea**

**Monterey Seabirds Fall Pelagic Birding**

An 8-hour sea voyage, departing from Monterey at 7:30 a.m. to visit the Fingers Canyon complex of northern Monterey Bay.

**Cost:** \$85 for SCBC members (\$95 for non-members).

**Contact:** (831) 375-4658 or

<http://www.montereyseabirds.com>



**Big Year**

Saturday, September 13

**Pajaro Dunes and Sunset SB**

Shorebirds, songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl are all likely as we visit the varied habitats of Sunset Beach and Pajaro Dunes. Snowy Plovers nest on the dunes themselves and the Pajaro River Mouth has long been one of the premier locations for rare shorebirds, gulls and terns. Stands of Monterey Cypress and willow patches provide habitat for a variety of passerines. Bring sunscreen, water, and snacks.

**Directions:** Meet at the Red Roof Inn parking lot on Lee Rd. Watsonville 7:30 a.m. We'll be carpooling from there.

**Leader:** Earl Lebow, (831) 475-1338, [hawkowl@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hawkowl@sbcglobal.net)



**Big Year**

Sunday, September 14

**Watsonville Sloughs**

We will explore the Watsonville Slough complex looking for waders, raptors, and shorebirds. This is a half day trip. Bring sunscreen, water, and snacks.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the rear of the parking lot behind West Marine, off Harkins Slough Rd. in Watsonville.

**Leaders:** Bernadette and Bob Ramer, (831) 426-7342, [baramer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:baramer@sbcglobal.net)



**Big Year**

Friday, September 19

**Neary Lagoon**

It's getting into the peak time for rare fall migrants. We'll see what we can find.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the west entrance, off California St., near the intersection with Bay St.

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



**Big Year**

Saturday, September 20

**Open Itinerary**

This trip will go where the winds of birding fortune seem most promising, beginning at the always interesting West-side of Santa Cruz. Other stops will depend on what spots are hot and what rarities may be around. Possible rare shorebirds and landbirds. Bring a snack in case we bird through lunch.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, [liturgist@stjoscap.org](mailto:liturgist@stjoscap.org)



**Big Year**

Wednesday, September 24

**Rancho del Oso**

We will seek fall vagrant warblers, sparrows, and woodpeckers at the beautiful Rancho del Oso.

**Directions:** Meet at Beckmann's Bakery on Mission at 8:00 a.m.

**Leader** Todd Newberry, [taxa@biology.ucsc.edu](mailto:taxa@biology.ucsc.edu)



**Big Year**

Thursday, September 25

**Meder Canyon**

Another good spot for fall migrants.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the southern end of the trail into the canyon (Grandview St. just west of Escalona).

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



Thursday, September 25

**SCBC Meeting @7:30 p.m.**

**Speaker: Rod Norden**

**Subject: Birding Optics**

Rod Norden will discuss how to select, test, and use binoculars and telescopes suitable for birding. Specifications for birding optics will be explained, including exit pupils, anti-reflection coatings and low dispersion glass. Different styles of binoculars priced from \$50 to about \$2000 will be displayed, as will different types of spotting scopes. Proper methods for cleaning optics will be demonstrated.

Please bring your binoculars, telescopes, and questions to participate.

**Location:**

Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History.





Friday, September 26

**Big Year at Sea**

**Shearwater Journeys Fall Pelagic Birding**

An 8-hour trip, departing from Santa Cruz at 7:00 a.m. Discounted reservations must be made in advance and are nonrefundable and nontransferable. Price does not include possible fuel surcharge. Advance reservation *required*. Send check to Debi Shearwater, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024.

**Cost:** \$115 for SCBC members (\$145 for non-members).

**Contact:** (831) 637-8527 or

<http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com>



**Big Year**

Monday, September 29

**Watsonville Sloughs**

We will explore the Watsonville Slough complex looking for waders, raptors, and shorebirds. This is a half day trip. Bring sunscreen, water, and snacks.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the rear of the parking lot behind West Marine, off Harkins Slough Rd. in Watsonville.

**Leader:** Michelle Scott, (831)426-8266, surfscoter61@yahoo.com



**Big Year**

Wednesday, October 1

**Natural Bridges and Vicinity**

We may cover parts of Natural Bridges, Antonelli Pond, the Terrace Point fields, Younger Lagoon, and/or other nearby areas, depending on the weather, what's known to be around, and the whim of the participants.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

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



**Big Year**

Thursday, October 2

**Wilder Ranch and the North Coast**

We will seek a wide variety of species along the coast at Wilder Ranch, and then probably travel up the coast to a few other spots. An initial meeting at Natural Bridges will allow us to seek any rarity that may be in that area before going to Wilder. This is a fine time for vagrant landbirds, such as warblers, sparrows, and flycatchers, and also for raptors and returning coastal birds. Plan for moderate but easy walking. Bring water in a day pack and lunch or a snack. Depending on weather, we will continue into the afternoon. There is a \$6 day use fee per car.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, liturgist@stjoscap.org



**Big Year**

Friday, October 3

**Natural Bridges and Vicinity**

We may cover parts of Natural Bridges, Antonelli Pond, the Terrace Point fields, Younger Lagoon, and/or other nearby areas, depending on the weather, what's known to be around, and the whim of the participants.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

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

**SPECIAL WEEKEND EVENT**



*Monterey Bay Birding Festival*

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, September 26, 27, 28

The Monterey Bay Birding Festival, in its fourth year, features Jon Dunn and other birding experts, plus more than 70 birding-related activities. Numerous field trips and workshops are scheduled on each of the three days. More information is on the back page of this newsletter.



Saturday, September 27

**Big Year at Sea**

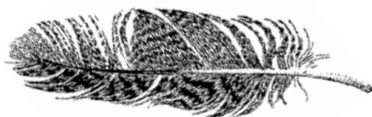
**Monterey Seabirds Fall Pelagic Birding**

An 8-hour sea voyage, departing from Monterey at 7:30 a.m. to visit the Fingers Canyon complex of northern Monterey Bay.

**Cost:** \$85 for SCBC members (\$95 for non-members).

**Contact:** (831) 375-4658 or

<http://www.montereyseabirds.com>



**Big Year****Saturday, October 4**  
**Watsonville Sloughs**

This is the prime time for rare shorebirds. Last year's rarities at the Watsonville sloughs included Buff Breasted Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, and Baird's Sandpiper. Let's see what this year's migration brings.

**Directions:** Meet at the Aptos Wells Fargo at 8:00 a.m. to carpool to the sloughs.

**Leader:** Todd Newberry, [taxa@biology.ucsc.edu](mailto:taxa@biology.ucsc.edu)

**Big Year****Sunday, October 5**  
**Beginning Bird Walk**

Quail Hollow has a good variety of species including woodpeckers, warblers, and sparrows.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot at Quail Hollow County Park.

**Leader:** David Ekdahl, 831-335-5742, [dek Dahl@earthlink.net](mailto:dek Dahl@earthlink.net)

**PICNIC!****Sunday, October 5**  
**SCBC Potluck Picnic**  
**DeLaveaga Park**

Bring a dish to share and a beverage (no alcohol allowed). BBQ pit with hot coals will be available. Paper plates, etc. provided, but bring your own settings if you wish.

**Time/Place:** 1-4 p.m. at the picnic area, 850 N. Branciforte Drive, in the main portion of the park, adjacent to the creek, between the playground area and the baseball fields. Come and enjoy the time with birds and other bird lovers.

**Contact:** Bernadette Ramer, (831) 426-7342 or [baramer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:baramer@sbcglobal.net)

**Big Year****Wednesday, October 8**  
**North Coast**

The wild north coast beckons! We'll hit several spots seeking rare migrants, from sparrows to raptors, longspurs to who knows what!? An initial meeting at Natural Bridges will allow us to seek any rarity that may be in that area before going up the coast. Plan for moderate but easy walking. Bring water in a day pack and lunch or a snack.

Depending on weather, we will continue into the afternoon. **Directions:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, [liturgist@stjoscap.org](mailto:liturgist@stjoscap.org)

**Big Year****Friday, October 10**  
**Neary Lagoon**

Another search for unusual migrants, etc.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the west entrance, off California St. near the intersection with Bay St.

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

**Saturday, October 11**  
**Big Year at Sea****Monterey Seabirds Fall Pelagic Birding**

An 8-hour sea voyage, departing from Monterey at 7:30 a.m. to visit the Fingers Canyon complex of northern Monterey Bay.

Cost: \$85 for SCBC members (\$95 for non-members).

**Contact:** (831) 375-4658 or

<http://www.montereyseabirds.com>

**Sunday, October 12**  
**Big Year at Sea****Shearwater Journeys Fall Pelagic Birding**

An 8-hour trip, departing from Santa Cruz at 7:00 a.m.

Discounted reservations must be made in advance and are nonrefundable and nontransferable. Price does not include possible fuel surcharge. Advance reservation *required*.

Send check to Debi Shearwater, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024.

Cost: \$115 for SCBC members (\$145 for non-members).

**Contact:** (831) 637-8527 or

<http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com>

**Big Year****Friday, October 17**  
**Wilder Ranch State Park**

The coastal fields, scrub, and willow patches here can yield the unexpected this time of year. Pacific Golden-Plover, Horned Lark, Short-eared Owl, and Lapland Longspur have all turned up in this area a few times. Rare but somewhat regular possibilities include Palm Warbler and Swamp and Clay-colored Sparrows. Expect a few miles of mostly level walking. Remember that it is often colder and windier here than in town. There is a \$6 day use fee per car.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the main parking lot at Wilder Ranch (off Hwy 1).

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

**Big Year****Saturday, October 18**  
**Pajaro Valley**

We will explore Harkins, Struve, and Watsonville Sloughs for waders, raptors, and migrant shorebirds. This is a half day trip. If time and conditions permit, we will also explore local lakes, such as Pinto Lake. Bring sunscreen, water, and snacks.

**Directions:** Meet at 9:00 a.m. behind the West Marine building at the end of Westridge road in Watsonville.

**Leader:** Rod Norden, [rod.norden@gmail.com](mailto:rod.norden@gmail.com)



**Sunday, October 19**  
**Terrace Point and Younger Lagoon**

We will be looking for vagrant Shorebirds and will unashamedly chase any rarities reported in the area.  
**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at end of Delaware Ave.  
**Leader:** Phil Brown, phil@brown-herceg.com



**Wednesday, October 22**  
**Open Itinerary**

See details for September 20 above.  
**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.  
**Leader:** David Suddjian, liturgist@stjoscap.org



**Thursday, Oct. 23**  
**SCBC Meeting @ 7:30 p.m.**  
**Speakers: Rita Caratello, Don Roberson**

**Subject: Costa Rica**  
Rita Caratello and Don Roberson have put together an informative multi-media presentation of their travels to Costa Rica last Christmas. Rita shot video and Don digital photographs. This joint presentation will divulge many aspects of the natural history of Costa Rica and will not be limited to birds only. Come enjoy the sights and sounds of Central America through the eyes of one of Monterey Bay's premier naturalists.  
**Location:** Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History



**Friday, October 24**  
**San Lorenzo River**

We'll search for Swamp and other unusual sparrows, plus whatever else might be around.  
**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at San Lorenzo Park, by the duck pond  
**Leader:** Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



**Saturday, October 25**  
**Swanton Road Raptors**

We will be birding the fields around Swanton Road looking for vagrant fall raptors. Ferruginous Hawk, Rough legged Hawk, and Golden Eagle are possible and there is a chance of Prairie Falcon and Crested Caracara.  
**Directions:** Meet 8:00 a.m. at Coffeetopia, 1723 Mission St., Santa Cruz.  
**Leader:** Scott Smithson, scottndawn@sbcglobal.net



**Tuesday, October 28**  
**Harkins Slough**

Join the Open Space Alliance and the Santa Cruz Bird Club in a special opportunity to spend a morning birding along Harkins Slough on the beautiful, scenic property recently acquired by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, part of the National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. We will seek migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, as well as a wide range of raptors and other year-round species.  
**Directions:** Parking at the slough is limited, so participants will be asked to meet at 8:00 a.m. in the Aptos Wells Fargo Bank parking lot, 7701 Soquel Drive, for carpooling.  
**Leader:** Todd Newberry, taxa@biology.ucsc.edu



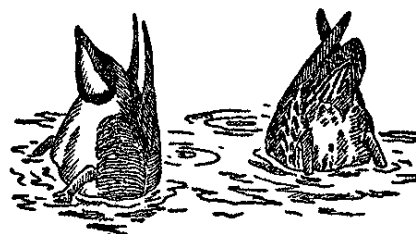
**Wednesday, October 29**  
**Baldwin Creek and vicinity**

This trip will visit coastline, marsh, scrub, riparian, and ag. fields seeking a variety of species, with a chance for rails, many sparrows, migrant seabirds, and interesting raptors. We can hope for a Swamp Sparrow and Palm Warbler and who knows what. Plan for several miles of mostly level walking.  
**Directions:** Meet at 7:15 a.m. at Beckman's Bakery, 2341 Mission Street in Santa Cruz.  
**Leader:** David Suddjian, liturgist@stjoscap.org



**Friday, October 31**  
**Natural Bridges and Vicinity**

We may cover parts of Natural Bridges, Antonelli Pond, the Terrace Point fields, Younger Lagoon, and/or other nearby areas, depending on the weather, what's known to be around, and the whim of the participants.  
**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.  
**Leader:** Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



**For additional birding opportunities,  
see page 18.**

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## Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2008

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Three wildfires consumed forest and chaparral over substantial acreage in the county for the first time in decades, with the Summit Fire above Corralitos on May 22, the Martin Fire at Bonny Doon on June 11, and the Trabling Fire at Watsonville on June 22. Although significantly large from the county perspective, the area burned by these fires is tiny compared to the truly large tracts burned in fires elsewhere this season, such as the huge Basin Complex Fire in Monterey County. The effects on bird life in our county are hard to gauge at present, although data collected in 2002-2007 by the Santa Cruz County Forest Bird Monitoring Program along survey routes that ran through the Summit and Martin burn areas will provide some baseline information, and I surveyed part of the Martin area in the weeks before the fire.

Habitats burned in the fires did not contain especially rare nesting species, although uncommon nesting species such as **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and **Yellow-rumped Warbler** were affected. **Common Poorwill** may have been, and I had documented a nesting **Cooper's Hawk** pair in the Martin Fire area shortly before that blaze. On the whole, the worst impact will probably not be effects on certain species, but just the timing, hitting right in the middle of the nesting season of most species. But looking ahead, in upcoming years the burned areas may provide new habitat opportunities for some of the county's uncommon breeders, such as **House Wren**, **Western Wood-Pewee**, **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, and **Lawrence's Goldfinch**...maybe even **Common Poorwill**, **Sage Sparrow** and **Black-chinned Sparrow**.

Spring's avian highlights included our first **Vermilion Flycatcher** and first spring occurrences for **Eurasian Wigeon** and **Cassin's Finch**. **Redhead**, **American White Pelican**, and **White-faced Ibis** lingering through the season added a new twist at the Watsonville sloughs. Spring landbird migration had few highlights, other than a record number of chats, and it was a slow season for vagrants.

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*A rare Vermilion Flycatcher (female) photographed by Steve Gerow at Antonelli Pond on April 1, 2008.*

Four **Greater White-fronted Geese** were in Watsonville Slough March 21 to April 5 (RW). Two photographed at Neary Lagoon were exceptionally late for spring migrants, staying there April 23-26 (MC, AG, PM); presumably the same pair flew out of town over Antonelli Pond on April 26 (TM). A flock of 21 **Snow Geese** flew over the UCSC Arboretum on March 18 (PB), a rare record of spring migrants for the county. **Cackling Geese** also lingered late, with six at Watsonville Slough from March 21-April 5, and one still there on April 12 (RW). Introduced-type **Canada Geese** at interesting spots included three in the pond at Quail Hollow on May 25 (AR) (they nested here in 2007, a first for the San Lorenzo Valley, but apparently did not this year) and up to four at a vineyard pond off Glen Canyon Road March 20 to May 5 (PM). The same pond off Glen Canyon had up to four **Wood Ducks** at various dates from March 23 to May 3 (PM), the first ever reported in that area. Two Wood Ducks at the north end of Loch Lomond on May 19 were interesting for the nesting season.

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** showed up in Struve Slough on April 12 (EL et al.), for the county's first spring record. While a lingering wintering bird can't be entirely ruled out, it was more likely a spring migrant, as there were no other reports after February 23. A **Blue-winged Teal** was at College Lake on April 5 (RW), and two were there on April 24 (PB). A male **Northern Shoveler** in Watsonville Slough from May 9 into early June (RW, LG, BR, MS), and apparently a different male at Pajaro Dunes on May 23 (RW), were unusual in the county this late in spring, as were four

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**Northern Pintail** in the lower stretch of Watsonville Slough May 9-13 (RW, LG, BR, MS). Also exceptionally late were two **Green-winged Teal** that appeared at Watsonville Slough May 16 (RW). A late **Canvas-back** stayed at College Lake from April 4-16 (RW, DSu).

Unprecedented in the county was the regular presence of **Redheads** in the Struve Slough and Watsonville Slough area from March 31 through the end of the period (H&RS, RW, JDo, GF, DSt, v.ob.), with reports of up to four birds at a time, and probably five different individuals involved. Late **Ring-necked Ducks** included two at Swanton Pond on April 23 (DSu) and one at Quail Hollow on May 3 (JW). Twelve female **Greater Scaup** at the Santa Cruz Harbor on March 31 were a good count for spring migrants (DSu). A lingering male was near the mouth of the Pajaro River on April 26 (NA, SG). Four late **Lesser Scaup** stopped in Watsonville Slough on May 2 (RW). Rare spring **Harlequin Ducks** included females off Waddell Creek Beach on March 22 (DSg), and off Seacliff State Beach April 19 (SSu). A **Black Scoter** flew by El Jarro Point on May 17 (RN et al.). Adding to the rare sea duck list for spring were a male and a female **Long-tailed Ducks**, spotted during an aerial survey about eight miles southwest of Terrace Point on April 3 (JDa).

A **Bufflehead** was on the late side at Rancho Del Oso on May 12 (DSu); more, and later, were at Watsonville and Struve Sloughs, with 10 there on May 13 (LG, BR, MS), six on May 16, and two still around on May 23 (RW). Two female **Common Goldeneyes** appeared at the mouth of Waddell Creek on April 23 (DSu). The last **Hooded Merganser** reported in the county this season was in the pond at Spring Lakes Mobile Home Park in Scotts Valley on April 23 (PM). **Common Mergansers** in the Pajaro Valley, where unexpected, included three at Pajaro Dunes in March 6 (AS), and a male at College Lake May 2-3 (RW, DSu). A nice total of 29 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were counted passing El Jarro Point on April 30 (DSu et al.); interestingly, there were only four males among them.

**Red-necked Grebes** had a very good spring showing, with birds off the Baldwin Creek mouth March 5 (LG et al.), off West Cliff Drive April 13-19 (AM, AG, SG), Seacliff State Beach April 19 (SSu), and a late

bird off Sunset State Beach May 13 (SSm). A **Laysan Albatross** in Santa Cruz County waters on March 2 was the first report for the county since 2003 (LL, ShJ). **American White Pelicans** had one of the strongest spring showings ever in the Pajaro Valley and were present in good numbers throughout the period (v.ob.), mostly in the Watsonville slough system and the lower Pajaro River. An **American Bittern** nest was spotted near the Struve Slough/Watsonville Slough confluence on May 7 (NA); there were regular reports of one or two bitterns through the period from the sloughs and some other Pajaro Valley spots.

A high count of 12 **Great Egret** nests were at Pinto Lake on May 3, the only active nesting colony in the county (DSu). Also on May 3, an impressive aggregation at College Lake included 79 **Great** and 53 **Snowy Egrets** (DSu). **White-faced Ibis** were present through the period in the Pajaro Valley. A couple of reports in March probably represented one or two lingering winterers, then April and May had a very strong showing of spring migrants (v.ob.) Especially notable was the persistence of birds at favored sites (the sloughs and College Lake) this spring; in previous years most late spring records involved birds flying over or stopping only briefly. The highest counts were nine at College Lake on May 3 (DSu) and nine at Watsonville Slough on May 16 (RW).



*Osprey pair on the nest at Harkins Slough. Photo by Gypsy Flores.*

A pair of **Ospreys** built a nest at Harkins Slough, starting on March 4 (RW, GK, v.ob.). The nest was built on a platform put up by PG&E to replace a power pole site where they built a nest last year (which caught fire). Though the pair persisted there through the season, their efforts were again unsuccessful in

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producing any young. A migrant **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Cabrillo College on April 5 (DSu). There were quite a few late spring reports of **Merlins**, with 9 in April and 3 in May (v.ob.), the latest at College Lake on May 11 (MB, OJ). A **Prairie Falcon** at College Lake on May 3 was an especially rare record for spring (DSu). A notably large concentration of **Spotted Sandpipers** was 18, all in one loose flock, at College Lake on May 3 (DSu).

**Solitary Sandpipers** were in the San Lorenzo River near San Lorenzo Park on May 2 (SG et al.), and at College Lake on May 3 (DSu). West Cliff Drive's wintering **Wandering Tattler** reappeared there on March 18 (SG). Spring migrant tattlers were reported from May 5-25 (v.ob.), a somewhat late passage, and with fewer total reports than usual. Reports of **Lesser Yellowlegs** included one at College Lake April 16-May 2 (DSu, PB, RW), two there May 11 (MB, OJ), and one at lower Watsonville Slough on April 23 (JW). Five **Ruddy Turnstones** flying by Terrace Point on May 7 (KA), and three more turning up at Capitola Beach on May 10 (DSu), was a bit better than average for recent springs, but still very few compared to earlier years. West Cliff's **Rock Sandpiper** was last seen April 7 (LG). A **Wilson's Snipe** at Quail Hollow on May 25 was probably the latest ever for Santa Cruz County in spring (AR).

Four **Wilson's Phalaropes** were at College Lake on May 2 (RW), with one still there May 9 (JP, LG, WG, DSu). **Red Phalaropes** were widely reported onshore May 8-16, following a windy period (v.ob.), but there were no large concentrations, nor any notably inland. **Franklin's Gulls** included single birds at the Waddell Creek mouth May 9 (DSu), flying past El Jarro Point on May 17 (RN et al.) and at Corcoran Lagoon May 20 (RT). **Bonaparte's Gulls** were formerly abundant spring migrants along the Santa Cruz County coast, but they just don't seem to pass through in the numbers they used to. This year continued the pattern, with only scattered reports of small numbers; the only moderate concentration was along the San Lorenzo River in mid to late May and involved mostly immature birds (v.ob.).

Late lingering gulls included single **Mew Gulls** at the lower San Lorenzo River May 4 (LG) and May 13 (SG), several reports of late **Herring Gulls** (v.ob.), and two **Thayer's Gulls** on the San Lorenzo May 13

(SG). The second year **Glaucous Gull** remained at Baldwin Creek Beach until March 8 (DSu, PM). A first-cycle **Glaucous** was at Harkins Slough March 4 (RW), and one was notably late at Pajaro Dunes April 19 (SSm). Single **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were onshore at the Santa Cruz Harbor March 26 (PM) and along West Cliff Drive April 4 (SG). Five flew by Terrace Point on May 7 (KA). A **Black Tern** paused at College Lake on April 22 (DSu). Dawn surveys for **Marbled Murrelets** at Big Basin in early May started off on an encouraging note, with more detections than the last six years. Activity sputtered out later in the month, though, as detections rapidly diminished (DSu). A **Cassin's Auklet** flew in and landed close to shore off Terrace Point May 7 (KA); this species is rarely seen from shore in the county.

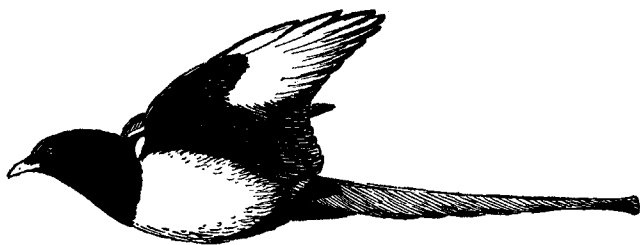
**Eurasian Collared-Dove** continued to expand its range and increase in numbers at the peripheries of the areas where it has become established, particularly around the margins of Santa Cruz and at Live Oak, Aptos, and Corralitos (v.ob.). April and May seem to be months when the species is particularly prone to appearing in new spots, perhaps as they prospect for nesting areas. Nests were found at Seacliff on April 16 and Pinto Lake County Park on May 3 (DSu), and individuals with nest material were at western Santa Cruz on April 1 (SG) and Graham Hill Road on May 6 (DSu). One at Rancho Del Oso on May 26 was the second record for the park (DSu). A **Burrowing Owl** was at the south end of Swanton Road on March 5-8 (DSu, v.ob.). Migrant **Black Swifts** included two at Gray Whale Ranch on May 9 (SSm et al), and singles over Rancho del Oso on May 12 (DSu), China Grade on May 23 (DSu), and Santa Cruz on May 29 (SG).

Several reports of **Northern Pygmy-Owl** were highlighted by one standing on a **Varied Thrush** it had killed at Huckleberry Campground in Big Basin on March 7 and one bathing vigorously in the Andrew P. Hill memorial water fountain at Redwood Trail in Big Basin on April 11 (DSu). A **White-throated Swift** at the Pajaro River at Watsonville on May 18 showed continued presence where a pair nested in 2007 (SG); the species is rare in the Pajaro Valley. An **Acorn Woodpecker** at Natural Bridges State Beach on April 27 was rare in the park and vicinity (SG). Breeding season **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** were at two spots along Waddell Creek at Rancho Del Oso in May (DSu).

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An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at DeLaveaga Park on March 31 tied the record early date for the county (9 days ahead of the average first arrival; SG, BR), and another early bird was at Sims Road on April 1 (JA). It was a slow season for rare migrant Empidonax flycatchers. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at Castle Rock State Park on April 15 (DS), and a **Dusky Flycatcher** was at Natural Bridges on May 5 (SG). A Dusky returned to its song territory at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin by at least May 8 (DSu) and remained into summer, present for its third breeding season there (v.ob.). Despite an admirable effort, he apparently did not attract a mate. An early **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Quail Hollow County Park on March 9 was 10 days ahead of our average arrival (AR); no others were reported in the county this season until March 18 (DK).

A female **Vermilion Flycatcher**, photographed near Antonelli Pond on April 1, was the best rarity of the season and our first county record (SG)! It was enjoyed by other birders that day but did not linger. A **Cassin's Kingbird** at College Lake on April 16 was just the 8th for the county (DSu); all but one have been in early spring. An early **Warbling Vireo** at Corralitos Lagoon on March 11 was seven days ahead of our average arrival (BMor). A **Yellow-billed Magpie** was along Highway 152 at the base of the foothills north of Watsonville on March 30 (DJ). There are few modern records of this species for the county, although they reside as close as the Aromas area in San Benito County.



*Yellow-billed Magpie*

**American Crows** visited the interior part of Big Basin Redwoods State Park for the 2nd time ever, with about six individuals noted from March 3 to April 11 (DSu, AS). They may have been roaming at the periphery of their expanding range, as they are wont to do in early spring. However, they have become established in forest dominated areas of the upper San

Lorenzo watershed (within a few miles of the park now) and maybe will join Big Basin's breeding avifauna before long. A pair of **Tree Swallows** was using a nest box at Last Chance Road on May 10 (CEy); they are rare breeders along our coast north of Santa Cruz. Migrant **Bank Swallows** were at Santa Cruz on April 23 (SG) and Baldwin Creek Marsh on May 12 (DSu). A **Rock Wren** was in an appropriately rocky spot in the upper Opal Creek watershed at Big Basin on May 8, for the first park record (DSu). This species is always rare in the county but especially so in spring.

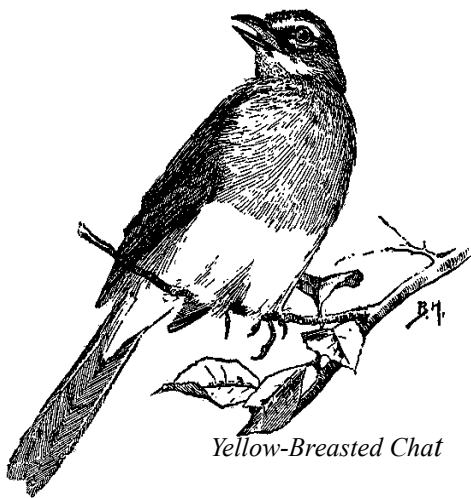
**Western Bluebirds** enjoyed a good nesting season, especially in areas of the county away from their Pajaro Valley foothills stronghold. Of special interest was a pair that nested in a nest box at Quail Hollow, fledging young on May 28, marking the first known successful nesting in the San Lorenzo Valley in over 10 years (JA et al.). The box was part of a nest box trail established in 2002. Two pairs were using nest boxes at Last Chance Road on May 10 (CEy). Two pairs were along Skyline Blvd southeast of Black Road on May 14 (DSu, PB, JW), and a pair was at Back Ranch Road on May 27 (TH). A pair off Jarvis Road in the upper West Branch of Soquel Creek on March 30 was apparently prospecting for a nest site, but they did not linger (KP). Not far from there, immediately across the county line at Summit Road, a pair nested in a box on the Taylor property for the first time since 1992, hatching eggs by May 24 (BT). Another new nesting site was at Merk Pond, where a nest box had young on May 12 (HS). Nesting continued at Pleasant Valley, where a pair fledged young by May 28 (RW).

A cooperative **Townsend's Solitaire** delighted folks at the UCSC Arboretum from March 17-29 (MS, JS, v.ob.), being the first to be photographed in the county (CC) and the first to be seen by many observers. Three singing **Varied Thrushes** were found at scattered points in Big Basin Redwoods State Park, with one along Blooms Creek on May 8-30, one along East Ridge Trail near Highway 236 on May 20, and one along Hwy 236 at the headwaters of Boulder Creek on May 31 (DSu). A **Northern Mockingbird** singing at Rancho Del Oso on May 26 was unexpected and without precedent for the breeding season (DSu). **Nashville Warblers** had a slim showing, with three found from April 4 to May 3 (MS, SSm, DSu).

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A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Ocean View Park on March 14-15 was apparently the only one for the winter season (LG, WG, v.ob.).

Another spring bird that most likely wintered locally was an alternate plumaged **Palm Warbler** at Antonelli Pond and Natural Bridges on April 10-26 (SG, v.ob.). The wintering **American Redstart** stayed at Natural Bridges until April 11 (v.ob.). A record sixteen **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found from April 27 to May 19 (all coastal), bolstered by a wave of migrant chats that hit the central California coast in mid May (SG, DSu, MB, PB, CEm, AS, LG, WG, AR). We had 14 chats from May 10-19, and many must have gone undetected. Our average spring showing is just four. Four **Summer Tanagers** in this reporting period included three that were likely wintering holdovers. One adult male was at Carbonera Creek in Santa Cruz on March 7 (DP). An immature male returned to a La Selva yard on March 15 (FM). A female was at Rodeo Gulch on March 24 (DSu). A more typical spring migrant was heard at Santa Cruz on May 27 (AS, RT).



*Yellow-Breasted Chat*

The San Lorenzo's wintering **Clay-colored Sparrow** stayed to at least March 19 (SG). A migrant **Black-chinned Sparrow** was singing in chaparral along Highway 236 in Big Basin on May 22 (DSu). Black-chinned has been known to nest in the county only in two limited areas—at Castle Rock and near Loma Prieta. But it has gone missing from both for over five years and may be extirpated as a breeder here. Migrant **Lark Sparrows** were found along the lower San Lorenzo River on May 14 (KA) and then at

Neary Lagoon on May 15 (SM). Three **Savannah Sparrows** at Quail Hollow on April 11 were unexpected there (AR). A survey of the main campgrounds at Big Basin on March 7 must have coincided with a migratory movement of **Fox Sparrows**, producing an impressive count of 199 individuals, with 98 in Huckleberry Campground alone. A survey of the same area on February 11 had only 50 sparrows, and by April 11 the count was down to three (DSu).

Four **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in March and April, with the last on April 8 (BS, CB, SG). An apparent hybrid **White-crowned x Golden-crowned Sparrow** was studied and photographed in a Santa Cruz yard on April 17, the first documented occurrence of such a bird in the county (SG). The last straggling **Golden-crowned Sparrows** are often seen into early May, but one at Pajaro Dunes on May 31 was exceptionally late (RW). The **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** wintering at Neary Lagoon was last seen on April 1 (PVL). A single May report—at Rancho Del Oso on May 26 (DSu)—marked the slowest spring for this species in recent memory. **Tricolored Blackbirds** resumed nesting at the pond along Last Chance Road, after apparently not nesting there for a couple years. A visit there on May 9 found about 220 individuals, with nesting evidence observed (DSu). Soda Lake has hosted the only other breeding colony in the county in recent years, but there is no access there to confirm continued use of that site. A flock of 65-75 “Trikes” flying east past Lighthouse Field State Beach on May 24 was odd (SG).

**Great-tailed Grackles** continued to nest at the confluence of Watsonville and Struve sloughs. Fifteen present there on April 30 included females carrying food to nests (JW, DSu). The species began to nest at Harkins Slough, as well, with up to seven birds seen there on May 22 (RW). One flying over Antonelli Pond on May 16 was unusual away from the sloughs (SG). We'd be interested in reports of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** from rural montane areas of the county, as the species is seldom reported from such areas. A male feeding among cattle at Locatelli Ranch at the top of Empire Grade on May 8 was one such record (DSu). A male **Cassin's Finch** along Summit Road near Maymens Flat (southeast of Loma Prieta) on May 10 provided our first spring record (L&CL). The area burned in the Summit Fire 12 days later.

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A pair of House Finches at Sky Meadow Lane in Big Basin on May 20+ were the first recorded in the breeding season in the park's interior away from Eagle Rock (DSu). Pine Siskins were more widely noted than they have been in recent springs, at least partly due to a passage of migrants that straggled into May, but they were also relatively numerous in the county's nesting areas. May records of interest, away from recent breeding locales, included birds at Merk Pond, Capitola, Big Basin, Skyline Blvd, and Quail Hollow (DSu, JW). No Lawrence's Goldfinches were found this spring.

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**Cited Observers:** Nanci Adams, Jenny Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Cliff Bixler, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Mary Crouser, Cindy Cummings, Jeff Davis (JDa), Judy Donaldson (JDo), Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Gypsy Flores, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Tonya Haff, Dan Jackson, Oscar Johnson, Gary Kittleson, David Kodl, Earl Lebow, Cindy Lieurance, Leslie Lieurance, Amy MacDonald, Freddy Menge, Paul Miller, Tom Morrell, Bryan Mori (BMor), Shirley Murphy, Rod Norden, Kenneth Peterson, Jeff Poklen, Doreen Prieto, Bernadette Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Hiedi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Jeff Scott, Michelle Scott (MS), Adam Searcy, Larry Selman, Shearwater Journeys, Dan Singer (DSg), Scott Smithson (SSm), David Styer (DSt), David Suddjian (DSu), Steve Summers, Barbara Taylor, Ryan Terrill, Paul Van Loan, Jeff Wall, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at [liturgist@stjoscap.org](mailto:liturgist@stjoscap.org) or (831) 479-9603

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## ***Outreach Field Notes: Birders and Birds***

*Nanci Adams, Outreach Officer*

### **Beginning birder classes**

"This shirt I'm wearing features *eastern* U.S. birds." With that enigmatic beginning, I went on to explain. This summer, as SCBC Outreach Officer, I introduced the joys of beginning birding to two classes of adult clients at the Cabrillo Stroke and Acquired Disability Center in DeLaveaga Park. The t-shirt proved to be the perfect hook (even though only two of the species were local). Class subjects included the basics of binoculars, field guides, habitats, and tricks

for attracting yard birds. Two especially helpful resources were the new birding kit from the Santa Cruz County Visitor Center and David Suddjian's season-by-season list of county birds. It was a very satisfying experience for teacher and students, and I will return this fall to introduce more classes to birding.

### **Mystery bird ID service**

Recently, I got a request from David Suddjian to identify "mystery birds" nesting in oak trees at a home on College Road in Watsonville. The owners had some empty blue-green eggs that had fallen from the nest. Based on conversation with the woman, David had tentatively narrowed identification down to two species. Armed with egg and nest books, I headed over and was delighted to find a mini Green Heron rookery. One of David's guesses was correct, and a bird showed up to clinch the identification. It appeared the owners were not quite so thrilled, as the birds were actively feeding at Kelly Lake and leaving extensive droppings on the woodpile below the nest. For encouragement, I gave them a birding kit with the most likely birding "customers" underlined. Let's hope I made two converts at that amazing locale.

### **Feeder tip**

I've had some success with the square wire hanging feeders in which one puts a suet block, but the longer rectangular 3x7inch cages attract far more individuals and species. Bigger birds, such as California Thrashers, can gain purchase and pound at peanuts and seeds in the feeding blocks. Chickadees assume, of course, that the feeders are exclusively for them, and they get more food than at the sunflower feeders because they'll hang on the cage for extended periods, seemingly without fear.

The biggest surprise after switching to the rectangular cages, however, came when a young male Wrentit zoomed in from the garden and proceeded to dominate the cage café, doing his very best chickadee imitation! The mix of seeds seemed to suit his tastes perfectly.

As I head to Arizona (in August?!) with Cathy Gamble and Sharon Hull to pursue unusual hummers and warblers, I just wish that, with our ideal climate, "they all could be California" birds.

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## Big Year 2008 Wings Into Summer

Progress report through July 31, 2008

The Bird Club's Big Year 2008 is flying strong into the summer season. With 235 species found half way through the year, we are approaching our official goal of 240 species! Through July we have fielded an amazing 72 trips, averaging 10 trips per month, with a high of 15 trips in April! Only a few have been cancelled due to weather, with most of those rescheduled soon after. The June trip, cancelled due to the Trabing Fire, was perhaps the first bird club trip ever cancelled due to fire. Our spring and early summer trips continued to visit the coast and Pajaro Valley, but with the arrival of breeding birds, we ranged up into the mountains, too. Some specialty trips included spring sea watches at El Jarro Point and trips that targeted Common Poorwill, Black Swift, and our returning territorial Dusky Flycatcher. Several trips went to new or seldom visited field trip destinations. Be sure and check out our Big Year page on the SCBC website for a full list of sightings, trip reports, and more. [http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/The\\_Big\\_Year.html](http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/The_Big_Year.html)

Inquiries in mid-July revealed that our champion participant so far has been Phil Brown, who has joined 35 of the 67 (52%) trips that had occurred as of July 11. Runners-up were Jeff Wall (26 trips), Rich Griffiths and Margaret Perham (22 trips) and Bonnie Bedzin (21 trips). As frequent trip leaders, Steve Gerow and I have participated on 18 and 19 trips, respectively. Trip attendance has varied widely, but all participants have enjoyed great opportunities to see and hear cool birds in many new places. As Rich Griffiths and Margaret Perham commented, "The big year trips have been great for building club participation, especially for some of the newer faces in the crowd."



*Phil Brown counting pelicans at Wilder SP. Photo by David Suddjian*

Table 1 lists the 35 new species we have found since April 11 (cutoff for the last progress report). We added a whopping 22 species in the remainder of April, then seven in May, and dropped as expected to four in June, and two in July. A slow spring for vagrants hindered the addition of rarities. Among the more difficult species, we added no new "code 6" species, but found three more "Code 5s": Solitary Sandpiper, Red Knot, and Northern Parula (see Table 1 for dates and locations). Six new "Code 4" species were all great field trip birds: Redhead (especially rare as a spring addition), Franklin's Gull, Black Swift, Dusky Flycatcher, Palm Warbler, and Red Crossbill (who would have predicted we'd add it in late June?). We finished off the easy "Code 1" species, adding Sooty Shearwater and Elegant Tern. Through July we have logged 103 Code 1 species (100%), 91 Code 2s (91%), 21 Code 3s (57%), 13 Code 4s (33%), five Code 5s (8%) and two Code 6s (2%). All the remaining Code 2s are pelagic species that we can expect on the fall pelagics. We have a good chance of reaching our goal of 240 species in August, finding uncommon to rare migrant shorebirds, and perhaps some rare landbirds. Looking at the list of remaining species, I think we have a good chance to exceed 270 species for the year, especially if we are blessed with a decent showing of fall rarities.

It has been impressive and gratifying to see some of the species fall into place. Phil Brown commented that he could not believe the Club's good luck. Luck had a hand, yes, but planning, too. Many spring additions were expected breeders that returned to expected spots, but other finds were chancy. I thought it rather bold for Steve Gerow to advertise a Solitary Sandpiper in the announcement of his May 2 trip to the San Lorenzo River. We didn't even find that species in the county in 2007! But there it was, one of the first birds seen that day, #223 for the year! Franklin's Gull obliged, passing by Rod Norden's group at El Jarro Point on the 2nd of our two spring sea watches! The Dusky Flycatcher kindly accommodated our Big Year by returning to Big Basin for his third season. Our two planned Black Swift trips in July (both successful, by the way) were scooped by a first-of-the-season sighting of migrants appearing out of the fog at Gray Whale Ranch on May 8. Common Poorwills were more than cooperative on both poorwill outings.

There have been some "misses," species we could have expected to find, both rarities we narrowly missed and regulars that did not appear. We will yet be redeemed on some of these. Among the staked out rarities or uncommon species that were seen before and after field trips and sought on one or more trips, were Wilson's Phalarope, Red-naped Sapsucker, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Rose-breasted Gros-

beak. Hope lives on for some of these, but the chat may remain a miss, especially so since we had a record showing this past spring. Lawrence's Goldfinch was not found, but none were seen at all in the county this past spring. Golden Eagle has surprisingly eluded detection, but reports have been very few this year, and I expect we'll tick it off this fall.

Check out our calendar to see the multitude of opportunities that the Bird Club offers this fall, then get out there and join the chase, see new birds and new places, and make new friends. It is a great time to find rare birds, and you still may have a chance to bump Phil from his top spot as Most Frequent Field Trip Participant!

**Table 1. New species found between April 11 and July 27.**

Species	Date added	Location
American Bittern	4/12/2008	Watsonville Sloughs
Ash-throated Flycatcher	4/12/2008	Watsonville Sloughs
Vaux's Swift	4/13/2008	Swanton Road and Big Creek
Olive-sided Flycatcher	4/18/2008	Moore Creek Preserve
Grasshopper Sparrow	4/18/2008	Moore Creek Preserve
Redhead	4/19/2008	West Struve Slough
Semipalmated Plover	4/19/2008	Pajaro Dunes
Red-necked Phalarope	4/19/2008	Pajaro Dunes
Common Tern	4/19/2008	Pajaro Dunes
Yellow Warbler	4/23/2008	Henry Cowell State Park
Hermit Warbler	4/23/2008	Henry Cowell State Park
Western Tanager	4/23/2008	Henry Cowell State Park
Cassin's Vireo	4/25/2008	Harvey West Park
Palm Warbler	4/25/2008	Antonelli Pond
Western Wood-Pewee	4/26/2008	Rancho del Oso
Swainson's Thrush	4/26/2008	Rancho del Oso
MacGillivray's Warbler	4/26/2008	Rancho del Oso
Red-breasted Nuthatch	4/27/2008	Bonny Doon Ecological Preserve
Sooty Shearwater	4/30/2008	El Jarro Point
Long-billed Curlew	4/30/2008	El Jarro Point
Dunlin	4/30/2008	El Jarro Point
Bullock's Oriole	4/30/2008	Struve Slough
Solitary Sandpiper	5/2/2008	San Lorenzo River
Western Kingbird	5/3/2008	Moore Creek Preserve
Black Swift	5/9/2008	Gray Whale Ranch
Lazuli Bunting	5/9/2008	Gray Whale Ranch
Chipping Sparrow	5/14/2008	Skyline Blvd
Red Phalarope	5/16/2008	Younger Lagoon
Franklin's Gull	5/17/2008	El Jarro Point
Dusky Flycatcher	6/4/2008	Ocean View Summit, Big Basin SP
Northern Parula	6/7/2008	Henry Cowell State Park
Common Poorwill	6/18/2008	Hwy 236, Big Basin State Park
Red Crossbill	6/29/2008	Last Chance Road
Elegant Tern	7/8/2008	Wilder Ranch State Park
Red Knot	7/27/2008	Pajaro Dunes



*Bonnie Bedzin (above) seeks a Wilson's Warbler. Earl Lebow (below) spots another bird. Photos by D. Suddjian & D. Sidle*



*Photo Album:*

*Intrepid birders and one brave bird...*



*Judy Belden and Alex Rinkert scan for Black Swifts at Wilder Ranch on July 8. Photo by David Suddjian.*



*Roger Wolfe with birders at the Pajaro River on May 25. Photo by David Sidle.*

*Fledgling birder*



*Scott Smithson and daughter Selva at Gray Whale Ranch, May 8. Photo by Lois Goldfrank.*



*Determined mom*



*This nesting House Wren refused to evacuate—and survived—when a wildfire burned through her neighborhood. Photo by Chris Hartzell.*

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# After a Wildfire— Birding Safely

*Birder Chris Hartzell, from Monterey County, works for CAL FIRE (formerly CDF), battling the wildfires that have been so much in the news lately. This article was assembled from his MBB postings regarding birding in burned areas.*

## Lingering hazards

After all of the fires this year, especially those affecting some of our favorite hiking and birding places, you may be interested in visiting those areas to see what has happened to the wildlife. However please be extremely cautious when visiting burned areas. Major hazards persist weeks after a fire—falling trees, unstable ground, falling rocks, rock slides, and more.

In the Basin Fire area of Los Padres National Forest, trees were still falling in areas that had burned three weeks earlier. A Northern California firefighter was recently killed by a falling tree. Oaks do not handle heat well and can dry out, crack, and break unexpectedly. It can take them many weeks to either stabilize or break, and they are surprisingly silent when they fall.

Hot stump holes are another source of firefighter injuries and a hazard to the unwary. They can retain dangerous heat levels for several months after a fire. Some have been found smoldering as late as five months after a fire. A burnt stump can also leave hollow ground extending as much as 20 feet from the original tree trunk, creating a booby-trap for unsuspecting walkers. Huge stumps that burn out during a fire can be many feet deep. (We found one on the Summit Fire in Santa Cruz that could have held the entire crew.)

When winter comes, flooding becomes a major hazard in the burned areas. Normally, dirt on a hillside absorbs water well, and it takes time for the ground to be saturated enough to cause surface runoff. However the carbon in ashes repels water, causing almost immediate runoff. A very small storm can produce dangerous slides and floods. This was spectacularly observed in the recent Kern County fires (which you may have seen on the news). One day firefighters were battling 100-foot flames. Hours later they were running for their lives from 20-foot walls of mud carrying car-sized boulders.

Burned areas can be great for birding because of the conditions and the extensive bird activity as they hunt for the exposed food. But again, be very careful when traveling through these areas. It is recommended that people stay out of burned areas altogether for at least two months after a fire. If you do travel through a burned area, avoid freshly burned steep terrain, and walk out of range of trees that could fall. Stay on proven paths and solid ground, and stay clear of stumps. Check weather forecasts and be aware that seemingly insignificant rain squalls could easily cause flooding.

## Birding the burn

While walking through a burned area should be held off until a safer time, birding by road can be done soon after the fire is out. When using dirt roads or parking areas, just remember to avoid burned trees for the previously stated reasons.

It may seem like you've lost some good spots, but burned areas can be good birding sites too. Hawks become very prevalent and very visible. They don't shy from people as the "good hunting" takes precedence. Flycatchers and sparrows are also very common in the open areas, feeding on the burned insects. They are often found near the edges of the burn. Owls can be seen hunting near the fireline edges as well. The fire burns reptiles and insects, leaving them visible in open areas and attracting all kinds of birds. Areas with partly burned brush are best for perching birds. Grassy areas that have been burned clean have no hiding places for rodents, making them easy prey for raptors. Raptors that would normally steer clear of each other can often be found in close proximity. One fire I was on had a Cooper's Hawk, a White-tailed Kite, 4 Red-tailed Hawks, 6 Turkey Vultures, 3 American Kestrels, and a Golden Eagle—all within 1 square mile. At one point they were competing with a coyote for prey.

When burned areas begin to recover, fresh sprouting greens offer a ready food source for birds and animals. Insects start to traverse the area and become easy prey for waiting birds. Look for burned areas over 5 acres in size, not steep, with mixed vegetation of completely burned grass and partially burned brush and perhaps some rock outcroppings or rock piles. Find safe walkable paths or open areas.

Walk to a location and stay for 10 minutes, then walk to a new location and wait again. If you don't noticed anything, try another area. If there is no activity within 20 minutes, it may be the area has been cleaned of food for the time being. Revisit at another time of the day or in a couple of weeks.

*Chris Hartzell*



Satin Bowerbird  
*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*

## Past-President Tonya Haff Travels Down Under for Post-doc Studies

Tonya Haff (SCBC president 2005-2007) has left us for a time to study in Australia! She writes, "I've just started a PhD program in the School of Botany and Zoology at the Australian National University working on acoustic communication in birds. I'm starting out working on parent-offspring communication about danger (with White-browed Scrubwrens, an Australian endemic that is a facultative cooperative breeder), looking at how parents warn their nestlings about danger, and how young independently assess their environment. I may also do some work on inter-species communication, but I'm not really quite sure yet—I'm only 3 weeks in to the program!"

When asked what drew her to the Land Down Under, she noted, "I liked the research of my adviser, Rob Magrath, and so I sent him an email, we wrote a proposal and got a full scholarship...so it was hard to turn down! Plus totally new natural history is always exciting...The parrots and cockatoos and other birds here are amazing. And we caught a Satin Bowerbird the other day—they have lilac eyes!"

Tonya we wish you the best, and hope you return here one day!

*David Suddjian*

### Western Field Ornithologists Meet in San Mateo in October

The Western Field Ornithologists will hold their annual meeting in San Mateo this year, on October 9-12, 2008. If you're a birder with an interest in ornithology or an ornithologist with an interest in birding, this is a meeting you won't want to miss. There will be field trips to many of the SF Bay Area's hotspots. Workshops will cover topics like sketching birds and using GPS in the field. Al Jaramillo will lead an ecological transect of the San Mateo Peninsula. Scientific sessions will give you a glimpse into the most current ornithological research and expert photo and birdsong ID panels will educate and amaze, and vendors will be showing the latest birding goodies.

For more details and to register, visit the WFO web site:

<http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/>

### Additional birding opportunities— some offering SCBC member discounts

#### SHEARWATER JOURNEYS Basement Bargain Sale

Can that be on the ocean?? Shearwater Journeys, Inc. offers the following trips, departing from Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey—"on sale".

Seabird trips, 7:00 am to 3:00 pm  
September 12, 14, 22, 25, 28; October 3, 4, 11, 18  
SCBC rate @\$75/person for new signups.

Albacore grounds trips, 5:30 am to 5:30 pm  
September 13 & October 5,  
SCBC rate @\$115/person, for new signups.  
Albacore trips may get into Santa Cruz County.  
Parking is only \$4 with Shearwater Journeys.

Advance reservations *required*. Send payment to Shearwater Journeys, Inc., PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024.

NOTES: Discounted spaces may be limited.  
Fees are non-refundable for any reason.  
A fuel surcharge may be requested if necessary.

Contact: (831) 637-8527 or  
<http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com>

#### MONTEREY SEABIRDS Fall Pelagic Birding

Special for SCBC members:  
September 28, 8-hr trip, \$85  
(\$95 for non-members).

Also, Monterey Seabirding offers a free seabirding trip for every three seabirding trips you take. (Not redeemable for the 12-hour offshore trips.) Trips depart from Monterey Bay Whale Watch Center, located on Monterey's Fisherman's Wharf (Wharf #1)

8-hour trips:  
7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., \$95  
Dates: September 6, 13, 27, 28, October 11, 26.

12-hour albacore grounds trips:  
5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., \$135  
September 14, October 12, 25

Contact: (831) 375-4658 or  
<http://www.montereyseabirds.com>

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## ***New SCBC Members***

Barbara Banfield	5/08
Tom & Joan Merigan	5/08
Dalas McCown	5/08
Andrew Malcovsky	6/08
Eleanor Carolan	6/08
Scott Smithson	7/08
Lina Neher	7/08
Wendy Naruo	8/08
Toni Wolfson	8/08
Jeff Davis	8/08
Kent Johnson	8/08
Virginia Howard	8/08
Kitty Hawker	8/08

***Welcome!***

Assembling



**Albatross**

### **Submission for *The Albatross*—Guidelines**

In addition to regular features—calendar, Santa Cruz Birds, trip reports—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 a large article, please contact me about it before the submission deadline.

I accept plain text, Word or PDF files. Send items by email to: [calqua@sbcglobal.net](mailto:calqua@sbcglobal.net)

—*Judy Donaldson, Editor*



**Input deadline for  
the Nov/Dec issue  
of *The Albatross*  
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## Monterey Bay Birding Festival

September 26, 27, 28

The greatly expanded Monterey Bay Birding Festival, now in its fourth year, will be located at the new Watsonville Civic Plaza. This year the festival is offering more trips and workshops and adding some special new features.

Some highlights:

- Keynote speaker, Jon Dunn, will lead shorebird workshops on Saturday afternoon and give the Saturday evening lecture.
- “Honing your Birding Skills” workshops over the three days will offer something for all levels of birders—optics, identifying shorebirds, seabirds, and raptors, and digiscoping for photographers.
- Field trips—mini, half-day, and full day—are scheduled continuously, covering all birding options in the area, from the Pinnacles to Rancho del Oso, from the Watsonville lakes to the ocean, for beginners to experts.
- Exhibitors are featured this year, including tour companies and optics manufacturers and dealers—Leica, Swarovski, Kowa, Zeiss, and Eagle Optics—featuring lots of birding equipment and a special prize drawing.
- A book-signing reception on Saturday features Jon Dunn, John Moir, Todd Newberry, and Burt Guttman.

See the website for much more detail and for registration information:

<http://www.montereybaybirding.org/index.html>

### The ALBATROSS

Published five times a year by the Santa Cruz Bird Club. To see the online version, click the Albatross logo on the SCBC website:



<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/>

### Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club

Enjoy walks in and around the County of Santa Cruz, discounted boat trips on Monterey Bay, summer picnics and annual dinners, meetings September through May featuring informative, illustrated talks on wild birds and related topics, and receive the bimonthly newsletter, The Albatross. Memberships run June-May. Dues are \$20 Individual, \$25 Family, \$5 Youth, \$400 Life. Make checks payable to Santa Cruz Bird Club and mail to Box 1304, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, Attention: Membership Chairman.