

# Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

*It's that time again...*

## 51st Annual Santa Cruz County CBC

**December 15, 2007**

**In this issue**

Christmas  
Bird Count



Calendar



Santa Cruz  
Birds



Announcement:  
Big Year!



Conservation  
& Outreach



Trip  
Reports



The Brown  
Bird



What better way to spend a winter day along the central California coast than counting birds?! The Santa Cruz County CBC is a highlight of our birding year and is always fun for experienced and new birders alike. Our 15-mile diameter count circle reaches from Davenport to New Brighton and from Boulder Creek to the ocean, encompassing a wide array of habitats. Each year 60 to 80 birders join together to search the woods, walk the fields and scan the seas. Rare birds may get the lime-light, but the best fun comes from counting the "regular" birds and tracking down the uncommon ones in each counting area. Our long-term tracking of numbers of individuals of each species is the real fruit of the CBC. The end-of-the-day potluck dinner and species countdown wraps it all up as we share the day's adventures and discoveries.

This year's Santa Cruz County CBC will be on December 15. Come join in the fun! Brave the elements, enjoy the birds and one of birding's best times. Potluck count-down dinner to follow at Messiah Lutheran Church, 801 High St., Santa Cruz.

To volunteer, contact compiler David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603.

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# Events Calendar

November - December



## Sunday, November 4 Beginning Birding Walk Quail Hollow Ranch County Park

The first half hour will be spent in the parking lot and around the pond within sight of the parking lot, such that those arriving by 8:30 a.m. can easily join the group. This area has plenty to see.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park. Heavy rain cancels.

**Leader:** James von Hendy, 335-1191



## Friday, November 9 Natural Bridges State Beach

Always reliable for a good variety of birds, and often with a surprise or two. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue gate.

**Directions:** The meeting place is at the service road gate on Delaware Avenue just across from the south end of Natural Bridges Drive. Heavy rain cancels.

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



## Sunday, November 11 Local Mid/North-County Birding

On this full day trip, we will visit variety of locations throughout Santa Cruz, Live Oak, Capitola, Soquel, and Aptos. The itinerary will be decided the day of trip, based on participant recommendations/desires, local reports (MBB), scouting, and weather. Possible locations include Aptos Creek mouth, Aptos Creek County Park, the Porter-Sesnon property, New Brighton State Beach, Capitola Beach, and O'Neill Ranch

Open Space, Moran and Corcorran Lagoons, Black Point, Twin Lakes SP natural area behind Simpkins Swim Center, Arana Gulch, Rodeo Gulch, Sycamore Grove, Westside Lake, etc. We'll see just how much variety we can find of wintering and resident landbirds and spend some time looking at gulls at the Aptos Creek mouth and Capitola Beach.

**Directions:** Meet 7:30 a.m. at the Aptos Wells Fargo Bank, intersection of State Park Drive and Soquel Drive.

**Leader:** Eric Feuss, 477-0280



## Wednesday, November 14 Rancho Del Oso

A half day plus trip to a favorite locale! Ranging from beach and ocean birds to scrub, pine forest, riparian and mixed evergreen, Rancho Del Oso always promises a nice variety of species. We'll seek out gulls, woodpeckers, mixed species flocks, thrushes, wrens, rails and sparrows, with the hope of something unexpected. Interesting possibilities include Northern Pygmy-Owl, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Warbler and Pileated Woodpecker. Plan for 3-4 miles of mostly easy hiking and bring water and a snack.

**Directions.** Meet at the Waddell Beach parking lot at 7:30 a.m. From Santa Cruz, take Highway 1 north for about 20 minutes, and watch for the parking area on the left after crossing Waddell Creek. Rain cancels.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, dsuddjian@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, November 17  
Rancho del Oso**

After scanning Waddell Beach for shore/surf species, we will bird the road in to the redwoods. A half-day trip with optional early PM follow-up as reports tempt; bring snack/drink.

**Directions:** Depart 7:00 a.m. from Beckmann's Bakery, west end of Mission St, SC, or meet before 8:00 a.m. in the Hwy 1 parking lot, just north of Waddell Creek. Rain or shine.

**Leader:** Todd Newberry, 426-8741



**Friday, November 23  
Lighthouse Field State Beach**

We can be a little lazy the day after Thanksgiving, so we'll meet for this one at 9:30 a.m. We'll explore the willows, cypresses, and brush patches in the field, watch for raptors, and probably check the coast at Lighthouse Point and nearby.

**Directions:** Meet at 9:30 a.m. along Pelton Avenue (the inland side of Lighthouse Field) across from the end of Laguna Street. Heavy rain cancels.

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



**Wednesday, November 28  
Sunset State Beach**

This half day trip will sample pine stands, coastal scrub, marsh, beach, and bay habitats. We'll search for sparrows, wrens, rails, scoters, gulls, loons, and Snowy Plover. Plan for a few miles of walking, including walking on the beach. Bring drink and a snack. If there is interest after Sunset, we will visit the Watsonville Sloughs.

**Directions.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the entrance to Sunset State Beach. \$6 day use fee. From Highway 1 take San Andreas Road through La Selva, and turn right on Sunset Beach Drive. Rain cancels.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com.



**Thursday, November 29,  
SCBC Meeting @ 7:30 pm  
Speaker: Sayre Flanagan—**

**Big Sur Condor Recovery Program Update**

Sayre Flanagan is a Wildlife Biologist with the Ventana Wildlife Society (VWS) and coordinates all field activities for the condor recovery program out of the VWS Field Headquarters at Andrew Molera State Park in Big Sur. She will give us an informative talk about the progress of the program.



**Saturday, December 1  
South County Birding**

This is a full day trip in which we will visit a variety of possible locations through out the Pajaro Valley. The exact itinerary will be decided the day of the trip, based on participant location recommendations/ desires, local reports (MBB), my scouting, and weather. Possible locations include Pinto Lake, Merk Lake (pond), areas along Corralitos Creek, the slough trail system, Harkin Slough (Buena Vista Road), Watonsville Slough on out to Pajaro River mouth, etc. We'll see just how much variety we can find of wintering and resident landbirds and spend some time looking at Gulls at the Pajaro River mouth.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Aptos Wells Fargo Bank at the intersection of State Park Drive and Soquel Drive.

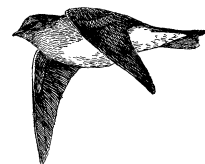
**Leader:** Eric Feuss, 477-0280.



**Sunday, December 2,  
Natural Bridges State Park  
Beginning Birding Walk**

A 2-hr morning walk to learn/share some I.D. and observational skills. Meet 8:00 a.m. at the Delaware Ave ("back") entrance to Natural Bridges State Park. Rain or shine.

**Leader:** Todd Newberry, 426-8741





**Tuesday, December 4**  
**Seacliff State Beach and vicinity**

A half day trip to search for birds of the sea and shore, as well as forest and scrub. We will begin at the mouth of Aptos Creek to study gulls and other birds near the beach. Afterwards we will visit either New Brighton, Porter-Sesnon, or Aptos Creek County Park to search for upland birds. We hope for a wide variety of species, including 7-8 species of gulls, scoters and loons, mixed species landbird flocks, sparrows, and more. Possible \$6 day use fee if we go to New Brighton State Beach.

**Directions.** Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Rio Del Mar flats, at the south end of Seacliff State Beach. From Highway 1 take Rio Del Mar Blvd coastward to its end at the parking area at the beach. Rain cancels.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



**Friday, December 7**  
**Wilder Ranch State Park**

We may walk the coastline or we may go inland here, depending on weather conditions and other factors. Meet at the main parking lot at 8:00 a.m..

**Directions:** Park entrance is on Highway 1, just over a mile west of Western Drive. Entrance fee is \$6, or park on Hwy 1 and walk in. Heavy rain cancels.

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



**Saturday, December 8**  
**San Lorenzo River and Henry Cowell Campground**

This half-day trip will begin near Roaring Camp, wend its way through the sycamores and box elders of the San Lorenzo River and Zayante Creek, and end in the chaparral and Ponderosa pines of the Henry Cowell campground. This is a stronghold of wrens, kinglets, woodpeckers, and in good years, Varied Thrush.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 a.m in the church parking lot at the intersection of Graham Hill Road and Zayante Road. Heavy rain cancels.

**Leader:** Bonnie Bedzin phone 831 425 1335 email: bonnie@cruzio.com



**Saturday, December 15,**  
**SCBC Christmas Bird Count**



Join our 51st annual Christmas Bird Count and count-down dinner. The CBC helps us track the ups and downs of our local bird populations and is considered by many club members to be a highlight of the birding year! All birders are welcome to join this all day event!

Please email or call count compiler David Suddjian (dsuddjian@aol.com, 83- 479-9603) to let him know you want to count. There is a \$5.00 fee for each participant. Potluck count-down dinner to follow at Messiah Lutheran Church, 801 High St., Santa Cruz.



**Friday, December 21**  
**Lower UCSC Campus**

We'll start at the Arboretum and check some of the adjacent grasslands, the riparian along upper Moore Creek, and possibly the area around the Farm. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the lower parking lot at the Arboretum.

**Directions:** The Arboretum entrance is along High Street (becomes Empire Grade) about a half mile northwest of the UCSC main entrance. Parking is rather limited, so it is worth considering alternative means of transportation or car-pooling.

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



**Hear Ye...!**  
**2008 is coming**  
**and SCBC wants to**  
**make it a BIG YEAR!**  
**See the initial**  
**announcement**  
**on page 9**

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## Start the New Year right with...



**MOSS LANDING CBC**  
**Tuesday January 1, 2008**



The Moss Landing CBC will be held on Tuesday, January 1, 2008. This count circle covers some amazing birding areas—large portions of Santa Cruz county not covered by the Santa Cruz count and also the Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough area. We are always in need of birders on this count, so please join us on this special New Year's Day outing. As with other counts, the day ends with a countdown dinner.

If you are interested in participating in the count, please contact Bob and Bernadette Ramer at 831-426-7342 or email: [baramer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:baramer@sbcglobal.net).



**Sunday, January 6, 2008**  
**Beginning Birding Walk**  
**Natural Bridges State Park**

Directions: Meet at 8:30 AM at the Delaware Avenue entrance (back entrance) to Natural Bridges State Park. Heavy rain cancels.

**Leader:** Forthcoming



**January 2008 - TBD**  
**San Mateo Bayfront and Coast**

We'll visit Coyote Point, Foster City, and Radio Road in the morning and Half Moon Bay / Princeton Harbor in the afternoon (high tide is usually near Noon, +/- one hour). Itinerary may vary as we'll attempt for any recent sightings provided on the peninsula birding list server (pen-bird) appropriate to these locations. Bring lunch for a full day's birding.

**Directions:** Meet at the County Government Center on Ocean Street, in parking lot near main sign (first Ocean Street entrance closest to Water Street) at 7:00 a.m.. Plan to carpool, if possible. Heavy rain cancels.

**Leader:** Eric Feuss 831-477-0280

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*NOTE: Please see the back page for a special report from Eric Feuss, our Fieldtrip Coordinator.*

Assembling

The



Albatross

### Notes about the newsletter...

For budgetary reasons, the SCBC officers voted to print Alby on a less expensive paper. It is still a good quality recycled product.

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 (jpeg, tif)

To submit a large article, please contact me about it before the submission deadline.

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

~Judy Donaldson, Editor

**Saturday, December 1**  
**is the input deadline for the**  
**Jan/Feb 2008 issue.**

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## Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from June 1 to July 31, 2007

*After a few Alby issues when I was unable to complete this column due to work conflicts, I have decided to skip over the now old winter and spring season to be sure to get something in for this issue. I hope to write up summaries for the missing months and post them on the Bird Club's web site later this fall. But for now let's skip to this past summer. I am indebted to Steve Gerow for collating most of the records for this season.*

*Records here consider June and July, but in the interest of completing the picture for a few species I've reached back a bit into May. Most notable in this regard was the astounding invasion of Horned Puffins that began in late May and continued into July. Ours were part of a large scale event, with many records in Monterey and San Mateo counties and farther "afield." Mixed in were a few noteworthy Tufted Puffins and Ancient Murrelets, both unseasonable and unusual near the shore. Quite underwhelming was the poorest late spring showing by vagrant land birds in recent times.*



A highlight from March was this **Brown Booby**, photographed at the Santa Cruz wharf by Jeff Poklen.


A pair of **Canada Geese** with one gosling at Quail Hollow Ranch on June 26 provided the first breeding record for the county's mountain region (PB et al.). A Canada family at Corcoran Lagoon in early June added to the few coastal breeding records away from the Pajaro Valley (MC). Numbers of Canadas in the Pajaro Valley increased by late July, with 250+ at Watsonville Slough on July 28 (EL). Five **Brant** flying up the coast at Santa Cruz on July 2 were notable after the more frequent stragglers of early June (SG). Twenty-four **Wood Ducks** at Neary Lagoon on July 1 were mostly eclipse-plumaged males (SG), with the high count suggesting Neary is a post-breeding gathering spot for this species. **Gadwall** nested again at Younger Lagoon, with four young seen on June 22 (SG); the species is a rare breeder away from the Pajaro Valley. A hybrid male **Mallard x Cinnamon Teal** summered at Natural Bridges State Beach (SG).

Rare summer **Bufflehead** included two females at Watsonville Slough on June 8-23 (RW), and a male and female at the San Lorenzo River mouth on June 21 (AG). A female **Wild Turkey** with 7 small young was a surprise along the Pajaro River at Watsonville, in an area bounded entirely by agricultural fields (DS). More **Sooty Shearwaters** were seen from shore this summer than in the last few years, but numbers still much reduced from those we formerly enjoyed. The highest number reported was 100,000 off Pajaro Dunes on July 29 (PM).

**American White Pelicans** disappeared for the nesting season, returning by July 28, with eight at Watsonville Slough (EL). **Brandt's Cormorant** nested at three spots: Davenport (34 nests), Natural Bridges (23 nests), and Seacliff State Beach (~120 nests) (DS, SG). **Double-crested Cormorants** continued nesting at Pinto Lake (16 nests, BR) and Schwan Lake (195 nests, BM). The colony at the latter site has grown steadily since it was founded five years ago.

An **American Bittern** at Struve Slough on June 5 was the only report all season (RW). **Great Egrets** nested only at Pinto Lake, with five nests noted on May 26 (BR). **Great Blue Heron** seems to have dipped significantly as a breeder in the county. Please

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report all observations of nesting. Three **Green Heron** nests in pines in Felton parking lot in June added to scant breeding evidence from the county's mountain region, but followed the urban preference of recent times (BE, m.ob.). Two **White-faced Ibis** returned to Watsonville Slough by July 8 (RW). **Osprey** nested (or tried to) at two new spots, in addition to continued nesting near Davenport and at Loch Lomond. On May 31 and June 14 begging calls of nestlings were heard from the tree tops in dense forest at Fall Creek (SG, AD). Calling adults had been heard in the same area for the last few springs, so nesting had likely been going on there before this year. A pair built a nest on a power pole at Harkins Slough (!) in late May, but on June 27 the sticks of the ill-placed nested started an electrical fire (RW, GK). There was never any evidence that eggs were ever laid in the nest.

**Red-shouldered Hawk** has enjoyed a rapid population increase in forested regions of the county over the last decade. Field work at Big Basin Redwoods State Park found at least nine pairs in the watershed of the East Fork of Waddell Creek, where none were present at all prior to 1995 (DS). On the other side of the raptor coin, **American Kestrel** seems to be experiencing a marked decrease as a breeder in the county, but this change is perhaps "under the radar" of most observers. If you observed nesting evidence or territorial pairs of kestrels this past season, please pass word along. Two **Red Knots** flying past West Cliff Drive on July 6 provided the earliest "fall" record for the county by seven days (SG). A **Least Tern** was foraging off Natural Bridges on June 11 (CL, LL).

This spring and early summer **Marbled Murrelets** were distributed along our coast in a pattern that recalled ENSO conditions, with many birds along the mid-county coast, and some far into the Bay, but water temperatures were below average. For example, on June 9, 22 were counted from Sunset State Beach to Seacliff (DS), and 16 were off Western Santa Cruz (SG). The pattern at sea suggested foraging conditions were "off," as in ENSO years. Of special interest was a grounded juvenile found near Chalk Mountain in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on July 17 (fide SS). The bird was eventually taken for rehabilitation but it died soon after. This was the first

grounded juvenile murrelet found in Big Basin Redwoods State Park in several years, but the location of the nest is unknown, and it may have been outside the park. Most unusual at this season were three reports of **Ancient Murrelets** in June: one at Davenport Landing on June 1 (DS), two at Laguna Creek Beach on June 3 (CE), and two at West Cliff Drive on June 9 (CK).

Following reports from Monterey County in mid-May, a veritable parade of **Horned Puffins** appeared along our coast (v.ob.). After the first reports of four on May 21, they were nearly continuously present through June and then dwindled, with the last report on July 14. In total there were over 55 reports received, involving some 60-100 individuals spotted in our county alone! Some birds clearly stayed for two or more days, but there was much movement of new individuals into and out of the area (including many swimming down the coast), and undoubtedly many went undiscovered. Most reports were of 1-3 birds, but high single site counts were of eight at the Waddell Beach area on May 29 (GS) and seven at Panther Beach on June 2 (DS). The high single day total was 24 on May 30 (KA, DS, CE), and 11 were tallied on an aerial survey along the coast on June 28 (JD). Nearly all reports were of birds within a quarter mile of shore—some just outside the waves—and one at Waddell Creek on July 6 was even seen flying over the beach in heavy fog (DS)! Most were found from Santa Cruz north to the San Mateo county line, but some were in the inner Bay, too. Surprisingly few were found washed up dead on the shore.

Three reports of single **Tufted Puffins** seen from shore no doubt resulted from the same event or condition that brought us so many Horned Puffins. An adult flew in close to the bluffs at Terrace Point on June 8 (SG). An immature was there on June 9 (AV, CT). One snazzy adult was at Waddell Bluffs on July 1 (DS). This species has been extremely rare from shore in our county. The continued advance of **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was marked by the first north county nesting record (one carrying nesting material near Majors Creek on June 14; JL) and the first specific nest found in the county (at Watsonville on June 15 (DS)). Also stretching the limits were two at Rancho

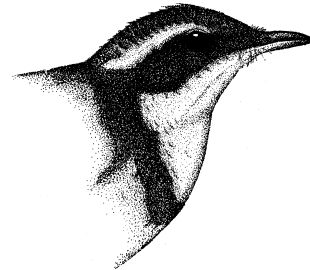
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Del Oso on June 21, the first for Big Basin Redwoods State Park (DS). A total of 68 were found during six hours of traveling in Watsonville and the town of Pajaro on July 5, illustrating the species' new found status as fairly common in those areas (DS). Despite these gains, the species is yet missing or of erratic occurrence in many areas of suitable habitat.

Two **Long-eared Owls** calling near Quail Hollow Ranch ca. June 4 provided the first modern breeding season occurrence from the San Lorenzo River watershed (DG). One continued at Soquel on July 26 (RW). A migrant **Common Nighthawk** visited Rancho Del Oso on June 10 (DS). **Black Swift** went missing as a breeder at known historic sites in the county, and although some were present at Año Nuevo this year they reportedly did not nest there either (fide PM, GS). The very few sightings in our county this period included one over Natural Bridges on June 9 (SG), one over Baldwin Creek near the Santa Cruz landfill on June 24 and July 6 (DS), and three over West Cliff Drive on July 26 (SG). This leaves 2006 and 2007 with the poorest showings in our history, and no confirmed nesting for the county since 1994. A pair of **Vaux's Swifts** nested in the same chimney at West Cliff Drive as in 2006, and fledged young by July 30 (SG).

A pair of White-throated Swifts nesting in the Main St / Porter St bridge over the Pajaro River in June provided the first breeding evidence from the Watsonville area (SG, BM); the nest itself was on the Monterey Co. side of the river. Breeding season sightings of **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** continued at Waddell, Scott and Liddell creeks (DS). A summering **Dusky Flycatcher** at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin was remarkable. First noted on May 31 (KA), it remained on a song territory through at least August 14 (DS, v.ob.). It was in characteristic nesting habitat, but at that altitude (1,685 ft.) was notably lower than other breeding occurrences in California and far removed from the nearest breeding station. **Purple Martins** remain missing from all modern nesting haunts, and sadly (from the martin's perspective) the only report this period was of a female at Younger Lagoon that was caught and eaten by a Great Egret (SG)! A **Bank Swallow** off Waddell Bluffs on June 11

was presumably ranging south from the small nesting colony at Año Nuevo State Reserve (DS). Breeding **Varied Thrushes** were mostly noted in the Big Basin region (DS), but one singing at Fall Creek State Park on June 2 was noteworthy away from that area (MST)



**Yellow Warbler** has declined dramatically as a breeding species in the county since the late 1980s, so it was a surprise this year that surveys along the Pajaro River found them to be common in areas that were cut-over by the extensive habitat removal that occurred in 1995. For example, surveys along 12 kilometers of river upstream of Highway One on May 25-28 found 108 Yellows, including 94 territorial singers (SG, BM, DS)! These were, as a rule, occupying the maturing band of dense willows that currently line the river channel. In contrast, they were only one-third as numerous in "intact" riparian forest downstream of the Highway on May 25 (MST), and they were completely missing along seven kilometers of nearby Sal-sipuedes and Corralitos creeks, even though large areas of that area had suitable habitat which was occupied at least into the 1990s (SG, BM, DS). The numbers of Yellows along the Pajaro upstream of Highway One—far exceeding those elsewhere in the county—are cause for hope, but Brown-headed Cowbirds were also abundant in that area, and evidence of parasitism on Yellow was observed.

**Chipping Sparrow**—another declining SCZ breeder—was represented by just a single report this season (Wilder Ranch on July 8; SG), and there were no reports of **Lark Sparrow**. Seven **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found from June 2-17 (DS, L&RS, fide GK, fide BB). Some 75 **Tricolored Blackbirds** were near Last Chance Lagoon on June 6, there was no evidence of nesting there for the third year running (DS). Six at Lighthouse Field State Beach on June 3



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were out of place for summer (SG). An impressive 24 **Great-tailed Grackles** flew over Salsipuedes Creek at the northeast side of Watsonville on June 20 (SG). These were likely coming from a roost in the Interlaken area, suggesting possible breeding at Kelly Lake or Lake Tynan.

Single **Red Crossbills** at Big Basin on June 18 and July 4 were the only ones reported (DS). **Pine Siskin** has gone missing in the Pajaro Valley region in recent years, so several at Corralitos on July 11 and July 29 were noteworthy (SG, MG, DS). A few **Lawrence's Goldfinches** turned up in the Pajaro Valley area, where they are around some years, but one juvenile at Terrace Point in Santa Cruz on July 23 was unexpected (SG).

**Cited Observers:** Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Bonnie Bedzin, Phil Brown, Mary Crouser, Jeff Davis, Adam Dobkin, Betsy Eakman, Chris Emmons, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Marcia Gregg, Diane Goodboe, Lois Goldfrank, Gary Kittleson, Earl Lebow, Cindy Lieurance, Les Lieurance, Janet Linthicum, Peter Metropulos, Bryan Mori, Bob Ramer, Michelle Scott, Les and Rene Seltzer, Steve Singer, Gary Strachan, David Suddjian, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, Charles Tralka, Andrea Vedanayagan, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

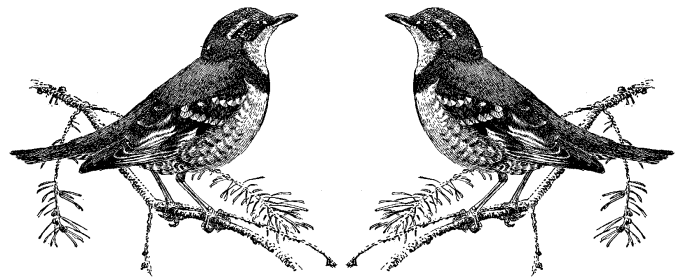
**Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at [dsuddjian@aol.com](mailto:dsuddjian@aol.com) or 831 479-9603**

### Longtime Members Celebrate 60th Wedding Anniversary

On Sunday afternoon, September 9th, former club officers Bambi and Bill Hopkins celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary, with family and friends at the clubhouse at Antonelli's Mobile Home Park. Among those attending were their daughter and son-in-law, Linda and Tony, son and daughter-in-law, Dana and Susan, and two granddaughters. The festivities included the renewing of their vows and the exchanging of rings. The couple then danced to the delight of all and cut the beautiful wedding cake. Several bird club members attended.

The Hopkins joined SCBC in 1981. Bambi served as secretary from 1982-1986 and as Jr. Activities director (with Barbara) from 1985-2000. She was given an honorary life membership in 1994. Bill served as editor in 1985.

~Barbara Scharfenstein



## 2008 – A Bird Club County Big Year!

How many species can we find in Santa Cruz County (SCZ) just on Bird Club field trips in 2008? Is it 250, 275, 300? We have decided to take up the challenge and have a SCZ Big Year as a theme for our club's field trips next year. We'll strategically plan our calendar of trips to provide an opportunity to find as many species of birds in SCZ as we can. Maybe 225 species are "sure things" (famous last words?), but finding many others will take specific planning (and luck), and connecting with the wide array of possible rarities will take persistence and still more luck. It should be great fun!

We hope the 2008 Big Year challenge will spice up our Bird Club trips, take us to new places, encourage new leaders, and help those who wish to work on their county list. Watch for details of our strategic plan and initial field trips in the next issue of the Albatross!

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## Pending Legislation to Protect the California Condor: AB 821

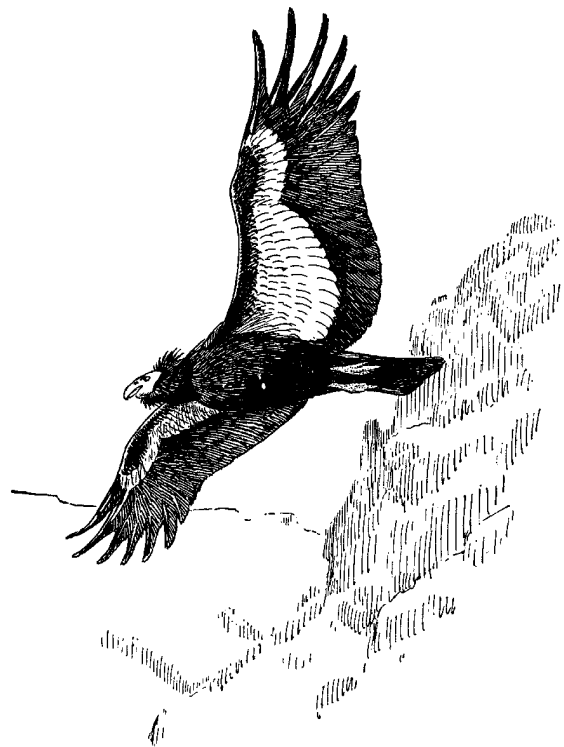
by Matthew Strusis-Timmer, Conservation

You are probably well aware that a population of one of the most endangered bird species in the world, the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), lives just South of us along the Big Sur coast. The Big Sur population gained notoriety this spring by hatching two chicks in the wild (first for the central coast since reintroduction efforts began in 1992!). You may also know that these New World Vultures are the largest flying birds in North America with a wingspan of up to 9.5 feet, can cruise 150 miles in one day, live up to 60 years, and are strictly scavengers that feed on carrion (dead animals). Unfortunately, their appetite for dead stuff has complicated recovery efforts. Opportunistic condors are poisoned after eating the leftover gut piles of deer and other game animals shot with bullets containing lead. Autopsies have revealed lead poisoning to be the cause of death in at least 10 condors since 1992, and 30 birds have required expensive medical treatment to remove lead from their blood since 1997. While in most species the death of a handful of individuals is rather insignificant, to a worldwide population of only 279 condors a premature death is catastrophic. (Think in terms of genetics.) The Ventana Wildlife Society, a non-profit group working on condor reintroduction, claims that lead ammunition is the single largest preventable threat to the recovery of the species.

Perhaps you are less aware of political legislation that would continue the success of condor reintroduction and recovery. Assemblyman Pedro Nava (D-Santa Barbara) introduced Assembly Bill (AB) 821 that would require the use of non-lead centerfire ammunition (copper works just as well) within the Department of Fish and Game's deer hunting zones that overlap current and potential condor range in California. To the extent funding is available, as determined by California Department of Finance, the bill would also establish a process that would provide hunters in these zones with non-lead ammunition coupons at no or reduced charge. It should be noted that AB 821 is not an anti-hunting bill. In fact, gut piles and discarded remains of game animals can be a valu-

able resource for condors as long as they don't contain harmful lead fragments. AB 821 was approved by the state Senate on September 5 and now resides with Governor Schwarzenegger, who has until October 14 to sign or veto the bill. Unfortunately, by the time this article is in your hands, the Governor will have made his decision. Consequently, it is too late to mobilize you to take action (if you haven't already done so). So, for what it's worth, I called the Governor—well, sort of. I spoke with one of his staff—on behalf of the SCBC to voice our support for AB 821. Keep your eyes peeled for the results of this pending legislation.

Recently, on a foggy September day along the Big Sur coast, I caught a quick glimpse of one of North America's largest birds flying silently 20 feet above my head before disappearing again into the fog. I hope that this is not a metaphor for the recovery of a species teetering on the edge of extinction. (In 1982, only 22 condors existed in the wild.) Ideally, our Governor will take this important step and sign AB 821 into law to protect the birds that grace both open country thermals and the California quarter.



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## SCBC Continues Monterey Bay Birding Festival Support

by Nanci Adams, Outreach officer

The third annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival, centered in Watsonville, was held September 21-23, 2007, and the active participation and support from Santa Cruz Bird Club members were major reasons for the festival's success. The club provided \$150 in seed money to help the festival committee begin this year's activities. In addition, the following SCBC members served as trip leaders or as volunteers in other capacities and should be commended for their involvement.

**Trip/workshop leaders:** David Ekdahl, Eric Feuss, Rick Fournier, Steve Gerow, Tonya Haff, Clay Kempf, Norm Kikuchi, Earl Lebow, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan, Todd Newberry, Bernadette Ramer, Bob Ramer, Michelle Scott, Pete Sole, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian, Connie Vigno, Roger Wolfe.

**Shearwater Journeys leaders:** Jennifer Green, Debi Shearwater

**Other member contributors:** Nanci Adams, Nancy Collins, Cathy Gamble, Sheri Howe (Bird Feeder ad), Ann Jenkins, Dobie Jenkins, Patricia McQuade, Jeff Poklen, Larry Selman, Tami Stolzenthaler

Larry Selman generously provided his American Avocet photo for extensive use by the festival committee. Both Larry and Jeff Poklen donated photos to Michelle Templeton and Nanci Adams for the flyer which announced the children's bird art contest at the Ramsay Park Nature Center. Larry's avocet photo was used by Patricia McQuade on her very professionally designed festival Web site ([www.montereybaybirding.org](http://www.montereybaybirding.org)) and in birding magazine and newspaper ads. Additionally, Larry allowed use of the image for festival t-shirts and pins. This unified theme greatly enhanced the festival's visibility and appeal.

Family Days, a bilingual event at the Ramsay Park Nature Center, featured the winning children's art entries and a variety of family-oriented activities, such as craft projects and walks, designed to increase local residents' appreciation and knowledge of birds and wetlands. Art contest winners received member Patricia McQuade's Earth-cards, among other rewards, to help youngsters with their own birding adventures.

In addition to the field trips and workshops, the festival featured a Friday night reception at Pajaro Dunes, where Steve Howell signed his new gull ID book, and a Saturday night talk on shorebirds by famed birder Ron LeValley. (Ron's main claim to fame, however, has to be that he got David Ekdahl started in birding in college!) The cycling trio, Malkolm Boothroyd and his parents Ken and Wendy, also were available after their workshop to recount their adventures thus far on a 10,000-mile fossil-fuel-reduced birding excursion. Their trip progress and bird reports can be viewed at [www.birdyear.com](http://www.birdyear.com).

Members Cathy Gamble, Rick Fournier, Ann and Dobie Jenkins, and Clay Kempf were major contributors to the very successful evening silent auction. Cathy, a talented artist, donated her Great Blue Heron stained glass piece, actively solicited other artists' donations, and contributed countless hours preparing items for display and being on hand during the action. Rick Fournier donated a birding field trip, and Clay Kempf, Ann Jenkins, and Dobie Jenkins made significant purchases of auction items. Members Ann Jenkins, Cathy Gamble, Nancy Collins, and Pete Sole all assisted Nanci Adams in setting up and conducting the auction. Pete, Nancy, and the Jenkins also worked very hard in the registration tent.

Next year's festival dates are September 26-28, 2008. The festival bird will be the California Condor. At least one condor was seen on this year's BSOL trips, contributing to the 211 species seen over the three-day festival period. Please consider joining in the festival fun next year, when condors are celebrated, and participants try for 212 species and beyond.

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## OUTREACH PROGRAM PROVIDES NEW OPPORTUNITIES

by Nanci Adams, Outreach officer

The 2007-2008 outreach program is off to a good start, first with events at the Monterey Bay Birding Festival, and next with a field trip to Natural Bridges on October 20. I'll be leading a trip for Shared Adventures participants who want to start birding. Shared Adventures, whose event director is Katrina Makuch, provides outdoors adventures for physically challenged individuals. We have registered several very eager novices, and I look forward to this experience. If you would like more information on Shared Adventures' program, please contact Katrina at 831-459-7210 or [Katrina@sharedadventures.org](mailto:Katrina@sharedadventures.org).

Work continues on emulating the Rio Grande Valley birding by ear program for the blind. I'll be utilizing member Stephanie Singer's suggestion to use skins for a tactile experience. This, coupled with tapes of local birds, should soon enable us to open up a new, rewarding world to blind potential birders.

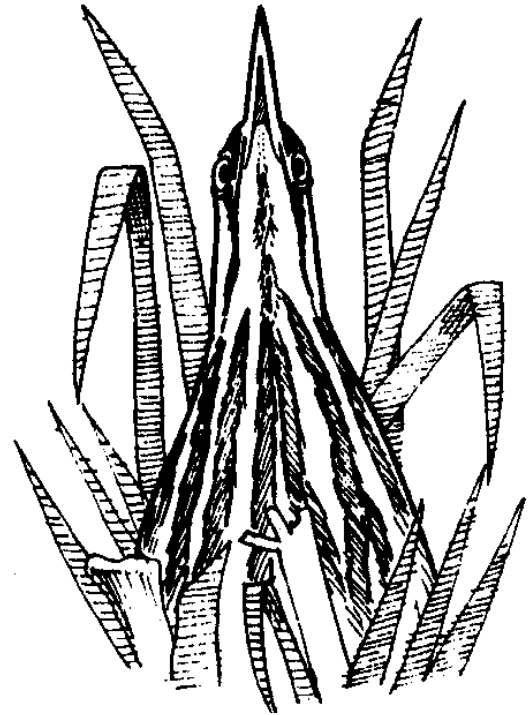
Finally, as a result of the recent MBB request by birder Sharon Hull for female birding buddies, I'll be developing a contact information bank for women who would like the companionship and safety of birding with at least one other female. Several women have contacted both Sharon and me about this, including those women who'd like to attend festivals or other out-of-area birding events and don't want to pay for a single supplement. Sharon even heard from a New Jersey woman who'd like a comparable program in her area and has requested an update. I hope to have this program in place within a month. My contact information is listed in the officers' sidebar on the last page of this newsletter, in case you'd like to be included.

Birding is a wonderful pastime, and, through outreach, we hope to bring the joy of that experience to others who may not have that opportunity otherwise. It should be very rewarding to all involved.

### New SCBC members

Steve Mandel	8/07
Harold Fukuma	9/07
Kae Peet	9/07
Pilcher/Gansauer Family	9/07
Sriya Cummins	9/07
Mary Doherty	9/07
Liza Lee Miller	9/07
Kathy Kuyper	10/07
Joanne Yablonsky & Ken Davis	10/07
Heidi Perlmutter	10/07
Lee Morrow	10/07

***Welcome!***



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## Trip Reports



**Friday, August 31**

### **Antonelli Pond**

Seventeen of us gathered for a walk around this well known west Santa Cruz birding spot. An auspicious beginning was provided by three Vaux's Swifts circling the group as we gathered in the morning. The pond provided good looks at a Green Heron, a juvenile Cooper's Hawk, and other expected species. A House Wren gave us ample opportunities to compare its calls with nearby Bewick's Wrens, although the bird itself never came out in the open. Barn and Cliff Swallows showed off their slightly different styles of catching insects on the wing.

After checking the pond, part of our group continued on to the Homeless Garden Project, where we compared American and Lesser Goldfinches, and studied Savannah Sparrows. A Peregrine Falcon flew over as we walked back toward Antonelli.

A few of us continued the walk into Natural Bridges, where a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher called and provided a brief glimpse, and a lingering family of Hooded Orioles provided a nice end to the morning. Steve Gerow

**Sunday, September 2**

### **Elkhorn Slough**

To start this day, sunrise flooded Jetty Road's flats and the thousands of shorebirds, ducks, and waders there with extraordinary light, as if the curtain had lifted on a grand opera. A dozen SCBC'ers stared amazed at the scene, struck dumb. Nature's beauty is one of moments, this one sublime. Then the sun rose farther, the light of a warm day settled in, and the day's action got underway. We scoped from the jetty: a steady line of Sooty Shearwaters passed not far offshore, their silvery underwings flashing in the superb light; murrelets glistened in rafts beyond the gentle surf; a Bonaparte's Gull strolled nearby on the beach and Clark's Grebes swam in the lagoon....

From the bluff at Moon Glow Dairy we reckoned thousands of Red-necked Phalaropes but saw few peeps. The bedraggled Brant was still near Pond 3, shifting about just enough to persuade us that it is not a decoy. As we were leaving, we noticed that the flocks of phalaropes on Pond 1 had assumed a striking

pattern. The midday breeze had blown the hordes of flies on the water's surface there into windrows; in turn, the formerly crazy-quilt flocks of phalaropes feeding on them had become a dozen linear crowds stretching here and there across the pond. We were there for another of Nature's special moments.

After a picnic, we chased rare shorebirds at East Struve Slough. A few days before, Roger Wolfe had hit a trifecta there: Baird's, Stilt, and Buff-breasted sandpipers. We missed the Stilt Sandpiper (probably by not trying hard enough to pick it out among the dowitchers there). But we were after the bigger prize, the Buff-breasted. And there it was, skulking on the mud among grasses—and two Baird's, too—but rather distantly across the pond: convincing enough views but BVD (Better View Desired). As the group dispersed, a few of us decided to try for a closer encounter from the opposite shore, if we could thread the labyrinthine development over there to reach an overlook. We were rewarded with a spectacular RIE (Radi-cally Improved Encounter) as we looked down from there on the birds virtually at our feet. A splendid way to ring the day's curtain down.

Todd Newberry

**Saturday, September 8,**

### **Año Nuevo State Park**

At the County Government center, the day appeared to be one of overcast, excellent for birding during migration. However, these determinations are always location specific. Año Nuevo, upon arrival, had clear skies. The parking lot, as I usually find, was full of bird calls, coming from both close and far. Naming the associated species (for reference) is always a good beginning. Seeking the originators of these calls is always challenging and part of the thrill of birding. To name a few, we had Common Bushtit, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, Pygmy Nuthatch, Bewick's Wren, a Wilson's Warbler, Brewer's and Red-winged Blackbirds, and Black Phoebe. The group did not get too far along the trail leaving the parking lot before we stopped for raptors: Red-tailed Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Cooper's Hawks, and Osprey were all seen. The pond yielded Red-necked Phalarope, Brown Pelican, Western Gull, California Gull, Heermann's Gull, Common Yel-

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lowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, House Finch, and others. Walking out to the point, we stopped at the tour group staging area. This area yielded Barn and Violet-green Swallows, Townsend's Warbler, California Thrasher, House Wren, and owl pellets but no owls. It also yielded more and better (for some) looks at Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Bewick's Wren, and White-crowned/Golden-crowned

Sparrows. Continuing our walk out to the point, we found Northern Harriers (male and female, juvenile and adult), Wandering Tattler, and Spotted Sandpiper. The point and the walk back yielded few new species, but a young male Elephant Seal was heard (and seen through a scope). The group had lunch at the picnic tables near the parking lot, during which we were all treated to incredible new bird photography by Norm Kikuchi. (Thank you Norm! "Amazing" is an understatement.) After lunch, a much smaller group birded the mouth of Gazos Creek, Cascade Creek, and the watershed/small reservoir inland from Cascade Creek. Thank you all for the great birding, Eric Feuss

#### **Friday, September 14, Pogonip**

Some unexpected Double-crested Cormorants treated the earliest arriving of our group to an interesting start. When we had all gathered, our group of eighteen or so birders proceeded through the grasslands, enjoying good looks at White-tailed Kites and a flock of eleven Vaux's Swifts. A different set of birds took over after the trail entered the forest. Chestnut-backed Chickadee flocks accompanied us through much of the walk, along with regular associates like Hutton's Vireos and Brown Creepers. Recently arrived Townsend's Warblers were quite widespread, and we had several good views of these colorful little birds. Several encounters with Winter Wrens at appropriately dark spots in thicker parts of the forest provided interesting punctuation. Some birds were a little more difficult—migrant Western Tanagers were around, but it was hard to get clear views of them; Golden-crowned Kinglets were making high-pitched sounds in the treetops, but never came down to where we were.

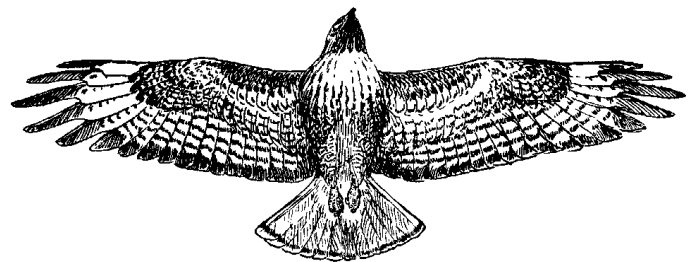
One never knows what to expect in Pogonip. The goldfish in the forest spring pool have been there for years, so they were no surprise despite the odd context. The statue of Buddha near the spring was new, but somehow seemed appropriate. On the other hand we weren't sure what to make of the headless wooden giraffe someone had left in the middle of the trail, but we continued on, enjoying the birds as we passed the "Haunted Meadow" and walked on back to our starting point.

Steve Gerow

#### **Friday, September 28, Meder Canyon**

An oddly cloudy day dampened bird activity a bit, but did not deter our group of nineteen as we explored this west Santa Cruz greenbelt area. Our persistence was rewarded with some good views of interesting birds—a young Cooper's Hawk up the lower side canyon, some Townsend's and Yellow Warblers, a Hutton's Vireo here, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet there. The upper side road gave us some very good views of a Black-headed Grosbeak, and a whole flock of Purple Finches. A Western Wood-Pewee and a Pacific-slope Flycatcher were other birds we managed to study in detail. Fox Sparrows, a Warbling Vireo, a Western Tanager or two, and a couple of Downy Woodpeckers allowed quick looks. A couple of Northern Flickers perched on a power line, as Northern Mockingbirds and California Thrashers "chacked" and "chucked" in the bushes. The canyon's Steller's Jays gave us ample examples of their excellent ability to imitate hawks, though a Red-shouldered Hawk later proved the real thing is much louder. Altogether, we ended up with a list of 45 species, not too bad for landbirds-only in just a couple of hours of birding.

Steve Gerow





# The Brown Bird

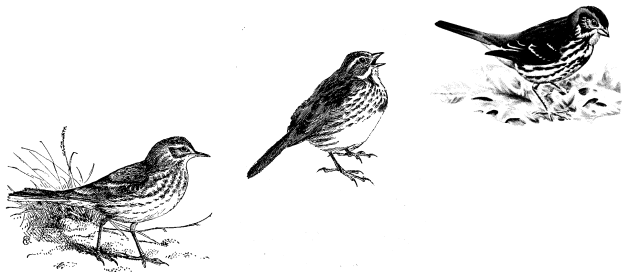
*Editor's note: I found the following while searching the internet for ID information (on a little brown bird), and it struck me that beginning birders often have the same feelings as the writer relates—until they are hopelessly and entirely hooked on birding. Non-birding Bill, married to hard-core birder, Sharon, presents his perspective on a topic near to our hearts.*

You'll note that my nickname is *non-birding* Bill, and not *bird-hating* Bill. I rather enjoy our fine feathered friends, especially from the comfort of an air-conditioned room with a high-speed wireless internet connection and cable TV, so I can, you know, have something to do after I see the birds.

Shazz [Sharon] on the other hand, loves nothing more than getting up at 4 a.m. to drive 2 hours on dirt roads and stand in the freezing cold, scanning the horizon for a bird that might be there. I keep pointing out to her (as she wakes me up) that she has books with pictures of these birds in them, but she just sighs and puts on another layer of clothing.

Of course, it's not just what birders consider ideal conditions for birding (cold, damp, desolate, locust plague, raining blood). It's also the fact that they love, love, love The Brown Bird.

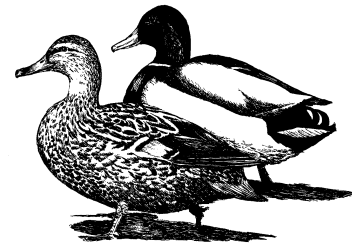
The Brown Bird (*sepia dullus*) is a creature that has evolved a remarkable form of camouflage: no other bird will eat it because it looks so uninteresting. Birders, however, possess a genetic flaw that not only allows them to see The Brown Bird, but causes them to hallucinate, causing them to think that it's actually several different birds.



However, it's not enough to see The Brown Bird sitting at your feeder, where you can, you know, find them

all the time. No, birders judge status amongst their kind by the conditions under which they were seen, and will often hire a skilled professional, called a "guide," to take them to the most out of the way place, show them a brown tree in a brown copse where The Brown Bird might be seen, and then strike them repeatedly about the head with a baseball bat. Kenn Kaufman, of course, rose to fame after detailing the 1% difference in brown shading found on the wingtips of The Brown Bird while being struck by lightning! David Allen Sibley countered by drawing every bird in North America while having his blood replaced with hydrochloric acid. Then the government stepped in.

Meanwhile I go off to feed the ducks, who make a pleasant quacking noise and seem to genuinely appreciate whatever bits of food (corn, salami) I toss them.



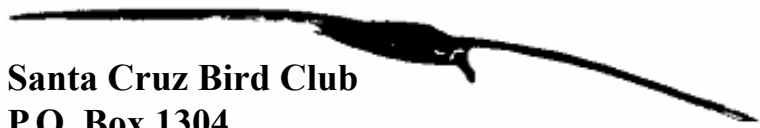
But I kid the birdwatchers. I kid, because I love. As a recovering hardcore geek m'self (comics, etc.), I see birders as, well, collectors. And like any other kind of collector, the more detail they notice about their subject, the more joy they get out of it. Sharon is, in my not-unbiased opinion, such a great ambassador for birding because she not only has a great deal of knowledge about the subject, but is genuinely excited about birds and most importantly, gets others excited about it, too. Even, alas, me.

I was walking to work one morning and saw something bebopping around in a hedge. "Oh," says I, "that's a yellow-rumped warbler."

And then I stopped. And then I wanted to punch myself.

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*Bill Stiteler (aka Non-birding Bill) wrote this as a guest writer on Sharon Stiteler's birding blog. They live in Minneapolis, MN. See <http://www.birdchick.com>*



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## **A BIG *THANK YOU!***

**and a continued request...**

Thanks to everyone who responded to my request for fieldtrip leaders in the Sept/Oct issue of the Albatross. I received a great response, resulting in new leaders and potential trips. The announcement also yielded a number of people willing to co-lead trips and to help foster and support new leaders. Thank you to those members as well. Now we can all look forward to some great new field trips and local walks.

But the request is still open! The need for new trip ideas—big or small—and trip leaders continues. My quest for people who are willing to share their favorite haunt(s) remains open, too. Visiting a new or familiar place through another birder's eyes is always rewarding and enlightening.

Appreciatively,

**Eric Feuss, Fieldtrip Coordinator**

### **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 Student \$400 Life. Make checks payable to Santa Cruz Bird Club and mail to Box 1304, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, Attention: Membership Chairman.