

Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

OUR GARDENS' FEATHERED STRANGERS

by Todd Newberry

In a book about crows, Mark Cocker wrote recently, "A really significant element in ascribing beauty to a thing lies not within [the thing] itself but in the quality of our attention to it." While bird walks offer the fun of the chase, I think our yards and gardens often let us watch birds with a better quality of attention. Yards and gardens are where we can sit still and really watch birds get on with their lives. Then I think we see birds with new eyes and hear them with new ears. We notice them. Proust reminds us that noticing is the subtlest of crafts, as when we notice the music inside the notes. But noticing doesn't come easily, and so I will risk your impatience by dwelling on some basics about birds. I have found that returning to basics helps me whenever I confront perplexing music or perplexing birds.

One basic is that all places, our yards among them, are habitats. When it comes to providing life's sustenance, habitats are restaurants. Their creatures are their customers. By dividing up the garden's resources, animals reduce their competition for any one item, which would otherwise soon run out. In their dietary diversity, a garden's customers, birds among them, eat virtually everything on the menu. Some customers even eat the other customers.

"...habitats are restaurants...some customers even eat the other customers."



By their structural and behavioral variety, birds reveal to us how they sort out a habitat's menu. A close look can surprise, as when we first notice the raptorial hook on the tip of a phoebe's bill. We look and look again and soon enough we find we can distinguish insect-gleaners and grain-browsers, nectar-sippers, lumber-probers and egg-robbers, scavengers and fly-catchers, and many other ecological kinds of birds, even if we don't yet know their names. Eventually we do learn their names, but by then they label creatures we not only recognize by the book but also have come to feel acquainted with on our own.

(continued on page 7)

In this issue:

Feathered Strangers



Calendar & Announcements

New BB Atlas

Special Thanks: Bill & Eric

Santa Cruz Birds

Burrowing Owl Update



CBC Report & Tables

Big Year takes Wing



Sea Trips

Photos!



Events Calendar

March - April 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



Big Year Sunday, March 2
Beginning Bird Walk
Quail Hollow County Park

Directions: Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Quail Hollow parking lot. Heavy rain cancels.

Leader: Eric Feuss, (831) 477-0280



Big Year Wednesday, March 5
North County Coast

Ocean, beaches, ponds, coastal scrub, fields, and riparian will provide a nice assemblage of birds. Itinerary will be decided the day of the trip, but might include Wilder Ranch, Baldwin Creek, and the Davenport area. Half day. Possible \$6 State Parks day use fee. Plan for a few miles of mostly easy walking. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Beckmann's Bakery at 2341 Mission Street in Santa Cruz.

Leader: David Suddjian, liturgist@stjoscap.org



Saturday March 8
Hummingbird Day
at the Arboretum at UC Santa Cruz

There will be a general bird walk at 8:00 a.m. led by Todd Newberry. Tonya Haff will give a slide lecture on hummingbird ecology and natural history at 2:30 p.m. To learn about other activities and for more info visit <http://arboretum.ucsc.edu> or (831) 427-2998.

If you want to bring a spotting scope and stay with it while visitors look at perching hummingbirds, please contact Stephen McCabe, smccabe@ucsc.edu or (831) 427-2998.



Big Year Friday, March 14
Pogonip

Pogonip is an extensive open space area with varied forest and field habitats and numerous bird species.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the entrance at the end of Golf Club Drive, off Highway 9, about a third of a mile north of the intersection of Highway 1 and Highway 9.

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

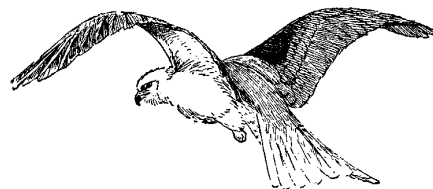


Big Year Saturday, March 15
Open Itinerary

Full day trip. Since we are between the Winter and Spring migrations at this time of year, this trip will have an open itinerary, going to in-county locations where we can expect the best birding for the weather. We might stop at both coastal and mountain locations to see who is migrating early this year.

Directions: Meet in County Government Center parking lot near main sign (Ocean Street entrance near Water Street) at 7:00 a.m. Participants are welcome to join later; please call leader to make arrangements and obtain his mobile number.

Leader: Eric Feuss, (831) 477-0280.



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, March 22
Santa Cruz Wharf and vicinity

Last year at this time, this area had a Brown Booby, Puffins, and Black-Legged Kittiwakes. Let's see what's around this year!

Directions: Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the Wharf.

Leader: Phil Brown, pdpbrown@gmail.com



Sunday, March 23
UCSC Arboretum

The Grevillea bushes at the Arboretum attract large numbers of Hummingbirds at this time of year, and spring Hummingbird migration should be in full flow. We will look for Allen's and Rufous Hummers and other spring migrants.

Directions: Meet in the lower parking lot for the UCSC Arboretum at 8:00 a.m.

Leader: Todd Newbury, taxa@biology.ucsc.edu



Wednesday, March 26
Corralitos Area

Several choices for destinations offer a variety of birds of the forest, stream and fields. Possibilities: Western Bluebird, American Dipper, Nor. Pygmy-Owl, and returning migrants. Half day into early afternoon, pending weather and interest. A pre-dawn start to try for forest owls is possible, but contact leader to make arrangements if you are interested. Plan for a few miles of walking. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the intersection of Corralitos Road and Browns Valley Road (near the Corralitos Market).

Leader: David Suddjian, liturgist@stjoscap.org



Thursday, March 27
SCBC Meeting @7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Jessica Griffiths

**Topic: "Bird Banding in Hungary:
A Monterey Ornithologist Travels Abroad"**

Ventana Wildlife Society biologist Jessica Griffiths will talk about her September 2006 trip to a banding station at Osca, in central Hungary. During her 8-day stay the banding station processed almost 2,000 birds (over 30 species). Her presentation will feature photos

of the species she handled and a discussion of the differences between European and American banding techniques.

Originally from Chicago, Jessica has ten years of experience as a field ornithologist. She has a degree in biology from Wellesley College and has worked for both government and private organizations, studying birds in seven states, including New Hampshire, North Dakota, and Mississippi.



Friday, March 28
Lighthouse Field & West Cliff Drive

We will look for spring migrant land, shore, and sea birds. There also still may be a chance for the Rock Sandpiper, and in bright breeding plumage.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the inland side of Lighthouse Field, at Pelton and Laguna Streets.

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



Saturday, March 29
Pajaro Valley

Seeking migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, we will explore the Sloughs and perhaps take in College Lake. We will also swing by Pajaro Dunes, to check the beach and the creeks.

Directions: Meet behind the West Marine building at the end of Westridge Road in Watsonville at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Scott Smithson, scottndawn@sbcglobal.net



Sunday, March 30
Seawatch

Are you looking to see some of the thousands of birds that live on the water like shearwaters, alcids, and even albatrosses but don't want to get on a boat? We'll share the thrills, challenges, and tricks-of-the-trade in identifying birds over the ocean from shore. This is a great time of year to see migrating Brant, scoters, and even Northern Fulmars and Black-legged Kittiwakes.

Directions: Meet in front of Seymour Marine Discovery Center (at Terrace Point) on the westside of Santa Cruz at 8:00 a.m. Spotting scopes are highly recommended, but all are welcome regardless.

Leader: Kumaran Arul, kumaranarul@earthlink.net



Big Year Saturday, April 5
Pinto Lake

After spending most of the morning at Pinto Lake County park, we'll head to Corralitos Creek in Eureka Canyon to look for American Dipper.

Directions: For those carpooling from Santa Cruz, meet at Aptos Wells Fargo Bank at 7:00 a.m. We'll reassemble at the Pinto Lake City Park at 7:30, then go to Pinto Lake County Park at 8:00 a.m. (meet in first parking lot).

Leaders: Bernadette and Bob Ramer (831) 426-7342



Big Year Sunday, April 6
Beginning Bird Walk
Natural Bridges

Directions: Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Delaware Avenue entrance (back entrance) to Natural Bridges State Park. Heavy rain cancels.

Leader: David Sidle, dsidle@hotmail.com



Big Year Sunday, April 6
Summit Road Regions

This trip is an afternoon trip, continuing until dusk in the hope of seeing or hearing a Common Poorwill. We will try for a county sighting (Big Year) but may have to go "out-of-county". Sunset will be ~7:30 p.m. Let's see what other migrants can be found.

Directions: Meet at Anna Jean Cummings Park at 1:00 p.m. in the lower parking lot. Participants are welcome to join later; please call leader to make arrangements and obtain his mobile number.

Leader: Eric Feuss, (831) 477-0280.



Big Year Friday, April 11
Antonelli Pond and Terrace Point

A search for spring migrants, and anything else that may be around.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 a.m. on Delaware Avenue on the west side of Antonelli Pond (close to the west end of Delaware Avenue, just before Shaffer Road.)

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

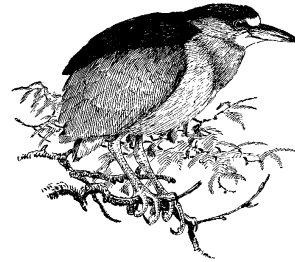


Big Year Saturday, April 12
Watsonville Sloughs

We will explore Harkins, East & West Struve, and Watsonville Sloughs for waders, raptors, early nesters, and migrants. Lingering waterfowl are a possibility and there is an outside chance for shorebirds if water levels are sufficiently low. This is a half day trip. Bring sunscreen, water, and snacks.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the rear of the parking lot behind West Marine off Harkins Slough Road in Watsonville.

Leader: Earl Lebow, hawkowl@sbcglobal.net



Big Year Sunday, April 13
Swanton Road and Big Creek

We will visit Swanton Road and Big Creek. Target species include American Dipper, Western Bluebird, Pileated Woodpecker, and Red-breasted Sapsucker. The trip can be extended beyond noon at birders' request.

Directions: Meet 7:30 a.m. at Beckmann's Bakery, 2341 Mission, Santa Cruz.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741.



Big Year Friday, April 18
Moore Creek Preserve

An area of extensive grasslands, plus some coastal scrub, live oaks, and douglas-fir forest. We can expect Grasshopper, Savannah, and maybe Chipping Sparrows, likely Western Kingbirds, swallows, and maybe swifts, plus other wildlife and interesting native plants.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 a.m. on Shaffer Road across from the intersection with Mission Street. Going west on Highway 1, Shaffer Road is a left (south) turn just over a quarter mile west of Western Drive. (The entrance to the preserve is on the north side of the highway, but there is no parking available on that side).

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



Saturday, April 19
Sunset State Beach and
Pajaro Dunes

Visit Sunset State Beach and Pajaro Dunes for migrants and shorebirds.

Directions: Meet at the Sunset State beach parking lot, 7:30 a.m. Day use fee of \$6 per car.

Leader Scott Smithson, scottndawn@sbcglobal.net.



Wednesday, April 23
Upper Henry Cowell State Park

A spring trek through the forests of the upper portion of Henry Cowell should be great for returning migrants and bird song identification. Possibilities: Hermit and Black-thr. Gray warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Pileated Woodpecker, Nor. Pygmy-Owl. Half day into early afternoon, pending weather and interest. Plan for a few miles of walking. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 6:30 a.m. at Graham Hill Plaza (mini shopping center) along Graham Hill Road at Nepenthe Road (about two miles up from Ocean Street, just north of Sims Road).

Leader: David Suddjian liturgist@stjoscap.org



Thursday, April 24
SCBC Meeting @7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Bill Bousman

Topic: Santa Clara County Breeding Bird Atlas
(See a review of the Atlas on page 8.)

Bill Bousman started birding in his teens, growing up in New York and Pennsylvania in the 1950s. He studied engineering at Cornell but still had time for the Monday night seminars at Sapsucker Woods. He came to California in 1970 and has been keeping the Santa Clara County records since 1980.

Bill says, "We started the Atlas in 1987 (one of the founders was David Suddjian, no surprise). We took 7 years for the field work. That was fun; the rest not so much. We have species accounts for 177 species, but I will not manage to cover every one in an hour's talk (big sigh of relief...)"



Friday, April 25
Harvey West Park

We'll explore some seldom-birded forest habitat at the edge of this city park. We are likely to find Olive-sided Flycatchers, Western Wood-Pewees, Pine Siskins, possibly nesting Cooper's Hawks, and other forest species.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the parking area by the Wagner Cottage, at the end of Evergreen Street. To get there, take Highway 9 one block north of the intersection with Hwy 1, turn left on Coral Street, follow Coral to the end and turn right onto Evergreen.

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



Saturday, April 26
Rancho Del Oso and
Berry Creek Falls

Put on your boots for one of the best low-elevation gradient hikes in the Santa Cruz Mountains. From the pines and riparian of Rancho Del Oso, we will trek up the Waddell Canyon all the way to spectacular 66-foot-high Berry Creek Falls, lovely with springtime flow! We will enjoy a fine, songful diversity of birds. Highlights may include nesting American Dipper, Common Merganser, MacGillivray's Warbler, Wood Duck, Marbled Murrelet, Pileated Woodpecker, and many other migratory song birds. A special early start option will seek to find the pair of Northern Pygmy-Owls that resides near the Nature Center. Plan for about 9 miles of mostly easy walking. Bring lunch and drink. Rain cancels.

Directions: Early meeting for Nor. Pygmy Owl at 5:50 a.m., with a "late" meeting at 6:45 a.m. Meet at the Rancho Del Oso Nature-History Center. Take Hwy 1 north from Santa Cruz, past the Big Creek Lumber Co. Turn right into Rancho Del Oso just before crossing Waddell Creek, and drive in to the Nature Center.

Leader: David Suddjian, liturgist@stjoscap.org





Big Year

Sunday, April 27
Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve

We will be exploring the chaparral and conifers of this ecological reserve. Target species are Black-throated Gray Warbler, Hutton's Vireo, California Thrasher, and Pileated Woodpecker. Rarities to look for include Nashville Warbler, Cassin's Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Western Tanager.

Directions: Meet at the Bonny Doon Volunteer Firehouse on Martin Rd at 7:30 a.m. Bring water & snacks.

Leader: Bonnie Bedzin, (831) 425 1335, bonnie@baymoon.com



Big Year

Wednesday, April 30
Spring Sea-watching and chance for Franklin's Gull

Seabird migration should be at its peak, with possibly large numbers of migrant loons in breeding plumage (Pacific will predominate), Brant, scoters, phalaropes, Bonaparte's Gull, and chances for Pomarine Jaeger, Marbled Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Sooty Shearwater, and maybe even an albatross! You never can tell what will appear at the height of spring seabird migration! We'll also check plowed agricultural fields for Franklin's Gull. Plan to view from a coastal bluff for at least a couple of hours, with a spotting scope highly recommended. And we may walk a bit to try for the Franklin's. Bring a warm jacket and a folding chair, if you like. Half day or less. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at Whale City Bakery in Davenport along Highway 1 at 6:30 a.m.

Leader: David Suddjian liturgist@stjoscap.org



Coming up—an overnight trip!
Wednesday-Thursday,
MAY 28-29

Mark your calendars for a May 28-29 trip to Long Ridge Open Space, with overnight camping at Portola Redwoods State Park. This is a special opportunity to experience the dawn flight of Marbled Murrelets at one of their last strongholds, plus forest owling, American Dipper, Pileated Woodpecker, 5 species of nesting warblers (incl. Hermit Warbler), Lazuli Bunting, and more.

Details in the next issue of *The Albatross*.

Some other Birding Events—

Ventana Wildlife Society 15th Annual Big Sur Ornithology Lab Birdathon Fundraiser

April 26 to June 15 and July 12, 2008

This year our Birdathon will open with a Birdathon Big Day on Saturday, April 26, 2008. Full- and half-day eco-experiences will be offered by VWS and other expert biologists. Simultaneously, our Big Day birder team will comb Monterey County in an effort to top our one-day best of 252 species.

Between April 26 and June 15, pick any 24-hour period and bird on your own or as part of a team, then collect your pledges to raise funds for Ventana Wildlife Society's Big Sur Ornithology Lab!

On Saturday, July 12, join us for the Birdathon Awards Dinner, where we will give prizes to groups and individuals who raise the most in pledge donations. We will also report our best counter totals, Birdathon Big Day totals, and the total number of species seen by all participants.

Bird, pledge, or do both, and raise funding and awareness for the important conservation efforts of the Ventana Wildlife Society's Big Sur Ornithology Lab!

For more details, see www.ventanaws.org

MSOE Bird-a-thon
Saturday, May 10, 2008

Mission Springs Outdoor Education is holding its 5th annual Bird-a-thon on Saturday, May 10. The purpose of this event is to raise scholarship money to help underprivileged students attend science camp. The term "bird-a-thon" is used loosely here to mean that donors pledge money for each bird species seen by community volunteers and Mission Springs Naturalists between 5 a.m. and 5 p.m. within Santa Cruz County on the day of the event. Last year the MSOE Bird-a-thon, held on May 12, tallied 175 species resulting in over \$5,300 for scholarships. This scholarship money allowed 53 students (many from inner-city Oakland who would not have otherwise had the opportunity) to experience hands-on science and environmental education.

If you would like to contribute your birding skills to this cause, please join one of our groups (we will divide up for better coverage of the county) or contribute your list independently. Contact Cassie by email: cassie@missionsprings.com or phone: (831) 335-3205 All skill levels welcome!

Matthew and Cassie Strusis-Timmer

Our Garden's Feathered Strangers (*continued*)

Birds in our gardens delight us, but let's acknowledge that far and away most birds are carnivorous predators—killing machines, really. Their toll is appalling. What they usually kill may seem distantly related to us—hordes of spiders and insects, especially—and so the fact that they are killing doesn't hit home to us. But they are, and sometimes we do notice. When we watch the phoebe catch the fly it is charming; but when the falcon catches the phoebe, we witness a more disconcerting death. But make no mistake about it: that fly has met its end as individually as that phoebe has. So much baggage to put on our garden's birds! Still, it seems to me to add substance to our encounters with birds when we see them as they are, not as we might wish they were.

A second basic point I would like to make is that most songbirds are very small compared to us. Of course! But prepare to be startled. Let's compare robins or wrens with us by weight. I weigh (or want to) about 150 pounds, or 2400 ounces. A hefty robin weighs less than 3 ounces. A sparrow weighs less than an ounce, a small wren about half an ounce, a hummingbird about a tenth of an ounce. It takes 800 robins to equal my weight—3,000 sparrows or 5,000 wrens—24,000 hummingbirds—even 120 crows. Weight is one measure of size; so is height. Standing, we are about twenty-five times as tall as a standing sparrow. That sparrow looks up at us the way we look up at a twelve-story building. Imagine such a tower advancing on you. No wonder birds scatter when we arrive!

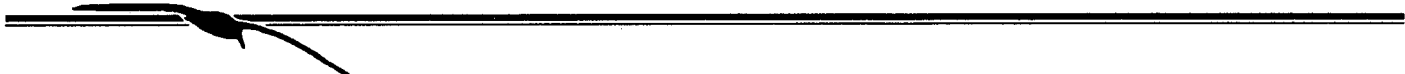
While robins and Rotarians share many traits, from legs to livers, their thousand-fold difference in size by itself confronts them with very different needs, problems, and outcomes. The way a bird's body works, tiny is of necessity intense, lest it lose the heat it needs to run its vital chemistry. For an extreme example, let's compare ourselves to hummingbirds. An active hummingbird breathes 250 times a minute; its heart beats 1,000 times a minute. To fuel its machinery it must consume twice or three times its weight daily in nectar and insects. If I lived at a hummingbird's pace I would burn up some ten thousand calories every hour. To hold my own, as Calvin Simonds has calculated, I would have to down more than a hundred double hot fudge sundaes during every day of frantic bar-hopping—especially frantic because each bar, were it like a blossom, would serve only one such treat before it closed for the day.

Still, at a tenth of an ounce a hummingbird weighs so little that its huge diet amounts daily to only a dozen calories. But wait: the average little flower's nectar provides only about a thousandth of a calorie, enough to sustain a flying hummingbird for only 11 seconds. So big, nectar-rich blossoms are a lot more than just attractive to people; to hummers they are vital. At night or during cold storms, hummingbirds must let their metabolic rate plummet; they go torpid to survive. At night you can pluck a hummer off a twig like a soft acorn.

Extreme though they are, hummingbirds are at one end of a size scale that includes us among its larger animals. And at its small end songbirds (and even hummingbirds) come in surprisingly many sizes. That robin weighs three times as much as a sparrow, five or six times as much as a wren. Among our fellow mammals, what weighs six times as much as we do? Your average moose does; and so do elk, many cows and camels, even grizzly bears. Imagine yourself having a picnic amidst a crowding herd of animals, some our size, like coyotes and deer, but also those moose and bears. Now imagine yourself as a sparrow; suddenly those other sparrows in the flock are not small at all. And all the while, interlopers and even flock-mates want your meal and don't want you near theirs. Disputes ensue.

In a flock of birds, size asserts itself; big tends to beat small. Watch for tiny songbird fights. They are over in a human instant, but the birds involved in them must remember them and behave accordingly in the face of subsequent body-language threats. And so flocks come to have social structures, including hierarchies among species of different sizes. We feel size-hierarchies ourselves when, for example, we consider that 1500-pound bull, six feet tall at its withers, glaring at us from not so far away across the pasture we both are in. There is an ecology of size itself. Size matters.

My third basic point is that small birds, as I have said, live at a much faster, more intense pace than we do. We feel it in their flittings about. But it is more than metabolic and mechanical, it is perceptual; tiny birds take in their world much faster than we do ours. To make my point, I will turn to birdsong, because music organizes time and expresses it in tempo, pitch, and timbre. Because they hear so quickly and we hear so slowly, little birds detect intricacies that we cannot discern in their songs. Slow-motion audio playback of birds' songs lets us hear these intricacies, as we adjust those songs to our human ability to take them in. And lowering the pitch of that playback lets us hear expressive qualities in the tim-



bre of birds' voices, not just the opaquely high whistles we are used to. If slow-low playbacks do reveal what small birds hear, then they hear the high, quick voices of each other the way we, much bigger, hear the lower, slower voices of other big mammals: dogs barking, sheep bleating, coyotes howling.

Those vocal intricacies let birds tell each other apart, just as we recognize people—even their moods—by their voices. By listening to their songs, many birds choose one potential mate over another and can tell one neighbor from another and any neighbor from a stranger. With our technical tricks we can hear how they do it, because now we can hear those intricacies and nuances of voice for ourselves. We have revealed inside a bird's song what Paul Valery once called "the anatomy inside the naked truth."

By the same token, we can listen this way to recordings of the chips and peeps of sparrows or warblers or other little songbirds calling together in a flock. Birds' calls are not complex, learned songs, but simpler, genetically fixed sounds like our own laughter and crying. Slowed and lowered recordings of birds' calls come across again, sure enough, as barks and howls. To sparrows, I think, a flock of sparrows must sound pretty much the way a pack of dogs does to dogs, or sea lions to each other, or even, to us, the roar of the crowd.

When surprises like these about their food, size, and voice combine, familiar birds may well seem less familiar the more we watch them, until our garden restaurant's tiny customers become not so much feathered friends as feathered strangers. So, too, must their world be unfamiliar to us. Sixty years ago the naturalist writer Edwin Way Teale called his garden a grassroot jungle—maybe not a wilderness, but for its insects and birds plenty wild. And our gardens are wild to us, too, when we see their creatures with new eyes and hear them with new ears.

Over the years, I have spent days afield with remarkable naturalists: in tide pools with Don Abbott and John Pearse, birding with Jon Dunn and Michael O'Brien and Floyd Wolfarth, hiking with Ken Norris...magical hours. Such keen observers have an uncanny way of making a habitat and its creatures seem to come alive. How do they do it? For one thing, of course, they ask good questions, ones whose answers do not all start with "maybe." And for another, they stay still and watch or listen until they notice the plants' and animals' own answers to their questions. I recommend it to you: asking good questions and noticing.

Book Review

Breeding Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County, California

***A Great New Resource
to Learn About Our Birds!***

Last November the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society published a book with the results of the Santa Clara County Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA), based on field work conducted in 1987-1993 and augmented with information from subsequent years. Written by county bird expert Bill Bousman (with contributions by many other writers), this book is a fantastic resource for birders in our region and for conservation. One of the best ways to grow in knowledge and appreciation of birds is to learn more about the local natural history, habitat requirements, population trends, and conservation concerns of our region's avifauna. The Breeding Bird Atlas of Santa Clara County, California gives us all that for 177 breeding species and much more. The book goes beyond the specific BBA results to share information on natural history and population trends that has been extensively researched and is presented with great insight on the regional perspective. And there is much that is directly related to birds in neighboring Santa Cruz County, too, as indeed the BBA field work extended into Santa Cruz for its coverage of the areas along the county line. There are also fascinating chapters that present the natural history of change in Santa Clara County, a summary of avifaunal changes, and a look at the county's ornithological history. I've read many BBA publications, and I think this is one of the very best. And being from our own area, it is a resource that all local birders with inquiring minds should read.

Author Bill Bousman will be the featured speaker at our April 24 meeting. He will have copies of the atlas for sale at 10% off the regular \$40 price (plus tax). Or it can be ordered by mail with the order form here:

<http://www.scvas.org/pdf/BBAOnlineOrderForm.pdf>

—David Suddjian

Special Thanks to Departing Club Officers

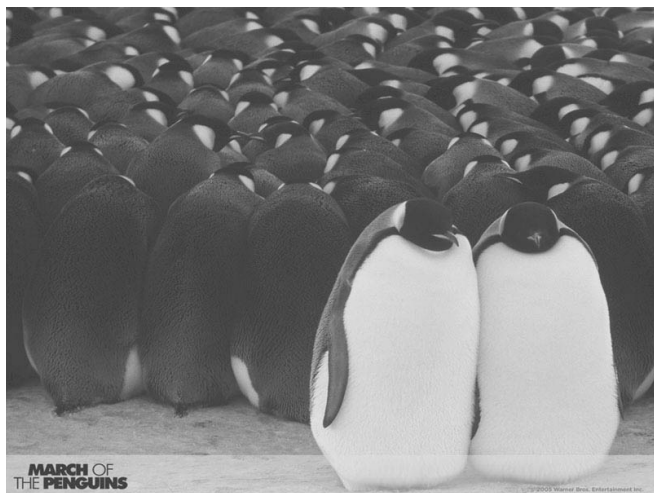
Two SCBC officers have stepped down recently, after several years of service. These words from some long-time members express the appreciation that all of us feel for the years of extraordinary service from Bill Park and Eric Feuss.

Bill Park: Editor of *The Albatross*

We take pleasure in thanking Bill Park for his editorship of *The Albatross*. He guided our efforts with wit and acumen, and he shaped our contributions with that finest of mixtures: kindness and subtlety. He even has opened our eyes and ears to the movies; who now can watch one without noting its birds, or see any bird at all without imagining a film it could appear in?

Bill's fellowship reminds us, too, of how our members bring into our midst such a confluence of talents, quiet achievements, and hopes, for us to share in friendship. We are uncommonly fortunate in our birds and our club.

—Todd Newberry



"Birds in the Movies"



and other areas of our lives.



Eric Feuss: Field Trip Coordinator

Eric Feuss has faithfully served the Santa Cruz Bird Club for the past nine years as Field Trip Coordinator but recently resigned his position due to work and life commitments. Although we are sad to see him leave, we are extremely grateful for his dedication over these years. When reading the *Albatross*, we may take for granted the many opportunities to explore new places with other birders in the company of an expert field trip leader. That's the end result, but a lot of preparatory work is required to make this happen. Eric coordinated a set of field trips to places within Santa Cruz County and beyond every two months—from August through June—for nine years. That's an amazing amount of work!

For anyone who has been on one of the 120 field trips that Eric has led, what a wonderful reign this has been! Eric had a special fondness for several birding localities ranging from nearby Quail Hollow Ranch to farther away destinations such as the Palo Alto Baylands, Point Reyes National Seashore, and the Sacramento Wildlife Refuges. Being an avid birder and dedicated teacher, Eric was constantly passing his birding expertise to others so that both the beginner and the seasoned pro would return home with some special memory from each trip. The good news is that Eric will continue spreading his birding enthusiasm to others, leading future field trips as his time allows. As spokespersons for the Santa Cruz Bird Club, Bernadette and I extend our congratulations, accolades and appreciation to Eric for the many valued services that he has provided over the past nine years. Thank you, Eric, for everything!

—Bob Ramer

Santa Cruz Birds

By *David Suddjian & Steve Gerow*

(Including reports from November 1 to December 31, 2007)

The transition of late fall to early winter continued early fall's pattern of relatively few rarities, but there were some highlights. Notable among these were a Williamson's Sapsucker, multiple Eurasian Wigeons, and some highbrow vagrant warblers. Irrupective montane or northern land birds remained sparse or, in some cases, absent. Especially striking were very low numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglet, Varied Thrush, and Pine Siskin, and no evidence of any incursion at all by Red-breasted Nuthatch or Red Crossbill. Some uncommon diving ducks (Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, and Common Goldeneye) were more numerous than normal, a situation which became even more evident in the New Year. White-winged Scoters were especially welcome, as they have declined markedly. On the other hand, it looks like we have said goodbye for the time being to wintering Ruddy Turnstones.

* * *

A **Snow Goose** was at Watsonville Slough from November 1-12 (RW), with three there and at adjacent Struve from November 26 to December 1 (JWa, KA, EFe). Two **Ross's Geese** were there on November 25 to December 1 (RW, JWa, EFe). A small flock of Ross's was at College Lake on December 23 (HS, RS). Greater White-fronted Geese failed to appear, unusual for late fall and early winter. With several reports of **Cackling Geese** during these months, the high count was 15+ at Struve Slough on December 11 (KA). The only Cacklers reported away from the Pajaro Valley were singles at the west side of Santa Cruz November 9-14 (v.ob.) and one at Soquel Creek mouth on December 15 (DSu). Five **Tundra Swans** flew over near Struve Slough on December 5 (CK).

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** lingered at Watsonville Slough from October 26 to November 26 (RW, NA, JWa), and was perhaps the same seen at West Struve on December 1 (EFe). Additional Eurasians arrived in that area by late December, with at least two males

(maybe three) present on December 27-28 (MC). Still more would be found in January! Another male Eurasian was at College Lake from December 22 into January (RS, HS). A **Blue-winged Teal** was at Struve Slough on November 26 (JWa), and three were there on December 27 (MC). One at Swanton Pond on December 12 was rarer along the north coast (KA).

Greater Scaup were more frequent and widespread in December than in recent memory (v.ob.), including a remarkable 50 at Schwan Lake on December 15 (CK et al.)! Seven in a pond near Majors Creek on December 15 provided a high count for the north coast (KA), and smaller numbers at several unexpected spots highlighted the species' unusually prominent presence. Two female **Harlequin Ducks** were at Cowell Beach on November 11 (CD), and a male was nearer to Steamer Lane on December 20-21 (AG, PB). Six reports of 1-3 **White-winged Scoters** from November 2-16 marked a better migrant passage than we've seen in years (v.ob.). Only one was reported in December, but the situation later improved, with many found after the New Year. Three **Black Scoters** were found in this period (SG, BAR, RW).

The only **Hooded Mergansers** away from the Pajaro Valley were three at Dairy Gulch on December 12 (LG, WG), and one there on December 15 (KA, JWa). A **Common Loon** was inland at Loch Lomond on December 15 (JWi, AR). A **Red-necked Grebe** was at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on November 26 (SG) and December 19-22 (SG, PM). Various reports of **American White Pelicans** in single and double digits were mostly from the Watsonville Slough system (high of 70 on November 2 [RW]), with some seen in the Interlaken area, too (v.ob.). A **Brown Pelican** cruising inland over the golf course and forests of De Laveaga Park on December 17 was aptly described as "weird" (MSc)!

A **Pelagic Cormorant** ventured into freshwater a few hundred yards up Soquel Creek on November 10 (DSu). The species has rarely been seen ranging up that stream, less often than the San Lorenzo, but its use of these riverine habitats remains quite odd in the bigger picture. **American Bitterns** were regular at a couple spots in the Pajaro Valley, with a high of three at Struve Slough on December 27-28 (MC, PM). A **Great Egret** visiting a backyard fish pond in Aptos on

November 9 was in a situation where the species has been rarely noted in this county (CA). **White-faced Ibis** had the strongest showing ever for November and December. Two to five remained at Struve Slough during November and early December (AH, NA, EL, KA, JWa, EFe), with one at Watsonville Slough near Ramsay Park on December 1 (EFe). But 14 at Struve on December 27 set a new winter record, and 10 were there the next day (MC).

A subadult **Bald Eagle** was spotted over the west side of Watsonville on November 1 (LH). **Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks** have both been quite scarce in recent years, so appearances in late fall were welcome: Ferruginous were seen at UCSC on November 17-22 (JL, v.ob.), and West Cliff Drive on November 23 (KA); a Rough-legged, the rarer of the two for us, was at Davenport on November 14-16 (JM, MB, KA). A **Common Moorhen** at Baldwin Creek Marsh on December 30 was notable away from the Pajaro Valley (EB, AG). **Long-billed Curlews**, always scarce in winter, were at Wilder and New Brighton beaches on December 15 (EL, DSu). Three **Marbled Godwits** at Harkins Slough on November 30 were unusual inland so late in the season (KA).

The **Ruddy Turnstone** that had wintered at Capitola for several years failed to appear this year, and no others were found, marking the first winter the species has been entirely absent in the county in modern memory. A **Rock Sandpiper** returned to West Cliff Drive for its 5th winter on November 14 (SG), and lingered into the New Year (v.ob.). Just two **Burrowing Owls** wintered at UCSC this season (JL, JB), indicating a continuing decline at the county's only remaining regular wintering location. (Read more about this on page 12). Another visited Back Ranch Road on December 18 (RD). A **Long-eared Owl** returned to a roost at O'Neill Ranch Open Space in Soquel by November 22 (AG) and lingered into the New Year (DSu). Two others were found in the Soquel Valley on December 15 (DSu). A **Common Poorwill** calling at O'Neill Ranch on December 15 was unexpected (DSu).

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at Graham Hill Road on November 1 (CB), and one at Mission Springs from December 8 into the New Year had probably returned from last winter (SS, PM, MST). One of the best finds of the season was a female

Williamson's Sapsucker at China Grade in Big Basin on December 29-31 (MST, DSu, PB, PM, HS, RS). This was the 4th county record, and the first to be photographed and enjoyed by multiple observers. A few unseasonable flycatchers were found in December. A very late **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was spotted at Pinto Lake on December 1 (EF et al.). A **Tropical Kingbird**—the only kingbird expected to appear here in winter—was near Kelly Lake on December 14 (DSu). A **Western Kingbird** photographed at Neary Lagoon on December 13 was much rarer (SG); we have only one other December record.

A "Solitary" Vireo at Neary Lagoon on November 21-30 was very likely a **Plumbeous Vireo** (SG). **Barn Swallows** continued their pattern of winter presence, with singles at Kelly Lake on December 14 (DSu) and College Lake on December 23 (HS, RS). **Western Bluebirds** graced the December 15 CBC, with four at Jarvis Road (an unexpected locale) northeast of Scotts Valley (BMon), and five at Back Ranch Road (TH).

Warbler diversity was very low in late fall and early winter, not unexpected after the poor fall showing, but there were a few clear highlights. A **Virginia's Warbler** found at Meder Canyon on October 29 lingered to November 22 (SG). Male **Black-throated Blue Warblers** appeared in a Santa Cruz yard on December 11 (TN) and New Brighton State beach on December 15 (DSu). An immature female **Blackburnian Warbler** was in Watsonville on November 29 to December 14 (BMor, DSu). An immature male **American Redstart** found at Natural Bridges State Beach on November 23 (MD) wintered into the New Year (v.ob.).

Less stellar rare warblers included a **Nashville Warbler** at Meder Canyon on November 19-22 (KK, SG), a **Hermit Warbler** at Rancho Del Oso on November 14 (DSu), a **Palm Warbler** wintering at western Santa Cruz (SG), and a late **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Pinto Lake on November 3 (JM). A female **Summer Tanager** at Antonelli Pond on November 9 (SG) was thought to be the same as one at neighboring Natural Bridges from December 4-20 (AG, v.ob.). Another female was at Rio Del Mar on December 28 (DSu). A tardy **Western Tanager** was at Meder Canyon on November 25 (PB).

Additional **Chipping Sparrows** in November (SG) brought the fall season total to an astounding 28 individuals, more than were found in the last 10 fall seasons combined! The recent 10-year average was only 2.1 per fall, with a prior season record of just six. A **Lark Sparrow** was near Antonelli Pond on November 15-22 (SG, AG). A **Fox Sparrow** with characteristics of the "Red" form was at Bonny Doon on November 20-21 (WBT). Just eight **White-throated Sparrows** in October and November made for a low fall showing, and early winter continued apace, with just six reported in December (v.ob.). The season's high counts for **Great-tailed Grackle** were 37 at Watsonville Slough on December 6 (CK) and 21 near Struve Slough on December 30 (DSi). A tardy **Bullock's Oriole** was at Santa Cruz on November 2 (SG).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Cindie Ambar, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Jack Barclay, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Matthew Coale, Carmen DeLeon, Ryan DiGaudio, Matthew Dodder, David Ekdahl, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Alison Graff, Tonya Haff, Ann Hastings, Laird Henkel, Kathy Kuyper, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor), Jean Myers, Todd Newberry, Bernadette A. Ramer (BAR), Alex Rinkert, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Michelle Scott (MSc), David Sidle (DSi), Scott Smithson, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler, Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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



Recent Changes in Burrowing Owl Numbers at UCSC

As in many of California's coastal counties, Santa Cruz County's breeding population of burrowing owls (BUOW) is extirpated. The last documented breeding attempt was in 1987 at UCSC. This may in part be due to lack of available burrows owing to an early ground squirrel eradication program in the county.* For example, there are very few ground squirrels on the county's entire North Coast, where seemingly suitable habitat is abundant. However, wintering owls from parts unknown still visit our county, especially in the lower meadows of UCSC. They arrive in Fall and leave in late March. The Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group has sponsored or conducted several campus surveys over three decades, and has information regarding other studies. In the 1980s, tallies of BUOW in the East Meadow and Great Meadows ranged from 10-20 owls. As late as 1995, we documented 17 individual owls wintering on these two meadows and the "mima mound" meadow across Empire Grade from campus. Since then numbers seem to have steadily declined, and in fact this winter, BUOW biologist Jack Barclay and myself found only two owls total, both in the East Meadow.

Survey history has not been consistent, but it has been steady, especially in the East Meadow. There have been some habitat changes, including an increase in available perches for large raptors (potential BUOW predators) in the East Meadow owing to new a fence bisecting the meadow for grazing management. However, the species is declining in many parts of its range in North America, and it is likely that we are simply seeing that decline mirrored in lower numbers of owls available to populate the available habitat in our county. It will be a sad day when the Santa Cruz CBC does not include the burrowing owl.

* regarding BUOW: "Formerly common. Now rare due to poisoning of ground squirrels." Streator, C. P. 1947. *Birds of Santa Cruz County, California*.

Janet Linthicum
Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group

The 51st Annual Santa Cruz County Christmas Bird Count December 15, 2007

We enjoyed beautiful weather on the 51st annual count, with mostly clear skies and high temperatures into the low 70s. Many thanks to the birders who scoured the fields, forests, bluffs, and sea! And three cheers to Nanci Adams, Cathy Gamble, Nancy Collins, and Pete Solé for making our end of the day count-down dinner such a nice affair! We continue to be indebted to David Wahle of the Santa Cruz Yacht Club for piloting his boat for our pelagic effort, and to Chris Berry and Scott Lang of the City of Santa Cruz for providing access to Loch Lomond.

Seventy-three observers logged 253.5 “party hours” (the best measure of field effort), up 9% from our 10-year average. Still, we only managed to find 165 species, the lowest total since 1982! Only two more species were added during “count week.” We counted 37,042, a whopping 26% below the recent average (standardized for field effort). The five most abundant species were Western Gull (3,162), European Starling (1,690), American Robin (1,622), California Gull (1,584), and Rock Pigeon (1,476). Fourteen species were notably more numerous than usual, but a hefty 42 species were well below their average numbers. While counts of many species were down this year, a good deal of the overall low total of individuals can be explained by below average numbers of most gulls and robins. For example, while American Robin made the top five most numerous this year (as usual), the count of 1,622 robins was only 43% of our average.

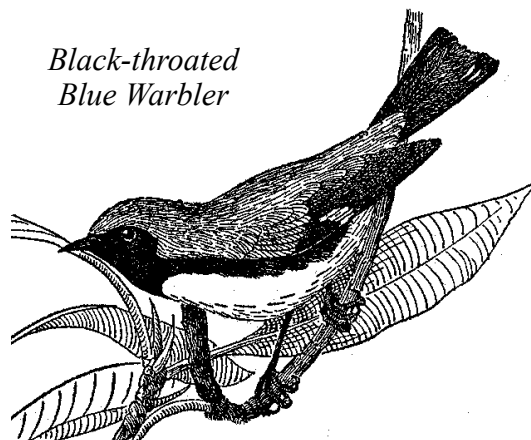
No new species were found for the count. The rarest finds were Rock Sandpiper, Common Poorwill, Red-naped Sapsucker, Black-throated Blue Warbler, American Redstart, and Summer Tanager. Nine Western Bluebirds were very welcome, as this locally declining species has been missed on count day since 2000. Particularly notable high counts were 61 Greater Scaup (10-year average = 2), 51 Common Goldeneye (average = 8), new records for Horned (44) and Eared Grebe (46), and a record 98 Lincoln’s Sparrows (average = 34).

There were an impressive 17 “misses” this time—species found in at least 10 of the last 15 years, but not this year: Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Canvasback,

Red-necked Grebe, Short-tailed Shearwater, Black-vented Shearwater, Common Moorhen, Wandering Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone (1st miss since 1970), Ancient Murrelet, White-throated Swift, White-breasted Nuthatch, Nashville Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Hermit Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, and Swamp Sparrow.

—David Suddjian, compiler

*Black-throated
Blue Warbler*



List of Participants: 2007 Santa Cruz County Christmas Bird Count

Kumaran Arul, Bonnie Bedzin, Marj Bourret, Ron Bourret, Rebecca Boydan, Linda Brodman, Phil Brown, Rita Colwell, Maryann Danielson, Steve Davison, Judy Donaldson, Dick Dummler, Sue Dummler, Patty Durkee-Lawton, David Ekdahl, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, David Franck, Ed Frost, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Alison Graff, Mark Greene, Rich Griffith, Tonya Haff, Howard Higley, Sharon Hull, Nick Kallioinen, Brian Keelan, Eileen Keelan, Clay Kempf, Norman Kikuchi, Kathy Kuyper, Daniel LaBeaune, Inga LaBeaune, Will Lawton, Earl Lebow, Janet Linticum, Barry McLaughlin, Kevin Meloy, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan, Jean Myers, Pam Myers, Todd Newberry, Tom Olden, William Park, Margaret Perham, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Bob Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Larry Selman, Alice Sickels, David Sidle, Rick Skehen, Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, Madeline Spencer, Linda St. John, Barry Staley, David Suddjian, Tom Takano, Jay Todd, Kay Todd, Sarah Underwood, Jeff Wall, Jim Williams.

2007 Santa Cruz County CBC

Species	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	10-Yr Avg	Species	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	10-Yr Avg
Gr. White-fronted Goose	0	1	1	0	0	0.8	Northern Harrier	12	13	23	19	19	16.9
Snow Goose	0	1	0	26	0	30.9	Sharp-shinned Hawk	19	13	13	13	10	12.0
Ross's Goose	1	0	1	0	0	1.4	Cooper's Hawk	9	12	17	19	14	12.2
Cackling Goose	2	0	1	0	1	0.6	Accipiter sp.	5	2	4	5	4	4.5
Canada Goose	0	1	4	1	8	4.5	Red-shouldered Hawk	52	48	55	57	69	46.1
Brant	0	7	CW	0	0	1.7	Red-tailed Hawk	105	89	77	113	128	117.5
Tundra Swan	0	0	CW	0	0	0.1	Rough-legged Hawk	1	0	0	0	0	0.2
Wood Duck	59	2	15	29	20	23.4	Golden Eagle	3	1	2	1	4	2.1
Gadwall	3	1	4	5	CW	2.1	Crested Caracara	0	0	CW	0	0	0.0
American Wigeon	37	12	22	36	43	26.1	American Kestrel	57	52	40	50	43	53.3
Mallard	759	704	706	641	852	791.4	Merlin	11	11	10	12	6	9.1
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	CW	0	0	0.0	Peregrine Falcon	6	5	6	4	6	4.6
Cinnamon Teal	2	1	1	0	0	0.5	Prairie Falcon	0	1	1	1	0	0.3
Northern Shoveler	4	0	0	2	6	3.6	Virginia Rail	30	16	5	5	9	11.2
Northern Pintail	1	1	46	0	0	6.2	Sora	11	5	4	9	3	6.5
Green-winged Teal	2	0	15	12	2	5.0	Virginia Rail/Sora sp.	0	0	1	0	0	0.1
Canvasback	1	0	1	0	0	1.0	Common Moorhen	1	0	2	2	0	1.0
Redhead	1	1	0	0	0	0.2	American Coot	373	313	646	1032	1213	709.1
Ring-necked Duck	93	20	116	88	114	75.6	Black-bellied Plover	207	46	229	107	68	117.0
Tufted Duck	1	0	0	0	0	0.2	Snowy Plover	77	96	82	17	82	61.4
Greater Scaup	1	1	4	0	61	8.0	Killdeer	9	49	227	180	266	129.0
Lesser Scaup	1	1	5	1	4	3.2	Black Oystercatcher	24	31	19	36	35	23.9
Surf Scoter	606	240	351	763	563	417.8	Greater Yellowlegs	2	1	0	1	1	1.4
White-winged Scoter	0	0	3	2	1	3.0	Willet	117	98	65	275	65	90.1
Black Scoter	2	0	1	1	0	0.7	Wandering Tattler	0	1	0	1	0	0.6
Bufflehead	59	44	82	126	141	81.7	Spotted Sandpiper	9	15	9	7	5	7.9
Common Goldeneye	18	9	4	8	51	12.4	Whimbrel	36	12	76	21	17	23.1
Hooded Merganser	2	4	4	1	1	6.4	Long-billed Curlew	1	1	1	0	2	1.4
Common Merganser	15	32	21	26	11	24.9	Marbled Godwit	81	36	74	45	27	37.1
Red-breasted Merganser	8	8	16	14	19	10.4	Ruddy Turnstone	1	1	1	1	0	2.8
Ruddy Duck	64	24	34	37	67	50.5	Black Turnstone	159	200	165	117	154	143.2
Wild Turkey	17	121	46	69	113	36.6	Surfbird	47	116	51	66	34	65.8
California Quail	668	248	265	280	301	370.2	Sanderling	561	2334	623	861	214	696.0
Red-throated Loon	20	48	30	59	90	75.0	Least Sandpiper	0	0	16	5	0	2.4
Pacific Loon	72	436	324	458	97	431.6	Rock Sandpiper	0	1	1	1	1	0.5
Common Loon	15	25	25	66	42	30.9	Dunlin	7	0	0	0	0	0.8
Loon species	44	28	51	456	114	266.2	Wilson's Snipe	3	17	23	0	4	10.3
Pied-billed Grebe	47	40	63	79	63	64.7	Red Phalarope	1	0	CW	0	0	1.7
Horned Grebe	2	5	24	26	44	14.4	Phalarope species	0	1	0	0	0	0.1
Red-necked Grebe	1	0	1	1	0	0.8	Pomarine Jaeger	0	2	1	1	0	0.7
Eared Grebe	22	14	13	59	46	20.2	Jaeger sp.	0	0	0	1	0	0.4
Western Grebe	217	193	320	366	306	390.9	Bonaparte's Gull	8	4	349	CW	8	42.1
Clark's Grebe	4	7	13	9	15	10.0	Heermann's Gull	169	443	901	405	86	380.2
Aechmophorus sp.	39	140	506	85	244	606.2	Mew Gull	734	519	215	413	161	452.8
Northern Fulmar	42	0	274	0	3	38.1	Ring-billed Gull	60	99	176	243	36	151.1
Pink-footed Shearwater	4	1	0	0	0	1.3	California Gull	2133	1841	6365	4991	1584	3107.6
Sooty Shearwater	0	0	0	1	1	1.5	Herring Gull	16	110	62	62	27	53.4
Short-tailed Shearwater	1	0	0	0	0	2.5	Thayer's Gull	6	4	10	28	5	11.4
Black-vented Shearwater	0	23	0	6	0	5.2	Western Gull	3372	2498	4178	4445	3162	2952.8
Dark shearwater sp.	0	0	1	1	0	2.7	Glaucous-winged Gull	511	840	811	1052	440	594.2
Brown Pelican	465	221	917	459	101	325.9	Herring X Gl.-wing. Gull	0	2	2	3	0	0.8
Brandt's Cormorant	293	290	420	418	492	351.1	West. X Gl.-winged Gull	123	78	439	537	97	145.6
Double-crested Cormorant	281	274	531	294	242	281.3	Glaucous Gull	1	CW	0	1	0	0.6
Pelagic Cormorant	32	50	20	52	37	35.5	Black-legged Kittiwake	0	1	0	0	0	0.6
American Bittern	0	1	0	0	0	0.2	Gull species	1422	1075	1176	1136	459	1387.4
Great Blue Heron	15	17	23	24	18	19.3	Common Tern	0	1	0	0	0	0.1
Great Egret	12	10	13	14	6	11.9	Forster's Tern	0	93	72	134	7	54.4
Snowy Egret	23	15	38	36	24	25.9	Black Skimmer	0	0	CW	0	0	0.2
Cattle Egret	0	1	0	0	0	0.4	Common Murre	12	22	92	357	346	248.3
Green Heron	2	4	5	3	6	5.4	Marbled Murrelet	9	71	14	30	8	22.7
Black-cr. Night-Heron	9	11	8	14	17	9.4	Ancient Murrelet	2	1	0	3	0	2.2
Turkey Vulture	1	2	2	5	10	3.5	Rhinoceros Auklet	75	412	545	279	48	166.4
Osprey	2	1	1	1	3	1.6	Rock Pigeon	1490	1860	1549	1515	1476	1403.9
White-tailed Kite	18	26	42	26	29	21.7	Band-tailed Pigeon	308	279	339	981	299	504.2



Species	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	10-Yr Avg
Eurasian Collared-Dove	--	--	12	8	9	9.7
Mourning Dove	733	483	431	357	484	603.1
Barn Owl	11	12	11	11	14	9.1
Western Screech-Owl	43	61	43	40	64	33.7
Great Horned Owl	43	43	36	33	36	33.0
Northern Pygmy-Owl	2	2	5	3	5	3.5
Burrowing Owl	4	3	2	3	2	3.9
Long-eared Owl	1	1	2	CW	3	1.0
Northern Saw-whet Owl	27	43	33	23	41	22.5
Common Poorwill	0	1	1	0	1	0.4
White-throated Swift	12	5	25	26	0	14.7
Anna's Hummingbird	452	642	927	576	611	552.0
Belted Kingfisher	17	14	13	17	12	19.4
Acorn Woodpecker	173	223	256	228	244	197.7
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	CW	0	0	0	0.2
Red-naped Sapsucker	1	1	0	1	1	0.9
Red-breasted Sapsucker	6	4	9	7	7	9.9
Nuttall's Woodpecker	18	11	21	10	25	13.8
Downy Woodpecker	40	49	30	44	28	36.6
Hairy Woodpecker	32	43	49	51	54	43.4
Northern Flicker (form?)	148	64	112	102	97	99.2
"Yellow-shafted" Flicker	1	0	0	0	0	0.4
"Red-shafted" Flicker	80	51	33	52	47	69.7
Nor. Flicker (R-sh x Y-sh)	4	1	3	3	1	2.9
Pileated Woodpecker	10	12	12	13	13	8.4
Olive-sided Flycatcher	0	0	0	1	0	0.1
Dusky Flycatcher	0	1	0	0	0	0.1
Black Phoebe	274	236	350	309	287	253.1
Say's Phoebe	27	57	33	29	36	34.0
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	0	0	1	0	0	0.2
Western Kingbird	0	0	0	0	CW	0.0
Loggerhead Shrike	3	14	1	5	2	4.0
Hutton's Vireo	92	66	57	75	47	59.8
Steller's Jay	469	291	604	592	370	479.0
Western Scrub-Jay	630	543	467	518	499	533.9
American Crow	375	225	500	469	486	360.5
Common Raven	262	251	404	445	439	315.0
Tree Swallow	0	0	0	6	0	1.2
Violet-green Swallow	0	0	0	40	32	7.9
Barn Swallow	CW	CW	0	13	0	1.3
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	1495	1076	1266	703	788	1066.1
Oak Titmouse	84	84	115	67	79	76.6
Bushtit	1614	1009	837	757	1097	1141.1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	29	4	3	2	9.6
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	2	1	1	0	1.1
Pygmy Nuthatch	327	243	257	244	186	253.3
Brown Creeper	219	96	122	118	78	122.0
Bewick's Wren	143	136	158	147	147	130.8
House Wren	6	4	5	3	9	4.2
Winter Wren	23	20	19	28	12	24.5
Marsh Wren	20	2	24	22	10	12.5
American Dipper	1	1	2	1	2	1.3
Golden-crowned Kinglet	44	15	31	114	5	93.7
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	532	672	1188	1119	673	727.7
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	2	2	2	1	2.9
Western Bluebird	0	0	0	0	9	2.7
Hermit Thrush	220	141	251	279	175	198.1
American Robin	3779	469	1979	8143	1622	3419.0
Varied Thrush	125	25	170	1548	8	297.4
Wrentit	107	100	146	104	142	113.0
Northern Mockingbird	75	39	39	45	39	51.6
California Thrasher	15	20	28	23	20	18.8
European Starling	1958	1159	1928	1736	1690	1548.5

Species	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	10-Yr Avg
American Pipit	14	121	342	258	204	129.6
Cedar Waxwing	296	431	557	1163	551	640.5
Tennessee Warbler	0	0	0	1	0	0.2
Orange-crowned Warbler	7	6	14	10	6	9.5
Nashville Warbler	3	1	1	0	0	1.5
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	0	0	0	0	1	0.3
Yellow-rumped Warblers:						
"Myrtle"	107	139	188	107	209	145.0
"Audubon's"	623	570	514	356	323	469.0
(form?)	531	347	440	221	306	371.7
Black-throated Gray Warbler	1	3	2	0	0	1.2
Townsend's Warbler	350	310	487	593	298	429.5
Hermit Warbler	7	3	1	1	0	2.1
Towns. x Herm. Warbler	0	0	1	0	0	0.2
Palm Warbler	2	1	CW	2	0	0.8
Black-and-White Warbler	2	1	1	0	0	0.9
American Redstart	0	0	0	0	1	0.2
Northern Waterthrush	0	0	0	1	0	0.1
Common Yellowthroat	19	28	59	58	38	26.7
Wilson's Warbler	0	0	1	0	0	0.2
Summer Tanager	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
Western Tanager	0	CW	1	1	0	1.0
Spotted Towhee	173	126	206	219	182	172.1
California Towhee	500	294	533	555	338	436.1
Chipping Sparrow	0	0	1	1	0	0.3
Lark Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	0.4
Savannah Sparrow	66	56	58	34	142	80.8
Grasshopper Sparrow	3	0	0	0	0	0.7
Fox Sparrow	131	74	198	243	149	133.4
Song Sparrow	228	220	351	334	158	254.9
Lincoln's Sparrow	41	33	51	54	98	42.0
Swamp Sparrow	1	0	1	3	0	1.0
White-throated Sparrow	16	4	10	17	5	9.5
White-crowned Sparrow	1234	704	1210	1369	681	953.3
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1723	1097	1804	1550	1357	1278.4
"Dark-eyed" "Oregon" Junco	1407	770	1342	1021	869	1122.8
"Dk-eyed" "Slate-clr." Junco	1	0	0	5	1	1.6
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	CW	1	0	0	0	0.4
Black-headed Grosbeak	0	0	1	1	0	0.2
Indigo Bunting	CW	0	0	0	0	0.2
Red-winged Blackbird	526	418	195	1284	708	675.2
Tricolored Blackbird	70	160	2420	1680	680	855.0
Western Meadowlark	130	232	186	302	197	295.3
Brewer's Blackbird	1309	1458	2384	1929	1216	1759.2
Brown-headed Cowbird	34	9	27	17	17	38.9
Bullock's Oriole	1	0	0	0	0	0.3
Purple Finch	56	88	76	168	201	115.2
House Finch	782	1177	1036	762	761	854.3
Red Crossbill	3	1	8	0	0	3.1
Pine Siskin	5	1242	75	28	134	306.1
Lesser Goldfinch	109	274	92	100	353	174.2
American Goldfinch	265	605	196	409	819	410.2
House Sparrow	161	164	88	66	66	95.3

No. of Individuals	42319	37224	53511	59126	37042	44626.3
No. of Species	185	182	183	179	165	183.5
Total Party Hours	259	255	243.5	235.5	253.5	236.6

"CW" indicates observations during count week, not on count day.

Compiler: David Suddjian

Big Year 2008 Takes Wing

Our Big Year 2008 is up and flying in fine style! With enthusiasm brimming and winter storms threatening, we went big early with a bold schedule of trips to kick off the year. The Bird Club fielded an impressive 11 field trips in January, with rain-outs fortunately only a minor factor. We focused on the Pajaro Valley and coastal areas, but also ranged into the hills at Mission Springs, Henry Cowell, and Swanton Road. The itinerary offered some new or uncommon offerings, such as a winter sea-watching effort, a waterfowl-focused big day, Long-eared Owl stakeout, and forest owling. Excitement about the Big Year added to the fun on all the trips, and it has been great to see new faces and long-time members who have seldom joined trips in recent years. As of the end of January, Bonnie Bedzin and Jean Myers are vying for the title of “Most Trips Attended!” A wonderful supporting element has been the Big Year webpage developed by Barry and Quinn McLaughlin. Their efforts have provided an opportunity for leaders to record trip lists for each outing, making results quickly available for all in a database format that will grow as the year progresses.

By the end of January our Big Year tally stood at a strong 167 species, 83% of all the species found in the county this January. The first bird officially tallied for the Big Year was Rock Pigeon (ugh!), but things quickly improved from there. On the Big Year webpage on the Bird Club’s website, you can view all the species found so far, see the lists for each trip, and read reports on individual trips. Here I’ll focus on some of the highlights and lowlights and few lights in between. Recall that each of the species on the county bird list was assigned a “difficulty code” to reflect the chances of finding it on a Big Year field trip, ranging from Code 1 for the easiest species to Code 6 for the rarest of the rare. These are explained and listed for each species on the webpage.

After one month we have found one Code 6 species (1%), one Code 5 species (2%), four Code 4 species (10%), nine Code 3 species (24%), 63 Code 2 species (63%), and 89 Code 1 species (86%). The rarest find was a female Barrow’s Goldeneye at Pajaro Dunes, Code 6 and the first ever seen in the county on a SCBC

field trip! Next best were multiple Eurasian Wigeons (Code 5) enjoyed on two trips at Struve Slough and College Lake. Code 4 species included Tundra Swan (two trips), Long-eared Owl, and wintering American Redstart and Clay-colored Sparrow—all great finds for our field trips! We are progressing well in the less rare categories. Many of the species in these will be found as we move into other seasons or simply spend more time visiting more places.



Female Barrow’s Goldeneye—a Code 6 species, photographed at Watsonville Slough by Jeff Poklen.

This early in the year, the only species we might consider as “misses” are rarities or some of the more uncommon species that might be hard to connect with later in the year. And among these would especially be species we actually tried to find. Thus, the most noteworthy “misses” so far are Redhead, Black Scoter, Red-necked Grebe, Rock Sandpiper, Red-naped Sapsucker, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. (Hmm...is there an interesting red theme developing there?). But we still have chances for all of these. Some other rarities were only seen on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC, before our first field trip, or at the end of the month after the last January trip.

We have much to anticipate as we forge ahead with a full calendar of trips and some special offerings. Although spring migration will bring a tide of new species, as we move further into the year it will become increasingly challenging to add to the Big Year list. But that is where a big part of the fun and challenge lie, as we plan carefully to provide opportunities, target certain rare species, track down missing species, and just get out there as often as we can. And there is also the individual challenge for birders to add to their own year or county lists and visit new places. Let’s take advantage of this year to get out and learn about and

appreciate our birds, thrill in the pursuit, enjoy each other, and have FUN!



*Rock Pigeon—
a Code 1 species*

OOH!...AHH!...PICTURES!

David Suddjian and others have been taking photos of the intrepid SCBC birders as they pursue birds of all kinds on the Big Year walks. See a few of those photos on page 18, and consider putting yourself “in the picture”—at least figuratively, if not literally. As of press time, there are still 259 species left for us to locate on the walks. Come on out and find a few!

For Trip Reports, Visit the Big Year Webpage

We invite everyone to join the fun and adventure on our field trips this year, but be sure to keep up with our progress by visiting our wonderful Big Year webpage on the Bird Club’s website:

www.santacruzbirdclub.org

Thanks to Barry and Quinn McLaughlin for their work in bringing this resource to our members and internet friends! Click on “The Big Year” link on the home page to see a running tally of species found, query the Big Year database for lists for each trip and the year as a whole, read trip reports, and check out photos from the field. Note that due to the volume of activities this year, most Big Year field trips will only have reports on the webpage, rather than the reports usually printed in the Albatross. So check it out to relive memories or enjoy vicarious birding fun!

The Big Year Goes to Sea

Discounted Fall Pelagic Birding For SCBC Members!

Shearwater Journeys and Monterey Seabirds have graciously allowed an opportunity to include some of their scheduled trips in our Big Year 2008 program. Check out details below for five trips offered in September and October with special discounts for Bird Club members! Group size is limited and these trips will sell out so make your reservations soon.

September and October have prime seabirding, with a great diversity and abundance of birds, and often mild ocean conditions. This is a great time for a variety of storm-petrels and shearwaters, as well as South Polar Skua, Long-tailed Jaeger, and perhaps Xantus’s Murrelets. And you never know what great rarity might be out there! Shearwater Journeys’ trips will sail from Santa Cruz (!!) for the first time in a number of years, and Monterey Seabirds’ trips sailing from Monterey plan to head directly to Santa Cruz waters. However, both tour operators advise that each trip could spend time in birding in Monterey County, too, as circumstances dictate. (But we all know where the best birding is!)

Shearwater Journeys

- Special Trip Dates: September 26 and October 12, 2008
- Itinerary: 8-hour trip departing Santa Cruz at 7:00 a.m.
- Cost: \$115 for SCBC members (\$145 for non-members). Discounted reservations must be made in advance and are nonrefundable and nontransferable. Price does not include possible fuel surcharge. Advance reservation required by sending check to Debi Shearwater at P. O. Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024.
- Contact and more info:
<http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com>
or (831) 637-8527.

Monterey Seabirds

- Special Trip Dates: September 13 & 27 and October 11, 2008
- Itinerary: 8-hour trip departing Monterey at 7:30 a.m. to visit the “the Fingers canyon complex”—Ano Nuevo, Ascension and Cabrillo Canyons—in northern Monterey Bay.
- Cost: \$85 for SCBC members (\$95 for non-members).
- Contact and more info:
<http://www.montereyseabirds.com>
or (831) 375-4658.



Roger Wolfe's waterfowling group pauses to pose at Sunset State Beach. (Photo: Pete Sole)



Jean Myers watches a Winter Wren along Scott Creek.



Wally Goldfrank helps Bonnie Bedzin spot a Long-eared Owl.

Big Year Photos

by
David Suddjian
unless otherwise
noted.



Dobie Jenkins, Jeff Wall and Richard Sandkuhle eyeing a shrike at College Lake on January 3.



Watching as a Long-eared Owl leaves its roost in Soquel on January 11.



Watching a mixed flock along Swanton Road: (l-r) Jeff Wall, Barry McLaughlin, Lois Goldfrank, and Bernadette Ramer.

Assembling



The

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 (jpeg, tif)

If you wish 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

—Judy Donaldson, Editor

New SCBC members

George & Linda Malloch 12/07

Jim & Yolanda O'Grady 12/07

Charlene & Wade Garza 12/07

Sarah Chauvet 12/07

John Pritchard 12/07

Sari Frederickson & Peter Banks 1/08

Barbara Austin 1/08

Rod Thorn 1/08

Pegatha Hughes 1/08

Richard & Heidi Sandkuhle 1/08

David & Edna Vollmer 1/08

Scott & Linda Terrill 1/08

Quinn McLaughlin 1/08

Howard Higley 1/08

Susan Paulsen 2/08

Tom & Chisten Morell 2/08

Gaylan Queirolo 2/08

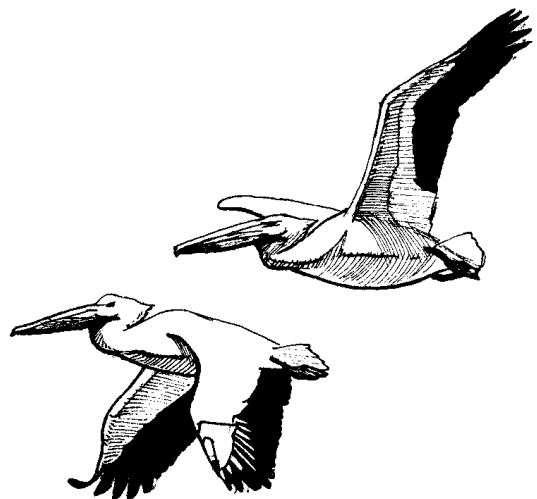
Lee Cantey 2/08

Sue Fitchen 2/08

Rolin & E. Louise Gebelein 2/08

Welcome!

**Input deadline
for May-August issue
of *The Albatross*:
April 2, 2008**



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<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/>

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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.