

Albatross

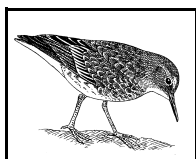
PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

A Rocky Road to Birding Revelations

by Steve Gerow

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**Rocky
Recollections**



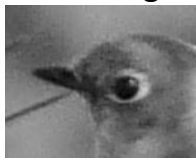
**Calendar
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**Santa Cruz
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**Big Year
Soaring**



**Remembrance
Viola
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& It's time to...

RENEW

A bird many of us have come to know is the Rock Sandpiper that has spent the last five winters in the Santa Cruz area. Normally wintering far to the north of us, only a handful have made it to the Monterey Bay Area over the years. This small shorebird, with its obscuring markings, an almost mouse-like manner of creeping along, and a definite tendency to be on the wrong (for the observer) side of the rocks most of the time...well, it has often required some patience to find. When in view, though, this bird is no more skittish than the other species it associates with, and at times some of us have been treated to fairly long and close studies.

Still, its habits can be frustrating. More than a few times I have been watching this bird and it is suddenly gone from view, remaining so for a long period of time. The Surfbirds and Black Turnstones it was with are still running around, but the Rock Sandpiper is seemingly gone.

I conclude it has somehow flown away during a moment when I was distracted, but then it emerges from a crevice, or a large wave sends it into view from the surf-splashed ocean side of the rocks. The old adage that patience has its rewards is obviously applicable here, a useful lesson for many other birding situations. For example, finding the American Redstart that spent this winter at Natural Bridges has often required a good deal of time, but eventually patience and persistence would pay off (though other days that same bird would be fluttering in front of the observer within seconds of arrival.)



Rock Sandpiper photographed by Steve Gerow

No amount of patience helps, though, when a bird is just not present in the area. While many wintering birds (like the Am. Redstart) may spend the whole season in one small patch of preferred habitat, the Rock Sandpiper has proven itself to be a restless wanderer. In past years it turned up in spots up and down the coast, stretch-

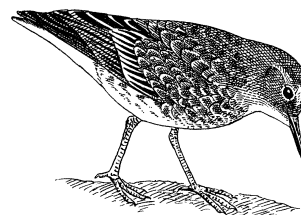
ing from Capitola all the way to Wilder Ranch. This year it was only seen along two miles or so of West Cliff, but it was obviously not always there. After the first part of January, a month and a half of searching its “usual haunts” on West Cliff by several observers familiar with its ways yielded no sightings. Then at the end of February it was back, and fairly easy to find, for a little while. It seems obvious that it had moved someplace else for a time, though no one knows where, but the pattern of movement shown in previous winters was still there.

Rare birds like this naturally draw observer interest because of their rarity. Many may seek views of these birds initially to mark them off on a list, or just for general interest. Others may just enjoy the rare opportunity to become familiar with a species that they seldom see, or would normally have to travel long distances to find. Whatever the motivations, insight flows from observation, especially when we keep our minds open and inquiring.

For one thing, birds that are identifiable as individuals, maybe being the only one of their species around, or maybe just an unusual or distinctive individual, can become “markers” of sorts. If there is only one Rock Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, or whatever among the wintering shorebird flocks, we can know that this individual bird is present or not at a given place, trace the extent of its movements, etc. The odd melanistic Ring-billed Gull that has wintered around the east side of Santa Cruz for several years now is an example of a distinctive individual of a common species. All these give us a better understanding about things like movements of wintering birds, their arrivals and departures, lifespan, etc.

Further, watching a bird like the Rock Sandpiper over time, one almost unconsciously absorbs knowledge of its manner of foraging, its ecological niche, and so forth. A relationship to its mud-flat-preferring relatives (other *Calidris* sandpipers) is revealed in its feeding habits—with a somewhat crouched stance suggesting Least Sandpiper, running around and picking on algae covered rocks (something like Semipalmated Sandpiper), and periods of probing in rock crevices and tide pools (more like Western Sandpiper). Yet, unlike the relatively calm environment preferred by most *Calidrid* cousins, this little sandpiper seeks out the apparently most hazardous of foraging spots, often venturing farther out onto wave splashed rocks than its larger and sturdier-looking rocky-shore companions, the Black Turnstones and Surfbirds (and staying out there longer as the waves splash higher). Its way of “making a living” sets it apart from its close relatives and is different enough to avoid much competition with the other species that forage in the same habitat.

In watching birds like this, we can develop a habit of focusing on these sorts of details, which in turn enriches the rest of our birding. In day-to-day birding situations, questions arise, and the source of the answers is careful observation. So what is going on with those chickadees, kinglets, Townsend's Warblers and so forth all traveling together? Are they seeking food in the same ways? Are they eating the same things? And what about the Yellow-rumped Warblers—why are there many more Audubon's in certain spots, while other places have mostly Myrtles? Those Hermit Thrushes that are all over in winter—are they the same as the ones up in the higher forests in spring and summer (the answer is no), and if not, what are the differences, and when does each group leave and depart? We may never learn the entire answers to all the questions, but the more we observe, the more we find out, and the more our focus expands. After over forty years of birding, I find I learn a few new things almost every time I take a walk, or even look out the window. Watching long-staying rarities like the Rock Sandpiper can help to both focus and broaden our perception, while honing our general ability to observe, giving us much more than just another filled space on a checklist. We increase our ability to learn from our observations, leading to more frequent, and more interesting, discoveries. Thus birding never gets old or mundane, and the fascination just keeps growing.



Events Calendar

May - August 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



Friday, May 2
San Lorenzo River

We will look for spring migrants; this is a good time of year for Solitary Sandpiper, which has been found several times in this area.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 a.m at San Lorenzo Park, by the duck pond.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476



Saturday, May 3
Moore Ranch Road

Discover a new place to bird along the north coast of Santa Cruz on this half-day trip. We'll climb a fairly steep hill, then walk through grassland, scrub, and finally redwood forest to a stream. In the past we've found Western Kingbird, Lazuli Bunting, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Vaux's and White-throated Swifts, Peregrine Falcon, Warbling Vireo, and occasionally Grasshopper Sparrow and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, plus who knows what might show up? Bring water and a snack.

Directions: Meet at Beckmann's Bakery, west end of Mission St., Santa Cruz, at 7:30 a.m.

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



Sunday, May 4
Beginners Bird Walk at 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: Phil Brown, pdpbrown@gmail.com



Thursday, May 8
Grey Whale

We will be looking for Spring Migrants and birds that frequent grassland habitats, including Chipping and Lark Sparrows.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Delaware Ave. entrance (back entrance) to Natural Bridges State Park. Parking on Empire Grade is very limited so we strongly recommend car-pooling for this trip. Heavy rain cancels.

Leader: Scott Smithson, scottndawn@sbcglobal.net



Saturday, May 10
Castle Rock State Park

Join us for a 3-mile moderate hike through Castle Rock State Park. The birding and wildflowers should be great. We hope to see or hear many spring nesting birds, including Hermit Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Purple Finch, and more. We'll hike the Saratoga Gap trail to the campground. The trail starts in a stretch of deep dark woods, then enters a long section of chaparral and live oak (we might hear Mountain Quail). Next we will enter an oasis of black oak and wildflowers and from there go uphill through more woods, with majestic old canyon oaks. This hike is one of the better spring hikes in Santa Cruz County for birding and great vistas of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Directions: Meet at the Santa Cruz Government Center, 701 Ocean St., Santa Cruz, at 6:30 a.m or at the main parking lot of Castle Rock State Park at 7:30 a.m. (There may be a fee). Bring lunch. We will hike to the campground and eat there. Heavy rain cancels.

Leader: David Ekdahl, (831) 335-5742, dekdahl@earthlink.net

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.

**SPECIAL
EVENT**

Saturday, May 10
MSOE Bird-a-thon
Mission Springs

This is the Mission Springs Outdoor Education's 5th annual Bird-a-thon. The purpose is to raise scholarship money to help underprivileged students attend science camp. Donors pledge money for each bird species seen by community volunteers and Mission Springs Naturalists between 5:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. within Santa Cruz County on the day of the event, May 10.

If you would like to contribute your birding skills to this cause, please join one of our groups or contribute your list independently. All skill levels are welcome.

Coordinated by Matthew and Cassie Strusis-Timmer.

For information, contact Cassie by email:

cassie@missionsprings.com or phone: (831) 335-3205

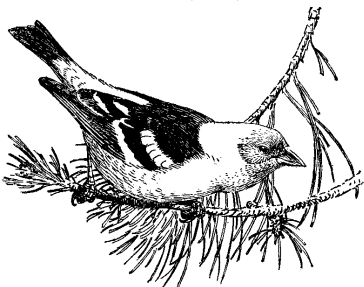


Sunday, May 11
Spanish Ranch Road and
Loma Prieta Avenue

This trip explores the upper reaches of Santa Cruz county along Spanish Ranch Rd., Mt. Bache Rd., and Loma Prieta Ave. for its unique habitat, spectacular panoramic views, and exciting birds, both breeders and migrants. Target species include Cassin's Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Western Tanager, and Lazuli Bunting among many others. Last year at this time, there were singing Black-chinned Sparrows here. Other rare species include Sage Sparrow, Black Swifts, Purple Martin, and Common Poorwill.

Directions: Meet at the intersection of Highland Way and Mt. Bache Rd. at 6:00 a.m. (1.6 miles from the intersection of Old San Jose Rd. and Summit Rd. Note: Summit Rd. becomes Highland Way beyond the intersection of Old San Jose Rd.). We will bird along Spanish Ranch Rd. and return to the same meeting spot at about 7:30 a.m. for those who wish to join us later. We will then proceed up Mt. Bache Rd. and onto Loma Prieta Ave. Late-comers can contact leader by phone but shouldn't have difficulty finding the group on the road. Car pooling is highly recommended due to the limited parking areas along this route.

Leader: Kumaran Arul, (831) 419-2838



Western Tanager



Wednesday, May 14
Summit Road &
Skyline Boulevard

The seldom-birded section of Summit Road between Bear Creek Road and Castle Rock State Park offers an outstanding opportunity to enjoy many of our montane and forest specialists and a great chance to learn bird song! We hope to find nesting Yellow-rumped, Hermit, and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pileated Woodpecker, Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, and more. Carpooling from the meeting place will be important, as parking is limited along this road. Plan to be parking in several spots with moderate walking from the vehicles. Half day. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 6:00 a.m. at the small park-and-ride lot at the junction of Hwy 17 and Summit Rd.

Leader: David Suddjian, liturgist@stjoscap.org



Friday, May 16
Antonelli Pond and Natural Bridges

Late May is the peak time for rare spring migrants. We'll see what we can find.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. on Delaware Ave., at the west side of Antonelli Pond.

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



Saturday, May 17
Spring Sea-watch and chance
of 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, as you like. Half day or less. Rain cancels. Please be on time, as we have to proceed to a spot with a view of the ocean.

Directions: Meet at Whale City Bakery in Davenport along Hwy 1 at 7:00 a.m.

Leader: Rod Norden, (408) 656-4669,
rod.norden@gmail.com



Thursday, May 22
SCBC Meeting @7:30 p.m.
Speaker: To be announced

Please join us for a still to-be-determined, but guaranteed-to-be-fascinating presentation and the usual delicious refreshments and comraderie. When the speaker/topic is determined, the information will be posted on the SCBC web site and on MBB.



Big Year **Friday, May 23**
Moore Creek Preserve

Another search for birds of grasslands and woodlands.
Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. on Shaffer Rd. across from the intersection of Mission St.
Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Big Year **Sunday, May 25**
Sunset State Beach/Pajaro River

This half day trip begins with a visit to Sunset State Beach (\$6 per vehicle) in hopes of finding Lawrence's Goldfinch for the club's Big Year. We will also visit the banks of the Pajaro River in search of spring migrants.
Directions: Meet at the unpaved parking lot at the Red Roof Inn, Beach St., near the intersection with Lee Rd. at 8:00 a.m.
Leader: Roger Wolfe, rogwolfe@cruzio.com



Wednesday & Thursday, May 28-29
Long Ridge Open Space and
Overnight to Portola Redwoods SP

Here is a special opportunity to visit some of the loveliest parts of the Santa Cruz mountains, with a chance to find some awesome birds. Long Ridge Open Space offers specialties of upper elevation forests and grassland edge and outstanding views! Highlights may include Chipping Sparrow (one of the last places to find them in the county), five species of nesting (and singing) warblers, Lazuli Bunting, Cassin's Vireo, Pileated Woodpecker, and more. Plan for a few miles of easy to moderate hiking. After Long Ridge we will journey to Portola SP, perhaps stopping along the way at Skyline Ridge Open Space. An overnight at Portola will afford an opportunity for owling in the evening and an early start to enjoy the dawn murrelet flight in one of the species' last Santa Cruz Mountains strongholds. Other birds here may include Am. Dipper, Wood Duck, Common Merganser, Vaux's Swift, Pileated Woodpecker, and singing Swainson's and Hermit thrushes. Portola is an under-visited jewel. Birders may come along just for the May 28 portion of the trip, as you like. Those wishing to come up just for the Portola SP overnight should contact the leader for details.

Those camping at Portola should bring all necessary food, equipment, fees, and a tank full of gas. Bring a flashlight and warm clothes. Reservations may be made through the State Parks on-line reservation system, but there is always space available mid-week even without reservations. \$25 camping fee.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. on May 28 at the Achistaca Trailhead, located along Hwy 9, 13.7 miles up from the junction of Hwy 236 and Hwy 9 in Boulder Creek (or 0.45 mile down Hwy 9 from the top at its junction with Hwy 35). Allow 50-60 min. to drive up from Santa Cruz.
Leader: David Suddjian liturgist@stjoscap.org



Big Year **Friday, May 30**
Neary Lagoon

Vagrant eastern passerines turn up around this time of year.
Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the west entrance (off California St. near the intersection with Bay St.)
Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Big Year **Sunday, June 1**
Beginning Bird Walk
at Quail Hollow County Park

Directions: Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot of Quail Hollow County Park. Heavy rain cancels.
Leader: Eric Feuss, (831) 477-0280



Big Year **Wednesday, June 4**
Big Basin for Dusky Flycatcher
and Marbled Murrelet

In 2006 and 2007, a Dusky Flycatcher was singing on territory at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin. With Big Year optimism that it will return, we will trek to the spot to seek it out, enjoying other birds, too. The trip will begin with an encounter with Marbled Murrelets in their dawn flight, and then we'll hike up to the Dusky's home turf. Dusky or not, it will be a nice hike and we can expect Pileated Woodpecker, Hermit Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Black-throated Gray, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Vaux's Swift, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. The hike will be about 4 miles round trip with a 700 foot elevation gain. Slopes are mostly moderate, except for short steep sections. Dress in layers, and bring water. \$6 day use fee.

Directions: Meet at Park HQ along Hwy 236. Meet for murrelets at 5:20 a.m., or just for the daytime birds at 6:15 a.m. From Santa Cruz take Hwy 9 north to Boulder Creek. Turn left on Hwy 236 and go for 9 miles to park HQ. Allow about 50 min. to drive from Santa Cruz.
Leader: David Suddjian liturgist@stjoscap.org

**Big Year****Saturday, June 7
Lower Henry Cowell and
Upper Roaring Camp**

Half-day trip. Bring water and snacks. We will look for American Dipper, Winter and Bewick's wrens, and other nesting species.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the church parking lot at the intersection of Zayante and Graham Hill roads.

Leader: Bonnie Bedzin, bonnie@baymoon.com

**Big Year****Friday, June 13
Meder Canyon**

There's still a possibility of unusual spring migrants plus a variety of breeding birds.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the southern end of the trail to the canyon (Grandview St. just west of Escalona).

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

**Big Year****Sunday, June 15
North Coast Hotspots**

We will bird Lidell Creek and check other hotspots on the way back into town. We will be looking for vagrants and summer nesting species.

Directions: Meet at Whale City Bakery in Davenport along Hwy 1 at 7:00 a.m.

Leader: Phil Brown, pdpbrown@gmail.com

**Big Year****Wednesday, June 18
Evening Outing for
Common Poorwill and Forest Owls**

A certain place in Big Basin offers the most convenient chance for Common Poorwill in Santa Cruz County. We'll try for them after sunset (with a great flight of bats, a rising full moon, and fine vistas), and then we'll spend some time trying for Western Screech-Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl. Minimal hiking.

Directions: Meet at 8:15 p.m. at the upper junction of Hwy 236 and China Grade. From Santa Cruz take Hwy 9 north to Boulder Creek. Turn left on Hwy 236, and drive about 4 miles to China Grade. Turn right on China Grade, and go 3.4 miles to the upper junction with Hwy 236. Allow an hour to drive from Santa Cruz.

Leader: David Suddjian liturgist@stjoscap.org

**Big Year****Saturday, June 21
Pajaro River**

We will bird riparian areas along the Pajaro River and possibly other South county locales for Yellow Warblers and other riparian specialists. Half day trip. Bring water and snacks.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the dirt parking lot of the Red Roof Inn, off the Hwy 129 exit from Hwy 1, at the junction of Beach St. and Lee Rd.

Leader: Matthew Strusis-Timmer, (831)335-2259, thedutchguy@hotmail.com

**Big Year****Friday, June 27
Pogonip**

Always a good variety of species of forest and grasslands.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the north end of Spring St.

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

**Big Year****Thursday, July 3
Moore Creek Preserve**

The focus of this afternoon trip will be on the mixed swallow and swift flocks—sometimes including Black Swifts—that often forage over the upper grasslands.

Directions: Meet at 2:30 p.m. on Shaffer Rd., across from the intersection of Mission St.

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

**Big Year****Sunday, July 6
Watsonville Sloughs**

We will explore the slough complex of Harkins, East & West Struve, and Watsonville Sloughs. We may see early arriving shorebirds and summer resident species. This is a half day trip. Bring water and snacks.

Directions: Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the rear of the parking lot behind the West Marine building, off Harkins Slough Rd. in Watsonville.

Leaders: Bernadette and Bob Ramer, baramer@sbcglobal.net or (831) 426-7342

~~~OMIGOSH!~~~

**Don't miss your Fall issue of *The Albatross*.  
See the back page of this issue for details.**

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**Big Year** Tuesday, July 8  
Black Swift Evening Watch  
at Wilder Ranch

The declining Black Swift has become hard to find in the county, but for the past few years there have been some sightings near dusk along the Wilder Ranch coastline. We'll give it a shot! Plan for a mile or two of easy walking. Be prepared for cool conditions, especially if it is foggy. Plan to spend some time waiting for swifts to appear, perhaps with a folding chair. \$6 day use fee per car.

**Directions:** Carpool meeting at Beckmann's Bakery at 2341 Mission St. at 5:00 p.m. or at the main parking lot at Wilder Ranch off Hwy 1 at 5:15 p.m.

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

**Big Year** Friday, July 11  
Natural Bridges

We'll check the beach early for the first few shorebird migrants and look for whatever else might be around.

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

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

**Big Year** Wednesday, July 16  
Evening Outing for  
Common Poorwill and Forest Owls

See details in the listing for June 18.

**Big Year** Friday, July 18  
San Lorenzo River

We'll check on the lower part of the river for early migrants and post-breeding dispersants.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the point overlooking the east side of the river mouth (off the sharp bend in East Cliff Dr., a block south of the intersection with Murray St.).

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

**Big Year** Sunday, July 20  
Watsonville Sloughs

We will explore Harkins, East and West Struve, and Watsonville Sloughs for waders, raptors and migrant shorebirds. This is a half day trip. Bring sunscreen, water and snacks.

**Directions:** Meet at 9:00 am at the rear of the parking lot behind West Marine, off Harkins Slough Rd. in Watsonville.

**Leader:** Rod Norden, (408) 656-4669, norden@rodnorden.com or rod.norden@gmail.com

**Big Year** Friday, July 25  
West Cliff Drive

The first fall migrant Black Turnstones and Wandering Tattlers should be around by now, and who knows what else might be with them?

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

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

**Big Year** Sunday, July 27  
Pajaro Dunes

On this morning fieldtrip, low tide will be just prior to 11:30 a.m. As such, we will start early with a leisurely walk out to the Pajaro Rivermouth and along the beach, then we'll return when the tide is low, walking along the Watsonville Slough. The focus of the trip will be on returning shorebirds, especially any species not already obtained on the Big Year list.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Pajaro Dunes, just outside Sunset State Beach parking area (end of Beach St). Participants are more than welcome to join later; please call leader to make arrangements and obtain his mobile number.

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

**Big Year** Friday, August 1  
Terrace Point and Vicinity

One never knows what will show up here; land, shore, and sea birds are all possible.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the west end of Delaware Ave., by the intersection with Shaffer Rd.

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

**Big Year** Saturday, August 2  
Watsonville Sloughs

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

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

**Leader:** Roger Wolfe, rogwolfe@cruzio.com

**Big Year** Sunday, August 3rd  
Beginners Bird Walk at  
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

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 **Big Year** **Saturday, August 9**  
**Pajaro River Mouth and Vicinity**

On this half-day trip, we will be exploring the beach, dunes, and sloughs surrounding the Pajaro River mouth. We expect to see a variety of gulls, terns, shorebirds, raptors, and landbirds. Species may include Snowy Plover, Elegant, Forster's and Caspian Terns, American Avocet, Brown Pelican, and Sooty Shearwater.

**Directions:** Meet at the Red Roof Inn parking lot on Lee Rd., Watsonville at 8:00 a.m. We will be carpooling from there. Be prepared for possibly walking a few miles on the beach.

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

 **Big Year** **Wednesday, August 13**  
**Open Itinerary**

An open itinerary will allow us to decide on the day of the trip where to go for this half day outing, depending on what spots are hot and what rarities may be around. We'll likely visit mid-county spots and/or the Pajaro Valley wetlands for possible rare shorebirds. Bring a snack in case we bird through lunch.

**Directions:** Meet 9:00 a.m. at Felker St. beside Denny's, off Ocean St. Extension in Santa Cruz.

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

 **Big Year** **Friday, August 15**  
**Neary Lagoon**

We'll look for dispersing and early migrant passerines and others.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the west entrance, off California St. near the intersection with Bay St.

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

 **Big Year** **Friday, August 22**  
**Meder Canyon**

A good time for western passerine migrants.

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

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

 **Big Year** **Wednesday, August 27**  
**Open Itinerary**

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

 **Big Year** **Saturday, August 30**  
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**Directions:** Meet at the unpaved parking lot at the Red Roof Inn on Beach St. near the intersection with Lee Rd. at 8:00 a.m.

**Leader:** Roger Wolfe, rogwolfe@cruzio.com



*Birders (front-to-back) Sharon Hull, Nanci Adams, and Lois Goldfrank are checking in all directions to locate the maximum number of species on a trip. March 5, 2008 photo by David Suddjian.*





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## OPPORTUNITIES: BIG YEAR AT 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**

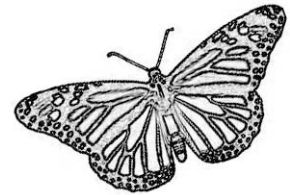
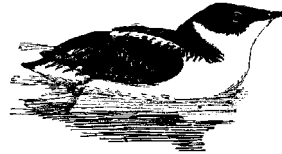
- Special Trip Dates: September 26 and October 12, 2008
- Itinerary: 8-hour trip departing Santa Cruz at 7:00 a.m.
- Cost: \$115 for SCBC members (\$145 for non-members). Discounted reservations must be made in advance and are nonrefundable and nontransferable. Price does not include possible fuel surcharge. 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.

**Special Event May 16-18, 2008**

## **Wings Over The Basin**



Big Basin Redwoods State Park invites you to the 7th Annual Wings Over the Basin on May 16 - 18, 2008. Several walks will be offered which focus on birds and butterflies, plus a campfire program with feathered guests! You are invited to join us for any or all of the events; come for the day, or come for the weekend.

Details about the schedule and reserving a camping space can be found at our website:

<http://home.comcast.net/~wingsoverthebasin/>

### **Friday, May 16:**

7:15 PM—Owls of the Redwood Forest  
(led by Jan Hintermeister)

### **Saturday, May 17:**

8:15 AM—Birds and Butterflies at the Edge of Big Basin (drive/walk with Kay Partelow & Paul Johnson)

3:00 PM—Once Upon a Nest (Steve & Stephanie Singer)

5:30 PM—Potluck Dinner for Birders and Butterflies

7:30 PM—"Hunters of the Sky" Campfire Program (Karen Hoyt)

### **Sunday, May 18:**

5:15 AM—Dawn Marbled Murrelet Survey (Matthew Strusis-Timmer)

7:00 AM—Birding by Ear with Todd Newberry

12:00 Noon—Peter and the Wolf Big Basin Style (Karen DeMello)

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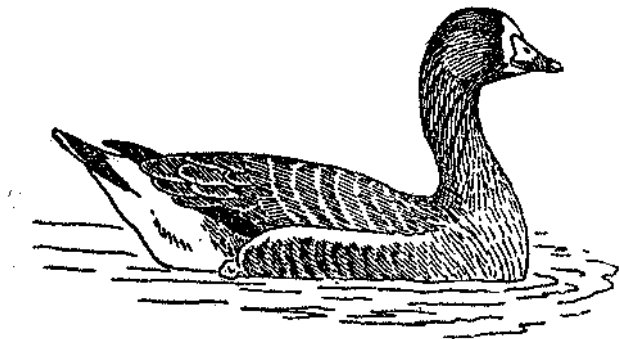
# Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from January 1 to February 29, 2008

\* \* \*

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** at College Lake on January 9 (JM) was the first in the county this winter, late for a first arrival. Up to five were in the sloughs west of Watsonville from January 18 to February 29 (RW, JS, v.ob.). Away from the Pajaro Valley, one at Antonelli Pond on February 7 (SG, AS) was probably the same bird seen flying nearby on February 10 (AG, EB). Several **Snow Geese** were at College Lake and Watsonville Slough through January and early February (v.ob.). The high count was eight at Watsonville Slough on January 19 (RgW et al.); two there on February 23 (SR) were the latest. The Pajaro Valley also had a fairly good showing of **Ross's Geese**, with up to eight at both College Lake and Watsonville Slough in January. Only one lingered later, staying at Watsonville Slough until February 23 (RW, SR, v.ob.).



**Cackling Geese** were fairly widespread in the Pajaro Valley through the end of February, with a high count of 20 at Struve and Watsonville Sloughs on January 3 (DS et al.). A flock of six **Brant** flying up the western Santa Cruz coast February 18 were the only ones reported through the period and were likely early northbound migrants (RRa, BAR, SG). Early January brought high numbers of **Tundra Swans** to the Pajaro Valley, with 23 in the Santa Cruz County portion of the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (DS, JW, EL, et al.). College Lake hosted at least 18 on January 2 (SS, PM, AR), a high count for this area. Numbers diminished after that, but a few lingered into late February.

**Eurasian Wigeon** had a great season in the Pajaro Valley area, with numerous reports through February 23 representing at least six or seven different birds (v.ob.), a new record for the county. Struve Slough alone had four males plus a probable female on January 1 (EL, MC, et al.). There was also a hybrid male **Eurasian Wigeon X American**

**Wigeon** at Struve Slough from January 3-7 (AD, DS). Two male **Blue-winged Teal** appeared at Neary Lagoon on January 6 (PVL), for a rare winter report from Santa Cruz. The highest count among several south county reports of Blue-wings was five at College Lake on January 19 (PS, NC). A flock of 55 **Northern Pintails** flying over the ocean off Terrace Point (KA et al.) was a nice number for the area, but otherwise wintering Pintails were scarce in the county.

A **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** ("Common Teal") at Struve Slough on January 7 (AD) was only the 2nd or 3rd county record of this rare form. There were several reports of **Redheads** in the Pajaro Valley, with the highest counts being two males and a female at College Lake on January 1 (DS) and three males at Watsonville Slough on February 16 (RW). The strong showing by **Greater Scaup** reported in the last issue grew to unprecedented numbers in mid-January, including 170+ at Schwan Lake January 16-19 (DS, JM), setting a new record for the county. Thirty-eight at College Lake on February 7 was very good for an inland site (DS), and nine at Swanton Pond February 13 was a high for the north coast (DS). More than usual were also reported swimming on the ocean at various spots (v.ob.).

**White-winged Scoters** were in better than average numbers from January 1 into mid-February, but an amazing count of 215 (!) off Sunset State Beach on February 12 (DS, et al.) was well out of proportion with all other counts in recent decades. Only one was left there on February 16 (RW), and there were no records of the species in the county after that date, suggesting the huge aggregation on the 12th was a staging of migrants. **Black Scoters** included a young male by the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf from January 7 to February 26 (SG, PB, JW, KA, v.ob.), a female at Pot Belly Beach on February 22 (RW), and a male at Seacliff State Beach on February 28 (RW). **Common Goldeneyes** were also reported in high numbers and were more widespread than usual in the county (v.ob.).

Overshadowing these, and arguably the most notable highlight of this remarkable season for waterfowl, was a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes from January 3-31 (DW, v.ob.). This well-photographed bird was one of very few records for Santa Cruz County, the first since 2003, and was seen by more observers than any previous county record. **Hooded Mergansers** away from their regular Pajaro Valley haunts included one at Younger Lagoon on February 1 (KA), a pair at Roaring Camp from February 2-9 (IM, LB), and five or more frequenting several ponds around Scotts Valley from January 7 to February 23 (PM). A **Pacific Loon** at Pinto Lake January 1-3 was rare inland (RRa, DS, et al.).

**Red-necked Grebe** reports included two off Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB), and singles off West Cliff Drive

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February 15-23 (PB, SG, RRa, BAR, JS, SR, v.ob.), and Terrace Point February 18 (SG). With not a single report of any kind of shearwater, and only a few **Northern Fulmars**, it was a very poor year for Procellariids in Santa Cruz County waters. **American White Pelicans** were reported regularly in the Pajaro Valley until January 20 (v.ob.), then apparently disappeared from the county for a while, with some found again beginning February 29 (RW). A **Cattle Egret** turned up at Younger Lagoon on January 26 (LG); this species has been quite rare in the county in recent years.

The high number of **White-faced Ibis** reported from the Watsonville area in late December continued into the beginning of the New Year, with 13 counted at Struve Slough on January 1 (EL, JW, et. al.). Numbers declined after that, but up to two lingered into early March (v.ob.). Among the season's most outstanding finds was a **Crested Caracara** perched atop a tree in Pogonip on February 27 (JH et al.), likely a first-year bird, but it is hard to be certain from the photograph. The bird was looked for extensively afterward and not refound, but one reported prior to this observation at Año Nuevo, and one afterward near Gilroy, suggest there may have been one bird wandering widely through the region. This is the 2nd or 3rd record for Santa Cruz County (depending on whether records near Davenport in 2002 and 2005-6 involved one or two individuals.)

There were 36 reports of **Merlin** from December 1 to February 29, for a fairly average winter showing. One adult male around western Santa Cruz from January 12 to February 12 showed characteristics of the locally rare Prairie form (ssp. *richardsonii*) (MS, SG) and was possibly a returning bird spending its second winter. A **Prairie Falcon**, always rare in Santa Cruz County, was at Struve Slough on January 1 (BR, JE). Numerous **Black Oystercatchers** continued to use Greyhound Rock as a roost site during high tide and windy weather; the high count this winter was 48 on February 13 (DS). **American Avocets** out of place away from the Pajaro Valley included one at Seacliff Beach on January 9 and a breeding-plumaged male at the mouth of Waddell Creek on February 29 (DS). A **Wandering Tattler**, rare in winter in recent years, was along West Cliff Drive from January 15 to February 15 (JW, SG, LG, PB, v.ob.).

**Ruddy Turnstones** remained absent, with no reports through the period. The **Rock Sandpiper** continued to roam the West Cliff Drive area into early March (v.ob.). As in past years, it was an unpredictable wanderer—no one saw it despite much searching from January 9 until it was found again February 26 (PB), after which it was observed fairly regularly until March 4. A would-be first county record of a **Slaty-backed Gull** was studied and photographed by an experienced observer at Harkins Slough on

January 26, then again later that same day at Sunset State Beach (TE). Unfortunately it was not found again, and the photos and notes from this observation, while suggestive of the species, are probably not sufficient to confirm the identification.

Four or five **Glaucous Gulls** were found from January 31 to February 29 (v.ob.). Most were first-year gulls, but one at Baldwin Creek Beach from February 26 to March 5 was a rarer 2nd cycle bird (JP, BAR, DS, et al.). Uncommon hybrid gulls reported included a 1st cycle **Glaucous Gull X Glaucous-winged Gull** at Baldwin Creek Beach on January 10 (JP), with a 2nd cycle bird showing characteristics of that combination at the same spot on February 6 (JP, PB) and a probable **Glaucous Gull X Herring Gull** hybrid along West Cliff Drive on February 3 (SG). A **Black Skimmer** was photographed at Seabright Beach on January 29 (MP). A **Pigeon Guillemot**, rare in winter, was off Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB). In general, Alcids seemed to be quite scarce in Santa Cruz County waters this winter.



*The gull flock at Baldwin Creek Beach on March 5, 2008. A 2nd-cycle **Glaucous Gull** is at the far right. Photo by David Suddjian.*

**Band-tailed Pigeons** are known to nest outside the usual spring–summer period, but there has been little specific evidence of that from our county. Thus, a nest with half-grown chick at Huckleberry Campground in Big Basin on February 11 was of interest (DS). Daily high temperatures in that campground during January and February seldom rise above the mid-40s. Impressive tallies of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** from two of their centers of occurrence were 58 along College and Lakeview roads east of Watsonville on January 31, and 18 in the Mar Vista Road neighborhood of Seacliff on February 8 (DS). **Long-eared Owls** continued at O'Neill Ranch in Soquel, with one seen leaving the roost in January and two on February 4 (DS et al.).

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Another was found roosting near Cabrillo College on January 9-10 (FM).

Mission Spring's **Red-naped Sapsucker** lingered to January 13 (PM, MS-T, LG, WG). The **Williamson's Sapsucker** at China Grade eluded many seekers in early January. It was re-found February 11-15 (DS, RW), but still managed to avoid most birders. An **American Crow** at Big Basin on February 27 was only the second record for the interior region of the park (DS), but it was followed by several more in March. Perhaps these presage colonization of that forested region by the county's expanding population—an unwelcome addition of a predator for the park's beleaguered **Marbled Murrelets**. Additional **Barn Swallows** from January 1-16 (NK, BMon, AD, SG, LG) brought the December–January total up to 16 individuals, plus one on February 18 (SG) that was perhaps part of the early winter movement rather than a returning breeder.

Thirteen **Western Bluebirds** were found at four places in the Santa Cruz County portion of the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (LG, WG, MSc, BRe, RRa, BAR, DS). Two bluebirds at Anna Jean Cummings Park in Soquel on February 23 were the first in Soquel in quite a while (EF), and at least two continued at Back Ranch Road into March (TH). After a moderate to light presence in early winter, **American Robins** seemed to move into the county during late January, with several reports of large roosts and of flocks flying over, especially from mountain areas. Then numbers seemed to decline after early February. **Varied Thrush** remained uncommon to rare in most areas, but was locally numerous. For example, 478 were tallied on surveys along 22 miles of trails in Big Basin from February 15 to March 4 (DS). But numbers there were well down from last winter's huge invasion, when 2771 Varied Thrushes were counted on the same survey areas in late January 2007.

It was a slow winter for rare warblers. A **Nashville Warbler** at Meder Canyon on February 1-6 was the only one reported all winter (SG, v.ob.), as was a **Hermit Warbler** at Kelly Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on January 1 (SS, DS). **Black-throated Gray** went unreported until a likely wintering bird was found at Branciforte Dip on March 15 (LG). A **Palm Warbler** was at Watsonville on January 1 (BRe et al.). The **American Redstart** at Natural Bridges stayed into March and delighted many birders (v.ob.). A **Wilson's Warbler** was near College Lake on January 1 (DE). An immature male **Summer Tanager** frequented a backyard in La Selva Beach sporadically from February 24 to March 15, feeding during stormy periods on bees near hives (FM).

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** along the San Lorenzo River near Riverside Drive from January 7 to at least March 19 (SG, v.ob.) was one of few ever documented to over-winter

in the county. Two **Swamp Sparrows** at College Lake on January 1 were the only ones reported this winter, for a very slim showing (DS). **Lincoln's Sparrows** were plentiful, though, with a record count of 93 on the December 15 Santa Cruz CBC and 81 found during partial coverage of the fields around near College Lake on January 1 (DS, SS). **White-throated Sparrow** was less numerous than in most recent years, with just 17 reported from December to February, less than half of the recent five year average. It was missed on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC for the first time since 1987 (fide RRa). An immature **Harris's Sparrow** was at College Lake on January 1 (DS).

Two "Slate-colored" **Dark-eyed Juncos** were reported this winter (LH, DS). An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a feeder near Neary Lagoon from January 11 to at least March 12, molting much of the way to adult plumage by March (PVL, v.ob.). A female **Black-headed Grosbeak** was a brief visitor at a Capitola feeder on January 10 (DS). The only large aggregations of **Tricolored Blackbirds** (500-1000+) were along the north coast at favored spots near Baldwin Creek and around the south end of Swanton Road. A total of 36 found at several spots in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Moss Landing CBC on January 1 (fide RRa) included birds in three areas where they are seldom found; the species has dwindled greatly as a wintering bird in the Pajaro Valley area. Elsewhere, a male along West Cliff Drive on January 20 was out of place (SG).

Wintering **Bullock's Orioles** showed up in Santa Cruz at Bethany Curve on January 14 to February 7 (SG) and near Westlake Park on January 24 (LS). A male **Cassin's Finch** at Middle Ridge in Big Basin on February 27 was one of the best finds of the season (DS). This is the third county record of Cassin's other than those noted during an exceptional montane invasion that occurred in the fall of 1996.

\* \* \*

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Bruce Barrett, Linda Brodman, Phil Brown, Matthew Coale, Nancy Collins, Al DeMartini, Todd Easterla, Jim Edgar, David Ekdahl, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Tonya Haff, Jason Henderson, Laird Henkel, Norman Kikuchi, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Ingrid Mednis, Freddy Menge, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor), Jean Myers, Todd Newberry, Margaret Perham, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette A. Ramer (BAR), Robert Ramer (RRa), Bill Reese (BRe), Alex Rinkert, Steve Rovell, Michelle Scott (MSc), Adam Searcy, Larry Selman, Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, John Sterling, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian, W. Breck Tyler, Paul Van Loan, Jeff Wall, Denise Wight, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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

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## Big Year 2008 is Soaring

The Bird Club's Big Year 2008 is soaring strong into its fourth month of county field trips! As of April 11, we have been out on 34 field trips, with only a couple of planned trips canceled for weather. Our late winter coverage continued along the coast and in the Pajaro Valley with trips into the mountains, too, and coverage in the hills picked up as we move into the exciting spring season. Bonnie Bedzin is still a champion attendee, but she may have been surpassed by Jeff Wall for the title of "Most Trips Attended." Be sure and check out our Big Year page on the SCBC website for a full list of sightings, trip reports and more.

[http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/The\\_Big\\_Year.html](http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/The_Big_Year.html)

A field trip on April 11 added Hooded Oriole at Antonelli Pond, hitting the 200 species mark for the Big Year. The Big Year tally remains at 83% of all the species found in the county up to April 11. Our initial planning goal was 240 species for the year, but I think it is plain that we will easily surpass that and perhaps reach my more challenging goal of 270 species. Since January we have added one to three new species on most trips, and this pace should continue well into spring.

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. As of April 11 we have found two Code 6 species (2%), two Code 5 species (3%), seven Code 4 species (18%), 15 Code 3 species (40%), 73 Code 2 species (73%), and 101 Code 1 species (98%).

In addition to the rarities reported in the last issue for January, we added the Code 6 Rock Sandpiper at West Cliff Drive on March 15, after it had eluded us on a few trips. A cooperative Code 5 Townsend's Solitaire at the UCSC Arboretum on March 23 and March 26 was the first one ever seen in the county on field trip. Additional Code 4 species, all great finds for field trips, were Black Scoter at the Santa Cruz Wharf, Red-necked Grebe at West Cliff Drive, and Glaucous Gull at Baldwin Creek. We continue to progress well in the less rare categories. The only Code 1 species still missing are Sooty Shearwater and Elegant Tern.



*A locally rare Townsend's Solitaire (Code 5), photographed at the UCSC Arboretum by Cindy Cummings.*

We still have opportunities to make up nearly all of the rarer species we have missed thus far. But a few stand out as possible official "misses" since individuals of each were seen both before and after field trips when we tried to find them. Redheads eluded us in the Pajaro Valley. A Red-naped Sapsucker at Mission Springs did not cooperate, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak visiting a Santa Cruz feeder gave us the slip. The county's first ever Vermilion Flycatcher near Antonelli would have been a big coup for the Big Year, but it was a one day wonder, and we did not get a chance to chase it on a trip. A wintering Williamson's Sapsucker at China Grade disappeared before a trip ventured up after it. And a rare spring Palm Warbler at Antonelli failed to show up for the next day's field trip. That last one, at least, we should scoop up in the fall.

Several experienced local birders have already been thrilled to find out about new places in the county. As we move into May and the summer season we will have a chance to enjoy several montane locations never before visited by Bird Club trips, as well as spring sea watches, Poorwill searches, and more. And don't forget to sign up for one or more of our special pelagic birding opportunities in September and October. Please mark your calendars for all the fun, and help make our many trips as great as they can be!

*David Suddjian*

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# Viola Washburn

## Bird Club's Last Surviving Charter Member Passes Away

*by David Suddjian, Historian*

We were saddened to learn that Viola Washburn died on February 17, 2008 at the wonderful age of 101 years. As far as we are aware, Viola was the last surviving charter member of the Santa Cruz Bird Club, present at its founding meeting in January 1956, and she remained a member up until her death. Viola was an active member of the Club in its first three decades, publishing a book in 1982 that chronicled the Club's first 25 years. You can read more about her participation in parts 1-3 of my history of the Club's first 50 years, on the club web site:

<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/David's%20Articles/history50.htm>

From Viola's obituary in the Santa Cruz Sentinel:

*Viola M. Washburn of Santa Cruz, CA died February 17 at the age of 101. She was born in Clatskanie, Oregon, and moved to California in 1927 where she worked her way through school as a nanny and cook while earning a Bachelors Degree in Education from San Jose State Normal School. San Jose, CA. Viola taught in elementary and secondary schools in Oregon and CA. She retired from teaching when she married Henry Washburn, the first Santa Cruz Co. Farm Advisor. Upon her husband's retirement, they filmed nine nature films, the Walk Along Series, to teach natural history to children in primary school.*

*Viola was an avid birder, naturalist, author and publisher. Her published books include Birds of Monterey Bay and Once Around the Mountain, a history of Mount Shasta which was a favorite area of Viola's. She was an active member of the Cottage Weavers, Santa Cruz Women's Club, and the Santa Cruz Chapter of the Tri-Is. She was also a charter member of the Santa Cruz Bird Club and helped establish the Women's Auxiliary for both the Santa Cruz Natural History Museum and the Octagon Museum.*

## A Remembrance of Viola Washburn

*by Randy Morgan*

My mom tells me I met Viola Washburn before the Santa Cruz Bird Club even existed. Her husband was the county farm advisor and my parents were among his advisees. Evidently they needed a lot of advice because they got to know the Washburns fairly well. But I was probably too busy out watching birds to notice. Vi came onto my own screen when I finally found the Bird Club.

She seemed grandmotherly but not especially old, and she never seemed to age much as long as I knew her. Along with Viola Anderson she was one of "The Two Vi's", both of them mainstays of the Club all through the 1960s and into the 70s, always on hand when something needed doing. They had different personalities, of course. Vi A. was something of a character, with a quirky sense of humor, and Vi W. was more low-key, steady, unflappable. She seemed very solid, down-to-earth. Like several other core members of the Club in its early years, Vi belonged to a dedicated little fraternity of amateur bird-banders, volunteers who set up various kinds of traps and nets in their back gardens, keeping detailed records of the birds they banded or recaptured, sending in annual reports... a short-lived phenomenon, but engrossing enough while it lasted.

Probably the best time I spent with Vi was about 1973 when I was going around picking the brains of some SCBC old-timers about their local birding memories and records. Vi invited me to her house on Escalona Drive for a very pleasant afternoon's chat—at least it was pleasant for me. She was a very indulgent interviewee and too gracious a host to show it if I was wearing her out with my questions. It hardly seems like 35 years ago.

Many times I have felt like paying her another visit but somehow never got around to it. Every time I would drive past that beautiful old house I would imagine her there, the same Vi I knew all those years ago, and wonder if it was possible she was really still there. And to think, all that time, she was. And what a chance we missed to throw a grateful happy 100 birthday party for our last founding member.

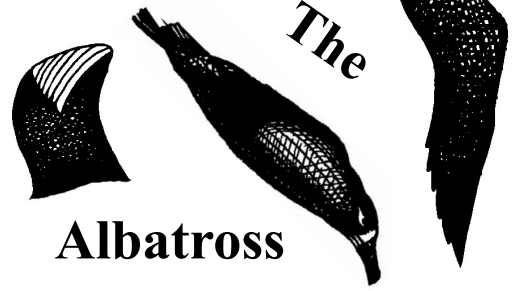
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## New SCBC members

Janet Slay 2/08  
Dennis Porter 3/08  
Ruth Kerr 3/08  
Kirsten Liske 3/08  
Betsy Eakman 3/08  
Nolan Lameka 3/08  
Mayilyn Brennan 4/08  
Rod Norden 4/08

***Welcome!***

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:

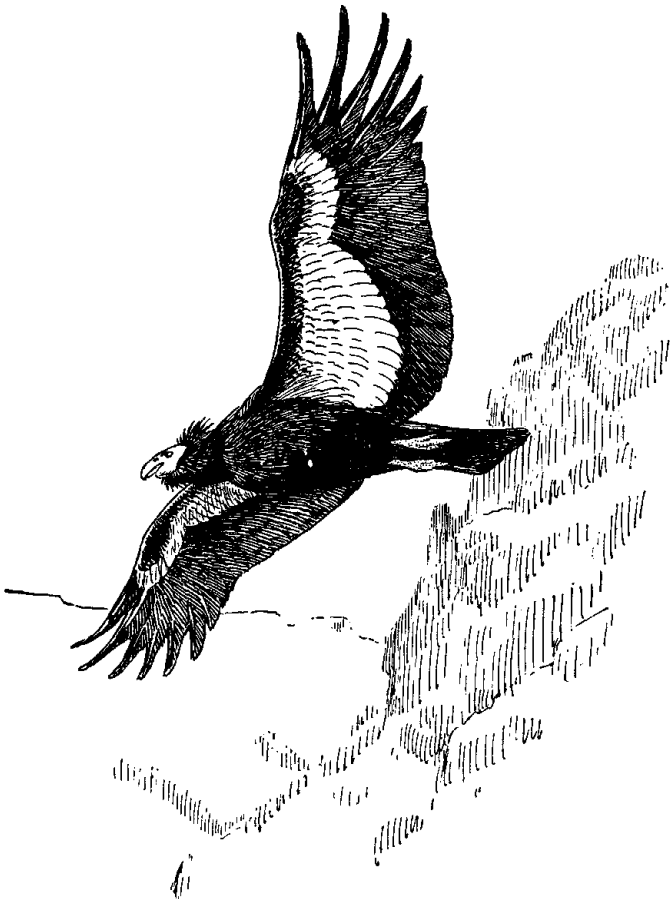
- Feature articles
- Birding event announcements
- Stories about birders, serious or comic
- Reviews of birding literature or guides
- Conservation & outreach reports/stories
- Birding tips, descriptions of local sites
- Filler tidbits: Quotes or images
- Photos of people at our events (jpg, tif)

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](mailto:calqua@sbcglobal.net)

—Judy Donaldson, Editor

**Input deadline for  
the Sept/Oct issue  
of *The Albatross*  
is August 1, 2008**



Santa Cruz Bird Club  
P.O. Box 1304  
Santa Cruz, CA 95061

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**TIME TO RENEW SCBC MEMBERSHIP**

It's that time of year again—time to renew membership in the Santa Cruz Bird Club. Tucked in this issue of *The Albatross* is—ta-DA!— a remittance envelope, which we hope will make dues-paying a tiny bit easier.

To send in a renewal or a donation, just fill in the relevant information, put in a check, and mail. (Please attach postage, too.)

Please pay your dues now, while the envelope is in hand. You will *not* receive the Sept/Oct issue of *The Albatross* this fall if your dues are not paid.



**Make a Gift of Birds and Birding**

For a friend who is interested in birds, an SCBC membership would be a thoughtful gift. Fill in the information for the giftee, and send in the payment. Eventually, envelopes will be available from several club officers and from trip leaders.

**The ALBATROSS**

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<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/>

**Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club**

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