



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

*Big Year
2008*

What a Year!

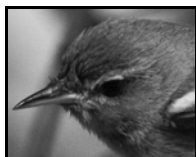
Inside:

**Big Year
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**Santa Cruz
Birds**

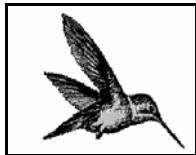


**Quail Hollow
Bluebirds**



CBC Details

**Hummingbird
Happenings**



**Remembering
Dorothy B. Hunt**

The Bird Club's Big Year came home to roost in December 2008. The final month wound up with 14 more field trips and added two new birds, bringing the final tally to a very satisfying 276 species. December field trips focused on the Pajaro Valley and Mid-County Coast areas plus a couple of forays into the mountains. With the easier species either all ticked off or seasonally out of contention, it was mostly a matter of taking chances on finding rarer species. The new additions included a Code 6 Cape May Warbler at Santa Cruz on December 9 and a Code 3 Ancient Murrelet at Sunset State Beach on December 27. A couple of rarities were found in December that we missed on some attempted chases (notably Costa's Hummingbird, Northern Parula, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak), but the diversity of rare birds found this winter was not high in our county. Check out our Big Year page on the SCBC website for a full list of sightings and trip reports.

http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/The_Big_Year.html

For all of 2008, we fielded an amazing 147 field trips in Santa Cruz County (SCZ), averaging one official outing every 2.5 days! This was a huge increase over the number of trips the Club had offered in recent years, nearly eightfold more than in the last 10 years (Figure 1, page 7). Only four trips had to be cancelled without rescheduling—two due to weather, one to illness, and one to wildfire. We had a steady pace of outings through the seasons with peaks in spring and especially in fall (Figure 2, page 7).

Most trips had 6-11 participants with a high of 26 and a low of one. Some birders only came out occasionally, but some members were "frequent fliers". Phil Brown and Jeff Wall led the pack, each attending approximately 75 trips! Other addicted participants were Margaret Perham and Rich Griffith (56 trips), Steve Gerow (53), David Suddjian (42), Wendy Naruo (40), Lois Goldfrank (25), and David Sidle (25). Wendy deserves special mention in this regard, as she only took up birding in spring 2008, and almost all of her trip attendance was from June onwards! Bonnie Bedzin did not report the number of trips she attended but admitted that seeking gainful employment paled in comparison to the chance to attend 40 or 50 field trips. Now that is Club spirit!

[continued on page 6]

Events Calendar

March - April 2009

Check the online SCBC Calendar of Events for any recent updates.

<http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org>

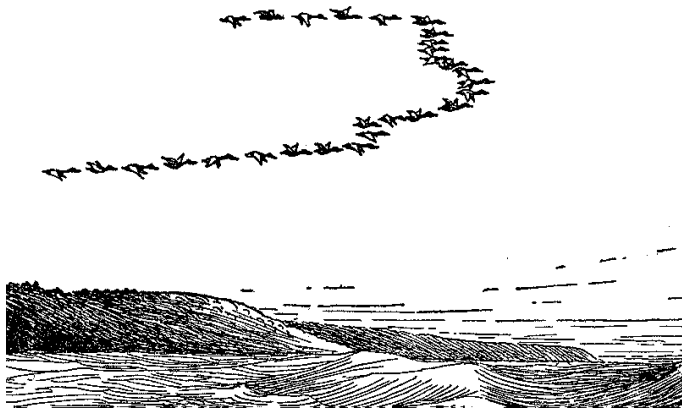


Sunday, March 1 Beginning Bird Walk Natural Bridges State Beach

A morning walk in a local birding hotspot with a variety of habitats.

Directions: Meet at the Delaware Road entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach at 8:30 AM. Heavy rain cancels.

Leader: Phil Brown, pdpbrown@gmail.com



Thursday, March 5 Harkins Slough

A morning walk into the more intimate eastern reaches of Harkins Slough to explore a currently restricted-access federal reserve area.

Directions: Meet at Aptos Wells Fargo at 7:00 AM.

Rain or shine.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741



Friday, March 6 Santa Cruz Wharf area

We'll look for wintering birds and early migrants in the wharf, main beach, and San Lorenzo River mouth areas and possibly elsewhere, depending on what is around.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM in the parking lot by the start of the wharf, off Beach Street, across from the end of Front Street.

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

SPECIAL EVENT



Saturday March 7 Hummingbird Day at the UCSC Arboretum

This annual festival at the UCSC Arboretum features a whole day of activities, including a slide presentation on hummingbird natural history by SCBC's own David Suddjian at 11:00 a.m.

See the details on page 21.



Friday, March 13 Natural Bridges and vicinity

We may also check Antonelli Pond, the Terrace Point area, and/or other nearby spots.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sunday, March 15
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 Road in Watsonville.

Leader: Rod Norden, norden@rodnorden.com



Friday, March 20
Afternoon at the Pajaro Valley

This late afternoon-to-sunset foray will seek wintering waterbirds and others in the sloughs of Watsonville, with a likely excursion to Pajaro Dunes, too.

Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 3:00 PM at parking lot behind the West Marine building along Struve slough, off Harkins Slough Road in Watsonville.

Leader: David Suddjian dsuddjian@aol.com



Wednesday, March 25
Seawatch and North Coast

We will begin early in the morning at El Jarro Point near Davenport Landing to watch for migrating seabirds. The flight is often best close to sunrise, but late risers can join a bit after. Late March is a good time for Brant, scoters, possible Black-legged Kittiwake, and maybe even Black-footed Albatross. Other possibilities include loons, auklets, murrelets, and gray whales. A spotting scope is very helpful, but come even if you don't have one. Dress warmly—gloves advised! After a couple hours of watching, pending weather, we will visit one or two other spots along the north coast. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 AM at Davenport Landing. From Davenport go north on Highway 1, then turn left at the first road (Davenport Landing Road), go a short way, and park at the beach access. We will walk directly out to the point from there. Late-comers can join us when they like, but after a couple hours we may go off to another site on the north coast. From the beach access parking area, go up the unmarked path on hill on the northwest side of the access (close to the road), then turn left at the top of the slope, and walk along the old farm road for about 5 minutes to reach the point.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Thursday, March 26
SCBC Meeting @ 7:30 p.m.
Speaker: Peter Kappes

Common Murre Breeding Ground Restoration

Peter Kappes, from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, will present his work with the Common Murre Restoration Project on the Central California coast. Starting in 1995, the project successfully reestablished a breeding colony of Common Murres at Devil's Slide Rock on the San Mateo coast. The colony was wiped out as a result of a 1986 oil spill. Peter will discuss the techniques used to restore the murre colonies and the results of the project's efforts, including continuing monitoring of colonies on the California coast. Peter has a Masters Degree in Environmental Science and is currently monitoring anthropogenic disturbances at important seabird nesting and roosting sites. These data will be used to designate marine protected areas along the central California coast

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



Friday, March 27
Lighthouse Field and
West Cliff Drive

A search for spring migrant land, shore, and sea birds. Pigeon Guillemots should be back in their nesting areas, and there is a chance for the Rock Sandpiper in breeding plumage.

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

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



*Birding at West Cliff Dr.—Steve Gerow & David Sidle.
Photo by David Suddjian.*



**Saturday
Beginners Bird Walk
at Mission Springs**

Come and learn the craft of identifying birds by sight and sound.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the Wild Oak portion of Mission Springs Conference Center in Scotts Valley. From Mt. Hermon Rd., just north of Scotts Valley, take Lockhart Gulch Road 0.5 miles and veer right onto Nelson Rd. The entrance to Wild Oak is on the left after 1 mile. Park to the right before crossing the bridge.

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



**Friday, April 10
Moore Creek Preserve**

We should find Grasshopper Sparrows and other grassland specialties plus a good variety of native plants and often a bobcat or a coyote or two.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM on Shaffer Road across from the intersection with Mission Street.

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



**Saturday, April 11
Elkhorn Slough**

We will bird Elkhorn Slough looking for spring shorebirds. This will be a morning trip that can extend into the afternoon.

Directions: Meet at Aptos Wells Fargo at 7:00 AM. We will be on Jetty Rd at 8:00 AM, then decide from late-breaking reports where to go up-slough from there. Rain or shine.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741



**Friday, April 17
San Lorenzo River**

Taking advantage of the new footbridge, we will head upstream from the park on the east levee and come back on the west side of the river. A variety of migrant passerines are possible, and there is even a slight chance of a Solitary Sandpiper.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at San Lorenzo Park by the duck pond.

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



**Saturday, April 18
Seawatch and North Coast**

See description for similar March 25 trip. Highlights in mid-April should include large numbers of loons, breeding plumaged Bonaparte's Gulls, and maybe shearwaters. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 6:30 AM at Davenport Landing. See detailed directions for the March 25 trip. Again, late-comers may arrive at the point after the meeting time, but eventually we will go off to one or two other north coast sites.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com

SPECIAL EVENT



**Saturday, April 18
Mission Springs Outdoor Education
BIRD-A-THON**

This event raises scholarship money to help underprivileged students attend science camp. Participants seek to find as many bird species as possible within Santa Cruz County on the day of the event. See the details on page 22.



**Sunday, April 19
Quail Hollow County Park**

A morning walk in one of the quieter parks in Santa Cruz county. Expected species for the trip include Ash-throated Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, and maybe a Bullock's Oriole.

Directions: Meet at the Quail Hollow CP parking lot at 8:00 AM.

Leader: Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



Wednesday, April 22
Seawatch and North Coast

See description for similar March 25 trip. By this date we are at the peak of migration for Pacific Loon, and we might hope for a Franklin's Gull and migrating shorebirds. This is also a great time for migrant landbirds. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 6:30 AM at Davenport Landing. See detailed directions for the March 25 trip. Again, late-comers may arrive at the point after the meeting time, but eventually we will go off to one or two other north coast sites.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Thursday, April 23
SCBC Meeting @ 7:30pm
Speaker: Matthew Strusis-Timmer

Life history, nesting ecology, and conservation of the Yellow Warbler

Come and learn about a local research project focused on one of our disappearing songbirds. Matthew, a graduate student at San Jose State University, will share from his experiences studying the Yellow Warbler in Santa Cruz County for his Master's thesis research. You will learn about current scientific theory (gasp!—don't worry, it won't be so bad) and common techniques used in avian research and conservation biology. He will also discuss conservation and management challenges for this species.

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



A Yellow Warbler nest with a Brown Cowbird egg.
Photo by Matthew Strusis-Timmer.



Friday, April 24
Watsonville Sloughs

A search for migrants and breeding birds in the marsh and riparian habitats in this area. We will look for the land birds that utilize this habitat, as well as any water or shore birds that might be around. We will also explore the habitat itself, including dominant plants and other wildlife.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the Watsonville Wetlands Nature Center, 30 Harkins Slough Road (the south side of Ramsay Park) in Watsonville.

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



Saturday, April 25
Upper Henry Cowell State Park

Spend the morning hiking the forests of the upper portion of Henry Cowell State Park, including the rare Santa Cruz sandhills. We'll look and listen for lingering wintering birds and returning migrants. Expect to walk a few miles. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 6:30 AM at the gravel parking lot on Graham Hill Rd. approx. 1.5 miles south of the Henry Cowell campground entrance.

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



Franklin's Gull



Wednesday, April 29
Seawatch and North Coast

See description for similar March 25 trip. We should have a nice cross section of seabirds, plus good timing for a Franklin's Gull. This is also a great time for migrant landbirds. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 6:15 AM at Davenport Landing. See detailed directions for the March 25 trip. Again, late-comers may arrive at the point after the meeting time, but eventually we will go off to one or two other north coast sites.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com

[What a Year! continued]

One goal of the Big Year was to increase the number of active field trip leaders. In 2008 we had 21 leaders, including several that were new leaders for the bird club and some who had occasionally led trips for us in the past. We are grateful for all our fine leaders! As Jeff Wall noted, “The chance for expert guidance 2-3 times a week for a year doesn’t come along very often.” Participation by some leaders was substantial. Steve Gerow set a record for Most Trips Led In One Year as he captained 45 field trips! David Suddjian led 37 trips. Others leading four or more trips included Phil Brown (8 trips), Todd Newberry (8), Roger Wolfe (8), Eric Feuss (7), Bernadette Ramer (6), Bob Ramer (5), Kumaran Arul (4), Rod Norden (4), and Scott Smithson (4).



Seawatch in the rain, December 14, 2008. Photo by David Sidle.

We visited 89 different locations in SCZ in 2008! Many were places the club had never or only rarely visited on a field trip, so there were lots of opportunities for birders to learn about new places to bird! Each region of the county was well represented, with some emphasis on the centrally-located and productive Mid-County Coast (29 locations). We also visited 21 locations in the Pajaro Valley area, 20 in the Mountains, and 19 in the North Coast area. We had five pelagic trips out on Monterey Bay, for which we are indebted to Monterey Seabirds (3 trips) and Shearwater Journeys (2 trips), as each offered discounts to club members.

Of course, birding hot spots were visited multiple times. Natural Bridges was the most frequently visited site (31 trips), followed by Struve and Watsonville Sloughs (23+), Antonelli Pond (16), Pajaro Dunes (13), and Terrace Point (13). In addition to such bread-and-butter destinations, we also offered a number of specialty trips. Along with the pelagic trips, these included nine opportunities for nighttime owling, trips focused on Common Poorwill, Black Swift, Dusky Flycatcher, and American Dipper, seawatches, and Roger Wolfe’s popular waterfowl roundups.

We surpassed both our initial easy goal of 240 species (with Black-chinned Hummingbird on August 15) and our second goal of 270 species (with Orchard Oriole on October 29). From an inauspicious beginning with Rock Pigeon as species #1, we added species steadily through the year, but with a steep increase from January to April and another significant rise from September to October (Figure 3, page 7). This pattern matched the typical pattern for accumulation of species on our collective county year lists. Our Big Year tally of 276 was 84% of the collective 329 species found in SCZ in 2008. We ended up with 103 Code 1 species (100%), 99 Code 2s (99%), 32 Code 3s (86%), 22 Code 4s (56%), 13 Code 5s (21%), and seven Code 6s (8%). We might have actually scored much better on rare birds in another year, but 2008 had relatively poor showings for vagrant landbirds in spring and fall and a very slow fall shorebird season. Still, we had a nice selection of rarities, many that were new species for Bird Club trips in SCZ. Code 6s were the cream of the crop: Barrow’s Goldeneye, Mountain Plover, Rock Sandpiper, Dusky Warbler, Gray Catbird, Cape May Warbler, and Black-throated Sparrow. The Dusky Warbler was easily the best regional rarity, but the nod for Best Big Year Bird might have to go to Mountain Plover, as that species was first found on one of our field trips (unlike all other Code 6s), and for those who were there to experience the circumstances, its discovery was a real highlight of the year! The list of Code 5s—all outstanding finds—includes Eurasian Wigeon, Laysan Albatross, Manx Shearwater, Rough-legged Hawk, Solitary Sandpiper, Red Knot, Townsend’s Solitaire, Northern Parula, Blackburnian Warbler, Summer Tanager, Harris’s Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, and Orchard Oriole. Solitary Sandpiper gets special appreciation, as Steve Gerow had the guts to actually advertise it for a May 2 trip, and then he found it just minutes into the outing!

Leaders submitted trip lists on our website for all but two of the 147 trips. These revealed which species were our most constant companions. As expected, the most frequent are all species that are present year-round. Western Scrub-Jay led the pack, appearing on 125 trips. Other common birds found on at least 100 trips were: Anna's Hummingbird (122), House Finch (121), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (120), California Towhee (120), Black Phoebe (119), Mourning Dove (114), Bushtit (113), Bewick's Wren (112), Brewer's Blackbird (112), American Robin (111), European Starling (109), Song Sparrow (105), California Gull (103), Mallard (100), Red-tailed Hawk (100), and Spotted Towhee (100). Among seasonal species, Golden-crowned Sparrow was the most frequently found winter season migrant (81 trips), and Barn Swallow was the most frequent breeding season migrant (53 trips). Some regularly-occurring species were found less often than might be expected, such as Varied Thrush (7 trips), Canvasback (5), Bullock's Oriole (5), Cassin's Vireo (4), Loggerhead Shrike (3), Brant (2), Golden Eagle (2), White-throated Sparrow (1). An impressive 39 species were only found on one trip!

And we had some misses of species we could have expected to find—regulars that did not appear and rarities we tried for and missed. Three expected species never showed up in SCZ in 2008: Short-tailed Shearwater, Arctic Tern, and Lawrence's Goldfinch. Others that were located and that we had a decent chance for on trips (but didn't find) included Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, Semipalmated and Baird's Sandpipers, Red-naped Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Red-throated Pipit, Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting.

But with the Big Year now behind us, we can hold on to all the positive elements the effort brought to SCBC and the participants. We met new people and grew in friendship with old friends. We visited many new places. We saw many new birds, both lifers and species that were new for the county. We had many laughs and good times doing what we love to do. New leaders were brought into action, and already in 2009 we are keeping a lively pace with many more field trips each month than we offered before the Big Year. We offer thanks to all the leaders, to Phil Brown our Field Trip Coordinator, to the Big Year planning team, and to Barry and Quinn McLaughlin for developing our webpage. It was, as Bonnie said,

“EXTRAORDINARY!”

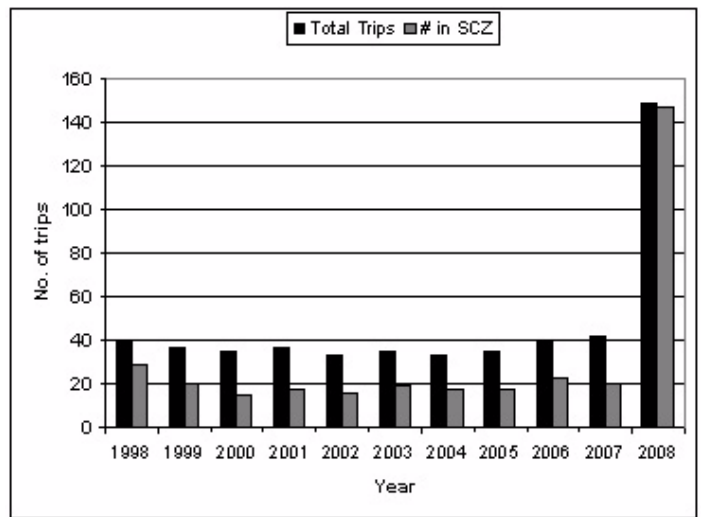


Figure 1. The number of field trips in 2008 was much higher than in recent years.

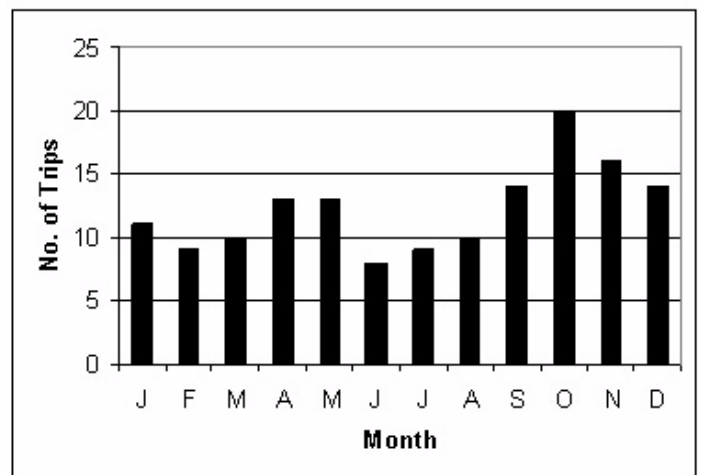


Figure 2. Each month was busy with trips, with most in spring and fall.

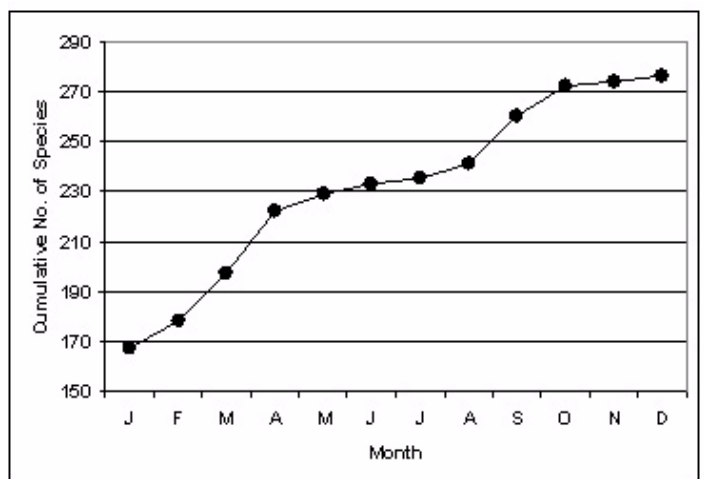


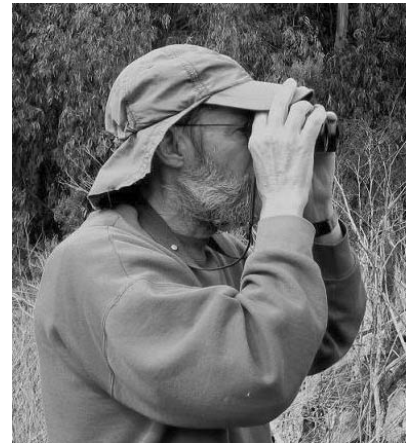
Figure 3. Species were added steadily through the year, with peaks in spring and fall.

Looking back at the **Big Year**, participants share their experience.

Photos by David Suddjian



Extraordinary!
~Bonnie Bedzin



*I saw more and learned more
than in any other period
of my birding history.*
~Jeff Wall



*I had not planned on doing
the Big Year...[but 75 field
trips later]...I had 270
species on my year list.*
~Phil Brown



*Nearly every day that
I was free to bird, there
was always an interesting
trip scheduled.*
~Alex Rinkert

*Meeting all the great people and learning
about new places in Santa Cruz County
were highlights.*
~Wendy Naruo



*The SCBC seems to have come to life
in a new way!*
~Lois Goldfrank

Santa Cruz Birds

*By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow
Including reports from
November 1 to December 31, 2008*

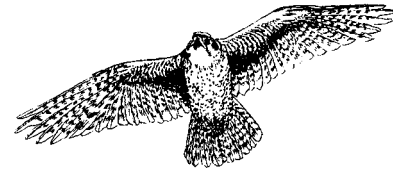
The good fall showing of **Greater White-fronted Geese** in the Watsonville Slough system continued with reports regularly exceeding 20 birds through November and in somewhat smaller numbers through December. The highest single site count during this period was 35 at West Struve Slough November 29 (JWa). Elsewhere, one stayed at San Lorenzo Park through the period (v.ob.), two flew over Antonelli Pond November 19 (OJ), and College Lake had one on November 30 (JM) and five on December 9 (DLSu, JHW, WN). A flock of 30-50 **Snow Geese** flew over Corralitos on November 15 (HS). Three swam in the lagoon at Rio Del Mar Beach on November 19 (JP), and there were various reports of 1-4 birds in the Watsonville Sloughs and College Lake (v.ob.). High counts among several Pajaro Valley reports of **Ross's Geese** included five at West Struve Slough November 3 (CK) and five at College Lake December 19 (JWa).

Notably large numbers of **Cackling Geese** for the county included a flock of 63 flying over Capitola on November 9 (DSu). In a flock of 79 at College Lake on November 30 (JM), most were apparently of the Aleutian form. Also showing characteristics of Aleutian cacklers were one staying at San Lorenzo Park through the period (SG, OJ, v.ob.) and two that stopped at Aptos Creek mouth November 2 (fide DSu). There were also several other reports of 1-5 Cackling Geese from various Pajaro Valley spots. **Canada Geese** were common in the Pajaro Valley, but the only report away from there was one at a pond on Glen Canyon Road on December 20 (BS et al). **Wood Ducks** continued in above average numbers at Neary Lagoon with 25-30 present at least through late December (MC, SG). A healthy total of 63 on the December 20 Santa Cruz County CBC included 18 at Neary Lagoon, 25 along the upper stretch of the San Lorenzo River, 12 in Henry Cowell State Park, and eight in the Scott's Valley area.

Male **Eurasian Wigeon** turned up in Watsonville Slough on November 1 (RW), College Lake on December 19 (JWa), and Struve Slough on December 29 (DSu, DSi, JD). A female **Blue-winged Teal** was at

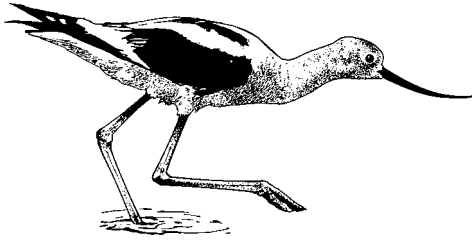
Struve Slough on November 3 (CK), and a male was there on December 29 (DSu, DSi, JD). The only **White-winged Scoters** reported were four among a huge group of Surf Scoters off Sunset State Beach on December 28 (PB). A female-type **Long-tailed Duck** was a rare find off Capitola on December 16 (DSu). **Hooded Mergansers** away from usual locations included one at Antonelli Pond on November 1-4 (SR, SG) and one at Neary Lagoon on December 23 (SG). Other reports were from ponds around Scotts Valley and Felton and at various spots in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.). A record high count of 311 **Red-throated Loons** on the December 20 Santa Cruz County CBC included an impressive 263 counted from shore in the West Cliff Drive area (OJ, LD).

A good showing of **Red-necked Grebes** included one off Capitola December 12-20 (DSu, JD, HS, RS), one off West Cliff Drive near Woodrow from December 20 to January 4 (OJ, LD, v.ob.) and another off West Cliff near Stockton Avenue on December 20 (OJ, LD). **American White Pelicans** were in the Pajaro Valley through November and December with regular reports from the sloughs, Pinto Lake, and College Lake. The high count through this period was 76 at Harkins Slough on November 28 (EL). The only report of **American Bittern** was of two at Pinto Lake on December 28 (BR et al.). **White-faced Ibis** seemed to disappear from the county for a while in November with no reports until two flew by at Harkins Slough on November 29 (JWa). Good numbers had returned to the Pajaro Valley by late December, though, with a high count of 19 at Struve Slough on December 27 (DSu et al.) setting a new winter record for Santa Cruz County.



A sub-adult **Bald Eagle** flying over the Capitola Mall on December 24 made Christmas Eve shopping more interesting than usual (DSu). Juvenile **Ferruginous Hawks** soared over Capitola on November 20 (DSu) and over western Santa Cruz December 4 (SG). Notable among numerous **Merlin** reports was one showing characteristics of the rare Prairie form on November 24 (OJ, TE). **Prairie Falcon** sightings

included one over Capitola on November 13 (DSu) and one flying near Lighthouse Field on December 15 (BM). Two **American Avocets**, rare in the county away from the Pajaro Valley, were on Capitola Beach December 29 (JP, AM, LB). A wintering **Wandering Tattler** appeared along West Cliff Drive on three dates from December 14 to January 13 (WG, SG, DSu, DSI, JD).



Marbled Godwits, formerly rare away from the coast, have become increasingly regular in the Watsonville Slough System in recent years. Still, 45-46 at Harkins Slough November 1-28 was a notably large number for this inland site, especially so late in the season (EL, RW). Twelve were still there December 9 (RW). One or two **Long-billed Curlews** were reported off and on through the period in the area from Santa Cruz to Wilder Ranch (v.ob.), and one was in the Sunset State Beach/Pajaro Dunes area December 28-January 1 (PB, DSu, v.ob.). A **Rock Sandpiper**, presumably the same bird back for its sixth winter, returned to West Cliff Drive on November 19 (SG, v.ob.), and was still present in late January. Unlike prior years when it wandered widely, this year the bird has so far only been reported within a half mile or less of Woodrow Avenue. An impressive movement of **Common Murres** down the coast off Natural Bridges totaled 8,000-10,000 birds over the course of about 1.5 hours (KA). At the peak of this passage murres were moving by at the rate of about 500 per minute!

A flock of 28 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** in western Santa Cruz on November 21 (SG) was one of the largest groups yet reported in the county. Sixty-three on the December 20 Santa Cruz CBC set a new record for the count with reports from eight sections of the count circle also indicating the species' increase. **Burrowing Owls** continued at three places where they were first noted in October: near Yellow Bank Creek, at Wilder Ranch near Fern Grotto, and at UCSC (JL, JB). A **Long-eared Owl** had returned to the roost at O'Neill

Ranch Open Space on December 18-20 (DSu) but was not in evidence on several other dates. A **Common Poorwill** calling near Liddell Creek inland of Davenport on December 20 added to a pattern of recent winter records from that region (MG).

A female **Costa's Hummingbird** at May Avenue in Santa Cruz on December 7-8 was just the second December record for the county, although there was no indication this one spent the winter (BT, LT, RT, OJ, MSc). A trio of **Eastern Phoebes** in November made a strong showing. One was at Natural Bridges State Beach on November 9-10 (JS, SJ, RT, AS). Others were at Gharkey Street in Santa Cruz (SG) and Soquel Creek in Soquel (DSu) on November 17. **Loggerhead Shrikes** were notably scarce in late fall and early winter, with a few in the Watsonville area being the only ones reported. None were reported from the north county coast after September. Observers are encouraged to report all occurrences of this declining species in Santa Cruz County. A **Cassin's Vireo** studied at Soquel Creek in Capitola on December 16 (DSu) was just the second winter record for the county. A **Warbling Vireo** at Ocean View Park in Santa Cruz on December 5 was exceptionally late (SG et al.).



If there was any doubt about the continued growth of our local populations of the big corvids, consider these totals from the December 20 Santa Cruz CBC: 518 **American Crows** and 738 **Common Ravens**. An impressive 191 Crows were found in montane sections of the count circle, where they continue to pioneer and establish themselves as prominent members of the local avifauna. A remarkable flock of up to 58 **Horned Larks** was found in fields near Hanson Slough on December 30 to January 1 (CK, OJ). Horned Larks have declined to near extirpation so that now any of

their rare appearances in the county are notable. But this was a record count for recent decades and was especially notable on the floor of the Pajaro Valley where there have been no other recent winter reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatches continued to be scattered here and there in above average numbers through December, but there was no big winter influx (v.ob.). Single **White-breasted Nuthatches** were at Quail Hollow Ranch on November 8 (AR) and along Empire Grade at Bonny Doon on December 20 (TM, EF). Reports of **Western Bluebirds** included eight near Murphy Crossing on November 23 (EF et al) and two at Back Ranch Road on December 20 (SN). **Nashville Warblers** were at Sunset State Beach on November 9 (OJ) and Jose Street Park in Live Oak on December 26 (DSu). A female **Northern Parula** photographed at UCSC Arboretum on December 28 was quite a surprise and an exceptional winter record, the first for our county (CG). It could not be found on subsequent days, and so was perhaps a very late migrant. A tardy **Yellow Warbler** was at Soquel Creek in Soquel on November 17 (DSu). Another stellar winter warbler was a **Cape May Warbler** visiting several yards at Washburn and Glenwood Avenues in Santa Cruz from at least December 3 to 31 (EM, v.ob.). Remarkably, the bird



Cape May Warbler, photographed by Wendy Naruo on December 9, 2008.

observers. **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were found at San Lorenzo Park on December 5 (PB, SG et al) and at Soquel Creek in Soquel on December 20 (DSu). A **Hermit Warbler** was at New Brighton State Beach on December 20 (DSu). Four **Palm Warblers** were found in December, including birds at Capitola and Santa Cruz that were confirmed to overwinter (SGe, RT et al., DSu, v.ob).

A straggling migrant **Wilson's Warbler** was at Natural Bridges on November 21 (SG et al), and a wintering bird was at New Brighton on December 18 – January 7 (DSu). A female **Summer Tanager** appeared in a eucalyptus grove near Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz in October and remained to at least January 18 (JS). A male at La Selva Beach on December 14 was probably the same one that visited there last winter (FM). A **Western Tanager** was at Maplethorpe Lane in Soquel on December 18-26 (DSu, HD). Three **Chipping Sparrows** along Green Valley Creek at Green Valley Road on December 29 were a surprise (DSu, DSi, JD) with one still in the area on January 1 (SG, MSc). A **Lark Sparrow** was at Natural Bridges on November 11 (MSc), and three were near Murphy Crossing on November 23 (EF et al).

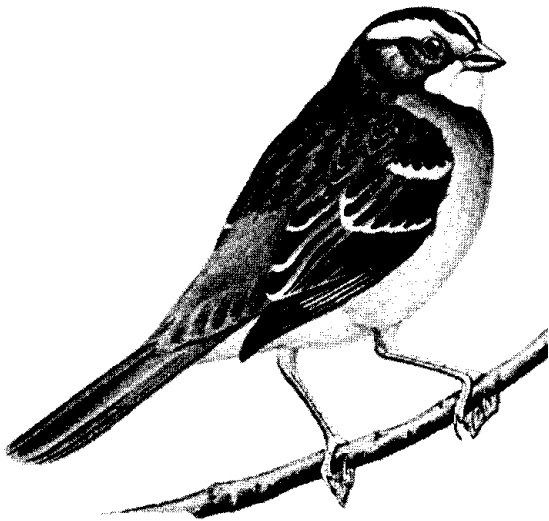
Five **Swamp Sparrows** were reported in November and December. Four were in expected spots, but an adult visiting a feeding station in an urban setting in western Santa Cruz was quite odd and the first backyard record in the county (WP, MP, SG, v.ob.). Twenty-two **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in



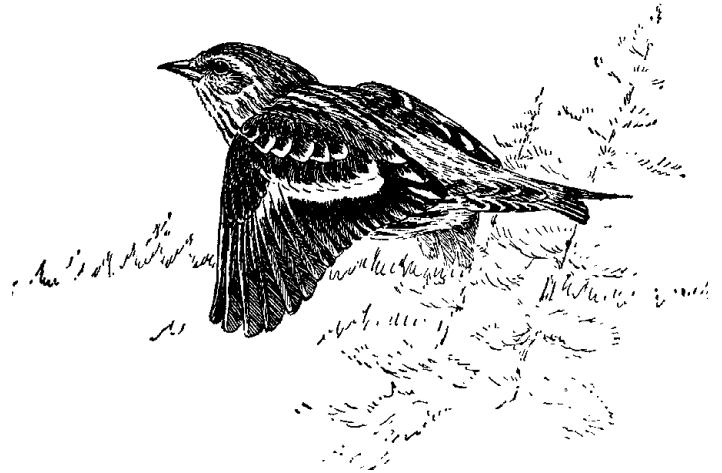
Female Northern Parula at the UCSC Arboretum on December 26, 2008. Photo used by permission.

sported a band on one leg, and examination of photographs revealed it was very likely an individual that was captured and banded on Southeast Farallon Island on September 29, 2008 (fide RT, RF)! This 4th county record, the first in 11 years, was enjoyed by many

November and December. An immature **Harris's Sparrow** delighted many observers in a yard bordering Meder Canyon from November 13 to December 9 (KA, v.ob.). This was the first fall occurrence for the county since 1981! Six **Juncos** of the **Slate-colored** form were reported in November and December (RT, SG et al, MSc, SR, AGr, WBT). Seven more **Lapland Longspurs**, reported through November 7 along the north coast and at Santa Cruz, brought the fall season's total to 14 birds—our best showing in many years (JO, SG, BR, MSc, OJ).



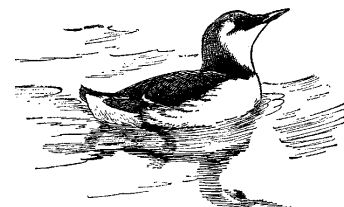
A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a Soquel feeder from December 15 to at least January 17 (NC, PS), and a female was seen at Neary Lagoon on December 20 (SG, RR). The period's high count of **Tricolored Blackbirds** was 1,200 at Swanton Berry Farm on November 12 (DSu et al.). Three males scattered among Brewer's at Scotts Valley on November 18 were away from areas of regular occurrence (DSu), and a lone male at Harkins Slough on December 29 was the only report from the Pajaro Valley (DSu, DSi, JD). Forty-seven **Great-tailed Grackles** at Struve Slough on November 9 set a new county record (EL, CK). A female or immature **Baltimore Oriole** was a treat in a Capitola yard on November 3-11 (DSu). There were two reports of **Red Crossbill** in November (EF et al., DSu) but then no others. **Pine Siskins** remained in good numbers but seemed to decrease somewhat and become more local as we moved into winter proper.



Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Jack Barclay, Leonie Batkin, Phil Brown, Nancy Collins, Mary Crouser, Hank DeDiego, Judy Donaldson, Eric Feuss, Rob Fowler, Alexander Gaguine, Carla Galloway, Luke DeCicco, Tanner Easterla, Steve Gerow, Wally Goldfrank, Alison Graff, Mark Greene, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Amy McDonald, Freddie Menge, Barbara Monahan, Tom Morell, Jean Myers, Wendy Naruo, Suzy Norris, John O'Brien, Marlene Park, Bill Park, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Richard Roullard, Steve Rovell, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MSc), Adam Searcy, David Sidle (DSi), Jenny Slaughter, Pete Solé, John Sterling, David Suddjian (DSu), Linda Terrill, Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, W. Breck Tyler, Jeff Wall (JWa), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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

ERRATA—In the print version of the Jan/Feb *Albatross*, the observers in the photo on page 9 were watching a **Dusky Warbler**, not a Blackburnian Warbler. ~Ed.



Return of the Western Bluebirds

A report on the
Quail Hollow Ranch Nest Box Project
by Jenny Anderson

“There’s blue,” she whispered to her field partner as they set off to check their loop of nest boxes at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park, about two miles east of Ben Lomond. The two observers raised their binoculars to look at the bird perched on the fence line in the lower meadow. They both said, “Western Bluebird” at the same time. This was the first time in four years that bluebirds had been seen near the nest boxes.

The word went out quickly via the email field report to the other sixteen volunteers of the Santa Cruz Bird Club’s Nest Box Project, and anticipation rose as we watched the pair of Western Bluebirds pick box #19, begin to build a nest on April 10th, and lay the first of five eggs on April 20th. The box was carefully monitored by project volunteers for the next 5 ½ weeks, and we enjoyed watching these beautiful birds forage and feed their young. We also worried about whether the parents could bring this clutch to fruition and protect themselves from European Starlings and Violet-green Swallows in the vicinity.

On May 28th, 2008 the pair successfully fledged a family of five. This was a big day for the Quail Hollow Ranch Nest Box Project. It was not only *our* first successful Western Bluebird nest, it was also the first documented successful Western Bluebird nesting in the San Lorenzo River Valley in twenty years! David Sudjian reports that county records show the last prior WEBL nesting documented in the San Lorenzo Valley was way back in 1988.

David said it was possible that some Western Bluebird nesting continued after 1988, but the species clearly declined, and if there was any activity, it escaped notice or reporting. There have been other pairs (some nesting successfully) on the ridges around the San Lorenzo watershed, such as atop Ben Lomond Mountain and along Skyline Blvd / Summit Road but none in the valley.

After the May 28th fledge, we were stunned and delighted to discover another Western Bluebird nest with four eggs in the same nest box—most likely from the same pair. Those nestlings also fledged successfully on July 21st. To have two successful nestings in one year was cause for celebration.

The Quail Hollow Ranch Nest Box Project was set up in 2002 by Tonya Haff, the Santa Cruz Bird Club Conservation Officer, to provide habitat for cavity-nesting birds. The project was specifically focused on Western Bluebirds, but prior to 2008, there was only one other nesting attempt—in 2004. The parents laid eggs which they successfully hatched, but the young died before fledging.

Last year, 18 project volunteers monitored 22 nest boxes. Nineteen of the boxes were used. In addition to the two Western Bluebird nests, we had successful nests for Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Oak Titmice, Violet-green Swallows, and Ash-throated Flycatchers. All of the data collected about lay dates, hatch dates, fledge dates, and nest success was reported to the Cornell Ornithological Lab’s Nest Watch Program.

Quail Hollow volunteers spend as little as two times a month (1-2 hours) to as much as two times a week, first observing the birds and then opening the boxes to check on the nest status. It’s a great way to get to know more about nesting behavior. Teams are made up of those new to birding as well as experienced birders. Last season, Bird Club member Kumaran Arul participated with his young daughter, Emma. What better way to get young birders involved than to give them the opportunity to actually see eggs and baby birds?

The kick-off lunch and training for the 2009 season will take place on March 8th at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park near Ben Lomond. If you’d like to join us in monitoring the nest boxes from March to June, contact:

Jenny Anderson
Ph. 831-423-8039
Email: jka@cruzio.com



*A nestbox at Quail Hollow.
Photo by Jane Lear*

We’d love to have you join us!

Trip Reports

January 9, West Cliff Drive/Lighthouse Field

West Cliff Drive is a busy part of Santa Cruz, but it is also a busy area for wintering birds. Our group found this to be very true this morning. Starting at West Cliff and Woodrow, we enjoyed a nice selection of shorebirds on the rocks and beaches (Black Turnstones, Surfbirds, Sanderlings, Whimbrel, Black Oystercatcher), lots of gulls (especially Mews), and a cove full of swimming birds. Good studies of three Red-breasted Mergansers and a very close-in Rhinoceros Auklet were among the early highlights.

A bit east of Woodrow, Norm Kikuchi noticed something moving in a crevice on a near vertical rock face, which turned out to be the local Rock Sandpiper!

Cooperating nicely, it worked across the rock to a sunny spot, giving everyone great views. Continuing down the coast, we compared similar species among groups of gulls and cormorants, then ended the morning with some land birding at Lighthouse Field State Beach—nothing unexpected, but nice views of Townsend's Warblers, a Hutton's Vireo, Western Meadowlarks, and others. ~Steve Gerow

January 16, Afternoon at Struve Slough

This opportunity for an afternoon outing, a rarity for the Bird Club, was clearly appreciated, as 24 birders showed up, including many on the beginner end of the spectrum. It didn't hurt that we were experiencing "summer in winter," with January temperatures into the 70s and blue skies. We began at Struve Slough upstream of Highway 1, where we found a nice cross section of ducks. The lighting can be just lovely at the sloughs in the afternoon, and it was a treat to enjoy the colors and patterns of Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Bufflehead, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon and others. A male Eurasian Wigeon was spotted amid some marsh vegetation, offering nice views for all. Small parties of Great-tailed Grackle moved here and there. A second stop was along Lee Road, with nice looks at Wilson's Snipe at the flooded road crossing and a male Eurasian Wigeon at West Struve Slough. The ducks were not as close here, but we added several species, including a Hooded Merganser. A dense knot of 30 Shovelers foraged in a swirling, tightly packed group much like a herd of white pelicans. A Northern Harrier coursed over the hills across the slough where a pair of coyotes was on the prowl. ~David Suddjian

January 21, Rancho Del Oso

Rancho Del Oso always delights. Along with the birding, we had fun botanizing and seeing what plants were popping up for the new year. And it was a treat to have former RDO resident Lion Baumgartner along to share some memories and help us notice how some things have changed there in recent years. The beach and Waddell Creek mouth had 43 Whimbrels on our first check, with another flock of about 45 flying in to the beach. A Common Goldeneye surfed in the waves, and others were in the creek lagoon. A large flock of 300-500 loons went north in one pulse around 7:45 a.m., looking like Pacific Loons, and Bottlenose Dolphins were cruising just outside the breakers.

Inland, in a mixed flock at the Marsh Trail, we had a cooperative Blue-gray Gnatcatcher—a species unexpected at RDO in winter. Willows were flowering, and some Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Bushtits were yellow-breasted from the pollen. We also had nice looks at some Varied Thrushes, and a Red-breasted Nuthatch called briefly near the Horse Camp. A fly-over Golden Eagle was a treat. ~David Suddjian



At Rancho del Oso on January 21, Lion Baumgartner and friend and Rich Griffith watch a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Photo by David Suddjian.

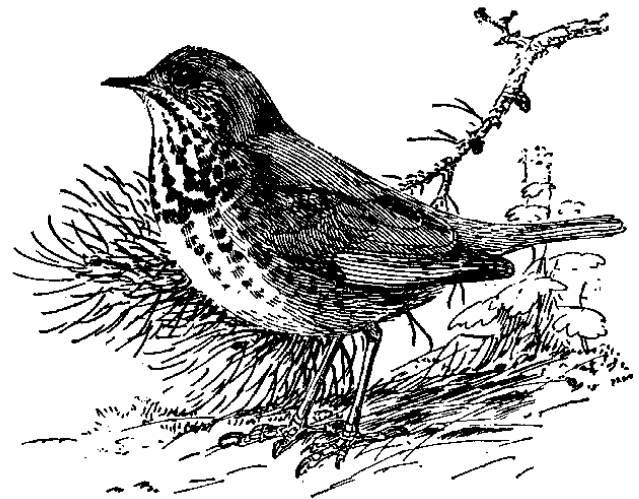
January 23, San Lorenzo River

Ignoring predictions of impending rain, about ten birders gathered at San Lorenzo Park, and were treated to a few hours of good birding. Two wintering geese (a Cackling and a Greater White-fronted) looked on as we started. The riparian near the park offered good views of Downy and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, then the footbridge provided a vantage for

Trip Reports

such things as Buffleheads, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and a young Black-crowned Night-Heron.

Downstream past Soquel Avenue, a wintering Swamp Sparrow showed itself briefly, and an Orange-crowned Warbler foraged in shrubs on the levee within a few feet of the group. It started to sprinkle, but we continued, enjoying more diving ducks and a gathering group of gulls. Among these were a few Thayer's of various ages plus at least five other species and some hybrids. Steadier precipitation convinced us to turn back before reaching Broadway. As we returned to San Lorenzo Park, the rain stopped again. Passerine activity picked up as we were preparing to leave, with the "yank" calls of a Red-breasted Nuthatch adding one more species for the morning. ~Steve Gerow



January 31, Upper UCSC Campus

On this sunny mid-winter morning, seventeen of us set off from the trail-head north of Kresge College to explore some of the diverse habitats represented in the upper area of the campus. The birding part of this walk was largely by ear, and it was a good day to be listening, with many species practicing a large part of their diverse repertoires. We heard the high, wiry songs of Brown Creepers, endless variations by Dark-eyed Juncos and Bewick's Wrens, and the seemingly never-stopping repetition of Hutton's Vireos. Some Golden-crowned Kinglets sent their wheezy, high-pitched sounds down from the treetops as they foraged very close to us (though we still had only brief glimpses of them). Some birds that we did see well included a bunch of Pine Siskins going in and out of a tree hollow (maybe for water?), a nice view of a recently-arrived male Allen's Hummingbird, and a very cooperative Red-breasted Sapsucker.

Butterflies were active for January, with lots of California Tortoiseshells, and we also enjoyed watching a giant colony of Red Wood Ants swarming around their huge nest mound encircling the base of a small tree. We also focused on the flora of the area, comparing species of pines, manzanita, ceanothus, etc. Among other botanical notables were blooming Western Azalea and almost-blooming Dwarf Fremont's Star Lily, among the earliest of the meadow plants to flower. Adding further interest were a few fascinating fungi, though the dry winter left us with fewer than usual. ~Steve Gerow

Wednesday January 14, New Brighton

The walk started along the railroad tracks off of New Brighton Rd. At the early portion of the walk we saw about 40 + Common Crows, and a few Stellar's Jays and Song Sparrows. Heading into the park from the RR tracks, an Oak Titmouse and a couple of Chestnut-backed Chickadees were at some feeders near the entrance road. Lots of Robins, Bushtits, and Pygmy Nuthatches were chatting in the tree tops on the entrance road near the Migration Center. A shoreline check revealed 3 Red-throated Loons and one Pacific Loon for great comparisons. In the same area: 4 Horned Grebes, 4 Western Grebes, 6 Eared Grebes, some Western Gulls, and a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers. A small flock of Sanderlings and a Willet were on the beach. Calm seas made great viewing from above, and we could actually see the loons under the clear water. In the campground area we saw Golden- and White-crowned Sparrows, Bewick's Wren, Dark-eyed Juncos, RC Kinglets, 2 Ravens, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and House Finches. Near the ranger station were two Orange-crowned Warblers, thinking it is already spring. Near the family camping area were Hairy Woodpeckers, a Northern Flicker, Purple Finches, Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow, and Spotted Towhees. The Porter Sesnon area on the other side of New Brighton Road yielded a Lincoln's Sparrow, a Wrentit, Lesser Goldfinches, and Cedar Waxwings. ~Michelle Scott

The 52nd Annual Santa Cruz County Christmas Bird Count

December 20, 2008

Thanks to all who came out to make our 52nd annual count another successful endeavor. We are grateful to Nanci Adams, Cathy Gamble, Nancy Collins, and Pete Solé for making our end-of-day count-down dinner such a nice affair! Thank you to St. Joseph's Church for use of the parish hall. We continue to be indebted to David Wahle of the Santa Cruz Yacht Club for piloting his boat for our pelagic effort.

Weather on Count Day was very nice, if a bit cool. Seventy observers logged 227 party hours (the best measure of field effort), down 10% from our 10-year average. We found 171 species, 12.5 below average and our second lowest tally since 1985, reflecting a recent change in species richness on our CBC (see below). Only one species was added during count week. We counted 38,900 individuals, 9% below the recent average (standardized for field effort). The five most abundant species were Western Gull (2,901), California Gull (2,055), Common Murre (1,668), European Starling (1,514), and Brewer's Blackbird (1,471). Sixteen species were notably more numerous than usual, and 19 species were well below their average numbers.

A Cape May Warbler seen during count week was a new species for the CBC, but no new species were found on the count day itself. The rarest finds on count day were a returning Rock Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Pigeon Gullmot (1st since 1982), Common Poorwill (5th count record), Wilson's Warbler, Summer Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. New record highs were set for Red-throated Loon (311), Clark's Grebe (62), Brandt's Cormorant (888), Red-shouldered Hawk (82), Common Murre (1668), Nuttall's Woodpecker (41), Pileated Woodpecker (18), Common Raven (738), and Marsh Wren (29).

We had an impressive 16 misses—species found in at least 10 of the last 15 years, but not this year: Canvasback, White-winged Scoter, Northern Fulmar, Sooty, Short-tailed, and Black-vented Shearwaters, Common Moorhen, Greater Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, Bonaparte's Gull, Red-naped Sapsucker, Loggerhead Shrike, American Dipper, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1st miss since 1982), Nashville Warbler,

and Black-and-white Warbler. Some others with notable low counts were both scaup species (just one each), Willet (20), Surfbird (11), Sanderling (86, lowest ever), and Forster's Tern (3).

So what is going on with our declining species tally? This CBC experienced a long term increase in species found on the count through the mid-1980s, but that was simply due to (a) increasing field effort, (b) growing knowledge about how and where to find rare and local species in the count circle, and (c) improvements in bird identification skills. (Think of it as a 30 year learning curve.) By 1986 the count hit a plateau as these evolving factors reached a threshold. From 1986 to 2001 the number of species fluctuated over a fairly narrow range in the upper 180s and low 190s. Since then, species richness on the CBC has declined. We haven't surpassed 185 species, and several years had a total below 180. Sometimes really poor weather can cause a species shortfall, but these past two years we've had very nice birding conditions yet found relatively few species (Figure 1, below).

A few recent changes stand out when we compare the leaner years of 2002-2008 to the rich years from 1986-2001. Rare birds can significantly pad the species total. True rarities are unpredictable, but along the central California coast we have come to expect a nice harvest of these treasures each year. Yet in recent years we have seen a decrease in the number of rarities that have been found. The regular species, whether numerous or scarce, are even more important for the count's richness. We are seeing a diminishment in several segments of our avifauna, and in recent years we have had many misses—species we had expected to find. Decreases in grassland and grassland-edge species are especially evident (Lark Sparrow, Western Bluebird, Loggerhead Shrike, Ferruginous Hawk, Western Meadowlark, Tricolored Blackbird). Waterfowl numbers have dropped, and most of our ponds are not so ducky lately. Several regular waterfowl species are now sometimes missing (Canvasback) or represented by just tiny numbers. In most recent years our offshore boat has been coming up short on tubenoses, perhaps reflecting a change in nearshore productivity. Lastly, some winter irruptive landbirds that had been found more years than not have been hard to come by lately. Seen any Evening Grosbeaks lately?

~David Suddjian, compiler

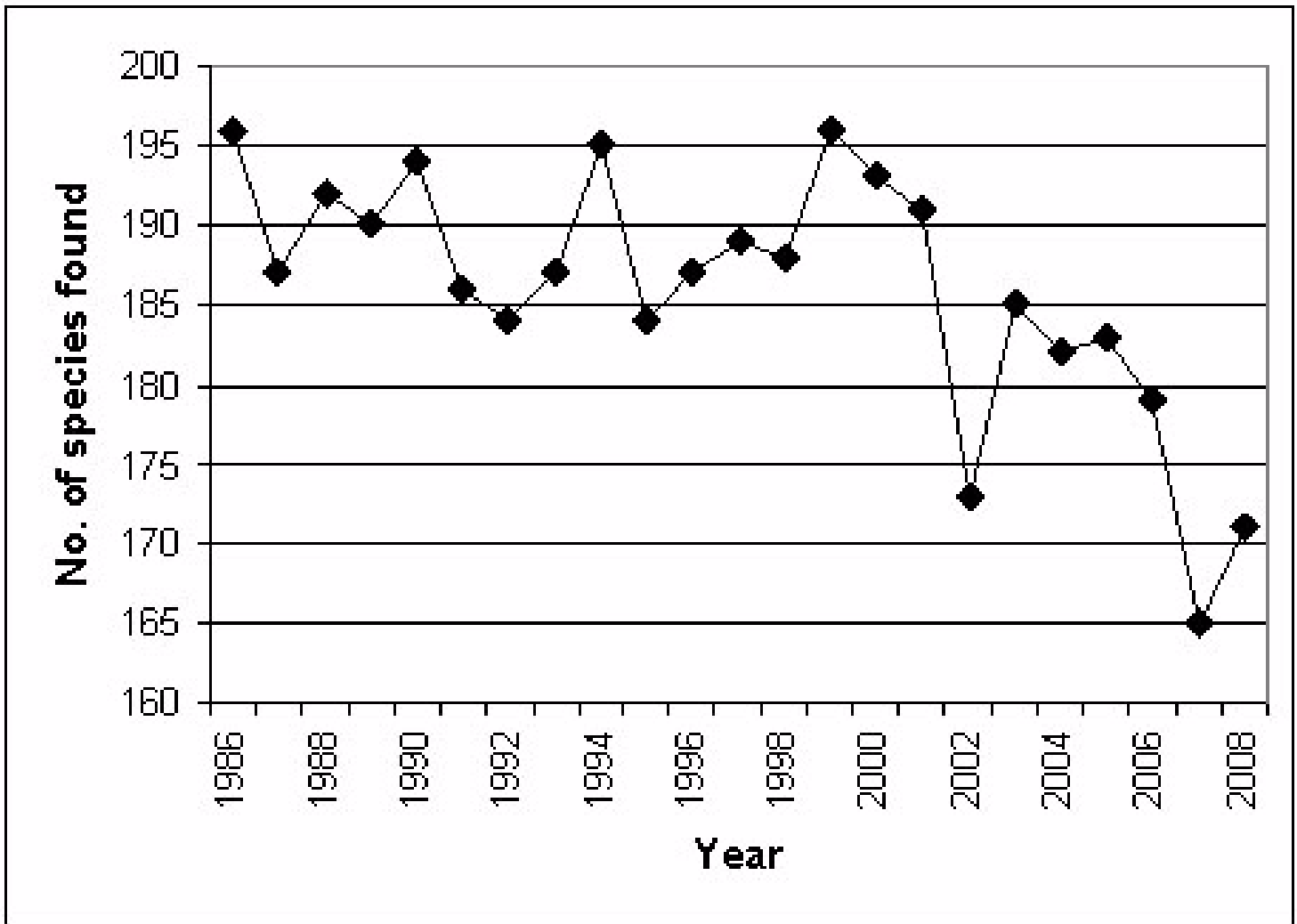
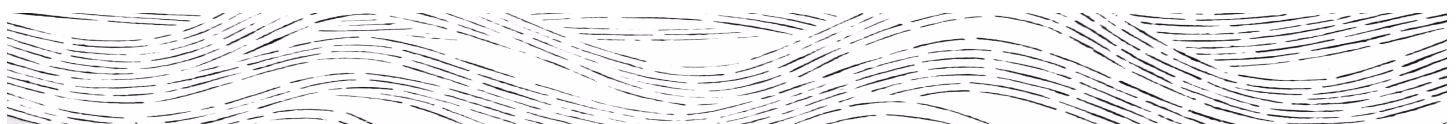


Figure 1: The number of species found on the Santa Cruz CBC is declining.

List of Participants on the 2008 Santa Cruz County Christmas Bird Count

Emma Arul, Kumaran Arul, Jack Barclay, Bonnie Bedzin, Marj Bourret, Ron Bourret, Linda Brodman, Phil Brown, Debra Chromczak, Luke DeCicco, Judy Donaldson, Patty Durkee-Lawton, David Ekdahl, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Alison Graff, Mark Greene, Rich Griffith, Bill Henley, Sharon Hull, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Martha King, Ron Kinner, Kathy Kuyper, Daniel Labeaune, Inga Labeaune, Inger Marie Laursen, Will Lawton, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Marybelle Lukins, Barry McLaughlin, Ingrid Mednis, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan, Tom Morell, Pam Myers, Wendy Naruo, Sydney Nash, Todd Newberry, Tom Olden, Margaret Perham, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Bob Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Richard Roullard, Steve Rovell, Eli Sadler, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, David Sidle, Jenny Slaughter, Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, Madeline Spencer, Linda St. John, John Stanley, Gene Stevens, David Suddjian, Monte Tudor-Long, Jeff Wall, Les Watts, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe.



2008 Santa Cruz County CBC

SPECIES	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	10-Yr Avg	SPECIES	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	10-Yr Avg
Gr. White-fronted Goose	1	1	0	0	1	0.9	Sharp-shinned Hawk	13	13	13	10	11	11.2
Snow Goose	1	0	26	0	0	30.9	Cooper's Hawk	12	17	19	14	9	11.6
Ross's Goose	0	1	0	0	0	1.4	Cooper's/Sharp-sh. sp.	2	4	5	4	4	4.2
Cackling Goose	0	1	0	1	1	0.6	Red-shouldered Hawk	48	55	57	69	82	44.5
Canada Goose	1	4	1	8	1	4.5	Red-tailed Hawk	89	77	113	128	101	108
Brant	7	CW	0	0	0	1.7	Golden Eagle	1	2	1	4	2	1.9
Tundra Swan	0	CW	0	0	0	0.1	Crested Caracara	0	CW	0	0	0	0
Wood Duck	2	15	29	20	63	21.7	American Kestrel	52	40	50	43	32	48.6
Gadwall	1	4	5	CW	3	1.8	Merlin	11	10	12	6	7	8.3
American Wigeon	12	22	36	43	40	22.7	Peregrine Falcon	5	6	4	6	5	4.2
Mallard	704	706	641	852	680	719.4	Prairie Falcon	1	1	1	0	0	0.3
Blue-winged Teal	0	CW	0	0	0	0	Virginia Rail	16	5	5	9	4	11
Cinnamon Teal	1	1	0	0	1	0.5	Sora	5	4	9	3	5	6
Northern Shoveler	0	0	2	6	9	3.1	Common Moorhen	0	2	2	0	0	0.9
Northern Pintail	1	46	0	0	226	6.1	American Coot	313	646	1032	1213	749	632.6
Green-winged Teal	0	15	12	2	3	4.1	Black-bellied Plover	46	229	107	68	67	101.9
Canvasback	0	1	0	0	0	0.7	Snowy Plover	96	82	17	82	28	57.9
Redhead	1	0	0	0	0	0.2	Killdeer	49	227	180	266	234	113.9
Ring-necked Duck	20	116	88	114	124	63.7	Black Oystercatcher	31	19	36	35	25	22.4
Greater Scaup	1	4	0	61	1	8	Greater Yellowlegs	1	0	1	1	0	1.3
Lesser Scaup	1	5	1	4	1	2.9	Willet	98	65	275	65	20	79.2
Surf Scoter	240	351	763	563	500	373.3	Wandering Tattler	1	0	1	0	0	0.4
White-winged Scoter	0	3	2	1	0	1.7	Spotted Sandpiper	15	9	7	5	8	7
Black Scoter	0	1	1	0	0	0.6	Whimbrel	12	76	21	17	21	22.1
Bufflehead	44	82	126	141	88	73.7	Long-billed Curlew	1	1	0	2	2	1.4
Common Goldeneye	9	4	8	51	22	11.3	Marbled Godwit	36	74	45	27	14	33.4
Hooded Merganser	4	4	1	1	7	5.7	Ruddy Turnstone	1	1	1	0	0	1.1
Common Merganser	32	21	26	11	16	23	Black Turnstone	200	165	117	154	58	130
Red-br. Merganser	8	16	14	19	12	9.7	Surfbird	116	51	66	34	11	57.2
Ruddy Duck	24	34	37	67	27	43.9	Sanderling	2334	623	861	214	86	653.5
Wild Turkey	121	46	69	113	39	36.6	Least Sandpiper	0	16	5	0	7	2.4
California Quail	248	265	280	301	329	321.5	Rock Sandpiper	1	1	1	1	1	0.5
Red-throated Loon	48	30	59	90	311	51.9	Wilson's Snipe	17	23	0	4	4	9.1
Pacific Loon	436	324	458	97	946	321.9	Red Phalarope	0	CW	0	0	0	1.7
Common Loon	25	25	66	42	21	27.6	Pomarine Jaeger	2	1	1	0	0	0.7
Loon species	28	51	456	114	47	201.7	Jaeger sp.	0	0	1	0	0	0.3
Pied-billed Grebe	40	63	79	63	42	53.9	Bonaparte's Gull	4	349	CW	8	0	41.1
Horned Grebe	5	24	26	44	8	13.6	Heermann's Gull	443	901	405	86	128	314.2
Red-necked Grebe	0	1	1	0	3	0.6	Mew Gull	519	215	413	161	184	426.7
Eared Grebe	14	13	59	46	25	19.7	Ring-billed Gull	99	176	243	36	108	120.7
Western Grebe	193	320	366	306	969	352.9	California Gull	1841	6365	4991	1584	2055	2713.6
Clark's Grebe	7	13	9	15	62	8	Herring Gull	110	62	62	27	29	45.4
Aechmophorus sp.	140	506	85	244	469	587.6	Thayer's Gull	4	10	28	5	4	8.5
Northern Fulmar	0	274	0	3	0	38.1	Western Gull	2498	4178	4445	3162	2901	2728.9
Pink-f. Shearwater	1	0	0	0	0	1.1	Glaucous-winged Gull	840	811	1052	440	570	546.4
Sooty Shearwater	0	0	1	1	0	1.3	Herr. X Gl.-w. Gull	2	2	3	0	2	0.7
Black-v. Shearwater	23	0	6	0	0	4.4	W. X Gl.-w. Gull	78	439	537	97	253	140.1
Brown Pelican	221	917	459	101	579	309.6	Glaucous Gull	CW	0	1	0	0	0.5
Brandt's Cormorant	290	420	418	492	888	323.2	Black-l. Kittiwake	1	0	0	0	0	0.3
Double-cr. Cormorant	274	531	294	242	212	255.6	Gull species	1075	1176	1136	459	427	1235.2
Pelagic Cormorant	50	20	52	37	44	33.5	Elegant Tern	0	0	0	0	0	0.3
American Bittern	1	0	0	0	0	0.2	Common Tern	1	0	0	0	0	0.1
Great Blue Heron	17	23	24	18	19	18	Forster's Tern	93	72	134	7	3	47.2
Great Egret	10	13	14	6	5	11.1	Black Skimmer	0	CW	0	0	0	0
Snowy Egret	15	38	36	24	19	22.3	Common Murre	22	92	357	346	1668	245
Cattle Egret	1	0	0	0	0	0.3	Pigeon Guillemot	0	0	0	0	2	0
Green Heron	4	5	3	6	5	4.7	Marbled Murrelet	71	14	30	8	9	22.1
Blk-cr. Night-Heron	11	8	14	17	13	9	Ancient Murrelet	1	0	3	0	10	1.7
Turkey Vulture	2	2	5	10	9	2.9	Rhinoceros Auklet	412	545	279	48	123	154.3
Osprey	1	1	1	3	1	1.6	Rock Pigeon	1860	1549	1515	1476	1095	1283
White-tailed Kite	26	42	26	29	11	21.4	Band-tailed Pigeon	279	339	981	299	574	461.7
Northern Harrier	13	23	19	19	11	16.6	Eur. Collared-Dove	0	12	8	9	63	2.9



SPECIES	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	10-Yr Avg
Mourning Dove	483	431	357	484	476	548
Barn Owl	12	11	11	14	1	8.6
W. Screech-Owl	61	43	40	64	21	32.3
Great Horned Owl	43	36	33	36	27	30.8
Nor. Pygmy-Owl	2	5	3	5	2	3.1
Burrowing Owl	3	2	3	2	3	3.5
Long-eared Owl	1	2	CW	3	1	1
Nor. Saw-whet Owl	43	33	23	41	19	21.1
Common Poorwill	1	1	0	1	1	0.4
White-thr. Swift	5	25	26	0	4	8.4
Anna's Hummingbird	642	927	576	611	474	507.9
Belted Kingfisher	14	13	17	12	10	17.7
Acorn Woodpecker	223	256	228	244	213	181.5
Yellow-b. Sapsucker	CW	0	0	0	0	0.2
Red-naped Sapsucker	1	0	1	1	0	0.8
Red-breasted Sapsucker	4	9	7	7	14	8.2
Nuttall's Woodpecker	11	21	10	25	41	13.2
Downy Woodpecker	49	30	44	28	36	33.4
Hairy Woodpecker	43	49	51	54	60	40.4
Nor. Flicker (form?)	64	112	102	97	88	91.8
"Yellow-shafted" Flicker	0	0	0	0	1	0.3
"Red-shafted" Flicker	51	33	52	47	49	58.6
Nor. Flicker (intergrade)	1	3	3	1	5	2.5
Pileated Woodpecker	12	12	13	13	18	7.9
Olive-sided Flycatcher	0	0	1	0	0	0.1
Dusky Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	0.1
Black Phoebe	236	350	309	287	243	234.3
Say's Phoebe	57	33	29	36	19	30.6
Dusky-cap. Flycatcher	0	1	0	0	0	0.1
Western Kingbird	0	0	0	CW	0	0
Loggerhead Shrike	14	1	5	2	0	3.9
Hutton's Vireo	66	57	75	47	65	55.1
Steller's Jay	291	604	592	370	301	427
Western Scrub-Jay	543	467	518	499	465	480
American Crow	225	500	469	486	518	350
Common Raven	251	404	445	439	738	294.5
Tree Swallow	0	0	6	0	0	0.8
Violet-green Swallow	0	0	40	32	9	7.9
Barn Swallow	CW	0	13	0	0	1.3
Chest.-b. Chickadee	1076	1266	703	788	927	966.7
Oak Titmouse	84	115	67	79	89	71.6
Bushtit	1009	837	757	1097	912	1040.3
Red-br. Nuthatch	29	4	3	2	17	7.8
White-br. Nuthatch	2	1	1	0	1	0.9
Pygmy Nuthatch	243	257	244	186	316	230
Brown Creeper	96	122	118	78	116	110.8
Bewick's Wren	136	158	147	147	155	118.9
House Wren	4	5	3	9	5	4
Winter Wren	20	19	28	12	11	21.4
Marsh Wren	2	24	22	10	29	12
American Dipper	1	2	1	2	0	1.3
Golden-cr. Kinglet	15	31	114	5	46	80.4
Ruby-cr. Kinglet	672	1188	1119	673	434	645.3
Blue-g. Gnatcatcher	2	2	2	1	0	2.3
Western Bluebird	0	0	0	9	2	2.6
Hermit Thrush	141	251	279	175	150	169.6
American Robin	469	1979	8143	1622	889	3212.3
Varied Thrush	25	170	1548	8	108	251.1
Wrentit	100	146	104	142	118	104.8
Nor. Mockingbird	39	39	45	39	40	45.5
California Thrasher	20	28	23	20	17	17.3
European Starling	1159	1928	1736	1690	1514	1405.8

SPECIES	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	10-Yr Avg
American Pipit	121	342	258	204	131	119.2
Cedar Waxwing	431	557	1163	551	272	618.3
Tennessee Warbler	0	0	1	0	0	0.2
Orange-cr. Warbler	6	14	10	6	10	8.4
Nashville Warbler	1	1	0	0	0	1.3
Cape May Warbler	0	0	0	0	CW	0
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	0	0	0	1	0	0.3
Y-rump. Warbler (form?)	347	440	221	306	312	321.1
"Myrtle" Warbler	139	188	107	209	136	135.1
"Audubon's" Warbler	570	514	356	323	338	415.8
Black-thr. Gray Warbler	3	2	0	0	1	1.1
Townsend's Warbler	310	487	593	298	269	345
Hermit Warbler	3	1	1	0	1	2
Townsend's x Hermit	0	1	0	0	0	0.1
Palm Warbler	1	CW	2	0	1	0.6
Bl.-and-Wh. Warbler	1	1	0	0	0	0.8
American Redstart	0	0	0	1	0	0.2
Nor. Waterthrush	0	0	1	0	0	0.1
Comm. Yellowthroat	28	59	58	38	23	25
Wilson's Warbler	0	1	0	0	1	0.2
Summer Tanager	0	0	0	1	1	0.3
Western Tanager	CW	1	1	0	1	0.6
Spotted Towhee	126	206	219	182	182	148.6
California Towhee	294	533	555	338	378	391.6
Chipping Sparrow	0	1	1	0	0	0.2
Savannah Sparrow	56	58	34	142	48	74.9
Fox Sparrow	74	198	243	149	88	116.9
Song Sparrow	220	351	334	158	173	234
Lincoln's Sparrow	33	51	54	98	34	40
Swamp Sparrow	0	1	3	0	1	0.9
White-thr. Sparrow	4	10	17	5	11	8.1
White-cr. Sparrow	704	1210	1369	681	763	835.8
Golden-cr. Sparrow	1097	1804	1550	1357	1052	1139.5
"Dark-eyed" "Oregon" Junco	770	1342	1021	869	610	971.3
"Dark-eyed" "Slate-clr." Junco	0	0	5	1	1	1.3
Rose-br. Grosbeak	1	0	0	0	1	0.3
Black-h. Grosbeak	0	1	1	0	0	0.2
Red-w. Blackbird	418	195	1284	708	255	573.9
Tricolored Blackbird	160	2420	1680	680	867	750
W. Meadowlark	232	186	302	197	289	263
Brewer's Blackbird	1458	2384	1929	1216	1471	1472.6
Brown-h. Cowbird	9	27	17	17	15	22.8
Purple Finch	88	76	168	201	184	105.6
House Finch	1177	1036	762	761	655	795.5
Red Crossbill	1	8	0	0	0	3.1
Pine Siskin	1242	75	28	134	595	294.3
Lesser Goldfinch	274	92	100	353	315	170
American Goldfinch	605	196	409	819	815	404.3
House Sparrow	164	88	66	66	64	86.9

# Individuals	37223	53509	59125	37042	38900	40186
# Species	182	183	179	165	171	164.7

# Observers	75	65	66	73	70	67.8
Total Field Hours	255.00	243.50	235.50	253.50	227.00	215.275

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

Compiler: David Suddjian

Hummingbird Monitoring Continues in Scotts Valley

by Rita Colwell

The January/February 2008 issue of the Albatross reported the establishment in 2007 of a site near Scotts Valley where standardized bird-banding was taking place to monitor hummingbirds. The site is part of the Hummingbird Monitoring Network (HMN), an organization created to collect information on ecology, breeding, migration, abundance, and population trends in hummingbirds. Started in 2002 with 11 total sites in Arizona and California, HMN had expanded to 32 stations by 2008. The organization's goals are: 1) to determine the best long-term monitoring sites; 2) to estimate hummingbird populations so trends can be detected; and 3) to use the information to preserve and protect hummingbird populations. Community involvement is encouraged by partnering with land managers of federal, state, and local agencies, as well as private landowners. The resulting data are useful for many purposes, including detecting where hummingbirds show high site fidelity. The organization trains citizen scientists to manage monitoring sites, and at public sites, to increase public awareness through outreach.

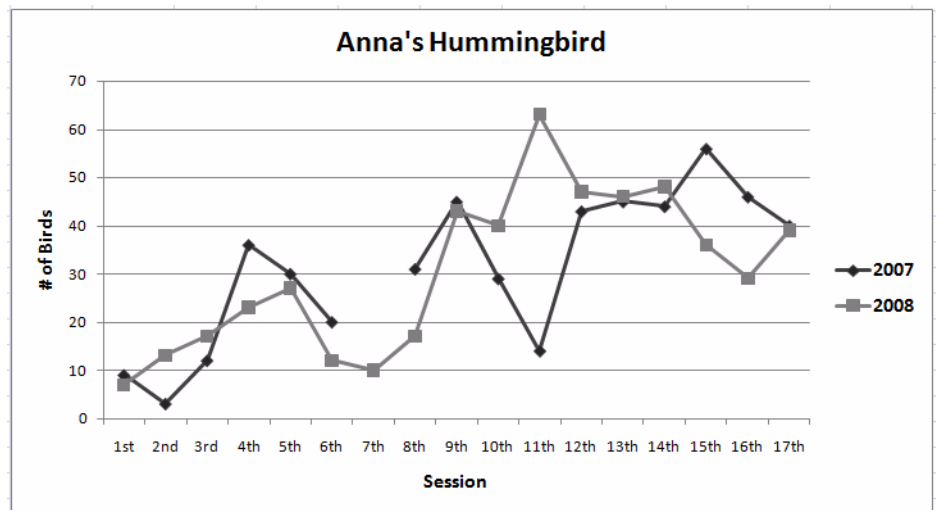
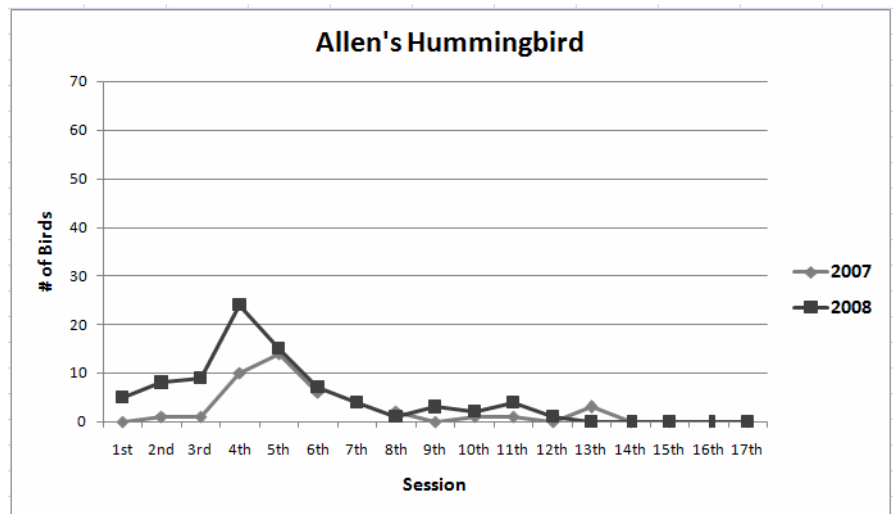
The Scotts Valley site was founded specifically to collect information on breeding Allen's Hummingbirds. This species, on the American Bird Conservancy's Species of Concern list, has both a restricted breeding and wintering range, thus making it more susceptible to environmental changes. In 2007, 35 Allen's were banded at Scotts Valley of which 25 were adult females. Eleven of those females returned in 2008—a 44% return rate for breeding females, and an indication of high breeding site fidelity. It remains to be seen if the Allen's high numbers will persist, but knowing that individuals return to successful areas to breed, over-winter, or migrate will be vital to conservation of the species.

The two charts below show the distribution and species numbers of Allen's and Anna's Hummingbirds for 2007 and 2008. The most outstanding difference between the two years is the large variation in numbers of Anna's during the 11th sampling session of both years. A total of 14 birds were captured on 28 July 2007, whereas 63 birds were captured on 26 July 2008. One hypothesis for the high numbers in 2008 is the fires that were burning in the state at this time. During early July 2008 several hundred thousand acres had burned or were burning in California, especially in the northern and central parts of the state. The displacement of birds from these areas must have been huge.

This March we begin our third year of monitoring and anticipate a productive season. Volunteers are always needed to assist in some of the tasks to keep this project going. From March until October, sessions occur one day every two weeks. Each session starts one half-hour before sunrise and continues for five hours. We also welcome visitors who want to observe and learn more about hummingbirds and hummingbird banding. If you are interested in helping us or visiting, please contacting Barb Monahan at 831-425-0845 or b@monahandirect.com to make arrangements.

For more information about the organization, visit the website:

<http://www.hummonnet.org>



Hummingbird Myths

Just for fun, here's a list of some common myths and misinformation relating to hummingbirds—ranging from the almost plausible to the incredibly ridiculous. The myths were assembled from several web sites and edited for brevity. (It could have filled several pages.) How many have you heard?



Myth: *Hummingbirds suck nectar through their tongues.*

Fact: A hummingbird tongue is not hollow. The bird laps up liquid, just like a cat does, but at a high rate of speed.

Myth: *A pair (or family) of hummingbirds comes to my feeder.*

Fact: Hummingbirds don't hang out as couples or families. The pair bond for many hummingbird species lasts as long as it takes to copulate.

Myth: *Hummingbirds mate while flying.*

Fact: They mate while perched. What may seem to be mating in the air is a part of the mating ritual.

Myth: *Hummingbirds get all their nutrition from nectar (flowers or feeders).*

Fact: The birds need protein and fat, which they get from eating insects. The liquids are good for quick energy but inadequate for nutrition.

Myth: *Hummingbirds become dependent on feeders and will starve if the feeders are emptied.*

Fact: Hummers, like all birds, instinctively forage for food and are not dependent on one source. Studies have shown that those with access to feeders use them for only 20% of daily rations.

Myth: *Hummingbirds only feed from red flowers or red feeders*

Fact: Hummers will feed from any flower or any feeder they find to be rich in nectar.

Myth: *Red dye in the hummingbird feeder is necessary (or harmful).*

Fact: There is no evidence for benefit or harm from red coloring. There are a few studies on color preferences and feeding of hummingbirds, but no proof that the color of the nectar matters. The most persistent story of harm—that the dye causes liver damage—was supposedly proven by a study done at the San Diego Zoo. However there was no such study, and there is no proof that the dye causes problems.

And here are some of the...uh...least plausible items.

Myth: *Hummingbirds have no feet (or toes).*

Fact: Hummingbirds are classified in the order, *Apodiformes*, which means "footless"—an unfortunate misnomer because they have feet—with toes. Otherwise they could not perch. The feet are so far back on the body that the birds can't walk.

Myth: *Hummingbirds migrate on the backs of geese.*

Fact: Wrong! Geese don't carry passengers, and there is virtually no overlap in the migration patterns and timing of geese and hummingbirds.

Myth: *Hummingbirds hibernate in lake mud rather than migrating.*

Fact: Wrong again! Migration is well documented.

OK...enough nonsense! Clear your mind, and get some genuine *scientific* information about hummingbirds at the UCSC Arboretum's Hummingbird Day. (See below.) Enjoy the local species there, and have a great day!

~Judy Donaldson

Saturday March 7th, 2009

8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Hummingbird Day

at the UCSC Arboretum

The Arboretum hosts its annual celebration of hummingbirds! Come enjoy the lovely gardens, and plug into some Hummer Electricity. Allen's are a star of the show in the gardens with Anna's, too, and possible Rufous. There will be a wide array of activities including a slide presentation on the hummingbird natural history by David Suddjian at 11:00 a.m., birding tours, photography workshops, and garden tours of plants that attract hummingbirds.

Children's activities are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.—coloring, crafts, and visits to places to see hummingbirds. No admission fee! All events are free, except for a photography workshop.

Reservations required for birding tours and the photo workshop (call # below). You may just show up for other events. See the Arboretum website for a detailed schedule:

<http://arboretum.ucsc.edu>

or call (831) 427-2998. The Arboretum is located on High Street, half-way between the main and west entrances to the campus.



Saturday, April 18, 2009, 5 am to 5 pm

Mission Springs Outdoor Education Bird-a-thon

Mission Springs Outdoor Education is holding its 6th annual Bird-a-thon on Saturday, April 18. This fun event raises scholarship money to help underprivileged students attend science camp. Community volunteers and Mission Springs Naturalists will seek to find as many bird species as possible between 5 AM and 5 PM within Santa Cruz County on the day of the event. Last year the MSOE Bird-a-thon raised over \$6,500 in scholarships for underprivileged kids. This scholarship money allowed 65 students, many from inner-city Oakland, to experience hands-on science and environmental education. They would not have otherwise had such an opportunity,

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. All skill levels welcome! For information contact:

Cassie Strusis-Timmer, Assistant Director of Outdoor Education

Email: cassie@missionsprings.com

Phone: (831) 335-3205



In Memory of Dorothy B. Hunt

Dorothy Bell Hunt, an active member of the Santa Cruz Bird Club in its first decade, died in Pacific Grove on November 17, 2008. Born in New York in 1911, Dorothy moved to Aptos with her husband, H. Raymond Hunt, when they retired in 1957. She was interested in natural history and read widely, becoming a serious birder and amateur naturalist.

Dorothy joined the Bird Club by at least the early 1960s. She was a frequent contributor of bird sightings and active amid the cadre of Club members who were avid bird banders. She served as Club Historian in 1963 and was compiler of the Santa Cruz County Christmas Bird Count for four years (1963-1966). Randy Morgan remembered Dorothy in the compiler's role as "efficient, meticulous, and ahead of her time."

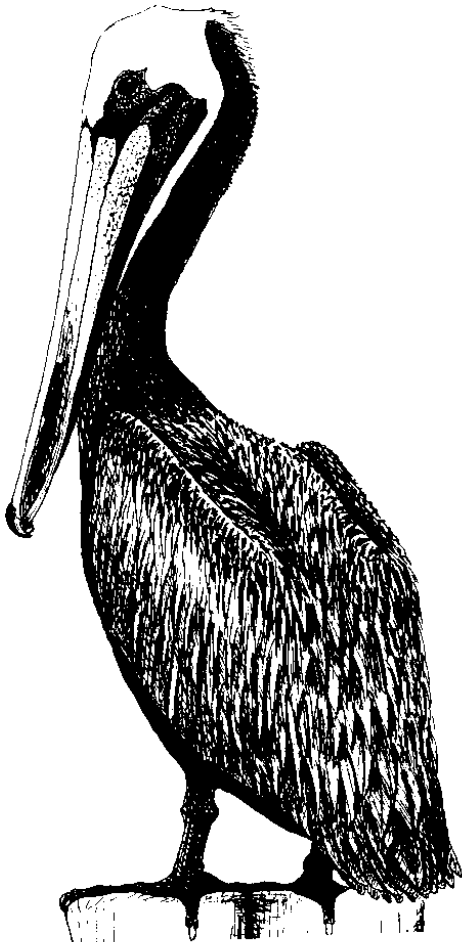
She was a member of the Western Bird-Banding Association and a charter member and dedicated supporter of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (now PRBO Conservation Science). She published two notes in the journal, *Western Bird Bander*, regarding Sooty Shearwaters in Santa Cruz County. The first—*The Day The Shearwaters Landed*, printed in 1962—described the remarkable event of August 18, 1961, when hundreds of shearwaters were wrecked on shore from Santa Cruz to Aptos. The second note, *Shearwaters Again—And an Important Recovery* (printed in 1966), reported the finding of a shearwater at Seacliff that had been banded in New Zealand.

~David Suddjian, SCBC Historian

New SCBC Members

Susan Matulich	1/09
Chris & Elizabeth Andrews	1/09
Katie O'Kelly	1/09
The Bibbleys	1/09
Gianna Dryer	1/09
Constance Crawford	1/09
John Macon	2/09
Christine DeLapp	2/09

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, Word, or PDF files. Send items by email to: calqua@sbcglobal.net

~Judy Donaldson, Editor

**Input deadline for
May/June issue
of The Albatross
is April 2, 2009**

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Counting on the view..



Taking a lunch break on the CBC, Jenny Slaughter, Judy Donaldson, and Linda Brodman enjoy the view from the top of Pipeline Road in Henry Cowell State Park, December 20, 2008. Photo by Bonnie Bedzin.

The ALBATROSS

is published five times a year by the Santa Cruz Bird Club. See the online version and past issues on the SCBC website,



<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/>

Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club

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