

Albatross

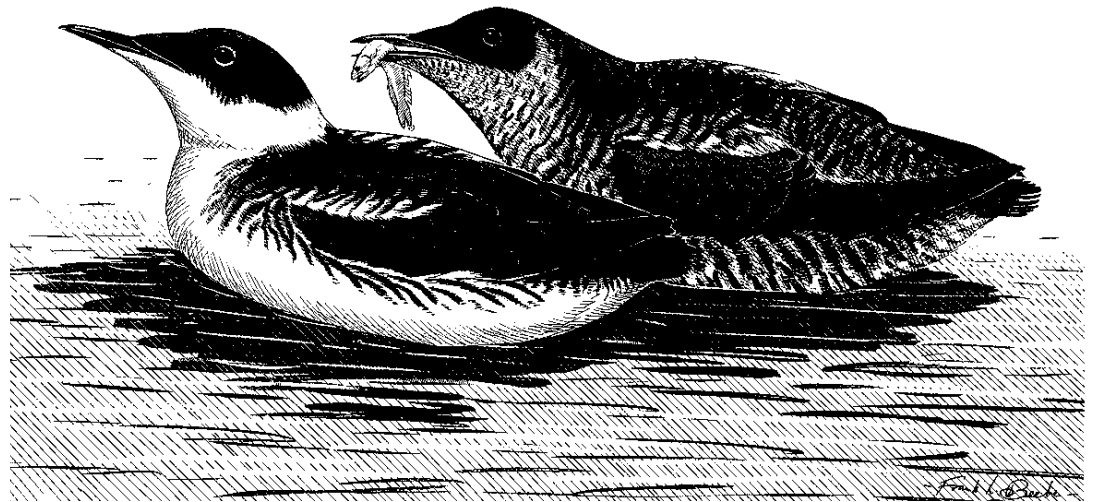
PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

The Plight of the Marbled Murrelet

by Laird Henkel

When the SCBC was founded in 1956, no one had yet seen a Marbled Murrelet nest. The first tree nest of this enigmatic species was not found until 1974, right here in the Santa Cruz Mountains. But the 1990s saw a big increase in Marbled Murrelet research, concurrent with the listing of the species as *Threatened* under the Endangered Species Act in 1992. Subsequently, more nests were found and population sizes were carefully estimated. Many of the mysteries of the Marbled Murrelet were unraveled. Unfortunately, more recent local population monitoring during this decade is revealing a disturbing trend.

SCBC guru David Suddjian and others have been conducting dawn surveys of Marbled Murrelets in Big Basin State Park since 1991 (and at some other sites in the Santa Cruz Mountains since 1992). At Big Basin (the heart of the species range in the Santa Cruz Mountains and the location of that first nest found in 1974), detections on these dawn surveys have fallen dramatically. Similar decreases are evident at Portola State Park. Even more disturbing are the results of at-sea surveys conducted between Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz several times during the breeding season. Recent surveys, conducted by Zach Peery (through Moss Landing Marine Labs), indicated a decline in the Santa Cruz Mountains population from more than 600 between 2001 and 2003, to only 367 birds in 2007, and 174 birds in 2008. *(continued)*



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Do you get...



Santa Cruz
Birds



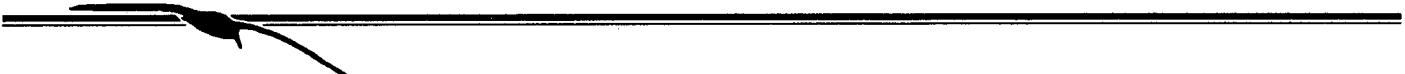
For the birds



SCBC Officer
Nominations

Reminder:

**TIME TO
RENEW**



Marbled Murrelet (continued from page 1)

Both David's and Zach's surveys were funded in part by Trustee Councils for recent oil spills in central California, including the Apex Houston, Command, and Luckenbach spills. The Trustee Councils are made up of several resource agencies, including the CA Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. They are providing funding to try to restore the murrelet population in the Santa Cruz Mountains—a genetically distinct population, at the southern end of the species' range—through habitat acquisition and management of nest predators. Monitoring of populations is important to assess the efficacy of these restoration actions. Faced with the dismal results discussed above, the Command Trustee Council convened a workshop in March for local murrelet researchers, land managers, and agency personnel to share information regarding the plight of the murrelet, with the goal of determining whether (and what) additional steps need to be taken.

The symposium was a success, if sobering. In addition to the decline in the at-sea population, very few juveniles have been seen at sea (an index of reproductive success), no juveniles were seen during the 2008

surveys, and very low incidences of flight behaviors associated with active nests are evident on most inland surveys. Zach Peery's detailed population modeling predicts that the current Santa Cruz Mountains population can't hold on—although it doesn't take fancy modeling to show that a population that doesn't produce any young can't persist. One ray of hope: Steve Singer has also been monitoring inland dawn detections, through both standard audio-visual surveys and radar, and his surveys in the Gazos Creek watershed have not shown a significant decline since the 1990s. In addition, management to decrease corvid abundance in murrelet nesting habitat has been effective—less garbage has been seen, and a decline in Stellar's Jays has been detected at several sites. But more management for corvids may be needed. The Command Trustee Council will be meeting again soon to discuss further options. For now, let's just hope that surveys in 2009 don't show a further decline in the population and that maybe a juvenile or two can be found.

Laird Henkel
CA Dept. of Fish and Game
Office of Spill Prevention and Response

Resources for Santa Cruz County Bird Information—UPDATED!

To get current information about our local birds, check out the [Local Bird Information](#) link on the Santa Cruz Bird Club home page:

<http://santacruzbirdclub.org>

Here are some recently updated documents that are now available from the bird information page:

- **SC County Checklist**

This is the official *Checklist of the Birds of Santa Cruz County, California* in a pdf file. It has been updated through February 2009.

In addition to bringing the list into conformity with current taxonomy, the update included over 100 revisions to seasonal status codes and notes for various species. Two species were added to the list since the July 2006 version—Zone-tailed Hawk and Vermilion Flycatcher. One species was *formally* dropped—Spotted Owl. To receive the list as an MS Word document, contact David Suddjian via email: dsuddjian@aol.com

- **“Santa Cruz Birds” Archive 1991-present.pdf**

These articles, published in each issue of the Albatross, form a tremendous resource for learning about our local birds. All articles have been gathered in an archive and are now available in one searchable pdf document. (Note: The archive has been updated to include reports from the period December 2006 to May 2007, which did not make it into the Albatross.)

Pick a species you are interested in, and try searching for unusual or noteworthy occurrences.

- **SCZ Bird Data Summaries**

On this page, the document titled **Spring Arrival Dates....** (fourth link from the bottom) has a summary of spring arrival dates for a number of land-birds. It has been updated and thoroughly revised and is available as a pdf file.

~David Suddjian

Events Calendar

May - August 2009

Check the online SCBC Calendar of Events for updates: <http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org>



Sunday, May 3

Beginning Bird Walk Natural Bridges

Our local birding hotspot is a great place to get an introduction to the birds of Santa Cruz County.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the Delaware Road entrance to Natural Bridges.

Leader: David Sidle, dsidle@hotmail.com



Saturday, May 9

Upper UCSC

A variety of interesting breeding birds occur in the forests here, with possibilities including Black-throated Gray and Hermit Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and others. If we are lucky, we might also encounter a wave of migrating mountain species. Expect 4-6 miles of hiking and some hills, but a fairly slow pace.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM in the North Remote Parking Lot, at the north end of Heller Drive

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



Sunday, May 10—Mother's Day

Rancho del Oso

We will snoop on avian moms (for the day, all parents are moms) trying to get their babies safely out into the world. Our leader's songbird-nest-finding skills are meager, so we may just stand very still and hope the birds reveal their nests themselves.

Directions: Meet at the old Beckmann's (now Brendan's) Bakery, west end of Mission St, Santa Cruz, at 7:00 AM sharp; by 8:00, we will be at Waddell Creek parking lot.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741



Sunday, May 10

Mount Hamilton from the East

A rare opportunity to bird one of the remote areas of the Bay Area should not be missed! We will travel up Mount Hamilton until about noon, stopping along the way to see possible Burrowing Owls, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Lazuli Bunting, Lark Sparrow, Yellow-billed Magpie, Blue Grosbeak, Phainopepla, Lewis's Woodpecker, Prairie Falcon, Canyon Wren, Golden Eagle, Lawrence's Gold-

finch, and Costa's Hummingbird. After birding at the top of the mountain, people can choose to return through Livermore on Mines Valley Road or through San Jose on San Antonio Valley Road—depending on their final destination. There will be practically no hiking on this trip—just lots of car stops. The mountains can be cold so wear layers. Also be sure your gas tank is full, bring plenty of liquids, lunch, and snacks. Sunscreen and hats are a must. Space is limited on the roads so carpooling is strongly encouraged. People travelling from South County who wish to carpool should contact the trip leader to make arrangements.

Directions: We will meet at the Santa Cruz Government Center on Ocean Street at 6:30 AM to carpool to the start of the trip. The trip will start within sight of Highway 5 at the intersection of Del Puerto Canyon Rd. and Diablo Grande Parkway just West of Patterson at 8:30 AM. The journey from Santa Cruz will take about 1 hour, 50 minutes. I recommend allowing 2 hours so people can stop for a bathroom before the destination is reached. There is a rest stop just north of Patterson. For those coming from the south, I recommend stopping at a gas station before reaching Patterson.

Leader: Jean Myers, (408) 505-0927, birdermom@starband.net



Friday, May 15

Rancho del Oso

RDO in the spring is hard to beat for a broad array of songbirds, including large numbers of Swainson's Thrushes and Wilson's Warblers and a good chance for MacGillivray's Warbler, White-throated and Vaux's Swifts, and possible Pileated Woodpecker and Northern Pygmy-Owl. We will work on birding by ear and enjoy some fun plant ID, too, including 18 species of native tress! Expect about 4 miles of walking, with some minor elevation change, but generally a slow pace. Bring water and something to eat. We'll continue to mid-day.

Directions: Meet at 6:30 AM at the Waddell Beach parking lot off Highway 1, immediately after crossing Waddell Creek. For late-comers, we'll go from there to the Nature & History Center then along the Marsh Trail.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com

Santa Cruz Bird Club programs and field trips are open to the public—non-members are welcome. People needing rides to field trip sites are advised to contact field trip leaders. Carpooling is encouraged. Dress in layers and bring liquids. Lunches are optional on half-day trips. Heavy rain cancels. Field trips can pose hazards. Reluctantly, we have decided we must publish and implement this policy:

The Santa Cruz Bird Club or its field trip leaders cannot be responsible for damage, injury, or loss incurred by the acts or omissions of any member or visitor during Club field trips or during commutes to or from them. Field trip participants must release the Club from any liability for such damage, injury, or loss. Ordinarily, field trip participants sign a waiver releasing the Club from such liability, but in the absence of such a signed waiver, participation on a Club field trip in itself implies consent to and agreement with this waiver.



TUESDAY, May 19
SCBC Meeting @7:30 pm
Speaker: Paul Bannick

The Owl and the Woodpecker

Author, photographer, and naturalist Paul Bannick looks at all 19 owl species found between the Arctic Circle and the Mexican border. Through stunning photography and patient field observations, he examines each as his discussion explores various North American habitats and how they meet the needs of these special birds. The content draws from Bannick's new book, *The Owl and The Woodpecker: Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds*. Paul is Director of Development for Conservation Northwest. Some of his photography can be viewed at www.paulbannick.com

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



Friday, May 22
Arana Gulch

We will look for breeding species in this area and have a chance for unusual late spring migrants.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the entrance on Agnes Street, by the end of Mentel Avenue (off the south side of Soquel Avenue two blocks east of Trevethan and Hagemann).

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



Friday, May 29
Natural Bridges Area

We may also visit Antonelli Pond and other nearby areas. This can be a good time of year for unusual spring migrants.

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

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



Saturday, May 30
Butano State Park

Butano is a fantastic jewel among our forest parks. This trip will seek a variety of singing forest birds including Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes, Black-headed Grosbeak, MacGillivray's Warbler, possible Hermit Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and more. An optional extra early start will offer a chance to see and/or hear Marbled Murrelets flying over and to enjoy the experience of the dawn chorus. And, the areas we will visit have a wonderful variety of shrubs that include several that are hard to find in Santa Cruz County, so this will be fun for

plant lovers, too—not to mention some great trees! Expect about 4-5 miles of walking with some minor elevation change but generally a slow pace. Bring water and something to eat. We'll continue to mid-day, and on the way out we might check for Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows along Cloverdale Road and pause at Gazos Creek.

Directions: Meet at the small picnic area a few hundred yards in past the park's entrance kiosk. There is a day use fee for each car. Go north on Highway 1 past Año Nuevo, turn right on Gazos Creek Road, left on Cloverdale Road, and then after a couple miles watch for the entrance road to Butano State Park on the right.

Early start-murrelets and dawn chorus: meet at 5:30 AM.
 Regular start: meet at 7:00 AM.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Friday, June 5
Nearby Lagoon

Some of the rarest spring migrants show up in early June. If nothing unusual is around, there are always plenty of "regular" birds to enjoy.

Directions: Meet at the west entrance at 7:30 AM.

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



Saturday, June 6
Russian Ridge
Open Space Preserve

Target birds include Lazuli Bunting, testosterone-laden Grasshopper Sparrows, Ash-throated Flycatchers, and Golden Eagle. Bring extra layers of clothing in case it is foggy and cold. This is a half day trip.

Directions: Meet at the Santa Cruz Government Center, 701 Ocean St, Santa Cruz, at 6:30 AM to carpool or at the intersection of Skyline Blvd and Page Mill Rd. at 8:00 AM.

Leader: Norman Kikuchi, (831) 459-9424



Sunday, June 7
Lower Henry Cowell

We will look for American Dipper, Winter and Bewick's Wrens, and other nesting species. Last year we found a Northern Parula on this trip, so who knows what we might find this time?

Directions: Meet at 7:00 AM in the church parking lot at the intersection of Zayante and Graham Hill roads for a half-day trip. Bring water and snacks.

Leader: Bonnie Bedzin bonnie@baymoon.com





Wednesday, June 17
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, and then, if it is not breezy, we will spend some time trying for Western Screech-Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl. Expect about a mile of easy walking on roads.

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

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Sunday, June 21
Father's Day—Elkhorn Slough

We will seek proud avian dads (for the day, all parents are dads), mostly shorebirds, and their outrageously cute babies—prizes for the most endearing. Bring lunch.

Directions: Meet at Aptos Wells Fargo at 7:00 AM sharp; by 8:00 we will be on Jetty Rd.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741



Sunday, June 28
Beginning Bird Walk
Quail Hollow County Park

Expected species for the trip include Ash-throated Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, and maybe a Western Bluebird.

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

Leader: Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



Friday, July 3
Moore Creek Preserve

If all goes well we have a chance for Black Swifts foraging over the grasslands. If not, we'll see what else we can find.

Directions: Meet at 3:00 PM on Shaffer Road, across from the intersection with Mission Street.

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



Thursday, July 16
Evening Outing for
Common Poorwill and Forest Owls

See details above for June 17.



Friday, July 17
Natural Bridges area

No great expectations this time of year, but one never knows. Early migrant shorebirds are a possibility.

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

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



Friday, July 31
Terrace Point area

Shorebird migration should be well underway by now, and some landbirds are also dispersing or starting to migrate.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the west end of Delaware Avenue, by the intersection with Shaffer Road.

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



Friday, August 14
Meder Canyon

There is often quite a bit of passerine migration by now, and this can be a good place to find migrants.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the southern end of the trail into the canyon on Grandview Street just west of Escalona (Swift Street north of Mission makes a sharp left bend, then turns into Grandview).

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



Friday, August 21
Natural Bridges area

Things usually get interesting about this time of year. Black-chinned Hummingbirds and some other hard to find migrants are possible.

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

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



Friday, August 28
San Lorenzo River

The lower stretches of the river this time of year are unpredictable, but often interesting. We might go upstream, downstream, or a little of both, depending on conditions and what might be around.

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

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

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SEABIRDING

Once again, Shearwater Journeys and Monterey Seabirds are offering discounted pelagic birding excursions to SCBC members. Group size is limited so make your reservations early, before the trips sell out. If you get seasick, please take note of a new remedy, reviewed by Roger Wolfe on the facing page.



SHEARWATER JOURNEYS

Pelagic Trips

Discounts are available for Bird Club members on the following trips:

Leaving from Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey:

May 10 - Spring Seabirds and Albatrosses

July 31 - Summer Seabirds & Albatrosses

August 7, 21, & 28 - Fall Seabird Classic & Albatrosses

Cost: \$95 per person

Leaving from Santa Cruz:

Aug 31 - Fall Seabird Classic & Albatrosses

Cost: \$105 per person

Discounted trips are non-refundable for any reason.

More information at:

<http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com>

To make a reservation:

Select a trip date, note the price per trip, and send your personal check or money order with the name, address, phone & email of EACH person booking (as required by the US Coast Guard) to:

D. Shearwater
P.O. Box 190
Hollister, CA 95024

MONTEREY SEABIRDS

Pelagic Seabirding-Monterey Bay

Saturday, May 23

An all-day outing aboard the Pt. Sur Clipper. Previous spring trips have yielded rarities such as Short-tailed Albatross, Horned and Tufted Puffins, Yellow-billed Loon, Manx Shearwater, and Leach's Storm Petrel in addition to the more-to-be-expected Black-footed Albatross, Ancient Murrelet, Pink-footed Shearwater, Arctic Tern, and Sabine's Gull. May is also the peak month for sighting killer whales.

Dress warmly in layers, bring lunch and beverages.

Cost: SCBC members-\$95, non-members \$105.

Saturday, September 5 - SCBC Group Charter

An early fall pelagic outing reserved for **SCBC members and guests only**—limited to the first 25 who sign up. The fall season is the peak of seabird diversity and *the* time for megararities on the Monterey Bay. The list of possibilities is long. Weather permitting we plan to head directly to Santa Cruz County waters for the storm-petrel flocks (Ashy, Black, and possibly Least and Wilson's) if they are present. So come pad your county list. The best part is the price.

Cost: For 25 participants the price will be \$66.00 per person, but with fewer, the scale will slide upward. If we only get 20, the price will be \$82.50 per person.

Dress warmly in layers, bring lunch and beverages.

Directions for both trips:

Meet at the Monterey Bay Whale Watch Center at the end of Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey.

Be there by 7:00 AM to check in.

Boat departs at 7:30 AM.

For details etc. go to: www.montereyseabirds.com

To reserve a spot contact:

Roger Wolfe
rogwolfe@cruzio.com
or (831) 252-0752.

Carpooling is encouraged and will be arranged.

Trips will be led by Roger Wolfe and others.



Do you get SEASICK?

Promising news for motion-sickness sufferers

Over the last few years I've seen quite a few green faces and witnessed more regurgitation than I would have liked. I've loaned out electric Relief bands, handed out Bonine and ginger candies, and watched Dramamine-dosed dozers miss the action. I've seen people bend over the rail despite the Scopolamine patches behind their ears. The only sure-fire cure for seasickness is land, but there is another antidote for motion sickness that is gaining a reputation among boaters, fisherman, and seabirders—*Scopace* tablets.

Scopolamine transdermal patches have been problematic in that it is difficult to gauge the proper dosage due to variables like skin thickness, which varies among individuals. However Scopolamine is now available in a tablet form—available by prescription only—that is absorbed more effectively in the gastrointestinal tract. It can be taken an hour prior to heading out to sea, whereas the patches need to be applied twelve hours prior to departure. The average dosage is two tablets.

Last year, several participants (and one leader) on the Monterey Seabird trips testified that after several attempts at avoiding seasickness with patches or other medications without success, they found that Scopace worked.

So if *mal de mer* (seasickness) has been keeping you from experiencing the avian wonders of Monterey Bay, you might look into Scopace. More information and testimonials from physicians are available on the web site at:

<http://www.motionsickness.net>

As with any drug, inform yourself about side effects and drug interactions. The most serious side effect seems to be dry mouth, but you should also avoid operating heavy machinery.

~Roger Wolfe

Photos by David Suddjian



Barbara Banfield and Margaret Perham at Watsonville, March 20, 2009

*At El Jarro Pt. on March 25, 2009—
Jeff Wall, Tim Jolly, and Phil Brown*



Santa Cruz Birds

*By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow
Including reports
from January 1 to February 28, 2009*

Greater White-fronted Geese were found at a handful of lakes and wetlands in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.), with high counts of 27 at Struve Slough on January 3 (RW) and 13 at College Lake on January 10 (LG, WG, JP). Away from the Pajaro Valley, one continued at San Lorenzo Park into March (SG, v.ob.) and one at Laguna Creek Marsh on January 11 was rare for the north coast in winter (SP). Five to seven **Snow Geese** were at scattered spots in the Pajaro Valley in early January (v.ob.), and 12 flew over the County Fairgrounds on January 10 (LG, WG, JP). The only **Ross's Geese** reported were 1-3 at Watsonville and Struve sloughs on January 10-17 (JWa, RgW et al., OJ). A **Cackling Goose** continued at San Lorenzo Park into March (SG, v.ob.), two were at College Lake on January 1-10 (MST, RW), and four were at Struve Slough on January 1 (BRe).

A juvenile **Tundra Swan** visited Watsonville Slough near Pajaro Dunes on February 2 (JWa). Four **Wood Ducks** at Pinto Lake on December 28 provided the only report for the Pajaro Valley this winter (TN); the species was missed this time on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC. Struve Slough had at least two (and maybe three) male **Eurasian Wigeons** wintering from January 1 to early February, with at least one lingering to February 28 (v.ob.). About nine **Blue-winged Teal** were reported for the period, all in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.). At least four **Redheads** frequented the Watsonville Slough system from January 5 to February 8 (JWa, RW, OJ, AG, EB), and two were at College Lake on January 27 (DSu). **Lesser Scaup** was disturbingly sparse; not more than 10 were reported in the county all winter (AG, JWa, EL et al., RW, DSu).

Unlike last winter, when **Greater Scaup** and **White-winged Scoter** were found in very high numbers, both species were back down to very low numbers this season. There were only four reports of Greater Scaup all winter, totaling just six birds (CK et al., JWa, RW). White-winged Scoters were concentrated at Sunset State Beach, where the high counts were 11-15 birds on January 15-17 (JP, LG). One at Terrace Point on February 26 was the only one reported elsewhere (PB). **Surf Scoters** gathered in impressive numbers at Sunset State Beach most of the season, with a high count of 2,325 on January 28 (DSu). A **Black Scoter** was there that day, too, and one was at Hidden Beach on January 26 (DSu). A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** at the Pajaro River mouth from January 4 to February 2, one of the season's rarest birds, was likely the same bird

present in the area last winter. It was found initially on the Monterey County side (RC) and then seen on the Santa Cruz side from January 27 on (DSu, JWa).

A high count of 29 **Hooded Mergansers** was made at College Lake on January 27 (DSu). One at Neary Lagoon from December 23 to February 14 was unusual for that well-watched spot (SG, MC et al.). Two **Common Mergansers** at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on February 4-8 were rare for the Pajaro Valley (OJ, AG, EB). In fact, the slough offered a rare Santa Cruz County opportunity for a merganser hat trick, with all three species present there over those dates. On what other occasion have all three been seen on the same waters in our county? **Red-necked Grebes** were at Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB) and February 4 (OJ). Large crowds of **Western** and **Clark's Grebes** flocked off the Pajaro Dunes and Sunset State Beach area. A count at Sunset on January 27 tallied 5,900 grebes (DSu). Most could not be identified, but a small sample suggests about 95% were Westerns. A count of some of the same birds on January 1 (also including some in Monterey County) came up with a high 790 Clark's and 4,165 Westerns (CK, JG, OJ, MB).

A female **Brown Booby** was found standing in the RV campground area at Seacliff State Beach on January 4 (JE). It was captured by park rangers that day and taken to the International Bird Rescue Research Center, where it later died. The IBRRC reported it had been emaciated and dehydrated and was suffering from an infection. Interestingly, a booby was seen flying at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf the day before, January 3 (AV). It was not conclusively ID'd, but reported details suggest it may have been the rarer *Masked Booby*, and after viewing photos of the Seacliff Brown Booby the observer was confident it was not the same bird. The high count of **American White Pelicans** for the period was 31 at Harkins Slough on January 27 (DSu).

Three reports of **Brown Pelicans** away from the ocean were unexpected. Three flew over agricultural fields inland of Sunset State Beach on January 27 (DSu et al.). Two flew in and landed at Neary Lagoon on January 29 (MC). Odd-est, one was found dead atop a greenhouse roof 1.75 miles inland in Soquel on February 16 (fide HN). These inland occurrences were especially rare for winter, as most have been in late summer and early fall. We had our strongest winter showing ever for **White-faced Ibis**. The new winter record count reported for December 27 in the last issue was broken on January 1 when a flock of 20 was seen flying at Drew Lake (PB, EF, KK). Coverage of the whole Pajaro Valley for the January 1 CBC tallied up to 46 ibis (fide RR & BR)! Besides Drew, they were seen at the Watsonville Slough system, College Lake, and Pinto Lake. After the

strong January presence, the last report was on February 2 until others appeared in March.

Two or three **Ospreys** wintered in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.). Elsewhere there were just sporadic reports at Capitola (DSu), Santa Cruz (MB, JS), and Ben Lomond (AR). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was spied eating worms off wet pavement at Glen Canyon road on January 22 (BS). Desperate or opportunistic? You decide. Forty-six reports of **Merlin** were received from December to February (v.ob.). A **Prairie Falcon** seen variously at Wilder Ranch State Park and nearby UCSC on three dates from January 15 to February 14 (SG, DSu) was perhaps the same bird previously reported at Santa Cruz on December 15. Another was along Struve Slough on January 27 (DSu). **Ruddy Turnstone** failed to appear this winter.

Some shorebirds that are common in winter at Elkhorn Slough are rare or sporadic in Santa Cruz County in that season. The Pajaro River mouth attracted some of these when it finally breached its sand bar in January, making available some nice mudflat habitat. Notable counts were 39 **Semipalmated Plovers** on January 29, up to 144 **Western Sandpipers**, 230 **Least Sandpipers**, and 1-4 **Dunlin** on January 27-29 (DSu, JW). An **American Avocet** at Struve Slough on January 13 was the only one reported from the Pajaro Valley all winter (LG, JP, BMcL). The winter's only **Wandering Tattler** stayed at West Cliff Drive to January 15 (SG). The **Rock Sandpiper** stayed faithful to West Cliff into March (v.ob.) but was also at Capitola on February 2 (DSu). **Bonaparte's Gulls** were quite rare, with but a single report at Santa Cruz and just a handful of sightings further down the coast (v.ob.).



The faithful Rock Sandpiper of West Cliff Drive. Photo by Jeff Poklen.



A possible, but unconfirmed, 1st cycle Iceland Gull, photographed by Jeff Poklen at Sunset State Beach on January 22, 2009.

It was a great winter for **Glaucous Gulls**. It is hard to sort out which birds might have been seen on more than one date, but examination of the reports suggests that as many as 18 individuals may have been found in the county from January 15 to February 20 (v.ob.). Among these were record setting counts of 5-6 Glaucous Gulls at Buena Vista Road County Landfill and adjacent Harkins Slough on January 23-27 (OJ, MB, DSu). On the latter date these included an adult, for the first county record of that age (DSu). Several reports of first cycle rare gulls presented challenges. Among those documented was a possible 1st county record of **Iceland Gull** at Sunset State Beach on January 22 (JP), pending review by the California Bird Records Committee, and a **Herring Gull** showing characters of the *Vega* subspecies at Capitola Beach December 19-22 (OJ, MB, LD). There were also a number of reports of rare hybrids in first cycle plumage, such as involving Glaucous Gull parentage, but it is hard to be certain of the identity of such birds. It seems the situation will only get messier in future seasons as keen observers are able to discern these odd gulls amid the flocks.

A count of 251 **Forster's Terns** along the coast from Sunset State Beach to La Selva on January 1 was a very high winter count (BMn, KM et al.). A notable movement of **Common Murres** was noted on February 10 when 3,500 passed Terrace Point in just 15 minutes (SG). A count of 222 **Cassin's Auklets** tallied on aerial transect surveys between Santa Cruz and Monterey on January 27 was more than had been observed on any such survey in at

least 10 years (JD, DL). It was suspected that many thousands were probably present in addition to those in the rather limited survey lanes. Curiously, none were present on surveys one month later.

A record count of 124 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** in the Santa Cruz County portion of the January 1 Moss Landing CBC provided another striking illustration of the rapid population increase of this dove in parts of this county (fide RR, BR). Two **Burrowing Owls** turned up at the Thompson-Cooley Ranch east of Watsonville on January 1, the first report in several years from this formerly regular wintering area (EF, PB, KK). A **Long-eared Owl** was along Casserley Creek near College Lake on Jan. 1 (DSu). Two **Common Poorwills** were along Highway 236 west of China Grade in Big Basin on January 3, responding to recordings just after dark (DSu). **Loggerhead Shrikes** remained extremely few and far between this winter. One continued in the vicinity of Harkins Slough until at least February 20 (EL, NA, v.ob.), and one was spotted at the UCSC Arboretum January 28 (RCi).

An impressive swarm of about 800 **American Crows** flooded into a roost at the mouth of Casserley Creek on College Lake on January 1 (DSu, MST), all arriving within just a few minutes. A **Horned Lark** sitting on a fence post at the intersection of Hecker Pass Road and Casserley Road on February 28 was the second occurrence of the species in the Pajaro Valley this season (AR); this species has been quite rare anywhere in the county in recent years. Christmas counters picked out a rare winter **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB et al). Repeating what has been a regular pattern in recent years, **Barn Swallows** made another winter appearance in the county. Oddly, while 18 were found in the lower Pajaro Valley area during coverage for the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (v.ob.), the only other report was of a single bird at Harkins Slough January 23 (OJ, MB).

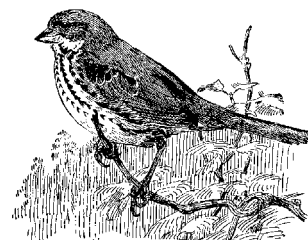
Wintering **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued to be found in scattered spots in the county, with reports of small numbers continuing into March (v.ob.). The largest count from a single location was seven in the Sunset State Beach area January 1 (BMn, KM). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at Kelly-Thompson Ranch in the hills east of Watsonville on January 1 (DSu, MST). **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were found at Harkins Slough January 1 (EL et al), Rancho Del Oso on January 21 (DSu et al), and Baldwin Creek February 18 (SG et al). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was a nice surprise at Johansen Road in Big Basin on January 3 (DSu), right on the Santa Cruz/San Mateo County line.

Forty **Western Bluebirds** were found at eight locations in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Moss Landing CBC, a good showing compared to the last several years

(fide RR, BR). Most were from locations east of Watsonville and around Corralitos; four at Zils Road near Monterey Bay Academy were quite close to the coast, where less expected (BMn, KM). There were also a couple of other Corralitos-area reports in January (NA, RW). A pair of bluebirds present on Valencia School Road from early February into March represented the first report from Aptos in many years (KP), and two north of the UCSC Arboretum on February 3 (RG, MP) were among very few recent reports from that area.

A **Nashville Warbler** made appearances in Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz from February 13-27 (AG, SG). A rare wintering **Yellow Warbler** along the San Lorenzo River near Soquel Avenue in Santa Cruz from February 8-25 was the first winter record for the county in 10 years (SG). **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were in Santa Cruz around Ocean View Park January 11-21 (TM, RB, SG, LG) and on Washburn Avenue January 11 (JS, MB). In addition to continuing birds in Santa Cruz and Capitola, a third wintering **Palm Warbler** turned up at Monterey Bay Academy on January 28 (DSu). The wintering female **Summer Tanager** near Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz was last reported January 24 (JS), and the wintering male in La Selva Beach reappeared February 16, after almost two months of apparent absence (FM). **Western Tanagers** visited eucalyptus groves in Meder Canyon in Santa Cruz January 17 (SG), and Hidden Beach January 26 (DSu).

A very rare wintering **Clay-colored Sparrow** was a good find at Sierra Azul Nursery east of Watsonville on January 1 (EF, PB, KK). **Fox Sparrows** were quite abundant in some spots in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on January 3, with 167 recorded there in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Año Nuevo CBC Circle (DSu, SS, MST). Most were in forest areas with large patches of wartleaf ceanothus, including 97 counted along a stretch of only about 150 yards on the Hollow Tree Trail (DSu)! Three **Swamp Sparrows** were counted at College Lake January 1 (DSu). A wintering bird along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz was last found February 8 (v.ob.), and the one visiting a west Santa Cruz back yard stayed around until February 7 (WP, v.ob.). Thirteen **White-throated Sparrows** were reported during January and February (v.ob.). A **Dark-eyed Junco** of the **Slate-colored** form visited a Bonny Doon feeder until March 5 (WBT).





Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, photographed at a Soquel feeder by Pete Solé.

Two male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** turned out to be regular visitors to the same Soquel feeder through this winter, staying until at least March 15 (NC, PS), probably the first time more than one of this species have been found wintering in the same spot in Santa Cruz County. One was an adult and the other a first winter male. The two were seen simultaneously on several occasions, and **Pete Solé** managed to get photos showing both birds together. A **Bullock's Oriole** was chattering at Lighthouse Field on January 30 (SG). The only **Red Crossbills** reported were two flying over San Lorenzo Valley High School in Felton on January 2 (AR). **Pine Siskins** remained locally numerous through the period, with most in the mountains and at some north coast spots, and **American Goldfinches** were also in somewhat above average numbers (v.ob.).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Eileen Balian, Bruce Barrett, Robert Blumberg, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Ryan Carle, Richard Cimino (RCi), Nancy Collins, Mary Crouser, Jeff Davis, Luke DeCicco, John Ellis, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Jennifer Green, Rich Griffith, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Kathy Kuyper, Earl Lebow, Dave Lewis, Barry McLaughlin (BMcL), Freddie Menge, Barbara Monahan (BMn), Kevin Monahan, Tom Morell, Hannah Nevins, Todd Newberry, Bill Park, Margaret Perham, Kenneth Peterson, Shantanu Phukan, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Bill Reese (BRe), Alex Rinkert, Barbara Scharfenstein, Jenny Slaughter, Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, John Sterling, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler, Ann Verdi, 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

A "grayscale" bird

Will Lawton found and photographed this leucistic Nuttall's Woodpecker near the San Lorenzo River at the Felton Covered Bridge park, February 27, 2009



It really was...

"For the Birds!"

By David Suddjian, Historian

The Bird Feeder store in Santa Cruz—a much-loved resource for bird enthusiasts of all sorts—closed at the end of March, after 16 years of filling a unique niche in our community. Although saddened by the store's closing, we are grateful to proprietor and long-time Santa Cruz Bird Club member Sheri Howe for the wonderful contribution that she and her store have made in our local birding world. We congratulate Sheri on her retirement. And although Sheri's role as "the Bird Feeder Lady" has drawn to a close, we look forward to her continued involvement in our Bird Club. We hope that now, free from the duties of the store, we'll even see her out on a field trip now and again!

Sheri and the Bird Feeder made a significant impact on the life of the Bird Club. Her clientele was broad, including many active local birders, but especially many other bird lovers who simply enjoyed birds in their back yards. Sheri was a liaison between the broader community and the Bird Club. She was a staunch supporter of the Club, referring customers to the Club and recommending membership, and advertising Club field trips and other events in her store's monthly *Bird Feeder Bulletin*.

Her store was my favored source for purchasing bird seed, and I always enjoyed stopping in to browse and look at feeders, books, videos, jewelry, t-shirts, and other bird related merchandise. The Bird Feeder was an especially welcome source for a number of bird books, tapes or CDs that we could not find on the shelves of local book stores. It was a rare occasion to stop into the store and not have other customers come in happy to share their bird feeding stories or ask questions of Sheri and her staff about our local birds. Sheri accomplished a great deal of outreach in that way, and she had a wealth of information to share. It was always nice just to stop in to see how things were going and to enjoy Sheri's wry sense of humor.

The Bird Feeder supported the Santa Cruz Bird Club in many other ways, too. Although it is not a part of our current calendar of events, the Bird Club for-

merly had an Annual Dinner each winter with a special speaker or program. For several years we had raffles that helped to fund the dinner event and even provided extra income for the Bird Club. Each year Sheri generously donated a number of items for the raffle, really helping it to succeed. Similarly she provided small gifts for the tables, creating a festive environment. More recently, as the Bird Club celebrated its 50th year, the Bird Feeder provided door prizes for all of the meetings that year, renewing a tradition from the Club's earliest years. Sheri also served as the Club's hospitality officer from 2002-2004, and for a long time she was the one who picked up the Albatross newsletters from the printer, attached the mailing labels, and delivered them to the post office.

It was great to have the Bird Feeder in our community so that I could refer new birders to the store. There were many occasions when I recommended a visit to the store to peruse and select a new field guide or purchase feeders and other equipment. In addition to advertising Club events and connecting people with the Bird Club, Sheri also regularly encouraged customers to contact me to report interesting bird sightings from their yards. The call would come in, "The lady at the Bird Feeder said I should tell you about..." Thus many interesting bird reports entered our county records. These reports were especially interesting in helping to document an increase in the occurrence of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, many of which showed up at bird feeders stocked by seed from Sheri's store! And Sheri's own feeders on Sunset Avenue provided excitement for local birders, such as when a Painted Bunting visited there in November 1995 and was enjoyed by over 160 birders!

It will be our joy to honor Sheri at our May 19 Bird Club meeting and to present her with a gift to acknowledge her contribution to the Club.



“Bird Feeder Lady” Sheri Howe



Club members share some memories and appreciative thoughts

“...perhaps we can redouble our efforts and make sure she can finally have her share of fun with the Santa Cruz birding community.”

~Barb Monahan

“[Sheri’s contributions]...symbolized the distinctively fun and engaging quality of the Santa Cruz Bird Club.”

~Jeff Davis

“I loved...exchanging recent birding news and sightings...Sheri, you will be missed. ”

~Jeana de la Torre

“Sheri...introduced me to the Santa Cruz Bird Club. So thanks, Sheri, for paving my way into a world that I never thought I would venture into.”

~Michelle Scott

“...the Sheri we have all come to know [is] generous, giving and extremely bright! She has given to so many, for so long. Thank you, Sheri!”

~Bernadette Ramer

“We celebrate what Sheri Howe has created with The Bird Feeder...but think of what the birds must be making of it: a chorus of grateful peeps and chirps, buzzes and trills, quacks and hoots and cries. You’ll hear it the next time you go birding.”

~Todd Newberry

“The Bird Feeder was a sweet spot for visitors, friends, and folks in general...It was a treasure, and it will be sorely missed by us and the birds.”

~Linda Brodman

“In the friendly atmosphere of her cheerful emporium, Sheri provided great products and expert advice... Sheri and The Bird Feeder will be sorely missed.”

~Nancy Collins

“We will miss her at the store but we will see her out birding & more times at Giants games. Good luck Sheri & thanks for just being you.”

~Barb Scharfenstein

“Sheri and her store were both a real treat for our family through the years we’ve been here...I am very sorry to see the store go.”

~Kumaran Arul

“The Bird Feeder and its owner Sheri Howe have been a vital part of the lives of local birders for many years.”

~Sharon Hull

“Our fondest memory of Sheri...was the afternoon she invited us as unknown, brand-new birders to come into her yard to have a look at the Painted Bunting that happened to be visiting. The bunting must have had a remarkable sensibility to find one of the few homes on the West Side that would allow so many birders a most unusual opportunity. Thanks again, Sheri!”

~Lois & Wally Goldfrank

“Thanks for everything, Sheri. We’ll greatly miss your store, though we hope we’ll still get to see you between your trips.”

~Jean Harrison



February 18, Baldwin Creek

The timing was good for this one, occurring on the first pleasant and sunny day in a couple of weeks. One of our first birds was one of our best, a very cooperative Blue-gray Gnatcatcher working through the scrub a short distance east of the trail to the beach. We enjoyed the singing Marsh Wrens and Common Yellowthroats in the marshland along the lower creek, then picked through the multitude of gulls on the beach, finding several Herring and Thayer's, plus some hybrids worthy of debate. The walk back produced more highlights, including distant views of White-throated Swifts and much closer looks at a foraging adult male Northern Harrier. ~Steve Gerow

February 20, Neary Lagoon

The riparian area here seemed to be crawling with activity. Dozens, perhaps hundreds of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings were feeding on English Ivy and other berries. The sprouting willows swarmed with finches, providing good opportunities to compare American and Lesser Goldfinches, House and Purple Finches, etc. Nice views of regulars like Common Yellowthroats, Oak Titmice, Marsh Wrens, and Wood Ducks enriched the morning. Up the Laurel Creek access path, a couple of less expected sightings added interest, including a Great Horned Owl flying around the oaks in the late morning and two somewhat lost Common Mergansers flying up the creek.

~Steve Gerow

February 28, Pogonip

This was a good morning to study the varied songs and calls of common forest species, with few views but many vocalizations from Hutton's Vireos, Brown Creepers, Spotted Towhees, Bewick's and Winter Wrens, and others. A couple of Pine Siskins venturing into low shrubs did provide some great views, as dozens of others called from well up the redwoods. We also had nice studies of several raptors—White-tailed Kite, American Kestrel, and Northern Harrier among them. Adding interest were multiple varieties of forest fungi, some of the early blooming flowers (including deep blue Hounds Tongues and the intricately lined lily-relative *Scoliopus bigelovii*), a substantial supply of Banana Slugs, and a visit to the goldfish-filled spring pool. ~Steve Gerow

March 13, Natural Bridges

This walk provided another lesson in the value of sprouting willows to many bird species. Finches, sparrows, and waxwings fed on catkins and sprouting leaves, while warblers, kinglets and others gleaned for insects. A highlight of the morning was a Palm Warbler among the other species in the “bend in the road” willow patch. The pleasant early spring weather elicited song and mating displays from many species.

~Steve Gerow



Our own “rock star”—the Rock Sandpiper. Photo by Jeff Poklen.

March 27, West Cliff/Lighthouse area

A loop around Lighthouse Field started the morning with a nice variety of landbirds, including good studies of the resident pair of American Kestrels. Moving on to West Cliff, we had close looks at Pigeon Guillemots and comparative studies of cormorant and loon species. The hazards of life for seabirds were brought home by an oiled Common Murre on a lawn across the street. Margaret and Barbara contacted Native Animal Rescue and stayed with the bird until help arrived. Further up the coast we encountered some foraging shorebirds, and our wintering Rock Sandpiper kept its appointment at the appointed place, appearing on exactly the same rock where we saw it in on a January field trip. Finally, we were actually able to answer affirmatively when passers-by asked the inevitable question, “Did you see any whales?” They were very numerous off the coast, spouting everywhere and occasionally surfacing. ~Steve Gerow

New SCBC Members

Stephanie Stainback	3/09
Suzanne Davis	3/09
Cheryl Jacques	3/09
Mary Nelson & Lance Sprague	3/09
Barbara Cordes	3/09
Kent Johnson	4/09

Welcome!

New SCBC Officers Nominated

The SCBC Nominating Committee—Barry McLaughlin, David Suddjian, and David Ekdahl—has submitted the following nominees for officer positions that will be vacated as of the May meeting:

- President - Steve Gerow
- Secretary - Jeff Wall
- Outreach Coordinator - Bernadette Ramer
- Hospitality Coordinator - Kathy Kuyper

All the nominees have confirmed their willingness to serve in these roles, if so elected by the general membership. Nominees will be presented for approval by the general membership at the meeting on April 23, and the final election will take place at the May 19 meeting.

Our MAY meeting is on a TUESDAY

The May 19 meeting will be on the third TUESDAY of the month. The day/date change was necessary to accommodate the speaker's schedule. Please see the Events Calendar for details.

Assembling



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
Sept/Oct issue
of The Albatross
is August 1, 2009**

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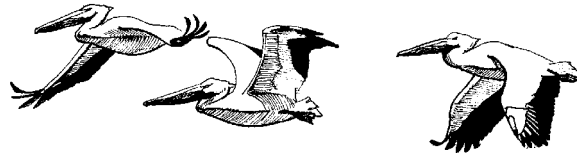


TIME TO RENEW SCBC MEMBERSHIP

It's that time of year again—time to renew membership in the Santa Cruz Bird Club. To make dues-paying easier, a remittance envelope is enclosed in this issue.

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

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

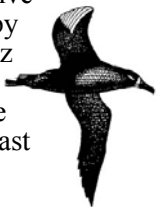


A Gift of Birds and Birding?

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. Additional envelopes are usually available from some club officers and trip leaders.

The ALBATROSS

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



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 from June to 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.