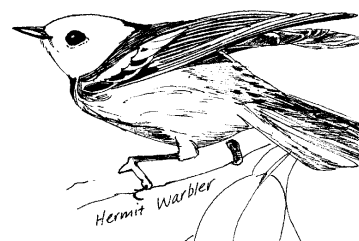


# Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

## Santa Cruz Birds



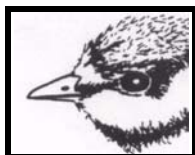
By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow  
Including reports from  
January 1 to February 28, 2010

Inside:

Santa Cruz  
Birds



Calendar

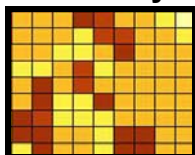


Trip Reports

News Blog



Avian  
Diversity



Reminder:  
**TIME TO  
RENEW**

Winter is frequently thought of as a rather slow and static time for birding, but there is often a lot going on. Just as the last bit of shuffling of fall migration ends, the first stirrings of spring migration are already beginning, and the timing of all this varies from year to year. Then there are unexpected movements in response to weather, changing food conditions, and who knows what else. This season we found a lot more Surf Scoters than usual, but fewer gulls. Some notable rarities like Costa's Hummingbird, Indigo Bunting, and Cassin's Finches appeared, but there were few uncommon-to-rare wintering warblers. Irruptives were lacking, with few Pine Siskins, for example, and no Red Crossbills. The local Western Bluebird population is showing encouraging signs of recovery, but some formerly regular wintering species like Ruddy Turnstone have all but disappeared. Every season there are some new things to observe and new questions to ponder. It never stops being interesting.

\*\*\*

Geese are generally not on the list of anticipated species when one is birding the interior of Big Basin Redwoods State Park, so a flock of 81 **Greater White-fronted Geese** and 13 **Ross's Geese** was quite a surprise when they flew by Mt. McAbee late in the day on January 2, heading toward the San Mateo County border (DSu). These were the first White-fronts reported from Big Basin apart from a few records at the Waddell Creek mouth and the first Ross's from anywhere in that park. In addition to a few in the Pajaro Valley in early January, two **Snow Geese** were at Scott Creek Beach January 4 (GS), and one was in Younger Lagoon January 14 (JW). A few more **Brant** wintered in the area than in most recent years, with regular reports mostly involving a handful of birds from eastern Santa Cruz to Capitola (v.ob.). On January 20, two flocks totaling 66 birds were flying up the coast off Terrace Point (OJ), then there were several more reports of Brant flocks moving up the coast starting in early February (v.ob.), suggesting some may have started their spring migration earlier than usual. *(continued on page 8)*

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# Events Calendar

May - August 2010

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



**Sunday, May 2**  
**Quail Hollow Ranch**  
**County Park**

Five flycatcher species nest at Quail Hollow Ranch, and they should be seen frequently during the morning. There is also a high chance of seeing Western Bluebirds in the park's meadows, and the lupine and sandhills flora will be in full bloom throughout the meadows and edges of the trail, making it a colorful day. Rain or shine.

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

**Leader:** Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



*Bench and view at Quail Hollow Ranch*



*A Solitary Sandpiper reflects at the San Lorenzo River in May 2009. Photo by Jeff Poklen*



**Tuesday, May 4**  
**San Lorenzo River**

This time of year there is a possibility (though slight) of a Solitary Sandpiper along the river, plus other spring migrants.

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

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

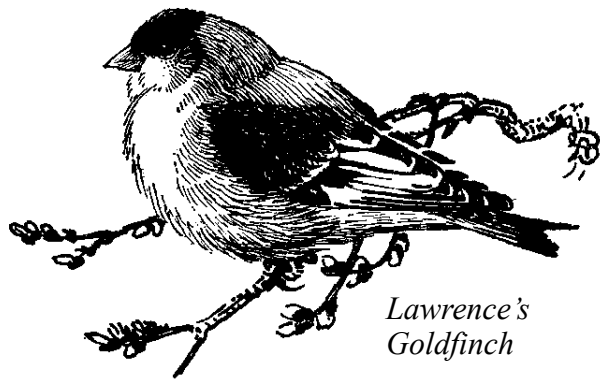
*Santa Cruz Bird Club programs and field trips are open to the public—non-members are welcome. People needing rides to field trip sites are advised to contact field trip leaders. Carpooling is encouraged. Dress in layers and bring liquids. Lunches are optional on half-day trips. Heavy rain cancels.*

*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.*



*Lawrence's Goldfinch*



**Saturday, May 8  
Mt. Hamilton**

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 Goldfinch and Costa's Hummingbird.

People should come with a full tank of gas Also bring plenty of liquids, lunch, and snacks. Sunblock lotion and hats are a must. There will be practically no hiking on this trip but lots of car stops. The mountain can be cold, so people should wear layers. After birding a few areas at the top of the mountain, people can choose to travel down the mountain through Livermore on Mines Valley Road or through San Jose on San Antonio Valley Road depending on their final destination. Space is limited on this road so carpooling is strongly encouraged. People travelling from South County who wish to carpool should contact the trip leader to make arrangements.

**Directions:** Meet at the Santa Cruz Government Center on Ocean Street at 6:30 AM to carpool to the start of the trip. We'll 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](mailto:birdermom@starband.net)



**Sunday, May 9  
Mother's Day at Rancho Del Oso**

All birds, including garish singers, will be declared female today. We will search the road in this morning.

**Directions:** Meet at Brendon's (formerly Beckmann's) Bakery, west end of Mission St. Leave there at 7:00 AM sharp (sunrise was at 6:15). Latecomers: We will regroup at 7:30 AM at Waddell Beach.

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



**Friday, May 14  
Neary Lagoon**

We'll look for spring migrant passerines and whatever else we can find.

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

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



**Friday, May 14  
Afternoon at the Watsonville Sloughs**

This late afternoon-to-sunset foray will seek water-birds and others in the sloughs of Watsonville. Rain cancels.

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

**Leader:** Rod Norden, [rod.norden@gmail.com](mailto:rod.norden@gmail.com)



*Watsonville Slough*

*Photo by David Suddjian*

**SPECIAL EVENT**

**May 14 - 16, 2010  
Big Basin State Park  
8th Annual Wings Over the Basin**

Experience the park's varied birdlife at the height of the nesting season on field trips, guided bird and butterfly walks, and at an evening campfire presentation.

Details at: <http://wingsoverthebasin.org>



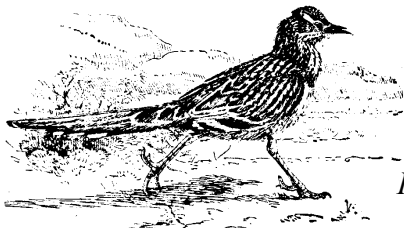


**Saturday, May 15**  
**Fremont Peak State Park**

This park is good for a chance at Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, California Thrasher, Greater Roadrunner, Wrentits, Sage and/or Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Western Bluebird, Orioles, Grosbeaks, and many wildflowers. Bring lunch and liquids and wear layers. At 3000 feet higher than the coast, the park can be cold AND hot.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 AM at the Aptos Wells Fargo to carpool. From Aptos (1-hour drive), take Highway 1 south to the Highway 129/Riverside Drive exit. Take Riverside/129 toward Watsonville, continuing through Watsonville past Aromas to the Highway 101 interchange. Go south on 101, taking the next exit, Highway 156/San Juan Bautista, toward San Juan Bautista. Turn right at the stoplight at Highway 156 and the Alameda. Two blocks down the Alameda, the road will fork in four directions. Jog slightly left, following the signs, to San Juan Canyon Road. The road leads to the state park, which is located 9 miles up a scenic, but narrow, winding road. Meet at the Madrone Picnic Area within the park shortly after 8:00 AM (when park opens). Map: <http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/564/files/FremontPDF.pdf>

**Leader:** Eric Feuss will be camping at the park with family. Call him if you plan to attend. He can then assist with carpool coordination or alternative arrangements if desired and possible. (831) 477-0280 (email is not a good way to initially reach me).



*Roadrunner*



**Friday, May 21**  
**Terrace Point**

We may also visit Younger Lagoon, the Homeless Garden, Antonelli Pond and/or other nearby spots.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the west end of Delaware Avenue, just past Antonelli Pond.

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



**Thursday, May 27**  
**SCBC Meeting @7:30 pm**  
**Speaker: Don Roberson**

**Topic: Hard Core Birding in New Zealand and Australia**

Last November Don Roberson took advantage of the cheap flights to Australia. He stopped en route in New Zealand for a few days to take a pelagic trip out of the Hauraki Gulf, see Kiwis and visit the island preserve of Tiritiri Matangi. In Australia he participated in a fast paced, hard-core birding tour to see five grasswrens in five days in South Australia, covering 1700 miles from Adelaide and back. Don, who is perhaps the most popular and regular presenter for the bird club, will share his photos and memories of that trip.

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



*Kiwi (Apteryx sp.)*

Image: <http://etc.usf.edu/clipart>



**Friday, May 28**  
**Henry Cowell State Park (eastern)**

It is the peak of the nesting season for many of the local forest species. We will pass through several types of forest, as well as some sand-hill chaparral and pine woodlands. Pileated Woodpeckers, Black-throated Gray and Hermit Warblers are among the possibilities, and the local nesting subspecies of Hermit Thrush should be in full song. Expect 3-4 miles of walking, with some hills.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the Graham Hill Plaza parking area, on Graham Hill Road near Nepeenthe Road (a short distance north of Sims Road).

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



**Sunday, May 30**  
**Lower Henry Cowell**

We will bird the Zayante Creek trail. Wilson's Warbler, Black-Headed Grosbeak, and Swallows are likely, but we *will* search for my nemesis bird—the Northern Parula—which has been found at this location in recent years.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the main entrance to Henry Cowell State Park.

**Leader:** Phil Brown, pdpbrown@gmail.com



**Friday, June 4**  
**Natural Bridges**

The late end of spring migration sometimes produces the rarest species, and even if there is nothing unusual, there should still be a good variety of birds around.

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

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



**Sunday, June 6**  
**Quail Hollow Ranch**  
**County Park**

Five flycatcher species nest at Quail Hollow Ranch, and they should be seen frequently during the morning. There is also a high chance of seeing Western Bluebirds in the park's meadows, and the lupine and sandhills flora will be in full bloom throughout the meadows and edges of the trail, making it a colorful day. Rain or shine.

**Directions:** Meet in the ranch parking lot at 8:00 AM.

**Leader:** Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



**Saturday, June 12**  
**Pogonip**

A search for forest and grassland species toward the end of their nesting season.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the north end of Spring Street, off High Street, in Santa Cruz.

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

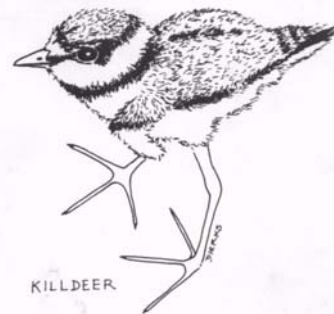


**Sunday, June 20**  
**Father's day at Elkhorn Slough**

All birds, including ovulators, are declared males today. And special cheers today for the most outrageously cute fledglings. We will search at least Jetty Road and Moon Glow Dairy this morning.

**Directions:** Meet at Aptos Wells Fargo. We'll leave there at 7:00 AM sharp (sunrise was at 5:45). Late-comers: We will regroup before 8:00 AM at Jetty Rd.

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



**Friday, July 2**  
**Moore Creek Preserve**

Afternoon walks here in early July in past years have been successful in finding Black Swifts; we'll try it again.

**Directions:** Meet at 2:30 PM on Shaffer Road across from the intersection with Mission Street.

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



**Friday, July 16**  
**Antonelli Pond**

A mid-summer check of a favorite spot.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the west end of Delaware Avenue, just past Antonelli Pond.

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



**Friday, July 30**  
**Natural Bridges**

We should see some early hints of fall migration, plus the *regulars*.

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

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



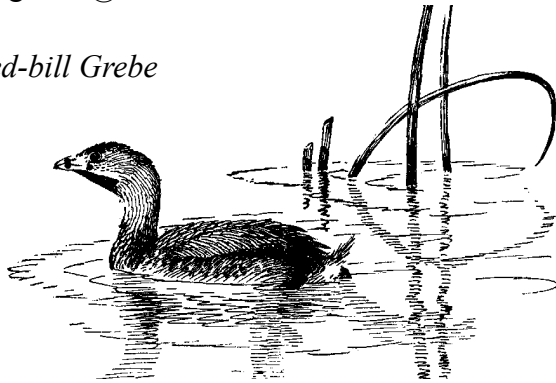
**Friday, August 13  
Terrace Point**

We may also visit Younger Lagoon, the Homeless Garden, Antonelli Pond, and/or other nearby spots.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the west end of Delaware Avenue, just past Antonelli Pond.

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

*Pied-bill Grebe*



**Friday, August 20  
Meder Canyon**

Fall migration is underway, and this is often a good area for various passerine migrants.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM on Grandview Street just past Escalona. To get to Grandview, take Swift Street north (inland) from Mission Street in Santa Cruz. Swift Street becomes Grandview after making a sharp left turn.

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



**Friday, August 27  
Schwan Lake area**

Another search for fall migrants.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the parking lot of the Simpkins Family Swim Center, 979 17th Avenue.

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

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## Trip Reports

### **Pogonip, February 27, 2010**

Another visit to this area of forest and meadow found a few new spring arrivals among the resident and wintering birds. Among these were three Violet-green Swallows foraging over the meadows at the forest edge, near the intersection of the Spring Trail and the Lookout Trail. A constantly-singing male Orange-crowned Warbler on the Spring Box Trail was another new arrival and, like the Violet-greens, among a handful of local species that typically start arriving in their nesting areas in late February. Other highlights included an adult male Northern Harrier foraging over the meadows in the southwest part of the park, as some Western Meadowlarks sang from the fence line at the UCSC border. A pair of White-tailed Kites were in a noisy territorial dispute with a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks. A singing Winter Wren near Redwood Creek was actually in a spot that was well-lit by the sun, showing off its colors and markings much better than usual. Just up the slope, a pair of Wrentits mutually preened after a bath in that same creek. On another stretch of the Fern Trail, some of us even had a reasonable view of a Golden-crowned Kinglet, a bird that is often heard in the park but seldom well-seen. Adding to it all was a variety of early spring flowers, lots of

interesting fungi, lichens, and moss. A few Banana Slugs were grazing on some of these.

### **Terrace Point and elsewhere, March 5, 2010**

This field trip started with a walk around the Terrace Point fields and coastline. An alternate-plumaged Pigeon Guillemot swimming offshore of the Terrace Point was a new arrival. As is often the case here, raptors were numerous. These included four Northern Harriers—an adult male, an adult female, and two immatures. A young Red-tailed Hawk, two Red-shouldered Hawks, and a White-tailed Kite were among other raptors hunting in the field, and a Peregrine Falcon flew by. Adding to the quota of predators were a Great Blue Heron and a Great Egret hunting for rodents. Western Meadowlarks and American Goldfinches were looking more colorful than in mid-winter, and Red-winged Blackbirds were displaying throughout the area. A Green Heron was among the regulars at Antonelli Pond. At the end of the trip, a few of us checked West Cliff Drive, where the Rock Sandpiper was on one of its favorite rocks just east of Woodrow Avenue, and another Peregrine Falcon made a few passes just off the coast.

~Steve Gerow

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## Trip Reports

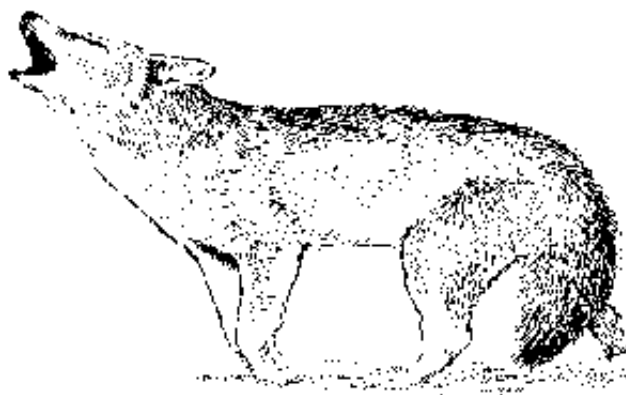
### San Lorenzo River, March 26, 2010

This morning we visited the San Lorenzo River in downtown Santa Cruz. Several of our highlights were in the stretch of river between Water Street and Highway 1. David Sidle picked out a Wilson's Snipe on a sandbar in the river, and soon two more came into clear view. Snipe have been hard to find around Santa Cruz over the past few years. Then Kathy Kuyper noticed a dark Merlin that flew in and perched east of the river. Eventually it flew, passing over us in good light, and landed in a nearby redwood. We were able to get good views of the "helmeted" looking solid dark head, with only the throat showing some light streaking, very densely streaked underparts, almost solid dark tail, without obvious bars, and very dark underwings, confirming a rare "Black Merlin" (subspecies *suckleyi*). A female American Kestrel was also in this area, possibly part of the pair that has nested near the river in some recent years. A pair of Wood Ducks flew up the river, continuing north of Highway 1. We also had good studies of several Common Mergansers and Buffleheads. Swallows were numerous, with well over 100 Cliff and moderate numbers of Violet-green and Northern Rough-winged, plus a lone Tree Swallow near Broadway. American Goldfinches were everywhere. There was little variety in gulls though—mostly just California and Western. We found only one each of Herring and Glaucous-winged, and no Mew Gulls were left at all.



*Herring Gull adult*

*Photo by Jeff Poklen*



*Robert Savannah, USFWS*

### Moore Creek Preserve, April 2, 2010

Finally, a winter with decent rainfall had the grasslands looking especially good as we walked up the hill into the preserve this cool and cloudy morning. Among the highlights were four Western Bluebirds (apparently two pairs) in the Vernal Ridge area of the preserve, the males looking especially colorful among the large patches of goldfields and other flowers. These were absent from this area for several years, but an increasing number of appearances in the last year or so suggest a possible comeback. Two Cooper's Hawks in this area were acting like a pair, though one was a year-old bird still retaining juvenal plumage. This hawk was doing an apparent display flight, with deep and steady wing beats seeming more typical of a kite or night-hawk. Three Grasshopper Sparrows were singing, well-hidden down in the grass. There were several Savannah Sparrows that seemed to be in nesting territories. The wintering Western Meadowlark flock was still around, with 50+ birds. A Wild Turkey, unexpected here (so far), was wandering through the grass near Moore Creek Canyon on the upper part of the slope. The forest areas were full of singing warblers, especially Townsend's and Orange-crowned, with some Wilson's and Yellow-rumped. Deer were numerous, and coyotes were howling and wandering around.

*~Steve Gerow*





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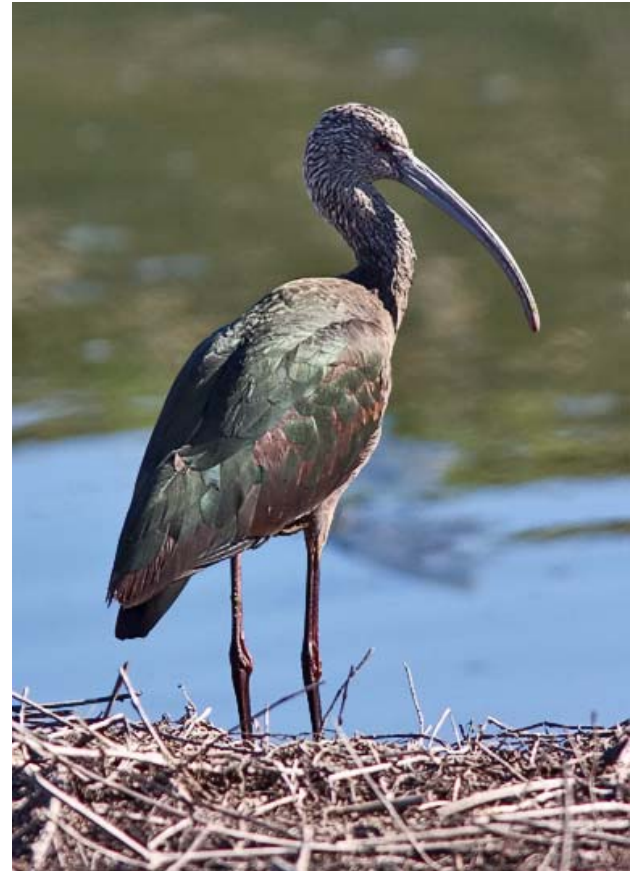
## **Santa Cruz Birds** (continued from page 1).

A few **Cackling Geese** were around the Pajaro Valley in January, the last report being one at College Lake January 22 (DSu). **Tundra Swan** reports included two at Struve Slough January 15 and five at College Lake January 16 (DSu).

**Eurasian Wigeon** were found regularly in Struve Slough and vicinity through January 15 (v.ob.). The highest count reported was four (three males and a female) on January 11 (DSu, MB). A male **Blue-winged Teal** was a regular in Struve Slough until at least January 15 (v.ob.), with three there on January 1 (DSi). **Northern Shovelers** wintered in better than average numbers on the sloughs, with a high count of 610 tallied from a few spots on Struve and West Struve Sloughs on January 15 (DSu). A Redhead was at College Lake January 1 (DSu, SSm, MST). **Surf Scoters** continued in high numbers along the county's coast. The highest count reported was 3620 off Seacliff State Beach on February 2 (DSu), most of these in one huge flock, with about 75% adult males. Seven **White-winged Scoters** flew down the Terrace Point coast on January 20 (OJ), and two flew by Capitola Beach on January 24 (DSu). There were four reports of single **Black Scoters** from February 1 to February 26 (DSu, JR, OJ). The female **Barrow's Goldeneye** re-appeared in the Pajaro River at the Watsonville Slough confluence on February 14 (DSu, SSu).

Four **Wild Turkeys** at Sunset State Beach on February 20 (JW) were the first ever found along the south Santa Cruz County Coast and were in a spot where they had to cross a large area of agricultural fields to get there. A **Red-necked Grebe** was off Capitola Beach on January 11, and one was there again on February 2 (DSu). **Brown Pelicans** are seldom seen far from the ocean in Santa Cruz County, so several reports of these flying inland were of interest. These were likely part of a pattern this season of disoriented **Brown Pelicans** noted in several parts of Central California, apparently due to malnutrition. Among these were one flying over the inland part of Capitola on January 20 (DSu), four that flew from near New Brighton State beach over parts of Capitola, Soquel, and Live Oak January 29, reaching 2-3 miles in from the coast (DSu), and one headed inland over Neary Lagoon on

January 31 (SG). A **Pelagic Cormorant** was upstream on the Pajaro River at the Watsonville Slough confluence on February 14 (DSu, SSu). These are rarely noted away from the ocean in this part of the county. There were a few reports of 1-2 **White-faced Ibis** in the Watsonville Slough system in early January (v.ob.).



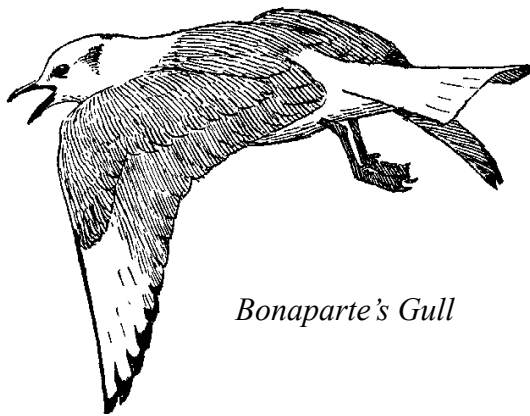
*White-faced Ibis* Photo by Jeff Poklen 2005

A **Merlin** of the rare subspecies *suckleyi* (Black Merlin) made Capitola its home from February 25 to March 2 (DSu). A **Prairie Falcon** soared over the Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on January 22 (DSu). The wintering **Wandering Tattler** was spotted a few times along West Cliff Drive until January 25 (EL, SG). The **Rock Sandpiper** continued through the period (v.ob.). A **Ruddy Turnstone** was a rare find along West Cliff Drive on February 12 (AG, EB). Since it was only found one day in this well-birded area, it might have been an early migrant, or perhaps it just wandered from somewhere.

It was not a great winter for gull variety in this area, with many species in below-average numbers. Four reports totaling five **Black-legged Kittiwakes** all



came within the two-day period of January 20-21 (OJ, DSu). An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** flew a bit inland over western Santa Cruz on January 26 (SG), the only report away from the Pajaro Valley. First-cycle **Glau-cous Gulls** turned up on Capitola Beach on January 17 (DSu) and at Waddell Creek Beach February 8 (GD). A **Parasitic Jaeger** off West Cliff Drive on January 5 was rare for winter in Santa Cruz County (OJ, LH). Scoping from West Cliff Drive produced 37 **Ancient Murrelets** on January 5 (OJ, LH), the high count among several reports this winter. Also off West Cliff that day were two **Cassin's Auklets** (OJ, LH), a species seldom spotted from shore in the county. A **Tufted Puffin** in Santa Cruz County waters was a nice find during pelagic coverage for the Moss Landing Christmas Bird Count on January 1 (RN, JG).



*Bonaparte's Gull*

A healthy total of 10 **Northern Pygmy-Owls** was tallied from eight locations in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on January 2 (DSu). **Burrowing Owls** turned up at several south-county spots. East of Watsonville, single owls were found at Thompson-Cooley Ranch on January 1 (PB, EF, KK), and at Kelly-Thompson Ranch January 1-22 (DSu, SSm). To the west, one was near West Struve Slough starting January 1, with two there by February 26 (EL, NA, CG), and one was at Sunset State Beach from January 26 into March (IML, JW). One wintering near Wilder Ranch was last reported January 16 (JL). A **Long-eared Owl** at Rancho Del Oso January 8 was unexpected (DSu); there is little precedent for the species in that area. The abundance of **Northern Saw-whet Owls** in our local forests was illustrated by a total of

102 (!) found in surveys at 34 points in Big Basin, conducted over three nights, January 23-28 (DSu).

A **Common Poorwill** calling on Gaffey Road in the Hazel Dell area on January 1 (DSu) was in a part of the county where little is known of this species' status. A Common Poorwill in the upper Sempervirens Creek drainage in Big Basin on January 2 was in an area where they are known to be resident (DSu). A female **Costa's Hummingbird** was carefully studied in Seaciff January 8-16 (DSu), for the 6th winter record for Santa Cruz County. A hybrid **Red-breasted X Red-naped Sapsucker** turned up near Sunset SB on January 1 (BM, KM). The wintering **Tropical Kingbird** remained around Struve Slough through the period (v.ob.). **Loggerhead Shrikes** continued to be sparse, with four reported at spots east of Watsonville January 1-9 (DSu, SSm, PB, EF, KK), one near West Struve Slough January 6-23 (DSu, MB, v.ob.) and one near Moore Creek Preserve January 23 (SG). College Lake again held a very large roost of **American Crows**, with about 950 birds counted leaving the roost on some mornings (DSu, SSm). An effort was made January 17 and some other dates to track the path of that portion of the crows that flew westward, and it was found that some went at least as far as Live Oak, about 15 miles from the roost site (DSu). Other crows in this roost dispersed northward and southward, so it seemed to draw crows from quite a large area.



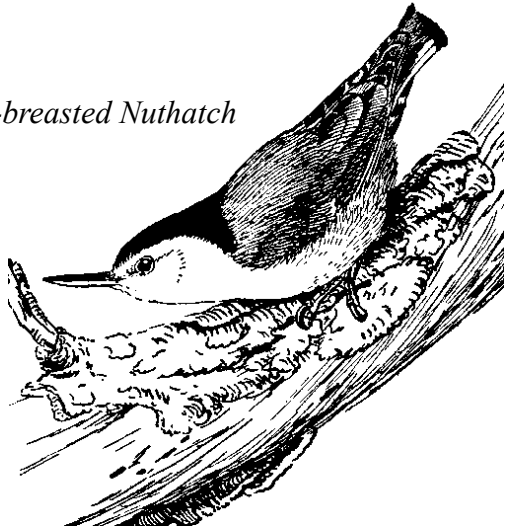
*A Tropical Kingbird has been wintering at Struve Slough. Photo by Wendy Naruo.*

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## Santa Cruz Birds

(continued)

*White-breasted Nuthatch*



Two **Horned Larks**, now rare anywhere in the county, were near Harkins Slough on January 6 (DSu et al.) A few reports of **Barn Swallow** in the Struve Slough area in January and early February all involved single birds (DR, RC, DSu, v.ob.). Another was at College Lake on January 22 (DSu). A careful count of a large **Bushtit** flock in Capitola on January 8 yielded a total of 62 birds (DSu)! The Kelly-Thompson Ranch had two **White-breasted Nuthatches** on January 1 (DSu, SSm). Two **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** at College Lake on January 1 were rare for that site (DSu, MST, SSm). Among various **Western Bluebird** reports, a high count of 43 in the Kelly-Thompson Ranch on January 1 was encouraging (DSu, SSm). This was more than double the largest number found at this site in any other recent year.

The wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** continued in the Ocean View Park area of Santa Cruz into March (SG, KK). New Brighton State Beach had a female **Hermit Warbler** on January 15 (DSu). A **Palm Warbler** stayed at Seacliff State Beach January 4-10 (DSu). The **Wilson's Warbler** wintering in Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz stayed through the period until at least March 15 (KK, SG). A **Chipping Sparrow** was found at College Lake on January 22 (DSu). Two wintering **Grasshopper Sparrows** turned up in a meadow in Gray Whale Ranch on January 24 (KK). Several **Swamp Sparrows** wintered at College Lake, with up to 5 at the north end January 1-22 (DSu, SS, MST) and another at the south end on January 8 (DSu).

One at Antonelli Pond remained until January 15 (SG, OJ, v.ob.).

Twelve **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in January and February (v.ob.) A “**Slate-colored**” **Dark-eyed Junco** showing features of the subspecies *cismontanus* was at a Bonny Doon feeder on January 18 (WBT). A female **Summer Tanager** turned up in a Seacliff eucalyptus grove on February 25 (DSu). The **Western Tanager** at New Brighton was last reported January 15 (DSu). The three reports of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** this period were all in Soquel (NC, PS, DSu), involving 1-2 males and one female. A male **Indigo Bunting** in the campground at New Brighton State Beach on February 22-23 was a very rare find for winter (DSu).



*A Hooded Oriole, wintering in Ben Lomond, was photographed by Alex Rinkert.*

A couple of high counts of **Great-tailed Grackles** at Struve Slough illustrate how large that population has grown. There were 65 on a neck of the slough near Ohlone Parkway on January 1 (DSi, PS), and 82 were counted February 14 flying in to roost near dusk near Lee Road (DSu, SSu). Despite these high numbers, the species is still rarely reported in the county away from the Watsonville Slough system. Ben Lomond's wintering **Hooded Oriole** was last reported February 6 (AR). **Bullock's Orioles** included an immature male south of Neary Lagoon on January 20 (KK) and a female near the west entrance to Neary on February 27 (KS et al.). A male **Cassin's Finch** was a good find at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin on January 2 (DSu), and a female was on the upper UCSC campus on February 17 (SG).

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**Cited Observers:** Nanci Adams, Eileen Balian, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Rita Carratello, Nancy Collins, Gary Deghi, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Cathy Gamble, Steve Gerow, Jennifer Green, Lauren Harter, Oscar Johnson, Kathy Kuyper, Inger Marie Laursen (IML), Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan, Rod Norden, Alex Rinkert, Don Roberson, Jennifer Rycenga, Ken Schneider, David

Sidle (DSi), Scott Smithson (SSm), Pete Solé, Gary Strachan, Matthew Strusis-Timmer (MST), David Suddjian (DSu), Stephen Suddjian (SSu), W. Breck Tyler (WBT), Jeff Wall

*Please report interesting observations to the Monterey Bay Birds list server or to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or (831) 479-9603.*



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## SANTA CRUZ BIRD CLUB NEWS

FIELD TRIPS, PHOTOS, NEWS, AND NOTES FROM THE SANTA CRUZ BIRD CLUB

### A New Online Feature from the Santa Cruz Bird Club

If you are interested in more details on what happened on certain SCBC field trips, including full lists of the birds seen, plus extra notes, photos, and more, you may enjoy the new *Santa Cruz Bird Club News*. This is a blog-type site featuring reports from most of our field trips, plus other news about the club, periodic announcements and reminders, conservation notes, bird ID notes, a photo quiz now and then, and much more. You can reach this new site at this address:

<http://santacruzbirdclubnews.blogspot.com>

or just click on the link on the SCBC web site.

We plan to update this regularly, so explore what is there now, then return every week or so to see what is new!

~Steve Gerow



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# Birds of Quail Hollow Ranch: A Study of Avian Diversity

*By Alex Rinkert*

This project was the result of the Environmental Monitoring course at San Lorenzo Valley High School. For this course, students conduct field and lab work on their own time and then present the results at various science fairs and symposiums.

My monitoring partner, Connor Chesus, and I did a study of avian diversity at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park in Ben Lomond. Of particular interest to us was the relationship between ecological succession (more permanent habitats taking over less permanent habitats) and the avian diversity at the park. In the early 1900s, the park was dominated by grassland and sand parkland habitats; both of which are not considered to be very wooded. Over time, wooded habitats, like Coastal Live Oak Forest, have succeeded the less wooded habitats. This has completely changed the landscape of the park to its present form.

Habitat	%
Riparian Forest	+600%
Mixed Evergreen Forest	+215.6%
Knobcone Pine Chaparral	+100%
Suburban	+77.8%
Coastal Live Oak Forest	+61.8%
Eucalyptus Forest	+28.6%
Ponderosa Pine Woodland	+8.3%
Coastal Live Oak Riparian Forest	0.0%
Redwood Forest	-8.7%
Sand Chaparral	-10.5%
Sand Parkland	-38.5%
Grassland	-54.9%
Pond	-72.7%
Apple Orchard	-86.1%

*Figure 1: Percentage of Change in Habitat Area from 1943-2009. Wooded habitats are increasing, and less wooded habitats are decreasing as ecological succession takes place.*

To collect data in each habitat, thirty-seven points were plotted on the trails throughout 300 acres; at least one of those points was in one of the fourteen different habitats found at the park. We went out at least once a week and conducted point counts at each station, recording all birds observed during the five minute “snapshot” of that habitat and then entered the data into eBird.

From the statistics that can be generated on eBird, tables were downloaded and modified in Excel to make graphs and charts to show various aspects of what we were looking for. Using the Simpson’s Index of Diversity formula (an equation that determines diversity from a set of data), each habitat received a value according to this formula.

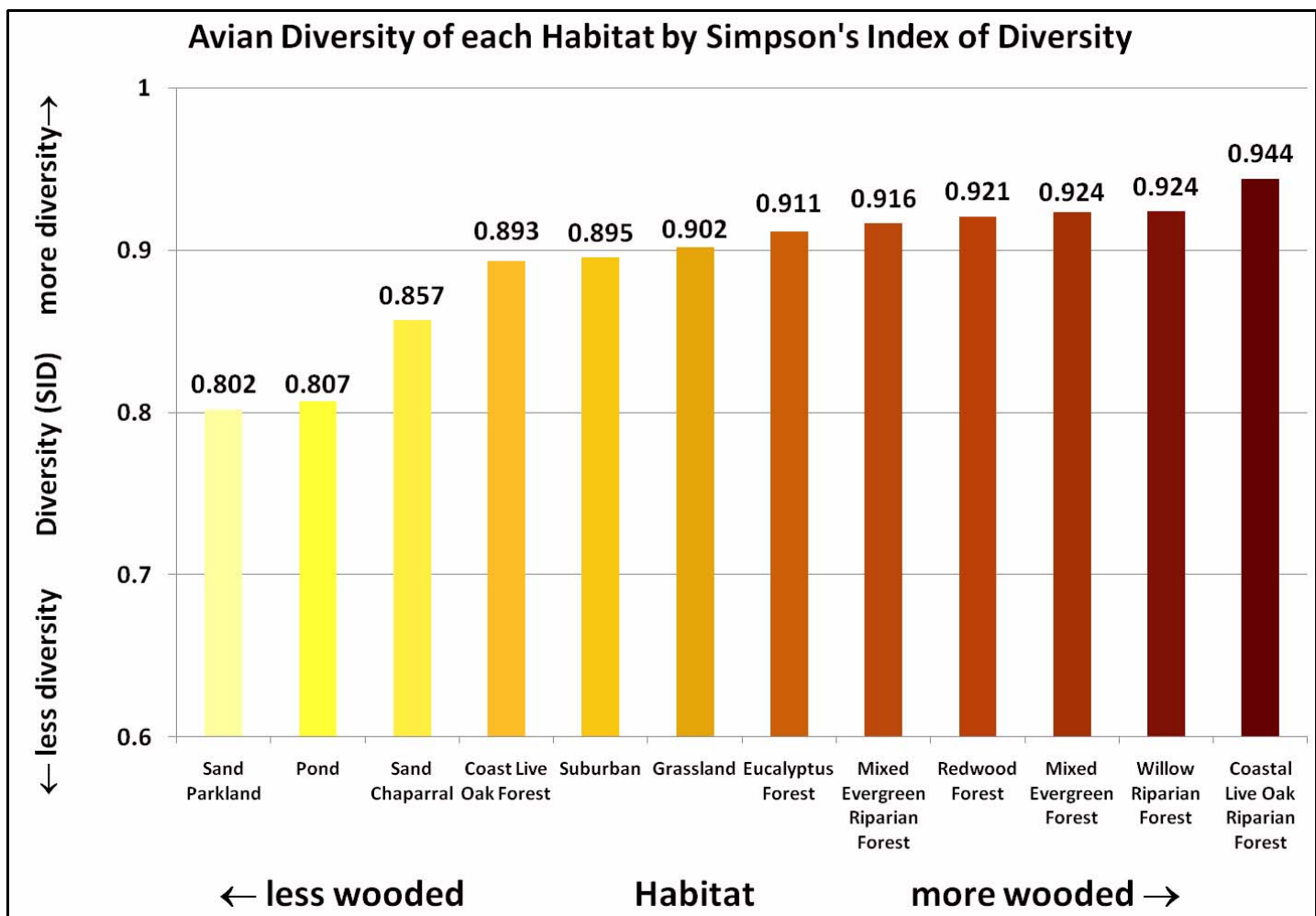
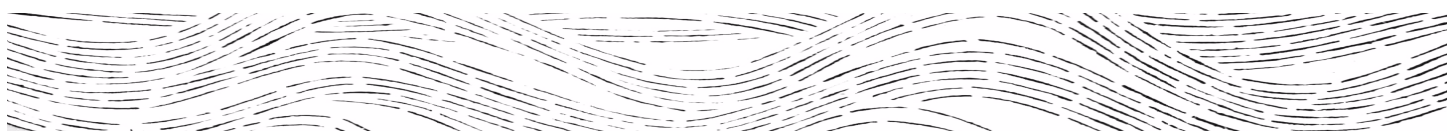


Figure 2: Avian Diversity of Habitats: The Simpson's Index of Diversity value was derived from the number and abundance of species in each habitat. The closer the value is to 1, the higher the habitat's avian diversity is.

**NOTE:** Figures 2 and 3 were originally generated in color. For clarity, see them in the online version of the Albatross at: [http://santacruzbirdclub.org/The\\_Albatross.html](http://santacruzbirdclub.org/The_Albatross.html)

Aerial photographs of the park from 1943, 1973, and 2009 were also obtained. Each one was made into a grid and each square was assigned a habitat. The total area of each habitat was counted in the selected years, and then the percentage of change in area was calculated for each habitat (see Figure 1).

When looking at the data, it is clear that more-wooded habitats support a higher diversity of avian life than less-wooded habitats. If this is applied to the ecological succession that is (and has been) taking place at Quail Hollow, it can be determined that the park has an overall higher avian diversity than it did nearly a century ago, and the diversity will continue to increase until the park reaches an equilibrium of habitats or something disturbs the natural process (such as a wildfire). Figure 3 (next page) shows this relationship and how it may continue.



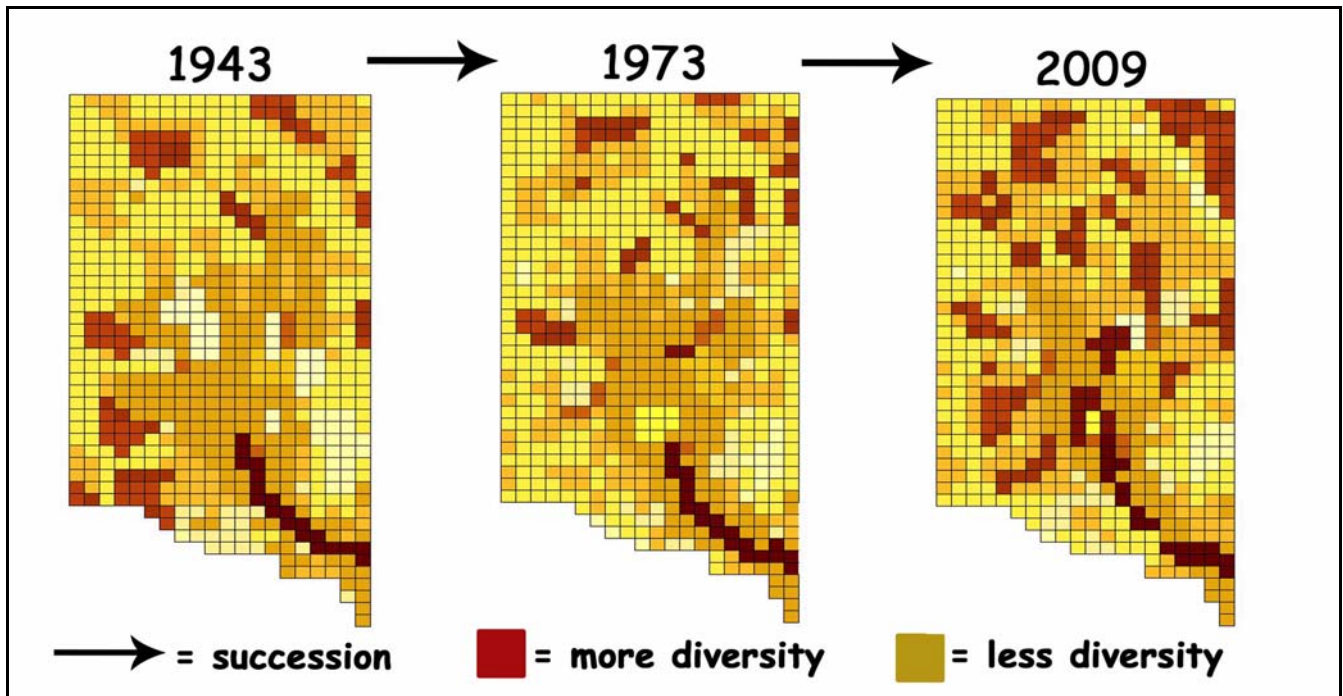


Figure 3: How succession affects avian diversity

In three maps of the park from different years, each square was assigned a habitat and a diversity color that correlates to it. Diversity color was given to each habitat according to Figure 2. Avian diversity at the park has increased since 1943.

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks to our mentor, David Suddjian, and to our project supervisor, Jane Orbuch, for their assistance and guidance.

#### Questions or comments

Contact Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net

### Birds of Quail Hollow Ranch: A Study of Avian Diversity ~Awards and Invitations~

Alex Rinkert and Connor Chesus entered their project in the 2010 Santa Cruz County Science Fair, where they won 1st Place in the Senior Zoology Division and an award from the National Association of Biology Teachers.

The project also qualified for the California State Science Fair, May 17-18 in Los Angeles.

In addition, Alex has been invited to present the project at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, which will be held May 9-14 in San Jose.

Congratulations to the researchers and their advisors!



California Quail Photo: Alex Rinkert



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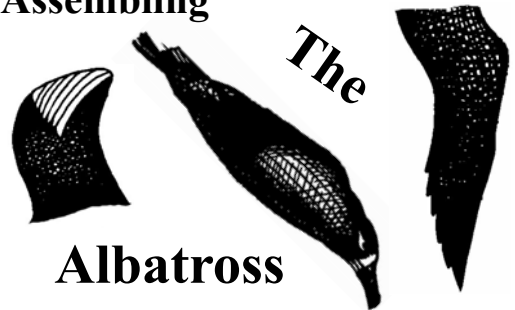
**New SCBC  
Members  
Welcome!**

Kevin Clark	02/10
Ronald Tyler	02/10
Margaret Leonard & Clare Sheils	03/10
Sandi Elsik	03/10

**Input deadline for  
Sept/Oct issue  
of the Albatross—  
August 1, 2010**

**Submission for the**

Assembling



**Albatross**

**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 an 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](mailto:calqua@sbcglobal.net)

~Judy Donaldson, Editor



*Allen's Hummingbird*

*Photo by Wendy Naruo*

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## RENEW YOUR 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 September/October issue of the *ALBATROSS* in the fall if dues have not been paid.

### **Consider 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**

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