

Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES



A TRAIL OF MEMORIES

by David Suddjian

Inside:
Calendar

**SCBC
HELP
WANTED**

Seabirding
Opportunities



Santa Cruz
Birds



Monterey Bay
Birding Festival

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What am I  
waiting for?



(See back page)

I like to return again and again to favorite spots to look for birds. Some people like to go to new places and see new things, and so do I. But left to my own devices, I'm more likely to return to a familiar spot. Lately I've noticed that as I go birding at a place that I've come to know in my heart, my experience is at once in the present, the future, and the past. I'm thinking and looking and listening ahead to what I might find and enjoying the birds in the moment, but the experience is especially colored by memories of all the times I've been there before.

A favorite trail where a birding walk is always a mixture of the moment and memories is the West Trail at Rancho Del Oso. It traverses the slope of the Waddell Creek canyon, west of the dirt road that runs along the canyon bottom. The canyon road is great, too, and offers fine birding, but when I get to choose my route up or down the canyon, it will always be West Trail. The trail runs for under one and a half miles, climbing and descending maybe 250 feet in elevation. Its southern end is near Horse Camp. From there it climbs, a little steeply at first and then more gently, before angling right to the shoulder of Swing Hill. Crossing that shoulder, the trail angles left and descends to a right bend, from which it runs north and drops gently down to its end at a crossing of Waddell Creek at Twin Redwoods Trail Camp. I've walked the trail most often in the morning, but at others times, including early evening and at night. Each little part holds memories.

Beginning at the south end, I am in Monterey pine forest, with coast live oaks, a few Douglas firs, and diverse understory. There are some walnuts that are a burst of golden yellow in the fall. There is a tree where I once enjoyed six species of woodpeckers in one view: Acorn, Nuttall's, Downy, Hairy, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Northern Flicker. Progressing slowly uphill, I hear the churring calls of House Wrens in fall or the far-flying song of the Olive-sided Flycatcher in spring. At lucky times there has been a singing MacGillivray's Warbler. The trail soon crosses a small spring-fed creek that offers little pools all year long—the only trail-side water until Waddell Creek at the other end. I go slow here, hoping once again to see Pygmy Nuthatches and Chestnut-backed Chickadees drop down for a dip. Once there was a splashing pair of Wrentits.

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Past the water there is a fine view across the canyon with bird song drifting over from the cottonwood corridor of Waddell. Here begins one of the trail's highlights. It traverses a steep slope, so that the downhill side view looks right into the canopy of the pines and oaks. Now the treetop flocks are at eye level or sometimes even below me. I remember one Bird Club field trip when an Olive-sided Flycatcher, that lover of high spots, was singing here at eye level. Did he enter our realm, or did we enter his?

Somewhere along here, there is always a mixed flock or two and memories of Hermit Warblers among the many Townsend's. There is that snag that had baby Hairy Woodpeckers poking from the hole. Those oaks held a begging family of Western Screech-Owls one moonless night. Here I found the only sharp-tailed snake I've ever chanced upon. Several bird club field trips have paused here befuddled by the calls of what might be a Pygmy-Owl...but is usually just a chipmunk. The debate ensues, and the chipmunk or owl is seldom seen.

Continuing to Swing Hill, I cross a southern exposure with crumbling mudstone substrate and now a sparse cover of pines and oaks. Suddenly it may be hot (even by 8:00 a.m.) maybe 20 degrees warmer than the canyon below, and there are views back to the ocean. Here wildflowers steal the show in spring, including drifts of yellow deerweed and pale orange monkey flower. A Black-chinned Hummer stopped in once. I always spend time looking back to the western ridge behind me. Swifts and swallows favor that bit of sky—Vaux's, White-throated, and Violet-green. I had Black Swift there this year. Raptors ride the drafts flowing up the slope, crossing over the canyon or following the ridge.

From the warm south slope, I look forward to a wonderful transition, angling around the shoulder of Swing Hill, which is highlighted by paintbrush, blue dicks, and buttercups in season.



*An Olive-sided Flycatcher seen at eye-level from West Trail.  
Photo by Wendy Naruo*



*Organic farm in Waddell Canyon. Photo by David Suddjian.*

It is suddenly cool on the hill's northern face. Here, much larger Douglas firs and stout pines tower, bedecked with lichen. If birding had been slow for a bit before, it's often lively now. Viewing north there is a striking contrast of wild, shaded forest slope and canyon-bottom agricultural fields with many colors of diverse organic crops. Off away up canyon, there is the cliff at Mount McAbee that has hosted nesting Peregrine Falcons. Quail call from the edges of the farm fields below. This is a good place to pish. One time in November, I was surrounded by a hoard of over 25 frenetic Ruby-crowned Kinglets, with chickadees and Townsend's Warblers darting here and there.

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At the base of Swing Hill's northern slope the trail passes through dense cover of coffeeberry and other shrubs. I recall the skulking Gray Catbird that was here and the finch-like call note that belonged to a Magnolia Warbler. Tree variety increases with maple, bay, and buckeye joining the conifers and live oaks. A Pileated Woodpecker usually breaks things up here, too often upslope with no hope of seeing it. But sometimes it obliges, as on one field trip, when a talkative bird served as a lifer for many. Or once, coming around a bend in the trail, there it was, chiseling away on a broken trunk suspended low over the trail. For years after, I passed those excavations but never saw the woodpecker there again. Now that log has fallen and is overgrown.

Here I whistle my imitation of a Northern Pygmy-Owl. The chipmunk usually responds first, and a varied crowd of little birds comes to check me out. My whistle holds their fervor for a little while, but the arrival of the real owl always takes them to new heights of conniption. A little clearing in the woods here is an especially good place to scan the tree tops for the responding owl, as it zips among tree tops, trailed by nuthatches, warblers, and Purple Finches.



*This huge snag where a Pileated Woodpecker once appeared is long gone, but the memory lingers.  
Photo by David Suddjian*



*On the West Trail, a real Northern Pygmy-Owl will often respond to a reasonable imitation of its call.  
Photo by Wendy Naruo*

often yields a chance to actually see Golden-crowned Kinglets, too often encountered as little voices from on high. But here they feed low in the trees. Calls of Song Sparrows greet me as I near the creek and breathe in the riparian smell. Some years Varied Thrushes lift off here and stare back at me from trail-side perches. The crossing at Waddell Creek holds a final hope for one more mixed flock. Autumn light sifts through golden maples. A breeze in the canopy matches the murmur of the stream. Chickadees are working up in the alders again, and a parade of Townsend's Warblers are with them. I always look hard here. Once there was a Black-and-white Warbler and once a Black-throated Blue! Maybe I won't see a rare bird today, but there is always the memory.

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# Events Calendar

## September-October 2010

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



### Friday, September 3 Natural Bridges Area

This is a good time of year to look for some of the rarer western migrants, including Black-chinned Hummingbird and Willow Flycatcher.

**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](mailto:stephengerow@aol.com)



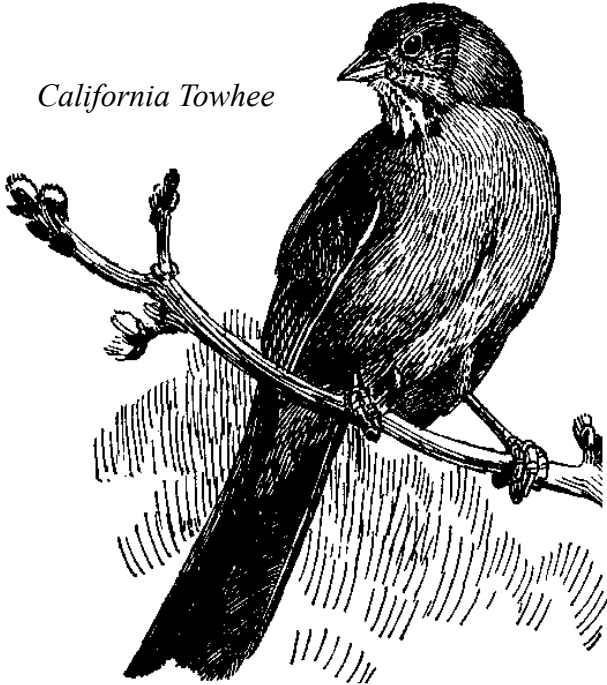
### Sunday, September 5 (Labor Day weekend) Elkhorn Slough Area

Another half-day SCBC trip to mark a loopy weekend. This trip will be on SUNDAY.

**Directions:** Meet at Aptos Wells Fargo at 7:00 AM, then regroup with latecomers at Jetty Road at 8:00. After surveying there (even if it is awash), we will go to Moon Glow Dairy (eucalyptus patch and bluff) and then plot our course by acclamation (e.g., Kirby Park? Watsonville Wetlands?).

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

*California Towhee*



### Friday, September 10 Arana Gulch

The grasslands of this park are surrounded by riparian, live oaks, eucalyptus, cypress, and even a bit of salt marsh, with potential for a good variety of fall migrants.

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

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



**Wednesday, September 15**  
**Watsonville Sloughs**

A half day excursion to search for shorebirds and other species at the sloughs near Watsonville. It is a good time of year to hope for an unusual shorebird or maybe some other interesting migrant. But no matter what, we'll find something fun to look at. Moderately easy walking.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot for Red Roof Inn in Watsonville, along West Beach Road near Highway 1.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



**Friday, September 17**  
**Neary Lagoon**

Late September often brings surprises. We'll see what we can find.

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

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



*Hooded Merganser, Mallard, and Wood Ducks at Neary Lagoon. Photo by Wendy Naruo*



**Wednesday, September 29**  
**North Coast**

A half day outing to check for interesting migrants. We'll hit a few spots from the west edge of town on up the coast, depending on what has been around and what seems interesting. We should enjoy a nice variety of birds and maybe a rare one.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the Homeless Garden Project along Shaffer Road off the end of Delaware Avenue in Santa Cruz.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



**Thursday, September 30**  
**SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM**  
**Speaker: David Suddjian**

**Topic: Birds of the Watsonville Sloughs—Seasons and Cycles of Change**

The Watsonville Slough system is among the richest bird habitat of Santa Cruz County, holding both good numbers of birds and a substantial diversity of species. Not everything is the same in the sloughs now as it was 25, 10, or even 5 years ago. As the keeper of the Santa Cruz County bird records and a long-time and very active birder and field biologist, David Suddjian has kept track of the avian denizens of the sloughs over the years. His presentation will explore what is there now and how things have changed over time.

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



**Friday, October 1**  
**To be announced...**

Fall can be unpredictable, so I'm leaving this one open until the last minute to allow us to take advantage of reported rarities, interesting trends, or other developments. The starting place and directions will be posted a few days before this date, so check MBB, the Santa Cruz Bird Club News blog, and the on-line schedule for information, or contact the leader.  
**Leader:** Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



**Sunday, October 3**  
**Wilder Ranch State Park**

We will seek migrants, shorebirds and winter arrivals. We'll decide at the start which way to go first—up along Wilder Creek, down the Old Cove Trail, or even over to Ohlone Bluffs Trail.

**Directions:** Meet at the day-use parking lot at 8:00 AM (\$10, \$9 for seniors).

**Leader:** Kathy Kuyper, (831) 431-0122, chswift@hotmail.com



**Wednesday, October 6  
South County**

A half day or longer outing to a handful of spots in the Pajaro Valley to seek a cross-section of birds in a variety of habitats. The timing is nice for unusual shorebirds and landbirds.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot for Red Roof Inn in Watsonville along West Beach Road near Highway 1.

**Leader:** David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



**Friday, October 8  
Natural Bridges area**

Some of the winter species should be here by now, plus a good variety of migrants, with rarities possible.

**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



**Saturday, October 16  
Lower UCSC Campus**

We'll visit a variety of habitats including grassland, patches of riparian and evergreen forest, and the Farm and Arboretum. An interesting mix of birds is possible, and some of these areas have produced rarities in fall. Expect about 2-3 miles of walking with a few hills.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at the south side of the East Remote Parking Lot, off Hagar Drive on the UCSC campus. Hagar Drive is a left turn off Coolidge Drive when coming from the main entrance at the north end of Bay St. The parking lot is on the right about 0.65 miles up Hagar.

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



**Sunday, October 17  
Quail Hollow**

The pond will be at its lowest point all year and the muddy shoreline may attract herons, egrets, and Wilson's Snipe. Unusual warblers and flycatchers are also possible at this time of year.

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

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



**Friday, October 22  
San Lorenzo River**

We have a chance of interesting sparrows, diving ducks, some of the winter gulls, and perhaps something unexpected.

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

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



**Thursday, October 28  
SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM  
Speaker: Bruce Lyon**

**Topic: Golden-crowned Sparrow Behavior**

There is much more to learn about many common birds than you may think. Bruce Lyon, Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UC Santa Cruz, has been conducting research on the behavior of wintering Golden-crowned Sparrows at the UCSC Arboretum for several years. His presentation will explore some fascinating findings on patterns of behavior, social interaction, and communication in these birds, so familiar at many of our backyard feeders.

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



*Golden-crowned Sparrow, photographed in Pogonip, April 29, 2010 by Jeff Poklen.*



**Friday, October 29**  
**Antonelli Pond and vicinity**

It's mostly winter birds now, but an unusual migrant or two is still possible.

**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

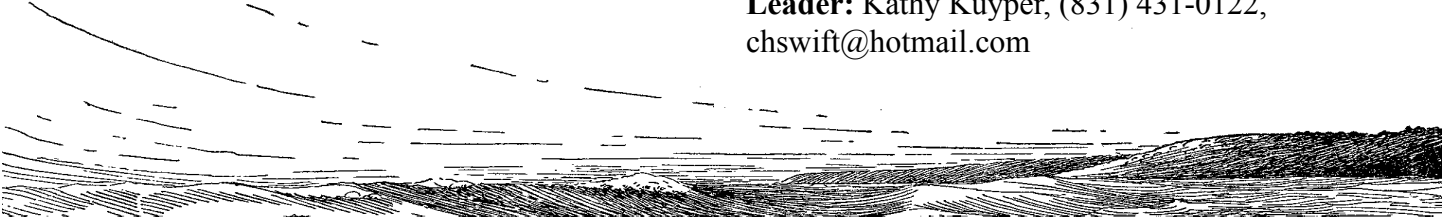


**Sunday, October 31**  
**Henry Cowell State Park**

We'll go along the San Lorenzo River, the picnic area, and Zayante Creek, looking for migrants, Varied Thrush, and sapsuckers.

**Directions:** Meet at the day-use parking lot at 8:00 AM. The fee per car is \$10 (\$9 for seniors), or park on Hwy. 9, and walk in for free. (Be sure to allow enough time to walk to the parking lot.)

Leader: Kathy Kuyper, (831) 431-0122, chswift@hotmail.com



## SCBC Needs Help!

Two outstanding Santa Cruz Bird Club officers have moved on from their positions this year. Many thanks go to Roger Wolfe for his great term as the club officer in charge of Programs, bringing us many interesting and enjoyable meeting the last two years. Thanks also to Bernadette Ramer for her dedicated work the past year as Outreach Officer, and prior to that, two years of hard work serving (along with Bob Ramer) as club president!

We now seeking volunteers to fill both of these vacancies, so this is your opportunity to take an active role in the SCBC.

The Programs Officer basically finds and schedules speakers or other types of programs for the SCBC meetings, a key role for our functioning as a club. The September and October meeting programs are already scheduled for this season, so this will be an easier year than usual for whoever takes this position.

The Outreach Officer is responsible for outreach to and making and coordinating connections between the bird club and other related groups and organizations within the community.

The other officers can't take on this extra work for too long, so we really need at least a couple of people who are willing and able to volunteer some time to help the club move forward. Please consider taking on one of these positions. If you are interested, contact Steve Gerow at stephengerow@aol.com. *Thank You!*

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## ***SEABIRDING opportunities***

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.

### ***Shearwater Journeys***

Shearwater Journeys has a new program of trips departing from Half Moon Bay. Some excellent sightings were made in 2009, including a Short-tailed Albatross and White-chinned Petrel (second record for North America, first live sighting). We may be able to reach seabirds such as storm-petrel flocks more easily than from other ports. The following trips are available:

Half-Moon Bay trips (departing from Huck Finn Center, Pillar Point Harbor)

**Dates:** September 13, 17, 18, 19, 28; October 2, 10, 11

**Time:** Depart at 7:00 a.m. and return 3:30-4:30 p.m.

**Cost:** SCBC members \$128, regularly \$148 (non-refundable)

Monterey trips

**Dates:** September 9, 10 and October 3, 9, and 17

**Time:** Depart at 7:00 a.m. and return 3:00 p.m.

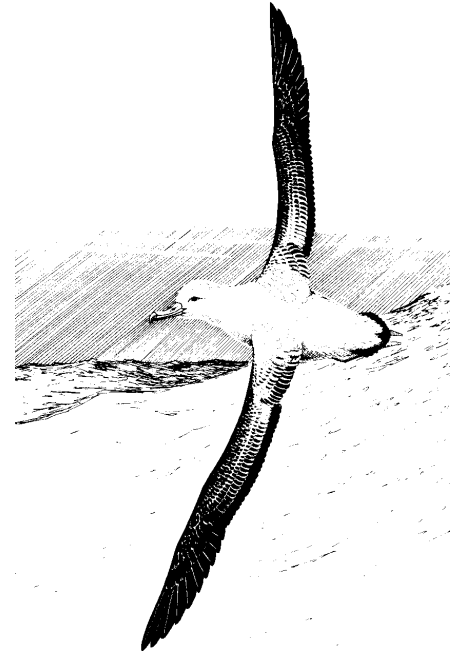
**Cost:** SCBC members \$85, regularly \$145.

Leaders: Debi Shearwater and Shearwater Journeys leaders (varies each trip).

Reservations: Send payment to Debi Shearwater,  
PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024

Contact: [debi@shearwaterjourneys.com](mailto:debi@shearwaterjourneys.com)

See: [www.shearwaterjourneys.com](http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com) for more information and trip reports,  
or see the blog: <http://shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com/>



*Short-tailed Albatross*

### ***Monterey Seabirds***

Monterey Seabirds is venturing offshore to the albacore grounds—a 12-hour trip

**Date:** September 18

**Cost:** \$110 for club members (reg. \$135).

Discounted prices for SCBC members on 8-hour pelagic trips out of Monterey.

**Dates:** October 2 and 10

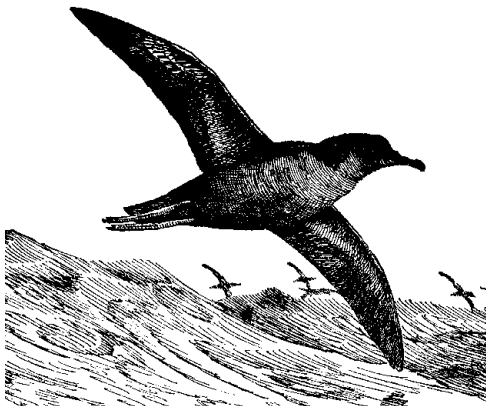
**Cost:** \$85 (reg. \$105)

Get out on the bay and see what is going on in your own backyard.

See more information and trip reports from prior years at:

<http://www.montereyseabirds.com> to get an idea of what can be seen.

Reserve your spot online, or call (831) 375-4658.



*Sooty Shearwater*



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# Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow  
Including reports from  
March 1 to May 31, 2010

Eight **Greater White-fronted Geese** flying over Capitola April 25 were late, and one heading up the coast off Seacliff State Beach on May 29 was the only May record for the county, excluding a few birds that have occasionally summered (DSu). Two male **Wood Ducks** in a pond on Glen Canyon Road on May 13 were away from traditional breeding-season spots (ML), but some were reported from this pond in 2008, so they may be regular here. Another male was at College Lake on May 19 (LG, JP), where they are seldom noted at any season. Single **Blue-winged Teal** swam at Scott Creek Marsh on April 24 (DSu) and in Struve Slough on May 10 (RR, BR). For the fifth spring in a row, some **Redheads** resided in the Watsonville Slough System. Pairs were noted at West Struve Slough on March 19 (DSu) and in Struve Slough April 20 (JWa) and again from May 24-28 (DSu, LG, JP). It is possible all these observations involved the same pair, but there were significant breaks between reports, suggesting different birds were involved.



*A pair of Redheads at Struve Slough on May 28.  
Photograph by Jeff Poklen.*

Late **Ring-necked Ducks** included one at College Lake on May 2 and four there May 15 (DSu). A female **Harlequin Duck** swam among the scoters at Seacliff State Beach on March 11 (DSu). **Surf Scoters** at Seacliff continued in large numbers into early March, with a high count of 2600 on March 4 (DSu); numbers diminished rapidly after the second week in March. There were five reports of migrant **White-winged**

**Scoters** from March 7 to May 2, involving a total of eight birds (SG, AM, DSu). No Black Scoters were reported this spring. Other late ducks included female **Buffleheads** at Watsonville Slough on May 24 (DSu) and at the San Lorenzo River on May 29 (LG, WG), and two female **Common Goldeneyes** at the mouth of Waddell Creek May 5-6 (DSu). Two male **Hooded Mergansers** set a new late record for the county, lingering at College Lake from April 20 to at least May 19 (JWa, DSu, HS, RS, PB, LG, BR, JP), with one staying to the exceptional date of June 13 (CK).

Four **Wild Turkeys** turned up at La Selva Beach on March 9 (CR), just the second record for the south coast area of the county and maybe the same four that were at Sunset State Beach on February 20. Aechmophorus grebes continued to be present in large numbers at Seacliff State Beach but with considerable fluctuation. A notable high count of 10,140 was tallied on April 17 (DSu), with 890 **Westerns** and 345 **Clark's Grebes**, but most too distant to identify to species. A bird survey from a cruise ship traveling well offshore up the California coast recorded two **Cook's Petrels** in the outer waters of Santa Cruz County on April 30 (RM et al.) This is just the third record of Cook's for the county, but large numbers were found overall in this expedition's passage through the offshore waters of California.

**American White Pelicans** were reported in small numbers from the Watsonville Sloughs and the Pajaro Dunes area through the period (v.ob.). **Five Brandt's Cormorant** nests were spotted on May 20 on the cliffs along the Old Cove Landing Trail in Wilder Ranch State Park, for the first nesting record for that park (LG). The site was unusual for the species, with nests on narrow ledges on cliff faces, a situation more typical of Pelagic Cormorants (which also nest in that area). Three of the Brandt's nests were subsequently abandoned, but two remained occupied by sitting adults at least until late June. There were several reports of **American Bittern** in known or probable breeding areas, with high counts of three at Struve Slough on March 1 (MS, KH) and at Pinto Lake on May 21 (RR). A breeding plumaged **Cattle Egret** flew by Capitola Beach on April 14 (DSu), passing over kelp beds and grebe flocks as it flew down the coast. This was the first in the county since September 2009 and quite unexpected in April.

**White-faced Ibis** reports included two at Struve Slough on April 16 (KK), two at College Lake on

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May 4 (DSu), and five there May 12 (PB). A pair of **Ospreys** again occupied the nesting platform at Harkins Slough. They nested successfully in 2009, but this year's attempt failed (GK, JWa, v.ob). Another pair was at the College Lake area into May (DSu), with courtship noted near there on April 16 (MPa) hinting at possible nesting in that area. Adult **Bald Eagles** soared over Henry Cowell State Park on April 9 (DSu) and over Drew Lake on April 22 (TL). A light-morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Capitola on March 23 (DSu). There were over thirty **Merlins** reported from the beginning of March to May 4 (v.ob.). Three **Peregrine Falcon** nests were noted in the county this spring. One, near Boulder Creek, fledged three young (DSu), but two others at north coast sites were depredated (fide JL).



*An immature Pacific Golden Plover photographed at Terrace Point by Pete Solé on April 30, 2010.*

**Black-bellied Plovers** were unusually sparse this spring, with only a handful of reports, all involving just single birds (v.ob.). An immature **Pacific Golden Plover** appeared on the rocks at Terrace Point on April 30 (DSi, PB, v.ob.), providing great studies and photo opportunities for many observers until May 16, with likely the same bird found again on May 31 (PS). It was joined by a colorful adult male from May 4-12 (PM, SG,

WN, v.ob). This constitutes the first spring report of the species in Santa Cruz County where individuals lingered more than one day and also the first time in spring where more than one occurred together. Seven **Spotted Sandpipers** at College Lake on May 12 (PB) was a good count for a single site. **Solitary Sandpipers** were near College Lake on May 2 and on the Pajaro River upstream from Watsonville on May 15 (DSu).

A **Wandering Tattler** at New Brighton state Beach on April 7 was a rather early migrant (DSu), while one along West Cliff Drive May 31 was late (SGe). Some 15-20 appeared during the regular migration period from April 18-May 15 (v.ob.). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Struve Slough on May 4 was fairly rare for Spring (DSu). The only **Ruddy Turnstone** this period was on Capitola Beach on April 28 (DSu). A **Red Knot** at College Lake on May 4 was only the second record for the county away from the immediate coast (DSu). The wintering **Rock Sandpiper** was last reported along West Cliff Drive on April 3 (SGe). The only **Black-legged Kittiwake** of the season was found dead at Seascap on March 25 (JH). **Sabine's Gulls** are seldom seen from shore in Santa Cruz County, so an adult off Capitola Beach on May 10 was notable (DSu).

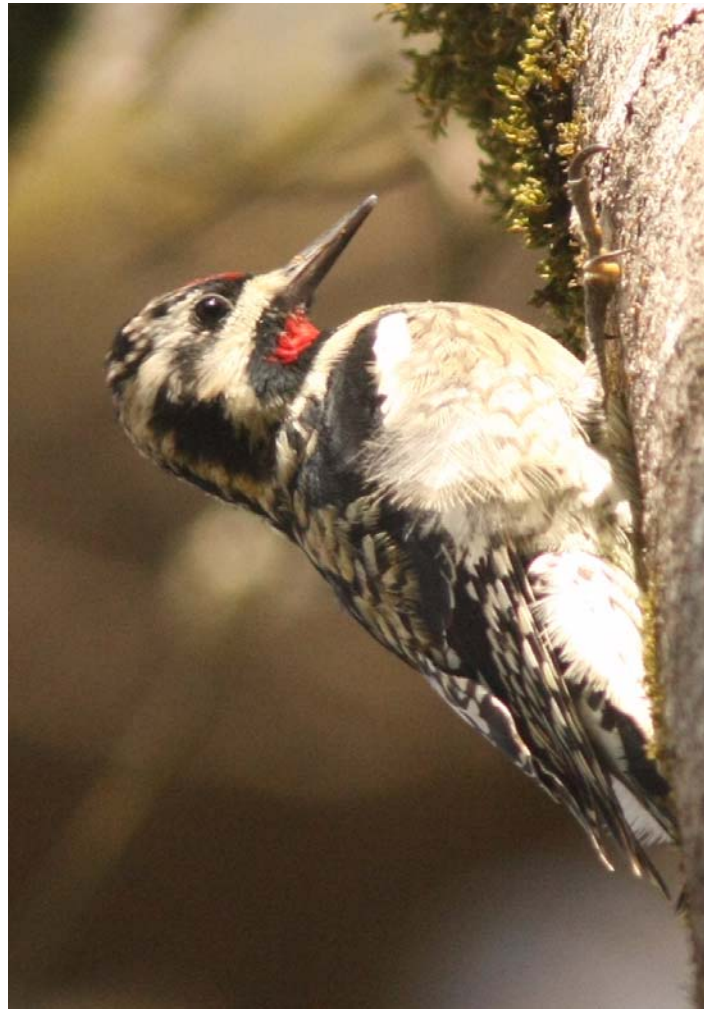
An adult **Franklin's Gull** flew up the coast off Seacliff Beach on April 25, and another was feeding in the fields near Table Rock on May 7 (DSu). **Mew Gulls** left early this year, with most gone by the first week in March, and the last one reported was March 17 at Rio Del Mar (JP). Most years they are around in numbers until at least mid-March, with some lingering into April. Late gulls included a 1st-cycle **Herring Gull** along the San Lorenzo River May 7 (SG) and a 1st-cycle **Thayer's Gull** on West Cliff Drive until May 9 (SG). Second-cycle **Glaucous Gulls** were at Aptos Creek mouth on March 24-30 (JP) and at Waddell Creek Beach on April 19 (GS). A **Common Tern** foraging with **Forster's** off Capitola Beach on May 3 was the only one reported (DSu).

**Elegant Terns** made an early appearance from April 18-May 4 (SG, RG, MPe, CK, AG, EB, v.ob.), with a high count of 9 off Seacliff on April 25 (DSu). Then they disappeared, and none were reported in the county after that through at least July. A **Black Skimmer** stopped at Aptos Creek mouth, then continued up the coast, on May 11 (DSu). Two **Marbled Murrelets** off Rio Del Mar on April 7 were unexpected for that area in spring, when they are rarely noted in down the coast past

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Santa Cruz (PB). This season's only **Ancient Murrelet** was swimming off Seacliff state Beach on March 16 (DSu). Observers surveying birds from a cruise ship going up the coast well offshore reported two **Parakeet Auklets** on April 30 in the farthest offshore waters of Santa Cruz County (RM et al.). Pending CBRC review, this would be just the third record from the county and the first involving live birds. (The other two were of beach-cast specimens.) A **Tufted Puffin** swam offshore of Seacliff State Beach on April 17 (DSu).

Observations of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** building nests at Soquel on March 20 (PS) and Capitola on May 15 (DSu) provided the first breeding confirmations reported in those communities. Fifty-five were gathered on one short stretch of the Pajaro River near Main Street on May 26 (DSu). Wintering **Burrowing Owls** lingered to March 29 near Sunset State Beach and near West Struve Slough (JWa, NA). We received nine reports of 15 migrant **Black Swifts** from May 15-30, including reports from the Pajaro Valley, San Lorenzo Valley and Capitola, where the species has only rarely been seen (v.ob.). However, there was again no suggestion of attendance at any of the county's former nesting sites. Reports of **Vaux's Swift** were, as expected, more common than Black (22 reports, beginning April 7), but most were of just 1-3 individuals. Large flights of migrant Vaux's have been lacking in the county in recent years

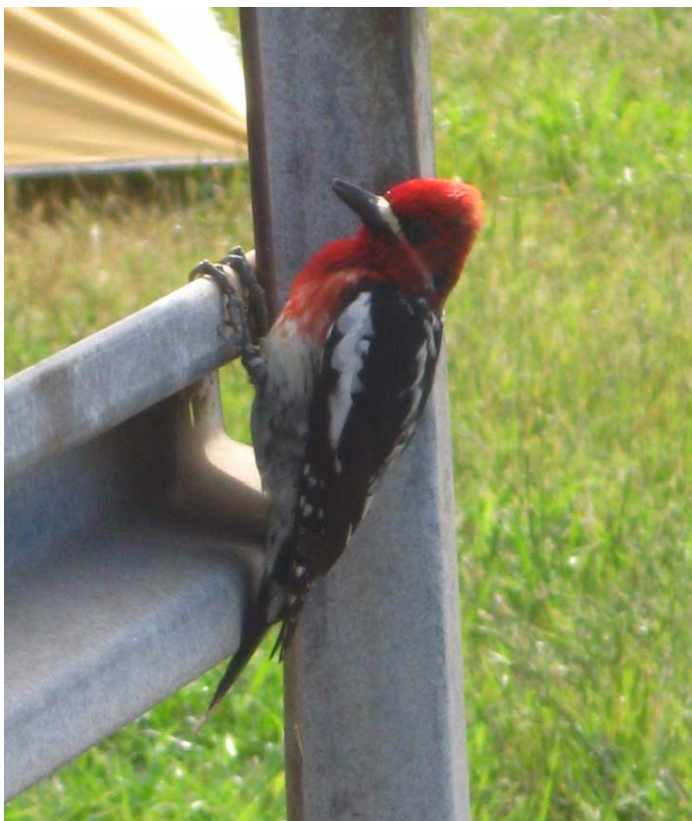


*This immature male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was photographed by Wendy Naruo on March 12, at Henry Cowell Park.*



*A probable Anna's Hummingbird x Selasphorus sp. See the online Albatross to view the spectacular colors. Photos by Rita Colwell.*

An exceptional hybrid male **Anna's Hummingbird x Selasphorus sp.** was captured and photographed during a hummingbird banding study northeast of Scotts Valley on March 7 (Rita Colwell). Based on limited precedent, Allen's Hummingbird is the most likely Selasphorus parent; a feather was taken for DNA testing to resolve the identity. An immature male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, our first since 2006, provided nice views for many observers along the San Lorenzo River in Henry Cowell State Park from March 9-15 (KK, v.ob.). Various reports of **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** at Rancho Del Oso from April 25 onwards suggested two breeding pairs were in residence there (DSu, DM, AM). One male entertained observers at Horse Camp for a few weeks in May with daily bouts of drumming on metal signs and gates.



*A Red-breasted Sapsucker drums on a gate at Rancho del Oso. Photo by David Suddjian*

The burned forest at Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve attracted a high concentration of **Hairy Woodpeckers** in late winter. A survey on March 4 tallied 17 individuals in an area of about 50 acres (SG, KK). Three reports of **Pileated Woodpeckers** were away from the species' usual forest settings: at Aptos Creek County Park on March 26 (DSu), Westlake School in Santa Cruz on April 14 (TT), and New Brighton State Beach on April 15 (DSu). These fit a pattern that has been established since the first such occurrence noted in our county in 2005. Eleven records of Pileateds away from usual forest haunts have accumulated since then, all in spring from March 21 to June 9, with most from late March to April, probably relating to some form of pre-breeding dispersal. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at the Porter Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach on April 17 (DSu).

The territorial **Dusky Flycatcher** returned for its 5th season to Ocean View Summit at Big Basin Redwoods State Park by at least May 3, where it remained singing into another summer (DSu, KK, GT). The wintering **Tropical Kingbird** at West Struve Slough was last reported on March 19 (DSu). A rare migrant

**Cassin's Kingbird** was along the Pajaro River on May 20 (DSu). A **Western Scrub-Jay** spent several days in May catching mosquito fish from a pond in a Capitola yard, apparently an unusual behavior for this jay (DSu). Migrant **Purple Martins** were at Seacliff on May 11 and at Last Chance Road on May 21 (GS). A **Tree Swallow** at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park was notable in the San Lorenzo Valley (AR, JW). The season's quota for **Bank Swallow** was met by one at Rancho Del Oso on April 22 (DSu).

A **Barn Swallow** near Mt. McAbee on May 17 was the first report for the interior region of Big Basin Redwoods State Park (KK). A pair of **House Wrens** nested for the second year in a row at Quail Hollow Ranch, this time in a nest box, fledging young by May 27 (fide JA). A singing male at Rancho Del Oso present from at least April 23 attracted a mate and had a nest with young in a Monterey pine snag on June 4 (DSu). There was a prior nesting at Rancho Del Oso in 1988, but otherwise there are no other breeding records from the county's north coast region, and the location is over 10 miles from any other known House Wren nesting site.

**Western Bluebirds** had another encouraging season. Three pairs appeared at **Quail Hollow Ranch** this spring, but only two stayed to nest in boxes there (fide JA). Nesting was also confirmed near Soda Lake (DSu), Merk Road (H&RS), and at two places near Larkin Valley Road (KR, fide LK). One at Bonny Doon Ecological Preserve on March 8 (KK) and two elsewhere in Bonny Doon on March 30 (fide BB) were notable for that part of the county in recent years. Singing **Varied Thrushes** in known or likely breeding areas were at three places in Big Basin State Park in May, and one was at Waterman Gap on May 31 (DSu). The season's only reports of **Nashville Warbler** were from New Brighton State Beach on April 15 and Sequel Creek at Capitola on April 16 (DSu).

Singing **Ovenbirds** were at Whalebone Gulch in the Bear Creek watershed on May 19 (DSu) and at Lighthouse Field State Beach on May 23-24 (SGe, DSu); a photograph of the latter provided the first photo-documentation for the county. A singing male **Hooded Warbler** brightened up New Brighton State Beach on May 12 (DSu). It was a slim season for **Yellow-breasted Chats**, with just two found from May 2-15 (DSu). Two **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** singing on a hillside near Soda Lake on March 19 were

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at the only place in the county where this species is known to reside (DSu). They had not been reported in the county since 2004, as the location is on private land with no visitation by birders. A **Chipping Sparrow** singing at Last Chance Road on May 23 was the only one reported (AR).



*A rare Ovenbird, photographed at Lighthouse Field by Steve Gerow on May 23, 2010.*

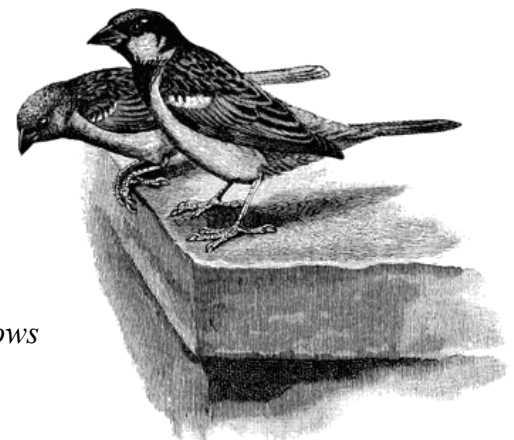
**Lark Sparrows** were at Wilder Ranch on April 22 (JWa) and near Soda Lake on May 4 (DSu). Both sites formerly had nesting birds, but it is unknown if any Lark Sparrows still nest in Santa Cruz County. **Song Sparrows** with a newly-fledged chick at Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz on March 15 provided evidence of a very early nesting (SG). One or two “**Slate-colored**” **Fox Sparrows** at Quail Hollow Ranch on April 5-7 were the first spring season occurrence for that form in the county (AR, JWi). Two **Golden-crowned Sparrows** there on May 22 were notably late (AR, TN).

A **Dark-eyed Junco** singing near College Lake on May 2 signaled the expansion of this species into the urban/agricultural region of the floor of the Pajaro Valley, where it had previously been absent. A pair along the Pajaro River upstream of Salsipuedes Creek (Monterey County side) on May 24 was the first breeding season record from that river corridor in the Pajaro Valley (SG), with nesting confirmed there in June.

Two **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found from March 15-27, and three more appeared from May 20-27 (DSu, EF, SM). Male **Blue Grosbeaks** were at the far southeast corner of the county near Soda Lake on May 4 (DS) and along the Pajaro River on May 23

(EL, CK). A fairly small number of **Tricolored Blackbirds** were in attendance at the pond along Last Chance Road in April and May (65 counted on April 26); they were probably nesting but no firm evidence was observed (DSu, AR). Small numbers of “**Trikes**” were seen flying around near the Pajaro River east of Watsonville on May 20 (DSu). A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** joined other blackbirds at a feeding station near Struve Slough on May 4 (DSu). The high count of **Great-tailed Grackles** was 41 at Harkins Slough on May 28, including nine begging fledglings and evidence of several active nests (DSu). Continued nesting at Struve Slough was also documented. Although now well-established in the Watsonville Slough system, sightings of grackles elsewhere are rare. This season one was at Pinto Lake on April 8 (RK, CM) and three were flying over the Pajaro River near Walker Street on May 24 (DSu).

Two **Hooded Orioles** visiting red hot poker flowers in a yard off Last Chance Road on May 21 were the first found along the coast north of Laguna Creek (GS). A pair at a nest with young in Quail Hollow Ranch County Park on May 28 provided the first breeding record for the San Lorenzo Valley (AR). Reports of **Red Crossbills** were of one at Bonny Doon on March 4 (KK, SG) and six at Castle Rock State Park on May 21 (LG, WG). A **Lawrence’s Goldfinch** near Soda Lake on May 4 was the only one reported this season. We don’t think much about patterns of movement for **House Sparrows**, but a male at Rancho Del Oso on April 26 was the second record for the park and was quite distance from any spots where the species is expected. (Wonder where it came from.)



*House Sparrows*

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### Santa Cruz Birds Cited Observers:

Nanci Adams, Jenny Anderson, Eileen Balian, Bonnie Bedzin, Phil Brown, Rita Colwell, Nancy Collins, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Rich Griffith, Joan Hardie, Kathe Hart, Clay Kempf, R. Ketley, Laura Kummerer, Gary Kittleson, Kathy Kuyper, Earl Lebow, Thomas Leikam, Margaret Leonard, Janet Linthicum, Pat Mahoney, Sally Maki, Catherine Mandella, Amy McDonald, Ryan Merrill, Dominic Mosur, Todd New-

berry, Mark Paxton (MPa), Margaret Perham (MPe), Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Kathleen Rose, Chris Rummel, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, David Sidle (DSi), Pete Solé, Madeline Spencer, Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DSu), Tom Takano, Glen Tepke, Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi). "v.ob." means many observers.

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



## Come to the 6th Annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival

September 23 - 26, 2010

"California, From Condors to Snowy Plovers" is the theme this year, serving as a bookend to last year's "Birding the Americas." The 4-day festival once again features great birders and lecturers. Alvaro Jaramillo returns for an encore performance on Saturday night as the festival's keynote speaker. His topic—California a Bird's Eye View (subtitled Ornithological Californication)—is sure to be equally educational and entertaining.

Friday evening's speaker will be Allen Fish, director of Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. What better topic is there than birds of prey?

Thursday evening there will be a screening of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker documentary, "Ghost Bird", complete with an introduction and post-viewing Q & A by the Sdirector, Scott Crocker.

Afternoon lectures will include more on California specialities (Snowy Plover, Tri-colored Blackbirds, California Condor); California bird identification workshops (Seabirds of the Pacific; Birds of Prey); and—new this year—workshops on sketching birds and avian photography.

Bird Club members will want to visit the many display booths present, including all the major optics vendors, plus a variety of tour companies and artists.

As always, we'll be offering a slew of trips to sloughs, vagrant traps, private ranches, etc. throughout the tri-county region of Monterey Bay.

Festival Headquarters at the Watsonville Civic Plaza is the perfect central location for the four days of activities, and parking is FREE.

Registration for each birding event is offered a la carte, so that participants can mix and match outings according to personal interests. Online registration is now available at the festival web site:

<http://www.montereybaybirding.org>

You can purchase and print tickets at home.

Most field trips depart from the Watsonville Civic Plaza where parking is free. Check the program for your particular field trip, as some meet at the site.

**New SCBC  
Members  
Welcome!**

|                                   |      |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Sandra Cohen &<br>Bill Carrothers | 4/10 |
| Jeff Bleam &<br>Jeannine Mealey   | 5/10 |
| Donna Hesterman                   | 5/10 |
| Marie Minton                      | 5/10 |
| Bill Eaton                        | 5/10 |
| Pamela King                       | 5/10 |
| Megan Matthews                    | 5/10 |
| Dickman Family                    | 6/10 |
| Michael Martin                    | 6/10 |
| Lynora Wine                       | 6/10 |
| Ted Pierce                        | 6/10 |
| Carolyn Watanabe                  | 6/10 |
| Cynthia Berg                      | 6/10 |

**Input deadline for  
Nov/Dec issue  
of the Albatross—  
October 1, 2010**

**Submission for the**

Assembling



**Albatross**

**Albatross—Guidelines**

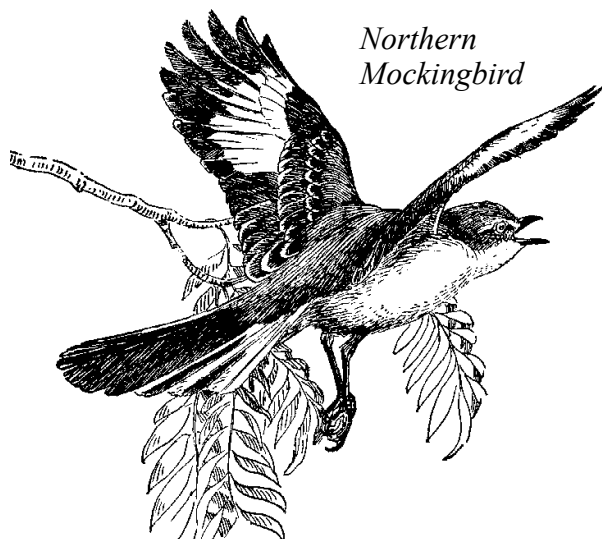
In addition to regular features—calendar, Santa Cruz Birds, trip reports—the newsletter can include almost anything related to birding in general and to local birding in particular. Depending on space, submissions of any of the following are welcome:

- 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



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Mockingbird*

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## ***Incoming...DINNER!!***



The blur at left (above) is a Western Bluebird parent bringing food to a hungry nestling. At right, the male brings more food. The birds nested this year in an orchard on Larkin Valley Road. Kathleen Rose took the photos in May. (See color images in the online Albatross.)

### ***The ALBATROSS***

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



<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/>

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