



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES



*Help us count
the birds...*



54th Annual Santa Cruz County CBC

Saturday, December 18, 2010

For a birder, is there a better way to spend a winter day along the central California coast than counting birds? Join our 54th annual Christmas Bird Count and countdown dinner! The CBC helps us track the ups and downs of the local bird populations. The count is a highlight of our birding year and is always fun for experienced and new birders alike. All are welcome to join the all-day event.

The 15-mile diameter count circle reaches from Davenport to New Brighton and from Boulder Creek to the ocean, encompassing a wide array of habitats. Each year 60 to 80 birders join together to search the woods, walk the fields, and scan the seas. Rare birds may get the limelight, but the best fun comes from counting the "regular" birds and tracking down the uncommon ones in each counting area. Our long-term tracking of numbers of individuals of each species is the real fruit of the CBC. The end-of-the-day potluck dinner and species countdown wraps it all up as we share the day's adventures and discoveries.

Please email or call David Suddjian to let him know you want to count. There is a \$5.00 fee for each participant.

dsuddjian@aol.com or (831) 479-9603

Potluck count-down dinner to follow at St. Joseph's Church parish hall, 435 Monterey Avenue, Capitola. From Highway 1, take Bay Street to Monterey Avenue. Go left on Monterey for just under 0.2 mile, and turn left into the parking lot for the church, across from Washburn Ave. Drive down to the lower parking lot to reach the parish hall.

Inside:

**Calendar
of trips
and talks**

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**Santa Cruz  
Birds**



*"Invisible?"*

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**No Winter Wrens
in Santa Cruz
County?**



Events Calendar

November-December 2010

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



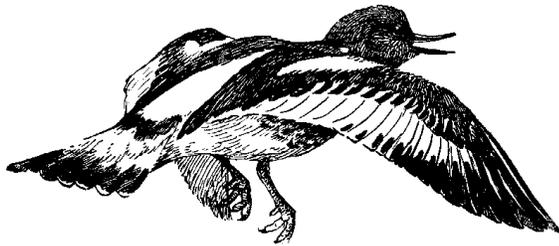
Friday, November 5 West Cliff Drive

We'll look for rocky shore birds (...anything smaller or longer-billed among those Black Turnstones and Surf-birds?), winter gulls (this is usually a good area for Mew Gulls), and others. We may also check Lighthouse Field and/or Bethany Curve Park for land birds.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the intersection of West Cliff Drive and Woodrow Avenue.

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

Black Turnstone



Sunday, November 7 Quail Hollow County Park

This will be a casual bird walk in a park with a good variety of habitat.

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

Leader: Eric Feuss, (831) 477-0280



Friday, November 12 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 winter birds and possibly a late migrant or two.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 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



Sunday, November 14 North Coast

Itinerary will be determined on the day of the trip, but it will start at Baldwin Creek Beach with possible stops being Swanton Road, Cascade Ranch, or Waddell Creek. Plan for 3-4 miles of mostly easy hiking, and bring water and a snack.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM along Highway 1 at the parking area for Baldwin Creek Beach (aka 4 Mile). Bring snack/drink. Rain or shine.

Leader: Eric Feuss, (831) 477-0280



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.



Thursday, November 18
SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM
Speaker: Scott Smithson

Topic: Breeding Biology & Habitat Use of Orange Bishops & Nutmeg Mannikins in California

It is important to study the spread of introduced bird species to document any effects on the local avifauna. The exotic parrot species get most of the press in California, but there are also introduced populations of weavers and finches that are now resident in a few metropolitan areas. While a graduate student at CSU Long Beach in the late 1990s, I studied the breeding biology and habitat use of Orange Bishops and Nutmeg Mannikins in southern California. Through color banding over 400 individual birds and extensive observation and nest searching, we made some interesting discoveries about these naturalized birds that are originally from Africa and Asia.

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



Friday, November 19
Natural Bridges Area

A late fall check of this reliable area.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

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



Friday, November 26
Neary Lagoon

This is an easy walk for a break from the indoor activities of the Thanksgiving weekend, and we might even find something unexpected.

Directions: Meet at the west entrance at 8:00 AM.

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



Sunday, November 28
Henry Cowell

This half-day trip will begin near Roaring Camp, wend its way through the sycamores and box elders of the San Lorenzo River and Zayante Creek, and end in the chaparral and Ponderosa Pines of the Henry Cowell campground. This is a stronghold of wrens, kinglets, woodpeckers, and in good years, Varied Thrush.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the Graham Hill entrance to the Zayante Creek trail. This is not clearly marked. It is to the right of the entrance to Pro-build. Parking is available in the church parking lot at the intersection of Graham Hill and Zayante Roads. Later, we will carpool up to the campground, where there is a \$10 day use fee.

Leader: Bonnie Bedzin,
 (831) 425-1335,
 bonnie@cruzio.com



Wrentit



Saturday, December 4
Pogonip

A search for wintering birds of forest and grasslands. The exact route will depend on both the weather and any bird trends that develop for the early winter, but expect a few miles of walking, with some hills.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the north end of Spring Street, off High Street in Santa Cruz.

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



Sunday, December 5
Salinas River Mouth

Especially for shorebirds and coastal birds and recently reported sightings there.

Directions: Depart at 7:00 AM from Aptos Wells Fargo Bank, or meet before 8:00 AM at the Salinas River mouth parking lot. Take Hwy 1 south beyond Castroville. Just after crossing the Salinas River, take the Del Monte Ave exit. Turn right (toward the bay), follow dirt road to parking lot. May check out Zmudowski State Beach and/or Moon Glow Dairy depending upon sightings in areas and how leader or group feels. Bring snack/drink. Rain or shine.

Leader: Eric Feuss, (831) 477-0280



Friday, December 10
Schwan Lake area

We'll look for wintering land birds in the grasslands and wooded areas north of the lake, and there may be something interesting in the lake, as well.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot of the Simpkins Family Swim Center, 979 17th Avenue.

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



Sunday, December 12
Quail Hollow County Park

We will look for winter birds on the upper slopes of the park where we might see Varied Thrush and Pine Siskin in the mixed evergreen forest.

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

Leader, Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



Pine Siskin



Friday, December 17
Natural Bridges area

This will be a very casual morning of birding—a prelude to the next day's Christmas Bird Count.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.

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

CBC **Saturday, December 18**
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
Details on page 1.



Lunch at the Pipeline overlook in Henry Cowell SP, on the 2008 Santa Cruz CBC. Photo by Bonnie Bedzin.



Thursday, December 30
Antonelli Pond
and vicinity

One last look at the lower west side of Santa Cruz for 2010. We may visit Natural Bridges, the Terrace Point area, or other nearby spots.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the west end of Delaware Avenue, just past Antonelli Pond.

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



Saturday, January 1, 2011 *Happy New Year!*
Moss Landing
Christmas Bird Count

Start 2011 with this special New Year's Day outing! The count circle covers some of the prime birding areas in southern Santa Cruz County and northern Monterey County. We are always in need of birders on this count, so please join us, and then enjoy the warm, friendly (and delicious) countdown dinner at Pajaro Dunes.

If you are interested in participating in the count, please contact Bob and Bernadette Ramer at (831) 426-7342, or email: baramer@sbcglobal.net

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2010

Nine **Greater White-fronted Geese** flew over Capitola Beach on June 5 (DSu), for the first June record for the county, excepting a few that have over-summered. A **Cackling Goose**, very rare in summer in Santa Cruz County, was along Watsonville Slough on August 7 (LG, WG). Nine **Brant** flying up the West Cliff Drive coast on July 9 may have been very late spring migrants (SG), but some reports of single birds in July and August suggested one or a few did stay for the summer in the mid-county area. Up to 24 were regularly noted in July and August at the Pajaro River mouth (v.ob.), a more regular spot for summering Brant. An estimated 100 **Gadwalls** at the Watsonville Slough/Struve Slough confluence on June 26 was an exceptional concentration for the area in June (JWa), and likely included some late migrants in addition to local residents.

The confluence of these sloughs also held a male **American Wigeon** from June 19-26 (LG, WG, DSu, JWa), establishing the first summer-period record of this species in Santa Cruz County. Some other out-of-season ducks in the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence area included four **Northern Shovelers** on June 19 (LG, WG), with one still there June 26 (JWa), a **Northern Pintail** on June 22 (DSu), and 1-2 **Green-winged Teal** from June 19-22 (LG, WG, DSu, JWa). A pair of Northern Pintails at Younger Lagoon on the odd date of July 24 (SG) were perhaps dispersants from nearby breeding populations. A count of 35 **Red-throated Loons** at Seacliff State Beach on June 5 (DSu) was exceptional for the date and may have been an instance of an exception-

ally late migratory movement. More Red-throateds than usual did remain through the summer though, with reports from various spots along the county coast involving a total of ten or more birds, some of these staying through August (v.ob.).

A **Laysan Albatross** was in Santa Cruz County waters on August 27 (SJ). A **Pink-footed Shearwater**, rarely seen from shore in Santa Cruz County, was off Seacliff State Beach on August 27 (DSu). **Sooty Shearwaters** were notable in their unusual absence through spring and summer, with none reported from shore through June or July. Good numbers suddenly appeared close to shore in early August, with an estimated 150,000 off Rio Del Mar and Seacliff State Beach being the first report (CK). **American White Pelicans** were in the Pajaro Valley area through the summer, with numbers increasing in late July (v.ob.).

Brandt's Cormorant nesting efforts had mixed success this year and began late at all sites. The Cement Ship at Seacliff State Beach again held the largest colony, with a peak count of 154 nests on June 13. More than this actually nested though, as new nests were regularly being started into late July when grown young were leaving some of the early nests (DSu). Some new nests were even started in late August, and some nesting was still going on through September and even into October! While it is uncertain if the latest of these efforts will produce any young, it is by far the latest nesting by Brandt's Cormorants in this county and perhaps the latest for the state! Some diversity in nest timing was also noted at the Davenport Pier colony, though this site only held a maximum of 16-18 nests (DSu). The oddly situated nests at Wilder Ranch (noted last issue) apparently failed to produce any young, and a small nesting attempt at Natural Bridges was quickly abandoned.



Sooty Shearwaters photographed on Monterey Bay, Santa Cruz County, by Jeff Poklen, August 15, 2010.

Double-crested Cormorants did well, with 83 nests at Pinto Lake (RR) and at least 142 nests at Schwan Lake (DSu), both producing numerous young. Nesting was again confirmed for **American Bitterns** along Struve Slough, with two or maybe three families of begging bittern babies being fed by their parents and putting on a good show for birders and photographers August 15-18 (BR, LG, JP, v.ob). **Great Blue Herons** nested at two spots this year, with six nests noted at Pinto Lake (RR, BR) and two at the Santa Cruz Harbor (SG). There were also four **Great Egret** nests at the Pinto Lake colony (RR, BR), their only regular nesting spot in the county. **Snowy Egrets** appeared in good numbers in the Santa Cruz/Live Oak area beginning in July, with a high count of 45 at Corcoran Lagoon on August 26 being an exceptional number for the area (RG).



A juvenile American Bittern practices the "invisible" pose at Struve Slough. Photo by Jeff Poklen, August 8, 2010.

Two **White-faced Ibis** were at the confluence of Watsonville and Struve Sloughs on June 22 (DSu), and two were noted in this area again starting August 3 (JWa, KK). A couple of **Bald Eagles** were surprises in late August, with an adult or near-adult over UCSC on August 28 (WG) and an immature over High Street in Santa Cruz on August 31 (TN). Some extra attention paid to little-birded urban and suburban neighborhoods

of the mid-county resulted in some significant finds, one of which was a family of three **Cooper's Hawk** fledglings just out of the nest in Capitola on June 30 (DSu), the first nesting confirmation for that city and for the urban mid-county area in general. A couple more begging juveniles in Soquel and some other evidence suggests a few other pairs of Cooper's may have nested around the neighborhoods in the area.

Only two pairs of **American Kestrel** were confirmed to nest in the county this season, both in known territories in Santa Cruz (SG). Other nestings may have occurred though, as some pairs continued in territories where they have nested in the recent past, and other pairs were found in places that have had no recent breeding confirmations, including Live Oak and Watsonville (DSu, NAn, v.ob.). More information is clearly needed on the status of this species in Santa Cruz County. A downy **Virginia Rail** chick at the Quail Hollow Ranch pond on June 15 (AR) provided the first breeding confirmation for this park and for the San Lorenzo Valley. A pair of **Black Oystercatchers** nesting on the natural bridge at Natural Bridges State Beach was the first confirmed nesting for this park and also for the Santa Cruz city limits (SG). Two chicks had hatched by July 6, but they did not survive for more than a day or so.

Black-necked Stilts away from the Pajaro Valley included two at Younger Lagoon on June 27 (DSi) and five at Natural Bridges on July 23-26 (DSi, SG). Similarly rare away from the Pajaro Valley was an **American Avocet** at Younger Lagoon on August 25 (LG, BR). A pair of **Spotted Sandpipers** with two chicks were along the Pajaro River upstream from Sal-sipedes Creek on June 22 (DSu), one of few recent breeding confirmations in Santa Cruz County. There were multiple reports of **Lesser Yellowlegs** from July 24 through August (v.ob.), with a high count of seven at Struve Slough on August 26 (BR). An adult **Ruddy Turnstone** visited Natural Bridges and Terrace Point on July 21 (SG), and another Ruddy was seen at Harkins Slough and the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence on August 27 (RF, CK, RW). That one was especially unusual for being away from the immediate vicinity of the ocean, perhaps the first Ruddy Turnstone ever reported in this county away from the coast.

Three Surf-birds at the Santa Cruz Harbor jetty on July 8 were quite early (LHe). A juvenile **Semipal-**



Baird's Sandpiper at Natural Bridges, photographed by Wendy Naruo on September 3, 2010.

mated Sandpiper at Corcoran Lagoon on July 26 was just the third July record for the county (KA). There were eleven reports of **Baird's Sandpiper** from August 3-28 (v.ob.), probably involving 8-10 individuals. An early **Pectoral Sandpiper** turned up at Watsonville Slough on August 10 (LG, JP). A rare juvenile **Stilt Sandpiper** was a nice find at Natural Bridges on August 23 (DSi), the first ever found in the county outside of the Pajaro Valley area. Another was along Struve Slough in Watsonville on August 26, staying into early September (LG, JP, JWa, v.ob.). Both these were earlier than any previous Stilt Sandpipers found in the county, with all the other records being from September and October. Three **Wilson's Phalaropes** were at Younger Lagoon on August 7 (DSi), and one was there on August 18 (SG, MG). Others were around the Watsonville Slough/Struve Slough confluence, with various reports of up to four starting August 14 (LG, WG, RW, v.ob.)



A Stilt Sandpiper at Natural Bridges State Beach, photographed by David Sidle, August 23, 2010.

California Gulls were again present in unusually high numbers in early summer and with an unexpectedly high proportion of adults for the season in Santa Cruz County (DSu, v.ob.). There were very late movements of large numbers of apparent northbound migrants through July and remarkable gatherings on some local beaches (high count of 555 on Waddell Creek Beach on July 25). Juveniles also arrived earlier than usual, with the first noted on Waddell Creek Beach on July 11 (DSu). The summer status of this species seems to be changing in a complex way, and it is difficult to sort out all of what is going on. A juvenile **Least Tern** was at Harkins Slough on August 27 (RF, CK, RW). A **Black Tern** visited Watsonville Slough August 22-23 (RW, NAd). **Forster's Terns** were again sparse in the county this summer, with just a handful of reports involving single birds (v.ob.).

The summer arrival of **Elegant Terns** came exceptionally late this year, exceeding even last year's late arrival. After a brief and very small scale movement of these in late April and early May, there were no other reports in the county until July 30 (v.ob.). One or two **Tufted Puffins** were within the county's part of Monterey Bay on August 27 (SJ). **Eurasian Collared-Doves** continued to increase and fill in gaps. Surveys of the urban areas of Live Oak to Aptos in late June and early July tallied 360 collared-doves, revealing the species' abundance in that region (DSu). A count of 44 at Davenport on June 13 was a new high count for the north coast region (DSU). A **White-winged Dove** at Santa Cruz on July 14 was a surprise, for our first July record and a rare summer occurrence for Northern California (OJ).

A paltry two reports of **Black Swifts**, with singles at Lighthouse Field on June 23 and Rancho Del Oso on June 24, marked a very low ebb for this species' presence in the county in the summer season (SG, DSu). Observations of **Vaux's Swifts** at Santa Cruz suggested pairs may have been nesting in neighborhoods near Natural Bridges and Pogonip, although no nest sites were confirmed (SG). A female or immature male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at Natural Bridges on July 26 was our first documented July record, and about three weeks ahead of the now expected late summer appearance of this species (SG). A female on August 1 at Capitola and an adult male there on August 11 were also early (DSu). An additional five birds were

found from August 19 onwards (JD, SG, DSu), with others in September. An immature male **Costa's Hummingbird** photographed at Natural Bridges on August 26 was a good deal rarer for the county (SG).

Acorn Woodpeckers were confirmed nesting at New Brighton State Beach for the first time this year, and sightings occurred in July and August in nearby urban areas of Capitola, where the species is usually absent (DSu). A spring migrant **Willow Flycatcher** was at Lighthouse Field on June 21 (SG). Two fall migrants were found August 28-29 (DSu, SG). The summering **Dusky Flycatcher** completed its summer at Big Basin, lingering to at least July 30 (DSu). A late **Western Kingbird** at Moore Creek Preserve on June 18 was not too far out of the established late season pattern for that site (SG), but one at Rancho Del Oso on July 12 was quite unexpected for the north coast in July (DSu). **Eastern Kingbirds** put in appearances at Seacliff State Beach on August 7 (DSu) and at Schwan Lake on August 27 (PB, DSi, SG et al.).

Multiple pairs of nesting **Horned Larks** in a fallow agricultural field at Watsonville Slough near Hanson Slough provided a big surprise. Reports of 8-20 individuals from June 8 to August 8 (GK, CK, SG) included several carrying food and sightings of juveniles on June 23 (GK). This species was last documented nesting in the county in 1993 and had since apparently become extirpated in the county. Its future at Watsonville Slough is uncertain, though, as the fallow field used this year is slated to be converted to wetlands in a restoration project. Perhaps management of the surrounding lands will maintain or provide some other habitat areas that are attractive to the larks. **Purple Martins** were at Terrace Point on June 1 (SG), New Brighton State Beach on July 24 (DSu) and over upper Empire Grade ca. August 1 (GS).

A juvenile **Varied Thrush** retaining down on its head was near Pine Flat Road at Bonny Doon on July 27-28, indicating nesting in that area, perhaps in the Majors Creek watershed (J&JT). This area is away from portions of the county where most nesting by this species has been found. A family of two fledgling Varied Thrushes with a female was along the West Fork of Waddell Creek a little ways upstream of the Forks on August 3 (DSu). **California Thrashers** at Seacliff State Beach (DSu) and Capitola (JD) on August 1 were away from the species normal range in the county

(DSu). A late **Cedar Waxwing** turned up near Natural Bridges on June 20 (SG). A very late **Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warbler** at the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton on June 6 fit the timing for an Eastern vagrant (DSu). A **Townsend's Warbler** at Rancho Del Oso on August 2 set a new early arrival record for the county by four days (DSu).

An **American Redstart** was at Schwan Lake on August 27 (LG et al.). A **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Porter-Sesnon on July 27 was unexpected, very early for a migrant and far from the local areas where the species nests in the county (DSu). The next earliest record for a fall migrant in the county is August 10. The only spots with **Chipping Sparrows** at mid-summer were UCSC and nearby Wilder Ranch, with just one to two noted at a few spots (SG, KK, PM). Breeding **Savannah Sparrows** were found in the same spot at Watsonville Slough as the Horned Larks described above (SG, GK, JWa). Up to six juveniles were seen there on June 20 (JWa). While much less rare in the county than the lark, Bryant's Savannah Sparrow (our breeding form) had been considered extirpated in the Pajaro Valley with a dearth of breeding evidence since the early 1990s, so this was a significant find for our subspecies which is listed on California's Bird Species of Special Concern list.



Adult female Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a feeder in Santa Cruz, CA. Photo by Jeff Poklen, July 7, 2010.

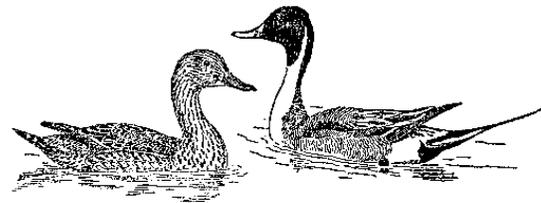
A **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Quail Hollow Ranch on June 13 was our first ever for summer (JWi). Surveys of the urban area from Live Oak to Aptos revealed how common **Dark-eyed Junco** has become in that area, where it was mostly absent until the last several years. 148 were tallied, occurring at 53% of 144 survey sites in late June and early July (DSu). An adult male **Summer Tanager** was along the Pajaro River upstream of Highway 1 on June 7 (DSu). An immature male was at

Capitola on August 23 to September 1 (DSu). Six **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found from June 9 to August 1 (NAd, SG, DSu, SB, JP, JB).

Tricolored Blackbirds appeared in agricultural areas along the Pajaro River from late May to late June (DSu). Eight at Corcoran Lagoon on June 30 were very rare for Live Oak (DSu). A series of sightings of Trikes flying up the coast over Seacliff and Capitola from August 23 into early September was unprecedented, including the first reports ever for both areas (DSu). The pattern, also including flocks of Red-wingeds heading up coast suggested a migratory movement, perhaps of birds heading to winter along our north county coast (DSu). A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** stopped at Seacliff State Beach on its westward journey on August 23 (DSu). Three **Western Meadowlarks** singing at UCSC from July 3-10 were the first singers there in several years, although the species formerly nested there (SG). A **Red Crossbill** was over Middle Ridge at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on June 13 (PB), and three were at Rancho Del Oso on August 1 (DSu).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Noelle Antolin, Kumaran Arul, Jeff Bleam, Phil Brown, Steve Butler, Judy Donaldson, Rick Fournier, Mike Geneau, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Rich Griffith, Laird Henkel, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Gary Kittleson, Kathy Kuyper, Paul Miller, Monterey Seabirds (fide Roger Wolfe), Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Shearwater Journeys (fide Debra Shearwater), David Sidle (DSi), Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DSu), John & Jill Thompson, Jeff Wall (JWa), Roger Wolfe, Jim Williams (JWi). "v.ob." means many observers.

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



Northern Pintails

No Winter Wrens in Santa Cruz County?

by Steve Gerow



Every so often, the name we have been applying to a familiar local bird becomes obsolete, and we have to get used to calling it something different. When I started birding, Brown Towhees, Sparrow Hawks, and Audubon's Warblers were among the familiar species. The towhees were split into two species, and ours is now California Towhee. Audubon's Warblers were lumped with Myrtles into Yellow-rumped Warbler, and the Sparrow Hawk's name was changed to American Kestrel for (among other reasons) consistency with the common names of related species in other parts of the world. Bullock's Oriole became Northern Oriole, then went back to being Bullock's (first a lump, then a split). The names (common and scientific) applied to birds in North America, as well as their taxonomic ordering, is governed by the Checklist of North American Birds, a publication of the American Ornithologists Union (AOU). The AOU has published these checklists periodically for over a century, with the last major revision (the 7th edition) coming out in 1998. But in between editions, there are supplements, published almost annually, which list changes in nomenclature and taxonomic grouping approved by the AOU's checklist committee, mostly based on recent research. The latest such supplement, just published this summer, again contains a number of changes in the common and scientific names of some of our local birds and how some of them are grouped among other species.

The change that will have the most immediate effect in our day to day bird conversations, lists, and so forth involves those little short-tailed dark brown wrens that live in the understory of our forests—Winter Wrens, up until a couple of months ago. Winter Wren was considered to include birds of this type all around the northern hemisphere, but research has indicated that there are several populations that are distinct enough to be considered separate species. The AOU has concluded that those in North America are distinct from those in Eurasia, and that the ones in western North America are a different species from those in the east (and across much of Canada). The common name Winter Wren is now properly applied only to the eastern species, whereas our birds are now called Pacific Wrens. These species are distinguished by some slight plumage differences, but especially by voice. While only Pacific Wren is currently recognized to occur in California, there are some records of birds that may have been vagrant Winter Wrens, and are being considered by the California Bird Records Committee, so it may be worth keeping the possibility in mind. Some information on the differences between the two can be found on David Sibley's blog:

<http://www.sibleyguides.com/2010/08/distinguishing-pacific-and-winter-wrens/>

And for good recordings comparing the calls and songs of the two species, try these entries from Nathan Pieplow's blog:

<http://earbirding.com/blog/archives/774>

<http://earbirding.com/blog/archives/826>

The only other major split in this supplement involving birds within North America was of Whip-poor-wills, which are now split into Eastern and Mexican species. While no Whip-poor-wills have been recorded in Santa Cruz County, there is a record in Monterey County, which was clearly a Mexican Whip-poor-will. As with the wrens, the two Whip-poor-will species are best separated by differences in calls. Black Scoters are now split from the Eurasian Common Scoters, but the common name we use will stay the same. One common name change affecting a species that has been recorded in Santa Cruz County does not involve any lumps or splits: what once were Greater Shearwaters are now Great Shearwaters.

Changes in scientific names that affect our species are mostly on the genus level. For example, most of the former *Vermivora* warblers (Orange-crowned, Tennessee, Nashville, Virginia's, Lucy's) are now in the genus *Oreothlypis*. The only *Vermivora* we have left on the Santa Cruz County list is the one record of Blue-winged Warbler. Waterthrush are now in the genus *Parkesia*, separated from the Ovenbird genus *Seiurus*. Spotted and Green-tailed Towhees are still in the genus *Pipilo*, but California Towhees (and other all-brown towhees) join ground sparrows in the genus *Melospiza*.

On the family level, Ospreys and Gnatcatchers now have their own families, separated from hawks and Old World warblers, respectively. Longspurs and Snow Buntings also have a new family, and are no longer part of the same family as American sparrows and Eurasian buntings. Leaf Warblers (like Dusky and Arctic, for example) are now in a separate family from the other Old World warblers. On the other hand, our familiar but hard-to-classify Wrentit is now included in the *Sylviidae*, along with one group of Old World warblers, and is no longer considered a babbler (nor a thrush, nor in its own separate family, nor...).

At the somewhat more arcane level of order, we find Falconiformes now includes only the falcon/carcara family, and are no longer considered to be close relatives of the hawks, ospreys and American vultures, which are now segregated into a different order. And Pelicans are now grouped with herons and ibis, while other families formerly in the Pelicaniformes (cormorants, anhingas, boobies, and frigatebirds) are now grouped in a different order, and tropicbirds are off with an order of their own.

For more detail, as well as changes affecting species from other parts of North America, you can download the recent supplement (51st), plus some correction pages, from the AOU website at the following address (look under Recent Updates).

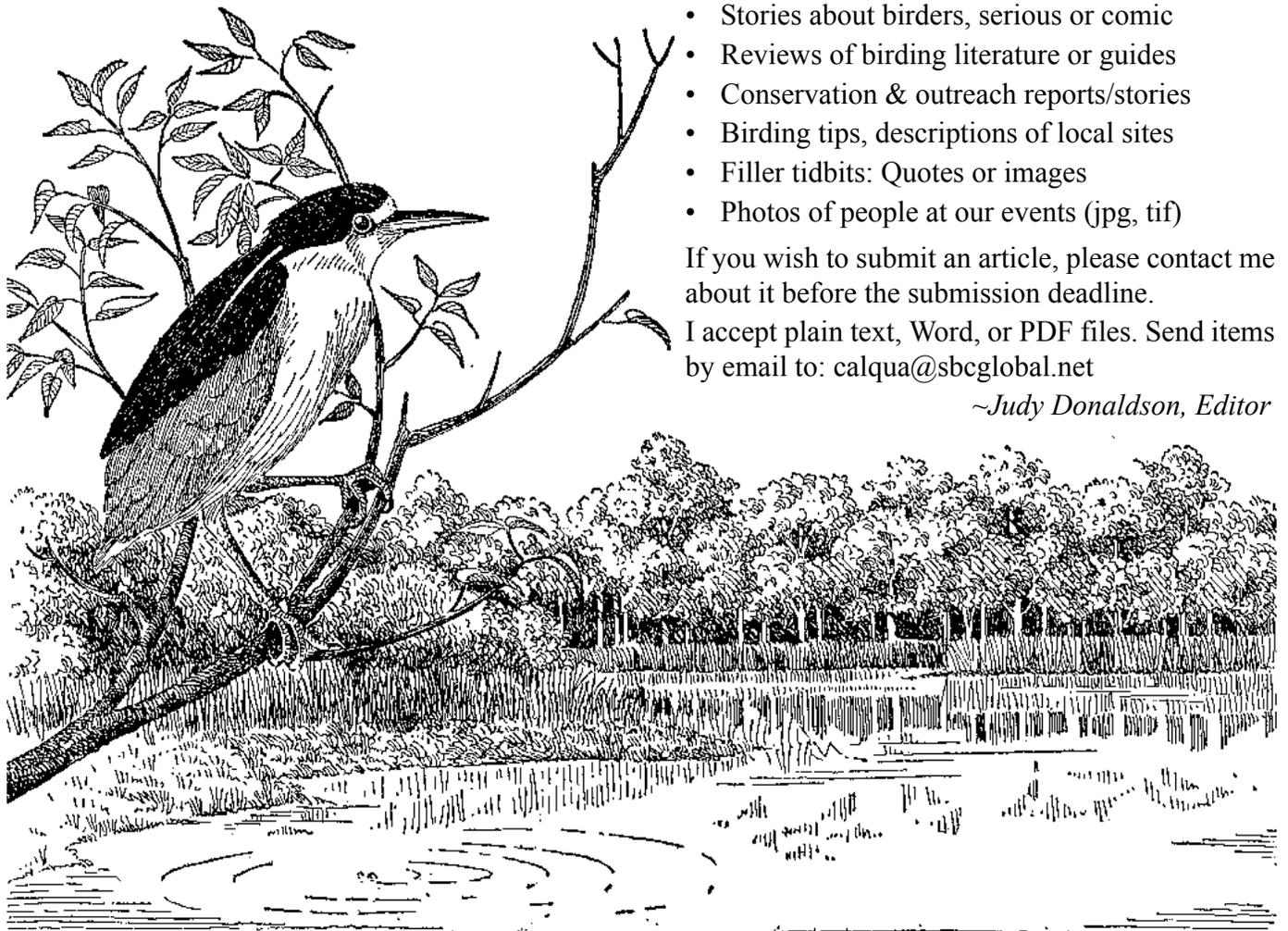
<http://www.aou.org/checklist/north/index.php>



**Input deadline for
Jan/Feb 2011
Albatross—
December 1, 2010**

**New SCBC
Member
Welcome!**

Ian Michael Aspinall 8/10



Assembling

the

Albatross

Submission for the Albatross—Guidelines

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

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

If you wish to submit 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

~Judy Donaldson, Editor

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A juvenile Cooper's Hawk flying over Natural Bridges State Beach. Photo by Wendy Naruo.

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