



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

The Site Survey: People, Places, & Parking Lots

By David Suddjian

I gaze through my binoculars, jot numbers on my clipboard, and the questions come my way: “Excuse me, sir? Do you mind if I ask what you are doing?” or “Are you keeping track of something?” or “Do you work for the city [or insert county, state, or federal] government?” Ever since I began a habit of making regular visits to count birds at selected spots, the inquiries from those around me have been interesting, engaging, and entertaining.

In November 2009 eBird established an effort called the *Site Survey*, inviting eBirders to make a commitment to count birds on a regular basis at sites of their choosing for an extended period of months, visiting the sites once a week or more frequently. I was immediately attracted to this idea. I have long enjoyed getting to know a place and its birds over the course of many visits. So I picked several local spots as *my* sites and have had a great time tracking their birds over the weeks, months, and now, over a year. It is a commitment, but it has also been very rewarding, sometimes in ways I had not anticipated.

An Ambassador for the Birds and Birding

There I am at popular Capitola Beach, peering through binoculars and writing down numbers. Or I’m wandering through the campground at New Brighton, attention focused in all directions, pausing to make quiet pishing sounds among the campers. Or I set up shop with the spotting scope atop the bluff at Seacliff to scan the sea. It is only natural that people might wonder what I am up to, and indeed they do. In the process I have found myself in the unexpected role of ambassador for the birds—answering questions about our bird populations—and for birding—showing why this passion is interesting and worthwhile.

The people at Capitola Beach have been the most curious and the most appreciative of what I am doing. My patterns have become known to some of the beach regulars. One man refers to me as the “Bird Guy.” One of the locals gathered with his friends at the Esplanade explains, “That’s the guy who counts the birds.” A lady tells me, “Thank you for watching out for our birds.” Another says, “I’m glad somebody cares.” After explaining to an inquirer what I am up to, the most common question is something like, “So how are the birds doing?” (*continued on p.6*)

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**Save Panoche
Valley Benefit**



**20 Years in
the SCBC**

Hotspot?



**Santa Cruz
Birds—
a very rare bird!**



**Wetlands Watch
Training**



Events Calendar

January - February 2011

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

<http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org>



Saturday, January 1 Moss Landing CBC

If you're tired of being indoors watching parades and football games on New Year's Day and would rather be outdoors watching birds (good choice if it's sunny and bright; questionable choice if it's stormy and cold), then do we have a deal for you!

Event: Moss Landing Christmas Bird Count

Date/Time: January 1, 2011, dawn to dusk, with count-down dinner to follow at Pajaro Dunes

Goal: Finding as many birds as possible then celebrating our success at Pajaro Dunes

So, if you would like to be part of this adventure, please contact us: rjramer@sbcglobal.net

Happy holidays, good birding, and best wishes to all!
Bob and Bernadette Ramer.

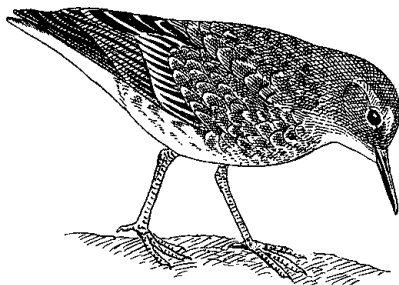


Friday, January 7 San Lorenzo River

The river and some adjacent park areas can have interesting wintering birds.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at San Lorenzo Park by the duck pond

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



Rock Sandpiper



Sunday, 9 January Palo Alto Baylands and Surrounding Areas

Rain will not cancel this trip. The tides are not spectacular (low tide of 1.6 at 10:58 AM and a high tide of 6.0 at 3:18 pm), but we will still try for Clapper Rail. We will bird the duck pond, lagoon, and trails around the Environmental Education Center (Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center), the Palo Alto flood control basin including the bordering Matadero and Adobe Creeks, Charleston Slough, Mountain View Forebay, Coast-Casey Forebay, Shoreline Lake, Pond A1 and A2, and then possibly further outlying areas such as Crittenden Marsh, etc. We may be moving around a bit if one or more interesting birds have been reported in the vicinity during the week.

Directions: Meet at the County Government Center at 6:45 AM (near sign at Ocean Street parking entrance) or at the Palo Alto Baylands at 8:00 AM—preferably at the Environmental Education Center. Sometimes the gate is still locked. If so, there is a parking lot outside the gate and some great mud flats (right there) in the basin to be birded. Please call leader before trip if meeting at the latter location or if you want to make arrangements for another meeting place and time.

Leader: Eric Feuss (831) 477-0280
(408) 717-0421 mobile—day of trip only



Friday, January 14 West Cliff Drive

The Rock Sandpiper has returned, so we will try to find it, as well as the other rocky shore regulars, plus an excursion into Lighthouse Field to see what land birds are around.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sunday, January 16
Quail Hollow County Park

January is a great time to see Wilson's Snipe and Sora at the pond, and Western Bluebirds may be present in the various meadows surrounding it. Rain or shine.*

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

Leader: Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



Thursday, January 20
SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM
Speakers: Gage Dayton and Elizabeth Howard (UCSC)

Topic: What's happening at Younger Lagoon?
An overview and update of habitat restoration at the Younger Lagoon Natural Reserve

Join us for this timely program on the habitat restoration efforts now taking place at popular westside Santa Cruz birding site Younger Lagoon. Speakers Beth Howard and Gage Dayton of the UC Natural Reserve System will share their experiences implementing this multi-faceted project to enhance plant and animal communities.

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



Saturday, January 22
North County Grasslands

Join us on a trip along Swanton Road to search for our Santa Cruz County wintering grassland birds. During the morning, we will be looking for kestrels, harriers, kites, meadowlarks, and shrikes, but we'll also keep our eyes open for other wintering raptors, as well as make a few stops in the riparian zone and Monterey pines.

Directions: Meet at Coffeetopia, 1723 Mission Street, at 8:00 AM.

Leader: Scott Smithson, wscottsmithson@gmail.com



Sunday, January 23
Whales, Winter Seabirds

Half-day seabirding and whale watching trip with Monterey Seabirds. Discount for SCBC members. See details on page 5.



Friday, January 28
Natural Bridges & vicinity

This is an area that is always worth checking.

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



Ferruginous Hawk - Photo by Clay Kempf



Saturday, February 5
Save Panoche Valley Benefit Field Trip & Luncheon



The first Saturday in February marks the long-standing traditional SCBC trip to Panoche Valley, an area first birded by Carolyn Frederickson and Steve Allison before their untimely departures from our world. Panoche has since been designated as a globally important bird area by the National Audubon Society. Unfortunately, the valley is currently threatened by a recently-approved solar power project, which will seriously impact species such as Mountain Plover, Kit Fox, Giant Kangaroo Rat, Burrowing Owl, Ferruginous Hawk, etc.

This trip will be held as a fundraiser for the legal defense being championed by Save Panoche Valley and Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. Besides great birding, our group will be treated to a luncheon prepared by some of the sustainable farmers and ranchers of Save Panoche Valley. The lunch will feature organic and beyond-organic meat, eggs, dairy, and heirloom vegetables. Proceeds will go to Save Panoche Valley, a grassroots organization working to preserve and protect the natural resources of Panoche and stop Solargen Energy Inc.'s 4,885 acre industrial solar project. The birding trip will seek out all the regional specialities, including Phainopepla, Western and Mountain Bluebird, Lewis' Woodpecker, Greater Roadrunner, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, Ferruginous Hawk, Bald & Golden Eagle, Mountain Plover, Chukar, Vesper Sparrow, and Long-eared Owl. Carpooling encouraged.

Suggested Donation is \$20-\$25.

Directions: Meet the leader at 8:00 AM at the Paicines Store on Hwy 25, approximately 12 miles south of Hollister. Those coming from Santa Cruz who want to carpool can meet at the Aptos Wells Fargo at 6:30 AM.

Please RSVP to the leader by phone or email. so we can get a reasonable estimate for the luncheon.

Leader: Clay Kempf, (831) 761-8260, ltjaeger@att.net



Thursday, February 17
SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM
Speaker: Stephanie Ellis,
Outreach & Communications Director, SFBBO

Topic: Tracking Bay Area Birds with the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

Birds are excellent indicators of ecosystem health. They are sensitive to the slightest environmental change. The San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory pays close attention to impacts on birds and their habitats and gathers crucial data specific to bird populations in the South Bay. Stephanie will discuss numerous projects the Bird Observatory conducts to preserve our native birds. Find out about the Bird Observatory's 30 years of landbird and colonial waterbird research, and its leadership of the Bay's Western Snowy Plover recovery effort. Please join us for this fun and informative talk.

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



Friday, February 11
Neary Lagoon

Depending on time and conditions, we may also check the Santa Cruz Wharf.

Directions: Meet at the west entrance (off Bay and California) at 8:00 AM.

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



Sunday 13 February
Merced and San Luis National Wildlife Refuges

Come and enjoy the fun of birding in the Central Valley wildlife refuges. We will visit Merced NWR and San Luis NWR. Our target birds will be Sandhill Cranes, Snow/Ross's Geese, White-faced Ibis, and the many ducks, shorebirds, and raptors of the Central Valley. Bring lunch and liquids for a full day of birding.

Directions: Meet at 6:30 AM at the Aptos Wells Fargo Bank, Soquel Avenue at State Park Dr. exit from HWY 1, or at 9:00 AM at the entrance to the Merced National Wildlife Refuge. To reach Merced NWR, take Highway 152 east, past Los Baños, to Highway 59 north. Follow Highway 59 for several miles to Sandy Mush Road, turn left onto Sandy Mush Rd., watch for the refuge, which will be on your left. We may be stopping along Sandy Mush Road to watch for large flocks of cranes and geese.

Leader: Eric Feuss (831) 477-0280
 (408) 717-0421 mobile—day of trip only



Saturday, February 19
Upper UCSC Campus

We should find resident and wintering forest birds and probably good numbers of Allen's Hummingbirds around the blooming manzanitas.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the North Remote Parking Lot, at the north end of Heller Drive.

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



Jeff, Lois, Wendy, and Rich discuss the birds on an SCBC walk. Photo by David Sidle.



Friday, February 25
Antonelli Pond and vicinity

There is often something interesting here.

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



Sunday, February 27
Upper Henry Cowell

We'll walk through the Henry Cowell Campground and sandhill trails and possibly to the observation deck, looking for Varied Thrushes and Pileated Woodpeckers. Later we'll check out the trails along the river.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the campground entrance parking lot/fee station, off Graham Hill Road.

Leader: Kathy Kuyper, chswift@hotmail.com



Pileated Woodpecker

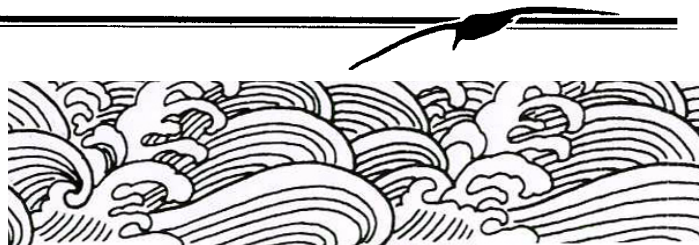
Twenty years in the Santa Cruz Bird Club

by Cliff Bixler

It seems hard to believe that it was over twenty years ago that my wife Lise and I joined the SCBC. I had always been interested in birds, having raised racing pigeons as a boy. We had birded as docents at Pigeon Point Lighthouse and on a trip to Anza Borrego. Then a friend told us about the SCBC. Sometimes trips in Santa Cruz were not so successful. On an owling trip to UCSC, the leader decided en route to go to a different area, and we lost the group. On our second trip we were introduced to the concept of "heard only" birds. Then we went on a trip with Earl Lebow to Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon. We saw lots of birds we had never seen before in their spring finery (and discovered that Earl's son-in-law was Lise's son's best friend). The hook was set. We joined the SCBC and the American Birding Association.

As newly minted birders we formed new friendships with Lois and Wally Goldfrank (who I had known twenty years earlier), Earl Lebow, Rick and Cheryl Fournier, Todd Newberry, and others along the way. We all took off as birders. Lise and I found and identified a life bird a day in the first year. We began looking for birds all over California and in other states when we could go. Our vacations were usually 10 days, and we were always birding. At that time the club would do trips all over California. Yosemite, Yuba Pass, Livermore, Pt. Reyes, Kern River Valley, Salton Sea, Joshua Tree, and Morongo Valley. "Local birding" at that time was ALL of California! At one point, I took the job of Field Trips Coordinator for five years.

Early on, we were very impressed with a number of the older club members--women like Barbara Scharfenstien (a fellow life-long Giants fan), grey-curl'd Millie Rose, and others. I remember in the first year we were camped at White Wolf in Yosemite, sitting around a fire with these venerable birders, and they were talking about favorite birding spots. "Sharf" said hers was "that trail up near Machu Pichu" and the others each chimed in one by one, agreeing that they thought so too. I was dumbfounded that they had all been there! Lise and I went back to our tent, and she said to me, "That is how I want to grow old." I agreed. A few years later Lise and I got into international birding and understood those ladies rhapsodizing about exotic birding destinations abroad. All in all it has been quite a ride. To think that the wonder of these amazing descendants of dinosaurs could open up such a larger appreciation of the world and all of its denizens astounds me. I can't imagine how much richness my life experience would be missing if I had never started birding.



Monterey Seabirds: Gray Whales, Albatrosses, and Winter Seabirds

Sunday, January 23, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
1/2-day trip, special rate for SCBC members

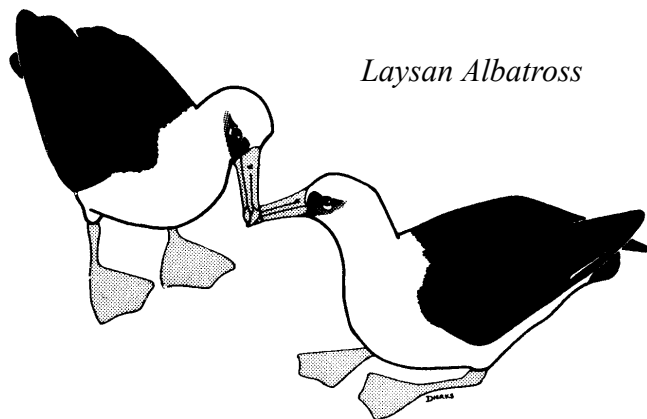
Join us to witness the Gray Whales on their southbound migration. January is also the peak time for Laysan Albatross, Short-tailed Shearwaters, and Yellow-billed Loon in Monterey Bay. We should also see Ancient Murrelets and Red-necked Grebes. On the 2008 trip we observed a large pod of Southern Resident Killer Whales from Washington State.

This half day trip (4 hours) is longer than most winter whale watches, allowing time for observing both whales and seabirds. It is suitable for families and children. Special price for SCBC members: \$40 for adults (regular \$45) and \$25 for kids under 12 (regular \$30).

In case of stormy weather the trip will be cancelled. Please call the number below to confirm if necessary.

Reservations: Call (831) 375-4658
or reserve online at: <http://www.montereyseabirds.com>
Departure will be from the Monterey Bay Whale Watch Center at 84 Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey.

Leader: Roger Wolfe, et al.



Laysan Albatross



The Site Survey: (continued)

or “Do we have more (or fewer) than we used to?” As I gaze around at the beach with its mixed gulls and to the ocean with pelicans, cormorants, scoters, loons, and more, these are not easy questions to answer. Usually I pick some avian feature of interest in the moment and share something I’ve observed. Perhaps it is the winter mix and diversity of gulls, or the wonder of migrating loons, or the diving pelicans and terns, or the turnstones that blend so well into the kelp and rocks. The other day it was a Peregrine Falcon that was standing on a gull it had killed, tearing off the meat, surrounded by a tide of plucked white feathers. One of the beach regulars said, “I’m so glad you are here. I saw it catch the gull, but I didn’t know if it was a hawk or what it was.”

At New Brighton’s campground people most often mistake me for a park staffer and ask about reservations, check out time, or other practical matters. But here also I encounter genuine interest in the park’s birds, the passage of migrants, the impact of feral cats, and the identification of bird songs. People ask questions about the birds they see in their yards back home. More than once I have run into campers who were looking for birds in the park after reading about it in the Bird Club’s online birding site guide. As I look out from the bluff at Seacliff, people wonder if I’m scoping the surfing conditions away off toward Manresa or watching for whales. When I explain my task, the inquirers often wonder, “How can you count all those birds?” and “How can you tell what they are from so far away?” So it goes over the months, with many opportunities to call attention to birds and birding, all the while learning many things.

Keeping Tabs on the Cormorants

One of the interesting aspects of my regular visits to Seacliff State Beach has been the opportunity to track the progress of the Brandt’s Cormorant nesting colony on the park’s famous cement ship. I’ve been counting nesting cormorants in Santa Cruz County for over 25 years, but I had never made the effort to track the progress of a colony over a whole season. And the 2010 nesting season was an interesting one at Seacliff’s cement ship colony, captured nicely by visits every four to seven days. I made 67 visits to count the cormorants (and everything else) from November 2009 to November 2010 (Figure 1).



Cement ship at Seacliff State Beach. Photo D.Suddjian

Very low numbers of cormorants were present during the winter. I expected some nesting activity to begin by late winter or very early spring, but numbers stayed low through March, and it seemed that the 2010 nesting season was off to a very slow start. Numbers finally began to increase through April and May. The first sighting of cormorants in breeding plumage was on February 11, but no nest building was under way until the end of April, with 19 nest starts by April 28. Incubation appeared to have begun in 10 of the nests by May 4, and many more nests were under construction.

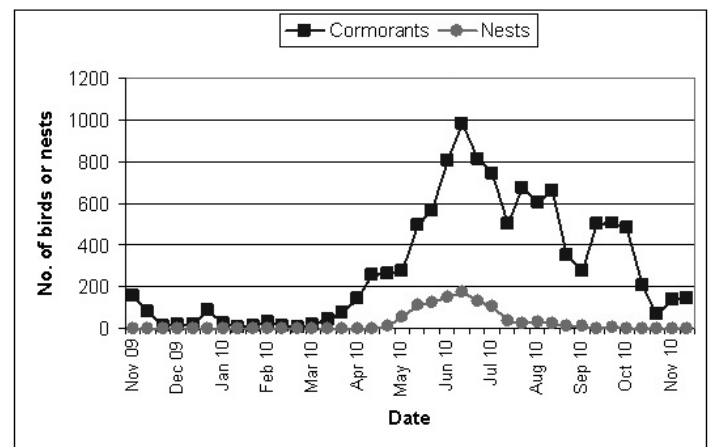


Figure 1. Numbers of Brandt’s Cormorants at the cement ship at Seacliff State Beach from November 2009 to November 2010.

The number of active nests increased steadily to the season’s peak of 177 on June 26 (Figure 2), when small young were finally visible in some nests. Then it became clear that while the nesting colony continued to bustle with young in many nests, many nests were being abandoned, and still others were just being started. A typical pattern for our area would have most nests fledging young in July, with the incubation phase over well before then, and nesting completely done

before late July. But at Seacliff in 2010, late nests were being initiated in significant numbers in July, and newly hatched chicks were seen on July 27. Some pairs continued to build new nests through August and even into September. The last nest with large young was noted on September 2, but by then there were still 12 nests with adults sitting as if incubating, and as they moved about eggs were seen. A copulating pair was noted as late as September 8, and individuals persisted with courtship displays all the way into October. The saga dragged on all the way to October 23, with the last handful of incubating birds on nests. By my next visit on October 28, there were no active nests.

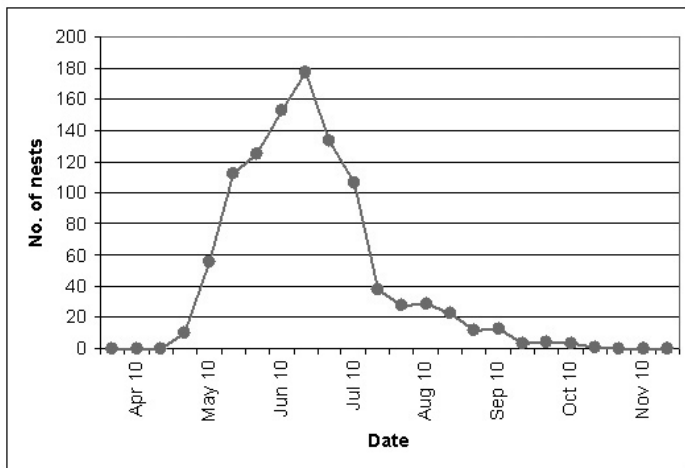


Figure 2. The number of cormorant nests peaked at the end of June, but active nests continued well into fall.

Some of the late nests initiated in June seemed to make it through to fledge birds, but it did not appear that any of the nests initiated in July and afterwards came to fruition, and I suspect that many of the very late incubating birds in August onwards were on eggs that were not living. After October I made some inquiries. Researcher Phil Capitolo noted that similar very late nesting was noted at a few other spots in 2010, and such late nesting had been rarely reported in other recent years. He also noted that observations documenting such things are hard to come by because few colonies are monitored.

An Unlikely Hotspot

When I began my series of visits to Seacliff my mind was on the ocean birds. I didn't think the landward side of things would offer much to capture my attention. And why should it? The bluff is backed by a large asphalt parking lot, with grassy, weedy medians. Most park visitors know it as a heavily used lot, espe-

cially in summer, with many cars and people on the move. But in the early morning the lot is mostly empty and quiet. Along with the grassy medians there is a good sized weedy field to the east side, a handful of Monterey pines along the margin of the lot, some small cypress and live oaks bordering the west side, and 10 or so Peruvian pepper trees growing in the medians. But it still doesn't look like much to attract birds, as evidenced by the fact that one would be hard pressed to find any birder who considers the parking lot at Seacliff to be a birding destination.



Seacliff State Beach Parking lot. Photo by D. Suddjian.

Yet, as I watched seaward, I kept a keen ear tuned for everything going on around me, and I often turn to scan the area around the parking lot—just in case. There were the usual suspects, like Brewer's Blackbird, California Towhee, Western Scrub-Jay, American Crow, European Starling, and Northern Mockingbird. The pines pulled in chickadees, Oak Titmouse, nesting Dark-eyed Junco, and Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warbler in winter. But I also discovered that the parking lot at Seacliff *is* a worthy birding spot (at least early in the day), and I've enjoyed a nice string of cool birds. Look at the list of unexpected upland visitors that have been detected over my first year of visits: White-winged Dove, Western Kingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Horned Lark, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Sage Thrasher, Palm Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, Tricolored Blackbird, and Yellow-headed Blackbird! I've learned once again, that birds are where you find them. Keep an eye on the Santa Cruz Bird Club calendar of events for upcoming trips to parking lots!

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 Learn about the eBird Site Survey here:  
[http://ebird.org/content/ebird/about/eBird\\_Site\\_Survey](http://ebird.org/content/ebird/about/eBird_Site_Survey)

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# *Santa Cruz Birds*

*By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow  
Including reports from  
September 1 to October 15, 2010*

*It is interesting how expectations change over the years. In many ways, we might look back on Fall 2010 as somewhat slow. Yet this snapshot of six weeks of the fall season highlights an array of species that would have ranked as stellar finds in Santa Cruz county a few decades ago: Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Bald Eagles, Ruff, White-winged Dove, Least Flycatcher, Sage Thrasher, and Black-throated Green Warbler, just to pick out a few. Now all these species, each still an exciting find, have an established a pattern of occurrence here and in that sense are expected. But, true to the wide possibilities of the fall season, one species was found without any precedent in our county, and very little even in California. A Great-winged Petrel discovered on a Monterey Seabirds trip now ranks as perhaps the rarest bird ever found in Santa Cruz County.*

\* \* \*

Early fall was good for **Greater White-fronted Geese**, with multiple reports starting September 20, from various coastal and Pajaro Valley locations. A concentrated movement occurred on September 29-30, with at least seven reports in the county (DSu, SG, v.ob), and numerous other reports from the rest of Central California. The largest flock noted was about 65 flying over Natural Bridges on the 29th (SG). A group of 12-14 **Brant** was observed at Pajaro Dunes September 25-26 (MST, EL et al.), possibly some of the same that spent the summer in that area. A male **Wood Duck** was at Pinto Lake on September 26 (RR et al.), fairly rare for the Pajaro Valley area. Two **Blue-winged Teal** were at Younger Lagoon on September 8 (PB), with one there September 17 and October 10 (DSi, SG), and up to three were at Pajaro Dunes September 25-26 (LG, WG, MST, EL et al.). A male **White-winged Scoter** flying up the coast past Davenport on September 22 (DSu) was especially notable for the early fall date, the first report in the county before late October in many years. Also quite early was a female **Bufflehead** on the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on October 1 (SG et al.).

The seabird highlight of the season was a well-photographed **Great-winged Petrel** in Santa Cruz County waters on September 18 (MS; TE, RT, KP, MV et al.). While this record requires CBRC review, several seabird authorities experienced with the species have examined the photos and have been unanimous in their assessment that it is this species, and almost certainly of the New Zealand breeding subspecies *gouldii* (as were the other California records). This would be the first record for Santa Cruz County and only the third for the state, with the last record twelve years earlier! Among the more expected Procellariids, one or two **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were found in Santa Cruz County waters on two or three pelagic trips (SJ, MS). Rare but regular storm-petrels in county waters included a **Wilson's** on September 26 (SJ), and **Least Storm-Petrel** reports included two on September 12 (SJ) and three on September 18 (MS).



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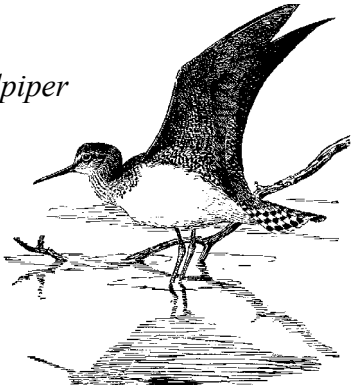
*A Great Winged Petrel, photographed on the Monterey Seabirds trip, September 18, 2010, by Martijn Verdoes.*



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**White-faced Ibis** were reported in small numbers in the Watsonville Slough System through the period (v.ob.), with the highest reported count being six in Struve Slough on October 7 (KK). Two different **Bald Eagles** flew over Capitola in early September—a sub-adult on September 5, and a juvenile on September 10 (DSu). With two reports (noted last issue) in late August, this brings the fall-period total for the county up to a remarkable four and all within a two week period! Two juvenile **Broad-winged Hawks** were over Wilder Ranch on October 3 (SG, KK, JWa), and an adult flew over Capitola on October 9 (DSu). Reports of early **Merlins** included at least two in Capitola on August 31 (JD, DSu) and one at New Brighton State Beach on September 1 (DSu). **Common Moorhens** are resident and expected in several Pajaro Valley areas, but still a count of eight at Pinto Lake on September 23 (RR, BR, et al.) was a very good number for one spot in Santa Cruz County. Moorhens are less expected in other parts of the county, so one at Baldwin Creek Marsh on September 29 was notable (TJ, DSu et al.).

*Solitary Sandpiper*



There were two reports of **Pacific Golden-Plover** in Santa Cruz County this fall, at the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence on August 27 (RF) and there again on September 6 (RW). Also at the confluence of these sloughs was this fall's only **Solitary Sandpiper**, on September 12 (AR, RW). It was quite a good fall for **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the county, with numbers peaking in the second week in September. The high count was an impressive 20 in the upstream area of Struve Slough on September 9 (BR, SG), with 12 still there on September 12 (AR). The season's second **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Struve Slough on September 17 (RW). There were a few more reports involving probably three **Baird's Sandpipers** through September 3 (v.ob.), but none thereafter, for a rather early departure. Some of these might have been

birds that had been reported earlier, so the estimated total for this fall migration season is in the range of 8-12 individuals. **Pectoral Sandpipers** had a moderate showing, with just over a dozen reports in September and early October (v.ob.). A majority were from the Watsonville Sloughs, but the high count for the season was five at Younger Lagoon on September 13 (PB).

The **Stilt Sandpiper** at Struve Slough remained until September 9 (v.ob.). A juvenile **Ruff** stopped at Younger Lagoon on September 15 (SG) but did not linger. The last **Wilson's Phalaropes** of this fall were two at the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence on September 6 (AR). The season's second **Least Tern** was fishing off Seacliff State Beach on September 2 (DSu). A young **Black Tern** at Capitola Beach on September 3 was also the second for the season (DSu). **Forster's Terns** continued to be scarce in the county, with the high count reported for this period being only four at the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence on October 4 (DVP, LHa). One to three **Tufted Puffins** were reported in county waters from various pelagic trips through October 10 (SJ, MS).

A **White-winged Dove** visited the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach on October 9 (DSu). A **Long-eared Owl** called in the Amaya Creek watershed on September 6 (DSu). A **Black Swift**, rarely detected in the county in fall migration, passed over Ocean View Summit at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on September 11 (KK). Although migrant **Vaux's Swifts** seemed sparse overall, two reports of aggregations were notable: 50-70 over upper Empire Grade on September 12 were representative of flocks seen there around that date (GS), and 100 were among many migrant swallows at Antonelli Pond on September 22 (AG). Additional **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** carried the season's total to at least 16 birds, above the average number that have appeared in late summer since 2002, when this hummer became a regular part of our suite of species. One was later than the main window of occurrence, being spotted at Lighthouse Field on October 10 (AG); there are few records after the third week of September.

A **Pileated Woodpecker** at the UCSC Arboretum on October 14 was away from its usual range and habitats (SG). A total of 10 **Willow Flycatchers** were reported for the fall migration, spanning August 28 to September 24 (v.ob.). A cooperative **Least Flycatcher** was enjoyed by a number of birders during a stay at Light-

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house Field from October 5-8 (SG, v.ob). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was at Pajaro Dunes on September 25 (MST). **Tropical Kingbirds** were enjoyed at Capitola on September 28 (JD), Struve Slough on October 5 (NA), and Porter-Sesnon on October 9 (DSu). A third **Eastern Kingbird** for the season was at Antonelli Pond on September 3 (GG), for a strong showing. Three **Horned Larks** at Hanson Slough on September 26 were in the area where this declining species has been found in recent seasons (CK), but a tired migrant that dropped in to rest on the parking lot at Seacliff State Beach on October 10 was unexpected (DSu).

A **Purple Martin** was at Antonelli Pond on September 6 (SG), and three were among other migrant swallows and swifts over upper Empire Grade on September 12 (GS). Always a treat in this county, a **White-breasted Nuthatch** visited the oaks of Quail Hollow Ranch on September 19 (AR). A **Marsh Wren** in coyote brush scrub at Porter-Sesnon on September 11 was way out of habitat and miles from any spot where the species might be expected (DSu). Several reports of **Western Bluebirds** were mostly from locations where they have been found in recent seasons, but a family group at Pinto Lake on August 18 was the first breeding evidence reported from that spot in many years (BMr), and six near the UCSC Arboretum on October 14 were good for that location (SG). A rare **Sage Thrasher** popped up at Seacliff State Beach on October 4 (DSu).

It was a fairly slow season for vagrant warblers. The best was a **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Quail Hollow Ranch on October 7, the first ever photographed in the county (AR). Next best among the vagrants were five **Tennessee Warblers** from Natural Bridges to Capitola during September 11 to October 6 for double the season's average (DSu, PB), a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Capitola on September 10 (DSu), a **Magnolia Warbler** at Capitola Beach on October 13 (DSu), and a **Blackburnian Warbler** at Capitola on October 8 (DSu). Among the more common vagrants were 11 **Palm Warblers** (v.ob.), four **Blackpoll Warblers** (BR, RR, DSu), one **Black-and-white Warbler** (DSu), two **American Redstarts**, and two **Northern Waterthrushes** (ER, DS). Rare to uncommon western warblers included three **Nashville Warblers** (low), 21 **Black-throated Grays**, and two **MacGillivray's** (v.ob.). Surprisingly, no Hermit Warblers were reported.

Migrant **Chipping Sparrows** outnumbered **Clay-colored Sparrows** seven to four (SGe, PB, DSu). A Vesper Sparrow was at Antonelli Pond on October 10 (SG). Four **Lark Sparrows** were found from September 1 to October 4 (DSu, SG, KK). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were at Natural Bridges on September 2 (WN) and Wilder Ranch on October 4 (KK). A **Blue Grosbeak** was at Santa Cruz on September 21-24 (SG). A flock of four **Great-tailed Grackles** flying up the coast along the top of the bluffs at New Brighton State Beach on October 14 were unexpected, and there have been few recent records from the mid-county area. A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at the Farm Project at UCSC on October 14 (SG).



*Black-throated Green Warbler photographed at Quail Hollow Ranch on October 7 by Alex Rinkert.*

**Cited Observers:** Nanci Adams, Phil Brown, Judy Donaldson, Todd Easterla, Rick Fournier, Gabriel Gartner, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Lauren Harter, Tim Jolly, Clay Kempf, Kathy Kuyper, Earl Lebow, Monterey Seabirds (fide Roger Wolfe), Bryan Mori (BMr), Wendy Naruo, Kenneth Petersen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Erik Rogers, Shearwater Journeys (fide Debra Shearwater), David Sidle (DSi), Gary Strachan, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, Richard Ternullo, David Suddjian (DSu), David Vander Pluym, Martijn Verdoes, Jeff Wall (JWa), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means many observers.

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

**New SCBC  
Members  
Welcome!**

|                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Judith Dunham                      | Oct 2010 |
| Skip McLaughlin                    | Nov 2010 |
| Will Brophy &<br>Kay Clark         | Nov 2010 |
| Dania Moss                         | Nov 2010 |
| Henry Smith &<br>Kerry Beth Hosley | Nov 2010 |
| Anne Bourdeau                      | Nov 2010 |
| Pat McVeigh                        | Dec 2010 |
| Don Gartner                        | Dec 2010 |
| Noreen Feuss                       | Dec 2010 |
| Clive & Dana<br>Bagshaw            | Dec 2010 |
| George & Joan<br>Hardie            | Dec2010  |

**Input deadline for  
March/April issue  
of the Albatross—  
February 1, 2011**

**Submission for the**

Assembling



Albatross

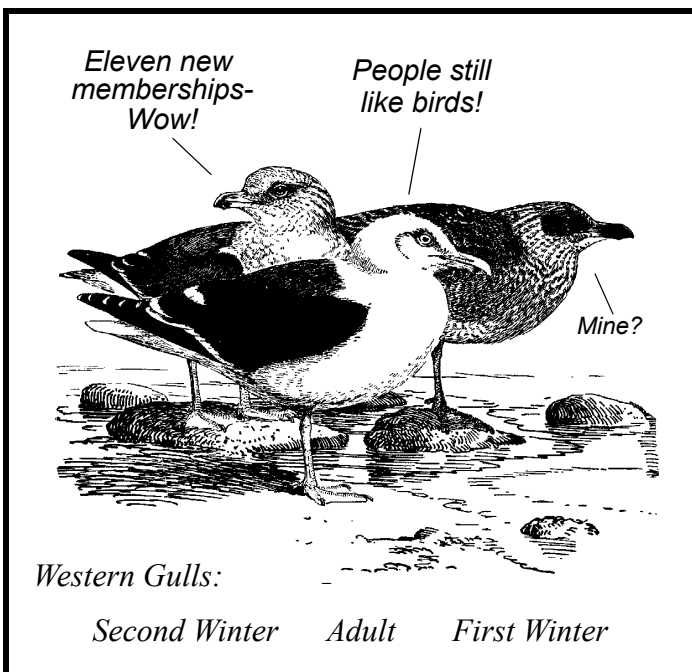
**Albatross—Guidelines**

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, 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 deadline. All submissions are subject to editing. 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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### *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/>

Printed on recycled paper



## Watsonville Wetlands Watch

### 2011 Docent Training Program

Watsonville Wetlands Watch 2011 Docent Training Program will begin on Jan. 26, 2011. Docent trainees will be treated to an inside look at the Pajaro Valley and its wide network of wetlands. Local experts will share the ecology, wildlife (with an emphasis on birds), history, and restoration of the wetlands during this 7-week program, which includes Wednesday evening presentations and Saturday morning field trips.

New docents will be prepared to lead walks and assist with field trips. Docent birders will also work with students to monitor bird populations. There are also opportunities to help with community events, participate in wetlands restoration, work in the library or greenhouse at the Fitz Wetlands Education Resource Center, and work on special projects. Birders are ideal candidates to become Watsonville Wetlands Watch docents. When birders share their passion with others, they inspire stewardship of the wetlands and bird populations.

The Watsonville Wetlands Watch is a nonprofit, community-based organization dedicated to the protection, restoration, and appreciation of the wetlands of Pajaro Valley. For more information, visit our website:

[www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org](http://www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org)

To enroll in the 2011 Docent Training Program, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Kathy Fieberling, at 831-345-1226, or email [kathyfiebing@yahoo.com](mailto:kathyfiebing@yahoo.com).

### Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club

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