



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Santa Cruz Birds

*By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow
Including reports from
January 1 to February 28, 2011*

Greater White-fronted Geese were reported from several spots (v.ob); high count for this period was 12 over College Lake on January 15 (DSu). There were eight reports of **Snow Geese**, all of 1-5 birds (v.ob.). All were from the Pajaro Valley except for a flock of five seen passing over the mountains near Boulder Creek on February 13 (JB). **Ross's Geese** included two at College Lake on January 1 and 19 (DSu, BMc, LG, JP), five at Struve Slough on January 9 (BR, RR), and one around Antonelli Pond on February 4-8 (SG et al). Eight **Brant** off Seacliff on February 16 were the only ones reported (DSu). Four **Tundra Swans** flew over College Lake on January 15 (DSu). A **Wood Duck** at a pond near the county fairgrounds on January 1 (DE et al.) was notable for the Pajaro Valley.



*Hammond's Flycatcher near the San Lorenzo River on January 6.
Photo: Barry McLaughlin*

A gathering of 495 **Gadwall** at College Lake on January 1 provided a record high for the county (DSu). Four Gadwalls flying off Sunset State Beach on February 9 were over the ocean, where rarely noted in this county (JW). Up to two male **Eurasian Wigeon** continued from December at Struve Slough, being noted through at least January 22 (DSi et al., v.ob.), and three males were at College Lake on January 1 (DSu). A hybrid male **Eurasian x American Wigeon** was at Struve Slough on January 11-23 and possibly as early as January 1 (LG, JW, WN, DSi, v.ob.). About nine **Blue-winged Teal** were reported in the Pajaro Valley this period (v.ob.). Five hundred **Northern Shovelers** at College Lake on January 1 was one of the higher counts on record for the county (DSu). A **Long-tailed Duck** was at Sunset State Beach on January 16 (DSu).

Continued on page 6

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Calendar

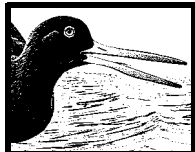


Seabirding Trips



For...MOMS

Help Needed on Surveys



Reminder:

TIME TO RENEW



Events Calendar

May - August 2011

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

<http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org>



Friday, May 6 San Lorenzo River

A search for spring migrant passerines, possibly a shorebird or two, and whatever else might be there.
Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at San Lorenzo Park by the duck pond.

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



Saturday, May 7 Spring Seawatching

Seabird migration should be at its peak, with possibly large numbers of migrant Loons in breeding plumage (Pacific will predominate), Brant, scoters, phalaropes, Bonaparte's Gull, and chances for Pomarine Jaeger, Marbled Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Sooty Shearwater, and maybe even an albatross! You never can tell what will appear at the height of spring seabird migration! We'll also check plowed agricultural fields for Franklin's Gull. Plan to view from a coastal bluff for at least a couple of hours, with a spotting scope highly recommended. And we may walk a bit to try for the Franklin's. Bring a warm jacket and a folding chair, as you like. Half day or less. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at the Whale City Bakery in Davenport at 7:00 AM.

Leader: Rod Norden, rod.norden@gmail.com



Sunday, May 8 Mother's Day at Rancho del Oso

All birds, including garish singers, are females for the morning. We will search the road in from Rte. 1 to the redwoods.

Directions: Meet to carpool at former/closed Brendan's (before that, Beckmann's) Bakery, west end (south side) of Mission St near Swift, at 7:00 AM (sunrise was 6). Latecomers: we will regroup at 7:30 at Waddell Beach (just before the cliffs).

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741



Saturday, May 14 UCSC Mima Meadow

This area has some of the more interesting grassland habitat in the Santa Cruz area. We will also walk along the edge of some evergreen forest, and a stretch of riparian habitat. We should find Grasshopper, Savannah, and possibly Chipping Sparrows, several raptors, lots of swallows and maybe swifts, and see some rare and interesting coastal prairie plants along the way.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM in the UCSC West Remote Parking area (the first right turn off Heller Drive, coming from the west entrance to the campus).

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



Savannah Sparrow



Chipping Sparrow

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, May 19 (Third Thursday)
SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM
Speaker: Don Roberson

Topic: Odes of the Monterey Bay region

Why is the SCBC scheduling a talk about odes? In fact, what are odes? Club members are invited to expand their observing horizons and join us for this slide show on the identification and ecology of local dragonflies and damselflies (Order Odonata) and the expanding subculture of odeing. Is odeing like birding? Can a birder be an odite?

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



California Spreadwing (Archilestes californica)
 Photo: Don Roberson



Friday, May 20
Natural Bridges

We'll look for spring migrants and nesting birds.
Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.
Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, May 27
Arana Gulch

Arana is a good spot for Olive-sided Flycatchers, Hooded Orioles, and many other species.

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

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



Olive-sided Flycatcher



Wednesday, June 1
Pinto Lake County Park

The heron rookery should be in full swing at this time, so we'll try to get an accurate count of heron, egret, and cormorant nests.

Directions: Meet at the County Park at the north end of Pinto lake at 8:00 AM. We'll assemble in the first parking lot area and then walk down the path to the lakeshore and boardwalk.

Leader: Bob Ramer, (831) 426-7342, rjrramer@sbcglobal.net



Friday, June 10
Schwan Lake area

The oaks, riparian, eucalyptus, and open grassy areas here often hold a nice mix of birds.

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

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



Saturday, June 18
Pogonip

We'll explore the abundant birds, plants, and other wildlife in the grasslands and forests of this park.

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

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

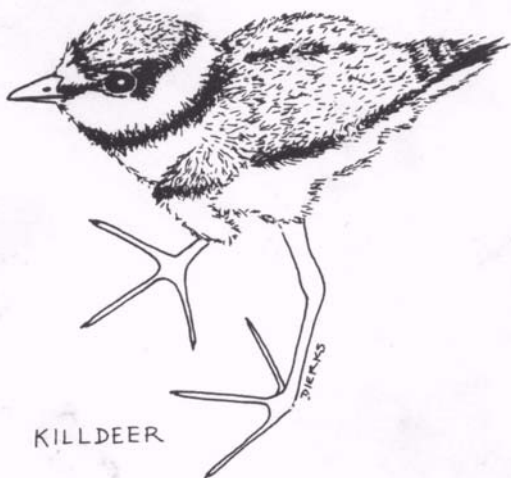


Sunday, June 19
Father's Day at Elkhorn Slough

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

Directions: Meet to carpool at Aptos Wells Fargo at 7:00 AM (sunrise was 5:45). Latecomers—we will regroup at 8:00 AM at Jetty Rd.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741

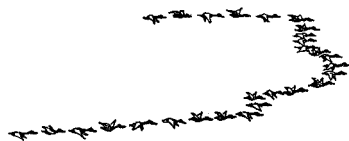


Friday, July 1
Moore Creek Preserve

We will focus in part on the flocks of swallows that forage over the grasslands here in the afternoon, which in the past have sometimes contained Black Swifts and other swifts. Grasshopper Sparrows and Western Bluebirds are among the other possibilities.

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

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



Friday, July 1
Antonelli Pond

Nothing too unusual expected now, but one never knows.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM on the west side of the pond at Delaware Avenue.

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



Friday, July 29
West Cliff Drive area

Some shorebirds should be returning by now. We may also check Lighthouse Field and/or Bethany Curve Park for land birds.

Directions: Meet at West Cliff and Woodrow at 7:30 AM.

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



Friday, August 12
Terrace Point

We'll search for early migrants.

Directions: Meet at the west end of Delaware Avenue at 7:30 AM

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



Friday, August 19
Neary Lagoon

Some interesting migrants are possible.

Directions: Meet at the west entrance (off Bay and California) at 7:30 AM.

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



Friday, August 26
Natural Bridges

Fall migration should be picking up by now, with surprises 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



Seabirding Specials for SCBC Members

Monterey Seabirds and Shearwater Journeys offer discounted pelagic birding excursions to SCBC members. Make your reservations early, before the trips sell out.

Shearwater Journeys

Half Moon Bay trip

Join world class Shearwater leaders on a pelagic trip to search for Cook's Petrels! July is the prime time of year to find them.

Dates: July 30, 31; August 1

Cost: \$125 per person for SCBC members, non-refundable. Parking is free.

Departure: Huck Finn Center, Pillar Point Harbor, Half Moon Bay.

Monterey Bay trips

Classic summertime trips for albatrosses and shearwater, whales and dolphins. This is our 36th year of offering seabird trips from Monterey.

Dates: June 24; August 5, 12, 26

Cost: \$90 per person for SCBC members, non-refundable. Parking is \$5.

Departure: Chris' Fishing Shop, Fishermans' Wharf, Monterey

Farralon Islands: Tufted Puffins

Journey to the largest seabird colony on the West coast, south of Alaska, the Farallon Islands. Here, we will see seabirds at their peak of breeding. The specialty of this trip is the colorful Tufted Puffin. Shearwater Journeys has a 100% success rate in finding these comical seabirds.

Date: August 7

Cost: \$135 per person for SCBC members, non-refundable. Parking is free. Trip sells out every year.

Departure: 3310 Powell Street, Emeryville on the New Superfish

Reservations: Debi Shearwater—Send payment along with your full name, address, phone, cell phone, and email to: Shearwater Journeys, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024.

Contact Debi: debi@shearwaterjourneys.com

See: <http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com> or

<http://shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com>

for more information.

Monterey Seabirds

Spring Seabirds and Killer Whales

Date: Sunday, May 22, Half day trip, 9 AM - 2 PM

Cost: \$50 adults, \$40 kids under 12. 10% discount for SCBC members. This trip is suitable for kids and families.

Spring Seabirds and Killer Whales

Date: Saturday, May 14, Full day, 7:30am – 3pm.

Cost: SCBC members \$105; non-members \$120

May offers the best chance of seeing transient Killer Whales (Orcas) in the Bay as they follow and prey on Gray Whale mother/calf pairs migrating north. We've also seen some great birds like Murphy's Petrel, Laysan Albatross, Horned Puffin, and Manx Shearwater.

Summer Seabirds and Blue Whales

Date: Saturday, July 23, Half day trip, 9 AM - 2 PM

Cost: \$50 adults, \$40 kids under 12. 10% discount for SCBC members. This trip is suitable for kids and families.

If plentiful krill is present, we should see the big baleen whales—Humpbacks and Blues. On past July trips, Cook's Petrel's have been in close to shore, and Xantus's Murrelett, Tufted Puffin, and Manx Shearwaters have been recorded.

Dates: Saturday August 20 and Sunday August 28

Full day trips, 7:30 AM - 3 PM.

Cost: SCBC members \$105; non-members \$120

The great whales should still be present, and chances will still be good for Cook's Petrel and other rarities.

Leaders for these trips will be Don Roberson, Dan Singer, Todd Easterla, Matthew Dodder, Martijn Verdoes, Tim Amaral, Bruce Elliot, Roger Wolfe, Richard Ternullo, and John Sterling.

Departures: All trips depart from the Monterey Bay Whale Watch Center at 84 Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey.

Reservations required. Call 375-4658 or go to:

<http://www.montereyseabirds.com>

Trips may be cancelled due to stormy weather. Please call to confirm if necessary.



Santa Cruz Birds (continued from page 1)

Three **Black Scoters** were found along the mid-county coast between January 10 and February 28 (DSu, KK, SG). One near Sunny Cove on February 23 was heard calling (KK), an exceptional occurrence for any of our scoters here in winter and especially so for this locally rare species. **White-winged Scoters** were found at a handful of spots from Sunset to Natural Bridges. The former has proved to be the best place to find this duck in recent winters, and this season's high count of 15 was made there on February 9 (JW). The high count of **Surf Scoters** from regular surveys at Seacliff State Beach was 3,100 on February 16 (DSu). **Common Merganser** turns up only rarely in the Pajaro Valley, so singles were notable at College Lake on January 6 (LG, WG) and at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on January 11 (BR, RR).

Good foraging conditions apparently attracted large numbers of **Red-throated Loons** to Soquel Cove in January, with counts from Seacliff of 215 and 216 on January 12 and January 24, respectively (DSu). For comparison, the recent average for the whole coastline from New Brighton to Davenport on the Santa Cruz CBC is just 85 birds. Three **Red-necked Grebes** were spotted this period. The high count of **Western/Clark's Grebes** during surveys at Seacliff was a hefty 11,730 on January 24 (DSu), coincident with the large number of loons mentioned above. A small number of **White-faced Ibis** wintered at the Watsonville Sloughs (v.ob.); the high count was eight on January 1 (CK, EL et al.). Ibis are less expected at Pinto Lake, where 1-5 were found up to January 22 (LG).

The period of December to February had 18 reports of **Osprey**, and four were found in the Pajaro Valley on January 1 alone (fide RR, BR). The same period had a high 84 reports of **Merlin** and 60 reports of **Peregrine Falcon!** Many of these were no doubt repeated sightings of the same individuals. Some shorebirds are only rarely found inland in this county, and then only at certain habitats. A **Black-bellied Plover** at the fields of Bay View School in Santa Cruz on January 2 was rare away from the coastline, but also provided the first report of the species at a playing field in this county (SG). Greyhound Rock continues to support a high tide gathering of **Black Oystercatchers**, as evidenced by 69 there on January 6 (DSu). It was odd to see a tight cluster of about 90 **Willetts** swimming in the ocean 400-700 yards off Seacliff State Beach on February 3 (DSu).

The winter's only **Ruddy Turnstone** was found along the Live Oak coast on January 15 (JW). A rare winter **Western Sandpiper** was spotted at College Lake on February 2 (EP, FO). The **Rock Sandpiper** continued through the season (v.ob.). **Long-billed Dowitchers** have been fairly rare here in winter lately. This season one was at College Lake on January 1 (DSu), and 10-12 were at Struve Slough on February 3-12 (RW). Some four to six **Glaucous Gulls** were noted in January and February (v.ob.). An early **Caspian Tern** flew by West Cliff Drive on February 22 (SG). **Cassin's Auklets** are seldom reported from shore in our county, but this period had one from Greyhound Rock (DSu) and 1 from Terrace Point (OJ).



A Red-naped Sapsucker, photographed in Henry Cowell State Park by Rob Martin.

A new record high count of 304 **Eurasian Col-lared-Doves** was tallied in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Moss Landing CBC circle on January 1 (fide RR & BR), another illustration of just how numerous that species has become, especially in the Pajaro Valley. The **Burrowing Owl** wintering at Younger Lagoon remained into March (LG, EL, JH, v.ob.), as did one wintering near Pajaro Valley High School, first found January 7 (JPi, NAn) and possibly one of the two owls in that same area last winter. A **Long-eared Owl** hunted the fields and fairgrounds near College Lake from January 1-15 (DSu). The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in the riparian of northern Henry Cowell State Park was seen again on January 15 (DSu), and an adult male **Red-naped Sapsucker**

turned up in the pines of the higher and drier eastern part of this park from January 12-15 (RM, DSu). So along with the regular **Red-breasteds**, Henry Cowell simultaneously hosted three species of sapsuckers for a while this winter.

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** along the San Lorenzo River near San Lorenzo Park from January 7 into March was the first ever found wintering in Santa Cruz County (DSi, SG, OJ, v.ob.). It was a good winter for **Eastern Phoebes**. The one in the northern part of Henry Cowell State Park was seen up until January 17 (PM, DSu, AR). Another was near Harkins Slough January 1-6 (EL, CK, SG, BR, RR). Then a third turned up along the river in San Lorenzo Park on January 24, staying well into March (LG, WG, v.ob.); this phoebe was possibly the same that was found in that area in early December. Struve Slough's wintering Tropical Kingbird continued until March 5 (DSi, GM, NA, ML, v.ob.). The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** at Wilder Ranch became rather elusive after early January, but it stayed around until at least February 22 (SG, ST, JWa, v.ob.).



Hammond's Flycatcher, photographed at the San Lorenzo River on January 6, by Barry McLaughlin.

Horned Lark reports included twelve near Hanson Slough on January 17 (DSi, DSt, JSt, et al.) and four near there on February 21 (JBu), showing the continued presence of what is apparently the only resident population of larks in the county. There were only two reports of **Loggerhead Shrikes** this period (SS, KJ), both from locations east of Watsonville in early Janu-

ary. College Lake again held a very large winter roost of **American Crows**, with a high count of 2,715 flying in to the roost site on the evening of February 11 (DSu, SSu), setting a new record for Santa Cruz County. Efforts to track the paths of crows flying from this roost in the mornings found that they dispersed widely in several directions, with some flying into Monterey, Santa Clara, and possibly San Benito Counties, and others commuting over 16 miles well up into mid-Santa Cruz County, some going past the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz (DSu).

A few additional winter **Barn Swallows** were reported from south county spots in early January (v.ob.), and somewhat less expected were three along West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz on January 14 (SGe et al.). A scattering of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued in lowland areas through the winter, with the highest count reported being four at San Lorenzo Park on January 25 (OJ et al.) The only **White-breasted Nuthatches** reported were at Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville, with three found on January 1 (WSS). **Western Bluebirds** were again found along the northern part of Swanton Road, with up to four there January 17-22 (LG, AR). Around five were regularly noted at Quail Hollow through the winter (AR, JWi), and there were various reports from the Pajaro Valley and adjacent foothills. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was in Castle Rock State Park on February 13 (RF).

A **Nashville Warbler** wintered at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz from January 2 onward (SG, v.ob.), and one was along Soquel Creek at Peery Park in Capitola on February 2 (DSu). The second **Yellow Warbler** of the winter was near the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on January 21 (OJ). The **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Peery Park stayed around until February 2 (DSu), and one visited trees in urban parking lots and street medians in downtown Santa Cruz from December 11 until February 3 (KK, MTL, SG, LGo, v.ob); the latter possibly a returning bird from the previous winter. The only **Hermit Warbler** found this winter was in Ranch Del Oso on January 6 (DSu). A wintering **Palm Warbler** stayed around Bethany Curve Park beginning January 28 (SG, v.ob.). A **Black-and-white Warbler** joined the other rarities at San Lorenzo Park from January 24 into March (LGo, WGo, v.ob.)

The wintering **Green-tailed Towhee** continued near Boulder Creek through the period (KJ, v.ob.).

A rare winter **Chipping Sparrow** was at College Lake on January 1 (DSu). Ten **Swamp Sparrows** around College Lake on January 1 included some at different places from the ten found the previous day (DSu); the estimated total of Swamps wintering at or near this lake was at least 13-14. Another was not too far away at Lake Tynan on January 1 (PB et al.). About 14 **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in January and February (v.ob.). There were four reports in this period of "**Slate-colored**" **Juncos** (BMo, DSu, SG, WBT). The only **Western Tanager** this winter was in Meder Canyon on February 10 (SG). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** turned up in an east Santa Cruz yard on January 15 (BR). Somewhat rarer for winter was a male **Black-headed Grosbeak** near College Lake on February 6 (BR, RR). Very rare for winter was a male **Indigo Bunting** that visited a Live Oak feeder on February 19 (GM). Among birds that shouldn't be rare, this winter's showing of **Tricolored Blackbirds** was very poor, with few reports and none exceeding 20 individuals! Several grassland species have shown a declining trend in the county in recent years, but it is especially discouraging to see such small numbers for a species so well known for occurring in large flocks. A female **Orchard Oriole**, the second this winter, was in eucalyptus at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds January 15-25 (DSu, AR). **Bullock's Orioles** were in Santa Cruz near Neary Lagoon from January 5 to February 17 (SG, SD, v.ob), and in the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach from January 7 to February 17 (DSu).



Indigo Bunting at a feeder in Live Oak. Photo by Gary Martindale



Evening Grosbeak photo by Wendy Naruo

Small numbers of **Red Crossbills** were around this winter, with a few reports each from the eastern part of Henry Cowell State Park and vicinity (AR, SG, KK, JWa) and from Monterey Pine forests from northern Swanton Road to Rancho Del Oso (DSu, BR, RR, AR). **Evening Grosbeaks** continued through the period (and well into March) in the riparian forest of northern Henry Cowell, with reported flocks ranging from a few birds to around 35 (JWi, SG, AR, PB, v.ob.). Other reports included three further downstream on the San Lorenzo in Santa Cruz on January 4 (KK) and six at Rancho Del Oso on January 6 (DSu)

* * *

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Noelle Antolin (NAn), Jeff Bleam, Jerry Busch (JBU), Phil Brown, Sue Dummler, David Ekdahl, Robert Furrow, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Jean Harrison, Kent Johnson, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Kathy Kuyper, Earl, Lebow, Margaret Leonard, Rob Martin, Gary Martindale, Barry McLaughlin (BMc), Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan (BMo), Wendy Naruo, Francis Oliver, Ed Pandolfino, Jonathan Pilch (JPi), Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, David Sidle (DSi), W. Scott Smithson (WSS), David Styer (DSt), Jane Styer, David Suddjian (DSu), Stephen Suddjian (SSu), Scott Terrill, W. Breck Tyler, Monte Tudor-Long, Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi), Roger Wolfe.

For the Love of Moms

By David Suddjian

The love of a mother for her children, whether it is a human mom or another animal species, never fails to inspire. For us bird nerds, just think of the dramas that play out every day in spring, as mothers seek to ensure the welfare of their families. Two encounters with mom Mallards stand out for me and embody a mother's love.

The first happened on May 12, 2002, perhaps not coincidentally Mother's Day that year. That morning my four-year-old son Michael looked out the back window into our yard and saw such a sight that he couldn't quite get the words out to tell us. Parading through the yard was a mother Mallard and her train of 11 new ducklings! They must have entered our Capitola yard through a low spot under one of the front gates. She was clearly looking for a passage to the open flowing water of Noble Gulch, about 150 yards north. She searched and searched for a way to get past our back fence, walking back and forth through the garden, with her obedient charges dutifully trailing her every step. Twice she had to chase off a wily Scrub Jay that had taken undue interest in the brood. I knew, however, that she wasn't going to find the passage she was looking for. She came back a few times to the front gate where she had entered the yard, but that wasn't the direction she wished to take her family, and going out that way would offer little hope of reaching the stream.

Finally I went out and dug out a passage under the back fence, and my wife and I herded her and the chicks to the hole. She would not go through the hole herself, but took a defensive pose. I cornered and grabbed her, as the ducklings began a mad scramble, some through the hole and some through my legs. I lifted momma duck over the back fence and dropped her down, and then we scooped up the remaining members of the brood and helped them through the hole under the fence. With her quacking and their peeping, all 11 were soon reunited with Mom. Later, that evening we drove over to Noble Gulch and found the family dozing in the grass around their determined and watchful mom—a nice ending to a Mother's Day.

A second encounter happened in Capitola, sometime in May, 2006. I work at St. Joseph's Church, in an office overlooking the lower parking lot, which borders the riparian corridor of Noble Gulch. Looking out the window one morning while talking on the telephone, I saw a drama of life (and maybe death) unfolding below. In the empty parking lot a mother Mallard

with 12 ducklings, was seeking a way past the chain link fence on the perimeter of the lot, to reach the stream. While she focused on finding passage through the fence, the ducklings were faced with a six-inch tall curb that loomed up like a wall before them. They wanted to follow Mom to the fence but could not leap high enough to mount the curb. If only she would lead them to the far end of the lot, where the curb came to an end, the brood could approach the fence.

As events unfolded in the open lot, a pair of crows was soon drawn to the scene, swooping in low and landing near the bustling brood, evaluating how they might pick a duckling out of the crowd. Mom Mallard rushed in, charging at the crows, and they backed off for a moment while the ducklings crowded close in to her. She was fierce in her defense! But the crows were persistent. Usually I stay out of the mix between predator and prey, but the ducklings were so cute, and it did not seem fair that they would find themselves beset by crows in the wide open parking lot, with a barrier hindering their escape. I decided to step in, but first I had to get outside and down a flight of stairs. Thankfully, events remained at a standstill. The crows retreated when I arrived, but Mom Mallard didn't seem much happier with me there! However I slowly herded them all to the end of the parking lot, where she took flight to reach the stream-side of the perimeter fence, quacking up a storm. After some searching, the frantic ducklings found a little niche and slipped under the fence. They were soon huddled around their mother, and a measure of calm fell over the scene, but not for long. Mom soon hustled down the slope, and their journey toward the stream continued. As they disappeared into the willows I had no doubt that other challenges lay ahead for the family, but for the moment all was well.



Mallard mom and ducklings. Photo by Wendy Naruo

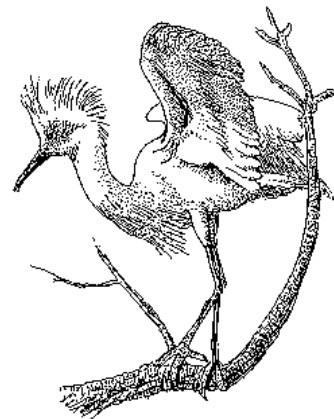
Santa Cruz Birders! Your help is needed!

Two surveys of local bird populations are coming up in May and June. If you would like to volunteer for one or both of these efforts, please contact David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com, and he will provide more specifics about the survey.

Survey of Nesting Herons and Egrets—May 2011

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is promoting a survey of nesting herons and egrets in the western states. The survey will occur during a three week period in May, with a focus on the window of May 15-23, 2011. The Santa Cruz Bird Club will cover Santa Cruz County! We will survey known rookeries, and look for new rookeries in suitable habitat. We have few known active sites for nesting waders in our county, but it will be interesting to have a reason to check on formerly active rookeries, and maybe we'll even find some new ones!

Colonies will be visited only once, so the total survey effort will be small. Coverage of each site is expected to take no more than an hour or two. A survey protocol will be provided. Data will be on paper forms and will be loaded onto a database via a website as well as on eBird for backup.



Black Oystercatcher Survey—June 3-6, 2011

Audubon California is spearheading a first-ever survey of the breeding population of Black Oystercatchers in California from June 3-6, 2011. David Suddjian has volunteered to coordinate coverage for Santa Cruz County, and we hope to survey all of the county's coastline that offers possible oystercatcher nesting habitat—that is, from the San Mateo County line to the Capitola area. We hope members of the Santa Cruz Bird Club will come forward to help, making it easy to cover the coast in a number of segments.



The Black Oystercatcher was selected as a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Focal Species for priority conservation action due to small global population size, restricted range, threats to preferred habitat, lack of baseline data to assess conservation status, and a suite of ongoing anthropogenic and natural factors that may limit long-term viability. After Black Oystercatcher was selected as a Focal Species, FWS became obligated to develop a conservation plan, intended as the single strategic planning resource for the species throughout its range. The hope is that actions resulting from Focal Species recommendations will preclude the need for an ESA listing. The Plan has specific "Priority Actions" for California: 1) estimate population size, 2) assess reproductive productivity at key sites, and 3) conduct banding studies. There has been no coordinated activity on these items and the California population remains poorly understood relative to the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. So this June's effort is a first step in meeting these goals.

Participants will be assigned to cover a particular stretch of coastline. If enough birders help, the assignments will be manageably small. Participants will be provided with a survey protocol, data forms, and an aerial photograph. We will be encouraging participants to record numbers of all species in their survey area, in addition to the oystercatcher data. All information will end up being added to the eBird database.

**New SCBC
Members
Welcome!**

Paul Lubeck	Feb 2011
Janie Tibbals	Mar 2011
Sue & Harry Jackson	Mar 2011
Joseph Morris	Mar 2011
Sonia & Tom Deetz	April 2011

**Input deadline for
Sept-Oct issue
of the Albatross—
August 1, 2011**

Assembling



Albatross

**Guide for Albatross
submissions**

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. All material is subject to editing. I accept plain text, Word, or PDF files. Email items to:
calqua@sbcglobal.net

~Judy Donaldson, Editor



THINGS ARE HUMMING..

... at Barbara & Kevin Monahan's home in the Santa Cruz mountains. During a recent banding session they counted 782 birds visiting the feeders. Obviously not all of these were captured, but still the volume is amazing. Just on April 4th, they captured 47 birds! Read more about the census project in the January/February 2008 Albatross, available on the SCBC website.

To learn more or to volunteer, contact:
Barbara Monohan—monahan@trogon.com

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TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

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

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

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

Consider a Gift of Birds and Birding

For a friend who is interested in birds, an SCBC membership would be a thoughtful gift. Fill in the information for the giftee, and send in the payment. Additional envelopes are usually available from some club officers and trip leaders.

The ALBATROSS

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/>

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.