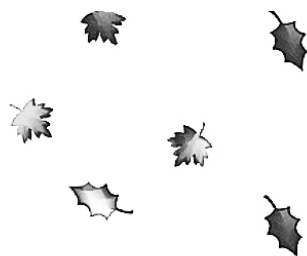




Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Falling into



Fall

by Steve Gerow

It's great that there are all these Western Sandpipers all of a sudden; there was nothing here a week ago. Why is that one acting so differently, though, running around like a plover, away from the rest, acting more aggressively? And it has this odd, uniformly scaly look and that short, blunt bill...

By the time most of you receive this issue, fall migration will be well underway for many bird species. Birding is a year-around endeavor, but for many Fall is *the* season. It's a long season—the first noticeable movements begin in June, when the human-defined summer has barely begun—and by the time it is over the calendar has put us into winter. There is extensive overlap in bird seasons, as late nesting birds may be encountered even when some species are arriving to spend the winter. But the peak of rapid change befalls from August through October, the time of year with the greatest potential for finding rarities.

I find the annual cycle of change in itself to be quite fascinating. As some birds we had grown used to leave us for the season, others arrive to stay for a while, and some visit only for a moment. Each year is a little different in timing and numbers and so forth, and noting and recording all this adds a lot to our knowledge. (Remember that eBird is an especially valuable way to record and keep track of this information.) Still, many of us look forward to the challenge and excitement of finding the unexpected, and fall rarely fails to produce at least some memorable finds. If one departs a bit from a purely “listing” approach to birding, the potential for interesting and exciting discoveries increases substantially. Encounters with the out-of-season, the out-of-range, and unexpected numbers can be as notable, and sometimes more so, than finding a species you haven't seen in a given place or time period. Turning up an ordinary Black Turnstone in Scotts Valley or Ben Lomond, for example, would be extraordinary, as would a common Cliff Swallow somewhere in the county in November; either may raise more eyebrows than an eastern vagrant Blackpoll Warbler on the coast at the end of September.

(continued on page 6)

**Inside:
Calendar**

**Monterey Bay
Birding Festival**

**Santa Cruz
Birds**



**New AOU
Classifications**



**Volunteers
Honored**



Seabirding Trips

Help Needed

Events Calendar

September - October 2011

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

<http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org>



Friday, September 2 Meder Canyon

There should be a variety of resident species and normal fall migrant species. Surprises are possible.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the start of the trail on Grandview Street, just west of the Escalona Street intersection. To reach Grandview Street, turn north (inland) from Mission Street onto Swift. Swift Street makes a sharp left turn and becomes Grandview.

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



Saturday, September 3 Pajaro Valley

Join a half-day, low-key, late summer outing to a few Pajaro Valley wetland areas to look for migrants. If the summer waters have drawn down at all, maybe we'll get some shorebirds. Plan for moderate but easy walking.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM in the lot beside the Red Roof Inn at Watsonville, off Beach Road just east of Lee Road. Latecomers might try to catch us at Struve Slough, near the overlook at the warehouses west of Lee Road.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Sunday, September 4 Elkhorn Slough

Shore-birding is the way to spend this loopy Labor Day weekend.

Directions: Depart Aptos Wells Fargo at 7:00 AM sharp. At 8:00 AM we will be on Jetty Rd or, if it is blocked by park-closure, then at the Sea Harvest restaurant parking lot, a little farther down Hwy 1 (just north of the bridge). This is a morning trip. Itinerary depends on what's about but will include Moon Glow Dairy.

Leader: Todd Newberry, (831) 426-8741



Friday, September 9 Antonelli Pond and vicinity

We may also visit the Homeless Garden, the Terrace Point fields, Natural Bridges, and/or other nearby locations.

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



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, September 11 Watsonville Sloughs

This trip will seek waterbirds and others in the sloughs of Watsonville. There is a possibility that we will have access to some good vantage points for the sloughs. Contact the leader for details. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot behind the West Marine building along Struve slough, off Harkins Slough Road.

Leader: Phil Brown, pdpbrown@gmail.com



Friday, September 16 Arana Gulch

A search for interesting fall migrants, plus maybe some just-arrived winter 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 Trevehan and Hagemann)

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



Sunday, September 18 Henry Cowell

This area is good for woodpeckers (including Pileated) and typical chaparral and woodland species such as Wrentit, Hutton's Vireo, California Thrasher, and thrushes.

Directions: Meet at Henry Cowell Redwoods SP campground parking lot (parks pass, \$10 or \$9 for seniors). Maybe we'll do the Pine Trail, check out the campground and the observation deck and come back on Ridge Road or Powder Mill.

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

SPECIAL SCBC MEETING

The first program night of the MBBF will also be the September SCBC meeting. Admission is free for SCBC members. Otherwise the cost is \$10.



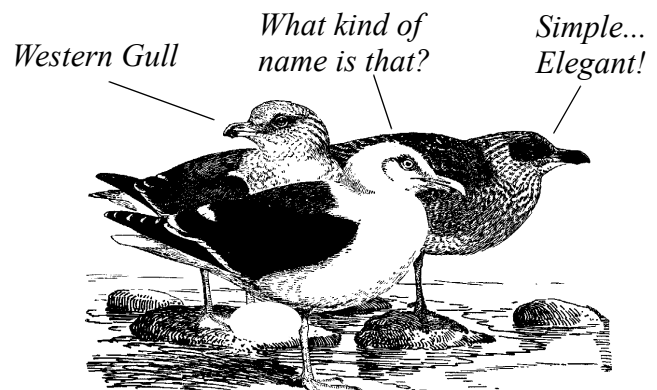
Thursday, September 22 (3rd Thursday) SCBC Meeting @7:00 PM Speaker: Stephen Shunk

Subject: The Names, Namers, and Naming of North America Birds

How often do you see the red belly on a Red-bellied Woodpecker, or the neck-ring on a Ring-necked Duck? Who were Lucy and Grace (of Lucy's and Grace's warblers), and what the heck does "prothonotary" mean? Join Oregon naturalist and author Steve Shunk as he demystifies the naming of North American birds. Steve will introduce you to Audubon's drinking buddies along with today's scientists responsible for naming birds. He will take you to places that lend their names to birds, and he will share the discoveries and translations of modern ornithology. Come learn the methods behind the madness of bird naming!

Stephen Shunk started birding in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1989 and moved to Sisters, Oregon, in 1997. He co-founded both the East Cascades Bird Conservancy and the Oregon Birding Trails program. Steve recently completed the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America*. For over 10 years, Steve has led birding tours and classes throughout western North America with his company, Paradise Birding.

Location: Watsonville Civic Plaza
Council Chambers





Thursday, September 29
UCSC Arboretum

We will look for fall migrants and vagrants in the exotic gardens.

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

Leader: Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



*Protea magnifica in the gardens
at the UCSC Arboreteum*



Friday, September 30
San Lorenzo River

We will most likely walk upstream, in search of fall migrant sparrows, warblers, and others.

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

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



Sunday, October 2
**Beginning Bird Walk
at Natural Bridges**

Our local birding hotspot is a great place to get an introduction to the birds of Santa Cruz County. Take a relaxed walk with a local birder, and get some tips on finding and identifying our local birds. A nice variety of habitat should yield a fair number of species.

Directions: Meet at 8:30 AM at the Delaware Avenue entrance to Natural Bridges.

Leader: Phil Brown, pdpbrown@gmail.com



Friday, October 7
Wilder Ranch State Park

The varied habitats here have potential for a large variety of species.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the main parking area. There is an entrance fee (currently \$10 per-vehicle).

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



Saturday, October 8
Sunset State Beach

We'll check the variety of habitats this park offers for lingering breeders, migrants, and winter arrivals. Plan for a moderate amount of walking, some on beach and uneven surfaces.

Directions: Meet at the parking area near the entrance kiosk. If you have a state park pass, please bring it. Otherwise bring \$10 for an entrance fee, if needed (although I hope to carpool from the entrance).

Leader: Matthew Strusis-Timmer, (831) 335-2259



Thursday, October 13
Quail Hollow

Mixed flocks in the Coast Live Oaks will be the primary focus of the morning, but we will not overlook the pond and ranch complex.

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

Leader: Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



**September
and October
Seabirding
Trips
at discount prices for
SCBC members
See page 12**



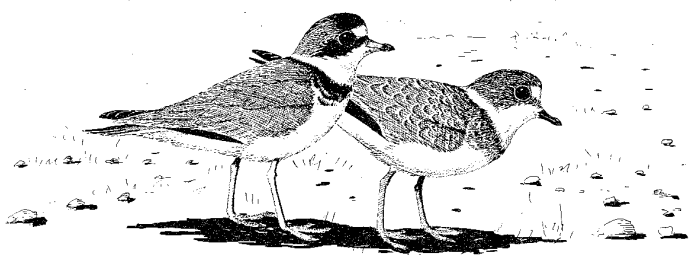


Friday, October 14
Natural Bridges State Beach

Always a good variety of birds here, and often something unexpected.

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



Semi-palmated Plovers



Saturday, October 15
Fall Creek

We'll trek upstream and uphill to the S-Cape Trail (short and steep) and down Ridge Trail looking for fall migrants like Golden-crowned Kinglets, Townsend's Warblers, and Varied Thrushes. (These trails can be a little rocky and uneven in spots from heavy use and erosion, so please use suitable footwear.)

Directions: 8:00 AM meet at entrance to Fall Creek on Felton-Empire Road.

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



Friday, October 21
North Coast

A half-day jaunt to sample some of the lovely places along the county's North Coast. We might encounter interesting raptors, sparrows, and other migrants. We should enjoy a nice variety, and it is a good date for a rarity. Plan for moderate but easy walking.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at Swanton Berry Farm along Highway 1, immediately north of the southern junction with Swanton Road, about 10 minutes up the coast from the edge of Santa Cruz. Rain cancels.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Thursday, October 27
SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM

Speaker: John Moir

Topic: Bringing Back the Condor

Award-winning environmental journalist John Moir will use the writings of Edgar Allan Poe as a framework for recounting the remarkable recovery of our largest bird, the California condor. By 1982, only 22 California Condors remained in the world. Extinction seemed inevitable until a small group of scientists undertook a risky and controversial program to bring the condor back from the brink. Using rare photos, Moir will tell the condor's riveting saga as well as describe the latest challenges facing the species including a new threat from DDT that he recently reported on for the New York Times.

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

California Condor



Saturday, October 29
Pogonip

Mostly the normal winter birds of forests and fields, but something unusual is still possible. Expect 3-4 miles of walking and 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

Fall (continued from page 1)

Finding rarities (however one defines the term) is in part a matter of luck, so the more you get out in the field, the better, but there are ways to improve your chances. For regular rarities, patterns of occurrence develop over the years, which can give some clues as to where and when to look. For example, a weedy field near the coast from late September through October is the most likely spot for a Palm Warbler, and flowering eucalyptus groves are good places to look for unusual orioles or tanagers. Shorebirds (mostly) frequent shores, but it helps to know that a Solitary Sandpiper will probably be foraging alone along fresh water margins in August or September, while a Stilt Sandpiper will more likely be wading among yellowlegs or dowitchers. Finding a Rock Sandpiper requires scrutinizing coastal rocks, but not before late October.

What's that warbler chip, slurred like a Yellow, but different? Is that it? No... Townsend's or...? That supercilium is really wide, and too pale and... behind the leaves again. The tail looks too short... it's gone... there over in the next tree... really bold wingbars. Now where'd it go? Pale stripes on the back...

Some spots become known as “vagrant traps”, including certain coastal points and riparian corridors with geographic features that tend to accumulate migrants. (Just remember that great rarities have appeared in back-yards, parking lots, and all sorts of places, so it's worthwhile to look beyond those known good spots.) A change in the weather may bring a change in the birds, and some of the best birding can be right after the passage of a storm. Checking spots where common birds accumulate and searching through flocks of all sorts are likely to yield dividends sooner or later. Getting to know the regular birds of an area—their various plumages, calls, and behavior—gives one a definite advantage for picking something different out of the crowds.

Anyway, you are out birding, and it finally happens, you find something really odd, so now what? If it is something very rare, either overall or for the time or place, start documenting your find almost immediately. Even if you are not sure what it is, start taking notes. It is best to document first and identify later in such cases. The opportunity to see details may be short, as birds fly away or disappear into the trees, and they often don't return to give you a second look. Thoroughly note everything you can about the details of plumage, overall structure, and the shape of various parts—head, bill, tail, leg length, wings, etc. If you can get photographs, that's great, but still take notes. Photos don't always show enough to prove an identification, and sometimes a reflection or shadow or other artifact may create a misleading impression. Make note of any calls you hear, and remember that behavior can be important. Notes on tail movements can help separate Dusky and Gray Flycatchers, for example, which can be difficult to distinguish in photos. And when writing up that possible Connecticut Warbler you saw, make sure to mention whether it was walking or hopping!



Steve Gerow, contemplating sights and sounds of birds at Younger Lagoon. Photo by David Suddjian.

Hmm...sounds like a Fox or a Lincoln's Sparrow calling down there in the willows, but for some reason I can't quite place which one. Sounds sort of in-between and a little off. Here's a bird...plain, noticeable supercilium but not much else. Warbling Vireo? No, looks wrong...and a really small, fine bill. Not a vireo. It's flitting like a kinglet but staying more down in the thick stuff. Tennessee Warbler? No, it's not green at all above and no yellow at all, just kind of plain and dull, bill's too short. I wish it would come out more in the open..

Once you are certain of what it is, then report it (the sooner the better for especially rare finds.) The Monterey Bay Birders email listserver (MBB) is probably the best way to get the word out on rare sightings in Santa Cruz,

Monterey, and San Benito Counties. In some cases, where you have good reason to believe it is a certain noteworthy species, but are not completely sure, it is still good to report it on MBB (as a “possible” or “probable”), and hopefully additional observers will find the bird and help confirm what it is. (But please only report a species on eBird if you are sure that it is that species.)

When you do report very rare sightings, you will probably be asked for some documentation, which may include written notes, photos, sketches, recordings, etc. Including notes with your original report (whether it be on MBB, on eBird, or otherwise) will save time, and often will be sufficient. In any case, if you did make an effort to thoroughly note details while observing the bird in the field, that should make it fairly easy to compose some documentation later, as it will mostly be there already. You can add a bit on how the details seen or heard add up to make it that species, and do include some notes on how you ruled out similar birds. And a bit of homework that can make this process easier is getting to know the parts of a bird, the various plumage tracts, and so forth, which helps with both taking notes, and with writing up the details later. (It is much easier saying, “the scapulars were pointed and dark centered” than trying to describe “those funny looking feathers that sort of droop over the top of the wing and...”) Anyway, you get the idea. And while you're reading this, there are all kinds of birds moving through outside, so get out there and see what you can find!

Look! Up in the sky...!



Come to the 7th Annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival

September 22 - 25, 2011



This year's theme, **The Evolution of Birding - From Field Guides to Hi-Tech**, will celebrate birding from the days of John James Audubon to the current era of hi-tech innovations in birding. Joe Morlan, Debi Shearwater, and Stephen Shunk will be the featured speakers.

Designed for birders of all levels, as well as outdoor lovers, the festival offers a unique opportunity to explore and appreciate world-class habitats such as the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, and Pinnacles National Monument. You'll be able to go to outings in the mountains, shoreline, chaparral, sloughs, and grasslands. Bird Club members will want to visit the many display booths present, representing all the major optics vendors plus a variety of tour companies and artists.

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

Festival Headquarters is at the Watsonville Civic Plaza—the perfect central location for the four days of activities. Parking is FREE.

Participants can register for a mix of outings, workshops, and evening programs, according to personal interests. For more information, see the festival web site:

<http://www.montereybaybirding.org>

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow
Including reports from
March 1 to May 31, 2011

Winter geese departed by early March, but one **Cackling Goose** joined a local flock of **Canada Geese** and was seen wandering from Santa Cruz to Capitola from April 23 to May 21—even loafing on the ocean at Capitola on the last date (v.ob.). A **Eurasian Wigeon** visited Pinto Lake on March 9-16 (NA). A pair of tardy **American Wigeon** at College Lake on May 19 was apparently the first May occurrence for the county (DSu). Two **Blue-winged Teal** were there on April 9-28 (AR, DSu). **Northern Shovelers** lingered late with some noted in May at the Watsonville sloughs and College Lake (v.ob.). A late **Green-winged Teal** was at College Lake on May 19, and the season's only **Red-head** was there on April 28 (DSu). Among a smattering of reports of one to two **White-winged Scoters** (last on May 2) there was a nice count of 21 at Sunset State Beach on March 12 (RW).

A molting male **Long-tailed Duck** was nicely photographed at Seacliff SB on May 15 (KK, JR, JWa). This species is rarely noted in the county in spring, and this was perhaps the latest spring migrant in our records. **Hooded Mergansers** lingered late at College Lake again this year, with one staying to at least May 19 (DSu, BR, RR, SG). A **Common Merganser** at Pajaro Dunes on April 6 was rare for the Pajaro Valley, especially in spring (H&RS). Regular surveys from the bluff at Seacliff SB produced the season's high count of 9,215 **Western / Clark's Grebes** on April 19 (DSu). Grebe numbers were at their peak from mid-April to early May. The third record of **Murphy's Petrel** was provided by one seen from a ship traversing outer county waters on May 12 (MW, TH). **American White Pelicans** visited the Watsonville sloughs through the period, with a high count of 89 at Hanson Slough on April 1 (GM). One flying by Seacliff on May 18 was unexpected and only the 7th occurrence away from the Pajaro Valley reported in the previous 20 years (CK).



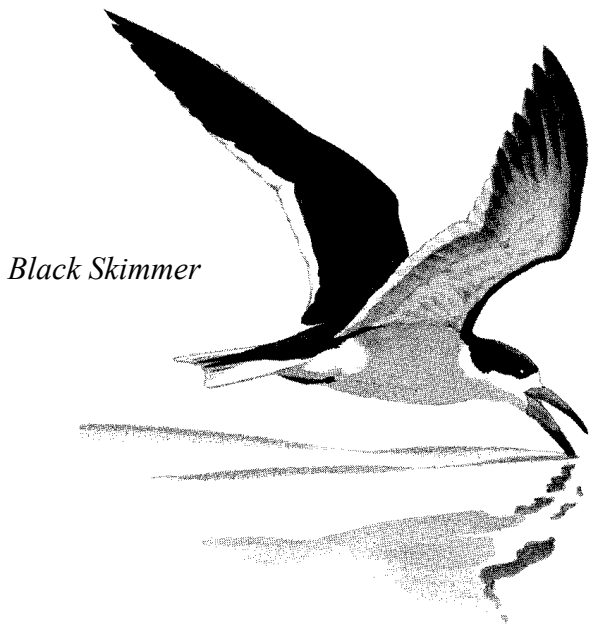
This Long-Tailed Duck was photographed by Javier Reza at Seacliff State Beach, May 15.

Surveys for colonially nesting herons in May failed to find any new localities, but did document our breeding numbers this season (BR, RR, SG, DSu). **Great Blue Herons** had seven nests at Pinto Lake and three nests at the Santa Cruz harbor. **Great Egrets** had 11 nests at Pinto Lake. Breeding season **American Bitterns** were noted at Pinto Lake, and Struve, Watsonville, and Harkins sloughs (ML, RR, BR, NA, SG, CK). Numerous reports of **White-faced Ibis** from the Watsonville Slough area continued to late May, with high counts of 12-13 on April 28-30 (v.ob.). Elsewhere two were at Pinto Lake on March 10 (ML), and five flew over College Lake on April 28 (DSu). A pair of **Osprey** nested again at Harkins Slough (v.ob.). A **Cooper's Hawk** nest with the female incubating near College Lake on May 19 was notable for the floor of the Pajaro Valley (DSu).

A long-lingering immature **Bald Eagle** hung around the Watsonville Slough area from April 14 to May 31 (JWa, v.ob.). A migrant **Swainson's Hawk** passed over Capitola on March 16 (DSu). Two **Golden Eagles** over Aptos on March 14 were from an area with few recent reports (SH). We had 21 reports of **Merlin** this period, with the last on April 27 (v.ob.); one of subspecies *richardsonii* was at Terrace Point on March 27 (SG). A fabulously handsome **American Golden-Plover** in full alternate plumage was at Seacliff SB on May 1, providing the county's first spring record and 4th modern occurrence (DSu). College Lake hosted record numbers of **Semipalmated**

Plovers during their migratory peak, with 259 on April 27 and 293 on April 28 (DSu). A **Black Oystercatcher** at Seacliff was unexpected on the long sandy beach of the inner Monterey Bay area, over four miles from any area where the species is usually found (DSu).

American Avocet was well reported this season. A flock of about 40 at Watsonville Slough on May 4 was a significant number for our county (JWa). Individuals stopped along the coastline, where they are rare—at Capitola Beach on April 27 (DSu) and Rio Del Mar on May 8 (KK). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at College Lake on April 28 (DSu). **Lesser Yellowlegs** are much less frequent in spring than fall, so two at Pajaro Dunes on March 14 (ML) and one at College Lake on April 27 and May 4 (DSu, KK) were notable. The season's only **Ruddy Turnstones** (two) were at Capitola on April 25 (DSu). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Watsonville Slough on April 28 was our first ever for spring, and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** there on May 1 was also excellent for spring (RW). The **Rock Sandpiper** completed its eighth winter at West Cliff Drive, last noted on April 8 (WN, JB).



Black Skimmer

A **Black-legged Kittiwake** found dead in a neighborhood in Rio Del Mar was 0.5 kilometer from the coast on May 26, coincident with a stormy period (MM fide NA). It was the only one reported this season. Two **Sabine's Gulls** were spotted from shore as they passed Capitola on May 17 (DSu). **California**

Gulls were performing courtship displays at a Western Gull nesting colony on a roof top in Capitola on March 30 and after, but nothing came of it (DSu). Six reports of **Glaucous Gulls** from March 9 to April 14 involved 4-5 different birds (RW, DSu, JP, SG). A **Black Tern** passed Capitola on May 1 (DSu), and one was foraging at Watsonville Slough on May 11 (JWa, NA). Two **Black Skimmers** passing overland at Capitola on April 23 were in the "trans-mountain flyway" heading toward San Francisco Bay (DSu). Although an overland flight of this species is remarkable in our region, they have been spotted in the flyway on a few prior occasions.

A **Lesser Nighthawk** was a nice surprise as it traveled over Tannery Gulch in New Brighton State Beach on May 11 (DSu). Reports of **Black Swift** this period included two over Capitola May 16, three there May 18 (DSu), and one over Moore Creek Preserve on May 27 (WSS). A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** turned up at Rancho Del Oso on May 4 (JH), a rarity in spring. There were 48 reports of identified **Rufous Hummingbirds** from February 12 to May 22, involving a total of around 50-60 individuals (v.ob.). This was probably the strongest spring passage by this species on record in Santa Cruz County, likely due at least in part to this spring's unusual weather conditions. The last report, an immature male at Quail Hollow on May 22 (AR), was notably late for the county. A male **Calliope Hummingbird** visited the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton on April 6 (DSu).

A few **Acorn Woodpeckers** appeared away from their usual areas of residency this season, with single birds north of Schwan Lake from March 29-April 11 (LL, SG et al., SM), at Peery Park along Soquel Creek on April 18 (DSu), and at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz on May 6 (JWa, SG et al.). Given the recent expansion of the species into New Brighton State Beach in coastal Capitola, such wanderings may bear watching. **Nuttall's Woodpecker** is a species that has greatly expanded its breeding range in Santa Cruz County in recent decades, but they are still absent as a nesting species from most of the developed mid-county coastal area. Thus the breeding season presence of 1-2 in eastern Santa Cruz from April 11-May 3 (NL), and at least one at Arana Gulch starting May 27 (SG et al.), are of interest. A recent pattern of spring wandering by **Pileated Woodpeckers** out of expected

areas and habitats was repeated this season, with one flying over the coastal lowlands of western Santa Cruz on March 16 (SG) and one at Moore Creek Preserve on March 29 (JWa).

The wintering **Hammond's Flycatcher** stayed around San Lorenzo Park until March 11 (SG, v.ob.). A spring migrant Hammond's was along Soquel Creek at Peery Park on April 23 (DSu). San Lorenzo Park's **Eastern Phoebe** was last seen March 12 (CL). The final sighting of the wintering **Tropical Kingbird** in the Struve Slough area was on March 4 (ML). More surprising was a Tropical Kingbird at Antonelli Pond on April 30 (LR, JJ), either a very rare spring migrant, or maybe one that wintered somewhere in the region. Twenty-six **Western Kingbirds** from April 12 to May 25 was an above-average total for the county (v.ob.), with additional reports continuing into the summer period. Small numbers of **Horned Larks** continued in fields near lower Watsonville Slough through the period (v.ob.).

A migrant **Purple Martin** was a rare find for Capitola on April 23 (DSu). Various reports of up to six martins within Santa Cruz County came from Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta beginning May 1 (v.ob.); this is near areas with some recent breeding confirmations, but all recent nest sites found thus far have been within Santa Clara County. There were three reports of single **Bank Swallows**—upper Struve Slough on May 12 (NA), Seacliff State Beach on May 16 (PB), and at College Lake on May 19 (DSu). Buildings at Pajaro Valley High School in Watsonville had well over 700 active **Cliff Swallow** nests this season (GM), a very large colony for Santa Cruz County. **Oak Titmouse** is another species that has been expanding its range in the coastal lowlands of the county, and this season they made it all the way down to beach level, nesting in a cypress on the beach at Seacliff (DSu), with three young fledged by May 9. The last **Red-breasted Nuthatch** report from lowland areas of the county this spring was one near San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz on April 23 (AR, PM).

A **House Wren** returned to Quail Hollow on March 29, for a third season at the only known breeding site in the San Lorenzo Valley (AR). One singing at Noble Gulch in Capitola on April 23 (DSu) was a rather rare spring migrant for the coastal lowlands of Santa Cruz County. **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** are also rare as

spring migrants in the coastal area of the county, so it was notable to have three records this season, from Santa Cruz and Capitola March 14-29 (SG, DSu). On March 17 at Moore Creek Preserve, a pair of **Western Bluebirds** moved into a nest box within a few days of its installation (JWa). The young fledged by May 25, and a second brood got underway shortly after (JWa, BR, SG, v.ob.). This was the first nesting in the Santa Cruz city limits in many years. Another pair had an active nest in a nest box near La Selva in late May (FM), notable for the south coast area of the county. An out-of-place **California Thrasher** noted at Seacliff State Beach starting April 11 into June was likely the same one first noted there in August 2010 (DSu).

California Thrasher



The wintering **Nashville Warbler** in Bethany Curve Park stayed until at least March 22 (v.ob.); one in the nearby neighborhood on April 3 (SG) might have been the same bird, or maybe an early migrant. Additional Nashvilles turned up along Soquel Creek on April 15 (DSu) and at Seacliff on May 2 (RW). A **Yellow Warbler** at Lighthouse Field on March 31 (SG) might have been the earliest spring migrant for the county, but the state of molt suggested it was more likely a bird that wintered locally. The earliest certain spring migrant did not appear until April 26. The wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** in downtown Santa Cruz made one last appearance on March 3 (MTL). Three reports of migrant Black-throated Grays from Live Oak and Capitola April 1- May 3 were more than usual for the urban mid-county area (SG et al., DSu). The **Palm Warbler** at Bethany Curve Park stayed until April 16 (SG, v.ob.). Palm Warblers at

Rancho Del Oso on April 2 (KC) and at Natural Bridges on April 16 (SG) also likely wintered locally. San Lorenzo Park's **Black-and-white Warbler** stayed until March 22 (RN, v.ob.). It was an above-average season for migrant **Yellow-breasted Chats**, with six reported from April 27- May 19 (DSu, SG, WN, NL).



Yellow-breasted Chat. Photo by Wendy Naruo

The **Green-tailed Towhee** wintering north of Boulder Creek was last noted March 23 (KJ). The only **Chipping Sparrows** reported this period were in Gray Whale Ranch, with three found beginning April 28 (SG, PM). A **Black-throated Sparrow** stopped briefly in Bethany Curve Park on May 5 (SG), for the fourth record for the county and the first for spring. A **Fox Sparrow** of the locally rare "Slate-colored" form was on Bear Mountain near Felton on March 19 (AR). Seven **White-throated Sparrows** were reported this period (DSu, WN, LL, LP), with the last staying until May 5 (LP). A "**Slate-colored**" **Junco** northeast of Scotts Valley stayed until March 9 (BMo). A male "Slate-colored" Junco showing features of the subspecies *cismontanus* was at Lighthouse Field May 15-16 (SG, AG), likely a rare spring vagrant rather than a lingering winterer. Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were reported from April 27-May 19 (BMo, DSu).

A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at Old Chittenden Road on May 15 (LL). The county's third **Common Grackle** was a nice find at Peery Park on Soquel Creek on May 2 (DSu). Interestingly, another grackle with appearance and calls suggestive of Common flew over western Santa Cruz later the same morning (SG). Perhaps it was the same bird wandering around the area but unfortunately not seen well enough to con-

firm. A **Great-tailed Grackle** on March 21 was rare for Capitola (DSu). An orange-yellow male **Purple Finch** near Graham Hill Road on May 10 was a rarely-noted color variant for that species (KC). **Lawrence's Goldfinch** reports included one at O'Neill Ranch on April 26 (DSu) and two near Loma Prieta on May 21 (AJ). **Evening Grosbeaks** were reported off and on from the San Lorenzo River riparian in Henry Cowell until April 26 (WN, JW, DE, CV, v.ob.). Others included one along the San Lorenzo in Santa Cruz on March 11 (SG et al.), Soquel Creek in Capitola on March 12 (DSu), and in New Brighton State Beach on March 30 (DSu).



A "Slate-colored" Junco, photographed by Steve Gerow at Lighthouse Field.

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Jeff Bleam, Phil Brown, Kevin Clark, David Ekdahl, Steve Gerow, Jack Harlan, Todd Hass, Sharon Hull, Alvaro Jaramillo, Julie Jedlicka, Kent Johnson, Kathy Kuyper, Lisa Larson, Margaret Leonard, Nick Levendosky, Calvin Lou, Gary Martindale, Freddy Menge, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan (BMo), Marie Mosely, Shirley Murphy, Wendy Naruo, Richard Norton, Lise Peterson, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Leighton Reid, Javier Reza, Alex Rinkert, Heidi & Richard Sandkuhle, W. Scott Smithson (WSS), David Suddjian (DSu), Monte Tudor-Long, Connie Vigno, Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi), Michael Woodruff, Roger Wolfe.

Please report unusual or interesting observations to dsuddjian@aol.com

Monterey Seabirds Fall Trips

Fall is the prime time for vagrant seabirds on the Monterey Bay and the offshore waters. It is also the season of greatest diversity. Monterey Seabirds is offering all day a trips for the serious seabird enthusiast and half day trips suitable for kids and families.

Half-day trips

(9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., adults \$50, under 12 \$40)
10% discount for SCBC members

Sunday, Sept. 11

Friday, Sept. 16.

All day trips

7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., SCBC members \$105,
non-members \$120

Saturday, Sept. 10 and 17

Sunday, Sept. 18

Sunday, Oct. 9

Saturday, Oct. 15

Sunday, Oct. 23

Saturday, Oct. 29

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

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>

Past Monterey Seabird Fall trips have yielded rarities such as MANX, WEDGE-TAILED, and STREAKED SHEARWATER, SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER, LAYSAN ALBATROSS, CRAVERI'S MURRELET. Last season we set a Santa Cruz county record with the sighting of a GREAT-WINGED PETREL.

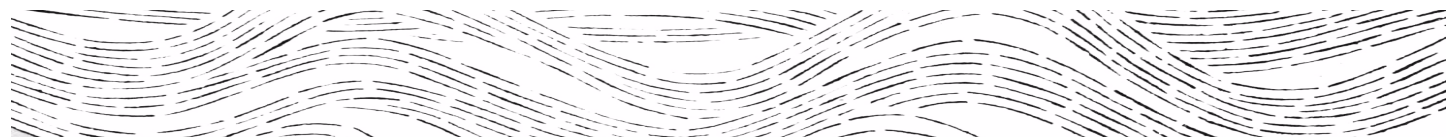
In addition to the expected species of seabirds, we will see a variety of marine mammals—from the giant Blue Whale to the tiny Harbor Porpoise. See the trip reports on our website to get an idea of what you can expect.

Roger Wolfe



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

©Martijn Verdoes www.agami.nl



Birders Honored by Santa Cruz County

by Jenny Anderson

At the April meeting of the County Board of Supervisors, Supervisor Mark Stone presented Outstanding Volunteer Awards for 2011 to Alex Rinkert, Jenny Anderson, and the other volunteers working on the Nest Box Project at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park. This was the first time the County has recognized the dedicated volunteer work of local birders, and it was a wonderful occasion.

Alex was honored for his overall work identifying and documenting the birds at Quail Hollow Ranch. He has birded there since 2003, and in 2009 he began a study listing species occurrence and looking at abundance and habitat association of the birds. He has single-handedly added about 30% more species to the bird list at Quail Hollow. He has also become the resident expert and on his daily visits to the park, he confirms species observed and answers questions on virtually anything about Quail Hollow birds. This past year he focused his studies on the Santa Cruz Sandhills to try to determine if there is a population of birds specific to this habitat that is not influenced by adjacent habitats. He and his field partner, Connor Chesus, have added significantly to the information on birds at Quail Hollow.



Left to Right: Quail Hollow volunteers John Anderson, Jenny Anderson, Alex Rinkert, Susan Myers, Jane Lear

The Quail Hollow Nest Box Project, a joint project in conjunction with the Santa Cruz Bird Club, has been ongoing for 10 years and is conducted entirely of volunteers. The County ceremony honored all twenty-two of this year's volunteers. The Nest Box Project provides habitat for cavity-nesting birds, particularly Western Bluebirds and Ash-throated Flycatchers. Not only has the project been successful in attracting these birds, but project volunteers also send their carefully collected data to the Cornell University Ornithology Lab. Their field observations, together with those submitted by other citizen scientists across the country, have greatly increased our understanding of cavity-nesting species. The project volunteers conduct weekly or bi-weekly checks of 28 nest boxes at Quail Hollow to determine species behavior, specifically the timing of egg laying, hatching and fledging of various species. The work of the volunteers has provided valuable site-specific information about the birds breeding at Quail Hollow Park.

Jenny Anderson was nominated for outstanding work in organizing, training, and supervising the Nest Box Project volunteers in their data-collecting pursuits. Her birding and teaching background, as well as her administrative expertise, have led to the project's success and made it one of the top-notch citizen science programs in Santa Cruz County.

Return of the Common Gallinule and more from the AOU

by Steve Gerow

The American Ornithologists' Union released the 52nd supplement to its Checklist of North American Birds this July, bringing a new set of changes affecting at least the names we use for some birds.

The list of species in Santa Cruz County had neither split-related additions, nor lump-caused deductions this time, but two of our birds are now considered to be different species than their Old World relatives. What once was Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) is now Common Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*), going back to the common name that some of us first learned many years ago. Snowy Plover's common name remains the same, but the scientific name is now *Charadrius nivosus*, separated from the Eurasian Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*).

The AOU continued its reshuffling of the Wood Warbler family, mostly at the genus level, bringing extensive changes in the scientific names of our warblers. We have lost the big genus *Dendroica*, which formerly included about 40% of our warbler species, and all of these are now lumped into the now even bigger genus *Setophaga*, which formerly only included American Redstart. Also joining this expanded genus are Northern Parula (no more genus *Parula*), and Hooded Warbler (no more genus *Wilsonia*), but Wilson's Warbler itself, along with Canada Warbler, now move to the genus *Cardellina*, joining Red-faced Warbler and a few other species. Finally, MacGillivray's, Mourning, and Kentucky Warblers now move in with the yellowthroats in the genus *Geothlypis*, with only Connecticut Warbler staying in *Oporornis*.

There are no family-level changes affecting our current list of birds this time, but whoever is lucky enough to discover the first-for-the-county Wheatear, Stonechat, or perhaps Red-flanked Bluetail will have found an Old World Flycatcher, not just another thrush. If you would like to see the full set of changes to North American checklist, you can read or download the supplement at this link:

<http://www.aou.org/auk/content/128/3/0600-0613.pdf>



Common Gallinule by J. J. Audubon

**New SCBC
Members
Welcome!**

Maryellen Boyle	May 2011
Scott & Linda Terrill	May 2011
Marici Wollesen	Jun 2011
Lorena Parker & Stuart Presley	July 2011
Don Glasco	July 2011
Sandra & Peter Nichols	July 2011

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



*White-faced
Ibis*

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Help represent SCBC at the festival...



Volunteers are needed to staff the Santa Cruz Bird Club table at the Monterey Bay Birding Festival—

- Afternoons, Thurs. & Fri., Sept 22 & 23
- All day on Saturday, September 24

Help spread the word about the Bird Club!

If you are interested or for more information,
please contact Steve Gerow:

stephengerow@aol.com

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.