

# Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

## The Best Day

by Scott Smithson

Every spring in the temperate North, there is an astounding biological convergence of events. Depending on geography and current climatic conditions, it happens at some point between April Fools' Day and Memorial Day. Those of us who love birds look forward to it every winter, especially if we live in a place with a traditional four-season cycle. What I am describing is that glorious period of a few weeks when avian biodiversity is at its spring peak.



Golden-crowned Sparrow - Photo: Wendy Naruo

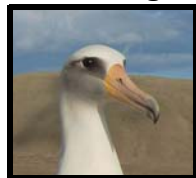
The Monterey Bay region is no exception to this wonderful phenomenon, and I know I am in good company when I say that late April to early May is one of the most inspirational times of the year to be a birder! The relative quiet of winter has been replaced with a cacophony of songbirds carving out their breeding territories. We have yet to say goodbye to the last of the Golden-crowned Sparrows, yet we are already surrounded with the beautiful

songs of breeding Wilson's Warblers. The last of the winter resident birds overlaps with the first of the late spring arrivals, creating conditions where we are able to observe both groups of birds during the same time frame. Of course, our faithful resident birds are present to add to the colorful mix we see and hear on a morning walk. Also, as an added bonus, spring migrant landbirds and waterbirds are passing through en route to breeding grounds at higher latitudes or altitudes.



Wilson's Warbler - Photo: Barry McLaughlin

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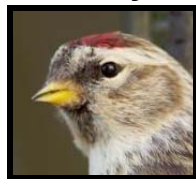


**Five-Year  
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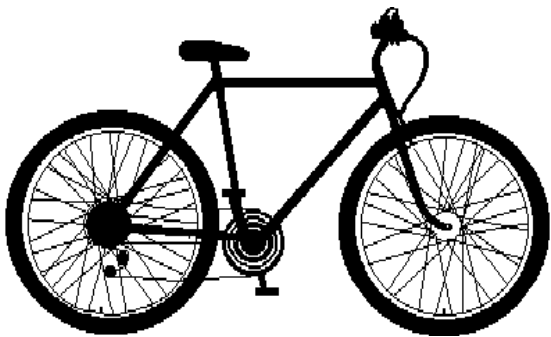


**TIME  
TO RENEW  
MEMBERSHIP**

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This spring peak of avian biodiversity has prompted birders over the years to wonder how many species can be observed in one day in a given area. Big Days evolved as a way for birders to enjoy this diverse time frame, and yes, they have turned into (mostly) friendly competitions between birders in many counties across the U.S. Also, this is one of the best times of year for bird-friendly non-profits to raise money and awareness through bird-a-thons. However, in the last several years, birders who are concerned about their carbon footprints have begun to ponder how many birds can be found in one day in a given area, without using vehicles to find them.

Last year, I created a website and blog at [www.greenbigday.org](http://www.greenbigday.org) that served as the online presence of the first international Green Big Day event. Between mid-April and mid-May 2011, 30 teams from the U.S., the U.K., and Australia scoured their local areas on foot, by bike, or by kayak to see who could identify the most species in one day without jumping in a car. Some amazing stories came out of the event, and you can check out the website if you are interested in the details. I present just a few summary thoughts below.



I conducted a survey after the event to see what motivated birders to participate and what value it was for them. I was most surprised and delighted by the answers given to the question of what impacted them as a result of doing a green Big Day.

Of those birders who completed the survey, 60% are more inclined to walk or bike to their local birding spots. Nearly 50% broke or set a new green-birding record for their areas, and about 20% actually discovered a new birding spot near their homes! Finally,



approximately half of the respondents indicated that they will make a concerted effort to carpool when “chasing” rarities.



So, who won? Well, we all did because it was so much fun, right? The top U.S. score for the coastal walking category was earned by Jim Royer and Mike Stiles of San Luis Obispo County at 82 species. Incidentally, Jim Royer also currently holds the North American BIGBY (Big Green Big Year) record at 318 species in 2010, a feat he accomplished by cycling more than 3,600 miles. Way out of my league!

Matthew Strusis-Timmer and I biked around mostly on the Westside of Santa Cruz and came up with 130 species at the end of the day, exciting for us! However, Josiah Clark and Andy Kleinhesselink landed the top U.S. score for coastal biking teams (145 species in Marin Co.). Josiah Clark and I met more than 20 years ago as campers at the ABA-VENT Camp Chiracahua for young birders. We crossed paths again when I discovered that the native San Franciscan is not only a passionate restoration ecology consultant, but also a hard-core greenbirder and cyclist. I appreciate Josiah's perspective, because for him, it wasn't about winning a birding competition, but rather, showcasing regional spring biodiversity:

“What better way to usher out the wintering species and usher in the northbound migrants than to undertake a self propelled migration of your own? For me, [the Green Big Day] ties together timely environmental and conservation issues, not just for birders but for everyone.”

If you are interested in participating in Green Big Day 2012 by foot or by bike, you can sign up online at any time during April and May: [www.greenbigday.org](http://www.greenbigday.org)

Enjoy the spring convergence!

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# Events Calendar

May - August 2012

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

<http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org>



## Friday, May 4 San Lorenzo River

A search for spring migrant passerines, possibly some shorebirds, and whatever else might be there.

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

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



## Saturday, May 5 Santa Ana Valley

A trip to the grasslands of Santa Ana Valley. Some expected species: Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Bald Eagle, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Burrowing Owl, Greater Road Runner. Possibles: Phainopepla, Rock Wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, and who knows what else.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM at the post office in Tres Pinos. I'd like to carpool with at most four cars. We'll start up Quien Sabe Rd. to Santa Ana Valley then proceed to Santa Anita Rd., finally take Browns Valley Rd, (a very passable dirt road through beautiful grassland) to Panoche Rd. and return to Tres Pinos via Paicines with a quick stop at the famous reservoir. The trip should last about four hours. Great lunches available at Flapjacks on outside patio, under Pepper trees, in Tres Pinos.

**Leader:** Nelson Samuels, (831) 566-9026, [samnelo@razzolink.com](mailto:samnelo@razzolink.com)



## Saturday, May 12 Upper UCSC Campus

If our timing is right, we may encounter an interesting variety of migrants, including some montane species. Expect up to three miles of walking, with some hills.

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

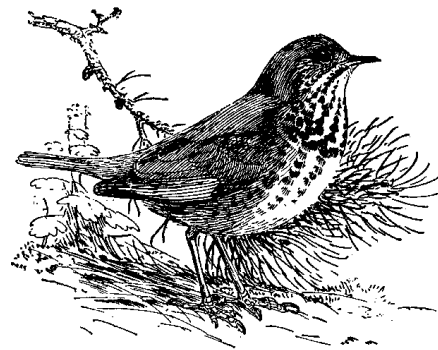


## Sunday, May 13 Mother's Day at Rancho Del Oso

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

**Directions:** Meet to carpool at Companion Bakery (once Beckmann's, then Brendan's), west end of Mission St. near Swift, at 7:00 AM (sun rose at 6). Latecomers: We will regroup at 7:30 at Waddell Beach (just before the cliffs).

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



*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.*



**Friday, May 18**  
**Wilder Ranch State Park**

The varied habitats of this park hold a good variety of birds and other wildlife. We may check coastal or inland parts of the park or a little of both. Expect a few miles of mostly easy walking.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM in the main parking lot. There is an entrance fee (currently \$10, \$9 for seniors)

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



**Saturday, May 19**  
**Pinto Lake County Park**

A half-day trip to see what Pinto Lake has to offer.

**Directions:** At the northern end of the lake, meet at 8:00 AM in the first parking lot to the right after you enter the park. Walk down to the boardwalk area. Late arrivals can meet us there. Bring water and snacks, and plan on a 2 to 3 hour walk.

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



**Thursday, May 24**  
**SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM**  
**Speaker: Bill Henry**

**Topic: From subtropical to eastern boundary: long distance breeding range expansion of a top marine consumer—the Laysan Albatross**

Many species are adjusting their distributions in response to a changing anthropocene environment. I work with Laysan Albatrosses and will talk about the consequences of range shifts on the habitat, behavior, diet, and threats to this species. How can albatrosses with changing ranges accommodate ecological differences in their new environments? Can we as ecologists and managers take an active role in facilitating changing distributions?

Bill Henry's interests focus on seabird foraging ecology and variation in sea movement patterns.

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

*Below: Laysan Albatrosses on Guadalupe Island.  
 Photo by Bill Henry.*





**Friday, May 25**  
**Upper Watsonville Slough area**

We'll look for both land and water birds, and may also check some other spots in the Watsonville area, depending on time and conditions.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM at the Watsonville Wetlands Nature Center, 30 Harkins Slough Road (the south side of Ramsay Park) in Watsonville.

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



**Friday, June 1**  
**Natural Bridges**

We'll look for nesting birds and possibly some surprises.

**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, June 8**  
**East Santa Cruz Nooks and Crannies**

This field trip will visit some seldom-birded spots east of the San Lorenzo in Santa Cruz. Early June occasionally produces some rare late-spring migrants, so perhaps we'll be fortunate.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM on Market Street by the footbridge over Branciforte Creek (one block north of Water Street across from the intersection of Market and Hubbard Street).

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



**Friday, June 15**  
**Neary Lagoon**

Nothing too unusual expected now, but one never knows...

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

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



**Sunday, June 17**  
**Father's Day at Elkhorn Slough**

All birds, even if ovulating, are males for the morning. And special cheers for the most outrageously cute fledglings. We will search Jetty Rd. and environs and then Moon Glow Dairy.

**Directions:** Meet to carpool at Aptos Wells Fargo (Soquel Dr. & State Park Dr.) at 7:00 AM. Latecomers: We will regroup at 8:00 AM on the Sea Harvest Restaurant lot (on right just before Hwy 1 bridge, Moss Landing) before going on to Jetty Rd (if open).

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

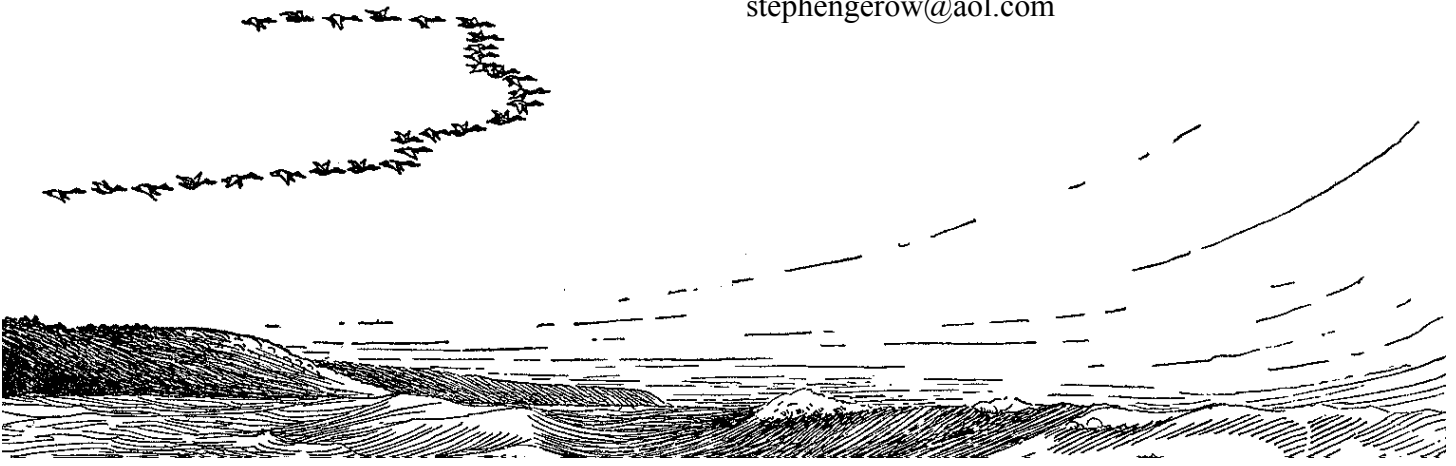


**Friday, July 6**  
**Moore Creek Preserve**

This walk 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



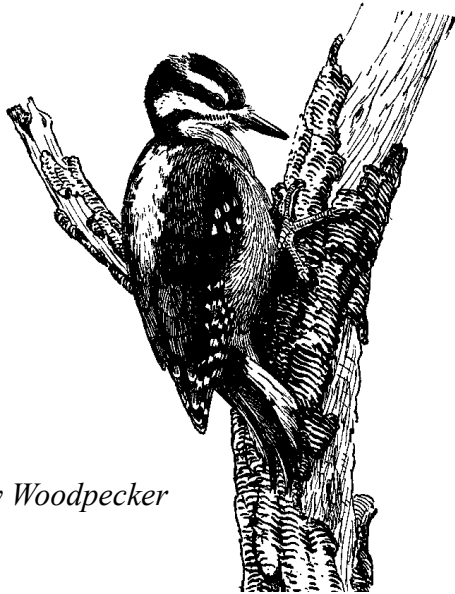


**Friday, July 20**  
**Felton area**

We will visit a few spots (the exact locations as yet to be decided), likely including some part of Henry Cowell State Park (fee or pass required).

**Directions:** Meet in the parking lot of Felton Faire Shopping Center (at the intersection of Graham Hill Road and Mt. Hermon Road) at 7:30 AM.

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



*Hairy Woodpecker*



**Friday, August 3**  
**West Cliff Drive**

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 17**  
**Neary Lagoon**

Some fall migrants may be arriving by now.

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

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



**Friday, August 24**  
**Natural Bridges**

Fall migration may be picking up by now, with surprises possible.

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

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



**Friday, August 31**  
**Schwan Lake**

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



*A group of birders consults with Todd Newberry on the January 7 Santa Cruz Rarity Roundup, led by Scott Smithson and Alex Rinkert. Photo by Wendy Naruo.*

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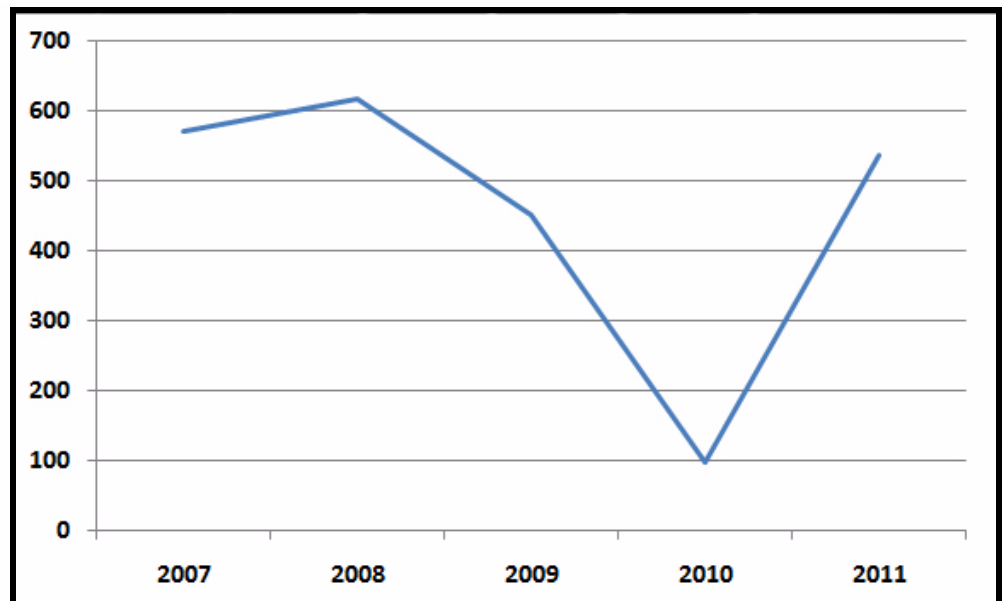
# Five Year Summary of Hummingbird Banding near Scotts Valley

*by Rita Colwell*

I began hummingbird banding in 2007 at a site near Scotts Valley (SV) and continued through 2011 as part of a monitoring network of 25 banding stations in the West. The sponsoring organization was the Hummingbird Monitoring Network (HMN). The standardized protocol involved banding one day every two weeks from March through October for five hours, starting one half hour before sunrise. The SV site maintained five hummingbird feeders during the season, and the capture method used two feeder-baited traps.

The Scotts Valley site is a private residence at 1033 feet elevation located in the Soquel Creek watershed. The reason I chose this site was to collect data on Allen's and Anna's Hummingbirds, to be shared with HMN for the purpose of increasing knowledge of hummingbirds. The network needed a banding site specifically for Allen's Hummingbirds, and this site was the only one in the HMN that collected substantial data on migrating and breeding Allen's. I was also interested in how loyal females are to a breeding site and what the productivity was here. Some of the data collected is presented here.

Figure 1 shows the total number of hummingbirds processed per year. This includes all new birds banded and all birds captured already with bands that data were taken on. For unknown reasons, mostly stable yearly numbers were disrupted during the 2010 season for both Allen's and Anna's Hummingbirds. Other HMN sites in California, British Columbia, and Arizona also reported overall numbers generally decreased that year. Sites in British Columbia were colder than normal, and there was speculation this may have influenced breeding success. Arizona sites observed



**Figure 1:** Total number of hummingbirds processed per year

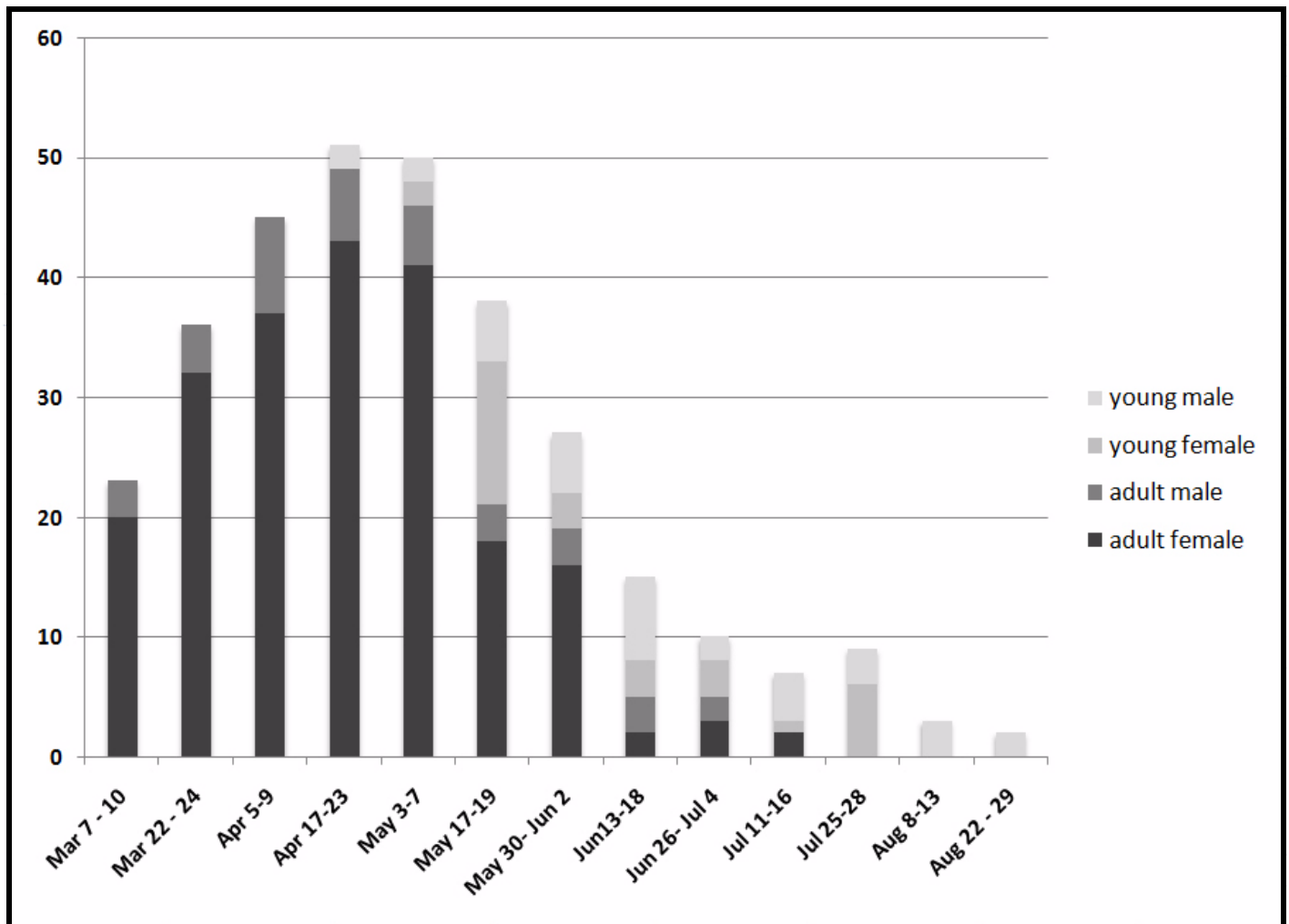
decreased numbers in some species. Winter rainfall at many sites was above normal and the increase in floral nectar may have resulted in fewer birds at the feeders.

The winter of 2009-2010 at the SV site was one of high rainfall and cold temperatures. There were fewer hummingbirds in the area for the entire banding season. The winter of 2010-2011 at SV was also wet and chilly, but the numbers of hummingbirds at the feeders from March through October were much higher than the previous year. This indicates that while weather may play a role in abundance of birds in an area, it is only one possible reason for fluctuations. Indeed, higher mortality than usual, or lower productivity would also result in lower numbers. These fluctuations fuel the need to watch the long-term trends over several years. Are these decreases occurring at more than one site and more frequently?

Table 1 shows the number of new birds banded per year by species. Numbers were higher in 2007 because it was the first year of monitoring, and thus all birds captured needed bands. In ensuing years many captured birds already had bands.

Species/Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Anna's Hummingbird	454	296	211	45	234
Rufous Hummingbird	11	8	6	0	9
Allen's Hummingbird	35	57	34	17	58
Unidentified Hummingbird	1	4	1	2	0

**Table 1.** Number of new birds banded per year by species



**Figure 2.** Five year cumulative number of Allen's Hummingbirds for each age/sex group per session

Figure 2 depicts the five year cumulative number of Allen's for each age and sex group caught per session. The SV site was a bonanza for females, whose numbers peak on the average about the middle of April. In five years a total of 116 females were banded. Some of these birds were migrants and some remained to breed. The return rate for females (banded birds returning at least a year after banding) was approximately 60%. Young Allen's,





however, did not have such a good showing. Some of the young caught were local birds, but some certainly were migrants. I expected more young for this site given the number of breeding females in the area.

The number of individuals that we captured once and only once during the course of 5 years was about 70% of birds banded (for both species), while the number of birds we caught returning a year or more after the year banded was approximately 25%. The similarity between species is surprising, as I would have expected that long-distance migration would take a higher toll on the Allen's.

At the end of the five year effort, the longevity record for Anna's at SV was 6 years old. (The Bird Banding Laboratory record is 8 years.) The male was banded as a hatching year bird in May 2005. It was only caught once more—in May 2011. A male and female Allen's tied at being least 5 years old; the BBL record is 6 years. The male Allen's was banded in March 2007 as an adult and captured every year after, except 2011. The female was banded in May 2007 as an adult, captured again in April 2008, and May 2011.

Sometimes on the same morning, birds would return to the traps and be caught again. On 22 March 2011, after a series of storms, we processed 56 individuals. The weather had been cold and blustery, and no flowers were available for food. Birds were relying heavily on the feeders. That morning 25 of those already-caught birds returned and were captured a second time. When a banded bird is captured, we determine if that bird has been already captured that morning. With a second capture for the morning, the bird is immediately released. On August 8, 2011, we had a young male Anna's return to the banding table six times! His reason for coming back is uncertain, but it might have been the free food we offer an individual just before it gets released (and at a feeder all to himself).

During the five years, SV participated in DNA research at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine by collecting feathers from all hummingbirds banded. Researchers there are looking at populations of hummingbirds to determine genetic diversity in several California species. They have found variable regions on hummingbirds' genomes that might be used to assess genetic diversity, and they are investigating genetic differences between migrant and resident populations within a species. This may assist in understanding seasonal movements of Anna's Hummingbirds.

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## *Previous Albatross articles on the monitoring project:*

### **January-February 2008**

**Banding Hummingbirds Near Scotts Valley—  
Over 400 Hummers in One Yard!**

### **March-April 2009**

**Hummingbird Monitoring Continues  
in Scotts Valley**

### **September-October 2010**

**Santa Cruz Birds: a hybrid hummingbird**

*The photos at right are from the Sept/Oct 2010 issue, showing a probable Anna's Hummingbird x Selasphorus sp. See the online Albatross to view the spectacular colors. Photos by Rita Colwell*



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## Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from  
January 1 to February 29, 2012

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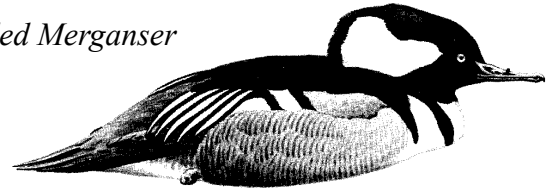
A wintering flock of **Greater White-fronted Geese** continued to use Younger Lagoon as its home base (PVL, JG, v.ob.), apparently commuting to some nearby locations for foraging. The original total of 37 geese had declined to 33 by February 18, but the flock continued into March. Other Greater White-fronts wintering in mid-county included two continuing through the period at San Lorenzo Park and one moving between Aptos Creek mouth and Cabrillo College (v.ob.). There were also a few reports from the Pajaro Valley. A flock of 38 **Snow Geese** flew over Capitola on January 2 (DSu), one was in Harkins Slough on January 14 (DSu), and five were at the Struve Slough/Watsonville Slough confluence on January 29 (DSt). A **Ross's Goose** flew over western Santa Cruz among White-fronted Geese on January 27 (SG), and two were in Watsonville Slough on January 29 (JG, CS, NL).

A **Brant** at the Pajaro River mouth on January 19 was the only winterer reported in the county this season (DSu). The first spring migrant reported was at Natural Bridges on February 27 (PB). The continuing **Cackling Goose** accompanied the Greater White-fronted Goose at Aptos Creek Mouth through the period, the two commuting daily to the Cabrillo playing fields to forage (DSu, MC, v.ob.). A handful of other Cackling Goose reports came from the Watsonville Slough System and the Pajaro River mouth. A pair of **Canada Geese** on a sea stack near Baldwin Creek Beach on February 24 (JWa) were at a site where they have attempted to nest in the past. Despite the recent abundance of the large introduced Canadas in the Pajaro Valley and in neighboring counties, few have nested at the mid-county or north coast sections of this county.

A pair of **Wood Ducks** were in a flooded field near College Lake on February 9 (DSu), a rarity for the Pajaro Valley. Four **Eurasian Wigeon** at College Lake

on January 1 was the high count for the period (DSu). Other reports came from Pinto Lake and from the Watsonville Slough system, for an overall total of perhaps 7-8 individuals in the Pajaro Valley this winter. **Blue-winged Teal** were found at six Pajaro Valley sites (v.ob.), with all the reports involving just one or two birds. The female **Northern Pintail** stayed around the Roaring Camp ponds until February 28 (AR, JWi), completing a rare winter stay in the San Lorenzo Valley. Among a small number of **Greater Scaup** reports, the largest total was 14 in Watsonville Slough on January 31, a good count for Santa Cruz County (AR). The highest tally of **Lesser Scaup** this winter was 19 in Watsonville Slough on January 4 (JWa). While both Scaup species have been among the scarcer ducks in the county in recent years, Lessers have declined significantly from the numbers of earlier times.

*Hooded Merganser*



Four **White-winged Scoters** flying by Natural Bridges beach on February 1 (PB) and six passing there on February 10 (JB) were the highest counts among a scattering of reports this period. **Hooded Mergansers** continued in good numbers through the winter, including notable aggregations of 21 in Struve Slough on January 2 (KVV) and 18 at College Lake on February 19 (JG, AR). Two **Red-throated Loons** at Kelly Lake on January 1 (PB, KK) and a continuing bird still present at Pinto Lake the same day (BR, RR) were rarities for those inland lakes. **Red-necked Grebes** included one off Sunset State Beach on January 1 (BM), two off Capitola on January 2 (DSu), and one off Natural Bridges on February 27 (AR). A small number of **American White Pelicans** were noted around the Pajaro Valley in January and February (v.ob.), with a high count of 10 at Watsonville Slough on February 10 (JWa). **White-faced Ibis** were also reported through the winter at various Pajaro Valley sites, with the largest total being 12 at Pajaro Dunes on January 8 (KK).

A pair of **Ospreys** returned to the area of the nest platform at Harkins Slough by January 8 (KK, v.ob.).

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A total of eight **White-tailed Kites** were all flying eastward in ones and twos over the upper UCSC Campus on the evening of February 28 (JG)—an usually large number for that area—probably headed for an unknown roost site. A kite at Porter-Sesnon on February 25 (DSu, SS) was unusual for the Capitola-Seacliff region. **Bald Eagles** were an unexpectedly regular sight in the Pajaro Valley this winter. The near-adult bird that was first noted on December 30 continued to be seen, mostly around College Lake (DSu, LG, BR, RR, v.ob.). This eagle paired with a fully adult bird, with the two regularly seen together starting January 25 (HS, v.ob.). This was the first pair of Bald Eagles ever noted in Santa Cruz County, and in March they began nesting! (More on that in the next issue.) There was also a juvenile Bald Eagle at College Lake from January 1-8 (DSu, WSS, AR, v.ob.), so at least for a while there was a minimum of three in the Pajaro Valley—a remarkable number for the county.

A **Broad-winged Hawk**, especially rare in winter, flew over western Santa Cruz not far from Neary Lagoon on February 23 (LG), the second report for this winter. Even rarer for winter was an adult **Swainson's Hawk**, studied as it flew over the lower Pajaro River in both Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties on January 28 (DE, CV), for only the second winter record of this species in Santa Cruz County. **Merlins** showing characteristics of the subspecies richardsonii (“Prairie Merlin”) were at the UCSC Arboretum on January 11 (JG), and at Natural Bridges on February 6 (SG). Three **Prairie Falcons** was a good total for the county, with one

east of Watsonville on January 1 (PB), one near Soda Lake on February 19 (AR, JG), and one at the south end of Swanton Road on February 26 (DSu).

Three **American Avocets**, rare away from the Pajaro Valley, visited Natural Bridges Beach on January 8 (SG). The Pajaro River backed up in early January, flooding an area along the road to Pajaro Dunes, and attracting a good number of ducks and wading shorebirds, including a concentration of 30 **Greater Yellowlegs** on January 8 (LG, WG), a high number for Santa Cruz County. The river dropped after the sandbar at the mouth was breached later in the month, exposing some good mudflat habitat for species such as **Semipalmated Plover** and **Western Sandpiper**, which are otherwise quite rare within the county in the winter months. Two **Lesser Yellowlegs** visited Harkins Slough on January 16 (EL, GM). A remarkable sight was a tight cluster of about 175 **Willetts** and 210 **Marbled Godwits** swimming in the ocean offshore of Seacliff State Beach on January 22 (DSu). While it was uncertain why they were out there, a similar swimming flock involving just 90 Willetts was observed off Seacliff just about a year earlier, on February 3, 2011 (DSu). **Surfbirds** continued to use the intertidal area of the Cement Ship at Seacliff State Beach, with 10-17 noted on most visits from January 19-February 12 (DSu). This is the only site where the species regularly occurs along the sandy shore of inner Monterey Bay between Capitola and Monterey. Shorebird species unreported in the county this season



*A Bald Eagle carries nesting material at Pinto Lake on March 22, 2012. Photos by Wendy Naruo*



*A second cycle Glaucous Gull struck an elegant pose, captured by photographer Wendy Naruo, January 13, at the San Lorenzo River.*

included **Wandering Tattler**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, and **Rock Sandpiper**.

Four **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were reported along the coast in January and February (v.ob.). About five different **Glaucous Gulls** were found this season, including the continuing second-cycle bird, which stayed in the downtown Santa Cruz area through the period (v.ob.). A 3rd-cycle Glaucous Gull off Seacliff Beach on January 19 (DSu) was especially notable, as birds older than two years are very rarely found in the county—or anywhere in California. A **Pigeon Guillemot** off Terrace Point on February 12 was a very early spring arrival (JG); others did not arrive until early March. An exhausted **Horned Puffin** was a surprising find on the beach near Pajaro Dunes on January 18 (GK). It was not seen again on later checks of the area that same day and after.

**Band-tailed Pigeons** continued a pattern of high numbers in the mid-county area, especially in the Capitola/Aptos region. A flock of 220 on January 19 was very good for Capitola (DSu). Wintering **Burrowing Owls** continued near Hanson Slough, at two places in Wilder Ranch State Park, and at UCSC. One was also found at the Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville (GM, BR, RR, AR, TM, TJ, DSu). A calling **Long-eared Owl** in the upper Valencia Creek watershed on February 27 was the first in the Aptos region in recent memory (DSu). Wintering **Common**

**Poorwills** were heard at two places in Big Basin Redwoods State Park (DSu).

The two immature male **Rufous Hummingbirds**, first found at the UCSC Arboretum on October 24, 2011, remained to at least January 30, with one lingering into March (SG, WN, JG, v.ob.). A migrant Rufous Hummingbird northeast of Scotts Valley on January 28 set a record early arrival date for the county by 5 days and was nearly a month ahead of the average arrival (BM, KM).



*One of the male Rufous Hummingbirds at the UCSC Arboretum. Photo by Wendy Naruo.*

A hybrid **Sapsucker** at Sycamore Grove on February 22-23 apparently had parentage of either Red-naped or Yellow-bellied (BR, RR, NL). The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** remained at the San Lorenzo River to January 16 (JH, BC), while the nearby **Plumbeous Vireo** stayed to February 18 (AR). Two **Cassin's Vireos** provided just the 3rd and 4th winter records for the county: at Hanson Slough on January 2 (KVV) and at Neary Lagoon on February 19-24 (JG, AR, SG). Together with the Warbling found in December, this was a remarkable rare vireo assemblage for winter. Just two **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported in the first two months of the year, with one continuing at UCSC to February 18 (AR) and one at Wilder Ranch



*A hybrid Sapsucker photographed by Nick Levendosky.*

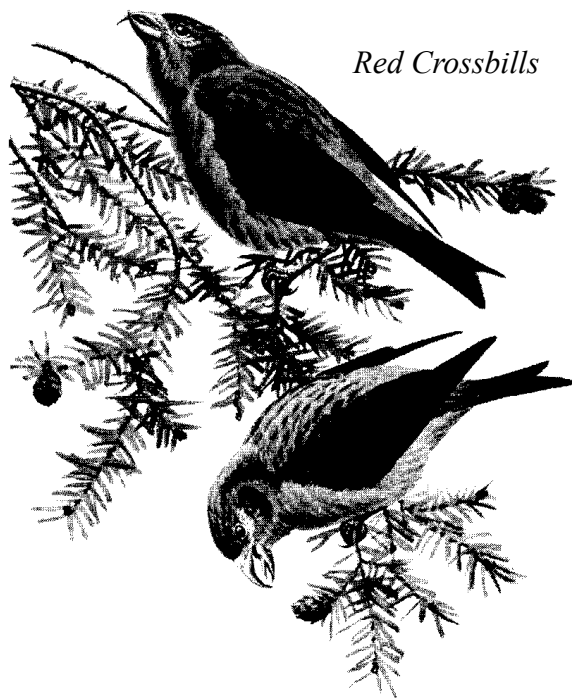
on February 11 (MP). Not a single shrike was found in the Pajaro Valley on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC.

A handful of counts were made of American Crows entering the roost at College Lake at dusk this winter, with the high count being 2,075 on February 9 (DSu, SS, MS). There were four reports of Barn Swallows from January 1-15, continuing the winter pattern of migrants for that species (CK, EL, KJ, KK, DSi, JG). Among these, three over the upper campus at UCSC on January 10 were at an unusual mountain location for this species in winter (JG). Three Western Bluebirds at Pasatiempo Golf Course on January 14 were the first reported from there in modern times (BB). We enjoyed good numbers of uncommon to rare winter warblers. Among expected western species, totals for December to February included: nine **Nashvilles** (twice the average), six **Black-throated Grays** (twice average), 16 **Hermits** (four times average), and four **Wilson's** (three times average) (v.ob).

The **Lucy's Warbler** wintering at Lighthouse Field was noted through January 8 (JG). Adding to two win-

tering **Black-and-white Warblers** cited in the last issue (both of which continued into 2012), four more were found in January and February. Six in one winter is four times our average! The new birds were at Caserley Creek on January 1 (DSu), Soquel Creek at Capitola on February 6-8 (SH, DSu), Borregas Gulch on February 21-23, and at Noble Gulch on February 22 – March 15 (DSu). Four **Palm Warblers** from January 1 through February was an average number (BB, SR, MR, LG, JH, DSu). A **Chipping Sparrow** was reported at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on January 16 (PM). The **Clay-colored Sparrow** wintering at San Lorenzo Park was noted through January 25 (v.ob.).

Additional **Swamp Sparrows** brought the winter's tally up to about 16 individuals (v.ob.), and the season's tally for **White-throated Sparrow** rose to a strong 44 birds (v.ob.). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were seen near the Watsonville Airport on January 1 (WR, AT) and at Capitola, February 9-19 (DSu). At least one of two **Black-headed Grosbeaks** wintering in the watershed of the West Branch of Soquel Creek remained well into March (BM). Winter orioles included two **Bullock's** at Capitola February 2-9 (LL, DSu) and one **Hooded** at Watsonville on January 29 (JG, CS). **Red Crossbills** were represented by just a few reports near the coast (SG, PB, DSu).



*Red Crossbills*



*A first for Santa Cruz County—this Common Redpoll appeared at a feeder near De Laveaga Park on February 24, 2012! The sharp-eyed owner of the feeder, Sharon Madison, took this photo.*

The star rarity of the season was the county's first **Common Redpoll**! A female was found and photographed on February 24 at a feeder in Santa Cruz just south of De Laveaga Park (M&SM), remaining to at least February 26 (DSu, JG, AR). This is the first record from the central California coast, but this bird

was part of an influx that brought a handful of others to widely scattered spots in the state. About five **Evening Grosbeaks** were in the Kelly Creek watershed at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on February 11 (JB).

**Cited Observers:** Bruce Barrett, Cliff Bixler, Jeff Bleam, Phil Brown, Bob Cohen, Mary Crouser, David Ekdahl, John Garrett, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Jane Henderson, Sharon Hull, Kent Johnson, Tim Jolly, Clay Kempf, Gary Kittleson, Kathy Kuyper, Lisa Larson, Earl Lebow, Nick Levendosky, Matthew and Sharon Madison, Tom Marshall, Gary Martindale, Paul Miller, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Wendy Naruo, Mel Preston, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, William Reese, Alex Rinkert, Marcos Rovell, Steve Rovell, Heidi Sandkuhle, Christian Schwarz, David Sidle (DSi), David Styer (DSt), David Suddjian (DSu), Michael Suddjian, Stephen Suddjian, Linda and Scott Terrill, Arthur Traum, Connie Vigno, Paul Van Loan, Kent Van Vuren, Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi), "v.ob." means various observers.

**Please report unusual or interesting observations to [dsuddjian@aol.com](mailto:dsuddjian@aol.com)**

~ ~ ~

*Below: Something in the trees has the complete attention of all these birders on the January 7 Santa Cruz Rarity Roundup, led by Scott Smithson and Alex Rinkert. Photo by Wendy Naruo.*



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**New SCBC  
Members  
Welcome!**

Beth O'Tool & Bob Harbuck	Mar 2012
Howard Higley	Mar 2012
David Dupue	Mar 2012
Mari Tustin	Mar 2012
Wendell Prows	Mar2012

**Input deadline for  
Sept/Oct issue  
of the Albatross—  
August 1, 2012**

**Submission for the**

Assembling



Albatross

**Albatross—Guidelines**

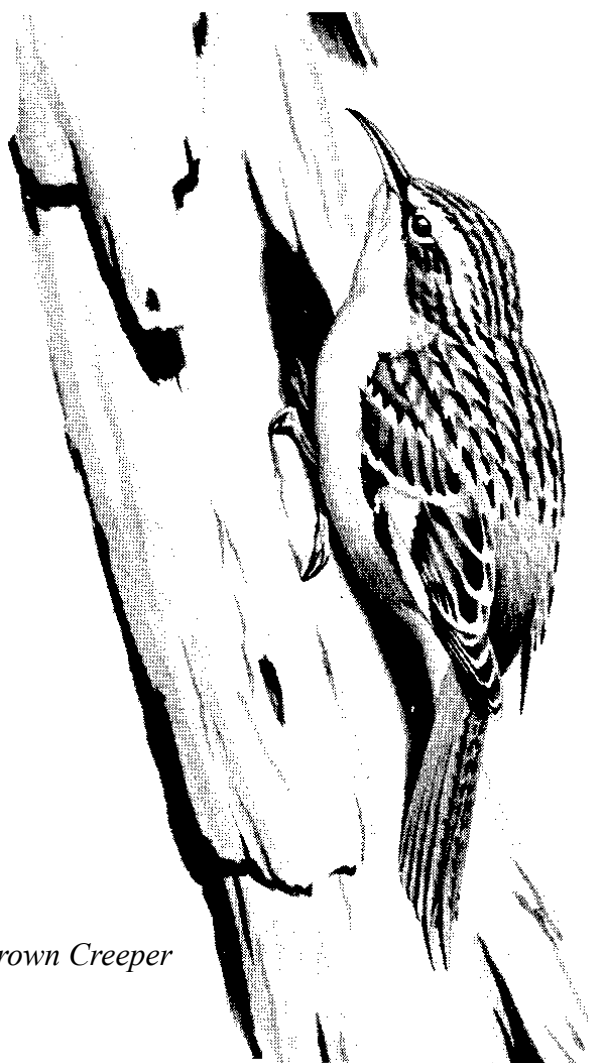
In addition to regular features—calendar, Santa Cruz Birds, trip reports—the newsletter can include almost anything related to birding in general and to local birding in particular. Depending on space, submissions of any of the following are welcome:

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

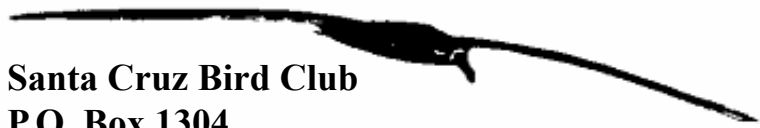
If you wish to submit an article, please contact me about it **before** the submission deadline.

I accept plain text, Word, or PDF files. Send items by email to: [calqua@sbcglobal.net](mailto:calqua@sbcglobal.net)

~Judy Donaldson, Editor



*Brown Creeper*



Santa Cruz Bird Club  
P.O. Box 1304  
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### Officers

#### *President & Treasurer*

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

#### *Programs*

Scott Smithson  
wscottsmithson@gmail.com  
&  
Breck Tyler  
ospr@ucsc.edu

#### *Field Trips*

Phil Brown (831)420-1350  
pdpbrown@gmail.com

#### *Conservation*

Matthew Strusis-Timmer  
(831)335-2259  
MStrusisTimmer@gmail.com

#### *History & Bird Records*

David Suddjian (831)479-9603  
dsuddjian@aol.com

#### *Hospitality*

Kathy Kuyper  
chswift@hotmail.com

#### *Outreach*

Barbara Banfield (831) 427-2947  
banfield@rattlebrain.com

#### *Membership & Circulation*

David Ekdahl (831)335-5742  
dekahl49@comcast.net

#### *Secretary*


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jhwall@hotmail.com

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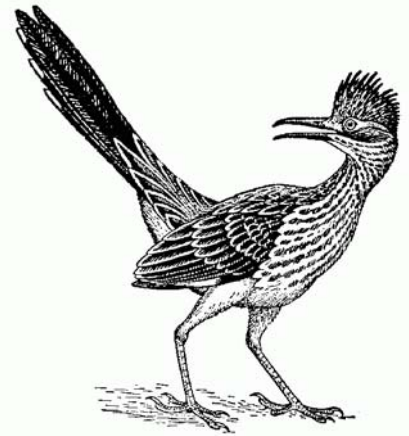
Barry McLaughlin  
(831)423-7103  
barry@coincidence.net

#### *Albatross Editor*

Judy Donaldson  
(831) 465-9006  
calqua@sbcglobal.net

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## SPRINGTIME is... TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP



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

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### **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.

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