

Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Bald Eagles Nest in Santa Cruz County!



Photo: Wendy Naruo

by David Suddjian, Santa Cruz County Records Compiler

Exciting news broke late last winter when a pair of Bald Eagles began nesting at Pinto Lake, establishing the first known nesting attempt in the modern history of Santa Cruz County. The immediate story line began to unfold at the end of December when a subadult eagle in near adult-like plumage was first reported at College Lake. This bird was apparently in its 5th to 6th calendar year of life, and plumage features confirmed it was not yet in definitive adult plumage. This near adult remained at College Lake deep into January and also visited adjacent lakes such as Pinto and Kelly. By late January it was joined by another eagle, this one a full adult. The two seemed to have formed a pair, flying together and roosting together. The exact timing of events is unclear, but in the period of late January to early February this new pair began to exhibit nesting activity in a blue gum eucalyptus grove at Pinto Lake. For a number of years the grove had hosted nesting Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and Double-crested Cormorants. The herons at least had already begun to reestablish nests for 2012 when the Bald Eagles appeared on the scene. The eagles adopted one of the existing nest structures in the grove and began to add nest material and sometimes to sit in the nest.

Word of the nesting effort began to surface widely in early March. It is no surprise that the advent of nesting activity by Bald Eagles generated a great deal of interest among local birders and in the community at large. The eagles were given newspaper coverage and featured on one or two local TV news stations. The

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Calendar
of Events

PICNIC!



**SEABIRD
TRIPS**

Monterey
Bay Birding
Festival

**SC Birds
1947**

Santa Cruz
Birds



Events Calendar

September - October 2012



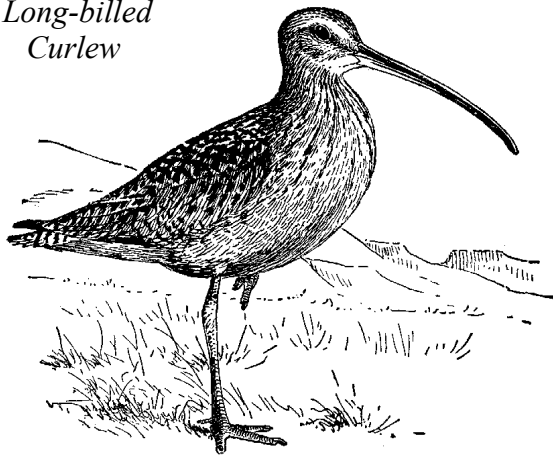
Sunday, September 2 Elkhorn Slough

Birding is the best way for locals to spend this loopy weekend. Tide rises all morning. We may continue into early afternoon, so bring some lunch.

Directions: Depart Aptos Wells Fargo at 7:00 AM (sun rose at 6:45). Latecomers: we will regroup at 8:00 AM on the Sea Harvest Restaurant lot (on right just before the Rte 1 bridge, Moss Landing).

Leader: Todd Newberry (831) 426-8741

*Long-billed
Curlew*



Friday, September 7 Wilder Ranch State Park

The varied habitats here have potential for a large variety of species, especially in fall migration.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the main parking area. Entrance fee is currently \$10 per-vehicle.

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



Meet at the Monterey Bay Birding Festival Thursday, September 13 @3:00 PM

This first talk at the MBBF (and the reception following at 5:30) will take the place of the September SCBC meeting. Admission is free.

Speaker: Daniel George

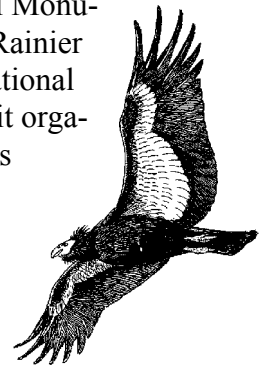
Subject: California Condor Recovery Program

Pinnacles National Monument now has 23 free-flying condors released from the park. Condor biologists closely monitor birds to increase chances of survival. In addition to tracking condor movements and habitat use, biologists are researching the impacts of incidental ingestion of lead bullet fragments, the influence of other contaminants, and nesting behavior. There are currently five condor nests in Central California—one near Pinnacles National Monument and four along the coast. The Pinnacles manages over twenty free-flying condors that have integrated into a single flock of nearly 50 which includes those released and managed by the Ventana Wildlife Society along the Big Sur coast.

Daniel George is the Condor Program Manager at Pinnacles National Monument. He has worked for Mt. Rainier National Park, Point Reyes National Seashore, and several nonprofit organizations. Most of his work has been with threatened and endangered birds.

Location:

Watsonville Civic Plaza
Council Chambers



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.



Monday, September 10
Neary Lagoon

Fall migration continues, so we'll see what's around.

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

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



Wood Duck mom and ducklings at Neary Lagoon.
Photo by Pete Solè.



Friday, September 21
Antonelli Pond and vicinity

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

Directions: Meet a 8:00 AM on the west side of the pond at Delaware Avenue.

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



Saturday, September 22
Quail Hollow and Henry Cowell

The trip will begin at Quail Hollow Ranch where we will look for fall migrants and vagrants in the lowlands of the park. We will then move on and bird the riparian forest along the Zayante and Meadow Trail just a few miles away in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park.

Directions: Meet at Quail Hollow at 7:30 AM.

Leader: Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



Friday, September 28
Watsonville area

This field trip will focus on passerine migrants in the riparian areas around Watsonville (though we won't ignore the shorebirds, waterbirds, and raptors). We'll start along Watsonville Slough near Ramsay Park and may also visit the new park along the Pajaro River, upper Struve Slough and/or other sites.

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, October 5
Lighthouse Field and vicinity

Lighthouse Field often produces some interesting migrants in fall, including a variety of notable rarities over the years. We may also check nearby Bethany Curve Park and look for shorebirds and seabirds along West Cliff Drive.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM on the inland side of the field by the intersection of Pelton Avenue and Laguna.

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



Sunday, October 7
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 at a beautiful local park. A nice variety of habitat should yield a fair number of species.

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

Leader: Phil Brown

Fox Sparrow





PICNIC! Sunday, October 7
SCBC Picnic at
Delaveaga County Park

Bring a dish to share and a beverage of your choice (no alcohol allowed). We will have access to a BBQ pit so if you want to BBQ something, coals will be blazing! The club will provide paper plates and utensils, but we encourage you to bring your own place settings to limit our contribution to the local landfill. You may want to bring a beach chair. Birds should be singing, so come and enjoy the afternoon festivities with the birds and your bird-loving friends.

Time/Place: 1:00-4:00 PM at the picnic area, 850 N. Branciforte Drive, in the main portion of the park, adjacent to the creek, between the playground area and the baseball fields.

Contact: Kathy Kuyper, chswift@hotmail.com



Friday, October 12
Arana Gulch

A search for interesting fall migrants, plus maybe some just-arrived winter species.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the entrance on Agnes Street, by the end of Mentel Avenue (off the south side of Soquel Avenue two blocks east of Treve-than and Hagemann).

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



Friday, October 19
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



Saturday, October 20
North Coast Grasslands

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

Directions: Meet at Coffeetopia on Mission Street at 8:00 AM.

Leader: Scott Smithson, scottndawn@sbcglobal.net



*White-tailed
Kite*



Thursday, October 25
SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM
Speaker: TBA

Topic: TBA

Watch MBB for details.

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



Friday, October 26
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



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.



Monterey Seabirds Fall Special

Sunday, September 16, 2012, Santa Cruz County Pelagic

We will spend most of our time seabirding off the north coast of the county. Cabrillo and Ano Nuevo Canyons are where flocks of BLACK and ASHY STORM-PETRELS are found, along with the occasional LEAST, WILSON'S, and FORK-TAILED STORM-PETRELS. Beef up your Santa Cruz County list! Rarities seen on prior Monterey Seabird trips in August include TUFTED and HORNED PUFFINS, WEDGE-TAILED and MANX SHEARWATERS and LAYSAN ALBATROSS. Trip reports online at www.montereyseabirds.com will give you an idea of what to expect. Spotters will be Don Roberson, Dan Singer, Todd Easterla, Matthew Dodder, Martijn Verdoes, Tim Amaral, Bruce Elliot, Richard Ternullo, Blake Matheson and Rod Norden.

Trip Leader: Roger Wolfe

Cost: SCBC members \$115, non members \$130.

Directions: Meet at the Monterey Bay Whale Watch Center at the end of Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey. Be there by 7:00 AM to check in, Boat departs at 7:30 AM.

Details, online registration, trip reports, etc. at: www.montereyseabirds.com or call (831) 375 4658 to reserve.



Shearwater Journeys

Fall season discounted trips for SCBC members

Since 1976, Shearwater Journeys has offered pelagic trips for birders departing from Monterey's Fishermans' Wharf. That's a lot of water under the boat! The gem of rare seabirds for the 2011 season was a GREAT-WINGED PETREL on our August 26th trip: http://shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com/2011_08_01_archive.html Rare, or common, we delight in finding seabirds for beginners, or seasoned salts. More and more, our trips are attended by photographers using digital cameras. We chum and often stop the boat for long sessions.

Dates: SEPTEMBER 7, 11, 12, 13, 28; OCTOBER 6, 14

Cost: \$130 per person, non-refundable. We give a parking voucher to save on parking.

Reservations: Mail payment along with name, address, phone, and email to
Debi Shearwater, POB 190, Hollister, CA 95024

Spaces are available on all of the above trips, with limited spaces on the September 7, 8, 9, and 12th trips. If you are interested in these dates, please book as soon as possible.

For more information see: www.shearwaterjourneys.com
or <http://shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com/2012/06/monterey-seabirds-with-shearwater.html>



Bald Eagles *(continued)*

eagles continued with the early stages of nesting through March and well into April, but it was never clear that they had laid any eggs. Then by late April they abandoned the nesting effort, and although they were seen at Pinto Lake for a time afterwards, by mid-spring they seemed to have moved away.

So Santa Cruz County's first confirmed nesting attempt ended in failure. But it was a beginning, and we can expect that this pair or even another will try to nest in the county in 2013. The cause for the abandoned and failed nesting is unknown, but it is not uncommon for new pairs to fail in their efforts for a year or two before they are successful. Given that one of the members of the pair was not yet in definitive adult plumage suggests this was a newly formed pair, and the Pinto Lake effort was their first try at breeding. Concern arose that human disturbance could be a factor affecting the outcome, and indeed in some settings Bald Eagles are known to be highly susceptible to impacts from human activity even at substantial distances from a nest. Pinto lake is anything but pristine or free from human activity. There are popular parks at both ends of the lake with high levels of use each day and boating on the lake. The lake is set in area of residential development and agricultural lands. But the eagles surely observed the levels and patterns of human activity and selected the site anyway, so it seems plausible that the human presence and land uses of the area were not a deterrent for this pair. Still, it is possible that this new pair made a poor choice of sites, and even though it was their choosing to nest at Pinto, perhaps the existing patterns of human activity had a role in the outcome of the nesting attempt.

Although the county's first confirmed Bald Eagle nesting attempt surprised many of us, local and regional trends suggest we could have expected it. We are familiar with the eagle's historic decline and the success story of its dramatic recovery from the 1970s onward. For the last two decades Bald Eagles have made dramatic increases in the central California region, some portions of which were within the known historic nesting range. Nesting resumed in San Luis Obispo, Monterey, and Alameda counties by the 1990s, and in San Benito, Santa Clara and Contra Costa counties by the 2000s. Along with the first Santa Cruz nesting, San Mateo County also enjoyed its first-ever nesting attempt in 2012. The San Mateo nest was located at Crystal Springs Reservoir, a much more secluded setting than Pinto Lake, but it also failed early in the nesting cycle. The regional increase in territories and the number of fledged young in Central California has produced a population of eagles that will continue to encounter each other, form pairs, and establish new nesting territories.

In Santa Cruz County Bald Eagles were historically rare. Early published accounts and other sources from the 1880s to the 1960s indicate the species was encountered only occasionally and there were rather few specific records. (There is mention of a possible nest site in the Waddell Canyon some 90 years ago, but that was not confirmed). This pattern of rarity continued in the 1970s, when modern bird record keeping began in the county, and on through the 1980s. These two decades produced just seven records of Bald Eagles in the county, and over half the years had no reports at all. But since the early 1990s we have enjoyed increasing numbers of records (Figure 1), and in the 23 years since 1990 eagles have been reported in all but six years. There have been stops and starts in the annual pattern, but the increasing trend is clear, and things seem to have really taken off in this county from 2009 to the present.

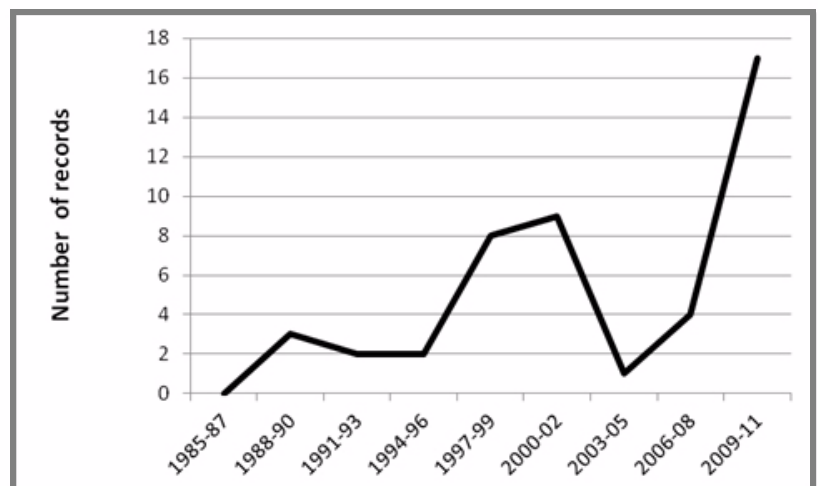


Figure 1: Bald Eagle occurrences have increased in Santa Cruz County since the 1990s.

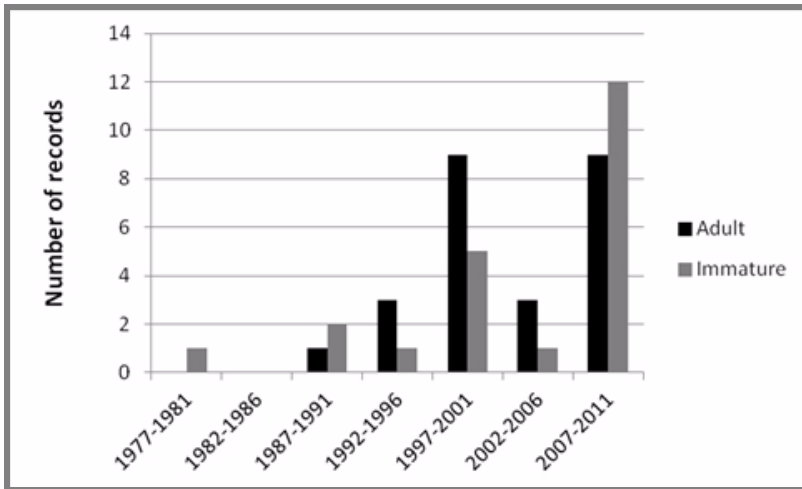


Figure 2. Proportion of adult and non-adult eagles reported in Santa Cruz County since the 1990s.

presence of this predator will affect other birds. As mentioned above, the Pinto Lake nest was situated amid an established heron, egret, and cormorant rookery. But the presence of the eagles disrupted nesting by those birds, causing them to abandon nesting efforts at Pinto in 2012. Even after the eagles departed in mid-spring, the other birds did not resume nesting there. This represented a significant loss from the county perspective, as Pinto hosted the only active breeding site in the county for Great Egret and was just one of two regular recent breeding sites for the Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorant. We can anticipate successful nesting by Bald Eagles eventually and perhaps more nest sites. It will be important for local birders to continue to report and track the presence of the Bald Eagles, even if they are no longer a rare treat, and to document how they are affecting our other birds.

All the modern Santa Cruz County records were single day occurrences until 1999, when a juvenile lingered at Wilder Ranch and Santa Cruz for a period of four days in late fall. Yet “one-day wonders” have continued to characterize most county occurrences, and it was not until spring 2011 that individuals were first observed to remain for periods of several weeks and months. Adult eagles made up a majority of reports up to 2006, but since then immature birds of varied ages have become more frequent than adults (Figure 2), perhaps reflecting the regional increase in fledged young that has really taken wing in the recent five years.

It will be interesting to see how the story unfolds in the next few years and how the



A Bald Eagle soars past the trees near Pinto Lake. Photo by Pete Solè.

Come to the 7th Annual Monterey Bay Birding Festival

September 13 -16, 2012



Designed for birders of all levels, as well as outdoor lovers, the festival offers a unique opportunity to explore and appreciate world-class habitats, including the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Elkhorn Slough NERR, and Pinnacles National Monument. There are outings in the mountains, shoreline, chaparral, sloughs, and grasslands. One special trip goes to Big Sur and the Ventana Wildlife Society to witness the return of the California Condors. Join a pelagic trip by Shearwater Journeys to one of the world's most productive regions for albatrosses, shearwaters, storm-petrels, and more. All field trips are led by friendly, expert leaders. There is even a field sketching workshop.

On Thursday afternoon, Daniel George will talk about "Reintroduction of California Condors in Pinnacles National Monument". Friday evening, Joe Morlan will speak on "Seeing Rare Birds in California". The keynote speaker, Greg Miller, of "Big Year" fame, will talk about "The Big Year" on Saturday evening. 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.

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

<http://www.montereybaybirding.org>

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

SCBC will have a table at the festival. If you want to help there, see the back page of this newsletter.

Another event—coming up in November:

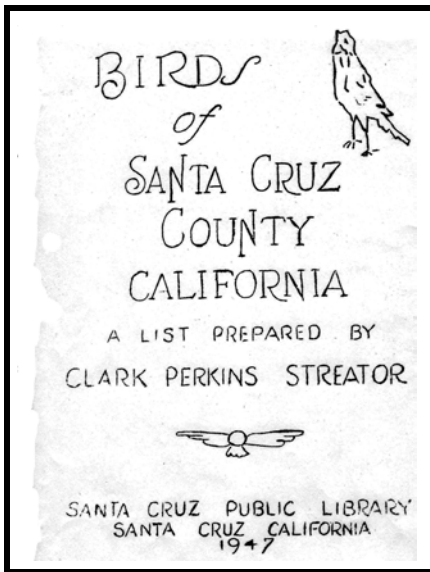
November 17-20, 2011—15th ANNUAL CENTRAL VALLEY BIRDING SYMPOSIUM

Hosted at the Stockton Hilton, by the CENTRAL VALLEY BIRD CLUB

Thursday night's keynote speaker is Ed Harper, presenting a program on "Appreciating the Birds of the Central Valley". Friday night's keynote program is by Sophie Webb on "Seabirds & Marine Mammals of the Tropical Eastern Pacific". Saturday night's keynote program is by Carlos Bethancourt on "The Natural Splendor of Panama"

Also on Saturday, Paul J. Baicich will present "Access Matters: Why Birders Should Care?" Is access to birding locations important? Well, only if you want to see birds! Other events include a "Century of Field Identification" by Joe Morlan, Bird ID Workshop by Jon Dunn, and a sketching workshop by Sophie Webb.

To look over the line-up of speakers, workshops, and field trips and for registration information, check out the website at: www.cvbs.org



Looking into the past: Santa Cruz Birds, circa 1947

As the editor of the Albatross, I maintain an archive, consisting of past issues dating back to 1956 (minus a couple of early numbers) and an assortment of birding ephemera. The archive can be a source of inspiration for layout or articles. Recently I came across a previously unnoticed document, titled “Birds of Santa Cruz County California: A list prepared by Clark Perkins Streator”, published in 1947 by the Santa Cruz Public Library.

Surprisingly, this list has much in common with the current county bird list (although the names of some species have changed). Streator’s notes are a little unnerving in that he “collected” species by shooting and stuffing them.

There are no numbers, only short notes on his own surveys and recollections (and hearsay) about sightings. Almost all the notes on scoters and alcids indicate that they were found dead on the beach, “oil soaked”. We can only assume that the oil was from shipwrecks in the area before 1946 when he did most of the survey.

Below are a few typical listings of species familiar to present-day Santa Cruz birders. There’s still a lot to look through—all the passerines, for example. If you are curious about a particular familiar species, let me know. Some of the listings include brief anecdotes that might be of sufficient interest to include in a future Albatross mini-article.

~*Judy Donaldson, Editor*

Puffinus Griseus -- **Sooty Shearwater**

Sometimes appear by thousands off shore.

Anas acuta tritzihoa -- **American Pintail**

I believe this is the commonest duck in Santa Cruz County.

Buteo regalis -- **Ferruginous Rough-legged Hawk**

One shot in the neighborhood of Soquel and mounted...now in the Soquel School Museum.

Haliacetus leucocephalus leucocephalus -- **Southern Bald Eagle**

Very rare. The late Capt. Merrell shot one which I mounted and is now in the Santa Cruz museum at Seabright. The specimen was shot at the mouth of the San Lorenzo River.

Aphriza virgata -- **Surf-bird**

I am not positive of ever having seen one. Vrooman once said that Brendiger collected three and sold their skins for a dollar each in early days.

Cephus columba columba -- **American Pigeon Guillemot**

Very common along the shore line. Breeds in the cliffs and has been found nesting among the fish boxes and on timbers under the Santa Cruz City Wharf.

Brachyramphus marmoratus marmoratus -- **American Marbled Murrelet**

Common some winters. I find many dead on the beach, oil soaked.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports
from March 1 to May 31, 2012

* * *

Younger Lagoon's wintering flock of **Greater White-fronted Geese** was not only large for the area, but also rather late-staying, continuing until April 24 (JG, PVL, SG, JB, v.ob.). The exact number of geese in this flock varied, with the highest count being 38 on April 6. The two wintering White-fronts at San Lorenzo Park lingered even later, staying until April 28 (AR, JG, JWa v.ob.), while the one that commuted with a Cackling Goose each day from Aptos Creek mouth to the Cabrillo College fields was last seen March 26 (DSu). Two migrant Greater White-fronted Geese flew up the coast past Capitola on April 16 (DSu). Three **Cackling Geese** stopped at Capitola Beach on March 4 (DSu), and the wintering Cackler that commuted with the White-front also made its last daily visit to Cabrillo on March 26 (DSu). A pair of **Canada Geese** nested on the natural bridge at Natural Bridges State Beach this season, with five young hatched by May 14 (MS, PB, SG, v.ob.). While the large introduced form of Canada Geese are now regular breeders in the Pajaro Valley, there are still relatively few nesting records in the rest of the county, and this was the first confirmed breeding record within the city of Santa Cruz.



Canada Goose with young at Natural Bridges State Beach. Photo by David Sidle.

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was swimming in Watsonville Slough near Ramsay Park on March 4 (NAd et al.). Two **Blue-winged Teal** in lower Watsonville Slough on April 22-23 were the only ones reported during the spring (JG, AR, NL). An interesting male **Mallard X Northern Pintail** hybrid was photographed in Struve Slough on April 22 (JG, AR) and remained until May 2 (JWa). Late or summering **Northern Shovelers** included one at Watsonville Slough on May 25 (SG et al.) and one at College Lake on May 30 (DSu). Following what seems to be a regular pattern in recent years, **Redheads** again made an appearance in late Spring, with various reports from the Watsonville Slough area involving at least three individuals from April 23 to May 13 (NL, AR, JG, v.ob.). Two late **Ring-necked Ducks** were noted at College Lake from May 12-17 (AR, JG, LG, WG). A male **Harlequin Duck** off Seacliff State Beach on March 25 was a rare spring occurrence for Santa Cruz County (DSu).



This Mallard x Northern Pintail hybrid male was at Struve Slough on April 22. Photo by Alex Rinkert.

Four **White-winged Scoters** flying by Capitola Beach on March 4 (DSu) was the high count this period, with just a small handful of other reports involving one or two birds through May 15 (v.ob.). A molting male **Long-tailed Duck**, quite rare in spring, stayed around the Pajaro River mouth from May 5-18 (BR), swimming within Santa Cruz County's borders at least on the 18th. Up to two late female **Buffleheads** were in Watsonville Slough from May 5-21 (WSS, AR, JG, v.ob.). Other late ducks included a **Common Goldeneye** at Younger Lagoon

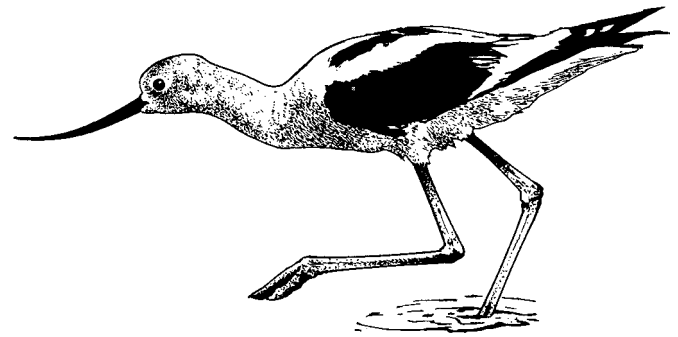
on April 28 (NL) and a **Hooded Merganser** in Scotts Valley and two at College Lake, also on April 28 (JG, AR, NL, CS). An inland **Red-throated Loon** was at Pinto Lake from March 12-22 (KP, SG, WN, MC). Also rare inland (and late) was a **Horned Grebe** at College Lake on May 12 (AR, JG). Horned Grebes along the coast were noted to be in above-average numbers this spring (v.ob.) and later than usual, including several May records, the last on May 18 (AR). There were four reports of **Red-necked Grebes** from March 2-29 (DSu, JB, SG, PB), but three of these were from the west Santa Cruz coast, possibly involving the same individual. As with the Horned Grebes, **Eared Grebes** were also reported in above-average numbers this spring (v.ob.).

There were very few reports involving pelagic birds this season, but one notable highlight was a **Hawaiian Petrel**, spotted from a cruise ship in the outer waters of Santa Cruz County on May 9 (PL et al.). This would be the first confirmed record for the county, if accepted by the California Bird Records Committee. A side-effect of the nesting attempt by the Bald Eagle pair at Pinto Lake was that no **Double-crested Cormorants**, **Great Blue Herons**, or **Great Egrets** nested at the lake this year (v.ob.). Double-crested Cormorants did nest as usual at their larger colony at Schwan Lake, but the only reported Great Blue Heron nests were three at the Santa Cruz Harbor, and apparently no Great Egrets nested in the county this year. A **Brown Pelican** was well inland at Pinto Lake on April 1 (KC). Three **Cattle Egrets** visited Watsonville Slough on April 25, with one remaining until May 1 (JWa, JG, AR, KK, v.ob.). Spring migrant White-faced Ibis numbers peaked in May, with a high count of 33 at Watsonville Slough on May 12 (AR, JG).

A pair of **Ospreys** again nested on the platform at Harkins Slough, first noted at the nest site on April 8 (EL, v.ob.). Another pair tried to build a nest atop a telephone pole at College Lake, first seen May 17 (LG, WG, DSu). This was the first nesting attempt at that location, but the pole they used was inadequate to support the nest structure, and the effort was abandoned. As noted in the last issue, a pair of **Bald Eagles** attempted nesting at Pinto Lake this spring (PM, HP, KC, RR, BR, NA, v.ob.). This was the first nesting effort by the species ever recorded in Santa Cruz

County, although the effort was abandoned by late April. See the feature article in this issue for further details. A white-bellied immature **Bald Eagle** (probably in its second year) that visited Watsonville and Struve Sloughs on May 2 was presumably a spring migrant (SG, RR, BR, JWa, LG). A pair of **Cooper's Hawks** were on a nest in a neighborhood park in Watsonville on April 9 (BMr), for one of few nesting confirmations for Watsonville and for the Pajaro Valley floor.

American Avocet



A **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Capitola on April 16 (DSu). A **Merlin** in Watsonville on May 23 was the latest spring migrant ever recorded in Santa Cruz County (SG, BR, RR, NA). Two **American Avocets** at Capitola Beach on April 23 (DSu) were rare for the county away from the Pajaro Valley. Two **Solitary Sandpipers** were near Watsonville Slough on April 26 (RR, NL), with one staying until April 28 (v.ob). There was also one near College Lake on April 28 (JG, AR, NL, CS), with two at the same spot on May 4 (DSu). Single **Lesser Yellowlegs** were at Watsonville Slough on March 5 (BR) and May 20 (JG). A **Red Knot** visited the beach at Pajaro Dunes on May 13 (BR). Watsonville Slough had up to two **Wilson's Phalaropes** from May 20-29 (JG, AR), and two were at College Lake on May 30 (DSu).

There were six reports of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** in March (v.ob.), with a high count of 12 off Seacliff State Beach on March 3 (DSu). **Bonaparte's Gulls** were remarkably scarce along the coast away from the Pajaro Valley this spring, with only five reports of single birds (v.ob.)! The Pajaro Valley had a few more, but the only moderate-sized concentrations were

around the Pajaro River mouth, with a high of 265 on May 17 (BR, RR). An adult **Franklin's Gull** was at College Lake on May 12 (AR, JG), and two flew up the coast off New Brighton State Beach on May 13 (DSu). The second-cycle **Glaucous Gull** stayed around the San Lorenzo River and downtown Santa Cruz until March 21 (CS, PB, v.ob.). A first-cycle Glaucous Gull turned up at Seacliff State Beach on March 3, and one stopped at Capitola Beach on March 15 (DSu).



One of the Black Skimmers that visited Capitola Beach in May. Photo by Alex Rinkert.

An adult **Black Tern** visited Capitola Beach on May 13 (DSu), and one was at Watsonville Slough on May 19 (AR). A **Black Skimmer** flew past Capitola Beach on April 16 (DSu), two were there May 1 (DSu, JD) and again on May 19 (NG), and one was at New Brighton on May 28 (DSu). An **Ancient Murrelet** off West Cliff Drive on March 4 was the only one reported this period (SG).

Band-tailed Pigeons continued in impressive numbers in the Aptos region. A dawn flight viewed from Porter-Sesnon on March 21 had 2,465 birds, probably a record count for the county (DSu). A count of 420 at College Lake on May 12 was good for the Pajaro Valley (AR, JG). **Northern Pygmy-Owls** are not expected in urban regions of the county. The species occupied an island of habitat at Meder Canyon in western Santa Cruz for a number of years and then went missing there. One this year on March 5 was the first there in quite a while (KA). A **Burrowing Owl** wintering at Wilder Ranch stayed to April 7 (v.ob.). One at Younger Lagoon on April 28 was rather late for the county (NL). A **Common Poorwill** was near Loma Prieta on April 28 (JG, AR, NL, CS).

Six reports of migrant **Black Swifts** spanned May 18-28 (v.ob.), with a high of 10 near Laguna Creek on May 22 (JG). **Vaux's Swifts** had another slow showing for spring, with sparse reports and no counts exceeding three birds (v.ob.). The male **Rufous Hummingbirds** wintering at the UCSC Arboretum lingered into March and possibly as late as April 12 (JG). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** provided a surprise at New Brighton SB



A pair of Black Skimmers contemplate the surf at Capitola Beach. Photo: Alex Rinkert



The distinctive breast band of the Bank Swallow shows well in this photo by Alex Rinkert.

on April 26 (DSu). **Pileated Woodpeckers** away from expected areas included one at Soquel Creek in Capitola on April 6 (DSu) and one at the UCSC Arboretum on April 27 (TN). A rare **Cassin's Kingbird** was photographed at Moore Creek Preserve on May 13 (JG). **Eastern Kingbirds** were at UCSC on May 26 (TN) and along the Pajaro River at the southeast corner of the county on May 30 (DSu). A migrant **Purple Martin** was at Porter-Sesnon on April 14, but several individuals were occupying a breeding location at the county line on Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta from May 29 onwards (WB). Migrant **Bank Swallows** visited Capitola on May 1 (DSu) and Younger Lagoon on May 21 (AR).



This is not the Pileated Woodpecker mentioned in the text, but it is a good example. Kevin Monahan took this photo at his front door.

A singing **Northern Waterthrush** along Watsonville Slough on May 2 was the 6th spring record for the county (SG, BR, RR, LG, JW). A wintering **Black-and-white Warbler** continued at Capitola to March 15 (DSu). A female **American Redstart** was spotted at Soquel Creek in Capitola on May 28 (DSu). The landbird highlight of the spring was a fabulous **Cape May Warbler** molting to alternate plumage at Neary Lagoon from April 12-15 (SG, v.ob.). The relatively early date suggests it wintered somewhere in the region, as a spring vagrant would be expected in late May or June. Singing **Northern Parulas** were at Zayante Trail in Henry Cowell Redwoods SP from May 31 onwards (SG, v.ob.) and along Liddell Creek on May 31 (DSu). A singing **Wilson's Warbler** at Antonelli Pond on March 6 was one of the earliest ever for the county, nearly two weeks ahead of average (AR). **Yellow-breasted Chats** included a rare backyard appearance at Capitola on April 30 and one at a possible breeding site along the Pajaro River on May 30 (DSu).



A rare Cape May Warbler surprised birders at Neary Lagoon in April. Photo by Steve Rovell.



A Sage Sparrow, photographed at Summit Ridge by Bill Bousman.

Circumstances permitted a May 30 visit to a privately owned location near Soda Lake which hosts the county's only **Rufous-crowned Sparrows**, with three noted confirming the species' continued presence (DSu). Both **Black-chinned Sparrow** and **Sage Sparrows** have been historically known to nest at just two locations in the county—at Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta and at Castle Rock SP. But both species have been mostly absent at these sites in recent years. This season about four **Black-chinned Sparrows** along Summit Ridge from May 25 into June (SP, PB, LG, JW, AR, v.ob.) were the first reported there since 2002. Meanwhile, a **Sage Sparrow** was at Castle Rock on May 14 (LG, WG, KK, JH), and at least two were at Summit Ridge on May 29+ (JL PB, v.ob.). A **Grasshopper Sparrow** along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on March 16 was in an unexpected spot (JB et al.). A strong spring showing by **White-throated Sparrows** included an amazing seven at Meder Canyon on April 5, for a record count (JG).

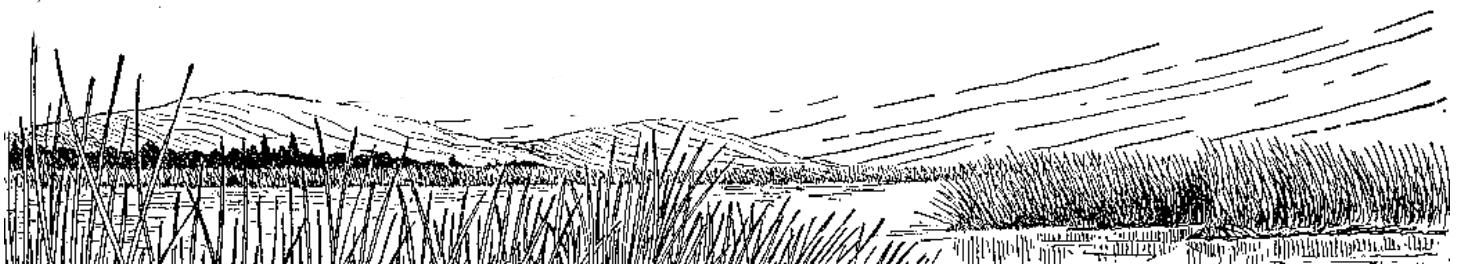
Four **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were seen visiting feeders May 15-30 (AW, LL, BMn, TC). Three reports of **Great-tailed Grackles** from the mid-county coastal area April 17-28 were away from the usual areas (SG, DSu, JG et al.). A smattering of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** appeared here and there (v.ob.), with one at Felton on April 1 (TM) being notable as the species is seldom found in the San Lorenzo Valley.



Black-chinned Sparrow singing at Summit Ridge. Photo by Alex Rinker.

Cited observers: Nanci Adams (NAd), Noelle Antolin (NAn), Kumaran Arul, Jeff Bleam, William Bousman, Phil Brown, Teetle Clawson, Mary Crouser, Kraig Cuddeford, Judy Donaldson, John Garrett, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Norman Gross, Kathy Kuyper, Lisa Larson, Earl Lebow, Paul Lehman, Nick Levendosky, Jim Lomax, Tom Marshall, Patricia McQuade, Barbara Monahan (BMn), Bryan Mori (BMr), Wendy Naruo, Kathy Parker, Heidi Perlmutter, Alex Rinkert, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Christian Schwarz, Michelle Scott, David Suddjian, Paul Van Loan, Jeff Wall, Andrea Welles. "v.ob." means many observers.

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



**New SCBC
Members
Welcome!**

Dan Tracy	Apr 2012
Francine Moody	Apr 2012
Monica Larenas	Apr 2012
Dania Moss	Apr 2012
Lisa Larson & Michael Jones	May 2012
Alan Hiromura & Candace Waage	May 2012
Ginnie Mickelson	Jun 2012
Teetle Clawson	Jun 2012
Kitty Stein	Aug 2012
Marshal Thomas	Aug 2012
Lisa Sheridan	Aug 2012
Douglas Craig Barili	Aug 2012
Gale Geurin	Aug 2012

**Input deadline for
Nov/Dec issue
of the Albatross—
October 1, 2012**

Submission for the

Assembling



Albatross

Albatross—Guidelines

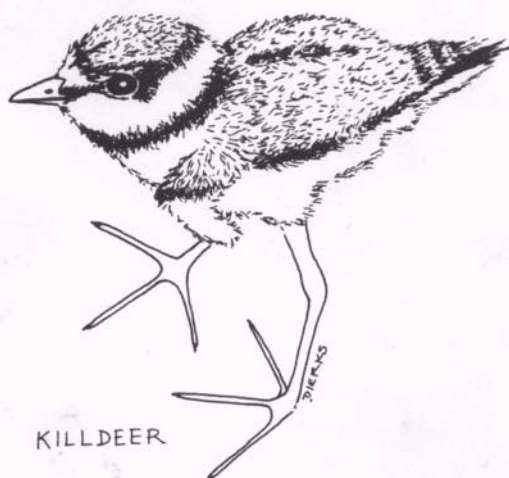
In addition to regular features—calendar, Santa Cruz Birds, trip reports—the newsletter can include almost anything related to birding in general and to local birding in particular. Depending on space, submissions of any of the following are welcome:

- 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

~Judy Donaldson, Editor



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- All day on Saturday, Sept. 15

Help spread the word about the Bird Club!

If you are interested or for
more information, contact

Steve Gerow:

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