



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

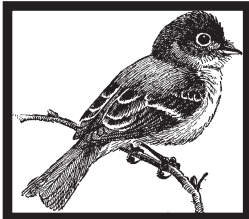
57TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FOR SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2013



Inside:

**Calendar
of Events
Santa Cruz
Birds**



MBB Demystified



Officers Needed!

**Seabirding
Trips**



By Eric Feuss



“Yeah!” It is almost that time of year—time for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This highlight of our birding year is always fun for experienced and new birders alike. How can it not be a highlight? Each year 60 to 80 birders join together to search the woods, walk the fields, and scan the seas. This canvassing of a CBC count circle by teams of birders concentrates interesting sightings and experiences. It is the sharing of these sightings, experiences, and associated stories that builds comradeship and bonds the birding community. It all comes together at the pot-luck dinner, with the species countdown wrapping up the day and event.

The Santa Cruz date for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is always on the first Saturday of the Audubon Society’s official count period, which always begins December 14th. So this year, the SCBC Saturday is the first day of the count period. The 15-mile diameter count circle reaches from Davenport to New Brighton and from Boulder Creek to the ocean, encompassing a wide array of habitats.



- California Quail Alex Rinkert

Rare birds may get the limelight, but the real value is in counting the “regular” birds, tracking the ups and downs of the local bird populations, and tracking down the uncommon ones in each section. This value grows with the long-term tracking of numbers of individuals of each species across the years. It’s the progenitor of eBird...well, for some of us.

This year is my first year as compiler. I’ve been with the Santa Cruz Bird Club since 1987. It was Barbara Scharfenstein, Bambi Hopkins, and Irene Manicci who first coaxed me into leading field trips for the club, which I still do today. Club meetings, guest speakers, and field trips all helped drive me toward work with the Institute for Bird Populations, which I did from the beginning to the end of the 1990s.



-Caspian Terns Pete Sole

Please sign up for the 57th annual Christmas Bird Count, and join us the countdown dinner! Anyone is welcome to participate in the all-day event, which happens rain or shine.

To join the count, email or call Eric Feuss at ericfeuss@sbcglobal.net or (831) 477-0280.



Events Calendar

November-December 2013



Friday, November 1
Schwan Lake

We'll explore the live oaks, riparian, grassland, and other habitats of the upland portion of Twin Lakes State Beach.
Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot of the Simpkins Family Swim Center, 979 17th Avenue.
Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



Sunday, November 3
Quail Hollow

Quail Hollow is a beautiful Santa Cruz Park with a good variety of species and habitats. Join us for a relaxed mornings birding.
Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the Quail Hollow parking lot.
Leader: Eric Feuss 831-477-0280



Friday, November 8
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, stephengerow@aol.com



Friday, November 15
Meder Canyon

An island of habitat within the west Santa Cruz residential area, featuring riparian and coastal scrub, plus extensive eucalyptus groves, which sometimes hold something unexpected near the intersection of Pelton and Laguna.
Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the south end of the trail on Grandview Street, just past the Escalona Street intersection. To reach Grandview Street, turn north (inland) from Mission Street onto Swift Street. Swift Street makes a sharp left turn and becomes Grandview.
Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com

Immature Cooper's Hawk



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 November 17
Watsonville Sloughs and/or Coast

We will start at the Ramsey Park Nature Center, but itinerary within the Pajaro Valley will be decided during week of the trip, depending upon tides, weather patterns, and local sightings. Bring lunch and liquids for a full day of birding.

Directions: Meet at 7:00 AM at the Ramsey Park Nature Center in Watsonville.

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



Thursday, November 21
SCBC Meeting @7:30 PM
Speaker: Alvaro Jaramillo,
Alvaro's Adventures & SFBBO

Topic: Why do They Keep Changing the Checklist?
(Bird Taxonomy for Regular Folk)

Hey, where are the loons? Didn't they always go at the start of the book? Why do these people keep telling me we have no tanagers in North America now? Why don't they just leave things alone and let us bird in peace?

We are living in a tumultuous time, and I am talking about ornithology, not global politics. Things are moving at a great pace, long held beliefs are being upended, species are being split, some which look pretty much like the other, and as a birder you are sort of stuck in the middle of it. What to do? Well Keep Calm and Carry On of course. Although this can make for some confusion as you get used to the new normal, it is actually a very exciting time. It is an amazing time to be living as a birder interested in science. People are discovering new species, new relationships, working out errors of preconceptions, and solidifying also that the early bird taxonomists were for the most part right on the money. This is a talk for birders, not for scientists, and it may help to explain what is going on right now and how taxonomists make decisions. Perhaps with a bit more background, all of the taxonomic musical chairs will become more fun than frustrating.

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



Friday, November 22
Felton Area

We may visit a few different spots, likely including part of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park (fee or a pass required).

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot of Felton Faire Shopping Center (at the intersection of Graham Hill Road and Mount Hermon road, on the southwest side. (closest to Graham Hill Rd.)

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



-Townsend Warbler Jeff Bleam

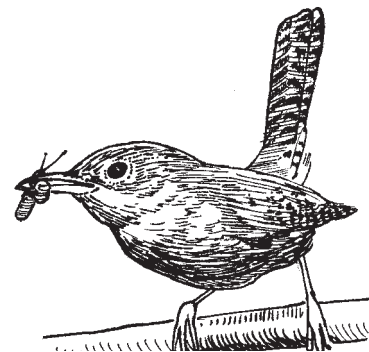


Sunday, November 24
Beginning Birdwalk at Natural Bridges

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 8:30 a.m. at the Delaware road entrance to Natural Bridges

Leader: Phil Brown, pdpbrown@gmail.com



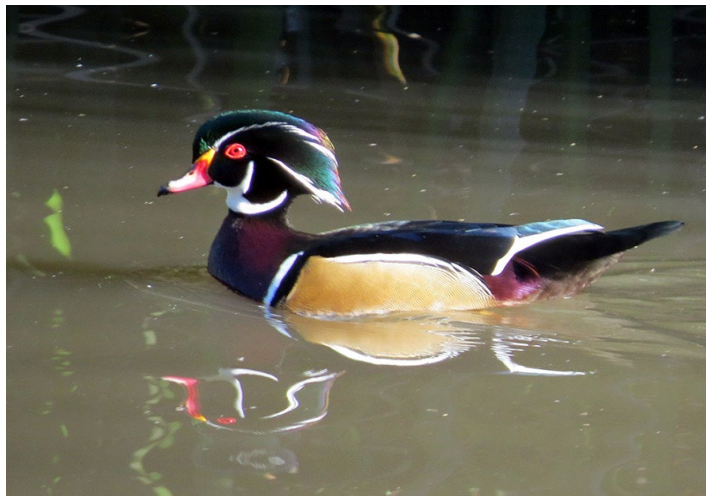


Friday, November 29
Neary Lagoon

A relaxed walk for the day after Thanksgiving, with probable Wood Ducks, various normal winter passerines, and maybe a surprise or two.

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

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com

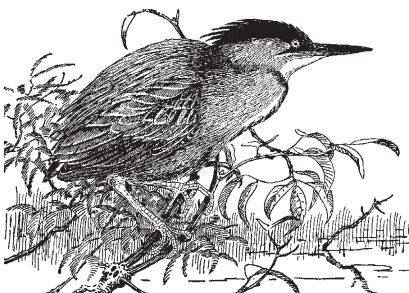


Friday, December 6
San Lorenzo River

The in-town part of the San Lorenzo (and adjacent San Lorenzo Park) has sometimes had some notable wintering rarities. If nothing else, we should see a mix of sparrows, a good assortment of gulls, plus some diving ducks, herons, etc.

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

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



Saturday, December 14
Santa Cruz County CBC

For details, see page 1 or contact Eric Feuss, ericfeuss@sbcglobal.net



Saturday, December 14 (Evening)
CBC Countdown Potluck Dinner

Location remains to be determined. Location, directions, and start time will be communicated through section leaders and email.

Bring your bird list and a dish to share—main, vegetable, salad, dessert, bread, and a drink if you want something special. There will be paper plates, cups, and utensils, but bringing your own tableware will reduce waste and cost. Soft drinks and hot water for tea or hot chocolate will be available.





Western Meadowlark



Friday, December 27
Natural Bridges State Beach

A visit to one of our most reliable local birding spots, for the last Friday field trip of 2013.

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

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com

The End of 2013
HAPPY NEW YEAR



Saturday, December 21
Lower UCSC Campus

We'll visit the lower campus grasslands, the Farm and Arboretum, and probably some other habitats. Expect a few miles of walking.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the East Remote Parking lot, off Hagar Drive on the UCSC Campus.

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



Wednesday, January 1
Moss Landing CBC

The Moss Landing CBC always takes place on NEW YEAR'S DAY. The count circle covers some of the prime birding areas in southern Santa Cruz County and northern Monterey County. As always, we're looking for more observers. Because the week between Christmas and New Year's becomes quite hectic for many people, please let us know your intentions before Christmas, so we can assign people to their territories before the holiday festivities begin. Sign up, join us, and then enjoy the warm, friendly (and delicious) countdown dinner at Pajaro Dunes.

If you are interested in participating in this year's count, please contact: Bob Ramer, 831-426-7342 or rjr@sbcbglobal.net



Seabirding trips

Monterey Seabirding Fall Special

Monterey Seabirds

Monterey Seabirds offers a discount rate to all SCBC members and Monterey Audubon Society members. \$105 on our trips (reg. \$130). Folks can register online at: www.montereyseabirds.com. (831) 375-4658
If you have questions, contact Tim Amaral at: montereyseabirds@gmail.com.

2013 Monterey Seabird Trips - 8-hour trips 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
OCTOBER: Sun. Oct. 6, Sat. Oct. 12

Enjoy the friendliest pelagic trips on the West Coast!



Shearwater Journeys - 38th year of Trips

This is an excellent time of year to see seabirds at their peak of migration. We could see up to 6 species of shearwaters, 4 species of storm-petrels, common murre, rhinoceros auklet, pigeon guillemot, as well as pomarine, parasitic and long-tailed jaegers, South polar skua, red and red-necked phalaropes. So, bring your county lists and requests. Other trips available include many from Monterey and Half Moon Bay, either place easily reached from Santa Cruz.

OCTOBER: 5th, 13th, 18th, 20th, 25th, 27th
NOVEMBER: 16th

See the schedule of trips here: <http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com/schedule.shtml> for more information, or email Debi Shearwater (Life member of SCBC) at: debi@shearwaterjourneys.com





Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow
Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2013

Up to eight **Brant** summered at Waddell Creek Beach (GS et al). Seven unidentified **Swans** flying north off Pajaro Dunes on June 14 were puzzling, it being exceptionally late for **Tundra Swan**, but even **Mute Swan** could not be eliminated (NL). Three baby **Wood Ducks** on the Pajaro River near Murphy's Crossing provided a rare breeding record for the Pajaro Valley (AR). Up to three **Blue-winged Teal** at the Watsonville Slough from June 25 to July 30 provided county's third summer record (JW, LG, AR, NL). Two **Northern Shovelers** there on July 26 were rare for summer (AR). A female **Common Goldeneye** at the Pajaro River to June 14 was quite late (NS).



-Hawaiian Petrel David Pavlik with www.shearwaterjourneys.com

A beautifully photographed **Hawaiian Petrel** was on Monterey Bay on August 2 (BSu, DP, DSh, CK et al.) for the third county record; one of those was accepted by the California Bird Records Committee as "Dark-rumped Petrel," but seems very likely to have been Hawaiian. A **Manx Shearwater** was also seen on the Bay on August 2 (CK, BSu, DSh et al.). **Brandt's Cormorants** nested in their usual spots (over 340 nests at Seacliff, 30 nests at Natural Bridges and 26 nests at Davenport [DSu, SG]),

but two nests on the mainland bluff at Wilder Ranch west of Wilder Creek were unusual on a vertical cliff face (AR, MC, SG). **Double-crested Cormorants** continued nesting at Schwan Lake (188 nests [DSu, SG]) and resumed nesting at Pinto Lake in the absence of the **Bald Eagles** (40 nests [BR, RR]), but four nests at the Santa Cruz Harbor were at a new location (DSu, SG), and one nest at the San Lorenzo River mouth was at a site that has not had nesting in several years (SG). Ten **Brown Pelicans** flying over the Struve Slough area on July 20 were unusual inland (AR).

An **American Bittern** at Antonelli Pond on July 19 was unseasonable, and they have been quite rare at Santa Cruz in recent years (CS, TP). One flying over Tannery Gulch at New Brighton State Beach on August 23 was a first for Capitola (DSu). With the eagles gone, **Great Blue Heron** (one nest) and **Great Egret** (two nests) also resumed breeding at Pinto Lake but in lower numbers than in past years (BR, RR). Another pair of **Ospreys** built a new nest at Hanson Slough (CK, GK), but it never had any evidence of eggs or young, and nests at College Lake and Harkins were similarly unproductive. **White-tailed Kites** nested at Soquel Cemetery, fledging young by June 21 (DSu, LSh). A belated reported of nesting there in 2012 provided the first confirmation for the mid-county area east of Santa Cruz (RW).



-White-tailed Kite first flight, first landing! Lisa Sheridan

Cooper's Hawks continued to expand their breeding presence, with more nesting records from the mid-county urban area (Schwan Lake, DeLaveaga Park, Moran Lake, Anna Jean Cummings Park, and Captiola)

and the first south coast records from Rio Del Mar and Seascape (v.ob.). One to two **Bald Eagles** made sporadic appearances at Pinto Lake and the Watsonville Sloughs in June following an absence of two months (v.ob.), with courtship behavior noted at Pinto on June 3-5 (MJ). A juvenile **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Arana Gulch on August 27 (SG). **Golden Eagles** were reported in this period from Smith Grade, UCSC and vicinity, Henry Cowell, Watsonville, the Chittenden area, and Scotts Valley (v.ob.).

An adult **Pacific Golden-Plover** was at the Pajaro River mouth on July 20 (AR). An adult **Lesser Sand-Plover** at Pajaro Dunes on August 2-4 provided a fantastic first county record (LSt, GP, CE, BR, RR et al)—and just the 13th state record! A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Struve Slough on August 30 (AR). A wave of migrant **Whimbrels** brought a record number to south county beaches on July 28, totaling about 800 birds from Seascape to Monterey Bay Academy (DSu). Three species of “rocky shorebirds” made exceptional June appearances: a **Ruddy Turnstone** at the Pajaro River mouth on June 14 (JG, AR, NL), a **Black Turnstone** there on June 2 (JG, AR), and two **Surfbirds** at Terrace Point on June 12-22 (JG, AR, NL). Two Ruddy Turnstones visited the Pajaro mouth and Watsonville Slough on July 16-20 (AR) and again on August 3 (NZ), and one was at the river mouth on August 16 (AR). One to three **Red Knots** were at Watsonville Slough on July 20-24 (AR, NL).

A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Struve slough on August 25 (AR). Dunlin is a late arrival in fall migration since the species molts in the far north before moving south. One in partial alternate at Sunset State Beach on July 19 was rare for the county before September (JB). An adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** photographed at Watsonville slough on July 21-30 was the county's first July record and only the third adult found in during fall migration (CK, PK, AR, JB, LG, JW). **Wilson's Phalarope** was well-reported from July 3 through August. Most were most often noted at the Watsonville Sloughs (v.ob.), where high counts were 14 on July 21 (CK, PK) and 16 on August 5 (AR, DH). Singles at Younger Lagoon August 2, 15, and 30 were the only ones away from the sloughs (JB, PB, NZ).

A juvenile **Marbled Murrelet** was photographed on the ground at Big Basin on June 21 (JA). Fledglings sometimes become grounded on their initial flight from the nest, but such reports have been rather rare in recent years as the species has declined. An adult **Franklin's Gull**

photographed at the Pajaro River mouth on June 15 was the county's latest spring record and only the third for June (AR). **Least Terns** included one to two at Watsonville



-Franklin's Gull Alex Rinkert

Slough on August 4-11 (CK, KK et al), one (of the same?) at the Pajaro River mouth on August 5 (KVV) and one at Black Point on August 26 (DSu). A **Black Skimmer** visited Aptos Creek mouth on July 10 (DSu).

Two calling **Common Nighthawks** flying around Arana Gulch on the evening of July 31 were quite an unexpected surprise (DSu). A few **Black Swifts** turned up in late summer, with two over Eagle Rock on August 10 (JB) and six near the coast in Wilder Ranch on August 22 (AR). A female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** in Capitola on August 7 was over two weeks earlier than usual (DSu). Within the usual timing for the now-regular late-summer influx were five female/immature Black-chinned Hummers found from August 26-31 (DSu, SG, AR) with more in early September. Another quite early fall migrant was an adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** that appeared in Capitola on June 10 (DSu), staying at the same site for ten days or more.

An interesting looking leucistic juvenile **Olive-sided Flycatcher** marked with patchy white was part of a family group seen in the Soquel hills starting June 28 (JW). Among several later-than-usual nesting records this summer were a pair of **Western Wood-Pewees** feeding young in DeLaveaga Park on August 19 and **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** feeding three fledglings in another part of the same park on August 17 (SG). Three spring migrant



Leucistic Olive-sided Flycatcher Jeff Wall

Willow Flycatchers were found from June 3-12 (DSu, WSS, SG). A pair of **Western Kingbirds** at Thompson Corner east of Watsonville on June 23 were likely a nesting pair (DSu) and were within the part of the county where the species is known to be a rather rare but regular breeder. Away from the southeast part of the county, a young Western Kingbird that visited Seacliff State Beach and Porter-Sesnon on July 22 (DSu) and one at Arana Gulch on July 24 (SG) were unexpected for July.

There were several **Loggerhead Shrike** reports in July and August, and the four July reports (NL, AR, RR, BR, KK, TN, v.ob.) were especially notable since the species has been essentially absent in summer in Santa Cruz County for over two decades (e.g., there were only two July records reported from 1991-2012). A **Cassin's Vireo** along Bush Creek in Rio Del Mar on July 28 was noteworthy (DSu). Post breeding dispersants of this species are rarely found in Santa Cruz County away from breeding areas and it is quite early for a fall migrant. Two **American Crows** along Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta

on June 4 (DSu) indicated a recent colonization of a new area in the higher part of the Santa Cruz Mountains. In the mid-county area the crows used a new roost site for a while this summer along Rodeo Gulch a bit upstream of Portola Drive. A substantial total of 1,960 were counted coming to roost on the evening of June 30 (DSu), an especially remarkable number for early summer. They used this roost into early July but by late August had returned to their previously-used roost site at nearby Arana Gulch.

At least one **Bank Swallow** foraged over Swanton Pond on several dates from June 24 to July 6 (DSu, SSu, LG, v.ob.), the first June record in Santa Cruz County in many years. A fairly late nesting pair of **Barn Swallows** were feeding three fledglings perched on a sailboat in the Santa Cruz Harbor on August 27 (SG). A pair of **Oak Titmice** feeding young in a cypress grove at Pajaro Dunes on June 3 (DSu) appears to be the first breeding confirmation for that location, well separated from usual habitats by extensive open agricultural fields. Also noted at Pajaro Dunes on June 3 were a pair of **Brown Creepers**, maybe the first breeding season report there, plus a pair of **House Wrens** with young, which is the first nesting confirmation there and just the second for the south coastal area of Santa Cruz County (DSu). A wandering **White-breasted Nuthatch** visited Quail Hollow on August 6 (AR). Three were along the Pajaro River near Pescadero Creek on August 21 (AR), an area that had several earlier this year but none since early April.

Roaming **Wrentits** included a pair along Noble Gulch in Capitola on June 20 (DSu), one in a field-surrounded yard east of Watsonville on June 23 (DSu) and one in a suburban neighborhood near DeLaveaga Park on June 30 (SG). All these were a half mile or more from areas where they are resident, further evidence that Wrentits wander more extensively than many believe. A female **Western Bluebird** feeding three young on Canham Road (AR) provided the first recent nesting confirmation for the grasslands on the north side of Scotts Valley, an area that has not received much birding attention in recent years. A total of 159 **American Robins** flying in to roost at Arana Gulch near sunset on July 31 was interesting for the time of year (DSu). There have been no other reports of group roosts of robins in the county during summer but probably they have just gone unnoticed.

A **Black-and-white Warbler** sang near Neary Lagoon in June 7 (SG et al.). A very late **Nashville Warbler** was at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds on

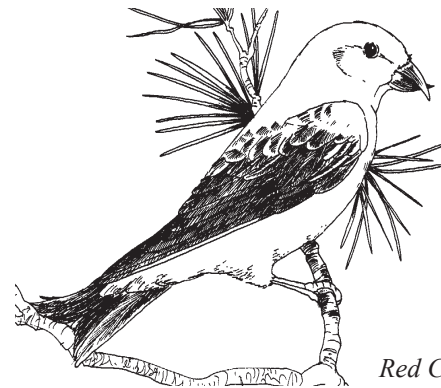
June 3 (DSu), the second-latest spring record for the county. A **MacGillivray's Warbler** in Davenport on August 8 may have been lingering from a local nesting (DSu). Spring Creek near La Selva had a female **American Redstart** on June 10 (DSu). A fall migrant **Northern Parula** was at Porter-Sesnon on August 28 (DSu). A **Canada Warbler** was a good find in Castle Rock State Park on August 31 (KK, KDM), the first record in Santa Cruz County since 2006. August records of some of the uncommon but regular fall migrant warbler species will be summarized along with later fall records in the next issue.

A lone **Chipping Sparrow** sang on territory by a parking lot on the mid-UCSC Campus from May 18-June 10 (KA, JG, AR), but there was no evidence of nesting or others present. Up to 7 Chipping Sparrows in Gray Whale Ranch May 18-June 10 (AR, KK) and two in Long Ridge Open Space Preserve on June 19 (DSu) showed continued occupation of two of the very few locations known to be regular breeding spots in recent years. **Grasshopper Sparrows** were found for the first time in recent years in the grasslands on the north side of Scotts Valley with an adult found on June 30 and a recently-fledged juvenile at a different spot on July 1 (AR), indicating nesting in the general area. **Dark-eyed Juncos** were feeding young at Pajaro Dunes on June 3, confirming a recent expansion of their breeding range into this area (DSu). A rather late-nesting pair of juncos were feeding young in Capitola on August 15 (DSu).

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were in good numbers in late spring and early summer, with seven found from June 3 to July 2 (BSc, SG, JS, SSm, DSu, DE, CV, GM). Others were at Davenport on August 18 and Natural Bridges on August 30 (SG et al.). A male **Blue Grosbeak** was photographed in the Old Chittenden Road area along the Pajaro River on July 12 (JB). This may have been the male of the pair that held a territory at the Santa Cruz/Santa Clara border this spring/early summer, but it was over half a mile from the other sightings so it may have been a different individual. There were two male **Indigo Buntings** just inside Santa Cruz County along the Pajaro River east of Pescadero Creek on June 3 (DSu). Another male Indigo turned up along Watsonville Slough on July 6 (BR, RR). Then there was a remarkable gathering of 16+ (!) buntings on the north side of College Lake on August 2 (GK) including at least five male **Lazuli Buntings**, three male **Indigo Buntings** and a number of difficult female/immature types. At least seven buntings (one Indigo and

two Lazuli identified) were still there on August 5 (AR, DH).

Another interesting find in the north Scotts Valley grasslands was a **Western Meadowlark** on June 20 (AR) in habitat that appears suitable for nesting, although there are no modern breeding records in that area. A **Great-tailed Grackle** along Rodeo Gulch north of Portola Drive on July 7 was a rarity away from the Pajaro Valley (DSu). The breeding-season presence of **Bullock's Orioles** in the mid-county area has been very limited recently, with no breeding confirmations in a number of years. Thus a pair in western Santa Cruz on June 2 (AK) and a pair at Anna Jean Cummings Park June 3-13 (DSu, LSh) were of interest. Following the irruption of last winter, **Red Crossbills** (both "Type 2" and "Type 3" birds) continued a moderate presence in the county in June (AR, DSu, SG, PB), but none were found after June 28. There also were scattered reports in June, ranging from the mountains to the coast to the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.), but the only July report was one at Seascap Park on July 28 (DSu), and none were reported in August.



Red Crossbill

Cited Observers: John Adams, Kumaran Arul, Jeff Bleam, Phil Brown, Mary Crouser, Karen De Mello, David Ekdahl, John Garrett, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Doug Happ, Mike Johnson, Clay Kempf, Pamela King, Gary Kittleson, Anna Kopitov, Kather Kuyper, Nick Levendosky, Gary Martindale, Todd Newberry, Gary Page, David Pavlik, Trent Pearce, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Nelson Samuels, Brian Scholz (BSc), Debi Shearwater (DSh), Christian Schwarz, Lisa Sheridan (LSh), Jo Smith, Steve Smith (SSm), W. Scott Smithson (WSS), Lynn Stenzel (LSt), Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DSu), Stephen Suddjian (SSu), Brian Sullivan (BSu), Kent Van Vuren, Connie Vigno, Jeff Wall, Randy Wardle, Nickie Zavinsky.

MBB Demystified

-Todd Newberry

MBB stands for Monterey Bay Birds. Or is it for Birders? The answer is lost to history even for me, who started it many years ago. MBB dates from the Web's early days, when sharing news of rarities and interesting avian goings-on was much more happenstance than now, mostly by wire-strung telephone calls among friends. Now there are more than five hundred of us MBBers, and sites like <sialia.com> amass similar listservs from all over the state and even across the country – a boon for travelers.

Regionally, MBB tries to cover bird-sightings and related topics coastally from about Pt. Sur to the outskirts of Ano Nuevo and inland through Hollister and the Panoche Valley and even down into the Pinnacles. If you go to <sialia.com> and bring up <lists>, you will find that MBB now lies amidst a patchwork carpet of other such listservs that cover adjacent and far-flung regions. Of course, MBB's limits and borders are bound to be fuzzy. But we can forgive and double-cover geographic ambiguities that send us north and south, over the hill, and out to sea; and when "the bird of the day" is a whale or a bobcat or some other notable mammal, we can enjoy taxonomic license, too.



MBB started with sharing the news – rarities and oddities, seasonal arrivals and departures. But of course news like that led soon enough to questions about uncertain sightings, especially about identifications. Now the posts comprise a confusing mix. And any answer to "what is it?" invites questions about "how do you know?" Conversation on that score may well ensue. These back-and-forths often are what make bird walks and other such forays into nature sparkle, and I like to think they are the stuff of MBB, too. And now that cameras seem to be almost as common as binoculars among birders, cyber-conversations can be much richer than they used to be.

But from time to time we all have felt that naming a bird out loud feels oddly risky – so explicit, despite our secret doubts! And for some of us, doing so on MBB seems to intensify this sense of vulnerability – so public! Many books about birding have noted this personal investment in one's identifications; only experience gets us beyond it, like a musician overcoming performance anxiety. Errors invite correction, but correction can sting if made too abruptly; when it stings you, just ask your teacher what you missed and how not to next time. And if no one answers your MBB-question, just chalk that up to a wider uncertainty than yours – or to everyone being away, out there birding. Many of the corrections accompanying recent i.d. posts about rare fall warblers have

sharpened my eyes at home the way companions do in the field when they nudge and point.

But a note to those of us who do correct MBB-posters: realize how keen others' feelings may be. Make every lesson a positive one. Online or offline, it helps to put yourself mentally in the reporter's place. After all, you may meet in the field!

With confidence comes laughter. Those "quail" perched atop that redwood were pigeons. Or that Barn Owl that was a towel in a tree. Or Mountain Bluebirds aligned on some barbed wire: bits of tape. Or that pair of wrens twitching low in the forest: a hidden deer's ears. Yes, you say, but those gaffes reveal lapses, not ignorance. What, instead, about your carefully examined and yet still perplexing warblers and sparrows and hawks and gulls and sandpipers? With every



such identification, muttered or MBB'd, we advance at least tentatively to taxonomic interpretations of surprisingly complex observations. We have to expect to make mistakes as we learn new skills. Our stumbles mark our steps toward proficiency, as we learn how to look and listen. Do you really think worse of someone who, trying to learn what birds are about, misidentifies a few or asks for help?

MBB focuses on our bioregion's birds – rare and common ones alike – on their changing status through the year, on the skills we try to bring to bear as we try to identify what birds we encounter, and occasionally on how to make sense of them as other living creatures. When MBB started there were fewer other listservs to fill this bill, but now many crowd the Web. This diversity frees MBB to find its own regional and even parochial focus. Sometimes topics start that feel at cross-purposes to MBB's. Other-than-local conservation issues are an example. For the most part, these topics soon find other venues, many that MBBers follow, too. Topics seem to sort themselves out this way, and a sense of what we are about seems to prevail informally, without strict rules.

MBB brings together an extraordinary range of birders. I like to think that this hurly-burly scene is for the good, confusing as it may be for newcomers. Give yourself a chance to settle in, notice topical patterns, recognize frequent posters' names, and get a relaxed sense of the rare birding community you have joined. When it feels like MBB offers all too much to absorb or even to bear, hit the delete key. When MBB's region feels too isolated from its neighbors, go to sialia.com for a broader context on that score. When local topics pale, try the national BIRDCHAT. Even google the birds that puzzle you, as I did last week re dowitchers (an annual rite) and crows-vs-ravens (a nemesis for me). Choices and help abound. Think "community."



-Ravens Jeff Bleam





Officers Needed

Are you interested in becoming an officer for the Santa Cruz Bird Club? A number of our volunteer officer positions are now (or soon will be) vacant, and we need to find a few dedicated members with the time and interest to take over these important jobs.

We especially need a new Programs Officer, whose responsibility it is to find and schedule the programs for our meetings. Scott Smithson and Breck Tyler have been ably sharing the duties of this position for the last couple of years, and we thank them for all the great presentations they have brought to our meetings! Unfortunately neither is able to continue this year, so it is important that we find a person or two who can take over this task soon.

We also need a new Conservation Officer (who keeps up with, and sometimes represents the bird club, on local conservation issues), as Matthew Strusis-Timmer is no longer able to continue. Thanks to Matthew for his hard work filling this job!

Finally, it would be great if someone could take over as President sometime in the next few months!

There may also be other positions that need filling in the near future, and volunteers may be needed at times to help in other ways with other Santa Cruz Bird Club activities. If you are interested in helping with any of this, please contact Steve Gerow at stephengerow@aol.com.

-Steve Gerow





New SCBC Members *Welcome!*

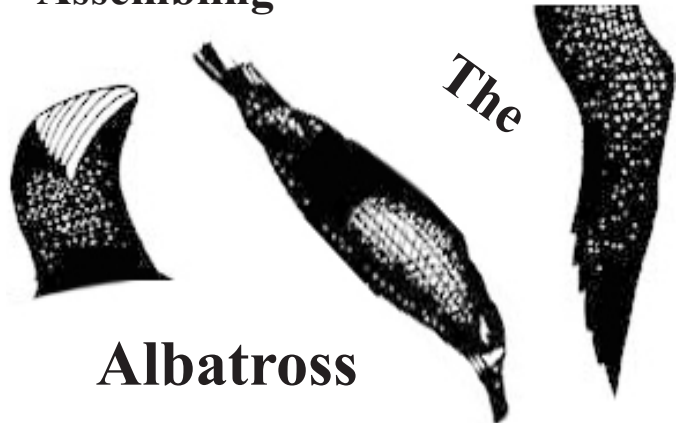
Debora Morrison	Sep 2013
Sandra Morris	Sep 2013
Roy & Yvonne Vermillion	Sep 2013
Gary & Melinda Martindale	Sep 2013
Mary Anne Flett	Sep 2013
Peter Beckmann	Sep 2013
Aya Sakimoto	Oct 2013



**Input deadline for
Jan/Feb issue
of the Albatross
DECEMBER 1,
2013**

Submission for the Albatross—Guidelines

Assembling



Albatross


In addition to regular features—calendar, Santa Cruz Birds, photos—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 birds/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 **a couple of weeks before** the submission deadline.

I accept plain text, Word, or PDF files. Send items by email to: scbirdclubeditor@gmail.com

~Lisa Fay Larson, Editor



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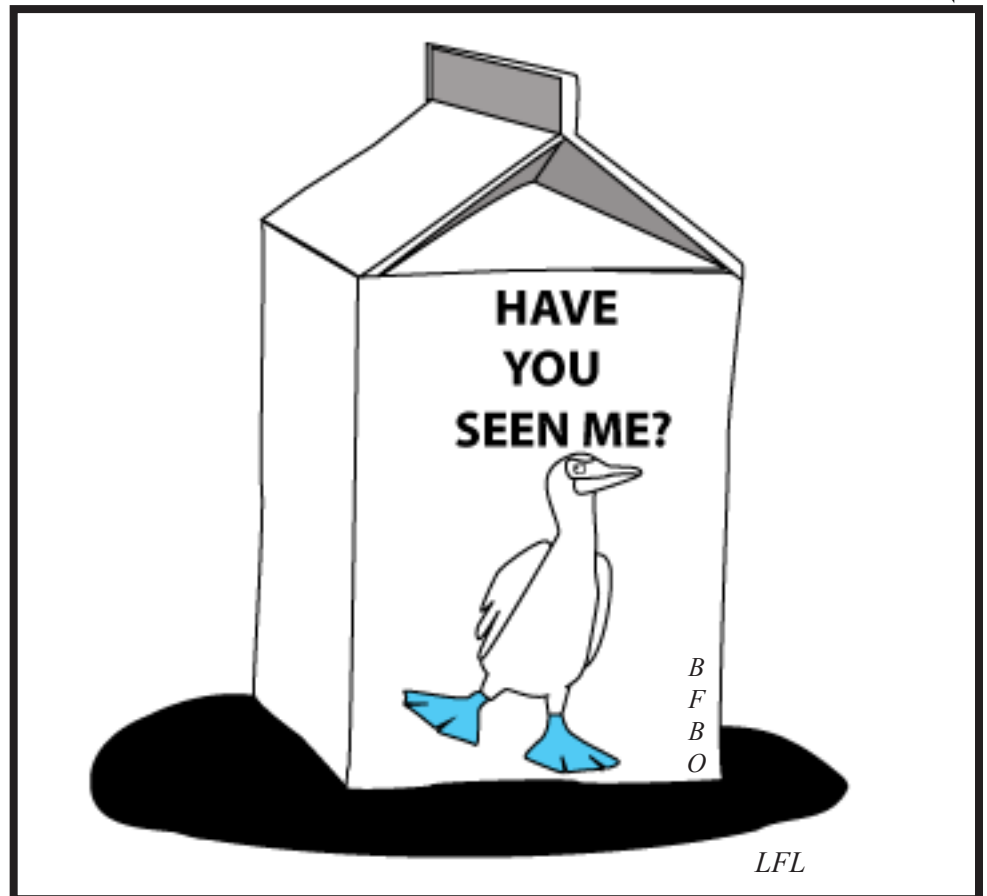
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<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/>



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.