



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Frequenting the Unfrequent

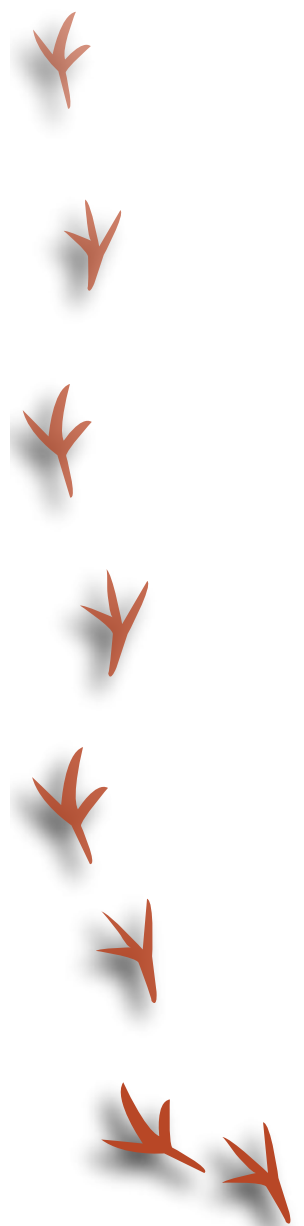
By Alex Rinkert

Much of birding revolves around knowing the frequency and abundance at which each species occurs in any given area. Equally interesting is how this knowledge of species is garnered through birding. Just as birds frequent some areas over others, birders often do as well. Although repeated observation in an area provides valuable information on birds, focusing on areas that receive little attention can bring valuable insight to bird status and distribution.

Birding in Santa Cruz County predominately occurs in two areas—within two miles of the coast, and the heart of the Pajaro Valley centered around the Watsonville Slough system. Remarkably, these two areas only encompass about 10% of land in the county. The remaining area in the county is left under-birded, receiving irregular or little attention at all. Spending more time in these under-birded areas will increase our understanding of bird status and distribution in the county as well as contribute valuable data to eBird. And perhaps, some will find adventure along the way. For this article, the under-birded areas of the county were assessed and five were chosen. Each of these neglected areas could benefit from increased coverage, each having the potential to provide new and interesting information on the status and distribution of birds in the county.

Selecting the Areas

To begin with, only fairly expansive and publicly accessible regions were considered. For this reason, the severely under-birded northwestern slope of Ben Lomond Mountain and Trescony Park in Santa Cruz were not considered. Furthermore, the offshore waters within the county line are largely under-birded, expansive, and publicly accessible. However, they were not included because of constraints (i.e., the necessity of a seaworthy boat for birding there).



INSIDE
Calendar
of Events



*Christmas Bird
Count*

*Santa Cruz
Birds*

Hawk Rescue

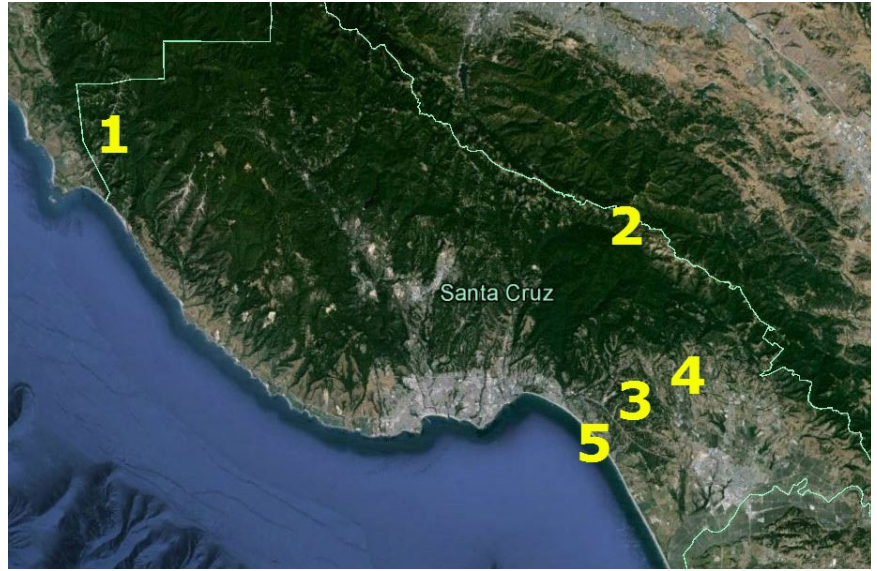


**Birder's
Notebook**

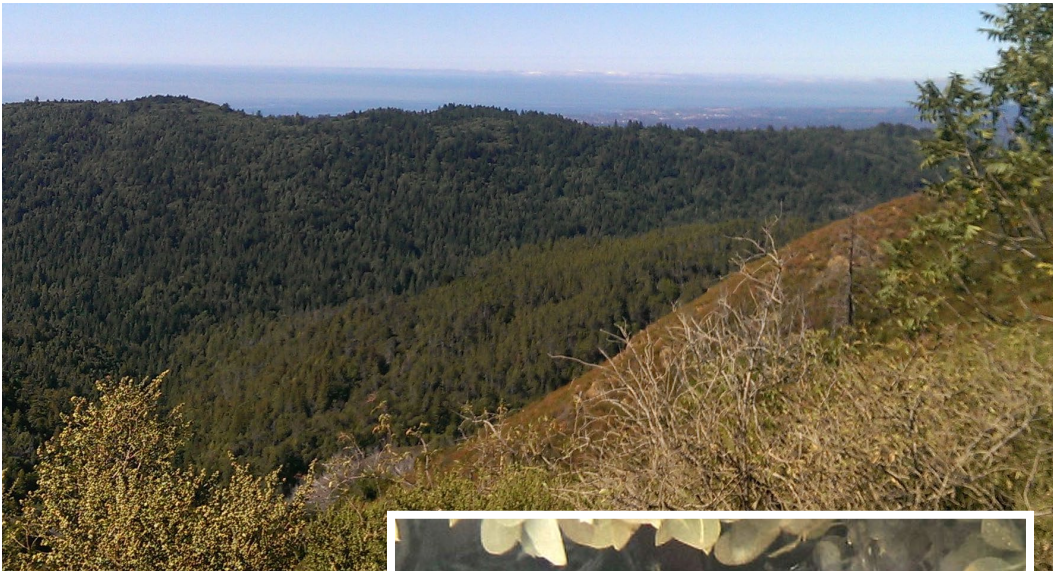
PARTING SHOT

Only birding coverage within the past five years (2011-2015) was considered. During this period, the Monterey Bay Birders listserv (MBB) served as one of the two main sources of information to draw upon. However, MBB content generally focuses on where interesting and unusual birds have been seen.

For this reason, eBird was used to generate a more complete picture of birding coverage. Initially the 'Species Maps' feature in eBird was used to view where birds were being reported, but then eBird released the 'Recent Visits' feature which displays the 100 most recent checklists submitted in Santa Cruz County. This effectively created a digest of data to look at each day, allowing for better assessment of birding coverage. In addition to MBB and eBird, sightings and field trip locations listed in *The Albatross* and sightings reports sent to the journal *North America Birds* were considered.



Under-birded Areas in Santa Cruz County
 1. The Chalks, 2. Loma Prieta, 3. Aptos Hills-Larkin Valley,
 4. Corralitos, 5. Rio Del Mar to Manresa



Above - The panoramic view from Loma Prieta is just as breathtaking in fall as it is in spring
Left - Thick-billed Fox Sparrow, - Alex Rinkert



Birding reports come in a broad range of forms—from systematic, standardized surveys to incidental observations—complicating the quantification of how under-birded an area was. When judging an area, the number of eBird checklists submitted was the most influential factor when deciding how under-birded an area was. Reports from MBB and other sources were used to help fill in any gaps.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Red-breasted Nuthatch (<i>Sitta canadensis</i>)					■	■	■	■				
Pygmy Nuthatch (<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>)					■							
House Wren (<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>)				■	■	■	■	■	■			
Bewick's Wren (<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>)			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (<i>Poliopitila caerulea</i>)			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (<i>Regulus calendula</i>)				■								
Wrentit (<i>Chamaea fasciata</i>)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Western Bluebird (<i>Sialia mexicana</i>)				■	■	■	■					
Swainson's Thrush (<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>)					■	■						
Hermit Thrush (<i>Catharus guttatus</i>)	■			■						■		
American Robin (<i>Turdus migratorius</i>)				■	■	■	■					
Varied Thrush (<i>Ixoreus naevius</i>)				■								
California Thrasher (<i>Toxostoma redivivum</i>)			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Northern Mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)				■		■						
European Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)				■	■							

The gray areas in this eBird bar chart for the Loma Prieta area (SCZ Co.) hotspot show when no data has been entered. Even for common species, there is very little eBird data outside the breeding season.

because of its fascinating environment and potential to produce interesting sightings. The main access through this area is Chalks Road which gently runs up and down along the ridge line. The road cuts through dry manzanita and knobcone pine broken up by patches of bare ground making much of the landscape appear white which gives The Chalks their name. Farther below the ridge line blanketed with scrub is coniferous forest thick with Douglas-fir. This area is good for irruptive species such as Red Crossbill and several exceptionally rare birds have appeared here in the past. There is no easy way to access this mountain ridge line (a steep 1.1 mile hike from the trailhead) and conditions can be inhospitably hot or windy, both factors undoubtedly keeping this area under-birded.

2. Loma Prieta

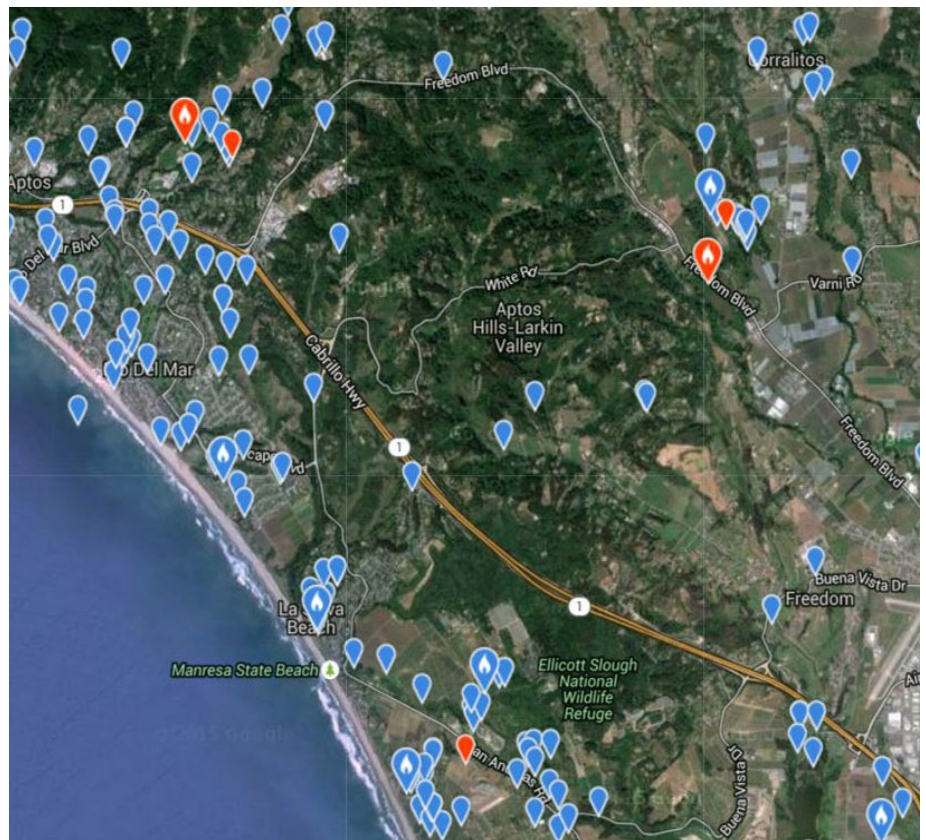
Seeing Loma Prieta on this list of under-birded areas may come as a surprise as birders flock there in spring and summer to seek several breeding species rare in the county. But when the

While not surprising, the five selected areas were all in the Santa Cruz Mountains. This is a region with enough mountains and canyons to fill the five spaces in this selection several times over. In an effort to present a more diverse assemblage of areas, two were selected from the mountains, two from the lowlands, and one located along the coast.

Under-birded Areas

1. The Chalks

This mountain range in Big Basin State Park is just one of many mountain areas receiving little attention; there have been very few eBird reports and no mention in any publications or reports since 2011. This area was chosen over other neglected areas



There are few eBird records (signified by dark and light markers) of Chestnut-backed Chickadees in the Aptos Hills-Larkin Valley area at the center of this map.

Black-chinned Sparrows and Purple Martins leave in late summer, the birders follow suit. Loma Prieta may have the most striking difference in seasonal coverage than any other area in Santa Cruz County. Most birding occurs between April and July; there is very little visitation outside of that period in fall and winter. Illustrating this is the seasonal disparity of eBird checklists that have been submitted at three eBird hotspots on the ridge. Between April and July, eBirders have submitted 282 checklists (70.5 per month), but between August and March only 18 checklists (2.3 per month). While bird activity does slow down at the end of summer, there is still enjoyable birding to be had on the ridge in fall and winter. Migrants can be seen flying over the ridge in fall and multiple groups of Fox Sparrows spend the winter in the steep scrub-covered slopes; in addition to our common ‘Sooty’ group, small numbers of ‘Thick-billed’ and ‘Slate-colored’ Fox Sparrows have been found as well. This is also a good place to encounter irruptive species in fall and winter, and there are still things to learn about the birds that occur on the ridge outside of the breeding season.



Red Crossbill - Beth Hamel

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
White-crowned Sparrow (<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>		■	■	■	■							■
Golden-crowned Sparrow (<i>Zonotrichia atricapilla</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>		■	■	■	■							■
Song Sparrow (<i>Melospiza melodia</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>		■	■	■	■	■		■				■
Lincoln's Sparrow (<i>Melospiza lincolni</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>		■	■	■	■							■
Swamp Sparrow (<i>Melospiza georgiana</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>		■										
California Towhee (<i>Melospiza crissalis</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>		■	■	■	■	■		■				■
Spotted Towhee (<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>		■	■	■	■	■		■				■
Black-headed Grosbeak (<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>				■	■	■						
Lazuli Bunting (<i>Passerina amoena</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>					■							
Red-winged Blackbird (<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>		■	■	■	■							
Brewer's Blackbird (<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>			■		■							
Great-tailed Grackle (<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>					■							
Brown-headed Cowbird (<i>Molothrus ater</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>					■	■	■					
Hooded Oriole (<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>					■							
Bullock's Oriole (<i>Icterus bullockii</i>) <input type="button" value="MAP"/>					■	■						

The irregular coverage at Litchfield Lane is well-represented in the eBird hotspot's bar chart.

3. Aptos Hills-Larkin Valley

This area in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains has received little attention. Three main roads—Larkin Valley, Calabasas, and White Road—traverse the rolling hills covered in a variety of forest types. Live oak woodland predominates, but there are also

redwood and eucalyptus groves, as well as narrow willow riparian corridors. All this plus some grassland and weedy areas makes for a varied landscape that would seem to host an interesting assemblage of species as well as rarities—and birders seeking them. But there are hardly any eBird checklists submitted in this area and only a few rare sightings from the Aptos Hills-Larkin Valley area have been mentioned in other sources. When searching for Chestnut-backed Chickadee reports on eBird in this area, only a few markers appear, despite there being extensive suitable habitat for the species—surely an indicator that this area is rarely visited. Birding here is best on a weekend morning when traffic is lightest along the road. In addition to the three main roads with numerous pullouts, there are several other roads that offer more birding opportunities.

4. Corralitos

Corralitos—bordering the popular Pajaro Valley and tucked away at the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains—receives light to moderate birding coverage at three locations: Merk Road, Corralitos Lagoon, and Litchfield Lane. While each area offers excellent birding throughout the year, they remain irregularly visited. The eBird bar charts for Litchfield Lane highlight the need to cover these areas and the rest of Corralitos more regularly—and more thoroughly. The extensive matrix of agricultural fields, orchards, and pastures segmented by riparian corridors extend beyond these three hotspots. Various places along Corralitos Creek, stops along Green Valley Road where the creek is close by, and other country roads are all likely to yield interesting birds. Away from the three hotspots, the area is best birded by making frequent stops where the road is wide enough to safely pull off.



Lincoln's Sparrow - Michael Bolte

5. Rio Del Mar to Manresa

The coastline between Rio Del Mar and Manresa may be the most under-birded area within two miles of the coast in Santa Cruz County. While visited more often than any other sites mentioned, it does not receive the thorough coverage other sections of the coastline do. The nearshore waters here are regularly scanned in fall and winter when the diversity of seabirds is at its highest, but few birders visit in spring and summer. On land, the rarely birded neighborhoods around Rio Del Mar, Seascape, and La Selva Beach offer a chance for vagrants; gulches leading down to the beach have produced rare birds as well. Additionally, Spring Valley Road off San Andreas Road in the southern section of this area offers excellent birding with its mix of willows, live oaks, eucalyptus, and coffeeberry that line the road—they are quite birdy and worth checking in any season.

Dune Grass - LFL



Events Calendar

November - December 2015



Sunday, November 1 Quail Hollow County Park

Quail Hollow is a beautiful Santa Cruz County Park with a good variety of species and habitats. Join us for a relaxed morning of birding.

Directions: We will meet at 8:00 AM in the Quail Hollow parking lot.

Leader: Eric Feuss, 831-477-0280



California Quail pair - Lisa Fay Larson



Friday, November 6, UCSC Arboretum—Birding and Photography

Join local birder and photographer Jeff Bleam for a casual walk with your camera and binoculars around the UCSC Arboretum. Our focus for the day will be capturing photos of birds, plants, and flowers as we try and build a comfortable, carefree environment to take photos. This will not be a structured workshop; Jeff will offer guidance and education.

Directions: Lets meet and the overflow parking lot at Hagar & East Remote (UCSC) at 8 AM. (GPS: 36.991368, -122.054511). Arboretum opens at 9:00 AM and there is a \$5 entrance fee.

Leader: Jeff Bleam, 307-200-7047



Sunday, November 8 Baldwin Creek

We will bird the marsh and coastal scrub where we may encounter late migrant land birds and waterfowl. There is usually a large gull flock to sort through on the beach, and plowed agricultural fields in this area can pull in large numbers of sparrows and pipits. A spotting scope is recommended.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the 4 Mile Beach parking area off Highway 1; the parking area is about 3.6 miles west of Western Drive in Santa Cruz.

Leader: Alex Rinkert, 831-431-0830, arinkert12@comcast.net



Friday, November 13 Branciforte Creek

Despite the mostly urban setting and concrete channel along much of this stretch of creek, there is some habitat here and often a lot of birds, including occasional surprises. We'll work our way up to the confluence with Carbonera Creek, then back downstream, continuing south toward Ocean Street.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM where the path along the creek meets Market Street in Santa Cruz, at the bridge across the creek by the intersection of Market and Hubbard Streets (just south of the Senior Center).

Leader: Jeff Bleam, 307-200-7047

Blue-gray
Gnatcatcher;
Baldwin Creek
- Michael Bolte



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 Nicholas Levendosky: nlevendosky@gmail.com. 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 15
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 AM at the Delaware Road entrance to Natural Bridges.

Leader: Phil Brown, 831-334-4249, pdpbrown@gmail.com



Friday,
November 20
Corralitos Area

We will visit a few locations in this part of the county, starting at Scott Park. Places we may go from there include Amesti Road, Merk Road, locations around Corralitos itself, and/or several other possibilities (to be determined later).

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking area of Scott Park (3101 Freedom Blvd, just over a half mile north of the intersection of Freedom Blvd and Corralitos Road). The parking lot is at the south end of the park, just north of Corralitos Lagoon (AKA Freedom Lake). Parking is limited (very limited at some of the possible birding spots), so carpooling is recommended.

Leader: Nick Levendosky, n.levendosky@gmail.com



Cedar Waxwing
Corralitos Area
- Jeff Bleam

Northern Harrier female,
Swanton Pond - Michael Bolte



Sunday, November 22
Palo Alto Baylands and Surrounding Areas

We'll watch for bird movement associated with rising tides in the morning, then check out any sightings posted that week, before moving back to the basin and vicinity of the nature center in the afternoon to watch as birds return to the mudflats during tidal drop.

Directions: Meet at 6:45 AM at the Santa Cruz County Government Center (near sign at Ocean Street parking entrance) or at the Palo Alto Baylands at 8:00 AM - preferably at the Environmental Education Center. Sometimes the gate is still locked. If locked, there is parking outside the gate and some great mud flats right there in the basin to be birded.

Please call leader before trip if meeting at the latter location or if one wishes to make arrangement for another meeting place and time.

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



Friday, November 27
Points North

Join us for a post-Thanksgiving exploration of the North Coast of Santa Cruz County. Places we may visit depending on conditions include El Jarro Pt., Swanton Pond and associated grasslands, and Greyhound Rock.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at Coffeetopia on Mission St.
Leader: Jeff Bleam, 307-200-7047



Friday, December 4
Henry Cowell State Park

We will hike to Pipeline Road and the observation deck looking for woodpeckers and Varied Thrush. Brush up on Red Crossbill and Golden-crowned Kinglet calls, but no promises.

Directions: Meet at 8 AM at the small parking lot inside the campground entrance off of Graham Hill Road. There is a state park fee and no really convenient free parking nearby. Heavy rain cancels.

Leader: Bonnie Bedzin, bupsiesioux@gmail.com



Saturday-Sunday, December 5-6
Sacramento NWR / Sutter Buttes

Join us for a potentially spectacular weekend in the Butte Sink Basin, where we'll be observing massive numbers



of southbound and wintering waterfowl that visit the numerous wildlife refuges and rice fields of the area. Raptors are also present in large numbers; target birds include Bald

& Golden Eagles, Peregrine & Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, and maybe even a Rough-legged. White-faced Ibis are numerous, and Sandhill Cranes, Common Moorhen, Yellow-billed Magpies, and Ring-necked Pheasant are all expected. Tundra Swans are likely. But the real attraction is the waterfowl; the sheer numbers of Ross's and Snow Geese make for a spectacular trip and will be our focal point. Five species of geese are likely—also tremendous numbers and species of ducks, with a chance of Eurasian Wigeon. Exact itinerary will be decided as the trip unfolds, but we'll include a drive through the scenic Sutter Buttes, with a chance for Lark Sparrow and Mountain Bluebird. Bring cameras if you have them, and be prepared for lunch in the field.

Directions: Meet at 8:30 AM on Saturday morning in the parking lot at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (about 20 miles north of Williams, just off of Interstate 5). Bring hand held radios if you have them. The leader will have a few to share; please bring AAA batteries.

Leader: Clay Kempf, ltjaeger@att.net



Tuesday, December 8
Pinto Lake

There should be a good mix of waterfowl and land birds at this time of year.

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

Leader: Bob Ramer, 831-426-7342, rjrmer@sbcglobal.net



Friday, December 11
San Lorenzo River

We should find sparrows, diving ducks, and a mix of gulls, among other things. The trees around San Lorenzo Park and the County Building sometimes hold rare wintering species so surprises are possible.

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

Leader: Jeff Bleam, 307-200-7047



Sunday, December 13
Beginning Birding 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 AM at the Delaware road entrance to Natural Bridges.

Leader: Phil Brown, 831-334-4249, pdpbrown@gmail.com



Left: Snow & Ross's Geese - Lisa Fay Larson
Above: Sandhill Crane - Andy Knorr



Friday, December 18
Lower UCSC

The grasslands and other habitats of this area, including the Farm and Arboretum, often produce an interesting mix of species. 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: Jeff Bleam, 307-200-7047

PLEASE SEE PAGE 10 FOR CBC INFORMATION!

Northern Flicker, UCSC Farm - Lee Jaffe



OFFICER NEEDED!

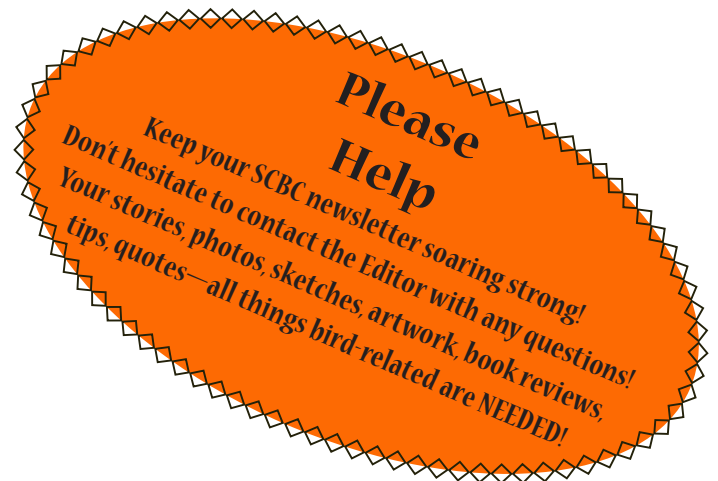
The Santa Cruz Bird Club needs a new Membership & Circulation officer in 2016!

Our current officer, David Ekdahl, is stepping down February 1, 2016. David has been the SCBC Membership Officer for a little over 27 years! Before that he was President for 4 years; and before that Vice President/Programs for another 4 years!

MANY, many thanks to David for his more-than-average years of dedication and service to our club!

Lets hear it for David!

Black-footed Albatross - Chris Hartzell



**The Albatross
Needs
Your Input**



*The 59th Annual Christmas
Bird Count for
Santa Cruz County
Saturday, December 19, 2015*

The National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for Santa Cruz County will be held this year on Saturday, December 19th¹. Please mark your calendars now and prepare for a day of birding, fun and excitement for the experienced and new birders alike.

The fall migration has been quite thrilling this year. We'll see what birds join us for December; a surprising vagrant is always fun. However, as always, diversity and abundances remain the focus of the count. Last year, we had 165 species on count day, but 174 species during count week, putting count around 10-year count average (171). Everyone's help in maintaining participation and diversity (species count) is greatly desired and appreciated.

We shall see what birds join us for the CBC this December. A surprising vagrant is always fun. Although rare birds get the limelight, diversity and abundances remain the focus of the count. The real value of the CBC is in the counting of "regular" birds. Current counts are added to past years' data, and this helps to track the ups and downs of the local bird populations, as well as indicating the uncommon ones (species of concern) in each section. This value grows with the long-term tracking of the numbers of individuals of each species across the years. The Christmas Bird Count is considered by some to be the progenitor of eBird.

The 15-mile diameter count circle reaches from Davenport to New Brighton Beach, and from Boulder Creek to the ocean, thus encompassing a wide array of species habitats.

Please join the 59th Annual Christmas Bird Count, and then enjoy the countdown dinner! All are welcome to join the all-day event which happens rain or shine.

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

¹The Santa Cruz circle for the National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is always on the first Saturday of the Audubon Society's official count period. The period always begins December 14th and ends January 5th.

*CBC Countdown Potluck Dinner
Saturday Evening December 19*

This year the countdown dinner will be held at the Soquel Glen Mobile Home Park event center. There will be directional flyers provided to section leaders. However, for anyone who cannot attend the count, but wishes to partake in the countdown with food and friends, the mobile home park is along Noble Gulch Creek and is located at 5470 Soquel Dr, Soquel, CA 95073. (The cross street is Soquel Drive and Pepperwood Way (not Silver Birch Lane). There is a Stop and Go Market on the other side of Soquel Drive, to mark vicinity. The event center is along Del Rio Circle - the first left from Pepperwood Way (all within park).

Bring your bird list and a dish to share—main, vegetable, salad, dessert, or bread, and a beverage of choice 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.

Red-winged Blackbirds - Beth Hamel





*Moss Landing Christmas Bird Count
Friday, January 1, 2016*

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 countdown dinner at Pajaro Dunes.

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



Moss Landing - Lisa Fay Larson

*Pinnacles National Park Christmas Bird Count
Saturday, January 2, 2016*



Join us for the 20th Annual Pinnacles Christmas Bird Count. The count is held with the full cooperation of the National Park staff and includes their Condor recovery team; indeed without them it would be very difficult to pull off. There is work to do on both sides of the mountains and we could certainly use people on the west side: Bryant, Stonewall, and Shirttail Canyon Roads, as well as the Salinas River. We gather at a restaurant in Hollister at day's end.

For more information please contact Rusty Scalf, rscalf@sonic.net or Steve Lombardi, hotrock175@gmail.com.

Pinnacles - Lisa Fay Larson



Santa Cruz Birds

By Steve Gerow

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2015

It was an interesting summer. Unusually warm seas brought seabirds swarming to cooler and more productive nearshore waters. We had several significant records of birds breeding (or possibly breeding) away from known areas. Add to that several notable rarities and the usual mix of “rare but regulars,” wanderers, and lingerers, and we have further proof that birding never stops being unpredictable and exciting.

Mostly Sooty Shearwaters - James Maughn



A late **Northern Pintail** stayed at Neary Lagoon until June 19 (PW, JG, PB, v.ob.) A summering **Bufflehead** was in the Pajaro Dunes area July 9-27 (AR, NL, v.ob.). Also rare for summer was an **Eared Grebe** in the lower Pajaro River on July 12, and three were in the same area on August 29 (AR). Substantial numbers of **Sooty Shearwaters** swarmed in nearshore waters in late summer, with a high count of 289,000 from Seacliff State Beach on July 27 (AR). A pair of **Great Egrets** nested in eucalyptus by the upper Santa Cruz Harbor in July and August, with three large young still in the nest on August 18 (RG, MP). This is a late nesting for this species, and it is also only

the second time they have been confirmed breeding in Santa Cruz County away from the small colony at Pinto Lake (the first

was also at the Santa Cruz Harbor, a single nest in 2005).

American Avocets away from their usual Pajaro Valley haunts included eight at Aptos Creek mouth on July 27 (MS), and 2 at Laguna Creek mouth on July 29 (GM). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was along lower Watsonville Slough by Pajaro Dunes on August 29 (AR). Fall migrant **Lesser Yellowlegs** were in above-average numbers this season, with multiple reports starting July 30, mostly from the

Lesser & Greater Yellowlegs - David Stidle



Pajaro Valley. They were especially numerous along lower Watsonville Slough in the Pajaro Dunes area, with a high count of 17 on August 29 (RR, BR). **Ruddy Turnstone** reports included one at Pajaro Dunes on July 27 (NL, AR), three near Pleasure Point on August 9 (RR, BR), and two more at Pajaro Dunes on August 29 (AR). Two **Baird's Sandpipers** at Laguna Creek mouth on July 27 were on the early side (GM), and three more were reported in August (v.ob). About eight **Pectoral Sandpipers** were found from August 14-30 (v.ob.). An impressive concentration of about 80 **Wilson's Phalaropes** was reported from the Pajaro River mouth areas on July 29 (JV), but it is unclear if any of this was in Santa Cruz County. Otherwise, nine or so were found in various locations from July 17-August 31 (v.ob.).



Sabine's Gulls - Beth Hamel

Standing out among the various seabirds gathering in near-coastal waters this summer were an exceptional number of **Sabine's Gulls** observed from shore, mostly in a concentrated movement between July 23-28. The

high count was 1575 (!) off Pajaro Dunes on July 27 (NL, AR), many very close to shore, far exceeding any previous shore-based count from Santa Cruz County. Sabine's Gulls are typically only rarely seen from shore at all, and when they are it's usually just individuals. **Elegant Terns** were again in good numbers along the county coast, though for the most part not as abundant as last year. However an especially strong movement was noted off the Laguna Creek mouth on August 16 (KJ), when an estimated 6000 birds passed down the coast over the course of an hour, for one of the higher counts ever recorded in this county. **Black Skimmer** reports included one skimming in the lower Pajaro River on June 13 (AG, CF), and two flying down the coast past Pajaro Dunes on July 28 (BS).

Black Swifts have not been known to nest in Santa Cruz County in about two decades. This year, observations of numbers of Black Swifts along the Wilder Ranch coast, mostly in July and early August, provided the most encouraging evidence of possible nesting in many years. The activity seemed to be centered near Sand Hill Bluff, focused around some sea caves which could provide nesting sites, and a good deal of vocalizing and displaying by up to nine swifts was observed on several occasions from July 21 to August 13 (AR, v.ob). Nesting was not proven, but the consistent presence of these swifts along with their behavior was at least suggestive of breeding. Migrant **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** arrived over three weeks early this year, with a female/immature type in Santa Cruz on July 21 (AR), an adult female at Moran Lake Park on July 22 (SG, MC), and a young male joining it there on July 31 (SG, v.ob.), providing only the third, fourth, and fifth July records for Santa Cruz County. Five more

Black-chins were found in August (v.ob.). A male Rufous Hummingbird at Liddell Creek on June 12 was presumably an early fall migrant (JB).

There were no confirmations of nesting by **American Kestrels** in the county this period, though some birds were present in regular nesting areas and some breeding may well have occurred. A pair present in the sandhills habitat at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park (AR) was behaving like it may have been nesting at that somewhat unexpected site. Three Willow Flycatchers were recorded from June 7-15 (AR, AG, GM, RN), bringing the spring migrant total up to four. The first fall migrant **Willow Flycatcher** of the season was at Natural Bridges from August 18-24 (SM, PF). Post-breeding dispersant **Say's Phoebes** were in Moore Creek Preserve on July 3 (JB, PB, et al.), and along Merk Road on July 24 (RS). Along with one earlier in spring, this brings the total of out-of-season Say's Phoebes to three for this year, unprecedented for Santa



Say's Phoebe - Lisa Sheridan

Cruz County. A flock of four fall migrant **Western Kingbirds** at Harkins Slough on August 15 (RW) was a nice gathering for the area. A **Loggerhead Shrike**, apparently a post-breeding dispersant, appeared by Swanton Pond on July 26 (MB), and one was at Pajaro Dunes on August 7 (AR).



Black-chinned_Hummingbird - Jeff Bleam

Two active **Purple Martin** nests were watched at Bonny Doon Preserve this season (AR, GS, CF, v.ob.), with large young being fed in at least one nest on July 26. This is the first confirmed nesting actually within Santa Cruz County since 2001 (they have nested regularly just outside the county near Loma Prieta in recent years), and the first recording for the Ben Lomond Mountain area in recent decades. A **Bank Swallow** was photographed at Pajaro Dunes on June 22

(DE, CV). Two **White-breasted Nuthatches** were along the Pajaro River near the Santa Clara County line on June 17 (NL), one was at Star Creek Ranch on July 2 (AR), and one was in Quail Hollow Ranch on August 14 (AR). New nest boxes attracted nesting **Western Bluebirds** to the UCSC Arboretum, the first confirmed nesting on the campus in many years (CB, v.ob.), though they have been regular breeders in some nearby areas in recent years.

Late spring vagrant warblers included an **American Redstart** at Natural Bridges on June 12 (AR, NL), a **Northern Parula** in west Santa Cruz on June 10 (AG), and a **Magnolia Warbler** recorded singing at Liddell Creek on June 6 (JG). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** in Ben Lomond on July 22 was interesting (JW)—perhaps a bird that summered in the riparian area along the nearby San Lorenzo River or Love Creek? A **Black-chinned Sparrow** feeding a fledgling near Loma Prieta on June 16 (AR) confirmed successful nesting in that area again this year. A **Bell's Sparrow** was in the Loma Prieta area on August 13



Savannah Sparrow - Lisa Fay Larson

(AR). Four **Savannah Sparrows**, including one singing, were in grasslands near the Pajaro River close to the Santa Clara County line on June 17 (NL). This is well away from known nesting areas in Santa Cruz County, where they are only known to breed along the immediate coast and in near-coastal grasslands and marsh edges. A summering **White-crowned Sparrow** was also along the Pajaro near the Santa Clara border on June 17 (NL). This was most likely a lingering individual of one of the wintering subspecies, as the resident coastal forms are not known to wander any significant distances.

The rarest bird found this period was a **Dark-eyed Junco** of the "Gray-headed" form, photographed on upper



Dark-eyed Junco, Gray-headed form - Glen Tepke

Mt. Madonna Road near Loma Prieta on June 16 (AR). This is only the third record of this form in Santa Cruz County, and the mid-June date seems especially odd. A young male **Summer Tanager** stayed around Natural Bridges from August 15-29 (PS, RW, NL, LG, v.ob.). Early June had a good showing of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, with seven found from June 5-15 (CF, AR, PY, JE, JY, BT). Do any **Blue Grosbeaks** nest in Santa Cruz County? A male was singing in possible breeding habitat along Pescadero Creek in the extreme southeast part of the county on June 3 (AR). They are known to nest along the Pajaro River just outside the county borders in Santa Clara, so breeding in this county is something to be watched for. A male Indigo Bunting visited Meder Canyon from June 5-15 (JG et al.)



Rose-breasted Grosbeak - Lisa Fay Larson

Western Meadowlarks have gotten quite sparse in the breeding season in Santa Cruz County. This season there were only two reports. Particularly interesting was

a recently fledged juvenile that turned up in Quail Hollow Ranch County Park on June 5, for the first modern breeding season record for the park, and generally unexpected in the San Lorenzo Valley (AR). There is some potentially suitable grassland adjacent to the park, so perhaps a pair or two nest there, or maybe it dispersed from farther away? The other was by Pescadero Creek in the southeast corner of the county on July 3 (AR). About a dozen **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were reported in the late spring and summer (v.ob.), including a couple of reports from Sunset State Beach, where the species has bred along the immediate coast some years (v.ob.).

Cited Observers: Clive Bagshaw, Jeff Bleam, Michael Bolte, Phil Brown, Mary Crouser, David Ekdahl, John Ellis, Park Forman, Craig Fosdick, Aaron Gabbe, John Garrett, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Rich Griffith, Kent Johnson, Nick Levendosky, Gary Martindale, Shirley Murphy, Russell Norvell, Margaret Perham, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Richard Sandkuhle, Pete Solé, Mark Stephenson, Gary Strachan, Brian Sullivan, Breck Tyler, Jonathan Vargas, Connie Vigno, Peter Wampler, Randy Wardle, Jim Williams, Joanne Yablonsky, Phil Yule, v.ob. = various observers



Purple Martin Pair - LFL



Purple Martins

If we were such and so, the same as these,
 maybe we too would be slingers and sliders,
 tumbling half over in the water mirrors,
 tumbling half over at the horse heads of the sun,
 tumbling our purple numbers.

Twirl on, you and your satin blue.
 Be water birds, be air birds.
 Be these purple tumblers you are.

Dip and get away
 From loops into slip-knots,
 Write your own ciphers and figure eights.
 It is your wooded island here in Lincoln park.
 Everybody knows this belongs to you.

Five fat geese
 Eat grass on a sod bank
 And never count your slinging ciphers,
 your sliding figure eights.

A man on a green paint iron bench,
 Slouches his feet and sniffs in a book,
 And looks at you and your loops and slip-knots,
 And looks at you and your sheaths of satin blue,
 And slouches again and sniffs in the book,
 And mumbles: It is an idle and a doctrinaire exploit.

Go on tumbling half over in the water mirrors.
 Go on tumbling half over at the horse heads of the sun.
 Be water birds, be air birds.
 Be these purple tumblers you are.

Carl Sandburg, 1920



Purple Martin - Christian Schwarz

Hawk Rescue

The Story of a Recent Emergency Rescue of a Cooper's Hawk from Wildlife Emergency Services blog

On Saturday, October 10th we were notified of a hawk inside the Home Depot off 41st Avenue in Capitola. Apparently, the hawk was going after a small bird when it flew into the store through one of the large roll-up doors. It then made its way into the main retail area where it stayed high, flying through and between a matrix of metal beams and framework.

Unfortunately, this immature Cooper's Hawk had injured itself in a collision with one of the many obstacles in the store, quite possibly one of the fans.

When we arrived, the bird was able to fly, but its right leg was badly damaged. The bird could not put any weight on it—the leg just dangled at its side.

The injury complicated matters. Normally, a healthy accipiter would be quick to land on a bal-chatri—a trap that uses live prey to lure predatory birds, but this hawk was in severe pain and did not show much interest in the trap we had placed.

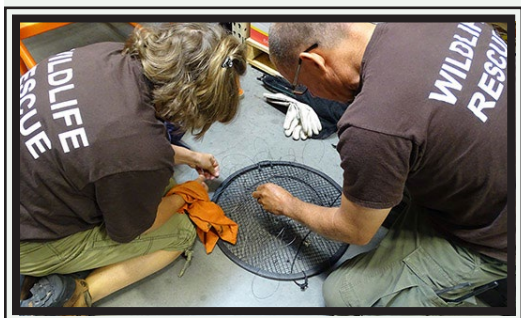
That night, after the store closed at 8:00 pm, the store manager, Doug, helped us darken areas of the building so we could use spotlights to help conceal our approach with nets, but the bird was too wary and traumatized.

The next day, rescuers from Native Animal Rescue also tried luring the bird, but, again, the hawk showed little interest.

Finally, on Wednesday, the bird landed on the bal-chatri. We waited, watching from afar for a sign that it was caught but it took off back to its perch above the indoor plant section (where there was a source of water at ground level).



Cooper's Hawk in Home Depot



Preparing the bal-chatri

Then, on Thursday afternoon, we placed a mouse and a finch in the bal-chatri and set the trap in the same spot as the day before. Once more, with the shopping isles blocked off and the garden door closed, we waited.

Within minutes the hawk was on the trap!

Again, we waited for a sign that it was caught. Finally, we received the sign. The bird tried to lift off but couldn't; we could only hope it wasn't doing more damage to its leg.

We rushed the trap, got control of the bird, and removed the nooses from its legs. It was then quickly boxed and transported minutes away to Native Animal Rescue.

The Button Quail, mouse, and finch we used as lures during these days were certainly stressed but returned home, unharmed.

THANK YOU HOME DEPOT MANAGERS FOR OUTSTANDING ASSISTANCE IN HELPING US RESCUE THE INJURED HAWK!

THANK YOU MARY DALTON AND THE NATIVE ANIMAL RESCUE TEAM!

UPDATE: On October 15th the Cooper's Hawk was seen by an avian veterinarian who attempted to place a pin in its broken leg. Sadly, the hawk expired during the procedure.



RESCUE RESOURCES

Native Animal Rescue is dedicated to the rehabilitation and release of injured, sick, and orphaned wildlife:

www.nativeanimalrescue.org/what-we-do

(831) 462-0726

1855 17th Ave. Santa Cruz CA 95062

Wildlife Emergency Services, based out of Moss Landing, performs on-call rescues all over the Monterey Bay Area:

www.wildlifeservices.org

(866) WILD-911

See their blog with some of their latest rescues: www.wildlifeemergencyservices.blogspot.com.

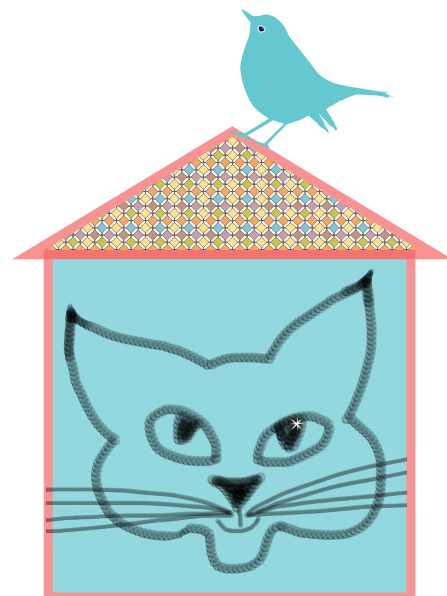


Photo collage care of wildlifeservices.org/

Catio Tour Coming in April

“What is a Catio?!? A catio is an enclosed space for domestic cats to enjoy fresh air and sunlight, without impacting the surrounding environment. It can range from a screened window box all the way up to a catwalk from an attic window out to a screened gazebo! Caticos keep birds safe from cats and cats safe from predators! The **Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter** and **Native Animal Rescue** will be hosting a tour of caticos this coming April 2016 and the public is invited to join us to learn more about native animal rehabilitation, local birds, humane wildlife exclusion, and generally how to be good neighbors to our wild neighbors. Watch for more news at www.scanimalshelter.org or join our e-news lists and have shelter news delivered monthly right to your inbox!”

Illustration - LFL





Birder's Notebook

The Hermit Thrush

I return to coax the woodland sprite
My "tchuk, tchuk, tchuk" implores
Your chubbiness so close alights
And sweetest eyes reward
Angel kisses on throat to breast
Are smudged by pixie dust
I edge closer and dare to test
A momentary trust
The minutes pass and I am blessed
With shared rapt regard
Caramel freckles, cinnamon tail
And chocolate back complete
A masterpiece of forest dale
When next shall we meet?

- *Lisa Fay Larson*



Artwork - LFL

New SCBC Members Welcome!

Keffi Bell	Sep 2015
Burton & Cynthia Rees	Sep 2015
Joy Jennings Danziger	Sep 2015
Nancy Dixon	Sep 2015

Submission for the Albatross—Guidelines

ASSEMBLING THE

NEEDED
Recent
photos of Santa
Cruz Bird
Sightings!!!



ALBATROSS

Your participation is WELCOME!

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 **needed**:

- 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 BIRDS or 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



Black and White Warbler, Pinto Lake - Randy Wardle

Submissions NEEDED!
DEADLINE for
Jan-Feb issue
December 1,
2015

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PARTING SHOT: "SNOWY LIFT-OFF"
- CATHY SUMMA WOLFE



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