



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Find Your Inner Birder – an Interview with Alvaro Jaramillo

By Debbie Diersch, Monterey Bay Birding Festival

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PARTING SHOT

The Monterey Bay Birding Festival Association is excited to announce that we are hosting three wonderful events with Alvaro Jaramillo at the 2016 birding festival! Alvaro writes the “Identify Yourself” feature article for *Bird Watcher’s Digest*, wrote *American Birding Association Field Guide to Birds of California*, which was published last fall, and owns *Alvaro’s Adventures*, which operates international birding tours.

During our interview, Alvaro generously shared his philosophy and insights into bird watching and how it is evolving. I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did. Let’s begin....

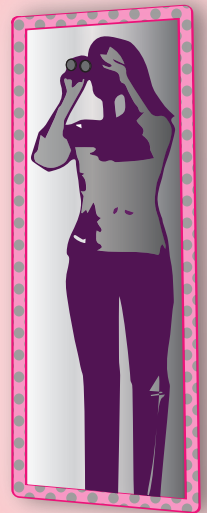
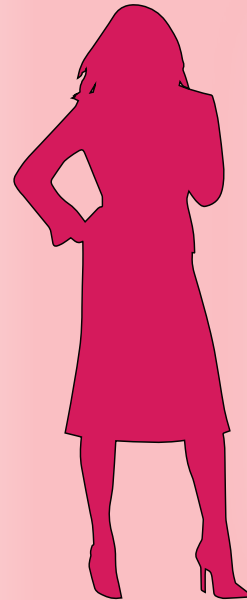
Alvaro, what do you want readers to know about you?

As far as birding goes, I’m different from some of the other people who are interested in bird ID and distribution because the main person I’m interested in reaching is the beginner or intermediate birder. It’s all about communicating this type of info to beginners/intermediate birders. I want them to know that it’s not all difficult or about trying to become skilled. When you put it in a way that makes it fun and simple, you don’t need to be a biologist to figure it out. I want to communicate to the every person.

As a young birder I was highly competitive. Let’s do a big day, keep a year list, but there came a time when it seemed empty. We have these wonderful birds, and it’s much richer than competition. Just enjoy the breeze, have a good dinner with friends, and make it the best it can be.

What do you find most fascinating about birds and birding?

It’s the most versatile and unending kind of endeavor you can get into. You can do everything else while you bird. You can even play tennis and bird at the same time. It adds to almost anything else you can do. Birds take you to places that are amazing. We go out on the bay and see killer whales as well as birds. You might not have gotten there if



Artwork - Lisa Fay Larson

weren't going for the birds in the first place. I can't imagine any other pastime you can have that is more fluid, diverse, and rich, and that adds another element to of life in this way.

Why did you decide to write *American Birding Association Field Guide to Birds of California* and what makes it special?

That's an interesting story... I wrote other books on orioles and blackbirds, but it has a really small fan base. I didn't feel like I reached very many people. My next book was a field guide to birds in Chile that reached a lot of people. It changed their contact with nature. But you cannot go to the bookstore and find these books because they are too discrete. Someone asked me if I would consider writing the California bird book. So here was the opportunity to write it for every person. It would be sold at the local bookstore and everyone would find it useful. I wrote it in a voice that simplified it. Such as the most basic way to find a bird, learn where it lives, see an amazing photo, and finally start getting it.

This book distills it down enough for beginning and intermediate birders.

Are you working on any other books?

Yes, birds of Patagonia, which will be a standard birding guide. I'm also thinking about doing a book that focuses exclusively on gulls, and makes it simple to the extreme. People think gulls are the most difficult birds to identify and won't even try, but it's not necessarily so. This book is still in the thinking phase. Maybe a few years out.

What will you speak about at the Monterey Bay Birding Festival?

Something I would love to talk about is living in a unique time when things are rapidly changing, and we can watch it changing. I'd like to share my story of a trip through weird warm water—"the warm water blob." I'll be looking at what the birds are reacting to,

The Republic of Chile

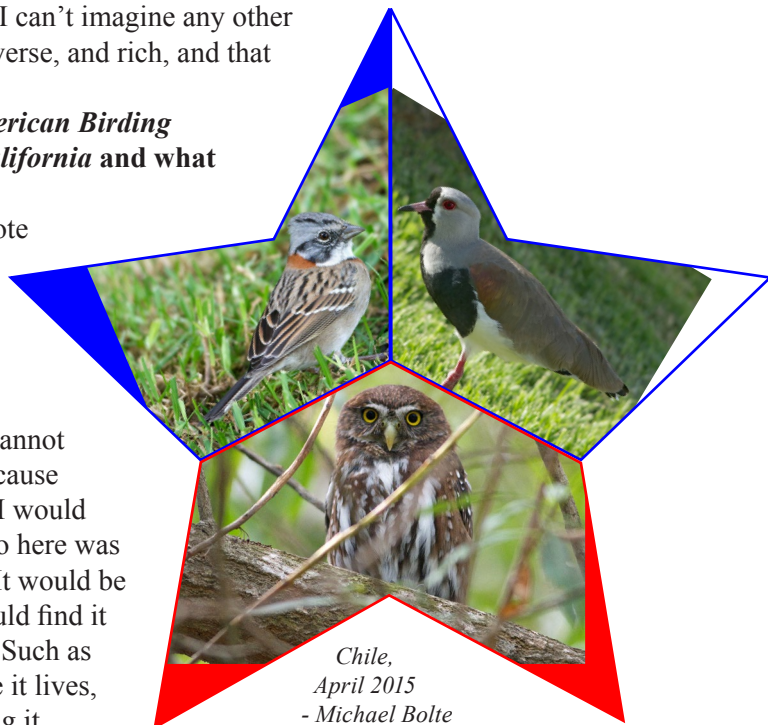
positive/negative, a bit of both. You can be an explorer because every year is different; you're charting it and tracking it. You can try to find the answer to what's happening with our birds and where it is all heading.

Will you be bringing your books to sell and sign at the festival?

Yes, if that's okay with the festival, I would like that.

What of particular interest do you expect to see on your pelagic field trips?

Monterey Bay is the key attraction. It's the bay itself. The Monterey Bay is a very deep water canyon. We have two places like that in the Americas, and Monterey Bay is THE ONE! It is as unique as going to the plains of Africa or Antarctica; there is no other place like it. When we go out to see the ocean birds, we'll also see whales, dolphins, and other sea life. Let's go and



*Chile,
April 2015
- Michael Bolte*

*Bird Photos Clockwise
Rufous-collared Sparrow, Southern Lapwing, Austral Pygmy Owl*

*Alvaro's Adventures
Pelagic Trip
- Sharon Hull*





see what's out there. I know Monterey Bay will show us so many wonderful things!

Have you been involved with the festival before and, if so, in what way?

Yes, about 10 years ago. I gave talks and bird walks. It was fun, a great experience, and I'm looking forward to being a part of it again. This is a great opportunity to bring people from all over the continent to see the birds and the bay. There are thousands and thousands of people who don't realize the amazing birds and nature we have here. If you want to go on a pelagic trip you know this is the place! The festival needs to be huge because the place is huge, and the birds are huge. It's the best time of the year to be here, and we need to reach out to get people here. The festival has a role in this.

Do you expect bird watching to evolve in future years and, if so, what kinds of activities will people be most interested in?

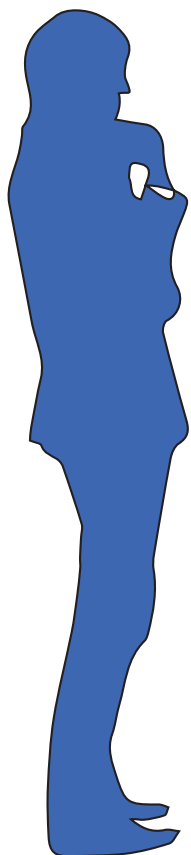
Yes, it will evolve. I think people will be interested in having real experiences, seeing something happening right there and you connect with it. It could be seeing a migrating or rare bird. It's about connecting with a time and place and situation. This is so real to me that it replaces a lot of things that are virtual and fleeting. You have to be there, in the moment, to get



Pink-footed Shearwater - Jeff Bleam

the real effect of birding. If you want to see these birds, whales, etc., you have to come to the Monterey Bay. More people who are birders are trying to get that connection. Sometimes it's through photography. Documentation of these events is becoming more important than listing. We're going to realize that the experiences are so important that birding will shift from lists to documentation with photos and videos. It parlays to a broader picture that is conservation science. More and more average people will take up birding and will see it's not weird. They'll look in their back yards and pay attention to the birds that they didn't even know existed or that didn't seem accessible to them. As soon as acceptance gets into it, we'll see more and more birders. It's the whole experiential thing that people are looking for.

Birders become birders in three different times of their life; when they're older, right after college, or when they're kids. The older birders typically get into it because they have more time, but for kids, it's when someone sparks it for them. Most kids don't get to see birds or understand them at all. Sometimes people go a little too far with binoculars or how to use the scope. This can be too complex for the kids to really get into. Just go to the local pond and look at the ducks or go to the beach and watch the gulls or go to the feeder and watch those birds. Tell the kids stories about them. Make it less complex. Try visiting a place where they rehabilitate injured raptors, do bird banding, or provide other opportunities to make it real for the kids.



Find Your Inner Birder - Artwork by Lisa Fay Larson



Alvaro pelagic trip sights: Tufted Puffin and Mola Mola (Ocean Sunfish) - Ron Wolf

What is your objective when you take people out birding?

I take people birding to all different parts of the world to have fun. It's a birding vacation. The idea is to go out to see great places, great birds, and great wildlife as a way to have a traveling vacation through birds. The goal is to have the experience more than to build a big list of birds. Although that will happen, too. I want people to go see the birds, but also to get to see and experience so much more. Birding used to be the most important thing at the expense of everything else. But that sort of experience appeals to only a certain number of people or at a certain time of their lives.



Any final thoughts?

Put out a message to anyone who has never actually gone birding ever and wonders, "Is this for me?" I would say, "Just dive in." Once a person finds birding they never leave it.

2016 MBBF events featuring Alvaro Jaramillo include:

Friday, September 23, 2016, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm –

Presentation on *Birding the Blob: Effects of Weird Warm Weather and the Drought on Birds*.

Includes book signing of Alvaro's book – *American Birding Association Field Guide to Birds of California*.

Saturday, September 24, 2016, Full-day Pelagic Field Trip

Sunday, September 25, 2016, Half-day Pelagic Field Trip *

***Note:** If you've never gone on a pelagic trip or have a tight Sunday schedule, Alvaro is offering the unusual opportunity of a half-day Sunday trip to launch your ocean experience.

The Monterey Bay Birding Festival takes place from September 23 through 25, 2016. For more information please visit: montereybaybirding.org or send an email to montereybaybirdingfestival@gmail.com.

Alvaro Jaramillo Bio: Chilean-born Alvaro Jaramillo is a walking encyclopedia of bird information and an expert on the birds of Chile and New World Blackbirds. He started birding as a youth in Toronto, Ontario, and now works as a tour guide for *Field Guides, Inc.* and as Senior Biologist with the *San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory*. Jaramillo authored *Birds of Chile*, coauthored *New World Blackbirds: The Icterids*, has contributed to *National Geographic* and *Sibley* bird guides, writes a column for *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and is an associate editor for the ABA (American Birding Association) publication *North American Birds*. His most recent book is *American Birding Association Field Guide to Birds of California*. He helped translate the *Neotropical Companion* into Spanish, serves on the *American Ornithologists' Union's South American Classification Committee*, and is active in the ABA. For more information about Alvaro please visit: alvarosadventures.com.





Imagine a World Without Birdsong...

Monterey Bay area birders, please join us for a one-time showing of *The Messenger*, a new film about the incredible flight and plight of song birds all over the world.

Monday, June 6 at 7:30PM
at The Del Mar Theater
1124 Pacific Ave, Santa Cruz
\$10 General Admission
\$25 "Song Bird Supporter" (If you want to make a tax-deductible donation to support the Monterey Bay Birding Festival, after you buy your ticket, just scroll down a little further and click to donate.)

Su Rynard's wide-ranging and contemplative documentary *The Messenger* explores our deep-seated connection to birds and warns that the uncertain fate of songbirds might mirror our own. Moving from the northern reaches of the Boreal Forest to the base of Mount Ararat in Turkey to the urban streets of New York, *The Messenger* brings us face-to-face with a remarkable variety of human-made perils that have devastated thrushes, warblers, orioles, tanagers, grosbeaks and many other airborne music-makers.

The Messenger extends our "birds' eye view," with a fresh glimpse into their migratory journeys.

Note this rare showing will only take place if we reserve at least 80 tickets! Otherwise *the showing will be cancelled* and no ticket fees will be charged.

So please reserve a ticket early, and post on your email/facebook/twitter feeds the description above and the following link: tugg.com/events/96774

This event supports the Monterey Bay Birding Festival, September 23-25, 2016



Bullocks Oriole - John Fox,
Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler
- Lisa Larson



Left:
"Belting" Bewick's Wren
- Lisa Sheridan

Right:
Yellow Warbler
- Beth Hamel



Events Calendar

May - August 2016



Sunday, May 1 Loma Prieta

We will bird the chaparral ridge that divides Santa Cruz and Santa Clara County. Specialties we might see include Bell's and Black-chinned Sparrow, Purple Martin, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and other higher elevation mountain breeders. We will look for hummingbirds, warblers, other land birds migrating over the ridge, and may encounter other types of migrants passing over. Weather here can be cold, hot, and windy all in one morning, so come prepared for changing conditions. Plan for 2-3 miles of mostly level walking.

Directions: If heading north on either Highway 17 or Old Soquel-San Jose Road, take a right onto Summit Road. Continue on Summit Road (which turns into Highland Way past Old Soquel-San Jose Road) and turn left onto Mt. Bache Road. Follow Mt. Bache Road for about a mile to the Loma Prieta Way intersection; keep right here and continue heading uphill for three more miles. We will meet at the very wide pullout at the intersection of Loma Prieta Way and Summit/Mt. Madonna Road. Meet at 7:00 AM.

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

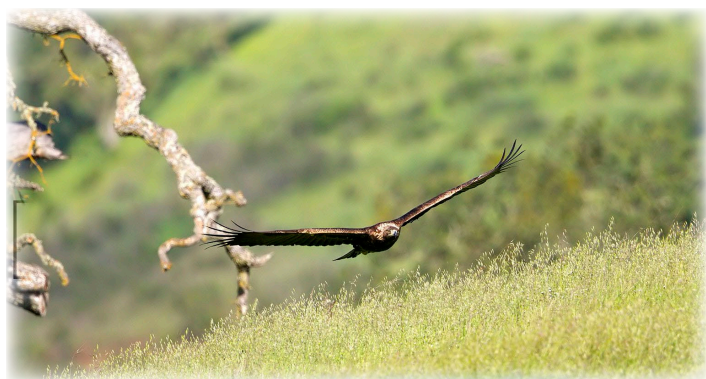


Saturday, May 7 San Benito Excursion

We will explore the areas east of Hollister in San Benito County. The route might include: Quien Sabe Rd, Santa Anita, Santa Ana, Brown's Valley, and Panoche Road as well as others, depending on what birds are around. Birders should bring lunch and drinks; I thought that it would be nice to eat lunch at the end of McCreary Ranch Road on the bridge, a great birding spot and very beautiful with the creek and riparian setting.

Directions: Meet in Tres Pinos at 8:30 AM in front of the Post Office. Park across the street from the Post Office and there we can arrange car sharing.

Leader: Nelson Samuels, samnelo@razzolink.com



Above:
Golden Eagle,
San Benito County

Right:
Quien Sabe Road

- John Fox



Black-chinned Sparrow - Alex Rinkert



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.



Friday, May 13
Schwan Lake

The mix of habitats here (live oaks, patches of grassland, riparian, lake and marsh) hold a variety of nesting species. Also, we may encounter some interesting spring migrants.

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



Friday, May 27
San Lorenzo River

We will probably work our way upstream, looking for breeding birds and there may also be some late spring migrants as well.

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

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



Sunday, May 29
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



Thursday, June 2
Pinto Lake County Park

We'll be looking for American Bitterns, Common Gallinules, and a variety of land birds, as there should be lots of birds around this time of the year.

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

Leader: Bob Ramer, rjramer@sbcglobal.net

Pied-billed Grebe with seven eggs - Andy Knorr



Friday, May 20
Watsonville Care Park

Let's explore this great little riparian park along the Pajaro River while looking for a variety of birds including warblers, orioles, wrens, and other breeding birds. Who knows what may turn up this time of year.

Directions: Meet at Care Park in Watsonville off W. Beach Road at 8:00 AM

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



Sunday, May 22
Corcoran Lagoon & Vicinity

We'll check the lagoon and beach area, and may also visit Moran Lake or other spots along the Live Oak coast.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the north side of Corcoran Lagoon by the Live Oak Library parking lot, off Portola Drive.

Leader: Sharon Hull, plants@cruzio.com



Juvenile American Bittern - Lisa Larson



Sunday, June 5
Rancho del Oso

This is a regular spot to find MacGillivray's Warbler, and Swainson's Thrush is expected. We will look for some expected breeding birds.

Directions: Meet at Waddell Creek Beach at 8:00 AM.

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



MacGillivray's Warbler
- Glen Tepke



Friday, June 10
DeLaveaga Park (south side)

We should find a mix of local forest species and others. In addition to seeing birds, this walk will focus on birding skills, such as birding by ear, and using details of shape, etc., to sort out similar species (such as three rather similarly-marked flycatchers that breed here).

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the trail head at the north end of Park Way (the section to the north of Highway 1), off Prospect Heights. Note that parking is limited in this area. There are a few parking spaces in a dirt lot by the park entrance, but these can be difficult for low-clearance vehicles. There is usually some on-street parking available along Prospect Heights and on nearby side streets. Carpooling is suggested.

Leader: Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



Sunday, June 12
Henry Cowell State Park

We may visit two or three spots in this area, likely including some portion of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park (entrance fee or state park pass required). The riparian forest along the San Lorenzo River in the Felton area can be very productive, with Nuttall's Woodpecker, Western Wood Pewee, Swainson's Thrush, and Yellow Warbler among the regular breeding species. If time and energy allows, we might also look at the pine/oak/chaparral mix near the Henry Cowell campground, where Hermit Thrush and Black-throated Gray Warblers would be some of the expected birds.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM the parking lot at Felton Faire shopping center, at the intersection of Graham Hill Road and Mt. Hermon Road, on the side of the lot closest to Graham Hill.

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



Sunday, June 19
Pacheco Pass State Park

This park is a little over one hour from Santa Cruz. The oak grasslands are old ranch lands and are dotted with large to small ponds. The grasslands can have Grasshopper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow, as well as Western Bluebird and Phainopepla. Both Bald Eagle (San Luis Reservoir) and Golden Eagle.

Directions: Meet at 6:45 AM at the Aptos Wells Fargo Bank for carpooling or at 8:00 AM at the park (there is only one parking area; \$10.00 State Park fee).

Leader: Eric Feuss, 831-477-0280 (h); 408-717-0421 (m). For alternate meeting arrangements, please call home phone and call ahead; mobile for day of trip only.



Western Bluebird - John Fox



Friday, June 24
Moore Creek Preserve

A walk through mostly grasslands, but also some oaks, douglas-fir, and some other habitats. Depending on the weather, large flocks of swallows and sometimes swifts (possibly including Black Swift) may be foraging over the slopes. Expect 3-4 miles of walking with some hills.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM on Shaffer Road near the intersection with Mission Street.

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



Sunday, July 17
Quail Hollow Ranch County Park

This park supports a unique assemblage of species for the Santa Cruz Mountains in part due to its diversity of habitats. We will seek birds of all kinds in grassland, oak woodland, redwood forest, the endemic sandhills, and riparian forest at the pond.

Directions: Meet at 800 Quail Hollow Rd, Felton at the main parking lot at 8:00 AM.

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



Friday, July 29
Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve

The breeding season will be just behind us, but many of the mountain specialties should still be around. Last year Purple Martins nested here until late July, so maybe we will be lucky to see them again this year.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot on Martin Road next to the fire station.

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



Northern Flicker intergrade - Alex Rinkert

This shot looks amazing in color - see our website!!!



Black-footed Albatross - Jeff Bleam



Check
out the
Alby IN COLOR
on our SCBC
website

Remember to visit the SCBC website at santacruzbirdclub.org
for calendar events, meetings, and announcements!



What Time

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It's TIME to RENEW your Santa Cruz Bird Club MEMBERSHIP!

For easy dues-paying, a remittance envelope is enclosed in this issue. To send in a renewal (or a donation), fill in the relevant information, put in your check, add postage, and mail.

Please pay the dues now, while the envelope is in hand, so you won't miss the September/October issue of the *ALBATROSS* in the fall.

A Gift of Birds and Birding?

Do you have a friend who is interested in birds? An SCBC membership would be a thoughtful—and perhaps inspiring—gift. Fill in the information for the giftee, and send in the payment. Additional envelopes are usually available from club officers and trip leaders.

Artwork - Lisa Fay Larson



Seabirding Trips

Monterey Seabirds

Monterey Seabirds features year-round pelagic trips enabling you to experience the seabirds of the Monterey Bay in their respective seasons. Folks can register online at: www.montereyseabirds.com. (831) 375-4658
If you have questions, contact Tim Amaral at: montereyseabirds@gmail.com.

2016 MONTEREY SEABIRD TRIPS

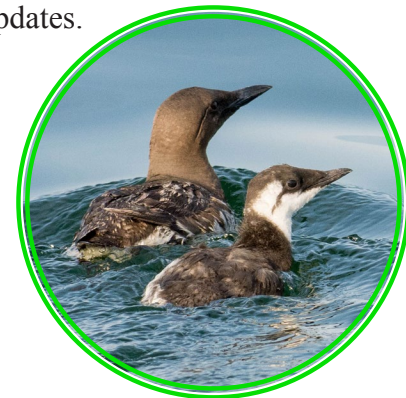
8-hour trips (7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. \$130)

Saturday July 9th through Sunday October 23rd

*Common Murre &
chick - Jeff Bleam*

Additional dates may be added. Please check montereybayseabirds.com for updates.

Enjoy the friendliest pelagic trips on the West Coast!

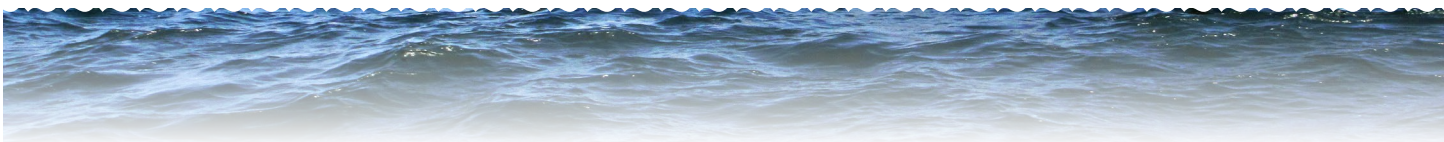


Shearwater Journeys

**MONTEREY BAY, HALF MOON BAY, BODEGA BAY &
FARALLON ISLANDS**

Shearwater Journeys invites members and friends of the Santa Cruz Bird Club to help us celebrate our 41st year of pelagic trips along the central coast of California! Excellent and friendly leaders with worldwide seabirding experience will be on board. On offer this year we have 25 pelagic trips departing from Monterey (15 trips), Half Moon Bay (8 trips) and Sausalito to the Farallon Islands (2 trips), spanning July 29th through October 9th. If you have never visited the Farallon Islands National Wildlife Refuge, you owe it to yourself to see this fabulous breeding seabird colony—the largest on the West coast, south of Alaska. Enjoy a unique view of the Golden Gate Bridge as we sail underneath it. Discounts are available for all trips.

Please see our web site: shearwaterjourneys.com and blog: shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com for more details. Contact Debi, a Life Member of the Santa Cruz Bird Club: debi@shearwaterjourneys.com.





SANTA CRUZ BIRDS

By Steve Gerow

Including reports from January 1 to February 29, 2016

No two seasons are the same, and this winter featured its own set of interesting circumstances and bird records. Weather this period was an odd mix, with well above-average rainfall in January, then an unusually warm and mostly dry February. Among the season's highlights was a Lesser Black-backed Gull, which added another species to the Santa Cruz County list. Irruptions of Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins continued, and American Robins were also in well above-average numbers, while other irregular winterers were in average to low numbers compared to other years. A record-breaking number of Black-headed Grosbeaks for winter suggested something unusual going on with them. Read on for details on these and more interesting bits and pieces that somehow fit together to form this season's jigsaw puzzle picture.



Geese (other than large Canadas) were relatively scarce in the county through late winter, compared to most recent years. **Greater White-fronted**

Goose reports included two continuing birds at the mouth of Aptos Creek through the period (RW, v.ob.), one at College Lake on January 9 (RW), and a few reports of up to four in Struve Slough through February 21 (AG, CF, EL, RR, v.ob.) A lone juvenile **Snow**

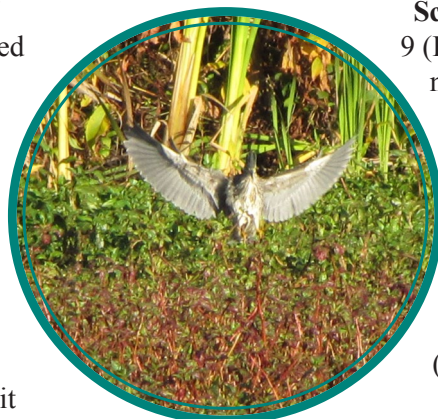
Goose stayed around Baldwin Creek mouth from January 12 to February 9 (JBI, DSI, LG, v.ob.). There were four reports involving six **Brant** along the coast in January and early February (AR, JBI, v.ob.), then larger flocks marking the beginning of the Spring migratory movement were noted starting February 17 (NL, NU). A few **Cackling Goose** reports from College Lake and Struve Slough added up to about four individuals (AR, DSt, NL). An interesting mid-sized goose that stayed around Swanton Pond from November 27 to January 4 (JBI, SHu, PS, v.ob.) presented an interesting identification dilemma—was it a small type of Canada, or a large Cackling? Fortunately it was well-photographed, and goose experts reviewing these photos concluded that it showed features of the **Taverner's form of Cackling Goose**. This is the largest of the Cackling Goose subspecies, and a form that had not been documented in the county before, though it is regular in the Central Valley and further north

along the coast. However it is possible that some earlier records could have been confused with the similar-sized Lesser Canada Goose, especially before the split of Canada and Cackling Geese made this a species-level ID problem.



*Redhead, Shorebirds Pond
- Jeff Bleam*

*American Bittern, Antonelli Pond
- Lisa Fay Larson*



A male **Eurasian Wigeon X American Wigeon** hybrid stayed at College Lake from January 17-30 (AR, v.ob.). The male **Gadwall X Mallard** hybrid (almost surely the same individual from earlier in winter and from the prior three winters) turned up at Neary Lagoon from February 13-21 (LS, NU, GM). A few **Redheads** were reported from the Watsonville Slough System and the Pajaro Dunes area through the period, with the highest count being five in Struve Slough on January 21 (LG, JWa, SG, MC). **White-winged Scoter** reports included one off Waddell Bluffs on January 23 (AR), and two seen from El Jarro Point on February 5 (SG, JBI, v.ob.). Two **Black Scoters** were off West Cliff Drive on January 9 (PS). Seven or so **Red-necked Grebes** were noted along the coast this period (v.ob.). At least one wintering **American Bittern**, rare in the Santa Cruz area, continued its presence at Antonelli Pond through February 16 (v.ob.), and two were found there a couple of times after February 11 (JBI, v.ob.). A **Cattle Egret** was at Pinto Lake County Park from January 20-24 (NU, RW, HS).

One adult **Bald Eagle** continued to be seen off and on around Harkins and Struve

Sloughs through the end of February (v.ob.), and an immature one was at Struve Slough on February 26 (JB1). A particularly interesting-looking, almost uniformly pale leucistic immature Bald Eagle, was photographed at College Lake on February 26 (GK, BM, JBu). It appeared to be in its second year.

Ferruginous Hawk numbers were a bit above average this winter, with individuals reported east of Watsonville on January 1 (PB et al.), around Soda Lake through February 13 (AR, JGa, AG), near Baldwin Creek on January 25 (LG, JWa), and around Moore Creek Preserve and UCSC through February 13 (ST, LJ, v.ob.). A **Common Gallinule**, a fairly rare species away from the Pajaro Valley, was in the Kalkar Quarry pond in Santa Cruz on January 21 (NM). A wintering **Wandering Tattler** continued to be seen off and on along West Cliff Drive through the period (MB, SHu, SP, v.ob.). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was reported at Pajaro Dunes on January 1-2 (DG, MB). The wintering **Red Knot** kept wandering the coast through February 1 (AR, RW, LG, BR, v.ob.), with reports from Twin Lakes Beach to Wilder Ranch.

An alternate-plumaged **Pigeon Guillemot** off Terrace Point on February 7 (MS, LG) may have been an extremely early “spring” arrival, or perhaps a wintering bird. Two **Ancient Murrelets** spotted off El Jarro Point on February 17 (NL) were the only ones reported in the county this winter. A first cycle **Laughing Gull** was a nice discovery at Baldwin Creek mouth from January 7-15 (JP, v.ob.), with presumably the same gull wandering to Natural Bridges on January 10 (ARG), and to the Santa Cruz Wharf on January 29 and February 6 (LG, SS). Probably



*Bald Eagle, College Lake
-Gary Kittleson*

the best find this period was Santa Cruz County’s first record of a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (AR), a third-cycle bird extensively photographed at Harkins Slough on January 29. There are records from all four of our surrounding counties, so this has been high on the “next expected species list” for the county for a while—finally we have one documented! Single **Caspian Terns** reported from Sunset State Beach on January 1 (JGr et al.), Struve Slough on January 16 (DSt), and West Cliff Drive on January 24 (MS) were the first January reports for Santa Cruz County since the 1980s. Single **Royal Terns** were spotted along the coast near the San Mateo County border on January 13 and 23 (JL, AR), apparently part of a small group that was hanging around Ano Nuevo State Reserve through most of January.



Burrowing Owl - Michael Bolte

At least ten **Burrowing Owls** wintered in the county this season (v.ob.), including two at UCSC, seven at

various Pajaro Valley spots, and one near Swanton Pond. Two **Short-eared Owls** were flying around El Jarro Point at dusk on February 21 (AR). Henry Cowell’s **Red-naped Sapsucker** continued through the period (JWi, v.ob.). A **Pileated Woodpecker** was in an odd location in the Moore Creek riparian area at the UCSC Arboretum on February 25 (SG, BL, v.ob.) A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** appeared at a regularly-birded residential location near Soquel on February 28 (AG), staying into March. While we do have some



*Laughing Gull, Baldwin Creek Mouth
-Jeff Poklen*

winter records of this species, the circumstances suggested that this was probably a record-early spring arrival, six days earlier than the previous record, and over two weeks before the average arrival time. Two (or so).



Barn Swallow - Lisa Larson

Tropical Kingbirds continued to move around the Watsonville Slough System through February 6 (DSi, RW, AR, v.ob.), with at least one of these continuing into early March.

About four different **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported in January and February (v.ob.). The only **Horned Larks** found were a couple on February 18, in an area near the lower Watsonville Slough System that has had a small resident population in recent years (NL, BR). At least one wintering **Barn Swallow** continued around Struve and Hanson Sloughs through January 23 (SHu, EL, v.ob.), and one was at College Lake on January 3 (AR). Perhaps inspired by February's warm weather, a pair of **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** had a nest started in a Soquel nest box on the early date of February 28 (JE). **White-breasted Nuthatches** were at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park on February 7, and along the Pajaro River near the Santa Clara

County line on February 21 (AR). **Townsend's Solitaires** were in Long Ridge Open Space Preserve on January 27, and in another spot there on February 24 (AR), and one turned up among a big flock of **American Robins** on the east side of Santa Cruz on February 4 (NL).

The **Black-and-white Warbler** in Bethany Curve Park was reported through February 29 (KS, SG, MC, v.ob.). Additional **Nashville Warblers** for this winter were in Watsonville near upper Struve Slough from January



Horned Lark - Andy Knorr

10-14 (LC), and at Ramsay Park on January 21 (SG, MC). A **Palm Warbler** remained at Natural Bridges Beach through February 6 (DW, EF, PB, v.ob.), and one was near Harkins Slough from February 4-18 (MS, SG, BR, v.ob.).

The only wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** reported was at Neary Lagoon on February 6 (SM). Single **Chipping Sparrows** were in Crestview Park in Watsonville on January 7 (BM), and east of Watsonville at Litchfield Lane on February 24 (JBI). A **Lark Sparrow** was along Peckham Road east of Watsonville starting February 21 (AR, v.ob.), with a second one noted in early March.

A **Fox Sparrow** showing characteristics of the **Slate-colored** form was at Natural Bridges on January 28 (SHa). Meanwhile, **Thick-billed Fox Sparrows** continued to be found on the chaparral-covered slopes near Loma Prieta, at least through February 20 (AR), an area where a small wintering population has been detected in the last couple of years. Filling out the list of Fox Sparrow



Black-throated Gray Warbler - Beth Hamel

forms, a **Red Fox Sparrow** turned up on ranch land east of Watsonville on January 1 (NL, JGa). (And, of course, **Sooty Fox Sparrows**, our regular wintering group of subspecies, were all over the place...) Five **Dark-eyed Juncos** reported this period fit either the “typical” **Slate-colored** form, or the intermediate subspecies *cismontanus* (v.ob.). A dozen **White-throated Sparrows** were reported from new spots this period, bringing the winter (December through February) total to 29 (v.ob.). There were only two reports of **Swamp Sparrow** this period, single birds (or maybe just one individual?) at College Lake on January 3 and 17 (AR), for an exceptionally low total for Santa Cruz County in winter. While they are uncommon, we almost always have more than this. The wintering **Green-tailed Towhee** at the UCSC Farm was present at least through January 14 (DW, DSi, SG, v.ob.)

A male **Summer Tanager** was seen at two close-together Live Oak locations on January 21 and 23 (GK, GM), perhaps the same bird that was found in this area in October. It’s not that unusual to have one or two **Black-headed Grosbeaks** turn up in winter, but this year was exceptional. Multiple reports came from eight locations (all but two at feeders) from late December to February 17 (v.ob.), with up to ten individuals involved (I can’t entirely rule out the possibility of some of the same individuals traveling between feeders, but most were well-separated.) Five of the sites were at scattered locations from Aptos to Corralitos, and there were also reports from near Loma Prieta, the UCSC campus, and



Taverner's form of Cackling Goose
- Lisa Sheridan

two birds together in Scotts Valley. Photo documentation of seven of these grosbeaks, plus written details for another, ruled out Rose-breasted Grosbeak (which is almost equally possible in winter) for most of these reports.

The **Red Crossbill** irruption kept on through the winter, with a majority of the reports in later winter coming from the mountains. All those documented with recordings and/or spectograms this period were “Type 3” (AR), a smaller-billed form favoring small conifer seeds (mostly Redwood and Douglas-fir in this area). **Pine Siskins** also continued to be numerous and well-distributed in the county through this period (v.ob.).



Loggerhead Shrike - Cathy Summa-Wolfe

Cited Observers: Jeff Bleam (JBl), Michael Bolte, Phil Brown, Jerry Busch (JBU), Larry Corridon, Mary Crouser, John Ellis, Elisabeth Forrest, Craig Fosdick, Aaron Gabbe, John Garrett (JGa), Steve Gerow, Don Glasco, Lois Goldfrank, Jennifer Green (JGr), Steve Hampton (SHa), Sharon Hull (SHu), Lee Jaffe, Gary Kittleson, Earl Lebow, Nick Levendosky, Bruce Lyon, John Luther, Nikolas Madsen, Gary Martindale, Bryan Mori, Shirley Murphy, Dave Nickerson, Shantanu Phukan, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Adam Romswinkel-Guise (ARG), Michelle Scott, Sheree Sheide, David Sidle (DSi), Lisa Sheridan, Pete Solé, Kitty Stein, Howard Stephenson, David Styer (DSt), Simon Thornhill, Norman Uyeda, Jeff Wall (JWa), Randy Wardle, David Wilhelm, Jim Williams (JWi), v.ob. = various observers



Birder's Notebook

Golden

Artwork & story by Cooper Smith



A thousand feet above the ground, keen eyes search for a tiny creature. Feathers shift in the breeze, tail and wings adjust slightly as the invisible currents change and move. The world below is covered in low, rolling hills carpeted with short green grass, mown down by the cows that frequent the area. The mountains rise up to the west, and the plain continues on east, out towards the Great Rocks, where the two-legged beasts live.

Beneath the hills run thousands of small moles and gophers and squirrels, all for the taking, but for their underground lairs. There, something beneath that tree. Just a fox, slyly hunting the same quarry. Banking left, away from the fox and the trees, carried by a warm current and rising up into the air, the eyes see a gray thing moving below. He tracks it as it runs across the plains and into a hole.

Dropping from the warm current, he loses altitude and soars downward. There, on the hill, standing watch—a ground squirrel. He dives, wings folding inwards, until he is only feet from the grasses. Then he snaps his wings open and extends his talons—but the squirrel is too fast, and disappears into a burrow the instant before his sharp talons can grasp its furry gray hide.

He flaps gracefully back into the air and catches another current, up into the sky. Golden hackles shine in the sunlight, and his wings stretch out, sunlight showing golden brown through the feathers. He feels a shift in the pressure; the clouds over the mountains are dark, and a fine mist comes from their depths. Turning away from the clouds, he drops out of the current. Below, the fox carries something small and gray in its mouth. It runs up a hill, past the trees, and disappears into a burrow.

Another flash of gray, beneath him. Wings tuck in and tail maneuvers while he dives, faster than any rabbit can run. His wings snap open as he nears his prey, and his talons close tightly on gray fur. Dust rises from the struggling rabbit's movement, then it is still. He takes his meal to a perch in a sheltered tree to wait out the storm.



Birder's Notebook



Titmouses

Oak Titmeeces?

I love 'em to pieces
From their pointy little heads
To their etched blue-gray feetsies!
They may not out-chirp the chirpiest
But they can out-perk the perkiest.

A crest that is raised or flattened at will
Adds expression to a bird who rarely stays still
A dour description of drabness
Refers only to plumage
As if a white rose lacks
Next to one that has rouge-ness!

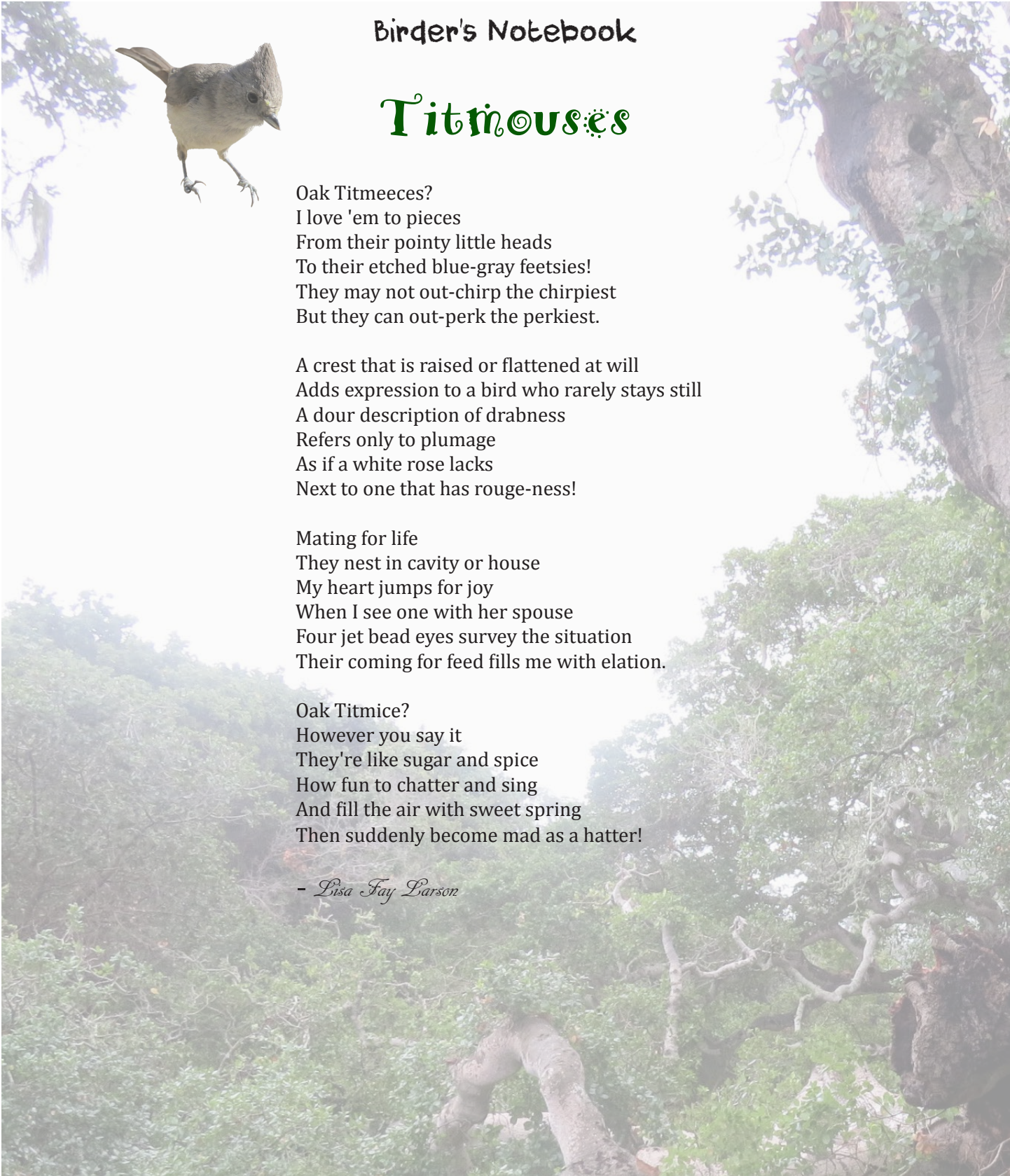
Mating for life

They nest in cavity or house
My heart jumps for joy
When I see one with her spouse
Four jet bead eyes survey the situation
Their coming for feed fills me with elation.

Oak Titmice?

However you say it
They're like sugar and spice
How fun to chatter and sing
And fill the air with sweet spring
Then suddenly become mad as a hatter!

- *Lisa Fay Larson*



SANTA CRUZ BIRD CLUB OFFICERS ARE **NEEDED NOW!**

Program Director

The Program Director position has been vacant too long and the number of club meetings has suffered as a result!

Secretary

Jeff Wall is stepping down as SCBC Secretary. The job consists of attending board meetings, writing up a record of what was discussed, and sending a copy to the board members. Please contact Jeff at jhwall@hotmail.com if you are interested in secretaryship.

Webmaster

The Bird Club is looking for someone to take over the position of Webmaster of our website: santacruzbirdclub.org. Please contact Barry McLaughlin at barry@coincidence.net if you are interested in being our webmaster.

Membership Director

David Ekdahl is stepping down and we need a new Membership Director. David has filled this position for over 27 years! If you are interested in filling this office, please contact David at dek Dahl49@comcast.net

An eagle salute to Barry, David, and Jeff for devoting their time in service to the SCBC! **THANK YOU!**



Original photo - Ron Wolf Artwork - Lisa Fay Larson

THE ALBATROSS NEEDS YOUR CONTRIBUTION!

Please help to keep your SCBC
newsletter **FLYING!**
Your stories, photos, book reviews,
tips, quotes, poems, artwork—
anything that's bird-related is
your opportunity to share!

SUBMISSIONS NEEDED!

DEADLINE

for Sep/Oct
issue

AUG 1, 2016

Coming in for a Landing, Allen's Hummingbird - Andy Knorr



Assembling
Your
ALBATROSS
Newsletter

Submission to the
Albatross
GUIDELINES



In addition to regular features—*Events Calendar*, photos for *Santa Cruz Birds*, *Birders Notebook* and *Parting Shot*—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 birds or birders, serious or comic
- Reviews of birding literature or guides
- Conservation & outreach reports/stories
- Birding tips, descriptions of local sites
- Poetry, quotes, field sketches, artwork or photos
- Photos of BIRDS or people at our events (jpg, tif)

If you wish to submit an article, please contact the editor 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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Santa Cruz Bird Club
P.O. Box 1304
Santa Cruz, CA 95061

Bird Club website
santacruzbirdclub.org

OFFICERS

President

Phil Brown (831) 334-4249
pdpbrown@gmail.com

Bird Records Keeper

Steve Gerow
stephengerow@aol.com

Programs - Vacant

Field Trips

Nick Levendosky
n.levendosky@gmail.com

Treasurer

Kent Johnson
kentjohnson@hotmail.com

Secretary

Jeff Wall
jhwall@hotmail.com

Editor

Lisa Fay Larson
scbirdclubeditor@gmail.com

Webmaster

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

Conservation Director

Lisa Sheridan
trottrider@aol.com

Membership Director

David Ekdahl (831) 335-5742
decv49@gmail.com

Outreach Director

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

Hospitality Director

Nickie Zavinsky
nickiezee@yahoo.com

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The ALBATROSS

is published five times a year by the Santa Cruz Bird Club. See the online version and past issues on the SCBC website, santacruzbirdclub.org



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