



# Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

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## Marvelous Mysteries of California's Oak Woodlands

By Debbie Diersch, Monterey Bay Birding Festival



If you think you already know everything worth knowing about Oak Titmice, Acorn Woodpeckers, or Western Bluebirds, you might be in for a surprise. Do you know which birds imitate the sounds of dangerous animals? Which species engages in simulated sex rituals every night before bed? Who is capable of “mental time travel” and “theory of mind”? Whose winter social structure depends on oak mistletoe? Have you heard which bird eats poison oak berries and seeds for seven months of the year—the same species that collects spider webs with its tail? If you would like to know more about the marvelous survival strategies, behaviors, and social structures of various bird species found in California’s most diverse terrestrial ecosystem, you will love Saturday night’s talk at the Monterey Bay Birding Festival.

The Festival is pleased to announce that Kate Marianchild, award-winning author of the best-selling book *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands: Plants and Animals among California's Oaks*, will present the closing keynote talk of the festival. Her illustrated lecture, *Extraordinary Ordinary Birds of California's Oak Woodlands*, will take place on Saturday, September 24, 2016, from 7–8:30 p.m.

After moving into a yurt near Ukiah in 2001, Kate fell in love with the oak woodlands that surrounded her. A budding birder at the time, she learned to recognize most of the regulars within a few years, but she wasn’t satisfied with knowing only the names of birds. She wanted to know how they fit into the oak woodland web of life—what they needed for survival and who needed them. While researching those questions, she uncovered mind-boggling information about other oak woodland inhabitants, from fungi and plants to reptiles and mammals. *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands* (Heyday in 2014) is a unique and captivating book and winner of an Indie Next Generation Book Award in the science, nature, and environment category. You can read excerpts from *Secrets of the Oak Woodlands* or see samples of its lavish watercolor illustrations at [katemarianchild.com](http://katemarianchild.com).

With her curiosity peaked after reading *Kate's book*, Debbie Diersch, Monterey Bay Birding Festival Board President, wanted to learn more. She talked with Kate one lovely summer day not very long ago, and here is a little of how that conversation went.

**With the vastness and diversity of California's oak woodlands, how did you choose the twenty-two plants, animals, and other organisms you wrote about in your book?**

**Kate:** It was a challenging process. I am grateful to birder and wildlife expert Bob Keiffer for helping me with it. For the first cut, I chose organisms that occur in both northern and southern California and that people can easily see (or see signs of). Then I narrowed it down to organisms that play a keystone role in oak ecosystems and/or organisms that are just plain fascinating in one way or another. Our western newts, for instance, may not play a key role in oak ecosystems, but they are incredibly interesting. They can regenerate their hearts, livers, and other organs as well as their limbs. Some individual newts are so toxic that if ground up and fed in small bits to two hundred adult humans, all the humans would die. And many of the western newts are engaged in a remarkable and ancient "co-evolutionary arms race" with common garter snakes, which has made them the most toxic salamanders in the world.

**Which organisms are your favorites and why?**

**Kate:** That's a tough call... Among mammals, I guess it would be woodrats, who are not actually rats. They are more like huge mice. They build the most complex aboveground houses of any mammal in the world, complete with leaching rooms, pantries, waterproof sleeping chambers, corridors, terraces, "windows," and dedicated latrine areas. I'll talk more about them during my Sunday field trip to Elkhorn Slough, where we'll see woodrat tree houses. It should be interesting to birders because woodrats are actually very important to the survival of some bird species, and not only raptors. Woodrats are also known



*Oak Titmouse- Lee Jaffe*

as packrats. I once found that a woodrat living under my yurt had stolen a pen and a spatula, and she was reading a paperback called *The Presence of Other Worlds*—an attempt, no doubt, to understand the infestation of aliens in the neighborhood—particularly the one living over her head.

I guess I'd have to say my favorite bird is the Acorn

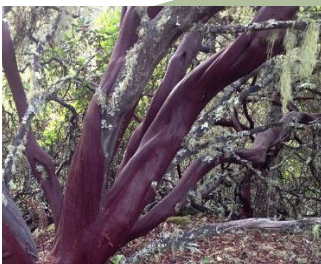


*Dusky-footed Woodrat - Jeff Bleam*

Woodpecker. When I first moved to my new home, my Acorn Woodpecker neighbors rescued me from loneliness. I was ill with Lyme disease, and isolated, and it cheered me tremendously to have Acorn Woodpeckers flying, calling, and drumming around me all day long. In some ways they are also responsible for the existence of my book. For years after I first met them, I had no idea they had the most complex reproductive and social structure of any vertebrate species in the world. I didn't even know they lived in clans. When I learned about them at a talk by Walt Koenig, the world authority on acorn woodpeckers, I started wondering whether there were other equally interesting species around me. Lo and behold, there are!

My favorite plant is manzanita—for its sheer beauty and sensuality, but also for other things: its unique adaptations to drought; its importance to birds, mammals, and bumblebees as a food source; its form of pollination (buzz pollination in middle C); and the timing and rationale behind its peeling skin. (I'll elaborate on the Sunday field trip.)

*Manzanita - Nickie Zavinski, Yellow-billed Magpie - Lee Jaffe, Rough-skinned Newt - Lisa Larson, Poison Oak - James Maughn*





And, surprisingly, I have a high regard for Poison Oak, another a keystone species. A whopping fifty-two species of California birds eat poison oak berries. In fact, Poison Oak may be a more important food source for birds and mammals than any other perennial shrub in California!

And I love Oak Mistletoe. It has been the object of extermination campaigns for decades, but forest scientists have recently realized that it is a keystone species. When oak mistletoe was experimentally removed from an Australian ecosystem, one-third of the insects, birds, and mammals disappeared. In winter, its clusters of pinkish-white berries provide sugar and protein for twenty-eight species of birds and several mammal species. Some mammals, like black-tailed deer, also eat the energy-rich leaves, and quite a few bird species nest in it, including White-tailed kites, Yellow-billed Magpies, Bushtits, Bullock's Orioles, and Black-throated Gray Warblers. Beware: mistletoe is poisonous to humans.

And then there are Western Fence Lizards, with their functional third eyes and their ability to filter Lyme spirochetes out of tick populations... and Western Bluebirds, with

*Acorn Woodpecker  
- Lisa Larson*



*Above: Western Fence Lizard  
Below: Blue-eyed Darner  
- Lisa Larson*



their arranged “marriages,” and...well, I’d better stop now. I could go on and on.



*Western Bluebird Nest -John Ellis*

**Can you give us a sneak preview of topics not included in your book that you’ll discuss during your presentation at the Monterey Bay Birding Festival?**

**Kate:** Well, just to make sure that people who have read my book won’t be bored, I’ll throw in Wood Ducks, Wrentits, Band-tailed Pigeons, Northern Flickers, and Cooper’s Hawks. I think a lot of people don’t realize that Wood Ducks eat acorns—in fact, the shape of Wood Duck bills has evolved to accommodate acorns. If you are lucky you might see them foraging under oaks for acorns this fall. A Wood Duck stores up to twenty acorns in its expandable esophagus before flying off to a less-exposed place where the rest of the digestive process is completed.

**Were there other organisms you would include now, and if so, what are they?**

**Kate:** Definitely! I’m keeping a list in case I decide to write another book. The birds might include Wood Duck, Cooper’s Hawk, Band-tailed Pigeon, Nuttall’s Woodpecker, Wrentit, and Anna’s Hummingbird. Other animals might include Yellow-faced Bumblebee, Western Tiger Swallowtail butterfly, and Pacific Green Sphinx Moth; Sierran Tree Frog, California Toad, and Northern Pacific Rattlesnake; Black Bear and Gray Fox. Plants would probably include Wavy-leafed Soap Plant, Coyote Bush, California Coffeeberry, California Poppy, and a couple of lupine species. I haven’t decided yet about lichens and fungi.



*Are you worried about the sustainability of CA oak woodlands, and if so, what do you suggest that bird watchers and other ordinary citizens do to help?*

**Kate:** Oak woodlands are critically important because they support more bio-diversity than any other type of terrestrial ecosystem in California—and they are quickly disappearing. Humans like to live, farm, drive, park, and shop in places that have been home to oaks and associated species for thousands of years. Eighty percent of California’s oak woodlands are on private land, where they have little legal or regulatory protection. In February of 2016, State Assembly Member Dan Chu introduced AB 2162, Oak Woodlands Protection Act, but quickly withdrew it due to a massive outcry from realtors, developers, agriculturalists, Chambers of Commerce, and other business interests.

Because oaks are so common in California, it is difficult for people to imagine our state without them. But if we don’t take the time and have the courage to anticipate and prevent that potential loss, our oak woodlands could be whittled away, tree by tree, acre by acre, until the quality of our air and water has drastically changed and we have lost the beauty and wildness and native species that sustain us.



*Oak Titmouse - Jeff Bleam*



*Acorn Woodpecker - Ron Wolf*

Birders can help in several ways: by supporting the California Oaks Foundation, a project of the California Wildlife Foundation; by creating public pressure for a process that would regulate oak woodland conversion; by putting oak woodland property into conservation easements; and by spreading the word about the wonders that can be found among California’s oaks.

**Kate Marianchild will lead the following activities at the Monterey Bay Birding Festival:**

Kate Marianchild will present: *Extraordinary Ordinary Birds of California’s Oak Woodlands*, on Saturday, September 24, 2016, from 7–8:30 p.m. at the Watsonville Civic Plaza located at 275 Main Street, Watsonville, CA. Copies of Kate’s book will be available for purchase and signing

at the festival; Kate will also have her laminated oak identification charts and close-focusing binoculars available for purchase.

*Wood Duck - Lee Jaffe*

To bring the oak woodlands up close and personal, Kate will also lead an *Exploring an Oak Woodland* field trip with Elkhorn Slough Reserve docent, Shirley Murphy, on Sunday, September 25, 2016, from 8:15 a.m. to noon. Visit a “grandmother” Coast Live Oak and learn why she is so popular with birds, butterflies, and neighboring plants. Inspect Lace Lichen and discover its importance to Hutton’s Vireos, Bullock’s Orioles, oaks, and manzanitas. Enjoy mind-boggling stories about Acorn Woodpeckers and woodrats, and yes, even come to appreciate Poison Oak!

Learn more about Kate’s talk and field trip at [montereybaybirding.org](http://montereybaybirding.org).





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## 2016 MONTEREY BAY BIRDING FESTIVAL

September 23 - 25

Presented by the all-volunteer MBBFA (a non-profit 501c-3), Planning Committee

**Join the fun and choose your own adventure(s) as we celebrate Monterey Bay's bounty and birds!**

### COME VOLUNTEER WITH US

Community Room, top floor, Civic Plaza Building  
275 Main Street, Watsonville

**Requirements:** Must be age 18 or older; iPad training for registration (free).  
Most volunteer shifts will be 2 hours. No birding experience necessary!

### Volunteer opportunities:

Sept. 22 = set-up, registration & Taste of the Pajaro Valley.

Sept. 23 - 25 = registration; hospitality support; facility support; vendor & exhibitor support; raffle support.

Sept. 26 = inventory, packing, & clean-up.

Want to attend the festival and volunteer? Please, *register first* so you'll know when you can volunteer.

**Register at:** [montereybaybirding.org](http://montereybaybirding.org).

**Volunteers receive:** free participation in selected events not conflicting with their volunteer schedule (space permitting); free snacks & drinks while on duty.

**To volunteer:** SignUp.com & enter "Monterey Bay Birding Festival", or call 1-888-909-7829, & leave your name & phone number so I can return your call.

Many thanks, Cathy Gamble, MBBF Volunteer Coordinator, & SCBC Member.



*Burrowing Owl*  
- John Fox



*Red-throated Loon* - Pete Solé



# EVENTS CALENDAR

## September–October 2016



**Friday, September 2**  
**Lighthouse Field**

We should find a mix of resident species and migrants, maybe including something unusual.

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

**Leader:** Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com

Northern Harrier - Michael Bolte



**Sunday, September 4**  
**Wilder Ranch State Park**

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

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM in the main parking lot. There is an entrance fee.

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



**Friday, September 9**  
**New Brighton State Beach**

With fall migration on the horizon, we will check the beach and ocean, riparian, pines, and other habitats—all of which could hold an interesting species this time of year.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM in the beach parking lot. There is a fee for driving in.

**Leader:** Reef Comer, reefcomer@gmail.com



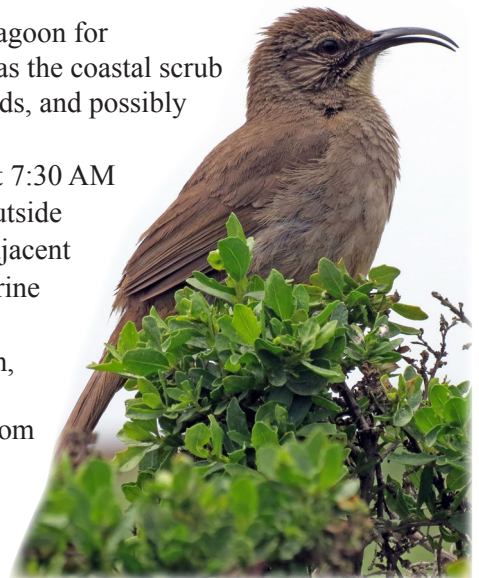
**Sunday, September 11**  
**Younger Lagoon and Vicinity**

We will check the lagoon for shorebirds, as well as the coastal scrub and weedy grasslands, and possibly the rocky coast.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM in the parking lot outside Younger Lagoon adjacent to the Seymour Marine Discovery Center.

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

California Thrasher,  
Younger Lagoon  
- Lisa Fay Larson



## Special October Event "Bird Club Kick Off"

October 27th 7:00 P.M.

Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History  
Meet and Greet - Welcome New Members

Birding Optics Flea Market  
Vote for and meet Club Officers  
Refreshments Provided  
(See details on page 9)





**Thursday, September 29**  
**Neary Lagoon**

Late September is a great time to visit this local marsh. Let's hope for some surprises.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM at the Chestnut St. entrance.  
**Leader:** Christian Schwarz, waxwingboheme@gmail.com



**Friday, September 30**  
**Arana Gulch**

This open space preserve has good habitat for sparrows, warblers, flycatchers and others. Who knows what might show up this time of year.

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

**Leader:** Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



**Sunday, October 2**  
**Watsonville Slough and Vicinity**

We will begin our morning at the famed "Common Cuckoo" spot from 2012 and see what direction the birds take us from there.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 AM at Watsonville Slough off of Ford St. Take Harkins Slough Rd. east from Hwy 1 over the slough, then turn right (south) on Ford Street.

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

*Virginia Rail - Andy Knorr*



**Sunday, October 9**  
**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 7:30 at the entrance gate off of Delaware Avenue.

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



*Sharp-shinned Hawk, Antonelli Pond  
- Jeff Bleam*



**Friday, October 14**  
**Antonelli Pond**

We should find a mix of migrants as well as newly-arrived wintering species.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM on the west side of Antonelli Pond, near the west end of Delaware Avenue.

**Leader:** Steve Gerow, stephengerow@aol.com



**Sunday, October 16**  
**Salinas River and Vicinity**

We will focus on shorebirds, coastal birds and recently reported sightings there. Depart 7:00 AM from Aptos Wells Fargo Bank or meet before 8:00 AM at the Salinas River Mouth parking lot.

**Directions:** Hwy 1 south beyond Castroville; just after Salinas River, take the Del Monte Avenue exit. Turn right (toward bay), and follow the dirt road to the parking lot. This will be a one stop morning trip with optional afternoon extension at either Moonglow Dairy, Zmudowski State Beach or (south to) Fort Ord Dunes State Park. Bring snack/drink. Rain or shine.

**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.



**Monday, October 17**  
**Schwann Lake**

Most of the winter birds should be here by now, and interesting fall migrants are still possible.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot of the Simpkins Family Swim Center, 979 17th Avenue.

**Leader:** Christian Schwarz, waxwingboheme@gmail.com



**Sunday, October 23**  
**Santa Cruz North Coast**

The coastal lagoons, agricultural fields, and grassland on the Santa Cruz north coast have produced many notable birds in late fall. Depending on the weather and what is around, we may spend time sorting through pipit and sparrow flocks, peering into willow thickets, or seawatching from a coastal promontory.

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

**Leader:** Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net

*Fox Sparrow*  
- David Sidle



*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.*

*Cinnamon Teal - Lisa Larson*





## Santa Cruz Bird Club Kick-off

October 27, 2016, 7:00 pm at Santa Cruz Natural History Museum

*This will be a membership meeting to elect new officers for the 2016-17 club year.*

All club members in good standing are eligible to vote. The following slate of officers has been approved by the club's existing board:

- a) **President** – Lisa Sheridan (replacing Phil Brown)
- b) **First Vice-President and Program Director** – Georgette Neal (this position has been vacant)
- c) **Second Vice-president and Field Trip Director** – Nick Levendosky
- d) **Treasurer** – Kent Johnson (Replacing Steve Gerow)
- e) **Secretary** – Tim Jolly (Replacing Jeff Wall)
- f) **Editor** – Lisa Fay Larson
- g) **Webmaster** – Phil Brown (Replacing Barry McLaughlin)
- h) **Conservation Director** – Jane Mio (replacing Lisa Sheridan)
- i) **Membership Director** – Stephanie Singer (Replacing David Ekdahl)
- j) **Outreach Coordinator** – this position is not proposed to be filled as it was felt that most of its functions are now accomplished by the Club's website and newsletter.
- k) **Hospitality Director** – Nickie Zavinsky
- l) **Historian** – Alex Rinkert
- m) **Bird Records Keeper** – Steve Gerow

**Birding/Optics Flea Market:** In addition to the election this meeting will also feature a birding/optics flea market for and by Santa Cruz Bird Club members. The market will provide an opportunity for members to sell, swap, or give away excess birding gear, including optics, such as binoculars, scopes, cameras and lenses, birding books, field guides, etc! The idea is to pass on your extra stuff to other birders in the club.

The Santa Cruz Bird Club is only providing the venue for the market. The Club will not be selling anything, charging fees, or endorsing any of the transactions which may occur between club members.

New members (especially beginning birders) are welcome! Pay your dues, vote and SHOP! Then get ready to start birding!

See what's coming soon  
on page 17!



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## LONE ★ STAR BIRD HOSTS

By *Connie and Tom Unsicker*

During March of 2016, we volunteered as Bird Hosts at Goose Island Texas State Park. The park is 35 miles southeast of Corpus Christi on the Gulf of Mexico inner bays, protected by barrier islands. There are two campgrounds, a Live Oak woods and an island with wetlands and a bay shoreline of oyster reefs and a fishing pier.

GISP is a birding hotspot close to the Aransas NWR, where Whooping Cranes winter, several of which are visible from the park. The park has a large resident bird population, wintering shore and woodland birds, as well as a stop-off point for many migrants. (Northern birders are puzzled when they don't recognize birds that they see here in winter plumage that are common back home.)

Our "job" was to lead walks, teach a beginning birding class, and tend a sanctuary with seed, suet, and hummingbird feeders. We led four walks a week, alternating two-hour "Shore" and "Woods" walks. We saw 35+ species each walk, more toward the end of March as spring migration began. (A species list from one Shore and one Woods walk is appended.)

Many visitors come for the birds. In addition to Texas and other American birders, we had many Europeans and French Canadians. It was interesting to see foreign language editions of field guides and hear differing common names.

Participants on the walks ranged from novice to expert. It was gratifying to see how helpful and patient the experienced birders were with the novices! The best

experiences were birders who stumbled upon our walks, knowing nothing about GISP and then getting up to 10 life firsts on a freezing, windy walk.

The average tide here is only three feet. However, the water is shallow and the wind can drive the water to extremes. We only had three March days with wind below 20 mph and several nights with gusts to 70+ mph. Some days following a strong north (offshore) wind we would see yards of exposed oyster reefs lined with shorebirds and the next day, after a wind shift offshore, the water would be up against the sea wall, threatening tents and trailers.

Wind speed and direction are vital for birds migrating north across the Gulf of Mexico. Strong wind from the south will carry birds over the beaches inland. A weak south wind or a shift to the north will cause a missed landfall, creating "rainbow beaches" covered in drowned, colorful birds.

The walks were interspersed with periods of busy birding and birdless lulls as we walked from one habitat area, past buildings or



*White Ibis*

*Whooping Cranes*







Snowy Egret, Reddish Egret, Black Stilt



Folks drove from hundreds of miles away and one birder canceled her flight to Florida to see it.

That Saturday was the first day of Spring Break and there were many parties. We took turns guarding the area while 40+ birders arrived with their gear. While waiting we educated visitors about the Surfbird migration, explaining that this little bird can migrate from the southern tip of South America to the Arctic Circle and right now it should be somewhere along the Pacific Coast between Baja and British Columbia.

The Surfbird, with a group of Ruddy Turnstones, rested on the parking lot seawall, obviously exhausted, allowing us to take many close up photos. Later, the birds flew between the seawall and an oyster bar until sunset.

Sunday morning, 60+ birders spread out along the seawall and pier to search the many oyster beds for the



Ruddy Turnstone and 2nd recorded Surfbird in Texas

parking areas, to the next. We were expected to inform while walking non-birdy areas. This led to a lot of “Come back later and you might see...” or, relating facts about resident birds, and tips on observing. The challenge was that many park guests attended multiple walks before leaving for another park. We had to have enough species facts up our sleeves for those sections of the walk to reduce the groans by the regulars and keep them amused. We spent evenings frantically researching bird behavior and biology.

Just before the migration began, we were seeing so many of the same birds, and birders, that we made a rule that a bird’s name could not be called until three characteristics had been listed. That began as a challenge but turned into a game. We added another rule—one could call the name without characteristics if it were given in Latin, i.e. *Cardinalis cardinalis*—with surprising results.

We were part of a Rare Bird Alert Saturday, 3/12/16. A Surfbird showed up 2,000 miles off course for only the second time in Texas. Michigan birders saw it in the morning but it left while we were leading a Woods walk. It returned at 1:30 and Tom confirmed it. Texas eBird sent a local expert who confirmed and listed it.

Black Skimmer



Surfbird. Overnight it had disappeared. On our next walk, the Park Supervisor thanked us all “for making so much money for the park.”

The Spring Migration started the last week in March so more warblers began arriving in the park. After we left we were told the trees looked like Christmas in April, covered with colorful warbler ornaments.

**...Continued on page 15**

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## Santa Cruz Birds

By Steve Gerow

*Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2016*

It was another season of notable discoveries in Santa Cruz County, including a new nesting record (Redhead), a couple of apparently long-lost species for the county (Least Bittern, Canyon Wren), some significant rarities for the county (Costa's Hummingbird, Gray Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Harris's Sparrow), plus the usual mix of the somewhat rare, the early, the late, and the just plain interesting.

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** stopped at Younger Lagoon on April 13 (AR), and a very late one visited Pajaro Dunes on May 25 (PF). **Tundra Swan** reports included two at College Lake on March 26 (NU), and one at Pajaro Dunes on April 10 (BR, RR). Rarer duck species reported this period included about six migrant **White-winged Scoters** from March 20-April 30, all seen from El Jarro Point (AR). At least one male **Black Scoter** was in the West Cliff Drive area from March 6-30 (AR, RW, v.ob.) Another male Black Scoter was in the Pajaro Dunes area starting May 30 and continuing into June (DG, JR, v.ob.) Additional late-lingering ducks included an **American Wigeon** at College Lake on May 21 (NU), a **Lesser Scaup** in the lower San Lorenzo River through May 19 (AR), a **Bufflehead** on Struve Slough through the end of May (DSt), two **Common Goldeneyes** in the San Lorenzo River through May 19 (JM, v.ob.) and another on the Pajaro River that continued into summer (CF, AG, v.ob.).

Easily the waterfowl highlight of the season was a female **Redhead** accompanied by two ducklings in a remote part of Harkins Slough on May 15 (AR, NL), for the first confirmed breeding record of this species in Santa Cruz County. There were six reports of **Red-necked Grebe** through April 29 (DW, v.ob.), all from the Santa Cruz area coast, and possibly all involving the same bird. A six hour seawatch from El Jarro Point on March 29 produced 288 **Pink-footed Shearwaters** (AR), a high number for a shore-based observation in Santa Cruz



*Bald Eagles, Harkins Slough  
- Lee Jaffe*



*Costa's Hummingbird  
- Kitty Stein*

County. One of the least-expected highlights this spring was a steadily-calling male **Least Bittern** in a non-public area of Harkins Slough on April 21 (SG, RR), the first record of the species in the county since 1961.

The remaining **Bald Eagle** of the Harkins Slough area pair had found a new mate by April 3 (GK, v.ob.) The new pair made some efforts suggesting nest building (or repair of the old nest), but there was no evidence of actual nesting; perhaps it was too late in the season by then. A migrant **Ferruginous Hawk** photographed near Loma Prieta on March 31 (JB) was in an interesting location, and also fairly late for the county.

A **Solitary Sandpiper** appeared at College Lake on April 9 (AR, NL). Four **Lesser Yellowlegs** were reported from April 3-20 (v.ob.) A **Ruddy Turnstone** photographed at Pajaro Dunes on May 2 was the only one reported

this period (NU). A **Red Knot** was noted at various Live Oak coastal spots from April 4-14 (DSi, AR, AP, v.ob.) A 1st-cycle **Herring Gull X Glaucous Gull hybrid** (a.k.a. "Nelson's Gull") turned up among the gulls on Baldwin Creek Beach on March 10 (JP). An early influx of **Elegant Terns** brought numbers to the local coastline from April 12 into late April (JM, v.ob.), but then most left, leaving very few around until summer. An accumulation of 115+ on Wilder Creek Beach on April 18 (SG, MC) was particularly impressive for April. A **Black Skimmer** was at Pajaro Dunes on May 3 (BR), and two were there on May 29 (CF, AG).

A **Black Swift** over Summit Ridge on April 28 (AR)



appears to be the earliest ever for the county by a couple of days, and about two weeks earlier than the average arrival. An almost all-white leucistic immature male **Anna's Hummingbird** was the star of the UCSC Arboretum's hummingbird show from May 30 into mid-summer (GW, MK, TN, v.ob.) A female **Costa's Hummingbird** was well-documented with photos at Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve on May 4 (KS). A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was near Loma Prieta on April 28 (AR). Two or three male **Calliope Hummingbirds** turned up in



*Leucistic Anna's Hummingbird*  
- Lee Jaffe



*Gray Flycatcher*  
- ©William G. Bousman

the Loma Prieta area from April 17 to May 1 (ST, JZ, GZ, AR, v.ob.). Henry Cowell's wintering **Red-naped Sapsucker** was last seen on March 15 (JW).

A **Willow Flycatcher** stopped at Big Creek on May 25 (AR). A rare **Gray Flycatcher** was thoroughly documented with photos and written details along Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta on April 17 (BB, PS, DN, GZ, v.ob.) Even rarer was a female **Vermilion Flycatcher** photographed during a very brief visit to Natural Bridges Beach

on March 22 (SN), for just the 3rd or 4th record for the county.

At least one **Tropical Kingbird** continued to move around the Struve Slough area until mid-spring, with the last report on April 16 (MJ, NU, v.ob.). **Loggerhead Shrike** reports included one at Wilder Ranch on April 25 (AR), and one along Hanson Slough on May 13 (EL, RR).



**Purple Martins** returned to recent nesting areas, with four on March 26 (JL) being the first arrivals in the Loma Prieta area (where they nest just across the county line in Santa Clara County), and several were present in recently-occupied Bonny Doon Ecological Preserve by May 26 (BR, RR, AR, v.ob.). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was near Loma Prieta on May 22 (WB); other reports came from the upper Pajaro River area at the southeast

corner of the county, where they seem to have become regular in recent years. One of

the less-expected finds this season was a **Canyon Wren** in Castle Rock State Park, seen and heard on a few occasions starting March 1 (AR), for the first record in Santa Cruz County since 1986. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was in Castle Rock State Park on March 31 (AR).



*Black-chinned Sparrow* - Michael Bolte

**Black-and-white Warblers** turned up along Soquel Creek at Peery Park on April 9 (GM), along upper Struve Slough on April 14 (NU), and along Swanton Road on May 25 (AR). There were five **Nashville Warbler** reports from April 17 to May 10 (PS, NL, LG, WG, v.ob.). **Palm Warblers** were noted at Antonelli Pond on April 1 (AF, ZS), and along the San Lorenzo River upstream of Highway 1 on April 4 (EF). Migrating **Yellow-breasted Chats** sang at College Lake on April 24 (AR), DeLaveaga Park on May 7 (SG), and along the Pajaro River at Watsonville on May 8 (AR). **Black-chinned Sparrows**



*Swamp Sparrow - Norman Uyeda*

returned to their recent haunts on the chaparral-covered ridges near Loma Prieta, with one arriving there on April 3 (AR). Up to three males were singing on territory through the later part of the period. Reports of about four **Lark Sparrows** all came from the southeast corner of the county (v.ob.)

Exceptionally late reports of migrant sparrows included a **Fox Sparrow** at Star Creek Ranch on May 20 (AR), and two **Lincoln's Sparrows** at CARE Park on the Pajaro River on May 22 (CK). A **Harris's Sparrow** visiting Soquel from April 6-18 (NF, BD) was the rarest sparrow reported this spring. There were six reports of

*Male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks - Craig Fosdick*



**White-throated Sparrows** in the county during this period (v.ob.). A colorful alternate-plumaged **Swamp Sparrow** at Pinto Lake City Park on March 29 (NU) may have been a spring migrant rather than a lingering winterer. Two **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** were near Soda Lake on May 21 (AR), in the only regular location for them known in the county, an area that is not accessible to the public.

Spring migration of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** got off to a good start, with five reported from May 13-31 (v.ob.) Two males were photographed together at a Boulder Creek feeder on May 20 (CF). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** visited West Struve Slough on April 22 (NL). **Red Crossbills** continued to be reported through the spring (v.ob.), with all those identified to type being Type 3. About four **Lawrence's Goldfinches** turned up in various spots this period (v.ob.)



*Leucistic Anna's - Lisa Larson*

**Cited Observers:** Jeff Bleam, Bill Bousman, Will Brooks, Mary Crouser, Beverly Douglas, John Ellis, Paul Fenwick, Noreen Feuss, Abram Fleishman, Elisabeth Forrest, Craig Fosdick, Aaron Gabbe, Steve Gerow, Don Glasco, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Molly Jaffe, Clay Kempf, Gary Kittleson, Melinda Kralj, Earl Lebow, Nick Levendosky, Jasen Liu, Gary Martindale, Jane Mio, Stephan Nance, Todd Newberry, Dave Nickerson, Amy Patten, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Jeff Roisman, David Sidle (DSi), Zeke Smith, Pete Solé, Kitty Stein, David Styer (DSt), Steve Tracey, Norman Uyeda, Randy Wardle, Glenn White, David Wilhelm, Jim Williams, Gena Zolotar, Jeff Zolotar, v.ob. = various observers



LONE ★ STAR BIRD HOSTS

...Continued from page 11




Black-and-White Warbler

Surfbird and Ruddy Turnstone



**SPECIES LISTS FROM ONE SHORE AND ONE WOODS WALK:**

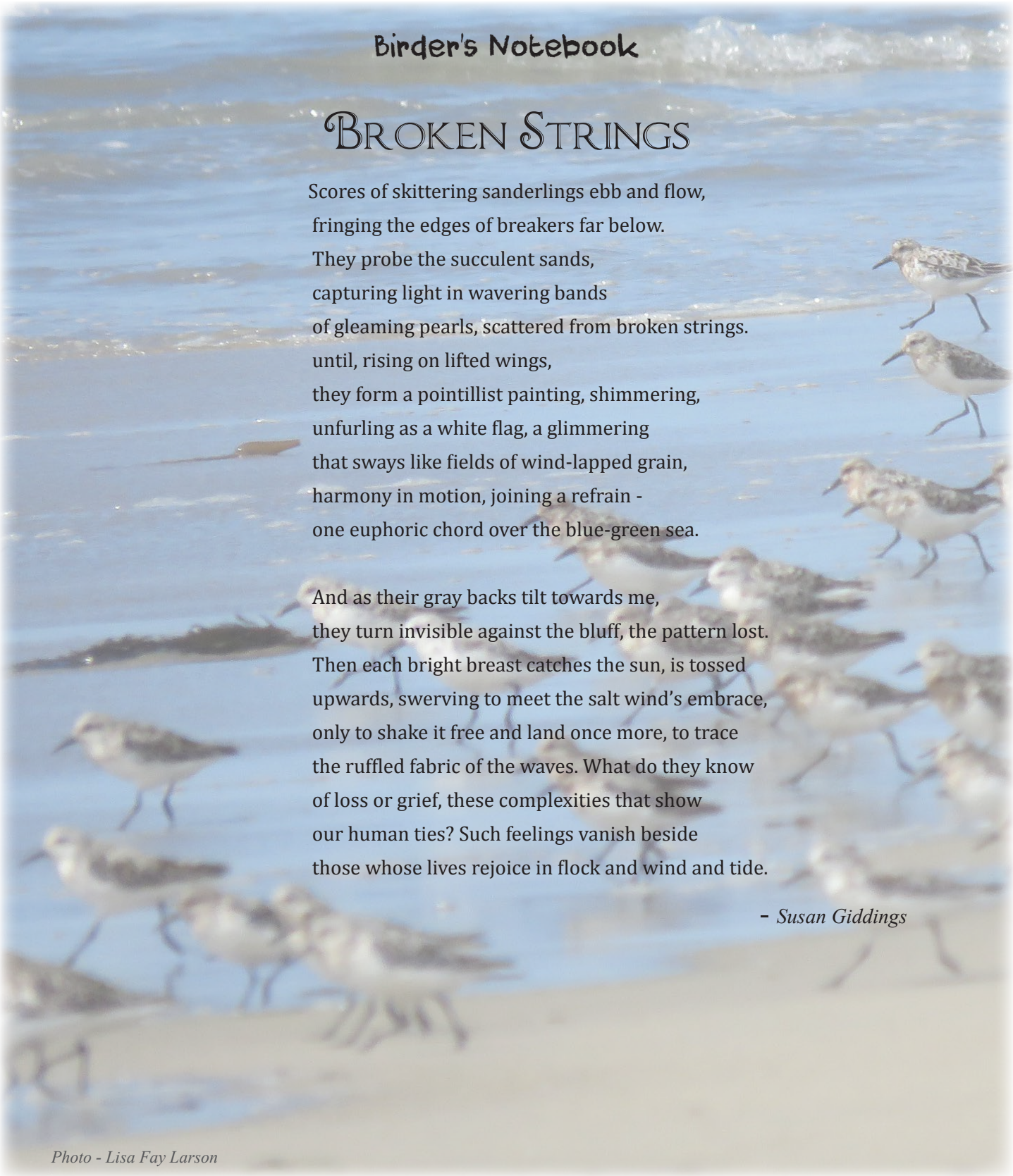
|                          |                            |                              |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>SHORE WALK</b>        | Caspian Tern               | Brown-headed Cowbird         |
| Bufflehead               | Forster's Tern             | Black-bellied Whistling-Duck |
| Common Loon              | Royal Tern                 | Tricolored Heron             |
| Neotropic Cormorant      | Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) | Cattle Egret                 |
| Double-crested Cormorant | Eurasian Collared-Dove     | White Ibis                   |
| American White Pelican   | Crested Caracara           | Black Vulture                |
| Brown Pelican            | Vermilion Flycatcher       | Inca Dove                    |
| Great Blue Heron         | Purple Martin              | White-winged Dove            |
| Great Egret              | Tree Swallow               | Mourning Dove                |
| Snowy Egret              | Northern Mockingbird       | Yellow-billed Cuckoo         |
| Little Blue Heron        | European Starling          | Chimney Swift                |
| Reddish Egret            | Savannah Sparrow           | Ruby-throated Hummingbird    |
| Roseate Spoonbill        | Northern Cardinal          | White-eyed Vireo             |
| Black Vulture            | Red-winged Blackbird       | Purple Martin                |
| Turkey Vulture           | Great-tailed Grackle       | Barn Swallow                 |
| Osprey                   | House Sparrow              | Black-crested Titmouse       |
| American Coot            |                            | House Wren                   |
| American Oystercatcher   | <b>WOODS WALK</b>          | Sedge Wren                   |
| Semipalmated Plover      | Blue-winged Teal           | Carolina Wren                |
| Killdeer                 | Northern Shoveler          | Blue-gray Gnatcatcher        |
| Spotted Sandpiper        | Redhead                    | Ruby-crowned Kinglet         |
| Willet                   | White-faced Ibis           | Gray Catbird                 |
| Marbled Godwit           | Black-bellied Plover       | Black-and-white Warbler      |
| Ruddy Turnstone          | Greater Yellowlegs         | Hooded Warbler               |
| Sanderling               | Lesser Yellowlegs          | Northern Parula              |
| Dunlin                   | Sandwich Tern              | Yellow-rumped Warbler        |
| Least Sandpiper          | Black Skimmer              | Yellow-throated Warbler      |
| Western Sandpiper        | Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  | Chipping Sparrow             |
| Laughing Gull            | Barn Swallow               | Field Sparrow                |
| Ring-billed Gull         | Marsh Wren                 | Lincoln's Sparrow            |
| Herring Gull             | Common Yellowthroat        |                              |



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## Birder's Notebook

# BROKEN STRINGS



Scores of skittering sanderlings ebb and flow,  
fringing the edges of breakers far below.  
They probe the succulent sands,  
capturing light in wavering bands  
of gleaming pearls, scattered from broken strings.  
until, rising on lifted wings,  
they form a pointillist painting, shimmering,  
unfurling as a white flag, a glimmering  
that sways like fields of wind-lapped grain,  
harmony in motion, joining a refrain -  
one euphoric chord over the blue-green sea.

And as their gray backs tilt towards me,  
they turn invisible against the bluff, the pattern lost.  
Then each bright breast catches the sun, is tossed  
upwards, swerving to meet the salt wind's embrace,  
only to shake it free and land once more, to trace  
the ruffled fabric of the waves. What do they know  
of loss or grief, these complexities that show  
our human ties? Such feelings vanish beside  
those whose lives rejoice in flock and wind and tide.

- Susan Giddings

*Photo - Lisa Fay Larson*





**Bird Club Officers are working hard this summer on improving our communication with members:**



**Coming Soon:**

- Pay Pal Membership** sign-ups at no cost to members.
- New email communication system** for members.

We wanted to make sure you know what's going on and don't miss out! Soon, we will be able to tweet you between the publications of the Albatross Newsletter. This would include cancellations of Bird Walks, adding new Bird Walks, community events that relate to birds, and reminders about guests speakers and other events you may not have on your radar!

The **A**lbatross  
Needs YOUR  
Contribution!

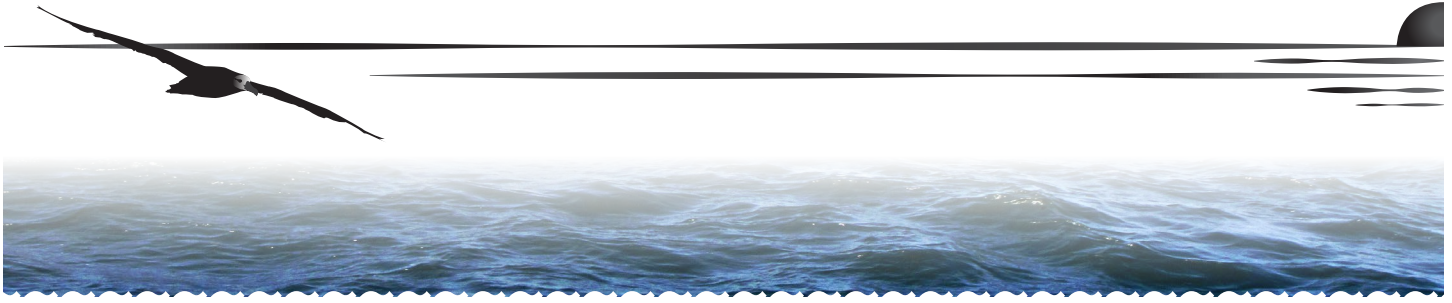
*Please help to keep your SCBC newsletter SOARING!  
Your stories, photos, book reviews, tips, quotes, poems, artwork—anything that's bird-related is your opportunity to share!*



Remember to check the website for any **UPDATES**—announcements, calendar events & meetings

Thank you for visiting your Alby **in color** on our website!

*Black-footed Albatross photo - Cathy Summa-Wolfe*



# Seabirding Trips

## Monterey Seabirds

Monterey Seabirds features year-round pelagic trips for observing seabirds and marine mammals of Monterey Bay. Our experienced trip leaders and skipper, boat, and policies will all contribute to your enjoyment of a safe, comfortable and rewarding trip. Folks can register online at: [www.montereyseabirds.com](http://www.montereyseabirds.com). (831) 375-4658  
If you have questions, contact Tim Amaral at: [montereyseabirds@gmail.com](mailto:montereyseabirds@gmail.com).

### 2016 MONTEREY SEABIRD TRIPS

**8-hour trips** (7:30 a.m. to approx. 3:30 p.m.)

Saturday September 3rd through Sunday October 23rd

*Marbled Murrelet  
- Beth Hamel*

**Additional dates may be added.** Please check [montereyseabirds.com](http://montereyseabirds.com) for updates.  
*Enjoy the friendliest pelagic trips on the West Coast!*



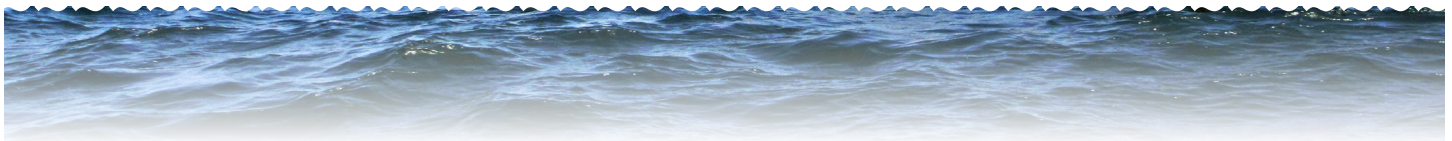
## SHEARWATER JOURNEYS

### MONTEREY BAY, HALF MOON BAY AND BODEGA BAY

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. We have pelagic trips departing from Monterey and Half Moon Bay, spanning September 3rd through October 16th.

Discounts are available for all trips.

**Please see our web site:** [shearwaterjourneys.com](http://shearwaterjourneys.com) and blog: [shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com](http://shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com) for more details.  
Contact Debi, a Life Member of the Santa Cruz Bird Club: [debi@shearwaterjourneys.com](mailto:debi@shearwaterjourneys.com).





*Submissions NEEDED*

**DEADLINE**

for Nov/Dec issue

*Oct 1, 2016*

***New SCBC Members  
Welcome!***

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Alice Sickels                  | Apr 2016 |
| Michael & Frances Bolte        | May 2016 |
| Mike & Tari Voydanoff          | May 2016 |
| Lee & Molly Jaffe              | May 2016 |
| Patrick Furtado                | May 2016 |
| Stephanie Martin               | Jun 2016 |
| Julie Allen                    | Jun 2016 |
| Gale Geurin                    | Jun 2016 |
| Elizabeth Ferguson<br>& Family | Jun 2016 |
| Robert Hardy                   | Jun 2016 |
| Jasper Barnes Family           |          |
| Glenn White                    | Jun 2016 |
| David & Lynda Lewit            | Jun 2016 |
| Carol Pecot                    | Jun 2016 |
| Ray Launier                    | Aug 2016 |

*Assembling Your*



**ALBATROSS**

*Newsletter*

Submission to the Albatross  
**Guidelines**

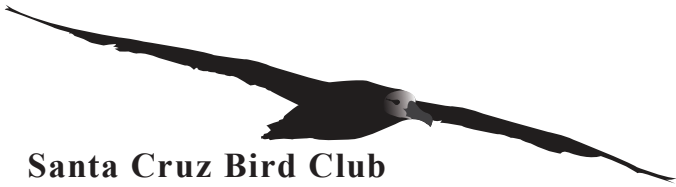
In addition to regular features—*Events Calendar*, photos for *Santa Cruz Birds*, *Birders Notebook* and *Parting Shot*—the newsletter can include almost anything related to birding in general and to local birding in particular. Depending on space, submissions of any of the following are **needed**:

- 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 AT LEAST 2 weeks before** the submission deadline.

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

*~Lisa Fay Larson, Editor*



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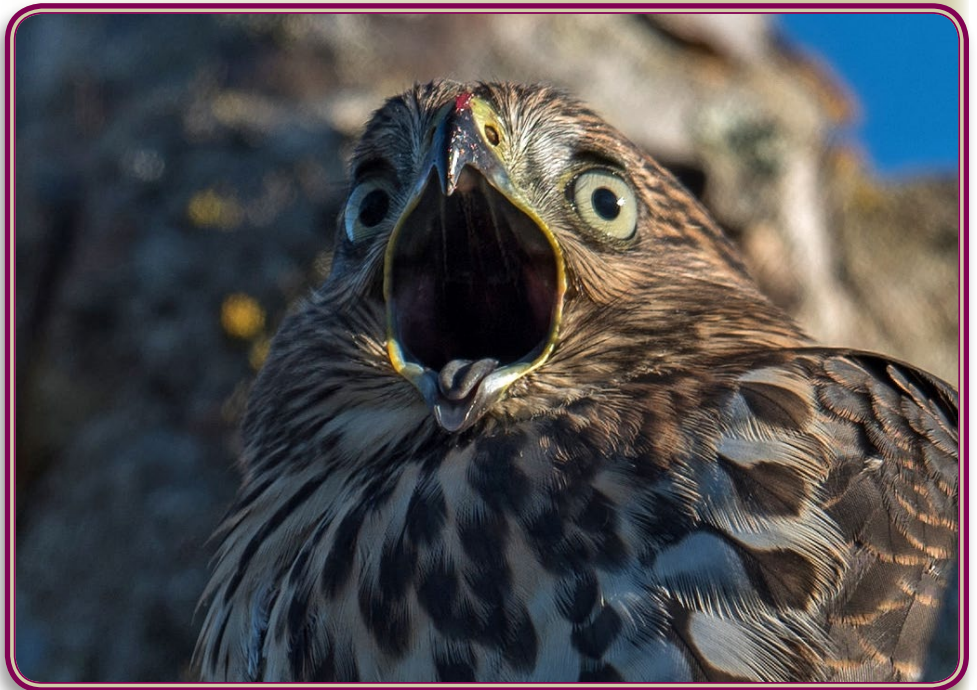
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PARTING SHOT: "O SOLE MIO"  
COOPERS HAWK - Michael Bolte



**ALBATROSS**

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by the Santa Cruz Bird Club.  
See the online version and past  
issues on the SCBC website,  
***santacruzbirdclub.org***

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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. Santa Cruz Bird Club memberships run June-May.

Dues are \$20 Individual, \$25 Family, \$5 Youth, \$400 Life.  
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