





# Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

**INSIDE**  
**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**



**SANTA CRUZ BIRDS**  
 ...for the Spring Gardener



*Seabirding Trips*  
**Birder's Notebook**  
 PARTING SHOT

Mallard and ANHU - Lisa Larson

## Protecting Bay Area Western Snowy Plovers

By Karine Tokatlian and Kristin Butler

The sun rises during a crisp winter morning in the South San Francisco Bay, illuminating a mysterious barren landscape of dry salt ponds. Since the early 1900s, the Bay's native tidal marshes have been pulled, diked, and reformed to build a complex system of salt evaporation ponds connected by underground pumps, leaving behind a strange moonscape of crusted mud and gypsum.

The few plants tolerant enough to grow in these moonscapes are invasive succulents that speckle the horizon with green and fiery red. It is an unlikely habitat for most—but it is in these dry moonscapes that we find the Western Snowy Plover. As the rising sun spreads its warming rays, a keen observer can watch the barren ground here suddenly come to life. Drab, palm-sized birds begin to scurry amid crevices while they flex their wings and wake their legs, running after insects, rambunctiously chasing each other, and making distinctive “tow-wheet” calls. They are a species full of life, but they are on their way to extinction and need our help.

Western Snowy Plovers (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*) are a geographically distinct subspecies from their relatives in the interior states. From Washington to Baja California, they breed on sandy and rocky coastal beaches and in the San Francisco



Snowy Plover chicks - Karine Tokatlian

and San Diego Bay areas. Unfortunately, coastal development continues to destroy their habitat and recreation creates so much stress for these alert birds that they often abandon their nests.

*Both photos: Snowy Plover Eggs in nest scrape (nests are highlighted)  
- Karine Tokatlin*



Western Snowy Plovers are so rare that in 1993 the federal government listed them as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. In 2003, the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO), a nonprofit in Milpitas with the mission to conserve birds and their habitats through science and outreach, began to study and protect them.

Since then, with support from volunteers, partners, and donors, SFBBO has conducted research to monitor Bay Area plovers, understand plover behavior, enhance plover habitat, mitigate threats, and educate the community about these charismatic birds.

Our local plovers are among the thousands of wintering shorebirds and waterfowl that utilize the San Francisco Bay during the winter months along the Pacific Flyway. They also use about 5,400 acres of former salt evaporation ponds at the State of California's Eden Landing Ecological Reserve, at Ravenswood and other sections of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and other bay regions to nest and raise their young.

Due to coastal habitat loss, human encroachment, and increasing predation pressure, the coastal Snowy Plover population has decreased considerably, which led to the creation of a recovery plan. The plan includes several region-wide goals.

The first is to develop a set of recovery unit working groups within the Pacific Coast states so scientists and land managers can collaborate together on solutions.

The second goal is to maintain a population of 3,000 or more breeding adult plovers along the Pacific Coast range for 10 years. Current numbers are at about 2,000 birds.

The third goal is to maintain a yearly average of productivity of at least one fledged chick per male per year. This is more challenging than it sounds. Most nests start with three eggs, which males and females take turns incubating. Once the eggs hatch, the males raise the chicks while the females find other mates to start new nests. Despite this effort, due to predation and other factors, the "one chick per male" goal is tough to reach.

To help achieve these range-wide goals, SFBBO and others are working to bring the current number of Bay Area plovers, which is at 208 birds, up to a goal of 500 birds. To do this, SFBBO scientists are implementing a series of strategies.

They are banding plovers for re-sighting in order to monitor plover numbers and locations. Because plover chicks are on the move only a few hours after hatching, scientists must time their banding operations carefully. After locating a nest (which is usually no more than a



simple scrape in the ground (sometimes decorated with rocks or shells), scientists predict when a chick will hatch by visiting the nest regularly during the 30-day incubation period and “floating” the plover eggs in water, as the eggs will float to the top when close to hatching. Also, because plovers are so hard to spot using a scope, scientists use a color banding rather than a number banding system.

To better understand the threats plovers face, SFBBO uses nest cameras to identify which types of predators are eating plover adults and chicks. SFBBO research shows that since 2008, predation by gulls, corvids, and some raptors is the leading cause of nest failures for Bay Area plovers and in some years up to 55% of nests fail due to this activity. In response to these findings, scientists and volunteers are removing posts, fences, dilapidated buildings, and other structures near plover habitat that predators may use to perch on while searching for prey.

In addition, because one of the plover’s most successful survival strategies is to blend in with its surroundings, SFBBO is testing ways to help the birds do this by dispersing oyster shells around the salt pond habitat to



*Above: Karine Tokatlin, Plover Program Director with Snowy Plover chick - Savannah Robinson  
Below: Snowy Plover Eggs - Karine Tokatlin*

provide camouflage for the birds’ nests. Early testing results for this effort are promising. SFBBO also plans to enhance plover habitat by creating depressions, cracks, and other ground disturbance camouflage in the salt ponds by stomping on the ground, and scientists are looking for volunteers to help.

SFBBO shares its plover data and test results with other scientists in the range wide Snowy Plover recovery group through reports and presentations at group meetings and conferences. They also share their data and expertise with members of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, a 50-year wetlands restoration effort in the San Francisco Bay. The restoration project aims to restore many salt ponds back to native tidal marsh activity while at the same time preserving some ponds for species such as plovers.

Plover experts at SFBBO are helping project decision-makers and construction workers to avoid


negatively impacting plovers as they create new habitat to support other bird and animal species.

Finally, SFBBO works to increase community awareness about Western Snowy Plovers through offering citizen science opportunities, plover docent tours, family science nights, and science talks for the Audubon Society, university groups, and others members of the public.

People from the community can help in a number of ways. They can become citizen scientists, docents, or family outreach volunteers; invite someone from SFBBO to speak to their group; write an article or share information about SFBBO and Snowy Plovers through social media; attend a plover event; and make an in-kind contribution or monetary donation. With everyone’s help, we can help our local plovers thrive!

To learn more or get involved, please visit [www.sfbbo.org](http://www.sfbbo.org) or contact [outreach@sfbbo.org](mailto:outreach@sfbbo.org).





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## Update on Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) Nesting in the Monterey Bay Area, California – 2016



The 2016 report from researchers and associates of Point Blue Conservation Science (Point Blue), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) has concluded that the number of fledged chicks may have exceeded the USFWS target (1.0 fledgling per male) for population stability.

Nesting Snowy Plovers were monitored to assess the response to management efforts to enhance the species' breeding success and maintain population size. Federal and state agencies management actions included:

- ⦿ Roping-off upper beach and river spits to minimize human disturbance of nests.
- ⦿ Predator removal by the Wildlife Services Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- ⦿ Ongoing habitat restoration and management at multiple sites.
- ⦿ Water management to provide nesting and feeding habitat in the managed ponds of the Moss Landing Wildlife Area.

The study area in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties includes the beaches of Monterey Bay, former salt ponds in Elkhorn Slough, and pocket beaches in northern Santa Cruz County. At least sixteen areas of varying sizes were included in the study area. The numbers are considered to be estimates as more unbanded chicks fledged than could be verified, therefore, the 202 confirmed fledglings are a minimum number. "The actual number may have easily exceeded the 1999-2014 year average of 229 fledglings for Monterey Bay."



## Findings:

- ↳ An estimated 427 Snowy Plovers nested in the greater Monterey Bay area in 2016, which exceeded the USFWS recovery plan target of 338 adults ( for the 11th time since the target was first attained in 2003).
- ↳ At least 381 nests; 357 were found as eggs and 24 as broods of chicks.
- ↳ The 54% of nests hatched in 2016 was below the average of 61% from 1999-2014.
- ↳ At least half the nest losses were caused by mostly avian predators. Ravens may have taken close to 50 nests. Humans were suspected of being the cause of 9 nest losses.
- ↳ The number of chicks hatching was 452-567 of which 257 were banded.
- ↳ A minimum of 202 chicks fledged of which 109 were banded and 93 unbanded.



*Snowy Plover Photos - Lisa Fay Larson*

Per Carleton Eyster, who is on the Point Blue team, "Nesting on northern SC County pocket beaches has not happened since 2009, though it gets little to no coverage (and we would in fact, be interested in getting Bird Club members interested in keeping an eye out). Pescadero and Half Moon Bay have had recent nesting, but the ravens and human use of the beaches, coupled with less active management, between SF and SC has been a limiting factor. Monterey Bay productivity, fortunately, has made up much of the difference for this Recovery Unit (Sonoma to Monterey County, excluding SFBay), and some of our juveniles emigrate to other sites across the range."

If you find Snowy Plover nests in any of the pocket beaches of northern Santa Cruz County, please contact Carleton Eyster, Snowy Plover Biologist or Kriss Neuman, Waterbird Ecologist at Point Blue: [pointblue@pointblue.org](mailto:pointblue@pointblue.org).

# EVENTS CALENDAR

March–April 2017



## Saturday, March 4 Neary Lagoon

Riparian and marsh habitat in the middle of Santa Cruz often provides something unexpected.

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

**Leader:** Nick Levendosky, nlevendosky@gmail.com



## Sunday, March 12 San Mateo Bayfront and Coast

We'll visit Redwood Shores and Radio Road areas/ponds in the morning (1.2 ft. low tide at 7:15 am and 7.9 ft. high tide 1:00 pm) and Half Moon Bay/Princeton Harbor in the afternoon. Itinerary may vary as we'll attempt for any recent sightings provided on the peninsula birding list server (pen-bird) appropriate to these locations. We may start at the "Shell Bar" near San Mateo Bridge. Bring lunch for a full day's birding. Heavy rain cancels.

**Directions:** Meet at the County Government Center at 7:00 a.m. (near sign at Ocean Street parking entrance) for carpooling possibilities. For alternate meeting arrangements, please call home phone and call ahead; mobile for day of trip only.

**Leader:** Eric Feuss, 831-477-0280 (h); 408-717-0421 (m).



*Left: Common Yellowthroat - Lisa Larson*

*Below: Marbled Godwit, Radio Road Ponds - Gail West*



## Sunday, March 5 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. This event will be a shorter two to three hour walk.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 am in the Quail Hollow County Park parking lot.

**Leader:** Eric Feuss, 831-477-0280 (h); 408-717-0421 (m).



## Saturday, March 11 New Brighton State Beach

With spring 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





**Saturday, March 18  
Schwan Lake**

We should find a mix of residents and spring migrants, plus a few lingering winter birds in the Live Oak woodlands, some open meadows, plus willows, marshlands, and other habitats along the lake.

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

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



**Thursday, March 23  
SCBC Meeting @ 7:30 pm**

**Speaker:** Glen Tepke

**Topic:** Life Beyond the Edge: Seabirds and Marine Mammals of the Northeast Pacific

Seabirds and marine mammals are some of the planet's least known but most threatened species. Drawing on photos from over 100 pelagic birding and whale-watching trips, Glen Tepke's presentation will highlight the mystery and beauty of the denizens of the offshore deep-water zone—albatrosses, shearwaters, storm-petrels, murrelets, auklets, puffins, dolphins and whales—focusing on species of the northeast Pacific. Glen will share identification tips, illustrate some of the unique adaptations required for the saltwater life, and outline the threats facing marine life ranging from long-line fishing to crumbling glaciers, as well as conservation success stories that have brought some species back from the brink of extinction.



*Kittlitz's Murrelet - GlenTepke*



While pelagic birding is an acquired taste for many birders, Glen's idea of bliss is a day spent 100 miles offshore in a small boat photographing rarely seen seabirds. A recreational birder and photographer living in Oakland and Santa Cruz, Glen is particularly interested in using his photos to promote conservation of endangered species, and has contributed many for the publications and websites of Audubon California, (National) Audubon, American Bird Conservancy, BirdLife International, Center for Biological Diversity, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and many other organizations. Glen's photos have also appeared in several field guides including the Stokes, Smithsonian, and National Wildlife Federation guides to North American birds.

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



*Immature Cooper's Hawk - Sharon Hull*



**Friday, March 24  
Meder Canyon**

We will explore an island of habitat within the west Santa Cruz residential area, featuring riparian and coastal scrub, plus extensive eucalyptus groves, which sometimes hold something unexpected.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 am at the south end of the trail on Grandview Street, just past the Escalona Street intersection. To reach Grandview Street, turn north (inland) from Mission Street onto Swift Street. Swift Street makes a sharp left turn, and becomes Grandview.

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



## Sunday, April 2 Pinnacles National Monument

A full day of hiking and birding for target birds, such as California Condor, Prairie Falcon, Western Kingbirds, Canyon Wren, Bell's Sparrow, Bullock's Oriole, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and more. Bring lunch and liquids.

**Directions:** Meet at 6:30 am at the Aptos Wells Fargo Bank for carpooling or at 8:00 am at the main Visitor Center along Hwy. 146 outside of the east entrance to the park (\$15 entrance fee w/o park pass). Reference: [www.nps.gov/pinn/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/pinn/index.htm). We may attempt to return through King City (Hwy. 25 to 198), birding some spots along the way. Participants are more than welcome to join us later; in which case, please call to make arrangements and obtain the mobile number.

**Leader:** Eric Feuss, 831-477-0280 (h); 408-717-0421 (m).



## Sunday, April 9 Terrace Point, Younger Lagoon, & Vicinity

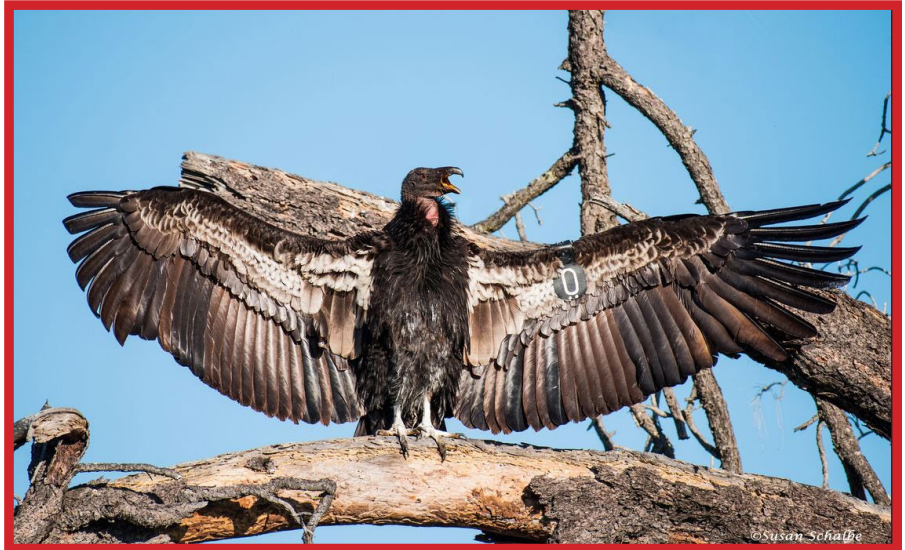
We will start by scoping the ocean and rocky shoreline before walking into Younger Lagoon. From here we will continue on to Antonelli Pond or even the Homeless Garden covering everything from the ocean, rocky coast, to coastal scrub, and weedy grasslands.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:30 am in the parking lot outside the Seymour Marine Discovery Center.

**Leader:** Nick Levendosky, [nlevendosky@gmail.com](mailto:nlevendosky@gmail.com)



Wrentit - Michael Bolte



California Condor - Susan Schalbe, her story follows

### *A Magical Moment With a Condor*

*Wildlife encounters are always special. Yet, I was totally unprepared for the most magical moment I shared with a friend as we drove down a bucolic highway in the vicinity of Pinnacles National Park last year. It was around 9 AM and there were very few cars on the road. The hills were green from an early spring rain and we could make out a hint of wildflowers in the distance. Suddenly as we rounded a bend, from the corner of my eye I spotted a large bird flying in from the west. My first thought was that this was a golden eagle. But as the bird crossed about 50 yards or so in front of our car I turned to my friend Chris and said, "Is that what I think it is? Is that a condor?". My heart was racing. We were blown away by the size of the bird as it flapped its large wings slowly in front of us. Even more remarkably, it landed in a low oak by the side of the road not far from us. We pulled over and were in awe as this young bird proceeded to turn his head from side to side and look at his surroundings. We had our cameras out and began taking what later came to be hundreds of photos. We just couldn't believe that we were actually in the presence of such a magnificent bird. And he was there in front of us, closer than almost any bird of prey we had ever seen. He hopped to a lower branch and preened and then opened his wings to catch the warmth of the winter sun. He didn't seem to mind our presence and dutifully turned his head from side to side so we were able to get magnificent views of this iconic bird. We spent an hour with this condor and finally, most reluctantly, left him, not wanting our luck to run out. Chris and I look back on that moment as one that we will treasure for the rest of our lives.*





**Friday, April 14**  
**Sunset State Beach**

Sunset State Beach offers interesting landbirds amidst coastal scrub and a mature grove of planted Monterey pines, and waterbirds on the beach and adjacent bay.

**Directions:** Meet at the parking area at 8:00 am near the entrance kiosk. There is an entrance fee for driving in.

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

California Thrasher - Jeff Roisman



**Saturday, April 15**  
**Watsonville Slough**

An array of some open water, marshes, willows, eucalyptus, plus a bordering city park and residential neighborhoods should produce an interesting mix of species this time of year.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 am at the Watsonville Wetlands Nature Center, 30 Harkins Slough Road (the south side of Ramsay Park) in Watsonville.

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



Townsend's Big-eared Bat - Merlin Tuttle



**Sunday, April 23**  
**El Jarro Point**

This is a good time and place to see spring seabird migration. Loons, Brant, and scoters will be flying up the coast, and we may encounter Pomerine Jaeger, phalaropes, or even a Black-footed Albatross. Whether or not something unusual is seen, the number of seabirds passing by may be all that is needed to provide excitement. Plan to spend several hours in one place, possibly in blustery conditions. A spotting scope is highly recommended and there is the option of bringing a folding chair.

**Directions:** Meet at 7:00 am at the Davenport Landing parking area. On Highway 1 at Western Drive, travel north up the coast for 10 miles. Take a left onto Davenport Landing Road and continue down to the parking area and restrooms by the beach where we will meet.

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



**Thursday, April 27**

**SCBC Meeting @ 7:30 pm**

**Speaker: Elise McCandless**

**Topic: Bats and Birds: Coexisting for Balance in the Environment**

Did you know that bats can eat 500-1000 insects per hour? Some bats can fly 60 miles per hour and 10,000 feet up while migrating thousands of miles! For a change in pace, please join us for a natural history program about our local bats, where they live, why we should protect them, and what their physiological differences are from birds. Bat advocate Elise McCandless of Santa Cruz Bats will talk about the biology, behavior and ecological importance of bats in our area. Come with your curiosity and questions to learn more about these other winged creatures of the air.

In 2012, Elise McCandless, with a Master's Degree in Education from Stanford University, founded Santa Cruz Bats ([www.santacruz bats.com](http://www.santacruz bats.com)), an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. She has also begun the *Batwise Business Certification Program*, which provides education and consultation to local businesses interested in protecting bats. Volunteers consult homeowners prior to construction or pest work, and assist residents who want to make their homes and yards bat-friendly. Santa Cruz Bats offers educational programs for schools and other groups.

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



**Friday, April 28**  
**Moore Creek Preserve**

This is one of the best local spots to find certain localized grassland breeding species like Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrows (and a great place to compare the buzzy songs of these two). Migrant Western Kingbirds are also a good possibility, plus Western Bluebirds and more.

**Directions:** Meet at 8:00 am on Shaffer Road near the intersection with Mission Street. Parking spaces can sometimes be hard to find in this area, so this is one of those spots where carpooling may be a good idea.

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



*American Kestrel - Andy Knorr*

*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.*



## *We're Recruiting*

The Monterey Bay Birding Festival Association, Inc., is recruiting Board of Directors Members.

The Board of Directors of our 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is the governing body of the Monterey Bay Birding Festival, which takes place annually in late September. We are actively recruiting to fill open seats on the Board of Directors.

If you are interested in birds then this would be a great opportunity for you to serve the birding community, learn, have fun, and actively engage with other birding enthusiasts to help shape the future of the Monterey Bay Birding Festival.

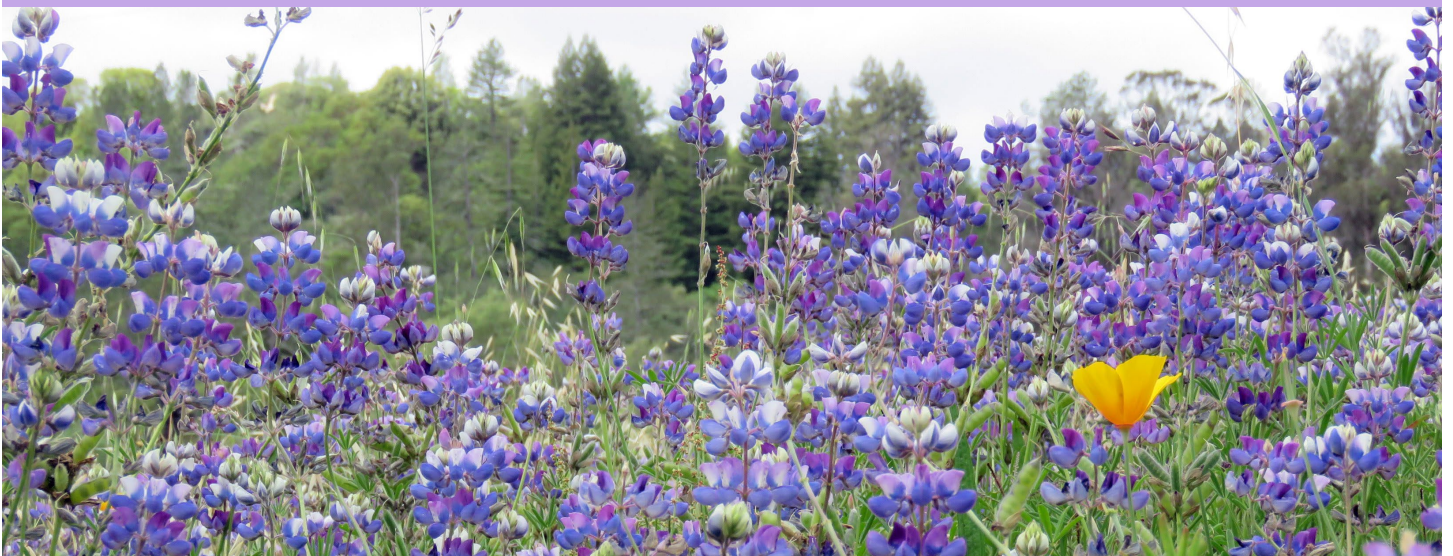
We are seeking individuals with a variety of skills and interests so don't be shy about inquiring if you have an interest in the birding festival and would like to work with a wonderful group of passionate birding enthusiasts. Inquire at [montereybaybirdingfestival@gmail.com](mailto:montereybaybirdingfestival@gmail.com). All question, comments, and inquiries are welcome! Visit [www.montereybaybirding.org](http://www.montereybaybirding.org) to learn more about the Monterey Bay Birding Festival.

## IT'S FOR THE BIRDS



*Western Bluebird, male and Quail Hollow Lupine - Lisa Fay Larson*

While we cannot turn back the clock or make immediate sweeping changes to environmental policy, we are not powerless. Thinking about conservation and habitat loss can be overwhelming, but there are things we can do to make a difference in our beloved Santa Cruz. One option is volunteering with a project that makes an impact. The ***Quail Hollow Nest Box Project*** presents such an opportunity. To date, the project has fledged over 100 Western Bluebirds, whose numbers in the county had been declining. In addition to providing habitat for these charming birds and several other species, the project contributes to the scientific understanding of bird breeding biology. Aside from being an important project, volunteering for the Quail Hollow Nest Box Project is fun. It is peaceful up there in the oak woodland and it is beautiful. Spring brings fields of lupine and an indescribable energy as the birds prepare themselves for nesting. Volunteering only requires a few flexible hours a week. If you are interested, please contact Jeremy Lin: [Jeremy.lin@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:Jeremy.lin@santacruzcounty.us) or 831 335-9348. Jeremy works on Sundays at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park in Ben Lomond.



# Santa Cruz Birds

By Steve Gerow

*Including reports from November 1 to December 31, 2016*

The early-winter reports still need a little sorting and double-checking at this time, so this report just finishes out the Fall Migration season, and the entire Winter season will be summarized in the next issue.



*Cackling Goose - Michael Bolte*



*Gadwall X Mallard - Alex Rinkert*



*Cattle Egret - Lee Jaffe*

A flock of 18 **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Pajaro Dunes on November 16 (TU). **Cackling Goose** reports came from a number of spots in the Pajaro Valley and along the coast from Capitola to Wilder Ranch; the largest total noted was 17 in Struve Slough on November 8 (NU). A male **Gadwall X Mallard** hybrid was at Neary Lagoon on November 21 (AR). It appeared to be the same individual that has wintered in Santa Cruz County (moving around among various sites) since the 2013-14 season. A female **Black Scoter** was off West Cliff Drive on November 19 (AR), and one (maybe the same?) was along the Wilder Ranch coast from November 20 to 29 (PB, TU, v.ob.). An **American Bittern** skulked at Antonelli Pond starting November 30 (DF, SL, v.ob.). Bitterns are rare in the Santa Cruz area, and this may have been the same bird that wintered here last year. A **Cattle Egret** was photographed at Pajaro Dunes on November 15 (LJ).

**Bald Eagles** continued to be found around the Watsonville Slough System, with reports involving at least two adults and one immature (JR, GK). One of the better raptor finds this fall was a **Rough-legged Hawk** at Wilder Ranch on November 6 (CF), the first reported in Santa Cruz County since 2012. A **Ruddy Turnstone** was along the Wilder Ranch coast on November 13 (TU, CU). Some **Elegant Terns** stayed late again this fall, including one or two at Twin Lakes State Beach on November 26 (AR). The now-famous mostly-white leucistic **Anna's Hummingbird** continued to please visitors to the UCSC Arboretum through the period (v.ob.). Another interesting

hummingbird at the Arboretum was a male **Anna's X Costa's Hummingbird** hybrid found on November 13 (GK, SM, MB).

An impressive accumulation of 110 **Acorn Woodpeckers** were tallied in Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve on November 6 (AR). This area was burnt in the 2008 Martin Fire, and has a large number of standing dead pines and other trees which have been attracting good numbers of various woodpecker species in the years since that fire. A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Ocean View Park on November 2 was fairly late (SH). **Tropical Kingbirds** in November included one or more moving around the Watsonville Slough System (v.ob.), one in the Terrace Point/Younger Lagoon area from November 1-5 (PB, PS), one at Wilder Ranch on November 7 (ST), and one around Lighthouse Field starting November 21 (SM, v.ob.). These birds seem to wander a fair amount, so it is often hard to judge how many individuals are actually involved.

Two or three **Loggerhead Shrikes** continued in the

*Loggerhead Shrike - Michael Bolte*



lower Pajaro Valley through late fall, with most reports from the Pajaro Dunes area and the vicinity of Harkins Slough (v.ob). Three **Horned Larks** visited Wilder Ranch on November 13 (TU, CU), and others were in their “usual area” near the lower Watsonville Slough System on November 5 (GK). It was a very sparse fall for **Varied Thrush** in Santa Cruz County, with no reports at all until the surprisingly late date of November 16 (CS). A **Lapland Longspur** was in the fields along the Wilder Ranch coast on November 4 (CS, OJ, ASe, et al.), with possibly the same bird nearby on November 12 (AK, PS, TU). Additional **Palm Warblers** found in November brought the fall total to about 12 (v.ob.). Four together along the railroad tracks in Wilder Ranch on November 4 (ASe, CS, OJ, v.ob.) was a noteworthy gathering. An additional **Black-throated Gray Warbler** for the season was along Watsonville Slough on November 6 (RT).

Late migrant **Chipping Sparrows** included two at Natural Bridges on November 5 (AK, PS), and one at Wilder Ranch on November 20 (TU). A couple more **Clay-colored Sparrows** turned up, including one in Aptos on November 1 (RW), and one by Swanton Pond November 24-27 (MBolte, TU, CU), bringing the fall total to five. Some additional **White-throated Sparrows** brought their period total to around 15-17 (v.ob.) The rarest sparrow find this period was a young **Harris’s Sparrow** at the Homeless Garden by Antonelli Pond on November 6 (KJ, AK, LL).

A male **Hooded Oriole** that appeared in

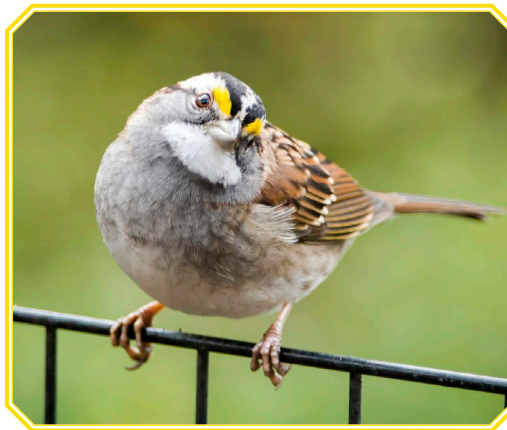
a Santa Cruz yard on November 3 was perhaps a very late fall migrant (MS). On the other hand, a female Hooded

Oriole that first seen on the same date in Watsonville (ASp) returned to the same feeder on a number of later dates, and continued into the winter. Six **Red Crossbills** near Quail Hollow on November 30 (CS) were the only ones reported all fall, and the first found in the county since June. Three **Lawrence’s Goldfinches** were near Loma Prieta on November 8 (AR), one of relatively few November reports for Santa Cruz County.

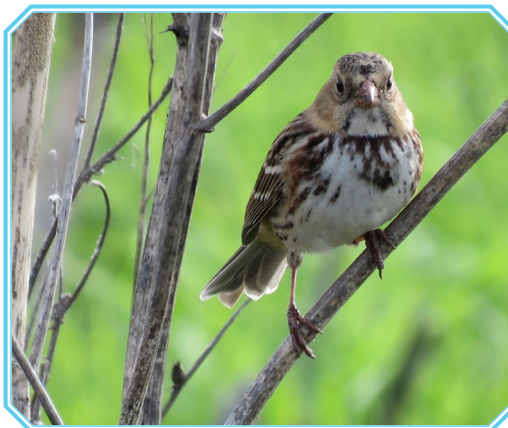
**Cited Observers:** Michael Bolte, Phil Brown, Darrow Feldstein, Craig Fosdick, Sharon Hull, Lee Jaffe, Kent Johnson, Oscar Johnson, Anna Kopitov, Gary Kittleson, Lisa Larson, Seowoo Lee, Shirley Murphy, Alex Rinkert, Jeff Roisman, Christian Schwarz, Michelle Scott, Adam Searcy (ASe), Pete Sole’, Anne Spence (ASp), Ryan Terrill, Simon Thornhill, Randy Wardle, Connie Unsicker, Tom Unsicker, Norman Uyeda



*Clay-colored Sparrow - Randy Wardle*



*White-throated Sparrow - Lisa Sheridan*



*Harris's Sparrow - Lisa Larson*



*Leucistic Anna's - Lee Jaffe*

# Bird Nesting and Feeding Tips for the Spring Gardener

By Jane Mio and Lisa Fay Larson

As springtime approaches, we humans are getting itchy hands to be busy with raking, sweeping, pruning and clipping to turn our gardens into tidy spring shape. The birds are itchy as well—engaging in a different activity—which results in nest building. And here is where the human and feather concept of an ideal spring garden greatly differ. We humans like to remove last year’s decaying flowers, stems, dried grasses, twigs, mulchy leaves. The birds would be ecstatic, though, if we left all the mulching debris on the ground as potential nest building material and food sources (just think of the delicious insects in the decaying matter). Realizing that for some of us that unkempt look isn’t in the rake for various reasons, here are some nesting material tips: hang a basket or suet container, fill it with approx. 6” cut string, raffia, and feathers. Find a spot under a bush or corner of your garden and toss twigs, stems, old leaves there. This way you don’t have to look at it and the birds have access to nest building treasures.



spiderwebs, so that the nests can stretch as their nestlings grow! Leaving spiderwebs alone for nesting season receives immense bird applause. Want to support the female birds during breeding season? Then wash your eggshells with hot water, bake them (to kill any Salmonella

*Pollen-covered Honeybee - Lisa Larson*  
*Anna's Hummingbird nest - Ron Wolf*

bacteria), crush them in paper bag and spread

them in the garden.

During breeding season it is necessary to look out for nests before you prune those branches. Hummingbird nests are especially hard to spot, because they the size of half of a walnut shell—plus the nest is ingeniously



camouflaged with bark and lichen pieces. Knock boldly on the tree and when you get a twitter or pop out response, double check for nests. Birds nest in various locations: in vines, low in shrubs, on the ground in grasses or the base of trees, and holes/cavities in trees. Birds may give you their “Alert! Nest in vicinity! Back off!” high pitch chitters—and in case you missed the warning, they may take to dive-bombing you. Follow their instructions and avoid the area until nest is empty. Should you find a nest occupied with eggs and/or baby birds then **PUT THE NEST BACK AND LEAVE**. The parents will resume their task. And, heaven forbid, there is no more branch or tree, call Native Animal Rescue at (831) 462-0726 for helpful advice.

Nesting season is timed to the insect hatching event, because the little ones quickly grow big and strong on high protein diets.

And consider this win-win situation: if you don’t use any pesticides/insecticides (including “safe” ones) you have to work less and the birds will help you vigilantly to get rid of your insects while you help the bird population grow. It feels good to help each other, doesn’t it?

The hair/fur from brushes is a highly valued nesting commodity, so toss it outside and the wind will take care of it.

Every gardener will benefit from the insect devouring robins, swallows

and phoebes, who require a

good amount of mud for their nests and appreciate a muddy area for that supply. The spiderwebs are another important nesting favorite. Hummingbirds build their nests with



*Barn Swallow nest - David Sidle*

Spring is also planting time. When you eye those plant and seed packages at the nurseries, how about keeping the 3 Bs in mind: Birds, Butterflies and Bees? Putting vegetation in your piece of soil, which nourishes these 3 Bs will reward you with delightful visuals (who can resist the swallowtails' beauty?), insect control (a phoebe and chickadee flitting through your garden is an inexpensive insect prevention), and pollination guarantee (the reassuring sound of buzzing bees taking care of the future).



*Tiger Swallowtail - Lisa Larson*

Keep in mind that many songbirds are atricial—meaning they are born helpless/underdeveloped—and require intensive parental care. (Precocial birds—such as ducks, numerous shorebirds, turkeys, and others—are able to keep reasonably warm, walk, and feed themselves independently after hatching.) Upon fledging, parents typically feed their young for up to two weeks. In this time, many fledglings are learning and honing flying techniques. Sadly, often, they are taken on the ground by predators. That is why it can be helpful to leave some “hiding” spots in your garden. A broken and overturned pot can provide shelter and protection. The creative possibilities are limitless.

Springime is an opportunity to execute your planned plantings that can provide a food supply in fall or winter or even the following spring for birds. Flowers that leave seed heads are a magnet for many birds—sunflowers being among the most obvious. It is so enchanting to watch chickadees, titmice, finches and others take seeds from your own offered plantings! These can consist of flowering plants and grasses that you intentionally leave to go to seed.



*Lesser Goldfinch fledgling begging from parent - Lee Jaffe*

Sages, yarrow, echinacea, coreopsis, cosmos, and many more are colorful, bird-attracting plants. Hummingbirds are especially attracted to red and orange colors. Bell-shaped/cone-shaped/tubular flowers are ideal invitations to their long nectar-seeking tongues, providing natural nectar for these amazing jewels of the sky. Fuschia, lobelia, honeysuckle, salvia, columbine, hot pokers, bee balm, penstemon—your garden is your palette!

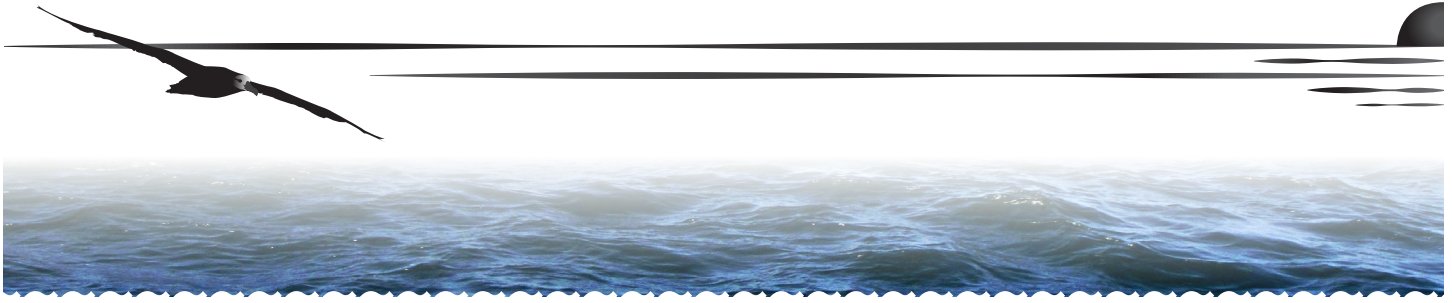
There are numerous berry-producing plants that will reward you in the fall with crowds of thrushes (American Robins and Hermit Thrushes), Cedar Waxwings, Golden-crowned Sparrows, and are often accompanied by insect hunters like the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bushtits, and wrens. It is important to remember that native plants will attract native birds, and also have a greater chance of growing success because of resistance to disease and drought. A few of the best choices (depending on your yard space, soil, and sun exposure) are Christmas Berry/Toyon, California Coffeeberry, elderberry, Oregon Grape, Western Serviceberry, and virburnums.

Please investigate using online and local, personal resources. Good nurseries have knowledgeable folks ready to answer your questions—and they want you to succeed. A great online resource to kickstart your planting plan is Audubon's Native Plant Database: [www.audubon.org/native-plants](http://www.audubon.org/native-plants)



*Downy Woodpecker with berries - John Fox*

One last note—enjoying the birds within sight and earshot while working in your yard, smelling the earth and feeling the air, will put you in close touch with some of the greatest reality life can offer!



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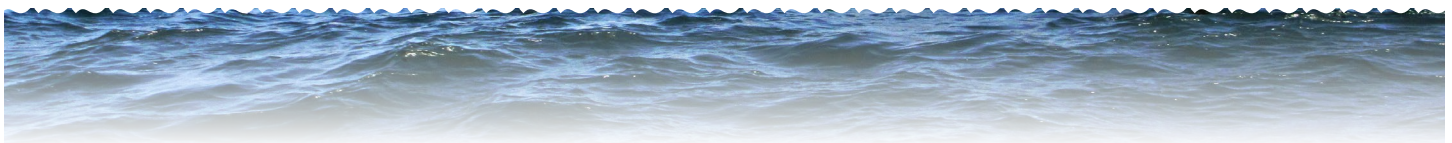
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**Please see our web site:** [shearwaterjourneys.com](http://shearwaterjourneys.com) and blog: [shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com](http://shearwaterjourneys.blogspot.com) for more details. Contact Debi, a Life Member of the Santa Cruz Bird Club: [debi@shearwaterjourneys.com](mailto:debi@shearwaterjourneys.com).



*South Polar Skua  
- Beth Hamel*





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## Birder's Notebook

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### *Of Shine*

The heron's bill grasps  
one end of shine

frog or fish or snake  
a slap at morning-misted air.

Down the hawk plunges  
talons bent to steal

the prey precipitous gone  
to gullet or ground.

Four great wings batter  
hoist & haul away.

-Carol Peters



In the quiet copse  
Small birds tend to life, as if  
No one was watching.

-Jerry Busch

*Bushtit with  
nesting material*  
- Lisa Larson



*Great Blue Heron*  
- Andy Knorr



## Birder's Notebook



### *The Pelican*

Hail the prehistoric pelicans  
as they dive bill first  
into the water seething with fish.

Hail and respect them  
for with them our future goes  
and with the future of the fish.

I've seen scores of pelicans  
dive like bombers  
exploding the calm water,  
then toss back their heads  
and tilt enormous beaks  
to swallow small fish whole.

Once at a restaurant where I sat  
relaxing on a deck over water  
a giant white pelican  
lit on a vacant table  
in the center of the diners.


He stayed for five long minutes  
motionless with people staring  
while I sat transfixed  
fascinated by the strangeness  
that I sensed behind his eyes,

yet knowing that if someone  
were to look into my mind  
I might seem just as odd.

*-John Laue*

*Brown Pelican - Lee Jaffe*

Submissions NEEDED



**DEADLINE**

for Jun/Aug issue

**Apr 1, 2017**



**New SCBC Members  
Welcome!**

Chrissy Thomure	Dec 2016
Vivienne Orgel	Dec 2016
Donna Meyers	Dec 2016
The Bird School Project	Jan 2017
David Scott Family	Jan 2017
Sharon Hoyenga	Jan 2017
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David Wilhelm	Jan 2017
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David Somerton	Jan 2017
Barbara Cushing	Jan 2017
Carol Greenstreet	Jan 2017
Julie StClair	Feb 2017
Arthur Walker Family	Feb 2017

# SUBMISSION TO THE ALBATROSS Guidelines

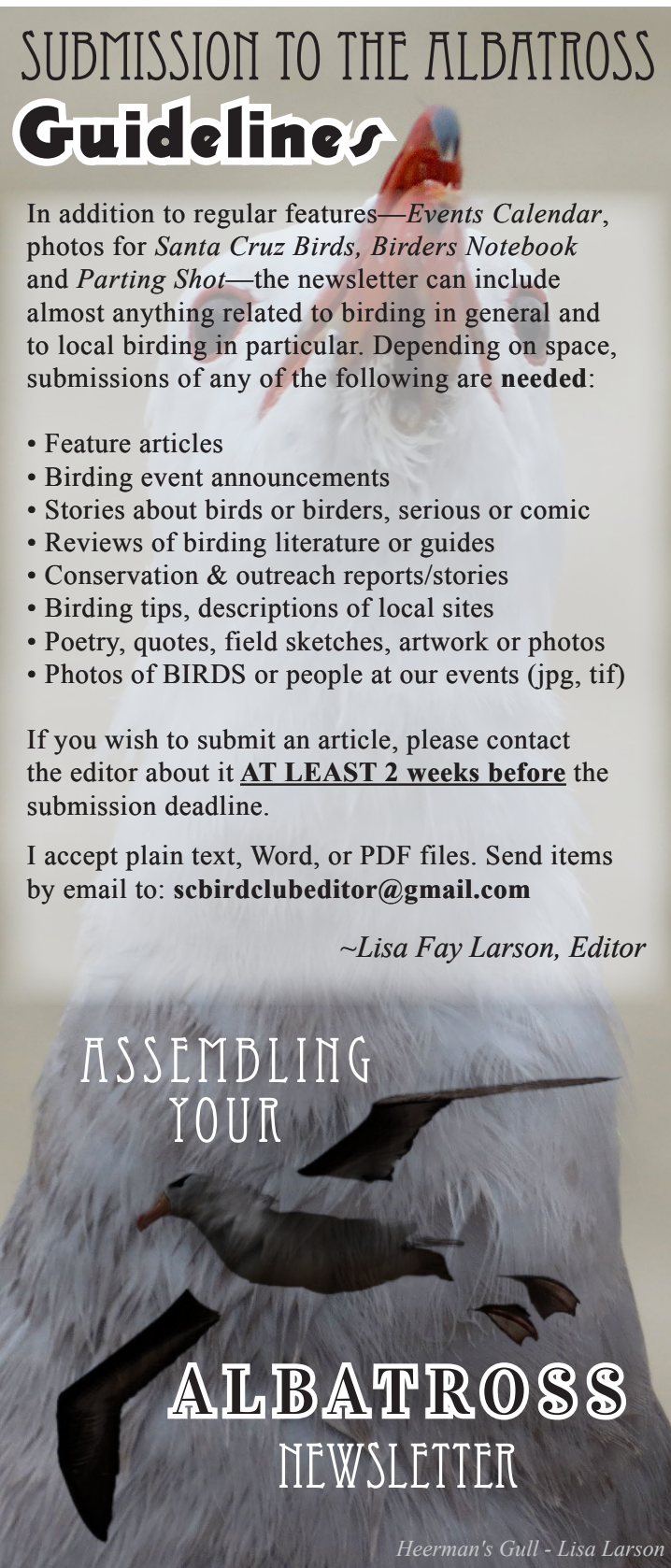
In addition to regular features—*Events Calendar*, photos for *Santa Cruz Birds*, *Birders Notebook* and *Parting Shot*—the newsletter can include almost anything related to birding in general and to local birding in particular. Depending on space, submissions of any of the following are **needed**:

- 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 **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



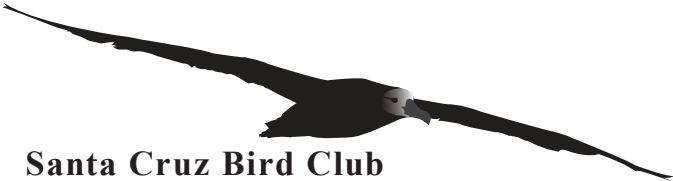
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**ALBATROSS**  
NEWSLETTER

*Heerman's Gull - Lisa Larson*

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PARTING SHOT: "**Don't Shoot!**"  
CANYON WREN - THY BUN



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