



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Inside Calendar of Events



Quail Hollow

The Atlasing Season
Begins

Santa Cruz Birds



Thoughts About
Birds

PARTING SHOT

2018: YEAR OF THE BTRD

...thoughts of a birdwatcher



- By Stephanie Singer

The Year of the Bird? Maybe you had the same reaction as I did—in my reality every year is a Year of the Bird! But 2018 is special: the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). This landmark legislation is the most powerful law ever passed to protect birds... and it is threatened now as never before. That is why major bird- and nature-oriented organizations have come together to advocate for continued protection of, as well as to celebrate, our feathered friends. (See *Year of the Bird* on page 3.)

The timing is fortuitous, as birds today face so many threats to survival—probably even more than they did 100 years ago when egrets were slaughtered to decorate women’s hats. It’s not just the insidious effects of climate change and loss of habitat that are problems, but also the egregious removal of regulations that for a century have moderated the harm that our techno-centric society imposes on bird and other creatures. (See *What is the MTBA* and *Threats to the MTBA* on page 4.)

It occurred to me that what is needed is a groundswell of support—it will take more than just birders—to protect what is left of our natural world and its birds. The broader public needs to insist on it. And we who love birds are key to educating people as to why birds matter.

“People protect what they love; they love what they understand and they understand what they are taught.” (Jacques-Yves Cousteau)



Green Honeycreeper, male, Panama
- Lisa Sheridan

Top: Golden-crowned Sparrow,
Bottom: Bewick's Wren - Lisa Larson

How can we go about this, when there are so many critical issues competing for people's attention? The fate of birds may not be at the top of everyone's list—especially non-birders. Here's a thought: What if every Bird Club member committed to sharing some information on the value of birds with a non-birder friend or acquaintance? If we each did that just once a week, in one year over 17,000 people would have been contacted. That is more than 6% of the county of Santa Cruz—not a bad start!

Here's another idea: Share the value of birds with a friend or relative in another state and ask them to tell their political representative how important birds are and how critical the MBTA and other environmental laws are to bird survival. It will take more than just birders in California to protect birds!

WHAT HAVE BIRDS DONE FOR ME LATELY?

Most people will agree that birds are intrinsically beautiful creatures with inspiring songs. Over 52 million Americans feed wild birds around their homes, mainly for their beauty and to bring nature closer. Aesthetics may be reason enough for many people to support protections for birds, but others may need some practical reasons. Unfortunately, political forces in our society often place more worth on economic values than on aesthetic ones. However, it must be asked: Is economic value our highest standard? (For a fuller discussion of this, see Jonathan Franzen's article in the January, 2018 National Geographic.)

Nonetheless, the economic contributions of birds aren't too shabby. Here are a few examples:

*Controlling insects: hummingbirds eat 2000 insects/ day; swallows average 850. Then there are the flycatchers, phoebes, chickadees, swifts, and all those warblers...

*Controlling rodents: hawks, owls, kites... Barn owls average 6 vole-sized critters every night. That adds up to 11,000 rodents in an average lifetime—which would have eaten 13 tons of agricultural crops!

*Pollinating flowers: bees don't do all the work—hummingbirds visit an average of 1000 flowers each day. Even sparrows and flickers have been seen with pollen-covered faces.

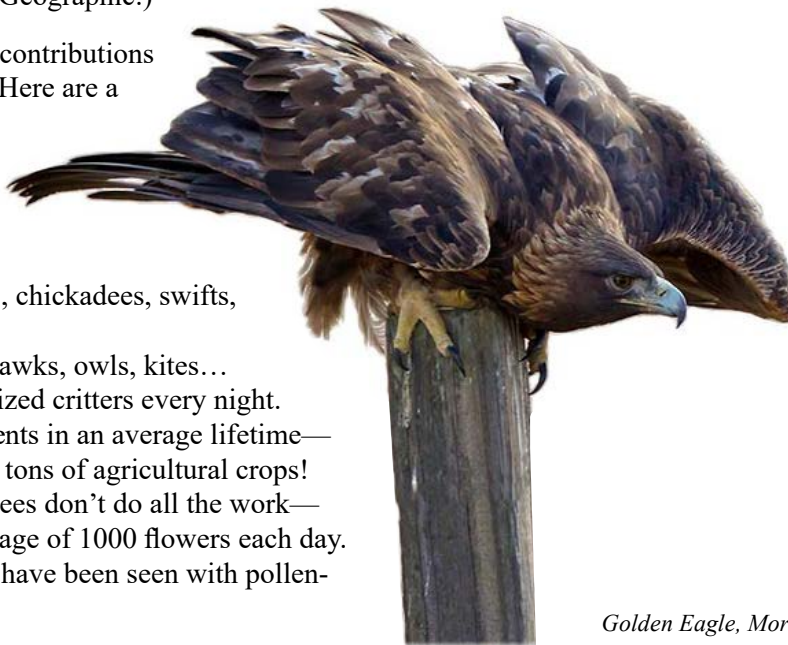


Painted Redstart, Ramsey Canyon, AZ - Gail West

*Re-planting: the many seed-eaters disperse seeds... For example, the Pinyon Jay's critical role in the planting of pinyon forests has only recently been discovered. Locally, you've probably seen scrub jays planting oaks.

*Providing the ultimate recycling service—by disposing of rotting carcasses and killing pathogenic bacteria with acidic stomach secretions. Vultures eat about 2 pounds in a meal... pretty impressive since they generally weigh less than 4 pounds themselves!

Maybe we should be asking ourselves: **“WHAT HAVE I DONE FOR BIRDS LATELY?”**



Golden Eagle, Morgan Hill - John Fox



YEAR OF THE BIRD

To mark the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, National Geographic is partnering with the National Audubon Society, BirdLife International and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to celebrate the “Year of the Bird” to bring attention and help for the protection of birds. There will be articles and initiatives throughout the year. Thomas Lovejoy said “if you take care of birds, you take care of most of the environmental problems of the world”.

If you want more information about the “Year of the Bird” see the **January 2018 issue of National Geographic magazine**. Another article in this edition is titled “Flight Paths” in which photographer/videographer Xavi Bou captures the flight patterns of birds.

Treat yourself and go online to nationalgeographic.com and search for “Why Birds Matter, and Are Worth Protecting” for an article by Jonathan Franzen, and stunning photographs by Joel Sartore (The Photo Ark, Birds of the Photo Ark).

Happy birding!
Elizabeth Van Dyke



Left: Spotted Owl, Point Reyes - Lisa Larson
Right: Great Gray Owl, Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park - Beth Hamel
Bottom: Yellow-billed Magpie, Del Valle Regional Park - Gail West

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT? (MBTA)

Passed in 1918, the MBTA is credited with saving numerous species of birds from extinction, including the Wood Duck, Snowy Egret, and many more.

Initially between the US and Great Britain (acting on behalf of Canada), similar conventions have been incorporated into the MBTA with Mexico, Japan and Russia. The statute makes it unlawful without a waiver to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, or sell birds listed therein as migratory birds. The statute does not discriminate between live or dead birds and also grants full protection to any bird parts including feathers, eggs, and nests. Over 800 species are currently on the list.

Some of the conventions stipulate protections not only for the birds themselves, but also for habitats and environs necessary for the birds' survival.

There are limited exceptions, such as American Indian tribes' use of eagles for religious purposes. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues permits for activities otherwise prohibited under the act. These include permits for taxidermy, falconry, propagation, scientific and educational use, and depredation for safety reasons, such as the killing of geese near an airport where they pose a danger to aircraft.

The MBTA has been modified somewhat over the years. At its core, it confers an obligation for industry to implement common-sense practices that prevent bird deaths. It also is an incentive for industries to adopt reasonable practices such as covering oil waste pits or reducing bird electrocutions and collisions from power lines.

It is because of the MBTA that industry is held accountable for bird deaths including from major oil spills like Deepwater Horizon and Exxon Valdez.

THREATS TO MBTA

At this writing, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is at risk of being severely weakened. Many bird species may find their survival in jeopardy.

For the latest on legislative actions, see the Bird Club's Facebook page or www.scmhc.org, or www.audubon.org (Click on News/Conservation).

In addition, the Department of the Interior is taking administrative actions that will have the effect of gutting the MBTA. For more information about this, and the alarm voiced by former high-ranking officials in that department, go to www.scmhc.org.

If these attacks succeed, industries would no longer be held accountable for bird deaths unless they set out with a deliberate goal of killing birds. They would be given a free pass for events like oil spills that kill birds. For example, BP would not have been held liable for killing more than one million birds during the Deep Water Horizon oil spill.



*Red-crowned Crane, dancing- Japan
- Cathy Summa-Wolfe*

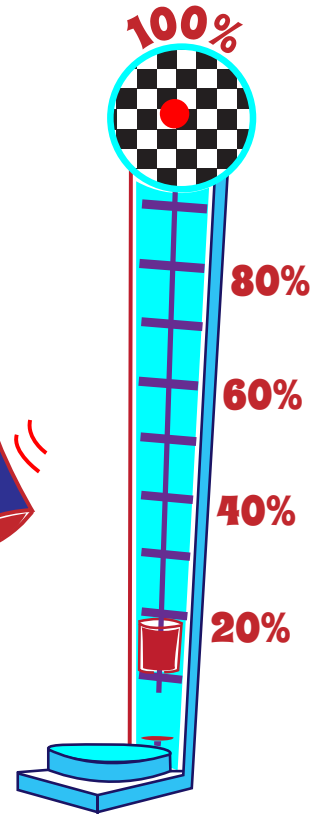


The Santa Cruz Bird Club needs your help for completing the Breeding Bird Atlas Project!

A very generous, anonymous donor has offered to match any donations to the atlas project.

The Atlas is a multi-year, multi-phase undertaking, and it would be great if everyone in the club participated in some way. You can help by actual atlassing, or with behind-the-scenes work like research or fundraising, or by monetary donations. So far, 20% of membership has participated.

Can you help us meet our goal of 100%?



Please send check to:
Santa Cruz Bird Club Box 1304, Santa Cruz, CA 95061
Attention: Breeding Bird Atlas

*Goal illustration - Lisa Larson
Steller's Jay - Randy Wardle*



Thanks to the many people who have graciously and generously donated to the Bird Club since September! Many of these have been in honor and memory of Steve Gerow. In a tribute to him, all donations are being used to support the Breeding Bird Atlas II Project. He was very supportive in getting this project up and running.

Thank you—

- Debbie Diersch**
- Julia Jackson & Dave Turner**
- Dan Frisch**
- Pete Solè**
- Norm Kikuchi**
- David Ekdahl & Connie Vigno**
- Peter Metropulos**

**20% of club members have contributed to the BBA project with time &/or funding.*

EVENTS CALENDAR

March–April 2018

Please see SCBC website Calendar for event details! Changes to event times/ place are sometimes necessary after publication. We suggest checking our Facebook page or our website Calendar for the latest information. Time permitting, we also send out a member-wide email notification. If you haven't been receiving these, please check your spam filter & let us know at: scbirdclub@gmail.com.

DATE	LOCATION	LEADER
Sunday, March 4	Quail Hollow Ranch County Park	Eric Feuss
Friday, March 10	Neary Lagoon	Phil Brown
Friday, March 16	Sunset State Beach	Reef Comer
Wednesday, March 21	Pinto Lake County Park	Bob Ramer
Saturday, March 24	Natural Bridges State Park	Phil Brown
Friday, April 6	Atlassing Q&A Session at The Tannery Arts Center	Alex Rinkert
Saturday, April 14	Meder Canyon	Phil Brown
Sunday, April 15	Mount Hamilton/San Antonio Valley (Road)/Mines Road	Eric Feuss
Sunday, April 22	Rancho del Oso	Nick Levendosky
Saturday, April 28	Moore Creek Preserve	Phil Brown
Sunday, April 29	Kaweah Oaks, Dry Creek, and Creighton Ranch Preserves	Eric Feuss

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.



Merlin - Lisa Larson



Violet-green Swallow chicks

Quail Hollow

– Quail Hollow Nest Box Project

The Quail Hollow Nest Box Project is currently seeking volunteers. The Nest Box Project was started in 2002 by the conservation arm of the Santa Cruz Bird Club, with the goals of providing nesting habitat for local cavity-nesting birds and gathering information about their breeding biology. Teams of volunteers check the boxes at least twice a week and carefully record observations, which are then reported to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and become part of a national database. Volunteering for the season only requires a commitment of a visit every other week, although more visits are welcome.



Ash-throated Flycatcher eggs

In 2008, the Quail Hollow Nest Box project produced the first record of a successful Western Bluebird nest in the San Lorenzo Valley in twenty-two years! To date, over 100 of these beautiful birds have fledged from park nest boxes. More bluebird sightings than usual have been reported throughout the county in recent years. We are not sure how many of these are “our” birds, but very likely some are Quail Hollow fledglings or their descendants.

Volunteering is a great way to learn more about cavity-nesting species. Watching these beautiful birds, we have learned that the female WEBL does most of the nest building, that both parents work together in the foraging and feeding process, and that fledglings from the first clutch often stay in the area and help with the second clutch. We discovered that WEBLs prefer the box opening NOT to face west. They will not occupy boxes that are close to each other, but they don’t seem to mind a Violet-green Swallow as a neighbor.

Although the nest box project was initially focused on attracting and observing Western Bluebirds, the conservation work of the project extends to other local cavity-nesting birds. Seven years ago, the Bird Club asked us to add the

Ash-throated Flycatcher as a target species. We have had at least one successful ATFL nest consistently since 2003 and we are now consciously locating boxes to accommodate this species. Since focusing on this bird, a total of 77 ATFLs have fledged. Last year we had a record 3 ATFL nests in one season. Unlike WEBLs, which often take their time choosing a location and then build a nest one blade of grass at a time before populating it, the ATFLs start nest building within a week after arrival and fill it with their vermiculated eggs

shortly thereafter. Their nests are not woven from grass and lined with feathers like the WEBL nests. A typical ATFL nest often includes mud, dung and horsehair and looks thrown together, as if they were in a hurry.

One nest at Quail Hollow was even observed to have a large rock inside!

AFTLs like to have a shrub near their box in which to wait and observe until the coast is clear,



*An excited Ash-throated Flycatcher, female near-by Quail Hollow
-Lisa Fay Larson*



Western Bluebird pair - John Ellis

before they enter. And They prefer a location near the pond, where they snag big dragonflies for the nestlings; this delectable may require some maneuvering through the nest box hole.

Other birds using the boxes include Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Oak Titmice, which lay eggs in carefully-constructed moss and lichen nests, as well as Violet-green Swallows, which build nests using grasses and feathers. It is an amazing experience to open a box and see the nests and eggs firsthand!

Those interested in volunteering can contact Dan Lazarus, the Park Interpreter at 831-335-9348. The 2018 season is kicking off, so contact us soon to be put in touch with the team.



Oak Titmouse nest

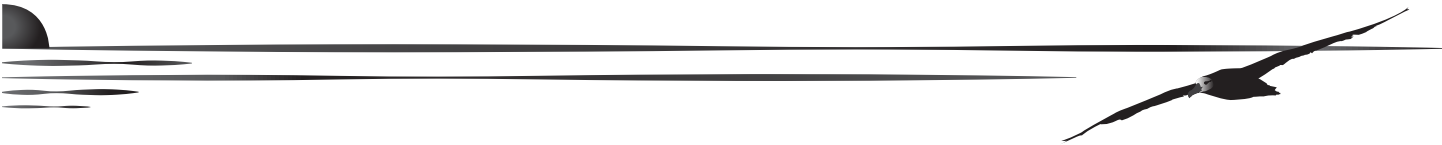
Unless specified, photos courtesy of qhnestbox.org



Cedar Waxwing - Andy Knorr



Please remember to check the latest CONSERVATION NEWS on the SCBC website!

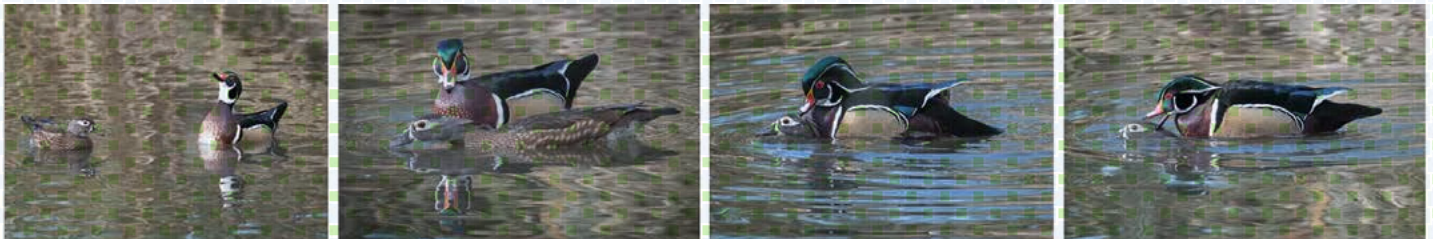


The Atlasing Season Begins

The days are becoming longer, wildflowers are blooming, and the melodic songs of birds waft in the spring breeze. What better way to spend this time of the year than being outdoors observing the intimate life history of birds? And what better way to make the most of your observations than by participating in the Santa Cruz County Breeding Bird Atlas II? The second year of field work for the atlas is set to begin on March 1. This year we are aiming to increase the quantity and quality of data we collect as well as increase participation in field work for the atlas. Want to learn how to contribute to this growing project that benefits both birds and birders? Come learn how to interpret breeding behavior and record your observations at one of the five atlaser trainings being offered this spring.

At each training we will take a short stroll through a private riparian corridor where we will discuss atlasing and interpreting breeding behavior. We will then head inside a comfortable clubhouse for instruction on how to record observations on the new atlas datasheet. All trainings will begin at the entrance to Sorrento Oaks, located at **800 Brommer Street, Santa Cruz**. Free parking is available along Brommer Street outside the park entrance. Questions about the trainings can be sent to Alex Rinkert, Atlas Director, at arinkert12@comcast.net

Friday, March 2 8 AM
Saturday, March 3 8 AM
Wednesday, March 7 4 PM
Saturday, March 10 8 AM
Sunday, March 11 8 AM



Wood Ducks, Neary Lagoon -Jeff Roisman



*Anna's Hummingbird with nesting material
- Beth Hamel*

Odd Bird Breeding Behavior

- Lisa Fay Larson

My husband Mike was surprised to find a nest in our nest box that we put up late last spring. All the feathers I had put in to attract the summering Violet-green Swallows were gone. I described the nest (almost all grass, with a nice depression in the middle) to John Ellis, who built the box for me, and he said it was Oak Titmouse. I never saw them bring a shred of nesting material into the box, but John said they can be stealthy nest-builders. Having had many nest boxes over the years, John had never caught the titmice in the act of nest-building before. Our box is upstairs facing east to catch the morning sun, just off our small deck. Chickadees, and a male House Sparrow had repeatedly checked out the box weeks earlier. The sparrow would peer in the hole then get on top of the box and vocalize like crazy. He attracted no females came around, thank goodness.

On the morning of February 21st, a little after 7:00, I saw our long-time resident male Oak Titmouse called and called. He went to the nest box hole and coaxed his mate out. They ate some of the crushed peanuts and seed that we offer on deck. The female went to the hole and proceeded to tear at the opening. This she did numerous times between noshing on peanut morsels and sunflower seeds. Oak Titmice are cavity nesters. The female chooses a nest site and may do further excavation. She is the nest builder, but the male stays with her while she gathers material and he feeds her during her labors. [I once saw a female titmouse inspecting a small tree cavity in an oak tree just off a Fort Ord trail. It was early fall! I asked Steve Gerow about it and he said that titmice may begin shopping early for a suitable nest site.] Finally, a lull in in our pair's activity signaled that it was time for me to work on the Albatross! I saw no more box activity that day.

The next morning starting about 7:30, both the male and female took turns in rather quick succession in taking nesting material *out of the box!* They were dismantling the nest! **Why?** Was it a practice nest? Did they find a better spot? Is our deck area too bird-active? We feed raw, unshelled peanuts to the Scrub and Steller's Jays and crushed peanuts to other takers: juncos, chickadees, California Towhees, and when we aren't



*Top right: Male titmouse with food
Lower right: Male offering food but female isn't interested—she obtained her own sunflower seed*

*Far left: Female at nest box hole
Center left: Female excavating hole*

- Lisa Fay Larson



looking, to marauding Eurasian-collared Doves. Add finches, sparrows and occasional other songbirds who come to drink and bathe. Seed feeders are around the corner outside the first floor. There are two hummer feeders upstairs, one over the deck and the other on the opposite site of the house.

The male titmouse brought caterpillars to the female a few times, but she was not interested. In 2 days, their project was complete. The nest was gone—completely dismantled with the exception of a few shreds of grass. Did they will they use the material somewhere else or will they start all over? The titmouse pair have come to feed daily since then, but they have not gone to the box. The male continues singing in trees in our yard and across the street, as he has for over a month. I did see a chickadee go to it twice on the 28th and peer inside the opening without venturing further.

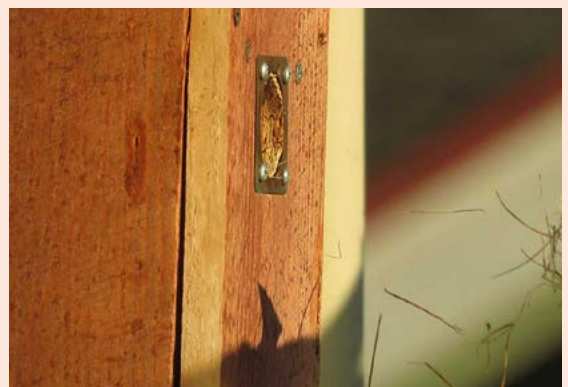
Perplexed, I did what any in-the-know but less-than-expert SCBC member would do—I asked Alex Rinkert. In answer to the many questions you have already previously read, he replied, “Very interesting. They could be using the material for a new nest (because they found somewhere better) or could just be disposing of it (because of potential parasite infestation). I suspect the latter as nest building is a lot of work, and why rebuild an entire nest if the nest is already in a suitable cavity? I have seen Bushtits dismantle an old, depredated nest of theirs and use the material to build a new nest elsewhere. But I haven’t seen titmice do that.”

I didn’t see where they took the material. I was going to stake it out the final day, but they stopped disassembling after only a couple of rounds. I hope they rebuild! I am fairly confident that the chickadees may use the box and have some hope that the titmice will come back.

I will record this on my BBA observation spreadsheet as “NB”—nest building—with a detailed note on the second page. (There is no DN—dismantling nest—designation.)

I have to say I am disappointed this nest didn’t work out, *but the birds know best!*

*Photos top to bottom:
Going...going...going...gone!
- Lisa Fay Larson*



SANTA CRUZ BIRDS

By Alex Rinkert

Including reports from November 1 to December 31, 2017

Other than some late migrants in November, including a Rough-legged Hawk and the 10th record of American Tree Sparrow, and a Pacific Golden-Plover in December, excitement this period was mostly limited to rarities expected each winter.

However, an interesting mix of birds with pigment abnormalities was reported this period and into early 2018. A male Surf Scoter with an unusual white patch on its right wing was seen at Wilder Ranch SP on December 28 (KJ) then again at Natural Bridges SB (LG, SM). A California Scrub-Jay whose body and wings were noticeably pallid was seen in a Santa Cruz neighborhood between December 28-29 (CP, SH), and another with various white patches continued in Scotts Valley (JS, HS, PS). From January 1-2, a striking all white Clark's Grebe was seen from the Santa Cruz Wharf (DJ, LG). An unusually warm brown Golden-crowned Sparrow sporting a white tail turned up at Neary Lagoon on January 29 (LL). And let's not forget about the White-crowned Sparrow covered in patches of white feathers that is still present at Swanton Pond (v.ob.). These are the only reports I received of birds with pigment abnormalities, but there were certainly Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, blackbirds, and others seen this winter that went unreported.



Photos from left: Scrub Jay - Lisa Larson, Clark's Grebe - Michael Bolte, Golden-crowned Sparrow - Lisa Larson, White-crowned Sparrow - Gail West

Continuing their good showing in fall, **Greater White-fronted Geese** were well reported through December (v.ob.). Likewise, white geese were well-reported this period; at least six reports of **Snow Geese** and four of **Ross's** were received (v.ob.). Of note was a Snow Goose along the lower San Lorenzo River, from November 24 to December 19 (JM, v.ob.), and a rare blue morph Snow in Watsonville from December 12-15 (NU, RW, HC). **Single Brant** were seen at Wilder Ranch SP on November 26 (PB, BM, TT) and December 16 (NL). The unprecedented showing of **Cackling Geese** from earlier in fall continued through December. At least 20 reports were received from throughout the lowlands of the county (v.ob.) Most of those reported were of the "Aleutian" subspecies, *B. h. leucopareia*, but there were

also two reports of the *B. h. minima*, the scarcer of the two regularly occurring subspecies in the county (CS, CGM). Up to three **Tundra Swans** were at College Lake from December 11-12 (GK, RW).

Four **Wood Ducks** at Pinto Lake on December 1 were unexpected there (RW). Also at Pinto Lake was an adult male **Eurasian x American Wigeon** hybrid, found on December 31 (LG). This male is likely the same individual that has wintered at various water bodies in the Pajaro Valley since January 2016; this would be the third winter it has returned for. There were 13 **Blue-winged Teal** found this period, most from the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.). A Canvasback at Laguna Creek from December 1-16 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (ST, DE). Three **Redhead** were at Pajaro Dune from

November 3-15 (RW, v.ob.) and one was at Corcoran Lagoon on December 9 (RAS). The latter was especially rare away from the Pajaro Valley. Four **White-winged Scoters** were reported from three locations along the coast this period (NU, NL).

A strong southbound movement of **Pacific Loons** was observed from Terrace Point on December 11 (NL). Roughly 10,000 were estimated to have flown by in 50 minutes. Five Red-necked Grebes were reported this period (v.ob.). A **Flesh-footed** and **Buller's Shearwater** were seen during a repositioning cruise far offshore on November 30 (TA, DA). **Black-vented Shearwaters** remained scarce in nearshore waters (NL, AR, MW, NS), with the highest count being 24 (NL). A **Pelagic Cormorant** frequented the lower San Lorenzo River through December (JM, SP). A **Cattle Egret** was photographed at Struve Slough on December 3 (PS).

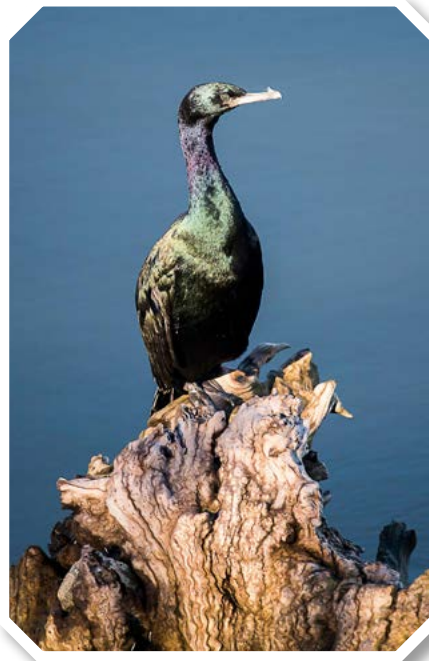
Two adult **Bald Eagles**, presumably the county's lone breeding pair, were seen at various places in the Watsonville Slough system through the period (v.ob.). A **Rough-legged Hawk** at Harkins Slough on November 17 was a nice find, and all the more impressive that it was photographed with a cell phone camera (HC)! The **Ferruginous Hawk** at Swanton Pond continued through December (v.ob.), and one near Soda Lake November 24-26 was presumably wintering as well (AR, NL, NU). Ferruginous were also seen flying over Wilder Ranch SP



Blue-winged Teal - Simon Thornhill



Redhead - Norm Uyeda



Pelagic Cormorant - Lisa Sheridan

on November 6 (NL) and Anna Jean Cummings Park on December 28 (LJ).

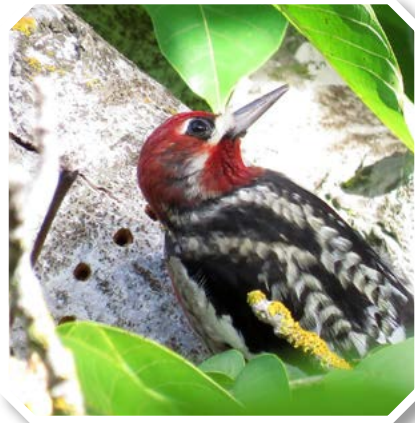
A **Common Gallinule** resided at Kalkar Quarry from November 7 to at least December 17 (LL, JS, HS, PS, SH) and one was at Baldwin Creek mouth on November 6 (AG). **Black-necked Stilts** are rare in winter along the mid-county coast, so one at Corcoran Lagoon on December 16 was notable (SH). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** found at Wilder Beach on December 16 was the first winter record for the county since 2003 (EA, KA). The plover was seen again at Wilder Beach on December 26 (KJ). The last **Pectoral Sandpiper** reported this fall was one at Struve Slough on November 2 (NU). **Lesser Yellowlegs**, rare in winter, were at Struve Slough on December 15 (LK) and 29 (PB).

A **Parasitic Jaeger** seen from Wilder Ranch SP on December 16 was rare for winter (AR). Aside from a flight of 850 on December 11 (NL), **Common Murres** were only found in small numbers this period. A boat survey of nearshore waters off Santa Cruz found an especially large number of **Ancient Murrelets**—225 between Natural Bridges and the Santa Cruz Wharf—on December 19 (NL). About 5,000 **Rhinoceros Auklets** in the same area was similarly a good count for nearshore waters (NL). Further offshore, two **Tufted Puffins** were spotted on November 18 (RS). An **Elegant Tern** at the San Lorenzo River mouth on December 2 was the last reported this period (MM).

A pair of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** gathering nest material in Scotts Valley on December 30 provided more evidence of early nesting by this species in the county (JS, HS, PS). Two or three **Burrowing Owls** were reported in the county this period, all from known wintering locations (AR, SH, MB). A **Long-eared Owl** was found roosting in the grove of trees bordering Swanton Pond on November 5 (CS). The adult male **Broad-billed Hummingbird** continued to visit a feeder in Santa Cruz through November 5 (SHo). An apparent **Red-breasted x Red-naped Sapsucker** hybrid, first found on October 29 (HS, JS, PS), continued at the UCSC Farm through December 13 (LL et al., NL). On average about one “**Black**” **Merlin**, *F. c. suckleyi*, is reported in the county each winter. One showing characteristics of this darker subspecies was seen on Summit Ridge on November 11 (AR et al.).

Single **Tropical Kingbirds** were found at Baldwin Creek mouth (LG, JW, SH), the lower San Lorenzo River (SP), and Sunset State Beach (DK). Surprisingly none were found in the Watsonville Slough system where several normally winter. A late **Western Kingbird** was at Natural Bridges SB on November 18 (PS, JS, HS).

This period 10-11 **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported from the Pajaro Valley and the north coast (v.ob.). **Barn Swallows** were at Wilder Ranch SP on November 25 (ST) and Swanton Pond on December 29 (MB). A handful of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were reported from scattered locations throughout the lowlands of the county, as well as



some areas in the mountains (v.ob.).

A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at Quail Hollow Ranch on November 12 (AR) and three were at Chittenden on November 24 (AR, NL). The latter location, along with some areas at the base of the Pajaro Hills, is

the only area of regular occurrence in the county. Elsewhere in the county they are presently very rare, with the exception of Quail Hollow Ranch where they have been reported about once a year since 2008, usually in August and September.

A species that has been notably scarce in recent years is **American Dipper**. One was seen on Last Chance Trail in Big Basin Redwoods SP on December 30 (AR), but more encouraging were two along a section of the San Lorenzo River that follows Zayante Trail in Henry Cowell Redwoods SP, first seen on December 3 (JD, BB). Another or the same pair was seen not far upstream near

Arcadia Falls at the confluence of Bean and Zayante Creeks. The latter location was formerly occupied by dippers for many years but became vacant after spring 2014. And now they are back.

Small numbers of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** persisted in the lowlands through the period (v.ob.). **American Robins** were rather scarce while Varied Thrushes were locally common in the mountains. A **Lapland Longspur** was in a plowed field at Wilder Ranch SP on November 5 (AR).

The **Black-and-white Warbler** at Bethany Curve was present through December (WBT, SM, SH). A male **Common Yellowthroat** at Roaring Camp on



Red-naped Sapsucker hybrid - Lisa Larson
Long-eared Owl - Christian Schwarz
Golden-crowned Kinglet - Lisa Larson

November 4 was a rare find in the mountains, especially outside of spring (CS). A tardy **Yellow Warbler** was seen at Sunset SB on November 10 (RC et al.). Four **Palm Warblers** were reported from expected locations in the lowlands this period (v.ob.). **Single Black-throated Gray Warblers**, probably late migrants, were found at New Brighton SB on November 17 (DS) and

Several dozen birders flocked to Swanton Pond between November 18-21 to see a cooperative **American Tree Sparrow**, the first reported in the county since 2001 and the 10th record overall (MB, FB, v.ob.). On November 19 a **Clay-colored Sparrow** was found at Swanton Pond and could often be seen feeding with the American Tree Sparrow (GM, LL, v.ob.).

The Clay-colored was last seen November 27. A **“Thick-billed” Fox Sparrow** was found at Loma Prieta on November 11, where they have come to be expected in small numbers in fall and winter (AR et al.). A **“Red” Fox Sparrow** at Baldwin Creek mouth on November 15 was a rare find (ST). Two **“Slate-colored” Dark-eyed Juncos** turned up at bird feeders (RW, PS). One in Aptos arrived at a backyard feeder on November 26 and was present almost every day subsequently through December (RW). At least 26 **White-throated Sparrows** and 8 **Swamp Sparrows** were reported this period (v.ob.).



American Tree Sparrow - Lee Jaffe

Natural Bridges SB on November 18 (PS, JS, HS). Black-throated Grays at Schwan Lake on December 6 (LJ) and Ocean View Park on December 13 (CS) were probably wintering. A **Wilson’s Warbler** seen between November 18-20 at Natural Bridges SB was late (JS, HS, PS).



American Tree Sparrow - Lisa Sheridan



American Tree Sparrow & Clay-colored Sparrow - Carole Rose

Western Tanagers were at Scotts Valley on November 10 (JS) and near Drew Lake in Watsonville on December 27 (NU). A wintering **Black-headed Grosbeak** in a Soquel backyard was first seen on December 17 (PS). **Western Meadowlarks** are rare in the mountains so one at Skypark in Scotts Valley on December 28 (JS) and two at Henry Cowell SP on November 30 (JW) were notable. A **Hooded Oriole** frequenting a Watsonville backyard beginning October 29 stayed through the end of the year (AS).

After a modest showing earlier in fall, **Red Crossbills** quickly petered out by the end of November. There were five reports in November and none in December (v.ob.). All individuals identified to type were type 3s (AR). An **Evening Grosbeak** was at Little Basin on November 12 (LM) and four flew over Santa Cruz on November 28 (NL).

Cited Observers: Robin Abu-Shumays, Dorian Anderson, Emma Arul, Kumaran Arul, Tim Avery, Bonnie Bedzin, Francis Bolte, Mike Bolte, Phil Brown, Hugo Ceja, Reef Comer, Judy Donaldson, David Ekdahl, Alexander Gaguine, Laurie Graham, Lois Goldfrank, Sheri Howe (SHo), Sharon Hull, Lee Jaffe, Kent Johnson, Dave Johnston, Logan Kahle, Durrell Kapan, Gary Kittleson, Lisa Larson, Nick Levendosky, Gary Martindale, Bobbie Mayer, Michael Martin, Stephanie Martin, Larry Maurin, Jane Mio, Shirley Murphy, Carol Panofsky, Shantanu Phukan, Alex Rinkert, Ryan Sanderson, Naresh Satyan, Christian Schwarz, Pete Solé, David Suddjian, Anne Spence, Hanna Svensson, Jonah Svensson, Peter Svensson, Tim Thompson, Simon Thornhill, W. Breck Tyler, Norman Uyeda, Jeff Wall, Randy Wardle, Michael Welch, Jim Williams, "v.ob." means various observers. Please enter interesting observations into eBird or report them to Alex Rinkert at arinkert12@comcast.net.



"Red" Fox Sparrow - Simon Thornhill



Dark-eyed Junco, slate-colored: a daily yard visitor from Nov. 26 - Dec. 29 - Randy Wardle





My Thoughts About Birds

by Jay Todd


Thirty-five years ago, my wife and I got very lucky by buying six acres of timber and poison oak on the side of Swanton Canyon. Having always been a nature lover, I fell into feeding birds and building nesting boxes for chickadees to screech owl sized birds.

The real reason I'm writing this is to tell my best and most recent birding experience. I focus on feeding lots of birds as they need all the help they can get. I have two small hummingbird feeders and at times I used up to 7 pounds of sugar a week. I wish they'd learn to share!

About 4 months ago, I looked out our sliding glass doors and noticed a female hummingbird who had impaled herself in the sliding screen. I moved close and noticed her eyes didn't move. Her feet were not moving either. I freed her and wondered if she was alive. Then the light bulb went off in my head. That's right, I thought, the feeder isn't far away - so let's try it. I carried the unmoving bird to the feeder. I stuck her beak in the feeder and cradled her there. She was still not moving. I bent a little and watched the beak in profile. I had to keep my hand on her or she would have fallen off. After a couple of minutes, the tongue started working.

In the meantime, a male kept darting in and repeatedly strafing her on the head and then trying to mate as she wasn't moving yet. In another minute, there were four males competing for her. I held my hand in the way so I could protect her and keep her being able to feed. She wasn't up to mating yet. She was starting to show some strength and the tongue was still doing its job. Abruptly, she flew somewhat wobbly off to the nearby thicket. I felt she had a fifty-fifty chance of living. I'm not a hero here as I caused it all by having the feeders too close to the windows yet under the eaves to keep off the rain.

Since we're in this canyon all the time and I have ears, I keep a mental tally of some local birds. I occasionally hear a kingfisher in Big Creek Canyon which is nearby. Another favorite of mine is the pileated woodpecker. I'm guessing there may be 4 in the Swanton area.



Now that I'm retired, I'm clear that the best thing I can do for this planet is to turn this property into an intense haven for birds with water dishes, and feeders and suet baskets all hanging from limbs with ropes and pulleys. It's a responsibility that keeps speaking to me. It would be a labor of love.

*Left & Background photo - Lisa Larson
Anna's Hummingbird & Swanton Road*

This young male Anna's was being chased and struck a window. He laid helpless on the deck while I kept a very close eye on him. At first his eyes were closed but eventually, they opened!. I waited anxiously. It took him about 15 minutes to revive and fly off.

Jay's little Anna's female was fortunate he was there to aide her with his quick thinking and gentle heart.

New SCBC Members **WELCOME!**


Mary Lanctot	Nov 2017
Camille Smith-Ballon	Dec2017
Jonathan Aguinaga	Dec2017
Jenni Peters	Dec 2017
Adam Blundell	Dec2017
Cayla Salvador	Dec2017
Barbara Riverwoman	Dec2017
Patricia Minor	Dec 2017
Tom Drinkard	Dec 2017
Alan Sinclair	Jan 2018
Linda Jordan	Jan 2018
Julianne Henry	Jan 2018
Helen Carr	Jan 2018
Susan Nemitz	Jan 2018
Stuart Branoff	Jan 2018
Sandra Nichols	Jan 2018
Laurie Kiguchi	Jan 2018
Kaia Colestock	Jan 2018
Patricia Clark	Jan 2018
Gary Kittleson	Feb2018
Marilee Westen	Feb 2018
Sandra Cherk	Feb 2018
Jaime Garfield Family	Feb2018
Meredith Freeman	Feb 2018
John Perry	Feb 2018
Dan Frisch	Feb2018
Ralph Cross	Feb 2018
Allen Royer	Feb 2018



*Little Blue Heron
- Lisa Larson*

D **EADLINE** For
Submissions
for May/Aug Issue

APR 1, 2018

N  **o**

F **oolin'**

Illustration above: "Menacing Bird" - Lisa Larson

The mark of a true birder: Margaret Perham with Richard Griffith, on an SCBC Bird Walk at Schwan Lake - Lisa Larson



Submission to the
ALBATROSS
Newsletter

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, birding, or birders
- 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)

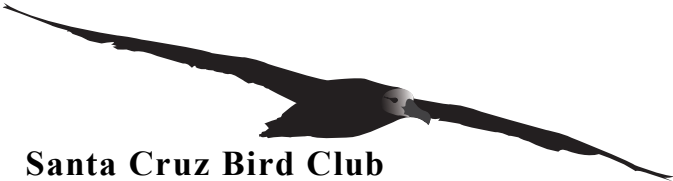
If you wish to submit an article, please contact the editor about it **AT LEAST 2 weeks before** the submission deadline.

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

~Lisa Fay Larson, Editor

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PARTING SHOT: "CHUCKARS ARE KNOWN TO BE GREAT BARGAIN HUNTERS"
CHUCKAR AT CAPITOLA MALL - PETE SOLÈ



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