

Santa Cruz Birds



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*An Archive of Articles
Published in the Albatross*

**Volumes 37 to 55
1991-2011**

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Introduction

For decades the Santa Cruz Bird Club has compiled records of birds in Santa Cruz County, California and published listings or summaries of interesting occurrences in its newsletter the *Albatross*. From 1986 to the present I (assisted by Steve Gerow since 2007) have prepared an article titled, “Santa Cruz Birds” for each issue of the *Albatross*. The “Santa Cruz Birds” articles were patterned after the regional reports published in the journal *American Birds* and its successors, seeking to distill the numerous reports of birds into a summary detailing the occurrence of rare birds and highlighting other ornithological events of note as recorded by birders in Santa Cruz County.

This archive includes “Santa Cruz Birds” articles published in Volumes 37 to 55 of the *Albatross*, spanning the period of April 1991 to February 2011. The source of the bird records was local birders and others reporting directly to the Bird Club’s county records compiler, or more generally within the local birding network. Since 1999 reports to the Internet list “Monterey Bay Birds” have been a principal source.

The articles present a distillation of the significant aspects of avian status and distribution in Santa Cruz County as they have developed over the years, but they are not exhaustive. There has always been a focus on rare and uncommon species, but the articles also highlight changing seasonal patterns, species out of place, unusual numbers, important nesting records, early and late occurrences, and more. Each article summarized records from a period of two to four months, usually being published one to a few months after the fact. Two articles covering the period December 2006 to May 2007 were written two years after the fact.

The articles are presented as they were published, except for some minor formatting. The status of reports of some very rare species may have changed since to the original publication, particularly where a given report may not have been accepted by the California Bird Records Committee. The organization of the articles and bird names followed the then-current taxonomy and nomenclature of the A.O.U.’s Check-List of North American Birds. Abbreviations used for the names of some observers have varied over the years, but there is a list of cited observers at the conclusion of each article.

This archive will be updated periodically, and is maintained at the Santa Cruz Bird Club’s website – www.santacruzbirdclub.org

David Suddjian
Santa Cruz Bird Club

Originally published in the September – October 1991 issue of the Albatross (Vol 37, No. 1)

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from April to August 1991

It was a slow breeding season for many species, with many arriving late and in smaller numbers than expected from observations made in previous years. I was particularly distressed by my observations along the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains, where many species that should have been plentiful were scarce or even absent. For example, the Bird Club's trip to Loma Prieta on May 25 was a bust, in spite of good weather. We found zero **Lazuli Buntings** or **House Wrens**, and amazingly few **California Quail**, **Ash-throated Flycatchers**, **Black-headed Grosbeaks** or **Dark-eyed Juncos**. Even **Scrub Jays** and **Wrentits** were few and far between! These species were all expected to be numerous and easy to find. Similar absences were noted at Castle Rock and the Long Ridge area. Where were the birds? Some resident species may have been set back by the December freeze, and the late spring may have contributed to the apparently light passage of migrants. But when you have a hard time finding even the *common* birds, it seems like something must be wrong.

Anyway, we did have several interesting observations this spring and summer, including a new species for the county and a new breeding bird. I wish to thank Bob Merrill and Doug George for their regular, monthly letters detailing their interesting observations. This sort of contribution is of great value to our county bird records, and I encourage everyone who is out birding to take a few minutes to write down the highlights for our records.

* * *

Our first **Murphy's Petrel** was seen on April 11, 21 nautical miles southwest of Davenport (DR). This bird was the last of 122 seen by Roberson while over deeper waters than usually visited on pelagic bird trips. The other 121 petrels were in Monterey County waters. Murphy's Petrel may be of regular occurrence well offshore, along with a few other little known species. This "unknown zone", beyond the reach of one-day pelagic trips, is receiving increased attention from ornithologists and birdwatchers. **Brown Pelicans** flocked in impressive numbers to Central California this spring and summer, producing record high counts for several spots. Flocks of several hundred were a regular feature at Waddell Creek in June and July (DG, RM, DS) and observations at various points recorded nearly continuous passage of flocks both north and south during July (DS). A *feeding* flock of over 425 pelicans upstaged the Fabulous Drifters' concert at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk on August 29 (DS) It was encouraging to note that the great majority of birds after mid-June were young of the year, indicating breeding was quite successful somewhere.

The situation looked more precarious early this spring for our **Brandt's Cormorant** colony in Davenport. The cormorants were off to a good start with 54 nests built by March 29, but all but two nests were gone by April 11 (RM). Fortunately they redoubled their efforts, with 117 nests counted May 17 (RM), and a record high of 151 nests (most with large young) on July 3 (DS). The spring setback may have been due to the March storms. A female **Common Merganser** with seven downy young was seen at Loch Lomond on 29 May, for our first breeding record away from the San Lorenzo River (RM). A **Peregrine Falcon** at Wilder Beach July 15 is one of only a

few recent mid-summer records for the county. Some of these breeding season birds have been known releases.

The **Sharp-shinned Hawk** is thought to be an exceptionally rare breeding bird in the Santa Cruz Mountains, with only three recent nesting confirmations and few other observations. However, in the last three years I have received reports from a wide variety of areas, mostly in late June and July, with some sightings in unusual habitat for breeding birds (e.g., Watsonville). Most have been seen only briefly, and few have been reported to age. Are these hawks early migrants, non-breeders, local dispersants, or...? The **Turkey Vulture** has held its nesting secrets more closely than nearly all of our other breeding birds, but this year our Atlas project came through with three breeding confirmations. The first was a nest with downy chicks reported by Bonnie Bedzin on June 7, located just over the county line in Santa Clara County near Redwood Estates. The nest was in a cave, and the landowner had been aware of it from previous years. Two more nests were discovered on the precipitous east face of Pine Mountain on June 29, viewed from a distance in Scott Creek Canyon (DS). These nests were in caves on a large cliff; one had two downy chicks and the other had two large young ready to fledge.

Two pairs of **Spotted Sandpipers** at Loch Lomond on May 29 indicated likely nesting there, although no follow-up trip could be made to be sure (RM). This is one of our rarest breeding birds in the county. A **Franklin's Gull** was reported from a boat 8.8 nautical miles off Santa Cruz on August 24 (*fide* DSh). A **Least Tern** was studied at Wilder Beach June 11, a typical date for this rare migrant (DG). A non-breeding plumaged **Ancient Murrelet** seen on the ocean at the Santa Cruz/ San Mateo County line on July 29 was an extremely rare sight for summer (*GS fide* RT), providing our second summer record. The fourth **Marbled Murrelet** nest ever found in California was discovered and monitored by the Santa Cruz Bird Club in Big Basin Redwoods State Park. The first observations leading to the discovery of the nest were made on May 5 (RC, BB), and observation continued until the chick was seen fledging on July 3 (m.ob.)! This nest was significant for being the first ever found in a coast redwood tree, and this was the first time fledging was ever witnessed first hand. Read the full story elsewhere in this issue!

The wintering **Common Ground-Dove** remained at Wilder Ranch through April 3, when its favorite weedy field was plowed for planting (DG). A **Lesser Nighthawk** landed on a pelagic birding boat off Santa Cruz on August 13, providing a rare fall record for this species (DSh). The wintering **Lewis' Woodpecker** at Wilder Ranch was last reported April 3 (DG). Like the Turkey Vulture, nests of the **Vaux's Swift** have proved very difficult to find, with a traditional nest site in a chimney in Aptos being the only one known in the county prior to this summer. Most of our Vaux's Swifts are thought to nest in tree cavities and hollowed trunks in mature and ancient forests, but this has been difficult to confirm. Thus, a nest discovered in a tree cavity at Big Basin Redwoods State Park was an important find. A lead on the nest site was obtained by Clay Kempf on July 13, and a follow visit confirmed the active nest on July 17 (DS). An early fall migrant **Eastern Kingbird** was found at Natural Bridges State Beach July 23 (RM). A **Purple Martin** was seen at Pine Mountain June 3, an area where they were thought to nest, but no martins were seen there subsequently (RM). A fall migrant **Bank Swallow** was at Wilder Ranch July 29 (DG). This swallow was once a common breeding bird along our coast, but they are now extirpated and we only have one or two reports of migrants in the county each year.

One of the most *unexpected* finds of the season was nesting **Varied Thrushes** at Cascade Creek in Santa Cruz County (east of Año Nuevo), and at Butano State Park and the North Fork of Butano Creek in San Mateo County! My sources show this species was previously known to nest south only as far as Humboldt County, some 200 miles to the north! The Cascade Creek sighting was of a male and female feeding two fledged young on July 2 (DS). Nesting was confirmed

north of Little Butano Creek on June 21, when a female was seen carrying food for young (DS). Other sightings involved singing birds and pairs at six spots in the watershed of the North Fork and South Fork of Butano Creek, June 6 to July 11 (DS, KR, BM, RC). We had no previous summering records in Santa Cruz County, and I am aware of only a few June records for San Mateo County. And we never guessed Varied Thrushes might nest locally. We will have to wait for future years to determine if this year's finding were anomalous.

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, Rebecca Cull, Doug George, Clay Kempf, Robert Merrill, Bryan Mori, Kent Reeves, Don Roberson, Debi Shearwater (DSh), Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DS), Ron Thorn.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from August to September 1991

I have recently completed a draft annotated checklist of Santa Cruz County birds, developed for future inclusion in Richard Erickson's and Michael Patten's planned "Distributional Checklist of California Birds," a compendium indicating the species known to occur in each county and their status and abundance. As I completed the draft I found myself wondering which species that have not been recorded in Santa Cruz County would be most likely to appear next.

Pending Erickson and Patten's review, our county list currently has four hundred one species that have been reliably reported. A few of these are still being reviewed by the California Bird Records Committee, so the total may change a bit. There are quite a number of other species that have been seen in adjacent counties, but not in Santa Cruz, and of course there are many species that have been recorded elsewhere in California. We have been adding about three to five species to our list per year in the last few years. Which *are* the species most likely to be next reported for the first time in Santa Cruz County? Below are my top ten guesses (as of October 5), just for fun, and we shall see what the future holds!

Red-billed Tropicbird	Tufted Duck
King Eider	Hudsonian Godwit
Dusky Flycatcher	Red-throated Pipit
Northern Shrike	Bay-breasted Warbler
Mourning Warbler	Cassin's Finch

I considered many other species, and with the way birding goes, it is equally likely something outlandish will appear before any of these species do. I chose to leave out any of the species that I included in my draft list as recorded in the county, although several of these may lose official status by the time I complete the final list.

* * *

The most exciting find of the season (and perhaps the year) was a **Brown Booby** seen at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on September 26 by Eric Feuss and four visiting birders from England. The bird was seen flying over the wharf, circling over a boat, and then flying off toward the Santa Cruz harbor. Eric's description supports his identification, which was confirmed at the time of the sighting by the other observers, at least one of which had prior experience with the species. The bird, apparently an adult of the western race, was the first booby of any species described for Santa Cruz County (pending review by the California Bird Records Committee). A **Ross' Goose** with a broken wing was found at the Shorebirds Pond on August 28 (DG), lingering at least to September 21(m.ob.) and probably beyond. This is our second summer record for this species. It would be interesting to know whether this bird was present prior to August 28, and if it arrived in better health.

An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** was seen soaring over Nearys Lagoon on September 28 (DG), providing only our second fall record (the rest have been winter sightings). A **Lesser**

Golden-Plover was at Wilder Beach on August 22 (DG). **Solitary Sandpipers** were seen at Wilder Beach on August 10, and Laguna Beach on August 14 and 25, representing 2-3 individuals (DG). Two **Red Knots** were feeding just upstream of the Pajaro River mouth on September 3 (RM). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Wilder Beach on August 22 was a good find. (DG). We have had only a handful of previous records, although I have heard rumors of another in the county this fall but have not received the details. **Red-necked Phalaropes** are more common in Santa Cruz during fall migration than the other two species, but a record count was made this year of 192 Red-neckeds at Laguna Creek Marsh on September 4 (DS, SS). Five hundred and fifty **Common Murres** (give or take a few) off Davenport on September 9 was an impressive flock (RM).

Another great find this season was a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** seen well at Wilder Ranch State Park on September 4 (RM). We have two other records from fall migration in the last fifteen years or so, but that is all we have unless you go back to the good old days when this species nested along the Pajaro River (around 1900). The second **Eastern Kingbird** of the season was at the U.C.S.C. Arboretum on September 9 (DG). Bob Merrill noted "the end of a raucous era" as the Ben Lomond Landfill closed for good in August, leaving the scenic dump's contingent of **Common Ravens** (and gulls) high and dry. Bob reported a dramatic decline of raven sightings in the Ben Lomond area coincident with the closing of the landfill, and an uncharacteristic quiet in the San Lorenzo Valley. It will be interesting to see how many ravens are found on this year's Christmas Bird Count (the Dimeo Lane dump is still active in the count circle).

An immature **Northern Mockingbird** turned up at Rancho Del Oso on September 12, over ten miles from the nearest known nesting site (RM). There are one or two other fall records from nearby Swanton Road. A **Magnolia Warbler** fluttered around at New Brighton State Beach on October 5 (DS). **Black-and-White Warblers** were found at Liddell Creek on September 9 (RM), and at Wilder Ranch State Park on another early September date (MA). An **American Redstart** was seen at Rancho Del Oso on September 9 (RM). With the Redstart, Black-and-White, and Eastern Kingbird, it seems we had a little vagrant "fall-out" on September 9. A **Clay-colored Sparrow** arrived at Natural Bridges State Beach in time for my birthday on September 16 (RM), although I didn't get a chance to see it. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Branciforte Dip (the south end of Branciforte Drive) on September 21 (DG). A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** provided a rare fall record at Swanton Road pond on August 28 (RM, EL).

Corrigendum: In my discussion of **Varied Thrush** in the last issue I overlooked a previous summer record (our only one) of one bird at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on June 13, 1990 (RM).

Cited Observers: Mark Allaback, Eric Feuss, Doug George, Bob Merrill, David Suddjian, Susan Suddjian.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from October to November 1991

A **Brandt's Cormorant** was seen in an unusual freshwater setting 0.7 miles up Soquel Creek 23 November (DS). We have no other records of this species in freshwater. The bird appeared disoriented but would not allow capture and was even seen foraging for fish. **Ross' Geese** have already made a good showing this season, and we haven't even had the Christmas counts yet! The broken-winged goose at the Shorebirds Pond cited in the last issue was reported present from at least 26 July (RM) and has lingered through November (DG, CK). It was joined by a healthy immature on 8 November (CK, DG). Another Ross' Goose was reported from the field at Del Mar Middle School (!) in Santa Cruz 10-18 November (DC *fide* JL). **Eurasian Wigeon** were found again this fall for the fifth year in a row. One male was found at Merk Pond near Corralitos on 13 November (RM) with two males present 14-17 November (KK, CK). Who will dare to report the first female Eurasian Wigeon for the county?

Nine **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Pajaro River mouth on 23 October were a large concentration for Santa Cruz County (EL). A **Northern Harrier** was seen catching a healthy Dowitcher at Wilder Beach on 2 October (DG). **Ferruginous Hawks** were reported from Laguna Creek on 28 October (DG) and near the Watsonville Airport on 26 November (EF). **Golden Eagles** were seen at a few odd spots this fall including one over the Safeway at the west end of Santa Cruz 17 November (SA), one at Corcoran Lagoon 18 November (EL) and one at Highway 1 near Mar Monte Road 20 November (CK). A **Peregrine Falcon** has been using a eucalyptus grove near the San Lorenzo River mouth as a winter roost for the last few years. This fall it was first seen there in late September (EF) and was reported through 16 November. This bird's habits work out well with the Santa Cruz Christmas Bird Count, of course, so we wish this Peregrine an extra long life!

Two **Lesser Golden Plovers** were observed at a sod farm adjacent to Sunset State Beach on 3 October (DG). Most of our Golden Plovers have not been identified to subspecies. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Wilder Beach on 6 November (DG) was late. **Pileated Woodpeckers** were found away from their usual forests, with a male at Gold Avenue, Felton on 16 November (DE) and a female at Aptos Creek 29 November (DS). Both were probably fall wanderers from our local breeding population. The Felton sighting was near the recently colonized Fall Creek watershed, so let's keep an eye out for further records from the Felton area. Eastern warblers were fairly well-reported this fall, but Santa Cruz County had all the "common" rare species and none of the flashy vagrants found elsewhere along the coast. Reports included one **Tennessee Warbler** at Rancho del Oso 27 October (RM), **Blackpoll Warblers** at Neary Lagoon 10 October (DG) and at Liddell Creek 19 October (RM), five or six **Palm Warblers** at coastal sites 12 October through 20 November (RM, EL, 00) and a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Rancho del Oso 27 October (RM).

A female **Summer Tanager** at Liddell Creek on 31 October was a nice find (EL, RM). This is our fifth or ninth record depending on how you treat the male that wintered at Corralitos Creek for five years. **Swamp Sparrows** were reported, including nine birds at five sites on the north coast 19 October to 25 November (RM, DG). A **Bobolink** was seen at Wilder Ranch on 10 October. An unidentified female **Oriole** was seen briefly in Santa Cruz on 5 December (EF). The

observer was leaning toward a possible Hooded Oriole but the date and the small size described lead me to wonder if it wasn't an Orchard Oriole. Either sounds nice in December.

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Dean Cutter, David Ekdahl, Eric Feuss, Doug George, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, John Lane, Earl Lebow, Robert Merrill and David Suddjian.

Originally published in the March – April 1992 issue of the Albatross (Vol 37, No. 4)

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1991 to early February 1992

Pink-footed Shearwaters are rare on Monterey Bay during winter, so 12 seen from the boat on the 14 December Santa Cruz County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) were unexpected and provided a record high count (SA, DSh). One Flesh-footed Shearwater seen from the boat on the Santa Cruz CBC was even rarer, providing a first record for the CBC (DSh, SA). **American White Pelicans** wintered at South County lakes for the fourth season in a row (m.ob.). They were reported at Pinto and Kelly Lakes from early December through January, with a high count of 24 at Pinto on 19 December (DG). I wonder if they will still visit South County regularly after the drought ends. Will the drought ever end? **Brown Pelicans** were recorded in record numbers on the 14 December Santa Cruz CBC (349 birds), and were above average on the 1 January Moss Landing CBC (78 birds).

Where were the **American Bitterns** this winter? I received no reports at all through January when 3-10 are usually reported, although I think a few were seen in South County. **Wood Ducks** have begun to use Branciforte Creek in Santa Cruz in significant numbers as indicated by 65 in one flock on December 14 (DSu). A small number of **Mandarin Ducks** are now apparently resident in the county on the San Lorenzo River and Branciforte Creek where they are usually seen with Wood Ducks. Although this exotic duck is not considered established locally, both sexes are present and we should watch for nesting in the near future. Please forward all sightings of this species so we can mark its population changes. A small number of wintering **Blue-winged Teal** were reported, as usual (m.ob.). Noteworthy were one female at Dimeo Lane Ponds on the 14 December CBC (first CBC record, RMo & SS) and *four* at Pinto Lake from December to January (DG,B&BR).

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at College Lake from at least December 29 to January 1 for our third record this season (CK, DSu). A male **Redhead**, a species recorded only a few times in recent years, was at College Lake January 1 (DSu). Redheads wintered regularly in the county prior to 1966 but not since. A probable "**Harlan's**" **Red-tailed Hawk** was well described at Love Creek on 7 January for our second report of this rare subspecies (RMe). **Ferruginous Hawk** sightings were unusually numerous with thirteen reports in the county from 8 December to 29 January (m.ob.). Most were seen in South County grasslands or in the Wilder Ranch - Moore Creek area. In contrast, only one **Rough-legged Hawk** was reported, near Moore Creek on 8 December (EF). The rarest shorebird of the winter was a **Lesser Golden Plover** (*fulva* subspecies) near College Lake on 1 January (DSu).

A late wave of up to 14 migrant **Long-billed Dowitchers** was noted 11-14 December from Santa Cruz to Laguna Creek and inland to Scotts Valley (DSu, DG, EL, BB). Most years we don't have any reports away from South County wetlands after November. A **Red Phalarope** was out of place at Pinto Lake on 1 January (B&BR, GP, LS). This species is some-times seen inland following winter storms, but weather was calm for several days prior to this sighting. First-winter **Glaucous Gulls** were at Twin Lakes State Beach on 8 December and the lower San Lorenzo River on 11 December (same bird?;DSu), with others at Waddell Beach on 26 January (RMe) and near Wilder Beach on January 31 (DG). A **Tufted Puffin** was a nice find from the boat on the 14

December CBC, providing only the second record for the count and one of the few winter records for the county (SA, DSh).

Burrowing Owls have taken another step backwards in Santa Cruz County. A regular wintering site near Thompsen Road, east of Watsonville, has had no owls for two years (RMO) since a ground squirrel poisoning program was successfully implemented. This site was one of only two remaining wintering sites with the other at the Great Meadow area of UCSC. A **Long-eared Owl** was flushed from willows along the San Lorenzo River near Sycamore Grove on 14 December for the fourth CBC record, all from the last five years (DSu). This species was very rarely reported in the county prior to 1987, but 1-3 have been reported each winter since and breeding was documented in 1988. We know less about our Long-eared Owls than nearly all other Santa Cruz species. **White-throated Swifts** were more widely reported than usual for winter (four reports), including two 23 December (DSu). What they could have been eating up there is anybody's guess!

Three **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were reported at Cascade Creek on 23 December, Casserley Creek at College Lake on 1 January and Sycamore Grove on 11 January (all DSu). This species is clearly a rare but regular visitor in Santa Cruz County during fall and winter. Nearly all our records are from the last seven years. An apparent hybrid **Red-breasted x Red-naped** Sapsucker was at the Taylor Ranch, Summit Road on 23 November (BT). We have 2-3 other records of hybrids. Several locals have reported more **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** in the middle and northern parts of the county this fall and winter than ever before in recorded Santa Cruz history (RMe, DG, DSu, RMO, BS, KK et al.). This species is an uncommon to fairly common resident in parts of the Pajaro River Valley and in the Santa Cruz Mountains south of Mount Madonna Road. Elsewhere it is a rather rare and sporadic non-breeding visitor mid-July to March. We have a few puzzling recent spring and summer records. I don't know where these birds come from but since they show up in July it seems they are of the local Santa Cruz Mountains, dispersing after nesting, and are not from far away.

Pileated Woodpeckers were first found at Cascade Creek in May 1990. One there in old growth forest on 23 December indicates they are probably resident in that watershed (DSu). *Two Eastern Phoebes* were found this winter, our sixth and seventh county records and the first in eleven years! One was found at Kalkar Quarry Pond near UCSC on 14 December (EF, KK), remaining to at least 3 February and being enjoyed by many birders (m.ob.). This bird was found on the Santa Cruz CBC for a first count record. While Eric and Ken knew it was a strange phoebe, it didn't register as an Eastern. Unfortunately, word of this strange phoebe didn't surface until January 13 when Eric went to check it out again so I wasn't able to include it with the final count sent to New York. I think we should count it anyway, don't you? The second Eastern Phoebe, which I thought was the first for four days, was at Rancho del Oso 9-12 January. It was more yellowish than the Kalkar bird (RMe).

A partial albino **American Crow** with white flight feathers was at Harkin's Slough on 1 January (CK, LF et al.). It was voted "best bird" of the Moss Landing CBC by a demented crowd at the Count Down that evening. There is another record of an albino from Harkin's, but with less white than this year's beauty. Barbara Taylor has been birding the upper Soquel Creek watershed, an area whose birds we know little about. She has recently found four **American Dipper** nests along the creek, at least two of which were from spring 1991, indicating a bigger population on Soquel Creek than we knew of. Barbara reported that one nest was infested with mites, similar to reports I've read of mites at Cliff Swallow nests. A **Townsend's Solitaire** fed on madrone fruits at Mount Hermon on 14 December for our second CBC record (DSu).

Winter means warblers around these parts, at least on Christmas Counts, and many rare warblers were reported. The riparian habitat near the confluence of Branciforte and Carbonera Creeks took the spotlight this year. I call this area "the Confluence." Especially good birds at the Confluence were a wintering female **Blackburnian Warbler** from 14 December to at least 2 February (DSu, m.ob.-- first CBC and winter record, fifth for the county), a rare wintering female **American Redstart** from 22 December to 8 January (RMe, BM, EL,IF) and a **Tennessee Warbler** on 22 December (RMe). A **Yellow Warbler** was at the San Lorenzo River near Highway 1 on 23 December (DSu). Warblers that are rare but are reported almost every winter tallied up to six **Nashvilles** (high total!), three **Black-throated Grays**, six **Hermits** (*three* at Cascade Creek), four **Palms**, one **Black-and-white**, and two **Wilson's** (m.ob.).

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Wilder Ranch from 20 January to 5 February (DG) was a very rare find. This one was in the same place as a wintering(?) Clay-colored found by Doug last winter on 5 March, but which I neglected to report. **Swamp Sparrows** were numerous this winter; for example, up to three were at Wilder Ranch from October through January (DG), four were found on the 14 December CBC (m.ob.) and *ten* were tallied on a complete circuit of College Lake on 1 January (DSu). The unidentified **Oriole** in Santa Cruz reported in the last issue remained through 17 December, still unidentified (probably a Bullock's) (EF, BB).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Bruce Barrett, Eric Feuss, Issac Field, Liz Fisher, Doug George, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Robert Merrill (RMe), Randy Morgan (RMo), Gary Page, Bob and Bernadette Ramer, Barbara Scharfenstein, Debi Shearwater, Lynn Stenzel, David Suddjian, Susan Suddjian, Barbara Taylor. "m.ob." means many observers (--50 others this issue!)

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from February to March 1992

An **American Bittern** was finally reported for the season, with one at Wilder Creek Marsh February 6 and 26 (DG). It wasn't too long ago when a **Ross' Goose** was considered a very rare deal for Santa Cruz County, but over the last several years they have become increasingly regular during fall and winter, with a handful of reports each year, and even a few spring and summer records. This trend continues with one Ross' at Laguna Creek Marsh on February 6 (DG), and three at the Shorebirds Pond on February 13 (RMe). **Snow Goose** has actually been less frequently reported of late, but single birds were also at Shorebirds Pond and Laguna Creek on the same dates as the Ross' (DG, RMe). Three small **Canada Geese** at Pinto Lake on December 19 included one with a numbered neck band (DG), which, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was a female "**Cackling**" **Goose** banded at Yukon Delta N.W.R. last summer.

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** at Wilder Creek Marsh on February 26 was rare for the north county coast (DG). The **Eurasian Wigeon** wintering at College Lake was reported again on February 2 (CK). Pairs of **Common Mergansers** reported at the San Lorenzo River at Riverside Avenue on March 17 (EF) and flying over Highway 1 on March 28 (RMe) were unusual downstream of Sycamore Grove. This species nested at Loch Lomond in 1991, but I wonder if they will this year with the re-opening of the county park and the crowds of eager human anglers. A **Hooded Merganser** at Laguna Creek Marsh on February 6 was rare for the north county coast (DG). Sightings of a pair of **Golden Eagles** at several spots from Wilder Ranch to Scotts Valley in February, March and early April may have been one pair ranging over a large territory, as suspected from observations in recent years (DS, RMo, RMe). But where are they nesting? Does anyone know?

I've often read of **Red-tailed Hawks** and **Great Horned Owls** sharing the position of "top predator" in many places, and, as owls often use nests built by hawks, they would seem to be unlikely neighbors. However, females of each were incubating eggs in adjacent eucalyptus tree nests in Moore Creek Gulch on April 4, only 200 feet apart (DS). Just a few days later I saw the same combination in eucalyptus trees north of Livermore, but his time they were only 150 apart! A **Black-necked Stilt** at Laguna Creek Marsh on February 6 was rare away from the Pajaro River valley (DG). A migrant flock of 53 **Surfbirds** at Laguna Creek on March 28 was a high count (but not unexpected during spring migration), not to mention the 97 **Black Turnstones** (RMe). "**Yellow-shafted**" **Flickers** have been widely reported from November to March (m.ob.). We have a few records each winter, but this season I received twelve reports.

The winter of the **Eastern Phoebe** continues. The phoebe wintering at Kalkar Quarry lingered at least through March 5 (EF,DG). *Another* Eastern Phoebe, the third in the county since December, was found at Wilder Ranch on March 24 (RMe), and the same bird apparently wandered to the nearby N/A Ranch on March 26 (DS). This bird showed much more yellow below than the Kalkar bird. A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** near Mar Monte Road on March 17 was a about a week early (RMo) Two more used nests of **American Dipper** were found along upper Soquel Creek on March 16 and 30 (BT). The wintering **Blackburnian Warbler** remained at "the Confluence" through at least February 21 (DS). A **Wilson's Warbler** singing at Sycamore Grove on March 8 was about two weeks early (DS). This one might have wintered locally, but several visits to the

grove in December and January didn't reveal any Wilson's. Other migrant landbirds reported through early April have pretty much been on schedule (m.ob.).

Cited Observers: Eric Feuss, Doug George, Clay Kempf, Robert Merrill, Randy Morgan, David Suddjian, Barbara Taylor. "M.ob." means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from April to July 1992

Spring and summer 1992 were noteworthy for the effects of the moderate "El Niño" we were able to observe along our coast. The warmer ocean temperatures and lack of nutrient-rich upwelling waters reduces the marine phytoplankton and zooplankton communities in the ocean, in turn affecting larger invertebrates, fishes, seabirds and mammals. Reductions in populations of seabird prey or changes in prey composition can result in reduced seabird nesting effort and nesting success, as well as fluctuations in seabird distribution.

Conditions were apparently worse for seabirds at the Farallon Islands and in Southern California than locally in Monterey Bay. Preliminary reports from the Farallons indicated species such as Brandt's Cormorant, Pelagic Cormorant and Cassin's Auklet were either not nesting this year or doing so in low numbers. Evidence of reductions in nesting by several southern-nesting species came from reports on the breeding grounds and the early presence of these birds in central California waters. Species apparently affected included **Brown Pelican, Heermann's Gull, Elegant Tern, Least Tern, Xantus' Murrelet, Craveri's Murrelet and Black Storm-Petrel.**

Monterey Bay remained productive throughout the spring. Nesting seabirds in Santa Cruz County apparently did well, although the **Marbled Murrelet** may have been affected in the second half of the breeding season. Hundreds of **Brandt's Cormorants**, probably emigrants from the Farallons, were present in the northern part of Monterey Bay this spring and summer when only small numbers are usually found. This species even attempted to nest at three new sites along our central coast, being successful at one (see below). **Brown Pelicans, Elegant Terns and Heermann's Gulls** moved into central California early in spring and in bigger than average numbers.

* * *

Hundred's of **Brandt's Cormorants** appeared along our coast this May, apparently emigrants from the north or south foregoing nesting and escaping poor feeding conditions. Many of these birds arrived in breeding plumage and they were commonly seen engaging in courtship. A small number even attempted to nest for the first time at three sites along our mid-county coast. One pair nested successfully on the rock off West Cliff Drive at Columbia Street while three other pairs didn't get past nest building (DSu). Single pairs were also seen building nests on the bluff west of Capitola Wharf (DSu) and at Natural Bridges (RMe, LH), although these efforts were abandoned before the nests were completed. An exciting report of a possible **Red-footed Booby** at Capitola Wharf on 24 May (SG) was unfortunately not confirmed and no details have been received. This would have been our first county record.

An unidentified male **frigatebird**, probably a Magnificent Frigatebird, was seen flying north past Scott Creek on 13 February for our first February record (GS). Our nesting **Great Blue Heron** population continues to grow. A colony of about five pairs nesting at Spring Lakes Golf Course off Casserly Road, present at least five years, was reported to me for the first time (PR). The Pinto Lake colony expanded to five pairs this year (CK, DSu). Two flight-worthy **Ross' Geese** wintering at the shorebirds Pond remained through 28 April (RMe, CK), while the broken-winged

Ross Goose over-summered and presumably will remain. A question for the next Moss Landing CBC: Do we count a broken-winged goose present for over a year in the same place? A pair of **Greater Scaup** at College Lake on 3 April was unusual away from the coast (RMe, EL). The **Oldsquaw** wintering at the Pajaro River mouth lingered to at least 3 April (RMe, EL).

The San Lorenzo River is doing its part to support the **Common Merganser** as evidenced by an aggregation of up to 21 juveniles in the Rincon Gorge/Sycamore Grove area in late July (DSu, DSh). Elsewhere, observations of male Common Mergansers at Opal Creek in Big Basin on 7 and 18 May (DSu, MA), and at Soquel Creek in Capitola on 20 May (RMo, EF) suggest nesting should be looked for in other streams in future. An unexpected adult **Bald Eagle** was well studied at Bonny Doon on 24 July, for our first summer record in many, many years (RGS). A family of begging **Cooper's Hawk** fledglings in the oak woodlands of Seascape was a noteworthy find (RMo). The site is currently proposed for a housing development. **Snowy Plovers** nested at Scott Creek for the first time in recent history, with three nests found and at least two chicks raised to juveniles (EJ, DG). The nest enclosure program instigated to protect plover nests from predation was implemented full force in the Monterey Bay area this year, with reports of success being favorable (RW).

An adult **Franklin's Gull** in striking breeding plumage was following a tractor in a coastal field north of Laguna Creek on 7 May (DSu, BM). A **Black Tern** paused to feed at Anderson Peat Ponds on 11 May (DSu). Another nest of the **Marbled Murrelet** was discovered at Big Basin Redwoods State Park, the fifth ever for California (Santa Cruz Mountains Murrelet Group). The nest was located in the same tree as last year's nest(!) but on a different branch. It was not discovered until late in the nesting cycle, and successful fledging was observed firsthand on 7 June (SS). A singing **Wood Thrush** was heard at Quail Hollow County Park on 13 June (KK), but the bird had its thrush cloaking device on and could not be observed. This would be our first county record for the species, but because of its rarity in the state, a tape recording or visual sighting and documentation are needed to support the addition of this species to our county list.

Varied Thrush was confirmed nesting again in Butano State Park, San Mateo County (DSu), indicating the nestings reported in 1991 in San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties were not just a flash in the pan. A singing male **Northern Parula** was at Rancho Del Oso on 7 May (RMe) with another (or the same) there on 23 May (EL). This species has nested in central California, including a pair nesting as close as Gazos Creek, San Mateo County in 1991. We have only four prior county records of this species. One summered at Sycamore Grove in 1988. All observers should follow-up on all spring/summer sightings of this species to determine if nesting occurs. A male **Hooded Warbler** singing at Branciforte Creek in De La Veaga Park on the odd date of 13 July (DSu) may have been present for some time, but was not seen subsequently. This was our seventh record for this rare warbler.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were well reported with a first spring male at Happy Valley on 11 May (BB), an adult male at Lazy Woods Road, Felton on 11-12 June (R&PL) and an adult male at Soquel Creek, Capitola on 8 July (DSu). These dates, ranging over three months, are typical for this species in California in the late spring and early summer. A female **Indigo Bunting** was seen at Sycamore Grove on 26 July (DSu). In addition to the Cooper's Hawks noted above, two other species of interest were found at the Seascape site proposed for development. One or two **Grasshopper Sparrows** were singing on territory through the season and presumably nested (RMo). This species is fairly common in certain grasslands on our north coast and east of Watsonville, but in the intervening area only two breeding stations are known, Seascape and East Struve Slough, with both sites proposed for development. The other species of interest at Seascape was **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, heard three times during the season (RMo).

Cited Observers: Mark Allaback, Bonnie Bedzin, Eric Feuss, Doug George, Sara Griffin, Les Hawkins, Ed Jameyson, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Ray and Pauline Launer, Earl Lebow, Robert Merrill (RMe), Randy Morgan (RMo), Bryan Mori, Paul Ramsey, Debi Shearwater (DSh), Steve Singer, Rae Gwyn Smith, Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DSu), and Ricky Warriner.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from August to mid-October 1992

Fall migration is always a time of surprises. This season was no exception. Exciting vagrants were discovered, including first county records for Streaked Shearwater and Painted Bunting. Other highlights were a couple Ruffs, a Lesser Nighthawk, a Phainopepla, a Red-eyed Vireo, a Canada Warbler, a Green-tailed Towhee and two Clay-colored Sparrows! These rarities aside, fall migration in Santa Cruz County is comprised of a familiar cast of characters, usually appearing on their expected cues. Our regular migrants are, of course, of greater biological importance locally. It is sobering to realize how little we know of the population trends of our migrants.

This fall I conducted a study of landbird migration in riparian habitat of the central coastal region of our county from Liddell Creek to south of La Selva. To my knowledge, this study is unique in providing a quantitative picture of our landbird migration. Much useful information was obtained on the patterns of migration for dozens of species. The following is a general overview of landbird migration in wooded habitats in our county.

One species, Allen's Hummingbird, begins fall (southward) migration in June, but migratory movements for most species are not evident until late July. Migrants during late July to mid-September are primarily species that breed in California and elsewhere in western North America, and many migrate to the Neotropics. These include Vaux's Swift, various swallows, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned, Yellow and Wilson's Warblers, Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak.

Numbers of most breeding migrants peak in late August or September. Interestingly, several species that are widespread and even common breeders in western North America (and even Santa Cruz County), are quite uncommon or even rare in our county during fall migration. These include Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Western Kingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Solitary Vireo, Nashville, Hermit, Black-throated Gray and MacGillivray's Warblers and Lazuli Bunting. How many of these species did you see this fall? Some are less frequently encountered than eastern "vagrants."

From mid-September through early winter migrants are primarily species that winter in California and elsewhere in western North America, some having nested further north. These include Northern Flicker, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit and Varied Thrushes, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warblers, Savannah, Fox, Lincoln's, Golden-crowned and White-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco, Pine Siskin and American Goldfinch. (Note that many of these species are also present during the breeding season, although some are represented by different subspecies locally during the breeding and non-breeding seasons [e.g. Hermit Thrush]). Most winter migrants arrive in September with numbers increasing through fall. Numerically, these are much more abundant than the breeding migrants.

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A **Streaked Shearwater** was seen in Monterey Bay on three days from 7-28 September. At least one observation of the bird was in Santa Cruz County waters, 7 September, for our first county record (DSH et. al.). Concentrations of **Great Egrets** were reported in late September with 19 at Swanton Pond 28 September (RMe) and 43 at Harkins Slough 30 September (DSu). A juvenile **Greater White-fronted Goose** landed exhausted on North Main Street in Soquel 28 September (RMo). A car flushed the bird before the observer could interview the goose as to its condition. A vociferous **Merlin** in Aptos 19 September was an early migrant, but was also noteworthy because vocal displays by this falcon are rarely heard in our area (DK). A **Prairie Falcon** flew over Monterey Bay Academy 25 September (DG) for one of our few records of this rare migrant.

Five **Lesser Golden Plovers** (presumably subspecies *fulva*) were at the sod farm near Sunset State Beach 25 September (DG). A juvenile **Ruff** appeared at Wilder Beach 1 September and was joined by a second on the second (DG). Both were seen at Wilder and nearby Younger Lagoon through 7 September (DG, RMe, EL, BD). These are our 10th and 11th records. The large numbers of **Elegant Terns** present this summer and early fall merit attention. Santa Cruz County clearly had more Elegant Terns, a species increasing in California, than ever before. High counts of high (and noisy) elegance were: 1,800 terns at Sunset State Beach 10 August (DSu), 2,300 at the Pajaro River mouth 18 August (RMe), 1,500 at Seacliff State Beach 27 August (DSu) and 1,700 at Wilder Beach 29 August (DG). An immature **Black Tern** was "deftly snaring tidbits of food" at Younger Lagoon 9 September (RMe).

A juvenile **Marbled Murrelet** found grounded and under-weight on the forest floor in Big Basin Redwoods State Park 27 August was rehabilitated and released at Año Nuevo 11 September (*vide* S&SS). Most unusual was a **Lesser Nighthawk** which resided at the UCSC Arboretum from at least 26 August to 11 September (DG, m.ob.). This rare migrant was carefully studied as it roosted during the day on the ground or on a favorite limb of an acacia (DG, RMe). **Black Swifts** are rare during fall migration so six zipping over Capitola on 22 September were of special interest (DSu). A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** buzzed into the "Scharf's Place" along Carbonera Creek 11-12 August (BS) exactly ten years after our county's first Black-chinned was seen there! Four **Willow Flycatchers** were found along the coast from 26 August to 17 September (DO, DSu). A **Bank Swallow** at Wilder Ranch 13 October was rare and late (DSu).

Southbound swallows formed nice aggregations in late summer as they paused to take advantage local resources before their long flight. For review I offer a flock of 500-1,000 **Violet-green Swallows** feeding daily over oak forest along Glenwood Road 8 August to 5 September and a flock of 2,000 **Barn Swallows** feeding over agricultural fields east of Watsonville 23 August (both DSu). **Cedar Waxwings** made the strongest early fall showing in several years, with flocks of up to 100 commonly seen in September and October (DSu). An immature **Phainopepla** was studied at the Monahan residence off Vine Hill Road 14 September (BMon) providing only our third or fourth record of this species of the arid interior. Eastern **Solitary Vireos** (subspecies *V. s. solitarius*) were at Rancho del Oso 10 September (RMe) and Sycamore Grove 5 October (DSu) for two of the few ever found in the county. Our second-ever **Red-eyed Vireo** paused at Harkins Slough 12-14 August (RMe, BMor, DSu) providing one of the earliest (*the earliest?*) fall records in California.

Immature **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were at Soquel Creek in Capitola 2 September and at Soquel Creek in Soquel 7 October (both DSu). An immature **Blackpoll Warbler** was also at Soquel Creek in Soquel 7 October (DSu). A female **Black-and-white Warbler** crept along live oak limbs in Borregas Gulch in Aptos 3 September (DSu). Four **American Redstarts** along the coast from 27 August to 14 October made a good showing, including three showy adult males, (RMe, DSu, DGe). Unusual was a male that lingered at the confluence of Carbonera and

Branciforte Creeks from 22 September through at least 14 October (RMe et.al.)! Three **Northern Waterthrushes** were found along the coast from 27 August to 27 September (RMe, DSu, EL). The best warbler of the early fall was easily the male **Canada Warbler** found along Liddell Creek (south of Davenport) 15 September (KK), our fourth county record. Our third record, here belatedly reported, was of a singing male seen and tape-recorded 3 June along the San Lorenzo River in Felton (R&PL).

Three **Summer Tanagers** were found, bringing our county total to eight: a first year male molting to adult plumage was at Tannery Gulch in Aptos 21 August (DSu), a female was at the Morgan residence in Soquel 2 September (RMo) and an adult male was at Pinto Lake 12-16 September (MK *vide* CK). A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** lingered at Ben Lomond from 13 August to 10 September (KK, RMe) and a female was near the Mid-County Senior Center along Soquel Creek 13 August (DSu). Charmed by the Canada Warbler on 15 September, Ken Kellman immediately brought the fabled Patagonia Picnic Table Effect into play when he spotted a female (or immature) **Painted Bunting** at the same place on Liddell Creek for our first county record! Clay Kempf kept the magic alive with the discovery of a skulking **Green-tailed Towhee** there on 16 September for our sixth record.

Rare **Clay-colored Sparrows** popped up out of anonymity at the UCSC Farm 18 September (DG) and Wilder Ranch State Park 23 September (DSu, BD). Note that this species' autumn look-alike, the **Chipping Sparrow**, is also rarely reported as evidenced by only two reports this fall (BS, DSu). A **Sage Sparrow** at Natural Bridges State Park 2 September was a very rare find (SG). There is a small resident population on the Santa Cruz side of the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains but this was only our third county report of a migrant. A **Bobolink** was at Harkins Slough 25 September (DG). A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was heard again at Seascape Uplands 2 September (RMo).

Cited Observers: Brock Dolman, Steve Gerow, Doug George, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Dee Kempf, Marth Kenner, Ray and Pauline Launer, Earl Lebow, Robert Merrill (RMe), Barbara Monahan (BMon), Randy Morgan (RMo), Bryan Mori (BMor), Barbara Scharfenstein, Debi Shearwater (DSh), Steve and Stephanie Singer (S&SS), David Suddjian (DSu), Barbara Taylor.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from October to November 1992

Fall 1992 was definitely distinctive for its rarity highlights. August and September brought reports of a Streaked Shearwater, Painted Bunting, Canada Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, and Green-tailed Towhee (see last issue of the *Albatross*), and now October and November bring a Wedge-tailed Shearwater, a Dusky-capped Flycatcher, a Gray Flycatcher, and a Rusty Blackbird! Wow!

Of interest during the winter are our local populations of "irruptive" species, such as thrushes, finches, nuthatches and others. As of early December, the following seems to be the case: **Red-breasted Nuthatches** are scarce; **Golden-crowned Kinglets** are in fair numbers locally in the mountains; Hermit Thrushes are in average to good numbers; **American Robins** are numerous, but haven't yet arrived in droves; **Varied Thrushes** are uncommon except at their favored forest haunts; **Cedar Waxwings** are in above average numbers, but fewer than early fall; **Red Crossbills** have not been reported yet for the season; **Evening Grosbeaks** are turning up in a few areas of the mountains; **Pine Siskins** are abundant and perhaps in record numbers.

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A **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** was an outstanding find in Santa Cruz waters off of the Pajaro Rivermouth on the Bird Club's 24 October pelagic trip, providing our first county record, and the third record for California (CK, DSh et al.)! **Black-vented Shearwaters** were frequently seen along the coast in October and November, with a high count of 550 at Santa Cruz on 16 November (RMe). **American Bitterns** at Pinto Lake on 5 November (DG) and Antonelli Pond on 4 December (BMon) were the only ones reported as of early December. Bitterns have been quite scarce in the last two years. Continuing our **Great Egret** concentrations of the fall was a report of 46 egrets actively feeding at the Pajaro Rivermouth on October 28 (DG).

Five **Cattle Egrets** on the old Davenport Pier on October 30 were in an unusual spot and were foraging by probing through last season's Brandt's Cormorant nests (RMe)! The observer speculated on the visual similarity of the old nests to pasture patties. Meanwhile, four Cattle Egrets stalked the ball fields of Scotts Valley's Siltanen Park in an area of the county with few prior records (DSu). Eight **Tundra Swans** flew over Antonelli Pond on 4 December (BMon). A **Ross' Goose** was at Pinto Lake from 13 October to at least 24 November (DG, DSu). Male **Harlequin Ducks** were found at Waddell Creek Beach on 9-17 October (GS, RMe) and at Scott Creek Beach 9 Oct (GS). These are the first for the county since one present for several winters at West Cliff Drive was last seen during the winter of 1987-88.

Lesser Golden Plovers continued to be seen at the sod farm near Sunset State Beach, with four to six there on 31 October to at least 5 November (PM, RMe, DG). At least five of these were of the subspecies dominica, for our first county report of that subspecies. Some ornithologists consider the fulva and dominica subspecies to be distinct species - Pacific Golden Plover and American Golden Plover, respectively. Single migrant **Burrowing Owls** were seen at the N-A Ranch west of Santa Cruz on 31 October (DSu) and in a recently tilled field near Sunset State Beach on 2 November (RMe). The latter record was odd as I'm unaware of other county records

from plowed fields, only from grassland. An unidentified *Selasphorus* hummingbird (Allen's or Rufous) lingered near Scotts Valley 13-26 November, and was quite late for either (BMon).

A male **Pileated Woodpecker** was observed along Graham Hill Road near the Ponderosa Lodge on 2 November, for our first record from that area (DSu). It was eating berries at a rate of about 30 per minute from poison oak vines that had grown up into the canopies of Ponderosa pines.

A **Willow Flycatcher**, the fifth for the season, was at Soquel Creek in Capitola on the late date of 10 October (RMe). Our third county record of **Gray Flycatcher**, and the first for fall, was discovered at Wilder Ranch State Park on 6 October (DG). Both previous records were from May. Our fourth county **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** appeared in the pines at Natural Bridges State Beach from 22 November to at least 4 December (SA, m.ob.). Interestingly, Steve also found this species at the same spot on 1-4 December 1990...is this the same bird? A **Tropical Kingbird** was at Younger Lagoon on 7 November (WBT).

Six **Horned Larks**, now rare throughout the county, were at the sod farm near Sunset State Beach on 31 October (PM). A late **Northern Parula** was at Soquel Creek in Soquel on 27 October for our seventh county record (DSu). A **Magnolia Warbler** was a nice find at Pinto Lake on 13 October (DG). Three **Palm Warblers** were found from 11-31 October (DG). The male **American Redstart** found at the confluence of Branciforte and Carbonera creeks on 22 September lingered at least through 16 November for an unusual autumn stretch of 56 days (RMe, DSu, BMor, AG). Our uncommon migrant western warblers (**Nashville, Black-throated Gray, Hermit and MacGillivray's**) were especially scarce this fall, given good birding coverage by several observers. Total individuals reported to me for these species this fall were: four, four, zero and two, respectively.

I studied the plumage of 78 migrant **Western Tanagers** in the county this fall and was surprised to find only 8% were adult males, 73% were females and 19% were immatures or females. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** paused at the Monahan residence northeast of Scotts Valley on 20 October (BMon). Our third **Clay-colored Sparrow** of the fall was at Rancho del Oso on 9 October (GS). An oddly-placed **Grasshopper Sparrow** was unfortunately found dead on 4 October from a collision with a window at 14th Avenue in Santa Cruz, providing one of our few fall records (fide EF). A female **Rusty Blackbird** at Scott Creek on 24-27 November was only the second or third county record, and the first since the mid-1970's (GS). Migrant **Pine Siskins** were abundant in the county by November, with many observers reporting flocks of 100's, and a record Christmas Bird Count tally expected. A scattering of **Evening Grosbeak** reports made their presence known, with 5 flocks reported from 21 October to 29 November (RMo, DSu).

Cited Contributors: Steve Allison, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Doug George, Clay Kempf, Robert Merrill (RMe), Peter Metropulos, Randy Morgan (RMo), Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor), Debra Shearwater (DSh), Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler. "M.ob." means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1992 to early January 1993

American White Pelicans, now annual winter visitors to south county, were reported as follows: about 20 at Pinto Lake in December (fide BR); two at Pinto on at least 9 January (DSu et al.); 18 flying over Watsonville and the Casserley area toward the mountains on 9 January (LF,CK,EF et al.); and one crippled pelican residing at Kelly Lake (RMO). There were no **American Bitterns** reported in the county this winter (through early February), with none on the Santa Cruz County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for the last three years!

Cattle Egrets were more plentiful in the mid-county area than usual this winter, with an influx evident in the first week of December. I received many reports from eleven localities, involving some forty egrets (BR,DSu,KK,DG, CK,BMon,AG,BS,DE,EL,CW). Many were attracted to expanses of turf at schools, golf courses and city parks. Of interest were 1-3 far up the San Lorenzo Valley at the Boulder Creek Elementary School from 4-15 December (KK). This species is annually present at various south county spots, but was also more widespread than usual there. Five **Tundra Swans** flew southeast over Scotts Valley on 28 January (DSu).

The lone **Greater White-fronted Goose** reported was one at College Lake on 1 January (DSu). A **Snow Goose** took a liking to the last large vacant lot in Capitola, along Clares Street, from 16-26 December (right across from Bruce LaBar's former residence; but no, Bruce, you can't add it to your yard list). It was out standing in its field, except when driven by dogs to seek refuge at nearby Soquel Creek mouth (CH,CK, m.ob.). Single **Ross' Geese** were at Pajaro Rivermouth 19-21 December (DG,DSu) and Pinto Lake County Park all winter (DG, m.ob.). The most interesting of several **Canada Goose** reports this winter was a large flock of 49 honkers at College Lake on 18 December (BMor).

Male **Eurasian Wigeons** were at Merk Pond on at least 6 December (HL) and at College Lake on 1 January (DSu). This species has been reported almost annually since autumn of 1987. A male **Redhead** was at College Lake on 1 January (DSu). A female-type **Harlequin Duck** was off Wilder Creek Beach from 19 December to at least 6 January, for our first winter record since 1986-87 (BW et al.,DG). The **Oldsquaw** wintering at the Pajaro Rivermouth lingered through the season (J&RW,m.ob.). The rarest raptor of the winter was an immature **Bald Eagle** at Major's Creek on 24 January (RMO).

Ferruginous Hawks were at the U.C.S.C. - N/A Ranch area from 19-22 December (EF,RMe,EL), College Lake on 1 January (DSu) and Kelly-Thompson Ranch on 1 January (SA et al.). The only **Rough-legged Hawk** was near Davenport on 19-20 December (MS et al.,DSu). A staggering thirty-six reports of **Merlins** were received for December and January from points throughout the county (m.ob.). Why has this migrant and wintering species increased so much over the last seven years? Two **Peregrine Falcons** wintered in the Santa Cruz area, roosting in a eucalyptus near the San Lorenzo Rivermouth (m.ob.). A rare **Prairie Falcon** was spotted at the Kelly-Thompson Ranch on 1 January (SA et al.).

Two reports of **Sandhill Cranes** were exceptional for Santa Cruz County. One was at N/A Ranch on at least 19 December, and possibly for a few days prior (BG, EL et al.). Another was

studied on 5 January as it flew southeast over Highway 17, about one mile south of the summit of the mountains (BE). There are eight prior reports of cranes for the county, but most are without specific dates and the validity of most is questionable. A high count of 94 **Snowy Plovers** at Scott Creek on 11 December was heartening (RMe). A **Black-necked Stilt** at the San Lorenzo River on 19-20 December was a rarity in the county away from the Pajaro Valley (BB et al.). First-winter **Glaucous Gulls** were at the Pajaro Rivermouth (Monterey side) on 9 January (DSu et al.) and Soquel Creekmouth on 15 January (DSu).

The banner summer and autumn for **Elegant Terns** led to many notably late reports, and some exceptional winter reports. Elegant Terns usually depart northern California for the south by November. This season we had five reports of 2-9 birds from Wilder to Seacliff between 3-13 December (DSu, PR, DG). One Elegant flying down the coast at Natural Bridges on 26 December was exceptionally late for northern California (DSu), and one feeding at Seacliff State Beach on 2 February was perhaps only the second-ever for February in northern California (DSu). A pair of unidentified **Xantus'** or **Craveri's Murrelets** seen from a boat southwest of Wilder Creek on 19 December provided the first record of this species pair for the Santa Cruz County CBC, and were generally rare for the season (SA, DSh). Xantus' seems most likely based on past winter records for northern California.

Storm-tossed winter seas took their toll on small alcids, as evidenced by 26 freshly-dead **Cassin's Auklets** washed up at Wilder Beach (DG). A big flock of about 650 **Band-tailed Pigeons** at Scotts Valley on 15 January exceeded most year's tallies for the whole Santa Cruz County CBC (DSu). A **Burrowing Owl** at N/A Ranch on the west side of Santa Cruz from at least 15-19 December (EL et al.) was probably the same one there on 31 October, and was at an unusual winter location. The only **Short-eared Owl** reported was one at College Lake on 1 January (DSu).

An unidentified *Selasphorus* hummingbird at Pasatiempo on the late date of 19 December was probably a **Rufous**, while the first migrant **Allen's Hummingbird** to return for the season was a male at College Lake on 18 January (both DSu). A female **Pileated Woodpecker** was at Mount Hermon on 19 December, within half a mile of the male seen on 2 November (DSu). The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** discovered at Natural Bridges on 22 November lingered through 10 January (m.ob.), and was one of an unprecedented six found in northern California this fall and winter.

A somewhat mediocre array of rare winter warblers was discovered, with their numbers and variety down from most recent winters. They were particularly scarce in south county, as evidenced by the almost complete absence of rare warblers on the 1 January Moss Landing CBC. The male **American Redstart** along Carbonera Creek near Highway 1 from 22 September to at least 8 January (DSu) was the winter's rarest and only exceptional warbler. Other warblers of note were one **Nashville** (CT et al.), three **Black-throated Grays** (SG, DSu, CK), two **Hermits** (DSu, DE), only one **Palm** (DG), and one **Black-and-White** (DSu).

Our wintering **Townsend's Warblers** were clearly hard hit by the big freeze of December 1990, but the 19 December Santa Cruz County CBC total suggested their numbers had largely recovered. They were in good numbers in appropriate habitats throughout in the county's lowlands (DSu), but their numbers were considered by some observers to still be below average in the mountains (RMe, KK). Three **Western Tanagers** were found, with singles at Pasatiempo and the Branciforte/Carbonera confluence on 19 December and one at Scotts Valley on 12 January (all DSu). An unidentified female **Rose-breasted** or **Black-headed Grosbeak** was at Bonny Doon on 19 December, for the first winter season report of a *Pheucticus* grosbeak in a few years (BD, CN).

For the past two years I've reported in this column on my sparrow counts from censuses on 1 January at College Lake. My complete five-mile circuit around the lake on 1 January for this year's Moss Landing CBC once again provided amazing counts of several sparrow species...in spite of the fact that it rained for almost the entire census! The whole loop requires over five hours, and takes one through a prime mix of sparrow habitat, including grassland, weedy fields, partially flooded agricultural fields, riparian, wetlands and scrub. Sparrow diversity this winter - 12 species (including junco) - was probably unmatched by any other comparable area in the Monterey Bay region (or anywhere in central California?), and included some very rare species. The sparrow tallies were: one **Chipping(!)**, one **Clay-colored(!)**, two **Lark**, 360 **Savannah**, 33 **Fox**, 640 **Song**, 296(!) **Lincoln**, 12(!) **Swamp**, one **White-throated**, 875 **Golden-crowned**, 1364 **White-crowned**, and 48 **Dark-eyed Juncos**. The **Chipping Sparrow** was the first winter report in the county in a few years. The **Clay-colored Sparrow** was in a weedy field east of Casserley Creek near its confluence with the lake, and it lingered at least to 22 January (DSu), providing one of few wintering records for northern California. The 12 **Swamp Sparrows** provided a record high count for the county, but similar counts were obtained there in recent winters.

Almost all the **Evening Grosbeaks** reported this winter have been in riparian forest in the vicinity of the confluence of the San Lorenzo River and Zayante Creek. Notably large flocks were feeding in box elders along Zayante Creek, with flocks of 82 on 11 December and 105 in the rain on 6 January (both DSu). **Lawrence's Goldfinch** are very rare in the county in winter. Two to three were flying over Soquel on 16 December (RMo) and 1 male was among numerous Lessers and Americans at College Lake on 1 January (DSu).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Bruce Barrett, Brock Dolman, David Ekdahl, Bill Elsey, Eric Feuss, Liz Fisher, Alexander Gaguine, Doug George, Bruce Gerow, Steve Gerow, Catherine Hickey, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Harold LaFont, Earl Lebow, Robert Merrill (RMe), Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor) Randy Morgan (RMo), Carol Nieukirk, Peter Radcliff, Bob Ramer, Barbara Scharfenstein, Debra Shearwater (DSh), David Suddjian (DSu), Mac Sutherlin, Chris Tenney, John and Ricky Warriner, Brian Weed, Chili White; "m.ob." means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from late January to March 1993

March sometimes gets a bad rap for being month with few rare birds, but I can't beat the arrival of the mythical **stork** on 3 March, bringing Susan and I our beautiful baby boy - David Aaron (7 lbs, 3 oz.)! Of course he hasn't done much birding yet, but he loves to watch his Scarlet Macaw mobile and he's very observant!

In the "best bird that almost was" category, we have a mysterious report called in to the rare bird alerts from an "out of state" birder, who shall remain anonymous, of a **Red-headed Woodpecker** perched on a bird bath at West Cliff Drive on 31 March (The day before 1 April!). Ordinarily, this would be big news, but the bird was very stationary and I had seen three or four others just like it on the shelf at the Orchard Supply Garden Center just the week before! Now, on to reality...

Three **American White Pelicans** were spotted flying high over the vicinity of Scott Creek Marsh on 3 February, for the county's first north coast record north of Wilder Ranch (DG). A hefty county of 252 **Brown Pelicans** at Wilder Beach on 3 February was unusually many for late winter (DG). Two **American Bitterns** at Drew Lake "for some time" during the winter were the only ones reported in the county all season (SH fide EF). **Great Egrets** were finding plenty of food in the south county sloughs this winter, with a high count of 116 tallied on 22 March at Harkins, Hanson, West Struve and Watsonville sloughs (DS). Twenty-four **Cattle Egrets** at the Seascape Golf Course was a high count, especially away from the Pajaro Valley (LC). Two **White-faced Ibis** were at Harkins Slough on 16 March, for a rare county record, with one seen again on 26 March (RMe).

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at College Lake on 18 March (RMe), presumably the same found on 1 January. A bird thought to be a **Ross' Goose** was reported from Schwan Lake on 15-26 March (PR). Although the diminutive goose generally fit the description of a Ross', it was noted to have a darkened "grinning patch" suggestive of a Snow Goose, raising the question of a possible hybrid (CK,RMe). Continuing last fall and winter's **Harlequin Duck** reports was Bob Merrill's sighting of two females amidst Surf Scoters at Seacliff State Beach on 16 March (one remaining to 19 March). There is only one prior county record of Harlequin Duck down the coast from Lighthouse Point in Santa Cruz.

Bob Merrill made an interesting observation of our local nesting **Common Mergansers** along the San Lorenzo River. The males, which may be seen courting females in late winter and early spring, are generally nowhere to be found later in the spring or summer. Where do they go? Three Common Mergansers on the river at the Soquel Avenue bridge on 1 April were unusually far down river for the species (EF). A displaying pair of **Hooded Mergansers** was rare for the north coast at Scott Creek Marsh on 29 March (RMe,EL).

Merlins topped the scales this winter, with an unprecedented 51 reported sightings between 1 December and 15 March (m.ob.). First winter plumaged **Glaucous Gulls** were at the Pajaro Rivermouth on 7 February (DS) and Wilder Beach on 8 February (DG). Two **Black Skimmers**

were found resting at Twin Lakes State Beach, adjacent to Schwan Lake, before flying down coast on 4 February (CH). This is our only winter record of a skimmer.

That's all I have time to write for now. I've got diapers to change!

Cited observers: Lisa Carp, Eric Feuss, Doug George, Catherine Hickey, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Robert Merrill, Shahe Moutafin, Peter Radcliff, David Suddjian. "M.ob. means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from April to July 1993

On 3 August 1993 we suffered a great loss, as two of the world's leading field biologists - ornithologist Ted Parker (40) and botanist Alwyn Gentry (48) - died in a plane crash during an aerial survey of the forests on the coast of Ecuador. Both men were unsurpassed in their field, taking with them about two-thirds of the unpublished knowledge of Neotropical biodiversity. Parker was renowned for his unique understanding of South American birds, their vocalizations (he knew the various calls of over 4,000 species!), and behavior. As stated by colleague Dr. John O'Neill of Louisiana State University, Parker "knew the birds better than any living person." Gentry was an expert in tropical plants, whose knowledge of tropical plants was regarded by scientists as unsurpassed. Dr. Peter Raven of Missouri Botanical Garden considered Gentry to be "undoubtedly the most knowledgeable person in the world about the flora of Latin America."

* * *

This spring and summer have provided a variety of interesting observations of migrant and breeding birds in the county. Migrants included birds out of place and those in large numbers. Breeding birds produced some rare county breeding records, including one species which was seen for the first time in the county this June and found nesting. That species occurs in all our neighboring counties, and was previously known to nest within one mile of Santa Cruz County. Can you guess which species? Read on...

I'll begin this report with a surprising "sighting". While walking out of a Capitola pharmacy in July I spotted a postcard on the rack showing Capitola beach and wharf with a flock of at least 20 adult **American White Pelicans** standing at the edge of the waves! I sure didn't know of any such record for Capitola, and the photo has not been tampered with. The caption reads "These pelicans are enjoying another beautiful day on the beaches of Capitola"!

Northbound migration of **Pacific Loons** was going full tilt on 11 April, when 11,200 were tallied passing Davenport in two hours (RMe). Northbound **Common Loons** and other waterbirds were seen away from the ocean in odd spots. A **Common Loon** was flying high over Big Basin on 14 April (DSu et al.). Unexpected sightings of waterbirds flying north over the crest of the mountains at Mount Madonna Center from 29 April to 8 May included: two **Common Loons**, five **Double-crested Cormorants**, 40 **Western Sandpipers**, three **Caspian Terns** and eight **Forster's Terns** (DSu). **Brandt's Cormorants** nesting at Davenport Pier this spring started and stopped, started and stopped, and eventually raised young in a below average 76 nests (RMe).

A **Cattle Egret** at Harkins Slough on 4 June was one of our latest ever (RMe). Several juvenile **Black-crowned Night-Herons** with adults at Harkins Slough on 27 July suggested nesting there (RMe). Seasonally rare were a male **Greater Scaup** and a female **Lesser Scaup** at Pajaro Rivermouth on 8 July (RMe). Several sightings of a male and female **Common Merganser** at Opal Creek in Big Basin on 5-18 April suggested possible nesting in the area (DSu et al.). The county's second nesting location for **Turkey Vulture** in recent history was discovered on 8 June with two young seen in a cave near Pescadero Creek (the tributary to Pajaro River) in extreme southeast Santa Cruz County (DSu).

A **Golden Eagle** was eating a gull (still alive but not for long) on 17 July along forested Jarvis Road northeast of Scotts Valley (K&BM)! The importance of College Lake for wintering waterfowl has been well documented, but it is also used by impressive numbers of shorebirds in spring when its receding waters leave extensive shallows and mudflat. Among those counted by Bob Merrill on 29 April were: 2,100 **Western Sandpipers**, 350 **Least Sandpipers**, 335 **dowitchers**, and 85 **Semipalmated Plovers**. Bob's total count of 2931 shorebirds on 29 April equaled 18% of the total shorebird count from PRBO's census of the coastal Monterey Bay area on 23-27 April. A **Marbled Godwit** at Harkins Slough on 26 June was our first inland summer record (RMe).

A **Black Skimmer** plied the waters of Pajaro Rivermouth on 21 May, a typical date for this rare spring migrant (BS). A **Marbled Murrelet** eggshell was found on the ground in Big Basin by a park docent on 7 May; Lloyd Kiff of the Los Angeles Museum of Vertebrate Zoology determined the egg had been predated shortly after being laid (fide SS). Ravens were the suspected culprit. **Rhinoceros Auklets** continue to nest near Davenport Pier, as evidenced by observations of courtship on 6 May, attendance at a nest cavity on 6 June, and carrying food to the nest cliff on 1 July (RMe, DSu).

A wave of migrant swifts along the crest of the mountains south of Loma Prieta on 12 May resulted in tallies of 38 **Black Swifts** and 327 **Vaux's Swifts** during two hours and 15 minutes of observation (DSu). Rare documentation for breeding by **Vaux's Swift** in the county was obtained when five young from a nest built in a chimney near U.C.S.C. were turned in to Native Animal Rescue; one young survived to be released (fide NS). A male **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen flying over Smith Grade at Moore Creek Road on 17 July (DSu), not far from the location two 1991 breeding season sightings of a pair on the Gray Whale Ranch. A pair of **Pileateds** nested again in May the lower watershed of Waddell Creek downstream of Camp Herbert (BS).

An adult **Eastern Kingbird** at Mount Madonna Center on July 31 was an early "fall" migrant, and was unusual away from the immediate coast (DSu). **Horned Larks** were nesting near Soda Lake on June 8, the only area where they are currently known to nest in the county (DSu). A pair of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** building a nest in second growth redwood forest at Mount Madonna Center on 9 May extended this species' breeding range to the south about 23 miles (DSu). An amazing wave of migrant **Hermit Warblers** brought at least 78 to the Croy Ridge area on the crest of the mountains, northwest of Mount Madonna, on 4 May (DSu).

A singing male **American Redstart** jazzed up Rancho del Oso on 18 June (RMe). A migrant **Yellow-breasted Chat** lived up to its name at Wilder Creek on 6 May (RMe). An exciting find was the discovery of a **Yellow-breasted Chat** nest along Pescadero Creek (tributary to Pajaro River) east of Soda Lake on 8 June (DSu). The nest was in an elderberry in fine riparian habitat, and contained one nestling chat and one nestling *Brown-headed Cowbird*! If I am to go by available historic breeding records, this is the first documented nesting confirmation in Santa Cruz County in 102 years, although chats probably nested in the county through the first few decades of this century.

A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited the Monahan's feeder northeast of Scotts Valley on 14 June (BM). The first county record and first breeding record mentioned above was for **Rufous-crowned Sparrow**, found on a steep slope northwest of Soda Lake near Mount Pajaro on June 17 (DSu). A family group with recent fledglings was seen, and another one was heard singing nearby; this species is known to nest just across the Pajaro River (San Benito County) at the

Aromas quarry. An immature male **Hooded Oriole** northeast of Scotts Valley on 4 June was our first record from the Santa Cruz Mountains (BM). **Red Crossbills** arrived in the summer for the first time since 1984, which proved to be a major irruption year for the species in California. They were first reported this summer on 2 July and by the end of the month had been seen in moderate numbers in many locations, including Bonny Doon, Big Basin, Felton, Soquel, Capitola, La Selva and Ben Lomond (DSu,RMo,BD,CN).

Cited Observers: Brock Dolman, Robert Merrill (RMe), Kevin and Barbara Monahan, Randy Morgan (RMo), Carol Nieu Kirk, Barbara Scharfenstein, Steve Singer, Nathan Smalley, David Suddjian.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from August to early October 1993

It's another exciting fall, at least through early October, with our first Dusky Flycatcher, a Magnificent Frigatebird, a Laughing Gull, a Lesser Nighthawk, an Ovenbird, and nesting Red Crossbills leading the list of noteworthy sightings. Most of the reports of eastern vagrants came in a well-defined wave from 21 September to 5 October, with a peak from 28 September to 4 October. Last year's fall season had a great first half matched by an equally exciting second half, so I have high hopes for October and November!

A rare **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** was reported from Santa Cruz County waters of Monterey Bay on 11 September (DSh). A female **Magnificent Frigatebird** soared high over the ocean at New Brighton State Beach on 22 September (DSu). A summering **American Bittern** at Harkins Slough 8 July to 12 September probably nested locally (RMe, EL). On 28 August it was seen out of character, perched atop a fence post and flanked by two **Green-backed Herons** (RMe)! An unusual seaward **Osprey** was making for land 7.3 miles off Santa Cruz on 22 August (DSh). Migrant *Accipiters* are comparatively numerous after the beginning of September, but flights of multiple hawks have been rarely reported in the county. Thus, a flight of 14 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and 5 **Cooper's Hawks** passing down the coast during 75 minutes of observation at the New Brighton State Beach campground area was noteworthy (DSu). Those hawks kept the local bushtit flocks twittering almost non-stop! Also exceptional were three **Peregrine Falcons** at Monterey Bay Academy on 29 September, with two swooping and diving at each other for fifteen minutes (EL).

Doug George reported on the success of predator exclosures at nests of the threatened **Snowy Plover** at Laguna Creek Beach in 1992-93, and Scott Creek Beach in 1993. Protected Laguna nests had an average hatching rate of 76% in 1992-93, versus a hatching rate of 20% at unprotected nests in 1988-91. However, the exclosures didn't protect the precocial chicks after they were led away from nests hours after hatching, with the average fledging rate for protected Laguna nests in 1992-93 only 7% over the fledging rate for unprotected nests in 1988-91. Doug noted there were no areas of the beach where nests free from human disturbance. Similarly, Scott Creek receives high levels of disturbance from recreational users, and four of five nests there in 1993 failed to fledge any young. Four of five nests were located on the dunes near Highway One in an area planned for an extensive dune stabilization and revegetation project which could eliminate the nesting habitat.

A **Solitary Sandpiper** paused at the San Lorenzo River in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on 11 August (MB). Four **Red Knots** at the mouth of Wilder Creek on 2 September were rare migrants (DG). A winter-plumaged adult **Laughing Gull** was a very good find at Seacliff State Beach on 4 September, for about our fifth county record, the first since 1987, and the first for fall (KM). This obliging, although sometimes hard to locate, gull remained at least to 21 September (m.ob.). For contrast, recent years have produced 1-3 records per year of the more regular **Franklin's Gull**. **Elegant Terns** arrived later than in other recent years, with no reports before late June, but good numbers were present soon after, with high counts of 1000 at the Pajaro Rivermouth on 8 July (RMe), 1750 there on 28 July (DSu), and 1200 at Corcoran Lagoon on 12 August (RMe). A juvenile **Marbled Murrelet** found grounded at Huckleberry Campground in

Big Basin on 5 September was released to the sea at Ano Nuevo the following day (*fide* SS). September is notably late for such a discovery.

Sister Mary Luke was witness to a **Northern Pygmy-Owl** devouring an unfortunate House Finch outside her window at Saint Clare's Retreat on 17 September! After the owl flew off, all the birds (minus one) returned to her feeder (is that an *owl* feeder?). A migrant **Burrowing Owl** was in the large field near the Lipton facility in western Santa Cruz on about 17 September (SG). Steve reports seeing fall migrant owls there with some regularity over the years, although they usually stay for brief periods. A **Lesser Nighthawk** was seen at Wilder Ranch on 7-14 September (DG,SG,BG), and was presumably the unidentified nighthawk seen flying along the coast just west of Natural Bridges on 13 September (AG). Doug George found the bird's roost site at Wilder on the rock railroad bed of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Most county records of nighthawks have not been identified to species, and reports in general are quite rare. A good fall passage of 190 **Vaux's Swifts** flew over Ben Lomond Mountain near Smith Grade in three hours on 7 September (DSu).

One **Willow Flycatcher** at Wilder Ranch on 22 September was the only report for the season so far (DG). A **Dusky Flycatcher** discovered near the butterfly trees at Natural Bridges State Beach on 4 October was our first county record for this difficult species (DSu,DG), with the bird remaining at least through 5 October (RMe,EL). A flock of five migrant **Ash-throated Flycatchers** at "Branciforte Dip" in Santa Cruz on 4 September were exceptional for the county(RC), where it's typical to encounter only one to two (or even none) during an active fall season of birding. Two **Tropical Kingbirds** along the San Lorenzo River near Highway One on 17 September established our earliest record (RMe), and another was in Capitola on 29 September (DSu). A flock of seven **Purple Martins** consorting briefly with three **Black Swifts** high over Liddell Creek on 5 August provided a rare fall record for the martin (RMe). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** seem to be in above average numbers this fall, with many reports from various localities beginning 10 August (m.ob.). At least 11 nuthatches in one area of knobcone pines along Empire Grade on 7 September was the only report of more than one or two (DSu).

A **Tennessee Warbler** was at Neary Lagoon on 4 October (DSu). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were at Natural Bridges on 21 September (SG) and New Brighton on 30 September (DSu). A **Magnolia Warbler** north of Natural Bridges on 1 October was the second rarest eastern warbler so far this season (SG). A wave of **Palm Warblers** brought 18 individuals to eight coastal sites from Scott Creek to Live Oak from 28 September to 5 October (SG, EL,RMe,RMo,DG,DSu,BH), including seven in the Natural Bridges area. This was easily the best showing of Palm Warblers since the record-setting fall of 1987 when at least 40 were reported from September through November, but this season's on a record-breaking pace. Especially noteworthy was a "**Yellow Palm Warbler**" of the subspecies *hypochrysea* at Laguna Creek on 1 October (RMe). The only other county record of this most easterly subspecies, rather rare in California, was in November 1975. **Blackpoll Warblers** were at Liddell Creek on 7 September (KK) and Wilder Ranch on 29 September (DG). Single **American Redstarts** were at New Brighton on 22-23 September (DSu), and north of Natural Bridges on 28 September (SG). The season's best warbler so far was a handsome and cooperative **Ovenbird** at Natural Bridges on 4-5 October, our fifth county record and first since 1988(DG,DSu,RMe, EL). **Northern Waterthrushes** were at Zayante Creek on 25 September (DSu) and Natural Bridges on 29 September.

A male **Summer Tanager** in an avocado tree on Walnut Street in Soquel on 14 June was apparently our first spring record (DSu). Another male **Summer Tanager**, this one presumably heading the other direction, was at Sycamore Grove on 8 August (DSu). A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in mixed flock at New Brighton State Beach on 23 September (DSu). A

rare **Clay-colored Sparrow**, seemingly becoming more regular in the county in fall, was near Baldwin Creek on 5 October (DSu). **Red Crossbills** continued to be reported from a variety of sites in the mountains through September, although numbers seem to have declined from July. A flock of 20 drinking from a puddle at Mount Hermon on 9 August included two heavily-streaked juveniles, suggesting local nesting, although none were in the area one month prior (RMe). Confirming local nesting by crossbills this year was the discovery of nest with two chicks in a fir tree at Cascade Creek on 5 September (DSu). Crossbills are said to nest at any time when cone crop conditions are favorable, including winter, but how often has nesting been documented in the late summer or early fall along the central coast of California?

Cited observers: Marjorie Bourret, Rebecca Cull, Alexander Gaguine, Doug George, Bruce Gerow, Steve Gerow, Bob Hargis, Ken Kellman, Earl Lebow, Sister Mary Luke, Robert Merrill (RMe), Kevin Monahan, Randy Morgan (RMo), Debra Shearwater (DSh), Steve Singer, David Suddjian (DSu); "m.ob." means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from mid-October to November 1993

The discoveries of the second-half of the fall season provided an exciting balance to the rarities of the first half. Among the best of the rarities seen during October and November were Eurasian Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Sandhill Crane, Laughing Gull, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Prairie Warbler and Blue Grosbeak! Of special note was our fine showing of warblers, including a record setting number of reports of "eastern" warblers for a single fall (82 records as of November 30, beating our previous best of 65 records in fall 1987). The diversity of warblers was also high for Santa Cruz County, with 23 species reported from August through November.

By late fall we look to the skies, trees, and our bird feeders to assess numbers of various "winter irruptive" landbirds. In contrast to last year, when many irruptives were present in above average or even record numbers, this fall nearly all irruptive species have so far failed to irrupt. From information at hand, only the Red Crossbill was in above average numbers, but it declined from peak numbers during mid-summer. Cedar waxwings and Pine Siskins, both abundant last fall, are particularly scarce this fall, and only one Evening Grosbeak sighting was reported for through November. Local numbers often change for some species, such as American Robin, as we move into winter.

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Good numbers of **Black-vented Shearwaters** were along our coast this fall, presumably due to warm water conditions, and were often visible with scopes from the shore. The high count reported was approximately 750 feeding off Soquel Point on 30 October (DS). Two reports of **American Bittern** were received: one at Neary Lagoon on 20 October (SM) and one at Harkins Slough on 8 November (EFr). Please report all sightings of bitterns so we can track this species which has been very rare in the county in the last few years. Large numbers of **Great Egrets** dotted Lower Watsonville Slough all fall, with a high count of 88 on 29 October (DS). This egret has exhibited an increasing trend in the county for a number of years. A nice flock of 12 **Tundra Swans** were seen passing east over Sunset State Beach during a very windy 14 November (B&KM), while a southbound flock of 31 **Greater White-fronted Geese** seen over Capitola on 25 October paused to circle before beginning the flight over Monterey Bay (DS). A **Ross' Goose** at Schwan Lake 25 November to early December was probably the same one present last March (DH, DS). A nice flock of 26 **Canada Geese** paused at Waddell Beach on 23 November (BH).

A puzzling male wigeon at Merk Pond from at least 11-26 November was apparently a hybrid **Eurasian x American Wigeon** (CK, m.ob.), and was joined by a typical male **Eurasian Wigeon** on 21-28 November (CK, m.ob.). A rare **Redhead** was at Schwan Lake from 25 November to early December (DH, DS) Two female **Harlequin Ducks** were at Seacliff State Beach on 13 November (DS). Were they the same as seen there last March? An **Oldsquaw** was at Pajaro Rivermouth on 12 November (DG). **Hooded Mergansers** on the north county coast, where rare, included one at Younger Lagoon and Antonelli Pond 24 October to at least 13 November (EL, BT, BD), and two at Swanton Road Pond on 12-20 November (RMe, LH). The only **Ferruginous Hawk** reported through November was at Wilder Ranch on 25 October (DG). Ferruginous Hawk has proven to be more frequent in fall and winter than Rough-Legged Hawk. The period

September to November had reports of up to 22 **Merlins** and nine **Peregrine Falcons** (m.ob.). Among the peregrines were a pair returning to winter near the San Lorenzo Rivermouth for at least the fourth winter (RA fide EFe). Rarer still in our county was a **Prairie Falcon** at Soda Lake on 13 October (CS). They may be regular during the fall and winter in the extreme southeast part of the county.

Vying for consideration as "best-ever backyard bird" was a **Sandhill Crane** seen and heard flying over the Monahan Residence northeast of Scotts Valley on 11 November (BM), providing only our third certain county record. A **Pacific Golden Plover** was at Wilder Beach on 18 October (DG). A **Red Knot** was at Laguna Creek Marsh on 20 October (RMo). A late **Pectoral Sandpiper** lingered at Younger Lagoon through at least 7 November (BT). An adult **Laughing Gull** at Seacliff State Beach on 24-25 October (DS) was presumably the same as one there in September. An adult **Sabine's Gull** on the ocean near the San Lorenzo River on 1 December was very late for California, and our county's latest by five weeks (DS). Two reports of **Marbled Murrelets** flying over new inland localities were significant: multiple birds were heard in the Big Creek watershed 19-24 July (BO, BMcC); and one was calling near Smith Grade Road on 28 November (BD, CN). A **Burrowing Owl** near Soda Lake on 13 October will possibly winter locally (CS). Six **Vaux's Swifts** flying over Capitola on 13 November were very late migrants (DS).

Among interesting reports of **Nuttall's Woodpecker** were a rare sighting from the north coast at Rancho del Oso on 2 November (RMe), and one at an unusually high elevation of 2950 feet near Loma Prieta on 19 November (DS). A pair of **Pileated Woodpeckers** were near the observation deck at the top of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on 18 October (SM), with at least one still nearby on 19 November (SS). These were likely dispersants from our local breeding population, but they may be further harbingers of the species' expansion in the San Lorenzo Valley. Another Pileated was along a tributary to Corralitos Creek on 25 November, for the first record from the Pajaro River watershed (DS). Two other Pileateds were just across the county line in the upper Los Gatos Creek watershed on 26 November (DS). The season's fourth **Tropical Kingbird** was near the Santa Cruz Municipal Harbor on 21 October (DS). Migrant **House Wrens** were more numerous than usual along the coast this fall from August through October (DG, DS). They were censused using playback of taped calls at Sunset State Beach, a known wintering site, with an impressive peak count of 39 on 29 October (DS). Only three **Solitary Vireos** were reported: one of the eastern "blue-headed" subspecies at Pot Belly Gulch on 10 October (DS), one of the western "Cassin's" subspecies at Wilder Ranch on 18 October (DG), and one very late "Cassin's" at Merk Pond on 26 November (DS).

Tennessee Warblers at Pot Belly Gulch 10 October and San Lorenzo River near Highway 1 on 20 October (both DS) brought our seasonal total up to three. Nine **Nashville Warblers** from 29 September to 22 November was a very good fall showing (DG, RMe, AG, DS). An immature **Northern Parula** was at Soquel Creek in Capitola on 20 October (DS). Belatedly reported was a singing male Northern Parula at Wilder Creek on 11 June (DG). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** at Rancho del Oso on 2 October (JS) and Liddell Creek on 9 October (RMe) brought our seasonal total to an above average four. The season's second and third **Magnolia Warblers** were both later than any previous fall records for the county: 27 October at Moore Creek (DS) and 28 October at Liddell Creek (RMe). An adult male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** materialized in a mixed species flock at Zayante Creek on the notably late date of 20 November, remaining at least to 1 December for an exciting highlight of the season and our fourth certain county record (DS, RMe, LH, DK).

Eight **Black-throated Gray Warblers** from 7 September to 2 December represented a good showing (DS, RMe, AG, SG), including a male at Carbonera Creek on the latter date which may have returned to spend his third winter in a row. Only three **Hermit Warblers** were reported, with two at Rancho del Oso on 7 October (RMe) and 1 at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on 23 November (DS). Our fourth county record of **Prairie Warbler** was an immature at Arana Gulch on 16 October (DS). This fall brought a significant influx of **Palm Warblers**. The total reported from September through the end of November included about 44 individuals (m.ob.), just beating the previous record of 40 set in the fall of 1987. All were near the coast except for one four miles inland along Glen Canyon Road (BS). Several were in Brussels sprout fields, where others were probably overlooked. Three **Blackpoll Warblers** found 7-28 October (RMe, DS) brought our seasonal total to a respectable five.

A record showing of seven **Black-and-White Warblers** was found from 8 October to 26 November, with five appearing from 8-13 October (DG, DS). One lingering at New Brighton State Beach from 9 October to at least 2 December is probably intent on wintering (DS). Our previous high fall count was only three. **American Redstarts** were similarly plentiful, with nine found for the season from 22 September to 26 November (DS, SG, RMe, DG). Noteworthy among these was the 14 October return of the male which wintered along Carbonera Creek last year (RMe), and so far this season was reported through 2 December, and a female lingering at Nobel Gulch in Capitola 8 November to at least 2 December (DS). Two **Northern Waterthrushes** 13-21 October (DS) brought our seasonal total to four. Among three **MacGillivray's Warblers** found 18 September to 7 November (RMe, DS), the one on the latter date was late and our only November record (DS). Finally, a **Yellow-breasted Chat** at the Pajaro River on 13 October was only our third fall record for the county, and was quite late for the species in California.

A **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Live Oak on 6 November was about a month late (JB). The Monahan's bird feeder near Jarvis Road hosted a female **Blue Grosbeak** from 15-18 November (B & KM, DS), for our eighth county record, and a very late record for California. The season's second **Clay-colored Sparrow** was in a Santa Cruz backyard at Rankin Street on 2 November (SG). Even rarer in our county was the **Vesper Sparrow** near Swift Street on 6 October (SG). Our local breeding **Sage Sparrows** (subspecies *belli*) in the Santa Cruz Mountains are supposedly year-round residents, but with little supportive evidence from actual winter sightings. Thus, one along Summit Road near Loma Prieta on 19 November was of interest (DS). A **Swamp Sparrow** returned to a regular wintering locale at Wilder Creek on 25 October (DG), with two there on 10 November (DG) and two more at Natural Bridges 19-21 November (SG). **Red Crossbills** continued their presence in our mountains through November (RMe, DS, BD, KK), but they have been rather locally distributed, favoring ponderosa pines and areas with plentiful Douglas firs. They've been found consistently in the pines at Mount Hermon, and a flock of fifteen there on 25 October included two in streaked juvenile plumage (RMe).

Cited Observers: Ron Avila, Jerry Busch, Brock Dolman, Eric Feuss (EFe), Ed Frost (EFr), Alexander Gaguine, Doug George, Steve Gerow, Leslie Hawkins, Donna Heim, Bambie Hopkins, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Dee Kempf, Earl Lebow, Bud McCrary, Robert Merrill (RMe), Barbara & Kevin Monahan, Randy Morgan (RMo), Shirley Murphy, Carol Nieu Kirk, Brian O'Donnell, Barbara Scharfenstein, Steve Singer, Chuck Striplen, David Suddjian (DSu), Breck Tyler; "m.ob." means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1993 to early February 1994

This winter was unparalleled in the county's recorded bird history in its diversity and numbers of rarities, especially "half-hardy" landbirds, although winter 1990-91 perhaps had more first magnitude rarities. No doubt the favorably warm and mostly dry weather encouraged some birds to linger and overwinter.

A **Red-necked Grebe** inland a Loch Lomond on 18 December was only our second record away from the ocean (GM *et al.*). The rarest bird of the season was the **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** seen two miles off Table Rock on 18 December, and it will certainly rank as one of the highlights of the entire North American Christmas Count season (DSh, SA). Both this and our first county record from fall 1992 await acceptance by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). A **Tropicbird** was reported from a boat 10-12 miles southwest of Santa Cruz on 30 January (MC *et al.*). None of the few tropicbirds reported for the county have been identified to species. **American White Pelicans** were again present in the Pajaro Valley, with up to 37 birds on 1 January, but few after that (m.ob.). As usual Pinto and Kelly lakes were their favored spots. Seven flying over Capitola on 15 December were rare away from South County (DSu).

After several poor winter showings, ten **American Bitterns** in December and January were heartening (m.ob.), although it was missed on the Santa Cruz County CBC for the fourth year in a row. Up to six **White-faced Ibis** at Harkins Slough 12-27 December (DG) and two at College Lake on 1 January (DSu) were the first winter records for in the county. A **Tundra Swan** lingered at Harkins Slough 12 December - 2 January (DG, m.ob.). The **Ross' Goose** at Schwan Lake since March 1993 was found dead on 18 December (CK). Another wintering at Pinto Lake has returned for several winters (DG, m.ob.), while one at a pond south of Laguna Creek 18 January - 9 February was the first record for the north coast (DSu). Other geese reported were eleven **Greater White-Fronteds**, one **Snow**, 28 **Canadas** and a flock of 12 **Brant** (m.ob.). The **Eurasian Wigeon** at Merk Pond in November remained through 15 January, being joined by a second male on 26 December - 15 January (CK, DSu, m.ob.). The apparent hybrid wigeon there remained through 26 December (DSu, CK). Another Eurasian Wigeon was at College Lake on 29 January (DSu).

Redhead have been found in most winters since 1988, although only in tiny numbers. This winter was the best in recent years, with up to seven birds at four sites (DSu, CK, BMor, EF, RMo, DG). Our first **Barrow's Goldeneye** since 1984 was a female in the Pajaro Dunes area 30 December - 10 January (DG, J&RW, DSu). A pair of Hooded Mergansers 3/4 miles up Waddell Creek on 6 January was rare on the north coast, and unusually far inland there, as well (DG). An adult **Bald Eagle** soaring beneath a rainbow at College Lake on 15 January was breathtaking (DSu). An adult **Broad-winged Hawk** was a great yard-bird for Barbara Scharfenstein along Glen Canyon Road on 20-22 January (BS, DSu). This was our first in winter since 1986. Three to four **Ferruginous Hawks** were reported December to February (RMo, DSu, VSD).

Ever wonder how many rails are skulking in our wetlands during the winter? I found myself wondering about this, so I used taped rail calls to survey all accessible suitable habitat in the

county. Sixty-four sites were checked between 13-20 January, yielding a grand total of 287 **Virginia Rails** and 126 **Soras**. They were found at 49 and 38 sites, respectively. Kelly Lake had many more rails than any other single site with a total of 60 birds. The South County sloughs collectively had 56 birds, but many areas were yet to be flooded by the winter's meager rains. An atypically social gathering of 12 **Common Moorhens** at Drew Lake on 1 January was a record congregation (RMO). First-winter Glaucous Gulls were "dump ducks" at the landfills at Dimeo Lane 16-18 December (DSu) and Buena Vista Road on 9 January (DSu *et al.*). Up to three **Black-necked Stilts** were along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz from 13 December through January, and were noteworthy away from the Pajaro Valley (PR, m.ob.).

A **Long-eared Owl** tucked away in the willows of Casserley Creek at College Lake 7 December to 1 January was our first wintering bird actually seen on more than one day (DSu). Another College Lake rarity was an out-of-season **Vaux's Swift** 7 December - 1 January (DSu). **Allen's Hummingbirds** came in extremely early, with males near Scotts Valley on 30 December (BMon), at U.C.S.C. Arboretum on 7 January (DSu), and Natural Bridges on 13 January (SG). Vanguard of the "normal" influx were seen as of 18 January (DG). **Pileated Woodpeckers** at Henry Cowell Redwoods continued to make news, as I learned that a pair successfully nested along Pipeline Road last summer (PH), and one or two birds were present there in December (PH, DSu).

Our second county record of **Dusky Flycatcher** was cautiously identified at Sycamore Grove 26 January - 7 February (DG, DSu, RMe). This species is very rare in the state in winter. An impressive three **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** were found 27 December - 3 February, with two along Corralitos Creek (DSi, m.ob.) and one at Soquel Creek (DSu). Two **Eastern Phoebes** graced the county: one at Harkins Slough 27 December - 5 February (DG, WM, EF) and one at Scott Creek 18 January - 9 February (DSu). A **Tropical Kingbird** was at the County Fairgrounds and adjacent College Lake 8-15 January (fide Nor. Cal. RBA, DSu). Yet another College Lake rarity was a wintering **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** 1-15 January, seen also at Kelly Lake on 14 January (DSu). Our fourth **Sage Thrasher**, and the first for winter, was at Monterey Bay Academy 12 December - 1 February (DG, m.ob.). A **Warbling Vireo** at the confluence of Soquel and Bates creeks 20 January - 9 February was only our fourth for winter, and one of few known to actually over-winter in California (DSu).

The warblers this winter were amazing for their variety (16 species) and record high counts of some species. **Tennessee Warblers** were at Ocean View Park in Santa Cruz 19-31 December, and at Soquel Creek in Soquel 20 January - 9 February (both DSu). Seven **Nashville Warblers** were very many and perhaps a record for December to February (m.ob.). Our second-ever **Lucy's Warbler** was a highlight of the season, wintering along the east side of Pinto Lake 1 January - 5 February (GP, BRa, m.ob.). Our only previous record was of a wintering bird at Branciforte Dip in 1980-81. **Yellow Warblers** were at College Lake 15-29 January and Santa Cruz 28 January (both DSu). An astounding 14 **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were found, clearly a record for winter, with many shown to overwinter (m.ob.). Interesting among these was a female at Rodeo Gulch present for at least her third winter (CK). The three **Hermit Warblers** found probably represent a quite rare but regular wintering population (RT, RMe). Another highlight of the season was a wintering **Prairie Warbler** at Corralitos Creek 1 January - 3 February, our fifth county record (DSi, m.ob.).

Following our record autumn fallout of **Palm Warblers**, were reports of 19 from December to mid-February, undoubtedly a new winter season high (m.ob.). An impressive six **Black-and-white Warblers** were reported (m.ob.). One at Liddell Creek 3 December - 18 January was the first ever to winter on the north coast (RMe, m.ob.). The male **American Redstart** at the

confluence of Branciforte and Carbonera Creeks spent his second winter, and stayed at least through 10 February (m.ob.), and the female found in November at Nobel Gulch in Capitola stayed at least to 28 January (DSu). A **Wilson's Warbler** was at Branciforte Creek 18 December - 10 February (DSu). A male **Summer Tanager** at New Brighton State Beach 5-8 February (RB, DSu) provided our third winter record. Surprisingly only one **Western Tanager** reported - at Ocean View Park 18 December - 9 January (BB, m.ob.).

Grosbeaks are always very rare in winter, and the pattern is clear in the state that wintering **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** are generally more frequent than **Black-headed Grosbeaks**. This winter we had three of the former and two of the latter! The Rose-breasted's were an adult male in Rio Del Mar 15 December - 1 February (DSu), a female at Carbonera Creek 16-18 December (DSu), and an immature male at Amesti Road 26-27 December (WM). The Black-headed's were an adult male amazingly present from summer through at least 4 January in Soquel (VC, DSu), and a female in Aptos 13-15 December (DK). A very rare winter **Clay-colored Sparrow** was near the Lipton facility in western Santa Cruz 18-30 December (SG, BG, DSu). Still another College Lake rarity was a **Vesper Sparrow** 1-21 January (DSu). **Swamp Sparrows** are regular in winter, and we know we miss some due to their secretive habits, but this winter's turnout was incredible. Sixty-one were found at 15 sites, including a stunning high count of 27 at College Lake on 15 January and 22 at the various South County sloughs 30 December - 13 January (DSu, DG, SG, CK, BRa, m.ob.). While it was clearly a good year for "Swampers", many were found during intensive surveys of rails in wetlands throughout the county, so the extra attention probably paid off.

A male **Common Grackle** of the "Bronzed" subspecies found in Capitola on 24 January was our first county record (DSu), taking a backseat only to the Wedge-tailed Shearwater in rarity this season. The bird subsequently eluded much searching, but was reported again on 26 January (BRy *vide* DR). As of the latest CBRC report 22 records had been accepted for the state. A flashy adult male "Bullock's" **Northern Oriole** was at Ocean View Park 18-26 December (SR *et al.*), and an immature was at Pinto Lake 1-9 January (BRa *et al.*). **Red Crossbills** were consistently found through February at Mount Hermon, Henry Cowell Redwoods and Smith Grade Road (m.ob.). A male gathering nest material (lichen) and carrying it into a ponderosa pine at Mount Hermon on 7 January indicated further nesting in the county (RMe).

Finally, a wrap up on the status of winter irruptives. On the pelagic scene, all the "cold water" species were scarce or absent (Northern Fulmar, Red Phalarope, Black-legged Kittiwake, Ancient Murrelet), while the warm El Nino waters produced many Black-vented Shearwaters and probably precipitated the Wedge-tailed Shearwater. Back on *terra firme*, winter irruptives were very scarce, except for good numbers of American Goldfinches, moderate numbers of Red Crossbills and a mediocre showing by Cedar Waxwing and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Notably scarce were Varied Thrush, American Robin, Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak.

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Bruce Barrett, Ronnie Breathe, Virginia Campbell, Matthew Cole, Eric Feuss, Doug George, Bruce Gerow, Steve Gerow, Paul Heady, Clay Kempf, Dee Kempf, Wayne Macon, Robert Merrill (RMe), Greg Meyer, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Randy Morgan (RMo), Bryan Mori (BMor), Northern California Rare Bird Alert, Gary Page, Peter Radcliff, Bob Ramer (BRa), Don Roberson, Stephanie Rousseau, Bill Rydell (BRy), Barbara Scharfenstein, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Dan Singer (DSi), Valerie St. Denis, David Suddjian (DSu), Bob Tintle, and John and Ricky Warriner; "m.ob." means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from mid-February to early April 1994

The 1994 winter Pajaro Valley Waterbird Survey was a great success, providing the first series of comprehensive winter censuses of our county's best waterbird habitats. Thanks to everyone who helped with the counts! I'm still in the process of analyzing the results, but I present a brief overview here. Birds were counted at 42 sites, ranging from large important wetlands like College Lake and the sloughs to tiny ponds without official names. Concurrent counts of many sites occurred on seven days from 1 January to 20 March, with additional surveys conducted at College Lake on four other days. Seventy-nine species of waterbirds were recorded. Total counts on various days ranged from 6722 to 10074 birds. The site with the most birds and greatest variety of species was far and away College Lake. High counts from the whole study area of selected ducks were: **Wood Duck** - 51 on 15 January; **Green-winged Teal** - 1064 on 13 February; **Mallard** - 483 on 1 January; **Northern Pintail** - 192 on 13 February; **Cinnamon Teal** - 883 on 13 February; **Northern Shoveler** - 263 on 13 February; **Gadwall** - 412 on 15 January; **American Wigeon** - 487 on 15 January; **Canvasback** - 716 on 13 February; **Ring-necked Duck** - 398 on 13 February; **Lesser Scaup** - 251 on 27 February; **Bufflehead** - 164 on 15 January; **Hooded Merganser** - 47 on 13 February; and **Ruddy Duck** - 2469 on 12 March.

Following are the last dates reported to me for various wintering rarities reported in this column in the last issue of the *Albatross*: **Ross' Goose** - Pinto Lake, 20 March and near Laguna Creek; 26 February (DS); **Eastern Phoebe** - Scott Creek, 20 March (DS); **Dusky Flycatcher** - Sycamore Grove, 21 February (DS); **Warbling Vireo** - Soquel Creek, 21 February (DS); **Lucy's Warbler** - Pinto Lake, 12 March (DS); **Prairie Warbler** - Corralitos Creek, singing, 16 March (RMe); **American Redstart** - Carbonera Creek, singing, 2 April and Noble Gulch, 21 February (DS); **Summer Tanager** - New Brighton State Beach, 24 February (DS).

A few of us enjoy watching the breeding **Brandt's Cormorants** at the old Davenport Pier, our only consistent breeding site for the species. The numbers of nesting pairs is limited by available space, as only about 130 nests fit on the remaining parts of the pier. That was, unfortunately, until one third of the remaining pier fell into the sea during a storm in late February. With reduced nesting area, only 59 pairs of cormorants had nests in progress by the end of March (RMe). February counts of **American White Pelicans** from Pajaro Valley lakes included 19 on 13 February and 3 on 27 February (B&BR, RMo,DS). **American Bitterns** continued in good numbers in the Pajaro Valley, where the Pajaro Valley Waterbird Survey found up to 11 birds at various sites from 13 February to 26 March (m.ob.). At least two **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were carrying sticks into the willows at Hanson Slough on 20 March indicating they may nest there again this year (DS).

Six **Tundra Swans** were at College Lake 27 February (DS). High counts of **Blue-winged Teal** were eight at College Lake on 13 February increasing to an outstanding 16 birds by 27 February (DS). A hybrid male **Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal** was at College lake on 20 March (DS). Two male **Eurasian Wigeon** joined the flocks at College Lake 13 February to 5 March (DS). Four **Greater Scaup** at College Lake 27 February to 4 March were inland where rare, but also were the only ones reported in the county all winter (DS). Four **Surf Scoters** at College Lake following a windy storm were quite rare inland, but not the first for that great duck magnet (DS).

A first-winter **Glaucous Gull** was at Waddell Beach on 15 February (DS). A **Caspian Tern** working the surf at Sunset State Beach on 14 February was about a month early (DS).

This winter's only **Short-eared Owl** was spotted at Harkins Slough on 27 February (EF). Always rare in our county, this species has become especially scarce in recent years. A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** showing characters of the northern subspecies *rubra* was studied at Scott Creek on 26 February, providing our third county record of that form, and the first since 1960 (DS). A **Pileated Woodpecker** at China Grade on -- April was the first for that spot (RMe). Our season's third **Eastern Phoebe** was spotted at East Struve Slough on 12 March (DS) for one of our best winter showings. Two **Violet-green Swallows** along Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta were early migrants and especially intriguing so early at this high elevation site (RMo). A **Barn Swallow** at College Lake on 13 February was quite early (DS). An **American Crow** at Love Creek Road in Ben Lomond on 22 March was out of place in the mountains and the first for the site (RMe). Crows tend to turn up in odd spots in March, apparently a time of seasonal movement for the species in our region.

House Wren and **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** present an interesting situation in the county during winter. Both species appear to be more numerous than might generally be assumed for our region in winter, and both exhibit a curious distribution, with most wrens found in scrub habitat along the south county coast, and nearly all gnatcatchers found in scrub along the north county coast. This February I performed surveys using taped calls of these species at 90 sites all along our coast. An impressive total of 66 wrens and 32 gnatcatchers were detected. Over 83% of the wrens were south and east of Capitola and all the gnatcatchers were north and west of Capitola. Both species were much easier to find using taped calls than otherwise, and we clearly overlook many (over 80% of the birds) on our Christmas bird counts.

Two more wintering **Nashville Warblers** were found in February, bringing our record-breaking season's total up to nine (DS). Similarly, four more **Palm Warblers** in February brought our winter total up to 24 birds (DS, HW)! The extensive birding conducted in our county this winter produced sightings of at least 117 **Orange-crowned Warblers**, including at least 63 which looked to be of the "gray-headed" subspecies (m.ob.). A **Sage Sparrow** near Liddell Creek on 23 February was away from Santa Cruz Mountain breeding areas and appeared to be of one of the interior subspecies - the first such report for the county (DS). A very rare wintering **Grasshopper Sparrow** was in grasslands north of Scott Creek on 25 February (DS). The only previous winter report of eight birds on the 1959 Christmas Bird Count is considered of doubtful validity. Among the many **Swamp Sparrows** wintering at College Lake at least three were still present through 25 March (DS).

The best rarity of the season was clearly a **Great-tailed Grackle** found by Bambie Hopkins in Live Oak at Capitola Road and 17th Avenue for our first county record. This bird was amazingly first found on 17 December (the day before our CBC), but unfortunately news of its presence didn't get around. Bambie re-found it in the same place on 8 April and the bird was seen by "m.ob.". Two more **Red Crossbill** nests were found, bringing our total for this incursion up to four breeding records! A nest with young was in a Monterey pine near Swanton Road on 15 February, with another in a Douglas fir along Majors Creek on 8 March (DS). Randy Morgan either attracts **Lawrence's Goldfinches** or he is just tuned into their wavelength. From 12 February to 29 March he heard this species at four spots including Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta, O'Neill Ranch in Soquel, Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville and Quail Hollow. These records suggest good numbers will be around this breeding season.

Cited Observers: Eric Feuss, Bambi Hopkins, Robert Merrill (RMe), Randy Morgan (RMo), Bob and Bernadette Ramer David Suddjian, Hira Walker. "m.ob." means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from early April to June 1994

The northward flow of migrant loons, Brant, scoters and other seabirds along our coast during spring is one of the great avian spectacles of our region. Repeated visits to strategic coastal spots will undoubtedly pay off with large numbers of migrants. The peak of the migration is between early April and early May, and the first few hours after sunrise are often the most productive. The best spots to watch from in Santa Cruz County are the Davenport bluffs and El Jarro Point (north of Davenport Landing). One of the most impressive sights is flock after flock of **Pacific Loons** passing during their seasonal peak in late April. A peak passage on 25 April was observed from Davenport and El Jarro Point, with 14,567 Pacific Loons seen during six hours (RMe, DSu). **Brant** were also abundant that day, with 6,183 observed (RMe, DSu).

Brandt's Cormorants nested at two unusual spots. Five pairs nested successfully on a small sea stack at Natural Bridges (SG, RMe, PR, DSu). Ten pairs attempted to nest at the Seaciff cement ship in May (RMe), but none were present by 6 June (DSu). Each breeding season I see an adult **Green-backed Heron** flying around the busy intersection of Mission Street and Chestnut Street in Santa Cruz, and this year was no exception. Could this riparian species be nesting in eucalyptus trees or other trees around the intersection?! Four **Buffleheads** at the Pajaro Rivermouth on 24 May were late (RMe). A Flock of 14-20 **Common Mergansers** was at Loch Lomond on 20 June (KK).

Downy feathers in the hollow of an old, burned redwood stump provided evidence of a **Turkey Vulture** nest at the Byrne Forest near Corralitos on 22 June (DSu). Two nests were also found in fire-hollowed redwoods - one standing and one fallen - in the Butano Creek watershed, San Mateo County, in May (BMo, BD, DSu). I believe such situations must host most of the nesting Turkey Vultures in the Santa Cruz Mountains, whose breeding haunts remain among the least known of our local nesting species.

A **White-tailed Kite** over forested terrain northeast of Scotts Valley on 16 April was out of place (KM). It is a rare and exciting to witness the local recovery of an endangered species, and we have the opportunity with the **Peregrine Falcon**. I recently learned that a pair has been nesting successfully for four years in the Waddell Creek watershed, raising three chicks this season (*fide* SCPBRG). An additional three falcons were seen along our north county coast north of Scott Creek from March to June, and courtship was observed among two (DSu, BD, CN, BMo, SCPBRG), so we may see establishment of another breeding pair next year. There is also the rumor of a potential nesting in recent years inland from Davenport! Historically, this species nested all along the central California coast.

An unusually large flock of 27 **Caspian Terns** were in the trans-mountain "commuter" route over Soquel on 11 April (RMo). An interesting change has occurred with this species. For a number of years migrant terns heading for San Francisco Bay breeding colonies could be seen crossing the mountains in early spring, and during May to July "commuters" could be seen daily flying to Monterey Bay to feed. Eventually, in July and August recently-fledged chicks would follow adult terns "over the hill" to feed in Monterey Bay. In the last few years, however, Caspian Terns using this short-cut route to the San Francisco Bay nesting colonies have been few, and birds

commuting to feed in Monterey Bay have been almost absent (DSu, RMo). This has been coincident with the rapid expansion of a nesting colony at Elkhorn Slough (*fide* AB). Perhaps the slough population increase is from former S. F. Bay breeders, and perhaps the terns which used to fly the long route to feed in Monterey Bay now enjoy a very short commute!

Pigeon Guillemots nested beneath the pier at Seacliff Beach, extending their known breeding range into the bay (DSu). Has anyone else ever observed nesting guillemots there? A **Marbled Murrelet** nest was discovered in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on 5 May (*fide* SS). Unfortunately, the nest was predated or abandoned before the egg hatched. Aside from the rarity of any murrelet nest discovery, this nest was significant because it documented nesting in the same redwood tree four years in a row. A female **Costa's Hummingbird** at UCSC Arboretum on 30 April was one of few ever found in the county (SG). **Pileated Woodpeckers** continued to expand their range. A pair was along Soquel Creek upstream of the Olive Springs Quarry on 13 April for the first breeding season record for that watershed (DSu), while another was about four miles further upstream along Soquel Creek on 14 May (RR). Three reports involving probably two birds came from the Laguna Creek and Major's Creek watersheds near Smith Grade 29 April to 10 June (CN, *fide* BD, JM). One heard near Pipeline Road in Henry Cowell on 21 May indicated continued occupation of that new breeding site (DSu *et al.*).

American Dippers are plentiful in the cascades and falls of Big Creek, where four breeding pairs were found on 7 May (BMc). A singing male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at Capitola on 1 June was the only vagrant reported (DSu). Two singing **Black-chinned Sparrows** were on the Santa Cruz County side of the line on Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta during late May and June (RMo, RMe) with a female carrying nest material on 26 May (RMe). These sparrows occur annually on the Santa Clara side of the ridge, but apparently only irregularly on the Santa Cruz side. Subtle differences in habitat features or other environmental conditions must cause this pattern, as similar chaparral occurs extensively on both sides of the county boundary. What is it that makes the Santa Clara side more suitable? The **Great-tailed Grackle** remained in Live Oak through at least 14 April (DSu).

A pair of **Northern Orioles** nested in eucalyptus at Davenport this season (DSu). To my knowledge this species is normally absent along the coast north of Wilder Creek. Does anyone have other north coast nesting records? A mountaineering male **Hooded Oriole** was at the Monahan's productive feeders northeast of Scotts Valley on 24 April (BMon). Was this the same as the immature male seen there in June 1993? **Red Crossbills** continued their presence in our mountains through June but were absent or very rare by July (BD, RMe, DSu). The 1993-94 incursion lasted just over 12 months, several months longer than usual. A singing male **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, rare along the coast, was at Wilder Ranch on 28 April (EL).

From the One-That-Got-Away Dept. comes word of a **Yellow-billed Loon** at the Santa Cruz Wharf in mid-March. The bird was seen by a very skilled Finnish birder who was familiar with the species. However, he was unaware of the significance of such a find in central California, and he didn't make a detailed study of the bird.

Cited Observers: Alan Baldrige, Brock Dolman, Steve Gerow, Ken Kellman, Earl Lebow, Bud McCrary (BMc), Jane McElvey, Robert Merrill (RMe), Barbara Monahan (BMon), Kevin Monahan, Randy Morgan (RMo), Bryan Mori (BMo), Carol Nieukirk, Peter Radcliff, Regan Ray, Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group (SCPBRG), Steve Singer, David Suddjian.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from July to September 1994

It looks like another exciting fall season for birding in Santa Cruz County, accented so far by numerous rarities in September and many reports of pelagic birds from Shearwater Journeys. Debi Shearwater sailed into Santa Cruz County waters on most of her boat trips this fall because that's where the birds were (naturally), and she was helpful in reporting many interesting records. Also, I enjoyed a rare opportunity to report here on one of most uncommented upon landbirds - the Bushtit

A **Laysan Albatross** eight miles south of Santa Cruz on August 20 was especially rare in summer, as was a **Northern Fulmar** the same day and on September 11 and a **Short-tailed Shearwater** on September 10 (DSh). An emaciated **Sooty Shearwater** was found hunkered down amid agapanthas in front of "The Bird Feeder" store in Santa Cruz on July 13 (SH). Sherri speculated the bird, which was taken in for care by Native Animal Rescue, may have arrived on night of July 11-12 when dense fog blanketed the area. Our only prior record of this species onshore but away from the immediate coast was the (in)famous "Day the Shearwaters Landed", August 18, 1961, when hundreds of shearwaters came ashore on a foggy night. The best pelagic bird was Santa Cruz County's first **Manx Shearwater** seen on August 29 five nautical miles off Sandhill Bluff (DSh, SB). The first definitive records of this species in California were obtained only last fall when several were seen in Monterey County waters and one was near the Farallon Islands. A **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** was with a mixed petrel flock on August 7 and September 10 (DSh). Sightings of rare **Least Storm-Petrels** included two on both those dates (DSh). These were especially interesting because Least's are most commonly found during warm water years, which this was not.

An **American Bittern** flew over Laguna Creek Marsh on July 25, early for the north coast (RMe). A flock of 12 large-form **Canada Geese** flying west-northwest over Capitola on September 8 were also early (DSu). I wonder if any Canada Geese from the thriving introduced population in the San Francisco Bay Area ever journey our way? A dark **Merlin** at Scott Creek on September 26 showed characters of the rarely noted subspecies *suckleyi* (DSu). A disoriented **Virginia Rail** was a surprise in Clay Kempf's Watsonville backyard on September 18. **Solitary Sandpipers** were at Scott Creek Marsh on August 30 (DSu) and Harkins Slough September 26-28 (RMe, EL). A **Red Knot** was at Table Rock on September 26 (DSu). A juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Baldwin Creek mouth on August 20 was only our sixth county record (KK). Clearly we need more sewage ponds in this county!

Single **South Polar Skuas** were seen from boats on August 29 and September 10 (DSh). But an amazing assemblage of Stercorariids was witnessed on the September 11 boat trip when the tally included 10 South Polar Skuas, 11 **Long-tailed Jaegers**, 19 **Pomarine Jaegers** and nine **Parasitic Jaegers** (DSh)! Imagine how the 14 **Arctic Terns** also seen that day must have felt (DSh). Another Long-tailed Jaeger in Santa Cruz waters was an adult with its tail streamers on August 7 (DSh). The September 11 trip also recorded a high count of 138 **Sabine's Gulls** and two **Craveri's Murrelets** (DSh). What a trip that must have been! A flock of 20 **Common Terns** resting at the Pajaro Rivermouth was more than usual (EL). A graceful **Black Tern** was at Corcoran Lagoon on August 28 (PR).

A **Common Poorwill** calling at the Monahan's residence on Richardson Road northeast of Scotts Valley on September 16 was at an unexpected spot (B&KM). Of all the species which occur regularly in the county the poorwill stands out as one whose occurrence (i.e., where, when and how many) is the least understood. One of the most exciting finds of the summer season was the discovery of a **Black Swift** nest site on Laguna Creek about two to three miles inland. On July 30 a single black swift was seen flying close to a waterfall on Laguna Creek, about a mile downstream of Smith Grade (AG). On August 3 an investigation into a cave behind the fall revealed two nests which fit the description of Black Swift nests, but neither was in use (BD). Berry Creek Falls in Big Basin Redwoods State Park is the only other confirmed inland breeding site in the Santa Cruz Mountains for this species which otherwise nests in sea caves on coastal cliffs. A strong flight of **Vaux's Swifts** on September 24 included 173 passing over Capitola in two hours (DSu). A female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was carefully studied at Natural Bridges on September 3-18, our fifth accepted record for this species (SG, DSu, RMe).

Four **Willow Flycatchers** were seen along the mid-county coast from September 3-27 (SG, DSu). Our fourth and fifth county records of **Gray Flycatcher** were provided by birds at Natural Bridges on September 18-20 (SG) and Rancho del Oso on September 25 (EL). An **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, rarely seen in fall, was at New Brighton on September 25 (DSu). An **Eastern Kingbird** was at Seacliff on September 26 (LR). Brock Dolman had been searching for an environmentally-friendly way to rid his honeysuckle vines of a massive infestation of aphids when a flock of **Bushtits** did the job for him! On July 20 a flock of at least 12 Bushtits swarmed through the vines at his Bonny Doon residence for about 15 minutes, consuming over 85% of the aphids. The flock returned at the same time the next day and cleaned up nearly all the rest. Thanks Bushtits! Three **Cedar Waxwings** in a cherry tree in Soquel on August 11 were quite early (RMo). A "Cassin's" **Solitary Vireo** was in Santa Cruz on September 11 (SG).

A wave of warblers in late September produced 16 records of vagrant species. **Tennessees** were at Capitola on September 20 (DSu) and Rancho del Oso on September 26 (JS). **Chestnut-sideds** were at New Brighton on September 15 (DSu), Capitola on September 20 (DSu) and Soquel Creek in Capitola on September 26-27 (RMe, DSu). A **Magnolia** was at Noble Gulch in Capitola on September 27 (DSu). **Blackpolls** were at Soquel Creek in Capitola on September 26-27 (RMe, EL) and Noble Gulch on September 27 (DSu). A **Black-and-white** was at Pot Belly Gulch near New Brighton on September 27 (DSu). Five **American Redstarts** from Santa Cruz to New Brighton on September 15-27 made a strong showing (DSu, RMe, EL, B&SH). These included the September 22 return of the adult male to the confluence of Carbonera and Branciforte Creeks, where he spent his last two winters (RMe). **Northern Waterthrushes** were at Scott Creek on August 30 (DSu) and Soquel Creek in Capitola on September 26-28 (RMe, EL). Rounding out the vagrant warblers of early fall, a rare female **Hooded Warbler** was at New Brighton on September 25 (DSu). Some of our "western" warblers are just as uncommon. Reports so far this fall included: one **Nashville** at Rancho del Oso on 26 September (DSu); up to 12 **Black-throated Grays** (good number!) along the mid-county coast September 10-27 (SG, RMe, DSu); **Hermits** at La Selva September 13-14 (JG) and Rancho del Oso September 20 (RMe); and three **MacGillivray's** from Santa Cruz to Capitola August 16-31 (SG, DSu).

An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was seen at Wilder Ranch on September 24 (SA). A female or immature **Blue Grosbeak** was a very good find at Harkins Slough on September 21-25 (RMe, CK, DSu), for our ninth county record, and at least three **Indigo Buntings** were at the same place on those dates (RMe, CK). A **Lazuli Bunting**, rarely seen in fall, was at Schwan Lake on September 22 (CK). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at Wilder Ranch on September 24 (SA). Less exotic than these rarities, but I think more interesting, was the adult **White-crowned**

Sparrow which summered at Quail Hollow County Park, being seen on June 26 and July 24 (KK). This was our first inland summer record, and was likely one of the wintering subspecies rather than an out-of-place individual of the resident coastal subspecies.

A **Bobolink** fed in a pumpkin patch near Table Rock on September 26 (DSu). Female **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Swanton Road Reservoir on September 11 (RMe) and Monterey Bay Academy on September 26 (DSu). Another highlight of early fall was an **Orchard Oriole** at Rancho del Oso on September 26 (JS). Seeming out-of-place and definitely out-of-flock was a single **Red Crossbill** at Cayuga Street in Santa Cruz on September 10 (SA).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Stephen Baily, Brock Dolman, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Bob and Suzanne Hargis, Sheri Howe, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Robert Merrill (RMe), Barbara and Keven Monahan, Randy Morgan (RMO), Peter Radcliff, Lyle Rice, Debi Shearwater (DSh), John Sterling, David Suddjian (DSu).

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from October to late November 1994

A **Red-necked Grebe** was at the Santa Cruz Harbor on November 10 (DG). An **American White Pelican** at Pinto Lake from at least October 24 through November may have actually over-summered. Three were there on November 17 (DSu). A **Pelagic Cormorant** was foraging in the San Lorenzo River upstream of Broadway in Santa Cruz on November 18 for our first record away from the ocean (DSu). The only **American Bittern** reported was at Baldwin Creek Marsh on October 20 (KK). One **White-faced Ibis** was at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on August 22 (DG), and two were at Harkins Slough on September 30 (DSu). These may have been some of the same birds as seen at nearby Elkhorn Slough during this period (*fide* SB). A pair of **Snow Geese** arrived with a storm to Harkins Slough on November 10 and stayed to November 16 (DSu, RMe, LF). An adult **Ross' Goose** was found at Pinto Lake City Park October 20, remaining through November (EF). Did anyone check here during the summer and see this goose? An immature Ross' Goose on the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on November 20 was wearing a blue plastic neck collar reading "J86" (PR). This is the first banded Ross' Goose found in the county. I'll pass on the details of its history when I obtain more information. A smattering of **Canada Geese** reports October 21 to November 18 included eight over Glen Canyon on October 21 (BS).

Eurasian Wigeons (all males) appeared again in south county, perhaps involving some of the same birds as last year. One was at Merk Pond on October 24 (DSu) with two there on October 30 (EF). One was at Harkins Slough on November 10 (DSu). Two at Corralitos Lagoon on November 19 (DSu) may have been the two seen previously at nearby Merk Pond. A male judged to be a hybrid **Eurasian x American Wigeon** was also at Merk Pond on October 24 (DSu). A **Hooded Merganser** at Wilder Creek on November 10 was on the north coast where this species is rare (DG). An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** soared over Highway 1 at 41st Avenue, Capitola, on October 5 for one of our few records of fall migrants (CK). A **Ferruginous Hawk** was soaring with six Red-tails over Meder Canyon in Santa Cruz on November 1 (SG). A **Rough-legged Hawk** resided near Scott Creek Beach October 15 - November 5 (BS, BH *et al.*). Fourteen reports of **Merlins** were received from September 26 to November 20 (m.ob.). At least one of the pair of **Peregrine Falcons** which wintered in the Santa Cruz area for the last few years has been seen back at its roost along the San Lorenzo River (PR).

Snowy Plovers weighed in with a high count of 114 at Sunset State Beach on October 8 (DSu). A **Black-necked Stilt** at Corcoran Lagoon on November 4-6 was out of place (MB). At least five stilts along the San Lorenzo River October 13 - November 20 were at a more expected locality, but represented good numbers for fall (MT-L, PR, DSu). Stilts remain rare in the county away from the Pajaro Valley. Two **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Harkins Slough on September 21 was the only report (RMe) for a very poor showing. An adult **Baird's Sandpiper** at Natural Bridges State Beach on July 9 was early and one of few county records of adults during the fall migration (SG). On the other end of the spectrum was a very late juvenile Baird's at Harkins Slough on November 10, for one of few November records for Northern California (DSu). In between these extremes was only a single Baird's at Moran Lake on August 21 (AB), for a meager season's total of three.

At least 12 **Pectoral Sandpipers** were found from September 20 - November 1 (RMe, DSu, DG). The rarest shorebird of the season was a juvenile **Ruff** at Harkins Slough on September 30 (DSu).

Adding to reports in the last issue, one **Long-tailed Jaeger** was seen from a boat off Santa Cruz on September 17 (DR). **Common Terns** were plentiful at Black Point with 23 on October 3 and 40 on October 4 (PR). Three **Burrowing Owls** were found in the Harkins Slough area between November 10-17 (DSu). These are heartening reports from an area of former regular occurrence. A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was along Branciforte Creek in Santa Cruz on November 11-14 (DSu). A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was well seen at Yellowbank Creek on October 4 for only our 4th county record and the 1st for fall (DSu). Two reports of unidentified *Empidonax* flycatchers at Natural Bridges State Beach were intriguing. One seen on November 10 was thought to be a possible Least Flycatcher (SG), while one in the same area on November 19 was thought to be a possible Dusky Flycatcher (DSu, PR *et al.*). Both sightings may be of the same bird. If we're lucky this bird will linger until the Christmas Count, whereby it will be Earl Lebow's responsibility to find it and write the description!

An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** at Yellowbank Creek on October 21 was a little late and brought our season's total to two (DSu). **Tropical Kingbirds** were identified at Sunset State Beach on October 8, Arana Gulch on October 17 (both DSu), Wilder Ranch on November 1 (DG) and Airport Boulevard on November 14-15 (BMon, DSu). Three other kingbirds near the coast from October 3-15 were probably this species (BMor, NH, SG). **Horned Larks** have been very rarely noted away from their regular haunts near Soda Lake during recent falls. They seemed more numerous this fall, with reports of 42 at five sites from Table Rock to Watsonville October 24 - November 14 (RMe, EL, RMo, DB, BT, DSu). Continued increases in **Common Raven** numbers in south county was evidenced by record numbers at the Buena Vista County Landfill and Watsonville City Landfill, with a high count of 27 at Buena Vista on November 17 (DSu).

A **Townsend's Solitaire** seen near Davenport on October 15 was a rare find for fall (RS *fide* RMo). A **Red-throated Pipit** provided a good study among American Pipits at Table Rock on October 23 for our 1st county record (DSu). Many people looked for it afterward and I've heard second-hand reports that it was re-found, but, if so, I don't know when or by who. Four **Solitary Vireos** along the coast from October 11 - November 12 brought our season's total up to five (SG, DSu). Four were the expected "**Cassin's**" form, but one at Monterey Bay Academy on October 24 was one of the rare "**Blue-headed**" forms (DSu). A **Tennessee Warbler** at Natural Bridges on September 27 brought our season's total up to three (SG). Eight **Nashville Warblers** found from September 26 - November 3 was a good number, with all but one along the coast (SG, CK, RMe, DSu, JW, DG). Our 10th record of **Northern Parula** was an immature at Scott Creek on October 19 (DSu). Unprecedented numbers of **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were found this fall (SG, RMe, DSu, EL). An amazing 33 were seen from September 10 - November 19, when even 10 would have been a good showing! Of special interest was a female at Coffee Lane Park on Rodeo Gulch on November 14-23 (DSu) which may be the same one that has wintered there for three previous seasons.

Up to seven **Hermit Warblers** were found September 13 - November 9 (m.ob.). An immature **Blackburnian Warbler** at Casserley Creek on October 21 was our 6th county record (DSu). **Palm Warblers** made a good showing, but it was nothing like last fall's flood. Twenty-two were found from October 5 - November 13 (SG, KK, EL, BS). A concerted four-hour search of Brussels sprout fields on the north coast on October 23 revealed nine birds, showing how many may slip by in this underworked "habitat" (DSu). This season's 4th **Blackpoll Warbler** was at Rodeo Gulch on October 17 (DSu). **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Wilder Ranch on September 28 (DG), Scott Creek on October 19 (DSu) and at the confluence of Branciforte and

Carbonera creeks (hereafter "Confluence") on November 10 (EL). Two **American Redstarts** in early October (DSu) brought our season's total up to a good seven. The wintering male at the Confluence was still there through November (m.ob.). An exciting surprise was a late male **Hooded Warbler** which was found in Capitola November 15 and has remained at least through the November 23 (DSu, RMe)! This species is exceptional in California after October.

A female or immature **Summer Tanager** was seen "squishing and devouring" its prey at the Confluence on October 18 (RMe). Late **Western Tanagers** were at U.C.S.C. Arboretum on November 13 (DG) and Meder Canyon on November 14 (SG). The full stay for the **Blue Grosbeak** at Harkins Slough was September 21-30 (RMe, CK, DSu). Immature **Clay-colored Sparrows** at Harkins Slough on October 10 and Harkins Slough on November 10 (DSu) brought our season's total up to three; in contrast the only **Chipping Sparrow** reported was near Table Rock on October 23 (DSu). **Lark Sparrows** are rare migrants along the immediate coast, so one near Natural Bridges on September 5 (SG) and two near Baldwin Creek on October 21 (DSu) were of interest. Eight **Swamp Sparrows** were found from Wilder Ranch to College Lake from October 10 - November 10 (EL, CK, SG, DSu). Five **White-throated Sparrows** were found along the coast from October 8 - November 15 (DG, SG, DSu), with the October 8 bird being a wintering bird returning to a Santa Cruz backyard (DG).

A **Lapland Longspur** was a very good find in a harvested Brussels sprouts field northwest of Wilder Creek on November 13 (DB, BT), our first since 1987 and approximately our 8th ever. Two **Bobolinks** were flushed out of the sparrow fields at Harkins Slough on October 10 (DSu). I encourage birders to report observations of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** seen from September to mid-March, as wintering numbers seem to be increasing in the county. They are most commonly found with blackbirds at landfills, cattle lots and dairies, and they seem to be increasing in urban settings where they frequent parking lots with Brewer's Blackbirds. For example, an unusually high count of 112 cowbirds were at the Brown Bulb Ranch Shopping Center in Capitola on November 16 (DSu). Keep an eye out when you visit these sorts of places. Actually, parking lot birding can be challenging. Try to find more than five species in a parking lot at one time (not counting birds flying over or in trees). It's something to do while taking care of holiday shopping!

Fall reports indicate a good season for some irruptive landbirds, but a poor showing for others (m.ob.). Species present in above average numbers include **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, **Hermit Thrush**, **Varied Thrush** and **Pine Siskin**. Although not typically considered irruptive, **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and **Townsend's Warblers** also seem more plentiful than usual. Species which are sparse or lacking so far include **Red-breasted Nuthatch** (the few reports were likely of local residents), **Red Crossbill** (two reports so far) and **Evening Grosbeak** (no reports).

Cited Observers: Stephen Baily, Melissa Black, Dawn Breese, Arley Brown, Liz Fisher, Ed Frost, Doug George, Steve Gerow, Bob Hargis, Nadine Hueter, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Robert Merrill (RMe), Barbara Monahan (BMon), Randy Morgan (RMo), Bryan Mori (BMor), Don Roberson, Barbara Scharfenstein, Roberta Smith, Peter Radcliff, David Suddjian, Bernie Tershy, Monte Tudor-Long, Janet Welch. "m.ob." means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1994 to January 1995

A **Red-necked Grebe** on the bay near the Santa Cruz Harbor on December 16 (DSu) was perhaps the same as seen there in November. Gale force south winds on January 7 brought five **Northern Fulmars** and three **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** close to shore at New Brighton State Beach (DSu). Two reports of **Manx Shearwater** were to my knowledge the first winter records ever for the state and one of the season's highlights. The first sighting was south-southwest of Table Rock along the north coast on December 17 (DSh, SA) and the second was flying from Monterey waters into Santa Cruz County off the mouth of the Pajaro River on December 30 (DSh, SB). Pending review by the California Bird Records Committee these would be the 2nd and 3rd records for the county. **American White Pelicans** resided at south county lakes as they have each winter since 1988-89, occurring mainly at Pinto and Kelly lakes (m.ob.). The high count was 18 at Pinto on December 28 (DSu).

I was glad to receive reports of some nine **American Bitterns** between November 23 and January 18 (m.ob.), as few have been reported in fall and early winter of recent years. Reports from the north coast, where they have been particularly lacking, were of singles at Antonelli Pond December 14-17 (EL) and Baldwin Creek Marsh December 17 (J&RW *et al.*). Two **White-faced Ibis** at Harkins Slough on January 1 (CK, ChW, CIW, MTL) provided only the 3rd winter record for the county, with one remaining until January 4 (RMe). One **Tundra Swan** paused at Harkins Slough on November 23 (DG). Geese made a good showing, although the lack of **Greater White-fronted Geese** was unusual. A flock of 30 **Snow Geese** flew high over Pinto Lake on November 30, with a family group of three dropping down to rest on the lake and the rest heading east over the Santa Cruz Mountains (DSu). A single Snow was at College Lake on January 1 (DSu).

Pinto Lake's **Ross' Goose** remained through at least January 15 (m.ob.), while one was at Harkins Slough on December 20 (DSu, DG) and two were there on January 20 (DSu). Fifty-four **Canada Geese** were reported from November 11 to January 15 (m.ob.). Observations of more than just one or two included 32 flying over western Santa Cruz on December 5 (SGer) and 11 at Kelly Lake on January 3 (DSu). Unusually high numbers of some dabbling ducks included record counts of 940 **Green-winged Teal** at Harkins Slough on December 20 and 814 **Northern Pintails** there on December 6 (both DSu). A crowd of 466-487 **American Wigeons** at Corralitos Lagoon on November 28-30 was one of our highest counts ever (EF, DSu). A hybrid male **Mallard x Northern Pintail** was at a pond near Spring Valley Road on January 1 (CK, ChW, CIW, MTL). Four **Cinnamon Teal** at Baldwin Creek Marsh December 15-17 were along the north coast where the species is often absent prior to the January influx of northbound migrants (DG, m.ob.).

The **Redhead** offers us a chance to observe the dynamics of a population's changing numbers. It was a regular, uncommon wintering species through most of the 1960's, when its local numbers crashed and it became a sporadic winter visitor in the 1970's and 1980's. Since December 1990 a few have been found nearly annually, and this year they turned up in more places and in better

numbers (about 22 birds) than any year since the mid-1960's. One at Swanton Road Reservoir on October 18 was over a month earlier than any recent record and was the first recent record from the north coast (TN). One was at Harkins Slough on November 30 (DSu). Three were at Schwan Lake December 16-17 (CK *et al.*), with five there January 17 (DSu). Two were at Corralitos Lagoon on December 20 (DSu), increasing to four by December 30 to January I (RMe, MS, PK, MM). The capper was a bonafide *flock* of II at College Lake on January I (DSu), with three still there on January 30.

A **Greater Scaup** was unusual inland on a pond at the north end of Scotts Valley on December 10, especially in that mountain setting (KK). **Hooded Mergansers** continued their increase at spots away from their Pajaro Valley stronghold, with 10 birds at five spots December 5 - January 25 (ill, KK, EL, DSu). Most interesting were four at a settling pond at the Kaiser sand quarry near Scotts Valley December 10-17 (KK, DSu), as they have not been recorded from that habitat in the county before. **Ferruginous Hawk** reports included a rare dark morph individual over Capitola on December 8 (2nd county record of this form; DSu). One light morph was west of Santa Cruz December 15-17 (EL), two were at the Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on January I (SA *et al.*), and one was at U.C.S.C. on January 31 (TN). Thirty **Merlin** reports were received between November 21 and January 30 (m.ob.). Among a number of **Peregrine Falcon** reports one at Loch Lomond on December 17 was unusual so far inland in the Santa Cruz Mountains (BMon).

A **Prairie Falcon** was near Wilder Creek Beach on January 9, being one of few north coast records and especially unusual so close to the ocean (DG). During winter **Semipalmated Plovers** usually occur in the county only at the Pajaro River mouth, and even there they are sporadic. Thus, two inland reports from the Pajaro Valley were noteworthy. One was at Drew Lake on January 1 (RMO) and a surprising 24 were in an agricultural field east of Pinto Lake on same day (B&BR, GP, LS). High numbers of **Snowy Plovers** at Scott Creek drew attention to the importance of that beach as a wintering site for this threatened species. Doug George reported 140 there on January 11, noting the flock held individuals usually found at Seabright Beach, Wilder, Laguna, Waddell and Gazos Creeks! **Black-necked Stilts** along the lower San Lorenzo River peaked at 11 birds on December 1 (DSu) and at least 8 remained into late December (PR, m.ob). The high flows of January forced them out, with the last one noted on January 6 (DSu).

A remarkable gathering of 64 **Black Oystercatchers** sought shelter on the lee side of Greyhound Rock on December 21 - seemingly "wishing the ocean would go away" (TN). The only **Lesser Yellowlegs** reported for early winter was at Harkins Slough December 28 to January I (DSu, CK *et al.*). Like the Semipalmated Plover, **Long-billed Curlew** is usually absent from the county during winter except at the Pajaro River mouth. This season one to three were at Wilder Beach from December 6 to January 9 (DG), with one of these seen near Table Rock on December 17 (J&RW *et al.*). These provided one of our only over-wintering records for the north coast. One at Seacliff State Beach on January 21 was also unusual (DSu). A **Red-necked Phalarope** at Anderson Peat Ponds on November 6 was late (CK).

The January storms brought **Red Phalaropes** ashore from January 10-28, both alive and dead (m.ob.). Fifteen live birds were found from the Pajaro River mouth to Laguna Creek Marsh, with eight at Laguna on January 24 being the high count (DSu). One live bird and seven of nine dead ones showed evidence of oil stains on their feathers (DG, DSu). Close scrutiny of gulls this winter revealed some very impressive counts of **Herring** and **Thayer's Gulls**. Among these were 658 Herring and 74 Thayer's at the Buena Vista Road landfill on January 21 and 438 Herring and 134 Thayer's at Pajaro River mouth on January 24 (DSu). There were more reports of **Glaucous Gulls** than perhaps ever before, with 14 reports spanning December 20 - January 30 (DSu, TN,

RMe) The exact number of birds Involved is hard to interpret, but I think there were at least six and maybe eight! All were 1st-winter birds, and all were coastal (eight places!), except for three reports from the Buena Vista Road landfill. Three together at the landfill on January 21 was unusually many (DSu). A 1st-winter gull at Natural Bridges State Beach January 15-21 (DH, PR, DSu, TN, et al.) had characters of a hybrid **Glaucous x Glaucous-winged Gull!**

With all the storms it was a bit surprising that the only **Black-legged Kittiwake** reported on shore was an adult at Sunset State Beach on January 28 (DSu). Twenty-five **Elegant Terns** seen off West Cliff Drive on December 17 were amazing (JMS), not only for the late date but all our other December records have been of only one to a few birds. Sixteen were still present the next day, then three were seen off Soquel Point on December 29 and four flew in and landed at Sunset State Beach on January 3 (all DSu)! A **Marbled Murrelet** heard calling over Hubbard Gulch near Ben Lomond at 4:30 AM on December 30 is the first report from the San Lorenzo watershed in many years (Grey). Any report from that watershed is intriguing but it's difficult to evaluate the significance of an isolated record. Three dead **Cassin's Auklets** washed up at Sunset State Beach on January 17 and 28 were liberally coated in oil (RMO, DSu).

Including reports noted in the last issue, **Burrowing Owls** were reported more than usual this fall and winter. Studies of the usual wintering population at U.C.S.C. in December revealed about nine owls in the Great Meadow and south of the East Field, along with two across Empire Grade from the Arboretum (*fide* HW, BL). Others included: one found dead near Davenport during the fall (*fide* JL); one near Long Marine Laboratory from late November to at least December 17 (JL, BL, DSu); one near the coastal bluffs north of Wilder Creek November 29 to December 1 (AB); and one at about 1,200 feet elevation at the Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville (SA et al). **Short-eared Owls** were near Antonelli Pond on November 29 (SGer) and Baldwin Creek on December 17 (DSu). **White-throated Swifts** are seen sporadically in small numbers in the county during winter, as they were this year (DG, SA, DSu), but a flock of 68 over Laguna Creek marsh on January 24 was unusually many (DSu).

A **Vaux's Swift** at Natural Bridges State Beach on November 26 was very late (SA). The season's most confiding rarity was a male **Costa's Hummingbird** that resided at Sierra Azul Nursery near the County Fairgrounds from November 1 through at least January 31 (AH, m.ob.). Word of the bird didn't reach the birding world until early January, but many birders saw it after that, including views as close as eight inches! This is our first winter record. As they did last winter, **Allen's Hummingbird's** appeared very early, with adult males near Watsonville on January 1 (DSu) and at Happy Valley January 2 (BB). Another male was at the U.C.S.C. Arboretum on January 6, and over 11 Allen's were there by January 24 (both DSu). **Pileated Woodpeckers** were seen at Roaring Camp on November 22 (PH), Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park in late November (*fide* BB), and Peasley Gulch on the Gray Whale Ranch on December 17 (RMO).

The flycatcher found at Natural Bridges on 19 November revealed itself as a **Dusky Flycatcher** on December 1 when better views were obtained (DSu). It has lingered through at least January 24 (SGer, DSu, m.ob.), providing our 2nd winter record and only our 3rd record ever. An impressive three "**Western "** Flycatchers were found in the county on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC: at Harkins Slough (MTL, CK, CIW, Ch W), Corralitos Creek, and the confluence of the Pajaro River and Salsipuedes Creek (both DSu, SGet). One of the more unexpected finds of the season was our first well-documented wintering **Western Kingbird**, found at Lighthouse Field on December 17 (JMS, AW). It lingered until at least January 17 and was studied by several of the county's active birders (DSu, RMe, EL, CK, PR). Tropical Kingbird has long proven to be the expected kingbird in late fall and winter in California, and this Western is one of few winter records for Northern California.

Five **Violet-green Swallows** over the upper part of Empire Grade on December 17 were unusual in the mountains and rare for the county away from the Pajaro Valley (RMe). **Common Ravens** have taken the South County dumps by storm! Large numbers are now making daily flights between the South County landfills and an unknown roost in the middle or northern part of the county. Their current route goes over Larkin Valley, where they have been seen flying south to the dumps in the morning and north to the roost in the afternoon (BI, DSu). Ah, the commuting life! High counts were 42 flying over Larkin Valley on December 10 (BI), 78 at Buena Vista landfill on December 20, 112 there on January 21 and 73 there on January 30 (all DSu). The Moss Landing Christmas Bird Count on January 1 recorded 66 in southern Santa Cruz County, compared to only a few in recent years!

Western Bluebirds had one of the best shows on the Santa Cruz County CBC that they've had in several years (m.ob.). The most encouraging point was not the count of 19 so much as their presence in seven different spots (vs. only one). The stealthy **Varied Thrush** is often hard to even see well, much less discover where it spends the night. Grey found at least three roosting in the hollow of a fire-scarred, old redwood in Hubbard Gulch on January 4. Although there were a few stellar species, rare wintering warblers were sparse overall compared to recent winters. **Nashville Warblers** were at the confluence of Branciforte and Carbonera Creeks (hereafter "the Confluence") December 1-17 (DSu), Nearys Lagoon December 16 (DG) and near 14th Avenue in Live Oak December 19 (fide PR). Late **Yellow Warblers** were at Laguna Creek November 22 (DG) and one male was singing(!) at Merk Pond December 6 (DSu).

An immature **Magnolia Warbler** at Arana Gulch north of Highway 1 on December 17 was very rare for Northern California in December (DSu). I don't know if it over-wintered. After last fall's record breaking tally, only one wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was surprising - a female at the Confluence November 19 to at least December 17 (DSu). Two **Hermit Warblers** were in the pines at DeLaveaga Park on December 15-17 where they ate probably regular (DSu). **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Rodeo Gulch in Soquel November 8 (JP), Soquel Creek in Soquel November 24 (DSu), Soquel Creek in Capitola December 17 to January 17 (EF, JC, DSu) and Rodeo Gulch in Live Oak December 16 to January 17 (DG, m.ob.). All five **Palm Warblers** found from November 22 to January 9 were coastal from Santa Cruz to Back Ranch Road (DG, SGer, DSu). The male **American Redstart** remained at the Confluence through at least January 3 (DSu).

Capitola's male **Hooded Warbler** stayed to at least January 13 for one of very few California winter records (DSu. ST). Five **Western Tanagers** round November 29 to January 2 were all females, from Santa Cruz to Aptos Creek (SGer, DSu). Two **Black-headed Grosbeaks** were very good finds for winter. An immature male was at Golf Club Drive in Santa Cruz December 17-28 (PR et al) and a female was near Pinto Lake on January 1 (BR, WM). One of the winter's rarest birds was an **American Tree Sparrow** ensconced at College Lake's best sparrow spot (near the mouth of Casserley Creek) from January 1-30 (DSu). This was our 7th county record and the first since November 1989. Twenty-three **Swamp Sparrows** found November 19 to January 30 were more than usual (m.ob.), with 12 at College Lake on January 1 being normal for that sparrow magnet (DSu).

Twenty-five **White-throated Sparrows** reported from November 21 to January 30 was one of the best showings on record (m.ob.). A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was along Harkins Slough Road December 31 (DG). Approximately 590 **Brown-headed Cowbirds** joined thousands of blackbirds and starlings at the Buena Vista Road landfill on January 21 for one of our highest counts (DSu). Orioles were unexpectedly numerous this winter. The rarest was an adult male

Orchard Oriole at Sunset State Beach on January 3 (DSu). A female **Hooded Oriole** in Live Oak from fall through at least January 20 was very rare for winter (AR, DSu). **Northern Orioles** (all Bullock's form) were found in unprecedented numbers for the season, with my best estimate at 11 individuals from November 14 through January 21 (JD, MF, AR, DSu. SGer *et al*). They were found from the west end of Santa Cruz to Seacliff, with seven in the small area of Santa Cruz between the Circles and Lighthouse Field. Three were seen together near Lighthouse Field on January 1 (JD, MF). The tally included six females, three 1st year males and two adult males. An unidentified oriole in Santa Cruz on November 4 was probably also this species (SGer).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Stephen Bailey , Bonnie Bedzin, Arley Brown, Jack Cole, Jeff Davis, Ed Frost, Marni Fylling, Doug George, Steve Gerow (SGer), SteveGetty (SGet), Grey, Adreinne Harrold, Paul Heady, Donna Heim, Barbara Indra, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Penny Kirk, Brian Latta, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Robert Merrill (RMe), Marty Michael, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Randy Morgan (RMo), Todd Newberry, Gary Page, Jeff Poklen, Peter Radcliff, Bob and Bernadette Ramer, Arnold Robinson, Maren Seidler , Debra Shearwater (DSh), Dan Singer (DSi), Jean Marie Spoelman, Lynn Stenzel, David Suddjian (DSu), Scott Terrill, Monte Tudor-Long, Hira Walker, John and Ricky Warriner, Anna Wilcox, Chris Wolfe (ChW), Claire Wolfe (CIW). "m.ob." means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from February to March 1995

The nesting efforts of a certain female **Anna's Hummingbird** provide a poignant illustration of the perseverance of one of our smallest species in the midst of one of our roughest winters. Anna's Hummingbirds regularly nest during winter and many females have nests in January and February. But I'm always impressed that this little bird can raise and fledge young at a time when most other species cannot. A female Anna's nested successfully twice near my home in Capitola in the comparatively mild late winter 1994, fledging four young by late March. This winter she was building her first nest in a Monterey pine by December 27 and she appeared to be incubating eggs by January 6. She weathered the seemingly endless storms of January, including the toppling of a tall eucalyptus which fell in a wind storm on January 9 and just missed the nest. Only one chick survived to fledge and was last seen in the nest on February 17. By February 15 the female was already building her second nest in a nearby alder, and she tended the offspring of her first nest while completing the second nest. She hatched two chicks in her second nest around March 8, and although she got very wet she steadfastly tended the tiny nestlings through the "Storm of the Century" March 9-11. She seemed well on her way to a second successful nesting for the season, but a cold storm on March 20-22 proved her undoing and the nest was abandoned by March 22. She later appeared in the area on March 26. I think she was forced to abandon the nest because she couldn't find small insects to feed the nestlings during the cold storm. For all I know she may be working on nest #3 even as I write this!

* * *

Single **Red-necked Grebes** at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on January 1 (PR) and Capitola Bluffs on February 13 (DSu) were typical reports of this rare wintering bird, but a flock of *nine* swimming north past El Jarro Point on March 27 was exceptional (DSu). Three days of strong southwest winds March 20-22 pushed seabirds close to shore, with 43 **Black-footed Albatross** and 56 **Northern Fulmars** seen flying north past El Jarro Point on March 22 (DSu). Two albatross were seen there during calm conditions on March 27. A **Flesh-footed Shearwater** was seen from a boat eight miles off Santa Cruz on February 16 (DSh). An exciting but ultimately frustrating "one that got away" was the unidentified **tropicbird** seen during an aerial seabird survey off the Pajaro River Mouth on February 2 (WBT, JD). Both observers felt it was not a Red-billed Tropicbird, the species that has provided most of the California records. Small numbers of **American**

White Pelicans lingered at Pinto Lake through at least March 23 when two were present (DSu, RMe, CK).

The wintering **Ross' Goose** was still there the same day, too (DSu). From Bob Merrill's "There's-gotta-be-a-better-way dept." comes word of three **Brant** paddling north in heavy seas off Waddell Beach on March 15. Large flocks of Brant were stalled by storm winds, with about 345 near the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on March 20 and 685 off El Jarro Point on March 22 (DSu). 475 **Canvasback** at Harkins Slough on February 17 was a high count for anywhere away from College Lake (RMe). **Redhead** continued this winter's strong presence with a female at Baldwin

Creek Marsh on February 3 and a pair at Scott Creek Marsh on March 22 (DSu). The most out of place duck was a male **White-winged Scoter** inland at Pinto Lake on March 23, following three days of strong southwest winds (DSu). Doug George reported a dramatic encounter between a **Peregrine Falcon** and a (barely) lucky **Whimbrel** at Wilder Ranch on February 10:

"An immature Peregrine was perched near the top of the coastal bluff west of Wilder Beach. It flew east [to] Fern Grotto Beach where it was out of view. Moments later a Whimbrel appeared in a low, rapid straight-line flight south over the ocean with the Peregrine following directly behind...The falcon quickly closed the distance, grabbed the Whimbrel in its talons, and continued in low level flight still clutching the Whimbrel. After approximately three seconds the Whimbrel dropped from the falcon's clutch and into the ocean where it sat on the surface. The Peregrine quickly swung around and flew directly toward the Whimbrel and attempted to grab it but the Whimbrel avoided capture by briefly diving. This happened a second time after which the Whimbrel took flight and flew for perhaps 200-300 feet before quickly dropping to the ocean's surface and diving to again evade the Peregrine's attack. Several Western Gulls converged and appeared to harass the falcon, causing it to break away from several direct flights toward the Whimbrel (which remained on the surface). During a time when the gulls were 'mobbing' the falcon the Whimbrel took flight and continued out to sea. The Peregrine gained altitude and flew away...in a direction opposite of that taken by the Whimbrel."

Gatherings of **Black Oystercatchers** at Greyhound Rock included 26 on March 3 and 36 on March 15 (RMe). A **Long-billed Curlew** at Waddell Beach on February 7 added to the season's pattern of wintering birds away from the Pajaro River, as noted in the last issue (RMe) A **Western Sandpiper** feeding with Sanderlings at Monterey Bay Academy Beach on February 21 was rare for the county in winter away from the Pajaro River (DSu) This offers a fine illustration of how some species are strongly limited to certain habitats during some seasons, as Western Sandpipers winter in the thousands on the tidal flats of nearby Elkhorn Slough. A **Parasitic Jaeger** resting at Waddell Beach on February 15 was rare for winter (DSu). This winter's wallop of **Glaucous Gulls** continued unabated through mid-March, with eight reports from February 8 to March 12 (DSu, TN, CK). These included rarely reported *second-winter* birds at Buena Vista Road Landfill on February 13 and Aptos Creek mouth on February 24 (DSu) The winter's total stands at 23 reports!

February generated a few **Black-legged Kittiwakes** on shore one at Natural Bridges on the 2nd (SG) and two at Wilder Beach on the 21st (DG) But the fierce storms and strong southwest winds of March brought dozens to local beaches (DSu). A total of 97 (64% adults) were found on March 9, 10 and 22 at six beaches from Aptos Creek to Waddell Creek. An impressive 56 **Marbled Murrelets** were tallied on a February 10 survey of the coast from Soquel Point to the San Lorenzo River (DSu). A **Tufted Puffin** was seen from a boat eight miles off Santa Cruz on February 16 (DSh). Extensive surveys of **Burrowing Owls** at UCSC revealed 10-13 wintering owls, with many still present through the end of March (NP, JL, HW *et al.*). The timing of the exodus of the campus' wintering owls is not well known, but Natalie Pelc's surveys this April should help resolve the question. A pair of Burrowing Owls has wintered at Long Marine Laboratory and was also still present in late March (JL, BL, NP). It is now very rare for any to over winter in the mid-county region except at UCSC. **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Terrace Point around December 30 and UCSC from late January to at least February 11 (HW, JL). The latter bird roosted for at least two weeks in a sinkhole in the campus grasslands.

Do you remember those hot days last February? I'll bet the **Common Poorwills** of the Lorna Prieta area do! The warm weather was enough to lure the birds out of their seasonal inactivity, perhaps to feed on insects that also became active with the warm nights. I drove to Summit Ridge near Lorna Prieta on February 2 and, along with the 71-degree evening, I enjoyed listening to nine calling poorwills (three in Santa Cruz County). This adds to scant evidence that this species is indeed resident in our mountains. Barbara and Kevin Monahan's hummingbird feeders northeast of Scotts Valley have attracted unusual concentrations of hummers that most of us can only envy. In mid-January they had about 35 **Anna's Hummingbirds** at the feeders at one time. On March 20-21 an eight-hole feeder simultaneously fed 15 hummers (**Anna's, Allen's and Rufous!**) who temporarily put aside territorial imperatives at dusk to tank up before darkness fell. The wintering male **Costa's Hummingbird** remained at Sierra Azul Nursery in Watsonville through at least March (AH, JR).

Pileated Woodpecker reports from recently colonized areas included one along Soquel Creek near Olive Springs Quarry on February 2 (DSu), two in the Wilder Creek watershed of Gray Whale Ranch on February 23 (DSu, KM), and one at Mount Hermon in mid-March (PH *fide* KK). The wintering **Dusky Flycatcher** lingered at Natural Bridges to at least March 1 (SG). A rare migrant **Bank Swallow** at Pinto Lake on March 23 was one of our earliest in recent years (DSu). A **Rock Wren** at Olive Springs Quarry on February 2 was our first report in a number of years (DSu). There is a pattern of fall and winter records from some of the large rock quarries in the county, and it may be that Rock Wrens are regular at these seldom-birded sites. A **Tennessee Warbler** was amid the flowers at the UCSC Arboretum on February 2 (DSu). Two reports of **Black-throated Gray Warbler** were of special interest. One at Laguna Creek on February 1 was one of few winter records from the north coast (DG). A female at Rodeo Gulch on March 21 (DSu) was likely the same one there in late November 1994, and it may have been the same that had wintered there since 1991-92.

The male **American Redstart** at the confluence of Branciforte and Carbonera Creeks stayed through March 28 when he was actively singing in the alders and cottonwoods (DSu). Capitola's male **Hooded Warbler** was seen sporadically through March 5 (DSu). A female **Black-headed Grosbeak**, our third this winter, was at UCSC Arboretum on February 2 (DSu). An albinistic **Song Sparrow** singing on territory at Wilder Ranch on March 19 had a white head and resembled "a tiny Bald Eagle perched on a bush" (TN). A male **Tricolored Blackbird** appeared at a feeder in Happy Valley on March 19 (BB). "Trikes" only turn up rarely in the county away from the coastal zone or the Pajaro Valley. Four new "**Bullock's**" **Northern Orioles** in February (JD, DSu) brought our winter total up to an *amazing* 14 different birds (eight females, three adult males and three first-year males), all in mid-county.

A trio of **Cassin's Finches** (1 male) were a surprise near the summit of Santa Rosalia Mountain in the Forest of Nisene Marks on March 6 (DSu). This rarity has been reported in the county a number of times over the years, but most reports were plainly erroneous and the only prior report with supporting documentation didn't eliminate Purple Finch. The Santa Rosalia birds would seem to be our only acceptably documented county record. Three **Lawrence's Goldfinches** paused near Soquel High School on February 14 (DSu).

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, Jeff Davis, Doug George, Steve Gerow, Adrienne Harrold, Paul Heady, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Brian Latta, Janet Linthecum, Robert Merrill, Kirby Molen, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Todd Newberry, Natalie Pelc, Peter Radcliff, Jeff Rosendale, Debra Shearwater (DSh), David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler, Hira Walker. "m.ob." means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from April to June 1995

An all day seawatch from a coastal promontory in the peak of spring migration is an exciting (if exhausting) way to appreciate the magnitude of seabird movement along our coast. I perched with my scope at El Jarro Point north of Davenport for nine hours on April 20 and logged the following high counts: 41,875 **Pacific Loons**, 594 **Red-throated Loons**, 488 **Common Loons**, 29 **Black-footed Albatross**, 12,250 **Brant**, 16,350 **Surf Scoters**, 196 **White-winged Scoters**, 556 **Whimbrels**, and 16,550 **Bonaparte's Gulls**. Our coastal waters flow with a river of birds! A **Red-necked Grebe** off Baldwin Creek Beach on June 19 was a very rare summer visitor (BMc). An unseasonable **Black-vented Shearwater** also passed El Jarro Point on April 20 (DS). Several **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf in late April were tardy. Three were seen on April 18 (PR) and up to five on April 21 (CB, EL, SG). One **American White Pelican** over-summered at Pinto Lake and was seen through June (RM, DS).

Brandt's Cormorants continued to nest at Natural Bridges State Beach, with a total of twelve nests on two sea stacks by late June (RMe, SG). One of the best seabirds of the season was an immature **Magnificent Frigatebird** that appeared near Corcoran Lagoon on April 28 just after a storm of sub-tropical origin (KA). Two **White-faced Ibis** were at College Lake on April 19 (DS). Pinto Lake's **Ross' Goose** is taking an extended sabbatical from Arctic life and was present and healthy through June (RM, DS). I suspect it has been there since at least fall 1993 but I can't prove it. A male **Northern Pintail** which wintered at Quail Hollow was present to at least mid-May, rather late for the county and odd in the mountains (KKe, PH). A pair of **Lesser Scaup** at College Lake on June 2 were late (RM), as was a female at Waddell Creek Mouth on June 14 (DS). Male and female **Common Mergansers** on Soquel Creek in Capitola on April 2 were the first apparent pair reported for the watershed (PR), and another or the same pair was in suitable breeding habitat upstream in the Soquel Demonstration State Forest on May 3 (DS). Stay tuned. A pair along the lower San Lorenzo on May 14 fit into a clear pattern of mid-spring sightings of this species on the lower river (PR).

A secondhand report of a nesting pair of **Ospreys** in the Waddell Creek area seemed plausible but is unconfirmed as of this writing (*fide* BMC). A **Swainson's Hawk** was mobbed by California Gulls over Soquel on April 2 (DS). A recent increase in spring sightings in the central coast region suggests we should be ready for more county records of this rare migrant. A late **Rough-legged Hawk** was near Scott Creek Beach on April 11 (BS, MB). **Peregrine Falcons** continued to make strides in Santa Cruz County (SCPBRG). Pairs with confirmed nests were in Big Basin Redwoods State Park and the upper watershed of the San Lorenzo River. Another pair was reportedly nesting in the Davenport region, and a pair without a nest occupied the Soquel Creek watershed. Eighteen **Black-bellied Plovers** at College Lake on April 19 were unusual so far inland in the county (DS). A **Black-necked Stilt** apparently incubating eggs at Hanson Slough on June 2 was the first indication of nesting by this species in the county away from the brackish waters of the Pajaro Dunes area (RM). However, no stilts were present on June 27 when the fields near Hanson Slough were being prepared for planting.

An unusual large flock of 19 **Wandering Tattlers** at El Jarro Point on April 20 were a sight to see, especially in the company of 66 **Surfbirds** all decked out in breeding plumage (DS)! A

Sanderling at College Lake on April 10 was rare inland (DSu). Large numbers of shorebirds at College Lake in late April were led by an impressive 6650 **Western Sandpipers** and 2975 **Least Sandpipers** on April 19 (DS). It was very odd that the lake was almost devoid of shorebirds in May when available mud flat increased greatly (RMe, DS). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was also at College Lake on 19 April for a rare spring record (DS). Migrant **Red-necked Phalaropes** don't usually appear in Northern California until early April, so several March reports were significant and part of a larger movement. On March 12 there were six at Pajaro Dunes (TN) and three at Wilder Ranch (AB). Twenty-seven were at the San Lorenzo River mouth on March 20 and eight were near Davenport on March 22 (DS).

An adult **Laughing Gull** was feeding with gulls of lesser note in plowed fields near Table Rock on May 24. An "invasion" of **Franklin's Gulls** brought *three* to the same fields on April 26 and one near Davenport on the same day (DS)! Two migrant **Least Terns** were following a flock of **Forster's Terns** north over Capitola on April 19 (DS). These were in a trans-mountain route leading to the San Francisco Bay area that is used by a wide variety of shorebirds, gulls, terns and other waterbirds. A **Black Tern** was at College Lake on April 23 (DS). A **Burrowing Owl** at U.C.S.C. to June 3 hinted at possible nesting, but it wasn't seen on subsequent visits (JL). This year several remained into April at U.C.S.C. and one even lingered through April at Terrace Point (JL). Our paradigm had wintering Burrowing Owls leaving our area by early March, but maybe this year's storms delayed migration. An adult male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** spotted at Antonelli Pond on May 21 was a rarity for the county (JD). Watsonville's wintering **Costa's Hummingbird** stayed through at least April 25 (AH). A female **Calliope Hummingbird** sipped from garden flowers near Long Ridge Road on May 15 (DS). Together with our usual Anna's, Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds, six species of hummers in the county this spring was a record season!

A crazy **Lewis' Woodpecker** resided briefly on a telephone pole at the Boulder Creek County Club on April 19 (DS). Steve Gerow found two **Hammond's Flycatchers**, for our 5th and 6th county records: one at U.C.S.C. on April 14 and one in Meder Canyon in Santa Cruz on May 10. Our second and third county records of **Cassin's Kingbird** were secured with birds near Harkins Slough on May 2 (LF) and near Pelican Rock on June 11 (DS). A migrant **Bank Swallow** was over College Lake on April 23, while four feeding near Waddell Creek Beach on May 24 were probably wandering from the breeding colony at nearby Año Nuevo Creek (DS). Up to four **American Crows** residing all spring in Scotts Valley perhaps forebode future permanent occupation of that mountain area (BS, LE) Crows in the county are currently limited to lowland areas, excepting occasional migrants.

A female **Varied Thrush** with two begging fledglings at San Vicente Creek on June 28 established a new southernmost breeding station for the species' entire range (DS). The apparently small and locally distributed Santa Cruz Mountains breeding population was only first discovered in 1991. The **Magnolia Warbler** found in December at Arana Gulch was re-located there on April 14, confirming a rare over-wintering occurrence for California (DS). A singing **American Redstart** was in Capitola on June 8 (DS). A male **Kentucky Warbler** sang and skulked several miles inland at San Vicente Creek on June 28 for our first county record (DS)! An adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** brightened a feeder near Arana Gulch on May 26 (A W), while another was at Browns Valley Road on June 9 (KKu). On a sad note, **Tricolored Blackbirds** apparently failed to nest in the county this year, in spite of good conditions in marsh breeding habitats. No nesting was observed at any of the sites used in recent years (DS, RM). A male Tricolored at a feeder northeast of Scotts Valley on April 28 was out of place (BMo) **Hooded Orioles** were rare in the mountains at Quail Hollow in late April (PH) and northeast of Scotts Valley on May 2 (BMo)

Cited Observers: Ken Alley, Cliff Bixler, Marjorie Bourret, Arley Brown, Jeff Davis, Lorraine Elrod, Liz Fisher, Steve Gerow, Adrienne Harrold, Paul Heady, Ken Kellman (KKe), Kathy Kusanovich (KKu), Earl Lebow, Janet Linthcum, Bert McKee, Robert Merrill, Barbara Monahan, Todd Newberry, Peter Radcliff, Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, Barbara Scharfenstein, David Suddjian, Andrea Welles.
"mob " means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from July to mid-September 1995

Every so often it's worthwhile to relate what happens to bird records that are reported to the Club's "Bird Records Keeper." My role is to gather and archive any available information about bird occurrence in the county. All written and verbal reports are saved and entered into the Club's bird records files. Observations of any potential interest are entered into a computer database. Noteworthy records are passed along quarterly to the *National Audubon Society Field Notes* (formerly *American Birds*) Middle Pacific Coast regional editors.

When I prepare this column I select records of particular interest to highlight significant observations and ornithological events of the season. Due to space limitations I cannot include every observation that is interesting, much less all the reports received. That doesn't mean a given sighting wasn't worth reporting or is not important to include in the Club's records. In fact, it's the accumulation over the years of a wide variety of records for many species that permits us to better understand patterns of bird distribution and occurrence in the county. This is certainly not limited only to rare birds, although this column often focuses on them by necessity. It is ironic that the rare birds are the best known in terms of supporting details in the county's bird records. I encourage everyone to take the time to pass along observations they feel are interesting. Active birders who submit regular written listings of sightings make extremely valuable contributions.

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Some local birders are aware that there is a "trans-mountain flyway" used by waterbirds moving between Monterey Bay and south San Francisco Bay which follows the canyons of Soquel and Los Gatos Creeks. The flyway has been best known as a route used by migrant and commuting **Caspian Terns**, but over the years a number of other species have also been recorded. As a matter of serendipity I moved this spring to a house which is located directly "under" the trans-mountain flyway at its southern end in Capitola. This resulted in detection of many species making significant use of the flyway for northward migration in spring and southward migration in fall, including some real surprises. To flesh out the Capitola sightings I also watched for birds in the flyway five miles up the Soquel Canyon and on the summit near Old Santa Cruz Highway.

The spring migration in the flyway involved at least ten species using the flyway from April to early June, including **Common Loon**, **Whimbrel**, **Long-billed Curlew**, **Dunlin**, **Bonaparte's Gull**, **California Gull** (thousands), **Caspian** and **Forster's Terns** and the **Least Terns** cited in my last column. Fall migration from August through mid-September proved even more interesting, with 16 waterbird species recorded and exciting finds such as **Black Skimmer** (!), numerous **Least Terns**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Elegant Tern**, **Black-necked Stilt** and **Black-bellied Plover**. Some of these are noted below.

Seventy-four Common Loons off Waddell Creek Beach on July 1 was amazing for the date, with numbers dwindling after (DSu). Two **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were in county waters on August 5, with one on August 6 (DSh). A **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** on August 12 was rare for summer (DSh). Six **Least Storm-Petrels** were off Santa Cruz on September 9 (SE, AH). Pinto's Lake's

summering **American White Pelican** remained through at least September 27 (RM, DSu). Three flew over the Pajaro River mouth on 9 July (SB *fide The Sanderling*). An **American Bittern** was at Laguna Creek Marsh on September 8 (DG). The best breeding season event was the discovery of nesting **Great Egrets** at Pinto Lake for the county's first breeding record! Three pairs were observed at nests in tall eucalyptus trees on July 25, including at least two nests with good-sized young (AD), and birds on nests were still noted to at least mid-August (RC). The only other breeding colony in the Monterey Bay area, at Elkhorn Slough, was just established in 1987 (*Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Monterey County, California*, D. Roberson and C. Tenney [Eds.], 1993).

Pinto Lake's long-lingering **Ross' Goose** stayed to at least September 8 (RM). Two to three **Canada Geese** also summered at the lake from June 2 to at least September 27 (RM, DSu). A female **Wood Duck** at Monterey Bay Academy on September 14-15 was unexpected along the south county coast (DSu, RM). An eclipse male **Lesser Scaup** at Swanton Road Reservoir on July 29 to September 11 provided a very rare summer record for the county (KK, TN, RM). An immature male **Black Scoter** at Natural Bridges SB from July 1-18 was also quite rare for summer (SG). Two significant breeding records for **Common Merganser** were obtained. A female with three chicks was at Soquel Demonstration State Forest on July 12 for the first breeding record for Soquel Creek, while a female with eight chicks was on the East Fork of Waddell Creek on July 23, providing a first confirmation for that watershed (both DSu). Two breeding confirmations for **Sharp-shinned Hawk** were among very few known for the Santa Cruz Mountains, with a family group near a nest in Big Basin on July 10 and another family group with begging young in Soquel Demonstration State Forest on July 12 (both DSu). This raptor's unobtrusive or even secretive behavior during the breeding season makes it difficult to detect without special effort and/or luck.

There was a rumor that rangers at Loch Lomond observed a pair of **Golden Eagles** building a nest near the lake this year (*fide SCPBRG*). An adult **Bald Eagle** was seen in a tree near Paradise Park along the San Lorenzo River on August 7 (TL *fide BS*). Of two confirmed **Peregrine Falcon** nests in the county, one in Big Basin Redwoods State Park was successful for its fourth year, while the new pair in the upper watershed of the San Lorenzo River failed to hatch its three eggs (SCPBRG). Doug George's summary of **Snowy Plover** breeding success in the county this season was not too encouraging. Of 33 nests, young hatched in 11 nests and only 17 chicks survived to fledge (DG, PRBO). Wilder Creek Beach, a relatively well-protected site with regard to human disturbance, had the most nests (13) but zero chicks hatched. Scott Creek stood out as an important site, generating 47% of the county's fledgling plovers this year. A nest with three eggs found at Three Mile Beach on July 9 (MTL) was the first ever for the site, eventually fledging two chicks in August (DG). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was on the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on September 12 (DSu). A **Spotted Sandpiper** with two chicks was along the river upstream of Highway One on August 6 for one of few recent breeding confirmations (DSu).

A big flight of **Long-billed Curlews** in the "trans-mountain flyway" included at least 53 birds passing south over Capitola during a four hour period on September 14 (DSu). Most of these probably over flew the county entirely, perhaps heading for the Elkhorn Slough area. The rarest shorebird of early fall was a **Ruff** at Wilder Creek mouth on September 11 (DG). Two **Long-tailed Jaegers** were in county waters on August 18, along with over 50 Sabine's Gulls and "100s" of **Arctic Terns** (all DSh). A **South Polar Skua** was off the north coast on August 5 (DSh). Two **Elegant Terns** flew south in the "trans-mountain flyway" over Capitola on September 2, providing our first overland record for this coastal species (DSu). Four sightings of 13 **Least Terns** flying south in the flyway August 16-26 were remarkable (DSu)! Three observations were of birds flying over Capitola, while the fourth was of birds crossing the mountains at Summit

Road. Even more remarkable, and a real jaw-dropper for me, was an adult **Black Skimmer** that flew south over my Capitola home on August 25, continuing down the flyway to the ocean!

An apparent hybrid **Sandwich Tern x Elegant Tern** (!) was at the Pajaro River mouth July 4-11 (SB, m.ob.), visiting both Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties. A **Pigeon Guillemot**, already molting to winter plumage, was seen carrying fish into a nest cavity on West Cliff Drive on September 2, documenting a late nesting for the county (SG). **Marbled Murrelets** were present off the mid-county coast in unusual numbers in June and July, with 38 from Soquel Point to the Santa Cruz Harbor being representative (DSu). Extensive at-sea surveys of inshore waters from Waddell Creek to Pigeon Point during May to August found hardly any juvenile murrelets, indicating very low breeding success (*fide* EB). Single **Tufted Puffins** were found in county waters on July 30 (DSh, KK) and August 12 (DSh). Hardly anyone ever reports anything about **Mourning Doves**, but Steve Gerow's estimate of 500 in one field near Natural Bridges on September 14 was certainly noteworthy. Among a few reports of sightings of **Northern Pygmy-Owl** this August, one standing on the ground next to a freshly killed robin in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park must have been exciting to witness (CV, DE).

A **Long-eared Owl** was heard calling in Seascape in the late evening of August 24 and September 19 (EL). These are rare late summer -early fall records for the county, for a species whose seasonal movements are poorly known. Two **Vaux's Swift** nests were found in chimneys in the neighborhood just south of the U.C. Santa Cruz faculty housing (DSu). The nests with begging young were found on July 30 and August 4. Vaux's Swift was known to nest in chimneys in this area but hardly any solid evidence is in our records. Spark arresters on most chimneys preclude swifts from nesting at most houses, but these nests were in chimneys without arresters. Good concentrations of migrant Vaux's included 50-60 over UCSC on August 16 (SG) and 85 over Summit Road on September 11 (DSu). A late lingering adult male **Allen's Hummingbird** with a deformed bill stayed at a westside Santa Cruz feeder to at least September 12 (SH). Records of **Pileated Woodpeckers** from areas of recent colonization included two at Soquel Demonstration State Forest on July 12 (DSu) and one at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on August 20 (CV, DE). Two Pileateds along upper San Vicente Creek on August 30 were the first for that watershed (DSu).

Willow Flycatchers made a good showing with at least 10 along the coast from August 25 - September 15 (SG, DG, DSu). Three **American Crows** overwintered in Scotts Valley (BS, LE), rare for a mountain location in our county, but David Bockman reports he's seen them there for about three years. A **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Noble Gulch in Capitola September 8-9 for our third county record (DSu). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were at Noble Gulch on August 27 (DSu) and Meder Canyon on September 15 (SG). A wave of **American Redstarts** brought three to the Capitola - Aptos area August 27-30 (DSu). **Northern Waterthrush** reports included one at Antonelli Pond on September 8 (SG) and two on the San Lorenzo River north of Highway 1 on September 9 (DSu). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was found dead after it hit a window along Empire Grade near U.C.S.C. on September 12 (CP). The specimen represents only our fourth fall record and will be sent to the California Academy of Sciences. It is likely that some chats are overlooked in fall due to their habitual skulking without their song to give them away.

Fruiting coffeeberry shrubs are magnets for fruit-eating migrants in the fall, and this year's good crop in Moore Creek attracted a feasting party of about 95 **Western Tanagers** and 11 **Black-headed Grosbeaks** on September 9 (DSu). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** included a male at a feeder in La Selva on August 12-15 (JG) and a female in Capitola on August 30 (DSu). A female **Indigo Bunting** was at Sunset State Beach on September 14 (DSu). A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** visited Wilder Ranch State Park on September 6 (DG). A **Red Crossbill** at Big Basin

Redwoods State Park on July 25 was the only one reported (BD).

Cited Observers: Stephen Bailey, David Bockman, Esther Burkett, Roberto Castro, Arturo Diaz, Brock Dolman, David Ekdahl, Scott Edwards, Lorraine Elrod, Doug George, Steve Gerow , Jennifer Green, Amber Hinsley, Ken Kellman, Earl Lebow, Tom Leonard, Robert Merrill, Todd Newberry , Carol Panofsky , Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, Barbara Scharfenstein, Debra Shearwater (DSh), David Suddjian (DSu), Monte Tudor-Long, Connie Vigno. "M.ob." means "many observers".

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from mid-September to early-November 1995

Late September through early November is always a particularly exciting time for birding in coastal California. This season was accented by sightings of several species previously recorded fewer than ten times in the county, including our first county records for Yellow-green Vireo, Bay-breasted Warbler and Chestnut-collared Longspur, and a second county record provided by an obliging Painted Bunting. Hopefully this is just a warm-up for the Christmas Bird Count season!

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Pied-billed Grebes reared a late brood at the back of Merk Pond, with dependent young still begging on November 2 (DSu). Such late nesting is known for Pied-billeds, but this set a record late date for Santa Cruz County. A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Natural Bridges in late September, earlier than most county records (AG), and three were at La Selva Beach in early November (JG). Single **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were in Santa Cruz waters on at least September 30 and October 7, this being a good year for them on Monterey Bay (DSh). Sightings of single **Manx Shearwaters** on September 17 and October 29 were the 4th and 5th county records (DSh *et al.*), pending review by the California Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC). The latter bird was well photographed. It was a slow season for **Black-vented Shearwaters** through early November with only small numbers seen from boats and no reports from shore. An **Ashy Storm-Petrel** just off the beach at La Selva on November 10 was most unusual close to shore (JG). The summering **American White Pelican** continued its love affair with Pinto Lake, remaining at least through early November (DSu).

Strong north winds in early October had geese moving around. In Capitola five flocks of **Canada Geese** totaling 259 birds were flying northwest on the evening of October 4, and one was on the lower San Lorenzo River October 11 (DSu). **Greater White-fronted Geese** included at least three calling over Baldwin Creek on the night of October 4 (RMO), 26 over Capitola October 11 (DSu) and 9-11 at Harkins Slough October 13-17 (WM, RMe). More sedentary geese included the faithful **Ross'** at Pinto Lake through at least November 2 (NH, DSu), the two summering **Canada Geese** still there that day (DSu), and a Canada present for over a year at Schwan Lake through at least November 5 (PR). Regarding the Ross' at Pinto, information has surfaced confirming that it has been continually present since it was first noted on December 12, 1993-nearly two years and staying over two summers! The bird appears healthy and has been seen to fly well for at least short distances. Why face the perils of migration and lose your babies to Arctic foxes when you can relax at Pinto Lake, dine at the City Park and spend your evenings at Marmo's dock?

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** put a now almost expected fall appearance at Merk Pond on November 2 (DSu). For the third fall in a row an apparent hybrid **Eurasian x American Wigeon** was at Merk, this time October 28 to at least November 2 (CK, DSu). Each year's hybrids have differed somewhat in their intermingling patterns of the two species' normal plumage. A male **Black Scoter** was at Sunset State Beach on November 4 (DSu). A female **Common Merganser** was on the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on October 3-5 (DSu, RMe). Fourteen reports of

Merlin in the county September 6 to November 4 were typical of numbers in recent autumns (m.ob.). At least one **Peregrine Falcon** returned to its winter roost near the San Lorenzo River mouth (PR). Two rare county reports of **Prairie Falcon** were one near Harkins Slough on October 7 and one near Soda Lake on October 26 (DSu). Prairies seem to be regular in fall and winter in the county's sparsely birded southeast corner.

A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was at Sunset State Beach September 27 (DSu). Clay Kempf provided his observations of a **Black-necked Stilt** sitting on a nest at Hanson Slough on several days in late spring, confirming the first breeding by this species in the county away from the brackish waters of the Pajaro Dunes area (see this column in Vol. 41, No.1). Once again, our regular but uncommon shorebirds were unusually sparse this fall. Reports for the season totaled only one **Lesser Yellowlegs**, three **Baird's Sandpipers**, and about eight **Pectoral Sandpipers** (DGe, DSu). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Monterey Bay Academy dairy on September 26 (DSu). A **Red Phalarope** came ashore at Three Mile Beach on September 30 (MTL). A **Long-tailed Jaeger** and a **South Polar Skua** were seen on the October 7 pelagic trip, with another skua on October 15 (DSh). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** was at Natural Bridges on November 3 (JD). One **Xantus' Murrelet** appeared for the October 15 boat (DSh). **Burrowing Owls** returned to UCSC by early October (JL) and one returned to the Younger Lagoon area by at least November 1 (EL). A bird identified as a **Short-eared Owl** was found injured on Miles Street in Santa Cruz on October 22 and taken in for care (PH). The verbal description of the bird sounded much more like a **Long-eared Owl** to me, but I didn't see it. Either species would be unusual in that circumstance.

A **Lesser Nighthawk** plied the airways north of Schwan Lake on October 6 (DSu). The county's nighthawk record is clouded by many birds not identified to species, but this was our third early fall record of Lesser Nighthawk since 1992. Forty **Vaux's Swifts** were over Ben Lomond on September 26 (RMe). A male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was working new holes in a walnut tree at Fern Flat Road in Aptos On November 4-5, for the 4th county record (LS). A wave of "**Yellow-shafted "** **Northern Flickers** brought one to Soquel on November 3 (RM0) and four to Sunset State Beach November 4 (DSu). An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Sunset State Beach on September 2 was the only one reported for the season (RM0). The strong showing of **Willow Flycatchers** rounded out to at least 15 birds through October 2 (m.ob.). A **Gray Flycatcher** at Monterey Bay Academy on October 7 was the 6th county record (DSu). Reports of fall migrant **Ash-throated Flycatchers** totaled two: in Santa Cruz August 18 and 27 (SG, PR). A **Tropical Kingbird** at Antonelli pond on October 28 was heard calling, unusual for this rare but annual fall visitor (SG)c Fall reports of **Western Kingbirds** included only two, both along the north coast September 11 and 19 (RMe, WBT).

About 95 **Horned Larks** in the Soda Lake area on October 26 was a good count for the county, but that area is clearly their present stronghold (DSu). A flock of 60 **American Crows** over the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on October 13 was a large flock for mid-county, where crow numbers continue to grow (DB). A **Rock Wren** was on driftwood at Sunset State Beach on October 16 (RM0). Although rarely noted in the county, Rock Wrens show a pattern of occasional records on the immediate coast in fall. Two "**Cassin's "** **Solitary Vireos** along the coast September 26-29 were the only ones reported (DSu, SG). The season's second **Red-eyed Vireo**, and the 4th county record, was at Rancho del Oso on October 4 (JM). Bob Merrill went to look for the Rock Wren at Sunset State Beach on October 17 and found a **Yellow-green Vireo** instead! This was our first county record and arguably the best bird of the season. I was lucky to see it the same morning, but unfortunately it didn't linger. As of the most recent CBRC report there were 31 prior accepted state records, with this bird fitting well into the established pattern of fall vagrants along the coast.

Tennessee Warblers were at Capitola on October 24 and Arana Gulch City Park November 4 (DSu). Three **Nashville Warblers** were along the coast August 30 to October 23 and was the season's total (DSu, DGe). A **Virginia's Warbler** in Capitola on October 17 was nearly hit by a car, but survived to provide our 4th county record (DSu). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Soquel Creek on September 16 (DSu) brought the season's total to three birds. A **Magnolia Warbler** was at Noble Gulch on October 2 (DSu). **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were reported in above average numbers, with 19 or 20 found from August 26 to October 26 (RMe, SG, DSu, DGo). **Hermit Warblers** were at Rancho del Oso October 6 and 24 (RMe). The discovery of an immature male **Blackburnian Warbler** at Sunset State Beach on October 17, our 7th record, was an offshoot of the search for the Yellow-green Vireo (DSu, EF). **Palm Warblers** made a respectable showing, with at least 24 along the coast from September 29 to November 7 (m.ob.). More are expected in late fall.

The county's first **Bay-breasted Warbler** was feeding on newly hatched termites along Soquel Creek in the Soquel Demonstration State Forest on November 10 (DSu). Two **Blackpoll Warblers** were at New Brighton State Beach September 26 (DSu), and singles were at Rancho del Oso October 6 (AD) and Harkins Slough October 17 (RMe). Five **Black-and-white Warblers** were all coastal October 2 to November 3 (DSu, PM, WBT). **American Redstarts** at Rancho del Oso October 10 (JM) and Santa Cruz October 11 (DSu) brought the season's total to five birds. Sadly, the male that had wintered at "the Confluence" for at least three years did not appear this fall. The only reported **MacGillivray's Warbler** was at New Brighton State Beach October 2 (DSu). An adult male **Summer Tanager** brightened up Carbonera Creek near Highway 1 on September 20-26 (RMe, DSu). The season's total for **Lazuli Bunting** stood at five birds found September 2-14 (SG, RMe, DSu).

No one better deserved to have a great bird appear at her bird feeder than Sheri Howe, the owner of The Bird Feeder and purveyor of so much seed. Justice was served when Sheri spotted an apparent immature **Painted Bunting** at her westside Santa Cruz home November 3. This cooperative rarity was enjoyed by over a hundred people as it came to the Howe's feeders through at least November 10. This bunting gets my vote as best feeder bird ever for the county! This will be the second county record, pending review by the CBRC, which had accepted 38 prior state records as of their most recent report. Identification will not be the deciding issue in this case, but rather the bird's possible captive origin might be debated. This record fits the established date span of accepted records and was in a coastal region with a history of vagrants. In my opinion, any serious arguments that this bird might have once been in captivity would be overly conservative.

Careful students of Santa Cruz bird history might guess which species to search for the day after a Painted Bunting is found in the county. I wasn't looking to find it, but a **Green-tailed Towhee** was at Sunset State Beach November 4, for the 7th county record (DSu). The last record was a towhee found the day after our first Painted Bunting in 1992 (see Vol 38, No.2). Two **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** near Soda Lake on October 26 were in the same area where they were found nesting in 1993, apparently the only spot in the County where they live (DSu). Four reports of **White-throated Sparrow** October 6 to November 8 (m.ob.) included one returning to a Santa Cruz feeder for the 2nd or 3rd year (DGe). It was a good longspur season in Northern California, with a few interesting records for Santa Cruz County. Our first record of **Chestnut-collared Longspur** was provided by two birds found north of Soda Lake, with eight **Lapland Longspurs** on October 26 (DSu). Three Laplands flew inland over Sunset State Beach on November 4 (DSu). A **Northern Oriole** at Ben Lomond on October 21 was late for a species rarely detected in fall (BM).

Finally, as of early November all was rather quiet with regard to irruptive landbirds. **Golden crowned Kinglets** were moderately numerous in coastal conifers, but otherwise there has been little of note. There were no reports of **Red Crossbill**, **Evening Grosbeak**, or **Red-breasted Nuthatch** (away from local areas of residency). **Varied Thrush** and **Pine Siskin** seemed sparse and **American Robins** and **Cedar Waxwings** were in unremarkable numbers. Maybe things will pick up for the Christmas Bird Count season!

Cited Observers: David Bockman, Jeff Davis, Al Demartini, Ed Frost, Doug George (DGe), Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow , Dawn Goley (DGo), Jennifer Green, Paula Haller, Sheri Howe, Nadine Hueter, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthecum, Wayne Macon, John Mariani, Robert Merri11 (RMe), Peter Metropulos, Barbara Monahan, Randy Morgan (RMo), Peter Radcliff, Laura Scribner, Debra Shearwater (DSh), David Suddjian (DSu), Monte Tudor-Long, W Breck Tyler. "M.ob." means "many observers".

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from mid-November 1995 to late January 1996

As usual, winter came with an assortment of rarities to rival fall migration for quality. The mild and dry weather of fall and early winter helped a strong contingent of "half-hardy" species to linger into winter. Winds on December 12 exceeded 90 mph at times, causing some interesting bird movements, particularly for phalaropes. Nearly all our winter irruptives were in low numbers or absent, probably because they found good feeding conditions elsewhere. Finally, a county record for the most woodpecker species was set when 10 were found at the Gray Whale Ranch December 14 and 16.

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A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Pelican Rock on November 27 (DSu) and two were at Monterey Bay Academy on Jan 1 (BMo *et al.*). The big windstorm of December 12 brought an unidentified **Pterodroma** petrel close to shore off West Cliff Drive (DSu). The bird appeared to be a "**Cookilaria**" petrel (either Cook's, Stejneger's, Pycroft's or Gould's) and seemed almost at home cutting through the 75+ mph winds! A **Black Storm-Petrel** seen off Soquel Point during an aerial survey of seabirds on December 14 was late (JDv). Pinto Lake's summering **American White Pelican** remained into winter, being joined by four to five others in late December and January (BR, DSu). Six white pelicans flying south over College Lake on Jan 1 were different birds (DSu). A **Brandt's Cormorant** wandering around the RMC Lonestar cement plant at Davenport on December 15 must have been a victim of the December 12 wind storm (RS). **American Bitterns** were at the San Lorenzo River on December 16 (BB) and Drew Lake on January 1 (RMo). **Cattle Egrets** were almost absent this winter; one near Corralitos December 31 to January 1 was the only one reported (RMe).

Greater White fronted Geese included one at De Laveaga Golf Course on December 16 (DSu), one at Harkins Slough on December 30 to January 1 (DG, CK *et al.*), six at College Lake on January 1 (DSu) and 12 there on Jan 19 (DSu). Single **Snow Geese** were at Harkins Slough on November 18 (TN), Wilder Ranch on December 5-12 (DG) and near the Pajaro River mouth on January 1 (JB, JT). Yes, Pinto Lake's **Ross' Goose** lingered on through the reporting period (m.ob.; 26 months and counting), but a "fresh " Ross' was at Shorebirds Pond from November 25 through January (DG, m.ob.). Two flocks totaling 26 **Brant** were off the south county coast on January 1 (JG *et al.*, AB *et al.*). Various reports of **Canada Geese** added up to about 23 birds (mostly of the small forms) from December to January (m.ob.). **Wood Ducks** were much more numerous than usual at College Lake, with a high count of 115 on January 19 (DSu); surveys here typically find fewer than five. A gathering of 1011 **Green-winged Teal** at Harkins Slough on January 1 was a high count (CK *et al.*).

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Harkins Slough on December 17 (DG) and two were at College Lake on January 19 (DSu). The hybrid wigeon remained at Merk Pond through November 19 (BH, DSu). **Redhead** continued their recent trend of late fall and winter presence in the county. Four were at Corralitos Lagoon on November 16, one was at Pajaro Dunes on November 17, and eight were at College Lake January 1 (all DSu). Five **Black Scoters** were along the coast from November through Jan 20 (JG, DG, SGer, DSu). Among various reports of **Hooded Mergansers**,

records from localities where they are rare included two at Waddell Creek on November 17 (DG), two to four near Scotts Valley on December 10-16 (KK), and three at Antonelli Pond on December 16 (EL). Many folks don't think twice about seeing a **Turkey Vulture**, but they are usually rather rare in the county from early November to mid-January. An estimated 10 vultures in the county from December 15 to Jan 1 was above average (m.ob.). **Ferruginous Hawks** were also more common than usual, with about 12-14 different birds found from November 13 to January 19 (m.ob.). Of special interest were a good count of four at Kelly Thompson Ranch on January 1 (SA *et al.*) and the third county report of a dark morph, seen over Capitola on January 17 (DSu).

Five **Golden Eagles** at Kelly-Thompson Ranch on January 1 must be one of the best concentrations on record for the county (SA *et al.*). When was the last time you saw a rail? How about a rail *in a tree!*? Steve Gerow found a **Sora** perched 12-15 feet up in a large willow in Meder Canyon in Santa Cruz on January 11, appearing "rather clumsy and out of place." Greyhound Rock's magnetism for **Black Oystercatchers** continued this winter, with 28 there on January 9 (RMe). A late **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Watsonville Slough on November 11 (DSu). **Red Phalaropes** are affected by big winter storms that sometimes "wreck" large numbers on shore and bring many into inshore waters. The storm of December 11-12 produced our largest onshore movement in recent years, bringing at least 150 birds onshore and many hundreds close to shore (m.ob.). The Santa Cruz County CBC total of 525 from December 16 was nearly nine times higher than the recent 10-year average. Many phalaropes were seen at coastal lagoons, ponds and creek mouths, but others were found walking along roads or swimming in rain puddles. Records of special note were of birds well inland, including three at Pinto Lake on December 20 (DG) and two at Sempervirens Reservoir in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on December 25 (DSu). Tied to the Red Phalarope influx was the discovery of two **Red-necked Phalaropes** at Soquel Creek mouth December 16-17 (EF, S&GH, DSu). This species is very rare in California after early November.

An immature **Franklin's Gull** was at Monterey Bay Academy on November 11 (DSu). **California Gulls** were very numerous. Very high dump counts included about 7700 at Buena Vista Road County Landfill on November 20 (DSu) and about 9500 at Dimeo Lane Santa Cruz City Landfill on December 16 (JDv). After last winter's record showing, only two sightings of **Glaucous Gulls** have surfaced so far this season, perhaps involving the same bird: single first-winter birds were at Pajaro River mouth on November 17 and Buena Vista Road County Landfill on November 20 (DSu). Six **Elegant Terns** at Black Point on November 26 marked the end of their fall presence this season (PR). Two **Pigeon Guillemots** off Sunset State Beach on January 1 were rare for winter (JG). On January 15 a lucky feeder-watcher near Boulder Creek witnessed a **Northern pygmy-Owl** kill an unlucky Mourning Dove and drag it under a bush (TS *fide* SH)! The **Burrowing Owl** near Younger Lagoon remained at least into January (EL, JLi), testifying to the value of Terrace Point, while another was at Davenport on November 30 (RS). A thorough survey of the UCSC owl habitat on December 16 was disappointing, as only two Burrowing Owls were found (JLi, HW). Two **Long-eared Owls** at Gray Whale Ranch on December 16 could not be refound on subsequent attempts (DSu).

A **Lewis' Woodpecker** resided at Gray Whale Ranch December 14 to January 8 (DSu). **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were at Rancho del Oso on November 17 (DG) and Gray Whale Ranch on December 14-16 (DSu). An apparent hybrid **Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsucker** was at Soquel December 16 (DSu). An exciting visitor was a female **Williamson's Sapsucker** amid pines and firs at the Gray Whale Ranch from December 13 to January 3 (DSu). This was our second well-documented county record, with the first being a specimen taken by A.G. Vroomann in 1896. **Pileated Woodpeckers** continued to be reported from the Mount Hermon area and the

coastal slope of Ben Lomond Mountain (m.ob.). A most intriguing report was of an apparent **Wood-Pewee** in La Selva on January 12 (JG). The report was supported by written details and a sketch which indicated a wood-pewee, but which one? Separating the two wood-pewees is one of the most difficult identification challenges in North America, and the plumage features and described call were inconclusive in this case. In fact, there are *no* verified winter records of any wood-pewee in California, so a record of either species needs unassailable details and preferably a tape recording of the calls.

A calling **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was at Branciforte Creek near Highway 1 from December 8 to January 7 (DSu). An **Eastern Phoebe** was at the UCSC Farm Project from January 1-6 (DG). A **Tropical Kingbird** was sporadically seen near Natural Bridges State Beach from December 14 to January 9 (JM, SGer, DSu), and another was at College Lake on January 1 (DSu). Two **Barn Swallows** at Back Ranch Road on December 16-17 were quite rare for winter and our first such record away from the Pajaro Valley (WBT, MB, DSu). Others were reportedly also seen on the 16th near Point Reyes and Arcata, suggesting some broad movement. **Common Raven** numbers continued to grow and they continued their spread in south county. A whopping 191 at the two south county landfills on November 20 (DSu) was ominous in the eyes of ravenophobes but cause for admiration in the eyes of ravenophiles. A night roost discovered on the Gray Whale Ranch in December was significant as we know very little about the raven's roosting habits in our region. Roost counts on several December dates ranged from 70 to 123 ravens (DSu). Big flocks of **American Crows** from the mid-county coast were 90 at Nearys Lagoon on November 23 (D.G) and 106 in Soquel on December 16 (DSu).

The second **Rock Wren** of fall was northwest of Scott Creek Beach on November 27 (DSu). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** made a very strong showing this winter and were common throughout the forested regions of the county. Our December 16 CBC total of 213 was nearly four times the recent 10-year average. The highest single area count was about 270 near headquarters of Big Basin Redwoods State Park on January 8 (DSu). **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** are regular along our north coast in the winter, but quite rare otherwise, so four found in south county were noteworthy: one to two at Harkins Slough from November 26 to January 1 (DG, CK *et al.*), one at Shorebirds Pond from January 1-25 (BMo *et al.*, DSu), and one at East Struve Slough on January 2 (DSh). **Townsend's Solitaire** is irregularly reported in the county during fall and winter, and usually only one or two are found, if any. This winter we had a record influx of seven to nine solitaires found from December 2 to January 7 (DSu, RS). They were found along upper Empire Grade, at San Vicente Creek, Gray Whale Ranch and Soquel Demonstration State Forest, and the ones seen feeding were eating madrone berries.

Fourteen species of wood warblers were found in the county in December and January, including a good showing by our rare but regular visitors, appearances by some true rarities, and a notable influx by a normally rare species. To save space, I do not list localities for all the interesting records. Four **Nashville Warblers** were found from December 16 to January 19 (DSu). A **Yellow Warbler** was at Neary Lagoon December 14 to January 2 (DG, SGer). Seven **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were found from November 23 to January 20 (m.ob.), including rare mountain winter records from Gray Whale Ranch (DSu) and near Quail Hollow (BH) on December 16. **Hermit Warblers** had a record winter, with a number of reports of mixed flocks with multiple Hermits (DSu, RF, CE, JW). About 40 different birds were found from December 13 to January 20, compared to our usual winter total of only one to four birds! Most were in various forested habitats in the mountains, but two were in planted woodlots near the coast. Many were found on my extensive bird surveys on the Gray Whale Ranch, where Hermits were found daily in mixed flocks at a ratio of one Hermit for about every 20 Townsend's Warblers. One flock on January 2 had *eight* Hermits. Why did so many winter here this season?

A star in the cast of winter warblers was a female **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Gray Whale Ranch January 2-9 (DSu). This was our third county record and only the fourth winter record for Northern California. Several steps down from that bird were the eight **Palm Warblers** found from November 14 to January 19 (DG, SGer, JDz, BMo, DSu). **Black-and-white Warblers** made a strong showing, with seven found from November 21 to January 19 (DG, DSu, EF, S&GH). An immature **MacGillivray's Warbler** along the Pajaro River was a very rare find, seen on the Monterey County side on January 1 (JB, JT), then on the Santa Cruz side on January 19 (DSu). Ultra-rare in winter, last year's wintering **Hooded Warbler** returned to Capitola by at least November 29, then remained elusive, but resurfaced in mid-January (MT, DSu). Finally, five **Wilson's Warblers** were in the Pajaro Valley January 1-19 (DSi, SGet, CK *et al*, JT, JB). A female or immature **Summer Tanager** graced Neary Lagoon from November 15 into December, but it moved to the surrounding neighborhood when the December 12 storm blasted the flowers from its favorite eucalyptus (SGer, m.ob.). It was seen through at least January 24 (MS). A male **Western Tanager** was at Carbonera Creek on December 9 (DSu). An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a feeder in Santa Cruz on December 17-18 (K&PJ). **Black-headed Grosbeaks** at other Santa Cruz feeders included an immature male on November 25 (SK) and a female on January 10-17 (GN). A rural female Black-headed was in the hills at the Kelly-Thompson Ranch on January 1 (BW). One of the season's rarest birds was an adult male **Lazuli Bunting** near College Lake January 1-19 (DSu), apparently only the third winter record for California. The **Painted Bunting** in Santa Cruz remained to November 17 (SH), satisfying about 200 birders before its departure. Thanks for the hospitality, Sheri and Paul!

A cooperative **Clay-colored Sparrow** came to a feeder in La Selva from November 12-24 (JG, DSu, EL). A **Chipping Sparrow** at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on December 16-17 (BB, TN, DSu) was the first winter report in nearly three years. **Grasshopper Sparrows** are rare and little known in winter in Northern California. This season one was at Wilder Ranch State Park December 16-19 (CE, JDv, DSu), with *three* in the same spot on January 9 (DSu). Another was at Kelly-Thompson Ranch on January 1 (JLo, SA, BW). We had only one well-documented previous winter record. A whopping 38 **Swamp Sparrows** found from November 11 to January 7 (m.ob.) included four captured and banded at Wilder Ranch (MB, WBT), four at Harkins Slough on January 1 (CK *et al.*), and 22 from a complete survey of College Lake on January 1 (DSu). **White-throated Sparrows** are having a record season; 29 were found from November 18 to January 19 (m.ob.). **Harris' Sparrow** was found in the county for the first time since 1981. An immature visited a Santa Cruz feeder from December 13-19 (MS, m.ob.), while another immature was at East Struve Slough on January 1 (DSu).

A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was near Soda Lake on November 19 (DSu). Hummingbird feeders in a Soquel yard attracted an adult male **Hooded Oriole** from November 10 to at least January 24 and an immature male **Bullock's Northern Oriole** from November 28 to December 18 (GC). A female Bullock's Oriole was in Santa Cruz on December 10 (DSu). The season was noteworthy for the lack of **Red Crossbills** and **Evening Grosbeaks**.

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Alan Baldrige, Bruce Barrett, Jim Booker, Martha Brown, Giriny Campbell, Jeff Davis (JDv), Jim Danzenbaker (JDz), David Ekdahl, Carleton Eyster, Rick Founier, Ed Frost, Doug George, Steve Geiow (SGer), Steve Getty (SGet), Jennifer Green, Bob Hargis, Scott and Gwyn Hartley, Sheri Howe, Karen and Pete Jacobson, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Surrey Kent, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthecum (JLi), Jim Lomax (JLo), Joy McKinney, Robert Merrill (RMe), Barbara Monahan (BMo), Randy Morgan (RMo), Todd Newberry, Gus Norton, Peter Radcliff, Bob Ramer, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSH), Dan Singer (DSi), Roberta Smith, Tom Spring, David Suddjian (DSu), Jim Tietz, Mary Tindle, W. Breck Tyler, Hira Walker, Brian Weed, John Welch. "m:ob." means many observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from late January to early April 1996

A single **American White Pelican** lingering at Pinto Lake through at least March 25 was perhaps the same that over-summered last year (RMe, DSu). The dilapidated Davenport Pier collapsed further into the sea in late January, leaving only about one third of the **Brandt's Cormorant** nesting habitat that was present a few years ago. The reduced nesting colony included 41 nests in progress on March 26 (DSu). In a season of very few **Cattle Egrets**, one was at Wilder Ranch State Park on January 29 (DG) and one to two were near Harkins Slough March 22-25 (DSu, RMe). Most interesting were two Cattle Egrets foraging in a left-over weedy lot along Pacific Avenue in downtown Santa Cruz on April 5 (DSu). The Pinto Lake **Ross' Goose** was still present through March 25 (RMe, DSu), and the one at Shorebirds Pond stayed through March 17 (MS, DSu). Two Ross' were feeding in a field near Davenport on March 30 for a very rare north coast record (DSu). A flock of 12 **Brant** flying down the coast at Lighthouse Point on January 27 were rare for mid-winter (SG).

Canada Geese included one at Pinto Lake through March 25 (DSu, RMe), eight at Shorebirds Pond that day (DSu), and one in long-term residence at lagoons of the Live Oak area through March (DSu, BH). A male **Blue-winged Teal** was at Wilder Creek mouth on January 29 (DG), and a pair was at Terrace Point on February 15 (AD). A female **Redhead** at Harkins Slough on March 22 was only the second spring record in recent history (DSu). Two more **Black Scoters** in late February (RMe, DSu *et al.*) brought the November - February total up to seven birds. An **Osprey** at Scott Creek on February 8 was along the north coast, where it is particularly rare in winter (DG). Observers should watch for **Swainson's Hawks** during spring migration. So far this spring reports included an early immature over Watsonville on March 2 (BM), a light morph adult over Sycamore Grove on March 20 (DSu), a dark morph adult over Scott Creek Marsh on March 26 (DSu), and a light morph adult at Waddell Creek bluffs on April 6 (DSu). All were noted to be moving north or up the coast.

Two **Ferruginous Hawks** near Soda Lake on February 8 added to this winter's record showing (DSu). The winter's only reported **Rough-legged Hawk** was harassing gulls at Twin Lakes State Beach on February 9 (BS). A pair of **Peregrine Falcons** were in the Soquel Creek watershed in February (*fide* TS, JL), where they were first found last spring. Perhaps they will nest there this year! Is something going on with **Wild Turkeys** in the county? To the best of my knowledge, established populations are limited to the extreme southeastern part of the county, adjacent to areas of Santa Clara and San Benito Counties where they also live. But in the last few years a scattering of reports from elsewhere in Santa Cruz County indicate that birders encountering turkeys should be sure to pass along any sightings. Within the last two years there have been reports from Spanish Ranch Road, China Grade, Scotts Valley, UCSC and Gray Whale Ranch. Most of these might be reasonably attributed to local releases or escapes. At present I don't have any reports of breeding or enough data to indicate established breeding populations in those areas.

High tide congregations of **Black Oystercatchers** at Greyhound Rock were 48 on February 7 and 21, and 28 on March 19 (RMe). How far do these birds come to seek shelter at the rock? A flock of 17 **Whimbrels** at Natural Bridges State Beach on January 20 was astutely recognized as a high

count, reflecting above average numbers along our coast this winter (SG). **Glaucous Gull** reports were of a first-winter bird and a rare second-winter bird at the Pajaro River mouth on February 28 (DSu), and a first-winter bird at Davenport Landing on March 5 (JD). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** was at Wilder Creek Beach on February 25 (DG) and four at Waddell Creek beach on March 15 (JP). The **Burrowing Owl** at Terrace Point lingered at least through February (JL). A daytime sighting of two **Common Poorwills** on March 27 at the Granite Construction rock quarry near Empire Grade was from a new area for the species (SS *vide* RMo). As I've noted in the past, this is one of the least well known of our regularly-occurring species. Just what is its pattern of occurrence in the Ben Lomond Mountain area?

A **Pileated Woodpecker** at Fritch Creek (tributary to Love Creek) on February 1 was the first for that watershed, as was one at Scott Creek on March 26 (DSu). One on the upper UCSC campus on March 18 was one of few ever recorded for that area (JD), although they are resident now just to the west of the campus. Pileateds continued to be reported at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park (including one appropriately in the Big Trees Grove on February 22; CV) and the coastal slope of Ben Lomond Mountain (DSu). I will not be citing reports from these areas in the future, unless they are of special interest, *but please continue to pass along all sightings!* A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was near the Brown Bulb Ranch Marketplace in Capitola on February 27 (DSu). Two more **Eastern Phoebes** were reported: one along Highway 1 at the west edge of Santa Cruz from about February 13-26 (JM, PR, DSu) and another at Seabright Beach from February 27 to March 4 (BS, DSu). Perhaps one of these was the same as the January UCSC bird cited in my last column.

Returning **Violet-green Swallows** were reported from various places around the county as early as mid-February, and the other swallow species also returned a little early (m.ob.). These were exceptions among the set of species that normally arrive in late winter or early spring, as nearly every other such species arrived late. A survey of wintering **House Wrens** at Sunset State Beach and near Shorebirds Pond on January 25 elicited responses from 29 birds using playback of taped calls (DSu). A **Nashville Warbler** at Natural Bridges State Beach on January 22 brought the winter's total up to five (DG). We don't pay too much attention to the departure of our wintering **Orange-crowned Warblers**, but one of a gray-headed form wintering in Capitola lingered through at least April 5 (DSu). The **Yellow Warbler** wintering at Neary Lagoon stayed until at least February 25, by which time it had acquired "a good number of red streaks" (SG).

One of the best birds of the winter was a male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** seen sporadically from December 7 to February 20 at a residence along Empire Grade near Waldorf School (TM, JB, DSu). This was our second winter record and one of a handful of winter records for northern California. Two more wintering **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were reported: at Wilder Ranch on February 9 and Neary Lagoon on March 1 (DG). The season's final estimate of **Hermit Warblers** was an outstanding 46 individuals. On average, they were found at a ratio of about one Hermit for every 30 Townsend's Warblers. The ultra-rare wintering **Black-throated Green Warbler** stayed at Gray Whale Ranch to at least February 23 (DSu). A **Palm Warbler** at Laguna Creek on February 8 (DG) brought the December - February total for the county to seven birds. A **Black-and-white Warbler** at Zayante Creek on February 10 (KK *et al.*) was especially unusual in the mountains. The **Hooded Warbler** remained in Capitola through at least February 19 (MT). A **Wilson's Warbler** at Scott Creek on February 8 was especially rare along our north coast in winter (DG).

The winter's unusual sprinkling of **Grasshopper Sparrows** continued with two along Highway 1 north of Scott Creek on February 6 (DSu), in the same area as one found in February 1994. Some additional **Swamp Sparrows** brought the winter total up to an estimated 41 birds, the second

most ever for the season. This winter's showing of **White-throated Sparrow** set a record, with at least 39 birds reported. The male **Hooded Oriole** wintering in Soquel remained through February 19 (GC). An oddly-colored male **Purple Finch** at Antonelli Pond on February 29 was "bright yellow-orange where it should have been red" (SG). This color variant is commonly seen on House Finches but is quite unusual for Purple Finch. Among the irruptive finches, **Red Crossbill** and **Evening Grosbeak** remained absent, **Pine Siskin** remained sparse, but **American Goldfinch** increased in late winter.

Cited Observers: Jennifer Baum, Ginny Campbell, Jeff Davis, Adam Donkin, Doug George, Steve Gerow, Bob Hargis, Ken Kellman, Janet Linthicum, Tom Marshall, Robert Merrill (RMe), Randy Morgan (RMo), Bryan Mori, Joe Morlan, Jeff Poklen, Peter Radcliff, Michael Sarka, Barbara Scharfenstein, Suzanne Schettler, David Suddjian, Thorn Sutfin, Mary Tindle, Connie Vigno. "m.ob." means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from April to mid-July 1996

Spring and early Summer 1996 produced important breeding records, notably rare migrants and over-summering individuals and two first county records. Extensive and intensive coverage of the Pajaro River was unprecedented and generated many interesting observations. Notice how many of the following records were not of "rarities," but of the "usual" species in high numbers, changing their range or out of season. This season illustrated well how events played out by the usual suspects can have the greater ornithological significance.

A seven-hour seawatch from El Jarro Point on April 19 tallied 46,835 northbound **Pacific Loons**, 954 **Common Loons** and 460 **Red-throated Loons** (DSu). The numbers are impressive but not unusual for the peak of the spring movement. Overland migrant loons included 30 **Commons** from April 27 - May 29 (DSu, JD) and two **Red-throateds** on May 12 (DSu), the latter a first for the trans-mountain flyway over Capitola. Single **Red-necked Grebes** were at Davenport on April 4 (RMe) and a bit late at La Selva Beach on May 5- 7 (JG). **Sooty Shearwaters** staged a good showing this spring and early summer, flocking into the bay to feed on most afternoons and generating much comment from the birding and non-birding public (m.ob.). Flocks of 10 to 75 thousand birds were frequent, with high estimates reaching 300,000 birds. An illegal gill net abandoned close to La Selva Beach entrapped and killed 265 shearwaters on June 25 (DB).

A **booby** was seen and photographed 5.5 miles south of Soquel Point on July 10 (JD, WBT *et al.*)! Its identity as either Brown or Red-footed is still being debated. A lone **American White Pelican** remained at Pinto Lake at least into July, probably spending its second summer there (RMe, DSu). A major flight of **Brown Pelicans** brought 7,955 past Pelican Rock during three hours on the evening of June 6 (DSu). **Great Egrets** failed to follow up on last year's first-ever county nesting at Pinto Lake (RMe). Two **Green Heron** nests were found in a most unusual setting in eucalyptus trees at the corner of Chestnut Street and Mission Street in Santa Cruz. One nest fledged young on May 14 (GN) and the other on June 26 (DSu). They were unusual for their distance away from water (0.4 mile) and their location over the edge of a busy five-lane highway! Four other nests found along the Pajaro River were more typical (BMo, DSu).

Pinto Lake's **Ross' Goose** was still there through June 19 (RMe, EF, DSu). A **Canada Goose** there on March 25 had characteristics of the rare Aleutian form *leucopareia* (RMe). A family of large *moffetti* **Canada Geese** (including 6 goslings) was at Pinto on June 9 for our first county nesting record (EF)! Clearly the lake needs to be re-named Goose Lake. Up to five **Brant** were summering at the Pajaro River mouth in early July (DSu, JD). **Gadwall** were found nesting along the Pajaro River for the first time, with several pairs there all season (m.ob.) and a female with young on June 20 (DSu). A **Turkey Vulture** nest in a burned out hollow of an old redwood in Gamecock Canyon on June 19 (DSu) was further evidence that such spots probably provide most nesting sites in the county. At least two **Ospreys** lingered through the early summer, leading to speculation of possible nesting in the county, where none has been documented since the 1930's. One was seen repeatedly at the Pajaro River from May 29 through July 5 (JD, DSu, EF). Another was carrying a fish up the coast past Long Marine Lab on June 7, and perhaps the same bird carried a fish to the northwest from Antonelli Pond on July 5 (JL). Osprey migration is protracted,

but northbound migrants are rarely seen after late May and southbound birds are rare before late July.

The spring's *fifth Swainson's Hawk* flew north from the Pajaro River at Murphy Crossing on April 27 (DSu). Our usual tally is zero. A **Merlin** at the Pajaro River on May 11 was late (DSu). **Peregrine Falcons** nesting in the upper watershed of the San Lorenzo River were successful for the first time in their second year at the site (BL, SCPBRG). The pair that nested in the Waddell Creek watershed from 1992-1995 either failed early, did not nest at all, or nested somewhere else nearby (JL, SCPBRG). One to two seen at nearby Big Basin from April to June were perhaps that pair (DSu, EB *et al.*). Another pair was seen on several dates in spring in the Soquel Creek watershed (*fide* JL) and several sightings were made of single birds along the coast from Davenport north (DSu, JL). Steve Gerow noted the apparent extirpation of **California Quail** at Neary Lagoon and Antonelli Pond, two habitat "islands" in the developed Westside of Santa Cruz where increased development and disturbance may have been the cause. Careful observers can make important observations by tracking our "common" birds.

Increased attention on the Pajaro River this spring documented use by large numbers of migrant shorebirds, a feature never noted before. The most productive habitat was provided by the many shallows, gravel and mud bars on the three-mile stretch downstream of Murphy Crossing. Numbers there peaked at 11 species and 2048 individuals on May 1 (DSu). High counts for selected species were: 259 **Semipalmated Plovers** on April 27, 186 **Greater Yellowlegs** and nine **Lessers** on April 21, 52 **Spotted Sandpipers** on April 27, 827 **Western Sandpipers**, 619 **Leasts** and 207 **Dunlin** on May 1 (all DSu). A record five **Solitary Sandpipers** were found this spring, all in the Pajaro Valley from April 14 to May 7 (JD, DSu, BMo). **Spotted Sandpipers** were confirmed nesting on the Pajaro with downy young at three spots in June and July (EF, DSu, BMo). Seasonally rare **Long-billed Curlews** included one flying northeast over the lower Pajaro River on June 9 (JD) and one flying north over Capitola on June 23 (DSu). Especially rare in spring migration were four **Pectoral Sandpipers** on the Pajaro on April 27 (DSu). A substantial inshore influx of migrant **Red Phalaropes** occurred in late April and early May. Not too many reports were received, but two high counts were 5000 counted on a April 25 aerial survey from Pajaro River mouth to La Selva (JD), and about 3500 off Manresa Beach on May 8 (DSu). Birds well inland, where rare, included eight near the Pajaro upstream of Highway 1 on May 7 and three all the way up the river at Murphy Crossing on May 9 (DSu).

Fifty-seven **Pomarine Jaegers** passed El Jarro Point during the seven-hour watch on April 19 (DSu). **Parasitic Jaeger** is much rarer in spring, so one at Lighthouse Point on April 11 (SG) and two passing El Jarro Point on April 19 (DSu) were good finds. **Franklin's Gulls** were again among gull flocks in freshly plowed fields on the north coast, with two adults near Table Rock on May 6 (DSu). The annual spring gull gathering in these fields warrants more coverage in the future, as rare gulls may be regular . A worn first year **Mew Gull** at the San Lorenzo River mouth on May 22 was late (JD, JC). A second year **Herring Gull** at Sunset State Beach on July 3 was very rare for summer (DSu). A first year **Glaucous Gull** passed El Jarro Point on April 19 (DSu). Three **Least Terns** passed north over Capitola in the trans-mountain flyway on May 1 (DSu). One at the Pajaro River mouth on July 3 was a rare summer record for recent years (DSu). Two **Black Terns** were at College Lake on April 27 (DSu). Three **Black Skimmers** were photographed as they beat the crowds to Santa Cruz's Main Beach on April 30 - May 1 (MH), while two were briefly at Capitola Beach on May 15 (DSu). Another flew north from the Pajaro River mouth on June 16 (DR, RC). As this species continues to nest in the San Francisco Bay area we should watch for an increase of migrants moving through in spring and summer.

Marbled Murrelets were found in unusually high numbers off the Santa Cruz area this spring. 30 from two spots along West Cliff Drive on April 19 (TN), 107 along the whole length of West Cliff and from Soquel Point to the San Lorenzo River on April 28 (DSu), and 32 off the western half of West Cliff Drive on May 15 (SG). The colony of **Rhinoceros Anklets** at Davenport celebrated its tenth anniversary this season, with up to 18 birds present and some seen flying up to the bluffs in spots not used in previous years (RMe, DSu, m.ob.). An extremely rare migrant **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** was a highlight of the season along the Pajaro River near Highway 129 on June 17 (DSu). The Terrace Point **Burrowing Owl** stayed until March 21 (JL). A flock of about 95 **Vaux's Swifts** over the San Lorenzo River near Highway I on June 26 was an exceptional number for early summer (DSu). A female **Calliope Hummingbird** appeared briefly at a Ben Lomond feeder on June 3, providing the latest of our few county records (RMe). A female **Red-naped Sapsucker** at Long Ridge Road April 24-28 was our latest by seven weeks (DSu). Hot on the heels of last year's first nesting for San Mateo County, a **Red-breasted Sapsucker** feeding two juveniles at Big Creek on June 23 provided the first county breeding record (DSu)! A pair of **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** nested at Sycamore Grove, with young in a nest on July 11, for the first breeding confirmation away from the Pajaro Valley area (DSu).

A pair of **Pileated Woodpeckers** nested at Gray Whale Ranch, fledging young by June 26, for the first documented breeding in the Ben Lomond Mountain area (DSu). Two to four pairs now reside there, ranging from the watersheds of Wilder to San Vicente Creek, but they were only first recorded on the mountain in 1991. A pair in Gamecock Canyon on July 7 extended the breeding season range still further south (DSu). A pair of **Western Kingbirds** with a nest near Soda Lake on May 26 was only our second documented breeding record, followed by an adult feeding a fledgling along the Pajaro River near Highway 129 on June 25 (DSu). A singing **Varied Thrush** at Gray Whale Ranch on June 26 established the southernmost breeding season record for the region, extending the range several miles (DSu). One of the best finds was a singing **Bell's Vireo** on the Pajaro River downstream of Highway 1 on May 29-30 (JD, DSu). It was found on the Monterey side on May 29, then on the Santa Cruz side on May 30 for the first county record. It appeared to be the endangered subspecies Least Bell's Vireo (*V. b. pusillus*), now apparently extirpated as a breeder in Northern and Central California and even migrants are extremely rare.

The absence of nesting **Yellow Warblers** at four regular breeding stations in Mid-County was interesting: none were found at Neary Lagoon, Antonelli Pond, Sycamore Grove or Soquel Creek in Capitola (SG, DSu). None have been found at Sycamore Grove for the last three years! What is going on? A singing **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was a nice find along the Pajaro River downstream of Highway I on June 18 (RMe). An apparent first year male **Townsend's Warbler** summering at Gray Whale Ranch from June 15 - July 3 was unprecedented for the season, perhaps a first for the state (DSu)! **Hermit Warbler** was confirmed to nest at Quail Hollow County Park on July 4, one of few confirmations from the San Lorenzo River watershed away from the Castle Rock area (KK). A singing **Ovenbird** near Pelican Rock on June 1 was the sixth county record and the second for spring (DSu).

A big surprise of the season was the discovery of nesting **MacGillivray's Warblers** along the north coast and at the Pajaro River! This has been among the rarest of all our breeding birds, with only three scattered confirmations in the last 40+ years, all involving only single pairs. It had never been found breeding along our coast until this year, and there were no records for the Pajaro River system subsequent to the 1930s. I found a pair on the Pajaro upstream of Murphy Crossing in April and the female was seen feeding two fledglings there on June 17 (DSu). Two other adults were upstream of Highway 129 in June and July. Two singing males were reported in coastal scrub at Rancho del Oso beginning May 4 (JC, KJ, RMe). This prompted me to survey there and at other north coast sites using taped songs to elicit responses. From June 1-15 I

checked 19 sites with "soft" coastal scrub from Rancho del Oso to Major's Creek. MacGillivray's responded at nine sites, totaling 14 males and seven females! They were found south to Panther Creek, just south of Davenport, and breeding confirmations were obtained at Rancho del Oso, near Pelican Rock, Molino Creek and Panther Creek.

Yellow-breasted Chats were well reported from the Pajaro River and vicinity. A few that were apparently migrants passing through were found from April 25 - May 29 (RMe, JD, ACV). Probable breeding pairs were near Soda Lake on May 26, at the Pajaro upstream of Highway 129 from May 9-27, and upstream of Murphy Crossing on May 9-27 (DSu). Nesting was confirmed on the river downstream of Highway 129 with a female feeding two fledglings on June 17 (DSu). An adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was photographed at a feeder in Rio Del Mar where it stayed March 14 to April 15 (DSa). Others found were a singing male at the Pajaro near Thurwachter Bridge on May 11, a first year male near Scott Creek Marsh on June 1, and a female Capitola on July 2 (all DSu). A singing male **Blue Grosbeak** at the Pajaro upstream of Highway 129 on April 22 was a rare find for the county and our first spring record since 1971 (DSu). Singing **Indigo Buntings** were at the Pajaro April 27 and May 28 (DSu). Singing **Lazuli Buntings** at Wilder Ranch State Park May 10 to June 6 suggested nesting there (RMe). The Lazuli's only consistent breeding haunts in the county are near Loma Prieta and in the county's southeast corner. There is little evidence from the coastal zone.

Out of place **Lark Sparrows** were in a Westside Santa Cruz yard on April 18 (SH) and at Happy Valley June 8 (BB). A summering **Golden-crowned Sparrow** along the Pajaro River near Watsonville June 16- July 12 had partial breeding plumage on June 16 (DSu). There were just two prior summer records for the county. **Great-tailed Grackles** have accelerated their spread into Northern California in recent seasons, with this spring bringing the most yet. We obtained our second through fifth county records with a pair at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz from early April to May 8 (JF), a pair at Thompson Road east of Watsonville on April 27 (DSu), a singing male at Westside Santa Cruz May 3 (ill) and two females in Watsonville on May 4 (DSu)! A **Red Crossbill** at UCSC on June 6 was the first reported in the county in 11 months (JC). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were more common than normal, and were especially noteworthy for their presence in areas where they are normally absent or rare. Quite a few were found in small groups at various spots along the Pajaro River from May to July (JD, DSu, EF), with breeding confirmations there on June 16 (near Watsonville) and June 20 (downstream of Thurwachter Bridge, Monterey side). It had not been found breeding along the river previously, except upstream of Highway 129. Other nesting pairs near Swanton Road and Yellow Bank Creek on June 13 were the first ever for the north coast (DSu).

Cited Observers: Dennis Baldwin, Bonnie Bedzin, Esther Burkett, Rita Caratello, Ann Carroll- Vasquez, Josiah Clark, Jeff Davis, Jared Figurski, Ed Frost, Steve Gerow, Jennifer Green, Mike Harris, Sheri Howe, Kent Johnson, Km Kellman, Bryan Latta, Janet Linthicum, Robert Merrill (RMe), Bryan Mori (BMo), Todd Newberry, Gus Norton, Don Roberson, Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, Dan Salaices (DSa), David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler. "m.ob." means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from mid-July to September 1996

This column includes the last records contributed by Bob Merrill before he passed away in August. I miss my friend, but I also miss one of the few who regularly reported bird sightings so they might be added to the county files. I would like to encourage more people to keep track of their observations and to pass along the noteworthy ones. Aside from records of rarities, many types of observations are of interest: arrivals and departures, high counts, nesting records, and birds out of I season or out of place. Part of the problem is that some folks are not sure what to watch for or report. To facilitate increased I reporting I've developed a list of the sorts of information that would be most appreciated. Copies will be available at club I meetings, or you may contact me and I'll gladly mail it to you.

* * *

Unusual numbers of **Pacific Loons** spent the summer off Sunset State Beach, with a high count of 167 on July 3 and 82 remaining by August 17 (DSu). Summering grebes along the south county coast included 1758 **Western Grebes** and 405 **Clark's** on August 17 (DSu). More **Northern Fulmars** were present in the bay this summer than usual (JD, DSh). Fifty-three dead fulmars were found on a beach walk from Palm Beach to New Brighton State Beach on August 17 (DSu). A **Leach's Storm-Petrel** was offshore on September 1 (DSh). Leach's is regular offshore in central California, but there is very little precedent in the way of actual records for Santa Cruz County waters. A **Flesh-footed Shearwater** and an unidentified **Tropicbird** was also seen offshore on September 1 (DSh). Jeff Davis decided the booby he saw off Soquel Point on July 10 (cited in the last issue) was a **Red-footed Booby**. If the California Bird Records Committee agrees, it would be the first record for the county. In their latest report (*Western Birds* 27: 100) they accepted the **Brown Booby** seen at Santa Cruz on September 26, 1991, currently the only accepted identification of a booby for the county.

It has come to my attention that the long-lingering **American White Pelican** at Pinto Lake was shot with an arrow during the winter of 1993-1994, rendering it incapable of flight (*fide* BH). It will not be mentioned further here. A roosting flock of 320+ **Brown Pelicans** on Wilder Beach September 24 (DG) was noteworthy for the mainland away from Pajaro River mouth, highlighting the value of beaches that are not over run by people. Observations of this year's nesting **Brandt's Cormorants** documented 57 successful nests at Davenport Pier (RMe) and 16 successful nests at Natural Bridges State Beach (SG, RMe). At the latter site they nest on a small sea stack and the natural bridge, but those on the bridge start late and have been less successful. A flock of eight **White-faced Ibis** flying southeast over Palm Beach on September 9 was a treat (EL). Pinto Lake's **Ross' Goose** (which *can* fly) was still there through September (DSu).

Doug George observed six **Brant** that had been color-banded in western Alaska. These were one at Scott Creek Beach and three among a flock of 35 at Waddell Beach on June 7, and two among a flock of 20 at Wilder Beach on July 5. All were banded in July 1995, except for one banded in July 1991. The flock of 20 on July 5 was a high count for July. An apparent *minima* **Canada Goose** was at Schwan Lake on July 21 (PR), then at Corcoran Lagoon through at least September 23 (DSu). This small form is very rare in the county during the summer. A hybrid male **Wood**

Duck x Mandarin Duck at Nearys Lagoon on September 20 must have looked neat (SG). I don't know the origin of that bird, but we have had a few feral Mandarin Ducks among Wood Ducks in "wild" settings in the last several years. Two **Blue-winged Teal** were on the Pajaro River on September 15 (DSu). A female **Common Merganser** with 11 grown young at Soquel Creek mouth August 5-14 must have been from a nesting upstream (DA), while 23 immatures busily feeding there on September 30 - October 1 were apparently a congregation of multiple broods (JT, DSu). Another family group with grown young was in a well-established breeding area on the San Lorenzo River at Rincon Gorge on August 24-25 (MTL).

An adult **Broad-winged Hawk** flying south over the Pajaro River on September 19 was pretty rare, but the adult **Swainson's Hawk** northwest of Watsonville on August 22 was only the second fall record ever for the county (both DSu). A family group of **Peregrine Falcons** including two young were seen at Olive Springs Quarry along Soquel Creek in mid-July (*fide* TS). Presumably they nested somewhere nearby, but where? Bob Merrill was treated to an unusual arboreal **Virginia Rail** at Rancho del Oso on July 30 when it flushed up 10 feet into an alder and walked back and forth along a branch. Over the last two years a restoration project at Wilder Ranch has transformed agricultural fields along Wilder Creek into wetlands. The presence of four **Virginia Rails** and two **Soras** there on August 29 suggests things are developing nicely (DG). Doug George (Point Reyes Bird Observatory) reported on the 1996 nesting success of **Snowy Plovers** at Wilder, Laguna and Scott creek beaches. Seventeen nests at all three beaches hatched 40 chicks but only 17 juveniles survived to fledge. Predator exclosures were successful in protecting nests through hatching (all 15 nests with exclosures hatched eggs), but after hatching the families may move to unprotected parts of the beach. Disturbance by people and unleashed dogs were continued problems at Laguna and Scott creeks, where public access is largely unrestricted, reducing fledgling success.

An **American Avocet** at Twin Lakes State Beach on September 29 was very rare away from the Pajaro River Valley (PR). **Solitary Sandpipers** were along the Pajaro River on August 29 and September 19 (DSu). Twelve **Wandering Tattlers** at West Cliff Drive on July 26 was a good fall count (SG). **Red Knots** are always rare in the county, so two at Waddell Creek mouth on August 13 were noteworthy (PR). An adult **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Natural Bridges State Beach on July 30 was the first adult ever reported in the fall in the county (SG), while a more typical juvenile was near the Pajaro River on August 21 (DSu). This brings the county total up to nine records. Through September there were reports of 13 **Baird's Sandpipers** (August 5-30) and one **Pectoral Sandpiper** (September 24) in the county (DG, PR, DSu). A **Long-tailed Jaeger** and **South Polar Skua** were seen offshore on August 27 (JD, WBT), and three skuas were there on September 1 (DSh). An adult **Mew Gull** at Cowell's Beach in Santa Cruz on July 1 was exceptional for summer (WBT), while a juvenile at Sunset State Beach on August 17 was a very early arrival (DSu). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** at Wilder Beach on August 12 was the first summer record in the county files since 1987 (DG). Two **Elegant Terns** feeding in the Pajaro River about two miles upstream of the mouth on September 15 were most unusual in a freshwater setting (DSu).

Intensive studies of **Marbled Murrelets** at Big Basin produced some interesting discoveries (*fide* EB and SS). A nest with a chick was found in a redwood tree near park headquarters on July 9 and monitored with a video camera until the chick successfully fledged on July 21! Evidence of a failed nest was found in another redwood tree where nesting has been documented in at least five of the last six years (only twice successfully). This year's nest was in the exact same niche as one in 1992. An eggshell found on the ground in another area on June 12 indicated another nest of unknown outcome. Finally, an under-weight juvenile was found grounded near park headquarters on July 29, fed and released that day at Año Nuevo. **Rhinoceros Auklets** were bringing fish into

two nest burrows at Davenport on July 24 (DSu), A **Tufted Puffin** was seen offshore on August 27 (JD, WBT). A **White-winged Dove** visited a bird feeder in western Santa Cruz on August 8 for the fifth acceptable county record and the first since 1990 (GB). A **Burrowing Owl** at U.C.S.C. had returned by September 29 and apparently had been there for a little while prior (JL).

An immature male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was in western Santa Cruz on August 14 and a female type was at Meder Canyon on August 31 (both SG). This brings the county total up to 10 records, with half from fall. An adult male **Costa's Hummingbird** defended a territory in a wonderful garden in Rio Del Mar from August 30 to at least September 27, for our 8th county record and the third for fall (SE). Other than one that wintered near Watsonville from at least November 1994 to April 1995, this is the only one known to have stayed for an extended period in the county. *Selasphorus* hummingbirds (**Rufous** or **Allen's**) were unusually plentiful in August and September (v.ob.). Most breeding Allen's depart by late July, and Rufous is apparently a rare summer and early fall migrant in the county, but this year hummers of this species pair were found regularly into late September. Nearly all these hummers seen in our region after early July are females or immatures that cannot be safely identified in the field. Banding data from other areas indicates Rufous may be the more common of the two after July. A **Pileated Woodpecker** at Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on September 13 was only the second park record in my files (JT), although they are now resident nearby at Soquel Creek.

Sixteen **Western Wood-Pewees** within a half-mile along Moore Creek on September 6 were an exceptional concentration for fall migration in the county (DSu). From the spring migrant department, four **Willow Flycatchers** were on the Santa Cruz side of the Pajaro River June 6-17, along with another on the Monterey side (DSu). From the fall migrant department, 17 or 18 Willows at various spots from August 23 - September 15 was our best fall showing on record (SG, EL, DG, DSu, JD). A **Tropical Kingbird** was at Lighthouse Field on September 19 (SG). A pair of **Purple Martins** had a nest with young in a knobcone pine at Summit Ridge near Gamecock Canyon on July 31 (DSu). This was the first confirmed breeding in the county since 1977! This pair was part of a small breeding population that frequents the summit area from the Lorna Prieta region south. A **Bank Swallow** at Antonelli Pond on August 22 filled the meager county quota for recent years (SG). For the first autumn since 1986 there was an indication of a substantial influx of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** in the county (v.ob.), perhaps harbingers of a good winter invasion. There were a few reports during August and many in September, including birds away from the usual conifer habitats most often visited by the species. A loose flock of seven at Glen Canyon on August 1 (BS) were rather early away from our local areas of residency.

A swarm of about 55 **Swainson's Thrushes** on one slope at Moore Creek on September 6 were attracted to fruiting coffeeberries (DSu). An immature **Red-eyed Vireo** was along the Pajaro River near Hwy 1 on August 21 for the 5th county record (DSu). A **Tennessee Warbler** was along the Pajaro on September 15 (DSu). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were at the Pajaro on August 29 and at Soquel Creek in Capitola on September 24 (DSu). **Yellow Warblers** commonly exhibit a migratory peak around the third week of September, when they are often the most abundant warbler in the coastal region. This season they were *especially* numerous, with a peak from 15-24 September. Especially high estimates were about 420 along 1.5 miles of the Pajaro River below Highway I on September 18 (DSu), 250 at Nearys Lagoon on September 20 (JD) and 160 along 0.2 miles of Soquel Creek in Capitola on September 20 (DSu). In those conditions the trees are *dripping* with Yellow Warblers! Eight **Blackpoll Warblers** at six sites from September 11- 29 was a record showing for the county, with four on September 20 alone (JM, JD, DSu). Among our other most frequent eastern warblers were one **Palm Warbler** on September 24(DG), three **Black-and-white Warblers** on September 6-21 (DSu, WBT), two **American Redstarts** on September 10 and 18 (DSu) and three **Northern Waterthrushes** on August 27 to September 18

(DSu, DG). Seven **MacGillivray's Warblers** found along the coast from August 22 to September 24 was above average for this skulker (SG, DG, DSu). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** at Noble Gulch on September 6 was the 5th fall record for the county (DSu).

A female **Summer Tanager** was at Liddell Creek on September 11 (DSu) and a flashy adult male was in Soquel on September 20 (SE). An adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at a feeder along Back Ranch Road from July 31 to August 5 (WBT). A female type **Indigo Bunting** at Meder Canyon on September 7 was only our fifth in the last 10 fall seasons. **Clay-colored Sparrows** popped up along the Pajaro River on September 15 and at Gizdich Ranch east of Watsonville on September 29 (DSu). A migrant **Lark Sparrow** was in a Westside Santa Cruz feeder on September 27 (MS). An albinistic **Dark-eyed Junco** at Bonny Doon on September 16 was mostly white with a scattering of dark feathers (BD). A female **Orchard Oriole** was at the Pajaro River on September 18-19 (DSu). A lone **Red Crossbill** was at Meder Canyon on August 24. A male **Lawrence's Goldfinch** feeding two juveniles at Wilder Ranch State Park on July 23 was the third nest record from the north coast (RMe; see this column in the last issue). An immature male **Evening Grosbeak** at a feeder near Aptos Creek mouth September 5-6 was our earliest record by 10 days, and only the 4th record for September (LR).

Cited Observers: Don Alley, George Banuelos, Esther Burkett, Jeff Davis, Betty Denihue, Scott Edwards, Ed Frost, Doug George, Steve Gerow, Bob Hargis, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Jennifer Matkin, Robert Merrill, Peter Radcliff, Lyle Rice, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Steve Singer, David Suddjian (DSu), Thomas Sutfin, Jean de 'a Tone, Monte Tudor-Long, W. Breck Tyler. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from October to November 1996

Two particularly interesting events occurred in the later half of the fall season. First was the irruption of several invasive montane species, including appearances by some species which are strictly rarities to our area. Second was the major feeding assemblage of seabirds close to shore off Mid-County and South County during mid-November.

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Montane Invasion. A suite of species with primarily montane (in some cases northern) distributions are irruptive in our area during fall and winter. Some years there are lots of them; in other years few. The chart on page five portrays the pattern of occurrence for some of these in Santa Cruz County over the last 10 years. This fall our region had an influx of several of these species (most notably **Red-breasted Nuthatch** and **Red Crossbill**), but we were also treated to several species that are normally absent or very rare in coastal Central California. These included **Northern Goshawk**, **Clark's Nutcracker**, **Townsend's Solitaire** and **Cassin's Finch**! Immature **Northern Goshawks** were at Nearys Lagoon on November 11 (JD) and at Lorna Prieta Avenue on November 26 (DSu). We have only a few prior records for the county and the validity of most of those is problematic. Seventeen or 18 **Clark's Nutcrackers** were found from October 24 to November 18 (DSu, ST, SRt). These included four at Big Basin on November 7, seven at Castle Rock on November 18 and four at China Grade the same day. Nutcrackers had not been reported in the county since April 1987. Ten **Townsend's Solitaires** found from November 18-26 were more than ever before (DSu). These included three at Castle Rock on November 18, four at China Grade the same day and three at Lorna Prieta Avenue on November 26. Most amazing of all were ten reports of **Cassin's Finches** from November 4-26 totaling a minimum of 39-40 birds (JD, JG, DSu, MF, SRt, TN, RF)! These were at scattered spots from UCSC and La Selva to Big Basin, China Grade, Castle Rock and the Loma Prieta region. We had only one prior acceptable county record!

November Seabird Assemblage. Monterey Bay is famous for its seabird populations, but with the exception of our summer flocks of Sooty Shearwaters, it is unusual to have tremendous numbers of birds feeding close to shore. During mid-November a major fish run and die-off (apparently sardines) concentrated huge numbers of feeding birds in inshore waters, generating record counts for many (DSu, JG, PR SRv, JS). This event lasted from about November 7-23. On November 9 I encountered unprecedented bird numbers along the South County Coast and ended up surveying the waters from the Pajaro River to New Brighton State Beach (about 11 miles of coast), and out to one mile from shore. In that area there were an estimated 242,000 seabirds, including the following high estimates: 130,000 loons (>99% **Pacific Loon**, record count), 29 **Red-necked Grebes** (record), 16,300 **Western Grebes** (record), 4,850 **Clark's Grebes** (record), 4,350 **Brown Pelicans**, 23,000 **Heermann's Gulls** (record), 15,000 **California Gulls** (record), 700 **Herring Gulls**, 425 **Thayer's Gulls**, 13,000 **Western Gulls** (record), and 1,500 **Glaucous-winged Gulls**. Other noteworthy estimates were of large numbers of **Black-vented Shearwaters** off the Santa Cruz area November 15-18 (PR, JS, SRv), peaking at 3,000-5,000 off Lighthouse Point on November 18. A flock of over 650 **Brown Pelicans** at Black Point on November 10 was a very large onshore roost away from the Pajaro River mouth (PR).

Everything Else. Single **Manx Shearwaters** in Monterey Bay on October 12 (DSH, v.ob.) and 20 (JD, v.ob.) were our 6th and 7th county records, pending California Bird Records Committee review. An **American White Pelican** joined "Old Flightless" at Pinto Lake by November 25 (DSu). One **Cattle Egret** was at Wilder Ranch on October 22 (DG) and two were near Harkins Slough on November 10 (BH, BS). A **White-faced Ibis** flew east over the lower Pajaro River on November 2 (DSu, BMor). A **Tundra Swan** was at the Pajaro River mouth on November 3 (HW). A family of four **Greater White-fronted Geese** paused at Wilder Creek mouth on October 1-12 (DG, RM), and an immature took up residence at Pinto Lake October 16 to November 25+ (RM, v.ob.). Pinto's **Ross' Goose** was still present through November. Another was at Harkins Slough on November 18 (SRv, JS), with *six* there on November 20 {TN}. Among several reports of **Canada Geese** (PR RM, DSu, ill), the most interesting was the over-summering *minima* which remained at Corcoran Lagoon through November (PR DSu). An eclipse male **Redhead** at Shorebirds Pond from November 8-25 (DSu, JD, BB) was joined by a female from November 18-22 (SRv, JS, JD).

Three **Black Scoters** were along the South County coast on November 9 (JG, DSu). **Ferruginous Hawks** were over Capitola on October 26 (DSu) and north of Scott Creek on November 28 (JL, BL). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was near Harkins Slough on November 10 (BH, BS). Thirteen reports of **Merlins** were received from September 15 to November 23 (v.ob.). Two **Peregrine Falcons** continued to use their winter roost near the San Lorenzo River mouth (PR). The female arrived by October 5 and a male by at least November 11. According to records of the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group, the female (which is banded) is approaching 13 years of age (*fide* JL)! An injured and starving female Peregrine was captured at Wilder Ranch State Park on November 4 (DC *fide* DG) and taken for rehabilitation by the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group. It was determined to be the subspecies *pealei*, which occurs on the Pacific Northwest coast and is quite rare in California. The bird is recovering well, but it is undetermined if it is wild or was released by a falconer (JL).

Two corrections regarding **Snowy Plover** nesting effort cited in my last column (*Albatross* 42(2):5): the number of nests from Wilder, Laguna and Scott creeks was 15 and the number of juveniles fledged was 13 (DG). Doug George further reported that of the five beaches where the plover nested in the county this year (Sunset, Wilder, Laguna, Scott and Waddell) only 16 juveniles were produced (Point Reyes Bird Observatory) . Three **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Harkins Slough on October 28 (DSu) brought the season's total to a paltry four birds. An adult **Little Gull** was at Sunset State Beach on November 9 for our fourth county record, pending CBRC review (DSu). A **Caspian Tern** at La Selva on November 9 was late (JG). An estimate of 165 **Elegant Terns** along the South County coast on November 9 was very many for so late in the season (DSu), and stragglers lingered in Mid-County to at least November 22. Late **Common Terns** were three at Seacliff State Beach on November 9 and one at Capitola on November 26 (DSu). Terrace Point's wintering **Burrowing Owl** returned by October 24 {JL}. A **Long-eared Owl** in a Soquel yard on August 23 (RM) was a very rare summer record. A **Short-eared Owl** was at Pajaro Dunes on November 5 (*fide* DSu).

The **Costa's Hummingbird** residing in Rio Del Mar since August was last seen on November 2 (SE). Three **Willow Flycatchers** in Mid-County October 3-7 (SG, JD, DG) brought the season's total to a record 19 individuals. Seventh county records for both **Hammond's** and **Gray flycatchers** were obtained for birds at Meder Canyon on October 29 (SG) and Noble Gulch on October 10 (DSu), respectively. A **Tropical Kingbird** was at Sunset State Beach on October 21 (AT). A late **Bank Swallow** was at the Pajaro River on October 28 (DSu). **White-breasted Nuthatches** are always rare in the county, so one northeast of Scotts Valley on November 16 was

noteworthy (BMon). A **Northern Mockingbird** at Davenport on October 3+ was reportedly the first in town since 1988 (RS). Mockingbirds are highly local on the north coast and absent in most areas there. Among eight **Solitary Vireos** reported this fall were a probable "**Blue-headed Vireo**" at Aptos Creek on October 4 (DSu, JD), and a "**Plumbeous Vireo**" at the Pajaro River on November 6 (DSu). Solitary Vireo may be split into more than one species in the future.

Vagrant warblers were not especially impressive this fall, after three pretty good seasons. A total of 35 individuals of 10 eastern species were reported through August, compared to an average of 64 individuals of 11 species in fall 1993-95. Highlights from October - November included a **Magnolia Warbler** at Noble Gulch on October 10 (DSu), a **Blackburnian Warbler** in Santa Cruz on October 4 (SG; 8th county record), and a **Prairie Warbler** at the Pajaro River on October 28 (DSu; 6th county record). Two additional **Blackpoll Warblers** on October 28-30 (SG, DSu) brought the season's total to a record 10 birds. August to November totals for sparse migrant western warblers included 11 **Nashvilles**, 22 **Black-throated Grays**, seven **Hermits**, and nine **MacGillivray's** (record count) (v.ob.). An adult male **MacGillivray's** at Natural Bridges State Beach on November 15 was notably late (SGer). The season's third **Summer Tanager** was a female at Tannery Gulch on October 16 (DSu), and the third **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at UCSC on October 26 (DG). A **Vesper Sparrow** was at Harkins Slough on October 28 (DSu). Four **Swamp Sparrows** turned up at usual wintering spots from October 28 to November 21 (DG, DSu). Six **White-throated Sparrows** were found from October 26 to November 21 (KG, HL, DSu, DG). Two belated breeding season reports from Castle Rock State Park of rare and very local sparrows were significant. Randy Morgan had a singing **Black-chinned Sparrow** there on May 25 (first there since 1977), and a **Sage Sparrow** was seen on July 2 (first since 1987). Two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** over UCSC on October 9 were apparently the first recorded on campus (JD). Another was at the Pajaro River on November 6 (DSu).

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, Dennis Carriere, JeffDavis, Scott Edwards, Mike Feighner, Rick Fournier, Doug George, Steve Gerow, Jennifer Green, Bob Hargis, Harold LaFont, Brian Latta, Earl Lebow, Janet Liuhicum, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor), Todd Newberry, Karyn O'Hearn, Peter Radcliff, Steve Rottenbom (SRt), Steve Rovell (SRv), Debra Shearwater (DSh), Roberta Smith, Barry Staley, John Sterling, David Suddjian (DSu), Scott Terrill, Alex Truce, Heath Wakelee. "v.ob" means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1996 to January 1997

It is interesting to look back and see which species were *reliably* found for the first time in the county during the last 15 years. The following list includes all species first recorded between 1982 and January 1997, noting the year in which they were first found. Reports still in review by the California Bird Records Committee are marked with an asterisk. Reports rejected by the committee are not listed. With 40 such species (including those pending CBRC acceptance), we have averaged about 2.7 new species per year, but in the 1990's the average has been 4.1 per year. Some years were rich (eight new species in 1987), while others were poor (none in 1982 or 1988).

Murphy's Petrel (1991)	Cassin's Kingbird (1990)
Streaked Shearwater (1992)	Mountain Chickadee (1987)
Wedge-tailed Shearwater (1993)*	Gray Catbird (1991)
Manx Shearwater (1994)*	Yellow Wagtail (1983)
Tropic bird sp. (1994)	Red-throated Pipit (1994)
Brown Booby (1991)	Bohemian Waxwing (1990)
Red-footed Booby (1996)*	Bell's Vireo (1996)
Little Blue Heron (1987)	Red-eyed Vireo (1987)
Garganey (1991)	Yellow-green Vireo (1995)*
Tufted Duck (1997)	Bay-breasted Warbler (1995)
Swainson's Hawk (1987)	Kentucky Warbler (1995)
Sandhill Crane (1992)	Painted Bunting (1992)*
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (1984)	Rufous-crowned Sparrow (1993)
Stilt Sandpiper (1987)	Brewer's Sparrow (1987)
Buff-bellied Sandpiper (1989)	LeConte's Sparrow (1983)
Common Ground-Dove (1991)	Chestnut-collared Longspur (1995)
Costa's Hummingbird (1985)	Great-tailed Grackle (1994)
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (1987)	Common Grackle (1994)
Hammond's Flycatcher (1987)	Brambling (1990)
Dusky Flycatcher (1993)	Cassin's Finch (1995)

A **Pacific Loon** at College Lake on January 5 was rare away from the ocean (SRv). Seventeen **Cattle Egrets** near Lee Road west of Watsonville on January 12 was the largest flock reported in the county in some years (BMor). Six **Tundra Swans** toured the Pajaro Valley on January 1 (DE, RM). A **Snow Goose** flew northwest near Loma Prieta on November 1 for an odd mountain sighting of this species (SRt). Pinto Lake's **Greater White-fronted Goose** and **Ross' Goose** were present through January (v.ob.). "New" Ross' Geese included adults at Shorebirds Pond on December 7 (DS) and De Laveaga Elementary School on December 21 (DS). A flock of 16 large **Canada Geese** flew east over Natural Bridges State Beach on December 15 (SG). Other reports of single Canada Geese were from scattered spots (v.ob.). A handful of **Blue-winged Teal** reports from South County wetlands were as expected (v.ob.), but one female on the North Coast at Baldwin Creek Marsh was quite rare for that area in winter (BWd). A male **Redhead** was at Harkins Slough December 31 (L&WG), while a flock of seven were flying at West Struve Slough

on January 1 (CK, C&CW, MTL). An estimated 675 **Ring-necked Ducks** at Harkins Slough on January 19 was a record for the county (DS).

Our first county record of **Tufted Duck** was provided by a female at College Lake from January 1-3 (DS). This rare duck has been found with increasing frequency in some parts of the state, but I believe this was only the second report for the Monterey Bay area. A male **White-winged Scoter** at Shorebirds Pond on December 31 was rare off the ocean (L&WG). Wintering **Osprey** reports included one near Davenport (DE) and two at Loch Lomond (BHa, K&BM) on December 21, and one frequenting South County lakes January 1 onwards (v.ob.). The season's *third* report of **Northern Goshawk** was of one near Dominican Hospital on December 19 (DS). A **Black-necked Stilt** at the San Lorenzo River December 19-21 was rare away from South County (DS, PR), as was a **Dunlin** at Capitola Beach on December 21 (DS). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** paused at Capitola Beach the same day (DS).

A very late **Elegant Tern** (presumably only one) was seen between the Santa Cruz harbor and wharf on several dates from December 21 - January 3 (PR, BS, DS). Also very rare for winter was a **Common Tern** at Capitola Beach December 21-23 (DS). A **Black Tern** at Harkins Slough from January 1 to at least January 12 was our first winter record and a very rare winter record for Northern California (MTL, CK, C&CW, v.ob.). A **Burrowing Owl** was near Harkins Slough on January 7, a spot where the species is sporadically seen during fall and winter (BS). A **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** chose to winter in a small drainage near Laguna Creek Beach from at least December 14 to January 26 (AG, v.ob.). This will be our fifth county record if accepted by the California Bird Records Committee. One of the rarest birds of the winter was a **Western Kingbird** in eastern Santa Cruz on January 3-6 (JW, DS). This provided our second valid winter record and one of few such records for Northern California. Three **Barn Swallows** at Harkins Slough on January 1 were very rare for winter (CK, C&CW, MTL).

Unusual **Clark's Nutcracker** reports continued with two near Ben Lomond from November 25 - December 3 (*fide* BWI), one over De Laveaga Park on December 21 (DS) and one in Aptos on January 16 (JA). The Santa Cruz County CBC total of 111 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** shattered the previous record (in spite of rain all day), indicating how abundant they are this season. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was at the county line near Loma Prieta on November 1, adding to our record fall showing (SRt). A "**Cassin's**" **Solitary Vireo** at Arana Gulch from December 19 to at least February 5 was our first to over-winter (DS). Eastern warblers and our rare wintering western warblers made a poor showing this winter. A **Nashville Warbler** was at Branciforte Dip and vicinity from December 20 to at least January 12 (EL, v.ob.). A **Lucy's Warbler** graced Branciforte Dip from December 19 through at least January 13 (DS, v.ob.). This was our third county record (all from winter), and interestingly our first record was in this same spot 17 years ago. The only **Black-throated Gray Warbler** reported was at Carbonera Creek from November through early January (DS). **Hermit Warblers** were at De Laveaga Park on December 21 (DS) and Rancho Del Oso on January 26 (TN). Three **Palm Warblers** were reported in Santa Cruz from December 12 - January 24 (SG, TN, BMor). After the Lucy's, this season's best warbler was clearly the male **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Natural Bridges on January 31 (SG).

A **Western Tanager** was at Ocean View Park in Santa Cruz on December 19 (DS). It was in the same place as a male seen on November 15 and was perhaps the same bird. Out of place **Lark Sparrows** were at Happy Valley on December 8 and January 12 (BB), and the west side of Watsonville on December 26 (BHo). A **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Wilder Ranch State Park on December 21 was in the exact spot where a few wintered last year, but this one had characters suggesting an eastern form (JD)! Both **Hooded** and **Bullock's Orioles** visited a feeder in Live Oak from November into at least early January (AR, DS). **Red Crossbills** continued to be widely

reported through January, but their numbers were clearly reduced from those of fall. The unprecedented invasion of **Cassin's Finches** continued with one near Scotts Valley from December 15 to January 31 (B&KM), two at De Laveaga Park on December 21 (DS), and one near Boulder Creek on January 19 (DS). **Evening Grosbeaks** were reported in small numbers at a few locations, indicating a minor winter incursion, but more than the last few years (v.ob.).

Cited Observers: Josh Adams, Bonnie Bedzin, Jeff Davis, David Ekdahl, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Bob Rargis (BRa), BambiRopkins (BRa), Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Kevin Monahan, Randy Morgan, Bryan Mori (BMor), Todd Newberry , Peter Radcliff, Arnold Robinson, Steve Rottenbom (SRt), Steve Rovell (SRv), Barbara Scharfenstein, David Suddjian (DSu), Monte Tudor-Long, Brian Weed (BWd), Janet Welch, Bev Wilder (BWI), Christine Wolfe, Claire Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from February to early April 1997

What happened to all the bird reports! Late winter was the quietest season in recent history in terms of folks passing on bird sightings...thus the short column this issue. Maybe folks just weren't seeing things of interest, but please make the effort to pass along word of what you find. If you don't know what is of interest then send me a self-addressed stamped envelope and I'll send you some guidelines that lay it all out.

* * *

The *minima* **Canada Goose** present at Corcoran Lagoon since Summer 1996 was present to early December, then disappeared. One that (re)appeared there on March 23 was perhaps the same bird (PR). A pair of **Hooded Mergansers** on the San Lorenzo River at Henry Cowell State Park on March 5 were rare for the San Lorenzo Valley (MB). Another Hooded was rumored to be on the north coast during late winter (*fide* JD) but no details were reported to me. A late **Rough-legged Hawk** was at Harkins Slough on March 27 (DSh). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** studied at Lighthouse Point on April 1 was a rare spring record for the county (DB, L W). A tremendous flock of 96 **Caspian Terns** were noisily enroute to the San Francisco Bay Area over Capitola and Soquel on April 6 (DS). A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Bay Street in Santa Cruz on February 23 was a nice find (JD). The large number of wintering **Red-breasted Nuthatches** seemed to decrease by early February, although some birds lingered through March (v.ob.).

The wintering **Lucy's Warbler** was still at Branciforte Dip through March 24 (DS). An **American Redstart** turned up at well-worked Natural Bridges on March 5 (BM), but was not reported before or after. We have only a handful of prior winter records. The very rare wintering male **MacGillivray's Warbler** lingered at Natural Bridges through at least March 30 (SG). A Wilson's Warbler at Natural Bridges on March 15 was early (DS). A male **Great-tailed Grackle** flew north over the Pajaro River near Watsonville on March 31 (DS), continuing the recent spate of spring appearances by this invader. **Red Crossbill** numbers declined notably after January with only a small number present to late March (v.ob.). Six **Evening Grosbeaks** visited a feeder in Corralitos on March 20, increasing to 20 by April 10 (KK). These were later than most for our county.

Cited Observers: David Bockman, MalJorie Bourett, JeffDavis, Steve Gerow, Kathy Kusanovich, Bert McKee, Peter Radcliff, Debi Shearwater (DSh), David Suddjian, Linda Wilson. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from mid-April to July 1997

Two breeding-plumaged **Red-necked Grebes** seen from a boat off Santa Cruz on May 9 were late (JD). Three **Laysan Albatrosses** northwest of Santa Cruz on May 16 provided a high count for the county (DSh). A well-described **Manx Shearwater** was seen from shore off Seabright Beach on April 17 for our first spring record (BMcK). A female **Magnificent Frigatebird** at Capitola Beach on June 4 was a nice addition to my list of species seen while sipping espresso at Mr. Toots Coffee House (DSu). You should try it some time! Two immature frigates were off Manresa State beach on July 29 (DSu). **Seven American Bitterns** at Harkins Slough on April 12 were unusually many (JD), while one at Laguna Creek Marsh on July 16 was rare for summer (DSu). **Green Herons** nested again at the busy intersection of Chestnut and Mission streets in Santa Cruz, and another suburban nest was in Capitola (DSu).

Pinto Lake's wintering **Greater White-fronted Goose** stayed through July, along with the resident **Ross' Goose** and two rare summering *minima* **Canada Geese** (BMor, DSu). Last year's first county nesting by *moffitti* Canada Geese was reprised at the lake this year with young present on May 19 (BMor). Another big Canada was at Antonelli Pond on April 24 (SG). An adult **Bald Eagle** cruised up the San Lorenzo River at Felton on July 6 (R&PL). It was reportedly seen on other summer dates at Loch Lomond. A **Swainson's Hawk** flying up the coast near Scott Creek on April 22 continued our series of recent spring records (D Su). Fifteen **Wandering Tattlers** along West Cliff Drive on July 29 were a good number (JD). Three reddish **Red Knots** stopped at Waddell Creek mouth on July 24, and an adult **Baird's Sandpiper** was there July 27 (DSu). A **Parasitic Jaeger** off Santa Cruz on May 9 was rare for spring (WBT). Adult **Franklin's Gulls** were found again in freshly plowed fields near Table Rock on April 22 and May 5 (DSu).

Elegant Terns were present in substantial numbers in July, with high counts at the Pajaro River mouth on several days ranging from 1000-3000 birds (v.ob.)! Two **Least Terns** were flying north in the "trans-mountain flyway" at Capitola on April 15 (DSu). Other Least Terns were at the Pajaro River mouth from July 13-30 (v.ob.). A **Black Skimmer** was feeding at Capitola on May 12 (DSu) while *four* were reported at the Pajaro River mouth on July 30 (*fide* "BirdWest"). Over 1500 **Common Murres** off Santa Cruz on May 9 were very many for spring (JD, WET). A radio-telemetry study of our local **Marbled Murrelets** conducted May to July produced much interesting information. A couple tidbits have so far filtered to me. A nest was found in the Scott Creek watershed (first breeding record for that area) on May 25, but it subsequently failed (JB). Radio transmitters from two predated murrelets were found beneath a **Peregrine Falcon** nest site in the East Fork of Waddell Creek in June (*fide* LH). A **Xantus' Murrelet** was off Santa Cruz on July 18 (ill).

A **Vaux's Swift** nest was found on June 7 in a snag near Timms Creek, tributary to the West Fork of Waddell Creek (DSu). Although it is a regular breeder, we still don't have many nesting confirmations. A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at Capitola on May 10 (DSu). An adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** studied closely at Glen Canyon Road on July 17 (BS) was interesting because we have few solid summer records of this species. A **Pileated Woodpecker** nest with young at Aptos Creek on June 18 confirmed breeding for that recently-colonized watershed (DSu). An **Eastern Kingbird** near Laguna Creek on July 23 was early and rare (DSu).

Red-breasted Nuthatches nested in the Monterey pines at New Brighton State Beach, where a family group was seen on July 5 (DSu). This species normally does not nest close to the coast except in native pine forest near Waddell Creek, and the only other mid-county breeding record is from the 1950's! **Varied Thrush** nested at Timms Creek, with two singing males on June 7, and a female carrying food there on June 17 (DSu) being the first breeding record for the greater Waddell Creek watershed.

Yellow Warblers again appeared to be absent as breeders at Westside Santa Cruz spots, Sycamore Grove and Soquel Creek at Capitola (SG, DSu). Gerow also noted low numbers and apparent poor success for **Warbling Vireos** and **Wilson's Warblers** nesting on the Westside, suggesting cowbirds may be the problem. A breeding-plumaged **Palm Warbler** was at Antonelli Pond on April 24 (SG). I suspect it was a lingering wintering bird, as records of true spring migrants are quite rare. **American Redstarts** were discovered nesting in the county for the first time! A female north of Swing Hill at Waddell Creek on July 6 preceded discovery of a family group of three fledglings and both adults on July 20 (DSu). A female downstream along the Marsh Trail on May 31 may have been a migrant (DSu). A few **MacGillivray's Warblers** at Waddell and Scott creeks from April to July suggested nesting may have occurred near the coast again this year (JD, EL, DSu), but no concerted effort was made to confirm breeding. The only report of **Yellow-breasted Chat** was of one at Nearys Lagoon on May 6 (BMor, SG).

A record *seven* **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were reported from May 25 - July 29, mostly from feeders and mostly adult males (BMon, MK, JG, SJ, DSu). Four were found between July 15-25. A female **Blue Grosbeak** was at Scott Creek on May 14 (DSu). Sometimes a bird out of its usual habitat is noteworthy. For example, a **California Towhee** near the park headquarters at Big Basin on July 12 was the first I'd ever found in the redwood forest of the park after many years of visiting the area. (Plus, I love to work species into this column for which we normally do not have "interesting" records.) **Vesper Sparrows** are always rare in the county, but most come in fall or winter. Two spring records this year included singles at Baldwin Creek on May 4 and at Harkins Slough on May 9 (DSu). An out-of-place **Lark Sparrow** appeared again at Happy Valley on April 19-20 and July 26 (BB). **Hooded Orioles**, normally absent in the mountains, have appeared at least four out of the last five springs at a feeder northeast of Scotts Valley. This year's was an immature male on May 4 (BMon).

Following last fall's invasion of **Red Crossbills**, which petered out by mid-winter, there seemed to be another small influx beginning in late March or so. Small numbers were seen in the mountains and in pines along the coast into July (SG, JD, DSu), with the only large count being 50-80 birds at Waddell Creek on April 20 (JD). A male **Lawrence's Goldfinch** at UCSC on May 16 was rare and only the second for the campus (JD). The late flock of **Evening Grosbeaks** at the Corralitos feeder mentioned last issue dwindled into mid-April, with the last seen about April 20 (KK). Three at Waddell Creek on May 11 were also late (DSu).

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, John Bolger, Jeff Davis, Steve Gerow (SG), John Green, Laird Henkel, SanJayan, Marth Kenner, Kathy Kusanovich, Ray and Pauline Launer, Earl Lebow, Bert McKee, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor), Barbara Scharfenstein, Debi Shearwater (DSh), David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler. "v.ob." means various observers

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from August to early October 1997

Two **tropicbirds** (sp?) were seen almost 13 nautical miles offshore on September 17 (*fide* JDz). Another suburban nesting **Green Heron** pair had young in the nest at the corner of Lincoln and Cedar Streets in Santa Cruz on August 6 (BMcK). Where else in our region has this species been found nesting in suburban settings away from water? Pinto Lake's **Ross' Goose**, **Greater White-fronted Goose** and the two summering *minima* **Canada Geese** continued present through October 5 (DSu). Pinto's nascent resident flock of *moffetti* Canada Geese was up to 12 birds on August 21, after two years of breeding (DSu). Also present was a hybrid **Canada Goose x Graylag Goose**. Flocks of migrant geese included about 80 **Greater White-fronteds** high over Capitola on September 18 and 19 **Canadas** over Capitola on September 30 (D Su). A summering **Brant** was worse for wear at Pajaro River mouth on August 4 (DSu, JD).

A light-morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** flew over the westside of Santa Cruz on August 13 for the county's 3rd fall record (SG). Fall records have spanned August 13 - September 10. A loose flock of 17 **Wandering Tattlers** working sandy beach at Seacliff on August 7 were unusually many, but in a regular spot for migrants in early "fall" (DSu). At West Cliff Drive migrant tattlers peaked at the very end of July, with 4-10 remaining daily through August then none after September 6 (SG). A flock of 23 **Long-billed Curlews** over western Santa Cruz on August 15 was a high count for the county (SG). A **Red Knot** at Black Point August 12-19 was especially rare for the mid-county coast (PR). A flock of 137 **Red-necked Phalaropes** at Corcoran Lagoon on September 8 was a good count for one spot in the county (PR). A 2nd-summer **Thayer's Gull** at West Cliff Drive from July 30 to September 6 provided a very rare summer record for California (SG).

Elegant Terns continued in very high numbers through early August, with counts of 500+ at Seabright Beach on August 6 (PR), 2000+ at Sunset State Beach on August 6, and 600 at Seacliff State Beach on August 7 (DSu). But by late August numbers had dropped to below normal, perhaps in response to warming sea conditions. A **Least Tern** was at the Pajaro River mouth on August 4 (JD, DSu) and one migrant flew off the mainland with **Caspian Terns** at Capitola on August 21 (DSu). **Black Terns** at Pinto Lake on August 9 (DSu) and Harkins Slough September 19 (EL) were rare migrants. A **Black Skimmer** flew down the coast at New Brighton State Beach on August 20 (DSu), and *four* were at the Pajaro River mouth on September 1 (BB, KK). Warm bay waters were favorable for **Craveri's** and **Xantus' murrelets** in early fall, as evidenced by counts of 22-24 murrelets seen on pelagic trips on Monterey Bay on August 16-17 (*fide* JDz).

A **White-winged Dove** at Kalkar Quarry (a.k.a. Spring Street Quarry) on August 12 was the 6th county record (BS, PL). **Three Northern Pygmy-Owls** calling at Meder Canyon on "a rather dark and cloudy morning" on September 14 was exceptional (SG). In our area this species has large territories and it is unusual to hear more than one at a time (except for pairs in the breeding season). A **nighthawk** (sp?) at the eastside of Santa Cruz on July 11 was likely a Lesser (BS). Recent years have seen a series of **Vaux's Swift** nest records from chimneys in the Spring Street neighborhood of Santa Cruz, near UCSC. This summer a pair fledged young there on July 13, with the youngsters remaining near the nest site into early August (LH *fide* BS and

PL). Fall reports of **Willow Flycatchers** included eight birds from August 30 - September 26 (SG, EL, TN, JD, DSu).

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** at Meder Canyon on September 10 continued the recent pattern of fall records for this rarity (JD). An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** at the UCSC Arboretum on October 5 was later than most for this very sparse fall migrant (TN). A **Tropical Kingbird** was at Noble Gulch on September 26 (DSu). **Purple Martins** are very rare fall migrants in the county no matter where they are, but one seen 12 nautical miles offshore on August 17 was remarkable (BMcK)! On the morning of August 25 I watched as over 25 small flocks of migrant **Barn Swallows** totaling about 250 birds embarked out over the bay at New Brighton State Beach, all flying south to the horizon and out of sight. A **Varied Thrush** at UCSC on September 10 was one of the earliest reports on file for the county (JD).

Early fall had a respectable showing of vagrant warblers, highlighted by some rather rare species. A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was in Capitola on September 25 (DSu). A **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was a prize at the UCSC Arboretum on September 21 (TN). A **Magnolia Warbler** was at Soquel Creek on October 2 (DSu). A **Prairie Warbler** in western Santa Cruz on August 2 was our 7th and earliest record (JD). **American Redstarts** were at Meder Canyon on September 23 (SG) and UCSC Arboretum on October 1 (JC). An immature **Prothonotary Warbler** was at a bird bath in Capitola on September 25, for our 4th record and first since 1981! A **Northern Waterthrush** was at Soquel Creek on September 8 (EL). An **Ovenbird** at Soquel Creek on October 2-3 was our 7th county record (DSu). More **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** included one at Aptos from August 2-17 (EB), one in Felton August 30 to September 1 (S) and one at Soquel Creek September 22 (DSu).

A female/immature **Blue Grosbeak** was at New Brighton State Beach on September 20 (DSu *et al.*). This species, while still very rare, has been found with increasing frequency in the last several years. A female/immature **Orchard Oriole** was at Meder Canyon on September 15 (JD). A **Vesper Sparrow** and two **Clay-colored Sparrows** were at the UCSC Arboretum on September 30 (JC), with one Clay-colored remaining through October 2 (B&LM). **Lark Sparrows** out of place included one at Scott Creek on September 1 (JD) and one returning to Happy Valley again on September 27 (BB). The **Red Crossbills** of spring and early summer apparently petered out by the end of July.

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, Ed Burt, Josiah Clark, Jim Danzenbaker (JDz), Jeff Davis, Steve Gerow, Ken Kellman, Pauline Launer, Earl Lebow, Bert McKee, Barry and Linda McLaughlin, Barbara Monahan, Todd Newberry, Peter Radcliff, Sanjayan, Barbara Scharfenstein, David Suddjian(DSu). "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from early October to late November 1997

Fall migration is always unpredictable and exciting. Late fall brought our first record(s) of Dusky Warbler and some other serious notables (e.g., Rock Sandpiper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cape May Warbler, Canada Warbler). The "Eastern warbler" situation, often a good measure of the quality of the fall migration in terms of unusual birds, was turned inside out this season. The usual Eastern species which dominate the show were sparse or absent: no Tennessees, *only one* Palm, *no* Blackpolls, one Black-and-white, two American Redstarts and two Northern Waterthrushes. In contrast, a series of true rarities were found: one Cape May, *eight* Black-throated Blues, and a single Prairie, Prothonotary, Ovenbird and Canada!

Another striking contrast was apparent for irruptive landbirds. Last fall we had an unprecedented showing of montane species, but this fall...just about nothing. None of the various irruptives appear to be present in good numbers, many seem scarce, and some (Red-breasted Nuthatch, Red Crossbill, Evening Grosbeak) appear to be absent.

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A **Pied-billed Grebe** feeding a dependent juvenile at Antonelli Pond on October 15-16 was one of our latest breeding records (JD), although there are other records of dependent young in October. A **Flesh-footed Shearwater** was seen offshore on September 13 (DSh). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Antonelli Pond from October 7-20 (SG, v.ob.). A big flock of about 180 **Greater White-fronts** passed high over Capitola on November 24 (DSu). Nine **Snow Geese** flew over Natural Bridges on November 2 (BB). A flock of 22 **Ross' Geese** (with about 10 immatures) made a touch and go landing at Harkins Slough on November 25 (DSu). It is quite rare to find more than one or two Ross' at a time along the central California coast. Three big **Canada Geese** stayed at the lower San Lorenzo River from October 11 to at least November 1 (PR, MTL, DB), while three big Canadas (the same?) were flying down the coast at Natural Bridges on October 21 (SG).

The only **Blue-winged Teal** report was one at Corralitos Lagoon on November 16 (B&KM). Three **Redhead** at Corralitos Lagoon on November 24 were gone the next day (DSu). A female **Greater Scaup** at Aptos Creek mouth on October 26 (DSu *et al.*) was away from the few spots in the county where it is normally found. This is one of our rarest regularly-occurring ducks, not even guaranteed to be found even at its favorite spots (e.g., Corcoran Lagoon, Schwan Lake, Pajaro River mouth). Doug George (Point Reyes Bird Observatory) reported on the nesting success of **Snowy Plovers** at our north coast beaches. Nesting efforts at Wilder, Laguna and Scott creek beaches produced 18 nests, 41 chicks and 16 fledged juveniles. Protective predator exclosures were placed at 16 of the 18 nests. For the first time in 12 years no nest attempts were made at Waddell Creek.

A **Rock Sandpiper** found at West Cliff Drive on November 14 (SG) stayed to at least November 23 (JD, DSu, TN, JC, PR v.ob.). This was only our third solid county record (first since 1988) and the only one seen on more than one day. Central California marks the far south end of this species' winter range. A juvenile **Red Knot** was near Black Point on October 10, with another (or

the same?) in basic plumage in the area on November 24 (both PR). The November date is late for the county, where we have few winter records. Our rare-but-regular shorebirds were reported in low numbers: four **Lesser Yellowlegs** from August 15 - September 6 (PR, MTL), three **Baird's Sandpipers** July 26 -September 6 (DSu, PR, TN) and zero(!) **Pectoral Sandpipers**. A first winter **Glaucous Gull** was at Soquel Creek mouth on November 17 (DSu). Lingering **Elegant Terns** at Black Point included three on November 15 and one on November 23 (PR).

Three **Black Skimmers** at Sunset State Beach on October 23 provided a late county record of this increasing species (*vide* DSu). Among many **Xantus' Murrelets** seen on the bay in late summer and early fall, at least one of the *hypoleucus* form was reported from county waters on September 13 (DSu). At least one **Burrowing Owl** returned to UCSC by October 4 (JL). Unfortunately, the burrow near Younger Lagoon which was used by an owl in recent winters was destroyed by construction, with no reports of that owl so far this fall. Was the female **Anna's Hummingbird** gathering thistle down near the UCSC Arboretum on October 22 building a nest (SG)? If so it would be two months early for this species that normally begins nesting by late December. Maybe she just couldn't resist the tempting fluff. A male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** near College Lake on November 25 was our fifth county record (DSu). Also rare, but recorded annually, a **Red-naped Sapsucker** at UCSC on November 20 met the fall quota (JC).

A late **Willow Flycatcher** was at Meder Canyon on October 14 (SG). A late **Ash-throated Flycatcher** at UCSC Arboretum on October 22 (DE) was perhaps the same seen there on October 5 (see last *Albatross*). A **Tropical Kingbird** was at the UCSC Farm on October 23 (HW). An estimated 100 **Horned Larks** in plowed fields near Table Rock on October 26 was a high modern count for the species in the county (TN, JC), although formerly it was "abundant". A flock of 77 **American Crows** over Capitola on November 17 was many for mid-county (DSu). A triumphant 255 **Common Ravens** darkened the skies near the Santa Cruz City Landfill on November 19 for a record high count (DSu).

Clearly the best rarity of the fall was the **Dusky Warbler** that lingered at Antonelli Pond from October 13-22 (SG, RF, DR, *many* satisfied observers). This was our first county record (pending CBRC review) and only about the fifth for California, however some others have also been reported in the state elsewhere this fall. This skulking Old World warbler, perhaps the rarest bird ever to be found in the county, attracted hundreds of birders, making the newspapers and television news. Remarkably, a Dusky Warbler, quite possibly a *second* individual, was found about a half mile away at Bethany Curve Parkway in Santa Cruz on October 24 (SG again!) It seems unlikely that the Antonelli bird, after staying for ten days, would just move over a short distance, and other reports elsewhere this season suggest an unusual movement by this vagrant could have brought two birds to our area. Shortly after the Antonelli bird made the news I received a call from a lady in Southern California who said she had a *flock of little brown birds* in her yard in her yard which she thought were Dusky Warblers, so who knows?! From the perspective of a local record keeper, I found the Dusky Warbler phenomenon disappointing in one regard. So many people came from all over the place to see the bird, but almost none of that field effort (not to mention resources) was channeled into productive birding elsewhere in the area or generating useful information. Oh well, I guess it was a good tick.

A **Plumbeous Vireo** was at the San Lorenzo River near Highway 1 on October 23 (DSu). The season's second **Magnolia Warbler** was at UCSC Arboretum on October 21-23 (JC, BS, SG). An immature **Cape May Warbler** was along Soquel Creek near the confluence with Bates Creek on October 19 (DSu). This was our third county record and first since 1976! Amazing was a series of *eight* **Black-throated Blue Warblers** this fall, including six males! Consider that our previous county total was only about six records ever! This season's first at UCSC Arboretum on

September 21 was noted in the last issue of the *Albatross*. The late fall litany included birds at Santa Cruz on October 19 (RB), UCSC Arboretum October 21-23 (JC *et al.*), Rodeo Gulch on October 22 (AE), Noble Gulch on October 23 (MT), Pajaro River on October 26 (AD), La Selva on November 11 (ED), and Soquel Creek in Capitola on November 23 (DSu). Five in eight days in late October is astounding, while the November birds were late.

After all those Black-throated Blues, I don't know what to make of the *single Palm Warbler*, at Santa Cruz on October 21 (SG), as that is normally our most abundant "Eastern warbler". The only **Black-and-White Warbler** was at Sycamore Grove on October 23 (DSu). The season's second **Northern Waterthrush** was at Antonelli Pond October 17-21 (v.ob) The fifth county record of **Canada Warbler** was a young male at Sycamore Grove on October 23 (DSu). Reports of rare western migrant warblers were five **Nashvilles** from September 30- November 6 (SG, RK), five **Black-throated Grays** from October 2 - November 6 (JD, TN, JC, AG, DSu), and three **MacGillivray's** from August 10 - October 15 (SG, RK, SR). A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at UCSC Arboretum on September 30 (JC). A **Vesper Sparrow** was at UCSC Arboretum on October 21 (JC), and another was at Neary Lagoon on October 23 (SG). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was at the Pajaro River on October 23 (EL, TN, RF). The only **Chipping Sparrow** reported was at Santa Cruz on October 22 (SG).

Lark Sparrows away from the usual haunts included singles at Lighthouse Field on September 23 (SG), Antonelli Pond on October 13-17 (SG, v.ob.) and again sporadically at a Happy Valley feeder (becoming a "usual haunt") from October 14 to November 25 (BB). An albinistic **Fox Sparrow** with a white crescent on the nape was at Rancho del Oso on October 22 (JP). Seven **Swamp Sparrows** at College Lake on November 25 was a good fall count, but not unusual for the site (DSu). Four **Lapland Longspurs** in plowed fields near Table Rock on October 26 (TN, JC; at least one staying to November 1 (TN, L&WG) were casually reported as "not too unexpected." Well, perhaps if these north coast fields were worked more heavily we would have more records, but as it stands the species has only rarely been found in the county. An immature male **Bullock's Oriole** at Neary Lagoon on October 23 was noteworthy because fall migrants are very rarely detected in the county after breeders depart in late summer (SG).

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, Ralph Berger, David Bockman, Josiah Clark, Jeff Davis, Arturo Diaz, Elaine Dinger, David Ekdahl, Austin Enright, Rick Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, Doug George, Steve Gerow, Lois and Wally Goldfrank, Rob Kaler, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Peter Radcliff, Don Roberson, Steve Rovell, Barbara Scharfenstein, Debra Shearwater (DSh), David Suddjian (DSu), Mary Turner, Monte Tudor-Long, Heather Wilson. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from late November 1997 to early February 1998

As expected, winter brought a few choice rarities and many lesser luminaries, but I heard from many people that they thought numbers of many species were low. A poor showing by all of the irruptive landbirds was a contributing factor to that impression. Some wild storms in late January and early February tossed a few birds out of their usual haunts.

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A **Horned Grebe** at Loch Lomond on December 20 was rare inland (BH). **Red-necked Grebes** were off Opal Cliffs on December 20 (DSu) and Lighthouse Point on January 4 (TN). Three **Laysan Albatross** were seen from a boat in county waters on January 19, along with two or three more in Monterey waters the same day (DSh). Six or seven **Black-footed Albatross** that day were many for January. Late **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were seen on pelagic trips on November 30 (DSh) and December 20 (SA). Two **Buller's Shearwaters** on November 30 were also tardy (DSh). An immature **Pelagic Cormorant** up the San Lorenzo River as far as Soquel Avenue on January 20 (SG) was rare away from the ocean. An **American Bittern** at Schwan Lake on February 4 (EL) was the only report I heard of away from the Pajaro Valley this season. Two to three **Snowy Egrets** feeding in a large field in western Santa Cruz on January 16 and 22 were in unusual habitat for this species in Santa Cruz County (SG).

A **Cattle Egret** near Schwan Lake on December 20 was the only report away from the Pajaro Valley this winter (DSu). Sixteen **Tundra Swans** stopped in at College Lake on January 12 (DSu). Four species of geese were at College Lake in early January including up to 32 **Canadas**, two **Snows**, one **Ross'** and two **Greater White-fronteds** (DSu). Two **Ross' Geese** at Pinto Lake on January 24 presumably included the long-time resident plus anew arrival (JD). A **Greater White-fronted** was also at Pinto Lake on January 24 (JD) and 13 were at College Lake on February 6 (DSu). A **Eurasian Green-winged Teal** (subspecies *crecca*) at College Lake on January 1 was the first county record for that form (DSu). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** at College Lake on January 1 was joined by another on January 12 (DSu). An unusually large flock of 743 **Canvasback** there on January 1 had six **Redhead** among them (DSu).

Black Scoters made a nice showing. Singles were off West Cliff Drive from early December to January 16 (SG, v.ob.) and off Soquel Point on December 20 (DSu). More unusual were multiple Blacks among large (400+) scoter flocks: six or seven at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf February 3 (MS), nine there February 4 (DSu), and six at New Brighton State Beach February 4 (DSu). Two **Surf Scoters** inland at Kelly Lake on February 6 were rare (D Su). The recent trend of **Hooded Mergansers** at Mid-County and along the north coast continued this winter: five at Swanton Road Pond on December 13 (TN) with one through January 1 (PR), one at Corcoran Lagoon on December 20 (DSu), and one at Antonelli Pond January 3 (SG). All were female types. Judging by the many reports, more **Ospreys** than usual were present in late fall and winter (v.ob.). A sub-adult **Bald Eagle** was near Wilder Ranch on January 17 (RK, HW). A **Ferruginous Hawk** was west of Santa Cruz on December 20 (EL). **Merlins** were lightly reported all fall and winter, but many reports of **Peregrine Falcons** demonstrated this species' continued

increase (v.ob.). Four **Peregrines** on the Santa Cruz County CBC was impressive. A "Black" **Merlin** (subspecies *suckleyi*) at Capitola on December 30 was a rare report for that form (DSu).

Snowy Plovers are rarely found away from their handful of regular beaches, so three at Natural Bridges on January 9 were noteworthy (AG). Seabright Beach is a regular spot for the species in winter (especially during stormy periods), but 45-55 there January 31 to February 1 seemed high (BJ). Another high count was 118 at Scott Creek Beach on January 23 (TN). West Cliff Drive's **Rock Sandpiper** was enjoyed by many folks through at least February 2 (v.ob.). The **Red Knot** remained at the Black Point area through at least January 16 for a rare overwintering record (PR, DSu). The storms of January and February brought many **Red Phalaropes** inshore and small numbers onshore all along the coast (v.ob.). The furthest inland were 29 at College Lake and nine at Kelly Lake on February 6 (DSu), both high counts for truly inland sites in the county. Also of interest were three feeding for an extended period in the rushing San Lorenzo River upstream of Water Street in Santa Cruz on February 1 (DB), one picking drowning earthworms from a roadside gutter in Capitola on February 6 (DSu) and three dodging traffic on Soquel Drive in downtown Soquel on February 6 (DSu).

A first winter **Glaucous Gull** was at Table Rock on December 13 (TN). **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were seen at many spots along the coast from January 11 to February 6, with mostly fewer than five at anyone spot (v.ob.). Twenty-two were off Soquel Point on February 3 (DSu), and one was blown inland to College Lake on February 6 (DSu). Late **Elegant Terns** included one at Table Rock on December 13 (TN) and one at Black Point on December 20 (DSu). Fairly thorough surveys of the UCSC grasslands in December found 5-6 wintering **Burrowing Owls** (JL). A report of a **Spotted Owl** "contact call" heard at Big Basin on January 3 was interesting, if for no other reason than it was actually documented by a written description. However, the details were unconvincing for this rarity, particularly given the reporter's apparent limited experience with the species. I mention this here because this species' record in the county is particularly clouded by erroneous reports and those which cannot be verified.

A displaying male **Allen's Hummingbird** at College Lake from January 1-9 was an early returning migrant (DSu). Male **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were at Pasatiempo November 29-30 (TH) and near UCSC December 19-23 (TM). The county's sixth **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** wintered at Nearys Lagoon from December 9 through at least January 20 (SG, v.ob.). A **Tropical Kingbird** wintered at Davenport from December 11 to at least February 4, with a *second* one (!) appearing there January 27 - February 4 (RS, DSu). Annual variation for a winter irruptive was well demonstrated by **Red-breasted Nuthatches** found on the Santa Cruz County CBC in the last two years. Just four were found this year with good weather conditions, compared to 111 in a total rain-out during last winter's record-breaking invasion. A **Nashville Warbler** was at Schwan Lake on December 20 (DSu). A **Lucy's Warbler** at Nearys Lagoon from December 3-17 was our fourth county record (SG, DSu); all have been in winter. A male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** in a Capitola yard from December 30 to January 11 was a very rare winter record (DSu).

Three **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were reported from Mid-County in December (SG, DSu). A **Black-and-white Warbler** at Nearys Lagoon on December 12 (MS) was probably the same one there on January 19 (SG). A **MacGillivray's Warbler** heard at Natural Bridges on January 17 was possibly the same that wintered there last year (JD). A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a Ben Lomond feeder on November 30 (CS) and a male was in Live Oak December 20-22 (AE). Happy Valley's **Lark Sparrow** remained through at least February 5 (BB). A **Harris's Sparrow** at the Pajaro River December 31 to at least January 3 (DG) was very rare for the county. A **Bullock's Oriole** was in Capitola December 20-21 (MT). An **Evening Grosbeak** at UCSC on January 11 was the only one reported for the season so far (JD).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Bonnie Bedzin, David Bockman, Jeff Davis, Austin Enright, Alexander Gaguine, Doug George, Steve Gerow, Bob Hargis, Tom Hopkins, Brett Jarret, Rob Kaler, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Tom Marshall, Todd Newberry, Peter Radcliff, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Roberta Smith, Chris Stewart, David Suddjian (DSu), Mabel Thue, Heather Wilson. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from early February to early April 1998

A **Red-throated Loon** was on the San Lorenzo River near Highway 1 on March 29 (DB). This was unusually far upstream for a riverine setting, although they are found inland on lakes. An immature cormorant on the San Lorenzo River just downstream of Highway 1 on February 27 was apparently unaware that it was a **Pelagic Cormorant** (DS). As such, it was rare off the ocean. Seven **White-faced Ibis** were flying high over Capitola on April 3 (DS). Two **Ross's Geese** continued present at Pinto Lake through March 12 (DS). Nine large **Canada Geese** were at College Lake on March 12, while seven were at Pinto Lake that day (DS). One flew over Davenport Landing on March 29. (AG). Rare ducks included a female **Redhead** at Harkins Slough and a male **Eurasian Wigeon** at upper Watsonville Slough on March 12 (DS). A female **White-winged Scoter** at Shorebirds Pond, Pajaro Dunes, was rare off the ocean (EL). An impressive count of 947 **Surf Scoters** was made at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on February 21 (PR). Compare this to the Santa Cruz County CBC's 10-year average of only 446 from about 14 miles of coastline!

A survey of seven lakes and wetlands in the Pajaro Valley on March 12 found a total of 127 **Hooded Mergansers** (39% adult male), far and away a record count for the valley (DS). Forty-eight at Harkins Slough and 47 at College Lake were very high counts in their own right. An immature **Bald Eagle** seen at Antonelli Pond on April 5 (AH, SE) was later than most recent records. **Golden Eagles** do not normally visit our immediate coast, so one (reported as a "juvenile") seen at Long Marine Lab on February 12 (*fide* SS) and a sub-adult (same bird?) seen there on three days in early April (JL) were odd. On one occasion it was evicted from the vicinity of the coastal bluff by territorial Western Gulls (JL). An **American Avocet** at Scott Creek mouth on February 25 was very rare away from the Pajaro Valley (BS). High counts of **Whimbrel** for the winter period included 33 at West Cliff Drive on January 31 (JD) and 26 at Black Point on February 13 (PR).

A **Red Knot** seen at West Cliff Drive on February 26 (SG) was likely the same one that wintered to the east at Black Point. The wintering **Rock Sandpiper** was seen through at least March 23 (PR, SG). Steve Gerow observed "rocky shorebirds" forced into odd spots at Natural Bridges during stormy conditions in late January. On January 31 **Black** and **Ruddy Turnstones**, **Surfbirds** and **Sanderlings** were foraging in non-littoral habitats on bluff tops and in pickleweed/saltgrass marsh. A migrant **Least Tern** was again seen in the "Trans-Mountain Flyway" with **Caspian Terns** and **Bonaparte's Gulls** over Capitola on April 13 (DS). A **Pileated Woodpecker** at Redwood Road east of Corralitos was at the margin of this species' expanding Santa Cruz Mountains range (TZ). A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at UCSC on March 5 was very early (JD). The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** that wintered at Neary Lagoon was present through at least April 4 (SG).

A **Loggerhead Shrike** at Felton on March 1 was rare for the San Lorenzo Valley (BS). A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Westside Santa Cruz on March 16-18 was likely wintering (JD, SG). Happy Valley's wintering **Lark Sparrow** has stayed from October 14 to at least April 11 (BB). Our wintering Lark Sparrows are mostly found in areas where they are present year-round, so this

individual provided a rare look at an over-wintering stay away from breeding areas. Lingering or spring migrant **White-throated Sparrows** were at Westside Santa Cruz on March 25 - April 3 (JD) and April 1 (MS). A pair of House Sparrows at Back Ranch Road was out of place and the first for long time resident W. Breck Tyler.

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, David Bockman, Jeff Davis, Scot Edwards, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Amber Hensley, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Peter Radcliff, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, David Suddjian, Susan Suddjian, W. Breck Tyler, Tim Zorach. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from mid-April to July 1998

It was an interesting spring and early summer! Rare birds, birds out of place, unusual migrant waves, rare nesting records, breeding population fluctuations...in other words, business as usual for the central California coast! Some locales are remarkable for their unlikely juxtaposition of species. For example, where was I on June 3 when I found Sora, California Thrasher, Snowy Plover, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Marbled Murrelet and Lawrence's Goldfinch? Read on and find out.

Speaking of interesting assemblages, Steve Gerow reported on the birds that came to feed on large flying insects over Meder Canyon in western Santa Cruz on April 22: eight to 10 **Western Scrub-Jays** and three **Steller's Jays** flycatching near the top of the slope, soon joined by about 20 **California Gulls**, 10-12 **Bonaparte's Gulls**, and one **Glaucous-winged-Gull**. The feeding frenzy lasted 20 minutes.

Two interesting migratory movements are worth detailing here. Summit Meadows in Castle Rock State Park is at the head of the San Lorenzo River watershed. Northbound landbirds (and waterbirds!) stream up the canyon and over the ridge into San Mateo County. I made observations from 7:30 to 10:00 a.m. on April 18 and saw the following going north: seven **Common Loons**, 45 **Western Sandpipers**, 35 **Long-billed Dowitchers**, 42 **Vaux's Swifts**, 21 **Western Kingbirds**, ~700 **American Robins**, ~865 **Cedar Waxwings**, 29 **Western Tanagers**, 36 **Black-headed Grosbeaks** and 47 **Lazuli Buntings** and others. Note that some of the landbirds are normally nocturnal migrants!

This spring's pattern of storms and unsettled weather generally slowed landbird migration. A break in the weather after a storm at the end of May led to a late fallout of migrant landbirds along the central California coast. Awakening to several singing **Yellow Warblers** around my home on the morning of May 29, I surveyed about 0.4 km² of the suburban habitat in the Cliffwood Heights neighborhood of Capitola. The tally included 42 **Yellow Warblers**, 13 **Wilson's Warblers**, 17 **Black-headed Grosbeaks**, 22 **Western Tanagers**, 9 **Pacific-slope Flycatchers**, 5 **Swainson's Thrushes** and one **Cassin's Vireo**!

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A count of 970 **Pacific Loons** at Sunset State Beach on May 27 was unusually many for so late in the season (DSu). Three **Common Loons** resided at Loch Lomond from at least early July onward for our first inland summer record (BWo). Pelagic trips in Santa Cruz waters found two **Laysan Albatrosses** on May 16 and two or three on June 3 (DSh). A **Flesh-footed Shearwater** near the cement ship at Seacliff State Beach on June 18 was seasonally rare and remarkable so close to shore (DSu). How many observers might independently spot the same rare bird on the same summer evening? I guess the odds are better if the birds are as big as **Magnificent Frigatebirds**. So it was on July 20 when two immature frigates were seen flying up the coast by two independent observers at West Cliff Drive around 7:15 p.m. (DC, DB). Then they were seen in the day's last light at Davenport *perched on a power line on the inland side of the highway* (DWB). At 4:45 a.m. on July 21 they were still roosting on the wire, flying out to sea at 5:50 a.m.

(JD, BMcK). Davis' careful study indicated they were an immature male and female in "Basic I" plumage (probably two to three years old).

A colony of nesting **Pelagic Cormorants** on the cliffs west of Capitola Beach on June 9 extended the species' known breeding range into the bay by almost 7 miles (LH, DSu). **Green Herons** continued to nest in urban and suburban settings, well away from water. They nested again in the eucalyptus at the corner of Highway 1 and Mission Street in Santa Cruz, fledging three young by May 20 (DSu). Another pair nested in a huge live oak in a Watsonville yard, fledging young by June 23 (KM). **Black-crowned Night-Herons** have nested irregularly in the Watsonville Slough system over the last 10 years. This year there were at least 16 nests in East Struve Slough on June 10 and 12 nests in Hanson Slough on June 11 (DSu). Three **White-faced Ibis** were at Hanson Slough on April 16 (DSu).

A female **Northern Shoveler** with six ducklings at Harkins Slough on July 4 was our first county breeding record (DSu). A male **Ring-necked Duck** at Antonelli Pond from at least June 4 to July 18 was our first summer record (PR, BBe, WR). A female **Bufflehead** at East Struve Slough on June 10 had little precedent for the season (DSu). A male **Black Scoter** was at West Cliff Drive on May 5 (SG). A male **Surf Scoter** flying overland at western Santa Cruz on May 12 was unusual (JD). Five Surf Scoters at Shorebirds Pond on May 27 {four on June 3, one on June 10} were rare away from the ocean (DSu). **Common Mergansers** nesting at recently-colonized Soquel Creek included females with young two miles up from Soquel Avenue on May 10 and near Olive Springs Quarry on June 5 (DSu). Nesting also continued in the San Lorenzo and Waddell Creek drainages. At least two **Ospreys** were reported to be present continually at Loch Lomond through spring and summer but there was no indication of nesting (BWo). An Osprey at Glen Canyon Road on June 8 was perhaps a late migrant (BS).

A pair of **Golden Eagles** frequented a eucalyptus grove near the UCSC Arboretum in mid-April, raising hopes for a nesting there (MS et al.), but nothing came of it. Another pair was displaying at the Kelly Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on June 6, but the observer (an eagle biologist) was '90%' sure there was no active nest (CH). The nesting sites of Golden Eagles in the county remain shrouded in mystery. I'm aware of one active nest site in the northern Pajaro Valley, but other sites I've heard of are all vague second- and third-hand reports by those who do not want the locations to be known. Meanwhile, observations of Golden Eagles at Wilder Beach on April 22 (AG) and at Long Marine Lab in late May (JL) were unusual for the immediate coast. **Peregrine Falcons** nested again at a site in the upper San Lorenzo watershed, fledging two young, but recent nest sites at Waddell Creek were apparently inactive (JL). A female trailed by two recent fledglings over Harbor High School in Santa Cruz in early July was a surprise (BWa). Where they came from is a mystery!

A pair of **California Quail** at Natural Bridges beginning May 5 were the first in the park in several years (SG). Regular observations by Gerow and others in recent years indicated that quail had disappeared from most of the habitat islands of western Santa Cruz. **Sora** is one of our rarest breeding species. This spring we had the following hints of local nesting: one at the Wilder Creek restoration area on May 8 (CE), one at Sunset Beach Marsh June 3 and 17 (DSu), and one at Hanson Slough on June 11 (DSu). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Hanson Slough on April 16 (DSu). A vocal flock of 96 Long-billed Curlews flying north over Capitola in the "trans-mountain flyway" on May 6 was a record number for the county (DSu). An adult **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Waddell Beach on July 22 (MS). The wintering Rock Sandpiper stayed at West Cliff to at least April 8, when it was in almost complete alternate plumage (SG). An immature **Franklin's Gull** flew up the coast at West Cliff Drive on June 1 (KJ). Three Franklin's Gulls were on the Monterey County side of the Pajaro River mouth on May 25-26 (*fide* JD).

A second-summer **Herring Gull** at Sunset State Beach May 27 to June 28 added a rare summering record (DSu). A second-summer **Thayer's Gull** at Shorebirds Pond on June 10 was also exceptional (DSu). A **Least Tern** flew north at Sunset State Beach on June 10. More significant was a Least Tern flying north at Glen Canyon Road on the evening of July 14 (BS), presumably en route over the mountains to the San Francisco Bay area. A **Black Tern** was at College Lake on April 17 (DSu). *Five* **Black Skimmers** flew north past Sunset State Beach on June 3, with another flying north on June 10 (DSu). Three Skimmers were on the Monterey County side of the Pajaro River mouth on May 25-26 (*fide* JD). Our **Pigeon Guillemot** population plummeted this season. The first returns of the season were on schedule (March 19, SG), but numbers remained extremely low through May, building only slightly during June (DSu, LH, SG, JD). Surveys at several key breeding areas during June and July indicated this year's population was only about 10% of average (DSu)! Was this related to El Niño?

Things seemed off with **Marbled Murrelets** as well. Unusually many were off the mid-county coast in April and May (LH, JD, EB), but they have become increasingly rare there in spring in the last few years. They were seen flying south past Sunset State Beach in early June (DSu), where they are usually absent until late summer or fall. A continuing radio-telemetry study of murrelets recorded three marked birds dead or dying onshore along the mid-county coast: Seabright Beach May 26, Aptos Creek mouth May 21 and along Moran Creek (!) on May 28 (EB). The latter was possibly predated or scavenged, but the cause(s) of death are still being investigated. **Rhinoceros Auklets** were absent at their breeding site at Davenport for the first time since they were discovered there in 1987 (DSu et al.)

An owl flushed from the lower reach of Wilder Creek on May 9 was probably a **Short-eared Owl**, but **Long-eared Owl** could not be ruled out (CE). Either would be unusual there in spring. Two **Black Swifts** feeding low over Sunset State Beach on May 27 were very rare for south county, where the species has hardly ever been seen (DSu). A major movement of Vaux's Swifts along the central coast in mid-May was also evident in Santa Cruz County on May 15, with swarms of 350 and 250 at Scott and Waddell Creeks, respectively (DSu). The last report I received of Neary's wintering **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** was April 18 (SG). **Hammond's Flycatchers** had a record spring showing: Noble Gulch in Capitola on May 30 (DSu), Liddell Creek on May 31 (CE), Sycamore Grove on June 6 (DSu), and an *Empidonax* considered to be a "probable" Hammond's (vs. Least) was in Live Oak on June 4 (PR). A singing **Dusky Flycatcher** was at the Pajaro River on May 27 (DSu). Four **Willow Flycatchers** were reported from June 1-8 (SG, DSu).

The county's fourth **Cassin's Kingbird** was at Soda Lake on April 17 (DSu); all records have been from spring, spanning March 6 - June 11. Cassin's currently nests as close as the Hollister / Gilroy area. In addition to the high count of migrant **Western Kingbirds** given above, 19 were in the Harkins / Hanson Slough area on April 16 (DSu). A male **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** north of Scott Creek on June 16 was our first *documented* county record (DSu). Migrant **Purple Martins** are hardly ever detected in the county, so two males and a female near Seacliff State Beach on July 13 were a treat- they were even seen landing on the beach (RW)! Up to eight **Common Ravens** were courting at the Buena Vista Road County Landfill on several days in early May and a family group with fledglings was near Gizdich Ranch east of Watsonville on July 20 (DSu). Nesting in the Pajaro Valley is apparently occurring, but no actual nest sites have yet been reported from that region.

A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** nest in the Monterey pine grove at Sunset State Beach on June 3 (DSu) was a first for south county and well away from our other local breeding

populations. Three at an Aptos feeder on June 14 were also away from local breeding areas (DK). An albino juvenile **European Starling** at Capitola on July 25 appeared to be a complete albino with pink eyes and everything (DSu)! Partial albinism is not too unusual in many species, but true albinos are very rare. Nesting was suggested for a pair of **Cedar Waxwings** gathering nest material and disappearing into the trees of the Pajaro River near the Watsonville sewage facility on May 27, with at least one still there on June 11 (DSu). It so happens that the only other hint of this species nesting in the county was waxwings gathering lichens in the same area on May 28, 1988! This is as close as we've gotten to a solid breeding record.

A **Tennessee Warbler** was at the Pajaro River on May 27 (DSu). **Yellow Warbler** continued to be absent as a breeding species at Neary Lagoon, Sycamore Grove and Soquel Creek in Capitola (SG, DSu, BMo), all formerly regular haunts. A female **American Redstart** was at Sycamore Grove on June 6 (DSu). A singing male **Mourning Warbler** was at Harkins Slough) on June 17 for our first county record, pending CBRC review (DSu). Breeding **MacGillivray's Warblers** continued to be found in "soft" scrub habitat at Rancho Del Oso from April 25 onwards (JD, BMcK), with nesting confirmed (feeding young) July 5 (DSu). They were first found breeding along our coast in 1996. **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were numerous. Seven (five adult males) were found from May 27 to July 7, with four in eight days from May 27 to June 3 (BBr, TH, GH, MC, DSu). Male **Blue Grosbeaks** were along Pescadero Creek in the extreme southeastern corner of the county on April 17, and near Scott Creek Marsh on May 9 (DSu). This rarity has been regularly found in the county since 1993, with one or two records each year.

Tricolored Blackbirds remain one of our most locally-distributed breeders. This year the colony at Last Chance Lagoon continued to be active (CE), while singing birds in potential habitat at Soda Lake on April 17 (DSu) and Swanton Pond June 9+ (DSu, LH) were the only other indications of possible breeding. **Great-tailed Grackles** continued the recent pattern of spring appearances: a male was near Harkins Slough on May 27 (DSu), a male was at Pinto Lake City Park on June 16 (WM), and a male and female were there on June 11 (DSu). They were reported to nest at San Felipe Lake in San Benito County this year - only eight miles from the county line. A smattering of **Red Crossbills** appeared in areas with Monterey pine or Douglas fir. Flocks of one to nine birds were reported from April 10 to June 14 (SG, JD, LH, DSu).

Finally, Sunset State Beach has a special charm for the genus *Carduelis*. This year **Lawrence's, Lesser and American Goldfinches** all nested within the same acre of land near the south parking lot, while **Pine Siskins** nested in pines only a short distance away (DSu). On June 3 all four species were seen feeding in the same weed patch! Where else can you find all four species nesting in such close proximity?

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin (BBe), Dawn Breese, Bill Brown (BBr), Esther Burkett, Debbie Cameron, Mardell Carmen, Jeff Davis, Chris Emmons, Carleton Eyster, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Gene Hall, Laird Henkel, Craig Himmelwright, Tom Hopkins, Kent Johnson, Dee Kempf, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Karen Major, Bert McKee, Bryan Mori, Peter Radcliff, Willard Roberts, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Debi Shearwater (DSH), David Suddjian (DSu), Brian Walton (BWa), Diane West-Bourke, Bill Wolcott (BWo), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from August to September 1998

Do you pay attention to "post-breeding dispersants" as they appear around your home? Many of us live in suburban areas away from the immediate vicinity of natural habitats (or perhaps only fragments of quasi-natural habitat are nearby). Such areas don't have too many breeding species, but from June to August one can detect a number of species as they disperse from their local breeding haunts. These are adults and juveniles that, for a time (perhaps the whole non-breeding season), become more catholic in their choice of habitats and move short distances from nesting areas. In suburban areas, most such dispersants are resident species, but a few breeding migrants also visit suburbia after nesting. Most of our breeding migrants do not show this pattern, although they turn up later in migration proper. I suspect the situation is different in mountain areas. Maybe some of you mountain residents can let me know which dispersants you notice.

For example, 16 species nest in my suburban Cliffwood Heights neighborhood in Capitola, plus a few others that visit through the breeding season. Post-breeding dispersants I detected near my home this summer arrived as follows: Sharp-shinned Hawk (June 13), Hairy Woodpecker (June 20), Black-headed Grosbeak (June 23), Black Phoebe (June 29), Pygmy Nuthatch (July 1), Western Tanager (July 7), Plain Titmouse (July 9), Downy Woodpecker (July 17), Wrentit and Bewick's Wren (July 28), Cooper's Hawk and Hutton's Vireo (August 9).

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Steve Gerow found a loon off West Cliff Drive on August 8 with features indicating **Arctic Loon**. Steve is to be commended for his conscientious approach to this observation of a rarity which has been found in California only a handful of times. It's one he had never identified before, whose identification (in non-breeding plumage) is difficult. He had a good study, but couldn't re-find the bird for more study and no one else was able to confirm it. He submitted a detailed description it even though he remained uncertain of its identity. Certainly the most spectacular bird feature of Monterey Bay during the summer and fall is the huge number of **Sooty Shearwaters** that come inshore to feed in the late afternoon and evening. Flocks of tens of thousands are regular and even hundreds of thousands are occasionally seen. But sometimes the numbers are just plain crazy, such as on September 12 when "unbelievable numbers" of Sooties off West Cliff Drive formed an "incredible cloud that stretched on forever" across the waters (JD). Jeff estimated a mind-numbing 3,000,000 Sooties were present.

Pink-footed Shearwaters seen from West Cliff Drive among big Sooty flocks included one on September 7 (SG) and two on September 12 (JD). Few are seen by shorebound observers. A **Short-tailed Shearwater** off Santa Cruz on September 20 was early (DSh). Over 1,000 **Black-vented Shearwaters** off Baldwin Creek Beach on September 7 was a high count (JD). A **Manx Shearwater** was seen off Santa Cruz on August 21 (DSu). **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** made news, with three on August 8 (DSh), one on August 21 (DSu) and a record 16 on September 13 (DSh). A **Leach's Storm-Petrel** 12 miles off Davenport on August 21 was one of the few reports ever for Santa Cruz waters (DSu). **Least Storm-Petrels** are sporadic on Monterey Bay, usually closely tied to El Niño conditions. This fall they appeared in record numbers. Counts of one to nine birds on trips from August 8-21 were not exceptional (DSh, CK, DSu), but a jaw-dropping 733 carefully tallied on September 13 was amazing (DSh et al.)!

Wood Ducks are normally absent on the urban section of the San Lorenzo River downstream of Highway 1, so counts of one to five there from September 11-28 were of interest (MTL, DB, LW). Antonelli's summering male **Ring-necked Duck** remained there through at least August 21 (PR, DSu, SG). Steve Gerow suspected it was the one there "off and on" since fall 1997. It seems it fell into bad company with some local "Mallards" of questionable lineage. By September 1 it moved to Neary's Lagoon, where it again joined "trash" ducks (SG), then from September 18-30 it was at the lower reach of the San Lorenzo River, company unreported (MTL). Four novel summer observations of an adult **Peregrine Falcon** (perhaps all of the same female) in Capitola from June 20 - August 21 provide another measure of this species' changing summer status in the county (DSu). A wintering Peregrine returned to the usual roost at the San Lorenzo River mouth by September 11 (PR).

Reports of **Long-billed Curlews**, a sparse fall migrant, included one at West Cliff Drive on June 27 (SG), three at Corcoran Lagoon Beach on July 11 (PR), and two there on August 25 (MS). A **Wandering Tattler** wading in the shallows of Bonita Lagoon on August 6 was in an odd habitat (PR). Single **Red Knots** were at Corcoran Lagoon Beach on August 6 (PR) and Laguna Creek Beach on September 24 (DSu). Eleven **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Harkins Slough on September 30 was the highest count reported in several years (CK). Twenty to 30 **Sabine's Gulls** graced the August 8 pelagic trip (DSh), with 23 seen on August 21 (DSu). Reports of *Synthliboramphus* murrelets from pelagic trips included: three **Xantus's Murrelets** on August 8 (DSh); one **Craveri's Murrelet** and one Xantus's/Craveri's sp. on August 14 (JD); and two Xantus's, four Craveri's and 4 Xantus's/Craveri's on August 21 (DSu) A **Horned Puffin** cruised by a boat 11 miles off Santa Cruz on August 21 (DSu).

A **White-winged Dove** at a feeder at Effie Street in Santa Cruz on September 13 was our seventh county record (DB, LW). Our five modern records fall in the period of August 8 to October 7. Two adult **Vaux's Swifts** tending three begging fledglings at a Spring Street residence on September 3 provided another (and late) breeding record from this neighborhood south of the UCSC campus (DSu *et al.*). A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at Soquel Creek in Capitola on September 18 was one of our earliest fall records, about two weeks ahead of average (DSu). Six **Willow Flycatchers** were found from September 7-20 (JD, DSu, SG). A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at Soquel Creek in Soquel on September 21 (DSu).

A loose flock of 58 **Western Scrub-Jays** was moving in a deliberate direction over Webb Road near Watsonville on September 2 (DSu). The only other comparable report of a flock on the move was of a loose flock of 32 travelling over Spring Valley Road on September 4, 1992 (DSu). Has anyone else ever seen large groups of these jays on the move? A flock of about 200 **American Crows** near Neary's Lagoon on September 29 was a record count for the mid-county area (SG). A "rather concentrated wave" of **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** passing along the coast at West Cliff Drive on August 30 totalled over 50 birds and included one flock of 38 birds. This is unusual for this somewhat solitary swallow which is rarely found in groups exceeding more than five birds.

Our annual **Bank Swallow** was at Harkins Slough on September 17 (DSu). **Barn Swallows** streaming south past the College Lake area on September 18 totalled over 3,000 birds passing in 3.5 hours (DSu). No other swallow species were evident! **Red-breasted Nuthatches** seemed to be in good numbers for early fall, suggesting a decent winter showing may be in store for us (SG, MS, v.ob.). A **Winter Wren** in a western Santa Cruz yard on September 16 was unusual in a suburban setting (SH). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** in Santa Cruz on August 20 was our earliest record by 11 days and about 3 weeks ahead of the average first arrivals (SH). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Scott Creek on September 22 (DSu). An early **Magnolia Warbler** in Santa Cruz

on August 30 was 13 days ahead of our previous early date and only the third fall record before October (SG).

A **Townsend's Warbler** at Rancho del Oso on August 19 was among our earliest reports on record (DSu). A **Hermit Warbler** at Meder Canyon on September 8 (JD) was odd in two respects: our migrants are rarely detected away from forested areas and this one was singing! A **Prairie Warbler** graced Lighthouse Field on September 17-26 (SG, MS, AK, DSu), with another at Harkins slough on September 30 (CK). A **Palm Warbler** was at Nearys Lagoon on September 16 (SG). Three or four **Blackpoll Warblers** were found from September 4-29 (AG, MS, DSu, v.ob.). Three female **American Redstarts** were found from August 20 - September 30 (DSu, MS, SG). An immature **Prothonotary Warbler** at Rancho del Oso on September 30 was only our fifth county record (DSu). A **Northern Waterthrush** paused at Soquel Creek in Capitola on September 29 (DSu). An adult male **Common Yellowthroat** in a western Santa Cruz yard was also unusual in a suburban setting (see Winter Wren, above) (MS).

A nice count of 42 **Western Tanagers** at Meder Canyon on September 6 was representative of the good numbers that frequent our coastal canyons to feast on coffeeberry and blackberry fruits (SG). An impressive four **Clay-colored Sparrows** were along the north county coast from September 22-30 (DSu, GS). Our first county record of **Black-throated Sparrow** was provided by a juvenile visiting feeders at Walnut Street in Santa Cruz from September 6-11 (BJ, SG, AG, JD, BS, v.ob.). The **Lark Sparrow** returned to its Happy Valley feeder by September 22 (BB), while one near West Cliff Drive on September 30 was a rare migrant (SG). A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was in Capitola on September 17 (MT). A female **Blue Grosbeak** was at Meder Canyon on August 20 (DSu). A trio of **Bobolinks** at Wilder Ranch State Park on September 25 dwindled to one by September 27 (GS, MS, JD). Six **Red Crossbills** at Rancho del Oso on September 30 were the only ones reported (DSu).

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, David Bockmann, Jeff Davis, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Sheri Howe, Bill Johnson, Anna Kapitov, Clay Kempf, Peter Radcliff, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Gary Strachen, David Suddjian (DSu), Mary Tindle, Monte Tudor-Long, Linda Wilson. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from October to November 1998

A few folks responded with interest to my idea about covering a "regular patch" and recording observations there over time (see *Albatross* vol. 44, no. 1). So far, only Monte Tudor-Long has sent summaries of his visits to be added to the county files. His efforts covered parts of the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz and Henry Cowell park. Thanks Monte! Anyone else want to try it? It's a lot better than watching football!

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A **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** in Santa Cruz waters on October 10-11 was viewed extensively and photographed (DSh et al.). This would be a first county record, pending review by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC), the previous two reports having been rejected by the committee. A **White-faced Ibis** was at West Struve Slough on October 4 (JB), while another was at the Shorebirds Pond on November 1 (BBu). A total of nine **Ross' Geese** were found at six spots in the Pajaro Valley November 19-24 (DSu). A **Redhead** was near Baldwin Creek on October 28, and four were at Corralitos Lagoon on November 24 (DSu). The **Ring-necked Duck** that over-summered in Santa Cruz was still present with ducks of ill repute through at least November 2 (MTL). It was even seen at the pond at San Lorenzo Park (*gasp!*), where no duck of any purity has ever set tail.

An adult **Bald Eagle** was over the San Lorenzo River mouth on October 28 (BW), while a sub-adult attracted the mobbing efforts of three other raptors at Harkins Slough on November 23 (BS, JA, PL). A **Broad-winged Hawk** cruised low over Capitola on November 5. **Ferruginous Hawks** were near Laguna Creek on October 28 (DSu) and Davenport on November 17 (BS). A healthy 24 reports of **Merlins** were received from September 29 - November 25 (v.ob.). A **Rock Sandpiper** was at West Cliff Drive and Natural Bridges from October 28 to at least November 6 (TN, SG). Perhaps this was last year's wintering bird returning for another season. Two **Elegant Terns** at Black Point on November 15 were the last for the season (PR). Flocks of 19 **Common Terns** at Seacliff State Beach on October 5 and 26 at Capitola Beach on October 20 were high on-shore counts for the county (DSu). Three juveniles at Aptos Creek mouth on November 11 were late (DSu).

Families of **Black Skimmers** put in late appearances: an adult and juvenile were photographed at the Main Beach in Santa Cruz on October 21 (CA), and two adults and a juvenile were at Aptos Creek mouth on November 11 (DSu). Over four hundred **Mourning Doves** in the field near the Lipton facility in Santa Cruz on October 14 was a large assemblage for the county. A Cooper's Hawk dove into the flock, "sending a shearwater-like mass into the air and circling the field for several minutes" (SG). A **Burrowing Owl** was along the coast at Wilder Ranch State Park on October 5 (CH). A would-be first county record of **Chimney Swift** was provided by a bird seen well at Kelly Lake on October 3 (DSu). I decided to leave the record as only "highly probable" because the identification is complicated, no one else was able to see it and the date is a little late. An unusually large swarm of about 250 **Vaux's Swifts** materialized over Capitola on October 2 on the first clear morning after a period of particularly dreary fog (DSu).

What do we make of an apparently recently-fledged juvenile **Anna's Hummingbird** at a Santa Cruz feeder November 21-23 (JD)? Juveniles are more typically found from late January to August. Three more **Willow Flycatchers** in October brought the fall total up to nine, including one tardy one at Natural Bridges on October 22 (AG). A **Gray Flycatcher** at Yellow Bank Creek on October 1 was our eighth county record (DSu). A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Capitola on November 17 was late (DSu). Reports of fall migrant **Cassin's Vireos** included just three birds from August 22 - October 5 (SG, DSu). An immature **Yellow-green Vireo** at Lighthouse Field State Beach on October 15-16 would be our second county record, pending CBRC review (SG, v.ob.). A flock of 110 **American Crows** at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on October 6 was another unusually large count for the mid-county area (MTL). Some 35 **Horned Larks** were in north county coast Brussels sprouts fields on October 28 (DSu).

Red-breasted Nuthatches continued in good numbers through the fall (v.ob.). Information at hand suggests a substantial invasion, but not a big as we had in fall 1996. **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were also present in good numbers (v.ob.). They were especially evident in lowland areas away from the forests, "almost anywhere there is a conifer" as well as elsewhere (SG). Reports of fall migrant **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** included six birds in Santa Cruz from August 10 - November 12 (SG, MSc). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Noble Gulch on November 10 was the latest county record by 14 days (DSu). A **Magnolia Warbler** was at Rancho del Oso on October 1 (SR). **Palm Warblers** are often our most numerous "Eastern vagrant" warblers in the fall, but how many do we really have each season? Unlike the other vagrant warblers, they seem to like our Brussels sprout fields, a "habitat" normally avoided by birders. On October 28, I spent four hours working sprout fields on the north county coast and found 21 **Palm Warblers**! Other reports so far this fall brought the season's total to a healthy 37 birds (CE, ED, TLi, DSu, EL, SG).

Blackpoll Warblers had a record fall showing, with 18 found from September 4 - October 15 (AG, BS, JA, JD, DSu, TLo). Our previous record was 10. Two more **American Redstarts** October 2 & 5 brought the season's total to five (DSu). Seven **Black-and-white Warblers** were found from October 7 - November 19 (CE, BMck, DSu). A **Wilson's Warbler** at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park on November 15 was late (JD). Reports of rare migrant western warblers included: six **Nashvilles** September 20 - November 1 (AK, MSc, BS, BM, BH, JB); 17 **Black-throated Grays** September 7 - November 12 (SG, DSu, SR, BS, JA); four **Hermits** September 8-30 (JD, DSu); and four **MacGillivray's** September 9 - November 20 (DSu). The MacGillivray's at Soquel Creek on November 20 was late.

An adult **Green-tailed Towhee** graced a Watsonville yard from November 1-6, for our eight county record (MSt). **Clay-colored Sparrows** broke county records for the season, with 11 found from September 22 - November 10 (DSu, GS, BBe). From 1988-1997 fall totals ranged from only one to three birds (average 2.2 per fall) In contrast, only one **Chipping Sparrow** was reported (October 28, DSu). A reddish **Fox Sparrow** seen well in Felton on November 5-17 (BS, PL, MSc) had characters consistent with the eastern form *P. i. iliaca* (fide JD), while one in Santa Cruz on November 9 was consistent with the Canadian-breeding form *zaboria* (JD). Reddish Fox Sparrows have been reported a few other times in the county, but so far none has been definitively documented. Nine **White-throated Sparrows** were reported October 1 -November 27 (SG, MSc, BS, DSu), but I understand others at feeders went unreported.

Two **Lapland Longspurs** were in the sprouts fields near Needle Rock Point on October 28 (DSu). Reports of fall migrant **Lazuli Buntings** totaled six from August 1 - September 20 (SG). A female type **Hooded Oriole** in Santa Cruz on October 22 was over a month late (MSc). Remarkably, a **Bullock's Oriole**, only very rarely detected in fall migration in the county, was

seen in the same yard the same day (MSc)! **Pine Siskins** were generally plentiful from October on, with some large groups (100+) at some feeders (BS, SH, v.ob.). Six **Evening Grosbeaks** at Quail Hollow County Park were the only ones reported (JD).

Cited Observers: Jean Adams, Cathleen Anderson, Bonnie Bedzin (BBe), Betty Burrige (BBu), Jerry Busch, Jeff Davis, Elaine Dinger, Chris Emmons, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Bob Hargis, Craig Himmelwright, Sheri Howe, Anna Kapitov, Pauline Launer, Todd Likens, Earl Lebow, Tom Lowe, Barry McLaughlin, Todd Newberry, Peter Radcliff, Steve Rovell, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MSc), , Debra Shearwater (DSh), Michael Stevenson (MSt), Gary Strachen, David Suddjian (DSu), Monte Tudor-Long, Brian Walton. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1998 to January 1999

As the county's avifauna becomes better known, it is increasingly evident that patterns of occurrence (where, when, how many) are quite dynamic for many species. But for most, such changes can only be elucidated when there is a detailed, long-term record to work from. We are fortunate to have a growing body of bird records to provide the perspective needed to be able to identify such changes. The dynamic nature of our avifauna makes it challenging to determine the norm for a given species, and to be sure the current paradigm of what is expected reflects reality. As a reviewer of records, I have to evaluate bird reports against what we have come to know and expect for each species. Thus, my alarm goes off if "Species A" (usually limited to the coast) is reported inland, or "Species B" (normally uncommon) is reported to outnumber all its congeners, or "Species C" (usually absent in winter) is reported in large numbers in January at an unexpected spot, etc. Sometimes birders are offended if I question a report, perhaps even of a species that is "common" in the proper seasons. Yet it is the continued critical review of reports that provides the quality control needed to ensure that our long-term record is accurate and scientifically useful.

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Red-throated Loons are not numerous along our coast in winter, so a concentration of at least 195 from Laguna Creek to Davenport on December 19 was unusual (DE et al.). A **Common Loon** at Loch Lomond on December 19 was rare inland (K&BM). A full-grown, but still stripe-headed juvenile **Pied-billed Grebe** was begging at Westlake on the late date of December 19 (LH, KN). Pied-billeds are said to nest just about anytime of the year, but our previous latest date for a begging juvenile was November 2. Five **Red-necked Grebes** were along the coast from December 16 - January 15 (DS, PR et al., RWa). An aggregation of 23 **Eared Grebes** off Capitola Beach on January 16 was unusually many for one spot in winter (DS). Two **Pink-footed Shearwaters** offshore on December 19 were rare for winter (SA). We've come to expect **American White Pelicans** in the Pajaro Valley in winter, and this year's reports were typical: variably three to 15 at Pinto Lake December 10 - January 16 (BRa et al., DS) and two at Harkins Slough on January 1 (CK et al.).

Two **American Bitterns** at Pinto Lake (BRa et al.) and one at East Struve Slough on January 1 were the only ones reported (BRe et al.). A "cloud" of 14-15 **Great Blue Herons** were circling above the eucalyptus grove where several pairs nest near Pine Street in Santa Cruz on January 17 (NC). Presumably this was some sort of amorous ritual associated with the onset of the breeding season. Two **White-faced Ibis** at Wilder Beach on December 19 provided our first winter record away from the Pajaro Valley (BW, JS). **Cattle Egrets** seem to be on a down cycle in Santa Cruz County in recent years, when winter visitors have been sparse and hard to come by. This year two or three in the Soquel area December 16-19 were the only ones reported (DS). **Turkey Vultures** were more plentiful than normal for early winter: six were in the Davenport / Bonny Doon region on December 19 (DE et al.), three to six were in the Pajaro Valley on January 1 (v.ob.), and six were reported from Rancho del Oso on January 3 (fide DWB).

Two **Tundra Swans** were at College Lake on January 1, increasing to 11 there on January 16 (DS). Geese made a very strong showing. Seven **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Kelly

Lake on January 16 (DS). An impressive 25-27 **Snow Geese** were found at four spots December 10 to January 16 (TN, JD, CK, BMcL, LSJ, DS). High counts were 13 at Harkins Slough on January 1 (CK) and nine at College Lake on January 16 (DS). **Ross's Geese** did even better, with some 38 geese at seven spots December 10 to January 16 (DS, CK, TN, BRe, BRa, AG, MS, PR). College Lake came in with the peak counts of 11 on January 1 and 19 on January 16 (DS). **Canada Geese** were reported from four spots December 10 to January 16 (CK, BRa, DS, CE). College Lake hosted a big flock that kept growing: 56 on December 10, 64 on January 1 and 98 on January 16 (DS). The flock included eight, 12 and 21 "small form" Canadas, respectively, and on January 16 there were nine intermediate-sized geese, as well. A flock of 47 Canadas (three small ones) flew down the coast at Davenport on January 16 (CE).

A **Blue-winged Teal** at College Lake on January 16 (DS) and a **Greater Scaup** at the Pajaro River mouth on January 1 (RWa) were the only ones reported. The scaup has become one of the rarest of our regular winter ducks. **Black Scoters** included one at Capitola Wharf December 19-23 (DS) and two near Sunset State Beach on January 1 (K&BM et al.). In recent years **Hooded Mergansers** have become regular away from their Pajaro Valley stronghold, with a few reports of one or two birds most winters. So far this winter a record 20 birds were reported at seven spots outside the Pajaro Valley from December 8 to January 12, ranging from Aptos to Scotts Valley to Swanton Road (JD, RM, DS). A **Common Merganser** on the Pajaro River at Murphy Crossing on January 1 was the only one seen away from that species' normal haunts (ADM). However, 11 on Soquel Creek on December 19 was a record winter count for that stream (DS).

Three or four **Ospreys** found December 10 to January 16 (RWO, DS, MS, PR, BRe) was about normal for recent years. One at the San Lorenzo River mouth on January 13 was seen perched in a eucalyptus, sharing the same branch with the resident Peregrine Falcon (PR)! An adult **Bald Eagle** soared over College Lake on January 1 (DS). An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** spotted in Capitola on January 7 and 14 was our first winter record in five years (DS). Four **Ferruginous Hawks** were reported from December 21 to January 1 (RM, ADM, DS). Among many reports of **Merlins**, two perched together at Bonny Doon on December 19 was most unusual, as we almost always see them singly (CB). A rare coastward **Prairie Falcon** zipped over East Struve Slough on January 1 (BRe et al.). A count of 12 **Common Moorhens** at Pinto Lake on January 1 was high for one spot (BRa et al.). **Semipalmated Plovers** are quite rare (usually absent) in the county in winter, so two inland reports on January 1 were noteworthy: five at College Lake (DS) and 25 at Upper Watsonville Slough (BRe et al.). Two to three **Black-necked Stilts** appeared at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz January 1-6 (PR, MTL). Also rare away from the Pajaro Valley were three **American Avocets** at Aptos Creek mouth on January 2 (DS).

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at the Pajaro River at Murphy Crossing on January 1 (ADM). Winter reports have been few in recent years. Three **Surfbirds** were foraging on the wave-washed cement ship at Seacliff State Beach on November 11 and December 9 and 29 (LH). This unique habitat seems to be the only spot where this rock-lover normally occurs between Capitola Beach and Monterey. **Marbled Godwits** are typically only found along the coast in our county, so three in a playing field at Ramsay Park, Watsonville, on January 1 (BRe et al.) and two at College Lake on January 16 were unusual (DS). A **Western Gull** flying near the Watsonville Fairgrounds on January 1 was rare so far inland (JM). Five reports of first winter **Glaucous Gulls** along the coast from December 11 to January 17 was a good showing (DS, TL). Three **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were seen from a boat off Santa Cruz on December 19 (SA).

Black Skimmers continued to make news, with three winter records probably pointing the way more in the future. Two were at the San Lorenzo River mouth on December 19-20 (BBa, DS). One (likely different) was there January 12 (GC, LH, JA), and one (the same?) was nearby at

Twin Lakes Beach on January 19 (PR). Two **Pigeon Guillemots** off Sunset State Beach on January 1 were very rare for winter (JG). **Northern Pygmy-Owls** wandered to Soquel Creek in Capitola on December 7 and at College Lake on January 1 (DS). Four **Burrowing Owls** were spotted during a survey of the grasslands on the U.C.S.C. campus on December 19, but concentrations of castings and scat suggested at least seven owls were actually present (JL). Most were in the East Field area.

A **Spotted Owl** was heard and seen as a silhouette in flight at Wilder Ranch State Park during the pre-dawn of December 19 (JD, HW, RK). The call (heard multiple times) was the "contact" call, given in response to taped playback of the species' four-note primary call. All three observers have significant prior field experience with identifying this species. I was uncertain about a similar report from Big Basin near park headquarters on January 3, 1998 (see *Albatross* v. 43, no. 4). The true status of Spotted Owls in the Santa Cruz Mountains remains clouded by undocumented reports and reports from folks lacking field experience with the species. Even reports by experienced observers can be hard to evaluate. There is no evidence that Spotted Owls formerly occurred in the Santa Cruz Mountains before historic logging brought major changes to our forests. Over the last four decades there have been a small number of solid records from the non-breeding season to indicate that individuals wander here on occasion (but from where? what subspecies?). Some recent breeding season reports from San Mateo County need to be (in my opinion) better documented. *If* we do have a resident population, they do not seem to be occupying the areas that would seem to be most suitable (e.g., Big Basin), as they have not been found in such places in spite of lots of field work over many years. As far as owls go, this is not a very elusive species and we would not expect resident birds to escape detection over the years.

One or two **Common Poorwills** were seen and heard along a dirt road at Rancho del Oso from ca. December 21 to January 3 (DWB). Poorwills are apparently year-round residents, but as with other aspects of their local occurrence, their winter status and distribution is poorly known. A male **Allen's Hummingbird** at Aptos Creek County Park on January 9 was a little early (DS). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was a highlight at Coffee Lane Park on Rodeo Gulch on December 19-31 (CK, DS). **Pileated Woodpeckers** continued to be found in all their recently-colonized watersheds, but one at Glen Haven Road on December 19 was a little away from their new digs along the East Branch of Soquel Creek (DS). A "**Western**" **Flycatcher** at La Selva on January 1 was not calling and could not be pinned down to species (BBa). A **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** at Neary Lagoon on December 19 was likely the same which wintered there last year (SG, BG). Unfortunately birding access to the site has been greatly limited this winter by construction of the adjacent sewage facility.

Three **American Crows** at Boulder Creek on December 19 were rare in the mountains (BRe, MM et al.). I'd like to hear of any crows in the mountains (except at Scotts Valley, where regular). **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were found wintering at their appointed spots along the north coast, although four together on Back Ranch Road on December 19 was exceptional (WBT). Four at three spots in the Pajaro Valley on January 1 was high for that area (CK, BMo, DS). The single **Western Bluebird** found on the Santa Cruz Christmas Bird Count (at Bonny Doon, CB) on December 19 was depressing, but numbers fared better in the Pajaro Valley sections of the Moss Landing CBC, where 27 were found on January 1 (v.ob.). Two reported from Monterey Bay Academy on January 1 were unprecedented for the south county coast in modern times (BBa). A **Sage Thrasher** was king of the yard waste piles at the Buena Vista Road County Landfill on January 16 (DS). This was our fifth county record (second for winter). I was interested to observe 10 other bird species residing in these piles of cuttings!

A rare winter **Yellow Warbler** was at Corralitos Creek on January 1 (BRe et al.). **Townsend's Warblers** were far more common than normal through December (see CBC data), eliciting comments from many non-birding folks who saw little black and yellow birds fluttering about their suburban yards. However, numbers seemed to drop to normal levels by January, so they must have moved elsewhere. An apparent **Townsend's x Hermit Warbler** hybrid was photographed near Antonelli Pond on December 19 (AK, EL et al.). This was the first documented record of this hybrid for the county. A female **MacGillivray's Warbler** wintering at Soquel Creek in Soquel from November 20 to at least January 12 (DS) was the rarest parulid of the season. Our rare but regular winter warblers included a strong six **Nashvilles** December 12 to January 15, only one **Black-throated Gray** December 9-19, one **Hermit** December 19, five **Palms** December 13 to January 16, and two **Black-and-whites** December 9 to January 16 (v.ob.).

A reddish female-type **Summer Tanager** was at Antonelli Pond and Natural Bridges December 17-19 (AK, MS, SG, JD, EL et al.). An impressive *seven* **Western Tanagers** were all at flowering eucalyptus trees December 19 to January 16 (BBa, PR, DS). This included three together at Branciforte Dip over this whole date span. A rare winter **Chipping Sparrow** was in Santa Cruz on December 19 (TN et al.). Happy Valley's **Lark Sparrow** continued to enjoy the Bedzin feeding station through mid-January (BBe). A **Fox Sparrow** of one of the gray-headed, large-billed subspecies was at Meder Canyon on December 10 (SG). A record-breaking *48* **White-throated Sparrows** were reported during December to January 16 (v.ob.). Five feeding stations reported two birds, four were together in one sparrow flock at Scott Creek on December 27, and four were scattered around College Lake on January 1. **Slate-colored Juncos** were also found in unprecedented numbers, with *nine* reported from December 19 to January 16 (v.ob.).

Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** attending feeders was a high total: a female in Santa Cruz on December 8 (MSP), an adult male in Soquel on December 16-21 (JZ, DS) and a female in Capitola on December 22-28 (DS). Even rarer in winter, a female **Black-headed Grosbeak** was in eucalyptus trees at College Lake on January 1 (DS). A female-type **Indigo Bunting** at the U.C.S.C. Arboretum on December 19-20 was a great find, one of a small number of winter records for northern California (BM, LSJ, DS). An oriole heard calling in Santa Cruz on January 7 sounded like a **Bullock's Oriole** (SG). A male **Cassin's Finch** was closely studied at the Monahan's feeding station near Scotts Valley on December 3 and 6 (K&BM). This was our first report since the big invasion in October '96 to January '97.

Among our winter irruptives, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** dropped off from high fall numbers, **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were plentiful, **thrushes** were average to low, **American Goldfinches** were low, **Pine Siskins** were low (except where concentrated at certain feeders), **Evening Grosbeaks** were sparse (three reports) and **Red Crossbills** continued absent.

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Bruce Barrett (BBa), Bonnie Bedzin (BBe), Cliff Bixler, Nanda Current, Jeff Davis, Al De Martini, David Ekdahl, Chris Emmons, Carleton Eyster (CEy), Alexander Gaguine, Bruce Gerow, Steve Gerow, Jennifer Green, Laird Henkel, Sheri Howe, Robb Kaler, Anna Kapitov, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Tom Lowe, John Mariani, Barry McLaughlin, Mark McReynolds, Kevin & Barbara Monahan, Randy Morgan, Kriss Neuman, Todd Newberry, Peter Radcliff, Bob Ramer (BRa), Bill Reese (BRe), Jan Scott, Michelle Scott, Madeline Spencer, Linda St. John, David Suddjian, W. Breck Tyler, Monte Tudor-Long, Ricky Warriner (RWa), Brian Weed, Diane West-Bourke, Heather Wilson, Roger Wolfe (RWO), James Zeeman. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from late January to early April 1999

A strong wind storm on February 9 brought a **Red-necked Grebe** to Pinto Lake (DSu). This was only our 9th inland record, but the 4th record for this lake. A **Laysan Albatross** was offshore in Santa Cruz waters on February 13 (AE, JS). Reports of **Pink-footed Shearwaters**, rare in winter, included four on February 1 and ten on February 13 (Shearwater Journeys). A **Manx Shearwater** was also documented on February 13 (DSh, RC, RT). The season's most remarkable bird was a juvenile **Masked Booby** well-photographed 7.9 nautical miles southwest of Wilder Ranch on February 13 (JS, DSh, RC, AE, RT et al.). This will be our first county record, pending review by the California Bird Records Committee. Don Roberson's review of the photos led him to conclude that it may have been a "Nazca Booby", a form that may be split out from the Masked Booby. **American White Pelicans** remained at Pinto Lake at least into early March, with a high count of 11 on February 8 (DSu).

In last issue's column I overlooked a report of three additional **American Bitterns** seen at Kelly and Tynan lakes on January 1 (RM, DB). A **Cattle Egret** in coastal fields near Laguna Creek on March 26 was presumably a migrant (CE). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Pinto Lake from February 8-28+ (DSu). A male **Mandarin Duck** at the San Lorenzo River in Felton on March 17 was certainly an escape (NK). Other reports of males and females in the San Lorenzo watershed in the last decade suggest possible future nesting in the "wild". A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at College Lake on February 8 (DSu). A male **Blue-winged Teal** stopped at Antonelli Pond on March 6 (DB). Five **Redhead** were at College Lake on February 22 (RW). A pair of **Common Goldeneye** off West Cliff Drive on February 2 was a rare ocean sighting (MS). Additional **Hooded Mergansers** away from the Pajaro Valley were two at Corcoran Lagoon on January 25 (DSu) and one at Scotts Valley on March 18 (LE, BS).

A dark morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** at Buena Vista Road County Landfill and Harkins Slough from January 21 to February 1 was a surprise (LE, BS, JA, PL, DSu, CK, RW). This was a first winter record for the county, and an exceptional winter record for the state away from the Sacramento - San Joaquin Delta region. A **Ferruginous Hawk** was near Scott Creek on January 22 (DSu). There were 24 reports of **Merlins** from December to March (v.ob.). Of interest was a dark bird at Capitola on February 3 that had characteristics of the Pacific Northwest form *suckleyi* (DSu). A **Prairie Falcon** near Antonelli Pond on February 21 was very rare along the coast and away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). A brief listen at the Wilder Creek restoration area on March 6 (with no taped calls) yielded six **Virginia Rails** and three **Soras** (DSu)! The wetland and riparian restoration seems to be a success, but to date there has been no monitoring to document changing bird use.

A **Black-necked Stilt** returned to the lower San Lorenzo River between storm flows on January 29 (MTL). An **American Avocet** was at Aptos Creek mouth on March 26 (RW). A **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Corcoran Lagoon on January 21-25 (BS, DSu) was very rare in winter away from the Pajaro Valley (where few winter, anyway). An additional six reports of **Glaucous Gull** from January 22 to February 22 (DSu, TN, RW) brought the season's total to a high 11 reports. An **Elegant Tern** at Seacliff State Beach on January 21 was a very rare mid-winter record for northern California (DSu). The wintering **Black Skimmer** continued to be seen sporadically at

Schwan Lake Beach through February 14 (PR, JW). Two *other* skimmers stopped at Aptos Creek mouth on January 21 (DSu). A weak **Rhinoceros Auklet** at Shorebirds Pond on February 9 was our first report off the ocean (DSu), apparently driven in by the strong wind storm early that morning.

A **Short-eared Owl** at Scott Creek Marsh on February 19 was the first county report in over two years (DSu). A **Western Kingbird** arrived at Watsonville Airport on March 13, about three weeks ahead of schedule for our earliest record (DSu). Migrant **Tree Swallows** begin to stage in numbers at the lakes and wetlands of the Pajaro Valley by late January. College Lake had impressive concentrations this year: ~1000 on January 23 (DSu, BB, NK, TN) and ~2000 on February 2 (DSu). These were joined by 100-400 **Violet-green Swallows** on these dates (DSu). A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** at Nearys Lagoon January 27 - February 14 was away from the species' north coastal wintering spots (BM, CL). The **Sage Thrasher** wintering at Buena Vista Road County Landfill stayed to at least March 13 (DSu). The **Yellow Warbler** found at Corralitos Creek on January 1 stayed to at least February 28 (DSu). **Black-and-white Warblers** wintering at Soquel and San Vicente creeks stayed to at least February 17 and February 19, respectively (DSu). A singing **Wilson's Warbler** at Harkins Slough on March 13 arrived about two weeks ahead of the rest of the Wilson's vanguard (DSu).

Three additional **Western Tanagers** found in late winter (DSu) brought the season's total to a record *ten* birds! All were at flowering eucalyptus trees. The **Green-tailed Towhee** found in Watsonville on November 1 stayed to at least March 20, for our first wintering record (MSt). "MLarky" the **Lark Sparrow** continued its long association with a Happy Valley feeder, remaining to at least March 30 (BB). New reports of **White-throated Sparrows** dried up after mid-January, after a record 48 were found earlier in the season. Late winter and early spring reports included singles at two spots in Santa Cruz on March 15 and April 3 (JD, DC). A female **Hooded Oriole** visiting a hummingbird feeder in Santa Cruz from early winter up at least January 31 was well described (TL). Although numerous in spring and summer, valid winter records of Hoodeds are very rare in our county. A male **Lawrence's Goldfinch** at a Santa Cruz feeder on March 24 was out of place (MS). Five to 14 **Evening Grosbeaks** were along the lower San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on March 28 and April 1, respectively (MTL).

Cited Observers: Jean Adams, Bonnie Bedzin, David Bockman, Dan Carmen, Ryan Chornock, Jeff Davis, Al Eisne, Lorraine Elrod, Carleton Eyster, Steve Gerow, Clay Kempf, Norman Kikuchi, Pauline Launer, Tod Likens, Carol Long, Randy Morgan, Bryan Mori, Todd Newberry, Peter Radcliff, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSh), John Sorenson, Michael Stevenson (MSt), David Suddjian (DSu), Richard Ternullo, Monte Tudor-Long, Janet Welch, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from mid-April to June 1999

Three hundred and seventy-seven **Pacific Loons** migrating past Pelican Rock on June 10 was many for so late in the season (DS). A flock of 17 **American White Pelicans** at College Lake on April 8 provided a rare record of spring migrants (DS), while two at Pinto Lake on April 22 were likely winter hold-overs (RW). This year's nesting effort by **Brandt's Cormorant** in the county included 48 nests at Davenport Pier and only one nest at Natural Bridges (DS, SG). An **American Bittern** at Baldwin Creek Marsh on June 4 was a very rare north coast breeding season record (DS). A flock of 16 **White-faced Ibis** paused at Hanson Slough on April 17 (DS). A **Ross' Goose** with an injured wing at College Lake on April 24 was likely present from winter (RW). **Canada Geese** continued to nest at Pinto Lake, with a family of 8 young seen there on May 28 (DS). So far this is the only nesting locale for the county, but I expect they will eventually become more widespread.

A male **Blue-winged Teal** was at Baldwin Creek Marsh from June 4-15 (DS). Also out of time and place were two male **Northern Pintails** on the San Lorenzo River at Paradise Park for one week in mid-June (JF). An immature male **Ring-necked Duck** at Molino Creek Pond from May 3-18 was a very late straggler (DS). Interesting **Oldsquaw** reports were of a female upstream of the Pajaro River mouth on April 24, and a male in eclipse plumage at the river mouth on May 1 (both RW). We have few recent records for the species, especially from spring, although it is regularly noted closeby at Moss Landing. Up to five female **Hooded Mergansers** at a lake in a Scotts Valley trailer park from April 13-29 were very late for an area away from the Pajaro Valley (LE, BS). The last report from the Pajaro Valley this year was one at Harkins Slough on April 24 (RW). **Common Mergansers** continued to increase in the county. This season at least one pair nested at Scott Creek for the first time ever, producing nine young by June 17 (DS). Nesting continued at Waddell Creek, San Lorenzo River and Soquel Creek (WR, MB, YK, DS). I place a rough estimate of this year's county breeding population at 7-10 pairs.

An **Osprey** flying south of Pajaro River mouth on June 8 added one more hint of local nesting (LH). An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** flew over Meder Canyon on April 16 for first spring record (SG). Two **Red-shouldered Hawks** near Big Basin Headquarters in May and June show this species to be making inroads into areas with heavy cover of old forest (EB, DS). **Swainson's Hawk** continued its recent series of spring appearances with one adult flying up the coast at Waddell Beach on April 16 (DS). **Merlins** at Harkins Slough on April 20 (DS) and near Major's Creek on April 28 (JL) were late. **Peregrine Falcons** continued to nest at a cliff in the upper San Lorenzo watershed, incubating eggs on April 25 (BL, JL). The eyrie at Waddell Creek was apparently unused this year. At least one adult again resided at Big Basin through the spring and early summer. This bird's presence was cause for concern (see Marbled Murrelet below). Coverage of the Wilder Creek habitat restoration area indicated two pairs of **Virginia Rails** were likely nesting there this season (JD).

A **Killdeer** nest at Loch Lomond dam on May 21 was one of few available breeding records from our portion of the Santa Cruz Mountains (BW *vide* LH). Just how rare are they as breeders in our mountains? An **American Avocet** at the San Lorenzo River mouth on June 20 was rare away from the Pajaro River mouth area (DB). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Harkins Slough on April

20 (DS). A **Willet** over Wilkes Circle in Santa Cruz on May 4 was one of few ever seen in the county away from the immediate coast (JD). Thirty-one **Wandering Tattlers** near Pelican Rock on May 18 was an impressive congregation (DS). One near Scott Creek Beach on June 22 was apparently over-summering (DS). These is only one previous summering record. A flock of about 100 **Western Sandpipers** at a pond in northern Soquel on May 11 was an unusual spot for foraging birds (DH).

Franklin's Gulls blew the top off any previous spring showing! They were found regularly along the north county coast from April 28 - May 25, with an estimated total of 21-22 birds being observed (DS, JD, LH). Mostly adults, all but two birds were seen foraging or loafing in newly plowed fields with California and Bonaparte's gulls. Recent records suggested that the species may be regular in the these fields during spring migration, but the previous 10-year average was only one bird per spring. A most impressive migratory pulse of **California Gulls** at Capitola on April 4 involved 12,000-13,000 birds flying north overland during a five hour period (DS). A spate of late reports of first year **Glaucous Gulls** was unexpected. Sightings came from Harkins Slough on April 24 (RW), Pajaro River mouth on May 1 (RW), Natural Bridges on May 4 (SG) and the vicinity of Baldwin Creek Beach on May 31 - June 9 (SA, DS). I'm not sure how many birds were involved (only one or two?), but the May records were the first such for the county, and the last record was the latest documented report since a specimen was taken in 1938.

Black-legged Kittiwakes were reported in unusually large numbers during April through June (v.ob.), although not nearly as many were found in Santa Cruz County compared to Monterey County. High counts reported were 75+ at the Natural Bridges area on May 10 (SG) and about 110 at Davenport Landing on May 24. Small numbers were reported in June. Among a handful of reports of **Common Terns**, two flying north overland with Forster's Terns at Capitola on May 12 provided a very rare inland record (DS). The same day saw a record flight of **Forster's** in the same route, involving over 1,100 birds during five hours (DS). Two **Least Terns** flew north in the overland flyway at Capitola on April 17 (DS), for the 5th record of spring migrants in this route.

Black Skimmers were also found flying north in the overland flyway, with one departing Capitola on April 27 and two on May 12 (DS). All were travelling with Caspian Terns. Other skimmers were two at Schwan Lake Beach on April 29 (SF), two at Seacliff Beach on May 2 (DS) and two skimming at the San Lorenzo River mouth on June 7 (DB, LW). After a very poor season in 1998, **Pigeon Guillemot** numbers rebounded to normal levels this spring. A juvenile male **Marbled Murrelet** was found on the ground at a Big Basin campground on June 25. It was taken into rehab for a day, was fed and fitted with a radio transmitter, then released at Año Nuevo. It was found dead the next day near Grayhound Rock (*fide* EB). Meanwhile, murrelet activity in Big Basin was unusually low this spring and summer (v.ob.), perhaps a result of the resident Peregrine Falcon. Predation of murrelets is one known issue, but observations at an area in San Mateo County indicate predator avoidance may affect patterns of murrelet activity at inland breeding areas (DS).

Rhinoceros Auklets did not nest at Davenport this year. Two there on June 25 was the only observation of the species near the breeding cliff (JD). A **Lesser Nighthawk** was captured in a mist net and photographed at Wilder Creek on May 28. Twenty-three **Black Swifts** were near Loma Prieta on May 25 (MR). Coastward reports were of one to six birds from Santa Cruz to Pelican Rock (v.ob.), beginning May 20 (MS). Two at Capitola Beach on June 10 (DS) were noteworthy, as the species is almost never found along our coast south of West Cliff Drive. A pair **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** was on territory at Scott Creek, with nesting confirmed in July (see next issue; DS). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was singing at Scott Creek on May 7 (DS). Two **Western**

Kingbirds in a suburban yard in Santa Cruz on April 11 were eating berries with waxwings (AH, SE)! Have you ever seen kingbirds eating berries in our region? An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in a Santa Cruz yard on June 2-3 was rare for a suburban setting.

Three **American Dipper** nests were found along the East Branch of Soquel Creek near Ashbury Gulch on May 12 (TS). The East Branch probably supports more nesting dippers than any other single reach of stream in the county. Migrant **Cedar Waxwings** regularly pass through in small numbers through the first week of June. However, this year there was an unusually strong passage in late May, with way more than normal seen in early June (v.ob.). Casual observations made at Capitola from June 3-7 recorded 500+ waxwings flying over, plus four there on June 12 were late (DS). A female **American Redstart** at Scott Creek on June 24-25 was the only vagrant of the season (TN, AK). **MacGillivray's Warblers** were singing on territory in coastal scrub at Rancho del Oso (two males; TNe) and Scott Creek (one male; DS). A female carrying food at Rancho del Oso on June 24 confirmed breeding there (TN, AK). A dead **Common Yellowthroat** found in Capitola on April 10 had been banded at Mecca, Riverside County, on October 10, 1997 (*fide* LH, JD).

Only two **Yellow-breasted Chats** were reported: one at Corralitos Creek on May 7 and one at Noble Gulch on May 12 (DS). Happy Valley's **Lark Sparrow** was present into July (BB), while a rare coastal migrant was at Capitola on April 20 (DS). **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** reports (all adult males) included two at Bonny Doon May 9-23 (MH), one at Capitola on May 31 (MT), another at Bonny Doon on June 16 (SM) and one near Scotts Valley on June 18 (KM). Jeff Davis noted that a **Western Meadowlark** at the UCSC Arboretum on June 30 was unusual, since he's found meadowlarks to be absent on campus in the breeding season in the last few years. However, it was a regular nester there through at least the early 1990's. What has happened? Does anyone have any insights? Five **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Hanson Slough on April 17 (DS). Adult male **Great-tailed Grackles** were at Capitola on May 31 - June 1 (MT, DS, JZ) and at Antonelli Pond on June 8 (SG). A male **Purple Finch** singing persistently in suburban Watsonville during May and June was in an unusual setting (BM). Four **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were in westside Santa Cruz on May 11 (SG). Late reports of **Evening Grosbeak** included five at Rancho del Oso on April 17 (JD et al.), two at Sycamore Grove on April 28 (DS) and two at Wilder Ranch on May 7 (JD).

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, David Bockman, Marjorie Bourett, Esther Burkett, Jeff Davis, Scott Edwards, Lorraine Elrod, Carleton Eyster, Susan Farrens, Steve Gerow, Dick Hartman, Mary Hellenthal, Laird Henkel, Amber Hensley, Anna Kapitolov, Yvonne Kirby, Brian Latta, Janet Linthicum, Sheri McDermott, Kevin Monahan, Bryan Mori, Todd Newberry, Willard Roberts, Michael Rogers, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, David Suddjian, Thom Sutfin, Mary Tindle, Linda Wilson, Bill Wolcott, Roger Wolfe, Jinny Zack. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from June to September 1999

This September, after a long, pleasant drive on winding country roads, I finally decided to take the on-ramp to the so-called "Information Super Highway". It was clearly a good move for the purposes of gathering reports from people about their Santa Cruz County bird observations. For many, the internet is now the most convenient way to report birds. Indeed, over half of the county bird observations reported by others in September came via email, especially through the listserver "Monterey Bay Birds". I still love telephone calls and written notes, though. Steve Gerow, one of our most valuable contributors, sends a multi-page letter of his observations through the postal service every couple of months, or so. All reports received are archived and many are added to the species files of the county records. Everyone's contributions are important!

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A pelagic trip out of Santa Cruz on August 27 tallied a high count of 1,756 **Buller's Shearwaters** (SJ). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** at the San Lorenzo River mouth on August 1 (at least) was probably over-summering (DS). A flock of 19 **Canada** Geese at Harkins Slough on August 13 was quite odd for summer (RW). Perhaps these were moving locally from some nesting area in the region, and were not long distance migrants. A report of 31 **Common Mergansers** feeding on young steelhead at Soquel Creek in Capitola on September 27 was a very high number for the county (MT). An **Osprey** at the San Lorenzo River in Ben Lomond on June 20 may have been summering (AG). A reliable observer reported a "family" of Ospreys at Quail Hollw Ranch on August 28-29, but I haven't yet found out exactly what was seen. The species has not been proven to nest in the Santa Cruz Mountains region in modern times.

Most of what we know about **Sharp-shinned Hawks** nesting in the Santa Cruz Mountains has been gathered in the last 10 years. This summer produced five breeding confirmations in Santa Cruz County from mid-July to July 31 (TS, DS, CE, IG, JD), plus at least seven more in southern San Mateo County (DS). All these records were from redwood forest areas, mostly in dense second growth. I suspect this hawk is a considerably more common breeder in our area than was formerly thought. A flock of six **Red-shouldered Hawks** (together with an Osprey and Red-tailed Hawk) over Back Ranch Road on August 29 made for a rare concentration of this species in the county (WBT). An adult **Swainson's Hawk** flying east over Capitola on September 8 was only our 4th fall record (DS). A **Golden Eagle** near Cabrillo College on July 10 was in an area with few recent reports (SS). An adult over westside Santa Cruz on July 15 was unusual over town (DC). A family of Golden's with two juveniles in Pleasant Valley on July 20 was likely from a known nearby nest site (RW), but the nest location of a family with two or three juveniles seen at Major's Creek on July 23 is unknown (JF).

A **Virginia Rail** was found dead among tomato plants in a suburban Capitola yard on September 15 (AS, DS). A family of **Black-necked Stilts** at Harkins Slough July 13+ was a very rare breeding confirmation away from the Pajaro Dunes area (CK, v.ob.). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on July 9 was our earliest fall record by 5 days, and only the third county record from July (DS). Reports in August and September were numerous compared to recent years (v.ob.). **Solitary Sandpipers** were at Harkins Slough on August 18-29 (JD, v.ob.)

and Baldwin Creek mouth on September 13 (DS). Another **Willet** over Westside Santa Cruz on August 3 was unusual for the county away from the immediate coast (JD). **Long-billed Curlews** are rather rare fall migrants in the county, except at Pajaro River mouth where small numbers are typical. Reports away from the Pajaro this season included just three birds from August 24 to September 15 (RW, AG, DS). Our 10th record of **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was provided by a juvenile at Harkins Slough on September 9-11 (RW, MF).

A **Red Phalarope** at Harkins Slough on September 9 was unusual inland, especially in fall (RW). It was likely blown in by strong winds the previous night. Reports of **South Polar Skuas** in county waters included one or two on August 1 and five on August 27 (SJ). These same dates had one and five **Long-tailed Jaegers**, respectively (SJ). An first-year **Franklin's Gull** was at Corcoran Lagoon on September 8 (DS). **Sabine's Gulls** are very rarely spotted from shore, so two adults seen off West Cliff Drive on July 29 were exceptional (SG). High counts of **Elegant Terns** were 1,000 at Corcoran Lagoon on August 21 (TN, AK) and 1,200 flying past New Brighton State Beach on August 24 (DS). Two or three different **Least Terns** were at the Pajaro River mouth August 13-20 (RW, JD, EL), while two flying off the mainland at Soquel Creek mouth on September 6 were apparently migrating from "over the hill" (DS). An immature **Black Tern** was at Corcoran Lagoon on September 8 (DS).

Black Skimmers continued to appear: two at the Pajaro River mouth on July 23 (TN), two at Corcoran Lagoon Beach on August 12 (DS), and two at Twin Lakes State Beach on September 24 (CE). Another grounded juvenile **Marbled Murrelet** was found near park headquarters on July 30, taken for rehab, then released at Año Nuevo on August 3 (*fide* LH). A rather late nesting effort by **Mourning Doves** in Santa Cruz hatched one egg on September 16, with the chick fledging by October 1 (MW). An unidentified **Nighthawk** over California Street in Santa Cruz on July 20 (AK) was likely the same one identified as a **Common Nighthawk** several blocks away at Surfside Street on July 21 (DB). There are only a handful of solid records of this species in the county, and this was the first since June 1988! Two **Burrowing Owls** returned on schedule to U.C.S.C. by September 28 (NN *fide* JL). A pair of **Long-eared Owls** was heard in the hills above Soquel from August 4-31 (RW). Over the last several years we have accumulated some late summer reports of this species from Seascape to Soquel, suggesting this poorly known resident may be nesting in that region.

A pair of **Vaux's Swifts** was attending a nest in a chimney near Aptos Village on August 12 (DS). An **Anna's Hummingbird** nest with two eggs at Schwan Lake on September 17 was very late (DS). Unfortunately, the nest was destroyed by jays. **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** confirmed nesting at Scott Creek provided our second county breeding record. An adult and two begging juveniles were seen on July 16, in an area that has a pair of adults in June (DS). Another adult was 1.5 miles inland at Waddell Creek on July 13 (DS). **Pileated Woodpeckers** at Paradise Park on July 3-10 (YK) and at Loch Lomond on September 11 (LBG, DD) were the first reports from those areas. A pair was along recently colonized Aptos Creek in Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on July 19 (DS). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was at Sycamore Grove on September 13-15. Eight **Willow Flycatchers** were reported from September 4-16 (v.ob.). From the Dept. of Arcane Knowledge...Jeff Davis appreciated an *adult* **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Meder Canyon on September 30, since nearly all of our fall migrants are juveniles. Leave it to the Prez to recognize such stuff!

Two **Eastern Kingbirds** paused at Antonelli Pond on September 5 (P&KJ, BB). We've never before had more than one at a time. A **Purple Martin** was at Wilder Ranch State Park on August 7 (JD). Another late nesting effort was by **Barn Swallows** at Rancho del Oso which began to hatch eggs on August 8 (DWB). Two **Bank Swallows** were at Scott Creek Marsh on July 16 (DS).

Three **American Crows** at Boulder Creek on July 4 (BS) were well into the mountains, where they are rare. They are resident at Scotts Valley, but what about the towns of the San Lorenzo Valley? **Common Raven** productivity was very high. Post-breeding congregations in late July at the Dimeo Lane and Buena Vista Road landfills were of 59-77 birds, 70-85% juveniles (DS).

Rare anytime in the county, a **White-breasted Nuthatch** was seen near Loch Lomond on September 11 (LBG, DD). A **Rock Wren** on coastal cliffs south of Pelican Rock on September 16 was our first county report since fall 1995...that it was my birthday made it all the better (DS). An **American Dipper** nest near Eureka Canyon on July 1 was at a usual spot, marking the southern end of the species range in our mountains (BS, MS). Still another late nesting record was provided by a family of **Wrentits** with newly fledged juveniles at Rodeo Gulch on September 17 (DS). A worn adult **American Pipit** at New Brighton State Beach on August 24-25 was three weeks ahead of our previous earliest fall arrival (RW).

“Eastern” warblers were found in good numbers in September. Among our more common vagrants were: three **Tennessee Warblers** from September 13-27 (DS, SG), three **Chestnut-sided Warblers** from September 1-16 (SG, DS), a **Magnolia Warbler** at the Pajaro River on September 26 (KVV), three **Blackpoll Warblers** from September 13-30 (DS), three **Black-and-White Warblers** from September 10-26 (RW, DS), a record-breaking 13 **American Redstarts** from September 8-27 (v.ob.) and two **Northern Waterthrushes** on September 16 and 27 (AG, DS). Several rarer species were also found. A **Northern Parula** was at Aptos Creek on September 11 (DS). Female **Black-throated Blue Warblers** were at New Brighton State Beach on September 8 (DS) and Natural Bridges State Beach on September 13 (AK). A **Prairie Warbler** was at Natural Bridges State Beach on September 7 (SG). A worn adult **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at Meder Canyon on August 10 was about a month ahead of the vanguard of fall migrants, and was more likely a post-breeding dispersant from nesting areas in the higher Santa Cruz Mountains (SG). We very rarely find such dispersants in the lowlands.

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** in the berry thickets of Meder Canyon on September 16 was one of only a handful ever found in fall in the county (SG). An immature male **MacGillivray’s Warbler** at Rancho del Oso on July 25 was likely the product of another nesting at that spot (TN). A **Western Tanager** joining starlings to eat pears on a compost pile in Santa Cruz on September 9 was unusual behavior (CN). Three **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found from September 13-30 (DS, JD). A **White-throated Sparrow** in Capitola on September 25 was our earliest ever by six days, and about three weeks ahead of the average first arrival (DSu). An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Aptos Creek on September 13 (RW). A female **Blue Grosbeak** in Capitola on September 18 continued this rarity’s recent pattern of fall records. A male **Great-tailed Grackle** was at Nearys Lagoon on July 6 (BH *fide* JD). Just two reports of **Red Crossbills** from the mountains in late July (DS) likely reflect limited coverage, since a minor summer invasion was evident in nearby portions of San Mateo County which received more field work.

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, Dawn Breese, Debbie Cameron, Jeff Davis, David Drake, Chris Emmons, Mike Feighner, Jodi Frediani, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Ian Gillespe, Leda Beth Gray, Laird Henkel, Bill Hill, Pete and Karen Jacobsen, Anna Kopitov, Yvonne Kirby, Brian Latta, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Christine Nagel, Todd Newberry, Neil Newman, Sue Sampson, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Shearwater Journeys (*fide* Debra Love Shearwater and Clay Kempf), Aaron Suddjian, David Suddjian, Thom Sutfin, Mable Thue, W. Breck Tyler, Kent Van Vuren, Marie Weidner, Diane West-Bourke, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from October 1 to November 30, 1999

Late fall never fails to produce the goods! This fall was noteworthy for a broad cross-section of really good birds, including a handful of 2nd and 3rd county records. It was great to have a continuing series of pelagic trips out of Santa Cruz to generate reports of pelagics for the county. Thanks to Jim Danzenbaker and Clay Kempf for forwarding results of those trips. A striking message from this season was simply this: *keep your eyes on your back yard!* Along with some great early fall yard birds reported last time (Blue Grosbeak, Clay-colored Sparrow), numerous stellar birds were seen in back yards in late fall, such as Broad-winged Hawk, White-winged Dove, Tropical Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Hooded Warbler and Dickcissel!

As always, we head into winter hoping to enjoy good numbers of some of the irruptive landbirds. Well, it looks like we can forget it this year, as none of these were in high numbers and many were sparse. The only exception, maybe, is Golden-crowned Kinglet in the mountains. We'll see what the Christmas Bird Counts come up with.

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Three **Red-necked Grebes** were found from Natural Bridges to Sunset State Beach from October 19 to November 29 (JD, DS). One to six **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were found regularly on pelagic trips out of the Santa Cruz harbor between September 11 and October 17, with the high of six on October 17 being notably many for Santa Cruz County (SJ, CK et al.). Continued high counts of **Buller's Shearwaters** on these trips included 707 on September 19, 1,200 on October 2, 1,328 on October 4 and 795 on October 19 (SJ, CK et al.). **Black-vented Shearwater** was notable for its absence. Single **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were found on September 11 and October 4 (SJ). High counts of **Ashy Storm-Petrel** included 6,322 on September 11 and 8,406 on October 4 (SJ). The only **Least Storm-Petrels** were two or three seen on October 2 (CK et al.).

An adult male **Brown Booby** photographed over the Soquel Canyon area of Monterey Bay on October 20 represents the 2nd county record, pending CBRC review (JB, RT). Photos may be viewed on Don Roberson's web page at <http://montereybay.com/creagrus/MTY_rare.html>. The fall influx of **American White Pelicans** included 30 at Pinto Lake on October 17 (RJ), 10 over the Pajaro River on November 18 (S&WM), and 32 at Harkins Slough on November 19 (EL). **American Bitterns** were reported only from Pinto Lake and the Pajaro River this fall (v.ob.). Something out of the ordinary brought record numbers of **Greater White-fronted Geese** to the county in early October. Two at the San Lorenzo River on September 29 were at the vanguard (AG), followed by flocks of one to nine geese at six spots through October 6 (v.ob.). Then on October 8 a remarkable 320 were reported from nine locations! These included widespread flocks whose composition and time of occurrence indicated they were probably all different. Of special note were flocks of 95 over Big Basin (DL), 76 at Pinto Lake (JMi), 34 and 51 over the Soquel / Capitola area (DS), and 22 sitting on the ocean off Capitola (DS). Reports of 1-17 geese continued at eight locations through October 23, probably involving some "new" birds (v.ob.). White-fronts appeared elsewhere along the central coast in the same time frame, but apparently in much lesser numbers.

Snow Geese appeared in late fall, with one at Baldwin Creek on November 28 (TN, LG) and two at College Lake on November 29 (RW). A flock of 31 **Canada Geese** in a plowed field along Green Valley Road on October 20 were unusual for the county away from the immediate vicinity of water (DS). A **Brant** onshore at Natural Bridges on November 14-21 was the only one reported (LG, MS). About 10 **Blue-winged Teal** were found from October 5 – November 14, all but two at Harkins Slough or Merk Pond (RW, DS, MF). Rare **Redhead** included females at the Pajaro River (odd habitat) on October 30 (SR), Merk Pond on October 31 (SR, KV) and Swanton Road Pond on November 22-26 (DS, AK, RW). Female **Black Scoters** were at Capitola on November 30 (DS) and near Table Rock on November 26 (RW). **Hooded Mergansers** made their regular fall appearances at Merk Pond, peaking at 18 on November 12 (CK). Three found from Aptos to Waddell Creek in late November continued the pattern of records away from the Pajaro Valley (AK, JA, DS).

Among many reports of **Osprey**, *three* together at Harkins Slough on November 16 was the most unusual (L&WG, TN). An adult **Bald Eagle** was near the Pajaro River east of Watsonville on October 18 (DS). **Broad-winged Hawks** made a nice showing: one immature flew southeast over Ben Lomond Mountain on October 8 (DS), two immatures were on the west side of Santa Cruz on October 10 (BW), and an adult was there on November 17 (BW). A dark morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** at the Harkins Slough area from November 11 into December was almost certainly the same one as found there in late January 1999 (CK, v.ob.). This is a great rarity in the late fall or winter season in California away from the Delta region. Three **Ferruginous Hawks** were seen in the Pajaro Valley region from October 18 – November 11 (DS). A **Golden Eagle** over Capitola on November 25 was perhaps the first record for the city (DS).

Merlin and **Peregrine Falcon** were both well reported. Of interest was the venerable female Peregrine that roosts each fall and winter near the San Lorenzo River mouth, since she was placed as a nestling into a nest at El Capitan in Yosemite in 1984 is now 15 years old (BW, JL). On October 10 Walton saw her eating a Sooty Shearwater that she had brought in from the ocean. **Common Moorhens** have become very scarce away from the Pajaro Valley, so one at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz from November 26 into December was of note (AG, JH). Fourteen **Black Oystercatchers** gathered at Waddell Bluffs on November 13 (LH, KN). **Lesser Yellowlegs** were more common than they had been for several fall seasons, with about 40 reported from August 19 – October 28 (v.ob.). Just five **Baird's Sandpipers** were found from August 19 – September 29 (SR, AK, DS, CEy), and only three **Pectoral Sandpipers** – at Baldwin Creek on September 15 (AG).

South Polar Skuas were plentiful on boat trips out of Santa Cruz, with a peak count of 15 on October 4 (SJ). A first winter **Glaucous Gull** was at Monterey Bay Academy Beach on November 29 (DS). Reports of **Black Skimmers** continued with three at Rio Del Mar State Beach on October 14 (TM), three flying north past Manresa State Beach on October 24 (AB), one at Twin Lakes State Beach on November 5 (DS) and one at the San Lorenzo River mouth on November 15 (CEm). Two of the most exciting finds of the season were an immature **Thick-billed Murre** seen just out of the Santa Cruz Municipal Harbor on October 4 (BMcK, CK et al.) and an adult Thick-billed videotaped 15 miles off Santa Cruz on October 17 (SJ, JD). These are 2nd and 3rd county records, pending CBRC review. Our first record was way back in 1972!

High concentrations of **Marbled Murrelets**, such as 21 off Soquel Point on September 8 (DS), 24 seen on a pelagic trip out of Santa Cruz on October 17 (SJ), and 23 off Fair Avenue at West Cliff Drive on November 3 (LH) compared well to the 1-5 birds usually encountered here and there in these areas in the fall. Then Henkel tallied a high 109 while surveying for this species from the Pajaro River to Santa Cruz on November 24. We still have a good deal to learn about

the post-breeding and fall season movements of our local murrelets. Our 8th county record of **White-winged Dove** was one at a La Selva feeder from October 1-3 (ED, DS). A road-killed **Burrowing Owl** was found dead in Freedom on October 22 (BMo). A **Short-eared Owl** was near Davenport on October 4 (CEm).

A request for information about *Selasphorus* hummers present in early fall generated a number of reports of birds thought to be **Allen's Hummingbirds** through mid-September, and a few lingering to the end of the month (v.ob.). The latest report was of a female or immature at Wilder Ranch on October 11 (MS, BS). While some of these were reported as adult male Allen's, the presence of **Rufous Hummingbirds** confuses the whole issue. Females and immatures of these species cannot normally be identified in the field, and even identification of some adult males is problematic. I will go out on a limb and challenge the common notion that Allen's are lingering in numbers into early fall, and suggest that look-alike Rufous Hummers may actually be the species involved in many cases. I think that many Allen's are replaced by Rufous from mid-summer onwards, when folks may innocently think their "Allen's" are still hanging out. Sneaky hummers! Fortunately for my theory, it will be hard for anyone to prove me wrong.

Two immature **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** brought the county total up to seven records. One was at the West Branch of Soquel Creek on November 15 (DS), and the other photographed at Rancho del Oso's famed "Sapsucker Alley" on November 20-30 (AK, DS). A straggling **Willow Flycatcher** at Meder Canyon on October 7 brought the fall's total up to 10 birds (AK). A dandy four **Tropical Kingbirds** were detected along the coast from October 24 – November 17 (TN et al., DS, MS). A rare **Plumbeous Vireo** was at Rancho del Oso on October 1 (DS). A very late **Warbling Vireo** was mist-netted at Wilder Creek on November 27 (JD). Michelle Scott garnered an immature **Red-eyed Vireo** for her already awesome Santa Cruz yard list on November 1, our 6th (and latest) county record. Small flocks of **Horned Larks** turned up along the north coast and the in Pajaro Valley from October 18 – November 29 (RW, JD, DS).

Our rare fall warblers made there best showing ever in terms of overall species richness and abundance. Along with birds cited in the last *Albatross*, 20 species and 125 individuals were reported for species considered to be vagrants or otherwise rare. The season's 4th **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at the Pajaro River on October 29. A **Magnolia Warbler** was at Noble Gulch on October 4. Two more **Black-throated Blue Warblers** were found -- adult males at Santa Cruz on October 4 (CC) and Aptos on October 20 (TP). A **Blackburnian Warbler** was at Wilder Creek on October 17 (JD). A **Prairie Warbler** was at Antonelli Pond on October 1 (JMa). Twenty-two **Palm Warblers** from October 3 – November 29 was about average (MS, BS, DS, DH), but 10 were found in mid-county on October 22 alone! Five more **Blackpoll Warblers** through October 27 brought the fall total to eight (SG, CC, DS). Two **Black-and-White Warblers** in South County from October 22-27 gave us four for the season (RW, DS).

Four more **American Redstarts** through October 31 took the season's tally to a record 14 birds, over twice the average (CEm GS, DS, SR, KVV). A **Prothonotary Warbler** was at Sycamore Grove on October 3, and an **Ovenbird** skulked at Rancho del Oso on October 6 (both DS). A Northern Waterthrush was at Sycamore Grove on October 8 (CC). An adult male **Hooded Warbler** enjoyed an Aptos birdbath on October 29. Finally, among our rare to uncommon "western" warblers, fall totals were: seven **Nashvilles** September 12 -- October 31; 21 **Black-throated Grays** August 17 – November 10; a record high of 14 **Hermits** late September – November 20; and seven **MacGillivray's** August 21 – November 9 (v.ob.). An adult male **Summer Tanager** was at the Pajaro River on October 11-12 (JG, DS). Five more **Clay-colored Sparrows** through November 3 brought the season's total to a high eight (RW, MS, DS), but one

Chipping Sparrow at the Pajaro River on October 12 was the only one reported for the season (DS).

A **Vesper Sparrow** and a **Lark Sparrow** were near Harkins Slough on October 18 (CK). Lark Sparrows took up residence at a Watsonville feeder from October 1 onwards (AS) and again at Happy Valley from October 20 onwards (BB). At least six **Swamp Sparrows** were found from November 5-27 and 14 **White-throated Sparrows** were reported from October 4 – November 30 (v.ob.). Female **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were at Seascape on October 3 (MN) and at Rancho del Oso on October 15 (LG, AK). An immature **Indigo Bunting** at Harkins Slough on November 14-15 was tardy, the 3rd latest ever for the county (SR, v.ob.). One of the best birds of the season was the 2nd county record of **Dickcissel** provided by a bird seen at a Santa Cruz feeder on November 3 (SG). The 1st record was way back in 1977. Also very good was a female **Rusty Blackbird** near Harkins Slough on October 20, for the 3rd county record (DS). Unfortunately, neither of these two hot birds had the courtesy to linger for others to enjoy.

A late **Bullock's Oriole** was visiting a hummer feeder in Rio Del Mar from November 22-29 (GL). Two female **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were at the Pajaro River on October 18 (DS). Irruptive **Red Crossbills** and **Evening Grosbeaks** were hard to find, with only two reports of each during October and November (SB, DS).

Cited Observers: Josh Adams, Bonnie Bedzin, Scott Benson, Alyssa Bertrand, Jim Booker, Cindy Cummings, Jim Danzenbaker, Jeff Davis, Henry De Deigo, Elaine Dinger, Chris Emmons, Carleton Eyster, Mike Feighner, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois & Wally Goldfrank, John Guitierrez, Jean Harrison, Dick Hartman, Laird Henkel, Roy James, Clay Kempf, Anna Kopitov, Don Layton, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Ginnie Lopes, Sylvia & Wayne Macon, Jennifer Malkin, Bert McKee, James Miller, Trish Monari, Bryan Mori, Michelle Naehring, Kriss Neuman, Todd Newberry, Taylor Pritchard, Steve Rovell, Barbara Scharfenstein, Gail Schumate, Michelle Scott, Shearwater Journeys, Anne Spence, David Suddjian, Richard Ternullo, W. Breck Tyler, Kent Van Vuren, Brian Walton, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1, 1999 to January 20, 2000

College Lake's status as the premier site for winter waterfowl in our county was once again strikingly evident this season, as surveys found most of the 6,500+ ducks and geese in the Pajaro Valley were concentrated there. Data from the Moss Landing CBC on January 1 illustrates this point. Excluding ocean-going ducks, College Lake had 69% of all ducks counted in the valley, and 87% of all geese. The lake hosted 61% of all dabbling ducks, and 83% of all diving ducks. New record counts and other high counts are cited below for certain species. College Lake's current management as a seasonal lake is precisely why it is so productive. Farmed during the dry season, harvested crops and weedy fallow areas are flooded in early winter, supporting rich foraging opportunities for ducks and other birds. For some years now there has been talk of using the lake for water storage, a plan that would undoubtedly have a big effect on the lake's value for birds. Pressure to develop water resources in the valley continues to increase. Bird club members would do well to follow and comment upon water resource development proposals that would affect College Lake and other important wetlands of the Pajaro Valley.

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Five **Red-necked Grebes** reported from December 7 – January 1 was a good showing (CK, DS, JG). **Aechmophorus** grebes were unusually numerous this winter all along the coast, with very high counts on both Santa Cruz and Moss Landing CBCs. Forty **American White Pelicans** at Harkins Slough on December 21 (RW) was the highest among a number of reports from Pajaro Valley wetlands. Most reports suggested birds moving through, with only a few actually overwintering. An **American Bittern** was at Baldwin Creek Marsh on December 18 (BW et al.). Recent years have had few winter reports away from the Pajaro Valley, where at least seven bitterns were found this season from December 31 – January 1 (PM, BR, RM, DS). Two **Cattle Egrets** at the O'Neill Ranch on December 18 was the only report (DS). No reports of reindeer were received on December 24, but a flock of 19 **White-faced Ibis** were seen flying southeast high over Capitola (DS).

About eight **Turkey Vultures** wintering along the north coast in late December and early January was a good number for that area before the arrival of migrants in later January (v.ob.). One at Sunset State Beach on January 1 was out of place for early winter (JG). Geese numbers were good again this season, although not as large as last winter. Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** loafed along the San Lorenzo River in town from December 5 to at least January 16 (DB, LW, v.ob.). Another was at Lake Tynan on January 1 (RM). Reports of **Snow Geese** at College Lake from December 1 – at least January 10 ranged from four to nine birds (v.ob.) (SR, CK, DS), and two others were at Harkins Slough on December 23 (RW, SR). As per the recent pattern, **Ross's Geese** were more widespread and similarly numerous: one new one among Pinto Lake's unmentionables on December 13 (CK), two to four at College Lake December 13 – January 1 (CK, DS), two at the San Lorenzo River mouth December 16-23 (MS, v.ob.) and again on January 16 (MD), and one over Pajaro Dunes on December 31 (PM).

Approximately 86 **Canada Geese** were reported during December and January (v.ob.), with the largest flocks being 28 at Pinto Lake on December 13 (CK) and 47 at College Lake on January 10

(DS). Seven at Loch Lomond on December 17 were in the mountains where we get few reports (WC). The only **Brant** reported moved about between Wilder Creek and West Cliff during December 18-31 (BW, MS, AK). Four **Tundra Swans** put in at College Lake on January 10 (DS). Male **Eurasian Wigeon** were at College Lake on January 10 (DS) and Harkins Slough on January 14 (LJ, JDLT). Five **Blue-winged Teal** were in the Pajaro Valley on January 1 (*fide* BR). A record 990 **Northern Pintails** were at College Lake on January 1. Record-breaking numbers of **Canvasback** also gathered at College Lake, with counts of 1,448 on January 1 and 1,625 on January 10 (DS). College Lake also had three to four **Redhead** on these dates (DS), and another was at Drew Lake on January 1 (RM).

Other noteworthy high duck counts from College Lake were 370 **Gadwall**, 655 **American Wigeon**, and 320 **Northern Shovelers** on January 1, and 232 **Ring-necked Ducks** and 420 **Ruddy Ducks** on January 10 (DS). **Greater Scaup** have been rather rare in recent years. So far this winter, two were at the lower San Lorenzo River on December 18 (AG, LG, WG), three were in the Pajaro Dunes area on January 1 (BBa, J&RW), and two were inland at College Lake on January 1 (DS). **White-winged Scoters** have apparently declined along our coast in recent years, with the single bird found on the December 18 Santa Cruz County CBC being an extreme example of their paucity. A **Black Scoter** was off Capitola on December 18 (DS). An immature male **Oldsquaw** was seen from a boat 600 meters off Pajaro Dunes on January 6 (LH). They are regular at nearby Moss Landing, but rarely detected in our county.

Hooded Mergansers continued their pattern of occurrence away from the Pajaro Valley, with up to 11 found from mid-county to Swanton December 18 – January 20 (v.ob.). The continued growth of our **Common Merganser** population was highlighted by a record count of 33 for the Santa Cruz County CBC, with 17 in the San Lorenzo watershed and 16 in the Soquel watershed (v.ob.). A male and female were at recently colonized at Scott Creek on January 17 (AKo). **Ospreys** had a strong early winter showing. Four or five were in the mid-county / San Lorenzo watershed area in late December and at least three were in the Pajaro Valley in early January (v.ob.). Three were at Loch Lomond on December 17 (WC). One wintering Osprey returning to College Lake by December 6 (CKf) is believed to be the same one present there each winter since at least 1994. Its favored perch is a PG&E tower in the middle of the lake, but ironically this seasonal lake has no fish and the Osprey must fly to nearby Pinto Lake or Kelly Lake to forage.

A young **Bald Eagle** lingered at Wilder Ranch and the westside of Santa Cruz from at least December 20-23 (KVV, v.ob.). Nearly all our modern records have been one day only, and this bird seemed stalled in Santa Cruz area by the lack of any thermals to help it on its way (JL). A curious concentration of 25 **White-tailed Kites** gathered in a pre-roost flock at Corralitos Creek on the evening of December 24, but there was no subsequent evidence of a roost in the area (WM). A rare wintering adult **Broad-winged Hawk** was near College Lake on January 1-10 (DS). Harkins Slough's **Swainson's Hawk** was seen regularly through December 9 (v.ob.), but only sporadically afterward through at least January 5 (SR, DS). Three **Ferruginous Hawks** were found between Santa Cruz and Davenport from December 18-28 (v.ob.). **Golden Eagles** were well reported, with four in the Santa Cruz County CBC circle on December 18 (DE, JD), up to six in the Pajaro Valley January 1-5 (SA, DE, DS), and three at Rancho del Oso on January 2 (*fide* AR).

Merlins were plentiful, with over 30 reports December 1 – January 20 involving at least 17 birds (v.ob.). **Peregrine Falcons** came on strong, too. It's hard to sort out all the reports, but by my best estimate seven to nine different birds were observed in the county over this period (v.ob.). Rounding things out for the Falconiformes, a rare **Prairie Falcon** was seen in the hills east of Watsonville on January 1 (RM). Thirteen **Common Moorhens** at Pinto Lake on January 1 helped

retain the lake's title as Moorhen Capital of the county (BR). Six at Sunset State beach Marsh that same day was high for that area (JD et al.). College Lake didn't have any moorhens that day, but it did have 2,850 **American Coots**, and that ought to count for something (DS)! An obfuscation of 56 **Black Oystercatchers** happened at Grayhound Rock on December 23 (KN). Several shorebirds that are common elsewhere in the region are often lacking in Santa Cruz County in winter due to the lack of tidal mudflats. Noteworthy this winter were two **Long-billed Curlews** at the Bombay Property on December 18-19 (EL et al.) and two at Sunset State Beach on January 1 (JD), and a **Western Sandpiper** and **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Wilder Creek mouth on December 18 (BW et al.).

A **Rock Sandpiper** near Wilder Beach December 18-28 was the 4th county record (RW, DS). First winter **Glaucous Gulls** were seen at Aptos Creek mouth on January 7 (RW), Capitola Beach on January 14-17 (DS, L&WG), and Davenport Landing on January 20 (CE). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** at Capitola Beach on December 15 and 18 was somewhat of an oddity this year, since there seemed to be hardly any offshore (DS). An immature **Common Tern** at New Brighton State Beach on December 15 was very late (DS). Two **Black Skimmers** at Sunset State Beach on January 13 added another winter record (SF). Two **Pigeon Guillemots** off Pajaro Dunes on January 1 were seasonally rare (BBa). Five **Xantus's / Craveri's Murrelets** off Longs Marine Lab on December 18 were very late and only 1.5 miles offshore (SA). Documentation provided seemed to eliminate other possibilities. A pair of **Northern Pygmy-Owls** calling in Meder Canyon on December 18 showed the continued presence of this owl in a natural area that has become surrounded by development (SG).

A survey of UCSC's grasslands on December 18 yielded nine **Burrowing Owls** (JL et al.). Another resided amid agricultural lands near the Dimeo Lane landfill on December 28, with evidence of a longer stay (BL). Two **Long-eared Owls** were not far apart in the lower Soquel Creek watershed. One was heard calling on many nights from December 2 – January 13 (JE, DS), and the other was heard on January 13 in the same area where two were found last August (RW). **Short-eared Owls** included one lingering in the Peasley Gulch area of Wilder Ranch from November 23 – December 28 (MC, v.ob.), and at Moore Ranch Road on December 18 (JD). A **Vaux's Swift** joined hundreds of swallows at College Lake on January 1 for a very rare winter record (DS). Rancho Del Oso's **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was reported through December 7 (AE, RW).

An amazing *six* **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were found, with at least five occurring on the same dates. I don't know what the record is for a county west of the Great Basin and western deserts, but this must rank well. The first, found at DeLaveaga Park on December 18 (EF et al.) stayed through at least January 20 to be the most viewed Red-naped in county history (v.ob.). The others were at Capitola December 29 – January 13 (MT, DS), Soquel December 30 – January 14 (EH), northwest of Pinto Lake January 1-10 (BR, DS), the Byrne Forest Reserve January 5 (DS), and at Long Ridge Road on January 13-16 (JW). An apparent hybrid **Red-breasted x Red-naped/Yellow-bellied** was also northwest of Pinto Lake on January 1-5 (DS). A "**Western**" **Flycatcher** at Soquel Creek on December 13 (DS) and a **Warbling Vireo** at Harkins Slough on December 2 (TN, BMcL, LSJ) were probably very tardy migrants, since neither could be refound.

Tree and **Violet-green Swallows**, our usual wintering swallows, were both in exceptional early winter numbers in the Pajaro Valley. Through coverage on January 1 came up with totals of 880 Trees and 612 Violet-greens (fide BR) -- record numbers prior to the late winter arrival of northbound migrants. The majority of each was concentrated at College Lake. Among our wintering landbirds, these swallows have the odd pattern of arriving in late fall, and it is not clear where they come from. Three Violet-greens at the San Lorenzo River on January 13 were out of

place for early winter (DS). Much more unusual were two **Barn Swallows** at Sunset State Beach on December 31 (PM), and five there on January 1 (JG, JD, BBa).

A large group of 150-200+ **American Crows** attracted attention this winter with their evening pre-roost evening in the neighborhoods around Nearys Lagoon this winter, such as on the evening of December 7 when Lois Goldfrank counted 200+ on the trees and wires around her home...but then, Lois *is* hot. This westside flock exceeded the number of crows tallied in the *whole Pajaro Valley* on the January 1 CBC, illustrating the great changes we have documented in this species' population in recent years. Meanwhile, two crows at Felton on December 18 were unusual there (SS, JDo). Flipping the corvid coin, we find that **Common Ravens** were found in *seven* different CBC sections in the Pajaro Valley on January 1, totaling 30 birds (fide BR), and a big flock of 117 ravens were cavorting near Corralitos on January 5 (DS). Perennially rare, **White-breasted Nuthatches** were at Olive Springs Road on December 18 (DS) and at Kelly-Thompson Ranch on January 1 (SA).

A **Rock Wren** was at a large quarry near Davenport on January 20 (DS). A **Northern Mockingbird** at Rancho Del Oso on January 2 was rare for the north coast (fide AR). A **Tennessee Warbler** was near Lighthouse Field on December 27-30 (DS). Five **Nashville Warblers** were found from December 9 – January 10 (AK, MS, DS, R&CF, LG et al.). An immature **Virginia's Warbler** at Natural Bridges on December 30 to January 1 was only the 5th county record, and the first for winter (AK, DS). Six **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were found from December 9 – January 5 (DS, JD). Six or seven **Hermit Warblers** were found December 8 – January 14 (L&WG, AK, DS). A **Prairie Warbler** at Harkins Slough on December 2 was apparently still on the move (TN, BMcL, LSJ), while another at Soquel Creek in Soquel December 18 – January 19 was our third to overwinter (DS). Six **Black-and-white Warblers** found December 13 – January 19 made an impressive total (DS, PM, JB). The **Hooded Warbler** found in Aptos on October 29 lingered until December 12 (fide DS). Last but not least was a **Wilson's Warbler** at the Pajaro River December 31 – January 1 (PM, JB).

Eight Western Tanagers from December 14 – January 5 was high (SG, AK, MS, DS). Wayne Macon obtained excellent photos of a late **Clay-colored Sparrow** that visited his Watsonville feeder from at least December 19-24. The Happy Valley **Lark Sparrow** continued through at least January 17, after losing his tail in late December (BBE). One in Capitola on December 17 was a late migrant (DS). A total of five **Swamp Sparrows** December 18 – January 10 was low compared to some recent winters (DS, PM). An immature **Harris's Sparrow** was in Capitola December 17 – January 3 (DS, RB). Fourteen new **White-throated Sparrows** were reported through mid-January, with at least four more hanging on from fall (v.ob.). An immature male **Hooded Oriole** near Lighthouse Field from December 13 – January 6 was a very rare winter find (AKo, DS, MS, R&CF). More expected was an immature male **Bullock's Oriole** visiting a hummer feeder in Soquel from December 5 through at least January 15 (GC).

As suspected in late fall, winter irruptive landbirds had a poor showing this winter. **Red-breasted Nuthatch, Varied Thrush, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch** and **Evening Grosbeak** were all well below average. **Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robin** and **Red Crossbill** were in mediocre numbers. None of the occasional rare species were found. Only **Cedar Waxwings** were a little above average.

Cited Observers: Josh Adams, Steve Allison, Bruce Barret (BBa), Bonnie Bedzin (BBE), Rose Bettar, David Bockman, Jim Booker, Walt Cacache, Ginny Campbell, Matthew Coale, Jim Danzenbaker, Jeff Davis, Maria DeFilipe, Jeana De La Torre, Judy Donaldson (JDo), David Ekdahl, Jerry Eckhart, Al Eisner, Chris Emmons, Sharon Fernandez, Eric Feuss, Rick & Cheryl Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow,

Lois & Wally Goldfrank, Jennifer Green, Eileen Hartman, Laird Henkel, Linda Jordan, Clay Kempf, Anna Kopitov, Brian Latta, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia & Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin, Peter Metropulos, Randy Morgan, Kriss Neuman, Todd Newberry, Bob Ramer, Annette Reid, Steve Rovell, Linda St. John, Barbara Scharfenstein, Sandra Scoggin, Michelle Scott, David Suddjian, Mary Tindle, W. Breck Tyler, Kent Van Vuren, Brian Walton, John and Ricky Warriner, Linda Wilson, Jeanne Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from January 21 to April 3, 2000

Observers reported early arrivals for most of the spring migrant landbirds that usually appear in late March and early April. These include Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Black-throated Gray, Hermit, MacGillivray's and Wilson's warblers, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeak, Hooded and Bullock's orioles and others. This pattern of early arrivals has become the norm in recent years. Perhaps some of the early dates are due to better coverage and more astute birders, perhaps some birds are arriving earlier on average. It would be more interesting to know not just about the arrival of the vanguard, but also when the main influx occurs. However, lacking banding operations and or detailed surveys, that information slips away from us.

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A **Red-necked Grebe** was off of La Selva on February 7 (DSu). Eleven **Pink-footed Shearwaters** and one **Flesh-footed Shearwater** seen on a pelagic trip out of Santa Cruz on January 29 were unusual for winter (DSh). Ten **American White Pelicans** at Pinto Lake on January 22 was the high count for late winter (TN). Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** lingered at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz through at least March 29 (DB, MTL). Thirteen **Snow Geese** were at College Lake on January 28 (DSu). "New" **Ross's Geese** appeared at Pinto Lake February 15-19 (CK) and Shorebirds Pond March 13 (TN, AK, BMcL). Up to 27 **Canada Geese** lingered at College Lake through February 2 (DSu). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** at College Lake on February 2 was likely different than the one previously reported on January 10 since it was missed on intervening visits (DSu). High numbers of **Canvasbacks** remained at College Lake into February, with counts such as 829 on January 28 (DSu).

A **Greater Scaup** was at the San Lorenzo River mouth on January 28 (CC). **Black Scoters** were off Davenport Landing on January 26 (DSu) and at the Santa Cruz Harbor on March 29 (LH). More **Hooded Mergansers** were found away from the Pajaro Valley: three at Corcoran Lagoon on January 24 (DSu), four on the San Lorenzo River at Felton on February 4 (PL), one at Back Ranch Road on February 14 (WBT) and one at Swanton Pond on March 11 (L&WG). A **Common Merganser** in a Scotts Valley trailer park on February 23 was out of pace (BS). At least one wintering **Osprey** continued in the mid-county area through mid-February, along another at College Lake and vicinity (v.ob.).

A pair of **White-tailed Kites** built a nest in the pines at Natural Bridges State Beach by late March (AK, CC). This appears to be the first county record of a nest in a developed area. Prior to this nesting pair I don't think kites were ever even seen much in the park. A second year **Bald Eagle** passed over Capitola on March 19 (DSu). The wintering **Broad-winged Hawk** found near College Lake on January 1 was present to at least February 14 (DSu). We enjoyed over 45 total reports of **Merlins** from December to March (v.ob.). Numerous reports of **Peregrine Falcons** clearly involved multiple reportings of the same individuals, but examination of the records suggests we had as a minimum of nine different Peregrines in the county from December to March (v.ob). Not bad!

An observation of two new downy **Virginia Rail** chicks with an adult at Rancho Del Oso on April 1 apparently tied with the published record early date for downy young of this species (PG). This rail nests at several of our wetlands, but we don't get too many confirmations. A **Semipalmated Plover** at College Lake January 22 – February 2 seemed to be the only one in the county this winter (DSu). A vociferous crowd of about 325 **Killdeer** gathered at College Lake on February 2, providing a nice concentration for the county (DSu). Up to two **Lesser Yellowlegs** visited the lake January 28 – February 2 (DSu). A group of one to five **Willetts** visited a soggy field in a Live Oak school yard from February 27 – March 5 (EFe). This species has hardly ever been found away from the immediate coast in our county. Additional **Glaucous Gull** reports were of a second winter bird at Aptos Creek mouth on January 25 (RW), and first winter birds at Capitola Beach on January 23, Watsonville City Landfill on February 7 (both DSu) and the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on February 20 (EF).

A **Pigeon Guillemot** off Davenport on January 27 was rare for winter, prior to the March return of breeding birds (DSu). A **Burrowing Owl** along the entrance road to Sunset State Beach on January 24 was in an unusual spot (GS). Some of U.C.S.C.'s wintering owls lingered into March, with four or five seen on March 10 (JL, JB). A **Long-eared Owl** was heard at Wilder Ranch on January 28 (JD). A **Short-eared Owl** was at U.C.S.C.'s Great Meadow on February 11 (SL, LP). College Lake's rare wintering **Vaux's Swift** was seen through January 28 (DSu). A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was seen well at the U.C.S.C. Arboretum on March 21 (BW). We picked up our *seventh* **Red-naped Sapsucker** of the winter with a report of one at Rancho Del Oso on January 22 (GM). Lingered Red-naped reported last issue included those at DeLaveaga Park through March 4, in Soquel through February 14, near Watsonville through February 2, at Byrne Forest Reserve through March 1 and at Long Ridge Road through January 24 (v.ob.).

A **Hairy Woodpecker** at Calabazas Road north of Watsonville on February 2 had characters of an out-of-place bird of the Pacific Northwest form *harrisi* (DSu). A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Glen Canyon Road on February 23 was either wintering or an exceptionally early migrant (BS, JA). An **American Crow** at Felton on March 21 was away from its usual turf (MTL). An estimated 2,500 **Tree Swallows** at College Lake on February 15 was an impressive number (CK). Two **Bank Swallows** were along the Pajaro River on March 21 (DSu). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at Quail Hollow County Park on March 26 (J&AW). The late date suggests a possible breeder. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was high atop Middle Ridge at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on February 17 (DSu). An additional **Black-and-white Warbler** at Capitola on February 29 brought the winter season's total to a high seven (DSu). One wintering bird found in early December lingered to March 24 at least (DSu).

Three or four additional **Western Tanagers** found February 9 – March 1, took the season's total up to eight or nine different birds (DSu, SG). The **Clay-colored Sparrow** at a Watsonville feeder in November to December reappeared for one day on January 27 following a month long absence (S&WM). Another was found at College Lake on February 4-10 (DSu). Happy Valley's out of place **Lark Sparrow** continued present into early April (BB). An apparent adult **Harris's Sparrow** was seen for one day in a Felton yard on January 1 (RG). Three or four "new" **White-throated Sparrows** were added from late January to March, giving us an average winter showing of some 25 birds (v.ob.). A "**Slate-colored**" **Junco** was at Felton on January 21 (PL, BS). A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was spotted at Branciforte Dip on February 9 (DSu). Rarer than that was an immature male **Black-headed Grosbeak** at Harkins Slough on February 16 (MS, BS, JA).

The winter's best rarity was the male **Dickcissel** found at Brook Street in Santa Cruz on March 12 (H&BD). Presumably an over-wintering bird, it lingered at least to April 3 to be enjoyed by

dozens of birders. This was the third county record. The wintering immature male **Hooded Oriole** found near Lighthouse Field on December 13 lingered to at least February 25 (MS). An immature male **Bullock's Oriole** stayed at a Soquel feeder through February 5 (GC). Another winter Bullock's was at Arana Gulch on February 9 (DSu). An odd male **Purple Finch** at Ben Lomond on February 9-27 was "beautiful golden yellow" where he should have been reddish (LBG, DD). Meanwhile, an abinistic female **House Finch** at Waddell Beach on February 7 had white in all the right spots so as to appear much like a Lark Bunting (JD). Three House Finches among the old growth forest near Big Basin headquarters on February 17 were out of place (DSu). Two February reports of small numbers of **Red Crossbills** added to this winter's meager showing (TN, DSu). Four **Evening Grosbeaks** near Felton on January 29 were the only ones reported from January to March (MG).

Cited Observers: Jean Adams, Jack Barclay, Bonnie Bedzin, David Bockman, Ginny Campbell, Cindy Cummings, Jeff Davis, Hiedi and Bruce Donald, David Drake, Eric Feuss, Matt Gallagher, Steve Gerow, Lois & Wally Goldfrank, Robert Golling, Phil Gordon, Leda Beth Gray, Laird Henkel, Clay Kempf, Anna Kopitov, Suzanne Langridge, Pauline Launer, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia & Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin, Greg Miller, Todd Newberry, Liba Pejchar, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Gail Sheridan, David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler, Bea Whitney, James & Anne Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from April 4 to May 31, 2000

A **Laysan Albatross** was seen on a pelagic trip off Santa Cruz on May 7 (SJ). The first large flock of **Sooty Shearwaters** seen close to shore this season was some 10,000 off New Brighton State Beach on April 26 (LH). An intriguing report of a possible **Red-billed Tropicbird** involved a bird seen briefly from a moving car at the San Lorenzo River mouth on May 25 (PK), but unfortunately no supporting details were received. The tropicbird genus *Phaethon* is the only genus on the county list for which no sighting has been conclusively identified to species. This spring I posted this information in an answer to a quiz question on the Bird Club's web page, prompting Linda Terrill wrote to say that she and Scott Terrill had identified a Red-billed Tropicbird in a photograph taken at Santa Cruz and published in the San Jose Mercury about 7 or 8 years ago! The tropicbird was reportedly flying in the background of the photo, but so far the clipping has not been located. Anyone want to do some research at the Mercury archives??

Brandt's Cormorants continued to nest at our only two regular spots, with 53 nests at Davenport Pier (DSu) and 2 nests at Natural Bridges State Beach (SG, BS). The latter are interesting since the nests are on the mainland cliff. An **American Bittern** at Hazel Dell Marsh on May 15 was at a spot where bitterns have rarely been reported (S&WM). A gathering of 17 **Great Blue Herons** in a fallow field near Swanton Road on May 16 was an exceptional number away from the Pajaro Valley (DSu). **Green Herons** nested in a parking lot at Cedar Street in downtown Santa Cruz, with two large young in the nest on May 26 (DB, MTL). More on our urban-nesting herons nest issue. The two **Greater White-fronted Geese** wintering at the lower San Lorenzo River stayed through at least April 25 (DB, VJ). An immature **Ross' Goose** frequented Younger Lagoon and Wilder Beach from April 11 to May 12 (JL, CE). Reports of **Canada Geese** included five at College Lake on May 10 (DSu) and 15 at Pinto Lake on May 18 (CK).

What do you make of a brood of 11 brand new **Mallard** ducklings walking with mom near the Science Library at UCSC on May 19 (JD)? The nearest aquatic habitat was 1.2 miles away! A family of **Wood Ducks** on the San Lorenzo at Soquel Avenue on May 15 was rare for the lower reach of the river (MTL). A migrant **Swainson's Hawk** was near the Pajaro River east of Watsonville on April 25 (DSu). Pairs (apparently) of adult **Golden Eagles** were reported during April and May from Rancho Del Oso, UCSC – Westside Santa Cruz, Pleasant Valley, Soda Lake and Henry Cowell Redwoods (JD, JL, MS, DSu, DLE, CV, TN). With the exception of the Pleasant Valley birds, nest sites of these pairs are unknown or unreported. A new nesting locality for **Peregrine Falcon** was confirmed at Castle Rock State Park, with territorial adults noted on May 2-9 (JD, KK) and a family of newly-fledged juveniles on May 29 (JL, BL). A **Prairie Falcon** over of the UCSC Arboretum on April 18 was especially rare for spring (MS).

Three **Wild Turkeys** at Hazel Dell Road on April 8 might be considered part of the county's small "wild" population (RW). Reports of others at Watsonville, Paradise Park and Glen Canyon were more easily labeled as local escapes. So far, breeding of "wild" turkeys has only been documented in the hills east of Watsonville. Two **Mountain Quail** at Castle Rock State Park on May 2 were the first reported in the county in some 10 years (JD, KK). Castle Rock is the only site where it had been found with any regularity in recent decades, and the gap in records may be mostly due to limited birding coverage at the appropriate season. A brave **Sora** wandered out

onto the open lawn of West Lake Park to feed with blackbirds some 20 yards from marsh vegetation on April 4 (SG). A **Common Moorhen** at Neary Lagoon on April 26 provided a rare breeding season record away from the Pajaro Valley (BM). **Snowy Plovers** nested at Corcoran Lagoon Beach for the first time ever, with a nest with eggs found on May 13 and another nest established in June (CE, PRBO). Both efforts failed due to abandonment and predation.

A **Red Knot** was at Seacliff State Beach on April 12 (JDLT) and two were at Black Point on April 13 (DSu). Six **Wilson's Phalaropes** at College Lake on May 3 were the only ones reported this spring (DSu). **Parasitic Jaegers**, much rarer in spring than fall, were reported at Seabright State Beach on May 3 (CK) and from a pelagic trip out of Santa Cruz on May 7 (SJ). **Franklin's Gull's** followed last spring's record showing with four adults near Yellow Bank Creek on April 30 (PM) and two adults south of Baldwin Creek on May 17 (DSu). The coastal fields they favor were plowed and planted earlier than last year, before much birding coverage occurred. The May 7 pelagic trip tallied 21 **Sabine's Gulls** (SJ). **Elegant Terns** arrived early with two off La Selva on April 26 (LH). Four **Least Terns** were seen at Capitola Beach from April 24 to May 5 (DSu, RW). **Black Terns** were at College Lake on May 3 and May 10 (DSu). Remarkable were a Least Tern and a Black Tern seen eight miles offshore on the May 7 pelagic trip (ST, DSh, SJ)!

Two **Black Skimmers** flew up the coast past Santa Cruz on April 13 (DSu, NW), and two foraging at Capitola Beach on May 24 later flew north overland into the "trans-mountain" flyway with terns and gulls (DSu). **Rhinoceros Auklets** were present again at Davenport Bluffs, with courtship seen on two dates in May (JD, L&WG). A **Lesser Nighthawk** was seen near Baldwin Creek on May 27 (DSu). A **Northern Pygmy-Owl** at Capitola on April 27 was out of place and away from its usual habitat (DSu). A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was near Ramsey Gulch on May 6 (DSu). A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** drumming at Rancho Del Oso on April 2 was perhaps going to remain to nest (TN), but was not evident on a subsequent visit. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was singing at Schwan Lake on May 20 (DSu). A singing **Red-eyed Vireo** at Natural Bridges State Beach on May 17 was our first spring record and the seventh ever for the county. A **Purple Martin** was at Seacliff State Beach on May 19 (RW).

American Dippers continued to nest at Corralitos Creek, where a nest with young was found on April 30 (MS). The spring passage of **Nashville Warblers** produced sightings of five birds from April 7-27 (AK, SG, DSu). The county's first spring record of **Blackpoll Warbler** was a female at Sierra Azul Nursery on April 26-27, perhaps the earliest spring record ever for Northern California. Although a relatively common fall vagrant, Blackpolls are much rarer in spring, when most are found in late May and June. A male **Prothonotary Warbler** at Santa Cruz on May 19 was also the first spring record for the county (DBo). Singing male **MacGillivray's Warblers** at the Pajaro River on April 25 (DSu), Rancho Del Oso on May 6 (JM) and Scott Creek on May 27 (DSu) were all from areas where they have nested recently. **Yellow-breasted Chats** were at the Pajaro River on April 25 and Hazel Dell Marsh on May 3 (DSu). A migrant fallout left **Western Tanagers** dripping from the trees at Natural Bridges on May 7, when at least 100 were seen in the park (AK)!

Seven wintering **White-throated Sparrows** were reported as lingering into April, while four new ones were reported between April 1-25 (v.ob.). A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** lingered at Watsonville to May 13 (AS). A **Dark-eyed Junco** nested a suburban area of Capitola, where a nest with eggs was found on April 27 (DS), apparently the first record of suburban nesting in the county. Five **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** from May 20-30 would have been a high number for the season (SR, BV, GC, JMc, DSu), but additional birds in June brought the total to 16 (detail next issue). The obliging **Dickcissel** stayed in Santa Cruz through April 17 (v.ob., H&BD). The spring tide of **Great-tailed Grackles** brought males to Soquel on April 8 (DSu) and Santa Cruz on May

16 (EH), a male and female to Swanton Road on May 17 (DSu) and a male to Watsonville on May 18 (CK). Nesting has now been confirmed in three of our four neighboring counties. We need to watch for nesting in Santa Cruz County, perhaps especially in the Pajaro Valley where birding coverage has been rather light.

An adult male **Orchard Oriole** at Natural Bridges State Beach on April 7-9 was a nice find and the latest of our few spring records (AK, D&DN). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** nested again at Sunset State Beach. One pair with an extra male had a completed nest in the campground by April 16 (SH, v.ob.). A pair gathering nest material in the same spot on May 26 suggested a possible second nesting (JDLT).

Cited Observers: David Bockman, Ginny Campbell, Cindy Cummings, Jeff Davis, Jeana De La Torre, Heidi and Bruce Donald, David Ekdahl, Carleton Eyster, Eric Feuss, Steve Gerow, Lois & Wally Goldfrank, Steve Hampton, Laird Henkel, Elaine Hirston, Vern Johnson, Katherine Kauffman, Clay Kempf, Patricia Kirby, Anna Kopitov, Brian Latta, Pauline Launer, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia & Wayne Macon, Janine McCabe, John Mariani, Peter Metropulos, Bryan Mori, Todd Newberry, Dick & Dolores Norton, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Susan Roth, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Shearwater Journeys, Anne Spence, David Suddjian (DSu), Scott Terrill, Monte Tudor-Long, W. Breck Tyler, Bill Vaughn, Connie Vigno, Nancy Wiemer, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2000

Birding slows down in the summer, right? Not! Along with a smattering of rarities and several unusual summer records, summer is the season to get the *real* good stuff! As you read below, note all the interesting breeding records garnered this season for species such as Great Egret, Green Heron, Mandarin Duck, Common Merganser, Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Wild Turkey, Western Gull, Common Poorwill, Red-breasted Sapsucker and Varied Thrush.

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A juvenile **Pied-billed Grebe** on the ocean off West Cliff Drive on August 5 was only the second summer record of a sea-going bird in the county files (MS). Individuals are occasionally seen on the ocean during fall and winter. A **Western Grebe** at Loch Lomond on June 21 set a record for the latest date this species has been found inland in the county (BWo). Pelagic trips out of Santa Cruz Municipal Harbor produced rare July records of **Flesh-footed Shearwater** on July 23 (ST, SJ) and **Buller's Shearwater** on July 7 (JDz, SJ). Single **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were seen offshore on August 6 and 13, and a **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** was also noted on August 6 (DSh, SJ). **Brown Pelican** numbers soared during the peak of their summer arrival, with up to 7357 counted passing Scott Creek during 2.25 hours on July 31 (DSu). Four Brown Pelicans circling high over Pinto Lake on August 4 were quite unusual inland (W&SM). Pinto had four prior records reported by then-resident Bob Ramer in the 1970's, three of which were from August. Otherwise, it has hardly ever been found inland in the county away from the lower reaches of the Pajaro River.

Five **American Bitterns** at Harkins Slough on August 7 was a nice count, perhaps including some juveniles (JDv, SR). Seven **Great Egret** nests with large young were with Great Blue nests at Pinto Lake County Park on June 28 (S&WM). The county's only egret rookery was first discovered there in 1995. **Green Heron** nesting activity seems to be increasing, with at least 20 (!) nestings reported this spring and summer (including some second broods) being the most ever (v.ob.). Twelve nestings were in suburban and urban habitats from Santa Cruz to Rio Del Mar, while the rest were in riparian and live oak woodland. By way of comparison, extensive fieldwork for the county Breeding Bird Atlas in 1987-93 found only 15 breeding confirmations over seven years. Only four of those were from the developed mid-county area where many pairs now nest, and none were in the urban and suburban habitats now utilized. A flock of 20 **White-faced Ibis** flying down the coast past Long's Marine Lab on June 14 was our first summer record (JL).

Thirteen **Canada Geese** at the lower San Lorenzo River on June 1 were in an odd spot for that date (MS). A flock of 38 Canadas flew low over Watsonville on August 24 (RW). Tardy flocks of **Brant** included 14 flying past West Cliff Drive on June 4 (SG) and 22 loafing near Scott Creek mouth on June 5 (LH). A male **Mandarin Duck** was reported to have mated with a female **Wood Duck** at Newell Creek in early April, and two male Mandarins were said to be present earlier in the season (WW). On June 7 a female Mandarin was seen with 6 downy young on the San Lorenzo River between Brookdale and Ben Lomond, while an adult male was seen with Wood Ducks at Boulder Creek (CEm). This was the first report of breeding by this exotic species in the

county, but males and females have been sporadically reported from the greater San Lorenzo system for about 10 years. A survey of the San Lorenzo from Forest Park, upstream of Boulder Creek, down to Highway 1 on June 7-10 found a **Wood Duck** population of 8 adult males, 17 females and 30 young (CEm).

Observations of our nesting **Common Mergansers** brought some eye-opening results. Fairly extensive coverage of breeding streams, especially the San Lorenzo, led to a rather complete picture of the breeding population of this increasing species. At least 22 broods were first detected from May 20 to June 21, totaling 211 downy young! Estimates of males and females were 11-13 males and 34 females. Breeding evidence was reported from six watersheds: Waddell Creek, Scott Creek, San Lorenzo River (including Loch Lomond), Soquel Creek and the first time ever for Aptos Creek and Corralitos Creeks (CEm, DSu, MTL, DB, CR, BWo, GH, ET). Big news surfaced this spring with a belated report of an **Osprey** nest found in 1997 on private land in the San Vicente Creek watershed, inland of Davenport (GH). The nest has been active subsequently (SB, MG), including this year, when at least one young was fledged (BWo, DSu). It appears that this pair may forage mostly at Loch Lomond (where the begging juvenile was first seen June 17) and along the San Lorenzo River (v.ob.). This is the first known nest in the Santa Cruz Mountains or Monterey Bay region since the 1930's. A pair of Ospreys frequenting the Waddell Creek area this summer hinted at another possible nesting pair (GS, DSu), while an Osprey seen carrying a large stick as it flew up from the Pajaro River and over Watsonville on May 8 was also tantalizing (DSu).

The first juveniles from the **White-tailed Kite** nest at Natural Bridges were seen on June 9 (AK). Two adult **Bald Eagles** soared over the San Lorenzo River at Felton on August 20 (P&RL). Breeding evidence for **Sharp-shinned Hawk** was plentiful again this year, perhaps the fruit of a recent population increase. This year's records in Santa Cruz County included one active nest and nine family groups of begging young (DSu, CEm, JB, MG), along with a similar bounty of evidence from San Mateo County. All were in redwood forest, mostly in areas of second growth forest. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** family with newly fledged young were in old growth forest along the Gazos Escape Road at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on July 7 (DSu). This hawk appears to be only very recently colonizing this forest type in the Santa Cruz Mountains. An adult male **Rough-legged Hawk** was studied at length at Scott Creek on the very early date of August 15 (BS, MB), one of the earliest ever for Northern California. A banded female **Peregrine Falcon** at the San Lorenzo River mouth on June 2 was in the same roost used by our familiar wintering bird (BJW), but if she was the same bird what was she doing here on that date?

A **Wild Turkey** family with 7 young at Nelson Road near Scotts Valley in early August (JG) provided the first breeding evidence that I know of for the county away from the hills east of Watsonville. Up to 18 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, four **Baird's Sandpipers** and eight **Pectoral Sandpipers** were found from July 26 to August 30 (RW, DSu, CK, CEy), with 11 Lesser Yellowlegs at Harkins Slough on August 18 being a good count (RW). **Wilson's Phalaropes** were at Laguna Creek on July 26 (DSu) and Harkins Slough on August 20 (CK). Pelagic trips found single **South Polar Skuas** and **Long-tailed Jaegers** on July 7 and August 8, and an impressive 10 Long-tailed Jaegers on August 13 (DSh, SJ). A juvenile Long-tailed photographed at Manresa State Beach on August 31 was the first county record of one found on shore (KM). A first year **Franklin's Gull** was at Harkins Slough on August 26 (RF). A **Herring Gull** seen on the July 23 pelagic trip was very rare for summer (ST).

Western Gulls provided another of the season's nesting highlights when at least seven pairs were found nesting up to 1.1 mile inland on rooftops in the urban 41st Avenue area of Capitola and Soquel (LH, DSu, EF). Downy chicks were seen on four roofs from Capitola Mall to San Lorenzo

Lumber. I suspect others were present but not visible from the ground. Westerns are known to nest on roofs in some areas along the immediate coast, but they have perhaps never before been found nesting so far inland away from aquatic habitats. A **Least Tern** was seen offshore on August 6 (DSh, SJ). **Black Skimmers** were at Pajaro River mouth on July 14 (EL), San Lorenzo River mouth on August 22 (DSu) and Capitola Beach on August 31 (MF). Two fledgling **Marbled Murrelets** were found on the forest floor at Big Basin in August (EB, fide PM). Nine **Rhinoceros Auklets** at the Davenport Bluffs on June 9 included one waiting on the water with fish in its bill. Two Rhinos were displaying near the bluffs just south of Pelican Rock on June 24 (DSu). **Tufted Puffins** were seen offshore on July 7 and August 6 (NB, DSh, SJ).

An unidentified **nighthawk** over Seascape on July 1 was probably a Lesser (EL). Two downy **Common Poorwill** chicks found on the Chalks on the evening of August 2 provided the county's first breeding confirmation since the 1890s (DSu). A **Long-eared Owl** near Soquel on July 7-8 was in the same area where two were heard last year (RW). Another was heard from the Chalks at the headwaters of West Berry Creek on August 2 (DSu). What has happened to our nesting **Black Swifts**? This summer there were two June reports of swifts over lower Wilder Ranch, and one from West Cliff Drive (JDv), but that was all! It seemed that none nested at West Cliff or along the coast in the vicinity of Pelican Rock, where several pairs nested formerly. Three **Vaux's Swift** nests were found: in a chimney at Brookdale on June 7 (CEm), in a Pileated Woodpecker hole in a Douglas fir snag in the Rincon Gorge on June 9 (CEm) and in a broken-topped redwood at Sempervirens Creek in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on July 10+ (DSu). Emmons' survey of the San Lorenzo on June 7-10 tallied 55 Vaux's. Four Vaux's foraging over the ocean (unusual) at West Cliff Drive on August 23 were reportedly only visible from a surfboard (MS).

We've all heard of "a bird in the hand," but never a **Selasphorus** hummer in the pants! Yet Sheri Howe found a female or immature clinging inside a pair of slacks hanging in the closet of her Santa Cruz home on the night of August 25. It was safely released that evening. Makes me wonder what she has up her sleeve. Our nascent population of nesting **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** made new inroads this year and extended the species' coastal breeding range a bit further south. An adult with two begging juveniles was at the East Branch of Liddell Creek on July 17, and two adults were tending a begging juvenile at Zayante Creek near the San Lorenzo on July 29 (DSu). Another was drumming at Scott Creek on June 2, where breeding was confirmed last year (DSu). A **Nuttall's Woodpecker** at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on June 27 was out of place for summer, likely an early post-breeding dispersant (DSu). A **Willow Flycatcher** was at Scott Creek on June 2 (DSu) and two were at Liddell Creek on June 10 (CEm).

A **Say's Phoebe** studied at Glen Canyon on June 10 was unexpected, the only modern record between late April and early September (BS). An **Eastern Kingbird** was at the County Fairgrounds on June 3 (MG). A male **Purple Martin** at Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta on June 21 was at a local breeding locale (BR, FV), while one at Davenport on July 25 was probably a local dispersant (RS). A **Bank Swallow** visited Rancho Del Oso on July 22 (DSu). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** stopped at a Scotts Valley feeder on July 17 (MB). The June 7-10 survey of the San Lorenzo River found three pairs of **American Dippers** between Forest Park and Rincon Gorge (CEm). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at Opal Creek in Big Basin on July 10-29 was apparently the first summering record for the Santa Cruz Mountains (DSu). Prior county records spanned August 20 – May 8. A female **Variied Thrush** with nest material at Scott Creek on June 5 established the first breeding record for that watershed, while others in new areas included a male at Fall Creek on June 22 and a female at Opal Creek on July 10 (DSu).

A **Nashville Warbler** at Borregas Gulch on June 4 was the latest ever in the county by 20 days, with the date suggesting it might have been a vagrant Eastern form (DSu). Three **Northern**

Parulas were found along the coast from June 2-6 (DSu). A singing **Chestnut-sided Warbler** visited the San Lorenzo at Highlands County Park on June 9 (CEm). A **Townsend's Warbler** near Felton on August 15 tied the earliest ever date for a fall arrival (DSu). Two female **American Redstarts** were along the coast on June 5-7, with a fall migrant at Aptos Creek August 29-30 (DSu). **MacGillivray's Warbler** breeding at Rancho Del Oso was again confirmed when an adult was seen with a begging juvenile near the Nature Center on July 9 (AK). A singing **Black-chinned Sparrow** and a **Sage Sparrow** carrying food in its bill were at Castle Rock State Park on July 6 (DSu). Both species occur in the county only there and near Loma Prieta. A Sage Sparrow at the latter locale was right on the county line at Summit Ridge on June 30 (BR, FV).

Grasshopper Sparrows were reported from two isolated areas. Seven singing at Seascape Uplands on June 4 were at a previously known spot (EL), but three singing at Larkin Valley Road near Buena Vista Road were at a new spot (BMor). An alternate-plumaged **Golden-crowned Sparrow** at a Watsonville feeder on June 3 was very late (AS). Hot on the heels of late May's five **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** (cited last issue) were an amazing 11 more found from June 8-21, and still three others found on July 13 and 26, and August 31 (v.ob.)! Nearly all were seen at feeders. A male **Indigo Bunting** was at Loma Prieta Avenue on Summit Ridge on June 9 (DSu). A pair of **Hooded Orioles** northeast of Scotts Valley on July 14 were also heard on prior dates (BMon). There are still no county breeding confirmations away from the lowlands, but this location has had a handful of other records over the last 8 years. Hoodeds were out of range along the North Coast at Wilder Creek on June 25 (JDv) and Baldwin Creek on July 26 (DSu). The lone **Red Crossbill** report was one at Rancho Del Oso on July 22 (DSu).

Cited Observers: Nick Block, David Bockman, Marj Bourett, John Bulger, Elizabeth Burko, Steve Butler, Jim Danzenbaker (JDz), Jeff Davis (JDv), Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Marie Felix, Eric Feuss, Rick Fournier, Matt Gallagher, Steve Gerow, Lois & Wally Goldfrank, Jennifer Green, Matt Greene, Laird Henkel, Glen Herter, Geoff Holmes, Clay Kempf, Anna Kopitov, Pauline and Ray Launer, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia & Wayne Macon, Kris McNew, Pam Meyers, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor), Todd Newberry, Bob Reiling, Chris Riser, Steve Rovell, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Shearwater Journeys, Roberta Smith, Anne Spence, Gary Strachen, David Suddjian (DSu), Evan Taylor, Scott Terrill, Monte Tudor-Long, Frank Vanslager, Brian J. Walton (BJW), William Wilber, Bill Wolcott (BWo), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from September 1 to November 25, 2000

All and all it was an interesting fall migration season, with a nice cross-section of rarities (one 1st county record and several 2nd, 3rd and 4th county records). A string of rarities at Harkins Slough and Natural Bridges especially focused birding attention in those spots in October. Some of the “bread and butter” migrant landbirds seemed sparse, particularly Swainson’s Thrush. The inshore ocean waters were quite productive through out the period, especially in September and November, when great congregations of feeding seabirds were often enjoyed from Santa Cruz to Aptos. Unusual gatherings of Red-tailed Hawks were present for over a month at spots along the north county coast, with a preponderance of adults in the mix. Flocks of 15-20 foraging hawks were repeatedly noted. Good feeding opportunities undoubtedly drew them in, but I’m not sure what they were eating. The early season take on the winter irruptive situation indicates high numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglets, American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins, but no other strong showings by the other irruptive species.

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Red-necked Grebes were at West Cliff Drive on November 16 (JGi), Capitola on November 19 (DSu) and Seacliff on November 20 (RW). **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** reported from boat trips out of Santa Cruz Harbor included one on September 3, two on October 29 and one or more on November 5 (DSh, SJ). **Manx Shearwaters** were reported on October 10 and 29, pending CBRC review (DSh, SJ). Two **Least Storm-Petrels** were identified on the October 10 boat trip, with one on October 15 (DSh, SJ). A **Wilson’s Storm-Petrel** was seen on the September 3 trip (DSh, SJ). An adult **Brown Booby** was amid a seabird feeding frenzy at Capitola Beach on September 12 was the 3rd county record (DSu), pending review by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). **American White Pelicans** had perhaps their best fall showing ever. Leading the many reports were the variable numbers that gathered to feed at Harkins Slough from October 3 onwards (v.ob.), peaking at 53 on October 31 (RW). A flock of four White Pelicans flying past the Santa Cruz Wharf on September 16 were unusual over the ocean (EF). Other reports included 15 over Watsonville on October 15 and six at Pinto Lake on October 20 (CK).

A juvenile **Brown Pelican** was very rare inland at Harkins Slough, where it was seen on several dates from October 5 to November 9 (RW, SR), and was observed feeding on the freshwater ponds with White Pelicans. One reported dead at Loch Lomond on November 1 was also quite unusual (BWo *vide* JD). A juvenile **Magnificent Frigatebird** at Waddell Bluffs on October 27 was seen pursuing a Red-tailed Hawk (BJW)! This was one of the latest fall records for Central California, where most records are from the summer months. A few **Cattle Egret** reports were welcome, given their recent paucity. Two were at Scott Creek on October 2 (JA), one at Harkins Slough on October 22 (ADM, and two were at Capitola on October 26 (DSu). Two **White-faced Ibis** were at Harkins Slough on October 6-9 (SR, v.ob.). Reports of **Greater White-fronted Geese** included three over Wilder Creek on September 30 (JD), 1 at Scott Creek on October 9 (TN), four at Harkins Slough on October 22 (ADM), 38 over Corralitos on October 22 (DSu), one at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz on November 18 (DB) and 33 over Capitola on November 23 (DSu).

A **Snow Goose** was at Harkins Slough on November 8 (RW). A **Ross's Goose** was at College Lake on November 11 (SGI). Up to six **Canada Geese** were at Harkins Slough from October 3 to November 13 (JDLT, v.ob.), while five to six were present at Merk Pond all fall (DSu, PR). An immature **Tundra Swan** wandered around the county's north coast from November 1-27, lingering longest at Laguna Creek (JL, JGi, v.ob.). A female **Blue-winged Teal** at Harkins Slough on October 2 was remarkably the only report of the fall (DSu). **Greater Scaup** have been quite rare in the county in recent years, so reports on one at Harkins Slough on October 8 (SR), one at Moran Lake on October 22 (EF), 8-9 at the San Lorenzo River mouth on October 22 (EF) and two there on October 22 (MS) were all noteworthy. Female **Black Scoters** were at Terrace Point on November 11 (DSu) and West Cliff Drive on November 16 (JGi).

An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** soared over Mt. Madonna Road on October 1 (DSu). An immature **Rough-legged Hawk** was near Rogge Lane east of Watsonville on November 7 (DSu). **Ferruginous Hawks** were at Soda Lake on October 2 (DSu) and Santa Cruz on November 5 (MS). A **Sandhill Crane** seen flying south from Año Nuevo on the morning of October 22 (JGi), was seen in a field near Davenport that afternoon (RG), then was reported back at Año Nuevo the next day. This provided only the 2nd or 3rd solid record of this species for Santa Cruz County. A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was at Manresa State Beach on September 26 (DSu). **Lesser Yellowlegs** were at Harkins Slough from October 1-22, peaking at seven on October 6 (JP, v.ob.). A **Solitary Sandpiper** visited the Pajaro River on September 4 (DSu). A **Red Knot** was at Seacliff State Beach from November 17-23 (RW). A **Baird's Sandpiper** at Harkins on October 13-15 was a little late for this early fall migrant (MF, ADM). **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at Harkins from October 2-15 (v.ob.), with a high of 10 reported on the latter date (ADM).

The county's 3rd record of **Stilt Sandpiper** was an obliging juvenile that was viewed by many at Harkins Slough from October 1-12, then from October 21-26 (JP, v.ob.). Perhaps two birds were involved, but more likely there was just one that went undetected in the large slough area for eight days. A **Ruff** was yet another highlight at Harkins from October 11-17 (JGi, v.ob.). **South Polar Skuas** were reported on at least four boat trips, with a high of four on October 15 (SJ). A **Glaucous Gull** was at West Cliff Drive on November 16 (JGi). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** seen there the same day was the only one reported from shore (JGi). **Elegant Terns** lingered in small numbers along the mid-county coast to at least late November (MS, EF, DSu). A juvenile **Marbled Murrelet** was rescued from a road near Blooms Creek in Big basin on September 17 (fide PM). A **Xantus's Murrelet** was seen on the September 3 boat trip (SJ). This was the second fall in a row with no reports of **Craveri's Murrelets** from Santa Cruz County waters. A **Tufted Puffin** was seen in Santa Cruz waters on October 8 (SJ, CK).

A **Chimney Swift** was studied well as it flocked with Vaux's Swifts over The Chalks on September 16 for the 1st county record (DSu). A belated report was of a female **Calliope Hummingbird** in the upper watershed of the West Branch of Soquel Creek on May 2-4 (ST). Large fall aggregations of *Selasphorus* hummers (Rufous and/or Allen's) were at the UCSC Arboretum, with reported high counts of 50+ on September 21 (TN) and 30+ on September 22 (JGi). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** returned to the Byrne Forest Reserve on October 28, lingering through November (JH, DSu). Another was at Swanton Road on November 4 (BMon, KM). A **Pileated Woodpecker** at Last Chance Road on September 12 was in Monterey pine forest, a habitat where they have rarely been found (CE). Three **Olive-sided Flycatchers** at Quail Hollow on September 4 were the only ones reported this fall, but were perhaps lingering from the breeding season (LBG). Seventeen **Willow Flycatchers** from September 3 to October 9 was a strong showing (v.ob.).

A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** report from Wilder Ranch on October 14 may have been correct and would be the first county record (JD), but it will be hard for it to make it through CBRC review without photos or in-hand measurements. Three **Ash-throated Flycatchers** were reported from September 4 to October 26 (DSu). Five **Tropical Kingbirds** set a season high for the county: at Palm Beach on October 4 (BMor), near Davenport on October 12 (CEM), Lighthouse Field on October 16 (MS), Sunset State Beach on October 31 (DSu), and Harkins Slough on November 3-9 (EL, v.ob.). There were no fall reports of **Western Kingbird**. A **Cassin's Kingbird** near Soda Lake on September 23 was the 4th county record, and the 1st for fall (DSu). An **Eastern Kingbird** paused near Baldwin Creek on September 8-9 (MS, TN). A **Plumbeous Vireo** was at UCSC on October 24 (JGi). Six **Cassin's Vireos** were reported from September 8 to October 16 (DSu, JGi).

Back to back **Red-eyed Vireos** provided the 8th and 9th county records: at Carbonera Creek on September 8 (DSu) and at Natural Bridges State Beach on September 10 (SA). A **Clark's Nutcracker** at Johansen Road atop Big Basin Redwoods State Park on November 9 (DSu) was the only hint so far from this county of the corvid invasion that is bringing montane species into other parts of the state. Two **Yellow-billed Magpies** visited a ranch near Hecker Pass from September 21-23 for only the second county record in modern history (Michael Donnally). Reports of **Horned Larks** included four at Soda Lake on September 18 (DSu), four at Harkins Slough on October 22 (ADM) and 18 near Baldwin Creek on October 25 (DSu). A late **Cliff Swallow** flew past El Jarro Point on October 16 (DSu). Over 20 **Red-breasted Nuthatches** at the UCSC upper campus on October 23 was the only high count reported this fall (JD). A **Canyon Wren** at Olive Springs Quarry on November 19-22 was the first county report since 1987 (WV). A diverse set of rare warblers was encountered this fall.

Three **Tennessee Warblers** were found from September 27 to October 7 (DSu). A **Virginia's Warbler** was at Natural Bridges State Beach on October 5 (KP). A **Northern Parula** was at Rodeo Gulch on September 8 (DSu). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were at Capitola on September 7 (DSu) and UCSC on October 9 (JGi). A **Magnolia Warbler** was mist-netted at Wilder Creek on October 14 (JD). A female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was inland near Felton on October 16-19 (DSu). A female **Blackburnian Warbler** lingered at Natural Bridges from October 2-10 (MS, v.ob.). A **Prairie Warbler** was at Capitola on October 21-22 (DSu). Fourteen **Palm Warblers** were found from September 30 through November 20 (v.ob.). Twelve **Blackpoll Warblers** from September 23 to October 25 made a nice showing for the county (v.ob.). Six **Black-and-white Warblers** were found from September 23 to October 25 (DSu, JGi). Eight **American Redstarts** were found from September 2 to October 21 (v.ob.).

A female **Prothonotary Warbler** captured on film in a Watsonville yard was the first photo-documented record for the county (AS). Another was seen near Moran Lake on October 13 (JGi, ASt). An **Ovenbird** at UCSC on October 23 was even heard singing (JD). **Northern Waterthrushes** were at the Pajaro River on September 23 (DSu) and Natural Bridges on October 8 (SR). A female **Hooded Warbler** was at Rodeo Gulch on September 10-11 (DSu). A **Yellow-breasted Chat**, always rarely detected in fall, was at Rodeo Gulch on September 29 (DSu). Among the rare but regular western warblers there were reports of nine **Nashvilles**, 21 **Black-throated Grays**, 16 **Hermits** (high) and nine **MacGillivray's Warblers**. A late **Wilson's Warbler** was at Soquel on November 24 (BMon, KM). Two **Summer Tanagers** were found – an immature male at Soquel Creek on September 4 and a female at Rodeo Gulch on October 31 (DSu).

An **American Tree Sparrow** was in an Aptos yard on October 6 (KP). **Clay-colored Sparrows** were down compared to recent falls, with just two reported, both at Capitola feeders, on

September 29 (DSu) and November 24 (PV). A **Brewer's Sparrow** at Corralitos on October 1 was the 2nd county record (DSu). **Swamp Sparrows** were in expected spots near Majors Creek on October 19 (CEm), Harkins Slough on October 27 (MS), and Wilder Creek on November 11 (JD). Nine **White-throated Sparrows** were reported from October 22 to late November (v.ob.). A **Lapland Longspur** joined larks and pipits in the fields near Baldwin Creek on October 23 (DSu), an area where they have been found before. A female **Blue Grosbeak** was at Coffee Lane Park on September 11 (DSu). An **Indigo Bunting** was at Harkins Slough on October 2 (DSu).

An immature or female **Painted Bunting** was a star at Natural Bridges October 4-6 (SG, v.ob.), for our 3rd county record pending CBRC review. A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was near Soda Lake on October 2 (DSu). A female **Orchard Oriole** was at Rodeo Gulch on September 8 (DSu). The only migrant **Bullock's Oriole** reported was at Capitola on September 29 (DSu). Two **Red Crossbills** over Fall Creek on October 16 were the only ones reported (DSu). Two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were over UCSC on October 23 (JD), while one was near Scotts Valley on November 24-26 (JGr). The only two reports of **Evening Grosbeak** were two at Big Basin on November 9 and five at Zayante Creek on November 22 (DSu).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, David Bockman, Marj Bourett, Jeff Davis (JDv), Jeanna De La Torre, Al De Martini, Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Eric Feuss, Mike Fieghner, Steve Gerow (SG), James Gilroy (JGi), Steve Glover (SGl), Leda Beth Gray, Jennifer Green (JGr), Rudy Gutierrez, Jeff Helmer, Laird Henkel, Clay Kempf, Anna Kopitov, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Pam Meyers, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Kevin Monahan, Bryan Mori (BMor), Todd Newberry, Kenneth Peterson, Jeff Poklen, Peter Radcliff, Steve Rovell, Michelle Scott, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Shearwater Journeys, Anne Spence, Louisa Squires, Andy Stone (ASt) David Suddjian (DSu), Scott Terrill, Monte Tudor-Long, Peter Varcados, William Vaughan, Brian J. Walton (BJW), Bill Wolcott (BWo), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from November 26, 2000 to January 31, 2001

As usual, the Christmas Bird Counts (Santa Cruz County on December 16 and Moss Landing on January 1) provided many interesting records. The Moss Landing data was provided courtesy of compiler Bob Ramer. The rarest county bird was a Lark Bunting, the first reported in over 33 years. Storms with strong south and southwestern winds on January 12 and 25 brought some seabirds close to shore and inland. The latter storm brought Northern Fulmar, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, Black Scoter, Surf Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser and Red Phalarope to inland spots. Bird trivia history was made in January, when all of the *Buteo* species on the county list were seen that month -- A first for any month, and especially impressive for January.

Not counting the CBCs, over 90% of all the county bird reports are coming in via email now, especially via the listserver Monterey Bay Birds. This venue has proven fruitful, as the volume of reports and network of reporting observers have both grown. Many useful resources are available on the bird club's web page at www.santacruzbirdclub.org, including a seasonal county checklist, reports summarizing county bird data for various species, and a list of the types of things that should be reported. Pertinent to this season is a summary of irruptive winter land birds over the Santa Cruz County CBC's 44-year history (<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/irruptive.html>).

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Five **Horned Grebes** at Loch Lomond on December 16 were unusual at that inland location (B&KM). A **Red-necked Grebe** were reported at New Brighton State Beach December 13-16 (RWO, DSu), and two were seen between La Selva to Sunset State Beach on January 1 (fide BR). Two **Pied-billed Grebes** were on the ocean off Natural Bridges on November 20 (RWO). ***Aechmophorus* grebes** were very numerous at both ends of the county's coast at the cusp of the year. An estimated 2,500 *Aechmophorus* were packed together off the Waddell Beach area on December 30 (fide AJ). At the other end of the coast, an impressive 12,940 *Aechmophorus* were reported on January 1 from the Sunset State Beach and Marine sections of the Moss Landing CBC (an unknown portion in Monterey County; RB, RT). Both areas reported a high predominance of Westerns, but the actual ratio of Western to Clark's is uncertain. A **Laysan Albatross** was seen offshore of Santa Cruz on January 29 (MG).

Over 150 **Northern Fulmars** were seen from shore at Wilder Ranch during the peak of the wind storm on January 25 (CE). A dead or dying **Northern Fulmar** was onshore at the Shorebirds Pond at Pajaro Dunes on January 26 (DSu). Six **Pink-footed Shearwaters** off Santa Cruz on December 16 were many for December (SA, RWO). Good numbers of **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** were blown in by the January storms. About 10 were off West Cliff Drive on January 12 (JGi). On January 25 there were at least 22 off Wilder Ranch (CE) and five off Soquel Point (DSu). The best was one rescued alive from a the Nickelodeon Theatre parking lot in Santa Cruz on the evening of January 25, then released at the wharf (BJW). This was the first onshore record for the county. **American White Pelicans** were reported from Harkins and Hanson sloughs, and Pinto and College lakes (v.ob.) with high counts of 22 at Harkins on December 12 (RWO) and 39 at Pinto on January 1 (B&BR).

Geese continued their recent pattern of a strong winter showing. What I've enumerated below represents a notable increase in occurrence over the situation 10 years ago. A total of eight **Greater White-fronted Geese** were reported from five sites (RWo, BWe, WBT, EL, DE, DB, MTL). Three flocks of **Snow Geese** totaling 281 birds flew northwest high over New Brighton State Beach on December 16 (DSu), with one flock also seen subsequently near Scotts Valley (BM). Where were they coming from? Another lingered at an agricultural field at Seascape from January 1-4 (MSa, IMJ), and one was at Shorebirds Pond from late December to January 1 (B&KM). Two **Ross's Geese** flew around Younger Lagoon on December 6 (JL). One was a Westlake from about December 9 to January 2 (LN, v.ob.). Eight flew over New Brighton on December 16 with one of the flocks of Snows (DSu). Other reports were of one at Salsipuedes Pond and College Lake January 1-5 (DE, RWo), 1 at Soquel Creek mouth on January 5 (KN, LH) and three at Pajaro Dunes on January 26 (DSu). Reports of **Canada Geese** were quite numerous (v.ob.). The most interesting were one showing characters of the Aleutian form at New Brighton State Beach on December 12 and the high count of 34 at College Lake on January 5 (both RWo).

The immature **Tundra Swan** residing along the north coast since November 1 lingered at Laguna Creek Marsh through at least January 22 (v.ob.), and was joined by an adult by January 16 (AS). These were the first known to over-winter in the county away from the Pajaro Valley. A **Cinnamon Teal** at Baldwin Creek on December 16 was rare for the north coast at this season (BWe). **Green Winged Teal** have been declining in the Santa Cruz and north coast areas during winter. Just two (at Laguna Creek [DE]) on the December 16 CBC showed how sparse they were this season. Nine **Greater Scaup** were inland at Loch Lomond on December 16, where unusual (B&KM). **Black Scoters** were at New Brighton State Beach on December 6 and 18 (RWo), Sunset State Beach on January 1 (JGr), and La Selva January 13 (DSu). One Black at Anderson Peat Ponds at Harkins Slough on January 26 was undoubtedly pushed in by the storm, for a very rare inland record (DSu).

Three **Surf Scoters** seen flying just above the traffic on Laurel Street in Santa Cruz during the high winds of January 25 must have been a remarkable sight (JGi). Also storm-related were 11 Surfs surfing Anderson Peat Ponds at Harkins Slough on January 26, joined by and one **Red-breasted Merganser** (DSu). **Long-tailed Ducks** were seen off the Pajaro River mouth on December 11 (LH) and off La Selva on January 13 (DSu). **Hooded Merganser** numbers continued to increase away from the Pajaro Valley. For example, the December 16 CBC had eight at Soquel Creek (DSu), seven at Scotts Valley ponds (BS), two at Roaring Camp (BB), and four at Wilder Ranch (JD). Others reported from these areas included three at Quail Hollow County Park on December 24 (A&JW), two at Henry Cowell on December 27 (MG), two at Quail Hollow on January 7 (MSP) and nine at Yellow Bank Creek on January 22 (DSu). The high counts reported from the Pajaro Valley were of 18-28 at Merk Pond between December 27 to January 1 (v.ob.), and 17 at Harkins Slough on January 26 (DSu).

Ospreys at Capitola on December 16 and 30 and January 5 (DSu, KN, LH) and at the Wilder Ranch coastline on January 1 (BWT) were the only reports away from the Pajaro Valley lakes. Sightings of an adult **Bald Eagle** over Scotts Valley on January 3 (BH) and at Loch Lomond on January 25 (BWo) might have been of the same bird. An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** was reported from three areas on the west side of Santa Cruz from December 22 to January 18 (BJW, JD, SG, DSu). This is the third winter in a row that one has been found in the county. The dark morph **Swainson's Hawk**, one of our rarest visitors this season, returned to the Buena Vista Road County Landfill and adjacent Harkins Slough from January 5 into February (RWo, v.ob.). A confiding and well-viewed immature **Rough-legged Hawk** was at Davenport from at least December 8 to January 15 (BL, JL, v.ob.), generating a bit of discussion due to an apparently unusual tail pattern and lighter than expected carpal marks.

Up to seven **Ferruginous Hawks** were reported from far flung spots December 13 to January 5 (EL, BS, DSu, RWo, CE). Most noteworthy among them was a dark morph adult at Soda Lake on January 2 (DSu). A **Common Moorhen** at Laguna Creek on December 16 (DE) and a **Black-necked Stilt** at Waddell Creek Beach on January 22 (DSu) were both rare for the north coast. Eight **Lesser Yellowlegs** were at a flooded lawn at Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (PM). A **Long-billed Curlew** moved between Seacliff and Capitola beaches from December 13-18 (RWo, DSu). Another or the same was at Sunset State Beach and the Pajaro River mouth on January 1 (JGr, J&RW). A **Red Knot** lingered from late November at Capitola Beach and New Brighton State Beach, being last reported on January 13 (DSu). Four **Sanderlings** at Watsonville Slough inland of Highway 1 on January 26 may have been blown in by the storm. January storms brought **Red Phalaropes** inshore. Particularly noteworthy were onshore records of five at Pinto Lake on January 12 (DSu), one found dead in a Soquel yard on January 15 or 16 (TC), and three on College Lake on January 26 (JH).

First year **Glaucous Gulls** were well-reported: Waddell Creek Beach on December 4 (RWo), Capitola Beach on December 4 (DSu), Table Rock on December 16 (BWe), the Pajaro River mouth on January 1 (J&RW), Monterey Bay Academy Beach on January 13 (DSu) and Buena Vista Road landfill on January 17 (DSu). **Black-legged Kittiwakes** came inshore with the January storms. Reported of those onshore included two at Capitola Beach on January 10, one at the San Lorenzo River on January 18 and two at Capitola Beach on January 25 (DS). **Elegant Terns** made news. Singles at Natural Bridges State Beach on December 2 (JD) and Capitola Beach on December 4 (DSu) were nominally late. Two at West Cliff Drive on December 20 (JD) and one at Capitola Beach on December 30 (DS) were more noteworthy. But six feeding in the surf at Cowell's Beach at Santa Cruz on January 16 were very rare so far into the season (WBT).

A **Mourning Dove** nest with eggs at Capitola on January 12 was quite early (MC). The highest count of wintering **Burrowing Owls** reported this season at UCSC was five on December 16 (JL). **Short-eared Owls** were at Wilder Ranch This spot State Park on December 4 (RWo) and near Baldwin Creek on December 24 (CE). A **Long-eared Owl** was heard north of Soquel on December 16 (DSu). A **Common Poorwill** seen on Alfadel Lane north of Soquel in the pre-dawn on December 16 was unexpected (DSu). This species' winter status in the Santa Cruz Mountains is poorly understood, but past records indicate some over-winter in breeding areas. This one was away from known breeding areas. **Allen's Hummingbirds** appeared ahead of schedule, with a male at the UCSC Arboretum on January 3 (JGi) and a male high up atop China Grade on January 6 (DSu), and 2 males near Davenport on January 9 (CE). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** returned to a Soquel orchard from December 9-16 (GH, DSu).

Two **Pileated Woodpeckers** were along the southeast edge of Nisene Marks State Park on December 29 (JB), at the margin of their expanding range where they have only been irregularly reported. One in the upper watershed of Cascade Creek on January 22 was the first record from there (DSu). A late *Empidonax* flycatcher with details suggesting a possible **Least Flycatcher** was at Rancho Del Oso on November 27 (RWo). Unfortunately, it did not linger to be seen by others. A **Tropical Kingbird** was at Harkins Slough January 1-7 (CK, C&CW, MTL, MB, v.ob.). An unidentified kingbird was reported from Rancho del Oso on January 7 (BN fide DSi). A flock of 185 **Common Ravens** over Scotts Valley on December 2 was exceptionally many for the Santa Cruz Mountains away from the landfills (DSu).

December swallows away from the Pajaro Valley included two **Tree Swallows** south of Davenport (DE), four **Violet-green Swallows** north of Santa Cruz (SE, AH) and one Violet-green at New Brighton State Beach (DSu), all on Decemebr 16, plus five over Capitola on December

26. I suspect these were birds moving to local wintering areas elsewhere along the central coast of California, perhaps the Pajaro Valley. The fact that most December records of these swallows at the north coast and mid-county have been generated by the CBC, I think highlights the low level of coverage most of that region receives from general birding. Three **Horned Larks** at Wilder Ranch agricultural fields on January 22 were the only ones reported (DSu). Reports of White-breasted Nuthatches included one north of Soquel on December 16 (DSu), one at Sunset State Beach on January 1 (SR) and one off Branciforte Road from December 21 – January 25 (KP). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was at Long Ridge Road on January 12 (DSu). It was a good winter for **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, with relatively large numbers wintering throughout the forested areas and lesser numbers scattered through the developed areas along the coast.

It was a slow winter for rare warblers, western or eastern. A **Nashville Warbler** was at New Brighton State Beach on December 16-28 (DSu). **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were at Soquel Creek in Soquel on December 16 (DSu), New Brighton State Beach on December 28, and Rodeo Gulch on December 30 (all DSu). **Hermit Warblers** broke ranks with a good showing of 15 at nine spots December 4 to January 22 (v.ob.), including a high count of six at Cascade Creek on the latter date (DSu). A **Black-and-white Warbler** at Soquel Creek in Soquel on December 10-16 (DSu) was probably a returning wintering bird from last year. Another was near Schwan Lake on January 18 (DSu). Two **Palm Warblers** were along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz from December 13 to January 21 (MTL), with another at Arana Gulch on January 18 (DSu). **Western Tanagers** were near Schwan Lake December 16 (CK, SA), with perhaps the same there on January 18 (DSu), at Rodeo Gulch on December 30 (DSu) and north of Watsonville on January 1 (B&BR).

The season's best bird was a female **Lark Bunting** at Peckham Road east of Watsonville on January 1-2 (RM, DB, LW, PM et al.). This was the third county record and the first since 1968! A **Clay-colored Sparrow** seen at a Capitola feeder in late November re-appeared on December 26-27, but was not evident otherwise (PV). **Swamp Sparrows** were sparse, with single birds reported west of Antonelli Pond on December 16 (EL), at College Lake on January 1 (DSu) and at Laguna Creek Marsh on January 22 (DSu). An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at a feeder near UCSC on December 25 (SK), and another was at a Capitola feeder on January 9 (MT). One of the best finds of the season was an immature male **Indigo Bunting** near Rodeo Gulch on December 16-20 (CK, JA, CF, BS, DSu), the county's third December record. A big zero for **Tricolored Blackbird** on the Santa Cruz County portion of the Moss Landing CBC on January 1 was a sad testament, indeed (fide BR).

An adult male **Hooded Oriole** visited a hummer feeder in Soquel December 5 and December 23-25 (GC). An immature male was at Natural Bridges on December 16 (SG, BG). A unidentified oriole, very likely a **Bullock's Oriole**, was at a hummer feeder in Capitola on December 10 (MT). A definite **Bullock's** was at another Capitola feeder on December 24 (DSu). **Brown-headed Cowbirds** are increasingly numerous and widespread in the central and north coast parts of the county during winter. The December 16 CBC tallied 48 in six different sections of the count circle (fide DSu). A female **Great-tailed Grackle** at the UCSC Farm on January 3 was the first county record outside the months of April to July (JGi). **Red Crossbills** were sparse, with reports totaling 19 birds at six areas (BS, DSu, MTL). **Lawrence's Goldfinches**, especially rare in winter, included one continuing at a feeder near Scotts Valley through December 12 (JG) and a female at Noble Gulch in Capitola on December 13 (DSu). Two **Evening Grosbeaks** at Soquel Creek near Olive Springs Road on December 16 were the only ones reported (DSu).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Jenny Anderson, Bonnie Bedzin, John Black, David Bockman, Marj Bourett, Ron Branson, Ginny Campbell, Teetle Clawson, Millie Cunningham, Jeff Davis, Scott Edwards,

David Ekdahl, Chris Emmons, Christina Floyd, Bruce Gerow, Steve Gerow, James Gilroy (JGi), Jennifer Green (JGr), Matt Green, Michael Getty, James Harriman, Laird Henkel, Amber Hensley, Glen Herter, Annette Jackson, Clay Kempf, Suzanne Kent, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Ingrid Mendis-Johnson, Peter Metropulos, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan, Randy Morgan, Bess Nerricio, Kriss Neumann, Louise Newberry, Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Karen Potter, Bernadette Ramer, Bob Ramer, Michael Sarka (MSa), Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Dan Singer (DSi), Madeline Spencer, Barry Staley, Andy Stone (AS), David Suddjian (DSu), Richard Ternullo, Monte Tudor-Long, Mary Turner, Peter Varcados, Brian J. Walton (BJW), John Warriner, Ricky Warriner, Brian Weed (BWe) , Anne Williams, Jim Williams, Linda Wilson, Bill Wolcott (BWo), Chris Wolfe, Claire Wolfe, Roger Wolfe (RWo). "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from February 1 to March 31, 2001

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Two **American White Pelicans** were at Harkins Slough on February 27 (JDLT) and 39 flew over there on March 4 (DS). Three **American Bitterns** were at Harkins Slough on March 19 (EL), and one was at Struve Slough on March 4 (DS) and March 24 (JWe). A **Cattle Egret** northeast of Watsonville on March 26 (DS) was the only one reported in the county since a few were seen last fall. No winter reports were received. A flock of 38 **White-faced Ibis** at College Lake on February 6 (JH) was a very high count for the county, especially during winter. Noteworthy waterfowl at College Lake included six **Ross's Geese** February 2, a big flock of 142 **Canada Geese** flying over on February 4, and five **Tundra Swans** on February 1-2 (JH). The wintering Tundra Swans at Laguna Creek remained to at least February 7 (JP). Two **Blue-winged Teal** were at College Lake on March 6 (RF), and two were at Struve Slough on March 4 (DS), with one there March 17 (EF). A male **Black Scoter** was at Baldwin Creek Beach on March 17 (AG). A **Hooded Merganser** at Roaring Camp in Felton on March 4 (JiW) was away from the Pajaro Valley.

A belated report of a roost of 24 **White-tailed Kites** at the upper UCSC campus ca. December 10 was noteworthy, as such numbers are rarely seen in the county (JG). Interestingly, only 14 kites were reported from the entire Santa Cruz County Christmas Count Circle about a week later. The wintering **Broad-winged Hawk** on the Westside of Santa Cruz was seen through February 24 (JD, MS). Another immature Broad-wing at Freedom Boulevard in Freedom on March 28 was only the second spring record for the county (RW), although it might have over-wintered. Connecting the dots between the various spots where this bird was reported during the two months it was seen yields a minimum use area polygon of about 187 acres. Davenport's wintering **Rough-legged Hawk** was last reported on February 7 (JP). Another (the same?) was reported along Highway 1 north of Scott Creek on March 31 (CE). A **Ferruginous Hawk** was at Pogonip on February 3 (JD).

Three **Mountain Quail** were seen walking across China Grade on March 15, and two others were nearby in San Mateo County on the Butano Fire Trail that same day (DS). This is the first time they had been reported from that part of Santa Cruz in over 20 years. Courting **Western Gulls** at Capitola Mall on February 23 suggested nesting may occur there again this year (DS). Additional reports of **Glaucous Gulls** were of first winter birds at Aptos Creek mouth on February 10-11 (JP, RW), two there on February 15 (DS), one on March 7 (RW), and one at Capitola Beach on March 27. (DS). Following the winter reports cited in the last issue, seasonally exceptional records of **Elegant Terns** continued with two at Capitola on February 5 (DS), two at Seabright State Beach on March 7 (BS) and one at Capitola Beach on March 11 (DS). Efforts to survey the wintering **Burrowing Owls** at UCSC produced an estimate of 8-9 birds, similar numbers as found in other recent winters (LB fide JL). A road-killed Burrowing Owl was near the entrance to Sunset State Beach on March 4 (DS). A **Long-eared Owl** was heard at Soquel on March 9 (DS). **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were at Pot Belly Gulch on February 14-18 (JeW, DS) and at Zayante Creek on March 22 (DS). The latter bird was one of the latest ever for the county.

A **Cassin's Kingbird** at Watsonville March 4-5 provided the fifth county record (DS). A male **Purple Martin** at Hazel Dell Marsh on March 26 was an early record for the county (DS). A **Yellow-billed Magpie** seen at Bay Street near West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz on March 17 (C&WT) was somewhat problematic. While it might have been an escaped or released bird at that odd spot for a magpie, it seems more likely to have been a wandering wild bird, but as such would be only the third modern record for the species in the county. **White-breasted Nuthatches** were found at China Grade on February 18 and at Zayante Fire Station on March 15 (DS). A **Brown Creeper** working the trees at Holy Cross Park in Santa Cruz on March 24 was a bit out of place (JiW). Wintering **Nashville Warblers** were reported at Natural Bridges on February 4 (AK), New Brighton State Beach on February 16 (DS) and off Amesti Road on March 6 (WM). A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was at Rodeo Gulch on February 8 (DS).

A **Hermit Warbler** was at Big Basin on February 18 (DS). A **Palm Warbler** was at Natural Bridges on February 4-5 and March 25 (AK, BMcL). A **Wilson's Warbler** was at Natural Bridges on February 4 (AK). An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Rodeo Gulch on March 11 (DS). A male **Great-tailed Grackle** was at Capitola on March 27 (DS). A highlight of the reporting period was an immature male **Baltimore Oriole** at Natural Bridges State Beach on March 25-26 (AK, TN, RW, BMcL, LSJ). This was the 6th county record, and the first report since 1988. Flocks of 20-75 **Red Crossbills** were reported from the Monterey pines of Last Chance Road all winter (CE), although they were scarce elsewhere in the county. **Pine Siskin** numbers apparently increased during late winter, but many feeding stations had birds that were ill (v.ob.). After a winter's near-absence, four **Evening Grosbeaks** were at Zayante Creek on March 19 (DS).

Cited Observers: Bonnie Bedzin, Loni Beyer, Jeff Davis, Jeana De La Torre, Rick Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, James Gilroy, James Harriman, Anna Kopitov, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin, Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Linda St. John, David Suddjian, Chris & Wendy Tryde, John Welch, Jean Williams, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from April 1 to June 30, 2001

I am not sure whether a paucity of coastal reports this season indicated low coverage, low reporting or a lack of birds. But it did seem to be a slow spring for the passage of migrants with no notable fallouts. Yet somehow, this column is filled with interesting tidbits and several rather significant records! Of special interest this season was extensive coverage I was able to devote to the Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) as I conducted continuing focused studies there and began a forest-wide bird inventory. A good deal of noteworthy information was obtained, with just the cream of the crop presented below. But all this from an area of mostly redwood forest with limited previous coverage by general birding, and seemingly little there to attract birders! Yet there was much to learn and many interesting birds were found. And there are *many* similar areas in the Santa Cruz Mountains. It only serves to highlight how little effort we put into birding our extensive forest areas, and how locked into the “known” birding areas we can become. We should be challenged to go out and explore new areas, not all of them along the coast. I don’t wish to seem harsh, but so often our birding knowledge is rather superficial and many areas are left totally unvisited. Maybe it doesn’t matter, but when one turns to questions of conservation and what do we know about our bird populations, then all too often it is all those other areas out there that might be the most important areas. Those areas we know so little about.

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The only inland report of a migrant **Common Loon** was one flying north high over the East Branch of Soquel Creek at SDSF on April 25 (DS). A breeding-plumaged **Red-necked Grebe** was off Pajaro Dunes on May 5 (RW). **Double-crested Cormorants** nested at Pinto Lake County Park in association with Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets, for the first confirmed breeding ever for Santa Cruz County (W&SM). Apparently they were present and at least attempted nest building in 2000 (WM, CK). Then on May 18 of this year multiple birds were nest building (W&SM). A visit on June 15 revealed nine nests with small young evident in some (DS). An **American Bittern** calling at Scott Creek Marsh on June 7 and 15 was very rare for the north coast in the breeding season (DS). Numbers of nesting **Great Egrets** at the Pinto Lake rookery, its only one in the county, swelled to seven pairs this year (DS).

White-faced Ibis made an unusually strong showing in coastal California this spring. Locally, we had more sightings than normal, and all were later than usual for Santa Cruz County. A flock of 18 were at East Struve Slough on May 22 (CEM), three were over Swanton Road on May 23 (DS), and four were over Struve Slough on May 28 (JWi). The wintering duo of **Greater White-fronted Goose** and minima **Canada Goose** lingered at San Lorenzo Park to at least April 3 (DB). Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Antonelli Pond on April 16 were rare for spring (JL). Large **Canada Geese** made a strong mid-county showing for spring: multiple flocks of 6-11 birds in the Antonelli Pond area on April 16-19, five at Corcoran Lagoon on May 7 (MS), 12 over westside Santa Cruz on May 17 (JD), and one near Wilder Creek on May 21 (fide AG). One Canada took up residence at Westlake all season and made itself at home, even wandering into houses (Santa Cruz Sentinel). How long until Canada Geese nest in the Santa Cruz area?

Two **Brant** at West Cliff Drive on June 12 were the only stragglers reported this season (BP). A male **Blue-winged Teal** lingered in Santa Cruz, where they are always rather rare, from at least March 30 into July (RF, EL, DS, BMr, DB, v.ob.). He apparently moved about between Kalkar Quarry, San Lorenzo Park and Neary Lagoon, providing only the second summer record for the county. In late April and May he was seen courting a female Mallard and later “guarding” her (MC, DB). San Lorenzo Park does sad things to ducks. Lingered or tardy migrant **Ring-necked Ducks** included two at Westlake in Santa Cruz on April 19-25 (DS, AS), 13 at Scott Creek Marsh on April 22 (DS), and nine at Yellow Bank Creek on April 27 (DS). Three **Black Scoters** flew north at Davenport Landing on April 28 (DS). Four **Hooded Mergansers** two miles up Waddell Creek on March 31 included a displaying male (GM). A wintering female Hooded stayed at Scotts Valley until April 5 (LE).

A **Common Merganser** nest was finally found after a focused effort at the East Branch of Soquel Creek in SDSF (DS). A incubating female was seen going in and out of a cavity in a large Douglas-fir snag about 40 feet back from the creek on May 9-10. The young fledged from the nest about a week later. To my knowledge this is the first actual nest discovered in the Santa Cruz Mountains since the species began nesting in the region in the late 1980's. High water levels at Scott Creek Marsh enticed **Ruddy Ducks** to attempt to nest, a very rare occurrence for the north coast where they are usually absent in the breeding season. Courtship was seen on June 6-7, and a female with young was seen on June 25 (DS). Unfortunately, all the young were gone (probably eaten) by June 27 and no adults were seen after that date. A lovely light morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** circled low over Capitola on April 8 (DS, SS, AS). Later-than-most **Merlins** included ones at Santa Cruz on April 10 (DS), at Majors Creek on April 13 (BL), and at Davenport on April 22 (JDLT, LJ).

A **Prairie Falcon** over Neary Lagoon on June 10 was highly unusual for the date and location, providing the only county record later than mid-April (BMr). A pair of **Peregrine Falcons** was present in the East Branch of Soquel Creek watershed this season, being occasionally detected from May 1 into July (DS). It has been suspected for several years that a pair may be nesting in that watershed, but they apparently did not nest this year, or perhaps failed early in the season. The Peregrine nest discovered last year at Castle Rock State Park was active again with young in the nest on May 30 (JL, BL). Several sightings of **Wild Turkey** at SDSF in April, May and June included a female with nine small young on May 19 (DS). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** paused at Wilder Creek Beach on May 20 (CEy). Four **Red Phalaropes** in a pond near Davenport on April 27 were the only ones reported on shore this spring (DS). A **Wilson's Phalarope** at Scott Creek Marsh (DS) and four at Waddell Creek mouth (AS) on June 26 would be returning southbound birds.

A significant overland flight of approximately 3,100 **Bonaparte's Gulls** passed north in the “trans-mountain flyway” over Capitola on April 1 (DS). Two adult **Franklin's Gulls** were following a tractor in the fields near Highway 1 at Dimeo Lane on April 27 (DS). **Western Gulls** nested again at the odd inland location on the roof of San Lorenzo Lumber in Soquel, hatching chicks by June 16 (DS). Four **Elegant Terns** at Santa Cruz Wharf on April 28 were earlier than normal (DS). Two **Black Skimmers** flew up the coast past Schwan Lake on April 30 (CEm). Two sat on a sandbar in the middle of the Pajaro River mouth on May 11 (RF), and two were at the river mouth on June 18 (KH). One of the most significant discoveries of the season was the detection of **Marbled Murrelets** on five dates at Fall Creek Truck Road from May 4 to June 3, including behavior that indicated they might be nesting in the remnant old growth forest along the truck road (DS). This was the first solid modern record of murrelets associating with any potential nesting habitat in the San Lorenzo Valley (excepting the far headwaters of Boulder Creek adjacent to Big Basin).

Rhinoceros Auklets were seen a couple of times at the Davenport Bluffs in late April and May, but they did not nest there this year and most visits found none (DS). Two were on the water at the base of the bluffs near Pelican Rock on June 26 (DS). An adult **Long-eared Owl** was heard at Long Ridge Road on April 29, while a juvenile was making all kinds of racket on there June 6 (both DS). Another adult was about a mile away along Skyland Road on June 6 (DS). Interestingly, records Long-eareds have been accumulating for all seasons and from all parts of the Soquel watershed over the last several years, but elsewhere in the county there have been almost no reports. Coastal reports of **Black Swift** continued to be very sparse. Ten were at West Cliff Drive on May 22 (JD, SC), one was north of Scott Creek on May 29 (DS), and six were at Wilder Creek on June 30 (CEy). That these were the only reports from these three formerly (?) regular nesting areas, and all three areas received frequent coverage this year lends support to the concern I have expressed here that our coastal breeding population may have recently dwindled. I wish someone would check the county's two inland breeding sites some day.

It was an outstanding spring for our rare hummingbird visitors. Compare the following with a summary of county records through March 2000 at the SCBC web page: <http://santacruzbirdclub.org/rechum.html>. A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at a Watsonville feeder on April 15-18 (AS), while another male (and maybe even two) were at UCSC Arboretum on April 25 (JG). Male **Costa's Hummingbirds** were at Moore Creek on April 19 (DS), at SDSF on May 21 (RW), and at Long Ridge on May 14-15 (CR), while a female visited UCSC Arboretum on April 25 (JG). A male **Calliope Hummingbird** was at SDSF on April 25 and a female was in another location there on May 15 (both DS). These were the first Calliope reports in the county since 1996. A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at the East Branch of Soquel Creek at SDSF on May 25-29 was presumably part of the Santa Cruz Mountains growing and expanding breeding population, extending the known breeding season range some 8.5 miles eastward and significantly inland (DS). Another or the same was seen along the creek a mile upstream of the May location on June 22 (DS). One calling at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park picnic area along the San Lorenzo on June 18 was not far from a nesting site used last year (DS).

A **Lewis's Woodpecker** that flew into county airspace at Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta on June 1 was the latest of very few spring county records (BR, FV). **Nuttall's Woodpecker** has "always" been limited to the greater Pajaro Valley area during the breeding season proper, with only a few nesting confirmations in the mid-county area. This year several were found in interesting spots. A pair at Quail Hollow County Park was discovered in late March (MTL, LBG) and nesting was confirmed there May 29 (LBG, DD). A pair at Long Ridge Road was confirmed on May 19 (DS), with three other pairs nearby at Long Ridge Road, Skyland Road and Adams Road on June 6 (DS). Another pair was present at Richardson Road northeast of Scotts Valley from May 15 into July (B&KM) and a pair was at the San Lorenzo River at Felton on May 9 (DS). These records certainly indicate expansion of the local population into new areas. **Hammond's Flycatchers** was studied at Santa Rosalia Mountain at SDSF on April 27 (DS), and at Meder Canyon in Santa Cruz on May 16 (JG).

Two **Bank Swallows** visited foraged over the grassland and bluffs north of Scott Creek on May 29 (DS). A female **Purple Martin** was at the coast at Seacliff State Beach on May 6 (DS). Two males and two females were in nesting habitat at the county line near Loma Prieta on May 8 (FV), with one female there on May 22 (BR, FV). On May 11 a male and two females were seen west of Santa Rosalia Mountain perching in some old redwood snags at the north edge of the Hinkley Creek basin in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park (DS). On June 12 a pair was still there, with the female now entering a hole in one of the snags, indicating an active nest (DS). A

martin was over Old Turnpike Road in the upper Soquel watershed on June 3 (S<). **American Crows** at Wilder Creek Beach on several dates in May were beyond their usual range along the coast and rare for the north county coast, with high counts of eight on May 10 and ten on May 19 (CEy).

Golden-crowned Kinglet has made a substantial dramatic change in its breeding range in the Santa Cruz Mountains! Until this year there was only one breeding confirmation east of the San Lorenzo Valley, and precious few other breeding season records in that area. That was in spite of breeding bird atlas coverage and my own breeding season work at a number of forested areas east of the San Lorenzo Valley. This year I encountered numerous territorial and nesting kinglets in almost all forest areas I visited in the southeastern part of our mountains, including areas in the watersheds of Soquel, Aptos, Valencia, Corralitos, and Browns Creeks and further east into Bodfish Creek in Santa Clara County. Breeding was confirmed in several areas. Data from SDSF in the Soquel watershed is the most striking. I had conducted some detailed surveys there in 1995, 1996, and 1998, and less detailed coverage was made in other recent years. But I had never recorded Golden-crowned Kinglets on any of those breeding season efforts. This year extensive bird inventory work found them throughout SDSF at 42% of 130 survey stations from late April to late May. They were singing in redwood forest, mixed evergreen forest and even deciduous riparian forest. Sorry to go on and on, but this is one of the quickest and more dramatic positive changes in a bird population that has yet been documented in the county.

Singing **Varied Thrushes** were at Fall Creek Truck Road on May 4 to June 3 and at Timms Creek in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on May 31 (DS). The first breeding confirmation for Opal Creek at Big basin was obtained when a pair was seen feeding four begging young on June 18 (DS). **Nashville Warbler** had a record spring showing, with 10 singing birds from April 14 to May 21 (DS, EL, RW). A female **Northern Parula** was at Liddell Creek on June 25 (DS). Some nice counts of **Hermit Warblers** included 29 on April 27 at SDSF, where they are passage migrants, and over 30 singing on breeding territories at Fall Creek Truck Road on May 4, plus others that date at nearby Manson and Deans Creeks (DS). A singing male **American Redstart** was at Soquel Creek in SDSF on May 16 (DS). A singing **Ovenbird** was west of Santa Rosalia Mountain in SDSF on May 19 for one of the few spring county records (DS).

A handful of singing male **MacGillivray's Warblers** were detected at various spots in SDSF from April 18 to May 16 (DS). A female was carrying nest material with a singing male nearby at one of these spots in the Amaya Creek drainage on May 19, while another male continued to sing on territory elsewhere in that drainage through June 2 (DS). This nesting confirmation is one of very few known for the county other than multiple nestings in recent years along the north county coast. A female **Hooded Warbler** was at Valencia Creek on June 16 (DS). The only spring report of **Yellow-breasted Chat** was one singing at Zayante Creek on May 7 (DS). A dazzling male **Scarlet Tanager** was singing at Live Oak on June 27, for the first county record (DS). Too bad he didn't linger! A **Harris's Sparrow** at a feeder near Watsonville on April 10-21 provided the first spring record for the county, and was the first ever to be photo-documented for the county (W&SM). Lingering **White-throated Sparrows** included one singing at Westside Santa Cruz on April 22 (JH).

A hefty 12 **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found from April 16 to June 22 (B&KM, DS, VB, BJ, KP, BB, WBT, CEm, TM, CD). Matching the recent pattern, all but two were adult males; all but two were visiting feeders, and most were in the mountain areas of the county. A female **Blue Grosbeak** was at Olive Springs Quarry on May 3 (DS) and an immature male was at Liddell Creek on June 2 (DE). Reports of **Great-tailed Grackles** continued as in recent springs, with females at Corralitos on April 5-7 (JDi, DS) and at Swanton Road Pond on May 22 (DS), and

males reported at Harkins Slough on May 20 (EL), June 9 (JB) and June 16 (RW). Then came the anticipated discovery of the first breeding records for the county, when two pairs and two active nests were found at Watsonville Slough below Lee Road on June 19 (JWe, BV). The nests (at least one with hatched young) were in cocklebur in flooded vegetation in the slough, and the adults were foraging nearby in partially flooded agricultural fields. **Hooded Orioles** in the mountains were newsworthy. Richardson Road northeast of Scotts Valley had a pair with an “extra” male and female (B&KM). The first appeared there on April 23 and nesting was confirmed in July (see next issue). A female was nearby at Old Turnpike Road on April 26 (S<). Surprisingly, 30-40 **Red Crossbills** were seen frequently in the pines at Last Chance Road through early April, and 10-20 through April into May (CEy), but none were reported elsewhere.

Cited Observers: Bruce Barrett, Vicky Birdsall, David Bockman, Jerry Busch, Shauna Casey, Madeleine Clyde, Corrine Davenport, Jeff Davis, Jeana De La Torre, Julia Dinger, David Drake, David Ekdahl, Lorraine Elrod, Chris Emmons, Carleton Eyster, Rick Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, James Gilroy, Leda Beth Gray, Kathryn Hannah, Jean Harrison, Bill Johnson, Linda Jordan, Brian Latta, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Wayne & Sylvia Macon, Greg Meyer, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Bryan Mori (BMr), Terry Morrison, Bill Park, Kathleen Proffitt, Bob Reiling, Cheryl Rourke, Michelle Scott, Anne Spence, Andy Stone, Aaron Suddjian, David Suddjian, Susan Suddjian, Scott and Linda Terrill, Monte Tudor-Long, W. Breck Tyler, Frank Vanslager, Brian Voegtlen, John Welch, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from July 1 to August 31, 2001

Late summer was productive with interesting rarities. The vanguard of vagrants and returning migrants seemed to be a bit ahead of schedule. As with recent fall migrations, coverage of Harkins Slough and Natural Bridges continued to be relatively intense. However, reported coverage along the north coast or elsewhere in the Pajaro Valley was quite slim, and pelagic coverage was very sparse.

I only learned of one of the year's best birds when I read about it half a year later in *North American Birds* (Vol 55:224). An adult **Red-legged Kittiwake** "was well studied on the water" on February 26 west of Davenport by seabird biologists Larry Spear and David Ainley. Pending review by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC), this would be a 1st county record and only the 3rd record for California.

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A **Manx Shearwater** with a large flock of Sooty Shearwaters was reported by a veteran seabirder off Sunset State Beach on August 25 (ST). **American White Pelican** staged its strongest-ever late summer showing, a time when we usually have none at all except for a few crippled residents at Pajaro Valley lakes. A flock of 21 were soaring over Soquel August 5 (RW). Reports of flocks at Harkins Slough ranged from nine to 45 birds August 10-12 (RW, JD, JDLT). A record high count (for any season) of about 140 birds were seen circling west of Watsonville, with some heading off to Elkhorn Slough, on August 25 (DR, RC). That record quickly fell as an estimated 165 pelicans at Watsonville Slough August 28 (LH, JD). Two **Brown Pelicans** circling over Soquel and moving inland with the flock of 21 Whites were exceptional for (RW).

A **White-faced Ibis** at Harkins Slough on July 8 was only the 2nd summer record for the county (RC). Thirty **Canada Geese** flew into Pinto Lake at dusk on August 8 (BMr). Two flocks of **Snow Geese** totaling about 24 birds seen flying over the mountains northeast of Scotts Valley on August 27 were very odd for late summer along the central California coast (B&KM). The decline of Neary Lagoon as an urban haven for nesting **Wood Ducks** continued to be evident. Into the early 1990's it supported nesting by several pairs with pretty good success in most years. But Bryan Mori reports from his monitoring there over the past five years that at most just one pair produces a clutch now and rarely do any chicks survive to the later stages of ducklinghood. One such duckling made it this year. The summering **Blue-winged Teal** stayed at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz through at least August 24 (DB).

An **Osprey** with a fish at Pinto Lake on July 4 could have been a local breeder or summering bird, or perhaps was an early migrant (LH, KL). A juvenile with two adults at Loch Lomond on August 8 (fide BW) indicated that nested occurred again at the only known nest site, located a few miles from the reservoir. Breeding confirmations for **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and **Cooper's Hawk** continued to fairly pour in this season, apparently reflecting burgeoning populations of these forest-nesting hawks (v.ob.). The change has been especially dramatic for the Sharpie, with 20 confirmations in the county this season alone. I recall writing in this space in the late 1980's that, based on the very few records then known, it was perhaps the county's rarest breeding

raptor. A dark morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** over Harkins Slough on August 14 (JP) was only the 5th fall record for the county.

Snowy Plovers nested in an odd situation this season, placing three or four nests atop the bluff overlooking the west end of Wilder Beach (CE). These nests were especially vulnerable to being trampled by park users. Except for single **Lesser Yellowlegs** along the north coast on July 19 (MS) and July 27 (DS), all reports were from Harkins Slough, where counts ranged from one to seven birds from August 10-24 (RW, CK, JD, RF). A juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Harkins Slough from August 13-20 (SR, CK, RW, RF). A **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Wilder Beach on August 14 (CE), followed by variable counts of one to four at Harkins Slough from August 18-26 (RF, RW, BA). The only Pectoral Sandpiper was at Harkins on August 30 (RW). Counts of **Wilson's Phalaropes** at Harkins ranged from one to eight birds from August 10-16 (RW, SR, CK).

Two **Least Terns** were at the Pajaro River mouth on July 3 (CE). Three flew south with Caspian Terns over the crest of the mountains at Skyland Ridge on August 1 (DS). Two were at Capitola Beach on August 13 (DS). A **Black Tern** added style to Harkins Slough from August 23-26 (RW, RF, BA). Two **Black Skimmers** were at Sunset State Beach on July 29 (GP). The Big Basin headquarters area has long been considered to one the premier spot for high levels of **Marbled Murrelet** activity in the Santa Cruz Mountains, presumably reflecting a high concentration of nesting birds. However, dawn surveys in recent years have recorded a steady and alarming decline in activity levels, as illustrated by a compilation of data from the headquarters area spanning 1991-2001 (Figures 1 and 2; DS and Dept. Fish and Game data courtesy of EB). It is problematic to draw direct inferences regarding murrelet numbers from such dawn survey data (for reasons too complicated to present here). But it doesn't take a rocket scientist or a murrelet biologist to tell us that we should be alarmed by the trend.

Easily topping the summer rarities was the 1st Santa Cruz County and Monterey Bay area record of **Long-billed Murrelet**, photographed about 500 meters off Aptos Creek mouth on August 23 (JA, HN, LH; pending CBRC review). This would be about the 15th state record, and the southernmost coastal record so far. Nearly all of the previous records have also been between mid-July and mid-September. A **Tufted Puffin** was seen in county waters on a Shearwater Journeys pelagic trip on August 24 (CK). An unidentified **Nighthawk** flew over the Wilder Creek area on August 29 (CE). Past records suggest Lesser Nighthawk is most likely. Two **Chimney Swifts** described from West Cliff Drive on August 14 would be our 2nd county record (CK). A pair of **Vaux's Swifts** nested in the huge, hollow Santa Clara Tree at Big Basin, where they attended a nest on July 3 and 18 (DS). An adult male **Costa's Hummingbird** was at Capitola on August 22 (DS). An impressive concentration of 50+ **hummingbirds** (**Anna's** and **Selasphorus** sp.) reported in early August at feeders at Vine Hill Road near Scotts Valley were said to be drinking 110-120 oz of sugar solution per day (JW).

Willow Flycatchers were at Noble Gulch on August 23 and Liddell Creek on August 25 (both DS). A family group of five juvenile **Western Kingbirds** at Soda Lake on July 23 might have been from a rare county nesting, but it seems more likely they had dispersed there since no adults were in residence earlier in the season (BMr). The county's 3rd ever **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was a long-term crowd pleaser in the fields next to Long Marine Lab from July 17 until well into September (BK, JD, v.ob.). It was judged to be a one year old female, lingering as she underwent a molt. A **Red-eyed Vireo** was at the Ridge Trail at Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) on August 29 (DS). The **Purple Martin** nest in the Hinkley Creek watershed mentioned last issue had fledged four young by July 14 (DS). Approximately 60 **Common Ravens**, most or all

juveniles, at Wilder Beach on August 6 (CE) formed a large flock for summer and must have been a depressing sight for a Snowy Plover biologist.

At Richardson Road a **Chestnut-backed Chickadee** managed to trap itself *inside* of a Droll Yankee Feeder, where it was happily eating seeds in captivity on July 6 (B&KM), while another was temporarily caught and detained in a large orb-weaver's web at Long Ridge on August 2 (DS). A family of **Brown Creepers** with two young in the eucalyptus of upper Meder Canyon on July 4 provided an example that this forest bird has adapted to nesting in groves of this introduced tree (SG). A Hermit Thrush at SDSF on August 29 was judged to be a returning fall migrant, the earliest ever for the county by two days. An immature **Virginia's Warbler** at Natural Bridges on August 27-29 was the county's 6th record, and the earliest for fall (L&WG, TN, J&MM). A **Nashville Warbler** at Natural Bridges on August 28-29 set a new early record by two days (L&WG, J&MM). Another early Nashville was at SDSF on August 29 (DS). A hatch-year female **Northern Parula** lingered at Natural Bridges from August 8-27 (TN, JD, v.ob.). The age and early date suggest it hatched somewhere on the central coast of California, perhaps locally. Nesting has been confirmed in coastal counties both north and south of Santa Cruz.

An Audubon's **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at Long Ridge in SDSF on August 9 had likely dispersed from breeding areas at the crest of the mountains (a rarely noted movement for the species in our area), as opposed to arriving early from afar (DS). An early migrant was at Harkins Slough on August 25 (DR, RC). An adult male **Townsend's Warbler** at SDSF on August 16 was only one day shy of the earliest county record, and was followed by many more early birds over the next two weeks (DS). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at the East Branch of Soquel Creek in SDSF on August 20 (DS). A female **American Redstart** was at Neary Lagoon on August 19 (BA). A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was at SDSF on August 31. A male **Hooded Warbler** was northeast of Scotts Valley on July 17-18, for the county's second mid-summer record (B&KM). A fall migrant female was at the East Branch of Soquel Creek in SDSF on August 23-24 (DS).

An adult **Chipping Sparrow** at a feeder northeast of Scotts Valley on July 28 was out of place for the breeding season and early for one of our rare fall migrants (B&KM). Steve Gerow noted that a juvenile of our locally-breeding Nuttall's **White-crowned Sparrow** at Antonelli Pond on July 1 was unusual away from its nesting habitat along the immediate coast. This species has shown almost no tendency to wander even rather short distances in the county during the breeding or summer dispersal periods. Adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found at Rancho Del Oso on July 15 (BB) and at an Aptos feeder on August 18 (DRg).

Significant **Hooded Oriole** breeding confirmations were reported from two areas. Two pairs nested at Richardson Road in the mountains northeast of Scotts Valley, fledging young by July 21 and July 28 and providing the first breeding records from our mountain areas (B&KM). Another pair nested at Coast Road between Laguna and Majors Creek, fledging young by July 20 (JL). Although a pair has resided there in recent years, this was the first reported nesting confirmation and I know of no other nesting Hooded Orioles along our coast northwest of Santa Cruz. Meanwhile, an impressive 16 Hooded Orioles (many juveniles) gathered at the feeders in a Watsonville yard on July 25 (AS). Two juvenile **Brown-headed Cowbirds** being fed by Hooded Orioles in the same yard provided rare evidence of parasitism on that species in the county (AS).

Cited Observers: Brian Acord, Josh Adams, Bonnie Bedzin, David Bockman, Esther Burkett, Rita Carratello, Jeff Davis, Jeana De La Torre, Carleton Eyster, Rob Fowler, Steve Gerow, Lois & Wally Goldfrank, Laird Henkel, Brad Keitt, Clay Kempf, Kirk Lenington, Janet Linthicum, John & Maria Meyer, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Bryan Mori (BMr), Hannah Nevins, Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, G.

Price, Don Roberson, Dan Rogers (DRg), Steve Rovell, Michelle Scott, Anne Spence, David Suddjian, Scott Terrill, Jim Whitmore, Bill Wolcott, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from September 1 to November 30, 2001

All and all it was an outstanding fall! Just scan the summary below and look at all those goodies! A series of great rarities led the ranks during September and October, including first county records for Greater Shearwater and Grace's Warbler. Natural Bridges was especially hot during the last half of September, when a conjunction of steller birds brought a host of birders. We enjoyed the best season on record for rare fall warblers in the county, with record high numbers of many species and new records for total species and individuals.

I always like to see how the season shapes up for montane or irruptive species. Through November Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Varied Thrush and Pine Siskin seemed well represented, although none were reported in exceptional numbers. Red-breasted Nuthatch, Red Crossbill and Evening Grosbeak were sparse.

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A **Pied-billed Grebe** sailed the seas of Terrace Point on October 17 (LG). I believe small numbers occur regularly on inshore waters during fall and winter, but they are very rarely noticed or reported. A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Davenport Bluffs on November 16 (DSu). An intriguing report was of a decaying dead albatross with features matching an adult **Short-tailed Albatross** floating 15 miles south of Davenport on October 10 (JDa). Unfortunately it was not collected. **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were seen on trips out of Santa Cruz Municipal Harbor on October 20 and 27 (CK, LL, CL, SJ). Perhaps best of the whole fall season was a **Greater Shearwater** seen about 15 miles of Davenport Landing on October 8 (TM, DSh, CK, LG, WG, JP, RW, v.ob., SJ). This will be the first county record pending review by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). The season's 2nd **Manx Shearwater** was in close to Capitola Beach with a large flock of Sooty Shearwaters on September 24 (DSu).

The county's 4th **Brown Booby** was videotaped and photographed 7 miles south of Davenport on October 20 (LL, CK, DVP, DSh, v.ob., SJ). The unusually strong showing by **American White Pelican** in August continued into fall: about 40 at Harkins Slough on September 3 (MS, BS, BB), 86 over Hwy 129 east of Watsonville on September 5 (DSu), 10 over Harkins Slough on November 1 (JP), 20 over Watsonville on November 6 (BMM), 31 over Pajaro Dunes on November 17 (RW et al) and finally 2 over Freedom on November 26 (DK). An **American Bittern** at Antonelli Pond on September 9 was the only report received (EF). A **White-faced Ibis** paused at Younger Lagoon on September 21 (JDu, MS). The recent pattern of **Greater White-fronted Geese** appearing in the county in October continued with 30 over Laguna Creek on October 2 (RM), 48 east of Watsonville on October 6 (DSu), 22 over Capitola on October 13 (DSu) and one in a field at Seascape on October 15 (LT).

A **Ross' Goose** at Laguna Beach on November 23 (AG), was followed by four at Capitola Beach on November 24 (DSu). The only **Blue-winged Teal** report was of one at Merk Pond on November 3 (CK). An apparent hybrid **Gadwall X Mallard** was seen at Harkins Slough on November 23 (RW). A female **Redhead** was at Corralitos Lagoon on November 9 (DSu), and a pair was at lower Watsonville Slough on November 11 (RG). A female **Hooded Merganser** at

Younger Lagoon November 8-28 was the only one away from south county (LG, v.ob.). Twelve Hoodeds at Soda Lake on November 9 provided a good count away from the Pajaro Valley proper (BMM). Migration-in-action is rarely noted in the county for some of our raptors, but that would seem to explain a **Northern Harrier** flying south in the “trans-mountain flyway” over the upper Soquel watershed on September 9 (ST) and two **White-tailed Kites** flying southeast high over Capitola on October 13 (DSu).

An immature **Northern Goshawk** posed for a nice study at Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) on October 26 (DSu), providing only the 5th or 6th record for the county. An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** flew over Long Ridge at SDSF on September 14, and an adult was over Capitola on October 16 (DSu). The season’s second **Swainson’s Hawk** was an immature seen at Harkins Slough on September 2 (RW, DL). A **Ferruginous Hawk** visited Corralitos on November 9 (DSu). A **Common Moorhen** at Scott Creek Marsh on November 3 was along the north coast where they are rare (TN et al). **American Avocets** are rarely found away from the Pajaro Valley area (and have been pretty uncommon in the county in general lately), so individuals at West Cliff Drive on October 26 (TN) and Seacliff State Beach on November 26 (RW) were note worthy. Numbers of **Lesser Yellowlegs** increased at Harkins Slough in September with peak counts of at least 22 on September 3 (KVV; probably a county record) and 14 on September 13 (RW).

Marbled Godwits only seldom wander in from our immediate coast, so two at Harkins on September 8 were of interest (BA). The season’s only **Red Knot** was at Corcoran Lagoon on September 16 (BA). Harkins Slough produced a second juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** on September 13 (RW). Single **South Polar Skuas** were seen from boat trips in county waters on October 8, 14 and 20 (SJ). An immature **Franklin’s Gull** was just outside the Santa Cruz Harbor on September 9 (ST, SJ). Counts of **Sabine’s Gulls** reported from boat trips included eight on September 9 (GM) and four on October 8 (SJ). Josh Adams and Laird Henkel did it again, finding the second **Long-billed Murrelet** of the season along the central coast. This one, seen and photographed in Año Nuevo Bay on October 18, was just north of the county but is worthy of mention on the heels of our August record. Rumor has that Josh and Laird are considering forming a tour company called *Brachyramphus Journeys*.

Pelagic trips on October 14 and 27 each produced two **Tufted Puffins** in county waters (CK, LL, CL, SJ). A **White-winged Dove** was at a feeder in La Selva September 25-26 (MM). Eric Fuess’ observation of three juvenile **Eurasian Collared-Doves** at his Live Oak feeders in early September (courting adults seen last spring) provided the first evidence of nesting by this species for the county. A **Short-eared Owl** was at UCSC on October 31 (CE). **Long-eared Owls** were found roosting at Natural Bridges State Beach on October 12 (AS, DVP, MB), and at Long Ridge in SDSF on October 27 (DSu). One was calling at Skyland Road on November 26 (DSu). The Natural Bridges owl was an especially good find along the coast where we have few records. An immature **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at Natural Bridges on September 12 (TE). An adult male **Costa’s Hummingbird** at Corralitos on November 2 tied the record for our latest fall migrant (DSu).

A **Lewis’s Woodpecker** wandered to the black oaks of Castle Rock State Park on November 26 (CE). Two **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were found: at East Philipps Road outside of Watsonville on November 9-20 and at Aptos Creek on November 19 (DSu). Just three **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were reported for the season, September 5-27, showing their local scarcity during fall (JDLT, LJ, DSu). Additional **Willow Flycatchers** brought the season’s total to 15 birds found from August 23 to October 1 (MS, RW, EF, DSu). The county’s third ever **Least Flycatcher** provided a nice study at SDSF on October 15 (DSu). A **Gray Flycatcher** dipped its tail at Antonelli Pond on

September 12 (TE). Rounding out the unusual Empid reports was a **Dusky Flycatcher** studied at Natural Bridges September 14-17 (SG, RW). A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Capitola on November 23 was late (DSu). An **Eastern Phoebe** along the San Lorenzo River at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on October 12 was the county's first fall record (JDv).

Tropical Kingbirds appeared at Schwan Lake on September 27 (CE), Rancho Del Oso on October 19 (CE) and the Pajaro River on November 11 (RG). Several **Western Kingbird** reports were concentrated near Younger Lagoon, and included four on September 20 (a high fall count for the county; DVP, MB) and a tardy individual on October 26 (TN). An **Eastern Kingbird** was at Long Ridge in SDSF on September 14 (DSu). The obliging **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** discovered near Long Marine Lab on July 17 remained through at least September 16 (v.ob.). Just three **Cassin's Vireos** were reported for the season, August 29 – October 12 (DSu, RW). A bird showing characteristics of **Blue-headed Vireo** was at Antonelli Pond on September 12 (TE), but it was not conclusively identified. A **Plumbeous Vireo** was near Merk Pond on November 9 (DSu). The county's 2nd ever **Philadelphia Vireo** was at the Pajaro River at Murphy Crossing on September 29 (DSu). Four Horned Larks over Merk Pond on October 12 were the only ones reported (DSu). A **Bank Swallow** was spied at Antonelli Pond on September 12 (ST).

One of the odd events of the season was a spate of reports from September 10 – November 28 of 17(!) different **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** showing various degrees of leucism (paleness of plumage) and/or partial albinism (v.ob.). These birds, seen at widely scattered spots, were often reported as appearing like “black and white chickadees” with unusual white on the wings and tail, white or very pale backs, and often pale gray crowns and throats. Over the previous 16 years there had only been a few reports of such aberrant chickadees, but undoubtedly some went unreported. A statewide query via the listserv CALBIRDS yielded only two other reports of such birds this year (singles at San Mateo County in July and Marin County in November). What could have caused this phenomenon in Santa Cruz County this year? A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at New Brighton State Beach on November 4 (JDo).

It was a remarkable season for rare fall warblers (an updated 10-year summary is on the club web page at <http://santacruzbirdclub.org/recwarb.html>). Record high counts were set for 11 species, and four others tied their high counts. A record 23 “rare” species were reported, including a record 18 vagrant species. The total number of individual “rare” warblers (180) and vagrants (92) were 106% and 80% over the previous 9-year averages, respectively. Highlighting the warbled parade were some species that are particularly rare for the county. A **Grace's Warbler** caused a stir at Natural Bridges on September 27-29 (MS, JP, LG, TN, CL, SG et al.). This is the first county record and only the 3rd for Northern California, pending CBRC review. A **Lucy's Warbler** at Natural Bridges on November 11-12 (AK, LG) was the county's 4th ever, but just the 1st for fall. The county's 4th ever **Black-throated Green Warbler** was at the East Branch of Soquel Creek in SDSF on October 27 (DSu).

Four **Tennessee Warblers** were found September 13 to October 14 set a new record (v.ob.). An impressive 23 **Nashville Warblers** from August 28 to November 28 was more than twice the previous fall record (v.ob.). A female **Northern Parula** was at Natural Bridges on October 8-12 (AK, v.ob.). A **Yellow Warbler** at Tannery Gulch on November 28 was quite late (DSu). Eight **Chestnut-sided Warblers** from September 6 to October 29 doubled the previous record (v.ob.). **Magnolia Warblers** were at Antonelli Pond on September 13-16 (TN, v.ob.), and at two spots along Soquel Creek on October 11 (CE) and 14 (LG, WG). **Black-throated Blue Warblers** included females at Soquel Creek on October 8-11 (DSu, CE) and New Brighton State Beach on October 20, and males at Soquel Creek on November 11-15 (PL, DSu), and Santa Cruz

November 28-29 (MS, v.ob.). The latter male permitted lovely photographs as it visited a hummingbird feeder (CC).

A whopping 42 **Black-throated Gray Warblers** from August 13 to November 23 handily set a new fall record and was nearly three times our fall average (v.ob.). **Hermit Warblers** came on strong with 16 from September 7 to November 18 (v.ob.). A female **Blackburnian Warbler** was at Natural Bridges on September 29 to October 1 (AE, DVP, v.ob., photographed CC), joined by another on October 1 (AK, LG, v.ob.). A third was at the Pajaro River on September 29-30 (DSu, DVP, MB). An immature **Prairie Warbler** was at Soquel Creek on September 12 (DSu). Twelve **Blackpoll Warblers** were scrutinized from September 16 to October 20 (v.ob.). Twenty **Palm Warblers** bobbed in September 28 to November 16 (v.ob.). A record 10 **Black-and-White Warblers** crept into view from August 20 to November 9 (v.ob.). Thirteen **American Redstarts** flitted about from August 19 to November 2, twice the season's average. (v.ob.). A cooperative male **Prothonotary Warbler** was at Antonelli Pond and Natural Bridges on September 12-14 (TE, v.ob.).

Five **Northern Waterthrushes** from September 9 to October 10 was one above the old record (v.ob.). Six **MacGillivray's Warblers** skulked in from August 31 to October 10 (DSu, LH). The season's 2nd **Hooded Warbler** bathed vigorously in a La Selva yard on October 13-14 (MM). A late **Wilson's Warbler** was at Natural Bridges on November 13 (TN). And finally, our annual fall **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at the Pajaro River on September 5. Three female **Summer Tanagers** were found: September 27 at Olive Springs Road (DSu), October 10 at New Brighton State Beach (DSu) and November 19 at Wilder Ranch State Park (LG, WG). A late **Western Tanager** was at New Brighton on November 21 (DSu). A migrant **Lark Sparrow**, only rarely found in the county, was at Harkins Slough on September 3 (KVV). An **American Tree Sparrow** visited a feeder at Corralitos on November 9-11 (DSu, DH).

As usual, **Clay-colored Sparrows** well out-numbered **Chipping Sparrows**, this year 7 to 2, respectively. Clay-colored were found September 12 to October 22 (SG, CC, JW, DSu). One at Santa Cruz on September 19-15 was videotaped (CC), and one at Quail Hollow Ranch on October 21 was unusual away from the coast. Four **Swamp Sparrows** were found at favored spots October 10 to November 25 (DSu, RW, LG). Among nine reported **White-throated Sparrows** were two early ones: at Natural Bridges on October 9-12 (MG et al) and Soquel on October 9 (RW). Six **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** from September 8 to October 12 were more than we usually have in fall (v.ob). An immature male **Blue Grosbeak** was at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on September 17 (MG). Female **Indigo Buntings** were at New Brighton on September 15 (DSu) and Santa Cruz on October 7 (MS).

A female **Bobolink** was near Laguna Creek on November 16 (DSu). A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was at Harkins Slough on September 1 (JP). I'm always surprised how few **Bullock's Orioles** are detected in the county each fall. This season a female at Natural Bridges on November 13 was the only one reported (SA). A molting male **Orchard Oriole** was at Natural Bridges on September 26-30 (AG, BB). **Red Crossbills** barely showed up, with one over Long Ridge at SDSF on September 10 (DSu) and four at Castle Rock on November 26 (CE). A female **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at the Pajaro River on September 5 (DSu). A lovely male was videotaped as he visited a feeder in Santa Cruz from November 22-24 (CC).

Cited Observers: Brian Acord, Josh Adams, Steve Allison, Bonnie Bedzin, Matt Brady, Cindy Cummings, Jeff Davis (JDa), Jeana De La Torre, Judy Donaldson (JDo), Jon Dunn (JDu), Todd Easterla, Al Eisner, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, Steve Gerow, Alexander Gaguine, Michael Getty, Lois & Wally Goldfrank, Rudy Guitierrez, Donna Harris, Laird Henkel, Linda Jordan, Clay Kempf, Dave Kodl, Anna Kopitov,

Dave Lavarando, Pat Leask, Les & Cindy Lieurance, Janet Linthicum, Calvin Lou, Marian Mack, Todd McGrath, Greg Meyer, Randy Morgan, Bryan M. Mori (BMM), Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Debi Shearwater (DSh) Shearwater Journeys (SJ), Madeline Spencer, David Suddjian (DSu), Scott Terrill, Les Todd, David Vander Pluym, Kent Van Vuren, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1, 2001 to January 15, 2002

A **Red-throated Loon** was at Pinto Lake on December 21 (DS). Inland reports have been sparse in the county in recent winters. A **Red-necked Grebe** was off Capitola on December 15-19 (DS). **American White Pelicans** frequented the lakes of the Pajaro Valley as usual from December onwards (v.ob.) The highest counts were from Pinto and Kelly lakes, ranging from 15-22 birds. A **Pelagic Cormorant** on the San Lorenzo River above Riverside Drive on December 15 was unusual off the ocean (AG). An **American Bittern** at East Struve Slough on January 1 was the only one reported (JE). **Great Egrets** are becoming increasingly regular in inland and montane parts of mid-county, as documented by the Santa Cruz County CBC (SCC CBC). This year six of the count's 15 were found inland from Soquel Creek to Quail Hollow County Park. Another winter is passing us by with no county reports of **Cattle Egret**.

A small number of **Turkey Vultures** were found in early winter, as usual, but 11 near Greyhound Rock on January 12 were a high early winter count for the county (RW). Twelve **Greater White-fronted Geese** at College Lake on December 23 dwindled to 6 by January 1 (DS), and two were at Westlake Pond on January 13-14 (DVP, MB, AE). The only **Snow Geese** were singles at Laguna Creek Marsh December 15 – January 12 (DE et al., RW) and College Lake on December 18 (CK) and January 1 (DS). Reports of **Ross's Geese** were of singles at Corcoran Lagoon on December 15 (SA, CK) and Monterey Bay Academy on January 1 (JD, JG), and one to four at College Lake from December 24 – January 5 (RW, DS, v.ob.). The only large counts of **Canada Geese** came from College Lake, with 50 on December 24 (RW) and 58 on January 1 (DS). A quartet of **Tundra Swans** passing down the coast at Baldwin Creek on January 3 appeared to be a family group with two immatures (DS).

The Moss Landing CBC (ML CBC) provides a nice sample of waterfowl numbers in the Pajaro Valley on January 1, with all of the productive wetlands carefully covered. Counts of several ducks from this year's count struck me as being rather paltry, even fowl (if I dare say it): four **Wood Ducks**, 76 **American Wigeon**, 22 **Northern Pintail**, 18 **Green-winged Teal**, and five **Lesser Scaup** (fide BRa). Were they simply scattered elsewhere because of all the December rains? Three **Blue-winged Teal** were at East Struve Slough on January 1 (JE), with one at Watsonville Slough on January 4 (DS). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at College Lake on December 23 (DS). A pair of **Redhead** was at College Lake on January 1 (DS), with a third joining them on January 5 (RW). Reports of **Greater Scaup** inland exceeded those along the coast, which is odd: three were at College Lake on December 24 and January 5 (RW), and four were at Harkins Slough January 1-5 (CK et al., RW). Three at Pot Belly Beach on December 18 were on the ocean, where we have few records (RW).

The season's most appreciated duck was a nifty male **Tufted Duck** at Westlake Pond from December 15 into February, providing the 2nd county record (KA, BMc, MTL, JL, v.ob.). It was interesting to see his tuft grow from a stub in mid-December to its full, floppy length by mid-January. **White-winged Scoters** continued very scarce, with a combined total of just seven from the SCC CBC and the Santa Cruz County part of the ML CBC, and that from some 30 miles of coastline! **Black Scoters** were at New Brighton State Beach on December 10, Capitola on December 15 and Manresa State Beach on January 4 (DS). A female **Harlequin Duck** was with

Surf Scoters at Manresa on December 21 (DS). A **Common Merganser** at Quail Hollow Pond on December 2 was unusual (JW), as they are decidedly rare in the county away from their breeding streams and Loch Lomond.

A juvenile **Bald Eagle** was over Pinto Lake on December 7 (DS), and an adult was over Santa Cruz on January 15 (BW). **Ferruginous Hawks** were at Bombay Property and UCSC on December 15 (LG et al., KA, MTL) and Kelly - Thompson Ranch on January 1 (SA et al.). A **Rough-legged Hawk** was at Whiting Road near Casserley Creek on January 1 (DE). Reports of **Wild Turkeys** included four at China Grade (a new area) on December 10 (RH) and at Kelly - Thompson Ranch on January 1 (SA et al.). An impressive 73 **Black Oystercatchers** peppered Greyhound Rock at high tide on January 12 (RW). As I've wondered before, from how far do these birds come to roost there, and why so many? A **Long-billed Curlew** was at New Brighton State Beach December 10-15 (DS). I have a hard time believing how scarce **Ruddy Turnstone** has been in the SCC CBC circle in recent winters, but just two were found there on December 15 (DS). Two **Western Sandpipers** at Monterey Bay Academy on January 1 were very rare visitors to the county in winter (JD, JG).

Glaucous Gulls were reported from Capitola Beach on December 14-19 (DS, L&WG), and Harkins Slough (CK et al.) and Monterey Bay Academy Beach (BBa et al.) on January 1. The January birds may have been one and the same. Very late **Elegant Terns** included three off the end of 41st Ave on December 15 (CK), two at Seacliff State Beach on December 26 (DS) and one at Capitola Beach on December 30 (DS). A survey of **Burrowing Owls** at UCSC on December 15 found six (JL). **Short-eared Owls** were at Wilder Ranch on January 3 (BSm) and Davenport on January 12 (RW). **Long-eared Owls** were heard in the hills above Soquel on December 15 and east of Corralitos on January 1 (DS). An interesting hummingbird (or two?) visiting a Santa Cruz feeder presents a puzzle. A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was identified and described on December 18 (DR, RC, MS), but photos of what is assumed to be the same bird taken on December 20 (CA) suggest a hybrid **Costa's X Anna's** or even an F2 hybrid of those species (KA, PP). The bird continued to be seen through January 16 (MS). Was there one bird or two, or what? The jury is still out. The first returning **Allen's Hummingbird** at the UCSC Arboretum on January 7 (DS) was a little early, but was promptly followed by several others over the next week (v.ob.).

A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was along the San Lorenzo River in the Rincon Gorge on January 10 (GT), while **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were at Empire Grade on December 15-19 (EF, TH, L&WG, BMC) and Mission Springs on December 15 (BSt et al.). Reports of **Pileated Woodpeckers** in new localities were in the Bates Creek watershed near Soquel on December 15 and along the upper part of Green Valley Road on January 1 (DS). Numbers of **American Crows** in mid-county continue to climb skyward, with a whopping 713 reported on the SCC CBC on December 15. By comparison, only 166 were reported in the Pajaro Valley area of the ML CBC on January 1 (fide BRa). My how things have changed! Numbers continue to swell in the mountain areas of the SCC CBC circle, where 21 were found on December 15 (v.ob.), and three at Laguna Creek were rare on the north coast (AS).

Barn Swallows staged a veritable invasion for a species normally absent in winter. The January 1 ML CBC turned up 38 from Sunset State Beach to Pajaro Dunes (BBa et al., J&RW), with up to 51 others found in Monterey County's part of the count circle (fide BRa)! Then 55 were at Sunset State Beach and Palm Beach on January 2 (DS)! Numbers afterwards were smaller, but scattered: six in the vicinity of Baldwin Creek (DS), two at Laguna Creek (DS) and six at College Lake (DVP, MB) on January 3; five at upper Watsonville Slough (DS) and six near Pajaro Dunes on January 4 (DS); and the last report of one at Pajaro Dunes on January 8 (RW). There were only a

few prior winter records for the county, but ours this winter were part of a larger pattern than brought many others unseasonably to central California. But where did they come from and where did they go? Two **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** with the Barns at Sunset State Beach on January 2 were similarly rare for winter (DS). Our usual winter swallows (**Tree** and **Violet-green**) were present in lackluster numbers.

Additional reports of odd leucistic **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** brought the total reported in the county this fall and early winter up to 26 individuals (PL, CW, WA). **White-breasted Nuthatches** were at Mt Hermon on December 15 (CE) and the Kelly – Thompson Ranch on January 1 (SA et al.). A **Rock Wren** wintered at Olive Springs Quarry from at least December 15 – January 16 (DS). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were more numerous than usual and were widespread in conifers in the coastal lowlands (v.ob.). **Western Bluebirds** have shown a long-term decline in all parts of their county range, and the first zero ever for the SCC CBC was especially sad. However, they turned up at least briefly in a few spots where they have been missing in recent years, such as six in Freedom on December 6 (WM), and six at UCSC on December 12 (TH, RG).

Multiple **Townsend's Solitaires** were a treat, with two together on Castle Rock on December 13 (BMc, JP), one at Mt Hermon on December 15 (CE) and one at Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) on December 19 (DS). **American Robins** staged a large irruption and engendered much comment, although their numbers were not record-breakers locally. Still, they were abundant through the forested mountains, moving en masse into the coastal lowlands in January. A couple high estimates for single areas included over 2,000 roosting in upper Larkin Valley on December 12 (BBi) and about 1,700 along one mile of road at Amaya Ridge in SDSF on December 19 (DS). Four **Tennessee Warblers** may have set an early winter record, with individuals at Lighthouse Field on December 13 (DS), Rodeo Gulch on December 15+ (CK), one at Casserley Creek on January 1-4 (DS), and one in Santa Cruz near Walnut Street January 5+ (KA, LG). Nine **Nashville Warblers** found in coastal areas from December 3 to January 12 were more than normal (v.ob.).

The male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** found in Santa Cruz on November 28 continued to visit a feeder and the surrounding neighborhood through this reporting period to the delight of many (MS, KA, v.ob.), providing the fourth wintering record for the county. **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were sparse with just two reports: at Soquel Creek on December 9-15 (DS) and Corralitos Creek on January 1 (BRe). Seven **Hermit Warblers** found from December 15 – January 13 were mostly in forest areas where they seem to be regular winter visitors (v.ob.). Three **Palm Warblers** were discovered: at Soquel on December 15 (DS), and at Freedom (BRe) and Monterey Bay Academy (JD, JG) on January 1. **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Soquel Creek on December 9-15 (DS, CE), Corralitos Creek on December 23 (DS), and at Harkins Slough (CK, MTL, CWo) and Merk Road (DS) on January 1.

A flashy male **American Redstart** was at Soquel Creek upstream of Soquel from December 15-27 (CE, DS), with a **Wilson's Warbler** there on the same dates (CE, DS). Tanagers showed well. An impressive three **Summer Tanagers** included a female near DeLaveaga Park on December 6 (TH, RD), a red male at New Brighton State Beach from December 10-27 (DS, RCo, CE), and a female at Soquel Creek in Capitola on December 16-31+ (JA, CF, DS). The best of the bunch, and vying for top winter highlight, was a male **Scarlet Tanager** in a Santa Cruz yard on December 7-11 (KA, EA), providing the 2nd county record if accepted by the California Bird Records Committee. Male **Western Tanagers** were at Natural Bridges State Beach (SG) and Capitola (DS) on December 15. Three unidentified tanagers in Santa Cruz and Live Oak on the same day were very likely Westerns, as well (CK, AK).

Grasshopper Sparrows were discovered in the grasslands at Wilder Ranch State Park, with one on December 12 (TH, RD) and three on December 15 (TH, RW). This rather rare winter species has now been repeatedly found in this same area in December, but there has been little effort to find them at other times in the winter. I wonder if others occur elsewhere in the north coast grasslands during winter? Six **Swamp Sparrows** were found in typical spots from December 15 to January 13 (v.ob.). Twenty-eight **White-throated Sparrows** reported from December through mid-January made for a good turnout (v.ob.). A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a Soquel feeder from December 6-16 (GC). No **Tricolored Blackbirds** were found on the Pajaro Valley portion of the ML CBC for the second year in a row (fide BRa). A pair of **Great-tailed Grackles** at Struve Slough on January 1 was probably one of the pairs that nested in that area last year (CK, CWo, MTL), and a male was found there on January 12 (DS et al.). Another male was at Corralitos on January 1 (DS). We had only one prior winter record.

A **Bullock's Oriole** was at a Santa Cruz feeder on December 13-15 (DSh). A male **Cassin's Finch** was carefully studied high atop China Grade on January 3 (CE), for a very rare county occurrence. **Red Crossbills** were represented by only two reports, both from UCSC January 4 and 13 (DVP, JH). Reports of **Evening Grosbeaks** included 11 birds at three spots from December 15 to January 13 (CE, JH).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Carol Anderson, Jenny Anderson, Will Anderson, Erika Arul, Kumaran Arul, Bruce Barrett (BBa), Bob Bishop (BBi), Matt Brady, Ginny Campbell, Rita Caratello, Rob Colson, Jim Danzenbaker, Ryan DiGaudio, Jim Edger, Al Eisner, David Ekdahl, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, Christina Floyd, Steve Gerow, Alexander Gaguine, Lois & Wally Goldfrank, Jennifer Green, Tonya Haff, Terry Hall, Russ Heblack, Jim Holmes, Clay Kempf, Anna Kopitov, Patty Lawton, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin, Jeff Poklen, Peter Pyle, Bob Ramer (BRa), Bill Reese (BRe), Don Roberson, Don Shumate (DSh), Bob Smith (BSm), Madeline Spencer, Barry Staley (BSt), Andy Stone, David Suddjian, Gerry Thomas, Monte Tudor-Long, David Vander Pluym, Brian Walton, John & Ricky Warriner, Jim Williams, Claire Wilson, Christine Wolfe, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from January 16 to April 10, 2002

Late winter's birds were highlighted by wintering hold-overs, with Tufted Duck and Black-throated Blue Warbler leading the pack, and some exciting new discoveries (Orchard Oriole and White-winged Dove). But I think the most interesting phenomenon was the pattern of early first arrivals observed for so many of our spring migrant landbirds. *Twenty-nine* species arrived ahead of their average first arrival for the county, with record early dates for a nine species (plus two ties). Why did so many species arrive ahead of schedule? Our early spring weather was not particularly balmy, and these species came from a variety of southern wintering areas. Here is a look at this season's *early* birds:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Arrival Date</u>	<u>New Record?</u>	<u>Ahead of Average</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Obs.</u>
<i>Vaux's Swift</i>	March 26	Yes by 14 days	21 days	Castle Rock	CE
Allen's Hummingbird	January 7	No	12 days	UCSC	DS
Rufous Hummingbird	February 21	No	5 days	Bonny Doon	CE
Olive-sided Flycatcher	April 2	No	8 days	Mt. Madonna Rd	DS
<i>Western Wood-Pewee</i>	April 10	Yes by 6 days	12 days	Sycamore Grove	DS
<i>Hammond's Flycatcher</i>	April 6	Yes by 8 days	n/a	Natural Bridges	SG
Pacific-slope Flycatcher	March 19	No	2 days	Zayante Creek	DS
<i>Ash-throated Flycatcher</i>	March 30	Ties record	9 days	Ben Lomond	CE
<i>Western Kingbird</i>	March 8	Yes by 5 days	23 days	Corralitos	DS
Cassin's Vireo	March 26	No	9 days	Castle Rock	CE
Warbling Vireo	March 8	No	13 days	Eureka Canyon	DS
N. Rough-wi. Swallow	February 24	No	8 days	Capitola	DS
Cliff Swallow	February 15	No	19 days	College Lake	DS
Barn Swallow	February 15	No	19 days	College Lake	DS
<i>Swainson's Thrush</i>	April 7	Yes by 5 days	16 days	Meder Canyon	SG
Hermit Thrush	April 9	No	3 days	Felton	CE
<i>Nashville Warbler</i>	April 4	Yes by 3 days	18 days	Natural Bridges	MB
Yellow Warbler	April 4	No	6 days	Natural Bridges	MB
Black-th. Gray Warbler	March 26	No	6 days	Castle Rock	CE
<i>Hermit Warbler</i>	March 26	Yes by 7 days	16 days	Castle Rock	CE
MacGillivray's Warbler	April 8	No	9 days	Pajaro River	DS
Wilson's Warbler	March 16	No	6 days	Liddell Creek	CE
Western Tanager	April 2	No	7 days	Mt. Madonna Rd	DS
<i>Black-headed Grosbeak</i>	March 5	Yes by 11 days	25 days	Happy Valley	BB
<i>Lazuli Bunting</i>	April 2	Yes by 2 days	8 days	Mt. Madonna Rd	DS
Chipping Sparrow	March 31	No	1 day	Bonny Doon	CE
Grasshopper Sparrow	March 26	No	1 day	Cal Poly Ranch	CE
<i>Hooded Oriole</i>	March 15	Ties record	8 days	Watsonville	RG
Bullock's Oriole	March 21	No	6 days	Meder Canyon	SG

A summary of spring arrival dates for breeding and migrant landbirds in the county can be found at <http://santacruzbirdclub.org/Spring%20Arrival%20Dates%202-2002.htm>

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Red-necked Grebes were at Capitola on January 18 (DS) and New Brighton State beach on February 18 (RW). A **Flesh-footed Shearwater** and a **Pink-footed Shearwater** were seen from a boat in county waters on January 19 (SJ), and two Pink-foots were seen on February 20 (JD). A **Manx Shearwater** reported four miles off Santa Cruz on March 4 may have been correct (MH), but no details were received to support for this report of a California Bird Records Committee review species. **American White Pelicans** congregated at Harkins Slough in late winter, with high counts of 22 on February 11, 33 on February 26 (RW) and 17 on March 3 (TN). **Brandt's Cormorants** began nesting for the first time on a seastack off Lighthouse Field, with nine nests under way by April 9 (SG). An **American Bittern** at Quail Hollow Pond on December 30 was very rare for the San Lorenzo Valley (JW). One was at Antonelli Pond on March 27 (SG).

An absence of **Cattle Egrets** through March marked the first 12-month period the species was found missing from the county since 1969! See an account of its local "rise and fall" at <http://santacruzbirdclub.org/recce.html>. Two **Greater White-fronted Geese** remained at Westlake Pond through January 24, with one staying through February 17, then re-appearing there from March 3 to April 8 (v.ob.). A **Ross's Goose** was at the Pajaro River mouth on February 21 (LG, BMcL, JP). Noteworthy reports of **Greater Scaup** were two at Harkins Slough on February 20 (CK), and ocean going individuals at Pot Belly Beach (RW) and the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf (SG) on January 29. The wintering **Tufted Duck** remained at Westlake Pond, with tuft resplendent, through March 31 (TN, DVP, v.ob.). Two **Black Scoters** were at Pot Belly Beach on February 12-18 and again March 14 (RW) and four were at Sunset State Beach on February 18 (DS). A **Long-tailed Duck** was also at Sunset State Beach on February 18 (DS).

Tardy pairs of **Hooded Mergansers** were at Younger Lagoon on March 27 (WJP, MP) and off Mt. Madonna Road on April 2 (DS). A **White-tailed Kite** at Neary Lagoon on March 31 was noteworthy "in town" (SG). An adult **Bald Eagle** visited Loch Lomond on February 12 (BW). Migrant **Swainson's Hawks** included a dark morph adult at College Lake on April 5 (RW) and a light morph adult at UCSC on April 10 (DS). A dark morph adult **Ferruginous Hawk** over Capitola on January 22 (DS) was one of few reports of that color morph in the county. More frequently noted light morph birds were reported at Green Valley Road on February 1 (DS), at UCSC on February 8 (KA), and at Coast Road on February 9 (JL). **Merlins** at Wilder Ranch on April 4 (AG), Santa Cruz on April 6 (AK), and Lighthouse Field on April 10 (SG) were later than most. A **Mountain Quail** was calling at Castle Rock State Park on March 26 (CE).

A **Sora** was found dead in the weeds far from water along a Westside Santa Cruz sidewalk on January 19 (SG). A **Common Moorhen**, rare away from the Pajaro Valley, was at Neary Lagoon on March 27 (WJP, MP). **Wandering Tattler** went unreported in the county this winter -- an unusual absence. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was at College Lake on April 4 (DS). **Glaucous Gulls** were at Sunset State Beach and Buena Vista Road County Landfill on February 18 (DS), and Capitola Beach on March 11 (RW). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** was onshore at Seacliff on March 15 (RW). An **Elegant Tern** at West Cliff Drive on April 3 was rather early (KA), but arrival dates for this species have been steadily moving back over the years. A basic-plumaged **Pigeon Guillemot** off West Cliff Drive on February 20 (JD) was considered a rare wintering bird rather than an early returning migrant (the first of which were seen March 13 - DS). Over the last 10 years the county has averaged only 0.7 records per winter.

A **White-winged Dove** at Natural Bridges State Beach on February 2-3 was one of the winter's best finds (AE, TN, DVP, MB, BA), only the 2nd winter record for the county. Then it was re-found and photographed visiting a feeder at a residence near Natural Bridges on March 9 (WTP, WJP, MP) and was seen in that area off and on through at least April 4 (WJP, DS, DW). Rita

Colwell banded hummingbirds on five mornings at the UCSC Arboretum from March 4 to April 1. Total new captures included 18 **Anna's**, 31 **Allen's** and 4 **Rufous**. Three of the four Rufous were females. Photographs of four albinistic or leucistic **Acorn Woodpeckers** present at Scotts Valley since last summer showed mostly white birds with brown backs and wing coverts...very odd looking woodpeckers, indeed (RH). A **Pileated Woodpecker** near Boulder Creek on February 22 was observed flycatching (RG), an unusual foraging behavior for that species. A Pileated at Castle Rock on March 26 was the first I've heard of from that area (CE).

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was studied at Natural Bridges on April 6 (SG). A **Loggerhead Shrike** at Natural Bridges on March 31 was noteworthy for that well-worked locality (SG). The fall and winter tally of leucistic **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** continued to climb, with additional reports bringing the total up to 35 odd-plumaged individuals through the end of March (v.ob). Additional reports of **Western Bluebirds** from UCSC included three on January 16 and February 1 (TH) and five on February 14 (IMJ). A **Townsend's Solitaire** at Soquel Demonstration State Forest on January 16 brought our winter total to a strong five birds (DS). A **California Thrasher** at Natural Bridges on April 6-9 (SG, MB) was a novelty, as that species had not been recorded there previously (SG). Five additional **Nashville Warblers** found from late January to late February brought the winter's total to a record-breaking 14 individuals, most associated with flowering eucalyptus. The recent 10-year average was just 4.1 per winter.

Three over-wintering **Tennessee Warblers** continued: at Rodeo Gulch through February 4 (DS), at Casserley Creek through January 18 (CE), and at Santa Cruz through March 5 (KA, v.ob.). The obliging **Black-throated Blue Warbler** lingered at Santa Cruz until March 15 (KA, MSp, v.ob.). An additional wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was found at Santa Cruz on February 21, while a wintering **Palm Warbler** at Monterey Bay Academy stayed until February 18 (DS). The winter's 5th **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Casserley Creek on February 1 (DS). The male **American Redstart** at Soquel Creek lingered to at least February 20 (CE, DS). A rare winter **Wilson's Warbler** turned up briefly on February 4 at Natural Bridges (MSc). A male **Common Yellowthroat** about 4.5 mi. inland at Branciforte Creek on the December 15 Santa Cruz County CBC was most unusual (AH), as the species is normally limited to coastal habitats in the circle and is normally absent in streamside riparian settings during the winter.

Soquel Creek's **Summer Tanager** stayed to at least March 17 (DS, AS). A male **Western Tanager** at Natural Bridges on March 3-8 was perhaps the same seen there in December (SG). A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz on February 21 (DS). An immature male **Black-headed Grosbeak** wintered at Aptos, being reported from about December 20 through February 22 (B&CA, J&PM, B&KM). A very rare spring migrant **Vesper Sparrow** was spotted at the Pajaro River on April 8 (DS). An adult **Harris's Sparrow** was photographed at a Watsonville yard on March 7 (EH, CC). An immature Harris's visited a yard off Amesti Road near Watsonville on March 17 to at least April 8 (W&SM). The winter's total of **White-throated Sparrows** reached an above average 35 through March. Especially noteworthy were a record four together in a Santa Cruz yard from February 3-16 (TN). **Great-tailed Grackles** continued at the sloughs, with a male at Harkins Slough on January 24 (RW), a pair at Struve Slough on February 10 (JW) and two pairs there on February 15 (DS). Additional nesting is anticipated in that area this year.

The county's second winter record of **Orchard Oriole** was provided by a cooperative male molting to adult plumage at Natural Bridges, found on January 22 (MSc) and seen by many through April 2 (v.ob.). Remarkably, he was joined by another young male Orchard present from March 27 to April 9 (SG, v.ob.). Wintering **Bullock's Orioles** were at Capitola on January 25 and Casserley Creek on February 1 (DS). Among the winter's very few reports of **Red Crossbills** was

one at Last Chance Road on February 1 (CEy). A **Lawrence's Goldfinch**, always rare in winter in the county, was at Sunset State Beach on February 18 (DS). Two **Evening Grosbeaks** were at Sycamore Grove on February 1 (DS).

Cited Observers: Brian Acord, Kumaran Arul, Bob & Colleen August, Bonnie Bedzin, Matt Brady, Cindy Cummings, Jeff Davis, Al Eisner, Chris Emmons, Carleton Eyster (CEy), Steve Gerow, Alexander Gaguine, Lois & Wally Goldfrank, Robert Golling, Rudy Guitierrez, Tonya Haff, Roger Haas, Eileen Halvey, Mitch Heindel, Amber Hensley, Clay Kempf, Anna Kopitov, Janet Linthicum, Wayne & Sylvia Macon, Barry McLaughlin, Ingrid Mednis-Johnson, Jim & Pat Monahan, Barbara & Kevin Monahan, Todd Newberry, Marlene Park, William J. Park, William T. Park, Jeff Poklen, Michelle Scott (MSc), Shearwater Journeys, Madeline Spencer (MSp), Andy Stone, David Suddjian, David Vander Pluym, John Welch, Dawn Whitaker, Brian Wolcott, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from April 11 to May 31, 2002

Two **Red-Necked Grebes** seen passing Davenport on April 14 were especially unusual, as they are rarely seen in flight (DVP, MB). Three **Black-footed Albatross** were spied from Natural Bridges on a windy April 18 (KA). They are seldom noted from shore in our county. Three **American White Pelicans** flew over the Pajaro Dunes area on April 12 (B&KM). A new colony of **Brandt's Cormorants** formed on a sea stack at the west edge of Lighthouse Field State Beach, with 12 nests hosting large young by May 30 (SG). Our other colonies continued active this year at Davenport (34 nests; DS) and Natural Bridges (2 nests; SG). Following last year's first ever county nesting by **Double-crested Cormorants** at Pinto Lake, new nesting sites were reported at Schwan Lake on April 17 (33 nests; DW, DS) and San Lorenzo River mouth on April 26 (1 nest; DS). The Pinto colony continued active with 8 nests (DS, WM). The Schwan Lake colony was apparently initiated in 2001 (DW). I wonder about future conflicts at that colony, should the neighbors grow weary of its, shall I say, aromatic quality.

A **Pelagic Cormorant** at Antonelli Pond was very rare inland from the ocean, and was perhaps the only inland county record away from the lower reach of a large stream (LG). An **American Bittern** at Quail Hollow Pond on May 12 was very unusual for the San Lorenzo Valley, especially in the breeding season (LBG). **Great Egrets** continued to nest at Pinto Lake, the county's only colony, with six nests on April 12 (DS). A flock of 25 **White-faced Ibis** was seen flying east along the coast at Wilder Ranch State Park on May 23 (JW). The wintering **Greater White-fronted Goose** lingered at Westlake until April 30 (DVP, MB, DS). Tardy **Ring-necked Ducks** were at San Lorenzo Park on April 26 and Swanton Pond on May 7 (DS). A **Black Scoter** flew past Davenport Landing on April 11 (DVP, MB). Four **Bufflehead** at the Pajaro River mouth on May 5 were late (CK). Another specific nest site for **Common Merganser** was revealed on May 22 by a female using a hole in a big fir snag at the Rincon Gorge in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park (DS). A female with young at Aptos Creek on May 17 was only the second nesting confirmation for that watershed (DS).

A **Swainson's Hawk** was reported from Wilder Ranch State Park on May 5 (CK). Two **Golden Eagles** seen foraging at UCSC's grasslands from late winter to the third week of May, and seen flying off several times to the north beyond Pogonip, raised hope of a local nesting, but they apparently did not (JL, BL, v.ob.). Indications were that pairs of **Peregrine Falcons** continued to nest at two spots in the upper San Lorenzo watershed, while nesting by pairs at Soquel Creek and the coastal slope of Ben Lomond Mountain remained unresolved. Meanwhile, up to two Peregrines at Santa Cruz generated a series of observations (JL v.ob.), but were of unknown residence (like so many of the city's denizens). A **Merlin** at Natural Bridges on April 27 was tardy (SG). Small groups of **Wild Turkeys** appeared in the Big Basin and Little Basin area this spring (DS, KB), with a female and young seen in the Union Creek watershed in late May (KB). They are fairly tame and like to spend time in the gardens of the park's staff residences, but also roam even into old growth forest, where they are an odd sight, indeed.

A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at the San Lorenzo River at Zayante Creek on May 4 (DS). Spring migrant **Franklin's Gulls** included two at Swanton Road on April 22 (DS) and one at Natural

Bridges State Beach on May 21 (SG). Three reports of 1-3 **Elegant Terns** at the Mid-County coast from April 14-29 (DS, LH) followed the early April report cited in the last issue, but no others were reported until late June. A **Least Tern** was feeding off of the San Lorenzo River mouth on April 25 (DS). **Marbled Murrelets** flying over the Rincon Gorge in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on May 22 provided the first record from the San Lorenzo River canyon since 1930 (DS)! The Gorge has potential nesting habitat. Meanwhile, one Marbled Murrelet was detected along the upper part of the Fall Creek Truck Trail in Fall Creek State Park on May 4, where murrelets were first found last year (DS). A pair of **Long-eared Owls** was calling at Long Ridge on April 28 (DS).

A **Short-eared Owl** at Younger Lagoon on April 18 was the county's first spring record (SG). Migrant **Black Swifts** were detected early, with 3 over Skyland Ridge on May 2. The first coastal report was on schedule on May 21 at Natural Bridges (SG). Rare hummers included a female **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at the UCSC Arboretum on May 11 (SG), a male **Costa's Hummingbird** at Summit Ridge southeast of Loma Prieta on April 13 (DS), and female **Calliope Hummingbirds** at Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF) on May 1 and Highland Way on May 10 (DS). **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** were drumming and calling in two areas along the East Branch of Soquel Creek in late April and on May 14, and two were along Waddell Creek at Rancho Del Oso on May 30 (DS). Nesting was confirmed in both watersheds in June (see next issue). **Nuttall's Woodpeckers** were found at a number of sites away from their Pajaro Valley stronghold, suggesting continued population expansion. They were particularly evident on the coastward slopes of Summit Ridge from the Skyland Ridge area northwest toward Castle Rock. A family with fledglings was at Mountain Charley Road on May 25 (TH, RG).

Pileated Woodpeckers were, well...everywhere. An early **Dusky Flycatcher** was at SDSF on April 11, and the season's second **Hammond's Flycatcher** was along Summit Road near Redwood Estates on May 9 (DS). Migrant **Western Kingbirds** made a nice showing, with about 22 reported and a decided wave of them from May 5-15 (v.ob). One at UCSC Arboretum on May 31 was a little late (DVP, MB). A rare coastal migrant **Purple Martin** was at Natural Bridges on April 29 (EP). A small number of others (6 or so total) were seen during May in association with nesting areas at Buzzard Lagoon Road, Santa Rosalia Ridge and Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta (DS, BR et al.). Single **Bank Swallows** were spotted at Schwan Lake on April 17 and Kalkar Quarry in Santa Cruz on April 26 (DS). An aggregate total of about 100 **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** in the city of Santa Cruz on April 26 was a high number for the county (DS).

White-breasted Nuthatches were found nesting near Upper Zayante Road, where a nest with young was found in a black oak on May 9 (DS). This was apparently the first breeding confirmation for the county since 1977! This species shuns much of the foggy coastal slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Similarly, a **House Wren** pair carrying food to a nest hole along Summit Ridge northwest of Bear Creek Road on May 25 was a rare county nesting record away from the far southeast corner of the county (DS). Numbers of **Western Bluebirds** have dropped precipitously in recent decades, leaving most areas of the county unoccupied. Single males near Moore Creek in Santa Cruz on April 26 (DS) and at Quail Hollow County Park on May 9 (TH, RD, EVD) raised hopes for re-colonization of those areas, but they did not linger and nesting did not occur.

A **Townsend's Solitaire** was a surprise at Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta on April 16 (DS). A **Varied Thrush** singing near the Waddell Forks on May 30 was in a "new" spot (DS). **Nashville Warblers** had their best-ever spring showing, with 18 birds reported from April 4 to May 9 (v.ob.). The previous high spring count was 10 in 2001. **Northern Parulas** were at Scott Creek on May 7 (DS) and the Rincon Gorge on May 23 (EP). A pair of **Hermit Warblers** building a

nest at Aptos Creek on May 15 extended the species known range about 8 miles east, for the first nesting confirmation east of the San Lorenzo watershed (DS). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Valencia Road on May 16 (DS). A nesting pair of **MacGillivray's Warblers** was at Las Cumbres Road on May 9, off Summit Ridge southwest of Castle Rock, for a rare montane nesting record for the county. Singing birds continued coastally at the Rancho Del Oso. A female **Hooded Warbler** was at Hopkins Gulch off Bear Creek on May 27 (DS).

An impressive eight **Yellow-breasted Chats** turned up from April 22 to May 16 (KA, LBG, DS, MS, LS, SG). Six were found from May 6-16, when a notable migrant wave brought many others to central California. A **Black-chinned Sparrow** was singing at Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta on May 24 (DS). Single **Sage Sparrows** were in the same area on May 24 (WB) and at Castle Rock State Park on April 19 (RW). The immature **Harris's Sparrow** at the Macon's feeder near Watsonville lingered to May 7, molting to adult plumage (W&SM). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** made a good showing, with seven (six adult males) from April 26 to May 29 (DS, TN, MS, JP, YK, BH, JR). A male **Indigo Bunting** was at Summit Meadows in Castle Rock State Park on May 28 (BR, FV). A strong mid-May migrant push brought many more **Lazuli Buntings** to the county than usual, especially in the Santa Cruz area and along the north coast (SG, v.ob.).

As anticipated, **Great-tailed Grackles** nested again in the sloughs, with singles and pairs of birds seen on several dates, especially where Lee Road crosses Struve Slough (TN, MB, DVP, JP, MS). A survey by canoe of parts of Struve and Watsonville sloughs on May 17 found an impressive 8-9 males and 2-4 females, including a pair at a nest with young (JW). The Mid-County area had males at Neary Lagoon on April 25-26 (LM, DS), Antonelli Pond on May 8, and near Lighthouse Field on May 16 (DB). **Tricolored Blackbirds** continued to nest at Last Chance Lagoon, their only known active colony in the county (DS). The only others reported were about 10 at Struve Slough on May 16 (MB, DVP), and one at UCSC Arboretum on May 18 (MB). The second immature **Orchard Oriole** found at Natural Bridges on March 27 lingered until April 29 (v.ob.), becoming the latest for the county. **Hooded Orioles** were again found in montane settings. Several visited feeding stations at Richardson Road northeast of Scotts Valley beginning April 23 (B&KM), and one male was at Long Ridge Road on May 1 (DS). On the North Coast, a pair was in residence again at Coast Road near Majors Creek in May, and one was singing at Dimeo Lane on May 26 (JL). Interestingly, most of the males reported from the montane spots and North Coast area have been immatures.

Two male **Baltimore Orioles** appeared together at Natural Bridges on May 25-28 (S&SS, TN, JP, MS). There were 6 prior records for the county. Two **Red Crossbills** at Castle Rock on April 21 were the only ones reported (DVP, MB). **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were quite widespread in the region this spring, but few were reported in the county. Of note was a pair building a nest at Seacliff State Beach on May 24 (RD, TH).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Kim Baker, William Bousman, Matt Brady, Dawn Breese, Ryan DiGuadio, Chris Emmons, Carleton Eyster (CEy), Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Leda Beth Gray, Tonya Haff, Laird Henkel, Barbara Holland, Clay Kempf, Yvonne Kirby, Brian Latta, Janet Linthicum, Liz Meisser, Eric Preston, Wayne & Sylvia Macon, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Judith Ramaley, Bob Reiling, Michelle Scott, Steve and Stephanie Singer, Louisa Squires, David Suddjian, Elizabeth Van Dyke, David Vander Pluym, Frank Vanslager, John Welch, Dawn Whitaker, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2002

I have written in previous issues of the demise of breeding bird populations in our county's riparian corridors, highlighted (or lowlighted, as the case may be) by species (i.e., Yellow Warbler, Warbling Vireo) even "dropping out" of the breeding bird community in some areas. This year on June 7 I surveyed birds along Soquel Creek from Peery Park in Capitola upstream for 4.75 miles to the vicinity of Laurel Road x Old San Jose Road, repeating a survey I made of the same area on June 6, 1988. Although the comparison is just between two single surveys 14 years apart, the results are telling and *illustrative of changes that have otherwise been evident at Soquel Creek and elsewhere*. Look at the differences in numbers for these selected species:

<u>Decreasing Species</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>Increasing Species</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>2002</u>
California Quail	36	6	Common Merganser	0	7
Allen's Hummingbird	36	13	Red-shouldered Hawk	3	11
Downy Woodpecker	21	5	Red-br. Sapsucker	0	1
Olive-sided Flycatcher	6	2	American Crow	2	38
Western Wood-Pewee	42	18	Common Raven	0	6
Pacific-sl. Flycatcher	56	21	Pygmy Nuthatch	3	14
Warbling Vireo	46	15	Brown Creeper	1	6
Chestnut-b. Chickadee	60	38			
Bewick's Wren	27	9			
Swainson's Thrush	53	32			
Wrentit	14	1			
Orange-cr. Warbler	14	6			
Yellow Warbler	48	11			
Wilson's Warbler	53	21			
Black-headed Grosbeak	49	29			

Decreased numbers were especially evident in the lower, suburban section, where many species were very scarce or absent. For example, the first singing Yellow Warbler was not found until I came 1.7 miles upstream of Peery Park, even though many pairs had territories in that lower 1.7 miles in 1988. The reasons for the decreases shown by many species are not immediately apparent, as habitat conditions have not changed dramatically over the intervening years (although small areas have become somewhat degraded), and this section of the creek still supports extensive areas of some of the county's finest riparian forest.

Speaking of habitat changes, Harkins Slough is one area that *has* undergone dramatic changes over the last decade, particularly in the area viewed from Harkins Slough Road, where most birding occurs. Areas that were dominated by wetland vegetation, other herbaceous vegetation and willows have become more lacustrine (lake-like), now supporting open water, and mudflat when the flooded slough dries up in late summer. This has been a big boon for shorebirds and some other waterbirds, but where sparrows once abounded there are now few. Harkins has

become the county's premier spot for shorebirding in late summer and early fall, although 10 years ago I remember it was hard to see any mudflat over the cattails and tules. This change may result from a shift out of a multi-year drought to a period with more rainfall. Interestingly, proposed management of the slough would make its high winter water level deeper than it is at present, leading to a longer drying period, and perhaps not permitting the late summer drawdown that is so attractive to shorebirds.

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Reports of summering loons included a **Pacific Loon** at Greyhound Rock on July 3 (KO, DQ), and a **Red-throated Loon** at West Cliff Drive on August 6-12 (SG). **American White Pelicans** are exhibiting a dramatic change of status in summer and fall, seasons when they were normally rare. June reports included 78 at Harkins Slough on June 9, and 7-8 at Pinto Lake on June 10-15 (CK). Flocks were routinely found at Harkins Slough and the Pajaro River mouth during July and August, although numbers varied widely and there was good deal of daily movement. Counts at Harkins were often in the range of 10-90 birds (v.ob.), with high counts of 127 on July 31 (RF), 155 on August 20 (JP) and 162 on August 30 (RW). Counts at the Pajaro River mouth usually ranged from 10-20 (RD), with a high of 85 on July 5 (CK). A new county record was set by a flock of 260 pelicans at Watsonville Slough on August 14, with 13 others at Harkins at the same time (DSu).

Several nesting colonies of **Pelagic Cormorants** appeared to be out of commission this season (DSu), a situation that would benefit from further study next year. An **American Bittern** at Struve Slough on June 25 was, surprisingly, the only report from the Pajaro Valley (CK). One at Baldwin Creek Marsh on August 13 was rare on the north coast (MS, JP, LG). **Great Blue Herons** seem to no longer nest at former important rookeries at Pasatiempo and the south end of Branciforte St in Santa Cruz (BB, DSu), with nesting in the Santa Cruz area perhaps now limited to about 6-7 pairs around the Santa Cruz Harbor (JDLT, SB, MC). If anyone has other information from the Santa Cruz area, please pass it along. A dapper adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** with breeding plumes was at Sempervirens Reservoir in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on July 1, rare for the mountains so early in the summer (DSu).

White-faced Ibis appeared off and on during August at well-watched Harkins Slough. Reports were of four on August 11 (LL et al.), singles on August 14, 17-20 and 23, and seven on August 31 (RF). An intriguing report of a **California Condor** came from a skilled observer in the Aptos hills on June 16 (DL), the first report from the county in ages. Of course, it is not "countable." A **Turkey Vulture** nest with young was in the hollow at the base of an old redwood at Opal Creek in Big Basin on June 12 (DSu). Reports of **Canada Geese** included 30 at Pinto Lake on June 15 (CK), 38 at Harkins Slough on August 10 (CK), one on August 23 (CK), and 14 on August 27 (RW). An apparent hybrid **Mallard x Northern Pintail** was at Struve Slough on June 2 (CK).

Post-breeding **Common Mergansers** piled up at the lower San Lorenzo River, with a high count of 47 on June 26, including 21 adults and 26 juveniles (SG). They were also found "out of place" away from the river in westside Santa Cruz, a pattern not previously reported: one over the wharf on August 2 (SG), one at Moore Creek Lagoon at Natural Bridges on August 5 (SG), seven at Antonelli Pond on August 11 (LG), one offshore of Natural Bridges on August 21 (MS) and three over Bethany Curve on August 24 (SG). A **Ruddy Duck** at Laguna Creek Marsh on June 14 was rare for the north coast in summer (DSu). **Sharp-shinned Hawk** family groups were at Blooms Creek and Opal Creek in Big Basin on July 16 and 17, respectively (DSu). A family of **Cooper's Hawks** was at Pogonip on July 27, and begging young were at Rincon Gorge on August 11 (SG). An adult **Swainson's Hawk** passed over Soquel on August 30 (DSu). "Blonde and Blonder", the

distinctively pale-naped **Golden Eagle** pair, returned to UCSC's grasslands by the second week of August after a 2.5-month hiatus (B&KM, AS, JL). A juvenile **Prairie Falcon** over Santa Cruz on August 15 was a very good find (SG).

Good reporting of migrant shorebirds permits a listing of first dates for south-bound birds: **Black-bellied Plover** on July 10 (DSu), **Semipalmated Plover** on July 11 (DSu), **Willet** on June 30 (DSu), **Greater Yellowlegs** on July 3 (SG), **Spotted Sandpiper** on July 12 (CE), **Wandering Tattler** on July 21 (SG), **Long-billed Curlew** on July 2 (MJ), **Whimbrel** on July 3 (KO, DQ), **Black Turnstone** on July 12 (WBT), **Surfbird** on July 12, **Western Sandpiper** on July 7, **Least Sandpiper** on July 17, **Short-billed Dowitcher** on July 13 (DSu) and **Long-billed Dowitcher** on July 26. An adult female **Red-necked Phalarope** at Younger Lagoon on June 10 (SG) was presumably also an early southbound "fall" migrant, despite the spring date!

American Avocets have become surprisingly rare in the county in recent years. One was out of place at Twin Lakes Beach on June 6 (BH). Two were at Harkins Slough on June 22 (CK), and one was there on August 19 (RW), while one was at the Pajaro River mouth on June 6 (JDLT). Ten to 11 **Lesser Yellowlegs** were reported from four sites from August 18-29 (v.ob.), when numbers were comparable to those of **Greater Yellowlegs**. **Solitary Sandpipers** were at Branciforte Creek on August 19 (SG) and Harkins Slough on August 25 (JM, DSi, ME). The former was the first from Santa Cruz in quite some years. A **Spotted Sandpiper** at New Brighton SB on June 8 was probably a tardy spring migrant (DSu), as was a **Long-billed Curlew** flying by Terrace Point on June 10. A juvenile **Red Knot** was at Corcoran Lagoon on August 19-26 (KA). Four juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** set a record for the county: at Harkins Slough on August 3-6 (RW, v.ob.), Natural Bridges on August 15 (SG), Harkins again on August 19 (RW) and Younger Lagoon on August 20-21 (SG, MS, LG). Five **Baird's Sandpipers** were at four sites August 13-31 (v.ob.), and one **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Natural Bridges on August 20 (LG, MS).

A juvenile male **Ruff** was another highlight at Harkins Slough from August 30 to September 2 (RW, LC, CK). **Wilson's Phalaropes** were reported only from Harkins Slough, with 1-4 there from July 31 to August 29 (v.ob.). Two **Long-tailed Jaegers** and a **South Polar Skua** were over county waters on August 25 (MBWW, RW). Three **Franklin's Gulls** flew north past Pelican Rock on June 2 (DSu). An interesting gull at Natural Bridges on July 6 had features of a juvenile **Band-tailed Gull** (SG), but unfortunately could not be confirmed by other observers or photos. A pair of **Western Gulls** continued to nest inland on the roof of San Lorenzo Lumber in Soquel (DSu), with other pairs using roofs at Capitola Mall (LH). A pelagic trip out of Santa Cruz Harbor found 250 **Sabine's Gulls** on August 7 (SJ, DSh). **Least Terns** were off Terrace Point on August 6 (SG) and Capitola on August 11 (DSu). A **Black Tern** was at Capitola on August 25 (DSu). Three **Black Skimmers** skimmed at Twin Lakes Beach on June 6 (PK).

Marbled Murrelet activity reached a new recorded low at Big Basin this year, continuing the downward trend of recent years. **Common Ravens** were seen to predate two **Marbled Murrelet** nests there (DSu). On July 2 a raven was seen carrying and then eating a downy murrelet chick at Opal Creek Picnic Area. A murrelet nest was discovered at Blooms Creek Campground on July 14, apparently very shortly after the egg had hatched. The next morning on July 15 a raven flushed a brooding adult off the nest and ate the very small chick. On the flip side, Marbled Murrelets were detected at some new areas. On June 9 two were heard as they flew seaward over Empire Grade near Pine Flat Road (DSu). Two or three were heard circling in the upper Whitehouse Creek watershed on July 16 (DSu). Two were circling over the upper Majors Creek watershed on July 27 (DSu). Lastly, several detections from Cascade Creek on July 26 were the first reports I'd heard of from there in over a decade (DSu).

A **Rhinoceros Auklet** close inshore at Yellow Bank Beach on July 14 was the only such report this season, while the local Davenport colony again remained inactive, as it has been most years since the 1998 El Niño (DSu). A silent **Nighthawk** over westside Santa Cruz on June 27 was likely a Lesser (SG). A calling **Common Nighthawk** was at the Pajaro River on August 14 (DSu). An adult **Long-eared Owl** was at Ocean View Summit along Middle Ridge in Big Basin on July 18 (DSu). An adult and juvenile were near Glen Haven Road in Soquel on July 29, providing further indication of nesting in the Soquel Creek watershed (RW), and two juveniles were in the Carbonera Creek watershed ca. August 31 (NK). A **Black-chinned Hummingbird** visited Bethany Curve in Santa Cruz on August 24-29 (SG, LG).

Nesting by **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was confirmed for the Waddell and Soquel watersheds. Adults with two juveniles were near Twin Redwoods Camp at Rancho Del Oso on June 23 (CE). A nest with three young was along Soquel Creek above Soquel on June 7, and a family group was along the East Branch in Soquel Demonstration State Forest on July 25 (DSu). The sapsucker has now been confirmed to nest in six watersheds in the county, all since 1996! Three spring migrant **Willow Flycatchers** were found from June 7-14 (SG, DSu), while the first fall bird was at Antonelli Pond on August 22 (SG). An **Eastern Kingbird** was at Wilder Ranch on August 11 (CE). A tardy migrant **Western Kingbird** was at Last Chance Road on June 5 (DSu, DVP). A family of **American Crows** with begging young at Felton on July 3 provided evidence of nesting in the forested San Lorenzo Valley (DSu).

A series of migrant **Purple Martins** were a treat, since we don't find any in some falls. Singles were at Lighthouse Field on August 16 (SG), Harkins Slough on August 18 (CK) and Antonelli Pond and Natural Bridges August 22-24 (SG). A **Bank Swallow** was at Terrace Point on August 6 (SG). An aggregate count of over 118 **Northern Rough-wing Swallows** at westside Santa Cruz on August 26 was high for the county, marking a migratory peak (SG). Gerow's careful coverage of Santa Cruz helped document a new breeding season expansion of **Oak Titmouse** throughout the city of Santa Cruz into residential areas, city parks and lowland riparian areas. A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at Big basin on August 22 was about one month ahead of the average first arrivals (DSu). A pair of **Western Bluebirds** was at the Ben Lomond YCC camp along Empire Grade on June 8 (DSu). A male visited Quail Hollow Ranch on June 15 (LBG, DD). A pair nested successfully at Last Chance Road, with 2 juveniles seen on July 12 (EL). A male was at Valencia Road on July 28 (RW). Six were at upper Empire Grade on August 25 (JD, BBe, P&TM).

Several **Varied Thrushes** were found in Big Basin Redwoods State Park in June and July, with nesting confirmed by observations of family groups in the Timms Creek watershed on July 3, and the Opal Creek watershed on July 17 (DSu). A family group at Fall Creek on June 24 was the first confirmation from that watershed (DSu). Two **Cedar Waxwings** at Meder Canyon on June 24 were in the late June to July window when we have very few records, and they might be suspected of being rare local breeders (SG). Three at UCSC Arboretum on August 7 were presumed to be early fall migrants, setting a new record by four days (SG). A **Nashville Warbler** at Rodeo Gulch on August 20 set a new early record by eight days (DSu). A singing male **Northern Parula** at Soquel Creek on June 7 (DSu) was topped by discovery of the county's first nest (with young) at Scott Creek on July 8 (CE)! The nest, built in a California bay in the creek's riparian zone, fledged at least two young by July 12 (CE, DSu).

Chestnut-sided Warbler made a spring appearance, with a female at 3-Mile Beach on June 12 (DSu). While **Yellow Warblers** remained absent as breeders at several former Santa Cruz area haunts, three singing birds along the San Lorenzo River between Highway 1 and Water Street on

multiple dates in June raised hope that they were nesting there, although it could not be confirmed (SG). Interestingly, the narrow bands of young willows downstream of Highway 1 appear to be substandard habitat compared to better, but now Yellow-free habitat upstream of Highway 1, at Neary Lagoon and at Antonelli Pond. Go figure! Audubon's **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were confirmed nesting at upper Empire Grade on June 2 (an area with little recent coverage) and nesting was confirmed in redwood forest (a new habitat) along Mount Madonna Road on July 23 (DSu). Five lowland migrant **Black-throated Gray Warblers** from August 9-21 was many for August (KA, SG, LL, DSu), as were three **Hermit Warblers** at the westside of Santa Cruz on August 12-17 (SG).

Continuing the trend, a **Townsend's Warbler** at Aptos Creek on August 14 broke the early record by one day (DSu). A **Blackpoll Warbler** was at Antonelli Pond on August 29 (SS, MP). **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Henry Cowell on August 27 (JS, SH) and Borregas Gulch on August 31 (DSu). A young male **American Redstart** was at Bethany Curve in Santa Cruz on June 13-14 (SG). A singing **Ovenbird** was at Waterman Gap along Highway 236 on June 4 (DSu). **MacGillivray's Warbler** was confirmed nesting again at Rancho Del Oso, with a female feeding young upstream of Twin Redwoods Camp on June 23 (CE). A male **Summer Tanager** brightened up the old growth at Blooms Creek Campground in Big Basin on June 17 (DSu). I was surprised to discover a singing **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** in sparse knobcone pine – manzanita habitat at Chalk Mountain, at the county's northwest corner, on July 16 and 26 (DSu). This is only our second known locality.

Our first spring record of **Clay-colored Sparrow** was an adult at Younger Lagoon on June 10 (SG). **Lark Sparrows** appeared at Terrace Point on August 15 and Younger Lagoon on August 20 (SG). **Grasshopper Sparrows** continued to use an island of habitat at Seascape Uplands, with at least 6 reported singing there in July (EL). The spring flow of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** continued with birds at Fern Flat Road on June 1 (MH), UCSC Arboretum on June 2 (CE), and Davenport Landing on June 14 (DSu). Summer birds were at Corralitos on July 25 (RW), Aptos on August 4 (DSu) and Santa Cruz on August 10 (KA). Female **Blue Grosbeaks** were at upper Empire Grade on June 8 (DSu) and El Jarro Point on June 14 (DSu). **Lazuli Buntings** nested at UCSC following a strong spring showing, with a female and begging fledglings seen on July 20 (SG). Nesting in that region of the county appears to be quite sporadic. **Indigo Buntings** were at Mount Madonna Road on August 18 and Capitola on August 25 (DSu).

Reports of multiple **Great-tailed Grackles** continued from the East Struve Slough area from June 2 to July 14 (CK), and a male was seen at Harkins Slough on July 21 (RW). A male was at East Struve on August 14 (DSu). A **Hooded Oriole** nest with young at Long Ridge Road on July 10 provided a second montane breeding record for the county. A male (most often) and female visited a feeding station northeast for Scotts Valley through August 20, but there was no evidence of nesting there this year (B&KM). Meanwhile, on the north coast a pair again nested at Coast Road near Majors Creek, where a nest with young was seen on July 28 (JL). Up to six **Bullock's Orioles** at the Mid-County coast August 8-28 was a strong fall showing (SG, DSu). A scattering of **Red Crossbills** were reported from Big Basin, Chalk Mountain, Last Chance Road and Swanton Road, with five reports of 2-11 birds from June 5 to July 16 (DSu, DVP).

The regional influx of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** produced one at UCSC on June 1 (SG), two at Last Chance Road on June 5 (DVP), four at upper Empire Grade on June 8 (DSu), two at Rancho Del Oso on June 24 (CE), and one at Santa Cruz on June 24 (SG).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Bruce Barrett, Bonnie Bedzin (BBe), Stefan Berlinski, Matt Brady, Les Chibana, Matthew Coale, Jeana De La Torre, Judy Donaldson, David Drake, Ryan DiGuadio, Mark Eaton,

Chris Emmons, Rick Fournier, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Leda Beth Gray, Tonya Haff, Sarah Hamilton, Merry Harmon, Laird Henkel, Bambi Hopkins, Mark Johnston, Clay Kempf, Patrick Kent, Norman Kikuchi, Yvonne Kirby, Earl Lebow, David Lewis, Leslie Lieurance, Janet Linthicum, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Monterey Bay Whale Watch (MBWW), Joe Morlan, Pam and Tom Myers, Todd Newberry, Kris Olsen, Mike Peoples (MP), Jeff Poklen, Dave Quady, Jason Scott, Michelle Scott, Shearwater Journeys, Debra Shearwater (DSh), Dan Singer (DSi), Scott Smithson, Andi Stephens, David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler, David Vander Pluym, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from September 1 to November 30, 2002

This is the 80th “*Santa Cruz Birds*” article that I have written since assuming the role of county bird records keeper for the Santa Cruz Bird Club in 1986. That makes me feel old. But it also gives pause to reflect on how things have changed and stayed the same in the local record-keeping realm. A major change has been a long-term growth in the volume of bird reports, and an increasing variety of reporting observers. This has been spurred on in recent years by popularity of the local Monterey Bay Birds email list server, and reports by email in general, as these now comprise over 95% of all the reports received. Using the fall season as an example, an average of 17 observers were cited in this column each fall from 1986-1990, but the average rose nearly three-fold to 48 observers cited from 1998-2002.

From August to November this year I received some 2,100 specific bird records (including my own observations), of which some 1,900 were individually entered into the county’s species files, providing a measure of the mountain of data being reported, gathered and collated. Yet, as in years past, there is a rather small contingent of active observers who very regularly provide thorough reports of their observations over the years, and many other observers report only occasionally. But the cadre in the middle ground – those who report multiple observations several times over a season – has recently grown.

What is the point of it all? Why fuss over the county’s bird record archives that now include many tens of thousands of records? The SCBC’s records are simply the very best source of information on the past and present status of birds in this county. They are invaluable. I would guess our county’s avifauna is among the best known of any California county, providing a critical baseline from which to view future changes, and they are the backbone of the long in-progress county bird book. Our records are regularly summarized in reports that are added to the regional Northern California data set, with many becoming a part of the continental perspective when they are cited in the American Birding Association’s journal “*North American Birds*.”

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A **Red-necked Grebe** was unusual a short ways up the Pajaro River on November 24 (PR). A **Horned Grebe** at Harkins Slough on October 17 and 22 was rare away from the coast (RW). Tubenoses were well reported from shore, beyond the usual Sooty and Black-vented that are commonly seen from shore. There were a number of reports of **Northern Fulmar**, **Pink-footed Shearwater** and **Buller’s Shearwater**, all species that are only rarely reported from shore in this county (KA, SG, MSc, DSu). Particularly interesting were seven shore-based reports of 2-11+ Buller’s between October 9 and November 6. A **Manx Shearwater** was reported in county waters on October 27 (RT, MBWW). **Black-vented Shearwaters** were noted in good numbers from October 10 onwards (KA, DSu, SG), with the first on September 26 (DVP, MB). In contrast, none were reported in this period of Fall 2001.

The famous Monterey Bay storm-petrel flocks seemed to be largely missing this fall. Only rather small numbers of **Ashy** and **Black Storm-Petrels** were reported on most trips (SJ, MBWW), with 1,800 Ashy on September 1 being the only report of more than 20 of either species (DSH, SJ).

American White Pelicans continued regular at Harkins Slough through mid-October, and at Pajaro River mouth through at least late September (v.ob.). Numbers peaked at Harkins in August (see last issue), but high counts for this period reached 135 on September 1 (LC), 98 on September 11 (JP), and 100 on September 23 (DQ). Their use of the drying slough only slowed in mid-October, when water levels got rather low for the season. The only reports from elsewhere were 28 over Capitola on September 1 and 5 at Pinto Lake on September 29 (DSu).

Brown Pelicans wandered a short ways inland up the San Lorenzo River on September 5 and October 26 (SG). Similarly unusual away from coastal waters were single **Pelagic Cormorants** seen on the lower river on five dates from September 5 to November 15 (SG). An **American Bittern** was rare at Quail Hollow County Park on October 7 (ZM). Reports of one to six **White-faced Ibis** continued from Harkins Slough from September 1-30 (RW, CK, v.ob.). Like the white pelicans, they came and went on a regular basis and it is unclear how many actually visited the slough, but there may have been as many as 17 different individuals there in September. Thirteen reports of **Greater White-fronted Goose** came from five spots between September 24 and November 24 (v.ob.), with a total of some 65 birds visiting Harkins. A series of 16 **Canada Goose** reports came from Harkins from August 10 to November 9 (v.ob.), with high counts of 65 reported on August 18 and October 28 (CK). Good counts elsewhere were 43 over Wilder Ranch on November 14 (MB, DVP, RD) and 76 at College Lake on November 18 (RW).

Four **swans** flying offshore of Lighthouse Point were seen from a pelagic birding boat on the exceptionally early date of September 28 (CK, DSh). They were assumed to be Tundra Swans, but a number of other unseasonable reports in northern California have proven to be Mute Swans, and these would be about a month early for Tundras central California. More expected were reports one **Tundra Swan** flying over Santa Cruz and Davenport on November 10 (SG, JW, KD), and three over College Lake on November 23 (DSu). A parade of migrant **Blue-winged Teal** were studied at Harkins Slough from September 25 to November 4, when they often outnumbered Cinnamon Teal (RW, v.ob.), with a peak of eight on October 17 (RW). Elsewhere singles were at Baldwin Creek Marsh on October 16 and 29 (AG), Younger Lagoon on October 18-21 (SG) and San Lorenzo River mouth October 19 (SG). A male **Redhead** was enjoyed at the San Lorenzo River mouth from November 1-13 (SG, AG, WG, MSp).

A female **Black Scoter** was off Baldwin Creek Beach on October 15 (DVP, MB). A female **Long-tailed Duck** was off Manresa State Beach from November 18 into December (RW). **Hooded Mergansers** appeared in a typical scattering of spots from October 28 onwards (CK, v.ob.), but 20 at Merk Pond on November 26 provided a good count (WM, SM). Two immature **Common Mergansers** were at the Pajaro River mouth on September 27, where they are rarely reported (DSu). Twenty-two reports of **Ospreys** were received from August 7 to November 26. An adult **Bald Eagle** flew over upper Bear Creek Road on November 3 (MW). A **Cooper's Hawk** caught a **Black Turnstone** at West Cliff Drive on October 28 (SG). Migrant **Broad-winged Hawks** were at Santa Cruz on September 29 (SG) and Soquel on October 2 (DSu), and a **Swainson's Hawk** paused at Capitola on September 4 (DSu). Three **Ferruginous Hawks** were noted October 4-13 (JL, DSu).

The bird of the season was a **Crested Caracara** that delighted (and frustrated) many observers around the south end of Swanton Road from September 21-27 (MC, v.ob.). The bird ranged around a good deal, being seen from north of Scott Creek to several miles south of Davenport. It appeared to be in "Basic I" plumage, molting much of the way to adult plumage (i.e., about 1.5 years old). Interestingly, one was near Marina, Monterey County, August 11-13, and one (?) was reported sporadically from Pescadero to Half Moon Bay, San Mateo County, from September (date?) to November 6. The Marina bird was thought by some to be the same as our bird, but

raptor expert Bill Clark opined that photos indicated the Marina bird was a year younger than the Swanton bird. I never heard any details on the age of the San Mateo County bird, and I don't know if it was ever documented.

Merlin numbers went through the roof this fall, with a whopping 77 reports (!), and many other observations that were not specifically reported (v.ob.). The recent five fall seasons have only averaged 18 reports. They were early this year, too, with 17 reports in September (1st on September 17 (LG JP), when we have recently averaged only *one* in that month! Indicative of the high numbers were nine reports of two or three Merlins together at the same sites, while observations of more than one at a time have traditionally been very rare. **Peregrine Falcon** reports were also very frequent, with 52 received for August through November (v.ob.). Apparently no longer with us, however, was the banded female Peregrine that roosted for many winters at the San Lorenzo River mouth. That venerable female was hatched on El Capitan in Yosemite on April 22, 1984, and was 17¾ years old when last seen at the San Lorenzo roost in January 2002 (fide JL).

Two **Common Moorhens** at Sunset State Beach on September 12 were the only ones reported (LG, MSc). A flock of four **Sandhill Cranes** near Soda Lake on October 2 provided one of few county records (CE). They apparently came over with a strong northeast wind, and three other reports of cranes were made from San Mateo and Monterey Counties during October 2-3. Three **Black-bellied Plovers** at Harkins Slough on September 12 were rare away from the coast (MSc, LG, RW, CK). **Pacific Golden-Plovers** were at Natural Bridges on September 12 (MB) and Capitola Beach on October 23 (DSu). Unidentified **golden-plovers** were at Wilder Creek Beach on October 10 (DVP, MB), Natural Bridges on October 18 (SG) and over Santa Cruz on October 21 (SG). Two late-arriving reports of **Snowy Plovers** nesting at two new locations merit mention here. Nests with eggs were confirmed at Piggy Beach (near Majors Creek) on April 22 (DG) and at Baldwin Creek Beach on June 4 (RD; both *fide* CEY, PRBO).

Among the more interesting sightings of our usual birds was a flock of 12 **Black Oystercatchers** far from any rocky shore, flying south just offshore of the Pajaro River mouth (KA). Local evidence of migration or large-scale dispersal is very scant, and this was only the 2nd Santa Cruz Co. record south of Capitola, and the 1st for Monterey Co. north of Monterey. One to two **American Avocets** were sporadically seen at Harkins Slough (RW), and singles at San Lorenzo River mouth on September 26 (SG) and Wilder Creek Beach on October 10 (MB, DVP) were rare away from the Pajaro Valley. **Lesser Yellowlegs** were regular at Harkins Slough through November 4, often out-numbering Greater, with a peak count of 19 on September 22 (CK). Only a few individuals were reported elsewhere. Four additional **Solitary Sandpipers** brought the season's total to a record six: at Harkins Slough on September 2 (RW), September 18-21 (NK, v.ob.), and October 8 (DSu), and at Sempervirens Reservoir at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on September 13 (DSu).

Marbled Godwits were rare inland at Harkins Slough September 7-27 (v.ob.), with a high of 11 on September 7 (LL, CL). **Ruddy Turnstone** continued in its new status as a rarity, with just three reports of singles this season: mid-September at Terrace Point (MSc), October 24 at Capitola Beach (LG, JP) and October 26 at West Cliff Drive (MSp). Additional **Red Knots** brought the season's total to a high four reports, with singles at the Live Oak coast on October 17 (DSu), Natural Bridges on November 3 (LG, v.ob.) and Monterey Bay Academy Beach on November 15 (RD). Another **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Harkins on September 8 (RW) rounded out that species' record showing at five for the fall. About 10-12 **Baird's Sandpipers** were found at three sites (mostly Harkins) from August 13 to October 6 (v.ob.). About 18

Pectoral Sandpipers were found at five sites (mostly Harkins) from August 20 to November 4 (v.ob.).

Harkins Slough attracted juvenile **Stilt Sandpipers** on September 10-12 (RW, BH, NK, RF) and September 22-23 (RW, CK). Photographs of the first one by Bill Hill provided the first such documentation for this species the county. One to two **Wilson's Phalaropes** continued at Harkins through September 27 (v.ob.). **South Polar Skuas** seen on pelagic trips included one on September 1 and two on September 28 (DSh, SJ). Pelagic **Long-tailed Jaegers** included four on August 7, three on September 1 and 17 (!) on September 28 (DSh, SJ). One was identified from shore at Palm Beach on September 26 (RD). A **Franklin's Gull** was at Corcoran Lagoon on October 16 (DSu), and one was on the Monterey County side of the Pajaro River mouth on October 6 (KA). The only **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were singles at West Cliff Drive on November 9 (SG) and out on the Bay on November 20 (KA, MBWW). A **Sabine's Gull** spotted from shore at Natural Bridges on October 16 was unusual (KA). Few were found on the September and October pelagic trips.

A **Common Tern** at Harkins Slough on September 16-18 was rare inland (CK, NK). The season's only **Black Skimmer** paused at the San Lorenzo River mouth – Twin Lakes Beach area on October 24-25 (LH, DSu, MSt). Unidentified **Xantus's/Craveri's Murrelets** were seen on the Bay on September 28 and October 13 (DSh, SJ). It has been several years since a **Craveri's** has been identified in county waters. Counts of 245 **Cassin's Auklets** and 3,025 **Rhinoceros Auklets** from the October 13 boat trip were impressive for this county (DSh, SJ). One or two **Tufted Puffins** were seen from boats on five dates from August 7 to October 13 (v.ob., SJ, MBWW). The season's 2nd **Common Nighthawk**, seen and heard, was a dawn surprise at Soquel on September 28 (RW). A **Burrowing Owl** struck a window at Bay View School in Santa Cruz on October 30 and was taken in for rehabilitation (fide LG). An apparent juvenile **Long-eared Owl** was heard at Soquel on September 26 (RW), and an adult was found roosting along Waddell Creek at Rancho Del Oso on October 15 (DSu).

Immature male **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** at Santa Cruz on September 2 (SG) and north of Soquel on September 3 (DSu) brought the season's total to three. An **Acorn Woodpecker** at Natural Bridges on September 9 was unexpected (MB), as the county files have only one other report from westside Santa Cruz. Juvenile **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were along the Skyline to the Sea Trail at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on October 15, and along Soquel Creek in Soquel Demonstration State Forest on October 22 (both DSu). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was along Buzzard Lagoon Road on November 4 (DSu). **Willow Flycatcher** had a nice showing, with 19 found from August 22 to September 29 (v.ob.). The county's 4th record of **Least Flycatcher** was provided by one studied closely at Natural Bridges on October 16 (SG). An **Eastern Phoebe** at Natural Bridges on October 2 was just the 2nd fall record for the county (SG).

Tropical Kingbirds showed well with six records: Terrace Point on October 11 (MSc, SG), Lighthouse Field on October 24 (KM, BM), Sunset State Beach on October 30 (DSu), Aptos on November 2-3 (DSu) Live Oak on November 21 (GG) and College Lake on November 23 (DSu). Rounding out the flycatchers with style was a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** studied at Pajaro Dunes on November 1, for the 4th county record (JW, NW). A **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Rancho Del Oso on September 7 (CE). Exceptional numbers of **American Crows** included at least 380 at the Neary Lagoon roost on July 31 (BrM), and an aggregate of several flocks totaling 420 flying east at dusk over the San Lorenzo River mouth on October 24 (DSu). The Neary roost apparently regularly hosts over 200 crows, but numbers have not been carefully tracked. Also impressive was a flock of 187 **Common Ravens** flying away from the Santa Cruz landfill on September 25 (DSu).

There were two reports of **Horned Larks**: 15+ at Wilder Ranch State Park on October 11 (DVP, MB) and four at Swanton Road on October 15 (DSu). Are they as rare locally as the few reports indicate, or do they go unnoticed in the under-birded north coast agricultural fields? After last year's "epidemic" of leucism in **Chestnut-backed Chickadees**, this fall I received only two reports (KM, KL). Migrant **Red-breasted Nuthatches** made a very poor showing, with just a few sightings away from areas of residency from October 4 to November 2 (BB, DSu, SG). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at Santa Rosalia Mountain on November 4 (DSu). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were noted in good numbers from mid-October onward (SG, v.ob.), but with little presence away from forestlands. **Western Bluebirds** were reported only from Last Chance Road and two spots near Corralitos (DSu, CK, RW, SG, CEy).

Townsend's Solitaires appeared along Rodeo Gulch Road on November 19 and Mt. Charlie Road on November 22 (DSu). **Varied Thrush** was found in above average numbers from late October onward (SG, DSu). A female **Phainopepla** at Santa Rosalia Mountain on October 31 was the first reported in the county in some 10 years (DSu). After three really good years, the number and variety of vagrant warblers returned back to normal this fall, and we even missed a few eastern species that are usually found (e.g., Magnolia, Prairie). Meanwhile, rare western species were in average or above average numbers. **Tennessee Warblers** were at Soquel Creek in Capitola on October 9 (RW) and in a Capitola yard on October 21 (DS). Seven **Nashville Warblers** were found from August 22 to November 24 (MB, RF, DS, SG), close to average but well down from last fall's record-breaking 26. **Northern Parulas** were at Big Creek on September 11 (CE), UCSC Arboretum on September 14-16 (SG, MSta, MB), and there again on October 13 (SG).

Chestnut-sided Warblers were at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on September 24 (DSu), Natural Bridges on October 4 (MSc) and in a Santa Cruz yard on October 9-14 (KA). Last winter's famous male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** returned to his westside Santa Cruz digs on October 5, remaining at least into December (KA, MSp). Twenty-seven **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were reported from August 9 to November 20 (v.ob.). **Hermit Warblers** showed well, with 15 reported from August 12 to November 26 (v.ob.). **Blackburnian Warblers** were at Natural Bridges on September 28 (RW), and one at UCSC Arboretum on November 23-25 was our latest by three weeks (SG, LG, WG). Twelve **Palm Warblers** reported from September 26 to October 30 was low (v.ob.). Six **Blackpoll Warblers** were found from August 29 to October 20 (v.ob.). A **Black-and-white Warbler** at Aptos Creek County Park on October 4 brought the season's total to three (DSu). Four **American Redstarts** were found September 9 to October 8 (DSu, MM, AS).

A **Prothonotary Warbler** was at Pajaro Dunes on September 27 (DSu). **Northern Waterthrushes** were at Aptos Creek on September 7 (DSu) and Natural Bridges on September 9-16 (MB, v.ob.). Ten **MacGillivray's Warblers** from August 11 to November 13 provided the only record-breaking warbler total for the season, over twice our average (v.ob). Interesting among these were one that entered a Santa Cruz kitchen and hopped on the observer's outstretched finger on September 22 (TN), and a late one in Live Oak on November 13 (AR). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was near Natural Bridges on September 25-28 (SG, LG, BMc, LSJ), with another (?) at nearby Antonelli Pond on October 5 (SG, LG). An immature male **Summer Tanager** attracted birders to the UCSC Arboretum on September 17-27 (LG, JP, SG, DVP). One was heard only at Soquel Creek in Capitola on November 30 (DSu). A **Green-tailed Towhee** was at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on September 13 (DSu).

A **Spotted Towhee** at Antonelli Pond on November 3 had characters of the northwestern subspecies *oregonus* (SG), apparently a rare visitor to California (*vide* JDa). **Chipping Sparrows** were at the lower San Lorenzo River on October 13 and 19 (SG), while eight **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found from September 5 to October 24 (SG, DSu, DVP, MB). Six **Lark Sparrows** in the westside Santa Cruz area from August 15 to October 5 were unusually many (SG, MB, KA, JH). A **Sage Sparrow** at Castle Rock State Park on November 2 (CE) was in an area where the species is known to nest, but significant because there are very few county records of this supposed resident from the non-breeding season. Four migrant **Grasshopper Sparrows** from September 21 to October 15 were four more than average for fall (SG, RW, DS, MB, DVP). Increased attention to identifiable forms of the **Fox Sparrow** no doubt contributed to an unprecedented number of reports of forms other than the usual "Sooty" Fox Sparrow. Six individuals found from October 28 to November 22 showed characters of a Rocky Mountains / Great Basin subspecies within the "Slate-colored" group (SG, DVP, MB, DSu). More rare yet was a bird with characters of "Red" Fox Sparrow at New Brighton State Beach on November 19, presumably ssp. *zaboria* (WM, SM).

The only **Swamp Sparrow** was at Scott Creek Marsh on October 15 (DSu). Seventeen **White-throated Sparrows** were reported from October 3 through November (*v.ob.*). An immature female **Lapland Longspur** was near Table Rock on September 25-26 (DSu, LC). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** visited feeders near Neary Lagoon on October 18-20 (PVL, AVL, JF), Aptos on October 28 to November 2 (CS), and Santa Cruz on November 9 (MiC). A cooperative **Blue Grosbeak** stayed at Lighthouse Field from September 23-27 (SG, *v.ob.*). An **Indigo Bunting** was at UCSC Arboretum on September 14 (SG). Our first fall records of **Great-tailed Grackle** came from Harkins Slough, with females on September 8 (FT) and October 8 (DS, RW). **Red Crossbills** were sparse with few reports, except they were said to be "numerous" at Last Chance Road in October and November, when flocks of 20-30 were noted (CEy). Always rare in fall, a **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at Wilder Creek on October 3 (TH). Just three reports of **Evening Grosbeak** from October 28 to November 1 suggested a minor fall passage and no real influx (CE, DSu).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Matt Brady, Bonnie Britton, Les Chibana, Mike Clingerman (MiC), Madeleine Clyde, Jeff Davis (JDa), Karen DeMello, Ryan DiGaudio, Chris Emmons, Carleton Eyster (CEy), Joe Felton, Rick Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, Doug George, Gene Gerlock, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Tonya Haff, Lynn Halley, Jean Harrison, Bill Hill, Clay Kempf, Norman Kikuchi, Karen Laing, Cindy Lieurance, Les Lieurance, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia Macon, Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin (BMc), Zephyr Mitchell, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Margaret Moore, Bryan Mori (BrM), Monterey Bay Whale Watch (MBWW), Todd Newberry, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Jeff Poklen, Dave Quady, Peter Radcliff, Arnold Robinson, Michelle Scott (MSc), Shearwater Journeys, Debra Shearwater (DSH), Carol Sidney, Madeline Spencer (MSp), Linda St. John, Marcia Stanchfield (MSt), Mark Stevenson (MSt), Andy Stone, David Suddjian (DSu), Francis Tolde, Richard Turnello, Amanda Van Loan, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, Jim White, Natalie White, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe, Mark Wortman. "*v.ob.*" means various observers. *Thank you to the many others who reported observations which could not be cited individually.*

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Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1, 2002 to through January 31, 2003

It was a star-studded season for birding, punctuated by strong storms in December, followed with a lovely January. A Nutting's Flycatcher led the pack for a spectacular potential second state record, but the identification of this ultra-rarity has been contested. Beyond that, you can read on to pick and choose your own winter stars from our avian firmament.

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Strong storms with high winds in mid-December blew loons to inland spots. A **Pacific Loon** at a small pond at Zayante Vineyards on December 14 was the most unusual (LBG, DD). Two **Red-throated Loons** at Kelly Lake and one **Common Loon** at Pinto Lake on January 16 were more typical storm waifs (DS). **Red-necked Grebes** were off Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BBa) and Live Oak on January 10 (DS). A **Black-footed Albatross** lost its battle with the storms and was struggling in the surf line at New Brighton State Beach on December 16 (DS). **Northern Fulmars** were also blown close to shore, with an estimate of 100 off Terrace Point on December 17 being the high count (KA). A **Black-vented Shearwater** that flew over the coastline near Terrace Point during gale winds on December 14 was headed *inland* toward Antonelli Pond (TN)! An aerial survey produced a rare winter **Pink-footed Shearwater** in county waters on January 30 (LH).

December and January reports of one to 17 **American White Pelicans** came from Harkins Slough, Pajaro River mouth, Sunset State Beach, Pinto Lake, and Kelly Lake (v.ob.), with the high of 17 at Harkins on December 17 (RW). An immature **Brown Pelican** landed on the playground of Branciforte Elementary School in Santa Cruz following a series of strong thunderstorms on December 19 (BN)! Two **Pelagic Cormorants** were up the San Lorenzo River at Santa Cruz on December 6 (SG). **American Bitterns** visited Schwan Lake on December 17 (KA; quite rare at mid-county in recent years), and Lake Tynan on January 1-8 (RM, DB, DS). Forty-five **Snowy Egrets** in the Sunset State Beach area on January 1 was unusually many for winter (BBa, B&KM).

It was a slow winter for geese compared to recent years, with no reports of wintering Snow or Ross's Geese. **Greater White-fronted Geese** included two to four at College Lake December 23 to January 1 (RW, DS), 37 over Santa Cruz on January 7 (BD, JH), and one over Harkins Slough on January 18 (MB, DVP). A **Snow Goose** paused at Sunset State Beach on December 3 (LG, JP, BMc, LSJ, GS). Small numbers of **Canada Geese** were seen at a few spots in the Pajaro Valley, but College Lake had 38 on December 16 (DS), 52 on December 23 (RW) and 94 on January 1 (DS). Nine **Brant** passed Capitola with a 50 mph crosswind on December 14 (DS), and 25 were over the bay off Sunset State Beach on January 25 (TN). **Blue-winged Teal** in the Pajaro Valley included three at Struve Slough on January 1 (BRe et al.) and one to four at Pajaro Dunes January 12-28 (EF, KA). One at Baldwin Creek Marsh on January 28 was rare for the north coast (AG).

Two **Green-winged Teal** at Felton on December 14 were rare for the San Lorenzo Valley (BBe, JD). Harkins Slough hosted the largest concentration of wintering waterfowl this season, with 570 **Canvasbacks** on January 16 topping the charts (DS). Single **Redheads** were at Sunset State Beach on December 3 (LG, JP, BMc, LSJ, GS), Corralitos Lagoon on December 4-13 (DS, RW),

and Harkins Slough on January 1-29+ (CK et al., v.ob.). Westlake Pond hosted a male **Tufted Duck** from December 17 to January 5, presumably returning from last winter (TN, v.ob.). Unlike last year, it was missing from the pond about half the time and we never figured out where it went between times. Then a male **Tufted Duck** was found at Harkins Slough from January 16-31+ (RW, v.o.b.). Was it the same individual as seen earlier at Westlake Pond? There were only two prior occurrences for the county. A **Black Scoter** was at Seacliff State Beach on January 20 (KA).

White-winged Scoters continued very rare, with just three reports of a few birds (LG et al., DS). The Manresa State Beach **Long-tailed Duck** was seen through December 2 (RW), and another flew down the coast past 3-Mile Beach on January 6 (DS). A female **Harlequin Duck** stopped at Capitola on December 12-14 (DS). A male **Barrow's Goldeneye** at College Lake on January 9 was our first in eight years (CEM), but it did not linger. **Hooded Mergansers** were well reported in the Pajaro Valley, with a peak of 21 at Merk Pond on December 11-12 (PR), but only a few were found away from the valley. **Common Mergansers** in odd spots included singles at Pinto Lake on December 16 (DS), Westlake Pond on December 18 (MSc) and Miramar Reservoir near Baldwin Creek on January 18 (L&WG). Five or six **Ospreys** lingered through the winter (v.ob.).

An immature **Northern Goshawk** was unexpected at Casserley Creek on January 1 (DS, CEM), providing a nice study perched and in flight. Two other reports from late fall were harder to evaluate, but may have been correct. On November 15 one was reported calling (and seen briefly at a distance) at UCSC by an observer with significant prior experience (BW). A description of an adult at a Felton yard on November 21 was fairly convincing, although the observer had never seen one before (TC). An adult **Broad-winged Hawk** was found in the Longridge Road area of upper Soquel Creek from January 15-27 (VD, DS). **Ferruginous Hawk** was sparse, with just one found at Corralitos December 24 to January 1 (DS). A belated report provides an addendum to last fall's **Crested Caracara** occurrence. Cliff Shackelford, visiting from Texas, saw a Caracara west of Santa Cruz on September 16, just six days before the same (?) bird was found at Swanton Road.

Merlins continued their record showing, with 58 reports received for December and January (v.ob.), three times the recent average for those months! **Peregrine Falcon** was similarly well reported (v.ob.). A **Common Moorhen** at Neary Lagoon on January 17 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was at Monterey Bay Academy on January 13 (DS). Six **Black-bellied Plovers** west of Watsonville on January 1 were unusual away from the coastline. The high tide roost of Black **Oystercatchers** at Greyhound Rock sheltered a near-record 72 on January 2 (DS). **American Avocets** were plentiful at Pajaro Dunes this season, with a reported high of 46 on January 1 (J&RW). Three **Lesser Yellowlegs** there that day were at a favored winter locale (J&RW, PM), but one in a rain pond near Freedom on January 1 was unexpected (WM). **Wandering Tattler** went unreported for the second winter in a row despite some good coverage of its former haunts.

Eight **Spotted Sandpipers** between the Capitola jetty and New Brighton State beach on December 4 were unusually many for one area at this season (RW). **Long-billed Curlews** had an unprecedented winter showing for our county in a season when they have been typically absent. At least five were along the north coast from Wilder Beach to Baldwin Beach from December 14 through January (BWe, JS, WBT). One or two flying up the coast past Santa Cruz on three dates from December 17 to January 22 (SG) suggested they may have been commuting of a number of miles, perhaps to and from a roost site at Elkhorn Slough. At least two were regular at Sunset State Beach in January (DS). A **Marbled Godwit** at the County Fairgrounds on January 1 was unusual inland (DE et al.). Only a few **Ruddy Turnstones** were found: one at Capitola and

adjacent New Brighton State Beach from December 14 to January 5 (DS, MSp, RW, WBT) and two at the Wilder Ranch coastline on January 18-20 (RW).

Ninety-three **Surfbirds** gathered on one rock near Wilder Beach on January 16, a very high count for one spot (DS). A **Red Knot** at Table Rock on January 16 was very rare for winter (DS). Single **Dunlin** at Wilder Beach on December 4 (AG) and Capitola Beach on December 14 (DS) were typical sightings of late migrants for the county, and neither stuck around. But a flock estimated to have 1000 Dunlins at Pajaro Dunes on January 1 was unheard of for the county (BBa), setting a record high count for any season, but in a season when the species is typically rare. They were clustered high on the beach during an exceptionally high tide, and I conclude they much have been temporary refugees from nearby Elkhorn Slough. Twenty-one unidentified **dowitchers** at Wilder Ranch on December 23 was an exceptional number for the north coast at this season, with the date indicating they were very likely **Long-billed** (WBT).

Glaucous Gulls showed very well, with 13 reports of juveniles from December 2 to January 28, probably involving at least 5-6 individuals (RW, BW, DS, KA, JP, LG). Storms brought a handful of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** to shore, with four reports of 1-2 from December 14-31 (CEm, DS). Two **Elegant Terns** feeding at New Brighton State Beach on January 4 were very rare for winter, but fit a growing pattern of late December and January records from the county (DS, CEm). Two **Xantus's / Craveri's Murrelets** off Santa Cruz on January 30 were most likely Xantus's based on the date (DL). The **Burrowing Owl** discovered at Bayview School in Santa Cruz on October 30 was captured and relocated to the UCSC grasslands on December 11, but it soon returned to Bayview School where it remained through January (LG). A survey of part of the UCSC grasslands on January 11 found seven "Burrowing Fowl" south of the East Remote Lot (JL, JBar et al.). An owl found on January 1 at a formerly traditional spot at the base of the hills east of Watsonville was good news, as none had been there for 13 years since ground squirrels were poisoned out (RM, DB). Squirrels have now returned an at least one owl, too.

A **Long-eared Owl** was roosting near Baldwin Creek mouth on January 6 (DS). A **Short-eared Owl** was in the Wilder Ranch grasslands on January 14 (CEm, DS). A small dark swift seen with White-throateds at Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on January 1 (BWe, EL) was very likely a **Vaux's Swift** based on rare winter precedent. Three **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were found: at Calabasas Road on December 29 (DS), Scotts Valley on January 15 (JBai), and a cooperative bird at Neary Lagoon on January 17-29 (SG, v.ob.). The recent paucity of **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** was evident from composite total of just three on the Santa Cruz County CBC and the SCZ portion of the Moss Landing CBC. A **Least Flycatcher** at Natural Bridges State Beach from December 12 through January provided the first confirmed winter record for the county (SG, v.ob.). Gerow speculated it might well be the same bird that was found at that spot on October 16. A **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was at Soquel Creek in Capitola on December 14-30 (DS). An **Eastern Phoebe** was near Baldwin Creek January 13-16 (DS, CEm).

The discovery of the season was an apparent **Nutting's Flycatcher** at Laurel Street in Santa Cruz from January 1 to February 3, but at press time the identification remains controversial for what would be the 4th U.S. record, and 2nd state record. Michelle Scott discovered the bird in a relative's yard during a New Year's party, recognizing it as an unusual *Myiarchus* flycatcher, and then sought help from Steve Gerow with the ID. Steve viewed it on January 2 and came up with features suggesting Nutting's. Several observers studied it on January 3, concluding it was indeed a Nutting's, and it was seen by perhaps hundreds over the following weeks. A great deal of information about the bird became available on the Internet, including an extensive analysis of its identification by Don Roberson. However, some observers and some reviewers who did not see the bird concluded it might instead be an Ash-throated Flycatcher. Calls considered diagnostic for

Nutting's were heard by some observers, but it seems that without tape recordings of those calls, and lacking in-hand examination, the identification will face tough going with the California Bird Records Committee. Remarkably, Gerow found another *Myiarchus* near Natural Bridges on January 5, perhaps an Ash-throated, but its identity was uncertain and it could not be relocated.

The last flycatcher highlight was a **Tropical Kingbird** at Live Oak on December 14-16, presumably the same as found there on November 21 (GG, DS). A **Horned Lark** at coastal fields at Wilder Ranch on January 14 was rare for winter (DS, CEm). **Loggerhead Shrikes** continued to decline in numbers, with apparently only 7-10 wintering in the county this season (v.ob.). **Barn Swallows** staged another amazing cusp-of-the-year surge, with an impressive 12 reports from December 28 to January 18 (v.ob.). It is uncertain how many individuals were involved, but I estimate about 37 were found in our county. Most seemed to be on the move northward, and did not linger as if to over-winter. High counts were 10 at Antonelli Pond on December 28 (AS) and 18 at West Cliff Drive on January 14 (WB, RB). Two **Yellow-billed Magpies** were northeast of Watsonville on December 24, for our first modern winter record (DS). **American Crows** continued to increase in the mountain areas, with 27 from Scotts Valley to Boulder Creek on the December 14 CBC (CEm, BS, AS, BR). Records also came from the north coast, with two at Davenport on December 14 (DE) and one at Sand Flat Gulch on January 16 (DS).

A **Marsh Wren** at Roaring Camp in Felton on December 14 was unexpected in the San Lorenzo Valley (JD). An **American Dipper** ventured down Corralitos Creek into the lowlands as far as Browns Valley Road on January 1 (DS). Thirty-one **Western Bluebirds** were found at three expected areas in the SCZ portion of the January 1 Moss Landing CBC, in areas singing the north and east sides of the Pajaro Valley (SA et al., RM, DS). The only other reports were from Last Chance Road, where bluebirds were regularly noted, with a high of 12 on January 4 (CEy, LB). An "orangeless" male **Varied Thrush** at UCSC on December 4 was a very rarely noted color variant (SG). The bird was white where it would normally be orange. Five **Nashville Warblers** were found in December and January (SA, SG, MSc, DS), including one very pale bird that resembled a Virginia's Warbler.

The wintering **Black-throated Blue Warbler** delighted many at Santa Cruz through January (KA, MSp, v.ob.). Five **Black-throated Gray Warblers** found December 3-14 were apparently all tardy migrants (AS, DS, SG). Just three **Hermit Warblers** were reported December 14 to January 1 (CEm, DE et al., TN). Two were at expected wintering spots, but one on the floor of the Pajaro Valley northeast of Watsonville on January 1 was unusual (DE et al.). A **Palm Warbler** at the San Lorenzo River mouth on December 6 was a late migrant (SG), but one wintered near Baldwin Creek January 13 into February, and another was at Wilder Creek January 16 into February (DS). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Soquel Creek in Soquel December 12 to January 4 (DS, CEm), and one was at Aptos December 14-20 (DS). Four **Wilson's Warblers** made for a nice showing, all at mid-county December 12 to January 27 (SA, SG, DS).

A female **Summer Tanager** returned to Soquel Creek at Capitola from November 30 to at least January 4 (DS, CEm). Another female was at Lighthouse Field State Beach from December 5 to at least January 7 (SG, RD). Four **Western Tanagers** appeared from Santa Cruz to Corralitos from December 12 to January 26 (RW, SG, KA, DS). Another **Spotted Towhee** showing characteristics of the subspecies *oregonus*, apparently a rare visitor to California, was at UCSC on December 4 (SG). Rare winter **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found near Watsonville on December 15-26 and at Lombardi Creek on January 6 (DS). Recent winters have revealed that **Grasshopper Sparrows** may winter in the county, but the details remain poorly understood. One was found again in the grasslands of Wilder Ranch on the December 14 CBC (TH, RD). A systematic search of about 165 acres of grassland there on January 14 revealed *seven* Grasshopper

Sparrows (DS, CEm). Meanwhile, one was heard singing in an overgrown field near Corralitos on January 8 (RW).

Nine **Swamp Sparrows** were found December 14 through January, with seven on the north coast (DE, DS). **Harris's Sparrows** visited feeders in Soquel on December 10-22 (KW) and near Watsonville on December 29 to January 5 (S&WM). The latter was the third in that yard in three years, quite remarkable for so rare a bird! Among a healthy 36 **White-throated Sparrows** reported in December and January (13 in Santa Cruz alone), the discovery of six clustered in one unpruned berry field near Casserley Creek on January 1 was exceptional (DS). A **Lapland Longspur** in coastal fields at Wilder Ranch on January 16 was a very rare winter find for the county (DS). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** visited feeders at Capitola on December 10-14 (MT) and near Corralitos on December 28-29 (SC). The Pajaro Valley again suffered a dearth of **Tricolored Blackbirds**, with just one reported on the Santa Cruz portion of the Moss Landing CBC on January 1 (BBa). Ten at Roaring Camp in Felton on December 14 were rare for our mountains and the San Lorenzo Valley (JD).

Two male **Great-tailed Grackles** were at Hanson Slough on January 1 (CK et al.) and one male was at Lake Tynan on January 8 (DS). **Hooded Orioles** appeared at a Santa Cruz feeder on January 10-28 (DS) and at Branciforte Dip on January 22 (LG). Small Flocks of **Red Crossbills** were regular at Last Chance Road through January (CEy), but they seemed to be nearly absent elsewhere. A rare winter **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at O'Neill Ranch in Soquel on December 14 (DS).

Cited Observers: Steve Allison, Kumaran Arul, John Bailey (JBai), Jack Barclay (JBar), Bruce Barrett (BBa), Bonnie Bedzin (BBe), Ryan Blakelaar, David Bockman, William Bousman, Matt Brady, Linda Brodman, Tom Clunie, Scott Crooks, Bruce Deuel, Ryan DiGaudio, Vladimir Dinets, Judy Donaldson, David Drake, David Ekdahl, Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Gene Gerlach, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Leda Beth Gray, Tonya Haff, Jean Harrison, Laird Henkel, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, David Lewis, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia Macon, Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin (BMc), Peter Metropulos, Barbara and Kevin Monahan, Randy Morgan, Todd Newberry, Barbara Novelli, Jeff Poklen, Bob Ramer (BRa), Pat Raven, Bill Reese (BRe), Barbara Scharfenstein, Jan Scott, Michelle Scott (MSc), Madeline Spencer (MSp), Linda St. John, Gene Stevens, Andy Stone, David Suddjian (DSu), Mary Turner, W. Breck Tyler, David Vander Pluym, John & Ricky Warriner, Brian Weed (BWe), Kathy Wells, Roger Wolfe, Bruce Wright. "v.ob." means various observers. *Thank you to the many others who reported observations that could not be cited individually.*

Santa Cruz Birds

by David Suddjian

Including reports from February 1 to March 31, 2003

Two **Red-necked Grebes** were off Scott Creek Beach on February 7 (DVP, MB). A **Black-footed Albatross** seen from Wilder Ranch State Park on February 23 was a very rare shore-based report for the winter season (RW). An estimated 100 **Black-vented Shearwaters** off Scott Creek on February 7 was a good late winter count, and followed a period seven weeks with no reports (DVP, MB). Small numbers were reported subsequently to late February. Small numbers of **American White Pelicans** continued at Harkins Slough, with reports of up to six in February (CK, RW, AS), and up to 20 in March (RW, JD). Pinto Lake had 12 on March 11 (LG) and three on March 27 (JD). One was at Pajaro Dunes on February 17 (CK), and the Pajaro River mouth on March 19 (RD). A **Pelagic Cormorant** on the lower San Lorenzo River on March 20 continued the recent pattern of sightings there, off the ocean, but this was unusual for spring (SG).

An **American Bittern** was in a wetland restoration area in the Wilder Creek reserve on February 7 (DSu). Another at Quail Hollow Pond from February 16 to March 2 was rare for the San Lorenzo Valley (LBG, DD, v.ob.). Surprisingly, only one was reported all winter from the Pajaro Valley. As of March, **Cattle Egrets** have now gone unreported in the county for two full years. It goes to show how the status of some colonizing species can reverse itself over a reasonably short time span. A lack of reports of **Ross's Goose** marked the first winter since 1983 when none were found in the county, and **Snow Goose** was similarly scarce, with no reports after the December 3 record cited in the last issue. A **Brant** near Wilder Beach on February 2 was rare for the north coast in winter (RW), with perhaps the same bird there on March 1 (SG). A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** continued at Pajaro Dunes through February 15 (MY, RW), with another or the same pair there on March 29 (RW). Single males were at Harkins Slough and Struve Slough on March 25 (DSu). Three were at College Lake on March 29 (RW), with two through March 31 (RC).

Cinnamon Teal have been rather sparse in the county during their north-bound migration in recent years. Migration typically peaks in late February, when counts from single sites ranged as high as 750 in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But recently, there has been almost no indication of any migratory peak, and top counts have only been of 10-20 birds. Consider just one at College Lake on February 15 this year (RW), compared to 522 there on February 15, 1988 (DSu). Only a handful were reported from the north coast this February and March, although coverage there was good (DSu). Does this reflect regional changes, or just changes in distribution perhaps related to multi-year rainfall patterns? Harkins Slough's **Tufted Duck** was reported to February 1 (DSi). A female **Harlequin Duck** at West Cliff Drive on March 22 was one of very few apparent spring migrants ever found in the county (SG). **Black Scoters** were at West Cliff Drive on February 24 (SG), Baldwin Creek Beach on March 12 (DSu), and Manresa State Beach on March 27 (DSu).

Common Mergansers away from the usual spots included a pair at Lombardi Creek mouth on March 10 (DSu, LG), and a male over Baldwin Creek Marsh on March 21 (DSu). **Hooded Mergansers** away from the Pajaro Valley included one at Last Chance Lagoon (LG, BMcL, LSJ), four at Roaring Camp on February 25 (LG), and two at Baldwin Creek Marsh on March 24 (DSu, PH). A **Swainson's Hawk** flew north over Manresa Uplands on March 25 (DSu). **Merlins** continued strong, with nine reports in February and 11 in March (v.ob.). **Wild Turkeys** appeared in scattered spots, apparently intent on solving the age-old chicken riddle. Singles were seen

attempting to cross Old San Jose Road on March 21 (TS), and Highway 1 at Davenport(!) on March 25 (CEy), while at Jarvis Road on March 27 one decided to just run down the road instead (BM).

I conducted surveys for rails at 62 wetland sites countywide from February 10-28. I used tapes of calls to elicit responses, repeating similar efforts I had made in late fall of 1987 and January 1994. Total counts from all sites were 192 **Virginia Rails** and 32 **Soras**. Average numbers per site were well down from the earlier surveys for both species. Averages from 1987, 1994 and 2003, respectively, were 7.0, 4.5 and 3.1 for Virginia Rail, and 1.8, 2.0 and 0.5 for Sora. Flooding in some seasonal wetlands was greater in 2003 than the prior years, such that some rail habitat may have been unavailable, perhaps leading to lower numbers. However, reduced numbers in other sites where habitat conditions were comparable over the years suggest a population decrease. Sora, in particular, was less frequently present, being found at only about half as many sites as on the previous efforts, while the presence of Virginia Rail at sites stayed pretty much the same. A bright spot was provided by the recently created wetlands along Wilder Creek, which hosted up to 10 Virginias and 3 Soras.

The **Common Moorhen** continued to be seen at Neary Lagoon through March 24 (PVL, DM). Two **Snowy Plovers** at Baldwin Creek Beach on February 8 were noteworthy (RW), as the species had not been found there prior to a failed nesting attempt last year. Additional high tide counts of **Black Oystercatchers** roosting at Greyhound Rock were 55 on February 1 (DSi) and 46 on February 17 (DSu). **American Avocets** remained in good numbers at lower Watsonville Slough, with 66 on February 15-17 (RW, CK). **Long-billed Curlews** continued to be seen along north coast beaches from Wilder Creek to Laguna Creek through March 2, the first time they were ever known to over-winter there (v.ob.). The high single site count was eight, but I suspect more were actually present. Four on New Brighton State Beach on February 8, and five at Seacliff on March 16 were also noteworthy (DSu). Twenty-five at the Pajaro River mouth on March 29 was a good count (RW).

Two to three **Ruddy Turnstones** continued on the Wilder Ranch coast through February 23 (RW), but none were found elsewhere. A **Red Phalarope** at Harkins Slough on December 29 was the only inland report this winter (L&CL). A **Parasitic Jaeger** studied at New Brighton State Beach on March 7 was either a very rare wintering individual or an early migrant (RW). A bird showing many characters of a 1st year **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at West Cliff Drive on February 1 (SG), but unfortunately it was not seen again and the identification could not be confirmed. Late winter reports of young **Glaucous Gulls** were from Waddell Creek Beach on February 17 (DSu), Wilder Creek Beach on February 23 (RW), Monterey Bay Academy on February 27 (RD), and Capitola Beach on March 3 (DSu). A breeding plumaged **Pigeon Guillemot** off Natural Bridges on February 17 was presumably a returning migrant, but was a few weeks early for this county (DQ). No others were found until March 2 (RW).

Ancient Murrelets were nearshore at West Cliff Drive on February 20 (BK) and near Wilder Beach on March 1 (SG). Twelve reports of one to 15 **Rhinoceros Auklets** seen from shore between Seabright State Beach and Baldwin Creek Beach from February 4 to March 6 were many more shore-based reports than normal (v.ob.). High counts were 11 at Terrace Point on February 20 (SG) and 15 near Wilder Beach on February 24 (LG et al.). The **Burrowing Owl** wintering at Bayview Elementary School in Santa Cruz was seen through late February (fide LG). It roosted under the eaves of the school. A **Long-eared Owl** was reported at Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve on February 28 (VD). A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at the UCSC Arboretum on March 21 was early for Northern California (DSu). The wintering **Red-naped Sapsucker** remained at Neary Lagoon through at least March 11 (v.ob.). A **Pileated Woodpecker** in

Monterey pines at De LaVeaga Park on February 19 was significant in a planted, non-native “forest” and was new for the park (DSu).

The wintering **Least Flycatcher** lingered at Natural Bridges to March 1 (SG, v.ob.). A **Cassin’s Kingbird** was at a private ranch north of Rogge Road, east of Watsonville, on March 23 (CEM). **Western Kingbirds** at Natural Bridges on March 18 (SG) and O’Neill Ranch on March 19 (EF) were early migrants for the county. A returning **Warbling Vireo** at Pogonip on March 8 was quite early, two weeks ahead of the average first arrival (TH, RD). One of the best finds of the season was a **Philadelphia Vireo** in the natural reserve area at Wilder Creek on February 7-21 (DSu), representing the first winter record for Northern California. The march of **American Crows** venturing up the north coast went full scale in late winter and early spring. Numerous reports of up to 24 birds came from Wilder Ranch all the way the coast to Scott Creek Beach and Swanton Road, a most unwelcome addition to our Snowy Plover nesting beaches (DS, SG, MSc, LG). Small parties of crows seemed to be making daily commutes up the coast from Santa Cruz to forage in fields and at beaches. Crows were previously essentially absent on the north coast, but for very occasional reports scattered over many years, although they have been numerous in Santa Cruz for a decade.

A **White-breasted Nuthatch** at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve on March 28 was in possible nesting habitat (DSu). The birds of this extreme northern corner of the county have not been much studied. Three **Red-breasted Nuthatches** at upper UCSC campus on March 24 was good for early spring, as they are sparse and irregular there in the nesting season (SG), and one at Moore Creek Preserve on March 29 was a bit surprising (SG). A series of visits to Wilder Ranch State Park indicated at least 10 **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** wintered there on the oceanside of Highway 1 this season (DSu, SG, KA, BW, JS). This is probably a typical number of wintering birds for that area, but we seldom have had the thorough coverage needed to make an estimate. All were associated with scrub habitats. Three **Western Bluebirds** were at Green Valley road on February 14 (WM). A male at the north end of Scotts Valley on March 15 was the first I’ve heard of in a number of years from that formerly regular haunt (B&KM). Two were at Last Chance Road in mid March (CEy).

Three additional winter **Nashville Warblers** brought the winter season’s total to a high of 10 (SG, DSu). The wintering **Black-throated Blue Warbler** remained at Santa Cruz through March 12 (KA). Four **Palm Warblers** were found in the coastal area of Wilder Ranch during February. A female **American Redstart** at Wilder Creek on February 28 was a surprise, not only because of its winter rarity, but the area had been checked carefully three times earlier that month with no sign of its presence, and it was not seen after (DSu). The **Summer Tanager** at Soquel Creek remained to at least February 16 (DSu). Two more Western Tanagers in February brought the winter season’s total to a strong six birds (SG, DSu). The **Clay-colored Sparrow** found near Lombardi Creek on January 6 was found again on February 26 (DSu). A singing **Lark Sparrow** was at Moore Creek Preserve on March 11 (SG). This local breeder has become quite scarce in recent years.

Five more **Swamp Sparrows** were found along the north coast in February (SG, DSu), bringing the area’s total to 14 for the season, good for the north coast. None were seen after February 26. The county’s first over-wintering **Indigo Bunting** was a female at Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz on February 15-24 (SG, DSu). Single male **Great-tailed Grackles** were at Struve Slough on March 13 (LH) and 25 (DSu), and three were displaying there on March 29 (RW). Another male was at Antonelli Pond on March 31 (SG). The **Hooded Oriole** at the Dip in January stayed to at least February 24 (DSu). Was an adult male **Bullock’s Oriole** at Natural Bridges on March 3 was a local wintering bird or a very early migrant, 11 days ahead of the previous record (MB, DVP)?

The first certain migrant was found on March 17 (DSu). Small numbers of **Red Crossbills** continued into February and March in Monterey pines at Last Chance Road and adjacent Rancho Del Oso (CEy, DSu). Single **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were at Moore Creek Preserve on March 21 (SG), Manresa Uplands on March 27 (DSu) and Baldwin Creek on March 28 (SG, MSc). Pairs were at two known spots at Sunset State Beach on March 29 and 31 (RK).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Matt Brady, Roy Carlson, Jeff Davis, Ryan DiGaudio, Vladimir Dinets, David Drake, Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Eric Feuss, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Leda Beth Gray, Tonya Haff, Portia Halbert, Laird Henkel, Brad Keitt, Rich Kelly, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Les & Cindy Lieurance, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin (BMcL), Barbara and Kevin Monahan, David Moore, Jeff Poklen, Dave Quady, Barbara Scharfenstein, Jan Scott, Michelle Scott (MSc), Dan Singer (DSi), Anne Spence, Linda St. John, Trudi Stone, David Suddjian (DSu), Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, Brian Weed, Roger Wolfe, Mike Yough. "v.ob." means various observers. *Thank you to the many others who reported observations that could not be cited individually.*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from April 1 to through May 31, 2003

Spring migration was odd all around. Landbirds moved well in late March and into very early April. Then, perhaps slowed by a series of storms and cool weather, there was little migration evident until some waves in early to mid-May. In the end it was lackluster, except for appearances by some rare montane and Great Basin-associated species that generally showed well in central California west of the Sierra Nevada. Locally these included Calliope Hummer, Hammond's, Gray and Dusky flycatchers, and Plumbeous Vireo. Perhaps the Painted Redstart (!), a spectacular county first discovered by Steve Gerow, also fit into this pattern somehow.

Seabird migration, often a highlight of spring along the coast, was extremely slow. Loons, scoters, Brant, jaegers, Bonaparte's Gulls, Forster's Terns and others are expected to pour northward along our shore, but they trickled instead. This was true across the suite of species, making it the slowest spring seabird migration I've witnessed since moving here in 1985. Similarly, the large flocks of Sooty Shearwaters were lacking, with only small flocks occasionally seen. Some researchers suggested that a lack of onshore winds and reduced upwelling combined to affect prey availability and keep seabirds well offshore.

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A **Red-necked Grebe** was off Capitola Beach on April 1 (DS). Immature **Pelagic Cormorants** were seen up the San Lorenzo River on April 16 and May 4 (SG). They are always noteworthy off the ocean, and these were perhaps the first such spring records for Santa Cruz County. A **Laysan Albatross** in Santa Cruz waters on April 13 was a highlight for a trip out of Monterey (RW, RT, MBWW). **American White Pelicans** continued through spring again, following last year's pattern. Two were at Pinto Lake on April 3 (DS). Six were over Harkins Slough on April 5, and one or two were seen there on various dates from May 4-15 (RW). Pajaro River mouth and adjacent Watsonville Slough had seven on April 17 (RF), and one or two from May 4-25 (RW, BMa, AS).

Canada Geese are increasingly common breeders in parts of Santa Clara and Monterey counties, but breeding season occurrences in this county are still limited. Four in pairs at Pinto Lake on April 3 were at the county's only previously known nest site (DS). Elsewhere in the Pajaro Valley, two were at lower Struve Slough on April 5 (RW), one was at Pajaro Dunes on May 4 (RW), and seven were there on May 15 (RW). Away from the Pajaro Valley, five flew down the coast at Baldwin Creek on April 3 (SG, MS). One or more pairs were seen at various spots from Live Oak to Wilder Ranch from April 5 to May 17 (SG, PVL, DS, RW, JL, KA). Two **Blue-winged Teal** were at Pajaro Dunes on May 11, with one on May 12 (PM, RW). A female **Cinnamon Teal** with one new chick at Moore Creek in Natural Bridges State Park on May 19 provided a rare breeding record for the city of Santa Cruz (SG). Twenty-five **Greater Scaup** at the Pajaro Dunes area on April 5 was many for spring (RW).

A female **Long-tailed Duck** resided in lower Watsonville Slough and at the Pajaro River mouth from May 5 into summer (BMa, v.ob.), although on May 6 it was seen flying out and going north along the coast (RW). A female **Bufflehead** was late at the San Lorenzo River mouth on May 4

(SG), as were two at the Pajaro River mouth on May 25 (AS). A female **Common Merganser** exiting an old Pileated Woodpecker hole in an alder along the East Fork of Waddell Creek on May 29 provided the third actual nest site known for the county (DS). A female feeding at Younger Lagoon on April 22 was in an odd spot (SG). A **White-tailed Kite** flying coastward before sunrise over the Chalks from the upper Waddell Creek watershed on May 20 was perhaps coming from a nest site located far into the forest (DS). An adult **Sharp-shinned Hawk** along the Monterey side of the Pajaro River near Thurwachter Road on May 26 was in an odd spot for the date (DR, RC). It was late for a migrant, early for a dispersant, and breeders are unknown from the Pajaro Valley's lowlands.

The season's second migrant **Swainson's Hawk** was an intermediate morph immature over Lombardi Creek on April 4 (SG, MS). A series of reports of vocal **Golden Eagles** in the Rincon Gorge of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park from April 6 to May 18 raised hope of nesting there (BE, DS, KA, JL, BL). An adult over Soquel on April 26 was unusual (JP). Five **Merlins** were reported from April 6-26 (SG, KA, DS). **Peregrine Falcons** were confirmed nesting at three sites in the county this spring, including one newly confirmed location (fide JL). Territorial birds occupied a fourth site for the first time in recent history, but nesting was unconfirmed (JL), and it was unclear what happened in a fifth occupied territory (DS). Meanwhile, two April and May reports from the crest of the mountains at Loma Prieta and to the southeast were from areas where the species is rarely noted (DS, SR), and adults continued to be seen all season in the Santa Cruz area (v.ob.).

Mountain Quail were heard at two new locations, although both were near sites with prior records. One was along the summit ridge a few miles southeast of Loma Prieta on May 13 (DS). The other was near the summit about two miles southeast of Castle Rock on May 30 (SG, WM). **Wild Turkeys** continued to appear in odd spots: on a rooftop in a suburban area near De Laveaga Park in Santa Cruz on April 2 (RD); at the Ben Lomond Transfer Station on April 3 (AM); flying over traffic at the Mt Hermon exit at Highway 17 in Scotts Valley on April 4 (DE); and at the Pineridge Lane area of Bonny Doon on April 7 (MC). Perhaps early spring is a time of pre-breeding wandering? A **Virginia Rail** with six new chicks at Baldwin Creek Marsh on April 8 was one of the earliest breeding records for that species (DS). Baldwin held an impressive 10 adults on that date. An **American Avocet** at Corcoran Lagoon on April 1 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (DS). A **Solitary Sandpiper** stopped in at Lombardi Creek mouth on May 1 (DS).

Continuing the new pattern, **Ruddy Turnstone** went unreported in the county this spring, in spite of good coastal coverage (v.ob.). **Franklin's Gulls** were spied at Harkins Slough on May 6 (RW) and in an agricultural field near Baldwin Creek on May 29 (DS). A tardy **Mew Gull** was at Natural Bridges April 27 to May 3 (MB, DVP, SG). A late **Glaucous Gull** was at Wilder Ranch State Park on April 6 (RW). A **Black Tern** added spice to the Pajaro River mouth on May 10 (PM). A **Black Skimmer** at the Pajaro River mouth on May 4-5 (RW, BMa), and two there on May 19 (RD) were on the Monterey County side. Two **Marbled Murrelets** off Pajaro Dunes on April 5 were apparently far south in the bay for the spring season (RW), and small numbers were reported along the city of Santa Cruz's coast into early May (SG, v.ob). They seem to be irregular off Santa Cruz in spring, except perhaps when foraging conditions in their favored areas farther up the coast are below par.

A **Rhinoceros Auklet** flying in circles near the former Davenport nest cliff on April 26 showed there was still some interest in the site (DS et al.). **Common Poorwills** continued at the Chalks, with two on May 20 (DS). Several reports of **Black Swifts** along the mid-county coast from May 13 (SG) into June were tantalizing, but see the next issue for this season's findings with regard to nesting. A **Vaux's Swift** seen flying into a chimney at Chico Street in western Santa Cruz on May

7 suggested a possible nest site (SA), but subsequent observations could not confirm it. An impressive three **Calliope Hummingbirds** were found, all in the upper Soquel Creek watershed. A male visited a feeder at Old Turnpike Road on April 5-7 (SBT, LT, RT, MB, DVP). A female was at Jarvis Road on April 29 (DS). A male was at a feeder on Morrell Cut Off on May 3-4 (SH).

Breeding season **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** continued in some recently established localities: one at the East Branch of Soquel Creek on May 12, and two 0.4 mile apart along the West Fork of Waddell Creek on May 29 (DS). One drumming at the East Fork of Waddell Creek on May 27 was at a new spot (DS). One at Kings Creek on April 30 might have been a prospective breeder or a rather tardy winterer (DS). Four **Hammond's Flycatchers** from April 25 to May 12 made for a strong spring showing (CEm, DS, SG). They were at Felton, Rodeo Gulch, Bonny Doon and Santa Cruz. A **Gray Flycatcher** at Meder Canyon on April 24 was only our 3rd spring record, and the first since 1988 (SG). Rounding out the rare western Empids, **Dusky Flycatchers** were at Porter – Sesnon on May 4 and at the Chalks on May 20 (DS). A **Cassin's Kingbird** at Kelly Thompson Ranch on March 23 provided the 6th county record (CEm).

A **Plumbeous Vireo** at Hazel Dell Marsh on April 24 was our first for spring (RW). **American Crows** continued their unprecedented march on the county's north coast, first noted in late winter. Singles and small flocks were found regularly through May. As in winter, they appeared to be daily commuters from Santa Cruz traveling to forage along the north coast (SG, MS, MB, DS). Two very vocal crows on the summit ridge three miles northwest of Mount Madonna on May 13 were the first from that area (DS). We had only two reports of **Purple Martin**: a migrant at Casserley Creek on April 22 (RW) and a likely local breeder at Soquel Demonstration State Forest on May 22 (DS). The only **Bank Swallow** zipped over Baldwin Creek Marsh on April 8 (DS). **House Wren** is presently a rare breeder anywhere in the county away from its far southeast corner, so five singers at various spots near the summit ridge from the vicinity of Black Road to south east of Loma Prieta from May 12-30 were of note (DS, SG). A tardy **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at the Crest Ranch on Ben Lomond Mountain on May 9 (DS, KA, NF).

Reports of **Western Bluebirds** included a male along Green Valley Road north of Wheelock Road on April 3 (DS); a pair using a nest box in Pleasant Valley, with eggs in the box on April 30 (RW); a pair at Last Chance Road in April and May (CEy); and a male on top of Ben Lomond Mountain on May 9 (DS). Breeding **Varied Thrushes** continued to be found at a number of spots in May, mostly in Big Basin Redwoods State Park. A nest with young was in a tan oak along the West Fork of Waddell Creek on May 29 (DS). **Nashville Warblers** were well above average, with 17 found from April 7 to May 17 (v.ob.) nearly matching last spring's record of 18. A male **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was in Capitola on May 26 (DS). An April 4 assemblage of at least 120 migrant **Townsend's Warblers**, many singing, along 0.7 mile of Rodeo Gulch Road was impressive (DS). A **Palm Warbler** in a Santa Cruz yard on May 5 was probably a rare spring migrant rather than a winter hold-over (KA). We have few records of spring migrants.

An **Ovenbird** was at Pipeline Road in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on May 9 (DS). Unlike our other spring vagrant warblers, Ovenbirds have shown a pattern of appearing in the county away from the immediate coast. An adult **Painted Redstart** at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on April 27 was a terrific 1st county record (SG)! It was apparently only the 5th for anywhere in Northern California, but was especially rare coastward and in spring. Four migrant **MacGillivray's Warblers** were reported away from confirmed nesting areas from April 4 to May 6 (DS, RW, SG). One singing at Rancho Del Oso on May 29 was a presumed breeder (DS). **Yellow-breasted Chat** was only reported at one spot, but it was an interesting occurrence. One at Lombardi Creek (Wilder Ranch State Park) on May 1 (DS) was likely the same found singing

there on May 22 (TN) and 28 (EF). Both Todd and Eric thought there might have been two present on those dates, and indeed this was finally confirmed in July (RW). Read next issue for “the rest of the story.”

A **California Towhee** singing near the “Mother of the Forest” tree at Big Basin’s Redwood Trail on April 30 was out of place amid that old growth (DS). A very rare spring **Vesper Sparrow** was at the UCSC Arboretum on May 16 (MS). A pair of **Lark Sparrows** in residence at Moore Creek Preserve from March through May (SG, RW, v.ob.), was maybe all that is left of the recently dwindling nesting population that formerly occurred at grassland edges on the slopes of Ben Lomond Mountain from Swanton down to Pogonip. Actually there were areas that were not checked this spring, but all indications are that there are hardly any left in that region. Western Bluebird and Chipping Sparrow, two other grassland edge specialists, have similarly declined at Ben Lomond Mountain. Reasons for these recent declines have not been studied. Three **Sage Sparrows** along the Saratoga Gap Trail in Castle Rock State Park on April 20 were from one of the county’s two known spots, but three was a high count (DVP, MB). A **Swamp Sparrow** in breeding plumage at Wilder Creek on April 17 was probably a rare spring migrant (SG), as the local wintering birds in that area disappeared by late February.

Four **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found from April 30 to May 20 (PVL, DS). A male **Indigo Bunting** was photographed at a feeder in eastern Santa Cruz, visiting from about March 24 to April 16 (BB). The long stay in early spring dates suggested it had over-wintered, a rather rare occurrence for northern California, but the second for the county this season. A more typical spring migrant was a female at Natural Bridges on May 11 (SG). At least eight (and probably more) **Great-tailed Grackles** continued around the south county sloughs this spring, with activity centered at Struve Slough (v.ob.), but sightings also from Watsonville (BMo) and Harkins (RW) sloughs. Two reports of nests were received, documenting at least four nests this year, all at West Struve Slough. Two nests (one complete, one under construction) were seen in cattails on April 24 (BLy). Two nests in bur-reed on May 6 had a single chick and eggs, respectively, with a dead chick floating in the water nearby (JW). Bryan Mori reported that snails were a frequent food item for grackles foraging at Watsonville Slough. Reports of grackles away from the sloughs were fewer than in other recent years; one cited in the last issue and a male at Capitola on April 4 (DS) were the only ones.

A singing male **Baltimore Oriole** was a prize at Natural Bridges (an oriole magnet) on May 29 (SG). **Red Crossbills** continued in small numbers at Last Chance Road in April and May (CEy). The only other reports were of a few at Gray Whale Ranch on May 5 (DS, SG et al.) and at Chalk Mountain on May 20 (DS).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Barbara Booth, Matt Brady, Rita Caratello, Madeleine Clyde, Ryan DiGuadio, David Ekdahl, Barbara Egelhofer, Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Eric Feuss, Neill Fogarty, Steve Gerow, Scott Hanson, Brian Latta, Janet Linthicum, Bruce Lyon (BLy), Wayne Macon, Blake Matheson (BMa), Alexandra McDonald, Peter Metropulos, Monterey Bay Whale Watch, Bryan Mori (BMo), Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Don Roberson, Siobahn Ruck, Michelle Scott, Anne Spence, David Suddjian, Linda Terrill, Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, Richard Turnello, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, John Welch, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from June 1 through August 31, 2003

Straggling **Brant** were reported at Corcoran Lagoon on June 2 (RW), San Lorenzo River mouth on June 8 (SG) and Scott Creek mouth on June 21 to July 1 (WB et al.). A family of **Canada Geese** with eight young at Anderson Peat Ponds on Harkins Slough on July 16 documented only the second confirmed breeding site for the county (AS). Two **Greater Scaup** at the Pajaro River mouth on June 14-21 were exceptional for June, as were three **Lesser Scaup** there on June 6 (RW). The **Long-tailed Duck** found there on May 5 lingered to at August 29 for the county's first over-summering record (RW, v.ob.), although it spent most of its time on the Monterey side. Rare summering **Bufflehead** included one at San Lorenzo River mouth from May 4 to August 24 (SG), and two at Pajaro River mouth from May 26 to August 15, with one through August 29 (AS, RW). A **Ruddy Duck** at New Brighton State Beach on July 24 was unusual on the ocean for mid-summer (RW).

A one year old **Pelagic Cormorant** was a short way up the San Lorenzo River on August 24 (SG). A breeding-plumaged **Eared Grebe** at Seacliff State Beach on June 15-17 was exceptional for the county after mid-May (RW). **American White Pelicans** continued through the summer at Harkins Slough, the Pajaro River mouth area, and Pinto Lake (RW, AS, JD, MSc). Numbers at Harkins and Pajaro ranged from 2-41 birds during June and July, increasing at Harkins in August to a peak count of 100 on August 26 (RW). Only one was present at Pinto. Five White Pelicans off Capitola on August 5 were unusual over the ocean (DSu). **Double-crested Cormorants** increased markedly at their new rookery at Schwan Lake, with 59 active nests on June 5 (DSu). The colony at Pinto Lake had 7 nests on June 7 (W&SM). Colonies of **Brandt's Cormorants** had 17 nests at Lighthouse Field State Beach on May 26 (SG), 30 nests at Natural Bridges State Beach on June 5 (SG), and 28 nests at Davenport Pier on June 7 (DSu). An **American Bittern** flying along Highway 1 near Dimeo Lane on June 10 was rare for the north county coast, especially in the breeding season (BB).

Nesting by **Great Blue Herons** in the Santa Cruz area seems to have dwindled over the last 10 years, with six nests at the Municipal Harbor being the only ones reported this year (DSu). If any one knows of other active Santa Cruz nest sites please advise. Only one pair of **Great Egrets** nested at Pinto Lake this season, the county's only breeding site (W&SM). One Great Egret standing among the Great Blue Heron nests at the Harbor on June 5 raised hope of possible future nesting there, and it was rare for the mid-county area in the breeding season (DSu). A pair of **Osprey** continued to nest in the San Vicente Creek watershed (fide DSu). Repeated observations of adults carrying fish up Año Nuevo Creek suggested a pair might be nesting there or nearby in San Mateo or Santa Cruz County (GS). A pair placed sticks at the top of a large snag at Loch Lomond in late May in what was perhaps an aborted nest attempt (CB). One carrying a fish inland high over New Brighton State Beach on June 26 was far from any of those sites and fell outside the typical migratory periods (ST, LT).

The county's first urban nesting **Cooper's Hawks** were confirmed at Watsonville on June 12 when a nest was found in an old live oak (BM). A fall migrant **Swainson's Hawk** was near De Laveaga Park on August 24 (DSu). A pair of courting **Black-necked Stilts** at Natural Bridges on June 5 was an oddity (SG), as was one feeding at the edge of the surf at Seacliff on June 15

(RW). A **Greater Yellowlegs** flying north over Moore Creek Preserve on June 9 was apparently a very tardy spring migrant (SG), while one at Younger Lagoon on June 30 was the first southbound migrant for the season (LG). Eight or nine **Lesser Yellowlegs** were reported from July 9 to August 29 (SG, RW, KA). A **Solitary Sandpiper** visited the lower San Lorenzo River on August 24 (SG). **Spotted Sandpipers** at Pajaro Dunes on June 14 and Capitola Bluffs on June 15 were out of place for early summer (RW). **Long-billed Curlews** continued their recent trend, and were a good deal more numerous in the July and August than had been the case just a few years ago (v.ob.).

Early fall reports of the now rare **Ruddy Turnstone** were of one at Wilder Creek Beach on July 26 (RW) and two at West Cliff Drive on August 30 (SG). The latter were Steve's first in about three years...strong testimony of their scarcity from one of the most active observers in the county. A **Red Knot** was on the Santa Cruz side of the Pajaro River mouth on August 29 (RW). A juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Natural Bridges on August 17 (SG), while one at the Pajaro River mouth on August 8 was only seen on the Monterey side (RW). An adult **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Baldwin Creek mouth on July 21 (DSu). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Younger Lagoon on August 12 was one of our earliest county records (MSc). Eight **Wilson's Phalaropes** were reported from July 21 to August 29 (SG, MSc, MSp, RW, NK). A **South Polar Skua** was off Davenport on August 25 (JD). **Western Gulls** continued nesting on inland rooftops at several sites in Capitola and Soquel. Two large chicks on top of Toys 'R Us in Soquel on July 13 pushed the inland limit to two miles from the ocean (DSu). Nesting on rooftops has also begun to be noted in Santa Cruz, but so far all confirmed sites are along the immediate coast. A **Least Tern** was at Capitola Beach on August 3 (DSu). A **Black Skimmer** was at Seacliff State Beach on August 15 (DSu).

A **Long-billed Murrelet** close inshore at Waddell Bluffs on August 19 provided a nice study for the 2nd county record, pending CBRC review (DSu). Subsequent reports were received on August 22 (BR) and August 25 (KO), but it is hard to be certain if they pertained to the same bird. A warm water incursion in the bay was good for southern murrelets. Several July and August reports of **Xantus's Murrelets** were received from Santa Cruz waters, beginning with 3 on July 14 (RW, MBWW). Two **Craveri's Murrelets** on August 2 were the first reported in the county since the El Niño year of 1998 (LL, DVP et al., SJ). Five **Rhinoceros Auklets** at Davenport on June 27 were on the water beside their former (?) nesting site (WBT). A record 123 pairs of Rhinos nested at Año Nuevo Island, just across the line in San Mateo County, along with 10-15 pairs of nesting **Cassin's Auklets** (JT, PRBO). Fifty-three of the Rhino nests and three Cassin's nests were in artificial nest burrows. A **White-winged Dove** flew over Antonelli Pond on August 23 (SG).

Vaux's Swift has one of the more interesting breeding distributions in the county, being rather local and apparently limited by suitable nest sites. The "heart" of their county breeding population would seem to be at Big Basin Redwoods state Park, where the largest area of old growth forest remains. However, extensive surveys there in 2002 and 2003 suggested only a small breeding population of fewer than 10 pairs (DSu), and there seem to be fewer swifts than in most years over the last decade. Vaux's also nest very locally in chimneys on the west side of Santa Cruz, and although access to chimneys is are greatly constrained by spark arrestors on most chimneys, they have lately been more numerous in western Santa Cruz than at Big Basin (SG, v.ob.). Nesting seems to be occurring near Natural Bridges, although it has yet to be confirmed, and is also known from the neighborhoods bordering UCSC.

A **Long-eared Owl** was heard again at Soquel on June 2 (RW). **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** staged an unprecedented late summer influx, but I report here on just the vanguard that falls into

this reporting period: one female-type bird at Natural Bridges from August 26-28 (SG). **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** were confirmed breeding along the East Fork of Waddell Creek near Last Chance Road on July 15 (DSu). Other breeding season reports came from Soquel Creek north of Soquel on June 5, Scott Creek on June 7, and Sempervirens Creek in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on June 18 (DSu). **Pileated Woodpeckers** now occur over the county's entire forested region, with new localities continuing to be found each season. Extensive surveys at Big Basin Redwoods State Park led to an estimate of 17 pairs in the watershed of the East Fork of Waddell Creek, an area of roughly 7,000 acres (DSu).

A spring migrant **Willow Flycatcher** was at Liddell Creek on June 4 (DSu). Migrants in early fall began with one at Natural Bridges on August 10 providing the earliest county record by 12 days (SG). Five others were found through the end of August. Two enigmatic mid-breeding season records of **Western Kingbird** – one was at Moore Creek Preserve in Santa Cruz from June 9-23 (SG), and one to two were at Corralitos June 12-16 (RW) – were well away from the species' very limited county breeding range in the far southeast corner near the Pajaro River. **Tree Swallows** used a nest box at Neary Lagoon, providing the first breeding confirmation for the Santa Cruz area for several years (SG). A migrant **Bank Swallow** was at Lombardi Creek on August 20 (DSu). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** at West Ridge Trail in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on June 5 was a very rare breeding season record (TH). Another was at Corralitos from August 30 to September 3 (DK).

Western Bluebirds nested successfully in a box at Last Chance Road, fledging three young in early June (CEy, DSu). June brought several more records of singing **Varied Thrushes** at Big Basin, and a family of fledglings was found along Blooms Creek on July 3 (DSu). Additional spring vagrant warblers included a **Magnolia Warbler** at Antonelli Pond on June 1 (SG) and the county's second **Kentucky Warbler** at Soquel Creek on June 5 (DSu). Vagrants in early fall included **American Redstarts** at Harkins Slough on August 26 (RW) and Liddell Creek on August 31 (CEm), a **Black-and-white Warbler** at Live Oak on August 27 (BH), and an early **Northern Waterthrush** at Baldwin Creek on August 11 (DSu). A **Hermit Warbler** at Natural Bridges on August 3 was unusually early for a coastal migrant (SG). A **Townsend's Warbler** at New Brighton on August 6 was the earliest county record by eight days, and two other early birds were at Scott Creek on August 13 (DSu). A **Common Yellowthroat** singing in a bamboo thicket in suburban western Santa Cruz on July 4 was odd (SG).

Last issue I mentioned one or two **Yellow-breasted Chats** that were in residence in the thick weeds and willows at Lombardi Creek from May 1 into summer (v.ob.). The presence of two birds first confirmed on July 7 (RW). Nesting was documented – the only modern breeding record away from the county's far southeast corner – on July 30, when an adult was seen tending two fledglings (DSu). An immature male **Summer Tanager** was at Rancho Del Oso on June 7 (GS), and one was heard-only at Natural Bridges on June 12 (SG). A **Spotted Towhee** at Natural Bridges on August 28 had characters of the northwestern form *oregonus*. A migrant **Lark Sparrow** was along the lower San Lorenzo River on August 24 (SG). Our resident *nuttalli* subspecies of the **White-crowned Sparrow** has been known to breed only along the immediate coastline in this county, usually within 0.2 mile of the coast. Thus, one singing on June 8 on a scrub slope above Liddell Creek one mile inland was noteworthy (DSu). There are, however, several such areas with scrub-clad slopes between Davenport and Laguna Creek that merit further exploration.

Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** brought this spring's tally to seven. They were near Summit Road on June 3-4 (WA, TSc), at Molino Creek on June 7, and at Blooms Creek in Big Basin on June 18 (DSu). An estimated 1,000 **Tricolored Blackbirds** nesting at Soda Lake on June 13 was

an exciting find (BM), as the colony at Last Chance Lagoon is the only other active nesting site known in the county. Fourteen Tricoloreds near Antonelli Pond on June 12 were unexpected, perhaps indicating post-breeding dispersal was already occurring in the region (SG). **Great-tailed Grackles** continued in the Struve Slough area into August, with many reports of 2-8 birds (v.ob.), but a group of 15 at a new housing development there on August 22 included 10 juveniles! (LH). Grackles were also seen at nearby Hanson and Harkins sloughs (RW, CK). **Hooded Orioles** continued at montane, mostly forested areas in the upper Soquel Creek watershed, with up to six visiting feeders near Jarvis Road from April to early August (K&BM, KP), and two at a feeder off Olsen Road in late June (TSu).

Small numbers of **Red Crossbills** were reported in June and July at UCSC, Last Chance Road, Bonny Doon and Big Basin (CEy, SG, DSu, DVP). The crossbills at Last Chance Road are interesting because they have been there more or less continuously for about two years. Two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** appeared at Terrace Point on August 7 (SG).

Cited Observers: Will Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Chris Berry, Matt Brady, William Bousman, Jeff Davis, Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Steve Gerow, Tonya Haff, Laird Henkel, Bambi Hopkins, Dave Kodl, Leslie Lieurance, Wayne & Sylvia Macon, Monterey Bay Whale Watch, Kevin & Barbara Monahan, Bryan Mori (BMo), Kris Olsen, Todd Newberry, Kenneth Peterson, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Bill Rydell, Teresa Scagliotti (TSc), Michelle Scott (MSc), Shearwater Journeys, Anne Spence, Madeline Spencer (MSp), Gary Strachan, David Suddjian, Thomas Sutfin (TSu), Linda Terrill, Scott Terrill, Julie Thayer, W. Breck Tyler, David Vander Pluym, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from September 1 to November 30, 2003

Fall of 2003 was said by some to be slow for rarities, and so it seemed for some groups of birds. Indeed, fall vagrant warblers, often coloring our perception of the season, were fewer than hoped for this year. But have we become spoiled in our expectations? Each year seems to raise the bar with more and more top notch discoveries. So slow or not, it is hard to complain this fall with headliners like Pinyon Jay, Yellow Rail, Thick-billed Murre, Red-throated Pipit, Mountain Plover, Laughing Gull, Tufted Duck, and many other great birds!

One avian element that certainly was lacking was winter irruptive landbirds. Fall often provides a good measure of how the winter will shape up for these species. Red-breasted Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Varied Thrushes and Red Crossbills were very sparse, and no Evening Grosbeaks were reported through November.

* * *

Fewer **Greater White-fronted Geese** were reported than in recent falls. A flock of 12 was over Capitola on October 25 (DSu), a flock of 24 flew over Chittenden Pass on November 4 (DSu), and four visited Harkins Slough on November 23 (RW). A **Snow Goose** stopped at Baldwin Creek mouth on November 24 (DSu), and two at College Lake on November 28 (CK) had increased to five by November 29 (RW). One was at Harkins Slough on November 30 (TN). **Ross's Geese** made a nice showing for November. Singles were at Harkins Slough on November 14 (JP, GS), and again November 26-29 (RW), and at Scotts Valley on November 26 (KA). Four to five were at College Lake on November 28-29 (CK, RW). **Canada Geese** were reported frequently from Harkins Slough (up to 45) and sporadically in small numbers elsewhere (v.ob.). A flock of 115 at College Lake on November 29 was noteworthy (RW). A **Mute Swan** on the ocean off West Cliff Drive from September 27 to October 2 was interesting, but certainly an escaped or released bird (SG, JHn).

A family of five **Tundra Swans** stopped at Harkins Slough on November 22 (WP, DVP). Most of our ducks are only occasionally seen on the ocean, except for the expected scoters, Red-breasted Merganser, and some rare "sea ducks." Thus, a nice assortment at sea off Seacliff State Beach on November 24 was impressive for one time and place: 23 **Green-winged Teal**, 9 **Lesser Scaup**, 6 **Northern Pintails**, and one each of **Gadwall** and **Bufflehead**, plus all three scoters (KA). One to two **Blue-winged Teal** were reported from four spots in the Pajaro Valley from September 26 to November 21 (RW, CK, AS). A **Cinnamon Teal** at Scotts Valley on November 24 was unusual for the mountain area of the county (KA). A male **Tufted Duck** was a prize at Spring Lakes Mobile Home Park in Scotts Valley on November 21 to December 1 (MG, v.ob.), providing our 4th and earliest county record. A **Greater Scaup** at Scott Creek Marsh on November 28 was rare for the county's north coast (MSc).

A pair of **Black Scoters** was at Seacliff on November 24 (KA), with three females there on November 25 (RW). Two **White-winged Scoters** at Seacliff on November 24 were the only ones reported through November (KA). The San Lorenzo River's over-summering **Bufflehead** apparently lingered to October 7; wintering birds did not arrive there until November 4 (SG). A

Common Merganser at Harkins Slough on August 17 was unusual for that locale (KA). **Wild Turkeys** continue to turn up in new spots. Singles were at UCSC in September (EJ, MC), 17 were at Glen Haven Road on October 22 (RW), an oddball was in Capitola (!) on October 30 (SM), and four were in the Forest of Nisene Marks on November 12 (DSu). A **Red-necked Grebe** at Scott Creek Marsh on October 26 was rare off the ocean (WR). More expected were reports of one to two from Hidden Beach to New Brighton State Beach on November 16-27 (DSu, KA, RW).

An influx of **Northern Fulmars** in late October coincided with a major die off observed all along the California coast from the end of October through November. Many hundreds of dead fulmars washed up on our county's beaches (v.ob.). The vast majority were dark morph juveniles, apparently all or most from large breeding colonies at the Semidi Islands in Alaska (*fide* SH). Starvation seemed to be a principal cause, but there were indications that ingestion of plastics may also have been a factor (HN & JHy, MLML). One was found dead 0.5-mile inland in a Capitola parking lot after a windy storm on November 9 provided a first record for the county away from the immediate coast (DSu). The only report of **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** for the county this fall was of two seen on the bay September 26 (CK, SJ). A **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** and a **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** were found on a September 13 trip (DSh, SJ).

Once again, the large flocks of **Ashy** and **Black storm-petrels** were sporadic and mostly missing in Monterey Bay this year. An estimated 2,800 Ashies on August 31 was the only large number found in this county, and counts of Blacks were only in single digits (DSh, SJ, RW, MBS). An Ashy found stranded on Front Street in Santa Cruz on September 26 was remarkable given the lack of fog or poor weather at the time (AJ, WBT). It was released at Cowells Beach. Many appreciated an exotic **Pink-backed Pelican** at Harkins Slough from October 24 to at least November 24 (PG, AS, v.ob.). It was variously seen on its own or with American White Pelicans, and also spent time at some other undiscovered local spot(s). The Pink-backed is a resident African pelican, and it is assumed that this bird was an escape from somewhere. Interestingly, a Pink-backed has been reported along the central California coast in mid fall in each of the last three years: at Southeast Farallon Island on October 22-24, 2000, at Abbott's Lagoon on October 31, 2001, and again at SE Farallon on November 1-2, 2002 (*fide* MR). Could all these and the Harkins bird be one and the same? If so, where does it go at other times? It is a big, fairly distinctive bird to just blend into the woodwork of the birding world.

Flocks of 3-40 **American White Pelicans** continued at Harkins Slough through October 8, and after a hiatus, flocks of 2-32 birds returned from November 10 to December. One to three were reported occasionally from the Pajaro River mouth area (MSc, JP, AS), and 10 were at Pinto Lake on October 7 (AS). A flock of 22 was over Struve Slough on November 4 (DSu). **Pelagic Cormorants** continued to venture up the lower reaches of the San Lorenzo River, with one on September 14, four on November 4 and five on November 12 (SG). An **American Bittern** at Harkins Slough on August 17 was surprisingly the only one reported from that frequently birded spot (KA). Twelve **Great Egrets** at Antonelli Pond on August 28 was a high count away from the Pajaro Valley (MSP), and seven were stalking amid the dry grasses at Terrace Point on September 14 (AG). **White-faced Ibis** had their best fall showing yet, with varying numbers present regularly at Harkins slough from September 9 to November 22 (v.ob.). Most reports were of 1-6 birds; the high count was 18 on September 23 (RW). Elsewhere, one was at Struve Slough on October 15 (AS), and three were unexpected at Merk Pond on November 13 (CK).

Ospreys seemed plentiful, with 40 reports from August to November (v.ob.), although some reports likely were repeat sightings of some of the same individuals. An adult **Swainson's Hawk** flew south over the Pajaro River on September 15 (DSu). Three reports of **Ferruginous Hawk** at

the north county coast spanned October 21 to November 28 (DSu, RDiG, RW). **Merlins** made another very strong showing, with 39 reports from September 18 through November (v.ob.). Although only half the number of reports from fall 2002, this year's showing was twice the 1997-2001 average. A spectacular surprise was a **Yellow Rail** found dead on the road at Harkins Slough on October 25 (BBr, LHem), providing the first county record of this secretive species since several specimens were collected at Scotts Valley in 1905! The specimen was placed in the collection at UCSC, and museum curator Tonya Haff reported that the bird was an adult male that had been in excellent physical condition, but it had suffered a significant trauma with internal bleeding.

A **Common Moorhen** at Antonelli Pond on November 20-29 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (KA, SG). An **American Golden-Plover** was photographed at Wilder Beach on October 4, for only the 3rd modern county record (RW). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** was at Harkins Slough on September 19 (RW). A **Snowy Plover** at Seacliff State Beach on October 20-23 was away from the species' usual haunts (RW), as were two at Natural Bridges State Beach on November 25 (EA). A **Mountain Plover** at Pajaro Dunes on October 13 was perhaps the best shorebird of the fall, providing the 3rd county record, and the first since 1991 (RWa). An out-of-place **American Avocet** was at Younger Lagoon on October 27 (WBT). Five more **Lesser Yellowlegs** through October 21 brought the season's total to about 14 birds (RW, DSu). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Struve Slough on September 15-17 (CK).

A **Willet** was exceptional inland at Harkins Slough on September 23 (DVP). One foraging on floating kelp beds off West Cliff Drive on October 21 (SG) was not far from "home," but I don't recall hearing of a Willet out on kelp before. Nine **Spotted Sandpipers** along the bluffs between New Brighton State Beach and Capitola Beach on November 21 was very many for any one area (RW). **Marbled Godwits** are usually limited to the immediate coast in this county, so the frequent presence of up to 14 inland at Harkins Slough from September 13 to November 13 was unusual (v.ob.). Three reports of single **Ruddy Turnstones** in September brought the season's total to six birds (TN, EL, AG, DSu). Pairs of **Red Knots** were at New Brighton on September 7 (NG), and the Pajaro River mouth on September 19 (MSc, JP). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Harkins Slough on September 23 (RW). Five or six **Baird's Sandpipers** visited Younger Lagoon from September 6-13 (SG, RW), and the same number of **Pectoral Sandpipers** were at three spots from September 13 to October 15 (SG, TN, AS).

Harkins Slough came through with another **Ruff** – a juvenile present September 23 to October 6 (AS, v.ob.). A **Red Phalarope** was ashore at Wilder Beach on October 8 (LG, MSc), and a windy storm in late October brought small numbers on shore at several spots from October 31 to November 4 (KA, SG, WBT). **South Polar Skuas** were found on five pelagic trips in county waters from September 13 to October 11 (SJ, MBS), with a whopping 29 tallied on a trip in both Monterey and Santa Cruz waters on October 4 (DSh, SJ). **Long-tailed Jaegers** were also plentiful. An amazing 67 were seen on a trip out of Santa Cruz on September 13, and 52 were reported from a trip in both Santa Cruz and Monterey waters on September 15 (CK, SJ). Veteran pelagic birder Ryan Terrill provided a description of three Long-taileds that he saw at close range while surfing at Soquel Point on September 30 – a remarkable occurrence along the shore.

A 2nd winter **Laughing Gull** near Wilder Beach on November 2 (SG) provided the 6th county record, and the first in 10 years. **Franklin's Gulls** made late fall appearances at Harkins Slough on November 7 (GS), and Capitola Beach on November 28 (DSu). Very rare onshore **Sabine's Gulls** included a juvenile photographed at Younger Lagoon on September 20 (SG) and a juvenile at the Pajaro River mouth on September 26-29 (RDiG). **Elegant Terns** were exceptional for their general scarcity in late summer and fall (v.ob.). A **Common Tern** ventured inland to Harkins

Slough on September 26 (RW). A **Thick-billed Murre** photographed eight miles off Santa Cruz on October 4 ranked first among rare seabirds in the county this season (DW, DSh, v.ob., SJ). A pelagic trip on October 31 found an impressive 58 **Marbled Murrelets** concentrated off Santa Cruz (DSh, PP, SJ). Few had been in the area earlier in fall. The observers speculated they may have migrated to our area from a northern population, but there is still little known about seasonal dispersal and movement of populations of this species.

Pairs of **Xantus's Murrelets** were found offshore on September 13 and 19 (DSh, SJ, RW, MBS). **Tufted Puffins** were spotted on trips on September 26 and October 12 (CK, SJ). The season's 2nd **White-winged Dove** was along Highway 1 north of Scott Creek on September 8 (DSu). A **Burrowing Owl** appeared a bit early at UCSC on September 7 (JL, BL). A **Long-eared Owl** piped up again at Soquel on September 20 (RW). **Short-eared Owls** were at Moore Creek Preserve on November 1 (SG), and at Davenport on November 14 (DSu). Late word of a **Vaux's Swift** nest in a chimney at Bonny Doon this past breeding season was exciting; there are no previous nesting records known from that area of the county (AR, RE). A Vaux's night roost in a chimney on the Westside of Santa Cruz – the first roost ever discovered in the county – was active from at least September 20 to October 2 (JHe, v.ob.). Initial reports were of “hundreds” of swifts spiraling down into the chimney shortly after sunset, but numbers dwindled on later dates.

Black-chinned Hummingbirds were found in numbers completely unprecedented for the county. Fourteen to 16 different individuals were found at Santa Cruz and Capitola from August 26 to September 27, with 12 present in just the first week of September (SG, TN, DSu, PVL)! All were females or immature males. Our previous average was only 0.8 individuals per fall. I have no idea why so many showed up this year. Also remarkable was the discovery of an **Anna's Hummingbird** nest containing two large chicks at Wilder Creek on October 24, providing solid evidence of fall nesting in the county (DSu). Amazingly, a begging juvenile Anna's was seen the same day about 100 yards away from the nest, indicating another fall nesting (DSu). Prior evidence of fall nesting in the county included a couple observations of apparently recently-fledged juveniles in November, and one of a female gathering thistle down in October, but throughout the species' California range fall nesting has apparently been only rare documented.

Lewis's Woodpeckers “irrupted” in significant numbers in many parts of the state where they are normally absent, perhaps in response to a poor acorn crop in some areas. Santa Cruz County enjoyed its best ever showing of seven individuals: one at the Pajaro River on September 15 (DSu), one at Olive Springs Road on September 28 (DSu), two at Castle Rock State Park on October 5 (CEM), one at Aptos on October 8 (MRI), one near Mt Madonna on October 18 (DSu), and one at Big Basin on October 19 (CEM). Juvenile **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were at the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on November 12 (DSu), and at Quail Hollow Pond on November 28 to December 4 (JW, CEM, DSu). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** visited Soquel on November 2 (RW). A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** showing characteristics of the Pacific Northwest form *ruber* was studied at Gray Whale Ranch on October 10 (SG). A very tardy **Olive-sided Flycatcher** perched at Aptos Creek County Park on November 8, for the county's 2nd November record (DSu). Additional **Willow Flycatchers** brought the season's total to a nice 21 birds through September 16.

A **Least Flycatcher** was at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on October 5-6 (SG). Four **Tropical Kingbirds** were found along the coast from October 18 to November 5 (SG, DSu). Like the Lewis's Woodpecker, but presumably due to different stimuli, **Pinyon Jays** also staged an exceptional invasion to areas of California well beyond their usual range, with first records obtained for several counties. Three at Chalk Mountain in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on October 5 were the first ever for the county, followed by one at Johansen Road in Big Basin on

October 8 (DSu). Others were found nearby in the mountains of southern San Mateo County. **American Crows** continued their new presence along the county's north coast (v.ob.), and over 200 attended a roost west of Santa Cruz in October (SG). **Horned Larks** in agricultural fields along the north coast included three near Table Rock on October 21 (DSu), a high count of 13 near Wilder Creek on October 24 (RW), and six near Davenport on November 14 (DSu). A rare **Bank Swallow** was at Dairy Gulch in Wilder Ranch on September 1 (DSu).

White-breasted Nuthatches were well reported. One at Corralitos was seen at intervals from August 30 to November 16 (DK). Others were at Fall Creek State Park on September 15 (SG), at Santa Cruz on September 22 (SG), and at Bonny Doon on September 26 (BBa). A flock of about eight **Western Bluebirds** was at Last Chance Road on November 13 (CEy), and a pair near the nest box trail at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park on November 21 (JW) added a glimmer of hope to their future return as a nester in the San Lorenzo Valley. **Red-throated Pipits** had a major influx along the California coast in late September and October. Five were found locally: at Younger Lagoon on September 27 (SG), West Cliff Drive on September 29 (SG), near Wilder Creek on October 20 (SG), and near Strawberry Beach and near Table Rock on October 21 (DSu). There was only one prior county record. Along with the Red-throateds came a number of **American Pipits** showing characters of the Siberian form *japonicus*. One in our county with features suggesting *japonicus* was near Wilder Creek on October 24 (RW).

The fall warbler show was lackluster. Some regular but rare vagrants were missed, and many were in below average numbers. An updated summary of rare fall warblers is at <http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org/recwarb.html>. **Tennessee Warblers** were at New Brighton on September 17 (RW) and the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on October 7 (SG). Ten **Nashville Warblers** were reported, beginning September 12 (DSu, SG, KA). A **Virginia's Warbler** at Natural Bridges on November 15 was the season's rarest, based on past county records (SG). A **Northern Parula** was at Liddell Creek on September 15 (CEm). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Noble Gulch on September 12 (DSu). A slim 12 **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were reported from August 5 to October 30 (v.ob.), and five or six **Hermit Warblers** were noted from August 3 to November 1 (SG, DSu, TN). **Prairie Warblers** were at Terrace Point on September 13 (SG) and Soquel Creek in Soquel on October 7 (DSu).

Up to 27 **Palm Warblers** found September 29 to November 28 was a pretty good showing for this relatively common vagrant (SG, DSu, RW, MSc). Five **Blackpoll Warblers** from September 7 to October 21 (DSu, RW) were highlighted by one about four miles inland at Pleasant Valley on the latter date (RW). Most of our records are from near the immediate coast. Four additional **Black-and-white Warblers** through November 7 (DSu, SG, RF) brought the season's total to five, and six more **American Redstarts** through October 21 (DSu, BBz, RW) made eight for the season. Two **Northern Waterthrushes** through September 27 made three this fall (DSu). Six **MacGillvray's Warblers** spanned August 20 to September 28 (DSu, CEm, JS, KJ). Second prize for the season goes to the **Hooded Warbler** at Harkins Slough on October 21 (RW). A female **Summer Tanager** was at Wilder Creek on November 18 (DSu).

Five **Clay-colored Sparrows** from September 29 to October 24 (DSu, RW) beat out just one **Chipping Sparrow** on September 21 (SG), a typical ratio for our county. **Vesper Sparrows** visited Antonelli Pond on September 28 (SG) and El Jarro Point on October 21 (DSu). Six **Lark Sparrows** in the Santa Cruz – Wilder Ranch area from August 24 to November 8 were more than usual (SG, MC, BMc, DSu). A bird with characters of the "Red" **Fox Sparrow** group was at Natural Bridges on November 29 (SG). **Swamp Sparrows** showed well, with nine from October 21 to November 24 (SG, DSu). Fourteen **White-throated Sparrows** were reported, beginning October 20 (v.ob.). A **Lapland Longspur** was near Needle Rock Point at Wilder Ranch on

September 29 (DSu). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a Santa Cruz yard on November 23 (S&SS). A female **Painted Bunting** along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on September 1-4 provided the 4th county record (SG, DSu).

Great-tailed Grackles seem to have been resident in parts of the Watsonville Slough system for about three years now, but several reports this fall helped to fill in some seasonal gaps where records have been lacking (AS, SL, RT, MB, LC). Of particular note were high counts from Harkins Slough of 21 on November 21 (RT, MB) and 15 on November 30 (LC). Two **Bullock's Orioles** at Natural Bridges during November 5-22 may have thinking about a winter stay (SG). Small numbers of **Red Crossbills** were reported from four widely scattered spots from September 13 to October 11 (BBa, DSu, MR, CEm).

Cited Observers: Erika Arul, Kumaran Arul, Bruce Barrett (BBa), Bonnie Bedzin (BBz), Matt Brady, Bev Brock (BBr), Les Chibana, Madeleine Clyde, Matthew Coale, Jeff Davis, Ryan DiGaudio, Roger Ekers, Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Rik Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Michael Getty, Lois Goldfrank, Phil Gordon, Norman Gross, Tonya Haff, Jean Harrison (JHn), Scott Hatch, Jim Harvey (JHy), Lynn Hemink (LHem), Jane Henderson (JHe), Laird Henkel, Ed Jameyson, Kimberley Jannarone, Alex Jones, Clay Kempf, Dave Kodl, Elana Laborde, Brian Latta, Janet Linthicum, Stephen Long, Steve Maki, Barry McLaughlin, Monterey Bay Seabirds, Kevin & Barbara Monahan, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, Shirley Murphy, Hannah Nevins, Todd Newberry, William Park, Jeff Poklen, Peter Pyle, Will Roberts, Allison Rohlen, Michael Rogers, Mike Rollins (MRI), Michelle Scott (MSc), Debra Shearwater (DSh), Shearwater Journeys, Steve & Stephanie Singer, Anne Spence, Madeline Spencer (MSp), John Sterling, Gene Stevens, David Suddjian (DSu), Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, W. Breck Tyler, David Vander Pluym, David Ward, Ricky Warriner, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1-31, 2003

The end of fall and beginning of winter were relatively slow for rare birds. Highlights cited here include a belated November report of a Pinyon Jay to tag onto the fall invasion, three Tufted Ducks, two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, another odd early winter passage of Barn Swallows, a Northern Rough-winged Swallow, a Black-throated Blue Warbler, and an Indigo Bunting. A begging juvenile Anna's Hummingbird provided more evidence of fall nesting.

Winter irruptive land birds were sparse all around, especially among the seedeaters. I don't know a time when Pine Siskins have been sparser than they were this December. The only Red-breasted Nuthatches seemed to resident birds, Red Crossbills were very few, and there were no reports of Evening Grosbeak. Maybe next year!

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Greater White-fronted Geese visited Harkins Slough from December 8-26, with reports ranging from 7 to 12 birds (RW, MSc, JP, BMc, CK). A **Ross's Goose** remained at Scotts Valley through December (BS, KA, DS, BMo). We have few records from the montane part of the county. Ross's made a very nice showing in the Pajaro Valley. Three at Harkins Slough on December 4-8 increased to five from December 9-13 (MC, TN, RW, MSc, JB, AS). One to 10 Ross's were at College Lake through December, with high counts of six on December 5 (RW) and 10 on December 13 (CK). Changing numbers suggested quite a few individuals were present there over the month. Lastly, one was at Baldwin Creek mouth on December 8 (PH). A large flock of **Canada Geese** visited College Lake all month, with a high of 168 on December 13 being a very good count for this county (CK, AS). Moderate to large flocks were reported flying over eastern Watsonville each morning, heading toward College Lake, suggesting they may have been roosting to the south at night (AS).

Reports of **Blue-winged Teal** included an impressive seven at College Lake on December 13 (AS) and 1 at Harkins Slough on December 31 (DSu). A male **Redhead** was at Corralitos Lagoon from December 12 into January (RW). A female Redhead at the golf course in Scotts Valley on December 20 was especially noteworthy in the county's montane region (CEm). The male **Tufted Duck** found at Scotts Valley on November 21 molted from eclipse plumage and lost its long tuft by early December. It was subsequently found to be moving back and forth 4.8 miles between Scotts Valley and Westlake Pond through December, and so was judged to be the same male that wintered at Westlake Pond in the past two seasons (KA, DVP, TN, BR, v.ob.). A male Tufted was accompanied by a female at San Lorenzo Park on December 13, but they did not linger (DB, LW). I am assuming it was different from the Scotts Valley – Westlake male. A **Greater Scaup** was on the ocean off Capitola on December 20-22 (DSu).

Reports of single **White-winged Scoters** at Natural Bridges State Beach on December 1 (RT) and at Seacliff State Beach on December 5 (RW) were the only ones noted in December. A **Black Scoter** was at Natural Bridges on December 1-6 (RT, SG), two were in the Capitola – New Brighton area on December 20-22 (DSu), and one was at La Selva on December 31 (DSu). **Hooded Mergansers** found away from the Pajaro Valley included one at Scotts Valley on

December 17-20 (DSu, CEm), one at Soquel on December 20 (DSu), and up to four at Waddell Creek on December 26-28 (RW, TN, MSc). **Wild Turkeys** were found on the December 20 Santa Cruz County CBC for the first time ever, with flocks at Quail Hollow Road, Glen Haven Road, and actually in Soquel near Main Street School (LBG, DSu). A **Red-necked Grebe** was off Capitola on December 12-20 (DSu).

Four **Pink-footed Shearwaters** on the December 20 CBC were a good find for early winter (RW, EL). Shearwaters in general were remarkably scarce, with no reports of Sooty or Black-vented, and very few Short-tailed. **American White Pelicans** visited Harkins Slough off an on through December, with reports of five to 16 birds (v.ob.). Pinto Lake had 23 on December 18 (JD), and two were over the Pajaro River on December 31 (PM). **Pelagic Cormorants** continued to range up the San Lorenzo River, foraging as far up as Soquel Avenue, one mile up from the ocean (SG, DVP, DSu). Three **American Bitterns** were at Pinto Lake County Park on December 22 (RW). A **White-faced Ibis** was at Harkins Slough on December 4 (MC). A number of reports of **Ospreys** suggested six different birds were lingering in the county in December (v.ob.). A **Red-tailed Hawk** with characters of the rare subspecies *harlani* was at Wilder Ranch on December 27 (SG). A **Rough-legged Hawk** at Davenport on December 20-22 was a nice find (DE, NK).

A **Peregrine Falcon** at Scott Creek Beach on December 20 had characters of the rare form *tundrinus* (GS). The **Common Moorhen** at Antonelli Pond lingered to December 20 (SG), and one (the same?) was at nearby Neary Lagoon on December 16 (MSp). Four reports of **Long-billed Curlew** in December were good for a time of year when it was, until recently, rather rare (KA, SG, DSu). A single **Ruddy Turnstone** probably accounted for several reports from four spots from Capitola Beach to 18th Avenue from December 12-20 (DSu, CK). No others were reported. Up to seven **Dunlin** between Natural Bridges and Wilder Beach from December 3-20 were apparently straggling migrants, as none were found later in the season (SG, KA, BW). A second year **Glaucous Gull** was at Capitola from December 20-22, and two juveniles were at the Buena Vista Road County Landfill on December 31 (DSu). **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were sparse, with one at West Cliff Drive on December 6 and two at Capitola Beach on December 10 being the only ones reported.

Forster's Terns were exceptionally scarce this season, and seem to have vacated the county altogether from mid-fall to the end of December. Reports at Santa Cruz on December 29-30 were the first in seven to eight weeks (KA, SG). Efforts to count **Burrowing Owls** at UCSC on December 20 indicated at least four, but perhaps as many as seven, were present (JL). A **Long-eared Owl** was at Martin Road in Bonny Doon on December 20 (MG). A begging juvenile **Anna's Hummingbird** sitting beside an adult female at Natural Bridges on December 20 provided evidence of a nesting in late November and early December (KA). The juvenile **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** found at Quail Hollow Ranch on November 18 lingered into to January, establishing the first documented over wintering span for an individual in this county (JW, DSu, BSt, SR). Another juvenile was at Scotts Valley on December 18-20 (DSu, CEm). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was north of Soquel from December 15 into January (HH, DSu), and one was at College Lake on December 31 (DSu).

A **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** was with a large Violet-green Swallow flock at College Lake on December 31 (DSu). A wave of migrant **Barn Swallows** appeared for the third winter in a row in December and January. Each time they have moved through coastal California in early winter, reaching Washington and British Columbia by late January and February, months before the real spring migrants arrive. Locally these northbound birds appear two or three months after the last fall migrants have gone away, and about two months before the usual arrivals of breeding birds in late winter. The cause and dynamics of these temporally isolated early winter pulses of

migrants remain mysterious. This year we had 10 reports in December totaling about 105 individuals (DSu, CK, S&SL, MS, RW), and others in January! The high count was an astounding 75 at College Lake on December 31 (DSu)!

A belated report of another **Pinyon Jay** was of one along the upper part of Old San Jose Road on November 9, for the 3rd county record (ST, LT). **American Crows** continue to increase in the montane areas of the county. Seventy-six were found in montane parts of the Santa Cruz County CBC circle on December 20, with most around Felton (v.ob.). **White-breasted Nuthatches** were found near De Laveaga Park on December 20 (Efr) and at Scotts Valley on December 27 (DSu). **Nashville Warblers** showed well in December, with seven individuals found (KA, DSu, SG, PM). A male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** along the river at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on December 7-9 was very late, but apparently did not winter (MR, DSu). **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were at Soquel Creek and Rodeo Gulch (DSu). **Hermit Warblers** were plentiful, with about 11 found in December (SG, TN, DSu, CEm). These included a few near the immediate coast, where they are rare. One at Capitola was residing in eucalyptus trees and stained on its face from the flowers; our winter birds are usually only found in conifer forest.

Black-and-white Warblers were at Henry Cowell on December 10 (JB), at Soquel Creek on December 12-20 (DSu), and at New Brighton State Beach on December 20-26 (DSu). Six **Palm Warblers** were found in December (MSc, DVP, SG, DSu). A **Western Tanager** was at Branciforte Dip on December 9 (DSu). **Grasshopper Sparrows** were found again in winter at Wilder Ranch State Park, with three at Engelsmann Loop Trail on December 20 (TH, RD). They appear to be regular there in winter, but how many others might be going undiscovered in similar north coast grasslands. Most suitable habitat receives little or no coverage. **Lark Sparrows** were at a Soquel feeder on December 15-27 (KH, DSu) and at Glenwood Grasslands in Scotts Valley on December 27 (DSu). Four **Swamp Sparrows** were found in December (RW, DSu). A female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was seen sporadically at a Capitola feeder from December 12 onwards (DSu). A female **Indigo Bunting** was a rare winter find at O'Neill Ranch in Soquel on December 22-25 (DSu, CEm).

A tardy, but noteworthy report of **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was of one at Harkins Slough on October 9 (NK). **Great-tailed Grackles** were noted at Harkins, Struve and Watsonville Sloughs (RW, AS, v.ob.) Several late **Bullock's Orioles** appeared, with seven seen from very late November through December (RT, SG, ST, EFe, DSu). Some were shown to linger for several weeks, but none were known to actually over winter. Two **Red Crossbills** at Natural Bridges were odd in a non-invasion winter. Three at St. Clare's Retreat north of Soquel on December 20 were the only others reported (EFe).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Jeremy Bird, David Bockman, Matthew Coale, Jeff Davis, Ryan DiGaudio, David Ekdahl, Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Eric Feuss (EFe), Rick Fournier, Ed Frost (Efr), Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Leda Beth Gray, Mark Greene, Tonya Haff, Portia Halbert, Karen Howell, Henry Hyman, Clay Kempf, Norman Kikuchi, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Sharon & Stephen Long, Barry McLaughlin (BMc), Peter Metropulos, Barbara Monahan (BMo), Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Bob Ramer, Mark Rollins, Steve Rovell, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MSc), Anne Spence, Madeline Spencer (MSp), Barry Staley (BSt), Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DSu), Linda Terrill, Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, David Vander Pluym, Brian Weed, Jim Williams, Linda Wilson, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from January 1 to March 15, 2004

The winter continued to be slow for rarities, irruptive landbirds remained scarce, and waterbirds were sparse in our nearshore waters. A few birds stood out from the crowd: a remarkable out-of-season Least Tern, a cooperative Rock Sandpiper, and the wintering Tufted Duck. One of my favorite reports was Steve Gerow's observation of a Pomarine Jaeger circling over "The Circles" neighborhood of western Santa Cruz! It was also a season to appreciate unusual foraging behavior: a Snowy Egret pulling worms, Willets stalking kelp beds, and a Mockingbird with a taste for rabbit.

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Three **Greater White-fronted Geese** were at Watsonville Slough on January 3 (DS). A flock of 65 **Snow Geese** flew over Rancho Del Oso on January 17 (KK, TN). Reports of large flocks are rare in our county. Three Snows flew by Terrace Point on February 16 (DS). The **Ross's Goose** wintering at Scotts Valley remained through February (KA). Large numbers of **Canada Geese** continued at College Lake, with 163 there on January 1 (DS), but only smaller numbers after. Decent counts elsewhere were 39 at Watsonville Slough on January 3 (DS) and 27 at Harkins Slough on January 6 (RW). A small Canada Goose residing at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz since October 29 to at least mid-March was eventually determined to have characters of the Aleutian subspecies (SG, DVP, v.ob.). A pair of large Canadas roaming around the Santa Cruz area from at least March 3-14 may have been scouting a nesting spot (MTL, SG, DVP, JL, KA).

Two **Tundra Swans** flew into Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes in the last week of January (CR). A flock of six **Brant** flying by Natural Bridges on January 24 were the only ones found this winter before the onset of spring migration in late February (LG). An impressive six to nine **Blue-winged Teal** wintered at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes from January 21 through March 11 (AS, RW, JdIT, KA). A **Cinnamon Teal** at Scotts Valley from December 14-20 was unusual for the montane part of the county (KA, CE). The male **Redhead** lingered at Corralitos Lagoon through February 4 (RW, JP, MSc). A male at Watsonville Slough on January 4 (NK) was with a female on January 7 (AS), and a male was at Harkins Slough on February 4 (JP, LG).

The wintering male **Tufted Duck** continued moving between Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley, and stayed to at least March 4, eventually being seen at four different spots (v.ob.). A photo essay on the Bird Club's website documents his changing appearance over his stay. **Greater Scaup** on the ocean included one off Seabright State Beach on February 16 (DS) and two off Seacliff on March 4 (RW). One at Baldwin Creek Marsh on February 29 was rare for the north coast (AG, EB). A handful of reports of **White-winged Scoter** suggested only 4-8 individuals wintered in the county this season (RT, RW, SG, DS). There were four reports of **Black Scoter** between New Brighton State Beach and Terrace Point from January 29 to February 23 (RW, DS). **Common Mergansers** away from their usual spots included two at the Pajaro River mouth on February 13 (RW), and one at Corcoran Lagoon on February 26 (KA).

A **Red-necked Grebe** was off Monterey Bay Academy on January 3 (DS). Small flocks (up to 16) of **American White Pelicans** continued to visit Harkins Slough at intervals through

February, and one lingered at Pajaro Dunes through the season (v.ob.). Small numbers (up to six) were reported at other a few other spots in the Pajaro Valley. **Pelagic Cormorants** continued to venture up the San Lorenzo River as far as 1.1 miles from the ocean through February (SG, DS), while another a short ways up Soquel Creek at Capitola on January 18 and February 10 was the first for that stream (RW, MP). A **Snowy Egret** pulling earthworms from a rain puddle along the railroad tracks on the Westside of Santa Cruz on February 27 was in an odd setting (SG).

This was the first winter that **White-faced Ibis** have lingered through the winter in the county. Up to five ibis continued at Harkins Slough through January 6 (CK, MTL, RW), and five at the mouth of Struve Slough on January 3 were probably the same birds (DS). Up to four at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes from late January through February 17 may have also been the same (CR, RW, JdlT). A pair of **Osprey** seen through the season ranging from New Brighton State Beach to West Cliff Drive was unusual for the mid-county coast, where they rarely overwinter (RW, JP, DS, JH). The season's only **Ferruginous Hawk** was east of Watsonville on January 3 (DS). **Merlin** had another very strong winter showing, with 65 specific reports from December 1 to March 10, and a number of other sightings that were not reported (v.ob.).

A **Common Moorhen** continued at Santa Cruz to late March (SG, MS, PVL, v.ob.). A survey of all **Snowy Plover** sites in the county on January 12-13 found 185 birds (PRBO). Nearly all (97%) were at Seabright, Laguna Creek and Scott Creek beaches. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was spotted at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on February 15 (JdlT). **Willetts** were seen foraging on kelp beds off New Brighton State Beach in January and February, following up on last fall's report of this locally rare foraging behavior (RW). **Wandering Tattler** was absent again this winter. It has now been three years since the last winter record in the county. Although not as prevalent as last year, **Long-billed Curlew** reports continued from the north coast, with three sightings reported for January and February (DS).

A single **Ruddy Turnstone** continued along the shore from Capitola Beach to Live Oak, lingering into February (DS, PD). No others were found in the county this winter. Seven **Least Sandpipers** that appeared at a rain puddle along the railroad tracks in western Santa Cruz on January 7 (SG) must have been but roaming the region, as none over-wintered in the county but for a small number in the Pajaro Valley. A single **Dunlin** persisted after December to at least February 8, ranging from Terrace Point to Wilder Ranch State Park and providing a rather rare over-wintering record away from the Pajaro Valley (RW, DVP). Our 4th record of **Rock Sandpiper** added a highlight to a season with few highlights. It was found on January 17 at the Santa Cruz Harbor jetty (BF), and then refound on January 26 at the Wilder Ranch near Fern Grotto Beach (SG). It was subsequently seen regularly from Terrace Point to West Cliff Drive into late March (v.ob.). It was documented to range along 5.5 miles of coastline during its stay, but for much of the time was seen along just 1.7 miles of coastline.

An adult **Pomarine Jaeger** circling with gulls over suburban western Santa Cruz during a stormy period on February 25 was remarkable (SG)! Eight reports of **Glaucous Gulls** were received for January and February (RW, DS, SG, KA), but I'm not sure how many were actually present. Two reports from Terrace Point were noteworthy, as they are seldom noted at Santa Cruz: a 2nd winter bird on January 21 (SG), and a juvenile on February 28 (KA). Small numbers of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** appeared in February, with a migratory movement evident on February 28 when 17 flew up the coast in one hour (KA). Perhaps the most significant record of the season was an apparent **Least Tern** videotaped and studied at length at Capitola Beach on February 26 (PD). There are no other California records for the months of January through very late March (*fide* Guy McCaskie). Although the odds weigh heavily in favor of Least Tern, the possibility of it being a vagrant *Little Tern* (a virtual look-alike) apparently can't be ruled out completely.

A **Western Screech-Owl** calling in suburban Santa Cruz near Delaware Ave. x Woodrow Ave. on March 5 was quite odd (SG). Wandering screech-owls have been heard occasionally in the High Street neighborhood (TN), but otherwise I don't know of any other suburban records in the county. A **Long-eared Owl** was calling at Gray Whale Ranch on February 27 (DS). The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** wintering at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park was enjoyed by many – the first of its kind to be widely viewed in the county – and was last reported on February 27 (JW, SR, CE, v.ob.). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** found in a Soquel orchard in December remained there until January 15 (HH). Another was at La Selva on January 1 (JVH). An apparent hybrid **Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsucker** was at Twin Redwoods Camp at Rancho Del Oso on January 3 (AD). Six **Tree Swallows** at Swanton Road on January 3 were rare for winter away from the Pajaro Valley before the return of migrants in mid-February (MSc).

The early winter passage of **Barn Swallows** (reported last issue) continued with seven more reports up to January 9, all from the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.). None lingered for more than a week. A Barn Swallow at Aptos Creel mouth on February 7 (DS) was hard to characterize, occurring well after the odd early winter passage, but about three weeks before the return of breeding migrants. A **Horned Lark**, very rarely noted in the county in winter, was in a pasture near Moore Creek Preserve on February 13 (SG). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** appeared at Corralitos on January 4 after visiting there last fall (DK), and one was at Soquel on February 12 (DS). Several **American Crows** over two miles north of Boulder Creek on March 14 were breaking new ground in this species' conquest of the San Lorenzo Valley (LF).

Western Bluebirds in expected areas included 12 at Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on January 1 (BW) and 5 at Last Chance Road on January 22 (RD). A pair at Merk Road on January 1 was in a spot lacking other recent reports (RW), as was a pair along Valencia Road in Aptos on February 27-28 (IM). A breeding pair returned to a known nesting site at Pleasant Valley Road on February 3 (RW). A pair at Quail Hollow Ranch on March 6 gave reason to hope they might resume nesting in the San Lorenzo Valley (EF). A **Northern Mockingbird** was spied picking bits of flesh from a road-killed brush rabbit at Corralitos on January 1 (DS). A **Nashville Warbler** found at Natural Bridges State Beach on February 27 joined one already known to be wintering there (SG), and brought the season's total up to a healthy eight individuals.

Two **Black-throated Gray Warblers** discovered in February added to a fairly meager winter total of just four (SG, JA). Nine more **Hermit Warblers** found in January and February carried the season's tally up to an impressive 20 (RD, DS). Many were found at regular wintering sites (e.g., Rancho Del Oso, Last Chance Road, and Mt Hermon), but several were along the mid-county coast where winter records are few. Five more **Palm Warblers** brought the winter's total up to a nice 11 birds (SG, EF, MTL, DS). A **Western Tanager** was at Arana Gulch Open Space on February 16 (DS). A **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Moore Creek Preserve on March 9 was probably an early migrant, making for a record early appearance (SG). A **Lark Sparrow** at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on February 21 provided a rare winter record from a suburban area (SG).

Five more **Swamp Sparrows** in January and February were all at expected spots (SG, DS). **White-throated Sparrows** were found in record numbers this winter, with 52 reports from December 1 to March 15, and 24 found just within the city of Santa Cruz (v.ob.)! Six at together in a Santa Cruz yard were exceptional (TN). This season's total was 50% above the average for recent years, but some winters have had similar tallies (e.g., 48 in winter 1998-1999). About 12 **Tricolored Blackbirds** on the beach at Waddell Creek mouth on February 22 were in an unusual

setting (JW). **Great-tailed Grackles** continued at Struve and Harkins sloughs, with a peak winter count of 19 at Harkins on January 24 (AS). A male was at Capitola on March 7 (DS).

An immature male **Bullock's Oriole** at Antonelli Pond on January 29 and March 14 was probably one that had been there in early December (SG). A female was near Neary Lagoon on February 13 (SG). Two **Red Crossbills** at Pogonip on February 15 were the only ones mentioned in this reporting period (DS). **Pine Siskins** remained remarkably scarce through the end of winter (v.ob), with sightings of even single birds meriting mention by active local birders! The Rancho Del Oso – Swanton region seemed to be the only area with even a modicum of siskins (LGo), but in most other areas they were simply absent.

Cited Observers: Jan Alexander, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, David Bockman, Ryan DiGaudio, Al Dimartini, Paul Donahue, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss (EFe), Linda Fippin, Brian Fitch, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Jean Harrison, Henry Hyman, Ken Kellman, Clay Kempf, Norman Kikuchi, David Kodl, Janet Linthicum, Ingrid Mednis, Todd Newberry, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Jeff Poklen, Mark Paxton, Caroline Rodgers, Steve Rovell, Michelle Scott (MSc), Anne Spence, Madeline Spencer (MSp), David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Jeana de la Torre, Monte Tudor-Long, Jim Van Houten, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, Brian Weed, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from March 15 to May 31, 2004

Spring migration on the whole seemed fairly slow, but a strong showing of vagrants livened things up in in May, becoming even more exciting in June (to be covered next issue). Eight species of vagrant warblers were found in April and May, with still others appearing in June, surpassing any prior spring for variety. First spring records were logged for White-winged Dove, Chimney Swift, Rock Wren, and Tennessee Warbler.

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The **Ross's Goose** wintering at Scotts Valley lingered to at least April 1 (KA). The introduced resident form of **Canada Goose** (subspecies *moffitti*) has been undergoing a period of transition in its status in Santa Cruz County during the breeding season, paralleling its notable increase at other seasons. Although *moffitti* has become a common breeder in some adjacent counties (e.g., Santa Clara and Monterey), until these past two years it has been rather rare and local in Santa Cruz County during the breeding season. Following a first county nesting at Pinto Lake in 1996 (and occasional subsequent nesting there), a second county breeding locality was not added until 2003. But also last year, one or more pairs finally showed evidence of prospecting nest sites along the mid-county coast. This year moderate numbers were found in the Pajaro Valley in spring (e.g., 30 over Watsonville on May 24 [CK]), and pairs were widely noted in the mid-county region. A third Pajaro Valley nesting site was added on May 12, when a pair with downy young was seen at Watsonville Slough on May 12 (DVP). A family at Corcoran Lagoon confirmed the first nesting along the mid-county coast on May 6 (KA). Among the other "Canada" Geese forms, the apparent Aleutian **Cackling Goose** remained at the San Lorenzo River to at least May 22 (v.ob.). Two mid-sized geese judged to be most likely subspecies *parvipes* (now part of Canada Goose) were at Westlake Pond on April 17 (SG).

Two **Blue-winged Teal** at Watsonville Slough at Ford Road on April 12 were the only ones reported this spring (RW). Four **Northern Shovelers** at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on May 16 were tardy for this county (RW). A pair of **Lesser Scaup** at Younger Lagoon on May 27 was similarly late (LG, SG). **Common Merganser** families at Kings Creek on May 4 (BM) and Bear Creek on May 30 (DS) were the first reports of nesting from those two tributaries of the San Lorenzo River. **Wild Turkeys** continued to be reported from varied and far-flung localities, such that they are apparently now quite widespread, if still rather uncommon in most areas (v.ob). **Mountain Quail** were heard at two spots along Summit Road southeast of Loma Prieta on May 15, both new locations for Summit Ridge (DS). A flock of 14 **Pacific Loons** flying more than a mile inland over western Santa Cruz on April 10 were unusual (SG), as even in migration this species is very rarely reported away from the ocean in our county.

The season's only rare seabird was a **Manx Shearwater** spied among a flock of Sooty Shearwaters off Lighthouse Point on May 4 (KA). **American White Pelicans** continued in their increasing presence with seven reports from the Watsonville Slough system in April and May. Peak counts were both on May 16: 50 at Harkins Slough (a new spring record; JW) and 27 at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes (RW). An immature **Brown Pelican** at Harkins Slough on April 7 was unusual inland, and the first such county record for spring (RW). An **American**

Bittern at Quail Hollow Ranch on April 28 was rare for the San Lorenzo Valley, especially in spring (KF). A **White-faced Ibis** at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on March 20 was perhaps one of those that had wintered in the Monterey Bay area (CR). A **Swainson's Hawk** passing over Capitola on April 25 was par for the season (DS). The last **Merlin** reported for the season was slightly late at Natural Bridges State Beach on May 4 (SG).

Nesting was confirmed for **Peregrine Falcon** at two previously known sites this season, and probable at two others (*fide* JL, DS). The wintering **Common Moorhen** lingered at Neary Lagoon to April 10 (SG, MSp). Another at Westlake Pond from March 27 to April 17 was in an odd spot for the species (SG, DL, PR). A dapper **Pacific-Golden Plover** paused at Waddell Creek mouth on May 19 (DS). Spotted **Solitary Sandpipers** were at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on April 24 (SG), and at Watsonville Slough on May 10 (DS). A spring migrant **Wandering Tattler** at West Cliff Drive on April 19 was the first noted in the county since the last fall migrant on October 28 (SG). Gerow's observations at Santa Cruz documented a tidy migration period from April 19 to May 15. A single **Ruddy Turnstone** at West Cliff Drive on March 18-29 was the only migrant found this season (RT, MB, DVP, SG, KA, AG). A flock of at least 134 **Surfbirds** at West Cliff on April 10 was an exceptionally large flock for our county (KA).

Two migrant **Red Knots** flew by West Cliff on March 29, providing one of the few spring records for the county (SG). The wintering **Rock Sandpiper** found on January 17 was last seen at West Cliff on April 18 (v.ob.). It was molting by March 18, and in full alternate plumage by April 16, shortly before it disappeared. Migrant **Franklin's Gulls** included two at Lombardi Creek mouth on May 9 (DS), one at Watsonville Slough on May 10 (DS), and 1 at Baldwin Creek mouth on May 17 (JP, MSc, LG). A few **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were found on or near the shore through May 15 (KA, MH, RW). A **Black Skimmer** was on Capitola Beach on May 5 (DS). A **White-winged Dove** at Neary Lagoon on May 14 was exceptional for Northern California in spring, and the county's first spring record (SW). A **Common Poorwill** was at the Chalks in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on May 19 (DS). Five **Black Swifts** at Natural Bridges State Beach on May 10 were the first of the season, but the only report for May (SG).

A **Chimney Swift** along the coast of Wilder Ranch on May 24 provided the third county record and its first for spring (RW). After a few springs with a good showing by rare western hummers, this spring's only prize was a female **Calliope Hummingbird** at Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta on March 23, providing the county's earliest record (RT, MB). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** at Santa Rosalia Mountain made a rare spring appearance on May 14 (DS). A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at Aptos Creek in the Forest of Nisene Marks on May 13 was at a new locality for the breeding season (DS). A **Willow Flycatcher** was at Felton on May 29 (DS). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was at Natural Bridges State Beach on April 27 (SG). The county's 7th **Cassin's Kingbird** visited Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on March 31 (DS). A nice concentration of eight to 10 **Western Kingbirds** gathered at Moore Creek Preserve on May 5 (SG).

Purple Martin went unreported this spring (and summer), despite visits to the two areas where the species had recently nested (*fide* DS). A **Bank Swallow** was at Younger Lagoon on April 6 (SG). **American Crows** ranged into the upper watershed of the San Lorenzo River for the first time in the breeding season. Small numbers were noted two miles north of Boulder Creek in late March and early April (LF). Two or three at the county line at Saratoga Gap on March 28 were the first reported from the summit of the Santa Cruz Mountains (EF, TN). A pair was at Boulder Creek on May 30 (DS). The county's first spring migrant **Rock Wren** was oddly situated in a forested setting near Soquel Demonstration State Forest on May 11 (DS). A pair of **Western Bluebirds** nested in a box at Quail Hollow Ranch, with young in the nest by April 26 (EF, LBG,

DD, JW, LF et al.). Unfortunately the nest had failed by May 1. This was the first reported nesting in the San Lorenzo Valley since 1988, although bluebirds were formerly fairly common there. A successful nest was along Mount Madonna Road (DT).

Breeding **Varied Thrush** were found at six scattered spots in Big Basin Redwoods State Park in late May, including one along China Grade on May 31, the first in the Boulder Creek watershed (DS). The county's first spring **Tennessee Warbler** was singing at Natural Bridges on May 31 (JH, SG). Two migrant **Nashville Warblers** were reported this spring (SG, DS), a paltry total compared to the 10-18 birds we've had in the previous three springs. A **Northern Parula** was singing at Rancho Del Oso on May 31 (CE), and a **Magnolia Warbler** sang at Capitola on May 26 (DS). A **Palm Warbler** and **Black-and-white Warbler** together at Neary Lagoon on April 15 were mostly likely spring migrants rather than lingering wintering birds (SG). Another Black-and-white was along the Pajaro River on May 10 (DS). A male **American Redstart** was at Rancho Del Oso on May 27 (DS). An unseen **Ovenbird** sang at Aptos Creek in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on May 13 (DS).

MacGillivray's Warblers were noted in May at known breeding areas at Soquel Demonstration State Forest, Rancho Del Oso, and near Cascade Creek (DS). A concentration of five males singing on territory along 0.7 mile of Chalk Mountain Road near Cascade Creek on May 19 was perhaps the highest concentration ever found in the county. We may not think of **Common Yellowthroats** as local migrants, but birds out of place at Bethany Curve in Santa Cruz on May 16 and near the Big Trees Grove at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on May 26 were certainly in that class (SG). The plumage of the former was noted to be "different in several respects from local residents," suggesting perhaps a vagrant subspecies (SG). A **Hooded Warbler** at Neary Lagoon on May 7 (SG) was at the vanguard of an unprecedented spring showing that appeared mostly in June. The only reports of **Yellow-breasted Chats** were one at Neary Lagoon on April 25 (LG, WG), and one at Lombardi Creek on May 25, where nesting occurred last year (DS).

Two **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** on the slopes above Soda Lake on March 30 were from the only area where this species occurs regularly in the county (DS). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Wilder Ranch State Park on March 25 was probably lingering from winter (SG). Two or three **Grasshopper Sparrows** singing on a grassy ridge near Merk Pond on April 6 were rare for the floor of the Pajaro Valley and the Corralitos area (BM). A late **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was at Meder Canyon on May 12 (SG). Three male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** on May 24-28 (BK, J&JG, SG) led the way in the now-typical late spring surge that peaked in June. Hundreds of **Tricolored Blackbirds** at Soda Lake on May 6 (DJ) suggested continued nesting at this breeding colony that was discovered last year. Small numbers were present at Last Chance Lagoon in late May, but no nesting was evident at that time (DS). A flock of 35-40 flew in to Antonelli Pond on May 17, where they do not nest, and were unexpected in spring (SG).

Great-tailed Grackles continued in the area around Struve Slough, where they are resident (v.ob.). Away from there up to four males were found in western Santa Cruz from May 2-16 (BK, CL, AG). A few reports of **Red Crossbills** included two or three at UCSC on April 12 (MB), two at Pogonip on May 18 (SG), and one at Kings Creek on May 20 (DS). After a winter with hardly any, beginning in late March **Pine Siskins** returned in some numbers to areas on the coastal slope of Ben Lomond Mountain, from Pogonip through Bonny Doon to Rancho Del Oso (v.ob.). One singing at Spanish Ranch Road in the upper Soquel Creek watershed on May 22 was one of few found elsewhere, and was in an area where breeding has yet to be confirmed (KA). **Lawrence's Goldfinch** nested again at Sunset State Beach, where a pair was building a nest in a cypress on April 28 (RD). Four were there on May 16 (RW).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, David Bockman, Matt Brady, Ryan DiGaudio, David Drake, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss (EFe), Linda Fippin, Kyri Freeman, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, JJ & Joan Gonzales, Leda Beth Gray, Marlin Harms, Jason Hoeksema, David Johnston, Brad Keitt, Clay Kempf, Dottie Lieber, Janet Linthicum, Carol Long, Bryan Mori, Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Peter Radcliff, Caroline Rodgers, Michelle Scott (MSc), Anne Spence, Madeline Spencer (MSp), David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Jeana de la Torre, Deanna Turner, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe, Stan Wulkowicz. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from June 1 to August 15, 2004

An Awesome Vagrant Season

Spring and early summer 2004 brought a spectacular windfall of vagrant landbirds to Santa Cruz County and other parts of California. Species of the Southeastern U. S. figured prominently, recalling a similar major invasion of Southeastern species in spring and summer of 1992. Unfortunately, birding coverage was light in the county during the 1992 event, and only a few vagrants were reported then. Better coverage this year helped rake in a bevy of exciting records, not all of species from the Southeast. Reprising some of those cited in the last issue, here are the totals for these vagrants found in the county from April to July 2004:

White-winged Dove, 1	Black-and-White Warbler, 4
Chimney Swift, 2	American Redstart, 2
White-eyed Vireo, 1	Prothonotary Warbler, 1
Red-eyed Vireo, 3	Northern Waterthrush, 1
Brown Thrasher, 1	Ovenbird, 1
Tennessee Warbler, 1	Hooded Warbler 11
Northern Parula, 6	Summer Tanager, 2
Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1	“Slate-colored” Junco, 1
Magnolia Warbler 1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak 14
Palm Warbler, 1	Indigo Bunting, 3

The 11 species of vagrant warblers found this season was more than two times the previous high of six species, and nearly three times the recent spring/summer average of 3.7 species! A total of 30 individual vagrant warblers smashed the previous high of just nine, and was more than six times the average.

Populations of Some Breeding Waterbirds

Breeding populations of several waterbirds were determined this season (CE, DS, SG, BM):

- **Double-crested Cormorant:** 93 nests in two colonies in eucalyptus trees at Schwan and Pinto lakes.
- **Pelagic Cormorant:** 79 nests in 12 colonies on coastal cliffs from Opal Cliffs in Capitola to El Jarro Point. Colony size ranged from 3-16 nests (average 6.6 nests).
- **Brandt’s Cormorant:** 56 nests in three colonies – on the old Davenport Pier, on the mainland cliff at Natural Bridges, and on a sea stack at Lighthouse Field.
- **Great Blue Heron:** 14 nests in eucalyptus trees at Pinto and Kelly lakes, the Santa Cruz Harbor. A small number of pairs may have been overlooked elsewhere.
- **Great Egret:** 3 nests in eucalyptus at Pinto Lake, the county’s only confirmed nesting site.
- **Black Oystercatcher:** 21 nesting pairs plus approximately 30 additional non-breeders. Found from West Cliff Drive to Waddell Bluffs, but nesting limited rocky shelves, islets and sea stacks from near WilderCreek to Pelican Rock.
- **Western Gull:** 135 nests at 60 sites from Capitola / Soquel to near Greyhound Rock. Sites had

from one to 35 nests, but most (78%) had just 1-2 nests, and only two sites (Natural Bridges and Capitola Mall) had more than six nests. Most sites (53) were on coastal cliffs or sea stacks, but seven sites were on rooftops, and 30% of the county population was breeding on rooftops from 0.7 to 2.0 miles inland from the ocean.

- **Pigeon Guillemot**: estimated 325-350 nesting pairs from Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf to near Greyhound Rock. All nests were in natural settings on cliffs or sea stacks, except for two pairs that nested under the municipal wharf.

* * *

The **Cackling Goose** lingered at San Lorenzo Park to at least June 1 (SG). High counts of the growing population of resident **Canada Geese** were about 70 at Pinto Lake on July 5 (CK), and 92 at Harkins Slough on August 7 (RW). A survey from a small plane on August 8 found 129 at three spots in the Pajaro Valley (MR). Rare summer records of ducks included a male **Ring-necked Duck** at Scott Creek Marsh on August 11 (DVP), a pair of **Greater Scaup** at the Pajaro River mouth on June 25 (RW), and a female **Bufflehead** there on June 25 – July 24 (RW). Good coastal coverage produced counts of over-summering loons, with at least eight **Red-throated**, 33 **Pacific**, and seven **Common** (CE, DS, RW, SG, WBT). **American White Pelicans** continued to increase, with another record showing for the summer season (RW, BM, AS, BS, JH, MR, DS). They were found (range of counts in parentheses) at Harkins (8 - 98), Struve (4 -186) and Watsonville (8 – 85) Sloughs , Pajaro River mouth (12 – 42), and Pinto Lake (5-42) and Lake Tynan (up to 36). An flight in a small plane over the Pajaro Valley on August 8 tallied a total of 377 at the five spots listed above (MR)!

Brown Pelicans appeared along the coast in huge numbers during late June and July. Three reports from inland sites, all of young birds, were quite unusual for the county: one was standing in grassland (!) at Pogonip Park on July 4 (SL); one was at Pinto Lake on July 21 (MR); and a flock of six flew northwest along the crest of the mountains at Castle Rock State Park on July 29 (DS). An adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Sempervirens Reservoir in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on June 21-26 must have dispersed from nesting areas outside the county, and they are generally rare in montane parts of the county (DS). **White-faced Ibis** continued their recent pattern of “fall” presence in the county, and extended it into July this year, with three to six visiting Harkins Slough on July 6-23 (RW, DVP). There was but one prior county record for July. Early August had three to seven at Struve Slough on August 4-8 (CK, MR), and one to two at Harkins on August 6-15 (RW). The latter included the first report of an adult in the county in fall, as all others reported to age have so far been juveniles.

Osprey established a second nesting station in the county, with two active nests found at Loch Lomond on July 27 (CB). A pair continued to nest in the San Vicente Creek watershed, where nesting was first confirmed several years ago (MG). These are the only confirmed nesting pairs for the Santa Cruz Mountains and Monterey Bay regions. A pair of urban nesting **Cooper’s Hawks** continued at Watsonville, where a nest with young found on June 5 on the same property as the county’s first record of urban nesting in 2003. A **Black-necked Stilt** at Natural Bridges State Beach on July 5 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). An adult **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Laguna Creek Marsh on June 24 was the earliest southbound bird ever found in the county by 15 days. This was followed by 9-12 juveniles at Harkins Slough from July 26 to August 15 (RW, KA), and one at Younger Lagoon on July 13 (SG). **Marbled Godwits** were inland at Harkins Slough from July 26 to August 14, with a high count of eight on August 12 (KA, RW).

A **Red Knot** paused at Waddell Creek mouth on July 22 (DS). **Semipalmated Sandpipers** made a very strong showing. The county’s earliest ever was at Harkins Slough on July 22 (RW), with one to three others there between August 7-15 (RW, KA). One to three visited Younger Lagoon

on from August 6-11 (SG, DVP), and one was at Wilder Creek mouth on August 7 (DS). **Baird's Sandpipers** were at Younger on August 3 (SG) and Harkins on Aug 11 (RW). An early **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Wilder Creek mouth on August 7 was the first adult ever reported in the county during fall migration (DS). Reports of **Wilson's Phalaropes** included singles at Natural Bridges on July 12 (SG) and Younger on July 22 (SG), and up to five at Harkins on July 31 to August 14 (RW, DS). A **Franklin's Gull** was at Aptos Creek mouth on June 3 (AS). A late **Mew Gull** was there June 1-10 (JP, JH).

We have known numerous pairs of **Western Gulls** were nesting on the rooftops of Capitola Mall for several years now, but lack of access precluded any actual census. A series of helicopter flights over the mall this June 2-5 confirmed at least 35 and possibly as many as 40 nesting pairs, making this inland site the largest gull colony in the county (MO)! Two **Least Terns** were at Aptos Creek mouth on July 10 (ST, LT), and one was at Capitola Beach on July 16 (DS). **Black Terns** were found at Wilder Creek Beach on July 31 (JH), and Harkins Slough on August 6 (DS). On of the summer's most remarkable finds was a healthy breeding-plumaged **Horned Puffin** found foraging in the surf zone off Live Oak and Capitola on July 15-15 (AJ, AM, RW, DS). This was the first near shore sighting of this rarity for the county, although there are several records of beach cast specimens. A **Common Poorwill** near Middle Ridge Fire Road in Big Basin on June 17 was the first report from that area (DS). A calling **Long-eared Owl** in the same area that night hinted that nesting may occur there (DS).

A third year of intensive efforts to document breeding by **Black Swifts** failed again to find any nests or strong evidence of nesting in the county (CE, DS, SG, v.ob.), and unlike 2002 and 2003 there was no concentration of activity in the West Cliff Drive area. After an early migrant on May 10, there were 11 reports of Black Swifts in the county spanning June 1 to July 28. Only three scattered singles were noted in June. Things heated up in July a bit when one was seen flying to a cliff face on the Wilder Ranch coast on July 9 (SG). However, focused efforts over the following weeks indicated no nest was present. Swifts continued to be seen there through July 25, however, peaking at 20 on July 15 (SG, DS). The situation remained mysterious for this difficult-to-study species, but I think the July flurry was best explained as a pulse of migrants. None were seen at the two historical inland nest sites.

A **Chimney Swift** at Sempervirens Reservoir in Big Basin on June 26 provided the 4th county record (DS). A flock of 20 **Vaux's Swifts** there on June 21 was the most found in the park outside of migration periods during extensive fieldwork from 2001 – 2004 (DS). An adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** at Natural Bridges on June 4 was perhaps a very early fall migrant, although the onset of southbound migration is poorly documented in the county (BS). Adults male Rufous are generally quite rare in summer in the county, so one at UCSC Arboretum on July 7 was also of note (SG). More records of locally nesting **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** included singles at Scott Creek near Archibald Creek on June 1 and June 24, at Soquel Creek north of Soquel on June 8, at the West Branch of Liddell Creek on June 9, at Rancho del Oso on June 15, and at the East Branch of Soquel Creek on June 25 (DS). An adult with two juveniles was along the East Fork of Waddell Creek on July 6 (DS).

Extensive field work at Big Basin on July 3-7 resulted in detections of an estimated 32-35 **Pileated Woodpeckers**, showing how numerous that species has become in much of the park (DS). A juvenile **Say's Phoebe** at Moore Creek Preserve on July 23 was the first record of a post-breeding dispersant for the county, well ahead of the arrival of fall migrants in mid-September (SG). Four **Western Kingbirds** along the north county coast from June 4-24 were probably tardy migrants (SG, DS). The county's first **White-eyed Vireo** was a singing male along the West Fork of Waddell Creek in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on June 15 (DS). Several others were found

in central California this season, for what may be their strongest showing ever. Three **Red-eyed Vireos** were amazing, as we had only one prior spring record. They were at Neary Lagoon on June 9 (SG), at Wilder Creek on June 24 (DS), and at Rancho del Oso on July 5 (MSc).

A migrant **Purple Martin** was at Sunset State Beach on August 6, and a migrant **Bank Swallow** was at Davenport Landing on July 23 (DS). A hybrid **Cliff x Barn Swallow** was a remarkable find at Moore Creek Preserve on July 23, the first report of such a hybrid for the county (SG). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at Corralitos on July 7 for a rare summer record (DK). Some dispersing **House Wrens** appeared in the county about a month early, with the first at Natural Bridges on June 26 (SG). **Western Bluebirds** included those at known nesting spots, such as Last Chance Road on June 1 (DS) and Pleasant Valley Road on August 11 (RW), but one female at UCSC on June 2 was the first breeding season report from that former nesting station in several years (KA). A **Varied Thrush** was in the Opal Creek watershed at Big Basin on July 3-20 (DS). The county's 3rd **Brown Thrasher** (and first since 1983) was singing near Middle Ridge Fire Road in Big Basin on June 22 (DS). Five new **Northern Parulas** from June 7 to July 2, plus one cited in the last issue, set a record spring total of six, far over the recent average of just 0.8 per spring. Two occurrences were especially interesting, hinting at possible nesting in suitable habitat. One male was apparently singing on territory along the East Branch of Liddell Creek from June 9 to July 2 (DS, CE). A pair was in lichen festooned Monterey pine forest at Wilson Gulch (near Waddell Bluffs) from June 19 to at least June 28, with the female seen in close proximity to the singing male on three dates (CE). Unfortunately, no subsequent visits checks were possible. A female **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Rancho del Oso on June 11 (DS).

The locally breeding **Yellow-rumped Warblers** are very rarely noted dispersing after nesting in our county. Two such records were reported this summer, with one at Ben Lomond on July 7 (LBG) and one at Harkins Slough on July 9 (ST, SR). A female **Townsend's Warbler** spent the summer at East Ridge in Big Basin Redwoods State Park, being noted from June 19 to July 19 (DS). This is apparently only the 2nd record of an over-summering Townsend's for California, with the first also from Santa Cruz County. **Black-and-white Warblers** at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on June 6 (DS), and at Santa Cruz on June 23 (RD) brought the season's total to a record setting four. An **American Redstart** was at Davenport Landing on June 16 (DS). A male **Prothonotary Warbler** at Carbonera Creek on June 12 provided the 2nd spring record for the county (DS). A **Northern Waterthrush** at Rancho del Oso on June 7 was another exceptional spring record (CE), the first for the county since 1987.

Among the vagrant warblers, the showing by **Hooded Warblers** was the most impressive. Including one cited in the last issue, a staggered 11 individuals were found in the county from May to early August (SG, KA, DS, MH, CE, DVP). This compares to only six prior records for this period, and a recent average of just 0.3. Eight of the 11 were found in June. Remarkably, nesting was confirmed for the county at the East Branch of Soquel Creek in Soquel Demonstration State Forest, where a male was found on territory on July 16, and a female was seen feeding a begging youngster on August 10 (DS). Along with a successful nesting documented at Big Sur this season, this was the first breeding evidence for northern California! Young male **Summer Tanagers** were at Liddell Creek on June 10 (DS), and at Natural Bridges on June 24 (SG). A **Sage Sparrow** at Castle Rock State Park on June 30 was at an established haunt (DS), but we had no reports of **Black-chinned Sparrow** this breeding season.

A singing **Grasshopper Sparrow** was at West Struve Slough on June 21-29 was rare for the floor of the Pajaro Valley (BM, MA). A female junco at Natural Bridges on June 24 showing characters of "**Slate-colored**" **Junco** was unprecedented for the breeding season in this county (SG). A flood of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** occurred in spring and early summer, although the

14 found from May 24 to July 10, was not quite a record-breaker (DS, SG, PB, STr, BBe). One at Bonny Doon on August 5 fit a pattern for fall migrants (BBa). **Indigo Buntings** included a female at Summit Road and an adult male at Mount Madonna Road on June 6 (DS), and a 1st year male at Neary Lagoon on June 10 (PB). **Tricolored Blackbirds** turned up in a few odd spots, with small numbers at Englesman Loop Trail in Wilder Ranch State Park and near the west border of Santa Cruz on June 4 (SG), and near West Struve Slough on June 22 (BM).

Great-tailed Grackles continued at East Struve Slough through the summer, with a high of 16 adults on June 23, and adults seen carrying food to nests on June 22 (BM). Singles were seen near La Selva on June 10 (JH) and at Harkins Slough on July 11 (B&KM), and two were at Pajaro Dunes on June 25 (RW). Montane **Hooded Orioles** continued in the upper Soquel Creek watershed, with a remarkable seven found in one yard above the West Branch this breeding season (B&KM). Reports from a Ben Lomond feeder on July 11 and August 13 were among very few known for the San Lorenzo Valley (LBG, DD). Nesting continued at the only known north coast locality, near Majors Creek, with two active nests on July 17 (JL, BL). A female **Red Crossbill** was collecting nest material at Last Chance Road on June 1 (DS), where the species has been more or less resident (or at least present) for the last few years. One at suburban Santa Cruz on August 3 was notable for the developed mid-county area during summer (KA). A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at Sunset State Beach on August 6 (DS).

Cited Observers: Mark Allaback, Kumaran Arul, Bruce Barrett (BBa), Bonnie Bedzin (BBe), Chris Berry, Phil Brown, Ryan DiGaudio, David Drake, Chris Emmons, Steve Gerow, Leda Beth Gray, Mark Greene, Maryann Harris, Jason Hoeksema, Alex Jones, Clay Kempf, David Kodl, Sha Labare, Brian Latta, Janet Linthicum, Alison Markiewicz, Barbara & Kevin Monahan, Bryan Mori, Mark Olden, Jeff Poklen, Mark Rollins, Steve Rottenborn, Michelle Scott (MSc), Barbara Scharfenstein, Anne Spence, David Suddjian, Linda Terrill, Scott Terrill, Jeana de la Torre, Steve Tronick (STr), W. Breck Tyler, David Vander Pluym, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from August 15 – September 30, 2004

A juvenile **Greater White-fronted Goose** at the lower San Lorenzo River on September 17-20 was one of the county's earliest migrants on record (SG, AG). The resident form (*moffitti*) of the **Canada Goose** continues to gather strength in the Pajaro Valley. High counts were 152 and 222 at Harkins Slough on September 17 (SW) and September 21 (DVP), respectively. A **Greater Scaup** was on the ocean at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on September 30 (KA). Five **Common Mergansers** at the Pajaro River mouth on September 6 were rare for the Pajaro Valley (PM). **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** found on pelagic trips included one on September 12 and three or four on September 25 (SJ). **Buller's Shearwaters** were fairly common this season, and some were spied from shore, e.g., up to eight from Terrace Point on September 9 (KA), and three from Table Rock on September 27 (DS).

Pelagic trips encountered flocks of storm-petrels in decent numbers southwest of Davenport for a few weeks in September (SJ, MBWW). Peak counts of the two common species were 4,000 **Ashy Storm-Petrels** and 150 **Blacks** on September 11 (SJ). **Least Storm-Petrels** were found in county waters for the first time since 2000. They were seen on four trips from September 5-19 (SJ, MBWW), with a high count of 25 on September 11 (SJ). A single **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** reported on four trips over the same span was perhaps the same bird each time (SJ, MBWW). Numbers of **American White Pelicans** peaked in early summer this year (see last issue) with relatively small numbers continuing into fall compared to the last few years. Most reports were from Harkins Slough and the Pajaro River mouth (v.ob.), where numbers ranged from single digits into the 30s and 40s, with a peak for the period of 50 at Harkins on September 3 (RW). One at Corralitos Lagoon on August 31 was at a spot where they are rarely found (RW).

Some young **Brown Pelicans** wandered up the San Lorenzo River as far as Riverside Avenue in September (SG). Younger Lagoon hosted a high concentration of **Great Egrets** for Mid-County, with 14-17 reported from August 26 to September 11 (LG, AK, SC, SG). A **Cattle Egret** at Harkins Slough from September 17-23 was the first reported in the county in about 3.5 years (SW, v.ob.)! Small numbers of **White-faced Ibis** continued at Harkins and Struve sloughs into September (BM, RW, LG, JP, DL), with a peak of 8 at Harkins on September 29 (DL). Three **Prairie Falcons** were unusually many for the county in one season. They were over the UCSC Arboretum on August 26 (TN), Carleton Road east of Watsonville on September 16 (DS), and the westside of Santa Cruz on September 25 (SG). Reports of **Lesser Yellowlegs** ranged from 1-5 birds at Harkins Slough in late August and September (SW, RW, SR, KA), and three were at Watsonville Slough on August 24 (RW).

A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Harkins Slough on September 3 (RW). **Marbled Godwits** continued their recent pattern of late summer records at Harkins Slough; the high count was 28 on August 24 (KA). A **Surfbird** flew up the coast at the Pajaro River mouth on September 6, rare for the sandy inner shores of Monterey Bay (PM). A **Red Knot** paused at the Pajaro River mouth on August 27 (RW). An additional **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Harkins Slough on September 2 (RW) added to the season's record showing of 5-9 individuals. Approximately eight **Baird's Sandpipers** were noted at four locations from mid-August to September 8 (v.ob.). About 20-24 **Pectoral Sandpipers** were reported from August 22 through September (v.ob.). Two were at the

north coast (MSc, LG), but all the rest were at Harkins Slough, where peak counts of nine were reported on September 23 and 29 (LG, JP, DL).

A juvenile **Stilt Sandpiper** at Wilder Creek mouth on September 3 was the county's sixth, and the earliest record by 7 days (DS). The county's second **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was a juvenile at Harkins Slough on September 17 (SW), 15 years after our first record. A juvenile **Ruff** visited Harkins on September 23-24 (RW, LG, JP). Two **Wilson's Phalaropes** were at Harkins on August 24 (RW). **South Polar Skuas** were seen on six pelagic trips from September 5-25, with high counts of 4-5 on September 11-12 (SJ, MBWW). Two juvenile **Sabine's Gulls** appeared along the coastline: at Terrace Point on September 21 (SG) and Baldwin Creek mouth on September 27 (DS). Single **Tufted Puffins** were spied in county waters on trips on September 5, 11 and 25 (SJ). **White-winged Doves** were well reported, with a record four in the county, and they had a good season elsewhere in Northern California. Our local birds were found at Porter-Sesnon in Aptos on August 23 (DS), at westside Santa Cruz on August 25 (SG), Pajaro Dunes on September 5 (CH), and at Capitola on September 6 (DS).

A migrant **Burrowing Owl** was at Moore Creek Preserve on September 23 (SG), but returning wintering birds at UCSC were not reported until October. A family of **Long-eared Owls** with one juvenile was calling in the upper Soquel Creek watershed on September 1 (ST). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** on the westside of Santa Cruz on September 4 was the first reported from a developed setting in this county (KA). Was it a migrant or a local dispersant? A **Black Swift** over Natural Bridges on September 14 provided a rare report of a fall migrant for the county (SG). We had another unusual influx of migrant **Black-chinned Hummingbirds**, reprising on last year's unprecedented fall showing when 14-16 individuals were found. This season 10 were found from August 27 to September 18, closely matching the timing of last fall's influx (SG, JH, DS, RW, AG, EB, NZ, TN). As with last year, all were immature or female, and all were found the Mid-County coast. Interestingly, no corresponding "invasion" was noted in Monterey or San Mateo counties.

A **Dusky Flycatcher** was at the Pajaro River near Watsonville on September 12 (DS). An impressive 25-30 migrant **Willow Flycatchers** from August 24 to September 30 set a record for the county (v.ob.). An **Eastern Kingbird** at Harkins Slough on September 3 (SW, CK) was joined by another the next day (RW), and one remained to the 5th (SR, NK). An early **Tropical Kingbird** was at the lower San Lorenzo River on September 10 (SG). Others were at Pajaro Dunes on September 24 (RW) and Capitola on September 29 (DS). **Loggerhead Shrikes** appeared in above average numbers this fall (v.ob.), and some migrants were in developed areas, where they are quite rare (e.g., one at lower San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on August 25 (SG)). A **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Scott Creek on September 10 (DS). A **Purple Martin** joined other swallows at Younger Lagoon on September 8 (SG). A minor influx of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** brought individuals to varied spots away from areas of local residency beginning in late September, but no significant irruption seemed to develop (v.ob.).

Some **Pygmy Nuthatches** hopping about on the open mud of a dried pond at Natural Bridges on September 5 made for an odd sight (SG). Vagrant warblers were generally sparse this fall, although only half the season is covered in this issue. A **Tennessee Warbler** was at Capitola on September 28 (DS). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Pinto Lake on September 5 (EH). A **Prairie Warbler** was at East Liddell Creek on September 8 (DS). **Blackpoll Warblers** were at Terrace Point on September 26 (SG), Lombardi Creek on September 27 (DS), and Lighthouse Field on September 30 (KA). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was along the San Lorenzo River at Henry Cowell on August 26 (DS). A **Northern Waterthrush** was at Soquel Creek in Soquel on September 27 (DS). A young female **Hooded Warbler** was at Meder Canyon on August 16-18

(JH, SG). The oddly early date suggests she had possibly spent the summer there, following last season's invasion. A **Yellow-breasted Chat** lurked at Natural Bridges on September 11 (SG).

A single **Clay-colored Sparrow** near Baldwin Creek on September 27 made for a slim showing (DS). Among rare sparrows, the season's highlight was our 3rd and 4th records for **Brewer's Sparrow**. Individuals were at Wilder Creek on September 10 (DS), and at Terrace Point on September 11 (SG, RW). A **Vesper Sparrow** was also at Terrace Point on September 11-12 (SG, RW, JH), and another was at Pajaro Dunes on September 24 (RW). Migrant **Lark Sparrows** included two at Natural Bridges on August 27 (SG) and one at the Wilder Ranch parking lot on September 10 (DS). A **Grasshopper Sparrow**, rarely detected here in migration, was spotted at Terrace Point on September 22-26 (SG, KA). A **Lapland Longspur** was in the coastal fields at Wilder Ranch on September 29 (DS). An **Indigo Bunting** visited the westside of Santa Cruz on September 10 (SG). A **Bobolink** was a nice find at Terrace Point on September 26-27 (KA, SG, MSc, LG). There were nine scattered reports of single or small flocks of **Red Crossbills** from August 19 to September 14, but no signs of a local irruption by early fall (DVP, DS, TN, JH).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Stijn Catteart, Aexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Eileen Halvey, Jason Hoeksema, Craig Hunter, Clay Kempf, Norman Kikuchi, Anna Kopitov, Dan LaBounne, Janet Linthicum, Peter Metropulos, Monterey Bay Whale Watch (MBWW), Bryan Mori, Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Steve Rovell, Michelle Scott (MSc), Shearwater Journeys (SJ), David Suddjian, Scott Terrill, David Vander Pluym, Roger Wolfe, Stan Wulkowicz, Nickie Zavinski. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from October 1 to November 30, 2004

It is not uncommon for participants on pelagic birding trips to spot stray landbirds as they wander over the sea far from land, and quite a variety have been reported from the Monterey Bay area over the years. A trip on October 18 recorded an unusual assortment of non-pelagic oddities in a decidedly pelagic setting about 18 miles offshore: **American Bittern** (!), **Green Heron**, **American Pipit**, **Palm Warbler**, and **Brown-headed Cowbird** (SJ).

The fall season gives us a first glimpse of how the winter will shape up for irruptive landbirds. This season only one species – **Pine Siskin** – was in exceptional numbers, with an influx beginning in early October. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was fairly numerous locally away from breeding areas, but was not as common or widespread as in a significant irruption year. **Red Crossbill** showed signs of an influx early in the season, but then reports petered out by mid-fall. They were fairly numerous in other parts of the Santa Cruz Mountains, through. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, **American Robin**, and **Varied Thrush** were notably scarce, and **Evening Grosbeak** was reported just once.

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Reports of **Greater White-fronted Goose** included 15 at Harkins Slough on October 1-5 (SW, DL), one staying to winter at Neary Lagoon beginning October 24 (SG, v.ob.), and 33 over Capitola on November 15 (DS). A **Snow Goose** visited College Lake on November 19 (DS), and a flock of about 20 flew over the upper watershed of Soquel Creek on November 21 (RT). A **Cackling Goose** lingered in the Natural Bridges area from October 22 to November 19 (AG, SG, v.ob.), and a flock of 15 were in a field near Younger Lagoon on November 1-8 (JL, BL, SG). A flock of 17 **Canada Geese** flying over Meder Canyon on October 17 provided the fall's only report away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). A flock of 237 at College Lake on November 19 was the season's high count (DS). There were just three reports of **Brant**: two at the Pajaro River mouth on November 6 (CR), one at Pajaro Dunes on November 19 (DS), and one at Terrace Point on November 22 (JP).

Among a handful of reports of **Blue-winged Teal**, a flock of 12 at Pajaro Dunes on November 14-25 was a substantial number for the county (PM, DS, MSt). Changing numbers of males and females over this date span suggested even more than 12 were present. Single **Cinnamon Teal** at Felton on November 14 (BBz) and at Scotts Valley on November 29 (PB) were noteworthy from the montane part of the county. The male **Tufted Duck** returned for his 4th season, visiting Scotts Valley ponds from November 4-29, but he was not seen after (PB, v.ob.). He arrived in eclipse plumage, but had molted much of the way to alternate plumage by November 28. A female **Greater Scaup** was notable inland to Pinto Lake on October 5 (SW). A female **Harlequin Duck** flew down the coast at West Cliff Drive on November 4, adding a rare county record of a fall migrant (SG). **White-winged Scoters** continued to be scarce, with just two reports this fall of three flying down the coast past Santa Cruz in November (KA, SG).

Terrace Point has proven to be one of the best spots in the county to scope from shore for pelagic birds. Among several interesting reports there this season was an estimated 150 Pink-footed

Shearwaters on October 15, easily the most ever reported from shore in the county (KA). Reports of **Flesh-footed Shearwater** from pelagic birding trips continued, with four on October 3 and three on October 15 (MS, SJ). Storm-Petrels continued to be found in good numbers in early October, but flocks dispersed after the first week of the month (SJ, MS). Three to five **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were at the county line on October 1, and one was off Davenport on October 3 (SJ, MS). **Ashy** and **Black** storm-petrels peaked on October 1, with impressive counts of 8,000 and 3,250, respectively (SJ). **Least Storm-Petrels** gathered in record numbers, with 750 on October 1, and a whopping 1,420 on October 3 (SJ). On shore, a **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** was found on a Capitola street 0.7 mile inland during a windy storm on October 19 (DS).

A juvenile **Brown Booby** was spotted on a buoy 2.7 miles off Lighthouse Point on October 25 for the 5th county record (BW, JH, LHa). 45 **American White Pelicans** at Pinto Lake on November 18 provided the high count for this reporting period (JP, BMcL). **Pelagic Cormorants** resumed their unusual forays up the lower reaches of the San Lorenzo River by October 1 (SG). An **American Bittern** at Antonelli Pond on October 9-16 was nice outside the Pajaro Valley (SG, PB). The **Cattle Egret** remained at Harkins Slough to October 1 (SW). An immature **Bald Eagle** was at the Pajaro River mouth on November 19 (DS). Rare migrant hawks included a **Broad-winged Hawk** at Soquel on October 13 (DS), and three **Ferruginous Hawks** from October 13-30 (DS, DVP, MB). There were 31 reports of **Merlins** from September 14 to November 30 (v.ob.). A **Wandering Tattler** lingered at West Cliff Drive from at least November 22 onwards – the first that has attempted to winter in the county since 2000-2001 (SG).

Notable concentrations of **Spotted Sandpipers** were of eight at Capitola Beach and environs on November 4 (DS), and eight at the lower San Lorenzo River on November 14 (AG et al). **Marbled Godwits** continued to visit Harks Slough at intervals, with three there on October 22 (DS) and November 7 (DVP, MB). A **Ruddy Turnstone** at West Cliff Drive on October 18-23 was the only one on that well-watched stretch of coast (SG, AG). One at Capitola Beach from November 18 onwards was a returning wintering bird (DS). A **Red Knot** was on the rocks at Terrace Point on November 3 (KA). **Pectoral Sandpipers** had one of their best showings on records in Santa Cruz County this fall (v.ob.); an estimated 32 found from August 8 to October 11 was about twice the usual number found in recent falls. A **Rock Sandpiper** at West Cliff Drive from November 1 onwards was considered to be the same as one that was present last winter (SG, v.ob.).

Two juvenile **Sabine's Gulls** seen from Terrace Point on October 15 (KA) provided the third shore-based sighting this season. A carcass of an apparent **Long-billed Murrelet** was found at New Brighton State Beach on October 4 during on-going surveys of dead birds washed up on Monterey Bay area beaches (fide HN). If accepted by the California Bird Records Committee this will be the third county record. Twenty-two **Marbled Murrelets** in one area off West Cliff Drive on October 23 provided a nice concentration for that site (LHe, KN). Sightings of **Tufted Puffins** continued from pelagic trips, with two on October 1, and one on October 3 (SJ, MS). A **Greater Roadrunner** was spied on a hillside above Soda Lake on September 25 (DS). This was the first time in 40-50 years that this species had been found in the county, although it was formerly resident in some areas into at least the 1950s. Its extirpation coincided with increasing development and quarrying activity in their scattered strongholds, but the details of its demise are poorly known. The Soda Lake sighting was surprising, as the nearest areas of regular occurrence are some 10 miles distant.

Reports of **Long-eared Owl** in the Soquel Creek watershed continued, with two adults calling about six miles north of Soquel on several nights in late October (RT). A **Short-eared Owl** was at Wilder Ranch State Park on November 29 (DS). Although some **Common Poorwills** are

thought to be resident year round in our local areas of occurrence, one near Loma Prieta on October 31 provided one of few specific records for fall (AD). A **Vaux's Swift** over Santa Cruz on November 20 was exceptionally late (SG). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** visited China Grade on October 24-30 (S&VSD, DS). Last winter's **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** returned to Quail Hollow Ranch by November 20 (BBr, DS). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on November 14 (DS). An apparent hybrid **Red-naped x Red-breasted** was studied at Santa Cruz on November 18 (RD).

A wintering **Dusky Flycatcher** was first noted at Antonelli Pond on November 18 (SG). There are only two prior wintering records. The county's 3rd fall **Eastern Phoebe** was at Lighthouse Field State Beach on November 9 (SG). Additional **Tropical Kingbirds** at New Brighton State Beach on October 12 (DS) and at Younger Lagoon on November 6 (SG) brought the season's total to a healthy five birds. In comparison, seven **Western Kingbirds** were identified this fall, spanning August 11 to September 10 (v.ob.). A **Blue-headed Vireo** at Neary Lagoon on October 1 was the 4th ever reported in the county, but the first since the species was split from the former "Solitary Vireo" (SG). Three **Yellow-billed Magpies** flying over the Pajaro River from Aromas on October 21 added to the small handful of modern records of magpies for the county (DS). At least one **Townsend's Solitaire** flew over Summit Ridge near Loma Prieta on October 31 (AD), and one was at Loch Lomond on November 16 (DS). Reports of **Western Bluebirds** were 6 at Soda Lake on October 22 (RW), up to six near Amesti Road from November 13 to early December (WM), and 3 at Pleasant Valley Road on November 29 (RW).

The warbler season shaped up to be about average for vagrant species (but was slim on true highlights), and was generally slow for rare western migrants. A summary of rare fall warblers in the county from 1992-2004 is at www.santacruzbirdclub.org/recwarb.html. **Tennessee Warblers** at Neary Lagoon on October 1 (SG) and at Borregas Gulch on October 14 (DS) brought the season's total to three. Nine **Nashville Warblers** from September 8 to November 19 was an average showing (v.ob.). A **Lucy's Warbler** at the Pajaro River on November 13-15 was the best of the season, and just the 2nd fall record for the county (PM, DS). Two more **Chestnut-sided Warblers** included a long-lingering bird at Bethany Curve Park on October 4-16 (SG, v.ob.), and one at Liddell Creek on October 21 (DVP). A female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was at the Palm Beach Unit of Sunset State Beach on October 29 (DS). A tardy **Yellow Warbler** was at the Pajaro River on November 14 (PM).

Just 10 **Black-throated Gray Warblers** from August 1 to November 14) was only 50% of average (v.ob.). Similarly slim, only three **Hermit Warblers** were reported (August 26 – October 30; DS, KA, AG). An immature female **Blackburnian Warbler** was at Pot Belly Gulch on October 14 (DS). **Palm Warblers** were about twice as common as average, with approximately 40 found from October 3 – November 17, the most since fall of 1993 (v.ob.). These included five in the Terrace Point area on October 10, and a tight flock of four there on October 16-23 (SG). Seven more **Blackpoll Warblers** through October 21 brought the season's tally to 10 (SG, CE, DS). **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Borregas Gulch on October 12, and Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on October 18 (DS). Five **American Redstarts** were spotted from October 4 – November 15 (MSc, LG, DS, DVP). Four **MacGillivray's Warblers** were noted from August 24 to October 21 (KA, DS).

Two **Summer Tanagers** appeared on short order in late October. One was heard only at Pot Belly Gulch on October 21 (DS), and a female type lingered at Natural Bridges State beach on October 23 to November 6 (SG). A late **Western Tanager** was at Santa Cruz on November 14 (RD). Five **Chipping Sparrows** at Santa Cruz from September 27 to November 2 was a strong showing compared to the average of just one report per fall (SG). They even outnumbered **Clay-**

colored Sparrows, which totaled three this season. In addition to a Clay-colored in September, one was at Watsonville on October 7 (AS), and at Wilder Creek on October 11 being just the 2nd for that species this season (DS). **Lark Sparrows** were at UCSC on October 6 (SG), and along the San Lorenzo River on November 17 (DS). Four **Swamp Sparrows** this fall included one of the earliest ever for the county at Wilder Creek on October 11 (DS). Eighteen **White-throated Sparrows** were reported from October 4 through November (v.ob.).

The season's second **Lapland Longspur** was in the agricultural fields near Lombardi Creek at Wilder Ranch State Park on October 12 (SG). Nearly all reports of longspurs over the last decade have come from the north coast ag. fields. A **Black-headed Grosbeak** straggled through Santa Cruz as late as November 9 (KA). The season's 2nd **Indigo Bunting** was at the Porter – Sesnon Unit of New Brighton on October 12 (DS). The county's 4th **Dickcissel** was at Davenport on October 6 (RP). A flock of 26 **Tricolored Blackbirds** flying over Natural Bridges State Beach on October 18 was out of place (SG). There were only three reports of **Red Crossbills** in the county this reporting period, all of 1-4 birds from October 25-30 (SG, RW, DS). The paucity was surprising, as they were at least locally numerous elsewhere along the coastal slope and at the summit of the Santa Cruz Mountains. However, perhaps more reports would have surfaced if there had been better birding coverage in the upper elevation areas, and in the Monterey pine forests near Swanton. An **Evening Grosbeak** north of Soquel on October 31 was the first reported in the county in two years (ST).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Bruce Barrett (BBr), Bonnie Bedzin (BBz), Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Al DeMartini, Ryan DiGaudio, Chris Emmons, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Laurie Hall (LHa), Eileen Halvey, James Harvey, Laird Henkel (LHe), Clay Kempf, Dan LaBeaune, Brian Latta, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin, Peter Metropulos, Monterey Seabirds (MS, *fide* Roger Wolfe), Kris Neuman, Hannah Nevins, Roberta Perry, Jeff Poklen, Caroline Rodgers, Michelle Scott (MSc), Shearwater Journeys (SJ, *fide* Debi Shearwater), Anne Spence, Scott & Valerie St. Denis, Michael Stevenson (MSt), David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, David Vander Pluym, Bridget Watts, Roger Wolfe, Stan Wulkowicz. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1, 2004 to January 31, 2005

Neary Lagoon's wintering **Greater White-fronted Goose** remained through the period (PVL, v.ob.). One or two were seen on various dates at College Lake from December 18 to January 4 (CL, RW, LG, DS). Single **Snow Geese** were near Scott Creek Marsh on December 4 (RW), at Schwan Lake on December 18 (CK), and at College Lake on January 18-22 (LG, MS, DS). Three **Ross's Geese** were at the confluence of Watsonville and Struve sloughs on January 1 (CK). One was at College Lake on January 22 (DS). A **Cackling Goose** was at College Lake on December 18 (CL). Five Cacklers were northeast of College Lake on January 1 (DE et al.). A flock of at least a 100 flying east over Younger Lagoon on January 12 was perhaps a record count for the county (JL). Another was at the Shorebirds Pond at Pajaro Dunes on January 23 (DS). Peak counts of **Canada Geese** were 60 over Capitola on January 12 (CK), and about 125 at College Lake on January 22 (DS).

A flock of 18 **Brant** flew by West Cliff Drive on December 8 (SG), and seven were off Capitola on December 18 (DS). Five were at La Selva on January 1 (JG). Eight **Tundra Swans** (seven juveniles) visited College Lake from December 18-24 (CL, RW, DS). After a hiatus, one juvenile was seen there January 3-12 (RW, DS, LG, SR). Another or the same was at Harkins Slough on January 18 (LG, MS). Ten **Wood Ducks** at Merk Pond on December 31 to January 1 (DS) provided a good concentration for the Pajaro Valley (DS). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** graced College Lake from December 31 to January 12 (DS, LG, JP, RW, SR). **Blue-winged Teal** continued from fall at Pajaro Dunes and the river mouth: four (two males) on December 24 (RW), five males on January 1 (J&RW), a whopping 18 (14 males) on January 20 (LG, JP), and 15 (10 males) on January 22 (DS). Four Blue-wingeds were in the sloughs of western Watsonville on January 1 (BRe).

A female **Redhead** visited Spring Lakes at Scotts Valley from December 18-22 (BS, DS). There are few records from our mountain area. Two males at Harkins Slough from December 24 to January 13 were in a more typical spot (RW, EL, CK, LS, LG, JP, SG). **Greater Scaup** at inland spots included one at Harkins Slough on December 31 (EL), and 3 at College Lake on January 1 (DS). A male **Surf Scoter** was blown slightly inland to Neary Lagoon by a storm on January 7 (PVL). Reports of **White-winged Scoters** included one at Waddell Creek Beach on December 4 (RW), two at La Selva on January 1 (JG, WG), one at Davenport on December 15 (LG, WG), and three at Palm Beach on January 22 (DS). An impressive five **Black Scoters** were reported from La Selva to Sunset State Beach on January 1 (JG, WG). Four **Long-tailed Ducks** were spotted flying north three miles off Zmudowski State Beach in Monterey County during an aerial seabird survey on December 15 (JD). Although not seen in Santa Cruz County, they were due to have crossed the county line only moments later. One flying off Capitola Wharf on December 24 provided a less ambiguous county record (DS).

Wild Turkeys continued to be found in more and varied spots over much of the county, highlighting their recent and rapid expansion. These included several reports from people's yards, with the most extreme being one in a yard near Schwan Lake January 5 (JDLT). A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Seacliff State Beach on December 3 (RW), and two were at La Selva on January 1 (JG). Another was off Baldwin Creek Beach on January 13 (LG, JP). A **Pink-footed Shearwater**

seen from the boat off Santa Cruz on the December 18 CBC was a notable winter find (RW), as were two further offshore on January 30 (SJ fide MB & RT). About 20 **American White Pelicans** were at Harkins Slough on December 21 (PB, JDLT), with 27 noted there on December 24 (RW). On January 1 one was at western Watsonville (BRe), and 6 were at Pinto Lake (BRa). **American Bitterns** at Antonelli Pond on December 5 (SG) and Baldwin Creek Marsh on December 18 (BW) were both rare away from the Pajaro Valley.

A **Cattle Egret** visited Anna Jean Cummings Park and environs in Soquel from December 11-18 (EF, DS). An adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** provided an odd sight at Garfield Park in western Santa Cruz on December 16 as it fed on the lawn there in the predawn hours, far from any aquatic habitat (SG). An **Osprey** was at Capitola Beach and New Brighton State Beach from December 17-23 (DS, RW). One perched at UCSC on January 31 (MBw). Several reports from spots in the Pajaro Valley in late December and January suggested two or three wintered there (RW, CL, BRa, DS). A **Ferruginous Hawk** was north of Scott Creek on December 12 and 25 (GS). **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen at Waddell Creek Beach on December 4 (GS), and near Soda Lake on January 14 (DS). Reports of **Prairie Falcons** perhaps continued last fall's strong showing, with one at O'Neill Ranch in Soquel on December 18 (DS), and one in the hills east of Watsonville on January 1 (DL, RM).

A **Snowy Plover** at Cowell's Beach (near the Santa Cruz Wharf) on January 6 (PVL) was apparently the first one ever reported at that site (*fide* FB). West Cliff's wintering **Wandering Tattler** stayed through at least January 22 (SG, CL). A flock of 41 **Whimbrels** at Lighthouse Field State Beach on January 4 was a good winter number for the county (LG). A handful of reports of **Long-billed Curlews** from Baldwin Creek Beach to Sunset State Beach indicated 3-4 individuals wintered this season (BW, LG, JP, RW, SG). A (the?) **Ruddy Turnstone** was seen off and on at Capitola Beach through the period (DS, PD). I suspect that one seen at West Cliff Drive on December 26 and January 6 was the same bird (SG). The **Rock Sandpiper** continued at West Cliff Drive through the period (SG), but was not always evident there and so was presumably ranging more widely, as was documented during its stay the previous winter. The only report from elsewhere, though, was from Black Point on January 4 (DS).

A first cycle **Glaucous Gull** at Baldwin Creek Beach on December 15 (KA) was thought to be the same as one at Natural Bridges State Beach the next day (SG). Other reports of first cycle birds were of one at Aptos Creek mouth on December 29 (JP), and one at West Cliff Drive on January 26 (SG). A tardy immature **Common Tern** at Capitola Beach on December 17-18 provided a rare December record (DS). A **Pigeon Guillemot** was off Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB). Although guillemots winter regularly in small numbers in Monterey County, such is not the case in Santa Cruz County, where most winters we have none. An aerial survey on December 15 found an impressive 68 **Marbled Murrelets** near shore between Soquel Point and Terrace Point (JD, LH). The December 18 CBC's record count of 71 in roughly the same area provided a nice match between the two survey efforts. Fourteen were still in close quarters off the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on December 29 (SG).

A **Cassin's Auklet** just 50-75 yards offshore at Natural Bridges was exceptionally close to shore for this county (SG). **Rhinoceros Auklets** gathered close to shore in unusual numbers at Santa Cruz in December, with 115 scoped from Terrace Point alone on December 18 (DVP, OJ, KA). Two **Eurasian Collared-Doves** along Smith Road east of Corralitos on January 1 were considered to be the first county record of "wild" birds for the expanding population of this introduced species (DS). Two small resident populations in Santa Cruz and Live Oak apparently arose from local releases. A **Burrowing Owl** near Davenport on December 8 had likely been present there for some time (GSw). The usual wintering group at the grasslands of UCSC had at

least three owls this winter, and possibly four or five (JL). **Long-eared Owls** were at two places north of Soquel on December 18 and on January 22 (DS). A **Common Poorwill** was a bit of a surprise inland of Davenport on December 18 (MG). Winter records are few, but I suspect some are resident in that region of the county.

A displaying male **Allen's Hummingbird** at La Selva on January 1 was very nearly the earliest ever for the county (JG), but there are a handful of other records from the first few days of January. Quail Hollow's **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** continued through at least December 22 (JS, DS). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** visited an orchard north of Soquel from December 5-29 (HH). The **Dusky Flycatcher** at Antonelli Pond, the county's third winter record, remained through the period (SG, v.ob.). An estimated 500 **Violet-green Swallows** at College Lake on December 28 provided the high count for the wintering birds this season (CK). **Barn Swallows** once again pushed north in early winter – the third year running for this odd pattern – but in lesser numbers than in the other winters. This season eight were noted, with seven reports spanning December 17 to January 22 (DS, GS, RM, JG). Singles at Capitola Beach on December 17 (DS) and near Greyhound Rock on December 25 (GS) were the only ones away from the Pajaro Valley.

Three **White-breasted Nuthatches** were reported in this period (CE, DS). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were moderately numerous in some areas (most notably from Bonny Doon to Pogonip), but they remained spotty in the big picture, and were scarce to absent in many areas (v.ob.). **Western Bluebirds** were reported from five spots in the Pajaro Valley this period, including a total of 14 found in the hills east of Watsonville on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (v.ob.). **American Robins** were so sparse, that even one at Santa Cruz on January 4 was deemed noteworthy this season (KA)! A **Nashville Warbler** at western Santa Cruz lingered from November 19 to at least January 20 (KA). One at Natural Bridges from January 12 onwards was likely a bird returning from last winter (SG). A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was at Branciforte Dip on December 3-18 (SG, PR et al.), with a second noted there on December 18 (PR et al). Four **Hermit Warblers** were reported, with three were in expected spots, but out of place along the San Lorenzo River near Soquel Avenue on December 18 (AG, PR).

A **Palm Warbler** in western Santa Cruz from December 2 to January 23 was probably returning from last winter (SG). A **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Soquel Creek in Capitola on December 8-28 (DS). A **Wilson's Warbler** at Harkins slough on January 1 was the best of the season's warblers (CK et al.). A **Summer Tanager** heard at Natural Bridges on December 5 was perhaps the same as one there on October 23 and November 6 (SG). A **Western Tanager** was at Capitola from December 4-17 (DS), and two were picked out in the Eucalyptus of Branciforte Dip on December 19 (OJ *fide* DVP). Just three reports of **Swamp Sparrows**, all in the Pajaro Valley, made for the slimmest showing in quite a while (DS, EL, SG). An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was photographed near Struve Slough at Watsonville on December 5, with an unidentified female grosbeak in the same yard on December 8-9 (EH). An adult male **Rose-breasted** was at a feeder in Live Oak on December 16-20 (SM).

A female **Indigo Bunting** appeared sporadically in a Capitola yard on December 26 to January 21 (DS). Just two **Tricolored Blackbirds** were found in the Pajaro Valley section of the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (LG). Three at western Santa Cruz on January 18 were rare in town (SG). **Red Crossbills** remained sparse in the county, judging from reports received, although they were at least locally numerous during the period in parts of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Reports in this county included singles at Natural Bridges on December 9 (SG) and Mt. Charlie Road on December 18 (CE), and 8-10 at Swanton road on January 23 (DS). A rare winter **Lawrence's Goldfinch** visited a Capitola feeder on December 25 (DS). **Pine Siskins** continued as the only winter irruptive species present in exceptional numbers, with good concentrations in

many areas of the county (v.ob.). As often happens when there is a significant winter influx, there was also notable mortality observed at backyard feeding stations.

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Bruce Barrett, Frances Bidstrup, Matt Brady, Martha Brown (MBw), Phil Brown, Jeff Davis, Jeana de la Torre, Ryan DiGaudio, Paul Donahue, David Ekdahl, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Jennifer Green, Mark Green, Eileen Halvey, Henry Harrelson, Laird Henkel (LHe), Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Dan LaBeaune, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Calvin Lou, Randy Morgan, Sylvan Muffitti, Jeff Poklen, Peter Radcliff, Bob Ramer (BRa), Bill Reese (BRe), Steve Rovell, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MS), Larry Selman, Shearwater Journeys (SJ), John Sterling, Glenn Stewart (GSw), Gary Strachan (GS), David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, John & Ricky Warriner, Brian Weed, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from February 1 to April 30, 2005

Neary Lagoon's wintering **Greater White-fronted Goose** remained through the period (PVL, v.ob.). Up to nine **Canada Geese** frequented a variety of spots in western Santa Cruz and Wilder Ranch from March 8 through April (JL, SG, PVL, LG, MSc, v.ob.). They were no doubt prospecting nest sites, and indeed nesting was confirmed later in the season. Neary Lagoon received their attention and it seems like a natural nesting place, but evidently the local domestic goose (dubbed "The Boss") was not interested in having any large company on his turf (PVL). A pair of **Wood Ducks** visited a pond near Corralitos on April 28 (RW). I wonder why there are so few reports from the Pajaro Valley in the nesting season. The flock of **Blue-winged Teal** on Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes continued with seven there on February 1 (MSp), and five were on the slough downstream of Lee Road on February 3 (DS). Four **Redhead** were also at the latter spot on February 3 (DS).

Two **White-winged Scoters** were at Sunset State Beach on February 26 (RW). A **Black Scoter** was at West Cliff Drive on February 23 (SG), and migrants paused at West Cliff Drive on April 11 (LG) and Baldwin Creek Beach on April 22 (PVL). A **Common Merganser** at Neary Lagoon on March 29 was out of place (SG). They sometimes drop in at odd spots in early spring as they move around among the local streams. **Wild Turkeys** continued to turn up widely and in new areas. Three at Castle Rock State Park on April 16 were the first reported for that park (DS). A **Mountain Quail** was heard there the same day (DS). Six **American White Pelicans** soared over the Pajaro River at Murphy Crossing on February 3 (DS). Two **Pelagic Cormorants** ranged up the lower San Lorenzo River on March 3 (SG), and one contemplated Shadowbrook Restaurant on Soquel Creek in Capitola on March 6 (RW). Do we dub these Riverine Cormorants *P. riparia*?

The season's second **Cattle Egret** was at College Lake on February 26 (RW). Together with one at Soquel in December, these were the first winter reports for the county in four years! A **White-faced Ibis** was at Dairy Gulch in Wilder Ranch State Park on April 21 (SG), and a flock of 11 flew over Watsonville Slough on April 28 (DS). A wayward **Osprey** ranged about 11 miles offshore over Monterey Bay on March 17 (JD). Migrant **Swainson's Hawks** were spotted over Cabrillo College in Aptos on April 2 (DS) and at O'Neill Ranch in Soquel on April 24 (EF). A young **Golden Eagle** over Natural Bridges on March 28 was odd for the lower Westside (SG). Thirty-seven reports of **Merlin** for the winter period of December to March was about average (v.ob.), but was down considerably compared to the previous two winters. It is unclear, though, if there were fewer Merlins around or people got tired of reporting them. Six in April was a good showing for that month, including late migrants at Wilder Ranch on April 21 (SG) and three reports from Santa Cruz on April 19-30 (SG, MB, AW).

From the Bird-Brained Dept. comes word of a pair of **Killdeer** that nested in a planter basin in front of the 41st Avenue Safeway store in Soquel, with two young seen there on April 27 (EL). Were they just being adaptable or silly? Two **Long-billed Curlews** at Baldwin Creek Beach on February 13 continued the recent pattern of winter presence on the county's north coast (AG, EB). The wintering **Ruddy Turnstone** seen at West Cliff Drive up to March 5 (SG, LG, ST et al.). One at Capitola Beach on March 14 might have been the same individual (PD). A **Red Knot** paused at some rocky shore in Capitola on April 22 (DS). A **Least Sandpiper** at West Cliff Drive

on February 6 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley in winter, and our winter birds are seldom seen along the coastline (SG). West Cliff's wintering **Rock Sandpiper** acquired most of its alternate plumage by March 31 and stayed until April 2 (SG, MB, ST, BMcL).

A "very stressed" **Red Phalarope** was foraging among cars on the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on February 14, watched by a team of top observers through a restaurant window while they enjoyed crême brule (MB, RT, LT, ST). A strong pulse of migrants brought 11 adult **Franklin's Gulls** over a narrow date span: two flew by Capitola on April 22 (DS), three were at Wilder Ranch on April 24, with five there on April 26 (MB), and one was at Watsonville Slough on April 28 (DS). A 1st year **Glaucous Gull** flew up the coast at West Cliff Drive on February 20 (SG, BMcL). Single **Eurasian Collared-Doves** north of Soquel on March 3 (MB) and at Capitola on April 14 (DS) offered a glimpse at the future as the species continued to make inroads in the region. The resident population on the westside of Santa Cruz was noted to expand its range somewhat (SG). A pair of **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** excavating a cavity at San Vicente Creek near Davenport on April 23-25 added another watershed to this species growing range (CE). How interesting to have a growing nesting population, but a declining wintering population!

One of the period's strangest records was a **Pileated Woodpecker** seen in the cypress at Lighthouse Field State Beach on April 10 (SG). With their county population booming it was only a matter of time before one turned up really out of place, but as Gerow wondered, what was that bird thinking as it flew over Mission Street and the westside neighborhoods, heading for the sea? The wintering **Dusky Flycatcher** remained at Antonelli Pond to at least March 26 (DS). Rare Empidonax species made a pretty good showing in April. **Hammond's Flycatchers** were at New Brighton State Beach on April 15 (DS), Soquel Demonstration State Forest on April 25 (DS), and at Natural Bridges on April 28 (SG). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was near the top of Eureka Canyon Road on April 25 (DS). But the best, with less spring precedent in the county, was a **Gray Flycatcher** at Santa Cruz on April 17-20 (KA, EA). Five **Warbling Vireos** along Highland Way on March 11 were quite early, leading an early wave of migrants in the region.

Bank Swallows were at Antonelli Pond on March 31 (SG) and Wilder Creek on April 24 (DS). Two or three **Barn Swallows** along the western Santa Cruz coast on February 2 were perhaps part of the winter incursion pattern and not early breeding migrants; the first of the latter were at Younger on February 26 (SG). **American Crows** continued to make headway at the margins of their expanding range. Most notable was one at Huckleberry Campground in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on April 6, the first ever for the interior part of the park (PH et al.). Coastward, one at Rancho Del Oso on April 9 was far up the north coast, and maybe a first for there in spring (LG, WG, TN). In the upper San Lorenzo Valley small numbers were consistently present as much as two miles north of Boulder Creek in April. A few **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were in odd coastal spots for spring: one at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on March 31 (SG) and two at Capitola on April 12 (DS).

A pair of **Western Bluebirds** began building in a nest box at Mt Madonna Road by February 21 and fledged four young by April 16, the earliest nesting on record for the county, and apparently on a par with the earliest date known for this species anywhere (DT)! It was one to two months ahead of normally timed first broods. The pair was building a new nest in the box by the end of the month. Another nearby pair nested in a box off Amesti Road at Watsonville, the first time bluebirds have used the box in its 10-year history (WM). A pair continued at Last Chance Road, a northwestern outpost (EL). A **Townsend's Solitaire** paused at Summit Meadows in Castle Rock State Park on April 16 and then flew on northward (DS). We have few spring records. A **Nashville Warbler** wintering at Natural Bridges was seen to February 25 (SG). Another winterer was at Branciforte Dip on February 17 (SG). Early migrants included males at Borregas Gulch in

Aptos on April 2 (DS), and at Capitola on April 3 (RW), surpassing the previous early record of April 4. Including these, six Nashvilles were reported for the whole spring migration period.

A wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** lingered at Branciforte Dip at least to March 3 (SN, SG). A **Palm Warbler** at Natural Bridges from March 28 to April 28 set a new late date for a presumed wintering bird (SG). A wintering **Black-and-white Warbler** was at Neary Lagoon on February 20 (SG), while one singing at Borregas Gulch on April 16 was likely an early spring vagrant (DS). A **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Wilder Ranch on April 21 was the only one reported away from local nesting areas (SG). It is sometimes hard to notice migration among some species with a resident component to their local populations, but a careful eye for birds out of place helps give some clues. Sometimes the birds make it easy, such as the six **Common Yellowthroats** at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on April 12 (SG). Two **Yellow-breasted Chats** were on the north county coast on April 26 (CE, DS). A **Western Tanager** at Branciforte Dip on March 3 was a wintering bird (SG), a month ahead of the vanguard of spring migrants.

Grasshopper Sparrow returned early again at Moore Creek Preserve, with two singing there on March 12 being two weeks ahead of the average first arrival (SG). A **Sage Sparrow** at Saratoga Gap Trail in Castle Rock on April 16 was holding on in one of the county's two known locales for this species (DS) However, there are other good expanses of chaparral to the southeast on that crest line slope that are essentially inaccessible to birders. Where else might *A. belli* reside? One of the better finds for early spring was a **Harris's Sparrow** photographed visiting a yard near Thurber Lane in Santa Cruz from March 15 to April 13 (SK). It was presumably wintering locally. A **Black-headed Grosbeak** north of Soquel on March 9 was the 2nd earliest ever and 19 days ahead of average (RT); other early birds were noted within a few days.

Tricolored Blackbirds apparently did not nest at Last Chance Lagoon this year, the first time in over 20 years (DS). However, nest-building was observed at Soda Lake -- our only other recently active breeding site -- on April 30, but there were just 60 Trikes there (DB). An early **Hooded Oriole** appeared at Santa Cruz on March 15, tying the record early date for the county (SG). **Great-tailed Grackles** continued to nest at Struve Slough, where 12 on April 22 included adults carrying food to nests in the tules (BMo). Three females at Corcoran Lagoon on April 28 were the only ones reported away from the sloughs (LG). Small numbers of **Red Crossbills** were noted at scattered spots in the mountains (ST, DS). A flock of 17-18 birds was feeding at Moore Creek Preserve on February 2-9 (SG, AG, EB). One in a cypress atop the bluffs overlooking the ocean at Capitola on April 22 was out of the ordinary (DS).

Cited Observers: Erica Arul, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Dana Bland, Matt Brady, Jeff Davis, Paul Donahue, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Portia Halbert, Sally Ketley, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin (BMcL), Bryan Mori (BMo), Sydney Nash, Todd Newberry, Michelle Scott (MSc), Madeline Spencer (MSp), David Suddjian, Linda Terrill, Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, Deanna Turner, Paul Van Loan, Art Wang, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from May 1 to July 31, 2005

The major fallout of vagrant landbirds that led the news in late spring and early summer of 2004 was not reprised this year, but the season certainly had its moments for rarities. Topping the bill were three (!) first county records in June, pending review by the California Bird Records Committee. A would-be fourth addition was also reported in June: an *Ivory-billed Woodpecker!* But as the observer offered, "I know it is a long ways from Arkansas, and the habitat is wrong, and it's probably impossible, but..." I couldn't have put it better.

A major ornithological event of the period was a significant collapse of breeding for many seabirds along a large area of the West Coast. Unusual ocean conditions and lack of upwelling led to a lack of plankton, impacting fisheries resources. Substantial mortality was noted for a number of species of seabirds in central California during winter and spring. Regional nesting efforts and success were greatly affected for several species, including all three cormorants, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Cassin's and Rhinoceros auklets, and probably Marbled Murrelet, although nesting by the latter is more difficult to study directly. Locally, seabird nesting effort and success in Santa Cruz County was mixed, and some observations are highlighted below. The foraging conditions also apparently led to low numbers of some of our common summer species, such as Brown Pelican and Elegant Tern.

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Neary Lagoon's **Greater White-fronted Goose** remained through the period, present since October 24, 2004 (SG). A family of **Canada Geese** with three small young was in a marshy settling pond at Dairy Gulch in Wilder Ranch State Park on May 7, providing the first breeding record for the county's north coast region (SG). Fifteen **Wood Ducks** (14 adults) at Neary Lagoon on July 16 was a good count compared to recent years (SG). A female **Gadwall** with young at Younger Lagoon in late June (although not identified until August 1) provided just the second breeding record for the county away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). A pair of **Blue-winged Teal** was at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on May 6 (DS). A pair of **Cinnamon Teal** appeared at Younger Lagoon on July 5 (LG), but was not noted there before or after; they are very rare away from the Pajaro Valley in the nesting season. Four rare summering **Buffleheads** were spotted at Watsonville Slough at the confluence with Struve on July 16; at least one lingered to July 30 (RW).

A **White-winged Scoter** at West Cliff Drive on May 3-5 was the only one reported in the county all spring (MB)! Three **Common Mergansers** were unexpected at Corcoran Lagoon on May 8 (CK). Loch Lomond reservoir is clearly a hub for the burgeoning Common Merganser population, used for roosting, feeding and nesting. A survey of the Loch by boat on May 20 produced a count of 30 adults (18 males) and 2 broods of chicks (LH). On May 27 a female was observed at an apparent nest in an old snag-topped redwood near the reservoir's west shore, one of few specific nests yet known for the county (DS). Elsewhere, two streams were added to the list of confirmed breeding sites for this species, with broods of young seen at Opal Creek in Big Basin on June 6 and at Fall Creek on June 20 (DS). Common Merganser "super broods", or apparent amalgamations of more than one brood under the care of a single female, are sometimes

noted. Two examples from this season were a female with 20 “merglets” at Loch Lomond on June 10 (RW), and a female with 23 small young on the lower San Lorenzo River on June 11-12 (SG, RE).

Ruddy Duck nested at Scott Creek Marsh, where a female and young were seen by July 2 (LF); nesting has been infrequent along the north coast. Until recent years Ruddy had nested regularly at a few spots in the Santa Cruz area, so two males at Antonelli on June 9 and one at Younger on July 2 were of interest, but neither lingered (SG). A **Wild Turkey** at Skyline Boulevard three miles northwest of Highway 17 on May 21 was the first report from that area (DS). **Mountain Quail** were heard calling near Maymens Flat southeast of Loma Prieta on May 14 (DS) and from the Loughry Woods Trail at Castle Rock State Park on May 23 (KA). An immature **Common Loon** wandered inland to Loch Lomond where it was first reported on May 26 (SR); it lingered but was found dead by park staff on June 20, apparently predated by a mammal (fide CB). A **Red-necked Grebe** in partial alternate plumage was off Table Rock on July 2 for a very rare summer record (DS).

The spectacle of huge flocks of **Sooty Shearwaters** near the coast has been a characteristic phenomenon of our summer, but the last few years they have often been less than spectacular. This season began with some decent flocks into early June, but afterwards they were mostly absent near shore through the rest of the period (v.ob.). Reports from Monterey County suggested they may have shifted to the south half of the Bay. A flock of 20 **Brown Pelicans** soaring over Watsonville Slough near Lee Road on July 30 were unusual inland (RW). Nesting **Brandt's Cormorants** enjoyed mixed success this year. Most of this year's 31 nests at the long established Davenport colony were abandoned by July 2 (DS). The nine nests at the Natural Bridges colony were all abandoned by early June (SG). In contrast, most of the 20 nests at Lighthouse Field State Beach did well (SG). A new colony with about 105 nests formed on the “cement ship” at Seacliff State Beach (DS). Easily the county's largest colony, many nests had large young by July 10. It is likely that birds at this new colony were immigrants from failed breeding efforts outside the county. Indeed, several large and unseasonable flights were reported, e.g., 1000+ flying up the coast at Seacliff on May 29 (DS), and 800 flying down the coast in 15 minutes at West Cliff Drive on July 1 (SG).

Nesting **Double-crested Cormorants** seemed to do well in Santa Cruz County, perhaps because of the species affinity for freshwater foraging habitat. The colony at Schwan Lake continued to grow, with 115 nests there on May 22 (BMo). Nesting continued at a more modest level at Pinto Lake, where 14 nests were noted on April 26 (WM). Nesting efforts by **Pelagic Cormorants** at most of the county's colonies were either complete failures or had very little success (DS, CE). I am only aware of two active nesting sites for Great Blue Heron this season: Pinto Lake (two nests; WM) and the Santa Cruz Harbor (three nests; SG). Does anyone know of any other nesting sites? After hanging around for two breeding seasons among the Great Blues nesting at the Santa Cruz Harbor, **Great Egret** finally began to nest there, too; one nest with young was confirmed on June 3 (SG). The county's only other breeding site, Pinto Lake, had just one nest this season (WM, DS).

An immature **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was identified as it flew over the fields at Terrace Point on June 19 (SG), providing the first county record pending CBRC review. Two pairs of **Osprey** were at Loch Lomond this spring, with at least one nest with young confirmed on May 15 (CB). Both nests built last year blew out in the winter storms, but this year's nest was built in a more protected location. Nesting also continued at a site inland of Davenport (MG). Two tardy **Merlins** slipped by, flying north near Majors Creek on May 2 (JL) and at Pajaro Dunes on May 6 (DS). **Peregrine Falcon** continued to nest at a location northwest of Santa Cruz (fide JL), but

information was lacking on the status of other recently used aeries. A pair that has “threatened” for few years now to nest at another north coast site once again failed to take things to the next level, at least as far as evidence can tell (JL). Meanwhile, observations of Peregrines during the nesting season continue to increase, especially in the mid-county region.

An adult **Common Moorhen** at Younger Lagoon on May 19 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (LG), but it did not linger. A juvenile there on July 3 had apparently dispersed from elsewhere (LG). An **American Avocet** paused at Younger on July 5 (LG). Five **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found from July 23-30 (RW, SG). A **Spotted Sandpiper** at Loch Lomond on June 10 suggested possible nesting there (RW). Two rare *Calidris* sandpipers provided exceptional spring records. An alternate plumaged **Baird’s Sandpiper** at Dairy Gulch in Wilder Ranch on May 7 was just the third spring record for the county (SG). An alternate-plumaged **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Younger Lagoon on June 15 (SG); there were four prior spring records for the county, but all from April. An alternate-plumaged **Dunlin** nicely photographed at Natural Bridges on July 29 was a rather early fall arrival (LS). Dunlin is our latest arriving shorebird (typically not until September), by which time they have already molted to basic plumage. A **Wilson’s Phalarope** at Younger Lagoon on July 24 was the only fall migrant reported in the county this year (MSc).

A first-year **Franklin’s Gull** near Baldwin Creek on May 30 rounded out the season, for a total of up to 12 found this spring (DS). **Western Gulls** nesting on inland rooftops at Capitola and Soquel continued to increase. The large colony at the Capitola Mall was estimated to have 60 nests during helicopter flights over the site on June 8-10 (MO), nearly twice as many as last year. Eleven nests were noted on six other buildings in the area this season (DS). **Elegant Terns** arrived much later than usual, with none reported until July 7, when 27 were at Rio Del Mar (LG, JP). Perhaps they were present somewhat earlier at the Pajaro River mouth (I have no early summer reports from that site), but even so, it was clearly a late season for the species and numbers have been unusually low. A **Least Tern** appeared at Younger Lagoon on July 2 (SG). A **Black Tern** visited Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on May 6 (DS). A **Black Skimmer** at the Pajaro River mouth on July 27 was on the Monterey side (WM, SM).

Marbled Murrelet flight activity at inland breeding areas and its distribution along the coast suggested breeding effort was unusually low this season. Activity levels at Big Basin reached a new low, although they were not appreciably lower than the last few years (Figure 1; DS). The species was missed on a Breeding Bird Survey route at Big Basin for the first time since coverage of the route began in 1992 (DS). Activity at areas in San Mateo County, such as Portola Redwoods State Park, Butano State Park, and Gazos Creek watershed were also very low (DS, SS). Murrelet eggshell fragments were found at Big Basin near Opal Creek north of park headquarters on May 26, documenting at least one nesting attempt (SP), but the specific nest site and its fate were unknown. On the ocean, murrelets were scarce in their usual core area around Año Nuevo Bay, but were regular along the mid-county coast all through spring and early summer (SG, RW, DS). In most breeding seasons they are absent in the latter area. This distribution at sea was similar to years under the influence of El Niño.

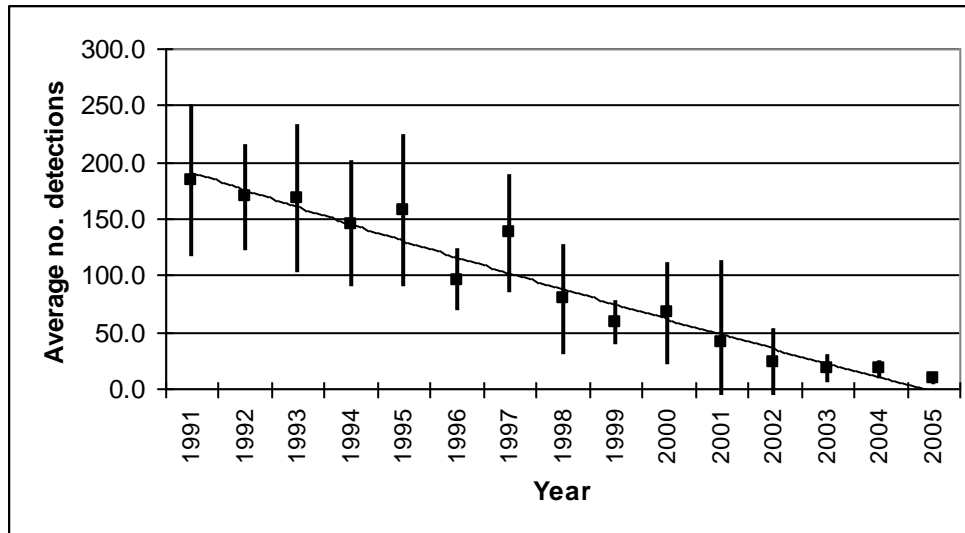


Figure 1. Average number of Marbled Murrelet detections (\pm s.d.) on dawn surveys at Redwood Meadow, Big Basin Redwoods State Park, 1991-2005. Redwood Meadow is in the center of the park's historic area of highest activity.

Two **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were at Anna Jean Cummings Park in Soquel on May 11 (DS), and one visited a Watsonville yard on June 21 (EH). A **White-winged Dove** flew by Younger Lagoon on May 19 for the county's second spring record (LG). A **Long-eared Owl** was heard north of Soquel on May 11 (DS). A **Common Poorwill** sitting on Highway 236 near its upper junction with China Grade on June 11 (KD) marked the "rediscovery" of a convenient site to find this species in the county. Although the species' presence in that area was known in the 1930s and later 1950s, that knowledge had slipped from recent bird lore. Subsequent visits to the area this summer found at least six individuals in the general region of the June 11 observation (DS). Other spots where this species is known in the county (e.g., the Chalks in Big Basin where five were heard on July 20 [DS]) are less easily reached.

Special attention was again paid to **Black Swifts** during the nesting season, but once again there was no confirmed nest evidence or even strong indications of possible nesting (i.e., courtship or visits to possible nest sites). Following three reports of apparent migrants from May 22-29 (DS, MB, EA, KA), there were thirteen reports from May 31 to August 17 (SG, ED, RD, JS, DVP). All of these reports were from coastal western Santa Cruz and Wilder Ranch State Park. There were only three sightings of one to two swifts in June, followed by a pulse of eight sightings from July 3-22. Activity then tapered quickly with just two reports after July 22. The high count this year was eight at Wilder Creek Beach on July 11 (JS). Visits to former known nest sites (coastal and inland) did not reveal any activity. Other differences from past years when nesting was known to occur included (1) a lack of consistent presence near nest areas through the season, (2) lack of courtship activity, and (3) lack of regular sightings into August (when most nests are still active).

The **Vaux's Swift** is similarly challenging to study, and has also shown declines as a breeding species in the county over recent years. This year two nests were located. One in a chimney near Natural Bridges State Beach provided a long-expected confirmation for nesting in that area (SG). The other was at a previously known nest site in Huckleberry Campground at Big Basin (DS). Additionally, a few recently fledged family groups were observed at Big Basin in late July (DS). Big Basin hosts more Vaux's than any other area of the county, but the size of the breeding population there has been hard to gauge given the species' flight habits and the park's extensive

forest cover. A novel simultaneous survey was undertaken at dusk on June 11 with multiple observers stationed at 13 spots. Eighteen people participated, viewing for an hour in the watersheds of Opal, Blooms, Sempervirens and Union Creeks, encompassing parts of the park most consistently used by this species. The most parsimonious view of the resulting data gave a minimum of 13 individuals, but a somewhat less conservative minimum count was 21. In considering this minimum range of 13-21 birds, note that most nesting pairs probably had one of the adults incubating on the nest during the survey, some pairs have an additional 1-2 adults as "helpers," and some non-breeders may also have been present during the survey. I'd say the survey suggested a population in the range of 8-18 pairs in the area sampled. Hopefully some additional survey efforts can be undertaken in 2006. Later this season (when both parents would be free of incubation duty) 20 Vaux's were seen together at dusk over the park's water supply reservoir on July 6, perhaps representing much of the park's breeding population (DS).

Four **White-throated Swifts** chasing each other at the Highway 1 overpass at San Andreas Road on May 22 may have been prospecting nest sites (DS). There are no nesting confirmations southeast of the Soquel Creek watershed, and although they do so commonly elsewhere, this species has not been known to nest in highway overpasses here yet. A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at Jarvis Road on May 1 (DS). **Calliope Hummingbirds** included a male at North Rodeo Gulch Road on May 1 and a female at Buzzard Lagoon Road on May 12 (DS). **Red-breasted Sapsucker** continued to expand its breeding presence. A first confirmation for Aptos Creek was obtained on May 17 when a pair was at its nest cavity (DS). Individuals were observed farther downstream than ever before in the nesting season at Waddell Creek, San Lorenzo River and Soquel Creek (DS). One at Hageman Gulch in the Arana Gulch Greenbelt on June 3 was the first breeding season record for Santa Cruz (SG).

The season's second **Gray Flycatcher** was at Rancho Del Oso on May 11 (DS). There were two reports of spring migrant **Willow Flycatchers**, both from the north coast from June 5-10 (DS, CE). Nine spring migrant **Western Kingbirds** were reported from April 4 to May 16 (SG, LG, DK, JH, DH), while one at Seacliff State Beach on July 16 was quite odd for summer (RW). A Western Kingbird nest was found in a eucalyptus at Merk Road in Corralitos on July 3 (WM, SM), providing the first modern breeding record away from the county's extreme southeast corner. The county's first **Yellow-throated Vireo** (pending CBRC review, but long overdue) was studied as it sang at Loch Lomond Recreation Area on June 1-3 (DS, RW). Another unusual vireo singing in the same spot on June 1 and subsequent days was not identified until June 6, when it was found to be a **Red-eyed Vireo** (LG, MSc, JP). It lingered, singing on territory to at least July 3, being the first known to over-summer in the county (v.ob.).

Nine **American Crows** were at four spots along Bear Creek Road northeast of Boulder Creek on May 22, including two ranging as high as 2,050 feet in elevation (DS), documenting further expansion in the upper watershed of the San Lorenzo River. A roost of over 375 crows in trees at the Wilder Ranch buildings on July 8 was one of the highest counts ever for the county (SG). Crows only began to regularly range up the north coast as recently as 2003. A impressive flock of **Common Ravens** assembled along Highway 1 at the south junction of Swanton Road in late June and July, with a peak count of 154 on June 30 (DS). Although there was no indication of nesting in the county this year, a female **Purple Martin** appeared at Seacliff State Beach on the odd date of June 30 (RW). Two **House Wrens** along Skyline Boulevard near Castle Rock State Park on May 15 (MR) were noteworthy, as few are presently found nesting in the summit region of the county, especially northwest of Highway 17. A late **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on May 17 (SG).

Western Bluebird enjoyed its best nesting season in a number of years. Together with reports from early spring, bluebirds were reported from 10 sites, and at least nine successful nestings were documented (DT, WM, EL, RT, LH, JF, DS)! Notable were nest boxes in the Corralitos / Freedom area that fledged two broods each (DT, WM), and the first breeding confirmations from Ben Lomond Mountain reported in several years (DS, JF). Also of note were birds in areas without other recent reports, such as the West Branch of Soquel Creek (RT), and Summit Road and Skyline Boulevard northwest of Highway 17 (DS). A singing **Wood Thrush** was tape recorded along Chalk Mountain Road at the county's extreme northwest corner on June 16, for another first county record and a dream come true (DS)! A prior report of a singing Wood Thrush at Quail Hollow Ranch on June 13, 1992 was probably also a valid record, but it was undocumented and not otherwise confirmed.

Breeding season **Varied Thrushes** were mostly found at Big Basin Redwoods State Park, likely due to focused coverage there. The only one found elsewhere was a bird singing at Fall Creek State Park on May 23 (DS). Eleven reports from varied spots in Big Basin from May 24 to July 7 included a female carrying food for young at the West Fork of Waddell Creek on May 30 (DS). A flock of about 400 **European Starlings** at the south end of Swanton Road on June 30 appeared to be all juveniles, evidencing this species' robust breeding success along the north coast (DS). **Yellow Warblers** continued absent in several areas of riparian habitat where they were nesting into the mid-1990s. This season they were missed along the San Lorenzo River and Zayante Creek within Henry Cowell, although a small number were found singing upstream along the San Lorenzo (SG, DS, KA). Numbers counted along 4.75 miles of Soquel Creek dropped to a new low of just four on a survey there on June 10 (DS). A survey of the same area in June 1988 found 48 Yellows!

A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at Natural Bridges on July 31 must have been a dispersant from the local nesting populations in our mountains (SG), but dispersing birds have been seldom found. A male **Prothonotary Warbler** at Soquel Creek north of Soquel on June 10 was the county's third spring occurrence (DS). A singing **American Redstart** was at Antonelli Pond on May 22 (SS, AS). Three **Ovenbirds** in late May made for an impressive showing: at New Brighton State Beach on May 19 (RW), Sunset Trail at Big Basin on May 24 (DS), and at Rancho Del Oso on May 30 (DS). A **Northern Waterthrush** was at Antonelli Pond on May 31 (SG). Eight **MacGillivray's Warblers** at Rancho Del Oso on May 30, one of the centers of this species county distribution, included seven singing males and one female carrying food for young (DS). Four singing males were on the west slopes of Chalk Mountain on June 16 (DS).

A juvenile **Common Yellowthroat** was a surprise in the kitchen at the Café Brazil restaurant in Santa Cruz on July 5 (SG). As Gerow said, "One never knows what to expect." There was nothing like last year's amazing influx, but at least one **Hooded Warbler** was pulled out of the hat this season – a male at Soquel Creek north of Soquel on June 11 (RW). Three more **Yellow-breasted Chats** from May 3-11 brought the season's total to five (SG, LG, DS). A female **Summer Tanager** was at Natural Bridges on June 24 (SG). A late lingering **White-throated Sparrow** stayed at Branciforte Dip to May 12 (SG). Another near Rodeo Gulch in Soquel on May 20-22 was apparently a late migrant (JP). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** came on strong again in late spring, with a whopping 16 (10 males) found from May 16 to June 18 (DS, JP, CA, CE, PM, SG, RW). One at Ben Lomond July 12-14 fit more into a pattern of summer occurrences (JVH, KT).

A male **Blue Grosbeak** was at Mount Madonna Road on May 14, while an **Indigo Bunting** visited Bear Creek Road on May 22 (DS). A **Western Meadowlark** over Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on June 24 was out of place for summer (SG). A **Great-tailed Grackle** was in the

marsh at Pinto Lake County Park on June 12 (DS). Multiple **Hooded Orioles** continued to frequent their mountain outpost off Jarvis Road northeast Scotts Valley this season (BaM, KM). I don't know of any Hoodeds in the developed Scotts Valley area. Do any readers know of any there? **Red Crossbills** were fairly plentiful in the Douglas-firs of the Castle Rock region in May, and I suspect they were up there ever since last fall. Nine reports from that area May 10-23 included counts of up to 22 birds (DS, MR, SG, KA). Elsewhere, five at Mount Hermon on May 23 included a female building a nest in a ponderosa pine, eight were at Chalk Mountain in Big Basin on May 26, one was at Bonny Doon on June 5, and two were at Last Chance Road on June 7 (DS).

Cited Observers: Carol Anderson, Erica Arul, Kumaran Arul, Chris Berry, Matt Brady, Ed DeBellevue, Karen DeMello, Ryan DiGaudio, Chris Emmons, Richard Erickson, Eric Feuss, Linda Fippin, Jon Franzen, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Mark Greene, Eileen Halvey, Laird Henkel, David Hille, Jason Hoeksema, Clay Kempf, David Kodl, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia Macon, Wayne Macon, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan (BaM), Kevin Monahan, Bryan Mori (BMo), Mark Olden, Scott Pedan, Jeff Poklen, Michael Rogers, Larry Selman, Shiobhan Ruck, Michelle Scott (MSc), Steve Singer, Scott Smithson, Andy Snyder, John Sterling, David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Deanna Turner, Kelly Tyler, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, James Von Hendy, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from August 1 to October 31, 2005

Shorebirding seemed slow this fall as Harkins Slough – our local hot spot of recent renown – was quite flooded all season. The changes in habitats at Harkins (and, accordingly, in its bird life) over the last 20 years have been dramatic. The drought-influenced conditions of the late 1980s and early 1990s promoted seasonal wetland vegetation, grasses and willows. Subsequent years of higher rainfall have left the slough flooded for long periods into summer and fall, and cover of wetlands, grasses and willows declined in favor of open water and, eventually, mudflat in the fall. This year we never got to the mudflat stage, and the slough remained “Harkins Lake,” as Roger Wolfe dubbed it.

Bird life in nearshore ocean waters remained generally slow, a seeming follow up on the pattern resulting from odd conditions last spring. Pelagic boat trips had a few lively days, but some species (Arctic Tern, Sabine’s Gull, Long-tailed Jaeger) were reported to have migrated far seaward this year, and bird diversity on the bay thinned out a bit earlier than normal (e.g., by early October).

Last for this eclectic intro, let’s see how the season is shaping up for our “irruptive” wintering landbirds. Only Varied Thrush seems to be around in strong numbers. Numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing and American Goldfinch are average or lackluster. Red-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, and Pine Siskin are sparse so far. Red Crossbill and Evening Grosbeak don’t seem to be around at all.

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Neary Lagoon’s **Greater White-fronted Goose** remained through the period, present now for over a year (SG, PVL). Migrant White-fronts included singles near Baldwin Creek on October 10 (AG, EB) and Watsonville Slough on October 14 (RW), and a flock of 22 over Live Oak on October 15 (DS). Reports of **Cackling Geese** included one at Waddell Creek mouth on October 8 (DS et al.), 23 over Santa Cruz on October 12 (SG), and one along Beach Road near Watsonville on October 14 (RG). Among a scattering of reports of **Canada Geese** at mid-county, an apparent family group that included one leucistic bird was seen at a few spots through the period and was thought to be the family that had nested at Wilder Ranch this past spring (SG, DS). The high count of Canadas for this reporting period was 193 at Beach Road on October 14 (RW). A **Wood Duck** at Soquel Creek in Capitola Village on October 23 was noteworthy for that stream.

Two **Blue-winged Teal** were at Younger Lagoon on September 26 (SG), and four were at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on October 7-14 (RW). **Cinnamon Teal** went unreported! A male **Bufflehead** at Watsonville Slough on September 11 was probably one of the summering birds found there in July (RW); the first returning migrants were not noted until October 20 (RT). **Hooded Mergansers** returned on schedule, with two at Pinto Lake on October 25 (SM, WM). A rather late nesting of **California Quail** was evident when small young were seen at Natural Bridges State Beach on Sept 13 (SG). A **Common Loon** flying overland at the westside of Santa Cruz on September 16 was unusual, especially as the first reported migrant of the season (SG). Another was off the ocean a short way up the San Lorenzo River on October 23 (LG, WG).

Pied-billed Grebes sometimes nest in the fall, but such efforts are not found locally every year; families with small young were found this October at Scott Creek Marsh (JP, MS et al) and the San Lorenzo River (SG). Two of the season's best pelagic rarities were close but not quite in Santa Cruz County: A **Streaked Shearwater** was in San Mateo County west-southwest of Año Nuevo Point on September 11 (SJ), and a **Hawaiian Petrel** was found two miles from the county line in Monterey County, flying toward Santa Cruz, on September 17 (MSe). **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were found in Santa Cruz waters on at least four pelagic trips from August 26 to October 9 (MSe, SJ). The best tubenose in the county this fall was a **Manx Shearwater** on October 9 (SJ, MB).

Storm-Petrels were again found mostly along the north rim of Monterey Submarine Canyon, with various reports from August 24 to October 9. The high count for **Ashy Storm-Petrel** was 7,500 on September 12, and 250 for **Black** on September 24 (SJ). A lone **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** was found on September 12 and 24 (SJ). **Least Storm-Petrels** were found September 12-24, but never topped the low double digits, with a high of 12 on September 17 (MSe). The only **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** was found snoozing on the sea on September 24 (SJ). Numbers of **American White Pelicans** failed to reach the heights of the last few years, although a flock was consistently found in the south county sloughs. Peak counts were 75-80 at Watsonville Slough on October 4 and 18 (JD, RW), and 80-85 at Harkins Slough on October 19 (LG, JP). River-going **Pelagic Cormorants** continued at the San Lorenzo with one adult there on October 30 (DS). **White-faced Ibis** were not found in Santa Cruz County this fall after several years of increasing presence; a single at the Pajaro River mouth on August 5 was on the Monterey side (RW).

An adult **Crested Caracara** stationed around the south end of Swanton Road for at least two and a half months was *THE* rare bird of the season. First noticed on August 14 (RM), it lingered to at least early November and was enjoyed by scores of folks (m.ob.). It is tempting to believe that this was the same individual that provided the first county record as a sub-adult in the same spot in September 2002, but who can say for sure? An early **Merlin** was at Manresa State Beach on August 27 (MP). The first typically-timed migrant was noted September 18 (AG), followed by 21 additional reports through October (m.ob.). A **Sora** at Antonelli Pond on August 5 was quite early away from a known or suspected nesting area (SG). Single **Sandhill Cranes** moving generally down the coast were seen over Antonelli Pond on October 11 (SG) and over Live Oak on October 15 (DS). This matched the timing of most of the county's few other records. Single **Golden-Plovers** flying over Neary Lagoon on October 18 and over Antonelli Pond on October 31 were likely Pacifics (SG).

A **Snowy Plover** at the beach beside Schwan Lake on August 26 was unusual there (BT), although only a short way from Seabright Beach where a wintering flock regularly forms in late summer. An **American Avocet** at the San Lorenzo River mouth on August 9 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (KA). The rare but regular fall shorebirds all had low turnouts: about seven **Lesser Yellowlegs** from August 5 to October 14 (RW, BS), seven to nine **Baird's Sandpipers** from August 5 to September 4 (RW, JP, EF, SG), and just four **Pectoral Sandpipers** from September 2-6 (DS, MT, CK). Single **Ruddy Turnstones** were at the Pajaro River mouth on August 7 and 20 (RW, PM), while one at Capitola Beach from September 20 onwards was a returning wintering bird (DS, m.ob.). Three **Red Knots** were at Wilder Ranch on August 17, and one paused at Terrace Point from September 1-6 (SG). Counts of 450 and 700+ **Western Sandpipers** at Pajaro Dunes on August 7 and 10, respectively, were quite good for the county in fall migration (RW, JP).

Juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on August 7 and September 21 (RW), and at Waddell Creek mouth on August 11 (DS). A **Rock Sandpiper** at West Cliff Drive beginning on October 25 was presumably the bird that had spent the previous two winters here (DW). Following the July report, another early **Dunlin** was at the Pajaro River mouth on August 10 (JP); the first of the normally-timed migrant influx was reported on October 4 (RW). The county's 7th record of **Stilt Sandpiper** was provided by one at Watsonville Slough on September 21 (RW). The season's showing of **Wilson's Phalaropes** was rounded out by one at Younger Lagoon on August 1 (SG), and six at Watsonville Slough on September 11 (RW). **South Polar Skuas** were noted regularly on boat trips from August 26 to October 9, with high counts in mid-September of up to 21 including many in Santa Cruz waters (SJ, MSe). **Long-tailed Jaegers** were noted in Santa Cruz waters on four trips from August 28 to October 1, with a high of six on the first date (SJ).

The only reports of **Sabine's Gull** were three on August 26 (MSe), and six on August 28 (SJ). An adult **Arctic Tern** at Terrace Point on September 26 (SG) was exceptional close to shore, especially this year when the species reportedly migrated far to sea; they were generally missed on the standard pelagic birding trips this season. A **Least Tern** was at New Brighton State Beach on August 6 (RW). A **Black Skimmer** stopped at Schwan Lake Beach on August 18 (DS). For several years records of skimmers showed a marked increase in the spring and fall, but the last few years have been slow for them. The season's only **Xantus's Murrelets** were two seen on September 2 (MSe). A **Common Poorwill** calling in the watershed of the West Branch of Soquel Creek on August 29 was just the second record for that watershed (ST). Two along Highway 236 near China Grade on October 21 were in an area where they nest and may be resident (DS). A **Burrowing Owl** was seen at Davenport on September 20 and October 21 (GS, JB). A **Long-eared Owl** continued at the north end of Soquel from September 21 to October 17 (RW).

Black-chinned Hummingbirds staged a mini-invasion in the mid-county area for the third year in a row. Prior to 2003 the county averaged less than one per fall. Then some 14-17 different individuals were found from August 26 to September 27, 2003 and about 10 were found from August 27 to September 18, 2004. In both years all were female or immature birds, concentrated in Santa Cruz, Capitola and Soquel. This year eight were found from August 27 to October 7 (SG, DS, KA, mo.b.). Noteworthy among these was an adult male well described at Santa Cruz on September 1 (KA), and an immature male (photographed by LS) that lingered at Bethany Curve Park from September 27 (SG) to the relatively tardy date of October 7 (LG et al.), setting a new record late date for the county. Oddly, no similar influx has been evident in other areas of the central California coast, such as in our neighboring counties. What is up?

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at Santa Cruz on October 23 (RD). Seven **Willow Flycatchers** detected from September 2-25 was far below the recent average (DS, SG). **Dusky Flycatchers** were at Natural Bridges State Beach on September 13-22 (SG) and O'Neill Ranch Open Space Preserve on September 26 (DS). **Tropical Kingbirds** were at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on September 27 (SG), Davenport on September 28 – October 2 (CE), and Rancho Del Oso on October 6 (CE). Just three **Western Kingbirds** were noted, all at the west end of Santa Cruz on August 23 to September 16 (SG, MSp). Three **Ash-throated Flycatchers** were found from August 4-27 (SG, AG, EB). A **Cassin's Vireo** at Rancho Del Oso on September 2 was the only one reported (DS). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at the Porter – Sesnon parcel of New Brighton State Beach on September 5 (DH et al.).

The first migrant **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was noted by September 5 (BM), but there was little evidence of any fall influx this season with just a handful of reports away from areas of residency. The only reports of **Western Bluebirds** were from nesting haunts in the Corralitos area: three at

Pleasant Valley on August 16 (RW), one at Mt Madonna Road on August 22 (DT), and at least one lingering off Amesti Road into September (WM). **American Robins** were again quite scarce through October, but **Varied Thrushes** were locally common after the first one of the season on October 15 (CE). For example, 150 were tallied on a morning survey at Big Basin on October 28, when it was the second most abundant species noted (DS). One of the best vagrants of the season was the county's fifth **Brown Thrasher** which visited a Scotts Valley yard on October 23 (AM).

Rare fall warblers had a below average season compared to recent years, and none of the rarer species (those averaging less than one per fall) were detected. A few more individuals may yet be found in November, but the overall variety of species this season was below par, and total individuals were down by 25% from average. **Chestnut-sided Warbler** bucked the trend with a remarkable showing: a record-smashing 15 individuals found from September 7 to October 27 (PB, SG, CE, DS, BT)! Our recent 10-year average was only three per fall. Among the other regularly found eastern vagrants were four **Tennessee Warblers**, one **Magnolia Warbler**, just 10 **Palm Warblers** (half of the recent average), seven **Blackpoll Warblers**, five each of **Black-and-white Warbler** and **American Redstart**, and three **Northern Waterthrushes** (SG, CE, DS, RW, JH, MSc, RT, CB, LG, EF, MT, BH, BSt, MS-T, RD).

The rarer eastern vagrants were represented by **Blackburnian Warblers** at San Vicente Creek on September 21 (CE) and at Rancho Del Oso on October 27 (DS), and a **Prairie Warbler** at Capitola on September 7 (DS). Rare western warblers were headlined by a **Yellow-breasted Chat** taking a bath at Bethany Curve Park on October 1 (SG). Remarkably, there were no reports of **Nashville Warbler** through October, the first time they went missing in September and October in many years! Numbers of other expected rare western species were ten **Black-throated Gray Warblers** (only half of our recent fall average), eight **Hermit Warblers** and four **MacGillivray's Warblers** (PD, KA, DS, SG, MSc, KA, PVL). A **Townsend's Warbler** at Natural Bridges State Beach on August 10 was the county's second earliest ever (SG).

A **Summer Tanager** distinctive call was heard at Trout Gulch Road in Aptos on August 30 (RT). The county's sixth **Brewer's Sparrow** was near Yellow Bank Beach on October 14 (CE). Two **Vesper Sparrows** appeared on October 17: at Swanton Road (DS) and Antonelli Pond (SG). Two **Chipping Sparrows** at Santa Cruz from October 18-23 (RD) contrasted with 11 **Clay-colored Sparrows** from September 17 to October 26 (CE, TN, DS, SG, m.ob.). Migrant **Lark Sparrows** visited O'Neill Ranch on September 10 (DS), and the Porter – Sesnon parcel on October 1 (RW). A **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Natural Bridges on September 1 set a new early date by one day (SG). **Swamp Sparrows** were near Antonelli Pond on October 12 (DS) and at Rancho Del Oso on October 17 (DS). Six **White-throateds** were reported in October (TN, SG, DS, RD, CC).

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks showed well, with six from August 2 to October 5 being about three times the recent average number for August to October (BT, KA, DS, SG, MSc, LGo). Six **Blue Grosbeaks** (all immatures or females) from September 5 to October 14 were far more than we've ever had before! The recent 10-year average was less than one per fall. The action this fall began with one at Meder Canyon on September 5 (SG), followed by birds at Terrace Point on September 13 (SG), and at O'Neill Ranch on September 17-19 (DS). Three in early October included one near Natural Bridges on October 3-6 (SG, PB, JH), one at Rancho Del Oso on October 11 (CE), and one at Neary Lagoon on October 13-14 (SG, PVL). The only **Indigo Bunting** of the fall was at Bethany Curve Park on August 26 (SG). In contrast, six **Lazuli Buntings** were reported from August 10 to September 19 (SG, DS, RD). A **Bobolink** at Terrace Point on August 23 was one of our earliest ever by two days, and just the second record for August (SG).

The Caracara at Swanton Road brought birders to the only spot that has consistently had large numbers of **Tricolored Blackbirds** in recent fall seasons. However, only very small numbers were noted there through early October (m.ob.). Numbers then picked up by October 16-17, when about 1,000 were estimated (AM, DS). Four **Red Crossbills** at Castle Rock State Park on August 26 provided the only report for this period, likely a hold over from spring (DS).

Cited Observers: Kat Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Jack Barclay, Cliff Bixler, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Christy Caldwell, Bob Cohen, Jeff Davis, Ryan DiGaudio, Patty Durkee, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Bob Hargis, Jane Henderson, Laird Henkel, David Hille, Clay Kempf, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia Macon, Wayne Macon, Alexandra McDonald, Allan McLean, Peter Metropulos, Paul Miller, Monterey Seabirds (MSe) *fide* Roger Wolfe, Rob Moeller, Barbara Monahan, Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Michael Pollack, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MSc), Larry Selman, Shearwater Journeys (SJ) *fide* Debra Shearwater et al., Scott Smithson, Madeline Spencer (MSp), Barry Staley (BSt), Glenn Stewart, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, Mike Tyner, Deanna Turner, Breck Tyler, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, David Weber, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from November 1-30, 2005

Neary Lagoon's **Greater White-fronted Goose** continued through November (SG, PVL). A spate of **Snow Geese** appeared in mid-November, coincident with similar reports elsewhere along the central California coast. A flock of 45 flying north over Seascape on November 15 (RW) might have been the same as a "large flock" seen over UCSC later that day (fide DVP). Thirteen photographed flying around the Baldwin Creek mouth area on November 17 included two juvenile "*Blue Morph*" Snows, providing a very rare record for that form for our county (KA). A large flock of 58 flew over Capitola on November 18 (DS), and one was at Harkins Slough on November 19 (RF). **Ross's Geese** appeared over the same period. Nine were with the Snows over Baldwin Creek on November 17 (KA), and singles were at Younger Lagoon November 18-27 (PM, v.ob.), Harkins Slough on November 19 (RF), and at Merk Pond on November 21 (LF).

Two **Cackling Geese** were at Pinto Lake on November 23 (LH, KN). Singles were at Westlake Pond from November 20 into December (KA, v.ob.), and Scott Creek mouth on November 25 (GaS). The only **Brant** reported in November were 23 flying past Seabright Beach on November 19 (BS). Single **Blue-winged Teal** were at Merk Pond (DS) and Antonelli Pond (SG) on November 17. An eclipse male **Redhead** was at the Pajaro River mouth on November 5 (EL). A **Pacific Loon** made a rare stop slightly inland at a farm reservoir near Baldwin Creek on November 16 (KA). Flocks of **American White Pelicans** at the Watsonville Slough system dwindled to small numbers through November (v.ob.). The only ones reported elsewhere were two at Pinto Lake on November 14 (PM).

American Bitterns were at Struve Slough on November 7-11 (NZ, TN), Sunset State Beach Marsh on November 20 (EL), and Harkins Slough on November 22 (RW). An immature **Northern Goshawk** provided nice views near Alder Camp at Rancho Del Oso on November 10 (DS). A **Ferruginous Hawk** was along Hwy 1 north of Scott Creek on November 11-25 (GaS). The **Crested Caracara** continued through the month (v.ob.). It was most often noted near Davenport, but on November 26 it ranged all the way down to the coastal fields immediately west of Santa Cruz (SG), returning over eight miles to Davenport by the next day. We received 36 reports of **Merlins** for the fall season through November, 35% over the recent 10-year average, but similar to the last two fall seasons (v.ob.).

A juvenile **Prairie Falcon** was seen in the Davenport area from November 5-19 (GIS, DS, EF). Not only is Prairie rare in the county, but this was perhaps the first time the presence of an individual was established over a period of weeks. Indeed, presumably the same bird was seen after November, too. Seven **Common Moorhens** at Harkins Slough on November 20 were a nice count (EL), while one at Antonelli Pond of November 22 was noteworthy away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). Good mudflat conditions at East Struve Slough produced some noteworthy records of shorebirds in November. **Semipalmated Plovers** lingered late, with 10-12 there on November 7 (LG, MS), and 8 on November 22 (RW). We seldom have any after mid- October. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was there on November 7 (LG, MS). Five **Western Sandpipers** on November 22 were late, as the species is seldom found in the county after October (RW). Two hundred **Least Sandpipers** there on November 7 were exceptionally many for so late in the season (LG, MS), and in fact provided the peak count for the whole migration season.

“The” **Ruddy Turnstone** continued at Capitola Beach through November (DS). The returning **Rock Sandpiper** continued at West Cliff Drive through November, was also spotted at the end of 41st Ave. in Capitola on November 14 (RT), and at Black Point on November 24 (DS), ranging over at least 5.5 miles of shoreline. Three **Common Poorwills** responded to recordings at China Grade ridge before dawn on November 19 (DS). A **Long-eared Owl** continued to be heard just north of Soquel through November 22 (RW). The season’s only **Short-eared Owl** was flying down the coast just west of Santa Cruz on November 1 (SG). An impressive count of 214 **Acorn Woodpeckers** made during a census along 5.2 miles of trail at Big Basin shows the robust numbers that reside in prime habitat in that part of the park (DS).

Red-naped Sapsuckers were spotted at Rancho Del Oso on November 10 and at Corralitos on November 17 (DS). A total of 26 **Pileated Woodpeckers** were tallied at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on surveys on five mornings along 28 miles of trails from November 22 to December 12 (DS). The season’s 4th **Tropical Kingbird** was at Anna Jean Cummings Park in Soquel on November 5 (DS). **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were quite numerous this fall; a morning-long survey at Rancho Del Oso on November 10 produced a tally of 290, making it the most abundant landbird there (DS). **Varied Thrush** was the most abundant bird on surveys in the interior part of Big Basin Redwoods State Park. A total of 1,321 were counted on five mornings along 28 miles of trails from November 22 to December 12, with a high of 567 on November 22 alone (DS).

After missing **Nashville Warbler** in the main period of its fall migration, one (same bird?) was seen at Natural Bridges State Beach on November 11 and 29 (MS, SG). A hybrid **Hermit x Townsend’s Warbler** was studied at Rancho Del Oso on November 10; a male **Hermit** was also there that day (DS). The season’s 11th **Palm Warbler** was at Santa Cruz on November 3 (SG), but the season’s total was only half of the recent average. A late **Wilson’s Warbler** was in Santa Cruz on November 6 (MS). A **Chipping Sparrow** at Neary Lagoon on November 21 was the third for the season (SG). Swamp Sparrows were at Harkins Slough on November 3 (RW) and Younger Lagoon on November 22 (SG). A **Fox Sparrow** with characteristics of the “Red” form was at Mount Hermon on November 21 (PM).

Thirteen **White-throated Sparrows** were reported from October to November (v.ob.). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a Live Oak feeder on November 20 was the 7th record for this fall (NZ). An impressive 31 **Great-tailed Grackles** were counted at Struve Slough on November 7, setting a new record for the county (LG, MS). Our peak counts have all come from the fall season since the species became established in the sloughs, but then numbers seem to drop by winter, suggesting some seasonal exodus.

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Linda Fippin, Rick Fournier, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Laird Henkel, Earl Lebow, Paul Miller, Kris Neuman, Todd Newberry, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Glenn Stewart (GIS), Gary Strachan (GaS), David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, , Roger Wolfe, Nickie Zavinski. “v.ob.” means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1, 2005 to February 28, 2006

Neary Lagoon's **Greater White-fronted Goose** continued through its second winter here (PVL). Migrants included three at College Lake on December 5-6 (MB, DS), and seven at Watsonville Slough on December 9 (RW). **Snow Geese** gathered at Watsonville Slough and adjacent East Struve Slough on December 4-13, with a high count of 18 on the first date (RW, PM, CA). One moving between Baldwin Creek and Younger Lagoon from January 20 to February 23 was noteworthy for the north coast in winter (KA, JP, v.ob). A flock of 15 passed over Mission Springs on January 25 (DH). Finally, a *Blue morph* Snow photographed at College Lake on December 10 was a rare occurrence of that form for the county (RW, DS). **Ross's Geese** included up to four at College Lake on December 4-10 (RW, MB, DS), five at Watsonville Slough on December 9 (RW), one at Wilder Creek Beach on December 17-19 (EL, DS), and one at Baldwin Creek Marsh on January 7 (BK).

A scattering of reports of one to six **Cackling Geese** was received (v.ob.). Three hundred and twenty **Canada Geese** at College Lake on December 8 was probably a new record for the county. The family group with the leucistic youngster (from last spring's first north coast nesting at Wilder Ranch) stayed together as they roamed about Santa Cruz and nearby areas until mid-January. By January 23 (SG) the two surviving offspring had separated from the adults, and in February two adults that I believe to be the same pair were seen visiting likely nesting habitat at points west of Santa Cruz (JLL, SG, JW, AG). Two **Brant** spent part of the winter at Younger Lagoon (LG, v.ob.). We have had few wintering birds on shore in recent years. Three **Tundra Swans** flew over Wilder Ranch State Park on December 19 (DS).

Wood Duck numbers have been low in recent years, so a few good counts at the cusp of the year are worth noting: 22 at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on December 31 (SS), 35 at a pond of Mount Madonna Road on January 1 (DT, DE; especially good for the Pajaro Valley), and up to 18 at Neary Lagoon on January 10 (KA). A female **Blue-winged Teal** at Younger Lagoon from December 1-16 and again January 18-21 (KA, SG, LG) was a good find away from the Pajaro Valley. Reports from the Valley this winter included up to eight at Watsonville Slough on December 4-12, three at Pinto Lake on January 1 (BR), and four at the Pajaro River mouth on January 23 (CA). A male **Cinnamon Teal** in western Santa Cruz from December 2-17 was noteworthy away from the Pajaro Valley prior to the January arrival of northbound migrants (SG, EL). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at West Struve Slough on February 5 (TN, LB).

Five **Greater Scaup** at College Lake on January 1 were rare inland (DS). A female **Harlequin Duck** was at Natural Bridges State Beach on February 1-4 (PB, MB). Two **Black Scoters** were in the area of Seacliff State Beach on December 3-17 (KA, MB, RW, DS), and three were at La Selva Beach on January 1 (JG). Similarly rare, there were six reports of **White-winged Scoters** this winter, involving up to 9 birds (RW, CK, JG). An female goldeneye at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz from December 11 to February 3 had characters suggesting it was a hybrid **Barrows x Common Goldeneye** (SG). A **Red-necked Grebe** was off Corcoran Lagoon on December 17 (CK), and a very impressive count of five was reported from the La Selva Beach area on January 1 (JG). **Aechmophorus Grebes** were present in high numbers within the bay this

winter. Representative reports were of “thousands” off Seacliff State Beach on December 3 (KA) and an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 off Sunset and Manresa State Beaches on February 8 (JD).

American White Pelicans were found at the usual spots in the Pajaro Valley through the winter, with 74 reported from four sites there on January 1 (CK, BR, RM, DS). A **White-faced Ibis** at Watsonville and West Struve Sloughs on January 8 was the only one found this winter (EL). A leucistic **Red-shouldered Hawk** residing on the westside of Santa Cruz from late summer into February was dramatically pale (JLL, SG, KA, v.ob.); records of leucism in this species are apparently quite rare. The winter’s only **Ferruginous Hawk** was at Wilder Ranch State Park on December 13 (LG, MS). The celebrated **Crested Caracara** stayed along the north coast all winter, at least to March 10 (v.ob.). It was most often seen in the Davenport area, but on six occasions was reported at varied points down the coast as far as Laguna Creek. I received a second hand report that a state park ranger observed it carrying a stick in early March!

Thirty-three reports of **Merlins** from December to February was close to the recent average (v.ob.). The **Prairie Falcon** found near Swanton Road on November 5 was seen subsequently to January 17, ranging between Davenport and the U.C. Santa Cruz campus (JL, GIS, EL, GM, AG). This was the first time one was noted to overwinter in the county away from the Pajaro Valley area, but even there reports have generally been single-day sightings and evidence of overwintering is scant. A **Sora** was found dead on a driveway on December 9 in a suburban area of Watsonville well away from wetland habitats (fide AS). Two **Common Moorhens** went arboreal at Harkins Slough on February 21 when they were observed feeding on new leaves or buds five feet up in a tree (AG)!

Black-bellied Plover has seldom been noted away from the intertidal zones in this county, so reports of flocks of 25-50 feeding in muddy agricultural fields at Wilder Ranch and near Younger Lagoon in December and February were of some interest (KA, SG). Up to 18 **Semipalmated Plovers** took advantage of good foraging habitat at East Struve Slough on December 4-5 before rains flooded the slough (RW, LG, MS); they are rare in this county after October. Reports of two **American Avocets** at East Struve Slough on December 5 (LG, MS), and one **Long-billed Curlew** at New Brighton State Beach on December 17 (DS) were the only mention of those species all winter. **Wandering Tattlers** were once again absent in the county for the winter. “Red” the **Ruddy Turnstone** lingered at Capitola Beach to at least January 29 (DS, RW).

Sixteen **Least Sandpipers** at Wilder Creek mouth on December 17 (MB) and a **Dunlin** at Terrace Point on December 29 (PM) were both good finds for the county in winter away from the Pajaro Valley. West Cliff Drive’s **Rock Sandpiper** stayed into March, completing its third winter visit (v.ob.). Blustery late December storms brought great numbers of **Red Phalaropes** close to and onto shore in San Mateo and Monterey Counties, but only small numbers were reported in Santa Cruz County; presumably due to wind direction. The only report of any sizeable number was of 55 from La Selva to Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB, KM, JG). But two blown inland to backyards were of some interest: one in Capitola on December 26 (DS), and one in Watsonville on January 2 (fide CS).

Bonaparte’s Gulls were much more numerous in December than they have been in recent years. About 800 were at Soquel Cove on December 3 (KA). 349 tallied on the December 17 Santa Cruz County CBC was 36 times more than the recent average. A bird showing characteristics of a Kumlein’s **Iceland Gull** was documented at Terrace Point on February 26 (SG). It may well have been that rare species, a would-be county first, but without clearer photographs or corroboration by other observers I’ve elected to wait for review by the California Bird Records Committee. **Glaucous Gulls** were at Aptos Creek mouth on December 17 (JP) and Waddell Creek mouth on

January 18 (DS). Glaucous-type gulls showing characters of hybridization with Herring Gull or Glaucous-winged Gull were at Baldwin Creek Beach on January 24 (JP), Natural Bridges on February 3 (SG), and Aptos Creek mouth February 18 (JP).

A trio of **Black Skimmers** cruised up and down the Santa Cruz Main Beach on December 14 (MTL). Aerial bird surveys found record-breaking numbers of **Marbled Murrelets** off Santa Cruz this winter, with high counts of 246 on January 24 and 232 on March 8 (LH). Together with even higher counts reported in from Half Moon Bay in February and March, one could speculate that the murrelet numbers in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties this winter were in the low thousands, surely reflecting a seasonal influx of birds from the north. See the article by Laird Henkel elsewhere in this issue for more details. A **Horned Puffin** was observed from a boat off Pajaro Dunes on February 21 (LH, HN), and beached individuals were found immediately north of the county line on February 17, and at La Selva Beach on February 27 (fide MBe). The La Selva bird died during attempts to rehabilitate it.

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to occur away from the known resident population on the westside of Santa Cruz. A flock of 5-10 has visited a Seacliff yard daily since at least September (JWt, GL). One was near De LaVeaga Park on December 17 (fide DS), and seven were at Drew Lake on January 1 (RM et al.). Reports of wintering **Common Poorwills** came from two spots where they are present in the breeding season: Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve on December 17 (BSt, KP) and along Highway 236 near China Grade on January 5 (DS). The wintering population of **Burrowing Owls** was determined to be just four birds this season (JB, JL). Wintering birds found elsewhere were at West Struve Slough from early December to at least January 1 (JPr et al.), and atop the coastal bluffs west of Wilder Creek Beach January 8 to February 1 (LW, RW, JW).

One or two **Long-eared Owls** were noted in the area of Glen Haven Road at Soquel through the winter (RW, MG), and another was at Bonny Doon on December 17 (MG). A female **Costa's Hummingbird** was spotted at Meder Canyon on January 13, providing just the third winter record for the county (SG). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was at Pinto Lake County Park on February 9 (WM), and a **Red-naped Sapsucker** was in Santa Cruz near Meder Canyon on February 6 (TU). The county's seventh **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** wintered at Meder Canyon from at least December 5 to March 11 (SG, v.ob). A **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** cavorted with other swallows at Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB). **Barn Swallows** made another early winter passage, now the fourth year in a row. Five reports from the Pajaro Valley from December 8 to January 11 were of 1-5 birds (DS, BB, BR), except for a tally of 34 in the sloughs west of Highway One on January 1 (CK et al.). The vanguard of normally-timed breeding migrants did not appear until early March.

The season's only report of **White-breasted Nuthatch** came from New Brighton State Beach on December 17 (DS). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** seemed to be absent away from our local breeding areas this winter. A **Townsend's Solitaire** joined robins at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on December 12 (DS). Eight reports of **Western Bluebirds** in the Pajaro Valley this winter included up to 33 tallied in the hills east of Watsonville on the January 1 (RW, RM et al.). Those hills seem to be the species' remaining "stronghold" in the county, but there is hardly any recent breeding season information from there. The only report away from the Pajaro Valley was of "several" at Back Ranch Road on January 13 (SN).

A highlight of the season was a male **Mountain Bluebird** photographed at Waddell Creek Beach on February 27-28 (GSt, ZB, DS)! In addition to two old specimen records without specific dates or locality information, the only other county record was from 1981. Records of some rare but

regular winter western warblers this period included four **Nashvilles** (DVP, MS, SG, PB), two **Black-throated Grays** (DS, CA, SG), and two **Hermits** (DS). A hybrid **Hermit x Townsend's Warbler** at New Brighton State Beach on December 17 was the 3rd for the county (DS). **Palm Warblers** were found just west of Santa Cruz on December 14 (SG) and on the westside of town on December 29 to February 19 (SG, MS). **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Rodeo Gulch on December 17 (DS) and Neary Lagoon February 26 (PVL, PS). **Wilson's Warblers** brightened up New Brighton on December 17 (DS) and Pajaro Dunes on December 28 (BM).

Two **Western Tanagers** were in Santa Cruz from December 9-17 (DS, SG). A **Chipping Sparrow** at O'Neill Ranch on December 17 was a good one for the winter period (DS). Seven **Swamp Sparrows** were found from December 9 to January 8 (SG, CK, EL, DS). The 38 **White-throated Sparrows** reported from December to February was above our recent average (v.ob.); four wintering at a Santa Cruz residence was the only notable concentration (TN). A male and female **Black-headed Grosbeak** provided a winter surprise at a feeder near Rodeo Gulch on December 16; the female was seen again December 17 (DS), and the male through January 30 (JP). A flock of about 2,300 **Tricolored Blackbirds** frequenting the fields near Baldwin Creek in mid-December (LG, JP, KA) were perhaps the same birds that had been in the Swanton Road area earlier in the fall. Elsewhere, just a single "Trike" was found in the Pajaro Valley on January 1 (RM).

A small number of **Great-tailed Grackles** continued in residence at Struve Slough through the winter, with five on January 1 being the highest count reported (CK). An first year male **Oriole** at Live Oak on January 21 was most likely an Orchard, but the identification could not be confirmed (MT). Eight **Red Crossbills** at Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve on December 17 were the only ones reported this winter (BSt, KP). In dramatic contrast with last winter, **Pine Siskin** was decidedly scarce this season, and indeed seemed absent over much of the landscape (v.ob.).

Cited Observers: Carol Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Jack Barclay, Bruce Barrett, Ziad Bawarshi, Michelle Bellizzi (MBe), Matt Brady (MB), Linda Brodman, Phil Brown, Jeff Davis, David Ekdahl, Linda Fippin, Rick Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Jennifer Green, Mark Greene, Laird Henkel, David Hille, Brad Keitt, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Grace Lee, Wayne Macon, Greg Meyer, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan, Randy Morgan, Kris Neuman, Todd Newberry, Susan Norris, Ken Peterson, Jeff Poklen (JP), Jonathan Pritchard (JPr), Bob Ramer, Barbara Scharfenstein (BS), Michelle Scott, Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, Anne Spence, Barry Staley (BSt), Glenn Stewart (GIS), Gary Strachan (GaS), Cindy Stoops, David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Monte Tudor-Long, Deanna Turner, Mary Turner, Tom Unsicker, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, Jeff Wall (JW), Jeff Walters (JWt), Laura Wolfe, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2006

A seemingly endless rainy weather pattern brought rain on most days from February 21 to April 16, with only short breaks from the wet stuff interspersed. Landbird migration was correspondingly slow. First arrivals and the main influx for many early season migrants (those arriving by early April) were significantly delayed. Migration didn't peak much even after the weather improved in late April, and it was quite protracted into early June. Breeding activity was also delayed and many early nesting attempts likely failed for many species due to the weather. Even breeding species that might not seem to be affected by rain, such as Common Merganser, had late seasons and low success. For example, we often get the first merganser broods by late April, but this year the first was not until early June and there were rather few families noted even by mid-summer. Foraging conditions were again apparently poor in nearshore ocean waters, and nesting activity by some species (Brandt's Cormorant, Western Gull, Pigeon Guillemot, Western Gull) appeared to be running late.

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Nearby Lagoon's **Greater White-fronted Goose** finally departed sometime after it was last reported on April 22 (PVL), bringing an end to its 18-month stay; its departure followed soon after the demise of its resident domestic goose companion. Six White-fronteds were at College Lake on March 11 (MB). The **Snow Goose** and **Brant** wintering at Younger Lagoon lingered to March 5 (SG). About 800 **Brant** passing West Cliff Drive in one hour on April 21 was one of the better migrant passages reported in the county in recent years (SG). One Brant put in at Antonelli Pond on April 22 (SG). A **Cackling Goose** on the bluffs at Natural Bridges State Beach on March 30 was in an odd setting and a bit late (SG).

Canada Geese ramped up their spring pattern of widespread and frequent occurrences in the mid-county coastal area and up the coast to the vicinity of Laguna Creek, with numerous reports of one to fourteen birds, especially from western Santa Cruz. Presumably this involves nest prospecting, but no actual nesting was noted in these areas this season. Interestingly, a leucistic goose at Antonelli Pond on April 13 (SG) was likely the pale offspring noted from a nest at Wilder Ranch in 2005, last seen in mid-January 2006. A pair of **Wood Ducks** on the Pajaro River below Highway 1 on April 29 was notable for the Pajaro Valley in the breeding season (RW), but why are they so scarce there at that season? Two male **Blue-winged Teal** were at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on March 18 (RW). A female Blue-wing at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park on March 25 was a rare find for the San Lorenzo Valley (AR, JW).

A **Northern Shoveler** at Watsonville Slough on May 12 was late; we have few after April (RW). Two tardy female **Greater Scaup** at the Pajaro River mouth on April 15 were perhaps the same as those at adjacent Watsonville Slough on April 21 and May 12-23 (RW). Male **Black Scoters** were at New Brighton State Beach on March 18 (RW) and West Cliff Drive on March 27 (AG). Tardy **Bufflehead** included a male and female at Watsonville Slough on April 21 (RW). Also of note, if just across the county line, were two female **Common Goldeneyes** on the Monterey side of the Pajaro River mouth on April 21+ (RW). A male **Hooded Merganser** at Watsonville Slough on April 15 was later than most (RW). **Common Mergansers** in somewhat odd spots

included one flying over a Capitola neighborhood on April 3 (DS), and five on the beach at Natural Bridges on April 6 (PB).

A **Wild Turkey** at Watsonville Slough near Highway 1 on April 21 (CK) was the first report from the South County Sloughs, one of the few regions of the county where this increasing species had yet to be noted. **California Quail** have “dropped out” of many localities in urban Santa Cruz over the last 20 years. Two at Neary Lagoon on May 16 were “new” at one such spot where the species was formerly resident (PVL, AVL). It would be interesting to study the dynamics of species’ persistence and recolonization in the various habitat fragments in the mid-county region. A **Horned Grebe** at Moran Lake in Live Oak on May 6-7 was tardy and noteworthy off the ocean (RD). Two **Red-necked Grebes** were at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on April 1 (PB). Another was on the ocean just across the county line at the Pajaro River mouth on March 8 (JP, BMcL).

Three **American White Pelicans** were at Harkins Slough on April 7 (RW), increasing to 20 there on April 9 (LS). One was at Watsonville Slough on April 21 (MB). Two White Pelicans flying west over Younger Lagoon on May 9 (JL) were among few reports ever away from the Pajaro Valley, especially in the spring season. A breeding-plumaged **Pelagic Cormorant** upstream of Broadway on April 1 was in decidedly fresh water, given the storm discharge at that time (SG). A **Great Egret** at Baldwin Creek Marsh on April 18 was rare for the north coast in the breeding season (RG, MP). A **Snowy Egret** at Natural Bridges on May 31 was going through the actions of nest building on the bluff top, but nothing came of it (SG).

Reports of **Osprey** have become increasingly frequent in spring and fall over the years, but the change in the breeding season has been marked over the last few years. Nesting is confirmed at two spots in Santa Cruz County (near Davenport and at Loch Lomond), but is probably occurring elsewhere, too. And nesting has recently been discovered over the summit ridge in the upper Los Gatos Creek watershed of Santa Clara County, and just north of the county in the Butano Creek watershed of San Mateo. A dark morph **Swainson’s Hawk** passed over Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on March 3, one day shy of tying our record early date (SG). On the other end of the season, a light morph Swainson’s passing over western Santa Cruz on May 18 was the county’s latest ever by about three weeks (AG, EB). **Golden Eagles** were again noted from March to May in the Rincon Gorge at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, but no nesting evidence was obtained (SG, fide JL).

The wintering **Crested Caracara** remained in the Davenport area to at least April 10 (BSm, CE, MG, DS). Meanwhile one appeared at Big Sur in Monterey County on March 28, lingering at least into summer. There were 17 reports of **Merlin** for the period, with one at the San Lorenzo River mouth on May 5 being notably late (BS). A **Prairie Falcon** was unexpected over western Santa Cruz on May 17 (GM). As with the Osprey, breeding season reports of **Peregrine Falcons** have become widespread and frequent. Peregrines were confirmed to nest at two spots in the county’s north coastal region this season, and the presence of adults at two other known sites suggested nesting was attempted there, too (fide JL). A **Black-necked Stilt** was at Younger Lagoon on April 28 (LG). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at the Pajaro River on April 29 (RW).

Careful watching and reporting from West Cliff Drive in 2004 and 2005 established a window of northward migration for **Wandering Tattler** spanning the 3rd week of April to the 3rd week of May. This year a tattler appeared early on March 25 (SG), three weeks ahead of schedule, followed by the regular passage of migrants noted from April 22 to May 10 (SG, v.ob.). Then a late straggler in basic plumage was noted from May 28 to June 7 (SG). **Ruddy Turnstone** has gone missing as a spring migrant in the county for the last several years, except for a couple

March sightings that more likely were of the county's lone wintering bird. This season it was nice to have one at the San Lorenzo River mouth on April 28 (NC, PS), and an impressive 14 at West Cliff Drive on May 8 (LG), the latter providing the highest count for the county in many years.

The **Rock Sandpiper** stayed at West Cliff Drive to April 9, molting to breeding plumage by the end of March (SG, LG, GT). A flock of about 500 **Forster's Terns** at Aptos Creek mouth on April 25 was impressive compared to other reports of migrant flocks in recent years (AG). A number of migrant **Red-necked Phalaropes** wound up on shore in spots away from the immediate coast this spring. The most noteworthy was one all the way in at Loch Lomond Reservoir on about April 15 (JC). Four found dead on the sidewalk at Gharkey Street in Santa Cruz on May 6 were odd, as this species seldom "wrecks" onshore (SS). An estimate of 900 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at Seacliff on April 21 was a high count compared to reports from recent spring migrations (CK). Just one **Franklin's Gull** was noted in the county this spring: an adult flying past Davenport on May 4 (DS). Two others were across the county line at the Pajaro River mouth on April 28-29 (MB, RW).

One of the period's best discoveries was an apparent 2nd year **Laughing Gull** photographed at Aptos Creek mouth on March 8-16 (JP, DVP, AG). This was the 7th county record, and 1st for March. A flurry of four sightings of **Glaucous Gulls** from March 4-11, plus one other just across the county line at the Pajaro River mouth rounded out the winter season (CK, JP). Of note was a 3rd year individual among *three* in the Harkins Slough area on March 4 (CK). Increased scrutiny of gulls produced two more sightings of apparent Glaucous hybrids at Capitola on March 3 (JP) and Terrace Point on March 12 (SG). A handful of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were seen along the shore from March 3-25 (JP, SG). Migrant **Least Terns** were at New Brighton on April 6 (RW) and Lighthouse Point on April 12 (KF, JH). **Elegant Terns** arrived on the early side with 14 at Pajaro Dunes on April 22 (RW), but the main influx into the county was not until early summer.

Two **Black Skimmers** flew by Pajaro Dunes on May 23 (RW). **Marbled Murrelet** activity at Big Basin Redwoods State Park was exceptionally low this spring, with next to nothing going on until the third week of May (DS). Activity usually picks up for the season by early April, and the seeming lack of activity this year was unprecedented for the park. A murrelet detection from Fall Creek State Park on May 23 showed continued presence at that spot (DS); the species was first noted there in 2001. Closer to other known areas of activity, detections on May 18 in the upper watershed of the south fork of Gazos Creek near the Chalks in Big Basin State Park established another new site of occurrence (DS).

A **Horned Puffin** near the surf at Seacliff State Beach on May 9 ended up on the beach later that day (CK, v.ob.). It was captured and taken for rehabilitation, where it was found to be starving (fide DVP). The presence of this bird was probably related to the event that brought others to the Monterey Bay region this past late winter, but it was a first May record for the county; 12 prior records have all come from February to mid-March or June to August. **Eurasian Collared-Doves** appeared widely this spring, especially in the Santa Cruz area (PVL, SG, PB, MB, DS, LG, WG). First records were noted for places such as Neary Lagoon, Natural Bridges, U.C.S.C., Aptos Village, Sunset State Beach, and La Selva. Please continue to report sightings of this increasing species to help document its spread. A **Short-eared Owl** along Highway 1 near Liddell Creek on March 18 was apparently a migrant, providing a rare spring record for the county (DVP).

Long-eared Owls continued in the Soquel Creek watershed, with detections at two places in March and April (RW, DS). A **Lesser Nighthawk** photographed as it perched on a fence in a yard east of De Laveaga Park on April 11 was a new early record for the county (JT, AT). Three **Black Swifts** over Moore Creek Preserve on May 13 were the only ones reported in the county

this period (SG et al.). Nine migrants were across the county line at Loma Prieta on May 28 (KA). Thirty **Vaux's Swifts** migrating past West Cliff Drive on April 25 was the only report of a group of more than a few (SG); spring migrants have been sparse in the county lately. Reports of **Acorn Woodpeckers** from urban settings were of interest: two along Pacheco Street in eastern Santa Cruz on April 7 (SN), one at Fair Avenue in Santa Cruz on April 20 (SG), and up to two at Natural Bridges on May 11-31 (SG).

Among many sightings of **Pileated Woodpeckers**, one at Moore Creek Preserve on April 22 was interesting as it was away from extensive forest and located at the margin of Santa Cruz (SG). Two at Zayante Trail in Henry Cowell on May 6 were in sycamore – cottonwood riparian forest (DS et al.). **Hammond's Flycatchers** were at Santa Cruz on April 19 (SG) and Capitola on April 25 (DS). A **Gray Flycatcher**, the rarest of our western *Empidonax* visitors, was at Lighthouse Field State Beach on April 28 (SG). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was there April 28-29 (SG, LL, CL). Up to 25 **Western Kingbirds** were noted from March 26 to May 18 (v.ob.); Moore Creek Preserve was again a hotspot, e.g. at least seven there on May 13 (SG). Among the season's very few Eastern vagrants were singing **Red-eyed Vireos** at the UCSC Arboretum on May 25 (MB) and Rancho Del Oso on May 29 (DS).

The season's only **Purple Martin** was at the Pajaro River on April 29 (RW). Recent (now former) local nesting areas remained devoid of martins. The only **Bank Swallow** was at Neary Lagoon on May 5 (SG). Sightings of **American Crows** pushing the distributional envelope included one in the upper watershed of the West Branch of Soquel Creek on April 6 (KM), and one along Skyline Blvd in the upper watershed of Bear Creek on May 27 (DS). Three hundred and eleven **Common Ravens** were counted on a drive along Highway 1 on March 23 between Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz, with 169 in this county (DS).

A **Western Bluebird** along Skyline Blvd at Long Ridge Open Space on March 9 was from an area of the county without other recent reports (DS), but none were evident in that area later in the season. Nesting attempts were reported at three previously used sites in the Corralitos region. Three adults at nest boxes near Amesti Road on March 14 were soon reduced when a Merlin took one of the males (WM)! Subsequent nesting there failed, perhaps due to the rainy early spring (WM). A pair at Mt Madonna Road tried to nest in one of last year's Cliff Swallow nests (a first for the county), but that attempt also failed (DT). Another pair at Pleasant Valley nested in a natural cavity in an apple tree (RW), the only county report of nesting in a natural tree cavity in recent memory. Finally, a pair along Back Ranch Road on April 23 was the first breeding season report from that former stronghold in several years (TH).

A singing **Varied Thrush** at Aptos Creek in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on May 19 extended the local breeding season range by about nine miles and was the first for that season east of the San Lorenzo River (DS). The only **Nashville Warblers** noted during the spring migration period were one at Natural Bridges on April 13 (a wintering bird?; SG), and one in Santa Cruz on April 28 (KA). A **Palm Warbler** was at Moore Creek Preserve on March 2 (SG). **MacGillivray's Warblers** at Seascape on May 30 (RW) and Santa Cruz on May 31 (SG) were probably migrants, but were late as such. A singing male **Hooded Warbler** was at Soquel Demonstration State Forest on May 11 (DS). The season's only **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at the Pajaro River on May 26 (RW).

A singing **Black-chinned Sparrow** was a surprise in coastal scrub at Rancho Del Oso on May 6, the first reported in the county since May 2002 (RW)! This is the only record in the county away from the species' former(?) breeding stations along the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains. A singing **Vesper Sparrow** in western Santa Cruz on April 26 added a rare spring record (SG). A

Sage Sparrow at Castle Rock on April 22 was in the only spot where they are currently known to occur in the county (DH et al.) Somewhat out of place **Grasshopper Sparrows** were singing at Terrace Point on April 29 (SG) and in the coastal agricultural fields at Wilder Ranch on May 6 (RW). **Fox Sparrows** of forms other than our common “Sooty” included birds with characters of the “Slate-colored” form at Younger Lagoon on March 5 (SG) and the “Red” form at Bonny Doon on March 12 (BT).

A migrant **Harris’s Sparrow** was enjoyed for one day only at the UCSC on April 30 (RB, TN, LG, WG). It was even heard singing, perhaps a first for the county. The 14 **White-throated Sparrows** reported in March and April were nearly all in Santa Cruz. Late birds included up to two at the UCSC Arboretum May 2-4 (TN, LS), and one northeast of Scotts Valley on May 13 (KP). A late **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was at Capitola on May 21 (DS). Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** from May 16-24 were fewer than most recent May showings (KMe, CA, Monterey Bay Area Bird Box). A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** near La Selva on April 14 was the first reported in the county since October 2003 (JS). **Great-tailed Grackles** continued resident in the Struve / Watsonville Slough area, with a high of 14 on April 14 (RW). There were three reports of **Red Crossbills** from May 6-30 (TN, TH, SG). A pair of **Lawrence’s Goldfinches** at Moore Creek Preserve approached so closely that the observers wondered if the birds might come tie their shoes (AG, EB)! Singles were at Eagle Rock on May 25 (DS) and at Sunset State Beach on May 26 (RW).

Cited Observers: Carol Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Ralph Berger, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Judie Cole, Nancy Collins, Ryan DiGaudio, Chris Emmons, Kyri Freeman, Alexander Gaguine, Michael Genaid, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Rich Griffin, Jean Harrison, David Hille, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Cindy Lieurance, Les Lieurance, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Barry McLaguhlin, Karen Merkley (KMe), Greg Meyer, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan (KM), Sydney Nash, Todd Newberry, Margaret Perham, Kenneth Peterson, Jeff Poklen, Alex Rinkert, Barbara Scharfenstein, Larry Selman, Steve Singer, Jenny Slaughter, Pete Solé, Bern Smith, David Suddjian, Gary Tepke, Ryan Terrill, Annie Tokarz, Jim Tokarz, Deanna Turner, Breck Tyler, Amanda Van Loan, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Pluym, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. “v.ob.” means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from June 1 to July 31, 2006

There was only one report of nesting for **Canada Goose** from the Pajaro Valley this season: a family at Watsonville Slough on June 10 (RW); did other evidence go unreported? Surprisingly, there were no reports of the species all from mid-county during the summer. The period's high count was 80 Canadas at Watsonville Slough on July 22 (RW). Straggling **Brant** included one at Capitola Beach on June 12-24 (RW). Nearly all recent reports of stragglers or summering Brant have been from the Pajaro River mouth, which had one this year from June 24 to July 1 (RW). Twenty-five **Wood Ducks** at Neary Lagoon on July 27 was a good count for summer (SG).

The Pajaro Valley had several seasonally rare ducks, some with little precedent in the county during June and July. A male **Green-winged Teal** was at Watsonville Slough on July 1 (RW), a male **Northern Pintail** was at Shorebirds Pond on June 5 (LG, MS), and three male **Northern Shovelers** were at Watsonville Slough on June 10 (RW). Up to two male **Redheads** at Watsonville Slough and the Pajaro River mouth on June 3-10 were the first ever for June (RW, LG, MS). Up to three **Buffleheads** were at the Pajaro River mouth between June 5 and July 22 (LG, MS, RW), while a **Greater Scaup** on June 10 and **Common Goldeneye** on July 8-15 were seen there only on the Monterey County side (RW). Two **Northern Shovelers** at the San Lorenzo River on July 28 provided the first summer record outside the Pajaro Valley (SG). **Gadwall** nested again at Younger Lagoon, with a family noted on July 15 (SG). A high summer count of Gadwalls from the Pajaro Valley was 111 at Watsonville Slough on June 17 (RW).

The first brood of **Common Mergansers** for the season – at Soquel Creek on June 7 (DS) – was five to seven weeks late (DS). Merganser nesting effort was low this season, or at least few broods made it out to the water; by late June just two broods were at Loch Lomond, where there had been over 10 in 2005 (JC). The near daily spectacle of huge flocks of **Sooty Shearwaters** in nearshore county waters once again failed to happen, with only sporadic reports of relatively small flocks; better concentrations were noted along the south part of the bay in Monterey County. Two **American White Pelicans** were at Watsonville Slough on June 17-24.

Double-crested Cormorants continued to nest at Pinto Lake (25 nests; W&SM) and Schwan Lake (123 nests; DS). **Brandt's Cormorants** nested at Seacliff State Beach (125 nests; DS), Natural Bridges State Beach (55 nests; SG et al.), and Davenport Pier (33 nests; DS). A nesting attempt at West Cliff Drive on the rock near Columbia Street was abandoned (SG). Three **Pelagic Cormorant** nests on the bluffs east of Capitola Beach were at a new site, the farthest ever inside along the north margin of the bay (RW). **Great Egrets** continued to nest at Pinto Lake (4 nests; W&SM), but apparently did not reprise their effort at the Santa Cruz harbor. A well-described **Cattle Egret** at Moore Creek Preserve on June 23 (fide KA) provided only the 2nd summer record for the county.

Osprey reports continued to increase, reflecting a growing breeding population in the region. Nesting continued at Loch Lomond (JC, CB) and near Davenport (fide DS), and numerous reports from the Pajaro Valley suggested nesting in that area, too. Other nests were just outside the county in the upper watersheds of Butano Creek (a first for San Mateo County), and Los Gatos Creek in Santa Clara County. A series of sightings in the Waddell Creek watershed this

season might have involved the Butano pair. A **Sharp-shinned Hawk** at the Pajaro River mouth on June 5 was well out of place for the date (LG, MS). **Peregrine Falcons** were confirmed to nest for the first time at a North Coast site where a pair had been present the past few years (JL), and nesting continued at another site near Davenport (fide JL). Two other known nesting territories in the county were at least occupied, but no specific evidence of nesting was obtained (fide JL).

A young **Virginia Rail** at Natural Bridges on July 13 had wandered from some local nesting site, but was early for a post-breeding dispersant (AG). Four of five pairs of **Common Moorhens** nested along Watsonville Slough inland of Highway this season, for a nice concentration for the county (BMr, GK); no others were reported. Up to 10 **Wilson's Phalaropes** were found in the Pajaro Valley from June 24 to July 23 (RW, CK). Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** at Watsonville Slough on June 24 were the only ones reported, and were notable away from the coast during summer (RW). Two **Black Skimmers** visited the Pajaro River mouth on June 17 (RW). Two inland at Watsonville Slough on July 23 were exceptional for the county away from the immediate coast (EL, CK).

The spate of **Horned Puffins** Monterey Bay region continued from winter and spring with an immature near the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on June 16-18 (JW, CC, RH). Two **Tufted Puffins** over Cabrillo Canyon were a highlight on a June 25 pelagic trip (RW). **Eurasian Collared-Doves** at new spots included two at Struve Slough on June 11 (first for the Watsonville Slough system; JW), and three in the Meder Canyon area on July 17 (SG). An unidentified **Nighthawk** at Arana Gulch on June 7 was thought to be a probable Lesser (RD). Just two records of **Black Swift** during June and July set a new low for the summer. Three flying north over Wilder Beach on June 12 fit the pattern of migrants (RD). Six foraging over Moore Creek Preserve on July 17 might have been birds nesting at Año Nuevo State Reserve in San Mateo County, where at least one nest was found this year (GS). Once again, all of the historic nest sites in Santa Cruz County were vacant.

Fifth and 6th county records of **Chimney Swifts** framed the season, with two at Slippery Rock in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on June 2, and one at Rancho Del Oso on July 31 (DS). **Vaux's Swifts** were confirmed to nest in two chimneys in suburban settings. One nest at a site along West Cliff Drive, notable for its position fronting the coastal cliffs, was perhaps by the same pair that nested nearby at Chico Street last year, but access at the Chico Street chimney had since been prevented by a new spark arrester (SG). The other nest site – at Seascapes (LH) – was a big surprise, as there was not even any indication that Vaux's were in that part of the county during the breeding season. Meanwhile, extensive field work in the forests of Big Basin revealed just two family groups in late July, and a season's high count of only eight adults (DS). Up to nine Vaux's were at Rancho Del Oso in June (DS).

Breeding **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** continued in the watersheds of Waddell (and tributaries), Scott, Liddell, Soquel and Aptos creeks (DS). One at Big Basin on June 21 was in old growth redwood forest well away from deciduous riparian – unusual for our breeding sapsuckers. A **Pileated Woodpecker** in town at Soquel on June 9 was the first for that suburban area (DS). A **Dusky Flycatcher** at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on June 4 was our latest spring record by eight days (KA). Two **Willow Flycatchers** were reported for the spring migration period, with one at Santa Cruz on June 1 (KA) and one in the upper Soquel Creek watershed on June 15 (RT). **Western Kingbirds** nested again at Merk Road, where a nest was found on July 2 (W&SM). Straggling migrants were at Santa Cruz on June 5 (PM) and UCSC on June 9-11 (MB, DVP).

A juvenile **Loggerhead Shrike** flying through the heavy fog at West Cliff Drive on July 17 was quite out of place, especially for July (SG). Was this a fledgling from a local nest? Does anyone have any recent evidence of local nesting for this declining species? The spring's third **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Soquel on June 13 (RW). Three **Purple Martins** at Natural Bridges on June 8 (SG) were hard to pigeonhole...late migrants? There were no other breeding season records for the county this season, and recent breeding stations remained vacant. Do any martins still nest in the Santa Cruz Mountains region? Single **Tree Swallows** at Rancho Del Oso on May 31 (PB, DSi) and Last Chance Road on June 6 (DS, MST) were rare for the North Coast. A singing **House Wren** at Sunset State Beach on June 1 was puzzling (MST, DH); could they be nesting along the coast, so far from other breeding stations? None are known to nest in the Pajaro Valley area.

Family groups of **Western Bluebirds** at the top of Empire Grade on July 5 (DS) and at Back Ranch Road on August 17 (TH) provided the only evidence of successful nests in the county this year. The Back Ranch record was the first report of nesting in that area of Ben Lomond Mountain in several years. A singing "Myrtle" **Yellow-rumped Warbler** along Skyline Boulevard southeast of Castle Rock on June 5 was perhaps an eastern vagrant rather than a lingering wintering bird (DS). A singing **Ovenbird** was also along Skyline Boulevard on June 5 (DS). A **MacGillivray's Warbler** at New Brighton State Beach on June 3 was an unusually late migrant, well away from the local breeding range (RW). A **Fox Sparrow** at Mission Springs on June 8 was the only June occurrence on record for the county, and it appeared to be other than the usual "Sooty" form (SS).

Seven **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** from June 1-21, brought the May-June total to 10 (LG, JP, BMn, LS, WM). Others at Felton on July 18 (RT) and Big Basin on July 19 (DS) fit into the late summer pattern of occurrence. Nesting **Lazuli Buntings** were fairly numerous at the top of Empire Grade (e.g., 8 on July 5; DS), an area where they are sporadic breeders. A singing male at O'Neill Ranch in Soquel on July 4 was from a region of the county where Lazuli is usually missing (RW). **Tricolored Blackbird** apparently skipped nesting at Last Chance Lagoon again (LG, DS), and we had no information from the county's only other recent breeding site at Soda Lake. **Great-tailed Grackles** continued in the Watsonville Slough system, with most at Struve Slough (BMr, RW, JW).

For several years I've been intrigued by the presence of **Hooded Orioles** at the Monahan's feeders in a forested montane setting northeast of Scotts Valley (up to nine visited there this spring and summer), and I was especially interested in Barbara Monahan's observation of a pair that she watched on June 27 as they left her jelly feeder. She was able to watch them fly down the West Soquel watershed into the far distance toward Soquel "until they were specks" in her binoculars. Might these orioles be making long distance commutes just to visit choice feeding stations? Two **Red Crossbills** at Skyline Boulevard on June 5 were the only ones reported (DS). One or two pairs of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were at Sunset State Beach on June 1-5 (MST, DH, LG, MS), where they have nested in several recent years. One at Natural Bridges on July 24 was more out of place (SG).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Chris Berry, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Judie Cole, Cindy Cummings, Ryan DiGaudio, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Tonya Haff, Lori Hannum, Rick Herder, David Hille, Clay Kempf, Gary Kittleson, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Wayne Macon, Pam Myers, Barbara Monahan (BMn), Kevin Monahan, Bryan Mori (BMr), Jeff Poklen, Michelle Scott, David Sidle (DSi), Scott Smithson, Linda Stinchfield, Gary Strachan, Ron Taylor, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, David Vander Pluym, Jeff Wall, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from August 1 to September 30, 2006

Shorebirding is a highlight of the late summer birding experience in our region, but Santa Cruz County can be so mudflat challenged. Shorebirding opportunities have varied in the county over its birding history, due to rainfall patterns, and changing habitats and land uses. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the Watsonville sewage facility along the Pajaro River was a hot spot, but then the operation of the site was changed and the ponds were no longer available or suitable for birds. The marsh at Laguna Creek mouth was awesome in the late 1980s, but ever since the drought of that time ended it has remained flooded all fall. In the early 1990s the dairy ponds at Monterey Bay Academy were pretty good, but then the dairy closed. More recently, Harkins Slough was the place to be in September. But these last few years it has been much more the lake than the seasonal slough.

This season birders paid attention to mudflats along the receding margins of Watsonville Slough. One area near Kearney Street Extension, where the water was pumped out to prepare for a wetland restoration project, was very birdy for a week or so, and then dry. The area downstream of the confluence with Struve Slough was even more interesting, offering one of the best mudflat situations I've ever seen in this county. Unfortunately, the best viewing was from farm roads without clear public access. Maybe we can work out permission for next summer.

Surveying the mudflats and shallows of Watsonville Slough this September I was struck by the changing face of the area's avifauna. Several species were prominent that would not have been there at all just 10 years ago. Congregations of American White Pelicans swam and loafed. Big flocks of Canada Geese flew in over the surrounding fields, recalling a Central Valley wildlife refuge, albeit in miniature. White-faced Ibis stalked the ponds. Calls of Great-tailed Grackles drifted over from some willows. One of the fascinations of birding is how things change.

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Canada Geese increased at the Watsonville Slough system by late August, with high counts for this reporting period of 220 on August 23 (RW), and 450 on September 22 (DS et al.). Hardly any were reported elsewhere. Three **Brant** were at the Pajaro River mouth on September 18-22 (RC, LG). Seven **Blue-winged Teal** were at the Pajaro River mouth on September 22 (JP). An immature **Common Merganser** at the mouth of Watsonville Slough on August 29 was rare for the Pajaro Valley, but fit a pattern of late summer occurrences (BS). A family of **California Quail** at Glen Canyon Road on September 27 with young less than two weeks old gave evidence of a very late nesting (BS). Several pelagic trips in September recorded **Flesh-footed Shearwaters**, with a high count of 10 on September 10 (five in Santa Cruz Co.; SJ).

The storm-petrel flocks were again found along the north side of the bay, especially off Davenport. **Ashy Storm-Petrel** was most abundant, with a peak count of about 7,800 on September 30 (SJ), and they outnumbered **Black Storm-Petrels** about ten to one. Among rarer species, two to three **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were found on September 9 and 30, and a few **Least Storm-Petrels** were noted on September trips (SJ, MBS). **Sooty Shearwaters** remained generally scarce in nearshore waters through the summer, with occasional reports into the low

thousands (v.ob.). **American White Pelicans** drifted back into the Pajaro Valley by the second week of August, and were regular there in increasing numbers through the period. Highs for these months were 43 at Watsonville Slough on August 30 (RW), and over 150 at Harkins Slough on September 22 (LG, JP).

An immature **Brown Pelican** was rare inland at Harkins Slough on August 4 (RW), and 26 up the San Lorenzo River as far as Riverside Drive on August 16 were unusual upstream of the river mouth (SG). Small numbers of **American Bitterns** were found at Watsonville, Struve and Harkins sloughs on various dates (v.ob.). A **Cattle Egret** flew in and landed on the rocks at West Cliff Drive on September 25, quite out of place and a rather early fall record for the county (SG). A flock of 11-12 **White-faced Ibis** at Watsonville Slough near Kearney Street Extension on August 28-29 (TN, v.ob.) included one bird that had features suggesting it might have been a Glossy Ibis(!), but it was not conclusively identified. A flock of 15 White-faced at Watsonville Slough downstream of Struve Slough on September 2 was thought to be a different group (RW). A few White-faced were there on September 19-22 (DS, LG).

Sightings of **Osprey** were so frequent as to be routine this period in many areas along the coast and in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.), reflecting the species' increase in our region. A family group with two juveniles circling over the West Branch of Soquel Creek on August 7 (TS) might have been from a nest in the Los Gatos Creek watershed, or perhaps there is a nest in the Soquel watershed, too. A family group at Harkins Slough and vicinity during September was probably from another local nesting (v.ob.), although rumor of a nest along the Pajaro River went unconfirmed. An adult and juvenile **Golden Eagle** together at Harkins Slough on September 3 were perhaps from a local nest, but there have been few reports from that area in recent seasons (RW). The season's first **Merlin** was at Schwan Lake on September 9, for one of the earliest county records (EL). A strong pulse of migrants was detected in the last week of September (JL, v.ob.).

A **Golden-Plover** at Watsonville Slough near Struve Slough on September 24-27 was possibly an American (AD, LG, JP, MS). Reports of **Lesser Yellowlegs** spanned August 11 through September, including 11-15 individuals at various places along Watsonville Slough, and two at the Pajaro River mouth (RW, v.ob.); none were found elsewhere. **Solitary Sandpipers** were found at Watsonville Slough near Kearney Street on August 24 (BMr) and near the confluence with Struve Slough on September 24 (NK, PMi). A flock of **Marbled Godwits** inland at Watsonville Slough near Struve Slough peaked at 100 on August 23 (RW); although found in the sloughs in recent falls, this species was formerly rather rare inland in the county. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** reported flying *up the coast* at Año Nuevo Point in San Mateo County was perhaps coming from Santa Cruz County, just a couple miles away...a might-have-been first county record (PMe)!

Two **Ruddy Turnstones** were at the Pajaro River mouth on August 2, for one of the earliest "fall" records of recent years (SS, PMi), and one was at Wilder Creek Beach on September 9 (RW, TN). A **Black Turnstone** at the Pajaro River mouth on September 9 was rare for that locality (RW). Juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were spied at the Pajaro River mouth on August 11 (RW), Watsonville Slough near Struve Slough on August 23 (RW), and at Watsonville Slough near Kearney Street on August 26 (LG, WG). **Baird's Sandpipers** were mostly found at Watsonville Slough, with reports of 13-18 individuals from August 23 through September (v.ob.), and a high of eight there on September 16 (RW et al.). Just three singles were found elsewhere from August 17 to September 16 (RD, SG).

Pectoral Sandpipers were similarly distributed, with 16-20 individuals at Watsonville Slough from August 23 through September (RW, v.ob.); one at Waddell Creek mouth on September 10 was the only one found elsewhere (DS). Of interest among the reports from Watsonville Slough were an adult on August 23, and the season's high count of 10 on September 13 (RW). A juvenile **Ruff** made a brief appearance at Waddell Creek mouth on September 10 (DS). Another at Watsonville Slough near Struve Slough was more cooperative, lingering from September 16-28 (RW et al., v.ob.). A **Red Phalarope** at West Cliff Drive on September 15 was the only one reported on shore (SG). The only **Wilson's Phalaropes** for the period were one at the Pajaro River mouth on August 2 (SS, PMi), and two at Watsonville Slough on September 10 (RW).

A fresh juvenile **Mew Gull** at Scott Creek Beach on August 17 was an unusually early arrival (RD), as we generally have none until mid-October. A **Common Tern** ranged inland to Watsonville Slough near Struve on September 28 (PB). One to three **Black Skimmers** roamed around Watsonville and Struve sloughs from August 11 to September 12 (RW, CK, LG, JP, BMr, LS). Along with the report of two there on July 23 cited in the last issue, these birds established the longest period that any skimmers have hung around in the county. Perhaps the two Black Skimmers at the San Lorenzo River mouth on August 7-8 were some of the same birds (RB, MG).

Steve Gerow added a dandy species to his westside Santa Cruz yard list when he heard a **Marbled Murrelet** calling in flight before dawn on August 10. Although the location is only a quarter mile from the coast, the species only very rarely wanders overland along the mid-county coast. **Eurasian Collared-Doves** continued pop up in new spots, e.g., Corralitos on August 4 (NA), New Brighton State Beach on August 23 (PB), and Watsonville Slough on August 29 (RG, MP). I get the sense that Collared-Doves may already be less than mentionable for some birders, but I encourage reports to document the species' increase in our region. **White-winged Doves** put in at the County Fairgrounds on September 4 (DS) and Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on September 9-10 (SG).

Black-chinned Hummingbirds staged a repeat of their recent pattern of late summer appearances in the mid-county area. Six were found in Santa Cruz and Capitola from August 23 to September 17 (SG, DS, PVL). All were females or immature males, except for an adult male well described at a feeder at Neary Lagoon on September 7 (PVL). The late summer occurrence of these hummers in the county – only evident since 2003 – has been remarkably consistent in timing and even general locations, although the latter might be a reflection of the habits of the few birders who have found most of them. As far as I am aware, there is no other similar pattern of occurrence known from surrounding coastal counties. Are they being overlooked elsewhere?

Eleven **Willow Flycatchers** along the coast from August 30 to September 14 made for a light showing (PB, SG, RW, LG, MS, DS). A **Dusky Flycatcher** visited Rancho Del Oso on September 21 (DS). **Eastern Kingbirds** were enjoyed at Neary Lagoon on August 5, and at Dairy Gulch in Wilder Ranch State Park on September 10 (SG). Thirteen migrant **Western Kingbirds** spanned August 5 to September 21 (v.ob.).

Early fall had a fair cross section of rare warblers, but it was not a banner season. The best find was a **Canada Warbler** at Natural Bridges State Beach on September 6, nine years since the last fall record for the county (LG, WG, PB, SM). Other vagrant highlights included **Chestnut-sided Warblers** at East Liddell Creek on September 9 (CE) and New Brighton State Beach on September 24 (MS-T), a **Magnolia Warbler** at Lighthouse Field on September 15 (SG), and a **Hooded Warbler** at Natural Bridges on September 5-7 (LG, MS, v.ob.). The more frequently found eastern species were represented by three **Tennessee Warblers** from August 29 to

September 25 (SG, ST, LG, MS), four **Blackpoll Warblers** from September 13-29 (DS, SG), three **American Redstarts** from September 9-29 (CE, PB, DS), one (early) **Palm Warbler** September 16 (SG), and a **Northern Waterthrush** on September 10 (DS).

One **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Wilder Ranch on September 24 (SG et al.) was topped by four **Chipping Sparrows** from September 10-19 (SJ, SG, LG); one of the latter was seen offshore during a pelagic birding trip. Four migrant **Lark Sparrows** found from August 23 to September 13 included three at Lighthouse Field (SG, DS). **Vesper Sparrows** were found in a westside Santa Cruz yard on September 14 and at Terrace Point on September 16 (SG). Returning **Fox Sparrows** included one of the Slate-colored form at Natural Bridges on September 26 (SG). Four **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were sprinkled from August 3 to September 26 (BS, CE, DS, SG). An **Indigo Bunting** was at Rancho Del Oso on September 13 (DS).

Tricolored Blackbirds returned in large flocks to the Davenport area by mid-September (e.g., 700 on September 15 [LS]), but the only other reports were of at least two at Antonelli Pond on August 28 (SG), and at least 10 near Struve Slough on September 19 (DS, MS-T). **Great-tailed Grackles** continued in the Watsonville Slough system, with a high reported count of 12 at Watsonville Slough on August 29 (BS). Kumaran Arul added an adult male **Baltimore Oriole** to an already excellent yard list at his Walnut Street residence in Santa Cruz on September 4. Last, and perhaps least, what to make of a flock of six **House Sparrows** chattering in the wind pruned willows at Waddell Creek mouth in Rancho Del Oso on September 21 (DS)? They were the first for the park, and I don't think any reside anywhere near there, so I guess they were making some sort of a migration or seasonal movement. But how often do we see them well away from the usual haunts?

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Ralph Berger, Phil Brown, Richard Carlson, Al Demartini, Ryan DiGaudio, Chris Emmons, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Mary Gomez, Rich Griffith, Tonya Haff, Clay Kempf, Norman Kikuchi, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Peter Metropulos (PMe), Paul Miller (PMi), Monterey Bay Seabirds (MBS), Bryan Mori (BMr), Shirley Murphy, Todd Newberry, Margaret Perham, Jeff Poklen, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Larry Selman, Shearwater Journeys (SJ), Scott Smithson, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian, Thomas Sutfin, Scott Terrill, Paul Van Loan, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from October 1 to November 30, 2006

Up to five **Greater White-fronted Geese** visited Baldwin Creek Beach from October 14 to November 9 (BMcL, AG, EB), but with no other reports it was a light fall showing for that goose. A **Snow Goose** was in the Terrace Point area on November 18-19 (JL, SG, PB), and one was at Neary Lagoon on November 29-30 (SG, PVL). **Cackling Geese** appeared at a handful of spots from October 16 onwards, but the largest flock was 62 over Capitola on October 19 (DS). Reports of **Blue-winged Teal** included four at West Struve Slough on November 4 (LJ), one at San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz on November 5 (KA), and six at Struve Slough on November 21 (BMor).

A female **Harlequin Duck** flew past Capitola on November 4 (DS). A **White-winged Scoter** at West Cliff Drive on November 3, and a **Black Scoter** there on November 27 were the only reports of either species this fall (SG). Some other ducks were decidedly scarce this fall, such as **Canvasback** and **Common Goldeneye**, neither of which were reported in the county until December. Four **Common Loons** flew down China Grade ridge at the top of Big Basin Redwoods State Park on October 17, trailing a party of migrating Varied Thrushes (DS)! You never know what you'll see out there. There were three reports of **Red-necked Grebe** between Soquel Point and West Cliff Drive from November 8-28 (RT, SG, JW).

A very exciting Shearwater Journeys pelagic trip on October 15 tied the world record for most shearwater species recorded in one day (eight, according to Debi Shearwater), and produced our 2nd county records of **Streaked Shearwater** and **Greater Shearwater** (SJ). **Flesh-footed Shearwater** was plentiful this fall, and a tally of 31 on October 22 perhaps set a Monterey Bay record (SJ). **Manx Shearwaters** were reported in Santa Cruz waters on October 7, 15 and 22 (SJ). Single **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were reported on October 2, 9 (SJ) and 13 (JC). A **Brown Booby** was another highlight from the shearwater-rich October 15 trip (SJ). Two **American White Pelicans** flying past West Cliff Drive on October 25 were among few county records away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). Numbers of American White Pelicans in the Pajaro Valley dropped off after September; the high for October was just 14 at Harkins Slough on October 25 (RW).

Pelagic Cormorants continued in a freshwater setting at the San Lorenzo River, including one on November 18 that was 1.7 river miles upstream from the ocean, the farthest inland yet for the county (SG). One flew into Waddell Creek lagoon on October 21, providing the first record for that creek mouth (TN et al.). **White-faced Ibis** continued in the Watsonville Slough system from October 6 to November 21, with a high of eight at Struve Slough on October 9 (BMor). A **Broad-wing Hawk** flew south past Swanton Road on October 30 (DS). A **Zone-tailed Hawk** flying southeast along the Summit Ridge near Hwy 17 on November 7 provided the first county record for both Santa Cruz and Santa Clara (DS). We had 49 reports of **Merlins** from the September to November period (m.ob.). A **Prairie Falcon** passing northwest of Capitola on October 12 (DS) might have been the same one seen at Terrace Point on October 16 (SG).

Twelve **Common Moorhens** were found in the Watsonville Slough system on November 3 (LJ). Away from the Pajaro Valley, they were at Antonelli Pond on November 6 (SG), and Baldwin Creek Marsh on November 9-12 (AG). An out-of-place **Black-necked Stilt** visited Natural

Bridges on October 6 (SG). **Marbled Godwits** continued inland at Watsonville Slough, with 42 counted there on October 13 (RW). Single **Ruddy Turnstones** were at Wilder Creek Beach on October 30 (RW) and Lighthouse Point on November 9 (TN), while the wintering bird returned to Capitola by November 26 (EF, DSi). A flock of 20 **Red Knots** flying by a birding boat offshore of Santa Cruz on October 7 was one of the only occasions a flock of more than a few have been found in the county (SJ). Seven **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Watsonville and Struve sloughs in October took the season total up to 27 (RW, CL).

A **Ring-billed Gull** at Waddell Creek Beach on October 21 was exceptional for the coast north of Baldwin Creek (DS et al.). A **Eurasian Collared-Dove** at Davenport on October 29 was the first for the county's north coast (NA). The county's second-ever **Common Ground-Dove** was cooperative for many viewers near Shaffer Road in Santa Cruz on October 13-19 (SG, LG, WG, MS, BoR, BeR, m.ob.). In addition to a few **Burrowing Owls** returning to winter at UCSC, others were found at Terrace Point ca. October 15 (fide JL), along the coastal bluffs west of Wilder Creek on October 20 (SG), and in a habitat restoration area at West Struve Slough October 21 to November 8 (JPi, AGr). The owl at Wilder was likely returning for a second winter season. A **Long-eared Owl** called at Soquel on November 3 (RW). An unidentified **nighthawk** flushed from a trail at Gray Whale Ranch on October 14, a late date for either species (BMcL).

A female **Costa's Hummingbird** at Rancho Del Oso on October 3 was the first rare hummer ever found along the county's north coast (DS). An unidentified **Wood-Pewee** at Natural Bridges on November 1 was late, providing only the second county record of a pewee in November (SS, PM). Two **Willow Flycatchers** in Santa Cruz on October 5 brought the fall total up to 13 (SG, PB). Terrace Point hosted an Eastern Phoebe on October 20 (SG). Five **Tropical Kingbirds** made for a strong showing. One photographed in Ben Lomond on October 8 was the first record of this species in the mountain area of the county (AR-G). Many enjoyed one at Terrace Point from October 11-13 (DS et al., m.ob.). Individuals were at Swanton Road on October 17 (CE), Terrace Point on October 25 (same as before? SG), and found dead in a Santa Cruz yard on October 27 (LR). The latter became a specimen in the collection at UCSC.

A **Plumbeous Vireo** brought some Great Basin flair to Ocean View Summit in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on October 20 (DS). A **Red-eyed Vireo** drinking at a backyard pond on October 10 made a nifty yard bird (MS). The year's only **Horned Lark** was at Wilder Ranch on October 30 (RW). An **American Dipper** at Laguna Creek on October 12 was from a drainage with few recent records (JSI), and how frequent are dippers along our smaller streams in the fall? It was one of the best season's on record for **Varied Thrushes**. After the first arrivals in early October, they became abundant in prime habitat by the end of the month, and were generally widespread otherwise. A series of surveys along 22 miles of trails at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on November 15-29 tallied 2,144 of them, and an estimate of the park population at that time was about 10,000 individuals (DS).

A **Gray Catbird** skulked in the undergrowth along West Trail at Rancho Del Oso from October 15-30, for just the 3rd or 4th county record (DS). A **Sage Thrasher** was at the Chalk's ridge in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on October 20 (DS). Gerow recognized the distinctive call of a **Red-throated Pipit** as it flew around Lighthouse Field State Beach on November 11 (SG). The second half of the fall wood-warbler show added a few more rarity highlights, but the season remained average overall. The rarer species were a **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Rancho Del Oso on October 15 (DS), a **Blackburnian Warbler** at Natural Bridges on October 23-29 (SG, m.ob.), and the season's second **Canada Warbler** at Rancho Del Oso on October 3 (DS).

In other Eastern vagrant news...a **Magnolia Warbler** was at Rancho Del Oso on October 30 (DS). Ten **Palm Warblers** from October 20 to November 30 brought the season total to just 11, very low for our most common vagrant (m.ob.). One Palm at Pinto Lake on October 22 was rare inland (JSm). The season's 4th **Blackpoll Warbler** was at Rancho Del Oso on October 15-16 (DS). **Black-and-white Warblers** were at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on October 6 (DS), Rancho Del Oso October 30 (DS), and Antonelli Pond on November 4 (SG). A **Northern Waterthrush** was at Antonelli on October 26-29 (SG). Totals for rare western wood-warblers from August to November were 12 **Nashvilles**, 20 **Black-throated Grays**, 18 **Hermits**, and six **MacGillivray's** (m.ob.).

One to two **Chipping Sparrows** near Antonelli Pond on October 11-13 brought the fall total to six (SG, m.ob.). Eight **Clay-colored Sparrows** in October brought that species' tally for the season up to nine (m.ob.). Completing the *Spizella* trio, were **Brewer's Sparrows** near Antonelli Pond on October 11-12 (SG, MB), and at Rancho Del Oso on October 30 (DS). Two **Swamp Sparrows** were at Rancho Del Oso on October 30 (DS), and one was at Neary Lagoon from November 1-15 (SS, PM, SG). Of 16 **White-throated Sparrows** reported in October and November, two thirds were in the city of Santa Cruz (m.ob.). A male **Black-headed Grosbeak** photographed at a feeder north of Boulder Creek on November 5 lingered into winter and was exceptional in the mountains at that season (JB).

A **Blue Grosbeak** was at Natural Bridges on October 1 (SG et al.). An **Indigo Bunting** was there on October 2 (PB). An **Orchard Oriole** was near Antonelli Pond on October 14 (MB, DVP, OJ). Small numbers of **Red Crossbills** over UCSC on November 1 and 8 were the only ones reported (MB). Two male **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were unexpected at Santa Cruz on October 20 (SG).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Jeff Bleam, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Josiah Clark, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Alison Graff (AGr), Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Tonya Haff, Oscar Johnson, Linda Jordan, Cindy Lieurance, Janet Linticum, Barry McLaughlin (BMcL), Paul Miller, Bryan Mori (BMor), Todd Newberry, Jonathan Pilch (JPi), Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer (BeR), Bob Ramer (BoR), Lee Ripma, Adam Romswinkel-Guise, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Larry Selman, Shearwater Journeys (SJ), David Sidle (DSi), Jenny Slaughter (JSI), Joyce Smith (JSm), Scott Smithson, David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Paul Van Loan, David Vander Plyum, Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Note: This seasonal report was prepared in November 2008, nearly two years after the period covered here, and was never published in the Albatross.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from December 1 2006 to February 28, 2007

Winter never disappoints for interesting birds and patterns. Exceptional rarities included the county's first winter record of Brown Booby, the returning Rock Sandpiper, the 3rd county record of Williamson's Sapsucker, the first winter record of Olive-sided Flycatcher, and the 4th county record of Lark Bunting. While winter 2006-2007 was a bust for most irruptive landbirds, numbers of Varied Thrushes were huge. A cold spell in mid-January brought multiple nights of temperatures into the 20s, even along the coast. This seemed to bring a few birds coastward, away from interior areas where it was even colder. Remarkable amid the cold were an unseasonable Vaux's Swift and a calling Common Poorwill. Discovery of a roost site for Long-eared Owl offered county birders an opportunity to get a look at this hard to find species.

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A flock of **Greater White-fronted Geese** visited Watsonville Slough from December 19 to the end of the period (v.ob.). Numbers varied but peaked at 23 on January 23 (RW). A **Snow Goose** at Terrace Point on December 3 (PB) and at Neary Lagoon on December 3-8 (PM, NZ) was likely the same found in those areas in November. A flock of 26 Snows flew over New Brighton State Beach on December 16 (DSu). A flock of 5-9 birds was at Watsonville Slough from December 24 to January 6 (RW, v.ob.), dropping to just one that remained to February 27 (RW, LG, AGa). A **Ross's Goose** paused at Aptos Creek mouth on December 10 (JM). A flock of Ross's joined the other geese at Watsonville Slough from January 6 onwards (RW, v.ob.), peaking at 12 birds on February 15 – March 3 (PB, RW). Groups of two to three **Cackling Geese** appeared in a few spots (DE, RW, JL), but a flock of 26 flew over UCSC on January 14 (DS).

Reports of **Canada Geese** were mostly of flocks in the sloughs and at College Lake, with a peak count of 228 in the Watsonville Sloughs area on January 1 (CK, EL et al). All reports away from the Pajaro Valley were of just one or two birds (v.ob.). A handful of reports of winter **Brant** were topped by 25 off Davenport on January 11 (LG, MS). A **Tundra Swan** at College Lake on January 1 was the only one report this season (DSu). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Watsonville and Struve sloughs from January 16 to February 2, with a second male there on January 27 (RW, TE, MB). A male was at College lake from February 17 – March 4 (RW, AM). Two **Redheads** were at College Lake on January 1 (DSu). A female **Harlequin Duck** was off Capitola Beach on December 31 (RW). **White-winged Scoters** remained scarce, with just five reports of single birds during the period.

Black Scoters were off Wilder Ranch on December 16 (MB) and in the Sunset State Beach area on January 1 (fide RR). A **Long-tailed Duck** was at the Santa Cruz side of the Pajaro River mouth lagoon on December 17 (KV). A **Common Merganser**, rare in the Pajaro Valley, was along the Pajaro River at Thurwachter Road on January 1 (fide RR). An exceptional concentration of 31 **Red-breasted Mergansers** gathered in Soquel Cove on February 2 (RW). A **Red-throated Loon** was inland a bit at Antonelli Pond on February 18 (SG). Two **Horned**

Grebes at Loch Lomond on December 16 were unexpected there (EF et al.). Three **Red-necked Grebes** were reported along the coast from December 16 to January 1 (DSu, AGa, fide RR). Two **Pink-footed Shearwaters** seen in county waters on a January 21 pelagic trip were nice for winter (SJ fide DVP).

A **Brown Booby** flying over the surf at Waddell Creek Beach on January 19 provided our first winter record for the county (DSu). **American White Pelicans** were in the Pajaro Valley through the winter, occurring mostly at the Watsonville Slough system, with high counts of up to 15 birds (v.ob.). A **Pelagic Cormorant** ranged up the San Lorenzo River to Riverside Avenue on December 29 (SG). Four **American Bitterns** at Pinto Lake on January 1 made for a nice number (RR et al.). A **Cattle Egret** was at Ramsay Park in Watsonville on December 24 (DSd). Two at Rancho Del Oso on January 13 on the beach beside Waddell Creek mouth were in an odd setting (DSu et al.). **White-faced Ibis** were at the Watsonville Slough system from December 24 to February 20 (v.ob.). Just one or two were noted most dates, but four were at West Struve on January 1 (CK, EL et al.). An adult **Bald Eagle** flushed from the San Lorenzo River at Ben Lomond on February 26 must have been an awesome sight (A&AW et al.)!

The winter season produced 41 **Merlin** reports (v.ob.). An adult **Prairie Falcon** added excitement to Wilder Ranch, UCSC and western Santa Cruz from December 7-19 (SG, LG, WG). It's extended stay was noteworthy, as most county records are of single day occurrences. Up to eight **Snowy Plovers** at Capitola Beach on January 16-18 were the first reported there in recent decades (DSu, JDo). One along the rocky shore of Soquel Point on January 20 was also out place (AGa). A **Semipalmated Plover** at Pajaro Dunes from December 30 to January 1 (RW, RiW) was rare for winter. A **Black-necked Stilt** at the lower San Lorenzo River on January 25-30 was notable away from the Pajaro Valley (AGa, SG). A **Wandering Tattler** near Yellow Bank Creek Beach on December 16 was among few winter records in recent years (DE, PB). A **Long-billed Curlew** visited the area from West Cliff Drive to Wilder Ranch from December 8 to February 5 (SG, AGa, RW).

The lone wintering **Ruddy Turnstone** was the returning bird at Capitola that stayed to at least February 28 for its 6th winter there (DSu, RT, DVP, AGa, RW). A few reports of small numbers of **Least Sandpipers** from Santa Cruz to Wilder Creek Beach included up to three out of place on the rocky shore of West Cliff Drive from January 20 to February 6 (SG). A **Rock Sandpiper** returned for its 3rd winter stay, appearing at Capitola on December 12 (RT); it was subsequently seen there and at West Cliff Drive up to January 26 (v.ob.). It then went missing but reappeared in early March, indicating it was residing somewhere that birders were not checking. Two **Short-billed Dowitchers** at Struve Slough on January 1 were very rare for the county in winter (EL). Although they winter regularly at nearby Elkhorn Slough, Santa Cruz County lacks the tidal mudflats this Dowitcher favors in winter. Ten at Watsonville Slough on February 23 were perhaps early spring migrants (RW).

Six reports of **Glaucous Gulls** (all first cycle) spanned December 16 to February 24, for a nice showing (v.ob.). Apparent hybrid **Glaucous x Glaucous-winged Gulls** were reported from a pelagic trip on January 21 (SJ fide DVP) and at Terrace Point on January 27 (SG). An apparent **Glaucous x Herring-winged** was also at Terrace Point the same day (SG). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** at Antonelli Pond on January 31 was slightly inland, swimming among Ruddy Ducks and Pied-billed Grebes (SG). An early migrant **Caspian Tern** was off West Cliff Drive on February 18 (SG). Two **Black Skimmers** paused at the San Lorenzo River mouth on December 26 (WBT). One ranged from Capitola Beach toward Soquel Point from January 15-18 (PD, DSu). **Marbled Murrelet** numbers were high again this winter, likely swelled by migrants from the north. Aerial surveys recorded 50 off Santa Cruz on December 19 and 100 off the south county

coast on January 19 (JDv et al.). A shore-based count at Seacliff State Beach tallied 31 on January 19 (RW). A 4-mile kayak transect off Santa Cruz tallied 53 on January 21 (JWa).

Wintering **Common Poorwills** were heard at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on December 30 (DSu) and amid the cold spell on January 9 (DSu, LG, WG). I did not receive any reports from UCSC of more than two **Burrowing Owls** this winter (JB, JL), but others turned up in less expected spots. One or two were in different areas at Wilder Ranch along the Old Cove Landing Trail from December 16 to January 28 (MB et al.). One was living in the rocks of the Santa Cruz Harbor breakwater in January (NS). Another was on the levee slope at the Pajaro River upstream of Watsonville from January 15-26 (GK). A **Long-eared Owl** roost site was discovered in a small draw at O'Neill Ranch Open Space in Soquel (AGr). One bird was first noted emerging at dusk ca. January 20, and two were seen most evenings from February 2 to March 3, with one last reported on March 11 (v.ob.). Another(?) was heard on these dates from December to February at Lagunita Drive, across the Soquel Creek valley (RW). And one was roosting at Waddell Creek in Rancho Del Oso on February 7 (DSu).

Two **Short-eared Owls** near Davenport on January 19 were very welcome, as the species has become quite rare lately (DVP, OJ, AS). Another *Asio* owl was seen too briefly to permit identification as it flushed near Wilder Creek on January 14 (SG). A **Vaux's Swift** at Westlake Pond on January 12-14 was exceptional in winter, but was also remarkable in the midst of the significant cold spell (DSu). The cold spell seemed to slow the arrival of our returning **Allen's Hummingbirds**, the first of which typically appear by mid-January, and sometimes near the beginning of the month. This year the first was not found until January 25 (SG) – the latest county arrival since 1982! – and none arrived at the UCSC Arboretum until February 3 (JWi). A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was unexpected atop the summit ridge at Kelly-Thompson Ranch southeast of Mount Madonna on January 1 (DSu).

An impressive four **Red-naped Sapsuckers** included birds at Mission Springs on December 14-16 (SS), at Bonny Doon on December 19 (J&JT), at Basin Trail in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on December 30 (DSu) and Rancho Del Oso on February 7 (DSu). Much rarer was a female **Williamson's Sapsucker** in the upper watershed of Opal Creek in Big Basin on December 8, for the 3rd county record (DSu). A top find of the season was an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** found at Golf Club Drive in Santa Cruz on December 16-19 (NZ, D&IL, SG, TN, LG, WG, PB). This was our first winter record and an extremely rare seasonal record for California. An **Eastern Phoebe** was at Santa Cruz near Meder Canyon on December 10 (KA). A flock of 34 **Horned Larks** at Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on January 1 were exceptional, as we have so few recent records, and such a number is without recent precedent in our county (DSu).

Tree Swallows made a strong showing at mid-county from December to January. Four reports there from December 5 to January 12 were led by a high of 122 passing West Cliff Drive on the former date (SG). **Violet-green Swallow** also showed well in that same period, with nine reports including winter high counts of 40 in from Wilder Ranch to Santa Cruz on December 16 (MB, AGa, RR), and 50 at Rancho Del Oso on January 13 (DSu et al.). The usual large numbers of both Tree and Violet-green were in the Pajaro Valley all winter, where they are expected. The early winter pattern of **Barn Swallow** records continued, with six reports from December 16 to January 27. All were singles except for a high count of 12 at Baldwin Creek Marsh on December 16 (AGa). **White-breasted Nuthatches** were at Pitman Ranch atop Ben Lomond Mountain on December 16 (TO) and at Monterey Bay Academy on January 1 (BM).

Wrens in unexpected spots on December 16 included a **House Wren** northeast of Scotts Valley (BM) and a **Marsh Wren** at Loch Lomond (EF). Thirty-eight **Western Bluebirds** were found in

the Pajaro Valley from Corralitos to Kelly-Thompson Ranch on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (fide RR). The only report elsewhere was of three near Eagle Rock at the top of Ben Lomond Mountain on January 9 (DSu). **Varied Thrush** continued to be remarkably numerous and widespread, appearing in many areas where they are often sparse or missing. The Santa Cruz County CBC on December 16 had a record-setting 1,548, more than 700% over the 10 year average. They were particularly abundant in extensive forested areas, such as in Big Basin Redwoods State Park, where a tally on December 30 was 1,718 individuals (DSu, MST, CE).

A **Tennessee Warbler** was at Capitola from December 13 to January 9 (DSu). Five **Nashville Warblers** made for a nice winter showing (SG, BR, BMcL, KA). A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** near China Grade in Big Basin on December 30 was a rare winter record for the park (DSu). There were reports of just one **Black-throated Gray Warbler** (SG) and two **Hermit Warblers** (MG, DSu), poor showings for both. Six **Palm Warblers** were found (PVL, SGe, DSu, DE, MB). The best wintering warbler was a **Northern Waterthrush** at Antonelli Pond from December 11 to March 15 (SG, v.ob.). A female **Summer Tanager** was photographed at Struve Slough on December 10 (PS). Three **Western Tanagers** were found from December 3 to January 1 (SG, KA, LG, MSc). A **Chipping Sparrow** at Pogonip on December 16 was a nice find, as we have few recent winter records (D&IL, NZ).

A flock of 20 **Lark Sparrows** at the Cooley Ranch east of Watsonville on January 1 (PB, HH) were from the last region of the county where the species can be found with any regularity, but even there it seems to be faltering. The county's 4th record of **Lark Bunting** was an imm. male at the Kelly-Thompson on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (DSu). Interestingly, the only other recent record was from nearby at Peckham Road in 2001, also found on a January 1 CBC. You gotta love the CBCs for digging up the good birds in out of the way spots! Three **Fox Sparrows** were reported showing characters of the "Red" form: at Bonny Doon on January 6 (WBT), at Santa Cruz on February 3 (SG), and at Rancho Del Oso on February 7 (DSu). Three **Swamp Sparrows** were along the lower reach of Wilder Creek on December 16 (MB), and seven were scattered around College Lake on January 1 (DSu).

White-throated Sparrows were reported in near record numbers, with about 50 found from December to February (v.ob.), including nice aggregations of four at Rancho Del Oso on December 7 (TN) and at Wilder Creek on January 14 (SG). A record 17 were spotted on the December 16 Santa Cruz CBC. The "Slate-colored" form of the **Dark-eyed Junco** was well reported, with six noted in January and February (v.ob.). A report of a bird showing characters of the "Pink-sided" form at Pogonip on February 17 was much more unusual (SG). It was a remarkable season for **Black-headed Grosbeaks**, with four reported but no reports of Rose-breasted which is more frequent in winter. Most unusual was an adult male photographed as it visited a feeder five miles north of Boulder Creek from November 5 to at least January 7 (JBI); there is little precedent for winter occurrences from our mountains. The others were in the lowlands where more expected, and none was shown to overwinter: at Live Oak on December 16 (PS, CK), at Merk Road on December 17 (PR), and at Santa Cruz on December 22 (L &MS).

Great-tailed Grackles continued at the sloughs, with a peak count of 37 at Watsonville Slough on February 4 (RT). **Bullock's Orioles** were at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz from January 5 to February 12 (SG) and near Meder Canyon on January 12 (KA).

Cited Observers: Kumaran Arul, Jack Barclay, Jeff Bleam (JBI), Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Jeff Davis (JDv), Paul Donahue, Judy Donaldson (JDo), Todd Easterla, David Ekdahl, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine (AGa), Steve Gerow, Mark Greene, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Alison Graff (AGr), Howard Higley, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Gary Kittleson, Dan & Inga Labeaune, Earl Lebow,

Janet Linthicum, Amy McDonald, Barry McLaughlin (BMcL), Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan, Joe Morris, Todd Newberry, Tom Olden, Robert Ramer, Pat Raven, Bill Reese, Naomi Scher, Michelle Scott (MSc), Adam Searcy, Shearwater Journeys, David Sidle (DSd), Larry & Matisse Selman, Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), Ryan Terrill, John & Jill Thompson, W. Breck Tyler, Jeff Wall (JWa), Paul Van Loan, Kent Van Vuren, David Vander Pluym, Ricky Warriner (RiW), Alden & Alijah Williams, Jim Williams (JWi), Roger Wolfe, Nickie Zavinski. "V.ob." means various observers.

Note: This seasonal report was prepared in February 2009, nearly two years after the period covered here, and was never published in the Albatross.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2007

Rarity highlights of the season included the county's second record of Common Grackle, two or three Brown Boobies (enjoyed by many), an unidentified Tropicbird, the second spring record of Green-tailed Towhee, and the third spring record of White-winged Dove. Three Horned Puffins at Santa Cruz in early spring later gave way to a flood of Horned Puffins in May. Also of note were rare spring occurrences of Redhead, Lesser Golden-Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs and Wilson's Phalarope.

Very productive feeding conditions along the Mid-County Coast in late March led to some exciting birding, especially near the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf. In addition to attracting Brown Booby, Horned Puffin, Tufted Puffin, there were huge numbers of Brandt's Cormorants, and good showings of Bonaparte's Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, and Marbled Murrelet.

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The wintering flock of **Greater White-fronted Geese** continued at Watsonville and Struve sloughs through April 16 (RW, AG, LG, JP). One was at College Lake on April 26 (RW). Few **Canada Geese** remained in the Pajaro Valley through the nesting season, where the only double digit count was 36 at Pinto Lake on May 26 (RRa, BRa). But pairs and small groups were noted repeatedly at the Mid-County coast and along the North Coast, suggesting they were prospecting for nest sites. Of some interest is a developing pattern of pairs of Canadas resting on isolated sea stacks, such as two on a stack near Baldwin Creek on March 11 (AG) and two near Bonny Doon Beach on April 29 (KA). Might they be interested in nesting at such odd spots?

Redhead are quite rare in the county in spring, so a few reports this season were notable. A pair was at Harkins Slough on March 25 (FO). One male was at the Pajaro River mouth on April 27 (RW). Several reports of at least two pairs came from Watsonville and Struve sloughs on May 1-14 (RW, GF). Spring migration brought reports of just five **White-winged Scoters** from May 8-29 (MC, SS, LG). Two male **Black Scoters** were at Seacliff State Beach on March 3-9 (RW, DL), and two males were at West Cliff Drive on April 9 (AG). A gathering of about 35 **Common Mergansers** at Loch Lomond on March 25 provided a high count for the county (AR). A female there on May 22 leading her brood of 13 new ducklings toward the reservoir was coming from a nest site that was at least 300 yards from the water, indicating some nests are located well off in the woods away from streams and lakes (DS). A new brood of **Wild Turkeys** in the upper watershed of Union Creek in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on May 24 provided the first nesting record for the park (DS).

Loons inland included a **Red-throated** over Neary Lagoon on April 22 (SG), a **Pacific** at Antonelli Pond on March 24 (SG), and **Commons** at Antonelli on April 28 (SG) and high over the Watsonville on May 16 (DS). An impressive aggregation of 17 **Red-necked Grebes** was off the Pajaro River mouth on March 3, with eight in Santa Cruz County and nine in Monterey (RW).

A **Tropicbird** with a long tail streamer seen from a boat off Santa Cruz on May 8 was not identified to species (MC et al.). Two or maybe three subadult **Brown Boobies** at Santa Cruz were stars of the season, offering many observers a chance to enjoy them over a period of weeks. One at roosted at Natural Bridges from March 15-23 (PB, v.ob.), and another – determined from photos to be a different individual – roosted at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf from March 25 to April 6 (AG, v.ob.). It is not clear if one at the Wharf on April 17 was the same or a new bird (JWi).

American White Pelicans lingered in the Pajaro Valley until March 30, with the season's high count of 23 on March 22 (RW). Excellent foraging conditions along the Mid-County coast in early spring attracted record numbers of **Brandt's Cormorants**, including peak counts of about 5,000 off Capitola on March 24 (PD), and 6,000 at the Santa Cruz Wharf on March 26 (SG). Over 200 **Double-crested Cormorants** off Capitola on March 24 was a large feeding aggregation for the county (PD). A wintering **White-faced Ibis** lingered at Struve Slough to March 4 (RW, AM), while 2-3 spring migrants appeared there on May 10-12 (BMr, GK, SS). An adult **Bald Eagle** was seen again along the San Lorenzo River near Ben Lomond on March 17 (AW). A **Swainson's Hawk** sailed over Capitola on March 17 (DS), while a **Ferruginous Hawk** was reported along Highway 1 along the North County coast on March 16 (BS). Among 14 reports of **Merlins**, one over the Pajaro River at Watsonville on May 16 was notably late (DS).

A **Common Moorhen** at Baldwin Creek March on March 11 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (AG). An alternate-plumaged **Pacific Golden-Plover** at Watsonville Slough on March 30 was our earliest ever for spring, a season with few records (RW). Also rare away from the Pajaro Valley was a **Black-necked Stilt** at Scott Creek mouth on April 10 (BS). An **American Avocet** nest at the Pajaro River mouth on May 7 added to scant breeding evidence in the county in the recent decade (CEy). A **Solitary Sandpiper** paused at Waddell Creek mouth on May 9 (DS). A **Wandering Tattler** at West Cliff Drive from March 1-12 had probably wintered locally (AG, SG). Up to 17 spring migrants were reported in a narrow window from April 25 to May 13 (SG, KA, TN, RW). **Lesser Yellowlegs** are rather rare in the county in spring, so the following were noteworthy: two at College Lake on April 16, three there on April 26 (RW), and one at the lower San Lorenzo River on May 5 (AG, EB).

A **Ruddy Turnstone** at West Cliff Drive on March 30 might have been the same bird that wintered at Capitola, or a migrant (JP). The wintering **Rock Sandpiper** completed its 4th winter stay, reaching breeding plumage by late March and leaving after April 12 (v.ob.). A report of 100+ **Wilson's Snipe** at College Lake on March 25 was huge for the county (FO). **Wilson's Phalaropes**, rare for us in spring, were spotted at Younger Lagoon, with two females on May 22 (AG, DVP, AS), and a male on May 23-25 (AG, LG). **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were relatively frequent in early spring; a high of 38 passed the Santa Cruz Wharf in just 10 minutes on March 22 (KA). The spring's only **Franklin's Gull** stopped at Capitola Beach on May 3 (DS). Seven or eight different **Glaucous Gulls** made for a strong spring showing. Most were in March (RT, JP, DMn, PD), but late birds were at Harkins Slough on April 18 (RW) and West Cliff Drive on May 7 (SG). At least two **Least Terns** were in the West Cliff Drive area on May 23 (KA, AG, TN).

A few **Horned Puffins** in early spring, remarkable by themselves, presaged an amazing influx in late spring. One was at the Santa Cruz Wharf on March 25-30 (JWa, PL, JWi). Two flew past West Cliff Drive on April 2 (OJ). As reported previously (Nov/Dec 2007 issue of the *Albatross*) a record breaking influx began to be evident along the central California coast by mid-May. The first report in our county on May 21 led a steady stream of 55 reports that extended into July, with some 60-100 Horned Puffins spotted in the county! A **Tufted Puffin** was nearshore at Lighthouse Point on March 25 (FO). Spring 2007 was a time of continued expansion and in-filling for our

growing population of **Eurasian Collared-Doves**. A comment by Kumaran Arul characterized the situation in Santa Cruz, "I can pretty much count on seeing some at some point more or less each day, somewhere." Fledglings at Santa Cruz on March 21 added to recent nest evidence (SM). A **White-winged Dove** at the Pajaro River near Watsonville on May 1 was the county's third spring record (DS).

A **Long-eared Owl** called at Soquel on April 4 (RW). A **Lesser Nighthawk** flew north along the crest of the mountains at Long Ridge OSP on May 14 (DS). There were four reports of nine migrant **Black Swifts** in May, beginning on May 12 (SS). One at Little Basin Road on May 24 was the first record from Big Basin Redwoods State Park in over a decade, although the species formerly nested in the park at Berry Creek Falls (DS). **Vaux's Swifts** were sparse migrants, with no reports of more than three individuals (v.ob.). **Calliope Hummingbirds** made a strong showing, all females. They were found at Antonelli Pond on April 29 (SG), UCSC Arboretum on May 4 (DVP), and west of Scotts Valley on May 8 (DS). One was about 100 yards outside the county at Gazos Creek Road in Big Basin park on May 15 (DS). A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** at Aptos Creek on May 17 was in a watershed recently colonized by breeding birds, while one drumming along Newell Creek near Loch Lomond on May 22 was the first breeding season occurrence for that watershed (DS).

Pileated Woodpeckers appeared in urban and near-urban settings: one flew up Meder Canyon in Santa Cruz on March 21 (KA), one was at Moore Creek Preserve on April 8 (SG), and one flew over Capitola on May 10 (DS). Two mornings of extensive coverage in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on May 17-18 produced detections of an estimated 21 different Pileated Woodpeckers; they are now very numerous in and around that park (DS)! Rare *Empidonax* migrants included **Hammond's Flycatchers** at Bethany Curve in Santa Cruz on May 4 (SG) and at China Grade in Big Basin on May 7 (DS), **Gray Flycatchers** near Smith Grade on May 6 and at Johansen Road in Big Basin on May 15 (DS), and **Dusky Flycatchers** west of Scotts Valley on May 8 (DS) and at Arana Gulch on May 17 (SS). A territorial Dusky at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin on May 31 (KA) subsequently spent the summer (see Nov/Dec 2007 issue of the Albatross).

The season's only **Purple Martin** was at Holohan Road near Watsonville on April 3 (LA), and the lone **Bank Swallow** visited Moore Creek Preserve on May 12 (SG). A **House Wren** nest with young at Sunset State Beach on May 29 was exceptional along the coast, and was the first breeding record for the Pajaro Valley area away from the hills east of Watsonville (LG, MS, BR). The House Wren's normal breeding range in the county is limited to the crest of the mountains (where it is spotty) and those hills east of Watsonville (where there is little recent info on the its nesting status). Pairs and single **Western Bluebirds** were reported from a handful of expected spots, but a female near Castle Rock State Park on May 17 was from a spot where none had been found in recent years (MR). A wintering **Nashville Warbler** reappeared at Meder Canyon on March 19 (SG). Just two spring migrants were noted, April 5 and 16 (OJ, DS).

A singing **Northern Parula** along Zayante Trail in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on May 24 added to a handful of May – June records from that area, an area that has suitable nesting habitat (SG). A singing **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was at Soquel Demonstration State Forest on May 11 (DS). A **Palm Warbler**, no doubt wintering, was at Natural Bridges from March 29 – April 10 (SG). Rounding out the vagrants, a male **Hooded Warbler** was at Quail Hollow Ranch on April 22 (JWi). Three **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found from May 7-12 (CR, SG, DS). A **Green-tailed Towhee** in an eastern Santa Cruz yard on April 2-8 was just the 2nd spring record of this rarity in the county (JR). A **Savannah Sparrow** at Fern Grotto Beach at Wilder Ranch on

March 6 had characters of the subspecies *rostratus* (Large-billed Savannah Sparrow) which nests in the gulf of California and has only rarely been found wintering in Northern California (SG).

A **Harris's Sparrow** visited a Corralitos yard on March 25 – April 15 (NA). Three **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** appeared on schedule from May 18-24 (DMp, JM, DS). **Blue Grosbeaks** were near Antonelli Pond on April 30 – May 1 (SG, LG, MS), at the Pajaro River in Watsonville on May 1-4 (DS), and at Lighthouse Field State Beach on May 2-5 (SG, SS, PM). A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** flew over Natural Bridges on May 21 (MB). A male **Common Grackle** was photographed at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on April 25 for the 2nd county record (SG). An **Orchard Oriole** appeared at Natural Bridges on March 18 (SG). Just a handful of reports of **Lawrence's Goldfinches** this spring included three in unexpected spots: West Cliff Drive on April 3 (DVP, OJ), and Meder Canyon (KA) and Capitola (DS) on May 22.

Cited Observers: Linda Adams, Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Matthew Coale, Paul Donahue, Carleton Eyster, Gypsy Flores, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Oscar Johnson, Gary Kittleson, Peter LaTourrette, Dave Lavarando, Dorothy Malpass (DMp), Dean Manley (DMn), Joan Martin, Amy McDonald, Paul Miller, Bryan Mori (BMr), Shirley Murphy, Todd Newberry, Frances Oliver, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Caroline Rogers, Michael Rogers, Jim Ryan, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott, Adam Searcy, Scott Smithson, David Suddjian, Ryan Terrill, Jeff Wall (JWa), David Vander Pluym, Alden Williams, Jim Williams (JWi), Roger Wolfe. "V.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from June 1 to July 31, 2007

After a few *Alby* issues when I was unable to complete this column due to work conflicts, I have decided to skip over the now old winter and spring season to be sure to get something in for this issue. I hope to write up summaries for the missing months and post them on the Bird Club's web site later this fall. But for now let's skip to this past summer. I am indebted to Steve Gerow for collating most of the records for this season.

Records here consider June and July, but in the interest of completing the picture for a few species I've reached back a bit into May. Most notable in this regard was the astounding invasion of Horned Puffins that began in late May and continued into July. Ours were part of a large scale event, with many records in Monterey and San Mateo counties, and farther "a field." Mixed in were a few noteworthy Tufted Puffins and Ancient Murrelets, both unseasonable and unusual near the shore. Quite underwhelming was the poorest late spring showing by vagrant landbirds in recent times.

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A pair of **Canada Geese** with one gosling at Quail Hollow Ranch on June 26 provided the first breeding record for the county's mountain region (PB et al.). A Canada family at Corcoran Lagoon in early June added to the few coastal breeding records away from the Pajaro Valley (MC). Numbers of Canadas in the Pajaro Valley increased by late July, with 250+ at Watsonville Slough on July 28 (EL). Five **Brant** flying up the coast at Santa Cruz on July 2 were notable after the more frequent stragglers of early June (SG). Twenty-four **Wood Ducks** at Neary Lagoon on July 1 were mostly eclipsed-plumaged males (SG), with the high count suggesting Neary is a post-breeding gathering spot for this species. **Gadwall** nested again at Younger Lagoon, with four young seen on June 22 (SG); the species is a rare breeder away from the Pajaro Valley. A hybrid male **Mallard x Cinnamon Teal** summered at Natural Bridges State Beach (SG).

Rare summer **Bufflehead** included two females at Watsonville Slough on June 8-23 (RW), and a male and female at the San Lorenzo River mouth on June 21 (AG). A female **Wild Turkey** with 7 small young was a surprise along the Pajaro River at Watsonville, in an area bounded entirely by agricultural fields (DS). More **Sooty Shearwaters** were seen from shore this summer than in the last few years, but numbers still much reduced from those we formerly enjoyed. The highest number reported was 100,000 off Pajaro Dunes on July 29 (PM). **American White Pelicans** disappeared for the nesting season, returning by July 28, with eight at Watsonville Slough (EL). **Brandt's Cormorant** nested at three spots: Davenport (34 nests), Natural Bridges (23 nests), and Seacliff State Beach (~120 nests) (DS, SG). **Double-crested Cormorants** continued nesting at Pinto Lake (16 nests, BR) and Schwan Lake (195 nests, BM). The colony at the latter site has grown steadily since it was founded five years ago.

An **American Bittern** at Struve Slough on June 5 was the only report all season (RW). **Great Egrets** nested only at Pinto Lake, with five nests noted on May 26 (BR). **Great Blue Heron** seems to have dipped significantly as a breeder in the county. Please report all observations of

nesting. Three **Green Heron** nests in pines in Felton parking lot in June added to scant breeding evidence from the county's mountain region, but followed the urban preference of recent times (BE, m.ob.). Two **White-faced Ibis** returned to Watsonville Slough by July 8 (RW). **Osprey** nested (or tried to) at two new spots, in addition to continued nesting near Davenport and at Loch Lomond. On May 31 and June 14 begging calls of nestlings were heard from the tree tops in dense forest at Fall Creek (SG, AD). Calling adults had been heard in the same area for the last few springs, so nesting had likely been going on there before this year. A pair built a nest on a power pole at Harkins Slough (!) in late May, but on June 27 the sticks of the ill-placed nest started an electrical fire (RW, GK). There was never any evidence that eggs were laid in the nest.

Red-shouldered Hawk has enjoyed a rapid population increase in forested regions of the county over the last decade. Field work at Big Basin Redwoods State Park found at least nine pairs in the watershed of the East Fork of Waddell Creek, where none were present at all prior to 1995 (DS). On the other side of raptor coin, **American Kestrel** seems to be experiencing a marked decrease as a breeder in the county, but this change is perhaps "under the radar" of most observers. *If you observed nesting evidence or territorial pairs of kestrels this past season, please pass along word.* Two **Red Knots** flying past West Cliff Drive on July 6 provided the earliest "fall" record for the county by seven days (SG). A **Least Tern** was foraging off Natural Bridges on June 11 (CL, LL).

This spring and early summer **Marbled Murrelets** were distributed along our coast in a pattern that recalled ENSO conditions, with many birds along the mid-county coast, and some far into the Bay, but water temperatures were below average. For example, on June 9, 22 were counted from Sunset State Beach to Seacliff (DS), and 16 were off Western Santa Cruz (SG). The pattern at sea suggested foraging conditions were "off," as in ENSO years. Of special interest was a grounded juvenile found near Chalk Mountain in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on July 17 (fide SS). The bird was eventually taken for rehabilitation but it died soon after. This was the first grounded juvenile murrelet found in Big Basin Redwoods State Park in several years, but the location of the nest is unknown, and it may have been outside the park. Most unusual at this season were three reports of **Ancient Murrelets** in June: one at Davenport Landing on June 1 (DS), two at Laguna Creek Beach on June 3 (CE), and two at West Cliff Drive on June 9 (CK).

Following reports from Monterey County in mid-May, a veritable parade of **Horned Puffins** appeared along our coast (v.ob.). After the first reports of four on May 21, they were nearly continuously present through June, and then winding down with the last report on July 14. In total there were over 55 reports received, involving some 60-100 individuals spotted in our county alone! Some birds clearly stayed for two or more days, but there was much movement of new individuals into and out of the area (including many swimming down the coast) and undoubtedly *many* went undiscovered. Most reports were of 1-3 birds, but high single site counts were of eight at the Waddell Beach area on May 29 (GS) and seven at Panther Beach on June 2 (DS). The high single day total was 24 on May 30 (KA, DS, CE), and 11 were tallied on an aerial survey along the coast on June 28 (JD). Nearly all reports were of birds within a quarter mile of shore – some just outside the waves – and one at Waddell Creek on July 6 was even seen flying over the beach in heavy fog (DS)! Most were found from Santa Cruz north to the San Mateo county line, but some were in the inner Bay, too. Surprisingly few were found washed up dead on the shore.

Three reports of single **Tufted Puffins** seen from shore no doubt resulted from the same event or condition that brought us so many Horned Puffins. An adult flew in close to the bluffs at Terrace Point on June 8 (SG). An immature was there on June 9 (AV, CT). One snazzy adult was at Waddell Bluffs on July 1 (DS). This species has been extremely rare from shore in our county. The continued advance of **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was marked by the first north county nesting

record (one carrying nesting material near Majors Creek on June 14; JL) and the first specific nest found in the county (at Watsonville on June 15 (DS)). Also stretching the limits were two at Rancho Del Oso on June 21, the first for Big Basin Redwoods State Park (DS). A total of 68 were found during six hours of traveling in Watsonville and the town of Pajaro on July 5, illustrating the species' new found status as fairly common in those areas (DS). Despite these gains, the species is yet missing or of erratic occurrence in many areas of suitable habitat.

Two **Long-eared Owls** calling near Quail Hollow Ranch ca. June 4 provided the first modern breeding season occurrence from the San Lorenzo River watershed (DG). One continued at Soquel on July 26 (RW). A migrant **Common Nighthawk** visited Rancho Del Oso on June 10 (DS). **Black Swift** went missing as a breeder at known historic sites in the county, and although some were present at Año Nuevo this year they reportedly did not nest there either (fide PM, GS). The very few sightings in our county this period included one over Natural Bridges on June 9 (SG), one over Baldwin Creek near the Santa Cruz landfill on June 24 and July 6 (DS), and three over West Cliff Drive on July 26 (SG). This leaves 2006 and 2007 with the poorest showings in our history, and no confirmed nesting for the county since 1994. A pair of **Vaux's Swifts** nested in the same chimney at West Cliff Drive as in 2006, and fledged young by July 30 (SG).

A pair of **White-throated Swifts** nesting in the Main St / Porter St bridge over the Pajaro River in June provided the first breeding evidence from the Watsonville area (SG, BM); the nest itself was on the Monterey Co. side of the river. Breeding season sightings of **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** continued at Waddell, Scott and Liddell creeks (DS). A summering **Dusky Flycatcher** at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin was remarkable. First noted on May 31 (KA), it remained on a song territory through at least August 14 (DS, v.ob.). It was in characteristic nesting habitat, but at 1,685' it was notably lower than other breeding occurrences in California, and was far removed from nearest breeding station. **Purple Martins** remain missing from all modern nesting haunts, and sadly (from the martin's perspective) the only report this period was of a female at Younger Lagoon that was caught and eaten by a Great Egret (SG)! A **Bank Swallow** off Waddell Bluffs on June 11 was presumably ranging south from the small nesting colony at Año Nuevo State Reserve (DS). Breeding **Varied Thrushes** were mostly noted in the Big Basin region (DS), but one singing at Fall Creek State Park on June 2 was noteworthy away from that area (MST).

Yellow Warbler has declined dramatically as a breeding species in the county since the late 1980s, so it was a surprise this year that surveys along the Pajaro River found them to be *common* in areas that were cut-over by the extensive habitat removal that occurred in 1995. For example, a surveys along 12 kilometers of river upstream of Highway One on May 25-28 found 108 Yellows, including 94 territorial singers (SG, BM, DS)! These were, as a rule, occupying the maturing band of dense willows that currently line the river channel. In contrast, they were only one-third as numerous in "intact" riparian forest downstream of the Highway on May 25 (MST), and they were *completely missing* along seven kilometers of nearby Salsipuedes and Corralitos creeks, even though large areas of that area had suitable habitat which was occupied at least into the 1990s (SG, BM, DS). The numbers of Yellows along the Pajaro upstream of Highway One – far exceeding those elsewhere in the county – are cause for hope, but Brown-headed Cowbirds were also abundant in that area, and evidence of parasitism on Yellow was observed.

Chipping Sparrow – another declining SCZ breeder – was represented by just a single report this season (Wilder Ranch on July 8; SG), and there were no reports of **Lark Sparrow**. Seven **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found from June 2-17 (DS, L&RS, fide GK, fide BB). Some 75 **Tricolored Blackbirds** were near Last Chance Lagoon on June 6, there was no evidence of nesting there for the third year running (DS). Six at Lighthouse Field State Beach on June 3 were

out of place for summer (SG). An impressive 24 **Great-tailed Grackles** flew over Salsipuedes Creek at the northeast side of Watsonville on June 20 (SG). These were likely coming from a roost in the Interlaken area, suggesting possible breeding at Kelly Lake or Lake Tynan.

Single **Red Crossbills** at Big Basin on June 18 and July 4 were the only ones reported (DS). **Pine Siskin** has gone missing in the Pajaro Valley region in recent years, so several at Corralitos on July 11 and July 29 were noteworthy (SG, MG, DS). A few **Lawrence's Goldfinches** turned up in the Pajaro Valley area, where they are around some years, but one juvenile at Terrace Point in Santa Cruz on July 23 was unexpected (SG).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Bonnie Bedzin, Phil Brown, Mary Crouser, Jeff Davis, Adam Dobkin, Betsy Eakman, Chris Emmons, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Marcia Gregg, Diane Goodboe, Lois Goldfrank, Gary Kittleson, Earl Lebow, Cindy Lieurance, Les Lieurance, Janet Linthicum, Peter Metropulos, Bryan Mori, Bob Ramer, Michelle Scott, Les and Rene Seltzer, Steve Singer, Gary Strachan, David Suddjian, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, Charles Tralka, Andrea Vedanayagan, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

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Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian

Including reports from August 1 to October 31, 2007

It seemed a slow season in many regards, but there is still a slew of interesting things to share! Struve Slough had the spotlight as the shorebird hotspot this fall, with a couple of great visitors. But rare seabirds were lacking, and vagrant landbirds were sparse. Rare wood-warblers – often defining the fall vagrant season – had their poorest showing since 1997. All of the rare but regular wood-warblers were below average, variety was low, and we even missed two species that we expect every fall: Hermit Warbler and American Redstart! (However, we did finally log a Hermit in November). First arrivals of wintering landbirds also deviated from recent patterns. Unlike most years, when early individuals have been found for many wintering landbirds, this season the first migrants came on time or were late. And, at least as of the end of October, irruptive landbirds were not...irrupting, that is.

I offer thanks to Steve Gerow for collating most of the records covered in this report!

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A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was at Harkins Slough on September 25-29. A number of flocks of up to 65 Cackling Geese were noted from September 30 to the end of October (KA, SG, JD, RW, BL). A male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Watsonville Slough on October 26 into November was one of our earliest ever (RW). The hybrid **Mallard x Cinnamon Teal** continued at Antonelli Pond and Natural Bridges to September 6, when it had molted to breeding plumage (SG). At least 12 **Blue-winged Teal** were reported from September 9 to October 26 (SG, RW, KA, DSu, SS, NA). A pair of **Redheads** flew over Santa Cruz streets toward the San Lorenzo River on the exceptional date of August 27 (KA). Our other modern fall records have been after October.

A male **Black Scoter** was at Waddell Creek Beach on October 30 (DS). Five **White-winged Scoters** flew past Terrace Point on October 18, providing a good count for this declining duck (SG). A **Red-necked Grebe** visited West Cliff Drive on October 27 (AG). No particularly unusual tubenoses were found in county waters this season. Highlights among the expected species were **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** observed on September 21, and October 20 and 28 (SJ, MS), and **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** reported on six trips from September 8-28 (SJ, MS). High counts of Wilson's included five on September 9, and 12 on September 21 (SJ). One to three **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** were found on three trips from September 11-21 (MS, SJ). **Least Storm-Petrels** were sparse; the only two reports were both from September 28, when six were found on a boat trip (SJ), and 20 were spotted during an aerial survey (TH et al.).

American White Pelican numbers peaked in September (v.ob.); the high count this season was about 200 at West Struve Slough on September 5 (RW). **Brown Pelican** oddities included a juvenile flying low over Neary Lagoon on October 7, and an adult ranging up the San Lorenzo River near Soquel Avenue on October 26 (SG). A **Pelagic Cormorant** up the San Lorenzo at Riverside Avenue on October 26 continued an unusual trend for that stream, but a young **Brandt's Cormorant** up near Broadway on October 11 had less local precedent off the ocean (SG). A small number of **American Bitterns** were found in September and October in the Pajaro Valley, where expected (v.ob.); one at Antonelli Pond on October 30 was more unusual (BMcL).

Up to five **White-faced Ibis** were reported sporadically at Watsonville, Struve and Harkins sloughs through the period (v.ob.). Three **White-tailed Kites** (including at least one juvenile) at the meadow in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park on July 31 indicated a pair nested in the Felton area (DE). An immature **Bald Eagle** flew south past Waddell Beach on August 12, providing the county's only recent summer record (PM). An adult was near Corralitos on October 14 (EFe). A juvenile **Broad-winged Hawk** was at Rancho Del Oso on October 30 (DSu). Among 20 reports of **Merlins** from September 15 through October, one with characteristics of the subspecies *richardsonii* was at Harkins Slough on September 23 (MD et al.).

A **Sora** at Neary Lagoon on August 4 was early for a migrant (SG). Another skulked in a backyard garden (!) in Capitola on September 4 (DSu). **American Coots** are occasionally seen on the ocean during fall migration, but usually just an odd bird now and again. Thus, a tight flock of about 100 in the surf at Capitola Beach on October 24 were noteworthy (DSu et al.). An alternate-plumaged adult golden-plover at Watsonville Slough on August 16 was thought to be an **American Golden-Plover** (RW). Up to 35 **Lesser Yellowlegs** found from August 14 to October 15 were nearly all in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.); the high count was 11 at Watsonville Slough on August 22 (RW). Reports of **Wandering Tattler** from the mid-county coast documented a fall migration spanning July 22 to September 23, with one straggler on October 19 (PB, SG, RW, NZ, MSc).

A flock of about 65 **Long-billed Curlews** high over Capitola on August 24 was a good number for fall (DSu). **Marbled Godwits** continued their new pattern of autumn use of the south county sloughs (v.ob.), with a high count of 65 at Harkins on October 12 (RW). The only **Ruddy Turnstone** was a juvenile at the mouth of Watsonville Slough on August 16 (RW). Five juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found, with singles at Younger Lagoon on August 1-2 (SG, MSc, BAR, JD) and August 9 (SG), Watsonville Slough on August 17 (RW), and two at Struve Slough on September 9 (DWi).

Eight to 10 **Baird's Sandpipers** were found from August 11 to September 10, followed by 11-17 **Pectoral Sandpipers** from September 9 to October 10 (v.ob.) Except for two Baird's at the mid-county coast, all of these sandpipers were at the south county sloughs. The county's seventh **Stilt Sandpiper** visited Struve and Watsonville sloughs September 1-10 (RW, v.ob.). The county's third-ever **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** – the first to be enjoyed by many and well-photographed – joined the Stilt at Struve Slough on September 1-13 (RW, v.ob.). A **Ruff** made a brief stop at Younger Lagoon on August 28 (LG). Five **Wilson's Phalaropes** were spotted at the south county sloughs from September 4-8 (RW, MSc, SG, JR). **Red-necked Phalaropes** had a strong presence along the coast and in the Pajaro Valley this fall, but 1-3 photographed at Loch Lomond on August 25-27 were unexpected at that mountain reservoir (JC).

A juvenile **Mew Gull** at West Cliff Drive on August 14 was very early (SG); the next fall arrival was not reported until October 20. Also out of season was a second-cycle **Herring Gull** at West Cliff on August 16 (SG). A **Black Tern** paused at Watsonville Slough on August 7 (RW). Two **Black Skimmers** were at the San Lorenzo River mouth on August 13 (DSu), followed by two (same?) at Pajaro Dunes on August 16 (RW). Two skimmers seen flying north at Año Nuevo Point in San Mateo County on August 3 presumably flew from Santa Cruz County to get there (fide PM). Six **Eurasian Collared-Doves** at Scotts Valley on August 22 were a first for that city (DSu). New high counts for other areas included a north coast record of 11 near Majors Creek on September 19 (JL), and a Santa Cruz record of 21 at Delaware Avenue on October 25 (SG).

Migrant **Burrowing Owls** were spied near Antonelli Pond on October 11 (SG), and at O'Neill Ranch Open Space in Soquel on October 21 (AG); the latter was the first report from Soquel in

ages. Only one was evident on a thorough search of the species' regular wintering fields at UCSC on October 28 (JB). A **Long-eared Owl** spoke up at Soquel on August 1-2 (RW). A **Common Nighthawk** at Watsonville on August 11 was one of the season's best birds (EFr). A **Common Poorwill** photographed at the UCSC Arboretum on October 30 was perhaps a campus first (RFI). Migrant **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** appeared in numbers from Santa Cruz to Capitola for the 5th fall in a row. An impressive 15 were identified from August 24 to September 24 (DSu, SG, MC, MSc, LG, EL, AD), all females or immature males, visiting riparian habitat or backyards.

Among the late summer wave of *Selasphorus* hummers – hard to identify female and immature Rufous and Allen's – a young male **Rufous Hummingbird** gave away his identity by displaying at Lighthouse Field State Beach on August 16 (SG); displays by this species have been very rarely noted in our county. A **Lewis's Woodpecker** flew over Soquel on September 8 (DSu). Fourteen **Willow Flycatchers** were found from August 22 to October 1 (SG, DSu, PB, AD, MSc, DW). A **Least Flycatcher** at Neary Lagoon on October 3 was the first to be photographed in the county (SG, PB), and another was at Lighthouse Field on October 10 (SG). A strong seven **Tropical Kingbirds** were found from October 1-25 (LG, WG, JP, GK, DSu, JG). **Western Kingbirds** came earlier, as expected; eight were reported from August 18 to September 29 (SG, DSu, JH, BC, RW).

Eastern Kingbirds were at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve on August 22 (DSu) and at Merk Road in Corralitos on September 13 (S&WM). **Loggerhead Shrikes** have become quite scarce on the whole. Please report all encounters with this declining species. A **Cassin's Vireo** at Antonelli Pond on October 24 was the only one identified this fall (SG); although another "Solitary" (Cassin's or Blue-headed) was noted at Corralitos on October 14 (EFe). Undeterred by July's martin-eating egret (see last issue), five migrant **Purple Martins** were spotted from August 4 to September 18 (SG, MSc, BAR). The only **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at Meder Canyon on September 8 (SG).

Tallies of **House Wrens** from two areas show how numerous this species can be in its preferred habitats during early fall: eight were at O'Neill Ranch Open Space on September 8 (DSu), and 10 were around the southeast corner of Wilder Ranch State Park on October 16 (SG). Three **Western Bluebirds** off upper Green Valley Road on October 28 were the only ones reported (EFe). **Varied Thrush** was decidedly sparse this season, after a huge influx in Fall 2006 (and good numbers in Fall 2005). For example, six hours in the forests around the north margin of Big Basin Redwoods State Park on October 30 yielded only four Varieds, but similar coverage in 2006 produced over 500!

Some of our rare migrant western wood-warblers were notably scarce: three **Nashville Warblers** (30% of average; MST, SG); 16 **Black-throated Grays** (90%; v.ob.); *zero* **Hermits** (we average ten), and two **MacGillivray's** (30%; (SG, DSu). A **Tennessee Warbler** was at the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park on September 21 (DSu). A record-setting three **Virginia's Warblers** were the rarest of the wood-warblers to be found this season: at New Brighton on September 23 (MSc), near Antonelli Pond September 24 (SG), and at Meder Canyon on October 29 (SG). We've never had more than one in a fall. **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were at Arana Gulch on September 25 (SS) and New Brighton on September 28 to October 1 (RW). A **Prairie Warbler** visited Sunset State Beach on October 20 (SS).

Eight **Palm Warblers** from September 26 to October 27 were less than half of average (v.ob.), but the total increased slightly in November. Three **Blackpolls** from September 24 to October 12 (DSu, JP, MCr) was about one third of normal. A single **Black-and-white Warbler** at Sunset on September 21 (RW et al.) was the slimmest tally in 10 years. Of two **Northern Waterthrushes**

found in August, one along the San Lorenzo River in Highlands County Park at Ben Lomond on August 10-11 was early and unusual for fall away from the coast (JHz). A **Yellow-breasted Chat** emerged at Lighthouse Field on September 24 (DSu).

A **Vesper Sparrow** at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on October 25-27 was the first one to be photographed in the county (SG, et al.). **Chipping Sparrows**, often a sparse fall migrant, came out of the thatchwork this year! A record-smashing 22 were found from September 23 to October 25, including several reports of 3-4 at one area (EFe, SG, PB, MSc, RR, BAR, RW). Our recent average has been only three per fall. In contrast, four **Clay-colored Sparrows** found from September 24 to October 17 were below average (SG, PB, v.ob.). A **Brewer's Sparrow** near Antonelli Pond on September 27 was the rarest sparrow of the season (RFo). Two **Lark Sparrows** were found from September 2-23 (SG, DSi et al). Three male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** included one each in August, September and October (CB, SS, MST, SW).

Blue Grosbeaks were at Santa Cruz on August 24 (SG) and Soquel on September 27 (DSu). An **Indigo Bunting** was at Lighthouse Field on September 11 (SG). An **Orchard Oriole** enjoyed apples in a Santa Cruz yard on October 3-7 (MSc). A female **Hooded Oriole** at Glen Canyon Road on October 14 was a month late (BS). A female **Baltimore Oriole** fed at bottlebrush flowers in Soquel on October 16 (DSu). Two **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were at Sunset on September 20 (SS) and two were at Wilder Ranch on October 9 (SG).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Jack Barclay, Cliff Bixler, Phil Brown, Bob Cohen, Judie Cole, Mary Crouser (MCr), Mary Cunningham, Al DeMartini, Matthew Dodder, Judy Donaldson, David Ekdahl, Eric Feuss (EFe), Rick Flores, Rick Fournier, Ed Frost (EFr), Alexander Gaguine, Jeff Garcia, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Alison Graff, Tonya Haff, Jane Henderson, John Hutz (JHz), Gary Kittleson, Brian Latta, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Sylvia & Wayne Macon, Barry McLaughlin, Peter Metropulos, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Monterey Seabirds (*fide* Roger Wolfe), Bryan Mori, Janna Pauser, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette A. Ramer (BAR), Robert Ramer, Jennifer Rycenga, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MSc), Shearwater Journeys (*fide* Debi Shearwater), David Sidle (DSi), Scott Smithson, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), Mike Tyner, David Weber, David Wimpfheimer (DWi), Roger Wolfe, Sandra Wusher, Nickie Zavinski. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from November 1 to December 31, 2007

The transition of late fall to early winter continued early fall's pattern of relatively few rarities, but there were some highlights. Notable among these were a Williamson's Sapsucker, multiple Eurasian Wigeon, and some highbrow vagrant warblers. Irruptive montane or northern land birds remained sparse or, in some cases, absent. Especially striking were very low numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglet, Varied Thrush and Pine Siskin, and no evidence of any incursion at all by Red-breasted Nuthatch or Red Crossbill. Some uncommon diving ducks (Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, and Common Goldeneye) were more numerous than normal, a situation which became even more evident in the New Year. White-winged Scoters were especially welcome, as they have declined markedly. On the other hand, it looks like we have said goodbye for the time being to wintering Ruddy Turnstones.

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A **Snow Goose** was at Watsonville Slough from November 1-12 (RW), with three there and at adjacent Struve on November 26 to December 1 (JWa, KA, EFe). Two **Ross's Geese** were there on November 25 to December 1 (RW, JWa, EFe). A small flock of Ross's was at College Lake on December 23 (HS, RS). **Greater White-fronted Geese** failed to appear, unusual for late fall and early winter. With several reports of **Cackling Geese** during these months, the high count was 15+ at Struve Slough on December 11 (KA). The only Cacklers reported away from the Pajaro Valley were singles at the west side of Santa Cruz November 9-14 (v.ob.) and one at Soquel Creek mouth on December 15 (DSu). Five **Tundra Swans** flew over near Struve Slough on December 5 (CK).

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** lingered at Watsonville Slough from October 26 to November 26 (RW, NA, JWa), and was perhaps the same seen at West Struve on December 1 (EFe). Additional Eurasians arrived in that area by late December, with at least two males (maybe 3) present on December 27-28 (MC). Still more would be found in January! Another male Eurasian was at College Lake on December 22 into January (RS, HS). A **Blue-winged Teal** was at Struve Slough on November 26 (JWa), and three were there on December 27 (MC). One at Swanton Pond on December 12 was rarer along the north coast (KA).

Greater Scaup were more frequent and widespread in December than in recent memory (v.ob.), including a remarkable 50 at Schwan Lake on December 15 (CK et al.)! Seven in a pond near Majors Creek on December 15 provided a high count for the north coast (KA), and smaller numbers at several unexpected spots highlighted the species' unusually prominent presence. Two female **Harlequin Ducks** were at Cowell Beach on November 11 (CD), and a male was nearer to Steamer Lane on December 20-21 (AG, PB). Six reports of 1-3 **White-winged Scoters** from November 2-16 marked a better migrant passage than we've seen in years (v.ob.). Only one was reported in December, but the situation later improved, with many found after the New Year. Three **Black Scoters** were found in this period (SG, BAR, RW).

The only **Hooded Mergansers** away from the Pajaro Valley were three at Dairy Gulch on December 12 (LG, WG), and one there on December 15 (KA, JWa). A **Common Loon** was

inland at Loch Lomond on December 15 (JWi, AR). A **Red-necked Grebe** was at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on November 26 (SG) and December 19-22 (SG, PM). Various reports of **American White Pelicans** in single and double digits were mostly from the Watsonville Slough system (high of 70 on November 2 [RW]), with some seen in the Interlaken area, too (v.ob.). A **Brown Pelican** cruising inland over the golf course and forests of De Laveaga Park on December 17 was aptly described as “weird” (MSc)!

A **Pelagic Cormorant** ventured into freshwater a few hundred yards up Soquel Creek on November 10 (DS). The species has rarely been seen ranging up that stream, less often than the San Lorenzo, but its use of these riverine habitats remains quite odd in the bigger picture.

American Bitterns were regular at a couple spots in the Pajaro Valley, with a high of three at Struve Slough on December 27-28 (MC, PM). A **Great Egret** visiting a backyard fish pond in Aptos on November 9 was in a situation where the species has been rarely noted in this county (CA). **White-faced Ibis** had the strongest showing ever for November and December. Two to five remained at Struve Slough during November and early December (AH, NA, EL, KA, JWa, EFe), with one at Watsonville Slough near Ramsay Park on December 1 (EFe). But 14 at Struve on December 27 set a new winter record, with 10 there the next day (MC).

A subadult **Bald Eagle** was spotted over the west side of Watsonville on November 1 (LH).

Ferruginous and **Rough-legged hawks** have both been quite scarce in recent years, so appearances in late fall were welcome: Ferruginous were seen at UCSC on November 17-22 (JL, v.ob.), and West Cliff Drive on November 23 (KA); a Rough-legged, the rarer of the two for us, was at Davenport on November 14-16 (JM, MB, KA). A **Common Moorhen** at Baldwin Creek Marsh on December 30 was notable away from the Pajaro Valley (EB, AG). **Long-billed Curlews**, always scarce in winter, were at Wilder and New Brighton beaches on December 15 (EL, DSu). Three **Marbled Godwits** at Harkins Slough on November 30 were unusual inland so late in the season (KA).

The **Ruddy Turnstone** that had wintered at Capitola for several years failed to appear this year, and no others were found, marking the first winter the species has been entirely absent in the county in modern memory. A **Rock Sandpiper** returned to West Cliff Drive for its 5th winter on November 14 (SG), and lingered into the New Year (v.ob.). Just two **Burrowing Owls** wintered at UCSC this season (JL, JB), indicating a continuing decline at the county’s only remaining regular wintering location. Another visited Back Ranch Road on December 18 (RD). A **Long-eared Owl** returned to a roost at O’Neill Ranch Open Space in Soquel by November 22 (AG) and lingered into the New Year (DSu). Two others were found in the Soquel Valley on December 15 (DSu). A **Common Poorwill** calling at O’Neill Ranch on December 15 was unexpected (DSu).

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was at Graham Hill Road on November 1 (CB), and one at Mission Springs from December 8 into the New Year had probably returned from last winter (SS, PM, MST). One of the best finds of the season was a female **Williamson’s Sapsucker** at China Grade in Big Basin on December 29-31 (MST, DSu, PB, PM, HS, RS). This was the 4th county record, and the first to be photographed and enjoyed by multiple observers. A few unseasonable flycatchers were found in December. A very late **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** was spotted at Pinto Lake on December 1 (EF et al.). A **Tropical Kingbird** – the only kingbird expected to appear here in winter – was near Kelly Lake on December 14 (DSu). A **Western Kingbird** photographed at Neary Lagoon on December 13 was much rarer (SG); we have only one other December record.

A “**Solitary**” **Vireo** at Neary Lagoon on November 21-30 was very likely a **Plumbeous** (SG). **Barn Swallows** continued their pattern of winter presence, with singles at Kelly Lake on December 14 (DSu) and College Lake on December 23 (HS, RS). **Western Bluebirds** graced the

December 15 CBC, with four at Jarvis Road (an unexpected locale) northeast of Scotts Valley (BMon), and five at Back Ranch Road (TH).

Warbler diversity was very low in late fall and early winter, not unexpected after the poor fall showing, but there were a few clear highlights. A **Virginia's Warbler** found at Meder Canyon on October 29 lingered to November 22 (SG). Male **Black-throated Blue Warblers** appeared in a Santa Cruz yard on December 11 (TN) and New Brighton State beach on December 15 (DSu). An immature female **Blackburnian Warbler** was in Watsonville on November 29 to December 14 (BMor, DSu). An immature male **American Redstart** found at Natural Bridges State Beach on November 23 (MD) wintered into the New Year (v.ob.).

Less stellar rare warblers included a **Nashville** at Meder Canyon on November 19-22 (KK, SG), a **Hermit Warbler** at Rancho Del Oso on November 14 (DSu), a **Palm Warbler** wintering at western Santa Cruz (SG), and a late **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Pinto Lake on November 3 (JM). A female **Summer Tanager** at Antonelli Pond on November 9 (SG) was thought to be the same as one at neighboring Natural Bridges from December 4-20 (AG, v.ob.). Another female was at Rio Del Mar on December 28 (DSu). A tardy **Western Tanager** was at Meder Canyon on November 25 (PB).

Additional **Chipping Sparrows** in November (SG) brought the fall season total to an astounding 28 individuals, more than were found in the last 10 fall seasons combined! The recent 10-year average was only 2.1 per fall, with a prior season record of just six. A **Lark Sparrow** was near Antonelli Pond on November 15-22 (SG, AG). A **Fox Sparrow** with characteristics of the "Red" form was at Bonny Doon on November 20-21 (WBT). Just eight **White-throated Sparrows** in October and November made for a low fall showing, and early winter continued apace, with just six reported in December (v.ob.). The season's high counts for **Great-tailed Grackle** were 37 at Watsonville Slough on December 6 (CK) and 21 near Struve Slough on December 30 (DSi). A tardy **Bullock's Oriole** was at Santa Cruz on November 2 (SG).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Cindie Ambar, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Jack Barclay, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Matthew Coale, Carmen DeLeon, Ryan DiGaudio, Matthew Dodder, David Ekdahl, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Alison Graff, Tonya Haff, Ann Hastings, Laird Henkel, Kathy Kuyper, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor), Jean Myers, Todd Newberry, Bernadette A. Ramer (BAR), Alex Rinkert, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Michelle Scott (MSc), David Sidle (DSi), Scott Smithson, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler, Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from January 1 to February 29, 2008

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A **Greater White-fronted Goose** at College Lake on January 9 (JM) was the first in the county this winter, late for a first arrival. Up to five were in the sloughs west of Watsonville from January 18 to February 29 (RW, JS, v.ob.). Away from the Pajaro Valley, one at Antonelli Pond on February 7 (SG, AS) was probably the same bird seen flying nearby on February 10 (AG, EB). Several **Snow Geese** were at College Lake and Watsonville Slough through January and early February (v.ob.). The high count was eight at Watsonville Slough on January 19 (RgW et al.); two there on February 23 (SR) were the latest. The Pajaro Valley also had a fairly good showing of **Ross's Geese**, with up to eight at both College Lake and Watsonville Slough in January. Only one lingered later, staying at Watsonville Slough until February 23 (RW, SR, v.ob.).

Cackling Geese were fairly widespread in the Pajaro Valley through the end of February, with a high count of 20 at Struve and Watsonville Sloughs on January 3 (DS et al.). A flock of six **Brant** flying up the western Santa Cruz coast February 18 were the only ones reported through the period, and were likely early northbound migrants (RRa, BAR, SG). Early January brought high numbers of **Tundra Swans** to the Pajaro Valley, with 23 in the Santa Cruz County portion of the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (DS, JW, EL, et al.). College Lake hosted at least 18 on January 2 (SS, PM, AR), a high count for this area. Numbers diminished after that, but a few lingered into late February.

Eurasian Wigeon had a great season in the Pajaro Valley area, with numerous reports through February 23 representing at least six or seven different birds (v.ob.), a new record for the county. Struve Slough alone had four males plus a probable female on January 1 (EL, MC, et al.). There was also a hybrid male **Eurasian Wigeon X American Wigeon** at Struve Slough from January 3-7 (AD, DS). Two male **Blue-winged Teal** appeared at Neary Lagoon on January 6 (PVL), for a rare winter report from Santa Cruz. The highest count among several south county reports of Blue-wings was five at College Lake on January 19 (PS, NC). A flock of 55 **Northern Pintails** flying over the ocean off Terrace Point (KA et al.) was a nice number for the area, but otherwise wintering Pintails were scarce in the county.

A Eurasian **Green-winged Teal** ("Common Teal") at Struve Slough on January 7 (AD) was only the 2nd or 3rd county record of this rare form. There were several reports of **Redheads** in the Pajaro Valley, with the highest counts being two males and a female at College Lake on January 1 (DS) and three males at Watsonville Slough on February 16 (RW). The strong showing by **Greater Scaup** reported in the last issue grew to unprecedented numbers in mid-January, including 170+ at Schwan Lake January 16-19 (DS, JM), setting a new record for the county. Thirty-eight at College Lake on February 7 was very good for an inland site (DS), and nine at Swanton Pond February 13 was a high for the north coast (DS). More than usual were also reported swimming on the ocean at various spots (v.ob.).

White-winged Scoters were in better than average numbers from January 1 into mid-February, but an amazing count of 215 (!) off Sunset State Beach on February 12 (DS, et al.) was well out

of proportion with all other counts in recent decades. Only one was left there on February 16 (RW), and there were no records of the species in the county after that date, suggesting the huge aggregation on the 12th was a staging of migrants. **Black Scoters** included a young male by the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf from January 7 to February 26 (SG, PB, JW, KA, v.ob.), a female at Pot Belly Beach on February 22 (RW), and a male at Seacliff State Beach on February 28 (RW). **Common Goldeneyes** were also reported in high numbers and were more widespread than usual in the county (v.ob.).

Overshadowing these, and arguably the most notable highlight of this remarkable season for waterfowl, was a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes from January 3-31 (DW, v.ob.). This well-photographed bird was one of very few records for Santa Cruz County, the first since 2003, and was seen by more observers than any previous county record. **Hooded Mergansers** away from their regular Pajaro Valley haunts included one at Younger Lagoon on February 1 (KA), a pair at Roaring Camp from February 2-9 (IM, LB), and five or more frequenting several ponds around Scotts Valley from January 7 to February 23 (PM). A **Pacific Loon** at Pinto Lake January 1-3 was rare inland (RRa, DS, et al.).

Red-necked Grebe reports included two off Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB), and singles off West Cliff Drive February 15-23 (PB, SG, RRa, BAR, JS, SR, v.ob.), and Terrace Point February 18 (SG). With not a single report of any kind of shearwater, and only a few **Northern Fulmars**, it was a very poor year for Procellariids in Santa Cruz County waters. **American White Pelicans** were reported regularly in the Pajaro Valley until January 20 (v.ob.), then apparently disappeared from the county for a while, with some found again beginning February 29 (RW). A **Cattle Egret** turned up at Younger Lagoon on January 26 (LG); this species has been quite rare in the county in recent years.

The high number of **White-faced Ibis** reported from the Watsonville area in late December continued into the beginning of the New Year, with 13 counted at Struve Slough on January 1 (EL, JW, et. al.). Numbers declined after that, but up to two lingered into early March (v.ob.). Among the season's most outstanding finds was a **Crested Caracara** perched atop a tree in Pogonip on February 27 (JH et al.), likely a first-year bird, but it is hard to be certain from the photograph. The bird was looked for extensively afterward and not refound, but one reported prior to this observation at Año Nuevo, and one afterward near Gilroy, suggest there may have been one bird wandering widely through the region. This is the 2nd or 3rd record for Santa Cruz County (depending on whether records near Davenport in 2002 and 2005-6 involved one or two individuals.)

There were 36 reports of **Merlin** from December 1 to February 29, for a fairly average winter showing. One adult male around western Santa Cruz from January 12 to February 12 showed characteristics of the locally rare Prairie form (ssp. *richardsonii*) (MS, SG), and was possibly a returning bird spending its second winter. A **Prairie Falcon**, always rare in Santa Cruz County, was at Struve Slough on January 1 (BR, JE). Numerous **Black Oystercatchers** continued to use Greyhound Rock as a roost site during high tide and windy weather; the high count this winter was 48 on February 13 (DS). **American Avocets** out of place away from the Pajaro Valley included one at Seacliff Beach on January 9, and a breeding-plumaged male at the mouth of Waddell Creek on February 29 (DS). A **Wandering Tattler**, rare in winter in recent years, was along West Cliff Drive from January 15 to February 15 (JW, SG, LG, PB, v.ob.).

Ruddy Turnstones remained absent, with no reports through the period. The **Rock Sandpiper** continued to roam the West Cliff Drive area into early March (v.ob.). As in past years, it was an unpredictable wanderer—no one saw it despite much searching from January 9 until it was found

again February 26 (PB), after which it was observed fairly regularly until March 4. A would-be first county record of a **Slaty-backed Gull** was studied and photographed by an experienced observer at Harkins Slough on January 26, then again later that same day at Sunset State Beach (TE). Unfortunately it was not found again, and the photos and notes from this observation, while suggestive of the species, are probably not sufficient to confirm the identification.

Four or five **Glaucous Gulls** were found from January 31 to February 29 (v.ob.). Most were first-year gulls, but one at Baldwin Creek Beach from February 26 to March 5 was a rarer 2nd cycle bird (JP, BAR, DS, et al.). Uncommon hybrid gulls reported included a 1st cycle **Glaucous Gull X Glaucous-winged Gull** at Baldwin Creek Beach on January 10 (JP), with a 2nd cycle bird showing characteristics of that combination at the same spot on February 6 (JP, PB), and a probable **Glaucous Gull X Herring Gull** hybrid along West Cliff Drive on February 3 (SG). A **Black Skimmer** was photographed at Seabright Beach on January 29 (MP). A **Pigeon Guillemot**, rare in winter, was off Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB). In general, Alcids seemed to be quite scarce in Santa Cruz County waters this winter.

Band-tailed Pigeons are known to nest outside the usual spring – summer period, but there has been little specific evidence of that from our county. Thus, a nest with half-grown chick at Huckleberry Campground in Big Basin on February 11 was of interest (DS). Daily high temperatures in that campground during January and February seldom rise above the mid-40s. Impressive tallies of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** from two of their centers of occurrence were 58 along College and Lakeview roads east of Watsonville on January 31, and 18 in the Mar Vista Road neighborhood of Seacliff on February 8 (DS). **Long-eared Owls** continued at O'Neill Ranch in Soquel, with one seen leaving the roost in January and two on February 4 (DS et al.). Another was found roosting near Cabrillo College on January 9-10 (FM).

Mission Spring's **Red-naped Sapsucker** lingered to January 13 (PM, MS-T, LG, WG). The **Williamson's Sapsucker** at China Grade eluded many seekers in early January. It was re-found February 11-15 (DS, RW), but still managed to avoid most birders. An **American Crow** at Big Basin on February 27 was only the second record for the interior region of the park (DS), but it was followed by several more in March. Perhaps these presage colonization of that forested region by the county's expanding population...an unwelcome addition of a predator for the park's beleaguered Marbled Murrelets. Additional **Barn Swallows** from January 1-16 (NK, BMon, AD, SG, LG) brought the December – January total up to 16 individuals, plus one on February 18 (SG) that was perhaps part of the early winter movement rather than a returning breeder.

Thirteen **Western Bluebirds** were found at four places in the Santa Cruz County portion of the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (LG, WG, MSc, BRe, RRa, BAR, DS). Two bluebirds at Anna Jean Cummings Park in Soquel on February 23 were the first in Soquel in quite a while (EF), and at least two continued at Back Ranch Road into March (TH). After a moderate to light presence in early winter, **American Robins** seemed to move into the county during late January, with several reports of large roosts and of flocks flying over, especially from mountain areas. Then numbers seemed to decline after early February. **Varied Thrush** remained uncommon to rare in most areas, but was locally numerous. For example, 478 were tallied on surveys along 22 miles of trails in Big Basin from February 15 to March 4 (DS). But numbers there were well down from last winter's huge invasion, when 2771 Varied Thrushes were counted on the same survey areas in late January 2007.

It was a slow winter for rare warblers. A **Nashville Warbler** at Meder Canyon on February 1-6 was the only one reported all winter (SG, v.ob.), as was a **Hermit Warbler** at Kelly Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on January 1 (SS, DS). **Black-throated Gray** went unreported until a

likely wintering bird was found at Branciforte Dip on March 15 (LG). A **Palm Warbler** was at Watsonville on January 1 (BRe et al.). The **American Redstart** at Natural Bridges stayed into March and delighted many birders (v.ob.). A **Wilson's Warbler** was near College Lake on January 1 (DE). An immature male **Summer Tanager** frequented a backyard in La Selva Beach sporadically from February 24 to March 15, feeding during stormy periods on bees near hives (FM).

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** along the San Lorenzo River near Riverside Drive from January 7 to at least March 19 (SG, v.ob.) was one of few ever documented to over-winter in the county. Two **Swamp Sparrows** at College Lake on January 1 were the only ones reported this winter, for a very slim showing (DS). **Lincoln's Sparrows** were plentiful, though, with a record count of 93 on the December 15 Santa Cruz CBC, and 81 found during partial coverage of the fields around near College Lake on January 1 (DS, SS). **White-throated Sparrow** was less numerous than in most recent years, with just 17 reported from December to February, less than half of the recent five year average. It was missed on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC for the first time since 1987 (fide RRa). An immature **Harris's Sparrow** was at College Lake on January 1 (DS).

Two "Slate-colored" **Dark-eyed Juncos** were reported this winter (LH, DS). An immature male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a feeder near Neary Lagoon from January 11 to at least March 12, molting much of the way to adult plumage by March (PVL, v.ob.). A female **Black-headed Grosbeak** was a brief visitor at a Capitola feeder on January 10 (DS). The only large aggregations of **Tricolored Blackbirds** (500-1000+) were along the north coast at favored spots near Baldwin Creek and around the south end of Swanton Road. A total of 36 found at several spots in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Moss Landing CBC on January 1 (fide RRa) included birds in three areas where they are seldom found; the species has dwindled greatly as a wintering bird in the Pajaro Valley area. Elsewhere, a male along West Cliff Drive on January 20 was out of place (SG).

Wintering **Bullock's Orioles** showed up in Santa Cruz at Bethany Curve on January 14 to February 7 (SG) and near Westlake Park on January 24 (LS). A male **Cassin's Finch** at Middle Ridge in Big Basin on February 27 was one of the best finds of the season (DS). This is the third county record of Cassin's other than those noted during an exceptional montane invasion that occurred in the fall of 1996.

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Bruce Barrett, Linda Brodman, Phil Brown, Matthew Coale, Nancy Collins, Al DeMartini, Todd Easterla, Jim Edgar, David Ekdahl, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Tonya Haff, Jason Henderson, Laird Henkel, Norman Kikuchi, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Ingrid Mednis, Freddy Menge, Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan (BMon), Bryan Mori (BMor), Jean Myers, Todd Newberry, Margaret Perham, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette A. Ramer (BAR), Robert Ramer (RRa), Bill Reese (BRe), Alex Rinkert, Steve Rovell, Michelle Scott (MSc), Adam Searcy, Larry Selman, Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, John Sterling, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian, W. Breck Tyler, Paul Van Loan, Jeff Wall, Denise Wight, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2008

Three wildfires consumed forest and chaparral over substantial acreage in the county for the first time in decades, with the Summit Fire above Corralitos on May 22, the Martin Fire at Bonny Doon on June 11 and the Trabing Fire at Watsonville on June 22. Although significantly large from the county perspective, the area burned by these fires is tiny compared to the truly large tracts burned in fires elsewhere this season, such as the huge Basin Complex Fire in Monterey County. The effects on bird life in our county are hard to gauge at present, although data collected in 2002-2007 by the Santa Cruz County Forest Bird Monitoring Program along survey routes that ran through the Summit and Martin burn areas will provide some baseline information, and I surveyed part of the Martin area in the weeks before the fire.

Habitats burned in the fires did not contain especially rare nesting species, although uncommon nesting species such as Red-breasted Nuthatch and Yellow-rumped Warbler were affected, Common Poorwill may have been, and I had documented a nesting Cooper's Hawk pair in the Martin Fire area shortly before that blaze. On the whole, the worst impact will probably not be effects on certain species, but just the timing, hitting right in the middle of the nesting season of most species. But looking ahead, in upcoming years the burned areas may provide new habitat opportunities for some of the county's uncommon breeders, such as House Wren, Western Wood-Pewee, Ash-throated Flycatcher and Lawrence's Goldfinch...Maybe even Common Poorwill, Sage Sparrow and Black-chinned Sparrow.

Spring's avian highlights included our first Vermilion Flycatcher, and first spring occurrences for Eurasian Wigeon and Cassin's Finch. Redhead, American White Pelican, and White-faced Ibis lingering through the season added a new twist at the Watsonville sloughs. Spring landbird migration had few highlights, other than a record number of chats, and it was a slow season for vagrants.

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Four **Greater White Fronted Geese** were in Watsonville Slough March 21 to April 5 (RW). Two photographed at Neary Lagoon were exceptionally late for spring migrants, staying there April 23-26 (MC, AG, PM); presumably the same pair flew out of town over Antonelli Pond on April 26 (TM). A flock of 21 **Snow Geese** flew over the UCSC Arboretum on March 18 (PB), a rare record of spring migrants for the county. **Cackling Geese** also lingered late, with six at Watsonville Slough from March 21-April 5, and one still there on April 12 (RW). Introduced-type **Canada Geese** at interesting spots included three in the pond at Quail Hollow on May 25 (AR) (they nested here in 2007, a first for the San Lorenzo Valley, but apparently did not this year), and up to four at a vineyard pond off Glen Canyon Road March 20 to May 5 (PM). The same pond off Glen Canyon had up to four **Wood Ducks** at various dates from March 23 to May 3 (PM), the first ever reported in that area. Two Wood Ducks at the north end of Loch Lomond on May 19 were interesting for the nesting season.

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** showed up in Struve Slough on April 12 (EL et al.), for the county's first spring record. While a lingering wintering bird can't be entirely ruled out, it was more likely a spring migrant, as there were no other reports after February 23. A **Blue-winged Teal** was at College Lake on April 5 (RW), and two were there on April 24 (PB). A male **Northern Shoveler** in Watsonville Slough from May 9 into early June (RW, LG, BR, MS), and apparently a different male at Pajaro Dunes on May 23 (RW), were unusual in the county this late in spring, as were four **Northern Pintail** in the lower stretch of Watsonville Slough May 9-13 (RW, LG, BR, MS). Also exceptionally late were two **Green-winged Teal** that appeared at Watsonville Slough May 16 (RW). A late **Canvasback** stayed at College Lake from April 4-16 (RW, DSu).

Unprecedented in the county was the regular presence of **Redheads** in the Struve Slough and Watsonville Slough area from March 31 through the end of the period (H&RS, RW, JDo, GF, DSt, v.ob.), with reports of up to four birds at a time, and probably five different individuals involved. Late **Ring-necked Ducks** included two at Swanton Pond on April 23 (DSu) and one at Quail Hollow on May 3 (JW). Twelve female **Greater Scaup** at the Santa Cruz Harbor on March 31 were a good count for spring migrants (DSu). A lingering male was near the mouth of the Pajaro River on April 26 (NA, SG). Four late **Lesser Scaup** stopped in Watsonville Slough on May 2 (RW). Rare spring **Harlequin Ducks** included females off Waddell Creek Beach on March 22 (DSg), and off Seacliff State Beach April 19 (SSu). A **Black Scoter** flew by El Jarro Point on May 17 (RN et al.). Adding to the rare sea duck list for spring were a male and a female **Long-tailed Ducks**, spotted during an aerial survey about eight miles southwest of Terrace Point on April 3 (JDa).

A **Bufflehead** was on the late side at Rancho Del Oso on May 12 (DSu); more, and later, were at Watsonville and Struve Sloughs, with 10 there on May 13 (LG, BR, MS), six on May 16, and two still around on May 23 (RW). Two female **Common Goldeneyes** appeared at the mouth of Waddell Creek on April 23 (DSu). The last **Hooded Merganser** reported in the county this season was in the pond at Spring Lakes Mobile Home Park in Scotts Valley on April 23 (PM). **Common Mergansers** in the Pajaro Valley, where unexpected, included three at Pajaro Dunes in March 6 (AS), and a male at College Lake May 2-3 (RW, DSu). A nice total of 29 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were counted passing El Jarro Point on April 30 (DSu et al.); interestingly, there were only four males among them.

Red-necked Grebes had a very good spring showing, with birds off the Baldwin Creek mouth March 5 (LG et al.), off West Cliff Drive April 13-19 (AM, AG, SG), Seacliff State Beach April 19 (SSu), and a late bird off Sunset State Beach May 13 (SSm). A **Laysan Albatross** in Santa Cruz County waters on March 2 was the first report for the county since 2003 (LL, ShJ).

American White Pelicans had one of the strongest spring showings ever in the Pajaro Valley, and were present in good numbers throughout the period (v.ob.), mostly in the Watsonville slough system and the lower Pajaro River. An **American Bittern** nest was spotted near the Struve Slough/Watsonville Slough confluence on May 7 (NA); there were regular reports of one or two bitterns through the period from the sloughs and some other Pajaro Valley spots.

A high count of 12 **Great Egret** nests were at Pinto Lake on May 3, the only active nesting colony in the county (DSu). Also on May 3, an impressive aggregation at College Lake included 79 Great and 53 Snowy Egrets (DSu). **White-faced Ibis** were present through the period in the Pajaro Valley. A couple of reports in March probably represented one or two lingering winterers, then April and May had a very strong showing of spring migrants (v.ob.) Especially notable was the persistence of birds at favored sites (the sloughs and College Lake) this spring; in previous years most late spring records involved birds flying over or stopping only briefly. The highest counts were nine at College Lake on May 3 (DSu), and nine at Watsonville Slough on May 16 (RW).

A pair of **Ospreys** built a nest at Harkins Slough, starting on March 4 (RW, GK, v.ob.). The nest was built on a platform put up by PG&E to replace a power pole site where they built a nest last year (which caught fire). Though the pair persisted there through the season, their efforts were again unsuccessful in producing any young. A migrant **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Cabrillo College on April 5 (DSu). There were quite a few late spring reports of **Merlins**, with 9 in April and 3 in May (v.ob.), the latest at College Lake on May 11 (MB, OJ). A **Prairie Falcon** at College Lake on May 3 was an especially rare record for spring (DSu). A notably large concentration of **Spotted Sandpipers** was 18, all in one loose flock, at College Lake on May 3 (DSu).

Solitary **Solitary Sandpipers** were in the San Lorenzo River near San Lorenzo Park on May 2 (SG et al.), and at College Lake on May 3 (DSu). West Cliff Drive's wintering **Wandering Tattler** reappeared there on March 18 (SG). Spring migrant tattlers were reported from May 5-25 (v.ob.), a somewhat late passage, and with fewer total reports than usual. Reports of **Lesser Yellowlegs** included one at College Lake April 16-May 2 (DSu, PB, RW), two there May 11 (MB, OJ), and one at lower Watsonville Slough on April 23 (JW). Five **Ruddy Turnstones** flying by Terrace Point on May 7 (KA), and three more turning up at Capitola Beach on May 10 (DSu), was a bit better than average for recent springs, but still very few compared to earlier years. West Cliff's **Rock Sandpiper** was last seen April 7 (LG). A **Wilson's Snipe** at Quail Hollow on May 25 was probably the latest ever for Santa Cruz County in spring (AR).

Four **Wilson's Phalaropes** were at College Lake on May 2 (RW), with one still there May 9 (JP, LG, WG, DSu). **Red Phalaropes** were widely reported onshore May 8-16, following a windy period (v.ob.), but there were no large concentrations, nor any notably inland. **Franklin's Gulls** included single birds at the Waddell Creek mouth May 9 (DSu), flying past El Jarro Point on May 17 (RN et al.), and at Corcoran Lagoon May 20 (RT). **Bonaparte's Gulls** were formerly abundant spring migrants along the Santa Cruz County coast, but they just don't seem to pass through in the numbers they used to. This year continued the pattern, with only scattered reports of small numbers; the only moderate concentration was along the San Lorenzo River in mid to late May, and involved mostly immature birds (v.ob.).

Late lingering gulls included single **Mew Gulls** at the lower San Lorenzo River May 4 (LG) and May 13 (SG), several reports of late **Herring Gulls** (v.ob.), and two **Thayer's Gulls** on the San Lorenzo May 13 (SG). The second year **Glaucous Gull** remained at Baldwin Creek Beach until March 8 (DSu, PM). A first-cycle Glaucous was at Harkins Slough March 4 (RW), and one was notably late at Pajaro Dunes April 19 (SSm). Single **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were onshore at the Santa Cruz Harbor March 26 (PM), and along West Cliff Drive April 4 (SG). Five flew by Terrace Point on May 7 (KA). A **Black Tern** paused at College Lake on April 22 (DSu). Dawn surveys for **Marbled Murrelets** at Big Basin in early May started off on an encouraging note, with more detections than the last six years. Activity sputtered out later in the month, though, as detections rapidly diminished (DSu). A **Cassin's Auklet** flew in and landed close to shore off Terrace Point May 7 (KA), this species is rarely seen from shore in the county.

Eurasian Collared-Dove continued to expand its range and increase in numbers at the peripheries of the areas where it has become established, particularly around the margins of Santa Cruz, and at Live Oak, Aptos, and Corralitos (v.ob.). April and May seem to be months when the species is particularly prone to appearing in new spots, perhaps as they prospect for nesting areas. Nests were found at Seacliff on April 16 and Pinto Lake County Park on May 3 (DSu), and individuals with nest material were at western Santa Cruz on April 1 (SG) and Graham Hill Road on May 6 (DSu). One at Rancho Del Oso on May 26 was the second record for the park (DSu). A **Burrowing Owl** was at the south end of Swanton Road on March 5-8 (DSu, v.ob.). Migrant **Black Swifts** included

two at Gray Whale Ranch on May 9 (SSm et al), and singles over Rancho del Oso on May 12 (DSu), China Grade on May 23 (DSu), and Santa Cruz on May 29 (SG).

Several reports of **Northern Pygmy-Owl** were highlighted by one standing on a Varied Thrush it had killed at Huckleberry Campground in Big Basin on March 7, and one bathing vigorously in the Andrew P. Hill memorial water fountain at Redwood Trail in Big Basin on April 11 (DSu). A **White-throated Swift** at the Pajaro River at Watsonville on May 18 showed continued presence where a pair nested in 2007 (SG); the species is rare in the Pajaro Valley. An **Acorn Woodpecker** at Natural Bridges State Beach on April 27 was rare in the park and vicinity (SG). Breeding season **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** were at two spots along Waddell Creek at Rancho Del Oso in May (DSu).

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at DeLaveaga Park on March 31 tied the record early date for the county (9 days ahead of the average first arrival; SG, BR), and another early bird was at Sims Road on April 1 (JA). It was a slow season for rare migrant *Empidonax* flycatchers. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at Castle Rock State Park on April 15 (DS), and a **Dusky Flycatcher** was at Natural Bridges on May 5 (SG). A Dusky returned to its song territory at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin by at least May 8 (DSu) and remained into summer, present for its third breeding season there (v.ob.). Despite an admirable effort, he apparently did not attract a mate. An early **Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Quail Hollow County Park on March 9 was 10 days ahead of our average arrival (AR); no others were reported in the county this season until March 18 (DK).

A female **Vermilion Flycatcher** photographed near Antonelli Pond on April 1 was the best rarity of the season and our first county record (SG)! It was enjoyed by other birders that day, but did not linger. A **Cassin's Kingbird** at College Lake on April 16 was just the 8th for the county (DSu); all but one have been in early spring. An early **Warbling Vireo** at Corralitos Lagoon on March 11 was seven days ahead of our average arrival (BMor). A **Yellow-billed Magpie** was along Highway 152 at the base of the foothills north of Watsonville on March 30 (DJ). There are few modern records of this species for the county, although they reside as close as the Aromas area in San Benito County.

American Crows visited the interior part of Big Basin Redwoods State Park for the 2nd time ever, with about six individuals noted from March 3 to April 11 (DSu, AS). They may have been roaming at the periphery of their expanding range, as they are wont to do in early spring. However, they have become established in forest dominated areas of the upper San Lorenzo watershed (within a few miles of the park now) and maybe will join Big Basin's breeding avifauna before long. A pair of **Tree Swallows** was using a nest box at Last Chance Road on May 10 (CEy); they are rare breeders along our coast north of Santa Cruz. Migrant **Bank Swallows** were at Santa Cruz on April 23 (SG) and Baldwin Creek Marsh on May 12 (DSu). A **Rock Wren** was in appropriately rocky spot in the upper Opal Creek watershed at Big Basin on May 8, for the first park record (DSu). This species is always rare in the county, but especially so in spring.

Western Bluebirds enjoyed a good nesting season, especially in areas of the county away from their Pajaro Valley foothills stronghold. Of special interest was a pair that nested in a nest box at Quail Hollow, fledging young on May 28, marking the first known successful nesting in the San Lorenzo Valley in over 10 years (JA et al.). The box was part of a nest box trail established in 2002. Two pairs were using nest boxes at Last Chance Road on May 10 (CE). Two pairs were along Skyline Blvd southeast of Black Road on May 14 (DSu, PB, JW), and a pair was at Back Ranch Road on May 27 (TH). A pair off Jarvis Road in the upper West Branch of Soquel Creek on March 30 was apparently prospecting for a nest site, but they did not linger (KP). Not far from there, immediately across the county line at Summit Road, a pair nested in a box on the Taylor

property for the first time since 1992, hatching eggs by May 24 (BT). Another new nesting site was at Merk Pond, where a nest box had young on May 12 (HS). Nesting continued at Pleasant Valley, where a pair fledged young by May 28 (RW).

A cooperative **Townsend's Solitaire** delighted folks at the UCSC Arboretum from March 17-29 (MS, JS, v.ob.), being the first to be photographed in the county (CC), and the first to be seen by many observers. Three singing **Varied Thrushes** were found at scattered points in Big Basin Redwoods State Park, with one along Blooms Creek on May 8-30, one along East Ridge Trail near Highway 236 on May 20, and one along Hwy 236 at the headwaters of Boulder Creek on May 31 (DSu). A **Northern Mockingbird** singing at Rancho Del Oso on May 26 was unexpected and without precedent for the breeding season (DSu). **Nashville Warblers** had a slim showing, with three found from April 4 to May 3 (MS, SSm, DSu). A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Ocean View Park on March 14-15 was apparently the only one for the winter season (LG, WG, v.ob.).

Another spring bird that most likely wintered locally was an alternate plumaged **Palm Warbler** at Antonelli Pond and Natural Bridges on April 10-26 (SG, v.ob.). The wintering **American Redstart** stayed at Natural Bridges until April 11 (v.ob.). A record sixteen **Yellow-breasted Chats** were found from April 27 to May 19 (all coastal), bolstered by a wave of migrant chats that hit the central California coast in mid May (SG, DSu, MB, PB, CEm, AS, LG, WG, AR). We had 14 chats from May 10-19, and many must have gone undetected. Our average spring showing is just four. Four **Summer Tanagers** in this reporting period included three that were likely wintering holdovers. One adult male was at Carbonera Creek in Santa Cruz on March 7 (DP). An immature male returned to a La Selva yard on March 15 (FM). A female was at Rodeo Gulch on March 24 (DSu). A more typical spring migrant was heard at Santa Cruz on May 27 (AS, RT).

The San Lorenzo's wintering **Clay-colored Sparrow** stayed to at least March 19 (SG). A migrant **Black-chinned Sparrow** was singing in chaparral along Highway 236 in Big Basin on May 22 (DSu). Black-chinned has been known to nest in the county only in two limited areas – at Castle Rock and near Loma Prieta. But it has gone missing from both for over five years, and may be extirpated as a breeder here. Migrant **Lark Sparrows** were found along the lower San Lorenzo River on May 14 (KA), and then at Neary Lagoon on May 15 (SM). Three **Savannah Sparrows** at Quail Hollow on April 11 were unexpected there (AR). A survey of the main campgrounds at Big Basin on March 7 must have coincided with a migratory movement of **Fox Sparrows**, producing an impressive count of 199 individuals, with 98 in Huckleberry Campground alone. A survey of the same area on February 11 had only 50 sparrows, and by April 11 the count was down to three (DSu).

Four **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in March and April, with the last on April 8 (BS, CB, SG). An apparent hybrid **White-crowned x Golden-crowned Sparrow** was studied and photographed in a Santa Cruz yard on April 17, the first documented occurrence of such a bird in the county (SG). The last straggling **Golden-crowned Sparrows** are often seen into early May, but one at Pajaro Dunes on May 31 was exceptionally late (RW). The **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** wintering at Neary Lagoon was last seen on April 1 (PVL). A single May report – at Rancho Del Oso on May 26 (DSu) – marked the slowest spring for this species in recent memory. **Tricolored Blackbirds** resumed nesting at the pond along Last Chance Road, after apparently not nesting there for a couple years. A visit there on May 9 found about 220 individuals, with nesting evidence observed (DSu). Soda Lake has hosted the only other breeding colony in the county in recent years, but there is no access there to confirm continued use of that site. A flock of 65-75 “Trikes” flying east past Lighthouse Field State Beach on May 24 was odd (SG).

Great-tailed Grackles continued to nest at the confluence of Watsonville and Struve sloughs. Fifteen present there on April 30 included females carrying food to nests (JW, DSu). The species began to nest at Harkins Slough, as well, with up to seven birds seen there on May 22 (RW). One flying over Antonelli Pond on May 16 was unusual away from the sloughs (SG). We'd be interested in reports of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** from rural montane areas of the county, as the species is seldom reported from such areas. A male feeding among cattle at Locatelli Ranch at the top of Empire Grade on May 8 was one such record (DSu). A male **Cassin's Finch** along Summit Road near Maymens Flat (southeast of Loma Prieta) on May 10 provided our first spring record (L&CL). The area burned in the Summit Fire 12 days later.

A pair of **House Finches** at Sky Meadow Lane in Big Basin on May 20+ were the first recorded in the breeding season in the park's interior away from Eagle Rock (DSu). **Pine Siskins** were more widely noted than they have been in recent springs, at least partly due to a passage of migrants that straggled into May, but they were also relatively numerous in the county's nesting areas. May records of interest away from recent breeding locales included birds at Merk Pond, Capitola, Big Basin, Skyline Blvd, and Quail Hollow (DSu, JW). No **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found this spring.

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Jenny Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Cliff Bixler, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Mary Crouser, Cindy Cummings, Jeff Davis (JDa), Judy Donaldson (JDo), Chris Emmons (CEm), Carleton Eyster (CEy), Gypsy Flores, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Tonya Haff, Dan Jackson, Oscar Johnson, Gary Kittleson, David Kodl, Earl Lebow, Cindy Lieurance, Leslie Lieurance, Amy MacDonald, Freddy Menge, Paul Miller, Tom Morrell, Bryan Mori (BMor), Shirley Murphy, Rod Norden, Kenneth Peterson, Jeff Poklen, Doreen Prieto, Bernadette Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Hiedi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Jeff Scott, Michelle Scott (MS), Adam Searcy, Larry Selman, Shearwater Journeys, Dan Singer (DSg), Scott Smithson (SSm), David Styer (DSt), David Suddjian (DSu), Steve Summers, Barbara Taylor, Ryan Terrill, Paul Van Loan, Jeff Wall, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers. *Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2008

A suite of species were exceptional this season for providing the first documented occurrences of over-summering in Santa Cruz County: Gray Catbird, Summer Tanager (2), White-throated Sparrow (3!), and White-faced Ibis (2), not to mention the steadfast Dusky Flycatcher completing his third summer in the county. Top rarities were the county's second ever Black-throated Sparrow, and third Scarlet Tanager and Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

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A summering **Brant** stayed at Wilder Creek Beach from June 9-July 13 (CU, TU). Neary Lagoon continued to be a post-breeding gathering spot for **Wood Ducks** (the only such known in Santa Cruz County), with counts in the high twenties recorded most mornings through June and July (MC). A pair of **Gadwalls** nested again at Younger Lagoon, apparently the only regular breeding spot in the county away from the Pajaro Valley. Nesting success was not good this year, though, as only one duckling was present on July 4 (SG), and neither it nor any adults were reported after this date. The late lingering **Northern Shoveler** at Struve Slough stayed until June 14 (RW).

A female **Northern Pintail**, very rare in summer in Santa Cruz County, turned up at Younger Lagoon on July 9 (SG). Another Pintail at the mouth of Watsonville Slough on August 9 (BR, RR, et al.) could have been summering locally, or was possibly an early fall migrant. There are very few summer records of **Green-winged Teal** in Santa Cruz County, so several birds this period in the Struve Slough area were quite notable. Two pairs were noted June 7, with one pair staying around until July 12, when the male had molted to eclipse plumage (RW). A female was still there July 25 (RF).

The remarkably late presence of **Redheads** in Struve Slough continued into June, with a pair there on June 1, and a male still around June 7 (RW). A female **Bufflehead** at Struve and Watsonville sloughs from June 7-July 12 was also rare, though with more precedent than some of the other summering waterfowl (RW). Only one brood of young **Common Mergansers** were observed at Loch Lomond this summer (AR, DSu), indicating poor nesting success at this important breeding site. They seemed to have a better season on the lower San Lorenzo River, where the 2-3 broods of young reported was closer to average success (SG, v.ob.). Three females were at the Pajaro River mouth, where unexpected, on August 13 (AR et al.).

A **Laysan Albatross** was off the north coast on August 22 (SJ), with perhaps the same bird found the next day just over the line in San Mateo County waters (MS). The rarest seabird of the season was a light morph **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** ranging over both Santa Cruz and San Mateo County waters on August 23 (MS; TE, photographed JP). This represents the 3rd record for Santa Cruz County, pending CBRC approval. **Sooty Shearwaters** appeared in better numbers this year than in the last few summers, with numerous shore-based reports of tens of thousands, and approaching one hundred thousand birds (v.ob.). They were especially numerous near shore from

Capitola to the east side of Santa Cruz. Overall, though, this represented a fairly average season by the standards of earlier years. Not normal by any standards was one found grounded about 2.75 miles inland, on the shoulder of Highway 17 near Pasatiempo (AG)! The bird was alive, and was taken to a rehabilitation center.

A **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** was offshore on August 22 (SJ). A **Wilson's** and a **Least Storm-Petrel** were notables among the first large storm-petrel aggregation reported in county waters this year on August 23 (MS). **American White Pelicans** stayed around in good numbers through the summer in the Pajaro Valley, with the largest concentration of 120 at Struve and Watsonville sloughs on July 26-28 (SG, MSc, BR, RR). An immature **Brown Pelican** was out of place there on July 26, and another inland bird was at Harkins Slough on August 6 (RW). The big news involving Brown Pelicans this period, though, was the huge number that appeared in early August, mostly from Capitola to Santa Cruz (DSu, JD, v.ob.). During the peak of this amazing spectacle from August 4-10, unprecedented aggregations of up to 2000 pelicans were swarming around such spots as the Capitola Wharf and off the Santa Cruz Main Beach, often accompanied by big numbers of Brandt's Cormorants, Heermann's Gulls, and other species.

Brandt's Cormorants nested in three spots this season, with 23 nests on the remains of the old Davenport Pier, 44 at Natural Bridges, and 157 nests on the expanding colony on the cement ship at Seacliff State Beach (DSu, SG). **Double-crested Cormorants** nested at their two regular colonies, with 38 nests at Pinto Lake, and 93 at Schwann Lake (DSu). There was also a late-starting colony of about ten nests in the eucalyptus grove near the mouth of the San Lorenzo River, first reported on July 7 (DSu, BR, MSc, SG), only the second time this site has been used (just one nest was there in 2002.) One or two pairs of **American Bitterns** nested at Struve Slough this year, with young present from August 2 on (RW, NA, HS, RS, v.ob). A bittern at Pinto Lake on June 23 was the only report away from Struve this period (AG).

One or two **White-faced Ibis** were reported at Struve Slough and vicinity on several dates through the period (v.ob.), and it seems likely that both birds stayed through the summer, for the first documented over-summering by this species in the county, including the first ever June records. Additional ibis appeared in August, with a high of four at Watsonville Slough on August 13 (DSu, AR). A pair of **White-tailed Kites** nested at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park for a second year in a row, with a family group present in the meadow near the main entrance beginning in early July confirming another rare nesting for the San Lorenzo Valley (AC).

There were only two reports of successful nestings by **American Kestrels** in the county this year, both in the Santa Cruz area (SG). While some nesting pairs likely went unreported, kestrels do seem to be declining as a breeding species here and in some other parts of coastal central California. An extremely early **Merlin** sped by Pajaro Dunes on July 27, continuing southward over the Pajaro River mouth (EF, JWa, JW, KK). This is the earliest ever for Santa Cruz County by almost a month, the prior early record being August 24. While there are still few July and early August records in California, early migrant Merlins may be increasing in the state, possibly related to a southward expansion of their breeding range in the Pacific Northwest. Another early Merlin at Capitola on August 21 (DSu) was the second-earliest record for the county.

Common Moorhens were confirmed breeding at two Pajaro Valley locations this year, with dependent young at Harkins Slough on June 6 (RW), and at Pinto Lake on June 23 (AG). An **American Avocet** at Corcoran Lagoon on July 11 (DSd), and another at the San Lorenzo River mouth on August 4 (DSu) were rare away from the Pajaro Valley. Avocets were also rare in the Pajaro Valley this season, though, with one at Watsonville Slough on July 26 being the only one reported all summer (RR, BR, MSc, SG). Six **Lesser Yellowlegs** were in various spots from

August 11-27 (v.ob). An adult **Ruddy Turnstone** turned up at Wilder Creek Beach on July 23 (AR), and another was near the Pajaro River mouth from August 9-14 (BR, RR, AR, v.ob.). An adult **Red Knot** was a nice find at the mouth of Watsonville Slough on July 27 (EF, JWa, JW, KK).

Up to 22 **Wilson's Phalaropes** were found around the Watsonville Slough system and the lower Pajaro River from July 24-August 15 (v.ob.). In general, though, the mudflat-favoring shorebird species were noted as being unusually scarce in the county this season, with most of the rarer species lacking, and even the common species hard to find at many regular shorebird spots. Shore-based observations of **Common Terns** included one off Capitola Beach on July 29 (DSu), and one resting on Wilder Creek Beach on August 16 (AR). While nothing like last year's invasion, an immature **Horned Puffin** off Waddell Creek Beach on July 14 was a nice find (DSu), with perhaps a different bird appearing there again on July 26 (ADeM).

A **Eurasian Collared-Dove** at Lockhart Gulch west of Scotts Valley on August 27 reached beyond recently colonized areas of the county (MST). Begging young **Northern Pygmy-Owls** were noted with adults at four locations in Big Basin this July (DSu). A **Burrowing Owl** at Back Ranch Road at the end of May – presumably a late migrant – was exceptional, as we have no other recent county records later than early April (TH). A **Long-eared Owl** was heard at Soquel on June 21 (RW).

Reports of **Black Swifts** continued a pattern quite like other recent years. Three reports of 2-6 birds in early June fit within the main thrust of spring migration (CH, TH, SG, WG). Then we had four scattered reports of 1-3 birds from late June through July from coastal areas, with no consistent presence in any area (JL, SG et al, DSu et al., RRa, BRa). Again there was no evidence or strong suggestion of nesting in the county, and checks of former breeding sites came up empty. The species reportedly failed to appear at all this breeding season at Año Nuevo State Reserve in San Mateo County (GS), the only other coastal area north of Big Sur where the species has historically nested in California. Two Black Swifts over Rancho Del Oso on August 29 were among few records of fall migrants in the county files (DSu).

Vaux's Swift is a challenging species to monitor, but several lines of evidence have developed to indicate a declining population in Santa Cruz County over the recent 10+ years. Careful attention paid to Vaux's Swifts this season in two traditional breeding areas – Big Basin and western Santa Cruz – found indications that nesting effort was very low, and/or perhaps was not successful (DSu, SG). No family groups were found at Big Basin until August 7, where some are normally evident by the 3rd week of July, and the pattern of activity in June and early July was off from prior years, with swifts being very hard to locate at all. Specific sites or areas of the park that have supported nesting in recent years had no activity or very infrequent activity. The family groups appeared in the park in early August associated with migrants, and it is not clear that they were from local breeding efforts. Similarly, western Santa Cruz had a gap of no sightings from June 24 – July 25. A family group seen at Antonelli Pond on July 26 may or may not have been local, and none were seen after.

Black-chinned Hummingbirds put in their anticipated late summer appearances, with six from August 14-31 (SG, BN, DSu, BS), and others in September. All were females or immature males. Two away from the mid-county coast were noteworthy: at Rancho Del Oso on August 29 (DSu) and near Scotts Valley on August 31 (BS). A female **Anna's Hummingbird** visiting azalea blossoms in old growth redwood forest at Blooms Creek Campground in Big Basin on June 2-3 was exceptional in that habitat, providing the first such occurrence for the park (DSu). Reports of seven adult male **Rufous Hummingbirds** in the mid-county region from June 28 – July 8 were at

the vanguard of the expected summer influx of *Selasphorus* hummers (largely female and immature birds), which we suspect to be mostly Rufous; but adult males have only infrequently been reported in the county in summer (DSu, SG, RW).

A **Red-breasted Sapsucker** in mixed evergreen forest at Sky Meadow Lane in Big Basin on July 5 was likely a post-breeding dispersant from a breeding site in riparian habitat (DSu); such dispersants have seldom been noted in the county. We had three spring migrant **Willow Flycatchers** from June 9-15 (RW, SG, PB). The **Dusky Flycatcher** summering at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin was last reported on July 30 (DSu). An **Eastern Phoebe** photographed at Natural Bridges on June 6 provided our second spring record (AS, RT, v.ob.). Families of **American Crows** pushing the distributional envelope were at Summit Road near Highway 17 on July 11 and at Swanton Road on July 24 (DSu). One at China Grade in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on August 1 was the first summer record for the park's interior.

Single migrant **Purple Martins** were at Soquel on June 5 (RW) and Rancho Del Oso on August 11 (DSu). Two **Bank Swallows** were reported at Antonelli Pond on July 26 (ADeM). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve on August 25 was the first reported in the county in about a year (DSu). Following up on Spring's **Western Bluebird** news, a second brood was successfully reared at Quail Hollow, fledging on July 21 (JA et al.), and nesting was confirmed along Summit Road and Skyline Boulevard at two places northwest of Highway 17 (DS, PM). Up to five Western Bluebirds at Moore Creek Preserve on August 26-27 were the first noted in that area in several years (JWa, SG). A female **Varied Thrush** carrying nest material in the Sempervirens Creek watershed on June 3 provided another breeding confirmation for Big Basin Redwoods SP (DSu).

One of the season's most exciting birds was the county's 4th or 5th **Gray Catbird**, providing the first summer record for the county and a rare over-summering record for California. It was found along Moore Creek north of Antonelli Pond on June 21 (SG), disappearing downstream. It was re-found nearby at Natural Bridges on July 29 (SG), where it stayed until September 15, being well photographed and enjoyed by dozens of birders, especially as it fed in its favorite coffeeberry bush. A **Northern Mockingbird** at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin on August 14 was a surprise and the first record from the park's interior (DSu). A singing **Northern Parula** was at Zayante Creek in Henry Cowell State Park on June 7 (BB et al., v.ob.), adding to a pattern of late spring occurrences in that area.

Matthew Strusis-Timmer conducted a significant study of our **Yellow Warblers** this season, documenting distribution, habitat associations, and nesting success, and providing valuable information for a species that has declined markedly in our county. Six **Black-throated Gray** and four **Hermit warblers** near China Grade in Big Basin on August 27 were exceptional tallies for a single day in fall migration in Santa Cruz County (DSu), but it may be that moderate numbers of these species move through our forested highlands in late summer when birding coverage is very light in such areas. A returning **Townsend's Warbler** at Big Basin on August 8 was just shy of a record early date (DSu).

Vagrant warblers of early fall migration included a **Black-and-white Warbler** near China Grade on August 27 (DSu) and a **Northern Waterthrush** at Natural Bridges on August 25 (LG). A singing male **Scarlet Tanager** near Big Basin HQ on June 5 was the 3rd county record (DSu). Two immature male **Summer Tanagers** at Natural Bridges were documented to do what none had been shown to do before in the county – they summered! One was initially identified on July 25 (DSd) following an unconfirmed report on July 16. Then two were seen together on July 26 (ADeM).

Both lingered into mid-August, with at least one staying to September 15 (v.ob.), molting to an adult appearance by September 1.

Among just a few reports of **Chipping Sparrows** at known or presumed breeding stations, four at Last Chance Road on June 29 were notable, as they represented the first breeding season occurrence from the county's North Coast in several years (EL et al.). An adult at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on July 12 and a juvenile at Terrace Point on July 23 were unexpected in town in July (SGe). The county's 2nd ever **Black-throated Sparrow** was an adult photographed at the U.C.S.C. Arboretum on August 22 (CG), 10 years after our initial county record. At least three pairs of **Song Sparrows** nesting in plantings at a parking garage at Cabrillo College were unusual for our county in a developed, landscaped setting (DSu). *Three* summering **White-throated Sparrows** were without precedent and quite unexpected. Two were together at a feeding station at Larkin Valley Road in early July, with one lingering to July 26 (photographed; CB, JB). Another was photographed as it visited a Ben Lomond feeding station from July 18 to August 4 (AW, JWj).

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at Aptos on June 3 (CA) and Bonny Doon on June 16 (BB) bumped the spring total to a paltry three, the lowest number in years. A fall migrant was at Santa Cruz on August 13 (KA). A male **Indigo Bunting** paused at Eagle Rock on June 3 (DSu). Single **Tricolored Blackbirds** at Natural Bridges on June 7 (AR) and nearby on June 29 (SG) were unexpected in town in the summer. A female **Great-tailed Grackle** carrying food to a nest at Harkins Slough on June 6 provided the first breeding evidence from that slough (RW). A pioneering pair of **House Finches** continued at Big Basin to August 20 (DSu). A scattering of **Red Crossbill** reports from June to August were widely dispersed in the northern half of the county (DSu, EL et al.). A flock of 18 at Last Chance Road on June 29 included some juvenile birds that may have been from local breeding (EL). A juvenile at the famous coffeeberry shrub in Natural Bridges on August 24 was the only report from the Santa Cruz area (ADeM).

Cited Observers: Cindie Ambar, Jenny Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Cathy Bradley, Jack Bradley, Phil Brown, Bonnie Bedzin, Antonina Cavanaugh, Mary Crouser, Al DeMartini, Judy Donaldson, Todd Easterla, Eric Feuss, Rick Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, Carla Galloway, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Tonya Haff, Craig Himmelwright, Kim Kuska, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Paul Miller, Monterey Seabirds (MS) *fide* Roger Wolfe, Barbara Novelli, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MSc), Adam Searcy, Larry Selman, Shearwater Journeys (SJ) *fide* Debi Shearwater, David Sidle (DSd), Gary Strachan, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), Ryan Terrill, Connie Unsicker, Tom Unsicker, Jeff Wall (JWa), Anne Williams, Jim Williams (JWi), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers. *Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from September 1 to October 31, 2008

Migrant **Greater White-fronted Geese** made a fairly strong appearance in October, starting with 22 at Harkins Slough on October 6 (JWa), and 49 there on October 14 (JLo). A flock of 38 flew over Capitola on October 16 (DSu), and a lone bird stayed along the San Lorenzo River near Soquel Avenue October 22-24 (SG, v.ob.). The season's first **Snow Goose** accompanied a flock of Canada Geese flying by a boat offshore on October 12 (SJ), then two flew over Capitola on October 16 (DSu), and two were in West Struve Slough on October 18 (RN et al.). Four **Cackling Geese** flew over Capitola, adding to a goose-filled day on October 16 (DSu), then single birds turned up grazing near West Struve Slough on October 18 (RN), flying over the west side of Santa Cruz on October 20 (SG), and wandering along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on October 22-24 (SG, v.ob.).

Wood Ducks gathered at Neary Lagoon in higher than usual numbers this October, with a peak count of 26 on October 28 (PVL). **Blue-winged Teal** reports included two at Struve Slough on October 3 (TN), and a female in the Baldwin Creek Marsh from October 29 into early November (DSu, v.ob.). A female **Common Merganser** was off Wilder Creek Beach on October 17 (SG, JW, et al.). This species has rarely been found on the ocean in Santa Cruz County, but earlier this season small numbers were noted flying up and down the county coast on several occasions.

A **Red-necked Grebe** was swimming off West Cliff Drive on October 23 (SG). The county's second **Laysan Albatross** sighting this fall was a highlight of a pelagic trip on September 26 (SJ). One to two **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** turned up on several pelagic trips from September 13 to October 12 (SJ, MS). A **Manx Shearwater** was studied and photographed from a boat off the county's north coast on September 13 (MS). **Black-vented Shearwaters** appeared in the bay in late September, with small numbers reported on several boat trips in county waters starting September 21 (MS, SJ). Numbers increased in October, with reports of observations from shore becoming regular after October 29 (v.ob.).

Swarming Storm-Petrels in the north part of the bay peaked in mid-September, declining noticeably after that, but with moderate numbers around until at least October 5. **Ashy Storm-Petrels**, the most abundant species, reached a high of about 10,000 on September 14 (SJ). **Black Storm-Petrels** were in much smaller numbers in county waters this year, with the highest count of 60 on September 14 (SJ). Among the rarer species, up to five **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were found on pelagic trips from September 12-14 (SJ, MS). **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels** included three on September 13, five on September 14 (SJ), and one still around September 19 (MS). Single **Leach's Storm-Petrels** found at different spots on September 13 and 14 were extremely rare finds in Santa Cruz County waters (SJ). While regular very far out off the coast of Central California, records of this species from pelagic trips off this county (or anywhere in Monterey Bay) are very few. **Least Storm-Petrels** included one on September 13, and 4 on October 5 (SJ).

American White Pelicans were apparently present in the south county sloughs throughout the period, though they are now becoming so ordinary in that area that fewer people are reporting

them; we encourage reports of white pelicans to help monitor this species' changing status. The largest number reported this period was around 100 at Struve Slough on September 27 (TN), and numbers declined after early October. Rather startlingly out of context were two **American Bitterns** flying over Highway 1 toward West Struve Slough on September 5 (DSu), passing over the highway at a height of about 150-200 feet! There were several reports of **White-faced Ibis** in the Watsonville Slough system through the period, with a high count of 15 at Harkins Slough on October 29 (NA, KKy).

An adult **Broad-winged Hawk** flew over Soquel on September 25 (DSu). A juvenile **Rough-legged Hawk** was watched near Baldwin Creek on October 29 (DSu et al), then an hour later it was four miles down the coast flying by Antonelli Pond (SG). **Merlins** were found in good numbers, with 31 reports in September and October. A **Snowy Plover** at Baldwin Creek Beach on October 2 was away from usual locations for the species (LG, BRa). Undoubtedly the most notable shorebird of the season was a cooperative **Mountain Plover**, enjoyed by many observers as it wandered some plowed fields near Table Rock in the western part of the Wilder Ranch coast from October 29-November 6 (PB, KKs, DSu, WN, LG, BB, JWa, v.ob.) This was only the fourth record for Santa Cruz County, and the first since 1991 with multiple observers. Otherwise very rare shorebirds were lacking, and most "rare but regular" species were sparse.

Lesser Yellowlegs were reported in small numbers in the Watsonville Slough system on several dates up to September 10 (v.ob.), with the highest count being four at Struve Slough on September 8 (RW). One appeared at the mouth of Waddell Creek on September 20 (GS), and two somewhat late birds were at Watsonville Slough on November 1 (RW). The second **Ruddy Turnstone** of the season was spotted on October 12 on the Santa Cruz Harbor breakwater from a boat heading out for a pelagic birding trip (LT et al.). The only certain **Semipalmated Sandpiper** found this season was a juvenile in Watsonville Slough near Ford Street September 8-10 (RW, PB). **Baird's Sandpipers** were very scarce, the only reports being two at Watsonville Slough on September 5 (RW, DSu), and one quite late at West Struve Slough on November 1 (RW). **Pectoral Sandpipers** were also scarce, with a total of nine reported from four spots from September 16-October 18 (v.ob.). Around six **Short-billed Dowitchers** at Harkins Slough October 26-28 were very late for Santa Cruz County (TN), and one lingered there until November 1 (RW).

A juvenile **Sabine's Gull** made a rare onshore appearance at Capitola Beach on October 7 (DSu). Among several reports from pelagic trips, the high count was 19 on September 13 (SJ). There were no reports at all of **Arctic Tern** in the county this season, and **Common Terns** were quite uncommon. Four **Pigeon Guillemots** off Baldwin Creek Beach on October 30 were rare for this late in fall (OJ, RT, AS, MO). **Xantus's Murrelets** found on pelagic trips in county waters included one on September 13 (MS), and 11 on October 5 (SJ), which included six of the more expected subspecies *scrippsi*, plus five of the rarer southern subspecies *hypoleucus*. A **Tufted Puffin** was found on a pelagic trip on September 27 (SJ). A **White-winged Dove** visited a Seacliff yard on September 22 (DSu, RG).

Four Northern Pygmy-Owls calling in the same area at dusk in the headwaters of Boulder Creek in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on September 3 were exceptional, as it is rare to hear more than one or two at a time (DSu). Perhaps it was a family group. A Pygmy-Owl at Meder Canyon on October 27 was the first report from that site in several years, although the species was formerly resident there (KA). A wintering **Burrowing Owl** returned to UCSC by October 26 (JB), but others were at Wilder Ranch near Fern Grotto on October 21-23 (LG, MSc, BRa), and near Yellow Bank Creek on October 21-27 (AP). A **Lesser Nighthawk** cruised around Ocean

View Summit at Big Basin on September 4 (DSu). A **Common Poorwill** calling near Ben Lomond on October 17 was likely a migrant (SN).

An aggregation of about 100 **Vaux's Swifts** at Sempervirens Reservoir in Big Basin at dusk on September 9 included three **Chimney Swifts** for our 7th county record (DSu). Now five of our seven records are from that park! Sempervirens Reservoir has proven to be a productive spot to watch for migrant Vaux's as they congregate there at dusk, but it is closed to the public and birding visits have only been sporadic. Elsewhere, counts of fall migrant Vaux's Swifts this season were all single-digit. Four more sightings of **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** (DSu, SG) brought this fall's tally to 10 birds for this season, about average for recent years, spanning August 14 to September 20. Ten **Willow Flycatchers** from August 31 to October 5 were fewer than in most recent years (v.ob.).

Tropical Kingbirds were at Harkins Slough on October 4 (CC, RK), Antonelli Pond on October 11 (SG), Lighthouse Field State Beach on October 14 (DSu et al), and Neary Lagoon on October 17-18 (RB). The season's 11 **Western Kingbirds** spanned August 3 to September 18 (v.ob.). Four migrant **Cassin's Vireos** were reported from August 15 to September 14 (DSu, AR). A **Horned Lark** at Wilder Ranch State Park on October 22 was the only one found in the county so far this year (DSu, KKY, WN). Migrant **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were widespread and fairly numerous in October, peaking at mid-month (v.ob.). It was their best fall showing in a number of years, but it remains to be seen if very many will stay to winter. A **White-breasted Nuthatch** visited a feeder north of Soquel from September 9-14 (CJ).

The most celebrated bird of the season was a **Dusky Warbler** that appeared at Antonelli Pond from October 16-18, for the 3rd county record (OJ, v.ob.). The bird was seen by dozens of birders and was photographed. Remarkably, it frequented the very same spot where the county's first Dusky was found in October 1997! Nine **Western Bluebirds** were at Last Chance Road on September 1 (BR, RR). Eight bluebirds at the Pajaro River near Thurwachter Road were unexpected in an area where none had ever been reported (VR). It was a great season for **Red-throated Pipits** in California, and we had our best showing in the county with at least six birds found, possibly seven. There were seven prior county records. This season's birds were all coastal, mostly found in agricultural settings: flying over Antonelli Pond on October 19 (OJ, AS, FO), near Swanton Pond on October 20 (CE), two or three at Wilder Ranch west of Dairy Gulch on October 20-24 (MB, RW), near Pajaro Dunes on October 20 (DS), and west of Baldwin Creek on October 26 (DSu, CE).

Rare fall warblers had a below average season, especially for the vagrant species, with a slow September and low diversity. Fall season-to-date totals for rare western species were six **Nashvilles**, 25 **Black-throated Grays**, 11 **Hermits** and five **MacGillivray's**. Four **Tennessee Warblers** from September 11 to October 16 was above average (SG, PB, RT, DSu). A **Northern Parula** at Sunset State Beach on October 31 was the latest county record by a couple days (VR). Four **Chestnut-sided Warblers** spanned September 11 to October 5 (DSu, DE et al., LG, TM). A **Magnolia Warbler** was at Arana Gulch on October 1 (DSu). A **Blackburnian Warbler** at Antonelli Pond on October 19-20 was nicely photographed (DSi, v.ob.). **Palm Warblers** had a below average showing, with 12 from September 30 to November 3 (v.ob.).

Eight **Blackpoll Warblers** were found from September 25 to October 20 (v.ob.); one flew around a pelagic birding boat well offshore on September 28 (SJ). Additional **Black-and-White Warblers** included one flying by an offshore boat on September 13 (SJ) and one at Natural Bridges on October 19 (AM). A **Hooded Warbler** was at New Brighton State Beach on September 21 (DSu). Natural Bridges' summering **Summer Tanagers** (staying to September 15,

see last issue) were followed by a male at Rancho Del Oso on September 11 (DSu), a female at Natural Bridges on September 25-30 (SG, LG, MSc, BR), and a female or imm. at King Street in Santa Cruz from October 20 to at least November 7 (RT, OJ). **Chipping Sparrows** had another strong fall showing, with 15-16 from September 3 to October 25 approaching last fall's record of 22, and about five times the recent average (v.ob.). Eleven **Clay-colored Sparrows** from September 29 to October 26 was a bit above average (v.ob.).

Vesper Sparrows were picked out at Terrace Point on September 6 (SG, LG, WG) and Swanton Pond on September 29 (DSu). Three **Lark Sparrows** were found along the coast from September 11 to October 26 (DSu et al, BR & RR et al.). On the heels of August's **Black-throated Sparrow**, an immature at Natural Bridges from September 25-28 provided our third county record (PB, SG, LG, v.ob.). An above average number were found in Northern California this fall. A **Swamp Sparrow** was obliging at Natural Bridges on October 24 to November 2 (ST, RT, AS, v.ob.). **Lapland Longspurs** rattled our north county coast, with at least seven from October 20-26 (SG, PB, LG, DSu, EL, AR, CE), and more in November. This was our best showing in several years.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks appeared at Capitola on September 1 (DSu) and Pinto Lake County Park on September 28 (PB et al.). An immature male **Indigo Bunting** popped up at the lower San Lorenzo River on October 22 (SG, LG, AR). The only large aggregation of **Tricolored Blackbirds** was in the usual area near the south end of Swanton Road, with over 1,000 on October 8 being a representative count (DSu et al.). A female **Orchard Oriole** was a treat at Baldwin Creek marsh on October 29 (DSu, KKs, PB, LG, JWa, BB, WN). A tardy immature female **Hooded Oriole** at Natural Bridges on October 8 was about a month late (NA). Four reports of **Red Crossbills** from the northwest end of the county (three from Rancho Del Oso) continued a pattern from late summer, but there was no indication of any broader presence. **Pine Siskin** showed signs of a building fall invasion beginning in mid-October, with numerous flocks being widely noted (v.ob.).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Ruth Barcelon, Bonnie Bedzin, Phil Brown, Mary Crouser, Cindy Cummings, Judy Donaldson, Todd Easterla, Chris Emmons, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Regina Gowan, Oscar Johnson, Carol Jordan, Ruth Kerr, Kim Kuska (KKs), Kathy Kuyper (KKy), Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Jim Lomax (JLo), Amy McDonald, Paul Miller, Monterey Seabirds (MS) *fide* Roger Wolfe, Tom Morell, Wendy Naruo, Sydney Nash, Todd Newberry, Rod Norden, Meagan Oldfather, Francis Oliver, Alberto Palleroni, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Van Remsen, Alex Rinkert, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MSc), Adam Searcy, Larry Selman, Shearwater Journeys (SJ) *fide* Debi Shearwater, David Sidle (DSd), Gary Strachan, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), Linda Terrill, Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, Paul Van Loan (PVL), Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers. *Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from November 1 to December 31, 2008

The good fall showing of **Greater White-fronted Geese** in the Watsonville Slough system continued, with reports regularly exceeding 20 birds through November, and in somewhat smaller numbers through December. The highest single site count during this period was 35 at West Struve Slough November 29 (JWa). Elsewhere, one stayed at San Lorenzo Park through the period (v.ob.), two flew over Antonelli Pond November 19 (OJ), and College Lake had one on November 30 (JM) and five on December 9 (DLSu, JHW, WN). A flock of 30-50 **Snow Geese** flew over Corralitos on November 15 (HS). Three swam in the lagoon at Rio Del Mar Beach on November 19 (JP), and there were various reports of 1-4 birds in the Watsonville Sloughs and College Lake (v.ob.). High counts among several Pajaro Valley reports of **Ross's Geese** included five at West Struve Slough November 3 (CK), and five at College Lake December 19 (JWa).

Notably large numbers of **Cackling Geese** for the county included a flock of 63 flying over Capitola on November 9 (DSu), and 79 at College Lake on November 30 (JM), most of these apparently of the Aleutian form. Also showing characteristics of Aleutian cacklers were one staying at San Lorenzo Park through the period (SG, OJ, v.ob.), and two that stopped at Aptos Creek mouth November 2 (fide DSu). There were also several other reports of 1-5 Cackling Geese from various Pajaro Valley spots. **Canada Geese** were common in the Pajaro Valley, but the only report away from there was one at a pond on Glen Canyon Road on December 20 (BS et al). **Wood Ducks** continued in above average numbers at Neary Lagoon, with 25-30 present at least through late December (MC, SG). A healthy total of 63 on the December 20 Santa Cruz County CBC included 18 at Neary, and also 25 counted along the upper stretch of the San Lorenzo River, 12 in Henry Cowell State Park, and eight in the Scott's Valley area.

Male **Eurasian Wigeon** turned up in Watsonville Slough on November 1 (RW), College Lake on December 19 (JWa), and Struve Slough on December 29 (DSu, DSi, JD). Struve Slough had a female **Blue-winged Teal** on November 3 (CK), and a male was there December 29 (DSu, DSi, JD). The only **White-winged Scoters** reported were four among a huge group of Surf Scoters off Sunset State Beach on December 28 (PB). A female-type **Long-tailed Duck** was a rare find off Capitola on December 16 (DSu). **Hooded Mergansers** away from usual locations included one at Antonelli Pond on November 1-4 (SR, SG) and one at Neary Lagoon on December 23 (SG). Other reports were from ponds around Scotts Valley and Felton, and at various spots in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.). A record high count of 311 **Red-throated Loons** on the December 20 Santa Cruz County CBC included an impressive 263 counted from shore in the West Cliff Drive area (OJ, LD).

A good showing of **Red-necked Grebes** included one off Capitola December 12-20 (DSu, JD, HS, RS), one off West Cliff Drive near Woodrow December 20 - January 4 (OJ, LD, v.ob.), and another off West Cliff near Stockton Avenue on December 20 (OJ, LD). **American White Pelicans** were in the Pajaro Valley through November and December, with regular reports from the sloughs, Pinto Lake and College Lake. The high count through this period was 76 at Harkins Slough on November 28 (EL). The only report of **American Bittern** was of two at Pinto Lake on December 28 (BR et al.). **White-faced Ibis** seemed to disappear from the county for a while in

November, with no reports until two flew by at Harkins Slough on November 29 (JWa). Good numbers had returned to the Pajaro Valley by late December, though, with a high count of 19 at Struve Slough on December 27 (DSu et al.), setting a new winter record for Santa Cruz County.

A sub-adult **Bald Eagle** flew over the Capitola Mall on December 24, making Christmas Eve shopping more interesting than usual (DSu). Juvenile **Ferruginous Hawks** soared over Capitola on November 20 (DSu), and over western Santa Cruz December 4 (SG). Notable among numerous **Merlin** reports was one showing characteristics of the rare Prairie form on November 24 (OJ, TE). **Prairie Falcon** sightings included one over Capitola on November 13 (DSu), and one flying near Lighthouse Field on December 15 (BM). Two **American Avocets**, rare in the county away from the Pajaro Valley, were on Capitola Beach December 29 (JP, AM, LB). A wintering **Wandering Tattler** appeared along West Cliff Drive on three dates from December 14 - January 13 (WG, SG, DSu, DSi, JD).

Marbled Godwits, formerly rare away from the coast, have become increasingly regular in the Watsonville Slough System in recent years. Still, 45-46 at Harkins Slough November 1-28 was a notably large number for this inland site, especially so late in the season (EL, RW). Twelve were still there December 9 (RW). One or two **Long-billed Curlews** were reported off and on through the period in the area from Santa Cruz to Wilder Ranch (v.ob.), and one was in the Sunset State Beach / Pajaro Dunes area December 28 -January 1 (PB, DSu, v.ob). A **Rock Sandpiper**, presumably the same bird back for its sixth winter, returned to West Cliff Drive on November 19 (SG, v.ob.), and was still present in late January. Unlike prior years when it wandered widely, this year the bird has so far only been reported within a half mile or less of Woodrow Avenue. An impressive movement of **Common Murres** down the coast off Natural Bridges totaled 8,000-10,000 birds over the course of about 1.5 hours (KA). At the peak of this passage murres were moving by at the rate of about 500 per minute!

A flock of 28 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** in western Santa Cruz on November 21 (SG) was one of the largest groups yet reported in the county. Sixty-three on the December 20 Santa Cruz CBC set a new record for the count, with reports from eight sections of the count circle also indicating the species' increase. **Burrowing Owls** continued at three places where they were first noted in October: near Yellow Bank Creek, at Wilder Ranch near Fern Grotto, and at UCSC (JL, JB). A **Long-eared Owl** had returned to the roost at O'Neill Ranch Open Space on December 18-20 (DSu), but was not in evidence on several other dates. A **Common Poorwill** calling near Liddell Creek inland of Davenport on December 20 added to a pattern of recent winter records from that region (MG).

A female **Costa's Hummingbird** at May Avenue in Santa Cruz on December 7-8 was just the second December record for the county, although there was no indication this one spent the winter (BT, LT, RT, OJ, MSc). A trio of **Eastern Phoebes** in November made a strong showing. One was at Natural Bridges State Beach on November 9-10 (JS, SJ, RT, AS). Others were at Gharkey Street in Santa Cruz (SG) and Soquel Creek in Soquel (DSu) on November 17. **Loggerhead Shrikes** were notably scarce in late fall and early winter, with a few in the Watsonville area being the only ones reported; none were reported from the north county coast after September. *Observers are encouraged to report all occurrences of this declining species in Santa Cruz County.* A **Cassin's Vireo** studied at Soquel Creek in Capitola on December 16 (DSu) was just the second winter record for the county.

A **Warbling Vireo** at Ocean View Park in Santa Cruz on December 5 was exceptionally late (SG et al.). If there was any doubt about the continued growth of our local populations of the big corvids, consider these totals from the December 20 Santa Cruz CBC: 518 **American Crows** and

738 **Common Ravens**. An impressive 191 Crows were found in montane sections of the count circle, where they continue to pioneer and establish themselves as prominent members of the local avifauna. A remarkable flock of up to 58 **Horned Larks** was found in fields near Hanson Slough on December 30 to January 1 (CK, OJ). Horned Larks have declined to near extirpation so that now any of their rare appearances in the county are notable. But this was a record count for recent decades, and was especially notable on the floor of the Pajaro Valley, where there have been no other recent winter reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatches continued to be scattered here and there in above average numbers through December, but there was no big winter influx (v.ob.). Single **White-breasted Nuthatches** were at Quail Hollow Ranch on November 8 (AR), and along Empire Grade at Bonny Doon on December 20 (TM, EF). Reports of **Western Bluebirds** included eight near Murphy Crossing on November 23 (EF et al), and two at Back Ranch Road on December 20 (SN). **Nashville Warblers** were at Sunset State Beach on November 9 (OJ) and Jose Street Park in Live Oak on December 26 (DSu). A female **Northern Parula** photographed at UCSC Arboretum on December 28 was quite a surprise and an exceptional winter record, the first for our county (CG). It could not be found on subsequent days, and so was perhaps a very late migrant. A tardy **Yellow Warbler** was at Soquel Creek in Soquel on November 17 (DSu).

Another stellar winter warbler was a **Cape May Warbler** visiting several yards at Washburn and Glenwood Avenues in Santa Cruz from at least December 3-31 (EM, v.ob.). Remarkably, the bird sported a band on one leg and examination of photographs revealed it was very likely an individual that was captured and banded on Southeast Farallon Island on September 29, 2008 (fide RT, RF)! This 4th county record, the first in 11 years, was enjoyed by many observers. **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were found at San Lorenzo Park on December 5 (PB, SG et al) and at Soquel Creek in Soquel on December 20 (DSu). A **Hermit Warbler** was at New Brighton State Beach on December 20 (DSu). Four **Palm Warblers** were found in December, including birds at Capitola and Santa Cruz that were confirmed to overwinter (SGe, RT et al., DSu, v.ob.).

A straggling migrant **Wilson's Warbler** was at Natural Bridges on November 21 (SG et al), and a wintering bird was at New Brighton on December 18 – January 7 (DSu). A female **Summer Tanager** appeared in a eucalyptus grove near Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz in October and remained to at least January 18 (JS). A male at La Selva Beach on December 14 was probably the same one that visited there last winter (FM). A **Western Tanager** was at Maplethorpe Lane in Soquel on December 18-26 (DSu, HD). Three **Chipping Sparrows** along Green Valley Creek at Green Valley Road on December 29 were a surprise (DSu, DSi, JD), with one in the area on January 1 (SG, MSc). A **Lark Sparrow** was at Natural Bridges on November 11 (MSc), and three were near Murphy Crossing on November 23 (EF et al).

Five **Swamp Sparrows** were reported in November and December; four were in expected spots, but an adult visiting a feeding station in an urban setting in western Santa Cruz was quite odd, and the first record from a backyard in county (WP, MP, SG, v.ob.). Twenty-two **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in November and December. An immature **Harris's Sparrow** delighted many observers in a yard bordering Meder Canyon from November 13 – December 9 (KA, v.ob.). This was the first fall occurrence for the county since 1981! Six **Juncos** of the **Slate-colored** form were reported in November and December (RT, SG et al, MSc, SR, AGr, WBT). Seven more **Lapland Longspurs** reported through November 7 along the north coast and at Santa Cruz brought the fall season's total to 14 birds, our best showing in many years (JO, SG, BR, MSc, OJ).

A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a Soquel feeder from December 15 to at least January 17 (NC, PS), while a female was seen at Neary Lagoon on December 20 (SG, RR). The period's high

count of **Tricolored Blackbirds** was 1,200 at Swanton Berry Farm on November 12 (DSu et al.). Three males scattered among Brewer's at Scotts Valley on November 18 were away from areas of regular occurrence (DSu), and a lone male at Harkins Slough on December 29 was the only report from the Pajaro Valley (DSu, DSi, JD). Forty-seven **Great-tailed Grackles** at Struve Slough on November 9 set a new county record (EL, CK). A female or immature **Baltimore Oriole** was a treat in a Capitola yard on November 3-11 (DSu). There were two reports of **Red Crossbill** in November (EF et al., DSu), but then no others. **Pine Siskins** remained in good numbers, but seemed to decrease somewhat and become more local as we moved into winter proper.

Cited Observers : Kumaran Arul, Jack Barclay, Leonie Batkin, Phil Brown, Nancy Collins, Mary Crouser, Hank DeDiego, Judy Donaldson, Eric Feuss, Rob Fowler, Alexander Gaguine, Carla Galloway, Luke DeCicco, Tanner Easterla, Steve Gerow, Wally Goldfrank, Alison Graff, Mark Greene, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Amy McDonald, Freddie Menge, Barbara Monahan, Tom Morell, Jean Myers, Wendy Naruo, Suzy Norris, John O'Brien, Marlene Park, Bill Park, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Richard Roullard, Steve Rovell, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Barbara Scharfenstein, Michelle Scott (MSc), Adam Searcy, David Sidle (DSi), Jenny Slaughter, Pete Solé, John Sterling, David Suddjian (DSu), Linda Terrill, Ryan Terrill, Scott Terrill, W. Breck Tyler, Jeff Wall (JWa), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers. *Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from January 1 to February 28, 2009

Greater White-fronted Geese were found at a handful of lakes and wetlands in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.), with high counts of 27 at Struve Slough on January 3 (RW) and 13 at College Lake on January 10 (LG, WG, JP). Away from the Pajaro Valley, one continued at San Lorenzo Park into March (SG, v.ob.), and one at Laguna Creek Marsh on January 11 was rare for the north coast in winter (SP). Five to seven **Snow Geese** were at scattered spots in the Pajaro Valley in early January (v.ob.), and 12 flew over the County Fairgrounds on January 10 (LG, WG, JP). The only **Ross's Geese** reported were 1-3 at Watsonville and Struve sloughs on January 10-17 (JWa, RgW et al., OJ). A **Cackling Goose** continued at San Lorenzo Park into March (SG, v.ob.); two were at College Lake on January 1-10 (MST, RW), and four were at Struve Slough on January 1 (BRe).

A juvenile **Tundra Swan** visited Watsonville Slough near Pajaro Dunes on February 2 (JWa). Four **Wood Ducks** at Pinto Lake on December 28 provided the only report for the Pajaro Valley this winter (TN); the species was missed this time on the January 1 Moss Landing CBC. Struve Slough had at least two and maybe three male **Eurasian Wigeons** wintering from January 1 to early February, with at least one lingering to February 28 (v.ob.). About nine **Blue-winged Teal** were reported for the period, all in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.). At least four **Redheads** frequented the Watsonville Slough system from January 5 – February 8 (JWa, RW, OJ, AG, EB), and two were at College Lake on January 27 (DSu). **Lesser Scaup** was disturbingly sparse; not more than 10 were reported in the county all winter (AG, JWa, EL et al., RW, DSu).

Unlike last winter, when **Greater Scaup** and **White-winged Scoter** were found in very high numbers, both species were back down to very low numbers this season. There were only four reports of Greater Scaup all winter, totaling just six birds (CK et al., JWa, RW). White-winged Scoters were concentrated at Sunset State Beach, where the high counts were 11-15 birds on January 15-17 (JP, LG). One at Terrace Point on February 26 was the only one reported elsewhere (PB). **Surf Scoters** gathered in impressive numbers of Sunset State Beach most of the season, with a high count of 2,325 on January 28 (DSu). A **Black Scoter** was there that day, too, and one was at Hidden Beach on January 26 (DSu). A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** at the Pajaro River mouth from January 4 to February 2, one of the season's rarest birds, was likely the same bird present in the area last winter. It was found initially on the Monterey County side (RC), and then seen on the Santa Cruz side from January 27 on (DSu, JWa).

A high count of 29 **Hooded Mergansers** was made at College Lake on January 27 (DSu). One at Neary Lagoon from December 23 to February 14 was unusual for that well-watched spot (SG, MC et al.). Two **Common Mergansers** at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on February 4-8 were rare for the Pajaro Valley (OJ, AG, EB). In fact, the slough offered a rare Santa Cruz County opportunity for a merganser hat trick, with all three species present there over those dates. On what other occasion have all three have been seen on the same waters in our county? **Red-necked Grebes** were at Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB) and February 4 (OJ). Large crowds of **Western** and **Clark's Grebes** flocked off the Pajaro Dunes and Sunset State Beach area. A count

at Sunset on January 27 tallied 5,900 grebes (DSu). Most could not be identified, but a small sample suggests about 95% were Westerns. A count of some of the same birds on January 1 (also including some in Monterey County) came up with a high 790 Clark's and 4,165 Westerns (CK, JG, OJ, MB).

A female **Brown Booby** was found standing in the RV campground area at Seacliff State Beach on January 4 (JE). It was captured by park rangers that day, and taken to the International Bird Rescue Research Center, where it later died. The IBRRC reported it had been emaciated and dehydrated, and was suffering from an infection. Interestingly, a booby was seen flying at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf the day before, January 3 (AV). It was not conclusively ID'd, but reported details suggest it may have been the rarer *Masked Booby*, and after viewing photos of the Seacliff Brown Booby the observer was confident it was not the same bird. The high count of **American White Pelicans** for the period was 31 at Harkins Slough on January 27 (DSu).

Three reports of **Brown Pelicans** away from the ocean were unexpected. Three flew over agricultural fields inland of Sunset State Beach on January 27 (DSu et al.). Two flew in and landed at Neary Lagoon on January 29 (MC). Oddest, one was found dead atop a greenhouse roof 1.75 miles inland in Soquel on February 16 (fide HN). These inland occurrences were especially rare for winter, as most have been in late summer and early fall. We had our strongest winter showing ever for **White-faced Ibis**. The new winter record count reported for December 27 in the last issue was broken on January 1 when a flock of 20 was seen flying at Drew Lake (PB, EF, KK). Coverage of the whole Pajaro Valley for the January 1 CBC tallied up to 46 ibis (fide RR & BR)! Besides Drew, they were seen at the Watsonville Slough system, College Lake and Pinto Lake. After the strong January presence, the last report was on February 2 until others appeared in March.

Two or three **Ospreys** wintered in the Pajaro Valley (v.ob.). Elsewhere there were just sporadic reports at Capitola (DSu), Santa Cruz (MB, JS) and Ben Lomond (AR). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** was spied eating worms off wet pavement at Glen Canyon road on January 22 (BS)...desperate or opportunistic? You decide. Forty-six reports of Merlin were received from December to February (v.ob.). A **Prairie Falcon** seen variously at Wilder Ranch State Park and nearby UCSC on three dates from January 15 to February 14 (SG, DSu) was perhaps the same bird previously reported at Santa Cruz on December 15. Another was along Struve Slough on January 27 (DSu). **Ruddy Turnstone** failed to appear this winter.

Some shorebirds that are common in winter at Elkhorn Slough are rare or sporadic in Santa Cruz County in that season. The Pajaro River mouth attracted some of these when it finally breached its sand bar in January, making available some nice mudflat habitat. Notable counts were 39 **Semipalmated Plovers** on January 29, up to 144 **Western Sandpipers**, 230 Least Sandpipers, and 1-4 **Dunlin** on January 27-29 (DSu, JW). An **American Avocet** at Struve Slough on January 13 was the only one reported from the Pajaro Valley all winter (LG, JP, BMcL). The winter's only **Wandering Tattler** stayed at West Cliff Drive to January 15 (SG). The **Rock Sandpiper** stayed faithful to West Cliff into March (v.ob.), but was also at Capitola on February 2 (DSu). **Bonaparte's Gulls** were quite rare, with but a single report at Santa Cruz, and just a handful of sightings further down the coast (v.ob.).

It was a great winter for **Glaucous Gulls**. It is hard to sort out which birds might have been seen on more than one date, but examination of the reports suggests that as many as 18 individuals may have been found in the county from January 15 to February 20 (v.ob.). Among these were record setting counts of 5-6 Glaucous Gulls at Buena Vista Road County Landfill and adjacent Harkins Slough on January 23-27 (OJ, MB, DSu). On the latter date these included an adult, for

the first county record of that age (DSu). Several reports of first cycle rare gulls presented challenges. Among those documented was a possible 1st county record of **Iceland Gull** at Sunset State Beach on January 22 (JP), pending review by the California Bird Records Committee, and a **Herring Gull** showing characters of the “Vega” subspecies at Capitola Beach December 19-22 (OJ, MB, LD). There were also a number of reports of rare hybrids in first cycle plumage, such as involving Glaucous Gull parentage, but it is hard to be certain of the identity of such birds. It seems the situation will only get messier in future seasons as keen observers are able to discern these odd gulls amid the flocks.

A count of 251 **Forster’s Terns** along the coast from Sunset State Beach to La Selva on January 1 was a very high winter count (BMn, KM et al.). A notable movement of **Common Murres** was noted on February 10 when 3,500 passed Terrace Point in just 15 minutes (SG). A count of 222 **Cassin’s Auklets** tallied on aerial transect surveys between Santa Cruz and Monterey on January 27 was more than had been observed on any such survey in at least 10 years (JD, DL). It was suspected that many thousands were probably present in addition to those in the rather limited survey lanes. Curiously, none were present on surveys one month later.

A record count of 124 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** in the Santa Cruz County portion of the January 1 Moss Landing CBC provided another striking illustration of the rapid population increase of this dove in parts of this county (fide RR, BR). Two **Burrowing Owls** turned up at the Thompson-Cooley Ranch east of Watsonville on January 1, the first report in several years from this formerly regular wintering area (EF, PB, KK). A **Long-eared Owl** was along Casserley Creek near College Lake on Jan. 1 (DSu). Two **Common Poorwills** were along Highway 236 west of China Grade in Big Basin on January 3, responding to recordings just after dark (DSu). **Loggerhead Shrikes** remained extremely few and far between this winter. One continued in the vicinity of Harkins Slough until at least February 20 (EL, NA, v.ob.), and one was spotted at the UCSC Arboretum January 28 (RCi).

An impressive swarm of about 800 **American Crows** flooded into a roost at the mouth of Casserley Creek on College Lake on January 1 (DSu, MST), all arriving within just a few minutes. A **Horned Lark** sitting on a fencepost at the intersection of Hecker Pass Road and Casserley Road on February 28 was the second occurrence of the species in the Pajaro Valley this season (AR); this species has been quite rare anywhere in the county in recent years. Christmas counters picked out a rare winter **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Pajaro Dunes on January 1 (BB et al). Repeating what has been a regular pattern in recent years, **Barn Swallows** made another winter appearance in the county. Oddly, while 18 were found in the lower Pajaro Valley area during coverage for the January 1 Moss Landing CBC (v.ob.), the only other report was of a single bird at Harkins Slough January 23 (OJ, MB).

Wintering **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued to be found in scattered spots in the county, with reports of small numbers continuing into March (v.ob.). The largest count from a single location was seven in the Sunset State Beach area January 1 (BMn, KM). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** was at Kelly-Thompson Ranch in the hills east of Watsonville on January 1 (DSu, MST). **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were found at Harkins Slough January 1 (EL et al), Rancho Del Oso on January 21 (DSu et al), and Baldwin Creek February 18 (SG et al). A **Townsend's Solitaire** was a nice surprise at Johansen Road in Big Basin on January 3 (DSu), right on the Santa Cruz/San Mateo County line.

Forty **Western Bluebirds** were found at eight locations in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Moss Landing CBC, a good showing compared to the last several years (fide RR, BR). Most were from locations east of Watsonville and around Corralitos; four at Zils Road near Monterey

Bay Academy were quite close to the coast, where less expected (BMn, KM). There were also a couple of other Corralitos-area reports in January (NA, RW). A pair of bluebirds present on Valencia School Road from early February into March represented the first report from Aptos in many years (KP), and two north of the UCSC Arboretum on February 3 (RG, MP) were among very few recent reports from that area.

A **Nashville Warbler** made appearances in Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz from February 13-27 (AG, SG). A rare wintering **Yellow Warbler** along the San Lorenzo River near Soquel Avenue in Santa Cruz from February 8-25 was the first winter record for the county in 10 years (SG). **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were in Santa Cruz around Ocean View Park January 11-21 (TM, RB, SG, LG) and on Washburn Avenue January 11 (JS, MB). In addition to continuing birds in Santa Cruz and Capitola, a third wintering **Palm Warbler** turned up at Monterey Bay Academy on January 28 (DSu). The wintering female **Summer Tanager** near Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz was last reported January 24 (JS), and the wintering male in La Selva Beach reappeared February 16, after almost two months of apparent absence (FM). **Western Tanagers** visited eucalyptus groves in Meder Canyon in Santa Cruz January 17 (SG), and Hidden Beach January 26 (DSu).

A very rare wintering **Clay-colored Sparrow** was a good find at Sierra Azul Nursery east of Watsonville on January 1 (EF, PB, KK). **Fox Sparrows** were quite abundant in some spots in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on January 3, with 167 recorded there in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Año Nuevo CBC Circle (DSu, SS, MST). Most were in forest areas with large patches of wartleaf ceanothus, including 97 counted along a stretch of only about 150 yards on the Hollow Tree Trail (DSu)! Three **Swamp Sparrows** were counted at College Lake January 1 (DSu). A wintering bird along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz was last found February 8 (v.ob.), and the one visiting a west Santa Cruz back yard stayed around until February 7 (WP, v.ob.). Thirteen **White-throated Sparrows** were reported during January and February (v.ob.). A **Dark-eyed Junco** of the **Slate-colored** form visited a Bonny Doon feeder until March 5 (WBT).

Two male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** turned out to be regular visitors to the same Soquel feeder through this winter, staying until at least March 15 (NC, PS), probably the first time more than one of this species have been found wintering in the same spot in Santa Cruz County. One was an adult and the other a first winter male. The two were seen simultaneously on several occasions, and Pete Solé managed to get some photos showing both birds together. A **Bullock's Oriole** was chattering at Lighthouse Field on January 30 (SG). The only **Red Crossbills** reported were two flying over San Lorenzo Valley High School in Felton on January 2 (AR). **Pine Siskins** remained locally numerous through the period, with most in the mountains and at some north coast spots, and **American Goldfinches** were also in somewhat above average numbers (v.ob.).

Cited Observers : Nanci Adams, Eileen Balian, Bruce Barrett, Robert Blumberg, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Ryan Carle, Richard Cimino (RCi), Nancy Collins, Mary Crouser, Jeff Davis, Luke DeCicco, John Ellis, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Jennifer Green, Rich Griffith, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Kathy Kuyper, Earl Lebow, Dave Lewis, Barry McLaughlin (BMcL), Freddie Menge, Barbara Monahan (BMn), Kevin Monahan, Tom Morell, Hannah Nevins, Todd Newberry, Bill Park, Margaret Perham, Kenneth Peterson, Shantanu Phukan, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Bill Reese (BRe), Alex Rinkert, Barbara Scharfenstein, Jenny Slaughter, Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, John Sterling, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), W. Breck Tyler, Ann Verdi, Jeff Wall (JWa), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers. *Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2009

The **Greater White-fronted Goose** and **Cackling Goose** stayed at San Lorenzo Park until April 17, making a wintering stay of almost exactly six months (AG, DSu, SG). A pair of **Canada Geese** apparently had a nest on a sea stack near Baldwin Creek Beach, with a bird on the nest presumably incubating through at least April 29 (DSu, JWa et al.), but the outcome was not determined. Nesting is rare on our north county coast. As in past spring seasons, various pairs and small parties of Canada Geese roamed in the Santa Cruz area, but still no breeding record from the city of Santa Cruz (v.ob.). A **Wood Duck** at Rancho Del Oso on April 25 (DSu) was the only one reported away from the San Lorenzo River watershed and Neary Lagoon. Only two **Blue-winged Teal** were found: a pair at Younger Lagoon on April 25 (SG, LG). A late **Green-winged Teal** was at College Lake on May 12 (LG, JP).

Redhead were present in the Watsonville Slough system for the 4th spring in a row, with a high count of six at Struve Slough on April 28, and at least one staying to May 25 (AM, JWa). They have been found in this area each spring, with probably some of the same birds each year. Redhead have never been confirmed to nest in the county, but some careful watching would be in order if their spring presence continues. Migrant **White-winged Scoters** were found on just three dates from March 5 to April 5, totaling 5-6 individuals (AK, KA, KK). A female **Common Goldeneye** at Waddell Creek mouth from May 11-29 was very late (DSu). A **Red-necked Grebe** lingered at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf from April 10 to May 7, molting to alternate plumage by the end of its stay, and providing good looks for many birders (KJ, v.ob.). It was unusual to have a spring bird stay so long, and it may have been injured.

Rare off the ocean in the county during spring were an **Eared Grebe** at Struve Slough on April 4 (JWa) and a **Clark's Grebe** at Waddell Creek lagoon on May 8-16 (DSu et al.). Single **Laysan Albatrosses** were seen in county waters off Santa Cruz on May 20 and 23 (MF, MS). **Murphy's Petrels** were found within Monterey Bay – as close as six nautical miles to shore – for the first time ever, with two to four seen in Santa Cruz County waters; the only prior county record was from April 1991. Two Murphy's were seen on May 20, and one on May 22 (MF). Two on May 23 included one in Santa Cruz waters and another in Monterey waters, with the first photographic evidence obtained for our county (MS, RW, JP). A rare spring record of **Flesh-footed Shearwater** was provided by one southwest of Santa Cruz on May 20 (MF).

American White Pelicans were present in the Watsonville Sloughs area and Pajaro Dunes through the period, with a high count of 65 at Harkins slough on May 11 (JD). Significant mortality of **Brandt's Cormorants** due to poor food supplies occurred in March and April, coinciding with failure of early nesting efforts this season and an unusual early spring influx of adults, perhaps from failed nesting efforts elsewhere (v.ob.). Six Brandt's in mid-Bay waters on May 31 were unusually far offshore for this near-coastal species (MS). A **Pelagic Cormorant** swimming in Younger Lagoon on April 25-26 was in an unexpected spot (SG, LG), while one up the San Lorenzo River past Riverside Avenue continued the unusual local pattern of use of that river (SG et al.). Meanwhile, a flock of about 100 adults flying past Baldwin Creek Beach on May 15 was an exceptional concentration (JP).

Breeding season **American Bitterns** continued at Struve Slough and Pinto Lake (AR-G, AG, NA, BR, v.ob.). **Great Blue Herons** had four nests at Pinto Lake this year (BR, LG); nest building near the Santa Cruz Harbor was the only other nesting evidence reported for the county, but it is unknown how many nests were present there... anyone know? **Great Egrets** had 10 nests at Pinto Lake, the county's only regularly-used rookery (BR, LG). Four reports of **White-faced Ibis** from Struve Slough included high counts of 11 on March 22 (SH, PMy) and 13 on April 11 (AM), with the last report of seven on April 28 (JW). A tagged adult **Bald Eagle** passed over Glen Canyon Road on May 31 and was photographed in Scotts Valley on June 1 (BS, MB). According to the Ventana Wilderness Society, it was a 6-year old female that had been released on Santa Rosa Island and had spent time this past winter with California Condors at a condor feeding station at Big Sur.

A light morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** was at Harkins Slough on April 18 (MST, SS). The only reports of **American Kestrel** were from the Santa Cruz area, of about three pairs (v.ob.). Twenty reports of **Merlins** this reporting period concluded with a late bird at Pajaro Dunes on May 3 (PMe). The only nests of **Peregrine Falcon** confirmed for the county this year both failed (fide JL). A **Prairie Falcon** at Quail Hollow Ranch on April 19 was rare for spring and exceptional in the Santa Cruz Mountains (KJ). In addition to a handful of reports of **American Avocet** in the Pajaro Valley, one was at Capitola Beach on April 18 (DS, SS). A **Solitary Sandpiper** satisfied a number of viewers and photographers at the San Lorenzo River on May 1-4 (SG, vob), and was likely the same one that was in the same spot on May 2, 2008.

Three reports of migrant **Ruddy Turnstones** included two at Capitola Beach on May 3 (DSu), 14 at West Cliff Drive on May 7 (LG), and one there on May 8 (SG). The flock of 14 tied our county's record high count for recent years, and in an impressive coincidence, Lois also had the previous high of 14 at West Cliff, three years prior, but just one day later -- May 8, 2006. A **Black Turnstone** at Pajaro Dunes on May 3 was feeding with Sanderlings on extensive sandy beach, away from its typical habitat (PMe). Three **Red Knots** flying up the coast at West Cliff Drive on April 5 were very rare for the county in spring and were the 2nd earliest ever. Even odder, though, were seven alternate-plumaged Red Knots that were found disheveled and injured in Santa Cruz urban yards near May Avenue x Glenwood Avenue on May 9 (EM et al.). All seven subsequently expired, and three are now specimens in the collection at UCSC. There was no unusual weather associated with the occurrence, and except for occasional storm and wind-caused "wrecks" of Red Phalaropes, the event was otherwise unprecedented among shorebirds in our county.

A **Baird's Sandpiper** at the San Lorenzo River on April 29 provided just the 4th (and earliest) spring record for the county (RL, EC). The wintering **Rock Sandpiper** stayed until April 6, having molted into alternate plumage by March 29 (v.ob.). Seven **Franklin's Gulls** were spotted from May 9-23 (DSu, OJ, AH, MS). Late gulls included a **Mew** at Santa Cruz on May 19 (SG), **Herring** at Scott Creek Beach on May 15 (JP), and **Thayer's** at the San Lorenzo River on May 1-4 (SG). Two to four **Glaucous Gulls** were at Waddell Creek Beach from March 19-30 (JP, TN, DSu). Late Glaucous were at Capitola Beach on April 18 (SS) and (exceptionally so) at Waddell Creek Beach on May 15 (DSu). A **Black Skimmer** was at Waddell Creek Beach on May 29 (DSu). A tally of 189 **Pigeon Guillemots** at flying west past Lighthouse Point during 30 minutes on the evening of April 8 was a very high count (OJ).

Reports of **Xantus's Murrelets** in May provided the first spring records that are known with certainty to have been in Santa Cruz County. One was seen on May 22 (MF), while two were seen on May 31 (MS). Another amazing pelagic occurrence was provided by the oiled remains of

a **Parakeet Auklet** found on Manresa State Beach on May 2 (JG fide HN). Documented by photographs, this was just the 2nd record for Santa Cruz County. However, as with the first record – also a beachcast specimen, found in spring 1947 – it is unknown where the bird was when it died, and a carcass might possibly be carried by ocean currents some distance before being found on shore. Parakeet Auklets were found by pelagic trips off Southern California this past winter. Two **Tufted Puffins** were on the Bay on May 31 (MS).

Eurasian Collared-Doves spread further this spring. The first inland record for the north coast portion of the county was one at Big Creek on May 1 (LG, JP), then one was 0.9 mile inland at Rancho Del Oso on May 9 (DSu). Others in new places included one in the hills northeast of Scotts Valley on May 25 (BMn, KM), and a new colony at Pajaro Dunes (PMe, JWa, JW, RWa). Farther afield, four perched on the deck of a research vessel on May 22, nine nautical miles off of Lighthouse Point (MF) (and the same day a **Mourning Dove** also flew around that ship.) **Burrowing Owls** generated some excitement near Swanton Pond. One bird first reported March 10 was joined by a second owl at the same burrow by March 14 (JWa, JL, JB, v.ob.). The pair lingered until March 22, but no courtship activity or other evidence of nesting was observed, and none were found on multiple checks after that date.

Three **Black Swifts** flew over China Grade in Big Basin on May 19 (DSu), the only ones reported this period. Rancho Del Oso hosted two rare migrant hummingbirds this spring—a male **Black-chinned Hummingbird**, the first spring migrant in four years, on May 15 (PB, DSu); and a female **Calliope Hummingbird** on April 21 (DSu). A drumming **Red-breasted Sapsucker** along Waddell Creek downstream from Swing Hill on April 25 (DSu) was at a regular breeding spot. A couple more **Pileated Woodpeckers** turned up in unexpected locations, continuing a pattern of springtime wandering. One along Soquel Creek downstream from Highway 1 on March 31 was just the second record for Capitola (DSu). The first ever for Natural Bridges State Beach roamed through the eucalyptus and cypress groves on April 29 (SG, HS, MSw).

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** arrived unusually early again on the east side of DeLaveaga Park on April 1 (BR). This was the same spot where one was recorded last spring on March 31, which tied the early-arrival record for the county. The lone male **Dusky Flycatcher** was back on territory at Ocean View Summit in the Big Basin area on May 6, returning for its fourth year (DSu, v.ob.). A rare migrant **Cassin's Kingbird** gave a good start to a field trip at the west edge of Santa Cruz on April 10 (SG et al.), at first along Shaffer Road, then across Highway 1 in Moore Creek Preserve. A singing **Red-eyed Vireo** was at Sky Meadow Lane in Big Basin on May 19 (DSu). Rare migrant swallows included a **Purple Martin** over Soquel on March 30 (RW), and a **Bank Swallow** at Rancho Del Oso on April 28 (DSu).

Two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** at Natural Bridges on April 19 (MST) were the last lingerers from this winter's moderate incursion. A pair of **House Wrens** nested at Quail Hollow this season, first reported nest building on April 13, and with young on the nest by May 23 (AR, v.ob.). This is the first confirmed nesting report for anywhere in the San Lorenzo Valley. The species is a very local breeder in Santa Cruz County, occurring mostly along the crest of the Santa Cruz Mountains, and in the Pajaro Valley area east of Watsonville. One singing at Sunset State Beach on April 18 (SS) was at the only other disjunct site where nesting has been confirmed in the county in recent years, though it is not known if any nested there this year.

Western Bluebird news was again encouraging, with nesting confirmed at new locations along Valencia School Road (KP), which was the first in the Aptos area in many years, and along Larkin Valley Road (FM). Bluebirds also returned to nesting sites occupied last year at Merk Road, Quail Hollow, and Last Chance Road (HS, RS, DSu, PR, JA, AR, LG, v.ob.). A **Northern**

Mockingbird was out of its usual range at Davenport Landing on March 25 (DSu); mockingbirds are rare along the coast northwest of Wilder Ranch.

A **Nashville Warbler** at Rancho Del Oso on April 25 was the only one reported this season (DSu). A **Townsend's Warbler** was lost at sea over 12 miles offshore on May 22 (MF). A spring migrant **Hermit Warbler** along the Pajaro River May 3 (PMe) was in lowland riparian habitat, where they are rare. A **Palm Warbler** foraged through the willows at Natural Bridges March 13 to April 8 (PB, SG, v.ob), most likely a bird that wintered locally. **MacGillivray's Warblers** returned to their breeding area around Rancho Del Oso, with the first appearing April 21, and at least four males on territories by May 6 (DSu, v.ob.). The only **Yellow-breasted Chat** found this season sang at Pajaro Dunes on April 26 (CR). A **Western Tanager** in Meder Canyon on March 17 (SG) was probably a wintering bird. Spring migrant tanagers came rather late, the first not until April 22 (SG), and were generally noted as sparse this season.

A **Chipping Sparrow**, rare away from breeding habitat in spring migration, was along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on April 17 (SG et al.). The first (and so far only) **Lark Sparrow** for the county in 2009 was at Antonelli Pond May 28 (LG, BR). A **Fox Sparrow** at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin on May 6 was notably late (DSu). Ten **White-throated Sparrows** were reported this period, only one of them previously reported (v.ob.). The last wintering bird lingered at a Glen Canyon feeding station until April 26 (BS), then a late migrant stopped at a Ben Lomond feeder on May 5 (AW). In recent years **Dark-eyed Juncos** have started to nest in urban and suburban lowlands along the mid-county coast, away from their usual forest habitats. This spring the pace of this expansion accelerated, as illustrated by a total of 21 males found singing on territories in Capitola during the period (DSu). There were only 2-3 pairs breeding in Capitola the prior few years, and none at all before that.

One of the wintering male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** reported the last issue turned up for one last visit to a Soquel feeder on March 31 (NC, PS). Spring migration brought more to the county, with five reported from various spots May 21-30 (KM, DSu, SG, JWa), including an adult male on May 22 photographed on board a research ship seven nautical miles offshore (MF)! A female **Indigo Bunting** stopped at Antonelli Pond May 28 (LG, BR). **Tricolored Blackbirds** were confirmed to be breeding again this year at the Last Chance Road pond on April 22 (DSu, JWa), currently the only active breeding colony known in the county. A wandering flock of 55-60 flew over Neary Lagoon on May 21 (SG). A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** stayed along Shaffer Road on the west side of Santa Cruz from April 24-29 (AG, EB, v.ob.), and a female visited the Swanton Pond area and nearby Scott Creek Marsh on April 25-26 (DSu, LW.)

A **Great-tailed Grackle** in the Antonelli Pond/Natural Bridges area April 5-13 (SvS, SpS, SG), then two in a nearby west Santa Cruz neighborhood April 18, were rare for the mid-county area. There have been few records in recent years away from their Pajaro Valley stronghold. A **Hooded Oriole** at Frederick Street Park in Santa Cruz on March 8 set a new early arrival record for the county (BR, RR), a week ahead of the previous early arrival date, and almost three weeks ahead of average. Further evidence that rarities can show up anywhere was provided by a female **Baltimore Oriole** flying around a NOAA research ship nine nautical miles off Lighthouse Point on May 22 (MF). Four **Red Crossbills** flying over Middle Ridge Road in Big Basin on May 6 were the only ones reported during this period. A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** at Rancho del Oso on May 10 (TN et al) was the first reported in the county in about 19 months.

Cited Observers : Nanci Adams, Jennie Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Jack Barclay, Michael Boyd, Phil Brown, Nancy Collins, Elizabeth Crawford, Jeff Davis, Michael Force, Alexander Gaguine, Judy Garrison, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Alex Harper, Sharon Hull, Kent Johnson,

Oscar Johnson, Anne Koeppel, Kathy Kuyper, Richard Lange, Janet Linthicum, Amy McDonald, Freddie Menge, Peter Metropolis (PMe), Eric Miller, Barbara Monahan (BMn), Kevin Monahan, *Monterey Seabirds* (fide RW), Pam Myers, Hannah Nevins, Todd Newberry, Kenneth Peterson, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Patricia Raven, Alex Rinkert, Caroline Rodgers, Adam Romswinkel-Guise, Barbara Scharfenstein, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Steve Singer (SvS), Stephanie Singer (SpS), Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, Marie Stewart (MSw), Matthew Strusis-Timmer, David Suddjian (DSu), Jeff Wall (JWa), John Warriner, Ricky Warriner (RWa), Anne Williams, Lisa Willis, Roger Wolfe. “v.ob.” means various observers. *Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2009

A somewhat “slow” late spring and early summer transitioned to a rather interesting late summer, which has continued into an exciting fall. A remarkable three first county records were documented in late summer (pending review by the California Bird Records Committee): Short-tailed Albatross, Hawaiian (or “Dark-rumped”) Petrel, and Hudsonian Godwit. Records of Cook’s Petrels and Yellow-billed Cuckoos were also exceptional.

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Flocks of **Canada Geese** were sporadic in the Pajaro Valley this summer, and went unreported elsewhere. The high count for the period was 210 at Struve Slough on August 2 (AM). Summering **Brant** at the Pajaro River mouth reached a peak of 10 birds on July 9 (JW), but all were gone by August. The only **Wood Ducks** away from the San Lorenzo River or Neary Lagoon were very small numbers in the Waddell Creek watershed of Big Basin Redwoods State Park (DSu). The season’s high counts of the post-breeding gathering at Neary were in the 20s (fide SG). Summer ducks rare outside the Pajaro Valley included a pair of **Gadwall** at Younger Lagoon on June 20, and 1 female **Cinnamon Teal** at Antonelli Pond on July 29 (SG). Three **Surf Scoters** at Sunset State Beach on July 29 were the only ones reported all summer (DSu); most summers there are a few off Santa Cruz and the north county coast.

A female **Bufflehead** at the lower San Lorenzo River on July 11 was the last reported (SG); summer lingerers seldom persist through the season. Among a smattering of summer loon reports, **Pacific Loons** seemed more plentiful than average. Twelve were reported in July (DSu, AG), and 13 along the north coast on August 3 included an impressive 11 off Yellow Bank Creek (DSu). **Western** and **Clark’s Grebes** summered in unusually high numbers along parts of the county coast where they are normally scarce or absent during the season (DSu, SG). An immature **Short-tailed Albatross** photographed off Davenport on July 30 provided a long-awaited first county record for this recovering species (LE). The Short-tailed was undoubtedly a regular part of the county’s avifauna into the 19th Century, before it was driven to near extinction, but there were no specific historic records for Santa Cruz County.

An amazing presence of *Pterodroma* petrels relatively near to shore along California this summer produced Santa Cruz County counts of 11 **Cook’s Petrels** (v.ob., SJ) and one **Hawaiian Petrel** (JS, SJ) on August 2! There had been just one prior record of Cook’s for the county (plus one unidentified “Cookilaria”), and this is the first county record of Hawaiian Petrel. Until identification criteria are further resolved, the Committee has treated all reports of Hawaiian-type petrels as “Dark-rumped Petrel,” comprised of Hawaiian and Galapagos petrels, but it seems likely that California records pertain to Hawaiian. A **Buller’s Shearwater** was seen from Capitola on August 26 (DSu); the species is seldom noted from shore in our county. A **Wilson’s Storm-Petrel** was offshore on August 28 (SJ).

Peak counts of **American White Pelicans** at Watsonville and Struve sloughs were 115 on July 3 (AM), 250 on August 13 (JW), and about 400 on August 26 (DSu). The count on the latter date

set a record for a single area for the county. Young **Brown Pelicans** ranged inland to the sloughs, with one at Watsonville Slough on August 13 (JW) and two at Harkins on August 31 (DSu). **Brandt's Cormorants** had mixed nesting success at the county's three breeding colonies. Nearly all nesting efforts begun before mid-May were abandoned, but efforts rebounded in late spring with some eventual success at Seacliff and Davenport (DSu), but not at Natural Bridges (SG). Very large numbers of non-breeding Brandt's were present, e.g., 3000 estimated from four south coast vantage points on July 29, and 1,600 at Black Point on August 7 (DSu).

Double-crested Cormorants continued to nest at three sites, with the county's population increasing. This season there were 142 nests at Schwan Lake (BMr, DSi), 66 at Pinto Lake (BR, RR, LG), and four at the San Lorenzo River mouth (SG). While we have carefully tracked our nesting Brandt's and Double-crested, we have rather little recent information on the county's nesting **Pelagic Cormorants**. **American Bitterns** were reported at Struve and Harkins sloughs (v.ob.). Pinto Lake was the season's only confirmed nesting site for **Great Blue Heron** (three nests) and **Great Egret** (11 nests) (BR, RR). An aggregation of 36 Great Egrets at Struve Slough on July 5 was good count for early summer, but a record 162 were tallied at Struve Slough on August 26 (DSu). A **Cattle Egret** at Watsonville Slough near Lee Road on July 9 was just the 3rd summer record for the county (JW), where the species is now rare at all seasons.

Reports of **White-faced Ibis** at the Watsonville sloughs from the end of June into July suggested some over-summered again. A count of 10 at Struve Slough on July 1 set a new record for mid-summer (AR, WL, PD). A report of three at Watsonville Slough on August 13 was the only one for that month, despite good coverage and reporting (JW, DW). **Osprey** nested again at Harkins Slough, using a platform that had been provided for them (LG, JP, JW, SG, WN, HS, RS). They were successful for the first time this year, rearing two young which were near to fledging by July 9. This was the first successful nesting effort from the Pajaro Valley region in about 75 years. There were no reports from the other, more remote nest sites that have been active in the county in recent years, but 13 sightings from mid-county and the north county coast in June and July suggested other nesting may have occurred (v.ob.).

Golden Eagle was sparsely reported; singles at UCSC on July 1 (KA) and Rancho Del Oso on July 25 (DSu) were the only ones mentioned. In addition to a few occupied territories in the Santa Cruz area, a family group of **American Kestrels** at Swanton Road on August 4 provided the only nesting evidence reported from the north coast this season (DM). A **Merlin** flying down the coast at Yellow Bank Creek on August 3 was exceptionally early (DSu). A **Pacific Golden-Plover** at Watsonville Slough on August 14 was the first golden-plover identified to species in the county during fall migration since 2003 (RW). Breeding was confirmed for **American Avocet** at Watsonville Slough at the confluence with Struve Slough on July 9, when three chicks were seen along with eight adults (JW). This was the first breeding record for the county in several years, and avocets have even been missing in several recent nesting seasons. Some remained at Watsonville and Struve Slough up to August 27, but were absent afterward.

A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at Struve Slough on August 31 (DSu). A **Willet** was inland at Struve Slough on July 25 (BR), and two were there on August 19 (SG, BR). Some 8-15 **Lesser Yellowlegs** were reported from Struve and Watsonville sloughs from August 13-31 (v.ob.). Among reports of migrant **Long-billed Curlews**, one flying high over Big Basin on August 14 was notable over the Santa Cruz Mountains (DSu). The county's first record of **Hudsonian Godwit** was a juvenile found at Watsonville Slough on August 25 (RW), seen by many as it stayed until August 27 (v.ob.). A report of 35 **Marbled Godwits** at Watsonville Slough on August 16 was a high inland count for the county (BR); at least 22 remained to August 26 (DSu).

Semipalmated Sandpipers were at Watsonville Slough on August 26 (DSu, DW), at Struve on August 27 (RW), and perhaps a different bird at Watsonville Slough again on August 31 (DSu).

Six to 10 **Baird's Sandpipers** were reported from August 14-31 (v.ob.). All were at Watsonville and Struve sloughs, except for three at Natural Bridges (KPa et al., RN). Notable among three **Pectoral Sandpipers** in late August was one *adult* studied at Natural Bridges State Beach on August 16, providing just the 2nd fall record of an adult for the county (SG). The county's 4th record of **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** appeared briefly at Watsonville Slough on August 28 (JS, TE). Some 15-20 **Wilson's Phalaropes** were reported at Watsonville and Struve sloughs from August 14 to September 1 (v.ob.). A small number of immature **Bonaparte's Gulls** summered at the Watsonville Sloughs, with a high count of six on August 26 (DSu).

A pair of **California Gulls** provided an unexpected nesting record when an adult on a nest was identified from aerial photographs of the roof of the Capitola Mall taken on June 9 (PC, LH, JD). Not only was this a first nesting record for the county, but a rooftop nesting location was apparently also unprecedented for this species (fide JD). California Gulls exhibited an unusual northward migration through the county from late May to early July, a period when numbers are typically quite low without any indication of pronounced movement. Some representative unseasonable high counts were 615 and 486 at Scott Creek and Waddell Creek beaches on June 29, respectively, and 2,200 passing up the coast during two hours at Seacliff State Beach on July 5 (DSu). A juvenile **Black Tern** flew past New Brighton State Beach on August 27 (DSu).

Elegant Terns were scarcer along the county's coast than they had been for 30-40 years. While there were some moderate concentrations reported at the Pajaro River mouth (mostly in Monterey County), the species was nearly absent along most of the Santa Cruz County coast during June and July (not even recorded at Santa Cruz until July 19); numbers picked up slightly in late August (v.ob.). Two **Black Skimmers** were at Wilder Creek Beach on July 14 (JF), and three flew up the coast at West Cliff Drive on July 18 (SG). **South Polar Skuas** and **Long-tailed Jaegers** were both well-reported from several pelagic trips in August, with high counts of 13 and 38 on August 30, respectively (MS). **Marbled Murrelet** activity at Big Basin Redwoods SP, documented to have declined to a very low level over the last decade, reached a new nadir on long-term monitoring surveys conducted in June and July (DSu). Reports of **Xantus's Murrelets** included four of the subspecies *scripsii* on August 2, and one *hypoleucus* on August 7 (SJ).

An immature **Horned Puffin** was off Waddell Bluffs on June 9 (DSu). A **Tufted Puffin** was offshore on August 7 (SJ). A pair of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** nested at Rancho Del Oso this season, with the female nest building on June 4, and a juvenile nearby on July 11 (DSu). This is the first breeding record from anywhere within Big Basin Redwoods State Park (DSu). One calling at Slippery Rock in Big Basin on August 8 was the first ever for the park interior (DSu), and was also unexpected in an extensively forested area. Very unexpected was a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** that hit a window (and survived) in a west Santa Cruz yard on June 14. The bird lost its tail in the collision, and was kept in captivity for recovery, then escaped on June 27 (MC, RM). This was only the fifth modern record in Santa Cruz County, and the first since 1996, so it was *quite* a surprise when another Yellow-billed Cuckoo, this a fall migrant, turned up in the willows at Natural Bridges on August 11 (PB, OJ, WF)!

Northern Pygmy-Owls seemed to have a successful nesting season this year, with four family groups with young found in the Big Basin interior from July 13-18, and three families around Rancho Del Oso July 11-August 2 (DSu). The only reports of **Black Swifts** this season came from Moore Creek Preserve and vicinity, where there were four sightings of 1-3 birds from June 6 to July 11 (SG et al., SH, PM, DSu). There has been a pattern of June and July reports of Black

Swifts foraging over these grasslands in recent years (mostly in the afternoons and evenings), but where do they come from? There were again no hints of nesting in the county this year, nor even any presence noted near likely nesting habitat. A rare spring migrant **Chimney Swift** turned up at Rancho Del Oso on June 8 (OJ, AS, AP), and a fall migrant was at Swanton Pond on August 12 (DSu).

The status of breeding **Vaux's Swifts** in the county was again puzzling. In Big Basin, they were very sparse early in the season, but in early July increased numbers were noted at the park's water supply reservoir, some behaving in ways that suggested they were nesting. They became less regular by mid-July, but some family groups with juveniles indicated at least some successful breeding in the area, unlike 2008 when there was no evidence that any nested successfully anywhere in the county (DSu). Elsewhere this summer, the Santa Cruz west side had only a few sightings of swifts, and no indication of nesting (SG), and there were only a very few scattered observations at other places in the county. **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** continued their pattern of recent years, with at least five females or immature males reported from August 18-31 (SG, DSu), and more came in September. Most were along the mid-county coast, but one in at Watsonville Slough on August 31 (DSu) was only the second report from Watsonville.

The only spring migrant **Willow Flycatcher** was at Neary Lagoon June 5 (PB, SG, et al.). Six fall migrants were found from August 23-31 (SG, DSu, SL). The **Dusky Flycatcher** at Ocean View Summit stayed until at least July 15 (DSu, BT, JB). A **Western Kingbird** at Moore Creek Preserve on June 6 was a little late (SG), but a very late migrant or dispersant at Quail Hollow on June 23 was much more unusual (AR). Western Kingbirds are rare anytime in the San Lorenzo Valley. Three kingbirds near Moore Creek Preserve on August 10 marked the beginning of the fall migration (SG). A fall migrant **Loggerhead Shrike** was at Moore Creek Preserve August 10 (SG). This species has become so scarce in the county in recent years that occurrences at any season are worth reporting.

Red-eyed Vireos sang by Laurel Creek in Santa Cruz on June 15 (OJ), and along Western Drive June 29-30 (SS, LG, BR, MS), bringing the total of spring migrants this year up to an impressive three. An early fall migrant was at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on August 29 (SG). For the first time in many years **Purple Martins** were present in the Loma Prieta area through the breeding season, and may have nested. From June 6 through July, up to four martins were seen on multiple dates foraging on both the Santa Cruz and Santa Clara sides of the county line, and three times observers noticed them entering what seemed to be nesting holes (all in Santa Clara County) (BRe, FV, MR, WB, v.ob.). One was still in the area as late as August 1 (OJ). Then on August 6, a female Purple Martin with two fledglings appeared near Summit Road in the upper watershed of the West Branch of Soquel Creek (WA), about 5.6 miles from the area of martin activity near Loma Prieta. It's not certain where these nested, but it was the first nesting evidence in Santa Cruz County since 2001 (fide DSu); in Santa Clara County the last confirmed nesting was in 1995, though some martins were noted around breeding habitats as late as 2002 (fide WB)

A **Bank Swallow** joined a large mixed swallow flock over Watsonville Slough on August 31 (DSu). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** wandered to New Brighton State Beach on August 27 (DSu). Dispersing **House Wrens** arrived early this season, with single birds at three different spots well away from their breeding areas June 29-30 (DSu, LG); most years the first of these arrive sometime in mid-July. **Western Bluebirds** nested in at least ten locations in the county this season, mostly successfully and with some pairs producing second broods (v.ob.). In addition to nest sites noted in the last *Albatross*, pairs with nestlings or fledglings were found at two locations on Skyline Blvd and one on Summit Road on June 23, all places where nesting has

occurred before (DSu). A singing male **Northern Parula** was at Rancho Del Oso on June 21, with presumably the same bird lingering to at least July 11 (DSu).

Eight **Black-throated Gray Warblers** were reported from July 30-August 29, all but two in the mountains (AR, DSu, SG, et. al.). One at Natural Bridges July 30 (AR) was quite early for a migrant/dispersant in a coastal lowland area. An immature **Hermit Warbler** at Quail Hollow July 30 also either a very early migrant or a local dispersant (WL, AR). A very early **Prairie Warbler** was at Rancho Del Oso August 3-5 (DSu), one day short of tying the record early date for a fall migrant in the county, and exceptionally early for anywhere in California. A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was on the Pajaro River downstream from Watsonville on June 8 (BMr), probably a late spring migrant, although nesting has occurred farther upstream on the Pajaro. Fall migrant MacGillivray's were at Lighthouse Field (SG) and New Brighton State Beach (DSu), both on August 27.

A singing male **Hooded Warbler** was enjoyed by many at Rancho Del Oso June 7-10 (SP, v.ob.). Another adult male was northeast of Scotts Valley on August 19 (BMn, KM), presumably an early fall migrant. A **Chipping Sparrow** sang at a Christmas tree farm near the summit of Ben Lomond Mountain on June 6 (DSu). This is the first recent record of a possible breeding bird in this area, though there is adequate habitat and there have been annual breeding bird surveys since 2002. Fall migrant Chipping Sparrows were at two spots in Santa Cruz August 28-29 (PB, SG). A **Lark Sparrow** was at Swanton Pond on August 12 (DSu). A family group of **Dark-eyed Juncos** at Seacliff State Beach June 14 was the first breeding record for this park (DSu). Reflecting their recent breeding expansion into previously unoccupied coastal lowland areas, various riparian and wooded areas near the coast from Santa Cruz to Pajaro Dunes held junco flocks in the late summer, where in prior years none would be present until the arrival of fall migrants (DSu, v.ob.).

A female **Summer Tanager** at Natural Bridges on July 6-15 provided a rare mid-summer record (LG, SH, PM, v.ob.). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** had a fairly good showing this summer, with six reports from June 5 to July 25 (DSu, JH, KM, CR, BH, v.ob.). A female along the San Lorenzo River August 28 was likely a fall migrant (SG et al.). A singing male **Indigo Bunting** was in Long Ridge Open Space Preserve on June 23 (DSu). A **Western Meadowlark** near the Pogonip/UCSC border on July 28 (SG) was the only one reported in the county all summer. This is another species that has noticeably declined as a nesting species in the county in recent years, though some breeding habitat, especially in the southeast portion of the county, has rarely been surveyed and is largely inaccessible for birding. **Red Crossbill** reports included 2 near Antonelli Pond on July 31 (SG), two at Rancho Del Oso August 3 (DSu), and one at New Brighton State Beach on August 27 (DSu). An adult male **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve on June 23 (DSu), and dispersing female/immature Lawrence's turned up at the UCSC Arboretum on July 21 (SG), and at Rancho Del Oso on July 24 (DSu).

Cited Observers : Will Anderson, Kumaran Arul, Jeff Bleam, William Bousman, Phil Brown, Phil Capitolo, Melani Clark, Jeff Davis, Patty Durkee, Todd Easterla, Lisa Etheridge (*Sea Education Association*), Jonathan Franzen, Wes Fritz, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Laird Henkel, Bob Hirt, Sharon Hull, Oscar Johnson, Sarah Lane, Will Lawton, Amy McDonald, Rob Moeller, Barbara Monahan (BMn), Kevin Monahan, *Monterey Seabirds* (fide RW), Bryan Mori (BMr), Dominic Mosur, Pam Myers, Wendy Naruo, Richard Norton, Kathy Parker (KPa), Amy Patten, Shantanu Phukan, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Bob Reiling (BRe), Alex Rinkert, Mike Rogers, Chris Rummel, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Michelle Scott, Adam Searcy, Debra Shearwater (DSh), *Shearwater Journeys* (fide DSh), Scott Smithson, John Sterling, David Suddjian (DSu), Brent Thordarson, Frank Vanslager, Jeff Wall, David Weber, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means various observers. *Please report interesting observations to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603.*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from September 1 to October 31, 2009

We hit a birding “hot spell” from mid-September to mid-October, with a series of scorching birds that helped make this one of the most diverse seasons for the county. Among the greatest were the county’s first Blue-winged Warbler, and second records for Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Flammulated Owl (a surprise!). Then toss in a flock of Mountain Bluebirds, a Lucy’s Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Least and Gray flycatchers, Sage Thrasher, Lesser Nighthawk, and Yellow-headed Blackbird and it made for a pretty exciting time. And we must give a nod to our now elderly Rock Sandpiper, wisely choosing to continue to winter on our lovely stretch of coastline.

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Greater White-fronted Geese had a nice showing from September 26 to October 27, with 10 reports from scattered locations (v.ob.). The largest flock was 32 over Wilder Ranch on September 26 (MO, JS). A flock of 63 **Cackling Geese** passed over Capitola on October 27 (DSu). The peak count of *moffetti* **Canada Geese** was 387 at Struve Slough on September 6, a high county for our county (DSu). Two **Wood Ducks** at Natural Bridges State Beach on September 9-13 were there (SGe), and were the only ones reported away from Neary Lagoon or Big Basin State Park. A **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Struve Slough on October 28 (JM). All but two of 14 **Blue-winged Teal** reported from September 11 through October were at Struve Slough (SG, DSu, TN, JM). Six **Greater Scaup** at Harkins Slough on September 26 were the earliest fall arrivals for the county in a number of years, and they continue a recent trend of occurrence away from the immediate coast (TN et al).

An adult male **Long-tailed Duck** was seen during an aerial survey as it flew south near Pajaro Dunes on October 20 (JD). Two late season nesting efforts by **Pied-billed Grebe** were interesting: a family with three young chicks at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on September 22, and a family with just one chick leaving the nest by October 30 at Antonelli Pond (SG). High numbers of *Aechmophorus* grebes continued along the coast into October, with a peak count of 1,260 **Western**, 775 **Clark’s**, and 2,075 unidentified grebes in Soquel Cove on October 8 (DSu). Reports of **Flesh-footed Shearwater** on Monterey Bay included one on September 26 (MS) and three on October 25 (SJ). **Wilson’s Storm-Petrels** were seen on September 9 and 27 (SJ). Peak estimates of **Ashy Storm-Petrels** were 2,500 on September 5 (MS) and 4,000 on September 27 (SJ).

Very few **Black Storm-Petrels** were out there this season, with a high of just 15 on September 5 (MS), and only single digit tallies on other dates. One and two **Least Storm-Petrels** were reported on September 20 and 27 (MS). **American White Pelicans** were present through the period in the Pajaro Valley. The high reported count was 120 at Watsonville Slough on September 11 (BR). A **Brown Pelican** wandered inland to Harkins Slough on September 26 (TN) and one was up the San Lorenzo River in town on October 14 (SG, KK). The identity of a **Booby** hidden among roosting pelicans at Natural Bridges on September 2 could not be determined (WBT, MB). A nice concentration of 120 **Great Egrets** gathered at Struve Slough on September

12 (HS, BR, RR). A **Cattle Egret** at Pajaro Dunes on September 1-4 was exceptional for September (DSu, KK).

White-faced Ibis were noted regularly in the Watsonville Slough system from September 10 to October 2, with a high count of 17 at West Struve on September 20 (DSu). After a hiatus, two ibis were seen in the sloughs area from October 23 into November. There have been few fall records of White-faced Ibis away from the Pajaro Valley, but this season one was at Antonelli Pond on September 21 (SG), with probably the same bird at Schwan Lake the next day (PD), and 10 flew up the coast past Baldwin Creek on October 6 (KK, LG, JW). A juvenile **Bald Eagle** moved down the coast from Davenport to Antonelli Pond on September 24 (AJ, SG). A juvenile **Broad-winged Hawk** was at Struve Slough on September 25 (HW, TB), and two flew south over the Pajaro River at Watsonville on October 23 (DSu). A young **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Capitola on September 13 (DSu), and an adult was at UCSC on September 30 (JL).

A juvenile and two adult **Golden Eagles** at UCSC on September 3 (JW) might have been from a nest in the nearby Rincon Gorge in Henry Cowell SP, but the whereabouts of any nest remains unconfirmed. Another early **Merlin** was migrating by Pajaro Dunes on September 1 (DSu). Total reports included 16 in September, and 17 in October. A family group of two adult and one juvenile **Sandhill Cranes** flew south over the Pajaro River at Watsonville on a windy October 27 (DSu). All of the few records from the recent decade have been from October days with strong winds out of the east or north. The season's second **Pacific Golden-Plover** was spotted at Waddell Creek mouth on September 21 (DM).

A **Black-necked Stilt** seen at Waddell that day was rare for the north county coast (GS). Similarly notable was an **American Avocet** at Natural Bridges on the same date (DM, DSi, LG). Then "a few" were at the San Lorenzo River mouth on October 2 (SB), and nine lingered there from October 9-14 (AG, SG, KK). The latter occurrence was an exceptional number for our county away from the Pajaro Valley. Three **Solitary Sandpipers** from September 1-15 brought the season's total to an impressive four birds (DSu, SG, LG). Eight **Lesser Yellowlegs** were noted in this reporting period (RW, HW, BR, DSu, SG), with one over Antonelli Pond on September 28 being the only one this fall found away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). A **Ruddy Turnstone** was near Black Point on October 17 (JW). A **Red Knot** visited the Pajaro River mouth on September 1 (DSu).

The season's fourth **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Monterey Bay Academy on September 6 (DSu). A few more reports of **Baird's Sandpipers** through October 5 brought the season's tally up to 8-12 individuals (v.ob.). After a few **Pectoral Sandpipers** in August, there was a strong showing in September and October with 25 reports through October 12 involving approximately 55 individuals (v.ob.). Two **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** at West Struve Slough on September 29 (RW), with one on October 1 (DSu), provided just the 2nd county record; the first was way back in 1984. The **Rock Sandpiper** returned to West Cliff Drive for its 7th season by October 28 (SG), and was seen near Black Point the next day (DSu). A **Stilt Sandpiper** was at West Struve Slough on October 1-2 (DSu, JW, BR). An out of place **Wilson's Snipe** dropped in at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on October 26 (SG).

A juvenile **Sabine's Gull** came ashore to rest at Sunset State Beach on September 21 (DSu). A **Least Tern** was at Pajaro Dunes on September 1 (DSu). After we missed **Arctic Tern** in 2008, this season had singles reported in county waters from (only) two pelagic trips on August 6 and September 26 (SJ); one that came ashore at Aptos Creek mouth on October 8 was more unusual (DSu). **Forster's Tern** – a species that once had a regular fall presence in the county – went unreported after September 1. After a very slow summer, **Elegant Terns** remained sparse away

from the Pajaro River mouth until a spike of numbers in early fall, with a peak of about 400 at Black Point on October 1 (JW). A **Xantus's Murrelet** photographed on the Bay on an October 24 pelagic trip (JP) appears to be the county's latest record for fall (MS). **Tufted Puffins** were reported from trips on September 26 (MS) and 27 (SJ), and October 25 (SJ).

A **White-winged Dove** appeared in the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach on September 8, and two were near Struve Slough on September 20 (DSu). Extensive owl surveys in Big Basin Redwoods State Park this fall produced some interesting data, but an exceptional highlight was a migrant **Flammulated Owl** on Middle Ridge Road in Big Basin on September 29 (DSu), only the second ever found in Santa Cruz County (the other record was in August, 1962!). Seven **Northern Pygmy-Owls** were calling at Rancho Del Oso on October 6, all in a 1.5 mile stretch from Alder Camp to Waddell Forks (DSu), an impressive total for this small area. A **Burrowing Owl** had returned to the lower fields of the UCSC campus by October 6 (BM), with one at another spot October 10 (CS, SN, OJ). Another Burrowing Owl was on the Pajaro River levee near Murphy Crossing on October 26 (DSu). A **Short-eared Owl** near Swanton Pond on October 6 was the first reported in the county in almost three years (DSu). A migrant **Northern Saw-whet Owl** roosting in riparian trees at Antonelli Pond on October 17 was a very rare find away from its typical forest haunts (MD et al, DSi, KA).

A **Lesser Nighthawk** foraged over Highway 1 in Watsonville on September 13 (ST, LT). Single **Common Poorwills** were found in Big Basin State Park in the Berry, West Waddell and Sempervirens watersheds from September 22 to October 9 (DSu). Migrant **Vaux's Swifts** were in better numbers this fall than in other recent seasons, peaking in late September (v.ob.). The high count reported was 120+ at Sempervirens Reservoir in Big Basin on September 28 (DSu), and 60 + over the Natural Bridges area on September 26 was the largest coastal count (SG). There were multiple reports of **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** in September, involving at least 17-19 individuals reported from August 18- September 30, setting a new fall record (v.ob.). Most were in the mid-county coastal area, as usual, but there were three reports from south county, which had few previous records. Then an immature male Black-chinned was carefully studied on October 31 as it fed at feeders in the mountains north of Soquel (ST, LT), a new late fall date for the county, three weeks past the previous record, and at an unusual inland mountain location.

A female **Anna's Hummingbird** was gathering plant down at Ramsay Park in Watsonville on October 9 (SG et al), and a fledgling Anna's Hummer was begging from a female along Aptos Creek in Rio Del Mar on October 19 (DSu), confirming a late nesting there. There have been several reports in recent years indicating occasional fall nesting by Anna's in Santa Cruz County. A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was at Boulder Creek on October 10 (DSu). An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Slippery Rock in Big Basin on September 4 was the first record of a fall migrant for the Big Basin park interior (DSu). A quite late migrant **Western Wood-Pewee** stopped in Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on October 17 (LG, SG). A dozen more **Willow Flycatchers** in September brought the season total up to a healthy 18 (v.ob.). A **Least Flycatcher** along Middle Ridge Road in Big Basin on October 12 (DSu) was the second record of this rarity in a montane setting in the county, and about the 7th overall.

Hammond's Flycatchers were at Rancho Del Oso on September 25 (DSu), and Lighthouse Field on October 11 (SG). A rare fall migrant **Gray Flycatcher** was at Rancho Del Oso on September 22 (MT). Filling out the rare Empid list, a **Dusky Flycatcher** was near West Struve Slough on September 20 (DSu). An above-average five **Tropical Kingbirds** included birds at Watsonville Slough September 23 (DSu, KP), Lighthouse Field October 11 (SG), Struve Slough upstream from Hwy 1 on October 12 (DSu), San Lorenzo Park October 14 (LB), and Lee Road October 17 (KVV). A total of 11 **Western Kingbirds** were reported from August 10 to September 25 (v.ob.).

Eastern Kingbirds were at Struve Slough September 5-6 (DSt, DSu), and along the San Lorenzo River near San Lorenzo Park September 15-23 (TM, CC, LC, v.ob.). Three **Loggerhead Shrikes**, now rare in the county, were along Highway 129 east of Watsonville on October 28 (SS), and single shrikes were at Swanton Road September 3 (DSu) and the mouth of Baldwin Creek October 6 (KK, LG, JW).

The second **Red-eyed Vireo** of the fall was at Aptos Creek County Park on September 14 (DSu). In keeping with this fall's trend of late nesting, a **Western Scrub-Jay** was carrying likely nesting material at Natural Bridges on September 24 (SG), and an adult was feeding a new fledgling in Capitola on October 5 (DSu). Late nesting **Pygmy Nuthatches** were feeding young in a nest at New Brighton State Beach on September 22 (DSu). Seven Pygmy Nuthatches in riparian habitat along the Pajaro River downstream from Highway 1 on September 23 were well away from expected habitats (DSu). An apparently just-fledged young **Winter Wren** was near Felton on October 6 (Paul Miller), for another case of very late nesting. Four **Western Bluebirds** were nice yard-list additions in Capitola on October 18 (DSu), and the first recent record from that city. Better than that, however, were the seven **Mountain Bluebirds** earlier that same day (!) in the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach (DSu), providing just the third modern record (5th overall) for Santa Cruz County, and the first involving more than one bird.

A **Sage Thrasher** visited the Homeless Garden on Shaffer Road on September 26 (SG, KK, et al.), the 7th for Santa Cruz County, and the first in three years. Among the most notable finds this season was the first Santa Cruz County record of **Blue-winged Warbler**, well-photographed near the Manresa State Beach entrance on October 10 (TE), and refound a couple of times until October 15 (DSu, SR, RC, SM), although it was an elusive visitor, evading detection by most who searched for it. **Tennessee Warblers** were at Monterey Bay Academy on September 21 (DSu) and Sunset State Beach on September 27 (DE, CV, et al.). A **Lucy's Warbler** was enjoyed by many observers at Natural Bridges, or often feeding in nearby eucalyptus, from September 19-27 (SG, JM, PB, OJ, WN, v.ob.). This was the earliest fall Lucy's in Santa Cruz County by far; previous records included two in November and four in winter.

A **Northern Parula** was at Natural Bridges on September 30 (OJ). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were in Capitola on September 21 (DSu), and along Soquel Creek October 14 (JW). A **Magnolia Warbler** was in the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton on September 21 (DSu). Rancho Del Oso hosted a male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** on September 24 (DSu). A very rare **Black-throated Green Warbler**, just the 6th for the county, was at New Brighton State Beach on October 16 (DSu). **Blackburnian Warblers** stopped at Lighthouse Field on October 12 (LG, WG), and at New Brighton on October 16 (DSu). The second **Prairie Warbler** of the season was near the Seymour Center at Terrace Point on September 29-30 (DSi, v.ob.). Five **Palm Warblers** were found October 1-29 (DSu, LG), a sparse showing for this species. **Blackpoll Warblers** were slightly below average, with six between September 14 and 23 (DSu, KP).

Black-and-White Warblers were found along the Pajaro River September 10 (DSu), and at Lighthouse Field October 7 (JH, BC). Three **American Redstarts** appeared from September 1-October 8 (DSu, SG). A **Northern Waterthrush** bobbed its way around Antonelli Pond from September 21-29 (OJ, SG, v.ob.), and one was at Baldwin Creek Marsh on September 24 (DSu). **Yellow-breasted Chats** were along the Pajaro River September 10 (DSu), and at West Struve Slough October 5 (RS). Totals for other uncommon but regular western warblers included only three **Nashvilles** from September 22-27, an above-average 32 **Black-throated Grays** from August 8-October 23, 11 **Hermits** from September 4 to October 10, and 6 **MacGillivray's** from August 27-October 20 (v.ob.). An apparent **Hermit X Townsend's Warbler** hybrid was studied at Rancho Del Oso on September 26 (JR et al.).

Among the common migrant warblers, **Yellow Warblers** numbers were better than average, peaking in mid to late September, when counts of 50-90 birds were reported in several areas (v.ob). Two more **Chipping Sparrows** September 2-16 brought the fall total up to 4 (SG, DSu). Three **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found September 29-October 28 (DSu). **Brewer's Sparrows** turned up at Pajaro Dunes on September 21 (DSu), and along Shaffer Road October 2 (SG et al.). Swanton Pond had a **Vesper Sparrow** on September 24 (DSu). Three migrant **Lark Sparrows** were reported September 15-October 10 (JW, DSu, JH, BC), bringing the fall total up to four. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** in the Terrace Point field October 10 was among just a handful of reports of fall migrants in the county (TE, SR). A "Slat-colored" **Fox Sparrow** was at Big Basin State Park on October 10 (DSu). **White-throated Sparrows** at Porter-Sesnon October 15 (DSu), and a Santa Cruz yard on October 27 (SS) were the first arrivals this fall.

Summer Tanagers turned up north of Schwan Lake September 17, at Rancho Del Oso September 24-25, and at New Brighton October 2 (DSu). Six **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found August 28- October 11 (SA, SG, DSu, CM, v.ob.). A late **Black-headed Grosbeak** was at Natural Bridges on October 30 (SG et al.). Female/immature type **Blue Grosbeaks** visited the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton on September 8 (DSu), and Natural Bridges September 15 (SG). Four **Indigo Buntings**, all immature males, appeared at various spots September 6-23 (DSu, KP, OJ). The first **Bobolinks** in the county since 2005 included birds in the Terrace Point field (at least one September 25-October 5, with two seen together September 29-30) (DSu, SG, OJ, v.ob), and one at West Struve Slough October 1 (DSu). Female **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Pajaro Dunes September 21 (DSu) and at Natural Bridges October 17 (MD et al.).

A female **Great-tailed Grackle** carried what seemed to be nesting material at Struve Slough on the late date of September 9 (DSu). Four **Orchard Orioles** was an exceptional showing: a female and an immature male found separately near Natural Bridges September 24 (JS, ADM), a female/immature type at the Homeless Garden on Shaffer Road September 30 (SG), and one at Aptos Creek mouth October 19 (DSu). A late **Hooded Oriole** was near Natural Bridges on September 21 (PB, SG). A female **Bullock's Oriole**, fairly rare in fall migration, was at Natural Bridges September 15 (SG, LGo). Three **Red Crossbills** flew over Rancho Del Oso September 24 (DSu). Thus far this fall there was no real indication of any irruptions by any of the irregular wintering species, though **American Goldfinches** seemed to be in above-average numbers in some spots.

Cited Observers: Sally Arnold, Kumaran Arul, Lion Baumgartner, Scott Benthall, Tony Brake, Martha Brown, Phil Brown, Roy Carlson, Lilian Carswell, Bob Cohen, Chris Cutler, Jeff Davis, Al DeMartini, Matthew Dodder, Patty Durkee, Todd Easterla, David Ekdahl, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Jane Henderson, Alvaro Jaramillo, Oscar Johnson, Kathy Kuyper, Janet Leonard, Caitlin Madden, Paul Miller, *Monterey Seabirds* (fide Roger Wolfe), Bob Montgomerie, Tom Morell, Dominic Mosur, Shirley Murphy, Jean Myers, Wendy Naruo, Todd Newberry, Sam Novey, Meagan Oldfather, Kathy Parker, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Steve Rovell, Jennifer Rycenga, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Christian Schwarz, *Shearwater Journeys* (fide Debra Shearwater), David Sidle (DSi), Jherek Silber, Scott Smithson, John Sterling, Gary Strachan, David Styer (DSt), David Suddjian (DSu), Linda Terrill, Scott Terrill, W. Breck Tyler, Mike Tyner, Jeff Wall, Harvey Wilson, Kent Van Vuren, Connie Vigno. *Please report interesting observations to the Monterey Bay Birds list server, or to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603*

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from November 1 to December 31, 2009

A most unusual flight of waterfowl on December 19 luckily coincided with our local Christmas Bird Count. Unexpected flocks of geese, swans and ducks were over the ocean, along the coast and at Loch Lomond, racking up some exceptional counts for Santa Cruz County. It appears that weather somehow caused a displacement of birds from the Central Valley, and similar unusual occurrences were noted on other CBCs conducted that day, such as in northern San Mateo County and at Point Reyes Peninsula, but the exact cause is uncertain. Here is a rundown of the more noteworthy aspects from our area:

We found three flocks of **Greater White-fronted Geese**, including flocks of 85 and 9 at Capitola (DSu), and 40 over Santa Cruz (PB, KK, MS). Three **Snow Geese** and one **Ross's** were over Capitola (DSu), and one Snow was seen offshore (RgW). Apparently different flocks of 38 **Cackling Geese** were noted six hours apart in different areas of Santa Cruz (OJ, SG, PB et al), with another flock of 16 at West Cliff (OJ), and 72 over Capitola (DSu). A flight of 450 **Canada Geese** over Capitola set a new county record (DSu), as did the day's aggregate count of 582 birds. It is likely that none of these were of the population now resident in our region. The topper among the big waterfowl were six **Tundra Swans** that flew up the coast past Capitola (DSu)! There are but a handful of records of this species in the county away from the Pajaro Valley.

Loch Lomond hosted a broad array of ducks, including several species that are extremely rare there (AR, WL, AW, JW, PD) or anywhere in the montane region of the county. Most notable among these were one **Canvasback** (rare anywhere outside the Pajaro Valley), two **Cinnamon Teal**, seven **Gadwall**, 25-30 **American Wigeon**, 4 **Northern Shovelers**, and six **Greater Scaup**. Some of these same species also appeared in flocks over the ocean, but the most remarkable sight was a densely packed flock of about 500 **Scaup** parked on the water off Capitola Beach late in the day (DSu). A small number seen flying were Greater Scaup, and perhaps the whole flock was Greater. Whichever species, there has never been a report of so many scaup in Santa Cruz County.

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The period's high count of **Greater White-fronted Geese** in the Pajaro Valley was seven at College Lake on November 25 (DSu). A spate of 11 **Snow Goose** reports in late November and early December were of 1-8 birds, except for flocks of 31 over Soquel (DSu et al) and 30 over Wilder Ranch (C&TU), both on November 25. A flock of 22 passed over Struve Slough on December 24 (AM). There were four reports of 1-4 **Ross's Goose** in the Pajaro Valley from November 24 to December 8 (JW, DSu, OJ). Six reports of **Cackling Goose** in the same period were of larger flocks, with high counts of 23 at College Lake on November 29, and 53 at Watsonville Slough on December 8 (OJ). Aside from the large number of **Canada Geese** noted on December 19 (see above), a flock of about 100 flying over Lighthouse Field State Beach on November 1 was a high count away from the Pajaro Valley (EB).

Another **Tundra Swan** was at Watsonville Slough on December 24 (AM). Several reports of male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Struve Slough in November and December involved at least two birds, and maybe more (v.ob.). A male **Blue-winged Teal** was at Struve through the period (v.ob.). A male **Green-winged Teal** at Watsonville Slough near Pajaro Dunes on December 30 had characteristics of the Eurasian form, or “Common Teal” (SH, NA), noted only very rarely in the county. A **Redhead** visited Struve slough on December 20 (DE, CV). A female **Harlequin Duck** was at Waddell Bluffs on November 19 (DSu). **Surf Scoter** was present in high numbers this season, with a record smashing 2,928 on the December 19 Santa Cruz County CBC. A representative high count from Seacliff State Beach was 1,941 on December 16 (DSu), and 8,043 were tallied off the South County beaches on December 30 at a series of observations from Sunset State Beach to Seacliff (DSu).

Six reports of **White-winged Scoters** during this period were all of 1-4 birds (v.ob.). The Seacliff – New Brighton area had at least two **Black Scoters** during the period (DSu), three were near the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on December 28 (SG), and three were at Sunset State Beach on December 30 (DSu). Two **Long-tailed Ducks** flew down the coast past Monterey Bay Academy on November 13 (DSu), and one lingered there from December 3-14 (LG, JP, OJ). Another or the same was off southern Sunset State Beach on December 30 (DSu). A female **Barrow’s Goldeneye** at the Pajaro River mouth on December 4-30 was likely the same one that visited us the previous two winters (JW, LG, BR, RN, JA). Twelve **Common Mergansers** at the Pajaro River mouth on November 2 provided a high count for the Pajaro Valley, where they are seldom noted (JW). A **Common Loon** was inland at Loch Lomond on December 19 (AR et al).

A **Red-necked Grebe** was at Waddell Bluffs on November 10 (DSu), and another was at the entrance to the Santa Cruz Harbor from December 12-29 (RD, v.ob.). A flight of about 800 shearwaters off West Cliff Drive on November 3 was thought to be mostly **Black-vented Shearwaters**, with a small portion being **Sooty** (SG, SL). Scoping from a series of points along the South County coast on December 30 resulted in tallies of 57 **Northern Fulmars**, 1 **Short-tailed Shearwater** (plus 3 Short-tailed / Sooty), and 340 Black-vented Shearwaters (DSu). One **American Bittern** was reported at Struve Slough on November 27 (DSi) and December 27 (NA). A nice concentration of 26 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** was roosting at Struve Slough on December 29 (DSu, SS). A handful of **White-faced Ibis** lingered at Struve Slough through the period, with a high count of five on December 4 (JW).

A tilting of seven **Turkey Vultures** over Seacliff on December 26 was a high count for the Mid-County region in early winter (DSu, RW). An out of place **White-tailed Kite** flew over the San Lorenzo River in downtown Santa Cruz on December 11 (SG). Three different juvenile **Bald Eagles** made for an exceptional showing. One flew south over College Lake on November 24 (JW). One was soaring over Capitola and Soquel on December 2 (DSu). Another flew east over Capitola on December 19 (JK). A **Northern Harrier** over the summit ridge near Loma Prieta on December 26 was of interest, as the species is seldom reported from our mountains (BB, JD). The 4th **Broad-winged Hawk** of the fall passed over Meder Canyon on November 24 (SG). The fall’s only **Ferruginous Hawk** flew over Soquel on November 23 (DSu).

We had 14 reports of **Merlins** in November, and 26 reports in December; one at Natural Bridges on December 18 had characteristics of the form *richardsonii* (SG et al.). A juvenile **Peregrine Falcon** at Lighthouse Field on December 19 had characteristics of the form *pealei* (OJ). A **Prairie Falcon** was spotted at Swanton Road on November 2 (DM). **Semipalmated Plover** is quite rare in the county after early Fall, so singles at Rio Del Mar SB on December 2 (DSu et al) and at Pajaro Dunes on December 9 (LG, BR) were noteworthy. A gathering of 76 **Black Oystercatchers** at Greyhound Rock on December 8 set a new record for the county (SP), but

similarly high numbers have been noted here in the past. A **Wandering Tattler** at West Cliff Drive on November 11-23 (SG et al), was perhaps the same as one there on December 24 (MF).

A few **Long-billed Curlews** frequented the Santa Cruz and Live Oak coast from December 15-22 (BR, v.ob.). A late migrant **Ruddy Turnstone** was at Black Point on November 9-10 (DSi). A **Red Knot** at West Cliff Drive on November 16 was the county's latest-ever fall migrant (RT, JG). The wintering **Rock Sandpiper** remained at West Cliff Drive into 2010 (v.ob.), and was also seen at Capitola Beach on December 19 (DSu). A high count of about 800 **Red Phalaropes** were off West Cliff Drive on December 27 (SG), but otherwise the species was barely noted. Decent numbers of **Marbled Murrelets** off the South County coast included 31 tallied from a series of observation points on December 30 (DSu). The same effort found 21 **Ancient Murrelets** and one **Cassin's Auklet** (DSu), the latter being seldom reported from shore in the county.

The breeding season seemed to get underway early for **Eurasian Collared-Doves** in the Mid-County area this season, including one carrying nesting material at Seacliff on December 26 (DSu). While this species is steadily increasing its numbers and range in the county, we still don't know a lot about what is "normal" for its annual breeding cycle. **Burrowing Owl** reports included both bad news and good news. Two birds were found dead in late fall, one of unknown causes at Terrace Point on October 25, and the other hit by a vehicle on Coolidge Drive at UCSC on November 14 (CL). The good news is that more live owls were found wintering in the lower UCSC grasslands than in the last several years, with five present on December 19 (JL et al). Another wintering bird was near Wilder Ranch from December 15 through at least late January (JL, CH, LG, WG).

A **Common Poorwill** on Pine Mountain in Big Basin on November 4 could have been a resident, or perhaps a migrant or wanderer (DSu). Three others were in expected spots in Big Basin on December 3, providing further documentation of their year-round residency in these areas (DSu). A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was photographed at Corcoran Lagoon on December 26 (PC), the fifth winter record for the county. A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was on Johansen Road in Big Basin, just inside the Santa Cruz County line, on November 24 (DSu). A silent "**Western**" **Flycatcher** foraged in the forest at Moore Creek Preserve on December 19 (EL). A wintering **Tropical Kingbird** wandered the Struve Slough area from November 6 into January (HS, RS, DSt, JM, JW, LG, BR, v.ob). **Loggerhead Shrikes** continued to be rare in the county, with only about three reported, all from the north coast area from Wilder Ranch to Davenport (AG, LG, DB, v.ob.).

Late fall **Horned Lark** reports included two at UCSC around the end of October (OJ), one at Moore Creek Preserve November 2 (SG), and two near Swanton Pond on November 7 (DSu). A **Barn Swallow** was at Struve Slough December 1 (AG), and five were there December 4 (LG, BR). **Western Bluebirds** away from their more regular haunts included four at Zayante Vineyards (AR et al) and 12 at a vineyard on upper Jarvis Road northeast of Scotts Valley (BM, KM) on December 19. Also on the 19th five bluebirds were on Back Ranch Road (LG et al.), and two were along Zils Road off San Andreas Road on December 29 (BM, KM), both spots where they have been previously reported in recent years, though still rare. A female **Phainopepla** was a nice surprise on Pine Mountain in Big Basin on November 4 (DSu), providing just the fifth record for the county, and the first since 2002.

Following an exciting and varied migration period earlier in fall, uncommon warblers became notably rare in November and December, and rarer species were absent. **Black-throated Gray Warblers** appeared along Soquel Creek in Capitola on December 10 (DSu), in downtown Santa Cruz December 11 (SG), and an adult male was in the Ocean View Park area starting December

19 (KK, MS, v.ob.), the latter a returning bird that has wintered in that area for the last few years. An immature **Hermit Warbler** was at New Brighton State Beach on November 13 (DSu). A **Palm Warbler** was at Seacliff on November 23 (DSu). A wintering **Wilson's Warbler** was in "Branciforte Dip" near Ocean View Park from November 22 into January (KK, SG, v.ob.)

A late wave of **Clay-colored Sparrows** brought one to Capitola and 2-3 to western Santa Cruz, all on November 16 (DSu, SG), and a few others were reported in neighboring counties around that time. The grasslands of the lower UCSC campus had a **Grasshopper Sparrow** on December 1 (OJ), the first December record in the county since 2003. **Fox Sparrows** of rare forms included "**Slate-colored**" **Fox Sparrows** on Eagle Rock in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on November 3 (DSu) and at Quail Hollow Ranch on December 5 (AR), and a "**Red**" **Fox Sparrow** at New Brighton State Beach from December 2-29 (DSu). **Swamp Sparrows** were at Antonelli Pond November 19-26, with two present there at least from November 21-25 (SG, MD, EG, JM, v.ob.), along lower Wilder Creek December 19 (KA), and again at Antonelli Pond (maybe one of the same as in November) starting December 30 (SG). Fourteen **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in November and December (v.ob.), for a relatively sparse showing. The only "**Slate-colored**" **Dark-eyed Junco** reported this period was a regular visitor at a feeder northeast of Scotts Valley starting November 7 (BM).

A male **Summer Tanager** returned for its third winter to a yard with bee hives in La Selva Beach from December 9 to January 3 (FM). Late or wintering **Western Tanagers** appeared at Neary Lagoon on November 11 (SG), in Meder Canyon on November 24 (SGe), and at New Brighton State Beach from December 15 into January (DSu). A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited a Soquel feeder November 14 (PS, NC), and a female was at a feeder north of Soquel from December 8-19 (DSu). An immature male **Hooded Oriole** was well studied and photographed as it visited a Ben Lomond feeder from December 17 into late January (DG, AR). This is the first report of *any* wintering oriole from the heavily forested San Lorenzo Valley, where Hooded Orioles are rare even in spring and summer. An immature female **Baltimore Oriole** was a good find at the Homeless Garden on November 1 (LG, WG, BR, RR, RF, v.ob.). More expected were a female **Bullock's Oriole** in western Santa Cruz December 9 (SG), and an immature male Bullock's in the eucalyptus at Lighthouse Field from December 14-19 (SG, OJ).

A **Cassin's Finch** was identified by its distinctive flight call as it flew over the upper UCSC campus on November 25 (OJ). This was the first November record in the county since the exceptional irruption of the species in Fall 1996. In general, though, montane or northern irruptive species were lacking or in low numbers this season. There were no reports of **Red Crossbill** in the county in November or December, **Pine Siskins** were fairly scarce and mostly confined to the mountains, and **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were absent away from the local mountain areas where they are resident. Other irruptive wintering species were present in anywhere from somewhat below to slightly above average numbers, with no notable "invasions" of anything.

Cited Observers: Jim Abernathy, Nanci Adams, Kumaran Arul, Eileen Balian, Bonnie Bedzin, David Bell, Phil Brown, Paul Clapham, Nancy Collins, Ryan DiGaudio, Matthew Dodder, Judy Donaldson, Patty Durkee, David Ekdahl, Mark Forney, Rick Fournier, Alexander Gaguine, Jill Gautreaux, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Debbie Goodell, Eric Goodill, Craig Himmelwright, Sharon Hull, Oscar Johnson, Jacob Kirkland, Kathy Kuyper, Sarah Lane, Will Lawton, Chris Lay, Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Amy McDonald, Freddie Menge, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan, Dominic Mosur, Jean Myers, Wendy Naruo, Todd Newberry, Richard Norton, Shantanu Phukan, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, David Sidle (DSi), Scott Smithson, Pete Solé, Marie Stewart, David Styer (DSt), David Suddjian (DSu), Stephen Suddjian, Connie & Tom Unsicker, Constance Vigno, Jeff Wall, Anne & Jim Williams, Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means many

observers. *Please report interesting observations to the Monterey Bay Birds list server, or to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or 831 479-9603*

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Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from January 1 to February 28, 2010

Winter is often thought of as a rather slow and static time for birding, but there is often a lot going on. Just as the last bit of shuffling of fall migration ends, the first stirrings of spring migration are already beginning, and the timing of all this varies from year to year. Then there are unexpected movements in response to weather, changing food conditions, and who knows what else. This season we found a lot more Surf Scoters than usual, but fewer gulls. Some notable rarities like Costa's Hummingbird, Indigo Bunting, and Cassin's Finches appeared, but there were few uncommon to rare wintering warblers. Irruptives were lacking, with few Pine Siskins, for example, and no Red Crossbills. The local Western Bluebird population is showing encouraging signs of recovery, but some formerly regular wintering species like Ruddy Turnstone have all but disappeared. Every season there are some new things to observe, and new questions to ponder. It never stops being interesting.

* * *

Geese are generally not on the list of anticipated species when one is birding the interior of Big Basin Redwoods State Park, so a flock of 81 **Greater White-fronted Geese** and 13 **Ross's Geese** were quite a surprise when they flew by Mt. McAbee late on the day on January 2, heading toward the San Mateo County border (DSu). These were the first White-fronts reported from Big Basin apart from a few records at the Waddell Creek mouth, and the first Ross's from anywhere in that park. In addition to a few in the Pajaro Valley in early January, two **Snow Geese** were at Scott Creek Beach January 4 (GS), and one was in Younger Lagoon January 14 (JW). A few more **Brant** wintered in the area than in most recent years, with regular reports mostly involving a handful of birds from eastern Santa Cruz to Capitola (v.ob.). On January 20, two flocks totaling 66 birds were flying up the coast off Terrace Point (OJ), then there were several more reports of Brant flocks moving up the coast starting in early February (v.ob.), suggesting some may have started their spring migration earlier than usual.

A few **Cackling Geese** were around the Pajaro Valley in January, the last report being one at College Lake January 22 (DSu). **Tundra Swan** reports included two at Struve Slough January 15, and 5 at College Lake January 16 (DSu). **Eurasian Wigeon** were found regularly in Struve Slough and vicinity through January 15 (v.ob.) The highest count reported was 4 (3 males and a female) on January 11 (DSu, MB). A male **Blue-winged Teal** was a regular in Struve Slough until at least January 15 (v.ob.), with three there on January 1 (DSi). **Northern Shovelers** wintered in better than average numbers on the sloughs, with a high count of 610 tallied from a few spots on Struve and West Struve Sloughs on January 15 (DSu). A **Redhead** was at College Lake January 1 (DSu, SSm, MST). **Surf Scoters** continued in high numbers along the county's coast. The highest count reported was 3620 off Seacliff State Beach on February 2 (DSu), most of these in one huge flock, with about 75% adult males.

Seven **White-winged Scoters** flew down the Terrace Point coast on January 20 (OJ), and two flew by Capitola Beach on January 24 (DSu). There were four reports of single **Black Scoters**

from February 1 to February 26 (DSu, JR, OJ). The female **Barrow's Goldeneye** re-appeared in the Pajaro River at the Watsonville Slough confluence on February 14 (DSu, SSu). Four **Wild Turkeys** at Sunset State Beach on February 20 (JW) were the first ever found along the south Santa Cruz County Coast, and had to cross a large area of agricultural fields to get to Sunset. A **Red-necked Grebe** was off Capitola Beach on January 11, and one was there again on February 2 (DSu). **Brown Pelicans** are seldom noted far from the coast in this county, so a series of reports of these flying inland was interesting. These were likely part of a pattern this season of disoriented pelicans noted in several parts of Central California, apparently due to malnutrition. Among these were one flying over the inland part of Capitola on January 20 (DSu), four that flew from near New Brighton State beach over parts of Capitola, Soquel and Live Oak January 29, reaching 2-3 miles in from the coast (DSu), and one headed inland over Neary Lagoon January 31 (SG).

There were a few reports of 1-2 **White-faced Ibis** in the Watsonville Slough system in early January (v.ob.). A **Merlin** of the rare subspecies *suckleyi* ("Black Merlin") made Capitola its home from February 25 to March 2 (DSu). A **Prairie Falcon** soared over the Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville on January 22 (DSu). The wintering **Wandering Tattler** was spotted a few times along West Cliff Drive until January 25 (EL, SG). The **Rock Sandpiper** continued through the period (v.ob.). A **Ruddy Turnstone** was a rare find along West Cliff Drive on February 12 (AG, EB). Since it was only found one day in this well-birded area, it might have been an early migrant, or perhaps just wandering from somewhere.

It was not a great winter for gull variety in this area, with many species in below-average numbers. Four reports totaling five **Black-legged Kittiwakes** all came within the two-day period January 20-21 (OJ, DSu). An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** flew a bit inland over western Santa Cruz on January 26 (SG), the only report away from the Pajaro Valley. First-cycle **Glaucous Gulls** turned up on Capitola Beach on January 17 (DSu), and at Waddell Creek Beach February 8 (GD). A **Parasitic Jaeger** off West Cliff Drive on January 5 was rare for winter in Santa Cruz County (OJ, LH). Scoping from West Cliff Drive produced 37 **Ancient Murrelets** on January 5 (OJ, LH), the high count among several reports this winter. Also off West Cliff that day were two **Cassin's Auklets** (OJ, LH), a species seldom spotted from shore in the county. A **Tufted Puffin** in Santa Cruz County waters was a nice find during pelagic coverage for the Moss Landing Christmas Bird Count on January 1 (RN, JG).

A healthy total of 10 **Northern Pygmy-Owls** was tallied from eight locations in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on January 2 (DSu). **Burrowing Owls** turned up at several south-county spots. East of Watsonville, single owls were found at Thompson-Cooley Ranch on January 1 (PB, EF, KK), and at Kelly-Thompson Ranch January 1-22 (DSu, SSm). To the west, one was near West Struve Slough starting January 1, with two there by February 26 (EL, NA, CG), and one was at Sunset State Beach from January 26 into March (IML, JW). One wintering near Wilder Ranch was last reported January 16 (JL). A **Long-eared Owl** at Rancho Del Oso January 8 was unexpected (DSu); there is little precedent for the species in that area. The abundance of **Northern Saw-whet Owls** in our local forests was illustrated by a total of 102 (!) found in surveys at 34 points in Big Basin, conducted over three nights from January 23-28 (DSu).

A **Common Poorwill** calling on Gaffey Road in the Hazel Dell area on January 1 (DSu) was in a part of the county where little is known of this species' status. A Common Poorwill in the upper Sempervirens Creek drainage in Big Basin on January 2 was in an area where they are known to be resident (DSu). A female **Costa's Hummingbird** was carefully studied in Seacliff January 8-16 (DSu), for the 6th winter record for Santa Cruz County. A hybrid **Red-breasted X Red-naped Sapsucker** turned up near Sunset SB on January 1 (BM, KM). The wintering **Tropical Kingbird**

remained around Struve Slough through the period (v.ob.). **Loggerhead Shrikes** continued to be sparse, with four reported at spots east of Watsonville January 1-9 (DSu, SSm, PB, EF, KK), one near West Struve Slough January 6-23 (DSu, MB, v.ob.), and one near Moore Creek Preserve January 23 (SG). College Lake again held a very large roost of American Crows, with about 950 birds counted leaving the roost on some mornings (DSu, SSm). An effort was made January 17 and some other dates to track the path of that portion of the crows that flew westward, and it was found that some went at least as far as Live Oak, some 15 miles from the roost site (DSu). Other crows in this roost dispersed northward and southward, so it seemed to draw crows from quite a large area.

Two **Horned Larks**, now rare anywhere in the county, were near Harkins Slough on January 6 (DSu et al.). A few reports of **Barn Swallow** in the Struve Slough area in January and early February all involved single birds (DR, RC, DSu, v.ob.). Another was at College Lake on January 22 (DSu). A careful count of a large **Bushtit** flock in Capitola on January 8 yielded a total of 62 birds (DSu)! The Kelly-Thompson Ranch had two **White-breasted Nuthatches** on January 1 (DSu, SSm). Two **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** at College Lake on January 1 were rare for that site (DSu, MST, SSm). Among various **Western Bluebird** reports, a high count of **43** in the Kelly-Thompson Ranch on January 1 was encouraging (DSu, SSm). This was more than double the largest number found at this site in any other recent year.

The wintering **Black-throated Gray Warbler** continued in the Ocean View Park area of Santa Cruz into March (SG, KK). New Brighton State Beach had a female **Hermit Warbler** on January 15 (DSu). A **Palm Warbler** stayed at Seacliff State Beach January 4-10 (DSu). The **Wilson's Warbler** wintering in "Branciforte Dip" in Santa Cruz stayed through the period, until at least March 15 (KK, SG). A **Chipping Sparrow** was found at College Lake on January 22 (DSu). Two wintering **Grasshopper Sparrows** turned up in a meadow in Gray Whale Ranch on January 24 (KK). Several **Swamp Sparrows** wintered at College Lake, with up to 5 at the north end January 1-22 (DSu, SS, MST) and another at the south end on January 8 (DSu). One at Antonelli Pond remained until January 15 (SG, OJ, v.ob).

Twelve **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in January and February (v.ob.). A "**Slate-colored**" **Dark-eyed Junco** showing features of the subspecies *cismontanus* was at a Bonny Doon feeder on January 18 (WBT). A female **Summer Tanager** turned up in a Seacliff eucalyptus grove on February 25 (DSu). The **Western Tanager** at New Brighton was last reported January 15 (DSu). The three reports of **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** this period were all in Soquel (NC, PS, DSu), involving 1-2 males and one female. A male **Indigo Bunting** in the campground at New Brighton State Beach on February 22-23 was a very rare find for winter (DSu).

A couple of high counts of **Great-tailed Grackles** at Struve Slough illustrate how large that population has grown. There were 65 on a neck of the slough near Ohlone Parkway on January 1 (DSi, PS), and 82 were counted February 14 flying in to roost near dusk near Lee Road (DSu, SSu). Despite these high numbers, the species is still rarely reported in the county away from the Watsonville Slough system. Ben Lomond's wintering **Hooded Oriole** was last reported February 6 (AR). **Bullock's Orioles** included an immature male south of Neary Lagoon on January 20 (KK), and a female near the west entrance to Neary on February 27 (KS et al.). A male **Cassin's Finch** was a good find at Ocean View Summit in Big Basin on January 2 (DSu), and a female was on the upper UCSC campus on February 17 (SG).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Eileen Balian, Matt Brady, Phil Brown, Rita Carratello, Nancy Collins, Gary Deghi, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Cathy Gamble, Steve Gerow, Jennifer Green, Lauren Harter,

Oscar Johnson, Kathy Kuyper, Inger Marie Laursen (IML), Earl Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Barbara Monahan, Kevin Monahan, Rod Norden, Alex Rinkert, Don Roberson, Jennifer Rycenga, Ken Schneider, David Sidle (DSi), Scott Smithson (SSm), Pete Sole', Gary Strachan, Matthew Strusis-Timmer (MST), David Suddjian (DSu), Stephen Suddjian (SSu), W. Breck Tyler (WBT), Jeff Wall

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2010

Eight **Greater White-fronted Geese** flying over Capitola April 25 were late, and one heading up the coast off Seacliff State Beach on May 29 was the only May record for the county, excluding a few birds that have occasionally summered (DSu). Two male **Wood Ducks** in a pond on Glen Canyon Road on May 13 were away from traditional breeding-season spots (ML), but some were reported from this pond in 2008, so they may be regular here. Another male was at College Lake on May 19 (LG, JP), where they are seldom noted at any season. Single **Blue-winged Teal** swam at Scott Creek Marsh on April 24 (DSu), and in Struve Slough on May 10 (RR, BR). For the fifth spring in a row, some **Redheads** resided in the Watsonville Slough System. Pairs were noted at West Struve Slough on March 19 (DSu), and in Struve Slough April 20 (JWa), and again from May 24-28 (DSu, LG, JP). It is possible all these observations involved the same pair, but there were significant breaks between reports, suggesting different birds were involved.

Late **Ring-necked Ducks** included one at College Lake on May 2, and four there May 15 (DSu). A female **Harlequin Duck** swam among the scoters at Seacliff State Beach on March 11 (DSu). **Surf Scoters** at Seacliff continued in large numbers into early March, with a high count of 2600 on March 4 (DSu); numbers diminished rapidly after the second week in March. There were five reports of migrant **White-winged Scoters** from March 7 to May 2, involving a total of eight birds (SG, AM, DSu). No **Black Scoters** were reported this spring. Other late ducks included female **Buffleheads** at Watsonville Slough on May 24 (DSu) and at the San Lorenzo River on May 29 (LG, WG), and two female **Common Goldeneyes** at the mouth of Waddell Creek May 5-6 (DSu). Two male **Hooded Mergansers** set a new late record for the county, lingering at College Lake from April 20 to at least May 19 (JWa, DSu, HS, RS, PB, LG, BR, JP), with one staying to the exceptional date of June 13 (CK).

Four **Wild Turkeys** turned up at La Selva Beach on March 9 (CR), just the second record for the south coast area of the county, and maybe the same four that were at Sunset State Beach on February 20. **Aechmophorus** grebes continued to be present in large numbers at Seacliff State Beach, but with considerable fluctuation. A notable high count of 10,140 was tallied on April 17 (DSu), with 890 **Westerns** and 345 **Clark's**, but most too far to identify to species. A bird survey from a cruise ship traveling well offshore up the California coast recorded two **Cook's Petrels** in the outer waters of Santa Cruz County on April 30 (RM et al.) This is just the third record of Cook's for the county, but large numbers were found overall in this expedition's passage through the offshore waters of California.

American White Pelicans were reported in small numbers from the Watsonville Sloughs and the Pajaro Dunes area through the period (v.ob.). Five **Brandt's Cormorant** nests were spotted on May 20 on the cliffs along the Old Cove Landing Trail in Wilder Ranch State Park, for the first nesting record for that park (LG). The site was unusual for the species, with nests on narrow ledges on cliff faces, a situation more typical of Pelagic Cormorants (which also nest in that area). Three of the Brandt's nests were subsequently abandoned, but two remained occupied by sitting adults at least until late June. There were several reports of **American Bittern** in known or probable breeding areas, with high counts of three at Struve Slough on March 1 (MS, KH), and at

Pinto Lake on May 21 (RR). A breeding plumaged **Cattle Egret** flew by Capitola Beach on April 14 (DSu), passing over kelp beds and grebe flocks as it flew down the coast. This was the first in the county since September 2009, and quite unexpected in April.

White-faced Ibis reports included two at Struve Slough on April 16 (KK), two at College Lake on May 4 (DSu), and five there May 12 (PB). A pair of **Ospreys** again occupied the nesting platform at Harkins Slough. They nested successfully in 2009, but this year's attempt failed (GK, JWa, v.ob). Another pair was at the College Lake area into May (DSu), with courtship noted near there on April 16 (MPa) hinting at possible nesting in that area. Adult **Bald Eagles** soared over Henry Cowell State Park on April 9 (DSu), and over Drew Lake on April 22 (TL). A light-morph adult **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Capitola on March 23 (DSu). There were over thirty **Merlins** reported from the beginning of March to May 4 (v.ob.). Three **Peregrine Falcon** nests were noted in the county this spring. One, near Boulder Creek, fledged three young (DSu), but two others at north coast sites were depredated (*fide* JL).

Black-bellied Plovers were unusually sparse this spring, with only a handful of reports, all involving just single birds (v.ob.). An immature **Pacific Golden Plover** appeared on the rocks at Terrace Point on April 30 (DSi, PB, v.ob.), providing great studies and photo opportunities for many observers until May 16, with likely the same bird found again on May 31 (PS). It was joined by a colorful adult male from May 4-12 (PM, SG, WN, v.ob). This constitutes the first spring report of the species in Santa Cruz County where individuals lingered more than one day, and also the first time in spring where more than one occurred together. Seven **Spotted Sandpipers** at College Lake on May 12 (PB) was a good count for a single site. **Solitary Sandpipers** were near College Lake on May 2, and on the Pajaro River upstream from Watsonville on May 15 (DSu).

A **Wandering Tattler** at New Brighton state Beach on April 7 was a rather early migrant (DSu), while one along West Cliff Drive May 31 was late (SGe). Some 15-20 appeared during the regular migration period from April 18-May 15 (v.ob.). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Struve Slough on May 4 was fairly rare for Spring (DSu). The only **Ruddy Turnstone** this period was on Capitola Beach on April 28 (DSu). A **Red Knot** at College Lake on May 4 was only the second record for the county away from the immediate coast (DSu). The wintering **Rock Sandpiper** was last reported along West Cliff Drive on April 3 (SGe). The only **Black-legged Kittiwake** of the season was found dead at Seascape on March 25 (JH). **Sabine's Gulls** are seldom seen from shore in Santa Cruz County, so an adult off Capitola Beach on May 10 was notable (DSu).

An adult **Franklin's Gull** flew up the coast off Seacliff Beach on April 25, and another was feeding in the fields near Table Rock on May 7 (DSu). **Mew Gulls** left early this year, with most gone by the first week in March, and the last one reported was March 17 at Rio Del Mar (JP). Most years they are around in numbers until at least mid-March, with some lingering into April. Late gulls included a 1st cycle **Herring Gull** along the San Lorenzo River May 7 (SG), and a 1st cycle **Thayer's Gull** on West Cliff Drive until May 9 (SG). 2nd cycle **Glaucous Gulls** were at Aptos Creek mouth on March 24-30 (JP), and at Waddell Creek Beach on April 19 (GS). A **Common Tern** foraging with Forster's off Capitola Beach on May 3 was the only one reported (DSu).

Elegant Terns made an early appearance from April 18-May 4 (SG, RG, MPe, CK, AG, EB, v.ob.), with a high count of 9 off Seacliff on April 25 (DSu). Then they disappeared, and none were reported in the county after that through at least July. A **Black Skimmer** stopped at Aptos Creek mouth, then continued up the coast, on May 11 (DSu). Two **Marbled Murrelets** off Rio Del Mar on April 7 were unexpected for that area in spring, when they are rarely noted in down

the coast past Santa Cruz (PB). This season's only **Ancient Murrelet** was swimming off Seacliff state Beach on March 16 (DSu). Observers surveying birds from a cruise ship going up the coast well offshore reported two **Parakeet Auklets** on April 30 in the farthest offshore waters of Santa Cruz County (RM et al.). Pending CBRC review, this would be just the third record from the county, and the first involving live birds (the other two were of beach-cast specimens). A **Tufted Puffin** swam offshore of Seacliff State Beach on April 17 (DSu).

Observations of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** building nests at Soquel on March 20 (PS) and Capitola on May 15 (DSu) provided the first breeding confirmations reported in those communities. Fifty-five were gathered on one short stretch of the Pajaro River near Main Street on May 26 (DSu). Wintering **Burrowing Owls** lingered to March 29 near Sunset State Beach and near West Struve Slough (JWa, NA). We received nine reports of 15 migrant **Black Swifts** from May 15-30, including reports from the Pajaro Valley, San Lorenzo Valley and Capitola, where the species has only rarely been seen (v.ob.). However, there was again no suggestion of attendance at any of the county's former nesting sites. Reports of **Vaux's Swift** were, as expected, more common than Black (22 reports, beginning April 7), but most were of just 1-3 individuals. Large flights of migrant Vaux's have been lacking in the county in recent years.

An exceptional hybrid male **Anna's Hummingbird x *Selasphorus* sp.** was captured and photographed during a hummingbird banding study northeast of Scotts Valley on March 7 (Rita Colwell). Based on limited precedent, Allen's Hummingbird is the most likely *Selasphorus* parent; a feather was taken for DNA testing to resolve the identity. An immature male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, our first since 2006, provided nice views for many observers along the San Lorenzo River in Henry Cowell State Park from March 9-15 (KK, v.ob.). Various reports of **Red-breasted Sapsuckers** at Rancho Del Oso from April 25 onwards suggested two breeding pairs were in residence there (DSu, DM, AM). One male entertained observers at Horse Camp for a few weeks in May with daily bouts of drumming on metal signs and gates.

The burned forest at Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve attracted a high concentration of **Hairy Woodpeckers** in late winter. A survey on March 4 tallied 17 individuals in an area of about 50 acres (SG, KK). Three reports of **Pileated Woodpeckers** were away from the species' usual forest settings: at Aptos Creek County Park on March 26 (DSu), Westlake School in Santa Cruz on April 14 (TT), and New Brighton State Beach on April 15 (DSu). These fit a pattern that has been established since the first such occurrence noted in our county in 2005. Eleven records of Pileateds away from usual forest haunts have accumulated since then, all in spring from March 21 to June 9, with most from late March to April, probably relating to some form of pre-breeding dispersal. A **Hammond's Flycatcher** was at the Porter Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach on April 17 (DSu).

The territorial **Dusky Flycatcher** returned for its 5th season to Ocean View Summit at Big Basin Redwoods State Park by at least May 3, where it remained singing into another summer (DSu, KK, GT). The wintering **Tropical Kingbird** at West Struve Slough was last reported on March 19 (DSu). A rare migrant **Cassin's Kingbird** was along the Pajaro River on May 20 (DSu). A **Western Scrub-Jay** spent several days in May catching mosquito fish from a pond in a Capitola yard, apparently an unusual behavior for this jay (DSu). Migrant **Purple Martins** were at Seacliff on May 11 and at Last Chance Road on May 21 (GS). A **Tree Swallow** at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park was notable in the San Lorenzo Valley (AR, JWi). The season's quota for **Bank Swallow** was met by one at Rancho Del Oso on April 22 (DSu).

A **Barn Swallow** near Mt McAbee on May 17 was the first report for the interior region of Big Basin Redwoods State Park (KK). A pair of **House Wrens** nested for the second year in a row at

Quail Hollow Ranch, this time in a nest box, fledging young by May 27 (*fide* JA). A singing male at Rancho Del Oso present from at least April 23 attracted a mate and had a nest with young in a Monterey pine snag on June 4 (DSu). There was a prior nesting at Rancho Del Oso in 1988, but otherwise there are no other breeding records from the county's north coast region, and the location is over 10 miles from any other known House Wren nesting site.

Western Bluebirds had another encouraging season. Three pairs appeared at Quail Hollow Ranch this spring, but only two stayed to nest in boxes there (*fide* JA). Nesting was also confirmed near Soda Lake (DSu), Merk Road (H&RS), and at two places near Larkin Valley Road (KR, *fide* LK). One at Bonny Doon Ecological Preserve on March 8 (KK) and two elsewhere in Bonny Doon on March 30 (*fide* BB) were notable for that part of the county in recent years. Singing **Varied Thrushes** in known or likely breeding areas were at three places in Big Basin State Park in May, and one was at Waterman Gap on May 31 (DSu). The season's only reports of Nashville Warbler were from New Brighton State Beach on April 15 and Soquel Creek at Capitola on April 16 (DSu).

Singing **Ovenbirds** were at Whalebone Gulch in the Bear Creek watershed on May 19 (DSu) and at Lighthouse Field State Beach on May 23-24 (SGe, DSu); a photograph of the latter provided the first photo- documentation for the county. A singing male **Hooded Warbler** brightened up New Brighton State Beach on May 12 (DSu). It was a slim season for **Yellow-breasted Chats**, with just two found from May 2-15 (DSu). Two **Rufous-crowned Sparrows** singing on a hillside near Soda Lake on March 19 were at the only place in the county where this species is known to reside (DSu). They had not been reported in the county since 2004, as the location is on private land with no visitation by birders. A **Chipping Sparrow** singing at Last Chance Road on May 23 was the only one reported (AR).

Lark Sparrows were at Wilder Ranch on April 22 (JWa) and near Soda Lake on May 4 (DSu). Both sites formerly had nesting birds, but it is unknown if any Lark Sparrows still nest in Santa Cruz County. **Song Sparrows** with a newly-fledged chick at Branciforte Dip in Santa Cruz on March 15 provided evidence of a very early nesting (SG). One or two "Slate-colored" **Fox Sparrows** at Quail Hollow Ranch on April 5-7 were the first spring season occurrence for that form in the county (AR, JW). Two **Golden-crowned Sparrows** there on May 22 were notably late (AR, TN). A **Dark-eyed Junco** singing near College Lake on May 2 signaled the expansion of this species into the urban / agricultural region of the floor of the Pajaro Valley, where it had previously been absent. A pair along the Pajaro River upstream of Salsipuedes Creek (Monterey County side) on May 24 was the first breeding season record from that river corridor in the Pajaro Valley (SG), with nesting confirmed there in June.

Two **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found from March 15-27, and three more appeared from May 20-27 (DSu, EF, SM). Male **Blue Grosbeaks** were at the far southeast corner of the county near Soda Lake on May 4 (DS) and along the Pajaro River on May 23 (EL, CK). A fairly small number of **Tricolored Blackbirds** were in attendance at the pond along Last Chance Road in April and May (65 counted on April 26); they were probably nesting but no firm evidence was observed (DSu, AR). Small numbers of "Trikes" were seen flying around near the Pajaro River east of Watsonville on May 20 (DSu). A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** joined other blackbirds at a feeding station near Struve Slough on May 4 (DSu). The high count of **Great-tailed Grackles** was 41 at Harkins Slough on May 28, including nine begging fledglings and evidence of several active nests (DSu). Continued nesting at Struve Slough was also documented. Although now well-established in the Watsonville Slough system, sightings of grackles elsewhere are rare. This season one was at Pinto Lake on April 8 (RK, CM) and three were flying over the Pajaro River near Walker Street on May 24 (DSu).

Two **Hooded Orioles** visiting red hot poker flowers in a yard off Last Chance Road on May 21 were the first found along the coast north of Laguna Creek (GS). A pair at a nest with young in Quail Hollow Ranch County Park on May 28 provided the first breeding record for the San Lorenzo Valley (AR). Reports of **Red Crossbills** were of one at Bonny Doon on March 4 (KK, SG) and 6 at Castle Rock State Park on May 21 (LG, WG). A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** near Soda Lake on May 4 was the only one reported this season. We don't think much about patterns of movement for **House Sparrows**, but a male at Rancho Del Oso on April 26 was the 2nd record for the park and was quite distance from any spots where the species is expected. Wonder where it came from...

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Jenny Anderson, Eileen Balian, Bonnie Bedzin, Phil Brown, Rita Colwell, Nancy Collins, Eric Feuss, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Rich Griffith, Joan Hardie, Kathe Hart, Clay Kempf, R. Ketley, Laura Kummerer, Gary Kittleson, Kathy Kuyper, Earl Lebow, Thomas Leikam, Margaret Leonard, Janet Linthicum, Pat Mahoney, Sally Maki, Catherine Mandella, Amy McDonald, Ryan Merrill, Dominic Mosur, Todd Newberry, Mark Paxton (MPa), Margaret Perham (MPe), Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Kathleen Rose, Chris Rummel, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, David Sidle (DSi), Pete Solé, Madeline Spencer, Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DSu), Tom Takano, Glen Tepke, Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi). "v.ob." means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2010

Nine **Greater White-fronted Geese** flew over Capitola Beach on June 5 (DSu), for the first June record for the county, excepting a few that have over-summered. A **Cackling Goose**, very rare in summer in Santa Cruz County, was along Watsonville Slough on August 7 (LG, WG). Nine **Brant** flying up the West Cliff Drive coast on July 9 may have been very late spring migrants (SG), but some reports of single birds in July and August suggested one or a few did stay for the summer in the mid-county area. Up to 24 were regularly noted in July and August at the Pajaro River mouth (v.ob.), a more regular spot for summering Brant. An estimated 100 **Gadwalls** at the Watsonville Slough/Struve Slough confluence on June 26 was an exceptional concentration for the area in June (JWa), and likely included some late migrants in addition to local residents.

The confluence of these sloughs also held a male **American Wigeon** from June 19-26 (LG, WG, DSu, JWa), establishing the first summer-period record of this species in Santa Cruz County. Some other out-of-season ducks in the Struve-Watsonville Slough confluence area included four **Northern Shovelers** on June 19 (LG, WG), with one still there June 26 (JWa), a **Northern Pintail** on June 22 (DSu), and 1-2 **Green-winged Teal** from June 19-22 (LG, WG, DSu, JWa). A pair of **Northern Pintails** at Younger Lagoon on the odd date of July 24 (SG) were perhaps dispersants from nearby breeding populations. A count of 35 **Red-throated Loons** at Seacliff State Beach on June 5 (DSu) was exceptional for the date, and may have been an instance of an exceptionally late migratory movement. More Red-throateds than usual did remain through the summer, though, with reports from various spots along the county coast involving a total of ten or more birds, some of these staying through August (v.ob.).

A **Laysan Albatross** was in Santa Cruz County waters on August 27 (SJ). A **Pink-footed Shearwater**, rarely seen from shore in Santa Cruz County, was off Seacliff State Beach on August 27 (DSu). **Sooty Shearwaters** were notable in their unusual absence through spring and summer, with none reported from shore through June or July. Good numbers suddenly appeared close to shore in early August, with an estimated 150,000 off Rio Del Mar and Seacliff State Beach being the first report (CK). **American White Pelicans** were in the Pajaro Valley area through the summer, with numbers increasing in late July (v.ob.).

Brandt's Cormorant nesting efforts had mixed success this year, and began late at all sites. The Cement Ship at Seacliff State Beach again held the largest colony, with a peak count of 154 nests on June 13. More than this actually nested though, as new nests were regularly being started into late July, when grown young were leaving some of the early nests (DSu). Some new nests were even started in late August, and some nesting was still going on through September and even into October! While it is uncertain if the latest of these efforts will produce any young, it is by far the latest nesting by Brandt's Cormorants in this county, and perhaps the latest for the state! Some diversity in nest timing was also noted at the Davenport Pier colony, though this site only held a maximum of 16-18 nests (DSu). The oddly situated nests at Wilder Ranch (noted last issue) apparently failed to produce any young, and a small nesting attempt at Natural Bridges was quickly abandoned.

Double-crested Cormorants did well, with 83 nests at Pinto Lake (RR) and at least 142 nests at Schwan Lake (DSu), both producing numerous young. Nesting was again confirmed for **American Bitterns** along Struve Slough, with two or maybe three families of begging bittern babies being fed by their parents, putting on a good show for birders and photographers August 15-18 (BR, LG, JP, v.ob). **Great Blue Herons** nested at two spots this year, with six nests noted at Pinto Lake (RR, BR), and two at the Santa Cruz Harbor (SG). There were also four **Great Egret** nests at the Pinto Lake colony (RR, BR), their only regular nesting spot in the county. **Snowy Egrets** appeared in good numbers in the Santa Cruz/Live Oak area beginning in July, with a high count of 45 at Corcoran Lagoon on August 26 being an exceptional number for the area (RG).

Two **White-faced Ibis** were at the confluence of Watsonville and Struve Sloughs on June 22 (DSu), and two were noted in this area again starting August 3 (JWa, KK). A couple of **Bald Eagles** were surprises in late August, with an adult or near-adult over UCSC on August 28 (WG), and an immature over High Street in Santa Cruz on August 31 (TN). Some extra attention paid to little-birded urban and suburban neighborhoods of the mid-county resulted in some significant finds, one of which was a family of three **Cooper's Hawk** fledglings just out of the nest in Capitola on June 30 (DSu), the first nesting confirmation for that city, and for the urban mid-county area in general. A couple more begging juveniles in Soquel, and some other evidence suggests a few other pairs of Cooper's may have nested around the neighborhoods in the area.

Only two pairs of **American Kestrel** were confirmed to nest in the county this season, both in known territories in Santa Cruz (SGe). Other nestings may have occurred, though, as some pairs continued in territories where they have nested in the recent past, and other pairs were found in places that have had no recent breeding confirmations, including Live Oak and Watsonville (DSu, NAn, v.ob.). More information is clearly needed on the status of this species in Santa Cruz County. A downy **Virginia Rail** chick at the Quail Hollow Ranch pond on June 15 (AR) provided the first breeding confirmation for this park, and for the San Lorenzo Valley. A pair of **Black Oystercatchers** nesting on the natural bridge at Natural Bridges State Beach was the first confirmed nesting for this park, and also for the Santa Cruz city limits (SG). Two chicks had hatched by July 6, but they did not survive for more than a day or so.

Black-necked Stilts away from the Pajaro Valley included two at Younger Lagoon on June 27 (DSi), and five at Natural Bridges on July 23-26 (DSi, SG). Similarly rare away from the Pajaro Valley was an **American Avocet** at Younger Lagoon on August 25 (LG, BR). A pair of **Spotted Sandpipers** with two chicks were along the Pajaro River upstream from Salspuedes Creek on June 22 (DSu), one of few recent breeding confirmations in Santa Cruz County. There were multiple reports of **Lesser Yellowlegs** from July 24 through August (v.ob.), with a high count of seven at Struve Slough on August 26 (BR). An adult **Ruddy Turnstone** visited Natural Bridges and Terrace Point on July 21 (SG), and another Ruddy was seen at Harkins Slough and the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence on August 27 (RF, CK, RW). That one was especially unusual for being away from the immediate vicinity of the ocean, perhaps the first Ruddy Turnstone ever reported in this county away from the coast.

Three **Surfbirds** at the Santa Cruz Harbor jetty on July 8 were quite early (LHe). A juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Corcoran Lagoon on July 26 was just the third July record for the county (KA). There were eleven reports of **Baird's Sandpiper** from August 3-28 (v.ob.), probably involving 8-10 individuals. An early **Pectoral Sandpiper** turned up at Watsonville Slough on August 10 (LG, JP). A rare juvenile **Stilt Sandpiper** was a nice find at Natural Bridges on August 23 (DSi), the first ever found in the county outside of the Pajaro Valley area. Another was along Struve Slough in Watsonville on August 26, staying into early September (LG, JP,

JWa, v.ob.). Both these were earlier than any previous Stilt Sandpipers found in the county, with all the other records being from September and October. Three **Wilson's Phalaropes** were at Younger Lagoon on August 7 (DSi), and one was there on August 18 (SG, MG). Others were around the Watsonville Slough/Struve Slough confluence, with various reports of up to four starting August 14 (LG, WG, RW, v.ob.)

California Gulls were again present in unusually high numbers in early summer, and with an unexpectedly high proportion of adults for the season in Santa Cruz County (DSu, v.ob.) There were very late movements of large numbers of apparent northbound migrants through July, and remarkable gatherings on some local beaches (high count of 555 on Waddell Creek Beach on July 25). Juveniles also arrived earlier than usual, with the first noted on Waddell Creek Beach on July 11 (DSu). The summer status of this species seems to be changing in a complex way, and it is difficult to sort out all of what is going on. A juvenile **Least Tern** was at Harkins Slough on August 27 (RF, CK, RW). A **Black Tern** visited Watsonville Slough August 22-23 (RW, NAd). **Forster's Terns** were again sparse in the county this summer, with just a handful of reports involving single birds (v.ob.).

The summer arrival of **Elegant Terns** came exceptionally late this year, exceeding even last year's late arrival. After a brief and very small scale movement of these in late April and early May, there were no other reports in the county until July 30 (v.ob.). One or two **Tufted Puffins** were within the county's part of Monterey Bay on August 27 (SJ). **Eurasian Collared-Doves** continued to increase and fill in gaps. Surveys of the urban areas of Live Oak to Aptos in late June and early July tallied 360 collared-doves, revealing the species' abundance in that region (DSu). A count of 44 at Davenport on June 13 was a new high count for the north coast region (DSU). A **White-winged Dove** at Santa Cruz on July 14 was a surprise, for our first July record and a rare summer occurrence for Northern California (OJ).

A paltry two reports of **Black Swifts**, with singles at Lighthouse Field on June 23 and Rancho Del Oso on June 24, marked a very low ebb for this species' presence in the county in the summer season (SG, DSu). Observations of **Vaux's Swifts** at Santa Cruz suggested pairs may have been nesting in neighborhoods near Natural Bridges and Pogonip, although no nest sites were confirmed (SG). A female or immature male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at Natural Bridges on July 26 was our first documented July record, and about three weeks ahead of the now expected late summer appearance of this species (SG). A female on August 1 at Capitola and an adult male there on August 11 were also early (DSu). An additional five birds were found from August 19 onwards (JD, SG, DSu), with others in September. A female **Costa's Hummingbird** photographed at Natural Bridges on August 26 was a good deal rarer for the county (SG).

Acorn Woodpeckers were confirmed nesting at New Brighton State Beach for the first time this year, and sightings were made in July and August in nearby urban areas of Capitola, where the species is usually absent (DSu). A spring migrant **Willow Flycatcher** was at Lighthouse Field on June 21 (SG). Two fall migrants were found August 28-29 (DSu, SG). The summering **Dusky Flycatcher** completed its summer at Big Basin, lingering to at least July 30 (DSu). A late **Western Kingbird** at Moore Creek Preserve on June 18 was not too far out of the established late season pattern for that site (SG), but one at Rancho Del Oso on July 12 was quite unexpected for the north coast in July (DSu). **Eastern Kingbirds** put in appearances at Seacliff State Beach on August 7 (DSu) and at Schwan Lake on August 27 (PB, DSi, SG et al.).

Multiple pairs of nesting **Horned Larks** in a fallow agricultural field at Watsonville Slough near Hanson Slough provided a big surprise. Reports of 8-20 individuals from June 8 to August 8 (GK, CK, SG) included several carrying food, and sightings of juveniles on June 23 (GK). This

species was last documented nesting in the county in 1993 and had since apparently become extirpated in the county. Its future at Watsonville Slough is uncertain, though, as the fallow field used this year is slated to be converted to wetlands in a restoration project. Perhaps management of the surrounding lands will maintain or provide some other habitat areas that are attractive to the larks. **Purple Martins** were at Terrace Point on June 1 (SG), New Brighton State Beach on July 24 (DSu), and over upper Empire Grade ca. August 1 (GS).

A juvenile **Varied Thrush** retaining down on its head was near Pine Flat Road at Bonny Doon on July 27-28, indicating nesting in that area, perhaps in the Majors Creek watershed (J&JT). This area is away from portions of the county where most nesting by this species has been found. A family of two fledgling Varied Thrushes with a female was along the West Fork of Waddell Creek a little ways upstream of the Forks on August 3 (DSu). **California Thrashers** at Seacliff State Beach (DSu) and Capitola (JD) on August 1 were away from the species normal range in the county (DSu). A late **Cedar Waxwing** turned up near Natural Bridges on June 20 (SG). A very late Myrtle **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton on June 6 fit the timing for an Eastern vagrant (DSU). A **Townsend's Warbler** at Rancho Del Oso on August 2 set a new early arrival record for the county by four days (DSu).

An **American Redstart** was at Schwan Lake on August 27 (LG et al.). A **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Porter-Sesnon on July 27 was unexpected, very early for a migrant and far from the local areas where the species nests in the county (DSu). The next earliest record for a fall migrant in the county is August 10. The only spots with **Chipping Sparrows** at mid-summer were UCSC and nearby Wilder Ranch, with just one to two noted at a few spots (SG, KK, PM). Breeding **Savannah Sparrows** were found in the same spot at Watsonville Slough as the Horned Larks described above (SG, GK, JWa). Up to six juveniles were seen there on June 20 (JWa). While much less rare in the county than the lark, Bryant's Savannah Sparrow (our breeding form) had been considered extirpated in the Pajaro Valley with a dearth of breeding evidence since the early 1990s, so this was a significant find for our subspecies which is listed on California's *Bird Species of Special Concern* list.

A **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Quail Hollow Ranch on June 13 was our first ever for summer (JWi). Surveys of the urban area from Live Oak to Aptos revealed how common **Dark-eyed Junco** has become in that area, where it was mostly absent until the last several years. 148 were tallied, occurring at 53% of 144 survey sites in late June and early July (DSu). An adult male **Summer Tanager** was along the Pajaro River upstream of Highway 1 on June 7 (DSu). An immature male was at Capitola on August 23 to September 1 (DSu). Six **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found from June 9 to August 1 (NAd, SG, DSu, SB, JP, JB).

Tricolored Blackbirds appeared in agricultural areas along the Pajaro River from late May to late June (DSu). Eight at Corcoran Lagoon on June 30 were very rare for Live Oak (DSu). A series of sightings of Trikes flying up the coast over Seacliff and Capitola from August 23 into early September was unprecedented, including the first reports ever for both areas (DSu). The pattern, also including flocks of Red-wingeds heading up coast suggested a migratory movement, perhaps of birds heading to winter along our north county coast (DSu). A female **Yellow-headed Blackbird** stopped at Seacliff State Beach on its westward journey on August 23 (DSu). Three **Western Meadowlarks** singing at UCSC from July 3-10 were the first singers there in several years, although the species formerly nested there (SG). A **Red Crossbill** was over Middle Ridge at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on June 13 (PB), and three were at Rancho Del Oso on August 1 (DSu).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Noelle Antolin, Kumaran Arul, Jeff Bleam, Phil Brown, Steve Butler, Judy Donaldson, Rick Fournier, Mike Geneau, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Rich Griffith, Laird Henkel, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Gary Kittleson, Kathy Kuyper, Paul Miller, Monterey Seabirds (fide Roger Wolfe), Todd Newberry, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Shearwater Journeys (fide Debra Shearwater), David Sidle (DSi), Gary Strachan, David Suddjian (DSu), John & Jill Thompson, Jeff Wall (JWa), Roger Wolfe, Jim Williams (JWi). “v.ob.” means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from September 1 to October 15, 2010

It is interesting how expectations change over the years. In many ways, we might look back on Fall 2010 as somewhat slow. Yet this snapshot of six weeks of the fall season highlights an array of species that would have ranked as stellar finds in Santa Cruz county a few decades ago: Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Bald Eagles, Ruff, White-winged Dove, Least Flycatcher, Sage Thrasher, and Black-throated Green Warbler, just to pick out a few. Now all these species, each still an exciting find, have an established a pattern of occurrence here and in that sense are expected. But, true to the wide possibilities of the fall season, one species was found without any precedent in our county, and very little even in California. A Great-winged Petrel discovered on a Monterey Seabirds trip now ranks as perhaps the rarest bird ever found in Santa Cruz County.

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Early fall was good for **Greater White-fronted Geese**, with multiple reports starting September 20, from various coastal and Pajaro Valley locations. A concentrated movement occurred on September 29-30, with at least seven reports in the county (DSu, SG, v.ob), and numerous other reports from the rest of Central California. The largest flock noted was about 65 flying over Natural Bridges on the 29th (SG). A group of 12-14 **Brant** was observed at Pajaro Dunes September 25-26 (MST, EL et al.), possibly some of the same that spent the summer in that area. A male **Wood Duck** was at Pinto Lake on September 26 (RR et al.), fairly rare for the Pajaro Valley area. Two **Blue-winged Teal** were at Younger Lagoon on September 8 (PB), with one there September 17 and October 10 (DSi, SG), and up to three were at Pajaro Dunes September 25-26 (LG, WG, MST, EL et al.). A male **White-winged Scoter** flying up the coast past Davenport on September 22 (DSu) was especially notable for the early fall date, the first report in the county before late October in many years. Also quite early was a female **Bufflehead** on the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on October 1 (SG et al.).

The seabird highlight of the season was a well-photographed **Great-winged Petrel** in Santa Cruz County waters on September 18 (MS; TE, RT, KP, MV et al.). While this record requires CBRC review, several seabird authorities experienced with the species have examined the photos, and have been unanimous in their assessment that it is this species, and almost certainly of the New Zealand breeding subspecies *gouldii* (as were the other California records). This would be the first record for Santa Cruz County, and only the third for the state, with the last record twelve years earlier! Among the more expected Procellariids, one or two **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were found in Santa Cruz County waters on two or three pelagic trips (SJ, MS). Rare but regular storm-petrels in county waters included a **Wilson's** on September 26 (SJ), and **Least Storm-Petrel** reports included two on September 12 (SJ), and three on September 18 (MS).

White-faced Ibis were reported in small numbers in the Watsonville Slough System through the period (v.ob.), with the highest reported count being six in Struve Slough on October 7 (KK). Two different **Bald Eagles** flew over Capitola in early September—a sub-adult on September 5, and a juvenile on September 10 (DSu). With two reports (noted last issue) in late August, this brings the fall-period total for the county up to a remarkable four, and all within a two week

period! Two juvenile **Broad-winged Hawks** were over Wilder Ranch on October 3 (SG, KK, JWa), and an adult flew over Capitola on October 9 (DSu). Reports of early **Merlins** included at least two in Capitola on August 31 (JD, DSu), and one at New Brighton State Beach on September 1 (DSu). **Common Moorhens** are resident and expected in several Pajaro Valley areas, but still a count of eight at Pinto Lake on September 23 (RR, BR, et al.) was a very good number for one spot in Santa Cruz County. Moorhens are less expected in other parts of the county, so one at Baldwin Creek Marsh on September 29 was notable (TJ, DSu et al.).

There were two reports of **Pacific Golden-Plover** in Santa Cruz County this fall, at the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence on August 27 (RF), and there again on September 6 (RW). Also at the confluence of these sloughs was this fall's only **Solitary Sandpiper**, on September 12 (AR, RW). It was quite a good fall for **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the county, with numbers peaking in the second week in September. The high count was an impressive 20 in the upstream area of Struve Slough on September 9 (BR, SG), with 12 still there on September 12 (AR). The season's second **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Struve Slough on September 17 (RW). There were a few more reports involving probably three **Baird's Sandpipers** through September 3 (v.ob), but none thereafter, for a rather early departure. Some of these might have been birds that had been reported earlier, so the estimated total for this fall migration season is in the range of 8-12 individuals. **Pectoral Sandpipers** had a moderate showing, with just over a dozen reports in September and early October (v.ob.). A majority were from the Watsonville Sloughs, but the high count for the season was five at Younger Lagoon on September 13 (PB).

The **Stilt Sandpiper** at Struve Slough remained until September 9 (v.ob.). A juvenile **Ruff** stopped at Younger Lagoon on September 15 (SG), but did not linger. The last **Wilson's Phalaropes** of this fall were two at the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence on September 6 (AR). The season's second **Least Tern** was fishing off Seacliff State Beach on September 2 (DSu). A young **Black Tern** at Capitola Beach on September 3 was also the second for the season (DSu). **Forster's Terns** continued to be scarce in the county, with the high count reported for this period being only four at the Watsonville/Struve Slough confluence on October 4 (DVP, LHa). One to three **Tufted Puffins** were reported in county waters from various pelagic trips through October 10 (SJ, MS).

A **White-winged Dove** visited the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach on October 9 (DSu). A **Long-eared Owl** called in the Amaya Creek watershed on September 6 (DSu). A **Black Swift**, rarely detected in the county in fall migration, passed over Ocean View Summit at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on September 11 (KK). Although migrant **Vaux's Swifts** seemed sparse overall, two reports of aggregations were notable: 50-70 over upper Empire Grade on September 12 were representative of flocks seen there around that date (GS), and 100 were among many migrant swallows at Antonelli Pond on September 22 (AG). Additional **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** carried the season's total to at least 16 birds, above the average number that have appeared in late summer since 2002, when this hummer became a regular part of our suite of species. One was later than the main window of occurrence, being spotted at Lighthouse Field on October 10 (AG); there are few records after the third week of September.

A **Pileated Woodpecker** at the UCSC Arboretum on October 14 was away from its usual range and habitats (SG). A total of 10 **Willow Flycatchers** were reported for the fall migration, spanning August 28 to September 24 (v.ob.). A cooperative **Least Flycatcher** was enjoyed by a number of birders during its stay at Lighthouse Field from October 5-8 (SG, v.ob.). A **Dusky Flycatcher** was at Pajaro Dunes on September 25 (MST). **Tropical Kingbirds** were enjoyed at Capitola on September 28 (JD), Struve Slough on October 5 (NA), and Porter-Sesnon on October 9 (DSu). A third **Eastern Kingbird** for the season was at Antonelli Pond on September 3 (GG),

for a strong showing. Three **Horned Larks** at Hanson Slough on September 26 were in the area where this declining species has been found in recent seasons (CK), but a tired migrant that dropped in to rest on the parking lot at Seacliff State Beach on October 10 was unexpected (DSu).

A **Purple Martin** was at Antonelli Pond on September 6 (SG), and three were among other migrant swallows and swifts over upper Empire Grade on September 12 (GS). Always a treat in this county, a **White-breasted Nuthatch** visited the oaks of Quail Hollow Ranch on September 19 (AR). A **Marsh Wren** in coyote brush scrub at Porter-Sesnon on September 11 was way out of habitat and miles from any spot where the species might be expected (DSu). Several reports of **Western Bluebirds** were mostly from locations where they have been found in recent seasons, but a family group at Pinto Lake on August 18 was the first breeding evidence reported from that spot in many years (BMr), and six near the UCSC Arboretum on October 14 were good for that location (SG). A rare **Sage Thrasher** popped up at Seacliff State Beach on October 4 (DSu).

It was a fairly slow season for vagrant warblers. The best was a **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Quail Hollow Ranch on October 7, the first ever photographed in the county (AR). Next best among the vagrants were five **Tennessee Warblers** from Natural Bridges to Capitola during September 11 to October 6 for double the season's average (DSu, PB), a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Capitola on September 10 (DSu), a **Magnolia Warbler** at Capitola Beach on October 13 (DSu), and a **Blackburnian Warbler** at Capitola on October 8 (DSu). Among the more common vagrants were 11 **Palm Warblers** (v.ob.), four **Blackpoll Warblers** (BR, RR, DSu), one **Black-and-white Warbler** (DSu), two **American Redstarts**, and two **Northern Waterthrushes** (ER, DS). Rare to uncommon western warblers included three **Nashville Warblers** (low), 21 **Black-throated Grays**, and two **MacGillivray's** (v.ob.). Surprisingly, no **Hermit Warblers** were reported.

Migrant **Chipping Sparrows** outnumbered **Clay-colored Sparrows** seven to four (SGe, PB, DSu). A **Vesper Sparrow** was at Antonelli Pond on October 10 (SG). Four **Lark Sparrows** were found from September 1 to October 4 (DSu, SG, KK). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were at Natural Bridges on September 2 (WN) and Wilder Ranch on October 4 (KK). A **Blue Grosbeak** was at Santa Cruz on September 21-24 (SG). A flock of four **Great-tailed Grackles** flying up the coast along the top of the bluffs at New Brighton State Beach on October 14 were unexpected, and there have been few recent records from the mid-county area. A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at the Farm Project at UCSC on October 14 (SG).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Phil Brown, Judy Donaldson, Todd Easterla, Rick Fournier, Gabriel Gartner, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Lauren Harter, Tim Jolly, Clay Kempf, Kathy Kuyper, Earl Lebow, Monterey Seabirds (fide Roger Wolfe), Bryan Mori (BMr), Wendy Naruo, Kenneth Petersen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Erik Rogers, Shearwater Journeys (fide Debra Shearwater), David Sidle (DSi), Gary Strachan, Matthew Strusis-Timmer, Richard Ternullo, David Suddjian (DSu), David Vander Pluym, Martijn Verdoes, Jeff Wall (JWa), Roger Wolfe. "v.ob." means many observers.

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from October 16 to December 31, 2010

Greater White-fronted Geese were reported often through early winter, with the high count for this period being 39 at Harkins Slough on November 1 (CK). **Snow Geese** were reported from November 6 onwards (v.ob.). Notable counts were 34 over Capitola on November 16, and flocks of 32 and 140 over Capitola on December 12 (DSu). The latter represented one of the largest flocks on record for the county. Six reports of **Ross's Geese** from November 16 through December 31 were of 1-4 individuals, mostly at College Lake (JWa, OJ, CK, DSu, LG, JP). Reports of **Cackling Geese** came mostly after mid-November, with a high of 36 at Struve Slough on December 12 (DSt). **Brant** are decidedly rare in fall migration in this county, as evidenced this year by just three reports of one to six birds from November 13 to December 18 (DSu, JP).

Six **Tundra Swans** flew past Capitola Beach on December 29 (DSu). South county wetlands had a few male **Eurasian Wigeon**, such as one or two at Struve and West Struve sloughs from November 14 onwards, and up to two at College Lake on December 28-31 (v.ob.). But the species has been seldom found away from the Pajaro Valley, so one male at Younger Lagoon on December 21 was notable (JK). Three hundred and thirty **Green-winged Teal** at College Lake on December 31 provided a nice count (DSu). A female **Harlequin Duck** was at Seacliff State Beach on November 26, while **Long-tailed Ducks** flew past Seacliff on October 16 (early for this county) and Capitola Beach on December 29 (DSu). All five reports of **Black Scoters** came from Seacliff from November 8 to December 5 (DSu, PS, NC), with a high count of four on November 20 (DSu).

Three reports of **White-winged Scoters** came from the mid-county coast December 18-30 (DSu, SG). We normally see **Red-breasted Mergansers** just one to a few at a time, so a flock of 24 flying past Capitola on December 18 was a rare treat (DSu). An exceptional gathering of **Red-throated Loons** in Soquel Cove on November 8 included at least 1,485 birds, with a single flock of 650 (DSu)! Migrant **Pacific Loons** are more expected in large numbers in late fall, but an estimated 17,000 seen from Seacliff on November 20 was still exciting (DSu). Three **Red-necked Grebes** were reported at the mid-county coast from October 23 to December 1 (DSu, JR). A **Pink-footed Shearwater** was spied from Soquel Point on December 18 (CK).

A **Cattle Egret** at Wilder Ranch State Park on November 8 was the only one reported this fall (SG). Up to 10 **White-faced Ibis** were found at Struve Slough and vicinity from October through December (v.ob.). Notable reports elsewhere were one flying by Terrace Point on October 16 (MD et al), one at Laguna Creek Beach on October 25 (DSi), 17 at Pinto Lake on November 26 (BR, RR), and one there on December 15 (LG, JP). Reports of **Merlin** were plentiful, with 12 reports in October, 20 in November, and a robust 29 in December (v.ob.). Among these, birds showing characteristics of the "Prairie" subspecies were at Natural Bridges on November 19 (DSi, SG et al), at Seacliff on November 26 (DSu), and western Santa Cruz on December 7 (SG), while one of the "Black" subspecies was near Quail Hollow on December 1-5 (AR). A late **Lesser Yellowlegs** visited Struve Slough on November 21 (LR, RB). West Cliff Drive's **Rock**

Sandpiper returned for its 8th winter stay by November 30 (PB)! How many breaking waves has that bird dodged in its long life?

A flock of 120 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at Struve Slough on December 6 was a good count (LG, BR). One Bonaparte's the fields of Branciforte Middle School in Santa Cruz on December 21 was in an exceptional setting (AGa); we are unaware of other reports of this species at playing fields in this county. **Glaucous Gulls** were well reported from December 3 onward, but perhaps only four individuals were noted (v.ob.). One at San Lorenzo Park was much more cooperative than usual for birds visiting our county, staying for a period of weeks and being seen by many birders. A high count of 12,600 **Common Murres** flying out of the bay off Seacliff after a stormy night were probably just the "tip of the iceberg," as they were very far out and it is likely that many more too far to view (DSu). Two **Cassin's Auklets** noted in that same flight were notable, as we seldom see them from shore in this county (DSu).

Two **White-winged Dove** reports were late for Santa Cruz County. One stopped in western Santa Cruz on October 31 (SG). Then one at Seacliff State Beach on November 26 was the latest fall migrant ever for the county (DSu). A **Burrowing Owl** spent the late fall/early winter season at Younger Lagoon, first noted on October 23 (RoC, DSi, v.ob.). The lower UCSC grasslands, usually the most reliable spot for wintering Burrowing Owls in the county, had no reports until December 18, when just one was found (JL). An adult male **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** along the San Lorenzo River in northern Henry Cowell State Park on December 24 (AR, JWi, AW) was likely the same one that inhabited that area last winter. An **Eastern Phoebe** appeared near San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz on December 2 (BR), then further up the San Lorenzo Valley another turned up in northern Henry Cowell State Park starting December 23 (JWa). The fall's fourth **Tropical Kingbird** visited Lighthouse Field State Beach on October 28 (SG). Two were present at Struve Slough from November 1-18 (CK, DSt, JS, v.ob.) with at least one of these staying well into January, most likely the same one that wintered there last year. Then *another* Tropical Kingbird was found in Capitola on December 27 (JD).

A **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** found a winter home near the Wilder Ranch historic building complex starting December 15 (KK, JWa, SG, v.ob), and was studied and photographed by many. This is the eighth record for Santa Cruz County (pending CBRC approval). **Loggerhead Shrikes** were very sparse, with just a few reports involving about three birds, all in the Pajaro Valley. A few **Barn Swallows** showed up in December, a fairly normal occurrence in recent years. All reports were of single birds: the first at Struve Slough December 15 (DSt), one at Antonelli Pond December 21 (SG), one around the Struve/Watsonville Slough confluence December 26-28 (CK, EL, AR), and one at College Lake December 31 (DSu). **Chestnut-backed Chickadees** are abundant in our local forests, but over 70 streaming across a trail in Pogonip on December 5 was an unusually large number for one flock (SG et al.). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were reported widely in the county away from "usual areas", though numbers overall were not large (v.ob.).

At least five **Western Bluebirds** remained near the UCSC Arboretum until at least November 6 (JA). Seven along Swanton Road on November 21 provided the only fall report from the north coast area of the county (HS, RS), and two were in Moore Creek Preserve on December 12 (SG). Two **Townsend's Solitaires** visited both sides of the Santa Cruz/Santa Clara county line along Skyline Blvd. on December 30 (DSu). The fall's only **Lapland Longspur** flew down the coast over Seacliff State Beach on October 28 (DSu). A **Tennessee Warbler** near Majors Creek mouth on December 18 was a good find, especially for the county's north coast in December (DE et al.). The fourth fall report of a **Nashville Warbler** was at Struve Slough November 7 (JK), bringing the season total to less than half the recent average. A **Yellow Warbler** was photographed near

Struve Slough in Watsonville on December 24 (DSi), a good find for winter in Santa Cruz County.

The second **Chestnut-sided Warbler** of the fall was a very late migrant along Branciforte Creek in Santa Cruz from November 28 to December 1 (SE, WPr, SG, WN, SP, v.ob.). A couple more **Black-throated Gray Warblers** turned up in November, bringing the fall total to 22, almost exactly matching the average of the last ten years. A **Hermit Warbler** in Big Basin on October 28 (KK) was the only one reported this fall, compared to the average over the last decade of about ten. It was a slightly above-average fall for **Palm Warblers**, with about 18-20 individuals noted in October and November (v.ob.) One of these was snatched in flight and carried off by a Sharp-shinned Hawk in front of a group of birders at UCSC on October 16 (SG et al.)! The second **Black-and-white Warbler** of the fall was in Capitola on October 30 (LL), and one crept through the trees of the Soquel Creek riparian in Capitola from December 13-18 (DSu). Another very late migrant was the third **Northern Waterthrush** of the fall, bobbing along the Shorebirds Pond at Pajaro Dunes on November 21 (KVV).

A **Green-tailed Towhee** fluttered in front of a birder's window in Boulder Creek on December 27 (KJ), then stayed around well into January, providing just the second wintering record for Santa Cruz County. The eighth **Chipping Sparrow** of the fall was near Lighthouse Field on November 4 (AG), and the season's fifth **Clay-colored Sparrow** was in Santa Cruz on October 30 (SG). The only **Brewer's Sparrow** for the year was a late migrant studied and photographed by many near Antonelli Pond from November 18-22 (SG, v.ob.), for the first November record for the county. A **Vesper Sparrow**, the season's second, stopped at the famous Seacliff State Beach parking lot on October 16 (DSu), and the fall's fifth **Lark Sparrow** was in Ben Lomond on November 6 (JWi). Single **Swamp Sparrows** stayed at Antonelli Pond starting November 25, and Neary Lagoon from November 26 (SG, v.ob.). The local Swamp Sparrow haven, College Lake, held 10 on December 31 (DSu) – impressive, but not that unusual a number for that site.

A **Fox Sparrow** showing characteristics of the “Red” form was on the upper UCSC campus on December 27 (SG). **White-throated Sparrow** reports from October 10 through the end of December involved about 15 individuals (v.ob.). A **Dark-eyed Junco** of the “Slate-colored” form was northeast of Scotts Valley on December 6 (BMo). **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** visited feeders north of Boulder Creek on November 5 (JB), and in Santa Cruz near Natural Bridges on November 21 (WPa). **Black-headed Grosbeaks** in Corralitos from October 17-22 (NA) and in Santa Cruz on November 12 (BMc) were late. A tally of 136 **Great-tailed Grackles**, apparently flying to a roost site at Struve Slough on December 22 was a new high total for the county (DSu). A wintering **Orchard Oriole** was first found at Natural Bridges on December 16 (DM, ReC), and stayed into January. Another female oriole of the Orchard/Hooded type visited a Capitola yard from December 15-January 5 (JG).

A few **Red Crossbills** were noted from Santa Cruz and the Felton area November 1-10 (SG, KK, AR), suggesting a small scale movement, though there were no other reports through the end of December. **Pine Siskins** were in good numbers in some mountain areas of the county, with some counts in the hundreds (SG, AR, v.ob.), but they were quite sparse in the coastal lowlands. The first notable irruption of **Evening Grosbeaks** in California in some time brought some to Santa Cruz County from November 12 onward, with reports from various sites including Capitola, UCSC, Empire Grade, and Santa Cruz (DSu, BL, SG, v.ob.) By mid-December, fairly good numbers had concentrated in the riparian area along the San Lorenzo River in Henry Cowell State Park, where they feasted on the good crop of box elder seeds. There were numerous reports starting December 14 (IM, DE, CV, v.ob.), with the highest count noted being 51 on December 31 (AR).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Jenny Anderson, Jeff Bleam, Phil Brown, Rachel Brown, Rebecca Clark (ReC), Robert Clark (RoC), Nancy Collins, Matthew Dodder, Judy Donaldson, David Ekdahl, Sandi Elsik, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Janette Gross, Kent Johnson, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Jacob Kirkland, Kathy Kuyper, Lisa Larson, Earl, Lebow, Janet Linthicum, Bruce Lyon, Ingrid Mednis, Barry McLaughlin (BMc), Barbara Monahan (BMo), David Moldoff, Wendy Naruo, William Park (WPa), Shantanu Phukan, Jeff Poklen, Warren Pruess (WPr), Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Leighton Reid, Alex Rinkert, Jennifer Rycenga, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, David Sidle (DSi), Pete Sole', David Styer (DSt), Jane Styer, David Suddjian (DSu), Jeff Wall (JWa), Anne Williams, Jim Williams (JWi), Kent Van Vuren, Connie Vigno

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow

Including reports from January 1 to February 28, 2011

Greater White-fronted Geese were reported from several spots (v.ob); the period's high count was 12 over College Lake on January 15 (DSu). There were eight reports of **Snow Geese**, all of 1-5 birds (v.ob.). All were from the Pajaro Valley except for a flock of five seen passing over the mountains near Boulder Creek on February 13 (JB). **Ross's Geese** included two at College Lake on January 1 and 19 (DSu, BMc, LG, JP), five at Struve Slough on January 9 (BR, RR), and one around Antonelli Pond on February 4-8 (SG et al.). Eight **Brant** off Seacliff on February 16 were the only ones reported (DSu). Four **Tundra Swans** flew over College Lake on January 15 (DSu). A **Wood Duck** at a pond near the county fairgrounds on January 1 (DE et al.) was notable for the Pajaro Valley.

A gathering of 495 **Gadwall** at College Lake on January 1 provided a record high for the county (DSu). Four Gadwalls flying off Sunset State Beach on February 9 were over the ocean, where rarely noted in this county (JW). Up to two male **Eurasian Wigeon** continued from December at Struve Slough, being noted through at least January 22 (DSi et al., v.ob.), and three males were at College Lake on January 1 (DSu). A hybrid male **Eurasian x American Wigeon** was at Struve Slough on January 11-23, and possibly as early as January 1 (LG, JW, WN, DSi, v.ob.). About nine **Blue-winged Teal** were reported in the Pajaro Valley this period (v.ob.). Five hundred **Northern Shovelers** at College Lake on January 1 was one of the higher counts on record for the county (DSu). A **Long-tailed Duck** was at Sunset State Beach on January 16 (DSu).

Three **Black Scoters** were found along the mid-county coast from January 10 – February 28 (DSu, KK, SG). One near Sunny Cove on February 23 was heard calling (KK), an exceptional occurrence for any of our scoters here in winter, and especially so for this locally rare species. **White-winged Scoters** were found at a handful of spots from Sunset to Natural Bridges. The former has proved to be the best place to find this duck in recent winters, and this season's high count of 15 was made there on February 9 (JW). The high count of **Surf Scoters** from regular surveys at Seacliff State Beach was 3,100 on February 16 (DSu). **Common Merganser** turns up only rarely in the Pajaro Valley, so singles were notable at College Lake on January 6 (LG, WG) and at Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on January 11 (BR, RR).

Good foraging conditions apparently attracted large numbers of **Red-throated Loons** to Soquel Cove in January, with counts from Seacliff of 215 and 216 on January 12 and January 24, respectively (DSu). For comparison, the recent average for the whole coastline from New Brighton to Davenport on the Santa Cruz CBC is just 85 birds. Three **Red-necked Grebes** were spotted this period. The high count of **Western/Clark's Grebes** during surveys at Seacliff was a hefty 11,730 on January 24 (DSu), coincident with the large number of loons mentioned above. A small number of **White-faced Ibis** wintered at the Watsonville Sloughs (v.ob.); the high count was eight on January 1 (CK, EL et al.). Ibis are less expected at Pinto Lake, where 1-5 were found up to January 22 (LG).

The period of December to February had 18 reports of **Osprey**, and four were found in the Pajaro Valley on January 1 alone (fide RR, BR). The same period had a high 84 reports of **Merlin** and

60 reports of **Peregrine Falcon**! Many of these were no doubt repeated sightings of the same individuals. Some shorebirds are only rarely found inland in this county, and then only at certain habitats. A **Black-bellied Plover** at the fields of Bay View School in Santa Cruz on January 2 was rare away from the coastline, but also provided the first report of the species at a playing field in this county (SG). Greyhound Rock continues to support a high tide gathering of **Black Oystercatchers**, as evidenced by 69 there on January 6 (DSu). It was odd to see a tight cluster of about 90 **Willetts** swimming in the ocean 400-700 yards off Seacliff State Beach on February 3 (DSu).

The winter's only **Ruddy Turnstone** was found along the Live Oak coast on January 15 (JW). A rare winter **Western Sandpiper** was spotted at College Lake on February 2 (EP, FO). The **Rock Sandpiper** continued through the season (v.ob.). **Long-billed Dowitchers** have been fairly rare here in winter lately. This season one was at College Lake on December 31 (DSu), and 10-12 were at Struve Slough on February 3-12 (RW). Some four to six **Glaucous Gulls** were noted in January and February (v.ob.). An early **Caspian Tern** flew by West Cliff Drive on February 22 (SG). **Cassin's Auklets** are seldom reported from shore in our county, but this period had one from Greyhound Rock (DSu) and 1 from Terrace Point (OJ).

A new record high count of 304 **Eurasian Collared-Doves** was tallied in the Santa Cruz County portion of the Moss Landing CBC circle on January 1 (fide RR & BR), another illustration of just how numerous that species has become, especially in the Pajaro Valley. The **Burrowing Owl** wintering at Younger Lagoon remained into March (LG, EL, JH, v.ob.), as did one wintering near Pajaro Valley High School, first found January 7 (JPi, NAn), and possibly one of the two owls in that same area last winter. A **Long-eared Owl** hunted the fields and fairgrounds near College Lake from January 1-15 (DSu). The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in the riparian of northern Henry Cowell State Park was seen again on January 15 (DSu), and an adult male **Red-naped Sapsucker** turned up in the pines of the higher and drier eastern part of this park from January 12-15 (RM, DSu). So along with the regular Red-breasteds, Henry Cowell simultaneously hosted *three* species of sapsuckers for a while this winter.

A **Hammond's Flycatcher** along the San Lorenzo River near San Lorenzo Park from January 7 into March was the first ever found wintering in Santa Cruz County (DSi, SG, OJ, v.ob.). It was a good winter for **Eastern Phoebes**. The one in the northern part of Henry Cowell State Park was seen up until January 17 (PM, DSu, AR). Another was near Harkins Slough January 1-6 (EL, CK, SG, BR, RR). Then a third turned up along the river in San Lorenzo Park on January 24, staying well into March (LG, WG, v.ob.); this phoebe was possibly the same that was found in that area in early December. Struve Slough's wintering **Tropical Kingbird** continued until March 5 (DSi, GM, NA, ML, v.ob.). The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** at Wilder Ranch became rather elusive after early January, but it stayed around until at least February 22 (SG, ST, JWa, v.ob.).

Horned Lark reports included twelve near Hanson Slough on January 17 (DSi, DSt, JSt, et al.), and four near there on February 21 (JBU), showing the continued presence of what is apparently the only resident population of larks in the county. There were only two reports of **Loggerhead Shrikes** this period (WSS, KJ), both from locations east of Watsonville in early January. College Lake again held a very large winter roost of **American Crows**, with a high count of 2,715 flying in to the roost site on the evening of February 11 (DSu, SSu), setting a new record for Santa Cruz County. Efforts to track the paths of crows flying from this roost in the mornings found that they dispersed widely in several directions, with some flying into Monterey, Santa Clara, and possibly San Benito Counties, and others commuting over 16 miles well up into mid-Santa Cruz County, some going past the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz (DSu).

A few additional winter **Barn Swallows** were reported from south county spots in early January (v.ob.), and somewhat less expected were three were along West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz on January 14 (SGe et al.). A scattering of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued in lowland areas through the winter, with the highest count reported being four at San Lorenzo Park on January 25 (OJ et al.) The only **White-breasted Nuthatches** reported were at Kelly-Thompson Ranch east of Watsonville, with three found on January 1 (WSS). **Western Bluebirds** were again found along the northern part of Swanton Road, with up to four there January 17-22 (LG, AR). Around five were regularly noted at Quail Hollow through the winter (AR, JWi), and there were various reports from the Pajaro Valley and adjacent foothills. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was in Castle Rock State Park on February 13 (RF).

A **Nashville Warbler** wintered at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz from January 2 onward (SG, v.ob.), and one was along Soquel Creek at Peery Park in Capitola on February 2 (DSu). The second **Yellow Warbler** of the winter was near the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on January 21 (OJ). The **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Peery Park stayed around until February 2 (DSu), and one visited trees in urban parking lots and street medians in downtown Santa Cruz from December 11 until February 3 (KK, MTL, SG, LGo, v.ob); the latter possibly a returning bird from the previous winter. The only **Hermit Warbler** found this winter was in Ranch Del Oso on January 6 (DSu). A wintering **Palm Warbler** stayed around Bethany Curve Park beginning January 28 (SG, v.ob.). A **Black-and-white Warbler** joined the other rarities at San Lorenzo Park from January 24 into March (LGo, WGo, v.ob.).

The wintering **Green-tailed Towhee** continued near Boulder Creek through the period (KJ, v.ob.). A rare winter **Chipping Sparrow** was at College Lake on January 1 (DSu). Ten **Swamp Sparrows** around College Lake on January 1 included some at different places from the ten found the previous day (DSu); the estimated total of Swamps wintering at or near this lake was at least 13-14. Another was not too far away at Lake Tynan on January 1 (PB et al.). About 14 **White-throated Sparrows** were reported in January and February (v.ob.). There were four reports in this period of "**Slate-colored**" **Juncos** (BMo, DSu, SG, WBT). The only **Western Tanager** this winter was in Meder Canyon on February 10 (SG). A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** turned up in an east Santa Cruz yard on January 15 (BR). Somewhat rarer for winter was a male **Black-headed Grosbeak** near College Lake on February 6 (BR, RR).

Very rare for winter was a male **Indigo Bunting** that visited a Live Oak feeder on February 19 (GM). Among birds that shouldn't be rare, this winter's showing of **Tricolored Blackbirds** was very poor, with few reports, and none exceeding 20 individuals! Several grassland species have shown a declining trend in the county in recent years, but it is especially discouraging to see such small numbers for a species so well known for occurring in large flocks. A female **Orchard Oriole**, the second this winter, was in eucalyptus at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds January 15-25 (DSu, AR). **Bullock's Orioles** were in Santa Cruz near Neary Lagoon from January 5 to February 17 (SG, SD, v.ob), and in the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach from January 7 to February 17 (DSu).

Small numbers of **Red Crossbills** were around this winter, with a few reports each from the eastern part of Henry Cowell State Park and vicinity (AR, SG, KK, JWa), and from Monterey Pine forests from northern Swanton Road to Rancho Del Oso (DSu, BR, RR, AR). **Evening Grosbeaks** continued through the period (and well into March) in the riparian forest of northern Henry Cowell, with reported flocks ranging from a few birds to around 35 (JWi, SG, AR, PB, v.ob.). Other reports included three further downstream on the San Lorenzo in Santa Cruz on January 4 (KK), and six at Rancho Del Oso on January 6 (DSu).

Cited Observers: Nanci Adams, Noelle Antolin (NAn), Jeff Bleam, Jerry Busch (JBu), Phil Brown, Sue Dummler, David Ekdahl, Robert Furrow, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Jean Harrison, Kent Johnson, Oscar Johnson, Clay Kempf, Kathy Kuyper, Earl, Lebow, Margaret Leonard, Rob Martin, Gary Martindale, Barry McLaughlin (BMc), Paul Miller, Barbara Monahan (BMo), Wendy Naruo, Francis Oliver, Ed Pandolfino, Jonathan Pilch (JPi), Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, David Sidle (DSi), W. Scott Smithson (WSS), David Styer (DSt), Jane Styer, David Suddjian (DSu), Stephen Suddjian (SSu), Scott Terrill, W. Breck Tyler, Monte Tudor-Long, Jeff Wall (JWa), Jim Williams (JWi), Roger Wolfe.