

Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Inside Calendar of Events



Annual Christmas Bird Counts!

Santa Cruz Birds

Santa Cruz County 2018 Christmas Bird Count Summary



PARTING SHOT

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - Randy Wardle
Purple Finch on Pistache - Beth Hamel

"Birdhouse by the Bay", a NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat

- By Cathy Gamble

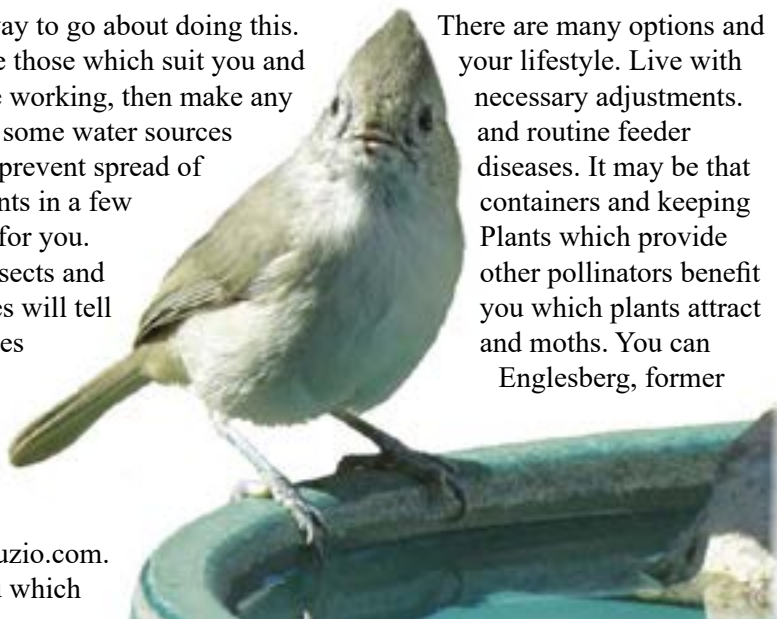
Disclaimer: I'm a student of wildlife (including birds) & plants, not an expert.

The National Wildlife Federation makes it easy for just about anyone to have a Certified Wildlife Habitat: "... your yard, balcony container garden, school yard, workplace landscape, or roadside green space." Why bother? Because we care about the environment and hope our actions help replenish lost habitat and resources for birds and other wildlife. It's also one way to show others what can be done to benefit our environment. It might encourage them to do likewise. Focusing on it's needs, changes and maintenance has provided some of the best natural entertainment, continuing education and experiences of my life.

Life rushes at me at a dizzying pace ... so many changes ... so much sad news ... confrontations and ugly rhetoric. My wildlife habitat provides a respite and haven from all this negative stuff. It's a positive counterbalance that helps me focus on what I can do to try to make the world a better place. And I learn something new almost every day.

Birds and other wildlife are good at finding find water, food, shelter, and places to raise their young ... things we all need to survive. If you provide them, they will come.

There's no one-right way to go about doing this. it's up to you to choose those which suit you and them and see if they're working, then make any Daily maintenance for some water sources cleaning are a must to prevent spread of providing the right plants in a few them alive works best for you. nectar and/or attract insects and birds. On-line resources will tell which insects, butterflies also contact Helen head of propagation at UCSC's Arboretum and owner of Pickelberry Farm: pickelberry@cruzio.com. She's happy to tell you which



There are many options and your lifestyle. Live with necessary adjustments. and routine feeder diseases. It may be that containers and keeping Plants which provide other pollinators benefit you which plants attract and moths. You can Englesberg, former

All photos taken at Cathy Gamble's by Lisa Larson
Oak Titmouse

pollinator plants might grow well in your area. She also sells these plants.

No two places are alike. Yours may attract different birds and other wildlife than those of your neighbors. Anything you do to help them, even if it's just foregoing pesticides will be beneficial.

Life leads us on unexpected journeys of discovery. We start out planning to find out about or fix one thing, discover other things in the process which, in turn, lead us on other journeys. Such has been the case for me. My property was certified by NFW in 2012, after several years of research, planning and hard work, but it wasn't my original goal.

My patch of paradise is 1/3 acre in a riparian area which abuts Boregas Gulch near Sealiff State Park. When I bought it in 1995, it had 2 oak trees and large overgrown junipers in the front yard, making it perfect for Halloween, but not inviting ... more like scary ... the rest of the year. The fenced back yard sloped down into the gulch, had 2 separate lawns, a redwood, 3 oaks and mostly non-native plants. Most of the back yard was newly planted and on an automatic sprinkler system. It was a "water hog". Because of all the birds that came here, I named it, "Birdhouse by the Bay". I saw birds I'd never seen before and wanted to encourage others. I heard no coyotes and saw no American crows, chipmunks or rabbits.

My original goal was to re-landscape both front and back yards ... over time so I could afford it ... to reduce my water usage. It's important to know and understand: which plants do best in your area; how the sun hits various spots daily and seasonally so you place plants where they'll thrive; and how birds and other wildlife living or visiting benefit from the plants you choose.

I volunteered for Watsonville Wetlands Watch and studied native and drought resistant plants. My main plant resources were *California Native Plants for the Garden* by Bornstein, Fross and O'Brien and *Sunset's Western Garden Book*. There are many excellent on-line and other resources now which were not available ten years ago.



In the meantime, I joined SCBC, took Nanci Adams' birding classes, went on bird walks locally and trips elsewhere. I consulted NFW's *Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife* to incorporate habitat in my plans.

I interviewed landscape designers and studied restoration methods before drawing sketches and plant lists for re-landscaping the front & back yards. Men used a truck and chains to remove the front yard junipers. It took 2 months to kill the backyard grass with layers of brown cardboard lying on top of the lawn areas. The cardboard biodegraded, benefitting the soil in the process. Two friends, Linda Bjornson and John Fitzpatrick, helped me design and install 3 dry stream beds. We laid landscape cloth under the dry stream beds and planting areas to discourage weeds, and planted new plants in gopher baskets. Linda placed the rocks so the beds look realistic. Shredded redwood bark ("gorilla hair") was used to mulch planted areas. Professionally installed drip irrigation systems on automatic timers kept new plants alive until they became established. In 3 years the timers were turned off. My water usage dropped by over 50%, so original mission accomplished. Most plants now require little or no supplemental water. I let most of the lower back yard go wild and build wildlife habitat naturally. The

number of different species of birds who visited and/or became regulars increased as the new landscaping matured and naturalized.

I attached a birdbath to my back deck railing. I use either a hydrogen peroxide or bleach solution, depending on the buildup in the birdbath or on the rocks, as a disinfectant. I put a few rocks in the water to provide easier access for small birds, bees and insects. Raccoons, opossums, squirrels, chipmunks, rats and mixed groups of birds use it. Birds' various bathing styles, some very enthusiastic to relieve the itch of molting and mites (parasites), are great fun to watch.

"Cavity nesting" birds use nesting boxes (bird houses), each species requiring a differently sized entrance



Above: Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Left: Hairy Woodpecker



Anna's Hummingbird, California Scrub Jay, Birds on far right panel are on next page

Location matters for wildlife, just as it does for us. My daughter gave me a bat house. After 10 years with no resident bats, I gave it to a friend in a warmer area. Bats moved into it in less than a week. You need to know where to place nesting boxes for wildlife, and when they're in use for rearing young so you don't disturb the process.

It's important to have shrubs or trees or some form of perch and shelter near feeders so birds can escape predation. They also provide a waiting area for a bird's turn at the feeder, and excellent viewing opportunities for you.

Info for placing feeders a safe distance from windows is available on-line. There are other methods to try for window-kill prevention.

It's trial and error. Wildlife are good at figuring out how to survive. For several years I had 2 platform seed feeders on my back deck railing. Word apparently circulated via the wildlife grapevine about them. 30 Band-Tailed Pigeons, 15 Eurasian Collared Doves and 18 squirrels (two different species) were the most I counted at once on the deck and in the feeders. Their "calling cards" and territorial marking turned the feeders and deck into a smelly, unsanitary latrine. I removed the platform feeders and replaced them with a series of hanging feeders which claimed to be squirrel-proof. One afternoon I found a large rat lying inside a large seed feeder having a feast in broad daylight. When I patiently explained that it was a nocturnal creature, it wasn't the least bit impressed and kept right on eating.

I've decided both squirrels and rats



hole. Cornell's Ornithology Lab or Audubon are great resources for this. Perching posts beneath the opening should be removed so "nest robbers" can't reach eggs or fledglings. There are 2 nesting boxes under the eaves of my house which are annual nesting boxes for Chestnut-back Chickadee and Oak Titmouse families (not at the same time, but both use the same box). CA Towhees nest in bushes and the "Cecile Brunner" climbing rose on one side of the house. Two pairs of Spotted Towhees nest on the ground in the "wild area" of my lower yard. Anna's Hummingbirds nest in the oaks.

Broken clay pots turned upside down on the ground shelter salamanders, newts and toads that eat plant-eating slugs. After rains, a single CA Newt or an entire family will hunker down under my green waste bin on the driveway. (Apparently, they're having a picnic. They always bring a slug with them.) If I forget to see if they're there, I can run over them when I move the cans to the street for pick-up. Their babies are often between rocks in the dry stream beds and moist planted areas, so I have to be careful there, too.

I try to leave spiders & their webs alone, especially in spring. Hummingbirds and other small birds use spider webs, lichen &/or moss to build or line their nests. String, ribbon & yarn are also used for nesting material by some birds. If having a bit of a messy yard doesn't bother you, you can leave small branches, leaves and twigs for birds' nest-building. Some birds use animal fur, or dandelion flower fluff to line their nests. (Dryer lint is very bad!)



are smarter than I and those who design most “squirrelproof” feeders. The seed feeder I’ve found that actually works is a “Squirrel Buster”. (See details at: www.bromebirdcare.com.) A weighted mechanism shuts the feeding portals if a bird or mammal on it weighs too much. Squirrels, rats, Band-tailed pigeons and Eurasian Collared doves no longer dine and leave a foul mess. Only a few come to look for food on the deck or use the birdbath, so my counts for Project Feeder Watch have changed substantially.

Using a new feeder presents a challenge for larger birds, but smaller birds have no problem. Different birds try various methods to get seed & persist until they succeed. Jays are smart and tried several methods to reach food before succeeding. Woodpeckers’ legs are positioned on their bodies differently than those of other birds. Their leg placement enables them to easily creep up and down the trunks of trees, but can’t perch upright on railings or branches like other birds. But they soon learned to hang on the side of the new seed feeder and bend over sideways or upside down to get at the seed ... just like the jays. The usually shy, reclusive, ground-dwelling Spotted Towhees and some other birds sat in nearby bushes, watching and were successful their first try. Watching was entertaining education for me.

Three kinds of woodpeckers use my seed feeder: Acorn, Downy and Hairy. Being able to see and hear them nearby makes identification easier. Acorn Woodpeckers don’t seem as shy as the others. Some Acorn Woodpeckers “converse” with me regularly when they’re on the feeders or at the birdbath, but the other two don’t come out of the bushes unless I retreat to the other side of the deck or go inside my house.



*Above: Chestnut-backed Chickadee (far left), Three Pygmy Nuthatches
Left: Bewick's Wren*



Sunflower seed shells contain a substance that inhibits plant growth under feeders or anywhere they gather. I buy no-waste wild bird seed at Aptos Feed. It costs a bit more, but provides a wider variety of seeds with no shells & attracts a wider variety of birds.

Because a Certified Wildlife Habitat includes caring for species other than small birds, I scatter handfuls of mixed shell-less nuts for squirrels, jays and ground-feeding birds onto the lower yard. If I don’t do this early, there will certainly be a squirrel or two on the deck peering through my sliding glass door, looking for me. When I show up on the deck with the nuts, CA Scrub and Stellar Jays are waiting in the trees and announce my arrival.

Home made suet blocks don’t leave an oily mess on my deck. I use 4 c. regular oats, 1 c. bird seed, 4 c. corn meal, 2 c. softened chunky peanut butter and 2 c. softened lard. Mix well, put into molds and freeze. I’ve re-used plastic molds from commercial suet blocks for years. However, I’ve yet to find a suet block feeder which foils raccoons, squirrels and rats, so I bring mine in nightly. A friend recently said

From left: Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Oak Titmouse, California Towhee, House Finch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Anna's Hummingbird, Dark-eyed Junco, Bewick's Wren, Song Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow





some commercial suet blocks contain red peppers that mammals find distasteful and leave alone. For my home made suet, I plan to try 1/2 to 1 tsp. red pepper flakes (like the ones used to sprinkle on pizzas) per suet block, as suggested by Nanci Adams. I now use only one nectar feeder for Anna's (residents) and Allen's (migrating visitors)

Hummingbirds. The nectar recipe: 1/4 c. white granulated sugar dissolved in 1 c. boiling water. Organic sugar can cause fungal buildup quickly and sicken birds. No food coloring should be used.

Participating in Cornell Ornithology Lab's Project Feeder Watch is another citizen science project which benefits scientists while helping me focus on birds by documenting which species come between November and April. No two weeks are the same. I'm restricted to counting birds on feeders or waiting to get on them, not those flying overhead. I've seen more than the 40 species use my feeders. Others fly by overhead: Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Cooper's Hawks, gulls, falcons, and in recent years, flocks of American Crows flying to their roosting spot near Santa Cruz. I hear Great-horned Owls hooting from redwood trees at night, but they don't nest here.



Rest in Peace, push mower!

Ms. Hairy Woodpecker exerts caution before succumbing to the magnetism of "her" suet.



Mother Nature doesn't work for Disney. Some of her scenes are difficult to watch. A Chestnut-backed Chickadee was at my seed feeder when Cooper's Hawk swooped down, grabbed it and flew away. Other birds saw this, scattered and sounded alarm calls. I watched a feral cat, with a rabbit about half her size in her mouth, carry it away from my lower yard.

Sometimes my biggest lessons come from failures. I planted a Buddleia bush in the front yard to attract butterflies. The first year I noticed disfigured and curled leaves, so I pruned them off. I told a friend what I'd done only to learn that those leaves may have contained the larvae of the butterflies I'd been trying to attract. I'll doubtless make other mistakes, but hopefully not that one again.



My outdoor "Today Shows" have no re-runs. I tried unsuccessfully in several states to see a fox in the wild. One night there it was ... a San Joaquin Kit Fox on my back deck, peering through the sliding glass door! There are now coyotes "singing" in the gulch, chipmunks and rabbits in my lower yard, and Tree Swallows overhead catching insects in summer. "My" birds know and trust their "serving wench" by sight. I've been thrilled when Pygmy Nuthatches can't wait for me to finish hanging the suet block and land on my arm. There are usually 5-8 of them dining (often upside down) together on the feeder. A Bewick's Wren visits several times daily, hopping 2 feet from me across the deck and up the trellis to get to the suet blocks. Seasonal visitors like warblers (3 kinds) and finches (3 kinds) and sparrows (4 kinds) are great fun to welcome and watch.

The joys of learning from plants and critters never end. When I pay attention to them, they are often some my best teachers.

Details for NWF certification at: www.nwf.org/CertifiedWildlifeHabitat

EVENTS CALENDAR

November-December 2019

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

DATE	LOCATION	LEADER
Sunday, November 3rd	Westcliff Drive and Lighthouse Field	Phil Brown
Friday, November 8th	Swanton Pond	Alex Rinkert
Sunday, November 10th	Henry Cowell State Park	Jonah Svensson
Tuesday, November 12th	Porter-Sesnon Property	Lisa Fay Larson
Sunday, November 17th	Terrace Point & Younger Lagoon	Jonah Svensson
Wednesday, November 20	Pinto Lake County Park	Bob Ramer
Sunday, November 24th	San Lorenzo River	Phil Brown
Friday, December 6th	UCSC Arboretum & Farm	Nick Levendosky
Sunday, December 8th	Baldwin Creek	Phil Brown
Thursday, December 19th	Loma Prieta	Nicholas Levendosky
Sunday, December 29th	Wilder Ranch and Old Cove Trail	Phil Brown

*Santa Cruz Bird Club programs and field trips are open to the public—non-members are welcome. People needing rides to field trip sites are advised to contact Nicholas Levendosky: nlevendosky@gmail.com. Carpooling is encouraged. Dress in layers and bring liquids. Lunches are optional on half-day trips. **Heavy rain cancels.***

Field trips can pose hazards. Reluctantly, we have decided we must publish and implement this policy:

The Santa Cruz Bird Club or its field trip leaders cannot be responsible for damage, injury, or loss incurred by the acts or omissions of any member or visitor during Club field trips or during commutes to or from them.

Field trip participants must release the Club from any liability for such damage, injury, or loss.

Ordinarily, field trip participants sign a waiver releasing the Club from such liability, but in the absence of such a signed waiver, participation on a Club field trip in itself implies consent to and agreement with this waiver.



Western Tanager - Pete Sole

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CBC

Saturday December 14

The 63rd Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for Santa Cruz County will be held on Saturday, December 14, 2019. Please mark one's calendar now and prepare for a day of birding, fun and excitement for the experienced and new birders alike. Come and see what birds join us for December; a surprising vagrant is always fun. However, as always, diversity and abundances remain the focus of the count. Last year, The count day tally was 165 species, four species below the current ten-year average of 169. The count week period tally came to 168 species. The total abundance count came to 32822 versus the current ten-year average of 43849. Everyone's help is greatly appreciated (and desired)! Last year, 97 observers participated in the field, logging 343.58 total party hours; the current ten-year average is 234.5 hours. Please contact Eric Feuss at ericfeuss@sbcglobal.net or at 831-477-0280.

CBC Countdown Potluck Dinner

Saturday Evening December 14

This year the countdown dinner will continue at the Soquel Glen Mobile Home Park event center. There will be directional flyers provided to section leaders. However, for anyone cannot attend the count, but wishes to partake in the countdown with food and friends, the mobile home park is along Nobile Creek and is located at 5470 Soquel Dr, Soquel, CA 95073. The cross street is Soquel Drive and Pepperwood Way (not Silver Birch Lane). There is a Stop and Go Market on the other side of Soquel Drive, to mark vicinity. The event center is along Del Rio Circle - the first left from Pepperwood Way (all within park).

Come ready for the exciting "countdown" and a dish to share—main, vegetable, salad, dessert, bread, and a drink if you want something special. There will be paper plates, cups, and utensils, but bringing your own tableware will reduce waste and cost. Soft drinks and hot water for tea or hot chocolate will be available.



Huddled Western Bluebirds
- Michelle Lamberson

Moss Landing Christmas Bird Count



Snowy Egret - Lee Jaffe

The Moss Landing CBC will take place on New Year's Day, January 1, 2020. As always, we're looking for more observers to help cover some of the prime birding areas in southern Santa Cruz County and northern Monterey County. Because the week between Christmas and New Year's becomes quite hectic for many people, please let us know your intentions before Christmas so we can assign people to their territories before the holiday festivities begin. The day will end with a catered countdown dinner at Pajaro Dunes; please be sure to reserve your place in advance.

If you are interested in participating in this year's count, please contact Bob Ramer at 831-818-2157 or rjramer@sbcglobal.net

Central Valley Birding Symposium 2019

The Central Valley Bird Club will be hosting the 23rd annual Central Valley Birding Symposium Nov. 21-24, 2019, at the Stockton Hilton Hotel in Stockton, CA. The Great Central Valley, in the heart of California and the Pacific Flyway, is uniquely situated for excellent birding. Please join us as the CVBS again celebrates the best of birding in the Central Valley!

Look over the schedule of events:
cvbirds.org/events/symposium



Sandhill Cranes - Lee Jaffe

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS RECENT DONORS

Amanda Preece, September donation
Lleni and Peter Carr, October donation

Thank you!



Above: Juvenile Common Yellowthroat - Kitty Stein



To make a tax-deductible contribution to the atlas, please visit the atlas website:
sfbbo.org/breeding-bird-atlas-project

Checks payable to “SFBBO” with a memo titled “Breeding Bird Atlas” can be sent to:

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory
524 Valley Way
Milpitas, CA 95035

100% of your donation goes to the Santa Cruz County Breeding Bird Atlas II.

Santa Cruz Birds

By Alex Rinkert and Jonah Svensson
Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2019



Shorebird habitat in the county has gradually decreased in the past few years as the Watsonville Slough system slowly turns into a more lacustrine system. For the first time in recent memory, numerous shorebirds expected in August went unreported. Those that are annual or nearly annual that went unreported this August include Baird's, Pectoral, and Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Wilson's Phalarope. No rarer species of shorebirds were found either.

Blue Grosbeaks were found breeding widely in the Pajaro Hills and there were once again several Cedar Waxwing nests found in the Pajaro Valley. They have now been confirmed breeding in three of the past four years. The Red-footed Booby was still with us this period and even made some appearances away from its usual roost at Seacliff State Beach.



A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was with **Canada Geese** on the lower San Lorenzo River from June 13-18

(AR, SP). A **Cackling Goose** flying by Seacliff State Beach on June 8 was one of the few summer records for the county (AH, ES). Canada Geese were well reported on the mid-county coast this summer, leaving little doubt as to their establishment in that part of the county (v.ob.). A flock of 22 honkers at the Quail Hollow Ranch pond was a very high count for the mountains, especially for summer, where only a few pairs breed (LM).

At least two broods of **Wood Ducks** were observed on the Pajaro River near Murphy Crossing this summer, where breeding is less often confirmed than where at where they breed elsewhere in the county (NU, EL). There were also numerous reports of Wood Ducks further downstream at CARE Park through late August but no evidence of breeding materialized (NU). One of the most unusual sightings this summer was a male Wood Duck photographed on the ocean at Seacliff State Beach on June 11 (TC). Wood Ducks are occasionally found in brackish lagoons, but this represents the first occurrence



in the county of one on salt water. A **Blue-winged Teal** in upper Watsonville Slough on August 5 was the only reported (NU). A male **Northern Shoveler** at College Lake on June 28 (GK) and a **Redhead** at Struve Slough on June 30 (RR) were the only reported this summer. **Black Scoters** photographed at Waddell Bluffs on July 26 (AR) and near the Pajaro River mouth on August 30 (NU, JWa) were quite rare for summer. Three reports of **Common Mergansers** between late June and early July on the Pajaro River were noteworthy and added to a growing number of records for this watercourse during the breeding season (NU, PB, HS). A male **Ruddy Duck** continued to visit the pond at Quail Hollow Ranch, seen on June 2 (EF et al.) and July 21 (JW).

A **Red-necked Grebe** studied at New Brighton State Beach on June 28 was one of the few summer records for the county (STu).

Evening outings at Sand Hill Bluff this summer found **Black Swifts** showing interest in several caves not previously visited in the past few years (AR). On July 19 two swifts separately entered one of the large caves for a few minutes in the evening, perhaps for the evening feeding of a nestling. More evening cave visits by five individuals were observed on August 17, suggesting



Black Swifts - Alex Rinkert

Wood Ducks - Norm Uyeda

nesting was ongoing at this location.

Where **Vaux's Swifts** are currently breeding in the county is not well known. One seen at Kelly-Thompson Ranch on June 21 was from an area of the county where there are very few reports during the breeding season

(EL, NU). A **Sora** in the Pajaro River at Murphy Crossing on June 20 was notable for being away from any known breeding locations (NU, EL). Annually occurring shorebirds that went unreported this period include the following: **Solitary, Pectoral, Baird's, and Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Wilson's Phalarope**. However, **Red-necked Phalaropes** seemed

more abundant this August, being found in good numbers at most coastal lagoons (v.ob.).

Spotted Sandpipers, one of the rarest breeding species in the county, were confirmed breeding on the Pajaro River at Murphy Crossing when an adult and one precocial young were seen on June 29 (EL, NU). The adult and young remained in the area through July 14. The last breeding record of this species in the county was in 2010. At least 22 **Wandering Tattlers** were reported from July 19 through August, a good showing for this species (v.ob.). A **Greater Yellowlegs** was heard calling while making a flight over Scotts Valley on August 23 (JS, HS). Most shorebirds, including yellowlegs, are rarely found in the mountains.

Lesser Yellowlegs were frequently reported in lower Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes from August 15 into September (v.ob.); the high count at this location was 15 on August 28 (KJ). Lessers were also found at



Corcoran Lagoon on July 29 (DS) and six were at Younger Lagoon on August 23 (LG, PB).

A **Pigeon Guillemot** bringing fish to a burrow in the seawall at Black Point on August 1 may be the only breeding location for them between the Santa Cruz Wharf and Pleasure Point (AR). An adult **Black-legged Kittiwake** was photographed offshore on August 30 (GA, AR, SJ). Single **Sabine's Gulls** made landfall at Younger Lagoon and Seacliff State Beach on

August 18 (NS, BSK, JWe). An immature **Laughing Gull** was photographed near the Pajaro River mouth on June 25 (LM) and a **Black Skimmer** was there on on June 21 (GM, CE).

The **Sooty Shearwater** show this summer was spectacular. Numbers grew through July and

reached a peak in early August when flocks totaling hundreds of thousands could be seen from shore in the evenings on the mid-county coast. Most impressive was a flock of about 310,000—one of the highest estimates in the past 30 years—off Seabright State Beach on August 7 (AR et al.). Large numbers continued to gather in the evenings off Seabright through mid-August, on some evenings even pursuing the anchovies well into the harbor channel! A flock of about 258,800 off Seabright State Beach on August 12 was another especially high estimate (AR, BR, RR).

The celebrity **Red-footed Booby** at Seacliff State Beach was seen almost daily through August 18 (v.ob.). Aside from a four month vacation in spring, this booby has been present at the end of the Seacliff pier since November 2018, yet it had never been seen away from Seacliff until this summer when it was found roosting on Seabright State Beach in a gull flock on August

From top:
Sora- Norm Uyeda
Lesser & Greater Yellowlegs -
Sharon Hull
Spotted Sandpiper - Norm Uyeda
Wandering Tattler - Sharon Hull



12 (AR). Not long after this sighting, the booby went missing at Seacliff but was then refound roosting with gulls on Zmudowski State Beach in Monterey County a few days later on August 20 (JMg). There were no sightings the rest of August.

on July 5, had three nestlings approximately a week old (MT). **Great Blue Herons** nested at Pinto Lake and the Santa Cruz Harbor this year, as did **Great Egrets** (AR, ZH, JJ, v.ob.). Up to nine **White-faced Ibis** were at College Lake from June 5-9 (GK) and three were at Harkins Slough on June 8 (MT). June is the time of year when there are the fewest reports of ibis in the county. A flock of 41 near the Pajaro River mouth on August 14 was a rather high count (NU).

Unlike in the past few years, **Brandt's Cormorants** nested on the natural bridge at Natural Bridges State Beach (AR). This nesting site is larger than the ledge below the parking lot and resultantly can support a larger colony, however on the bridge the cormorants contend with **Brown Pelicans** for space. This summer pelicans were not in great abundance and the cormorants were able to establish over 75 nests. An active **Double-crested Cormorant** nest was found in the heron and egret rookery at the Santa Cruz Harbor, only the second time they have nested there (AR, ZH, JJ). The nesting activities of both Double-crested and Brandt's Cormorants were not as affected this year as the **Pelagic**

Osprey fledged young from all four nests known to be active in the county this year; nests were at Henry Cowell, Harkins Slough, and two at College Lake (GK, LJ, AR). There was no breeding activity at Loch Lomond this summer (DE, CV). Begging

Sharp-shinned Hawks were heard in old growth forest at Big Basin State Park on July 23 (AR). The pair of **Bald Eagles** in



Cormorant nesting effort was. Most of the Pelagic Cormorant nests in the county failed to fledge young this year (AR, KJ, BM, JJ, ZH). Very few **American Bittern** nests have been found in the county so two found this summer was exciting. A nest at Pinto Lake had three eggs on June 30 (LC). Nestlings were seen by July 24 (LL) and dependent young were seen through late August (LC, v.ob.). Another nest at Harkins Slough, found

Watsonville fledged one young this summer (GK). Two begging **Northern Pygmy-Owls** at the Rincon Gorge in Henry Cowell State Park on June 30 were a treat to see during the day (AR, JS). Another group of fledged young were heard begging on Laurel Road on July 8 (AR). A **Long-eared Owl** was calling near Stetson Road in the Skyline area, where they are apparently rare but regular residents (STe).

Belted Kingfisher families with recently fledged young were seen on the Pajaro River at Murphy Crossing on July 14 (EL, NU) and the lower stretch of Aptos Creek on August 28 (JE). While present at numerous locations throughout the county as a breeding species, there are few recent breeding confirmations. Numerous birders noted a **Peregrine Falcon** plucking nestling Rock Pigeons from their nests under the Seacliff State Beach pier last November. This summer on numerous occasions, a Peregrine was photographed on the pier with a squab in its clutches, perhaps the same individual from last November (BSu, CG, DK).

A **Willow Flycatcher** was singing in a westside Santa Cruz backyard on June 9 (KK). Fall migrants in August included one in Seabright on August



Cedar Waxwing with nesting material
- Randy Wardle

29 (AR) and two at CARE Park on August 30 (RW). A **Say's Phoebe** at Pajaro Dunes on August 21 was earlier than usual for a fall arrival (BR, RR). Two pairs of **Western Kingbirds** were on territory in the Pajaro Hills at Kelly-Thompson Ranch and the Porter-Cooley Ranch in early June, but no further evidence of breeding was observed

(NU, EL). The few recent breeding confirmations for this species have all come from the Pajaro Hills.

At least one **Loggerhead Shrike** was at Swanton pond beginning July 30 (LM, ST, MB). **Cassin's Vireos** in Corralitos—Travers Lane on July 13 and lower Eureka Canyon Road on July 22—were at an unusually low elevation for the breeding season (JM). Being that many montane breeders are wrapping up their breeding efforts in mid- to late July, perhaps these were dispersants from higher elevations. There is very little precedent of post-breeding dispersal by this species into the lowlands of the county. Three

Horned Larks continued in the fallow field near San Andreas Road on June 2 (RW). They were confirmed breeding at this location earlier in the season.

An active **Purple Martin** nest was found at Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve on July 4 (MST), marking the fifth consecutive year they have bred at this location. At Loma Prieta, the martins that forage in the airspace above the county line at Loma Prieta were confirmed breeding at their colony in Santa Clara County in June (KO, BP) and early August (TE, RP). A few martins observed on upper Eureka Canyon Road

Osprey Family - Lee Jaffe





A **Varied Thrush** singing at Cascade Creek on June 26 was one of few reports of the local breeding population in recent years (GS).

Cedar Waxwings were found breeding again in the Pajaro Valley. A pair was first observed at CARE Park on July 5 (RW), and an active nest was discovered in a cottonwood on July 10 (HS, NU). Subsequently, a second pair was observed collecting nesting material on July 12 (LJ, RW) and by July 13 a second, incomplete nest was found in a small coast live oak (AR, RW).

southeast of Loma Prieta in early June were likely part of a different breeding colony (NL), while one there in late July could have been a dispersant (AR). Elsewhere, migrant or dispersing martins were found at numerous places: Seabright on



June 6 (AR), Swanton Road on June 23 (NL, AR), Fall Creek State Park on July 5 (AR), Smith Grade from June 4 to July 11 (AR), and inland Wilder Ranch State Park on August 3 (AR). **Tree Swallows** concluded their first breeding season at Arana Gulch this summer (LJ).

At least ten reports of **White-breasted Nuthatches** this summer was surprisingly many. Nuthatches were found at College Lake on June 18 (GM), Corralitos on July 18 (JM), Skyland on July 7 and 21 (STe), Scotts Valley from July 3-25 (JS, HS), Ben Lomond on July 1 (DE), Bonny Doon in early June (GS), and upper Empire Grade on June 26 and July 5 (AR). White-breasted Nuthatches were more expectedly at Quail Hollow Ranch from June 7-30 (SP, BS, LP, LW, PM), and again on August 30 (BK). Presumably many of these nuthatches are dispersing from breeding locations on the eastern slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains, and perhaps from elsewhere, but at places such as Quail Hollow Ranch where they are found almost annually in late spring and summer, their regular presence raises the question of whether some are breeding locally.

Nestlings estimated to be a few days old were first seen in the first nest by July 29 and in the second nest by August 1 (both NU). Both nests had large nestlings on August 5 but whether they fledged successfully is unknown (NU). Waxwings have now bred in the Pajaro Valley in three of the past four years.

A yellow-variant **Purple Finch** was photographed at Shorebirds Pond on July 11 (PB). A type 2 **Red Crossbill** was near China Grade in Big Basin State Park on July 17 (AR). A **Lawrence's Goldfinch** was at Loma Prieta on June 17 (PM, JWa) while another was at Kelly-Thompson Ranch, a less expected location, on June 7 (AR, NU, EL).

Chipping Sparrows were confirmed breeding at another new location in the Pajaro Valley, in an orchard on Calabasas Road in Corralitos. Recently fledged young were

observed there on June 13 (LL). Where else are they breeding in the Pajaro Valley? In the past few years the number of

Black-chinned Sparrows at Loma Prieta has dwindled. There were no reports of any in Santa Cruz County this summer, but a lonely male was heard singing on the Santa Clara side on June 19 (BP). Up to

From top:
 Female Hooded Oriole with nesting - Lisa Larson
 Male Hooded Oriole - John Hickok
 Chipping Sparrow, parents & juvenile - Lisa Larson



three **Lark Sparrows** were at Kelly-Thompson Ranch this summer (NU, AR, EL). An independent juvenile seen there on June 12 may have been from a local nest or an early dispersant from breeding populations out of the county. Two **Savannah Sparrows** singing at Shorebirds Pond on June 28 may have been breeding there (BR, RR).

Singing **Yellow-breasted Chats** were heard at the Homeless Garden on June 1 (JS, PS) and Rancho del Oso on June 8 (AH), and a fall migrant was found at Pinto Lake on August 17 (JM). A **Hooded Oriole** nest with young was found in a palm at Davenport on June 5 (AR). Only a few pairs of Hooded Orioles breed on the north coast. A pair of Hooded Orioles building a nest in a palm in Scotts Valley on July 4 was a rare breeding record for the mountains (JS) as was an adult feeding young in downtown Ben Lomond on June 15 (JW). Very few **Tricolored Blackbirds** were found this summer. A small flock of eight Trikes were seen flying towards Lagunas de las Trancas, the only active colony in the county, on June 23 (NL, AR). Otherwise, the only reports were of small groups scattered along the north coast, not tied to any possible breeding colony. A male Trike photographed on the lower San Lorenzo River on June 13 was at an odd location for June (GK).

A second-year male **American Redstart** sang at CARE Park from July 4-9 (NU, v.ob.). Another redstart was at Aptos Village Park on August 29 (JC). A singing **Northern Parula** at Neary Lagoon on June 5 was the second found this spring (LS). During the breeding season, **Hermit Warblers** reside in the canopy of tall trees so observations of a nest at Big Basin State Park this summer were very noteworthy as few nests have been found in the county (CF). Nest building was observed 50 feet up in a Douglas-fir on June 2. The nest was active by June 9 however subsequent observations found no activity at the nest. A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was at a feeder in Aptos from June 23-25 (RW) and a female was in a Santa Cruz backyard on July 5 (NL). A more out of

place female was at Kelly-Thompson Ranch on July 16, well away from any feeder or backyard where most in the county are typically found. A male **Indigo Bunting** was singing near Smith Grade on June 4 (AR).

Numerous pairs of **Blue Grosbeaks** were found

American Redstart - Randy Wardle



Juvenile Blue Grosbeak - Norm Uyeda

breeding in the Pajaro Hills this summer. At least two and perhaps three pairs were confirmed breeding from observations of recently fledged young between June 27 and July 30 at Kelly-Thompson Ranch (EL, NU). Previously this species had been found breeding at Kelly-Thompson in 2016 and 2017 (MP), but the surprising number breeding at this location was only discovered this

summer. Aside from those recently at Kelly-Thompson in 2016 and 2017, the only other breeding records in the county are from Corcoran Lagoon in 1956 and the Pajaro River in the southeast corner of the county in 2016.

Cited Observers:

Gavin Aquila, Mike Bolte, Phil Brown, John Carothers, Teresa Connell, David Ekdahl, Carleton Eyster, Tod Eggenberger, Craig Fosdick, Eric Feuss, Carter Gasiorowski, Lois Goldfrank, Zach Hampson, Adrian Hinkle, Sharon Hull, Lee Jaffe, Jazmine Jensen, Kent Johnson, Shearwater Journeys, Dan Kadra, Brian Kett, Kevin Kilpatrick, Gary Kittleson, Lisa Larson, Earl Lebow, Nick Levendosky, Jeff Manker, Tamia Marg, Gary Martindale, James Maughn (JMg), Bobbie Mayer, Paul Miller, Liam Murphy, Kitty O'Neil, Bill Pelletier, Ryan Phillips, Shantanu Phukan, Linda Pittman, Mel Preston, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Larry Scacchetti, Brian Scanlon, Em Scattaregia, Brian Schnack (BSk), Nico Schnack, David Sidle, Howard Stephenson, Gary Strachan, Brian Sullivan, Matthew Timmer, Hanna Svensson, Jonah Svensson, Scott Terrill (STe), Simon Thornhill, Steve Tucker (Stu), Norman Uyeda, Connie Vigno, Jonny Wahl (JWa), Randy Wardle, John Welch, Liz West, Jim Williams. **Please enter interesting observations into eBird or report them to Alex Rinkert at arinkert12@comcast.net.**

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY 2018 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY

Our 62st annual Santa Cruz County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on December 15, 2018. Outside of localized geographical influences, the count day across the count circle started with variable clouds from mostly to partly cloudy. Unlike last year, wind on the Beaufort scale was 0 (calm) to 1 (light air movement) and remained more-or-less constant across the count circle. The day's temperature variance was an average 18 degrees (Fahrenheit), in line with last year differential and down from the ten-year average of 24 degrees. A low temperature of 45 degrees (around 7 AM) and a high temperature of 63 degrees (around 2 PM) was recorded.

We had 97 observers in the field, logging 343.58 total party hours, higher hours than the current ten-year average of 246.2 hours. The count day tally was 165 species, four species below the current ten-year average of 169. The count week period tally came to 168 species. The total abundance count came to 32822 versus the current ten-year average of 43849. Last years low abundance count (31118) was explained by unusual high wind conditions. No explanation exists for this year other than low abundance counts may be a continued attribute of the four years of drought, 2012–2015.

“Off-list” species observed count day were Bald Eagle [2009, 2015-2017], Ferruginous Hawk [2016], Cassin's Auklet [2013-2015, 2017], Yellow-bellied Sapsucker [2013], Tropical Kingbird [2014], Barn Swallow [2017], Violet-green Swallow [2014 (CW), 2015], Black-and-White Warbler [2010-2011, 2012-2015(CW), 2016, 2017(CW)]. Only the last ten years of data is cited

here. One count of Western Tanager was submitted from Loch Lomond (restricted access) without details and, therefore, upon review with county records keeper, was not accepted into compiled counts.

“Off-list” species observed count week (CW) was Redhead.

“On-list” species missed count day and observed count week (CW) were (Greater/Lesser) Scaup species [Greater missed 2011-2012, 2016; Lesser

missed 2012, 2014], Common Gallinule [missed count day and week: 2009-2010, 2012-2013]. Only the last ten years of data is cited here.

“On-list” species missed count day and count week were all uncommon (*italicized*) species. These species usually put in a better showing than this year. These species were: Brant [missed 2011, 2013, 2015-2016]; White-winged Scoter [missed 2008, 2011-2012, 2014, 2016-2017]; Black Scoter [missed 2007-2008, 2010-2013, 2015, 2017]; Northern Fulmar [missed 2011, 2014]; Willet [missed 2010, 2013(seen count week), 2017(seen count week)]; Greater Yellowlegs



*Above: Cassin's Auklet
- Jeff Bleam*



*Bald Eagle
- Michael
Bolte*

[missed 2009(seen count week), 2012-2014]; Forster's Tern [missed 2011(seen count week), 2013, 2016-2017]; White-throated Swift [missed 2010-2011, 2012 (seen count week), 2013, 2016]; Red-breasted Nuthatch [missed 2016]; White-breasted Nuthatch [missed 2009-2012, 2014-2016]; and Red Crossbill [missed 2007-2011, 2014, 2016-2017]. Only the last ten years of data is cited here.

High and low counts are based upon the ratio of count to 10-year average wherein the count difference (differential) is well outside of annual count



Ferruginous Hawk - Lee Jaffe

fluctuations (variance).

Some high counts for this year were obtained for Wild Turkey (127 : 43), Snowy Egret (104 : 54), White-tailed Kite (26 : 16), Northern Harrier (42 : 16), Black Turnstone (225 : 121),

Western Bluebird (113 : 45), and American Pipit (527 : 119). The only significant low count for this year was obtained for Bufflehead (47 : 101). Common Murre numbers have fluctuated wildly over the years with changes around ten-year average being +/- 1033. However, it is still worth noting the ratio of count to ten-year average for this year (196 : 917).

Numbers for our irruptive winter landbirds were mixed positive and negative fluctuations. Based upon the same ratio of count to 10-year average, ratios by species were: Red-breasted Nuthatch (0 : 6), American Robin (2515 : 2108), Varied Thrush (25 : 179), Cedar Waxwing (909 : 510), Red Crossbill (0 : 16) and Pine Siskin (2 : 817).

Species whose numbers were adjusted downwards due to section boundary, party proximity (time) and directional flight considerations are Turkey Vulture (23 : 69), Osprey (6 : 10) and Ferruginous Hawk (1 : 2).

Eric Feuss, Compiler



Northern Flicker - Beth Hamel

New Members **WELCOME**

Olivia Millard & Family	Sept-19
Spencer Klinefelter	Sept-19
Kelly Arbor	Oct-19
June Ralston	Oct-19
Amanda Preece	Oct -19

DEADLINE

submissions for
JAN/FEB issue

DEC 1, 2019



Prairie Falcon - Lisa Larson



Great-tailed Grackle - Cathy Summa-Wolfe

Hermit Thrush - Lisa Larson

Submission to the



ALBATROSS

Guidelines

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

- **Feature articles**
- Birding event announcements
- **Stories about birds, birding, or birders**
- Reviews of birding literature or guides
- Conservation & outreach reports/stories
- Birding tips, descriptions of local sites
- Poetry, quotes, field sketches, artwork or photos
- Photos of BIRDS or people at our events (jpg, tif)

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

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

~ Lisa Fay Larson, Editor

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PARTING SHOT: "EWWW! SPIDER WEBS!"
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET
-MICHAEL BOLTE



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