

Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

A Beginning Birder's Adventure

- By Lynda Lewit

Occasionally, when out hiking, I have noticed groups of birders who were leaving the park as I was arriving. They were dressed warmly with jackets and hats, had birding guidebooks in their pockets, and wore binoculars and cameras around their necks. I often wondered, "Why in the world would anyone want to go on early walks to look at birds?" I thought birds were interesting, but they moved fast and were very complicated because they were so numerous.

One bright sunny day, I was hiking with a friend at Moore Creek Preserve when she spotted two White-tailed Kites circling and hovering in the air above us.



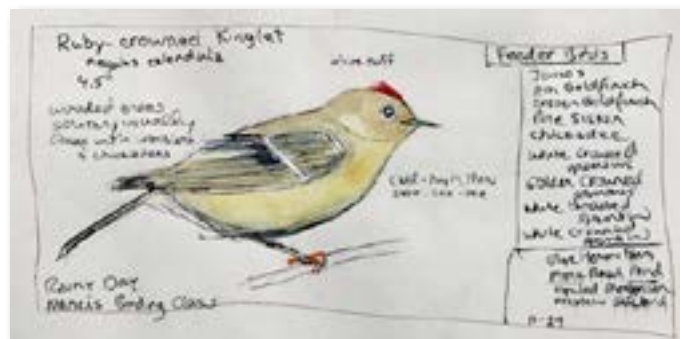
They circled around and for a fraction of a second, locked talons while swirling. During that hike, my friend pointed out numerous interesting birds and their calls.

When I arrived home, I looked up White-tailed Kites in Wikipedia. Through my research, I discovered Kites are considered raptors, birds of prey, and eat mostly mice and voles. They are 14-17 inches in length, with a wingspan of 35-40 inches. "Grappling" is the word describing the kite behavior I saw. I discovered that when kites are defending a territorial boundary, rivals might actually lock talons in the air! It was definitely time to learn more.

I enrolled in Nanci Adams' Birding Basics class through Watsonville/Aptos/Santa Cruz Adult Education. Every week we would go out as a group to identify birds flying,

perching, ground running, and swimming. I found it to be a fascinating and motivating opportunity to learn the names of birds understand their behavior.

I bought a pair of binoculars and made a commitment to begin the project of learning about bird



Inside
Calendar of Events



Breeding Bird Atlas:
Year 4 Begins

Santa Cruz Birds

WORLD MIGRATORY
BIRD DAY



PARTING SHOT

Red-shouldered Hawk - Jeff Roisman
Chestnut-backed Chickadee - Seraphina Landgrebe

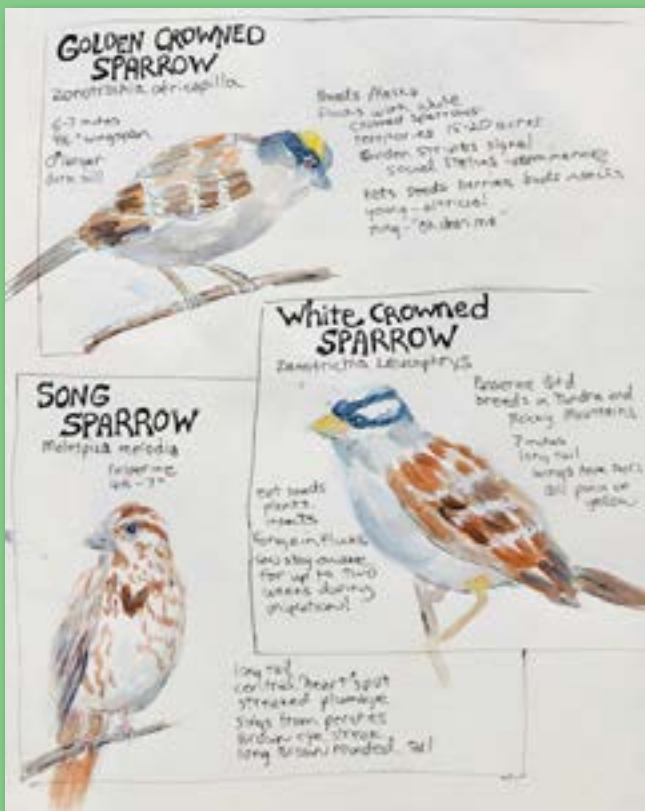
identification. At first I was overwhelmed. Birds ... are ... everywhere. I discovered that many species of regional birds are seasonal, due to migration and some stay all year as resident birds. Furthermore, males and females often have different colorations and patterns, especially in the spring and fall. But I learned to relax and enjoy the birds, adding more pieces of knowledge to the puzzle on each outing.

One of the best things about birding is that one can enjoy it throughout the year and in most locations and habitats. Other than the odd neck cramp from peering up into trees for minutes on end, my overall health has seen a major uptick since I took up the activity. My



hearing, for one, has improved since I started birding. Birding requires listening for the bird songs and calls. My eyesight has improved and I have a heightened sense of the distinct patterns, colors and shapes. I often feel a spiritual sense of connection to nature and the present moment while birding because of the thrill of a split-second sighting of a black, white and yellow Townsend's Warbler or the quick overhead flight of a Red-Tailed Hawk. It is often like a walking "mindfulness" meditation

Birding has united me with a nature-oriented community where I have met new friends. I feel a connection with birders out walking in parks, near lakes, at Watsonville's various sloughs, and the Moss Landing



All sketches by Lynda Lewit

area who are looking at birds. Many people seem to appreciate our Monterey Bay birding mecca.

The memorization part of birding is particularly perplexing. The shorebird family is challenging because they all looked the same at the beginning. How to remember the difference between a Willet, Whimbrel, Dowitcher, and Marbled Godwit? I made graphs, charts and drawings and still have trouble telling them apart. Birds that we used to call LBB (little brown birds), like sparrows, (part of the Passerine family), are a challenge to differentiate. I am thrilled to see the yellowish gold crown of a Golden-crowned Sparrow because I am sure that I identified one out of approximately 20 sparrow species in California.

Then, there are ducks (waterfowl family, Anatidae). There are more than 20 types of ducks that may visit and live in Santa Cruz County. I love how ducks adapt to so many climates, how they migrate long distances, and how they are visible during a warm afternoon. Ducks can swim, fly and even walk on land. I decided to specialize in ducks! Then I realized that this family is one of the hardest to learn because they change so much! The drakes go through “eclipse”. They molt their flight feathers twice a year, then grow them back again but



with different colors and patterns. For example, Mallard drakes lose their beautiful iridescent green head feathers and for a few weeks, appear almost exactly like the females with gray-brown heads.

Yes, ducks are difficult to identify. A Gadwall drake has a slightly square head and a black butt, while an American Wigeon drake has a crown stripe (bald pate) and a black and white rear end. It is hard enough to identify the species, and I still have trouble identifying the males from the females! The diving ducks go underwater just when I focus on one in my binoculars. Many species migrate to the north in the spring, so there is a “duck deficiency” during part of the year. Each fall, I need to study the arriving ducks once again. Keeping a nature journal and drawing pictures and writing facts is helpful to capture and reinforce learning. (John Muir Laws has a complete website and good books on Nature Journaling ... johnmuirlaws.com.)

Feeding birds in the yard has entailed a learning curve for me too. The first feeders we purchased were thoroughly enjoyed by the local western grey squirrels. I found that a canister type feeder with small perches suspended on a smooth hook works the best to thwart squirrels’ ability to stretch, jump and eat the birdseed. The other day I had “finch feeding envy” when I noticed that the local

House Finches and American Goldfinches preferred our neighbor's sunflower chips, instead of the fruit and nut mix that I have. That's fine because the Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Oak Titmice are fond of the feed that I provide.

My fascination with birds continued, and I joined the **Santa Cruz Bird Club**. I actually woke up in time for bird walks at 7:30am. I noticed that people were supportive of me, a beginner, and helped me see the bird that they were seeing and hear what they were hearing. I read articles in the *Albatross*, the Audubon Society magazine, and birding guidebooks by Sibley, Stokes, Peterson and the Audubon Society. Bird identification books and the Cornell University/ Merlin Birding app. became my bedtime reading. For the last four years I attended the **Monterey Bay Birding Festival** and that enabled me to reinforce identification skills.

The one thing about birding that is most difficult of all is the unreasonable time of day that one has to be outside to observe the different birds that inhabit Santa Cruz County. Birds are often most active in the early morning



hours, getting energizing food before temperatures rise too much. Upon awakening at or before dawn, the birds are ravenous (especially hummingbirds). In spring, one can enjoy the "dawn chorus" as birds claim or reclaim territories, announce their presence and try to attract females with their singing prowess.

I hope that the pastime of birding becomes even more popular with people of all ages. Increased awareness of birds will encourage environmental awareness and protection of natural habitats and bird species. This will be a positive consequence that will benefit humans as well as Mother Earth.

EDITOR'S NOTE
On Sketch Left

I happened to be on this pelagic trip. How Lynda was able to sketch these moving birds on a moving boat on moving ocean is a mystery to me and quite a feat!

Breeding Bird Atlas: Year 4 Begins

Spring is just around the corner so the time has come to begin Year 4 of the Santa Cruz County Breeding Bird Atlas II. With sponsorship from the Santa Cruz Bird Club, the breeding bird atlas began in 2017 and has continued to grow with support from the bird club, atlasers, and donors. Now in its fourth year, the finish line is drawing near—this will be the penultimate year of field work. Nearly 100 atlasers have contributed observations to the project over the years. We have maintained a large contingent of regulars but are still hoping to attract new atlasers and reinterest former atlasers who may have gone on a hiatus.

Atlasing is a different style of birding, and many would say it is a more rewarding experience than what they were accustomed to previously. So many “Audubon moments” can be had when making an effort to look for breeding behavior. *A Green Heron circles around a bare tree and alights on a branch over the water. After taking two paces forward to a makeshift podium, the male slowly throws his head back and fans his breast feathers. With his bill pointed directly skyward, he contracts his neck and emits an eerie “arooo-arooo”.* The [vivid violet color](#) in his lores is striking. While atlasing you will come across unfamiliar breeding behaviors that are beautiful and bizarre, carefully constructed nests, begging fledglings, and so much more. Contributing these observations to the breeding bird atlas helps improve what is known about the birds breeding in Santa Cruz County.

Download the atlasing materials for Year 4 & begin!
<https://santacruzbirdclub.org/breeding-bird-atlas/>
Please let me know your intent to participate this year if you have not done so already.

New atlasers are encouraged to attend an atlaser training at Sorrento Oaks. Trainings will be held on March 22nd and 28th from 9-11 AM and will begin at the clubhouse inside Sorrento Oaks located at 800 Brommer Street, Santa Cruz. The clubhouse is a short ways down the entrance road on the left. There is some parking inside Sorrento Oaks near the clubhouse and also along the concrete wall fronting Brommer Street. Please park only in clearly-marked spaces. If all the spaces in the park are full, additional parking is available on neighboring streets.

Alex Rinkert
Atlas Director

Green Heron - macaulaylibrary.org

EVENTS CALENDAR

March–April 2020

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
Thursday, March 5th	Long Valley, Aptos	Jeff Manker
Sunday, March 8th	West Cliff / Lighthouse Field	Phil Brown
Thursday, March 12th	Meadowridge (Corralitos)	Jeff Manker
Saturday, March 14th	Meder Canyon	Elisabeth Foster
Thursday, March 19th	Upper Green Valley Road (Corralitos)	Jeff Manker
Sunday, March 22nd	TBD	Nicholas Levendosky
Thursday, March 26th	SCBC meeting 6:30-8:30pm	TBA
Thursday, March 26th	Mount Madonna Center	Jeff Manker
Tuesday, March 31st	Pleasant Valley (Corralitos)	Jeff Manker
Sunday, April 5th	TBD	Nicholas Levendosky
Tuesday, April 7th	Anna Jean Cummings Park	Lisa Fay Larson
Thursday, April 9th	Cox Road/Day Valley Road Loop (Aptos)	Jeff Manker
Sunday, April 12th	Moore Creek Preserve	Phil Brown
Thursday, April 16th	Simas Lake and Old Hazel Dell (Corralitos)	Jeff Manker
Thursday, April 23rd	Las Colinas Drive (Corralitos)	Jeff Manker
Sunday, April 26th	Loma Prieta	Alex Rinkert
Thursday, April 30th	Pinto Lake County Park	Jeff Manker

Santa Cruz Bird Club programs & 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 & bring liquids. Lunches are optional on half-day trips. Heavy rain cancels.

Field trips can pose hazards. Reluctantly, we have decided we must publish & 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 & agreement with this waiver.



Western Bluebird - Lee Jaffe



Natural Bridges State Beach
and Santa Cruz Bird Club
Present

World Migratory Bird Day

Celebrate the flying future of mothers and their mates as they migrate across the country and even the world!

Saturday May 9th, 2020

Booths 10-3 Bird walks starting every hour starting at 8 am

Guided bird walks each hour, including Family bird walk, Bilingual bird walk, and Bird listens (birding by ear)
Phone for walk pre-registration or just show up
FREE loaner binoculars available for walks
Educational booths and bird call workshop
How to create nesting boxes and create bird-friendly backyards
Plant Sale with Bird-friendly plants
FREE app to ID a bird using 5 questions
Nest cams and Bird ID tutoring
Kids' crafts and migration game
Learn how to help migrating birds



Event is free, vehicle day-use is \$10
Natural Bridges State Beach
2531 West Cliff Drive Santa Cruz, CA
Phone: (831) 423-4609



SPONSOR-A-SPECIES Campaign Update:

Those who haven't had a chance yet to sponsor a species in the first phases of the fundraising campaign for the Santa Cruz County Breeding Bird Atlas can take advantage of upcoming opportunities to support this important local scientific effort and also get recognized as a sponsor of your favorite bird when the atlas is finished.

How the fundraiser works is each of the county's 173 breeding species will have one sponsor. Sponsors can be an individual, group, organization, or other entity and will get recognized in the two-page species account they sponsored and receive a custom SCBBA "Sponsor" decal sticker. An individual can sponsor more than one species (and are encouraged to do so!).

The upcoming sponsorship opportunities are as follows:

April 2020: Those dedicated folks known as "atlasers" who have participated in the atlas project and other atlas project donors will be able to take a stab at grabbing up their favorite species starting in April. You'll be receiving an email soon with instructions on how to sponsor your species so stay tuned!



May-September 2020: SCBC members and general public will be able to reserve a species for \$200/species. You can sponsor your species of choice (as long as someone else hasn't sponsored it!) by going to the SCBC website and navigating to the Breeding Bird Atlas page. There will be a link to an online store where you can find your bird and complete your purchase with paypal or an atm/credit card. Once your transaction is complete, your species will be reserved for you and made unavailable for sponsorship by anyone else.

October 2020: If you didn't get your chance to sponsor a species by next Fall, there will be an auction for any unchosen species at the Annual SCBC Silent Auction (date and location TBD). Details for the date and location of the auction will be released in the May/August Albatross.

We plan to have the Atlas completed and published in 2023. With your support, "Sponsor A Species" will help cover a major portion of the cost to prepare the Atlas. So, start thinking about that special bird or birds that you would like to sponsor and receive recognition for in the Santa Cruz County Breeding Bird Atlas. If you have questions, you may contact Larry Corridon at: Larry961357@sbcglobal.net.

But wait, there's more! If you want to donate





to the bird atlas now and don't want to wait for the Sponsor-A-Species fundraiser, here's how: To make a tax-deductible contribution, please visit the atlas website: sfbbo.org/breeding-bird-atlas-project. If you would like to pay by check, make checks payable to "SFBBO" with a memo stating "Breeding Bird Atlas" and send 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.

When you submit your donation and species request, please include how you would like your name to read, such as "A. Smith", "Alvin W. Smith", or "Mr. and Mrs. A. Smith". If you wish to donate in honor of someone, write out exactly how you want the dedication to read, such as "In Honor of A. Smith" or "B. Jones donated in honor of Alvin Smith".

Have you chosen your bird yet?

Best of Birding Luck,
 ~SCBC Board of Officers

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS RECENT DONORS

Robert Stephens
 Donna Elliott
 Rich & Heidi Sandkuhle
 Bobbie Mayer
 Steve & Stephanie Singer
 Jan Hintermeister
 Mike Shu
 Laura Monfils
 Monterey Bay Birding

Thank you!

Photos from page 8-9:

Pair of Wood Ducks, Neary Lagoon
Male Oak Titmouse feeds his mate,
Editor's Capitola nest box
Chestnut-backed Chickadee fledgling,
Larkin Valley
Baby Wild Turkey, Larkin Valley

- Lisa Fay Larson



Santa Cruz Birds

By Alex Rinkert and Jonah Svensson

Including reports from November 1 to December 31, 2019

On the heels of a good showing in October, several species continued their winter irruption into early winter. Red Crossbills, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Pine Siskins were all fairly abundant by early November. Red Crossbills petered out by late November but were still present at scattered locations, while nuthatches and siskins remained abundant throughout the county. Other winter irruptives remained in unremarkable numbers except perhaps American Goldfinch, which were moderately abundant. Other than two Summer Tanagers in December, it was a slow season for rare landbirds.



Five species of geese continued in the fields bordering West Beach Street through late November (v.ob.). About 306 **Canada Geese** nearby at Harkins Slough on November 18 was an especially high count for the county (BR, RR), as were 176 **Cackling Geese** in the West Beach Street fields on November 3 (SH, LG, RR, BR, RW). A **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Spring Lakes Mobile Home Park on November 19 (JL) was probably the same found a few miles away at Scotts Valley High School on December 6 (JS), and was a rare find for the mountains. Four reports of **Brant** from Wilder Ranch State Park, Santa Cruz, and the Pajaro River mouth was more than are usually reported in early winter (BS, AR).

A male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Pinto Lake on December 9 (JM). A male **Eurasian x American Wigeon** hybrid with bright white cheeks was found



*From Top: Northern Pintail
- Bernadette Ramer
Brandt - Brian Scanlon*

at Shorebirds Pond on November 25 (JM). Another hybrid male that closely resembled a Eurasian Wigeon was at Pinto Lake by December 16 (LG, SH). This male is most likely the same that has wintered in the Pajaro Valley since 2015-16. A male **Gadwall x Mallard** hybrid was at Pinto Lake from November 12-20 (BR, v.ob.). These hybrid ducks are the most frequently encountered in the county, but are still quite rare; both average about one record per winter over the last 10 years. Two **Northern Pintails** at a pond on Glen Canyon Road on December 14 were noteworthy for the mountains (SP). Four **Redheads** were at Struve Slough from December 18-19 (JB, JM).

The population of **Wild Turkeys** in the county is undoubtedly increasing. Two record high counts in early winter provided more evidence of their population growth: 50 near Smith Grade Road on



*Left: Greater White-fronted Goose, Canada Geese - Anonymous
Above: Wild Turkeys - Barry McLaughlin*

December 14 (BM) and a whopping 75 at Mima Meadow on December 6 (BML). A male **Anna's x Costa's Hummingbird** hybrid continued at a feeder in Aptos through December (RW). A **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Pajaro Dunes from December 20-21 was rare in winter (BP, PS).

A strong movement of **Rhinoceros Auklets** occurred on November 26. In an hour-long seawatch from West Cliff, about 1,890 were counted flying west (AR). The movement apparently continued through the day as 710 were counted flying west in another hour-long seawatch from Seabright State Beach later in the afternoon (AR).

Black-legged Kittiwakes were seen during a windy day on November 30 at the Santa Cruz Wharf and West Cliff (AR).

An adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at Harkins Slough on November 29 (AR) and then seen again on December 4 (DL). This is the 8th record for the county and the fifth consecutive winter they have been found. A first-cycle **Glaucous Gull** was at Sunset State Beach on December 7 (NU) and a second-cycle was near the Pajaro River mouth on December 31 (BS). An adult **Glaucous-winged x Glaucous Gull**, one of the rarer hybrid gulls that occurs in this region, was photographed at Baldwin Creek mouth on December 25 (AR). **Black-crowned Night-Herons** are known to roost in large numbers in Watsonville Slough near Ford Street, often hosting many dozens to over

a hundred individuals. A count of 135 at the roost on December 30 was one of the highest ever for the county (DS).

Quite a few **Bald Eagles** were reported around the county. A juvenile was at Swanton Pond on November 6 (LJ). Adults were at UC Santa Cruz from November 17-18 (BT, WC) and Highlands Park on December 14 (RJA, KK). A fourth-year was at Pajaro Dunes on December 28 (JM, SP, EM), and a few other reports in the Pajaro Valley could have pertained to this individual (SL, JM). The locally breeding pair was not reported at Harkins Slough or other areas where they are occasionally found. Four **Ferruginous Hawks** were reported from areas they normally overwinter: Swanton, Wilder Ranch State Park and UC Santa Cruz, and Soda Lake (AK, MB, NU, v.ob.). Only two **Burrowing Owls** were found in early winter: one at Pajaro Dunes (GK, JM) and the other at upper Hanson Slough (GM). Other recent wintering locations—UC Santa Cruz, Swanton Pond, Wilder Ranch State Park, and Seabright—were visited on numerous occasions in November and December, but no other owls were found. In Santa Clara County, wintering owls at some locations are



From top:

Rhinoceros Auklet - Alex Rinkert

Black-crowned Night Heron, Ford St. - Norm Uyeda

Burrowing Owl, Pajaro Dunes - Jeff Manker

also far fewer than usual so what is being observed locally may be a more widespread phenomenon. A **Short-eared Owl** was found at El Jarro Point on December 9 and continued through the month (AR, v.ob.).

A **Red-naped Sapsucker** was found in Felton near Zayante Creek on December 23 (BS). A “**Black**” **Merlin**, one of the rarer subspecies of Merlin that occurs in the county, was photographed at Pogonip on December 14 (GT, PB, SK). A “**Western**” **Flycatcher** at Soquel from December 12-14 was rare for winter (NU). At least four **Tropical Kingbirds** were reported in Santa Cruz, with three staying through December; only one of the three reported in the Pajaro Valley continued through December (JM, EL, PS, RAS, NU, BL et al., JM, PB, v.ob.). Just two **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported—both on the north coast (IB, AR et al., v.ob.).

Three **Violet-green Swallows** flying past Seabright on December 20 were away from their normal wintering areas on the north coast and in the Pajaro Valley (AR). Three **Barn Swallows** at UC Santa Cruz on December 14 were noteworthy for winter (MB). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were in abundance through December. The highest concentrations were in Monterey pines—34 were at Swanton Road on November 2 (AR)—but they were found in most areas of the mountains



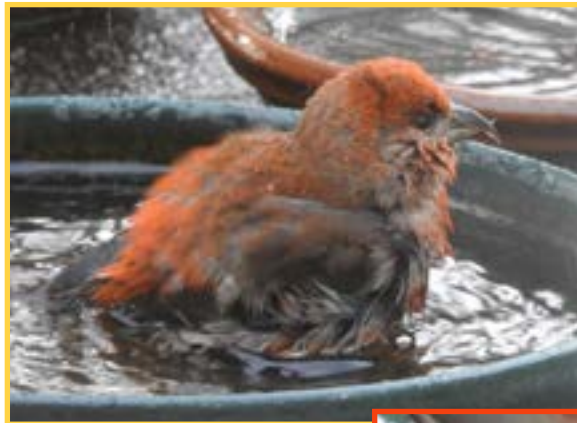
*From Top:
Black Merlin - Glen Tepke
Western Flycatcher - Norm Uyeda
Tropical Kingbird - Robin-Abu-Shumays*

and also in smaller numbers throughout the lowlands (v.ob.). A **White-breasted Nuthatch** continued at Quail Hollow Ranch through December (BK, v.ob.) and another was found at Castle Rock State Park on November 1 (CW). A **House Wren** in Summit Meadows at Castle Rock State Park and one wintering at Quail Hollow Ranch (JW et al., v.ob.) were rare finds in the mountains during winter.

Western Bluebirds are becoming more frequently found in suburban areas of Santa Cruz. Flocks of bluebirds were noted at Neary Lagoon, the lower San Lorenzo River, and Harbor High School in November, and Brommer Street Park in December (AM, AS, PB et al., ARG, GM). All were probably fall migrants except perhaps the latter, but that many reports just a few years ago would have been unusual. At least four bluebirds were present in the vicinity of Natural Bridges State Beach and Antonelli Pond through December, where they are now present year-round and could possibly be breeding (v.ob.).

Red Crossbills were present throughout the county in November before becoming scarcer in December, especially in the lowlands. As reported in the last issue, the crossbills that were identified to call type proved to be “type 2” (AR, NL, EL). This type, which specializes on the cones of Ponderosa pines, was largely absent from areas of

the county where there are stands of that tree species. Instead, the flocks that remained in one area were observed foraging on Monterey pine and Douglas-fir. The latter tree species has not been utilized by type 2 crossbills in recent irruptions to the county. Type 2s were noted feeding on Douglas-fir cones or were in forests comprising this tree species on Empire Grade (KD, LW, AR) and Sanborn County Park just over the county line in Santa Clara County (BM, JV). At Empire Grade, a large flock of 50 crossbills contained at least two individuals of the “type 4” call type which specializes on Douglas-fir cones (AR). While this call type has been documented to rarely occur elsewhere in the Santa Cruz Mountains and San Francisco Bay area, this was apparently the 1st record for the county.



A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was photographed at Terrace Point on November 7 (JJ, ZH, BL). Four “**Slate-colored**” **Dark-eyed Juncos** and 24 **White-throated Sparrows** were reported (BT, WL, RW, PS, v.ob.). **Swamp Sparrows** were found at Wilder Ranch State Park on December 14 (AG) and Pinto Lake on



December 27 (MN, TP).

A flock of 320 **Tricolored Blackbirds** at Swanton Pond on November 5 was the largest reported (RR, BR). They apparently went elsewhere as no flock of that size was reported after mid-November.

A flock of 128 on Back Ranch Road on December 14 was the only large flock reported in December (LG, KS). A **Black-and-white Warbler** remained at Bethany Curve through December (BB, v.ob.). This may be the same female that has wintered at the park since 2015-16. Only two **Palm Warblers** were reported, far fewer than are usually found (ES, CH). A **Black-throated**



From Top:
Red Crossbill- Randy Wardle
Summer Tanager- Sharon Hull
Summer Tanager- Pete Solè
Tri-colored Blackbirds - Norm Uyeda

Gray Warbler at Terrace Point on November 23 was late (NS). A young male **Summer Tanager** was at Natural Bridges State Beach from December 7-17 (JH, v.ob.), but apparently did not stick around despite efforts from many birders after it was last seen. Another young male Summer Tanager was photographed on December 9 at the UCSC Arboretum, but was also not refound (EG, JA). Maybe these two tanagers were still proceeding south on their fall migration. A **Black-**

headed Grosbeak visited a feeder in Rio Del Mar from December 16-24 (ES).

For the second year in a row, **Scaly-breasted Munias** made a late fall appearance in the county. Six were first seen visiting a feeder in Interlaken on November 7, and then the flock burgeoned to 50 (!)

munias by December 8 (NU). The flock dwindled after that but a good number continued visiting the feeder off and on through December. Three munias were also found in the tules at Pinto Lake City Park on December 31 where they were present last year (JM), and six were at a feeder in Corralitos from November 26-December 17 (SD, TD). Munias also made their first appearances away from the



Pajaro Valley this year. Up to eight visited a feeder at Seabright from November 24-December 5 (NL) and 8-10 were at a feeder in La Selva Beach on November 27 (fide SD).

There is a regional pattern of munias appearing in late fall

the past few years. Munias were again reported widely in Monterey, and this year munias were also reported in many of the bay area counties including San Mateo, San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda, and Santa Clara (away from the known population). The impressive count of 50 at the feeder in Interlaken is more than the small population along Los Alamitos Creek and

*From top:
Black & White Warbler - Lee Jaffe
Scaly-breasted Munias - Norman Uyeda
Scaly-breasted Munias - Nick Levandosky*



Guadalupe River in Santa Clara County could conceivably produce. The recent regional influx of this species each year in late fall and large numbers seen at some feeders conclusively points to the source being from the expanding munia population in southern California rather than releases or local dispersal from the Santa Clara population. With a pattern of occurrence established, the question now is when will they begin breeding here?

Cited Observers:

Robin Abu-Shumays, Jenny Anderson, Jeffrey Barnum, Ileana Betancourt, Mike Bolte, Phil Brown, Brian Bullard, Whitney Cohen, Sonia Deetz, Tom Deetz, Aaron Gabbe, Erika Garig, Lois Goldfrank, Zach Hampson, Jake Hernandez, Craig Himmelwright, Sharon Hull, Lee Jaffe, Jazmine Jensen, Kevin Kaos, Andrew Kenny, Surrey Kent, Bryan Kett, Andrew Kenny, Gary Kittleson, June Langhoff, Dave Lavorando, William Lawton, Earl Lebow, Nick Levendosky, Stephen Long, Bruce Lyon, Edwin Mabie, Jeff Manker, Alex Marse, Gary Martindale, Bobbie Mayer, Barry McLaughlin, Brooke Miller, Jane Mio, Monica N, Sandi Pensinger, Tracy Pham, Steve Pousty, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Adam Romswinkel-Guise, Brian Scanlon, Nico Schnack, Elena Scott, David Sidle, Abra Smith, Pete Solé, Ketury Stein, Jonah Svensson, Glen Tepke, Breck Tyler, Norman Uyeda, Jason Vassallo, Randy

Become a Docent with the Watsonville Wetlands Watch

Learn about Watsonville's wetlands and share your knowledge with the community:

- Wetland ecology
- Cultural history
- School program field trips
- Local plants and wildlife
- Community science programs
- Wetland tours and more!

Spring 2020 Docent Training Starts

March 18th

Join Us and Make a Difference!

Sign Up Now at watsonvillewetlandswatch.org/events/upcoming-events

Looking for Bilingual Volunteers
(Being bilingual is NOT a requirement)

Contact Noelle Fletcher at noelle@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org or
831-455-6771 for more information





Violet-green Swallow nest, first hatchling

Quail Hollow Nest Box Project: Call for 2020 Season Volunteers

The Quail Hollow Nest Box Project is currently seeking volunteers for the 2020 breeding season. The 2020 season is underway, but it is not too late to become a volunteer!

The Nest Box Project was started in 2002 by the conservation arm of the Santa Cruz Bird Club, with the goals of providing nesting habitat for local cavity-nesting birds and gathering information about their breeding biology.

Teams of volunteers work together to check the boxes and record observations such as species, clutch size and fledge date. These observations are then reported to the Cornell Ornithology Lab and become part of a national database.

Volunteering for the season only requires a commitment of a visit every other week, although more visits are welcome. As a volunteer, you will learn more about cavity-nesting species and see a part of their biology normally hidden from view.

Although the Nest Box Project was initially focused on attracting and observing Western Bluebirds, the conservation work of the project extends to other local cavity-nesting birds. Eight years ago, the Bird Club asked us to add the Ash-throated Flycatcher as a target species. We have had at least one successful ATFL nest consistently since 2013 and we are now consciously locating boxes to accommodate this species.

Other birds using the boxes include Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Oak Titmice, who lay eggs in carefully-constructed moss and lichen nests, as well as Violet-green Swallows, who build nests using grasses and feathers. It is an amazing experience to open a box and see the nests and eggs firsthand. Those interested in volunteering can contact Dan Lazarus, the Park Interpreter, at 831-335-9348

-The Quail Hollow Team



Quail Dad and chick - Logan Southal

New Members
WELCOME

Sarah de Sousa, Family	Jan 20
Karen Jackson, Family	Jan 20
Barbara Spencer, Family	Feb 20
Steven Penrose	Jan 20
Dylan McManus	Jan 20
Wendelyn Wells	Jan 20
Juan Villarino Family	Feb 20
JC Olander, Attorney at Law	Feb 20
Antonin Guttman	Feb 20
John and Sara Blakeslee Family	Feb 20
Anna Winn	Feb 20
Paul Lubeck Family	Feb 20

HOLD THIS DATE!

Tuesday, May 19th

Jennifer Ackerman, author of *The Genius of Birds*, is coming to town to speak about her new book: **THE BIRD WAY**

A NEW LOOK AT HOW BIRDS TALK, WORK, PLAY, PARENT, AND THINK

Stay tuned for a time/place announcement in the next Alby!



Leucistic Dark-eyed Junco - Debbie Diersch



Common Merganser - Lisa Larson

AVAILABLE

Santa Cruz Bird Club

Officer Positions *soon becoming* available:

- Program Director**
- Outreach/Publicity Director**
- Hospitality Director**

Please see santacruzbirdclub.org/club-information/club-officers for a description of officer duties.

DEADLINE

submissions for
May-Aug issue

APR 1, 2020



Banana Slug eating a Slippery Jack Fungus - Lisa Larson



Spotted Sandpiper - Sharon Hull

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

SCBC OFFICERS

President

Lisa Sheridan:

trotrider@aol.com

Bird Records Keeper

Alex Rinkert

arinkert12@comcast.net

Programs

Hannah Nevis

hnevins@abcbirds.org

Field Trips

Nick Levendosky

n.levendosky@gmail.com

Treasurer

Stephanie Singer

singersa@aol.com

Secretary

Larry Corridan

larry961357@sbcglobal.net

Editor

Lisa Fay Larson

scbirdclubeditor@gmail.com

Webmaster

Phil Brown

pdpbrown@gmail.com

Conservation Director

Jennifer Parkin

J.parkin127@gmail.com

Membership Director

Brian Schnack

theschnack@gmail.com

Hospitality Director

Nickie Zavinsky

nickiezee0111@gmail.com

Historian

Elisabeth Foster

elisabethif@gmail.com

ALBATROSS



is published five times a year
by the Santa Cruz Bird Club.
Download the online version and
past issues on the SCBC website,
santacruzbirdclub.org

PARTING SHOT: "GO AWAY! WE'RE NOT REALLY PIGEONS!" ROCK PIGEON VS PIGEON GUILLEMOT - ANDY KNORR



*Waddell Creek Beach Sunset
Hutton's Vireo on fence, Shorebirds Pond
- Lisa Larson*



Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club

Enjoy walks in and around Santa Cruz County, discounted boat trips on Monterey Bay, summer picnics, meetings Sept–May featuring informative, illustrated talks on wild birds and related topics, and our newsletter, *Albatross*.

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

To pay with PayPal:

santacruzbirdclub.org/join-or-renew-online.

Or make checks payable to
Santa Cruz Bird Club and mail to:
P.O. Box 1304, Santa Cruz, CA 95061,
Attention: Membership.