

## INSIDE

Breeding Bird Atlas Update

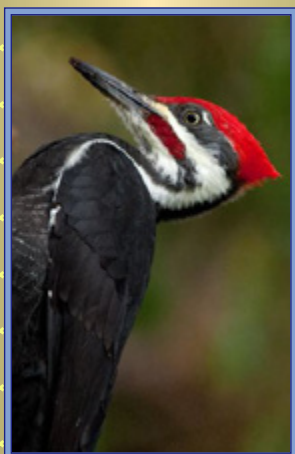
Sponsor-a-Species Campaign

The BOG Sit 2021



Christmas Bird Counts

Santa Cruz Birds



Birder's  
Notebook  
PARTING SHOT

Great Blue Heron - Andy Knorr  
Pileated Woodpecker  
- Michelle Lamberson



PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

## A Marbled Murrelet Fledges at Big Basin

By Alex Rinkert, Stephanie Singer, Steve Singer



Most birders are introduced to the Marbled Murrelet on boat trips—a small alcid bobbing on the ocean, diving when the boat approaches. Sometimes they're close enough to shore to be seen with a scope.

For those landlubbers who venture into the old-growth forest in the hours before dawn, the murrelet may reveal its second persona. As it flies to and from the ocean, through the giant trees, you may hear its eerie “keer-keer” calls to its fellow murrelets. Find a spot with a view of the sky and you may see them flying like giant bumblebees.

There is a third facet of the Marbled Murrelet, unseen by most. If its forest flights are successful, the bird will find a suitable large branch high in an old-growth tree and lay a single egg. It is a cause for celebration any time that an active murrelet nest is found. The one that Alex Rinkert found this summer in Big Basin Redwoods State Park was extra special, since 98% of the park was burned in the CZU Lightning Complex Fire, and most of it burned with high intensity.

Alex tells the story:

*During a dawn survey at the park on July 1, I observed an adult murrelet carrying a fish while flying over a small patch of green, lightly burned forest. The murrelet circled below the canopy and flew up to its nest on a large, moss-covered limb of a Douglas-fir; where a downy chick received its morning meal. A small group of researchers monitored the chick intermittently in the following days. By July 9, the chick had attained full juvenal plumage and was ready to fledge!*

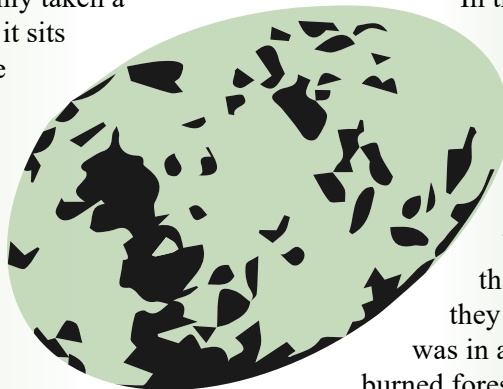
*That evening, the nest was staked out in anticipation of a fledging. An adult brought the chick one last fish, and then with a “full tank” and in fading light, the chick launched off the limb and took its first flight, 24 minutes after sunset! Renowned local photographer Frans Lanting and crew were on hand, and despite the challenging light and distance, they captured the first ground-based footage of this species fledging from a tree nest. We left that evening feeling ecstatic, tired, and relieved.*



*This drawing, by Ken Carlson, appeared in The Wilson Bulletin in 1975.*

Observations of murrelets over the years have revealed how amazingly fine-tuned their instincts are. The young chick first sees the world as a

collage of branches and sky, and has only taken a few steps around its nest. For 30 days it sits alone on the branch, and then when the moment is right, it preens off all of the downy feathers revealing its black and white juvenal plumage. After a few bouts of wing-flapping, it jumps off the nest branch and flies rapidly towards the ocean. Alone. No adults around. Once on the water—and it has never before even *seen* water—the fledgling knows how to dive and fly underwater to catch fish!



In the intervening years, 16 more nests were found in the Santa Cruz Mountains. However there have been no serious nest-finding efforts in the park in the last 20 years. The parents of this year's nest had to find their way to the breeding area over a landscape that was much different than what they were used to. Their chosen tree was in a rare, tiny 9-acre patch of lightly burned forest that still had some green canopy.

The nest itself lacked both vertical and horizontal branches that provide screening cover, and was much more visible than is typical. This year's chick somehow managed to avoid predation by corvids, perhaps because their numbers have been significantly reduced by the fire. Remarkably, the fledging of this year's nest occurred 30 years after Santa Cruz Bird Club members had witnessed the first ever fledging of this species from another tree only 500 meters away.

While there is much excitement about this year's nest, the severely burned old growth forest surrounding this tiny patch of remnant green canopy portrays a different reality. Nearly half of the potentially suitable murrelet nest trees at Big Basin were lost in the fire. Only time will tell whether this unique and endangered species can continue to breed in the rest of the park as the forest slowly recovers.

## THE SCBC CONNECTION

Santa Cruz County has been a key place for solving the mystery of the Marbled Murrelet's nest. In 1930, long before the Santa Cruz Bird Club was founded, a young Les Hawkins was birding along railroad tracks just south of what is now Henry Cowell State Park. He saw two murrelets chasing each other and calling repeatedly. He noted: "*...I know of no cliffs up the canyon from whence they might have come but many dead stubs full of holes. They are small enough—why can't or why aren't they nesting in holes in trees??... Just see if this prophecy doesn't come true.*" He was wrong about nesting in cavities, but right in that they nest in trees— a bizarre location for a seabird.

There were sporadic observations of Marbled Murrelets in the Santa Cruz Mountains from the 1930s through the early 1970s, including a nest search in 1957 by members of the newly formed Santa Cruz Bird Club and other naturalists. They searched along the banks of Pescadero Creek, but failed to find a nest.

It wasn't until 1974 that a nest was found— in a Douglas-fir at Big Basin Redwoods State Park. After two more nests were found at Big Basin in 1989, the Santa Cruz Bird Club joined forces with Steve and Stephanie Singer to search for nests in 1990. Success came in May 1991, when 14 club members met at dawn at Big Basin to stake out potentially suitable nest trees. Bonnie Bedzin and Rebecca Cull made the key observation that led to finding the fourth Marbled Murrelet nest ever found in California. Unlike the other three nests, this one was successful! With nine club members observing, the chick fledged successfully on the evening of July 3. Santa Cruz Bird Club members were the first people to ever observe the fledging of a Marbled Murrelet in person!

### ***Links for more information:***

Frans Lanting video of the fledge: [www.vimeo.com/592467183/5149ad27c7](http://www.vimeo.com/592467183/5149ad27c7)

More about the fire's impact on Big Basin Redwoods State Park: [www.scmcb.org](http://www.scmcb.org)

About the 1991 nest & fledge: [https://santacruzbirdclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MAMU\\_Suddjian\\_-1991\\_Albatross\\_V37.No\\_.1.pdf](https://santacruzbirdclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MAMU_Suddjian_-1991_Albatross_V37.No_.1.pdf)

About the 1974 nest:

(in Pacific Discovery): [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_california-wild\\_july-august-1975\\_28\\_4](https://archive.org/details/sim_california-wild_july-august-1975_28_4)

(in Wilson Bulletin): <https://sora.unm.edu/node/3375>

About the 1957 search for a nest: [https://santacruzbirdclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MAMU\\_Anderson-1972-1\\_PacDiscovery-article.pdf](https://santacruzbirdclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MAMU_Anderson-1972-1_PacDiscovery-article.pdf)



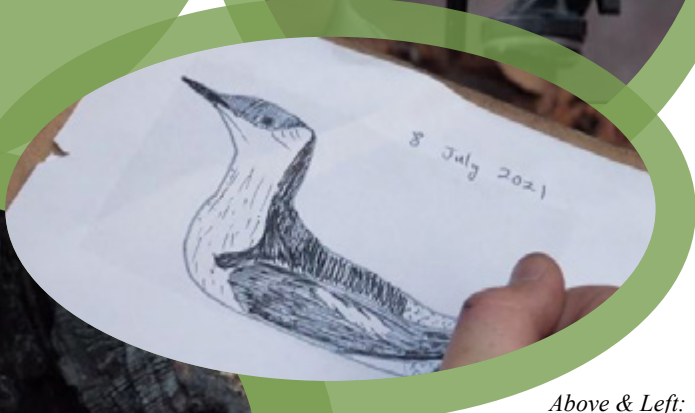
Marbled Murrelet nestling - Estrella Bibbey



Adult MAMU, breeding plumage  
- Beth Hamel

What a wonderful bird is the murr'let chick,  
He swallows fish whole – that's a neat trick.  
From his nest in a tree, he flies straight to the sea,  
In pitch dark, no ad'ult to guide it!

- Stephanie Singer



Above & Left:  
Alex Rinkert with scope  
Alex' MAMU sketch  
Alex sketching



# Breeding Bird Atlas Year 5 Report Coming Soon

This final year of the breeding bird atlas went exactly as we had hoped. Fieldwork for the project is about 98% complete, we have sponsors for over 90% of the species in the Sponsor-a-Species fundraising campaign, and we are off to the races with getting the atlas published. Looking back over the past five years I remember all the incredibly rewarding experiences, and also all the hard work. I suspect the 100+ volunteers who submitted observations to the atlas feel similarly, and they should stand proudly for their tremendous work and unwavering commitment to this project.

We are still planning to finish the remaining 2% of fieldwork next year as the atlas works its way through the publication process. In the meantime, the Year 5 report should be available in early November and I'll be sending an occasional update on the publication progress, and perhaps some sneak peaks at the results.

Alex Rinkert  
Project Director

The following observers (on next page-5) submitted at least one observation to the breeding bird atlas between 2017-2021. The names in **bold** are those who submitted observations in at least four years.



*Common Murre Dad with Chick - Jane Mayer*

## BREEDING BIRD ATLAS RECENT DONORS

Kevin Kilpatrick  
Pam Iriguchi  
Lois Goldfrank  
David Lavorando  
Ann Chandler

*Thank you!*

## **BBA OBSERVERS**

### **Robin Abu-Shumays**

RJ Adams

Nanci Adams

### **Jenny Anderson**

Jasper Barnes

Jo Ann Baumgartner

Bonnie Bedzin

Bill Bousman

### **Ann Brohmer**

### **Jessica Brohmer**

Perry Brohmer

Tracy Brookshier

### **Phil Brown**

Kristin Brunk

Brian Bullard

Lleni Carr

### **Bryan Cockel**

Kaia Colestock

Larry Corridon

Nanda Currant

Judy Donaldson

Hannah Doniach

### **David Ekdahl**

### **John Ellis**

Gilles Faggio

Vivian Fenner-Evans

### **Craig Fosdick**

Elisabeth Foster

Aaron Gabbe

Lois Goldfrank

Peggy Gotthold

### **Richard Griffith**

Jessica Guenther

Zach Hampson

Cole Heim

### **Sharon Hull**

Lee Jaffe

Jazmine Jensen

Kent Johnson

W&I Jolliffe

Tim Jolly

### **Surrey Kent**

Spencer Klinefelter

Storey La Montagne

Seraphina Landgrebe

### **June Langhoff**

### **Lisa Fay Larson**

Inger Marie Laursen

### **Earl Lebow**

Margaret Leonard

### **Nicholas Levendosky**

Juliette Linossier

### **Bruce Lyon**

Jenn Mahley

### **Jeff Manker**

Stephanie Martin

Bobbie Mayer

Brian McElroy

Jennifer McNulty

Don Miller

Jane Mio

Liam Murphy

Shirley Murphy

Sophie Noda

### **Jane Orbuch**

Vivienne Orgel

Amy Patten

Carol Pecot

Sandi Pensinger

### **Margaret Perham**

### **Bernadette Ramer**

### **Bob Ramer**

### **Alex Rinkert**

Barbara Riverwoman

Richard Sandkuhle

### **Rusty Scalf**

Christian Schwarz

Elena Scott

### **Lisa Sheridan**

Tomoko Shimotomai

### **David Sidle**

### **Stephanie Singer**

Logan Southall

Anne Spence

Madeline Spencer

### **Kitty Stein**

Howard Stephenson

David Suddjian

### **Peter Svensson**

### **Jonah Svensson**

### **Hanna Svensson**

### **Scott Terrill**

Tim Thompson

### **Simon Thornhill**

Matthew Timmer

### **Norman Uyeda**

Elizabeth Van Dyke

Connie Vigno

Jonny Wahl

### **Randy Wardle**

Jim Williams

Melanie Wirtanen

Amy Yee

## **PROJECTS**

Quail Hollow Nest Box Project

DeAnza Nest Box Project

UCSC Nest Box Project

Bay Heights Nest Box Project

Pasatiempo Nest Box Project

Wild Farm Alliance

Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group

Younger Lagoon Reserve Bird Banding Station

iNaturalist community



# THE SPONSOR-A-SPECIES CAMPAIGN

is coming to an end as of December 31st, 2021. This campaign has raised significant funds that will be used for the Santa Cruz Breeding Bird Atlas. Thank you so much to those who have made this campaign a success!

We have just a handful of birds left, and there are some great birds still available. We are offering a special discounted rate of 60% off the original price, meaning you can sponsor a great bird for only \$80!

And, it's tax-deductible! The name of the donor will be acknowledged in the Atlas with the sponsored bird or donations can be anonymous. You can treat yourself, give as a gift, or specify "in honor of..." or "in memory of..." another. A handsome Pileated Woodpecker decal comes with each sponsorship.

To sponsor, please go to: <https://santacruzbirdclub.org/auction/>. Note, if you pay by check, it must be made to "SFBBO" to qualify as tax-deductible.

**Each of our available birds has asked to make a final pitch, in their own words.**



**Virginia Rail** – I am perhaps even more secretive than my Sora cousin, so seeing me is surely enough to make any morning special. Don't let my shy nature stop you from sponsoring me!

**Western Gull** – Okay, I know, gulls are not for everyone, and even birders who do like gulls are not generally thrilled to see me. I eat French fries and make a lot of noise, but my fluffy polka dotted babies are extremely cute and I am part of the Santa Cruz vibe.

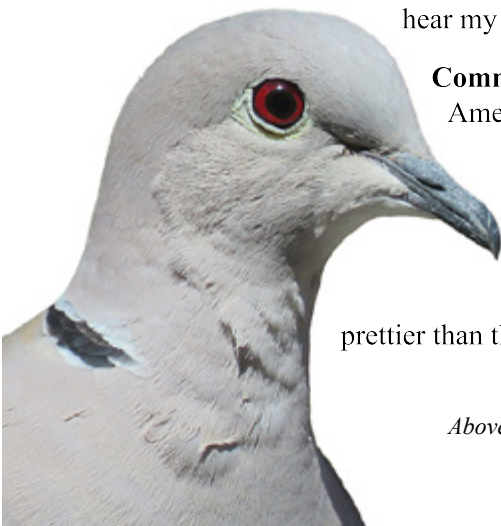
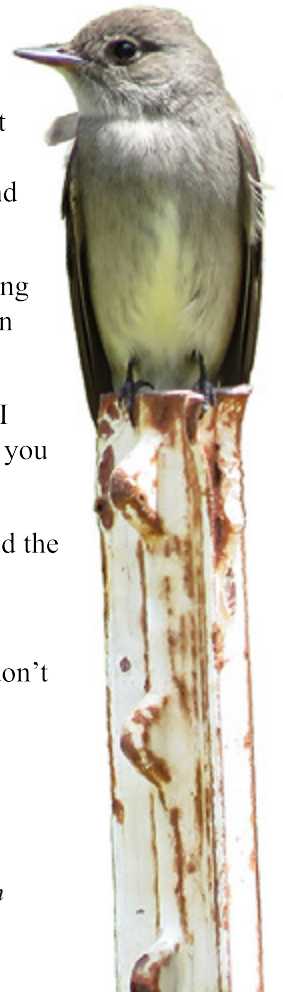
**Western Screech-Owl** – What is an adorable owl doing on the list of unclaimed birds? I'm small but mighty and an important part of the Santa Cruz woodlands.

**Western Wood-Pewee** – I am a very handsome flycatcher in my gray vest–I cannot believe that I am not sponsored yet. If you sponsor me, you can smile every time you hear my signature "peewee" call.

**Common Gallinule** – You're putting me on. Someone adopted the American Coot and not ME?

**Brown-headed Cowbird** – OK, so I'm not everyone's favorite bird. But don't blame me for how I raise (or don't raise) my young. Blame Darwin and evolution!

**Eurasian Collared-Dove** – Don't you think I'm much prettier than the Mourning Dove?



*Above left, counterclockwise: Western Gull and chicks - Margaret Perham  
Brown-headed Cowbird - Randy Wardle  
Eurasian Collared Dove - Lisa Larson  
Western Wood-Pewee - Lisa Larson*

**European Starling** – Face it, I’m the Gateway Bird for many folks. And you must admit, my iridescence is quite stunning.

**Bank Swallow** – Sponsoring me will bring you great happiness... and you can take that to the bank!

**Brewer’s Blackbird** – I may be “only another blackbird” but my mate & I are attentive parents and we catch a lot of insects for our little ones.

**Cliff Swallow** – Doesn’t my status among the county’s more abundant breeding species mean anything to you? I even put my nests where you can readily observe them.

**Great-tailed Grackle** – OK, I’m new here. But where’s the welcome mat?

**Rufous-crowned Sparrow** – I may or may not nest in the county. Sponsoring me may just tip the balance in your favor.

**Savannah Sparrow** – No, I’m not from Georgia. I just like grasslands.



*"Stacked Glossies" - Lisa Larson*

*Top: Brewer's Blackbird - John Fox*

*Middle: European Starling - Lisa Larson*

*Bottom: Great-tailed Grackle - Carole Rose*

# **65th Santa Cruz Christmas Bird Count**

## **Saturday, December 18, 2021**

The 65th Santa Cruz Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 18, 2021. After having the count and evening festivities limited by COVID last year, we are looking forward to restoring some normalcy to the count this time around. Despite the limitations last year, we had a record 100 birders participate and 39,935 birds of 167 species were tallied. While rare birds often steal the show, the Christmas Bird Count has always had an important role in monitoring the population trends of wintering birds both locally and across their range in North America. Last year the count documented the continued increase in Western Bluebird, Canada Goose, and Wild Turkey, as well as an unusual scarcity of nearshore seabirds. What will we find this year? Come spend the day counting birds to help us find out! Please sign up as soon as possible so we can begin making assignments for count day: <https://forms.gle/Upc5cxnjD3MHoBSv6>

Nick Levendosky  
Phil Brown  
Alex Rinkert  
Compilers

**\*\*We ask that unvaccinated participants wear a mask and socially distance when near others.\*\***



*Hermit Thrush on Coroneaster  
- Kathleen Waldron*

## **THE MOSS LANDING CBC**

The Moss Landing CBC will take place on January 1st, 2022! Please contact Kat Bailey at [kitkatbailey@gmail.com](mailto:kitkatbailey@gmail.com) if you would like to be added to the Moss Landing CBC email list. Due to continuing Covid-19 concerns and uncertainties, we will not be holding the countdown dinner this year, but I hope to bring it back in 2023.



# THE **BIG SIT**

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2021

We held the 2021 Big Sit at New Brighton State Beach and we situated our circle precariously on the bluffs above the day-use parking lot. The bright, sunny day seemed to augur well for the sit; but that was an illusion: the sea was an empty, glassy expanse and the pine forest behind us was likewise devoid of birds—so much so that we had to struggle to even hear a Spotted Towhee, which are a constant presence here. We limped along doggedly, however, and managed to pull out a grand total of 46 birds. Compare this to the last Big Sit at the same site in 2017 when we had 63 and you'll get some idea of the bird drought this year. The highlight was a Red-necked Grebe that appeared for the briefest second, gave Lois Goldfranka flash of a view, and then vanished before anyone could catch a glimpse of it. The other highlight was the food. I had purposely asked people to bring things to share and they did; so bird drought and food feast about sums up the day. We will do this again next year—it is always on the first weekend in October—but we may vary the site.



*All photos by Sharon Hull*

- Shantanu Phukan

*Photo below*

*Front: Larry Corridon (cutting his cakes) and Ray Dyer  
In back from left: Cliff Bixler, Pamela King, Brian Scanlon*

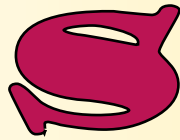


*Photo above, from left:  
Lois Goldfrank, Lisa Sheridan, Nancy Collins, and Cliff Bixler*

# SANTA CRUZ BIRDS

By Alex Rinkert

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2021



Significant avian events this summer included the first county record of Tricolored Heron, the first Marbled Murrelet nest since 2001, and a major dispersal of White-breasted Nuthatches into the county. Mud remained relatively scarce in the county, with Corcoran Lagoon and a finger of West Branch Struve Slough being the only places that had enough to consistently host shorebirds.

Extensive fieldwork this summer within the footprint of the CZU Lightning Complex fire documented the avifauna utilizing this newly formed landscape. Lazuli Buntings were one of the most common species in the burn area and they were confirmed breeding in many new places, especially in the most severely burned areas. Hairy Woodpeckers, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Pacific-slope Flycatchers also seemed to have readily adapted to the burned forests, while some species closely associated with high canopy cover and Douglas-firs, such as Golden-crowned Kinglet and Hermit Warbler, were virtually absent at former strongholds.

Sadly, the massive and familiar evening gatherings of Sooty Shearwaters in the nearshore waters were missing this summer. Where were they? Most of the other nearshore seabirds—Elegant Terns, Brown Pelicans, Heermann’s Gulls, and jaegers—that join the evening feeding frenzies were also missing. A red tide spanning the nearshore waters from the north coast to Moss Landing and beyond may have displaced the schools of anchovies these birds come to feast on.



From Top:  
Tri-colored Heron - Lois Goldfrank  
TCHE and 2 SNEG - Michael Bolte  
TCHE in flight - Alex Rinkert  
White-winged Dove - Lisa Larson



A flock of up to 80 **Canada Geese** at Sand Hill Bluff and vicinity in August was a record number for the north coast in summer (AR, v.ob.). A **Mute Swan** continued to be seen at Swanton Pond through June 13, but then moved to the Laguna Creek marsh by June 20 where it remained through August (v.ob.). A brood of **Wood Ducks** at a pond in Corralitos on June 17 was noteworthy as there are few breeding records for that region of the county (NU, EL). A **White-winged Scoter** at Yellow Bank Beach from August 2–9 was likely summering there (KD, LW, v.ob.). Unseasonal **Bufflehead** were in Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes on July 15–August 1 (BS, DS, STu) and more unusually in Soquel Creek below the Soquel Cemetery on July 4 (LSO, QS).

A female **Wild Turkey** with three poults in tow at Natural Bridges State Beach on June 1 was the first

breeding record for the park, and perhaps the most coastal breeding record in the county thus far (NS). The family group continued to be seen there through August (v.ob.). A **White-winged Dove** was at Struve Slough from August 27–29 (JM, v.ob.). **Vaux’s Swifts** were confirmed breeding in a neighborhood near Graham Hill Road on July 24 when begging young inside a chimney were heard (LSO). A family group with recently fledged young was then seen in the vicinity of the chimney on July 31 (AR, ES). Breeding was suspected to be occurring in this neighborhood last year, however no confirming behaviors were observed at that time. The observations this summer provide the first confirming evidence of breeding away from Big Basin since 2006. Vaux’s Swifts formerly nested in chimneys more regularly in the county, but most of these sites seem to have blinked out based on the absence of adult presence in June and July. Three **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were reported in Santa Cruz between August 20-30 (AR, NL, MBg, NU, v.ob.).



A Common Gallinule at Laguna Creek marsh on August 11 was rare away from the Pajaro Valley (ST).

A **Ruddy Turnstone** was in Watsonville Slough at Pajaro Dunes from August 15–16 (LFL, NS). **Baird's Sandpipers** were scarce this August with only 3-4 reported between August 11–23, (v.ob.).

Two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were the first reported in the county since 2017. One was at Struve Slough on August 9 (NU) and another appeared at Corcoran Lagoon on August 18 (BR, v.ob.). Six adult **Wilson's Phalaropes** at Drew Lake on June 18 were rather early fall migrants for the county (NU). At least three **Solitary Sandpipers** were at Struve Slough from August 10–30 (BS, RW, EL, NU). An adult **Willet** at Loch Lomond on June 26 was unexpected in the mountains, especially in June (AR, ES).

A **Marbled Murrelet** nest was discovered at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on July 1, the first found in the Santa Cruz Mountains since 2001 (AR). The nest was in a broken top Douglas-fir within a small patch of lightly burned forest near park headquarters. After monitoring the nest for eight days, the chick fledged late in the evening on July

9. A few **Rhinoceros Auklets** were close to shore off Davenport in early July, but there was no indication they were breeding at this historically occupied site (GS).

An extremely worn **Short-billed Gull** was near the Pajaro River mouth on August 16 (NS). The very earliest fall arrivals of this species appear in August, but the plumage of this bird indicates it likely summured locally. **Elegant Terns** rarely venture into the Pajaro Valley, so two at Pinto Lake on August 22 (AR, ES) and one at Struve Slough on August 29 (PH) were noteworthy. Two **Black Skimmers** were at Corcoran Lagoon on June 3 (GM, v.ob.) and one was at Pinto Lake on July 8 (LFL). A

**Manx Shearwater** was about 11 miles offshore in the Monterey Bay on August 24 (PB, MB, NU, BS).

An adult **Tricolored Heron** briefly seen at Younger Lagoon on July 31 was the first record for the county and the sixth record for northern California (LG, v.ob.). The heron was in the lagoon

for about two hours until it flew off heading west up the coast.

An **Osprey** nest with young near lower Nisene Marks State Park, found in June, was the first breeding record for that watershed (LFL, KS). After a **White-tailed Kite** was seen at Glenwood Preserve from May 5–6 (BB), up to four there between June 2–9 suggested a pair nested locally (BB, LH, AF). This species has rarely bred in the mountains, with the most recent confirmation being in 2008 at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Although a pair present in summer 2013 at the Glenwood grasslands may have also attempted to breed there that year. The breeding pair of **Bald Eagles** in the Watsonville sloughs successfully fledged one juvenile this summer (GK). Elsewhere, an adult flew over Soquel on June 16 (JE) and an adult pair was at Chittenden on August 11 (MB).

A recently fledged **Belted Kingfisher** at Arana Gulch from July 6–12 indicated this elusive breeding species probably



From top:  
Ruddy Turnstone - Lisa Larson  
Least (front) & Semipalmated Sandpiper  
- Norm Uyeda  
Tri-colored Heron - Sharon Hull  
Osprey pair on nest - Kitty Stein

nested somewhere nearby (MP, RG). Four **Willow Flycatchers** were reported from mid-county and the north coast between August 17–31 (AR, JW, JM, NU, v.ob.). Three **Western Kingbirds**—at Terrace Point on June 3 (BS), Davenport Landing on June 10 (AM), and UC Santa Cruz on June 13 (MB)—were probably all very late spring migrants. Two family groups, including one from a known nest, at Thompson Road in the Pajaro Hills on July 11 provided another rare breeding record for this species in the county (NU). A juvenile **Eastern Kingbird** found at Antonelli Pond on August 30 continued through the end of the month (LH, v.ob.). Three **Loggerhead Shrikes** were reported in August (NU, MB, BME).

Beginning July 8, up to ten **Horned Larks** were in the plowed agricultural fields near CARE Park where they remained through the end of August (RK, v.ob.). In July, the flock included some recently fledged young, which provided a rare breeding record for the county (DL, v.ob.). A flock of up to eleven larks continued near the southern end of San Andreas Road through at least June 22, with possible juveniles being seen there as well (GK).

At least four **Purple Martin** nests were found at Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve this summer (AR, LSo). An exciting discovery was a new colony of martins in the lower San Vicente watershed, found on July 14 (ZH, ES, WL). All four of the active nests seen there on July 18 had large young, and all were in close proximity to each other in burnt Douglas-fir snags (AR). Recently fledged young were also present on July 18, so there may have been five or more nests at this new colony this summer. With an



*From top: Western Kingbird family  
- Norm Uyeda  
Eastern Kingbird - Michael Bolte  
Purple Martin juvenile - Garet Lau  
Horned Larks - Randy Wardle*

increase in suitable breeding habitat for this species following the CZU Lightning Complex fire, there may be a resurgence of their breeding population in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Even before the fire, sightings away from known breeding locales were increasing every year.

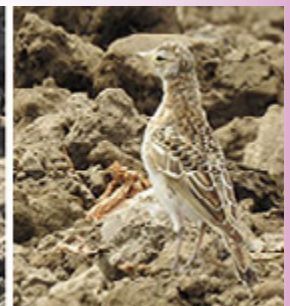
One martin at Corcoran Lagoon on July 6 was the first dispersant noted on the coast this summer (LM).

A pair of **Tree Swallows** nesting in newly erected nest boxes at DeAnza Mobile Home Park was perhaps the first time they have bred

there (SS, JA). At least 26 **White-breasted Nuthatches** reported this summer was an amazing number and more than in any recent year (v.ob.). Most of the June reports were from the Pajaro Hills, while the majority of the July and August reports were from the mountains.

These nuthatches are dispersants from breeding populations in more interior regions, but probably originate as close as the eastern slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains and south of Santa Cruz County. Despite the increasing number of summer reports and breeding season presence over the past few years, no nests have been found within the county in recent years.

A pair of **House Wrens** nested again at Swanton Road, confirmed by an adult feeding a begging juvenile on July 16 (RR). A pair of **Western Bluebirds** successfully nesting in a bird box at Branciforte Middle School earlier this spring was the first breeding record from a residential area in the county (SLM, v.ob.). The



first of many to come? Adults feeding young at Terrace Point on July 25 was the first evidence of them breeding in westside Santa Cruz after a few years of increasingly regular presence there (JS, PS, HS). Fledgling Western Bluebirds at McCrary Ridge on June 16 (AR) and Sky Meadow Lane on June 30 (ES) were the first breeding records at Big Basin Redwoods State Park.

A pair of **Cedar Waxwings** carrying nest material at CARE Park on July 18 provided another rare breeding record for the small, disjunct population that breeds in the Pajaro Valley (EF, LC). The pair was still building on July 21 (AR), and the nest was active by at least August 2 (LSO). Four very recently fledged young were seen huddling together on a branch near the nest as they were fed berries by an adult on August 29 (AR, EL).

Single **Red Crossbills** were at Empire Grade on June 13 and 18 (AR), Castle Rock State Park on June 14 (AR), Henry Cowell on June 26 (DG), and Loma Prieta on July 5 (BK, GG). Those at Castle Rock and Empire Grade were identified as the “type 2” call type (AR). **Lawrence’s Goldfinches** were reported at various places including Loma Prieta, Big Basin Redwoods State Park, Empire Grade, Swanton Road, Bonny Doon, Davenport, Interlaken, San Andreas Road, and the Pajaro Hills (v.ob.). Despite the surprisingly many reports throughout the summer, including of small groups and apparent pairs remaining in some areas for weeks, the only breeding confirmation was an adult feeding a begging fledgling at Pajaro Dunes on July 11 (PSO).

A **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Terrace Point from at least June 1–5 (MB, FB, JR) and several in a fallow field between Wilder Beach and Younger Lagoon bluffs on July 1 (SM) were away from the areas they normally breed.

One photographed in the scrub at Loma Prieta on July 8 was at a bizarre location for early July (PH). **Black-chinned Sparrows** were confirmed breeding at Loma Prieta this summer when one was seen carrying food on July 5 (STe). A **Brewer’s**



**Sparrow** visiting a backyard in westside Santa Cruz on June 18 was the first spring record for the county (KB). Single **Lark Sparrows** at Loma Prieta on June 13 (NU) and June 18 (JP) were unexpected there at that time of year, while one at Four Mile Beach on August 27 was at



a more expected location for a migrant (RK). An apparent “**Nuttall’s**” **White-crowned Sparrow**

with massive growths on the sides of its neck at Seacliff State Beach seen between July 6–26 was away from their usual areas of occurrence (DF, AR). Rare summering **Golden-crowned Sparrows** included one photographed visiting a feeder in Soquel from July 3–7 (JG) and one at upper Empire Grade on July 5, where much more unusual (BT, SLM). An adult **Bell’s Sparrow** in severely burned chaparral near Empire Grade on July 13 was quite unexpected there (AR). Post-breeding dispersal by this species is virtually unknown in the county, however, with the early successional chaparral created by the CZU fire, there may be more noticeable dispersal by this species and perhaps establishment of new populations in the future.



From top: *Bell’s Sparrow* - Alex Rinkert  
*Lawrence’s Goldfinches* - Pete Solè  
*White-breasted Nuthatch* - Earl Lebow  
*Grasshopper Sparrow* - Michael Bolte

Several **Western Meadowlarks** in the northern Pajaro Hills on June 15 and 25 offered hope they may be breeding there (NU, EL). Presently, this species is only known to be breeding at Soda Lake further to the south. No more than 15 **Tricolored Blackbirds**

were reported at Laguna de las Trancas this summer, but breeding was still confirmed at this last holdout for them in the county (RR). A pair of **Great-tailed Grackles** nested at Westlake Pond (CS), the first time they have nested away from the Pajaro Valley since becoming established as a breeding species in 2001. The pair apparently raised two broods at the pond this summer, as a nest with young produced fledglings in early July (RAS) and then recently fledged young were seen again on September 14 (BL).

A **Common Yellowthroat** singing a perfect rendition of a MacGillivray's Warbler song at Neary Lagoon in late May and into early June was unusual, but most remarkably this bird was banded on its left leg and had apparently been observed singing a MacGillivray's song at the same location two years earlier from May 26–June 8, 2019 (AR, AH, ESg)! See a video of this bird singing here: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/344653691>. A real **MacGillivray's Warbler** at the ranch buildings at Wilder Ranch State Park on June 19 may have been a prospective breeder rather than a late migrant (SH). A second-year female **Magnolia Warbler** visiting a bird bath at westside Santa Cruz on July 5 was unexpected (KB). An "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler photographed at the UC Santa Cruz Farm on July 3 was exceptional at that low elevation in early July (MB). A **Townsend's Warbler** at China Grade in Big Basin Redwoods State Park on August 2 tied the earliest fall arrival ever for that species in the county (ES).

A young male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was near Empire Grade on June 2 (AR) and an adult male was at a feeder in Soquel on June 23 (MPa). A second-year male **Indigo Bunting** sang at Pogonip from June 19–July 3 (LH, v.ob.). A flock of up to 12 **Scaly-breasted Munias** continued visiting a feeder in Interlaken and nearby Drew Lake through the end of August (NU).



Top right: MacGillivray's Warbler - Sharon Hull  
Center: Great-tailed Grackles - Robin Abu-Shumays  
Bottom left - Indigo Bunting - Michael Bolte

#### Cited Observers:

Robin Abu-Shumays, Jenny Anderson, Michael Bolte, Maria Borges (MBg), Phil Brown, Brian Bullard, Karen Burnson, Larry Corridon, Konshau Duman, John Ellis, David Fickel, Abram Fleishman, Elisabeth Foster, Jeff Garcia, Gabriel Gartner, Lois Goldfrank, Richard Griffith, Zach Hampson, Paul Heady, Adrian Hinkle, Lawrence Holland, Sharon Hull, Brooke Keeney, Ruth Kerr, Gary Kittleson, Lisa Fay Larson, David Lavorando, Will Lawton, Storey LaMontagne, Earl Lebow, Nick Levendosky, Bruce Lyon, Aaron Maizlish, Jeff Manker, Stephanie Martin, Gary Martindale, Brian McElroy, Liam Murphy, Martha Pallin (MPa), Margaret Perham, Jon Perry, Robert Ramer, Alex Rinkert, Jane Rudebusch, Brian Scanlon, Em Scattaregia (ESg), Nico Schnack, Christian Schwarz, Elena Scott, Stephanie Singer, Pete Solé (PSo), David Somerton, Logan Southall (LSO), Quinn Southall, Gary Strachan, Kitty Stein, Hanna Svensson, Jonah Svensson, Peter Svensson, Scott Terrill (STe), Simon Thornhill, Steve Tucker (STu), Breck Tyler, Norman Uyeda, Jonny Wahl, Randy Wardle, Lynette Williams, "v.ob." means various observers. **Please enter interesting observations into eBird or report them to Alex Rinkert at [arinkert@comcast.net](mailto:arinkert@comcast.net).**

# Birder's Notebook

## *While Holding on for Rain*

September, just past the equinox  
Already, geese have flown over, so high, calling.  
In a patch of fine dry grasses  
on a small coastal California organic farm  
tended by past lost wanderers, now at home,  
two Bobolinks glow in pale golden winter garb,  
feasting on tiny seeds no farmers desire, no birders care to name.  
Two thousand miles off-course, yet on their way,  
well fed, trusting magnetism and starlight,  
to grasslands of Argentina or the Pantanal.  
In spite of everything else, such joy today.

- Surrey Kent



*Bobolinks, Homeless Garden - Arthur Macmillian*

# Birder's Notebook, cont'd



This plover had only been seen in California on twenty occasions. And when it was first seen on the morning of September 17 by Simon Thornhill, he posted on a birding list serve: "Strange Plover at Laguna Beach". He noted that the plover was slightly larger than the snowy plovers it was loosely associating with. He included a photo and it was identified by the birding community as a lesser sand plover (*Charadrius mongolus*).

I had first seen a Lesser Sand Plover in California on October 22, 2016 on Pt. Reyes Beach on the Outer Point of Marin County's Pt. Reyes. This small plover is usually found in Asia (it was formally know as the Mongolian plover), the east coast of Africa, India, and Australia. So when one wanders into California is would have most likely crossed over from Siberia and headed south through Alaska, Canada, and the states of Washington and Oregon.

- John Perry  
(Sketch by John Perry)



*Lesser Sand Plover - Simon Thornhill*

*Simon Thornhill and Nick Levendosky  
photographing the Lesser Sand Plover  
- Sharon Hull*



# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Matthew Strusis-Timmer	Aug 2021
Craig Fosdick	Aug 2021
Barbara Bailey-Porter	Aug 2021
Scott Eriksen	Aug 2021
Joan Lamphier	Aug 2021
Emma Alcares Family	Sep 2021
Josefa Simkin Family	Sep 2021
Henry Smith Family	Sep 2021
Julie Heffington	Sep 2021
Rachel Peak	Sep 2021
Scott Jones	Sep 2021
Shari Dallas	Sep 2021
Jone Balesteri	Sep 2021
Lisa Gerber Family	Sep 2021
David Yule	Sep 2021
Lowell Saumweber Family	Sep 2021
Louise Chiatovich	Sep 2021
Debra Wirkman	Sep 2021
Tamara Jones	Sep 2021
Diane Heckman	Sep 2021
Brad Keitt Family	Sep 2021
Ellen Baker Family	Sep 2021
Linda Felicio	Sep 2021
Janis Bolt	Sep 2021
Upgraded to family: Georgina Monahan Family	Oct 2021
Upgraded to family: Cathy Gamble Family	Oct 2021



*Lincoln's Sparrow, Neary Lagoon - Joseph Mikulsky*



*Northern Mockingbird - Michelle Lamberson*



## NOTICE!

**SANTA CRUZ BIRD CLUB**  
**Officer Positions available:**

**Program Director**  
**Outreach/Publicity**  
**Director**  
**Editor**

Please see:

**[santacruzbirdclub.org/club-information/club-officers-2/](http://santacruzbirdclub.org/club-information/club-officers-2/)**  
**for a description of officer duties.**



*Belted Kingfisher - Jeff Roisman*

# DEADLINE

submissions for  
Jan/Feb issue

## DEC 1, 2021



*Eurasian Collared-Dove - Lisa Larson*



*Bald Eagle, juvenile - John Hickok*

*Yellow-rumped Warbler eating persimmon - Lisa Larson*

# Submission to the *ALBATROSS*

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)

## Guidelines

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

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

~ Lisa Fay Larson, Editor

## SCBC OFFICERS

### **President**

Lisa Sheridan:  
trotrider@aol.com

### **Bird Records Keeper**

Alex Rinkert  
arinkert12@comcast.net

### **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

*Banana Slug - Lisa Larson*

*Greater Roadrunner  
- Andy Knorr*

## 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](http://santacruzbirdclub.org)



**PARTING SHOT: "I AM DE CAPTAIN NOW!"**  
GREEN HERON - MARGARET PERHAM



### Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club

Enjoy walks in and around Santa Cruz County, a club pelagic trip, summer picnics, meetings Sept-May featuring informative, illustrated talks on wild birds and related topics, and Our newsletter *Albatross*.  
\$20 Individual, \$25 Family, \$ Youth. \$400 Life.

**To pay with PayPal:**  
[santacruzbirdclub.org/join-or-renew-online](http://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