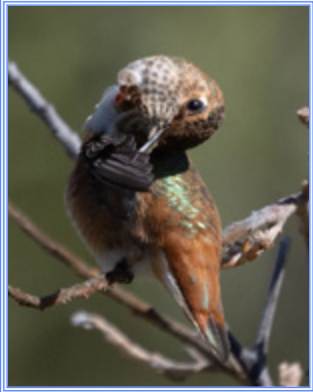


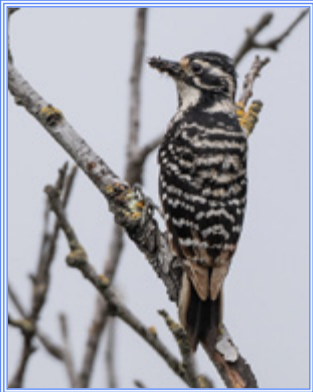
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# Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

## THE QUAIL HOLLOW RANCH NEST BOX PROJECT TWENTY-ONE YEARS AND STILL GOING STRONG

- By Sherry Fleming

**E**ach March, members of the Quail Hollow Ranch Nest Box Project (aka "Nest Boxers") gather for the new season's kick-off. After a survey of the park's boxes, volunteers enjoy a pot luck lunch and discuss plans for the months ahead. Currently, about 16 volunteers are actively involved in the project. They range from very experienced birders to relative novices who participate for the joy of involvement in this fun and educational citizen science endeavor. Last week the group finished up the final round of checks for our twenty-first season.

Begun in 2002 as a conservation effort primarily focused on Western Bluebirds (WEBL), over the years, in addition to WEBLs, the project nest boxes have been home to Violet-green Swallows (VGSW), Oak Titmouse (OATI), Chestnut-backed Chickadees (CBCH), Ash-throated Flycatchers (ATFL) and Bewick's Wrens (BEWR). Although starting off slowly (10 birds were recorded fledged from the boxes in 2002) the project has seen excellent success since its inception. During that time, 226 WEBL, 487 CBCH, 448 VGSW, 192 OATI, 133 ATFL and 28 BEWR have fledged from the park's boxes. Past seasons have seen as many as 106 birds fledge. Although this year's totals were lower (perhaps because of the weather) 58 birds fledged, a nearly six-fold increase over 2002.

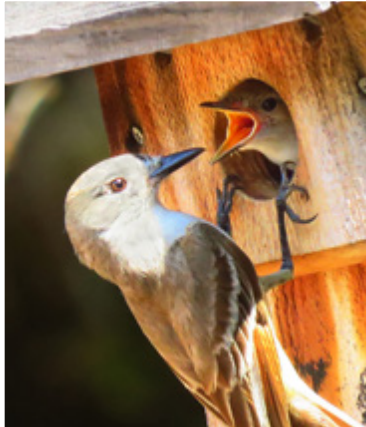
There are 22 boxes currently in use at the park, divided into two Loops. Loop 1 boxes are mostly located across the entrance meadow and along portions of the Chaparral trail. Loop 2 boxes are in the lower meadow across from Granite Construction Quarry, and also along the Discovery Loop. The boxes are sited and oriented with an eye towards attracting different

species. For example, WEBLs prefer open fields, whereas CBCHs are attracted to a secluded oak grove. During checks, the boxes, which are attached to telescoping poles, are lowered and the securing screws are removed. While this occurs, it is not uncommon for anxious parents to circle and even bombard the box checker. Under this pressure, many a nest boxer has dropped a nut,

WEBL Dad delivers food - Jim Bahn



From left: CBCH eggs - Bethany Klizer, ATFL and chick - Lisa Larson, OATI on nest - Bethany Klizer, OATI hatchlings - Bethany Klizer



bolt or screw into the surrounding vegetation, sometimes never to be found.

Over the years, in response to gained experience and lessons learned, box design has been updated and improved. For example, entry hole sizes have been reduced, and more prominent “excluders” have been attached to the box front to deter predators. As the planet has warmed, and because summer days in the park can be quite hot, more ventilation has been added to the top of the boxes. In past years, because of extreme heat, volunteers have even placed water bowls near some of the boxes located farther from a water source.

Members are loosely divided into two groups, each focusing on one of the Loops. At the start of the season boxes are checked twice per week. As the season progresses, checks are tailored to the expected activity for each box. These calculations, based on when a clutch of eggs is deemed “complete,” estimate hatch and fledged dates by species. Detailed records are kept for each box. Reports note any nearby adult activity, nest starts, egg laying, hatches and fledges. The data is then aggregated and provided to the Cornell Ornithology Lab where it becomes part of a national data base. It has also been incorporated into the Santa Cruz Breeding Bird Atlas, sponsored by the Santa

Cruz Bird Club. The information collected during each round of box checks is shared with the group via email. In addition to providing data for Cornell, this information is used as a road map for whoever makes the next round of checks. As the season progresses, and the regular, bi-weekly, monitoring segues into box-specific checks, individuals sign up to make the checks as needed. This is all managed via the group’s email Listserve and the Google calendar on its website.

Regular season maintenance of both the boxes and access to them has been diligently carried out by volunteer Jim Bahn, who is also the current president of the Friends of Quail Hollow Ranch. Jim deserves a special shout-out for his hard work and ongoing dedication. When someone’s report notes a problem with a box or difficulty reaching one (poison oak is a particular problem) Jim quickly responds and makes things right. But even with Jim’s valiant efforts, many of the nest boxes can be difficult to reach at times due to factors beyond control. This year the extremely wet weather transformed much of the lower fields into sucky marshes—perfect for the little newts who paddled happily by, but not so wonderful for the humans who were literally stuck in the mud.



WEBL & chick - Jim Bahn

Vigilance while conducting the checks is important. Among other things, nest boxers must always be on the lookout for poison oak, ticks, snakes, and the occasional cougar. This year, one member encountered a rattlesnake while approaching a box. A few years back



another member, refusing to be deterred from making her appointed rounds even after learning of a cougar sighting in the area, met the challenge by singing boisterously throughout her checks. As the season progresses, the grasses grow taller- so tall in fact that some of the shorter members disappear from sight as they traverse a field. During this time, caution is particularly needed to avoid stepping into an obscured badger hole. The secluded nature of some boxes has occasionally led to unexpected encounters. A few years ago, a nest boxer inadvertently interrupted a (human) couple's love-making while conducting her rounds. The couple probably thought they'd found a location where no human would bother them, but didn't take into account the intrepid behaviors of nest boxers on a mission.

Each season brings its own challenges and surprises. This past season included two unwelcome box inhabitants—a House Wren (HOWR) who was evicted before she could begin laying eggs, and a mouse who found other accommodations on its own. HOWR are known for preying on other birds and are discouraged from nesting in our boxes. In fact, a HOWR was a prime suspect in the early season demise of a CBCH, found dead on her nest. On a happier note, one forlorn VGSW chick was rescued from its box after failing to fledge with the rest of its clutch, and was taken to Native Animal Rescue, where reports indicate it has survived.

Although the focus of the project is on observation and data collection of the birds occupying the nest

boxes, much of the enjoyment from participation comes from walking around beautiful Quail Hollow Ranch Park in the company of others who share an interest in nature, and avian species in particular. Every year sports a new family (or two) of geese by the pond. The namesake quail abound and can be seen shepherding their adorable chicks through the underbrush. Wild turkeys (though not native\*) are commonly seen and heard. Many



*Left:  
VGSW Hatchlings  
- Bethany Klizer*



*Right:  
WEBL Hatchlings  
- Bethany Klizer*



*Left:  
ATFL - Box #40 Hatch in  
progress 5-29/18*

*Right:  
ATFL - Box #40 (8 days later  
than above), 4 young with pin  
feathers (no 5th)  
6/6/18  
- Bethany Klizer*





other species can be found at the park, where the Bird Club frequently leads outings.

The success, past and future, of the project depends on the volunteers. There is a great deal of cooperation and camaraderie amongst us. And we have the BEST potlucks! We are always interested in welcoming new members to our group. The 2024 season will begin in early March. Anyone interested in volunteering, or learning more about the group, can contact Margaret Ingraham, County Parks Volunteer Coordinator, at 831-566-6529. The Project's website page, [www.qhnestbox.org](http://www.qhnestbox.org) provides additional information about the group and detailed statistics compiled over the years, including specific nest and species information. A prior article, from 2014, provides a more historical view, and can be found on the Bird Club website at: [santacruzbirdclub.org/the-albatross/past-issues-of-the-albatross](http://santacruzbirdclub.org/the-albatross/past-issues-of-the-albatross). Volume 58 Number 5: May/Aug 2014.

\* The Bay Area's wild turkeys aren't native to California. They're actually a subspecies from the southwest introduced to the state by the California Fish and Game Commission as a trophy hunting bird in the second half of the last century.



*Bird walk 5/18/22 - trying to keep a respectful distance while passing by Canada Goose family  
- Lisa Larson*



*Above:*

*5/3/2015 This was in the report that day: "# 31 - WEBL VA/CN - This is the double decker nest. Looks like an ATFL nest started on the bottom, and then the WEBL nest on top. No eggs. The WEBLs returned to the box as we walked away. Both went inside. The nest is very tall, almost to the hole. Hope this does not put them in harm's way." The bottom nest was eventually removed, but no eggs were ever laid in the WEBL nest.*



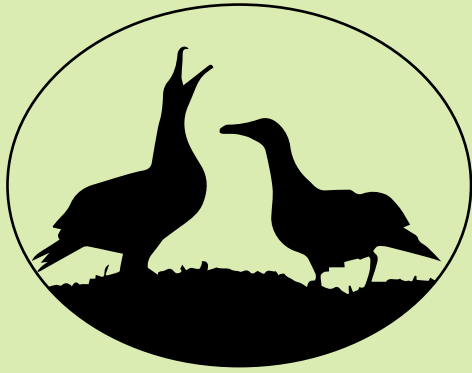
*Above:*

*WEBL mom bring food to her nestlings  
- Jim Bahn*



*Left:*

*BEWR nest at Loop 1 Box #2, 6 eggs tucked in there below feathers in a cup!  
- Tim Thompson*



# Submission to the *ALBATROSS* Guidelines

In addition to "Alby" regular features—*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. 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 SCBC MEMBERS (jpg, tif)

**NEXT DUE DATE  
OCTOBER 1st**

If you wish to submit an article, please contact the editor  
**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



*Wild Turkey Chick, Quail Hollow Ranch  
- Lisa Larson*



# Monterey Bay Festival of Birds

## October 13-15 2023

The Bird School Project has adopted the event formerly known as the Monterey Bay Birding Festival. We are happy to announce this year's Festival of Birds will take place Friday October 13 through Sunday October 15. This is our second year hosting the festival and we are so excited to bring this birding event and celebration back to life for our local and worldwide community! This year our theme is "A joyful celebration of the life and the death of birds". We are taking a deep dive on bird population declines, efforts for bird conservation, and a celebration of the life of birds we have now.

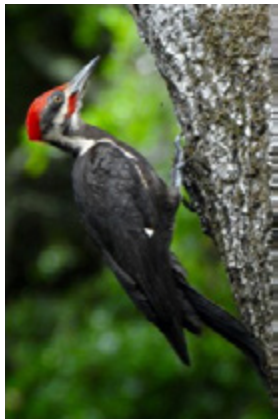
Monterey Bay has a unique natural landscape and a diversity of birds. We want to continue to highlight the magnificence of our region and create a hub where people of all backgrounds feel included and eager to explore the magical world of birds. You can look forward to interactive workshops and field trip options throughout the many communities of Monterey Bay. This festival will be full of fun community connections, food, music, and a keynote speaker. To sign up for field trips, workshops or learn more about *Saturday October 14th's free Nature Extravaganza* please visit [www.birdschoolproject.org/festival](http://www.birdschoolproject.org/festival)



*Osprey Family - David Lewit*



October 14th - Enjoy FREE and fun activities for all ages, live raptor presentation, food, and treats!



## CONSERVATION CORNER

Jane Orbuch—Conservation Officer

Hi fellow birders! I am your new Conservation Officer and hope to do a monthly Albatross piece on what YOU can do for birds and habitat preservation. I will also be posting information on local issues, legislation and conservation calendar events on the Santa Cruz Bird Club web page under Conservation News (<https://santacruzbirdclub.org/conservation-news/>) and sending out pertinent emails to club members. If you have suggestions, concerns or ideas please email me. ([janeorbuch@gmail.com](mailto:janeorbuch@gmail.com)).

Who am I? I have a biology degree from UCSD and was a high school science teacher for 30 years at San Lorenzo Valley High School (SLVHS) teaching science. I taught and developed classes including Marine Science, Earth Science, Biology and AP Environmental Science. I managed and developed the Environmental Monitoring program at the high school Watershed Academy in which students with mentor assistance conducted independent research and monitored the local environment—mainly citizen science projects. Since I retired from teaching, I was a member of the Santa Cruz County Commission on the Environment, was trained as a California Naturalist and I am a member of the Santa Cruz Sierra Club Conservation Committee. I am also trying to sustainably maintain a 2-acre parcel, including orchard, garden and wildlife pond. I am primarily a self-taught birder and have been participating in Ecotourism birding trips with a conservation bent.

As far as this column goes, I will be sharing things you can do in your daily life to make a difference for birds and habitat conservation. Many of you are probably already aware of this sustainable lifestyle, but its always good to get a reminder 🦋. So often, we can feel powerless in our society and our ability to create change—but as the saying goes: “Think Globally, Act locally.” There are so many ways in our personal lives that we can live in better harmony with our environment. I will cover a “bird friendly” diet, how you can improve your immediate environment for birds and lifestyle choices that can protect birds and preserve habitat.

As of late, the local issue that I have been focused on is the City of Santa Cruz San Lorenzo River Levee Vegetation Management and Rodent Mitigation projects and the proposed renovation of the San Lorenzo River Park and Benchlands. I will keep you posted on this on the [SCBC conservation web page](#). If you are interested in participating in remedying any local bird issues we can look into forming subcommittees.



*Killdeer & Chick - Michael Bolte*



# Santa Cruz Birds

By Alex Rinkert

Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2023



**T**he The unrelenting rain in winter continued to some extent in spring, with cool, wet conditions persisting through April. These conditions appeared to delay the breeding season by several weeks in some areas and cause widespread breeding failure early in the season.

Eventually, the breeding season was back on track and provided rare nests of Turkey Vulture, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Sharp-shinned Hawk. Other significant finds this spring included a Horned Puffin, Phainopepla, Sandhill Crane, “Eurasian” Green-winged Teal, and a Leach’s Storm-Petrel on land. Some of the widely enjoyed wintering rarities departed in March, the mid-county pair of Bald Eagles established two new nests, and White-throated Sparrows concluded their most abundant winter ever in the county.



A handful of **Cackling Geese** seen on the coast into late May were both unusually numerous and late (v.ob.); one flying over La Madrona on May 13 was especially out of place for the date (KA). A half-grown **Canada Goose** gosling at Scott Creek Beach on May 13 extended the breeding range of this species slightly further up the north coast (GC, JT).



*Cackling Goose, Laguna Creek Beach - David Sidle*

A pair of **Wood Ducks** at coastal Wilder Ranch State Park on April 16 were out of place (ML). A dapper male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Younger Lagoon on April 24 was the latest spring record for the county and just the second record for April (LG); almost all wintering or spring migrant Eurasian Wigeons in the county depart by mid-March. A pair of **Redheads** at the Watsonville sloughs and Shorebirds Pond remained from May 6–17 but no evidence of breeding materialized (AR, ES, v.ob.). Their spring presence in the county is now predictable, but breeding is apparently still very infrequent. A male **Ring-necked Duck** seen through May 25 at Westlake Pond and other spots at westside Santa Cruz was later than most remain into spring (KJ, SK, v.ob.). A female **Lesser Scaup** at Pajaro Dunes on May 8 was also quite late (PH).



*Barrow's Goldeneye - Norm Uyeda*

A female **Black Scoter** at Yellow Bank Beach from May 21–29 was either a late spring migrant or summering locally (JS, PS, v.ob.). A female **Bufflehead** in the same flock as the Black Scoter on May 25 was also quite late and unexpectedly on the ocean (MD). A female **Barrow's Goldeneye** at the Santa Cruz Harbor on March 10 was the second spring record for the county (AR, v.ob.). Over the next seven weeks the goldeneye roamed between the harbor and Cowell Beach through April 27.

A male “**Eurasian**” **Green-winged Teal** photographed at Pajaro Dunes on March 6–9 was just the fourth record of this rare subspecies in the county (JB, v.ob.). Two **Cinnamon Teal** on the ocean off Aptos Creek mouth were quite unusual for that location in late spring (PSo). A male **Gadwall x Mallard hybrid** at College Lake on May 3 was the latest spring record of this hybrid in the county (GK). Several male **Ruddy Ducks** doing courtship displays at Westlake Pond in late April and early May were intriguing as none have bred there since the late 1980s.

A **Red-necked Grebe** off Davenport on May 4 was late (CS). Up to two apparent



**Western x Clark's Grebe hybrids** were at the Santa Cruz Harbor and San Lorenzo River mouth from March 10–27 (AR, v.ob.). This hybrid is rarely documented in the county, but probably occurs with some regularity as hybrids and backcrosses can be substantially represented at sites where both species breed.

A **Common Poorwill** flushed off China Grade during a nighttime drive on April 21 was noteworthy as the species has not been found there since 2013 (KJ). One at Arana Gulch on May 24 was presumably a migrant, which are rarely detected in the county (JT, GC).

A male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at Loma Prieta on April 23 was the only one reported this spring (AK, BK, AR). **Rufous Hummingbirds** had a

poor showing at Loma Prieta; the high count on any morning this spring was only thirteen (SPa, TY), and most counts were under five. A male **Calliope Hummingbird** was captured at the Younger Lagoon banding station on April 21, and another visited a feeder at westside Santa Cruz on May 7 (AF).



*Calliope Hummingbird*  
- Abram Fleishman

The unrelenting rain that continued into spring flooded many low-lying areas, some of which developed into seasonal marshes. A **Sora** was heard calling from one of these flooded areas in the coastal prairie at Terrace Point from March 26–29 (SS, v.ob.). A **Sandhill Crane** flew over Younger Lagoon and landed in the nearby plowed fields where it was seen from May 10–11 (AF, v.ob.); there are only two other spring records for the county.

Two **American Avocet** nests with eggs near the confluence of Watsonville and Struve sloughs on May 5 and May 13 were noteworthy breeding confirmations (CMo, AR, NL). **Snowy Plovers** were confirmed breeding again at Laguna Creek Beach on April 10 (ST). A **Red Knot** at Pajaro Dunes on May 5 was the only reported this spring (AF, v.ob.). A **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Watsonville Slough near San Andreas Road from May 4–6 was a rare spring record, being the first in the county since 2014 (PSO, v.ob.). Two **Wilson's Snipes** seen from May



*American Avocet*  
- Charles Morano



*Western Grebe above, Western x Clark's Grebe below* - Alex Rinkert

4–6 at the same location (PS, v.ob.) and another at Pajaro Dunes on May 5 (GM) were quite late. Despite some great shorebird habitat being present throughout spring, no **Wilson's Phalaropes** were found.

An estimated 28,000 **Common Murres** seen during a pelagic trip on March 18 was an exceptionally high count for



*American Avocet eggs* - Charles Morano  
*Red Knot* - David Eckdahl

the county (AR, AF, GM, NU, PH, DU). A **Horned Puffin** photographed during that same pelagic trip was the first seen in the county since 2012 (AF et al.). Two **Ancient Murrelets** seen offshore on April 26 were rather late (NL).

An immature **Short-billed Gull** seen at Yellow Bank Beach from May 22–29 was probably summering locally (MD, JK, BL). At least three—but possibly more—**Black Skimmers** were regularly reported along





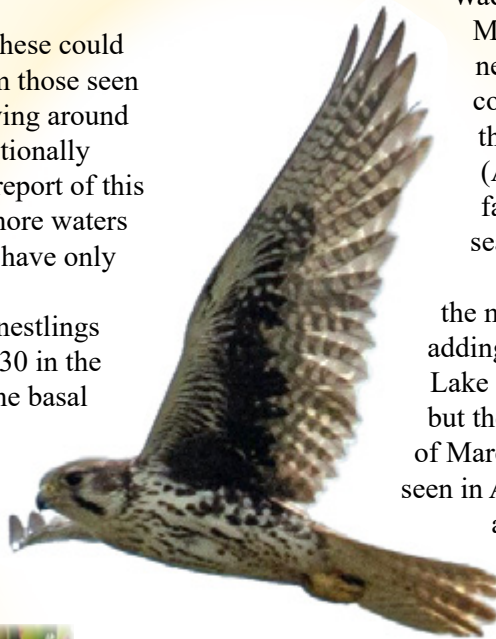
From Left:  
 Turkey Vulture nestlings  
 Alex at Turkey Vulture nest  
 Fledgling TUVU with parent  
 - Lisa Sheridan



(NL, AR). A pair of **Sharp-shinned Hawks** at an active nest near East Waddell Creek at Big Basin on May 25 represented just the fifth nest of that species found in the county, and only the second one that has been active when found (AR). Unfortunately, the nest failed at some point later in the season.

the coast between March 1–April 30 (v.ob.); these could have been migrants or perhaps holdovers from those seen in February. A **Leach’s Storm-Petrel** seen flying around the Pajaro River mouth on May 25 was exceptionally unusual (GC). This was the first shore-based report of this species in the county, and even in the far offshore waters of the county where it is more expected there have only been a handful of reports.

A **Turkey Vulture** nest with two downy nestlings about two weeks old was discovered on May 30 in the hills above Aptos (LS, RS). The nest was in the basal hollow of an old-growth redwood, similar to about half of the other seven nests found in recent decades. A new **Osprey** nest was under construction on a utility pole in an agricultural field near Struve Slough



*Prairie Falcon*  
 - Marc Brawer

The pair of **Bald Eagles** on the mid-county coast continued adding to their nests at Schwan Lake and the Santa Cruz Harbor, but their effort ceased by the end of March. They were occasionally seen in April and May, and once seen adding more material to the Schwan nest on May 16 (SH), but it was apparent by then that this year’s nesting effort had failed.



*Burrowing Owl*  
 - David Eckdahl

A **Swainson’s Hawk** soared over Watsonville on April 20 (NL), and a light-morph circled over the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on May 24 (GK). The **Burrowing Owl** wintering at Pajaro Dunes remained until March 15 (v.ob.). A **Merlin** flying over the Santa Cruz Wharf on May 11 was quite late (AR, GK); the last spring migrants are usually seen in late April. **Peregrine Falcons** apparently had a difficult breeding season on the north coast, with most nest sites used year after year not



even being occupied (BL, SM). A **Prairie Falcon** photographed flying over Shorebirds Pond on May 7 was a surprising record for spring (MB).

A **Willow Flycatcher** was at Scott Creek on May 17 (GM). A nice showing of three **Hammond's Flycatchers** included individuals at Porter-Sesnon Property from March 30–April 6 (LS, v.ob.), Rancho del Oso on April 19 (SE), and westside Santa Cruz on April 26 (EE). An additional

rare *Empidonax*, a **Hammond's/Dusky Flycatcher**, was at Loma Prieta on April 22 (NS, MF, SE). Three **Say's Phoebes** around the county between April 2–5 was an above average showing; these individuals were perhaps late spring migrants or early post-breeding dispersants (KG, SBB, AR, NL).

**Purple Martins** regularly present at Last Chance Road in late April and May suggested they were breeding somewhere nearby (AR). **White-breasted Nuthatches**, involving perhaps 10–15 individuals, were widely reported in the mountains and lowlands this spring (v.ob.). A pair at Quail Hollow Ranch was seen bringing nest material into a natural cavity in an ancient coast live oak on April 9 (AR, ES). Despite an increasingly regular, year-round presence in the past few years, there was no indication that they were actually breeding in the county. This nest at Quail Hollow Ranch was the first to be found in the county since 2002 and surprisingly just the third in the past 50 years, which helps illustrate just how rare this species was not too long ago.

A **Townsend's Solitaire** flew over Loma Prieta on April 22 (NU). The wintering **Red-flanked Bluetail** was seen almost daily at Lighthouse Field State Beach and remained there until March 26 (v.ob.). The **Gray Catbird**



*Bald Eagle on nest - Sharon Hull*

at Lighthouse Field State Beach continued through April 6 (v.ob.), while the **Sage Thrasher** at the San Lorenzo River mouth stayed until March 13 (v.ob.). A **Phainopepla** at Old Chittenden Road on April 21 was a nice find (NS, SBB). There are now eight records for the county, with a growing number coming from spring. A flock of five **Red Crossbills** flying over Loma Prieta on May 13 was unexpected considering there was no irruption or

movement noticed elsewhere in the

region this past winter or in spring (GC, JT).

At least two **Black-chinned Sparrows** were at Loma Prieta this spring, with the first being seen April 28 (AF, v.ob.). Both **Bell's Sparrow** and **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** went unreported at Loma Prieta through May. A wintering **Lark Sparrow** in a Santa Cruz backyard continued through April 18 (SPh), while a migrant was seen at San Lorenzo Park on March 25 (AM). A “**Slate-colored**” **Fox Sparrow** continued at Lighthouse

Field State Beach through March 1 (CM, PM), while a “**Red**” **Fox Sparrow** continued at a Soquel feeder through at least March 29 (LS). Another “Red” Fox Sparrow was found at Chittenden on March 6 (NU). A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** at Pleasure Point on May 17 was the latest this spring (GC). Following

an unprecedented winter showing, **White-throated Sparrows** remained incredibly numerous through April with some lingering into May. At least 72 individuals were reported with an impressive 10 of those seen in May (v.ob.).



*Three Hammon's Flycatchers - Locations from top:  
Porter Sesnon - Jonny Wahl  
Westside Santa Cruz - Erik Enbody  
Rancho del Oso - Sam Eberhard*

Nine **Yellow-breasted Chats** reported in the lowlands between May 6–20 was an excellent showing for spring (v.ob.). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at Antonelli Pond on May 7 did not linger there long (TL). A wintering **Bullock's Oriole** in a westside Santa Cruz backyard stayed until at least April 8 (AK, BK). At least 17 **Tricolored Blackbirds** were at Laguna de las Trancas on April 6, the only active breeding site known in the county (AR). Some males were displaying on this date but breeding behavior that would confirm breeding was not seen subsequently. A handful of **Great-tailed Grackles** persisted at Westlake Pond and



*Black-chinned Sparrow, Loma Prieta  
- Gary Martindale*

various places in Santa Cruz through May (v.ob.).

About 6 **Nashville Warblers** reported this spring was a decent showing (v.ob.). An **American Redstart** sang in a Pleasure Point neighborhood on May 26 (WH). An immature male **Summer Tanager** was photographed at a feeder in Pasatiempo on May 21.

Male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were at Loma Prieta on May 28 (TC, GL) and Chittenden on May 29 (NU), and a female was at a feeder in La Selva Beach on May 31 (CR). A migrant **Blue Grosbeak** was at Struve Slough on May 12 (SP). Modest numbers of **Scaly-breasted Munias** were reported at various locations in the Pajaro Valley, and a few locations on the mid-county coast (v.ob.).

#### **Cited Observers:**

Kumaran Arul, Jasper Barnes, Sam Baxter-Bray, Marc Brawer, Tom Cho, George Cummins, Mike Danzenbaker, Sam Eberhard, Erik Enbody, Max Ferrero, Abram Fleishman, Kim Glinka, Lois Goldfrank, Paul Heady, Wyatt Hersey, Sharon Hull, Kent Johnson, Joe Kaplan, Alex Keitt, Brad Keitt, Gary Kittleson, Simon Klinefelter, Garrett Lau, Tyler Lausten, Max Leibowitz, Nick Levendosky, Bruce Lyon, Arthur Macmillan, Stephanie Martin, Gary Martindale, Colette Micallef, Paul Micallef, Charles Moreno (CMo), Sergey Pavlov (SPa), Steve Pearl, Shantanu Phukan (SPh), Alex Rinkert, Nico Schnack, Elena Scott, Lisa Sheridan, Stephanie Singer, Cooper Smith, Pete Sole (PSo), Robert Stephens, Jonah Svensson, Peter Svensson, Simon Thornhill, Jaclyn Tolchin, Darrell Uyeda, Norman Uyeda, Tristan Yoo. "v.ob." means various observers. *Please enter interesting observations into eBird or report them to Alex Rinkert at [arinkert12@comcast.net](mailto:arinkert12@comcast.net).*



*Blue Grosbeak - Steve Pearl*





**WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?**

*Photos from top:  
Young Cooper's Hawk  
- Michael Bolte  
Western Gull chick  
- Lee Jaffe  
Young Heerman's Gull  
- Tony Britton*



**Please help us out**

**We really need a  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
and OUTREACH DIRECTOR!**

For a description of officer duties see:  
[santacruzbirdclub.org/club-information/club-officers-2/](https://santacruzbirdclub.org/club-information/club-officers-2/)

**CONTACT any SCBC Board Member!**



## Randy Wardle's Bird B.O.L.O. \* For Sept-Oct

### SEPTEMBER

September has arrived and so has the anticipation and excitement of finding some rarities during one of the best months for fall migration in Santa Cruz County. There should be a lot of bird activity all month long on land and at sea.

Many of our wintering landbirds will return this month: Ruby-crowned Kinglets, American Pipits, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Merlin, Fox and Lincoln's Sparrows, Red-breasted Sapsuckers, and about the third week of September the White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows will be making their way back to your feeders! Although Hooded Orioles, Olive-sided Flycatchers and Western Wood-Pewees will be mostly gone by the end of the month, wintering Western Meadowlarks start arriving in good numbers.

September continues to be a good time to look for Willow Flycatchers and Black-chinned Hummingbirds at Bethany Curve and other Westside hotspots. Also watch for Northern Waterthrush at predictable places like Antonelli Pond and the Butterfly Pond at Natural Bridges. This month is also the peak of Yellow Warbler migration. More and more Townsend's Warblers will be arriving as well. Be on the lookout for Hermit and Black-throated Gray Warblers as well as rarer species that might be flocking with them such as Black-and-white, Tennessee, Blackpoll, Chestnut-sided, Virginia, American Redstart and more. You may also want to listen this month for nocturnal flight calls from species like Swainson's Thrush in the hour before sunrise. If you're



Ruby-crowned Kinglet - Lisa Larson

up that early and the weather is warm, you might want to drive up to Loma Prieta and try for Common Poorwills.



Be on the lookout for the return of wintering Burrowing Owls at UCSC and Swanton Pond. September is also a good time for raptor migration over the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Watch especially for Broad-winged Hawks and others over Moore Creek Preserve, the Wilder Ranch uplands, and along Highway 129 in the Pajaro Valley.

September is also a great month to go offshore on a pelagic trip to see birds not typically seen from land. Storm-petrels, South Polar Skuas, murrelets and many more are out there. Several species of boobies have been seen in recent years in the Monterey Bay and one could turn up on a pelagic trip. Will a Red-footed Booby return to the Cement Ship?

Shorebird diversity will be at its highest this month. If the south county sloughs water levels ever begin to lower and reveal more mud, continue to look for Baird's, Pectoral, and Semipalmated Sandpipers as well as rarer species such as Ruff or Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Also look for these species at places like Younger and Corcoran Lagoons.

Although most Pigeon Guillemots will be gone by the end of September, some of the first winter gulls begin arriving: Herring, Mew, Iceland, and Western x Glaucous-winged. Evening feeding frenzies just offshore should continue with Elegant Terns, Brown Pelicans, Sooty Shearwaters and maybe even Black-vented Shearwaters should they push north. There is a chance of seeing rarer terns such as Common and Least at creek and river mouths and places like Corcoran Lagoon.

While most species have finished breeding, there is still some activity by species breeding into fall. Late breeders include towhees, finches and goldfinches, Pied-billed Grebes and a few others. I encourage you to record any breeding confirmations you come across on eBird.

September is one of the most exciting months of the year to be out birding as fall migration heats up. Get out in the field as much as possible and

**\* Be On The Lookout**



## B.O.L.O. (Be On The Lookout!)

see if you can add a few new life birds to your list! I wish you good birding!

### OCTOBER

It's October and the fall migration is in full swing as many species are continuing to move through or into the county. Gone for the summer now are the Hooded Orioles and most of the Black-headed Grosbeaks. The last Swainson's Thrushes are passing through, but be on the watch as Hermit Thrushes are returning.

Many warblers are still on the move. September should have seen a number of Yellow Warblers in most of the coastal hotspots. Watch for more returning Townsend's and Yellow-rumped Warblers, and for Palm Warblers on the coastal bluffs of the north coast. Continue to be on the lookout this month for rare warblers along the coast in places like Antonelli's Pond, Natural Bridges, Bethany Curve, Schwan Lake, Neary Lagoon and Pajaro Dunes. Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, Tennessee, Virginia and American Redstart may have already been seen, but more surprises are still likely to be found.

The "crowned sparrows" have arrived and look for their numbers to grow this month as they make their way into your yards to gobble up all your seed. Be on the watch for unusual sparrows migrating through the area this month at places like the Homeless Garden, Antonelli's Pond, and weedy fields on the north coast.

Cedar Waxwing and Western Meadowlark flocks are becoming more frequent as are Ruby-crowned Kinglets, so don't be too quick to call that little green and yellow bird a Hutton's Vireo. Watch for Tropical Kingbirds at Struve and Watsonville Sloughs where small numbers overwinter.



*Cedar Waxwings - Lee Jaffe*

In the county's waterbodies watch for the return of more duck species. Shovelers, teal, wigeon, and pintail have started to arrive, and Hooded Mergansers are not too far behind. Also look for Pectoral Sandpipers and other rare shorebirds as the high water in the Watsonville sloughs hopefully recedes this month.



*White-crowned Sparrow - Lisa Larson*

Hawk migration continues this month over the hills. You may still be able to see numbers of them from places like Moore Creek and upper Wilder Ranch Trails on warm afternoons.

Finally, along the coast, watch for an increase in wintering gull species: Short-Billed Gull (formerly called) Mew, Glaucous-winged, Herring, and Iceland to name a few.

If you haven't yet had a chance to go on a Pelagic Trip to look for offshore species that can't be seen from land, October is still a great month to get on board. High shearwater diversity and potential for Short-tailed, Manx, Black-vented, and maybe something rarer is still a good possibility. This generally is a good season for Tufted Puffins as well.

Don't forget the *Monterey Bay Festival of Birds* will have field trips, lectures, and workshops from October 12-15. There will be a number of outings to choose from as well as some great speakers this year.

October looks to be a very good birding month in the county, so get out with your binos to as many of the area hotspots as you can. Good luck and good birding!

# Birder's Notebook

## Elizabeth Romanini's Feather Artworks

My art focuses on a subtle exploration of shapes and structure that can be found in the natural world through single-plane studies of birds, insects and plants in their natural environment. The pieces are rendered using graphite and others with Pigma Micron pen, with a wash of translucent watercolours. Each work is an intimate portrait of the subject, so as to magnify the beauty that is in nature if we are just willing to look!

I try to show a respect for nature in my work by maintaining a sense of realism, but a wee bit of whimsy sometimes creeps into my work. Extensive research is done on the habits and habitats of all my subjects before I begin a drawing. The images I create are made from several sources including field sketches of live animal, or preserved specimens, along foliage and other background material that is brought into my studio.



*Western Bluebird*



*Above:  
California Quail*



*Below:  
Belted Kingfisher*







Great Horned Owl



Acorn Woodpecker

Right:  
Great Blue Heron



Below three species (from left):  
Western Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl,  
and Barn Owl

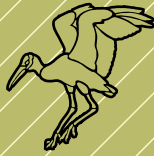


Lower Right:  
Red-shouldered Hawk



# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Henry Smith, <i>Life Membership</i>	
Phil Brown, <i>Life Membership</i>	
Suzanne Flanders Family	Apr 2023
Max Ferrero	Apr 2023
Ann Miya Family	May 2023
Susan Dahlgren	May 2023
Mark Haynes	May 2023
Emily Regan Family	May 2023
Sharron Miller	May 2023
Jivan Dhaliwal	May 2023
Sheldon Logan	May 2023
Sandra Nichols	May 2023
Sue Broadston	May 2023
Roylene Champeaux	Jun 2023
Andy Schneider	Jun 2023
Georgiana Flaherty Family	Jun 2023
David Laabs	Jun 2023
Carol Trabing	Jun 2023
William Jolly	Jun 2013
Jolene Coe	Jun 2023
Patricia Ruppelt	Jun 2023
Robin Hunicke	Jun 2023
Laura Wishart	Jun 2013
Elinor Slayer	Jun 2023
Richard Curtin	Jun 2023
David Esterline	Jun 2023
Erin Page	Jul 2023
Leslie Andrews	Jul 2023



## ATTENTION

Want to contribute to your  
Santa Cruz Bird Club?  
We need a community

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AND

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Contact any officer in the list  
on the back page

*Great Blue Heron - Michael Bolte*

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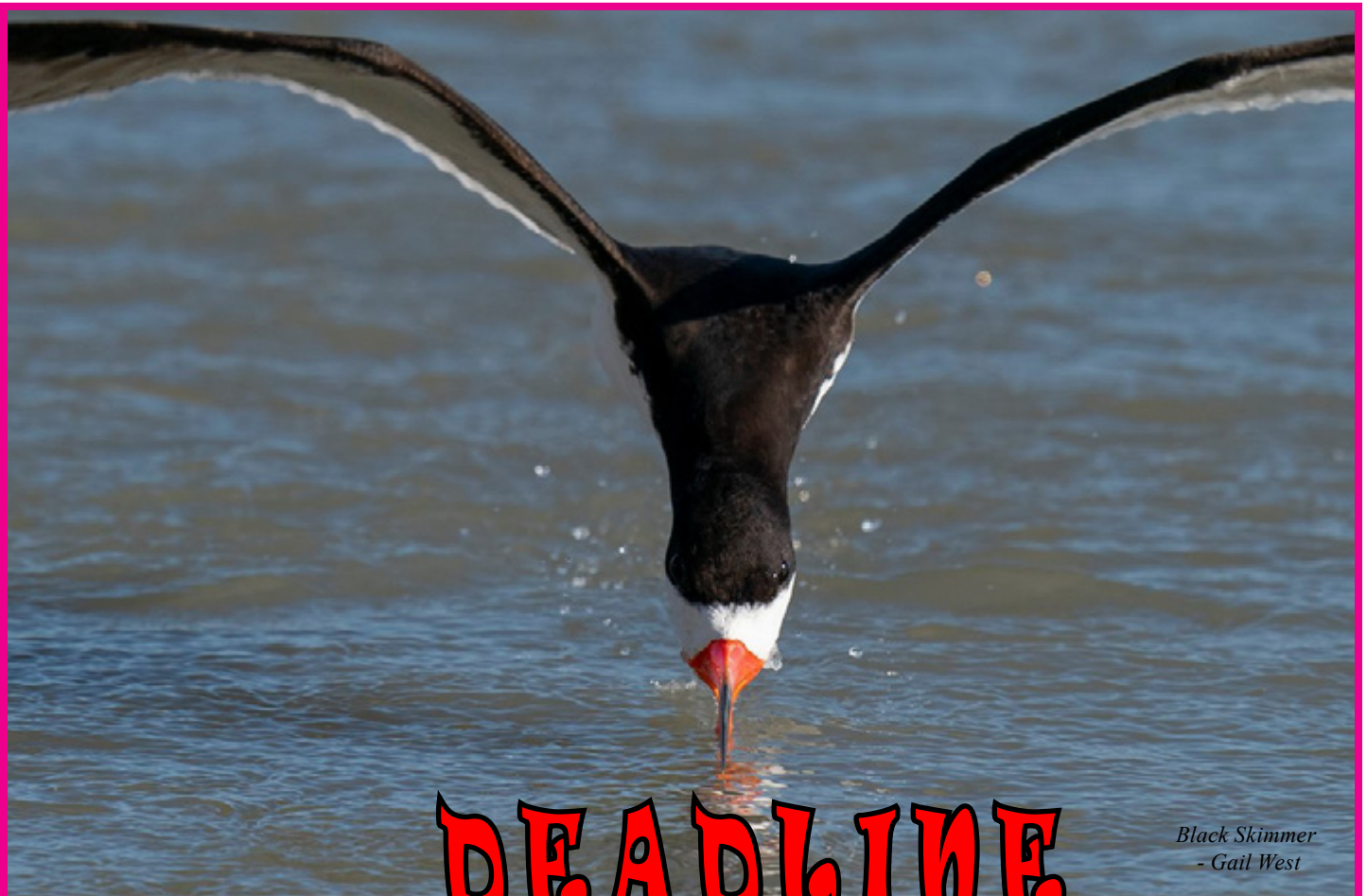
Teresa Green  
Jenny Anderson  
Brad Keitt

*Thank you!*



*Marbled Godwits - Lisa Larson*





*Black Skimmer  
- Gail West*

# DEADLINE

submissions for the  
**NOV/DEC** issue

**OCT 1, 2023**

## ALBATROSS DEADLINES



AUG 1 for SEP/OCT issue  
OCT 1 for NOV/DEC issue  
DEC 1 for JAN/FEB issue  
FEB 1 for MAR/APR issue  
APR 1 for JUNE/AUG issue

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## **PARTING SHOT:**

### **"LET ME TELL YOU A SECRET"**

GREAT HORNED OWL CHICKS

- TONY BRITTON

*Do YOU have a parting shot you would like to see featured? Please email the editor!*



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Attention: Membership

*Silhouette - Tony Britton*