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Birding Adventures on the Big Island: Rediscovering Hakalau Forest NWR

- By Cathy Summa-Wolfe

Early to mid-December is a great time to visit Hawai'i before the holiday rush arrives. I woke before dawn to a brilliant canopy of stars overhead, a warm breeze carrying the sweet scent of plumeria blossoms, and the gentle sound of waves lapping the Waikoloa shore. Not having visited the Big Island in a decade, I was eagerly anticipating a day of birding at the Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), where I hoped to see some of the rarest birds in the world with [Jack Jeffrey](#), guide, author, photographer, and retired biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This 33,000-acre refuge is located on the cool windward slope of Mauna Kea, at an elevation of about 6,500 feet, far removed from the balmy beaches below.

About halfway to the appointed rendezvous location the weather took an ominous turn. Angry-looking storm clouds gathered on the horizon towards Hilo, and the skies darkened even as the sun rose. When I reached a higher elevation, it started to snow.

I was the first to arrive at the Pu'u Huluhulu Hunter Check Station, located at the 28-mile marker on Highway 200 about 6,500 feet above sea level. The unexpected snow and poor visibility made a good day of birding seem like a distant prospect. Jack pulled up in his SUV, and two other birders arrived in a separate car. Undaunted, we moved our cars to a safer location and climbed into the SUV, full of good cheer despite the dreary weather.

Reaching the remote Hakalau Forest NWR is no easy feat, but that is part of its charm. Intrepid travelers must drive 50 miles from either Kona or Hilo and then spend an additional hour navigating the last 10 miles over a rough road. The refuge is currently closed to self-guided activities because of concerns about a disease called Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death.



T'iwī (Scarlet Honeycreeper)

In order to access the refuge these days, visitors must hire one of the [official bird tour guide operators under a Special Use Permit \(SUP\)](#). Due its fragility, only these commercial tour operators have access to the Pua Akala Unit. In this particular area of the Refuge visitors have an excellent chance to see some of Hakalau's most endangered birds.

Photos from top: 'Ōma'o 'Ākepa Nene (Hawaiian Goose)



Thankfully, we left the snow behind as we navigated across the coarse terrain. Along the way, Jack generously shared his renowned good humor and intimate knowledge of the topography, ecology, and history of the area, and, as an extra bonus, we got a good look at an Erckel's Francolin.

When I visited the refuge 10 years ago, the landscape was rocky and barren by comparison. Since then, the area has been invaded by gorse, a thick thorny shrub with yellow flowers that grows up to 6 feet tall. Native to Western Europe, gorse was introduced to Hawai'i as food for sheep. The sheep are gone. Gorse now dominates the landscape.

As we neared the refuge, large koa and 'ōhi'a lehua trees sprang up along the road, behind a stretch of protective fencing. According to The Friends of

Hakalau Forest NWR, 60 miles of sturdy fencing now serve as a barrier around the refuge, to prevent feral pigs and cattle from destroying endangered vegetation. The towering koa canopy was especially impressive, with its dense top layer and wide green leaves. Without the threat of foraging animals, koa can grow fast, about five feet per year for the first five years. Compared

with my last visit, and thanks to years of conservation efforts, the once sparse canopy had more than doubled in just 10 years.

Our goal for the day was to see the protected birds now thriving at the refuge, including the threatened Nene (Hawaiian Goose and Hawai'i's state bird), 'Ōma'o (an endemic

- Hawai'i Island thrush),
- 'Elepaio (an endemic flycatcher), and six honeycreepers: Akiapōlā'au, 'Alawī (Hawai'i Creeper), Hawai'i 'Ākepa, 'I'iwi, 'Apapane, and 'Amakihi.

The first of these rarities to make an appearance among the trees was the beautiful 'I'iwi (Scarlet Honeycreeper). Once a common forest



bird in the Hawaiian Islands, the 'I'iwi is now protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Next, an 'ōma'ō, one of only two remaining species of native thrush on the islands (the other on Kaua'i), made a brief appearance on the trees near the parking area, where we were also greeted by a gregarious gaggle of waddling Nēnē (Hawaiian Goose).

Jack led us on a winding path through the dense forest, where various birds furtively popped into view before quickly disappearing into the foliage. The brilliant orange 'Ākepa, scarlet 'Apapane, and yellow 'Amakihi foraged among the 'ōhi'a blossoms.

We stopped midday for a picnic lunch of sandwiches and Jack's wife's homemade cookies



in a lovely clearing surrounded by trees and flowering undergrowth. We were joined by a friendly pair of Kalij Pheasants that roam the property, and, overhead, a tiny 'Alawī crept along a thick branch covered by moss.

The beauty and lushness of this biodiverse haven is especially remarkable in light of the fact that Hawai'i has the dubious distinction as the reigning bird extinction capital of the world.

According to the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), since humans arrived on the islands, 95 of 142 unique bird species have become extinct on Hawai'i. In addition, thirty-three of Hawai'i's remaining 44 endemic birds are listed under the Endangered Species Act, 11 of which are likely extinct.

After lunch, as we slowly birded our way back to the parking area, an 'Elepaio made an appearance, briefly posing on a branch. Alas, the bird that I had really hoped to see, the Akiapōlā'au, was nowhere to be found.

On the way back, Jack gave us an informative overview of the unique characteristics of the Akiapōlā'au. This endemic Hawaiian honeycreeper is known for its specialized bill featuring a short woodpecker-like lower mandible for probing hard wood to find underlying insects, larvae, and tree sap. Their decurved upper mandible is used to hook and pull out their prey.



Photos from top:
'Alawī
'Apapane
'Amakihi

All photos taken by
Cathy Summa-Wolfe



Above: View of Mauna Kea From Hakalau NWR

The ‘Akiapola‘au lays a single egg during its nesting season and cares for its young for about four to five months. This low reproductive rate has contributed to the species slow recovery.

Survey analysis puts the current population at about 1,900.

Three-quarters of the way back to Jack’s SUV, I had already given up on seeing the elusive Akiapōlā‘au. When I saw it 10 years ago on my first trip to the refuge, it was raining heavily and I wasn’t able to take a photo.

As we crested the hill and reached a tree-lined service road, out popped a lively Akiapōlā‘au busy foraging on a koa tree. The lighting could not have been better for photos, and best of all, we ended our day having seen all of refuge’s avian rarities.

The striking success of the Hakalau Forest NWR is a testament to the hard work of many volunteers and staff members over the past 40 years. Their labors have included mitigating invasive species and planting hundreds of thousands of native plant seedlings, encouraging regeneration of the native forest habitat. For more information on how you can visit and help support this amazing conservation effort, please visit [Friends of Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge](#).



Akiapōlā‘au

MONTEREY BAY FESTIVAL OF BIRDS

Join The Bird School Project in celebrating the birds of the Monterey Bay at this year's Festival of Birds happening Friday, October 11th to Sunday, October 13th. This year's festival is extra special as it marks our tenth anniversary as an organization and our third year organizing the event!

Our program offerings will highlight the avian wonders of our region and create a hub where people of all backgrounds feel included and eager to explore the world of birding. Engage in lively discussions, discover new birding techniques, and build community with fellow bird lovers.

This year's festivities include a Birds and Brews Trivia Night hosted by the Central Coast Birding Collective and the vibrant Birder's Night Market. We hope to see you there!

To [register](#) for field trips and workshops or learn more about Saturday October 12th's Birder's Night Market please visit www.birdschoolproject.org/festival



WHAT'S IN AN EPONYM?

- by Kent Johnson

In an article in the Jun/Aug 2024 Albatross, Lisa Larson wrote about the proposed changing of the English names of all North American birds that have been named after a person—birds with eponyms. She gave some of the history of this idea, some of the reasons behind it, and she invited readers to suggest new names. I would like to respond differently.

Bird names sometimes change. If studies of the genetics, vocalizations, breeding habits, or other factors indicate that a hitherto unrecognized species deserves recognition, then one or more new names may be needed and old names may need to be abandoned. Over the years many bird names have changed for such reasons—e.g. the old Rufous-sided Towhee was split into the Spotted and Eastern Towhees. The current proposals have nothing to do with that. They will not affect the total on anyone's life list. The reasons for them, according to American Ornithological Society (AOS) President Dr. Colleen Handel, are that "some English bird names have associations with the past that continue to be exclusionary and harmful today. We need a much more inclusive and engaging scientific process that focuses attention on the unique features and beauty of the birds themselves" (americanornithology.org/english-bird-names/american-ornithological-society-will-change-the-english-names-of-bird-species-named-after-people). Many bird names do not focus attention on the unique features of the species, including birds named for places to which the birds have no particular connection (e.g. Philadelphia Vireo); those named for features that are obscure (e.g. Ring-necked Duck) or that use obscure references for features that may be prominent (e.g. Baltimore Oriole); those that are called

"Common", but are never common everywhere (e.g. Common Tern); those that belittle the species (e.g. Lesser Goldfinch); and eponyms (e.g. Cooper's Hawk). All birders come to understand this early in their study of birds.

I think a great majority of birders would agree that it is desirable to change names that

are "exclusionary and harmful", but the current proposals go far beyond that. Essentially, advocates are saying, "We should change the name of Cooper's Hawk (to give one example) because some other people for whom different birds were named did some detestable things." Some of those people surely did do some detestable things. I, and many others, fail to see what that has to do with Cooper or the bird named after him, how that name is exclusionary or harmful, or what benefits are to be gained by changing it. Indeed, I think there are significant things to be lost with such changes.

Where do these names come from? Since 1886 the American Ornithologists' Union, now the American Ornithological Society (AOS), has kept a list of birds that have occurred in America that classifies the birds according to the best available scientific evidence and approves Latin and English names for them. It now also standardizes French names for American birds. (For reasons unknown to me, there is seems to be no movement to change the French names, even though in many cases the birds are named in French for exactly the same people for whom they are named for in English.) That work has been done by committees, recently the North America Classification Committee (NACC) and the South American Classification Committee (SACC). For those wanting more about the history of naming American birds, Kevin Winker has reviewed the topic (academic.oup.com/auk/article/139/3/ukac019/6572201). Though this has not always been the case, when it comes to English names the NACC currently follows clear guidelines (americanornithology.org/about/committees/nacc/guidelines-for-english-bird-names). The general principle is that names should facilitate communication and try to avoid confusion. To do so they should stay the same, as far as possible.

In 2020 a group organized under the name Bird Names for Birds (birdnamesforbirds.wordpress.com) initiated an online petition urging the AOS to change eponymous bird names (docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd2ae0ngoPSF3o4FpGncPO2f79XigKmFwaNv5F3sDEbOLZQOg/viewform). The petition was closed at the end of the AOS annual convention in 2020, at which time it had been signed by 2555 people. The petition stated "Barriers in ornithology for Black, Indigenous, and people of color ... [include]... significant isolating and



demeaning reminders of oppression, slavery, and genocide that reside within many of the English common names attached to birds in North America.” It claimed that “Unlike recognized scientific names, the nomenclatural barriers of English common names exist for no reason other than tradition and comfort.” It called for action “We call upon the AOS to direct the NACC and SACC to publicly and directly address the issue of eponymous honors and other potentially derogatory, oppressive, or simply irrelevant holdovers in English common names.”

The AOS responded to the petition in 2022 by establishing an Ad Hoc English Bird Names Committee “to develop a process that will allow the [AOS] to change harmful and exclusionary English bird names in a thoughtful and proactive way for species within AOS’s purview.” After some deliberation, that committee recommended that the AOS:

1. Change all English names of birds that have been named after people and three additional names—Flesh-footed Shearwater, Eskimo Curlew, and Inca Dove. This would include 152 English names on the NACC list and 111 on the SACC checklist. They suggested a pilot run of the new name-change process, using a few species names representing a cross-section of considerations.

2. Establish a new naming committee that would be responsible for creating and approving English common bird names. The new committee would work with the NACC and SACC regarding proposed new names and ultimately choose new names.

3. Involve the public; the new naming committee should solicit input from the public before selecting replacement names (americanornithology.org/about/english-bird-names-project/english-bird-names-committee-recommendations).

The AOS Council, the governing body of the AOS, adopted all these recommendations (americanornithology.org/about/english-bird-names-project/american-ornithological-society-council-statement-on-english-bird-names). The process will begin by changing the names of species occurring primarily north of the Mexico/United States border, doing a few at a time, over a period of some years.

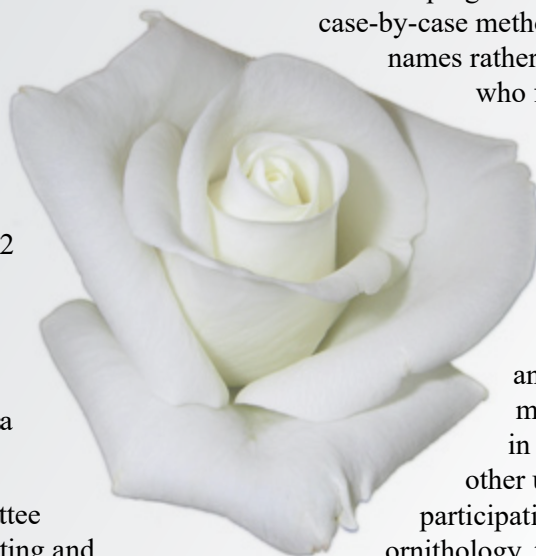
Sugar Moon Rose - Lisa Larson

Many ornithologists and birders have objected to this decision and have initiated a counter petition (www.change.org/p/petition-to-aos-leadership-on-the-recent-decision-to-change-all-eponymous-bird-names), so far with about 6400 signatures. This petition states: “We the undersigned strongly support diversity and inclusion in the birding community but disagree with this decision for the following reasons: The destabilization of 150 English bird names is unprecedented. We believe that such a momentous decision that affects the English names used by many thousands of people requires listening to a diversity of voices rather than a few. One of the guiding principles of the AOS is to maintain a list that ‘fosters stability for the sake of effective communication,’ yet it has never polled membership or the public regarding a decision that will impact the entire world-wide birding community.” It suggests that “Rather than a total purge of eponyms, we suggest that the previous case-by-case method be resumed to remove offensive

names rather than dishonoring the many people who founded ornithology in the Americas, many of whom are inadvertently disgraced by guilt by association.”

There are many reasons people think changing all those names is a bad idea, among them: that it is unnecessary and disruptive, that there was a lack of transparency and inclusiveness in the decision making process, that it will cost a lot in time and money that are better put to other uses, that it will do little to enhance participation of underrepresented groups in ornithology, that it is just another example of people in the U.S. and Canada exerting hegemony over birds that live mostly in Latin America, that some of these names are written into conservation laws and changing them may cause ambiguity, and that changing all the names is disrespectful to many people who contributed greatly to ornithology – some of those whose names were chosen and all of those who did the naming. The website birdnamesforstability.org gives links to papers that develop these arguments.

I will not go over all of the arguments but I will offer a few observations. English common names do exist for reasons beyond tradition and comfort. They are critical to communication about birds. Maintaining stability in names is important. What is the point of names, if names are ephemeral? A rose, by any other name, may smell just as sweet, but if you want to know what it is called and find out more about it, it helps if it has just one name. Communication depends upon words consistently denoting the same things/actions/qualities/relationships. When that



consistency is broken, communication becomes more likely to fail. Understanding is diminished. If a bird has multiple names, it is more difficult to find information about it. Even in the information age, you get incomplete search terms. It makes the study of birds harder. It creates a barrier. Many times non-birders have asked me about a bird they have seen. When I give them the name they are happy to learn it. If I tell them that to find out more about it they should also look for it under another name, they are less happy. They are less likely to look it up.

Changing names does not just affect those new to bird study. Suppose you were the world's expert on Wilson's Phalarope. You have studied Wilson's Phalarope for years. You have published many papers on Wilson's Phalarope. You have addressed significant issues in ecology, evolution, and behavior with your work on Wilson's Phalarope. You have built a reputation as an important scientist, and your work with Wilson's Phalarope has been key to that. Then you wake-up one morning and there is no more Wilson's Phalarope. Some committee has decided, for no scientific reason, to change the name. Your work now uses an obsolete name. How do you think that makes you feel? Like you have been marginalized? Slapped in the face? At the very least all the work you have done on Wilson's Phalarope is now going to be more difficult for people to access. I bet you would be pissed-off. This scenario is not really hypothetical – it happened, except that the bird was not Wilson's Phalarope, it was Mexican Jay. In 1983 the NACC changed its name to Gray-breasted Jay, just because the chairman of the committee liked it better. The expert was Dr. Jerram Brown. He was pissed-off. I know, I worked with him at the time. When you change the name of a bird, it diminishes the work of those that have published about that bird. It makes that work look old, possibly obsolete. It definitely makes the work harder to find. It creates confusion. It creates barriers. In 1995 the name was changed back to Mexican Jay, but it would be better if it had never been known as Gray-breasted Jay. Sometimes names need to be altered, but it always creates difficulties and it should not be done unnecessarily.

Above: Wilson's Phalarope - Gail West
Left: Mexican Jay - Lisa Larson



The decision to establish a new committee to decide on English names for birds is also troubling. The AOS already has committees to decide on names, the NACC and SACC. It was extremely insulting to the

members of those committees to decide that a new committee is needed.

The members of the NACC and SACC are volunteer experts that have dedicated years of very time-consuming work to produce the checklists. This is how you thank them? The new committee will be formulated to include “a diverse representation of individuals with expertise in the social sciences, communications, ornithology, and taxonomy” and will commit to “actively involving the public in the process of selecting new English bird names.” Call me crazy, but I think that important decisions in ornithology should be made by people who actually study birds. The Ad Hoc Committee advocated changing **all** eponyms because they found it too onerous to distinguish between the people who had done such detestable things that their names should be stricken from the checklist and others who were not so culpable. (One wonders what kind of criteria they were using if they cannot distinguish between General Winfield Scott, for whom Scott's Oriole is named, who oversaw the ethnic cleansing of the Cherokee people from their homelands, and the Zino family, for whom Zino's Petrel is named, that has worked for generations to protect one of the world's rarest birds.) It sounds like they want the new committee to have all the fun of giving out new names, but they do not want it to have to work too hard making tough decisions. While public participation sounds nice, consider that in 2016 the UK's Natural Environment Research

Council, trying to increase public interest in their work, held a poll to name a research ship they were building.

By a 3 to 1 margin over the next nearest contender, the public voted for Boaty McBoatface. I should have said earlier that the AOS **used** to have two committees to decide on names. With the decision on eponymous names and the insults offered them, the SACC has left the AOS and now works under the auspices of the International

Ornithological Council. Whether the AOS will form its own new committee on South American birds, or whether the NACC will also bolt the AOS, remain to be seen. For now we have the prospect that, to take one example, the bird we know as Cooper's Hawk will be continue to be known in Latin as *Accipiter cooperi* and in French as *Épervier de Cooper*. In South America it might well be known to Spanish speakers, as it is now named in some field guides, as *Gavilán de Cooper*, and to English speakers still as Cooper's Hawk. In North America, giving the public what it really wants in a name, it will be known as Hawky McHawkface.

A photograph of a Cooper's Hawk perched on a branch. The hawk has a brown and white speckled pattern on its chest and wings. A speech bubble with a brown background and white text is positioned to the right of the hawk's head.

HAVE SOME RESPECT!

The overreaching of the Ad Hoc Committee and the tunnel-vision of the AOS Council's response in implementing its recommendations are widely unpopular among ornithologists – a poll of ornithologists found 55% favor retaining some or all eponyms - and among the public. They have triggered a fracturing of the American ornithological community. Some of the online discussions of the issue have become quite rancorous. This is the opposite of the inclusiveness that name-change advocates claim to want. The proposed solutions for removing barriers to participation will actually create new barriers. A case-by-case assessment of eponymous names may be more difficult than the blanket elimination of them, but it has many advantages and can still remove names that may create barriers to inclusion. The NACC has shown in the past that it can do that, in the cases of the birds now known as Long-tailed Duck and Thick-billed Longspur, and they should continue to do so in the future.

*Above: Cooper's Hawk - Lisa Larson
Right: Long-tailed Duck - Lee Jaffe*



Breeding Bird Atlas Update

More progress has been made on publishing the breeding bird atlas! The first drafts of about one-third of the species accounts—what will form the bulk of the book—are written. The species accounts written so far are those that are more complex and have involved more research, so I expect most of the remaining ones to come together more quickly. In addition to writing, the first drafts of various graphics have been prepared, including those depicting phenology and population trends from Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey data. This fall, I'll be working with Rusty Scalf to produce the first drafts of the distribution maps, that will show where a species was confirmed breeding or where probable/possible evidence was obtained. There will be two maps for most species, one depicting Atlas I data, and the other depicting Atlas II data to allow a visual comparison in how species distributions have changed. Overall, at this point, the atlas publication is about 40-45% complete.

The most exciting update I have to share is that the bird club has engaged Edward Rooks, an accomplished wildlife artist, to illustrate the entire book! Edward will be producing an exquisite color painting for the cover and back of the book, as well as black-and-white drawings of over 160 breeding species that will appear in the species accounts. We hope to give you a preview of some of the art that will be in the book as it is produced over the next year.

As the book is coming together, I'm frequently reminded and grateful of all the hard work and contributions that atlasers, the bird club, donors have made over so many years. Thank you for your continued support of this important project.

Alex Rinkert
Project Director
arinkert@gmail.com



*Northern Harrier Pair
- Parham Pourahmad*



BEGINNERS BIRD WALK

**9 AM Saturday
September 21**

***Rancho del Oso
coastal section Big Basin Redwoods State Park***

Naturalists Cathy Burgess* and Charlie Lysikhina will lead a hike from Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center lasting approximately 1.5 hours. Learn about birds migrating through the north coast as well as year-round species. Bring binoculars if you have them. Loaners will also be available.

3600 Highway 1, between Ano Nuevo and Davenport
For detailed directions, go to ranchodeloso.org/visit



This free program is sponsored by the Waddell Creek Association and the Norris Center for Natural History



* Cathy is a member of the SCBC!

Santa Cruz Birds

By Alex Rinkert

Including reports from March 1 to May 31, 2024

Overall, this was a very pedestrian spring for highlights. The rarity highlights of this season were an Anna's x Costa's Hummingbird hybrid and a Tufted Puffin seen from shore. Red Crossbills continued to be found throughout the county, and some rare wintering ducks, orioles, and others continued into early spring. The fairly cool weather this spring did not seem to hamper breeding activity too much. Breeding records of Purple Martin, Great Blue Heron, Tree Swallow, and Turkey Vulture were at unexpected locations or unexpectedly early in the season.



A **Greater White-fronted Goose** at College Lake from May 23 through the end of the month was a rare record for late spring (NU, v.ob.). Other unseasonal birds at College Lake this spring included a pair of **Blue-winged Teals**, present from April 26–May 17 (GK, v.ob.); most spring migrants of this species have already passed through the county by May. The female **Harlequin Duck** wintering at the Santa Cruz Harbor was last seen April 11 (LG). Up to two **White-winged Scoters** seen through May 19 around the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf were late, and perhaps part of the flock that spent the winter in that area (EMK, MMK, v.ob.). A **Common Goldeneye** lingering along the lower San Lorenzo River through May 23 was later than most stay (LSe, v.ob.). The female **Barrow's Goldeneye** wintering at the Santa Cruz Harbor and vicinity stayed until at least March 23 (AR, JJ, ZH).

An apparent **Western x Clark's Grebe** hybrid was at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf on May 4 (AR). Hybrids of these two species are rarely identified away from breeding sites despite probably constituting what would be a surprisingly substantial proportion of Aechmophorus flocks if they were more readily identifiable. Also at the wharf



White-winged Scoter - Max Ferrero



Western x Clark's Grebe - Alex Rinkert

in May was a **Red-necked Grebe**, which lingered to the late date of May 20 (BR, RR, v.ob.).

Surveys to determine the status of **Common Poorwills** in some areas of the county had decent returns at Loma Prieta (five total detected at 56% of survey stations), but none were found at Big Basin Redwoods State Park in several areas where they formerly occurred before the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire (AR). Three **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** were found on the coast between April 23–26 (JT, KB, MF, TH). A male **Anna's x Costa's Hummingbird** hybrid in a backyard from March 29 to April 2 closely resembled a Costa's but had a few distinctive traits of Anna's, which identified it as a hybrid (JT, GC). Including this bird, the last four male "Costa's" hummingbirds in the county have upon closer scrutiny turned out to be this hybrid.

An **American Avocet** nest found at College Lake on May 21 was the first there in some time; only a few pairs attempt to nest in the county each year, and usually unsuccessfully (GK). A **Solitary Sandpiper** was at College Lake on April 30 where they occur almost annually (PH, NU, v.ob.), while one photographed flying north over Loma Prieta on April 20 was

at a much less expected location (MF, NS). Other rare shorebirds this spring included a **Ruddy Turnstone** was at Wilder Beach on May 3 (NA) and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Watsonville Slough on April 14 (PS). Good numbers of **Wilson's Snipes** were at Watsonville Slough this spring (v.ob.); the high count was 52 on March 2 (NU).

A **Tufted Puffin** was seen offshore on March 16 (EMM, PH, NU, DU, GM, AR) and an adult was seen from land as it flew by El Jarro Point on April 14 (PB et al.).

An adult **Franklin's Gull** flew by Wilder Beach on May 2 (NA). A few **Herring Gulls** were seen later into May than usual, with the latest being on May 21 at Scott Creek Beach (AR). Five **Black Skimmers** were at Sunset State Beach on April 11 (NU, v.ob.), while up to four were seen around the San Lorenzo River mouth from April 19–26 (ML, CS, v.ob.) An adult male **Brown Booby** perched at the end of Columbia Street on West Cliff Drive on March 3 (JA, HN, v.ob.).

A major **Brown Pelican** die off happened this spring between mid-April and mid-May. Hundreds of lethargic and dead pelicans and lesser numbers of cormorants and gulls were turning up along the coast especially around Santa Cruz, which quickly overwhelmed local rehab facilities. At some locations the numbers were shocking: sixty lethargic or dead pelicans were found at Main Beach and the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf in just one day on May 4 (AR). Authorities attributed starvation as the cause of the die off. A **Great Blue Heron** nest was reportedly found along the San Lorenzo River across from Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, the first time they have nested along that stretch of the river since 1980 (AC).

A **Turkey Vulture** nest found in the basal hollow of an old growth redwood in the hills above Aptos on March 6 was the third nest found in that area in the last two years, and the earliest active nest of that species ever found in the county (RS, LS). For unknown reasons,



Brown Booby - Michael Bolte

White-tailed Kites were extremely scarce this past winter, and they appeared to remain scarce this spring with only a few being reported, mainly on the north coast (v.ob.). A pair of **Bald Eagles** once again tried again to breed in Santa Cruz, but ended up failing before a nest became active (v.ob.). The pair in the Watsonville sloughs successfully raised and fledged one chick this year (GK). An immature **Swainson's Hawk** soared over Scotts Valley on May 12 (RP).

A **Tropical Kingbird** photographed at Struve Slough on May 23 was the latest spring record in the county and just the third record for May (CC). Most wintering individuals depart by March, with only a few sometimes remaining into mid-April. Others after this time could pertain to lingering wintering birds or late migrants. A **Cassin's Vireo** at lower Aptos Creek on March 7 was presumably wintering there given the date is several weeks before the first spring migrants arrive in the county (KO).

A pair of **Purple Martins** were observed building a nest in the sandhills at Mount Hermon on May 22 (PM et al.). This was the first breeding confirmation from that area of the county since 1950, although breeding may have also taken place in the nearby sandhills at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park in 2023 as martins were consistently present there during the breeding season. At least eight martins were also inspecting cavities and attempting copulation at the



Cassin's Vireo - Kurt Ongman



Purple Martin pair - Constance Vigno

fairly new colony at Wilder Ranch State Park on May 29 (JT), indicating there will probably be active nests there again this year. Elsewhere in the county, martins at Loma Prieta, Bonny Doon, Swanton Road and vicinity, and Big Basin Redwoods State Park suggest they are breeding at those locations as well (v.ob.).

A pair of **Tree Swallows** using a nest box at Glenwood Preserve in Scotts Valley may be the first breeding record of that species in the montane region of the county (BK et al.). Their current breeding distribution is throughout the Pajaro Valley, and much more locally on the mid-county coast and north coast. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** remained uncommon to fairly common throughout the county into spring, continuing their good showing this past winter (v.ob.). A **House Wren** building a nest at Shorebirds Pond on May 20 was a rare breeding record for that species on the south coast (NU). One or two **Townsend's Solitaires** were at Loma Prieta from April 20–21 (MF, NS).

Red Crossbills were reported in moderate numbers at scattered locations throughout the county this spring. The call types identified were predominately “type 2”, found mainly in the sandhills of the middle San Lorenzo Valley, and “type 4” in mixed evergreen forest elsewhere in the mountains. A flock of about 55 “type 4” crossbills on May 5 at Buzzard Lagoon Road was an especially high number for the county (AR). A few “type 3” crossbills were also identified, with three near Skyline Boulevard on May 11 (KM) and four at Empire Grade on May 24 (KD, LWD).

A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** remaining in a backyard through May 25 was quite late (BT). At least 5 **Yellow-breasted Chats** were reported in May, including two at the same location on Swanton Road where a pair summered last year (v.ob.). One of the wintering **Orchard Orioles** and the wintering **Bullock's Oriole** near Lighthouse State Beach remained until at least March 14 (RP, v.ob.). A **Hooded Oriole** at Long Ridge Road near Skyland on May 25–26 was probably breeding there (KD, LWD, v.ob.). No breeding activity by **Tricolored Blackbirds** was noted in the county this spring, and they went unreported in May.

A **Black-and-white Warbler** wintering at Neary Lagoon stayed through at least April 11 (GR, v.ob.). A **MacGillivray's Warbler** singing in burned forest on Jameson Creek Road on May 27 may have been breeding there, a location where the species did not occur before the CZU Fire in 2020 (AR). The immature male **Summer Tanager** wintering at Antonelli Pond was last seen on March 23 (EF). Male **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were at a feeder at Chimney Creek on May 17 (MP) and Natural Bridges State Beach on May 29 (MH). A flock of up to eight **Scaly-breasted Munias** persisted at Neary Lagoon through the spring, and others were seen at scattered locations in the Pajaro Valley and elsewhere (v.ob.).



MacGillivray's Warbler - Tom Hambleton



Rose-breasted Grosbeak - Martha Pallin

Cited Observers:

Josh Adams, Noah Arthur, Phil Brown, Karen Burnson, Ann Chandler, Cindy Cummings, George Cummins, Konshau Duman, Lynette Williams Duman, Max Ferrero, Elisabeth Foster, Lois Goldfrank, Tom Hambleton, Zach Hampson, Paul Heady, Mason Healy, Jazmine Jensen, Bethany Kilzer, Gary Kittleson, Margaret Leonard, Gary Martindale, Elias McKown, Matthew McKown, Paul Miller, Karen Moody, Hannah Nevins, Kurt Ongman, Martha Pallin, Ryan Phillips, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Gene Revelas, Alex Rinkert, Lawrence Seeberger (LSe), Lisa Sheridan, Pete Sole, Christopher Soriano, Robert Stephens, Nicholas Sundeen, Jaclyn Tolchin, Breck Tyler, Darrell Uyeda, Norman Uyeda. “v.ob.” means various observers. **Please enter interesting observations into [eBird](#) or report them to Alex Rinkert at arinkert@gmail.com**



Troical Kingbird - Cindy Cummings

House Wren - Tom Hambleton



Annual Steve Gerow Picnic

Thank you to all the bird club members and guests that helped make our picnic a fun afternoon on Sunday, 8/31. There was so much good food! It was nice to visit with friends and meet several new members. **Welcome!** **A big thank you to Phil Brown** for leading a great bird walk. The weather couldn't have been better and the Yellow Jackets went to a different party. **Also a big shout out to Larry and Tim** for helping with the setup and clean up. Mark your calendar for our annual picnic next year!

Ann Chandler
Hospitality Officer

Randy Wardle's September–November Bird B.O.L.O. *

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 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.



*From top: Western Meadowlark - John Fox
Baird's Sandpiper - Arthur Macmillan
Black-throated Gray Warbler - Michael Bolte*



*** Be On The Lookout**

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

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, Short-billed, 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



Short-billed Gull - Arthur Macmillan

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.

September is one of the most exciting months of the year to be out birding as fall migration heats up.



Chestnut-sided Warbler - David Sidle

Get out in the field as much as possible and 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. 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 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



Palm Warbler - Lee Jaffe

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

the area this month at places like the Homeless Garden, Antonelli's Pond, and weedy fields on the north coast.

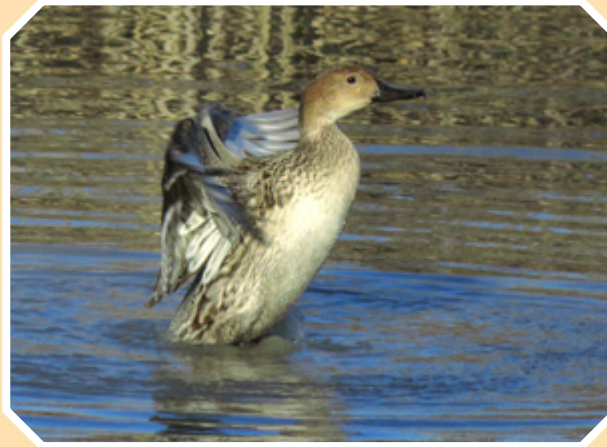
Cedar Waxwing and Western Meadowlark flocks are becoming more frequent as are Ruby-crowned Kinglets, so don't be too quick to call that little green and yellow bird a Hutton's Vireo. Watch for Tropical Kingbirds at Struve and Watsonville Sloughs where small numbers overwinter.

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.

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, Glaucous-winged, Herring, and Iceland to name a few.



Female Northern Pintail - Lisa Larson

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 has been a good season for Tufted Puffins as well.

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!

NOVEMBER

It's November and even though fall migration is slowing down, there are still many species of birds to watch for this month. The peak of landbird migration has past, but waterbird migration is still

moving well throughout the month. November has a long history of rarities, so keep checking the coastal vagrant traps for late eastern warblers, rare flycatchers, and more. Flowering Eucalyptus in Santa Cruz, Capitola, and elsewhere may harbor late tanagers and orioles as well. It's also time to look for irruptive species such as Varied Thrush, Red Crossbill, and perhaps Evening Grosbeak.

Scan fields along the north coast for Tricolored Blackbirds, and look for uncommon raptors such



Red Crossbill - John Hickok



Tufted Puffin - Beth Hamel

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

as Merlin and Peregrine Falcon, and possibly Ferruginous Hawk. This is a good time to search for Burrowing Owls at some of the few places where they have been found in recent years: Swanton Pond, Wilder Ranch, UCSC, and Pajaro Valley High School.

Late fall is a good time to study sparrows. Watch for our rarer wintering sparrows, Swamp and White-throated. Coastal Wilder Ranch offers a good variety of sparrow species, but also look along quiet country roads like Merk Road and Peckham Lane. November has historically been a good time to find longspurs, pipits, and Horned Larks in the county. Try looking for them in plowed ag fields along the north coast.

Geese and ducks are coming back now in good numbers. Some species have already arrived but many diving ducks such as Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Hooded Merganser are some who come later. Look for them at Baldwin Creek mouth, the San Lorenzo River, the Watsonville slough system, and College Lake when it fills up after the rains begin. Also scan playing fields and sloughs for Cattle Egrets which are often found in the month of November.

On the ocean, November is the peak of loon migration, and stops along the coast, especially early in the day, may have 1000s of Pacific Loons and lesser numbers of the other loon species streaming down the coast, together with movements of our large and small grebes. Surf Scoters become numerous, and scanning the coastal waters with a scope can sometimes produce the rarer White-winged or Black Scoter, especially along the south county coast between Seascape and Zils Road.

November is also a good time to study returning winter gulls. Numbers of Iceland (remember Thayer's has been lumped into Iceland Gull), Herring, Glaucous-winged, and Short-billed (Mew) will continue to grow through the month. Visit coastal creek mouths, San Lorenzo Park, and Pinto Lake City Park for a diverse selection of gulls.

There are many good birds to see this month so grab your binos and scope and get out in the field as much as you can. Good luck and good birding!



Merlin - Lisa Larson



Bufflehead- Thy Bun



Pacific Loons, El Jarro Point 11-19-23 - Sergey Pavlov

Steve's Corner

We are introducing a *new series* that takes a look back at the wonderful writing of Steve Gerow. Steve was a frequent contributor to the Albatross, and he provided a combination of his deep knowledge and humorous insights. Whether you are revisiting topic or reading for the first time, we hope you enjoy Steve's Corner.

Falling into Fall by Steve Gerow

(First appeared in Volume 56 Number 1: Sep/Oct 2011)

It's great that there are all these Western Sandpipers all of a sudden; there was nothing here a week ago. Why is that one acting so differently, though, running around like a plover, away from the rest, acting more aggressively? And it has this odd, uniformly scaly look and that short, blunt bill...

By the time most of you receive this issue, fall migration will be well underway for many bird species. Birding is a year-around endeavor, but for many Fall is the season. It's a long season—the first noticeable movements begin in June, when the human-defined summer has barely begun—and by the time it is over the calendar has put us into winter. There is extensive overlap in bird seasons, as late nesting birds may be encountered even when some species are arriving to spend the winter. But the peak of rapid change befalls from August through October, the time of year with the greatest potential for finding rarities. I find the annual cycle of change in itself to be quite fascinating. As some birds we had grown used to leave us for the season, others arrive to stay for a while, and some visit only for a moment. Each year is a little different in timing and numbers and so forth, and noting and recording all this adds a lot to our knowledge. (Remember that eBird is an especially valuable way to record and keep track of this information.) Still, many of us look forward to the challenge and excitement of finding the unexpected, and fall rarely fails to produce at least some memorable finds. If one departs a bit from a purely “listing” approach to birding, the potential for interesting and exciting discoveries increases substantially. Encounters with the out-of-season, the out-of-range, and unexpected numbers can be as notable, and sometimes more so, than finding a species you haven't seen in a given place or time period. Turning up an ordinary Black Turnstone in Scotts Valley or Ben Lomond, for example, would be extraordinary, as would a common Cliff Swallow somewhere in the county in November; either may raise more eyebrows than an

eastern vagrant Blackpoll Warbler on the coast at the end of September.

Finding rarities (however one defines the term) is in part a matter of luck, so the more you get out in the field, the better, but there are ways to improve your chances. For regular rarities, patterns of occurrence develop over the years, which can give some clues as to where and when to look. For example, a weedy field near the coast from late September through October is the most likely spot for a Palm Warbler, and flowering eucalyptus groves are good places to look for unusual orioles or tanagers. Shorebirds (mostly) frequent shores, but it helps to know that a Solitary Sandpiper will probably be foraging alone along fresh water margins in August or September, while a Stilt Sandpiper will more likely be wading among yellowlegs or dowitchers.

Finding a Rock Sandpiper requires scrutinizing coastal rocks, but

not before late October. What's that warbler chip, slurred like a Yellow,

but different? Is that it? No...

Townsend's or...?

That supercilium is really wide, and too pale and...

behind the leaves again. The tail looks too short...

it's gone...there over in the next tree...really bold wingbars. Now where'd it go? Pale stripes on the back... Some spots become known as “vagrant traps”, including certain coastal points and riparian corridors with geographic features that tend to accumulate migrants. (Just remember that great rarities have appeared in back-yards, parking lots, and all sorts of places, so it's worthwhile to look beyond those known good spots.) A change in the weather may bring a change in the birds, and some of the best birding can be right after the passage of a storm. Checking spots where common birds accumulate and searching through flocks of all sorts are likely to yield dividends sooner or later. Getting to know the regular birds of an area—their various plumages, calls, and behavior—gives one a definite advantage for picking something different out of the crowds.

Anyway, you are out birding, and it finally happens,



*Rock Sandpiper - End of Woodrow Ave.
- Steve Gerow, 11-4-09*

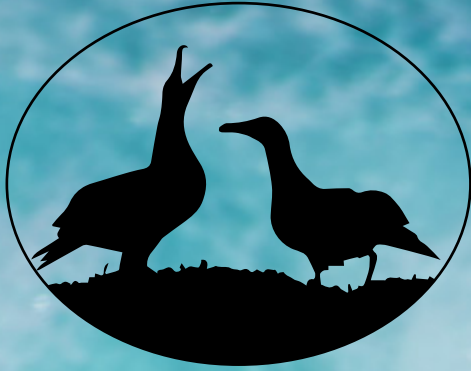
you find something really odd, so now what? If it is something very rare, either overall or for the time or place, start documenting your find almost immediately. Even if you are not sure what it is, start taking notes. It is best to document first and identify later in such cases. The opportunity to see details may be short, as birds fly away or disappear into the trees, and they often don't return to give you a second look. Thoroughly note everything you can about the details of plumage, overall structure, and the shape of various parts—head, bill, tail, leg length, wings, etc. If you can get photographs, that's great, but still take notes. Photos don't always show enough to prove an identification, and sometimes a reflection or shadow or other artifact may create a misleading impression. Make note of any calls you hear, and remember that behavior can be important. Notes on tail movements can help separate Dusky and Gray Flycatchers, for example, which can be difficult to distinguish in photos. And when writing up that possible Connecticut Warbler you saw, make sure to mention whether it was walking or hopping! Hmm...sounds like a Fox or a Lincoln's Sparrow calling down there in the willows, but for some reason I can't quite place which one. Sounds sort of in-between and a little off. Here's a bird...plain, noticeable supercilium but not much else. Warbling Vireo? No, looks wrong...and a really small, fine bill. Not a vireo. It's flitting like a kinglet but staying more down in the thick stuff. Tennessee Warbler? No, it's not green at all above and no yellow at all, just kind of plain and dull, bill's too short. I wish it would come out more in the open..

Once you are certain of what it is, then report it (the sooner the better for especially rare finds.) The Monterey Bay Birders email listserver (MBB) is probably the best way to get the word out on rare sightings in Santa Cruz. In some cases, where you have good reason to believe it is a certain noteworthy species, but are not completely sure, it is still good to report it on MBB (as a “possible” or “probable”), and hopefully additional observers will find the bird and help confirm what it is. (But please only report a species on eBird if you are sure that it is that species.) When you do report very rare sightings, you will probably be asked for some documentation, which may include written notes, photos, sketches, recordings, etc. Including notes with your original report (whether it be on MBB, on eBird, or otherwise) will save time, and often will be sufficient. In any case, if you did make an effort to thoroughly note details while observing the bird in the field, that should make it fairly easy to compose some documentation later, as it will mostly be there already. You can add a bit on how the details seen or heard add up to make it that species, and do include some notes on how you ruled out similar birds. And a bit of homework that can make this process easier is getting to know the parts of a bird, the various plumage tracts, and so forth, which helps with both taking notes, and with writing up the details later. (It is much easier saying, “the scapulars were pointed and dark centered” than trying to describe “those funny looking feathers that sort of droop over the top of the wing and...”)

Anyway, you get the idea. And while you're reading this, there are all kinds of birds moving through outside, so get out there and see what you can find! Look! Up in the sky...!

Steve Gerow, contemplating sights and sounds of birds at Younger Lagoon.
Photo by David Suddjian.





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)



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

~ Lisa Fay Larson, Editor

NEXT DUE DATE
NOV 1st

Brown Pelican
- Parham Pourahmad

Little Songs for the Great Horned

Winding up Old San José Road at dusk, I pull into a curve, and it's as if you have always been there, ears bent to the ditch from a low branch. I pass right through, but you make an impression, as on gelatin silver, onto my feelings, latent, permanent. It is the beginning of something.



I move to the woods. You call from atop sixty-million-year-old forests. You have climbed up from clay, from the Paleocene. You cleave like two notes on a wire, play your mediaeval chant. One of you coos—feathery, soft—that's Billie Holiday. The other lowers the pitch a tone on a hollow, woody reed. That's Benny Goodman. You vibrate duets from rooftops, car radios, belfries, clefts in the faces of cliffs.



One fall day, embers the size of unfurled wings. You're not used to being hunted. This sort of migration is not in your bones. Smoky half-night. Santa Ana gusts. You'll end up behind a grocery sign in town, or in a woman's garage behind the clothes dryer. Maybe on your own—toxic smoke, separated from your kin. Where to find food? Nesting by the interstate in a frazzled pine. Scouring ditches along the frontage road, the tracks.



There is no pyro-diversity to return to. No food source—no food source for your food source. No beetles in the ash. No beetle larvae. No understory, no mosaic no patchwork with hideouts. No woodpeckers. No green. Maybe next year, wildflowers, a few hummingbirds.



Geologically speaking, you've always hunkered down, taken the night shift, taken whatever you could find. A refugee. You're cast as an outlaw, harassed by mobs. You've become, over millions of years, a creature of the night. Astonished by disdain, you hone a quiet dignity, speak a strange and beautiful language.



Today, you've returned. A theme and variation, polyphonous, echoic, fugal, imitative, plainsong, an organ, an instrument. You hear a twig break under snow.



A shape that is probably you, a shape that holds steady, perhaps moves slightly—we're not quite sure—and then a shudder, a jolt as wings the size of a man launch without sound across the whole field of vision, then the moon, then the larger dark.



Before sleep, lying side by side, I am sure we are both great horned owls. Ridiculous! Only baby owls sleep lying down. But for that instant—the blanket of feathers over our long bodies, wings folded in—I see we are you.



One night, in a near-sleep, windows shut, I hear two of you. So faint, I count slowly to fifty and still can't swear it. Same thing before dawn. Is this really you, or just my inner owls? You, or just the memory of you? I am sometimes in dread of the sharp little binary of truth. It cuts and cuts into nothing.



I love you more than ever, but it is harder right now. Paul Farmer died in his sleep in Rwanda. I see you fly down from the same bare branch at dusk. I hear you in the middle of the night.

Ken Weisner, Santa Cruz

►from *Songs for the Great Horned*

Shanti Arts Press, 2024



Great Horned Owl, woodcut - Grace Brieger

YOU MATE FOR LIFE

Out on your usual spindly redwood branch suspended like
a fishing pole in the August sunset. Above the dry grass.
You are a fisherman, hook and line. You are patience, tool,
and craft.

You mate for life. Sometimes, rarely, if no chicks, you'll
fight. Maybe, after five years, you'll kick him out for
good. A serious reason. Something years in the making.
Something bigger than either of you.

I heard talons the day I left. Rabbit one minute, meat the
next. Carried along into this new home. Dusk dense with
stars and the roar of crickets.

There are mouths to feed. Later, invisible, your names on
each other's tongues. You sing a step higher; your four calls
overlap his five. You are close, you could be anywhere. I
hear you from my bed, like memory.

- Ken Weisner



Ken Weisner, Santa Cruz
▶from *Songs for the Great Horned*
Shanti Arts Press, 2024

Great Horned Owl - Keith Hansen



***I'M BUSHED
FOLKS!***



SO TIRED!



***IT'S BEEN TEN
YEARS!***

*From Top:
Bushtit
Sunning Chestnut-backed Chickadee
California Towhee
Dunlin
- Lisa Larson*

***IT'S TIME FOR
SOMEONE ELSE
TO STEP UP NOW***

FROM THE EDITOR:

I must retire as your Editor at the end of the year. It is time for someone else to fly our *Albatross* newsletter. I have loved being your editor for a decade, but my husband would like to retire and that means moving. Moving means going through everything we own to downsize. For this I need time I can no longer devote to the "Alby".

- Lisa Fay Larson



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Howard Mackey | June 2024 |
| Barbara Duron | June 2024 |
| Sandra Davis | June 2024 |
| Anne Hayes | June 2024 |
| Maxine Dorazio | June 2024 |
| The Perman Family | June 2024 |
| The Thompson Family | June 2024 |
| Megan Stewart | June 2024 |
| Dyane Jackson | June 2024 |
| Elisabeth Forrest | June 2024 |
| Ellen Pizer Family | June 2024 |
| Daniel Smith Family | June 2024 |
| Betty Weiss | June 2024 |
| Eve Meier Family | June 2024 |
| <i>Lifetime Members:</i> Margaret Perham | June 2024 |
| Nelle Lyons | June 2024 |



Juvenile Green Heron - Arthur Macmillan

Mallard male - Rick LeBadour

RECENT SCBC DONORS

Bill Murphy
Sue Dumler
Kathy Kuyper
Teresa Green

Thank you!



DEADLINE

Submissions for the

DEC/FEB

Winter Issue



NOV 1, 2024

ALBATROSS DEADLINES

AUG 1 for SEP/NOV issue

NOV 1 for DEC/FEB issue

FEB 1 for MAR/MAY issue

MAY 1 for JUNE/AUG issue

Red-tailed Hawk - Beth Hamel

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PARTING SHOT:

"HEY! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!"

PEEPS

- RICK LEBAUDOUR

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



Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club

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Say's Phoebe - David Lewit