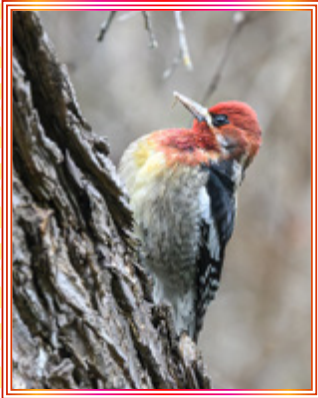


INSIDE



Red-breasted Sapsucker - Michael Bolte

68th Santa Cruz
Christmas Bird Count

MOSS LANDING CBC

Santa Cruz Birds



White-breasted Nuthatch - Arthur Macmillan

STEVE'S CORNER

Birder's Notebook

PARTING SHOT



PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

MY PERUVIAN AMAZON EXPERIENCE



- By Nico Schnack



hen I think back on the last (and first) 20 years of my life, and the subsequent 20 summers that came with it, I find that I'm pretty quick to get sentimental about things. Times that were spent with people that I love, times spent in places that I love, memories of places and faces that, in many cases, I haven't seen or spoken to in years. When I think about how I spent my time in 2023, I'm always drawn to the memories of the 15 days I spent in Peru as a research intern, and the many memories I made.

The journey of how I got the internship deserves a little background. Way back in the ancient times of 2020, some of my buddies in the *California Young Birders Club* had discovered *Fauna Forever*, a Peruvian non-profit organization offering internships in wildlife research at a field station within the Amazon rainforest. It was an incredible opportunity, but... COVID struck, and we did not go. Ultimately, my friends wound up going in 2021 and '22 instead. Fast forward to May 2023—I had just gotten home from my freshman year of college, and I had no clue what I'd be doing for the next three months. My mind bounced between getting a job, planning a multi-week road trip, or just staying in Santa Cruz and seeing how the summer turned out. Suddenly, I remembered Fauna Forever, and at that moment I decided to finally apply for the internship.

To make a long story short, I got accepted, and after a few semi-panicked last minute flight changes, I was off to Peru. The journey was something entirely new to me, having never traveled alone before. I knew enough Spanish to get around thanks to two months of Duolingo, but the 24-hour travel day proved to be a great opportunity to work on my problem solving skills, especially when my Spanish was unable to rise to the challenge.

Before I knew it there I was, stepping off a small commercial plane onto the tarmac of a little airport surrounded by lush green in all directions. The airport terminal was humid, crowded, confusing, and I was right in the middle of it.



Band-tailed Manakin - Hallie Cowan Barrera

Absolutely stoked. I grabbed my bag, went outside, found my car, and we were off!

Prior to starting the trek to our field station, we had to make a few stops in town. We flew into Puerto Maldonado, a large jungle town that rose during the rubber boom of the late 19th century. With modern infrastructure and a large town square complete with a clock tower, it wasn't exactly what I expected when I heard the term "jungle town" attached to it. Serving as a last stop of sorts, Puerto Maldonado sits within the Amazon rainforest, with nothing but green in all directions as far as the eye can see. And that's where I was headed— straight into the green!

A few stops and 4 hours of driving later, I thanked my driver and ditched the car for a boat at the Rio Tambopata, which is where I met Chris Ketola, the Head Field Research Coordinator of Fauna Forever. Decked out in some khaki hiking pants and a pair of sunglasses straight out of Top Gun, my first impression was "Indiana Jones of the Amazon" (which is a description I give with the most respect imaginable). After introductions and a firm handshake, we loaded up all my gear and the supplies we got in town, taking off downriver towards Fauna Forever's research station— my home for the next 15 days.

The boat ride to and from the research station was something else entirely, something that I never got bored of and would gladly experience a dozen more times. Flanked by walls of green, the river cut through the jungle, making a massive, aquatic highway of sorts—one used by not just people, but by countless creatures both above and below the water. The wide open river allowed for an incredibly unique view of the jungle, with the large open space being something impossible to come by naturally within the cramped confines of the Amazon rainforest. We arrived at the Secret Forest Lodge research station early in the afternoon. Walking up from the banks of the river, I could hear all sorts of sounds, from raucous flocks of parrots flying overhead to hummingbirds zipping through the forest and numerous other birds whose identities I had no clue.



White-browed_Antbird - Hallie Cowan Barrera

After getting a brief rundown of the rules and procedures of our basecamp, I promptly passed out from jet lag, but excited to see what tomorrow might bring.

The next day certainly brought "something", and that something was the worst allergies I have ever experienced in my life. Waking up, both of my eyes were itchy, swollen, and runny to the point that I was convinced I was sick with a horrible case of pink eye. After getting checked out and talking to Chris, we concluded that it was, thankfully, a bad allergic reaction to something in the air. So, the first two days were spent with sleepless nights and exploring camp half awake, which was pretty rough. Thankfully, by some miracle my allergies completely cleared up the morning of the third day, so I truly began my time at Fauna Forever!

My first goal now that I was back on my feet was to properly introduce myself to the fellow interns around camp. For the sake of this story, the three to remember are Hallie, a crocodile researcher from Florida; Nick, a wildlife photographer from Britain; and Matt, an undergraduate from Vermont. Given the fact that I was the only other "bird person" aside from Chris for most of my stay, Hallie, Nick and Matt wound up accompanying us on most of our



bird escapades. Now that I was finally back on my feet, it was time for my first morning of work!

For the bird research team, every day is an early wakeup. Bright and early at 5 AM, we all shuffled out of our bunk beds into the eating area. Today's breakfast (and the 12 that followed) consisted of pancakes, eggs, and fruit. After a quick meal, we loaded all our gear into a riverboat and set off downriver, deeper into the jungle.

Eventually, we stopped on a muddy riverbank, with capybara tracks dotting its length. The moment we got the all-clear, I eagerly hopped out of the boat, ready to start the day! If Chris wanted me to slow down, he didn't need to say anything—the moment my feet touched the ground I promptly sunk straight into the mud, all the way up to the brim of my boots. A few very muddy moments later we were back on track, walking along a narrow jungle trail towards today's banding site.

When you think of birding in the Amazon rainforest, you might think of a birding paradise—multicolored tanagers flitting through the trees, secretive antpittas hopping around in the undergrowth, massive flocks of parrots flying overhead—nearly deafening with loud screeches. You wouldn't be wrong to envision Amazon birding as such, but that's not entirely realistic. Place the tanagers 200 feet up in the canopy, the antpittas so deep in the understory that you could only dream of seeing them, and the parrots flying so high and fast that you'd be lucky to even catch a glimpse of them before they're gone. That would give you a real depiction of birding from the forest floor. Truth be told, birding within the deep Amazon itself was often a pain in the butt. However, we weren't there for birding at that moment.

The mist nets were set up along the trail, about three-fourths of a mile into the forest. Four nets, evenly spread out about 100 yards away from each other, each about ten feet tall more or less. After unfurling the nets and checking for tangles and tears, we retreated to our “station”, which consisted of a small foldable table set up on the trail, directly in the middle of the four



Band-tailed Manakin - Hallie Cowan Barrera

nets. The waiting game began—nets were checked every ~50 minutes, so we had plenty of downtime. On the first day, it was Hallie, Nick, Chris, and me, so waiting wasn't too bad, especially when you have friends to keep you company. Between getting to know one another, breaking into our supply of snacks, and admiring the forest around us, time went by pretty fast and before I knew it, it was time for our first check.

We split up into pairs and went off in either direction, eager to see what the nets caught. The nets I checked with Chris turned out pretty lackluster, with nothing but a few leaves entangled within. Thankfully, Hallie and Nick had better luck, coming up with a Semi-collared Puffbird! With our first bird in tow, we went back to the table and “processed” the bird—taking wing measurements, bill length, weight, age, and sex, and topping it all off with a ring around its leg, with Chris rattling off numbers so fast I had trouble keeping up at times. All this information would go into a massive database, containing all the info that Fauna Forever collects. That data is especially important for the puffbird – that chunky puffball of a bird, often found in the rainforest understory, was a quite uncommon catch for our nets, and my first bird-banding bird!



Semi-collared Puffbird - Hallie Cowan Barrera

The rest of the day and the ones that

followed spent banding in that section of forest progressed typically—the nets would continue to produce manikins, antwrens, and antbirds, all fantastic species that were made even more fascinating by being able to see them up close— but all very ordinary. I was happy with what we were catching of course, with Chris affectionately giving the nickname “minions” to the ever-present Band-tailed Manakins, a small, bright yellow bird with black wings and a colorful red face. This cycle of manakins would continue for the duration of our time spent in this section, until the last day – when the humdrum was broken by a hawk entangled in the nets.

That day it was just me and Chris; Hallie, Nick, and Matt being down for the count after a long night of herping (searching for reptiles and amphibians). It was going pretty slow— Chris and I had split up to check the nets, mine had the usual Band-tailed Manakin, of course. After giving the nets a twice over

Slate-colored Hawk - *Hallie Cowan Barrera*



to be sure I didn't miss anything, I went back to the table to meet up with Chris, who was holding a large, dark shape close to his chest as he made his way down the trail. Once I got close enough to make out the details of that large, dark shape, I realized it was a Slate-colored Hawk! Capturing any raptor in the nets is crazy, especially a raptor of this size. The fact it didn't tear through the nets was a miracle! With a red face, red legs, slate-colored body, and a banded black and white tail, this raptor is common in floodplain forests

and is without a doubt the most common hawk species in the area. However, to catch it in a net meant for passerines was incredible! Processing this bird was amazing, as I had never seen any hawk so closely. As we processed this bird, it struck me how timid it was—it wasn't thrashing about or trying to bite as one might expect a hawk to do, instead it just stared at us with its wide yellow eyes and its beak half open, almost as if it was shocked that it had been caught. I knew birds were light, but it was amazing how light the hawk was as I was holding it—for something so high up in the food chain, it felt so fragile in my hands. We admired it for a few more moments, then released it back into the jungle, grateful to have been blessed with

such an incredible capture.

While I was on the bird team and was fully involved with banding each morning, there was always something else interesting going on in the evening – for example, caiman surveys. This was the team Hallie worked on, with it being a far cry from what I experienced on the bird team. Every other night, they'd go out and spotlight along the banks of the river, searching for the eyeshine of caimans. On the Rio Tambopata, there are 3 caiman species— Black, Spectacled, and Dwarf Caimans, with Black and Spectacled being the ones encountered most often. Each time we saw a caiman, we'd drop a pin on a digital map and mark down species and behavior. However, the real fun came in the form of getting the caimans in hand and tagging them!

If the situation allowed it and the caiman was of appropriate size, Chris would attempt to catch the caiman with his bare hands or using a loop pole. Once



Chris Ketola with Nunbird - Hallie Cowan Barrera

As amazing as these 15 days were, they didn't come without moments of sadness. A vast portion of the area that Fauna Forever protects is contested by logging companies, with large swaths of forest being clear-cut. On my last day, we walked the trails farther back into the main Fauna Forever property, visiting the remains of a building that was recently burnt down by loggers. It was an act of retaliation since Fauna Forever took down their campsite after they had encroached onto Fauna Forever's land. In turn the loggers burnt down Fauna Forever's building. It's a bleak scene, as these loggers had gotten scammed into buying a fake land deed—one that falsely granted them logging rights in the area surrounding Fauna Forever's property. It's not like these loggers are bad people—many of them are poor and are simply doing what they can to feed themselves and their families.

the caiman was brought on board, they were weighed and tagged, a small clip of their scales taken as a sample used to measure mercury levels within the individual. One night, we were lucky enough to capture 6 babies from a known clutch that had hatched a few weeks prior. They were still very small—just a little over a foot long from nose to tail at best. Hallie, Chris, and I were holding a caiman each, with mother caiman watching us close by, we processed each of them, eventually releasing them back into the murky waters of the river.

Despite those sad affairs, I left Fauna Forever feeling hopeful for the future of the land they protect. That hope came in the form of the connections I made with the people I worked with. Every person I met was truly passionate and believed in the work they were doing – be it with birds, frogs, plants, or crocodiles. That passion, that belief that the research we were doing matters, the belief that each and every bit of the surrounding environment is invaluable and deserves to be acknowledged and protected, is what made my time at Fauna Forever truly special.

Night on the Rio Tambopata was far different than day, with an entirely different assortment of animals coming out to forage. Aside from caimans, the stars of the show, it was common to see groups of up to a dozen capybaras lounging in the mud, warily watching as we went past them. The eyeshine of Ladder-tailed Nightjar, a large, nocturnal bird of the tropical lowlands, was a frequent sight along the banks of the river. Being serenaded all the while by Common Pauraques made every night out on the river truly magical.



Baby Caiman - Hallie Cowan Barrera



Black-fronted Nunbird - Nico Schnack



Count us!

68th Santa Cruz Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 21, 2024



The 68th Santa Cruz Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 21, 2024.

Last year we had a record 130 birders participate and 33,810 birds of 171 species were tallied. While rare birds often steal the show, the Christmas Bird Count has always had an important role in monitoring the population trends of wintering birds both locally and across their range in North America.

Last year the count documented the continued increase in Western Bluebird, Canada Goose, and Wild Turkey. We also turned up a few nice species including Harlequin Duck, Pacific Golden-Plovers, Great-tailed Grackle, and multiple Summer and Western Tanagers. What will we find this year?

Come spend the day counting birds to help us find out! Please sign up as soon as possible so we can begin making assignments for count day:

<https://forms.gle/XuxqHaii8VKosE648>

Nick Levendosky
Alex Rinkert
Phil Brown
Compilers



*Top: Willets - Carole Rose
Right: Townsend's Warbler - Pete Solé*



Pacific Wren - Tom Hambleton

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The Christmas Bird Count will be December 21st this year. The CBC dinner that follows the count will be held at the Portuguese Hall (C.P.D.E.S. Hall) at 216 Evergreen Street, Santa Cruz, from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM. This a potluck event (as per city of Santa Cruz , please no Styrofoam) and the Bird Club will provide pizza, non alcoholic beverages, and tableware. The Hall will have a no host bar available (NO outside alcohol permitted). We won't have access to a kitchen so will be unable to heat any food. Salads, desserts and appetizers will be welcome!!

The CBC Dinner is a fun way to talk about the birds seen and counts for the day. The dinner gives us a chance to catch up with old friends and get to know other members. We can share our birding adventures with people that understand the excitement of birding. Will a White-tailed Kite be spotted this year? How many Black Phoebes counted. Any rare birds found?

The Bird Club will be responsible for setting up and putting away the tables and chairs. Any help with that will be greatly appreciated.

Hope to see you there!

Any questions : Ann Chandler
annchandler6@gmail.com

Cedar Waxwing - Tony Britton





Dear Friends of the SCBC,
WE NEED YOU!

Our club relies on volunteers to keep our wings moving!

As of January, we will be without an *essential* SCBC Board position: “**Field Trip Officer**”. This position requires some computer knowledge.

Nick Levendosky has served our club as Field Trip Officer with amazing dedication and excellent work for many, many years. We are grateful that he will continue to help with the Christmas Bird Count.

Brian Schnack greatly appreciates the favors his son Nico received as a budding young birder—Nico is currently a college student! Thank you for your assistance with membership, Brian.

We are grateful for Nick and Brian's service, and we will miss them both.

Become a SCBC Board Member!
This is your opportunity to weigh-in on our local birding concerns and participate in club decisions.

For more information and details about these positions, please call
Lisa Sheridan, President,
Santa Cruz Bird Club
831-332-3785

Marsh Wren - Rick Lebadour

Dearest SCBC Members,

*It has been my honor to serve our club as Editor for the past decade, but it is time to move on. This is very bittersweet for me because creating *The Albatross* and graphics for our club has been such an enriching experience. I took on this position after having given up on being hired in a new career as a graphic artist; it gave me purpose, an outlet to use my skills, and a sense of worth. I believe we are here to share life—the best and the worst—and to love and help each other. Birders are a special group of people; honest, patient, diligent, caring, and helpful—wanting to get everyone "on the bird" because enjoying our passion together is its own reward. I do plan to contribute to the club and the "Alby" so this is **NOT** . . .*



Sora - Lisa Larson

THE END



Great Horned Owl - Michael Bolte

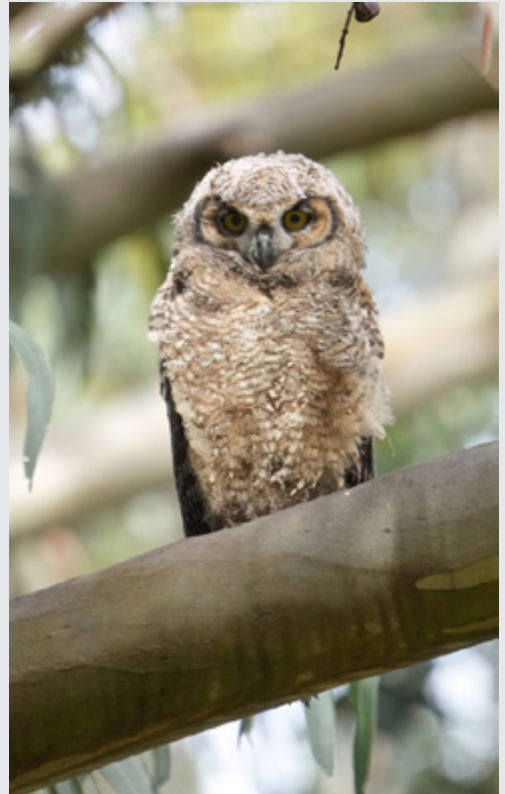
Our Neighborhood Great Horned Owls

- by Lisa Larson

In September I begin listening for the pair of Great Horned Owls that have been nesting not far from here for years. My heart leapt when I heard the four note call of the male one night— he was right around the corner! I strained my ears to hear the female, something I repeated around ten times over the weeks— but I didn't hear her. My heart sank. My heart sure gets a lot of exercise when it comes to birds.

What happened to her? Would he find another mate this season? A couple of nights I thought I may have heard her answering him. Were my ears making it up? I will suddenly awaken when my ears say, "OWL!" Then my brain concurs with my ears. One November night, finally, unmistakably, I heard them both at 3 AM. Her higher-pitched and faster five-note song: Hoo-Hoo-Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! and then his deep and slow, four note Hoo – Hoo – Hoo – Hoo! I listened for nearly an hour until I no longer could hear them, as they kept moving. I hope for a big, successful brood! My heart is in good shape.

I cannot help getting attached to "our" neighborhood birds.



Great Horned Owl Chick - Pete Solé



*American Barn Owl,
Struve Slough
- Steve Pearl*



Burrowing Owl - David Lewit





Moss Landing Christmas Bird Count January 1st 2025!

Brown Pelicans - Lee Jaffe

There will be a Moss Landing CBC on January 1st 2025. Anyone who would like to join should email me at kitkatbailey@gmail.com.



Short-eared Owl - Michael Bolte



High Voltage Acorn Woodpeckers - Pete Solé

Santa Cruz Birds

By Alex Rinkert

Including reports from June 1 to August 31, 2024

This summer had a nice selection of rare or otherwise noteworthy breeding records (Purple Martin, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Ruddy Duck) along with a few records where only probable breeding evidence was obtained (Rhinceros Auklet, Yellow-breasted Chat). August produced very few shorebirds on land, but there were good numbers and variety of seabirds offshore. While a bit thin on vagrants this summer, the highlight was an Eastern Wood-Pewee, which was the first record for Santa Cruz County. The total number of species now seen in the county now stands at 470.



College Lake had standing water into June, when it normally has already been plowed and turned into agricultural fields, which led to a number of interesting waterbirds utilizing this rare ephemeral habitat. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** first seen on May 23 continued through June 3 for a rare late spring record (NU, v.ob.), and a pair of **Northern Shovelers** through June 21 were late as well (NU, v.ob.). A female **Common Goldeneye** near the Pajaro River mouth from June 4–July 11 (MM, v.ob.) and an adult male at the lower San Lorenzo River from late May (or earlier) through July 26 (v.ob.) were rare in summer.

Recently fledged **Common Mergansers** on Waddell Creek at Rancho del Oso on June 11 provided one of the few recent breeding records from that watershed (LON). A female or immature **Hooded Merganser** at the Quail Hollow Ranch pond from August 19 through the end of the month was especially rare in August (CF, v.ob.). Two broods of **Ruddy Ducks** at Westlake Pond this summer were the first documented there since 1976 (AF).



Common Merganser and chick - Leo O'Neill

Unfortunately, both broods were eaten by largemouth bass within two days of hatching. Other places where this rare breeder produced broods this summer included Baldwin Creek marsh and Swanton Pond (TT, AR).

A **Wild Turkey** female with chicks at Natural Bridges State Beach on May 18 (LR), and then seen again on July 7 (HS), was one of few breeding records for that park. One **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was reported this period, at Larkin Valley on August 17-(BK).



Sooty Shearwaters - David Stidle

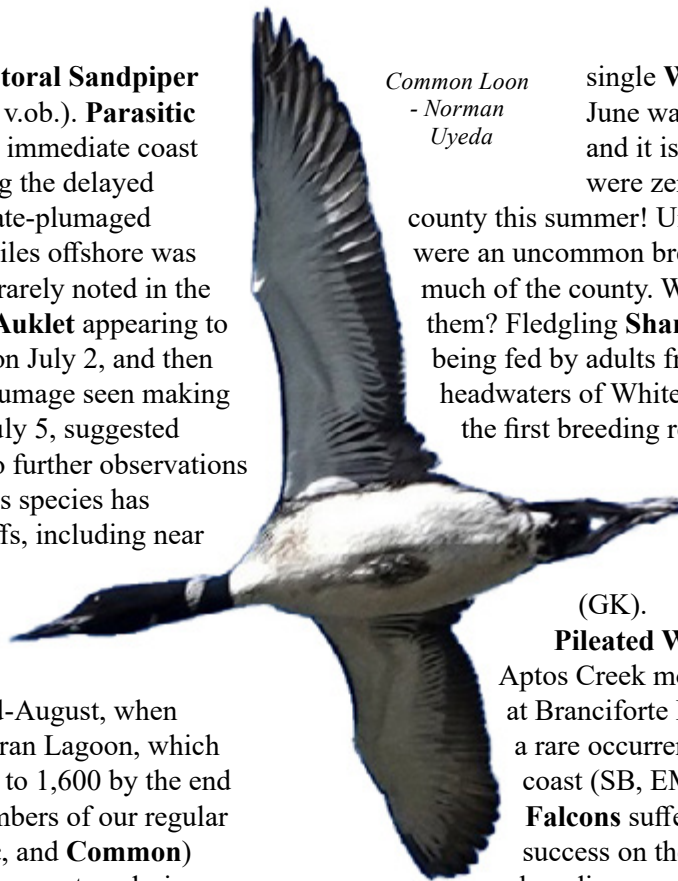
Only one **Baird's** and one **Pectoral Sandpiper** were reported this period (PB, GS, v.ob.). **Parasitic Jaegers** were largely absent on the immediate coast this summer, undoubtedly reflecting the delayed arrival of **Elegant Terns**. An alternate-plumaged adult **Pigeon Guillemot** seen 26 miles offshore was probably a fall migrant, which are rarely noted in the county (AR et al.). A **Rhinoceros Auklet** appearing to fly up to a cliff near Pelican Rock on July 2, and then an apparent pair in full breeding plumage seen making close passes by the same cliff on July 5, suggested breeding activity, but there were no further observations to support that suspicion (AR). This species has previously bred on north coast bluffs, including near Pelican Rock, as recently as 2011.

Arctic Terns were especially numerous offshore in August (v.ob.). **Elegant Terns** were rather scarce this summer until mid-August, when hundreds began amassing at Corcoran Lagoon, which turned into impressive flocks of up to 1,600 by the end of the month (LM, MF). Small numbers of our regular three loons (**Red-throated**, **Pacific**, and **Common**) can normally be seen in the nearshore waters during summer, but this year all three species were in above average numbers, especially **Common Loons** (v.ob.). The **Sooty Shearwater** show was fantastic this summer, with flocks reaching immense numbers and coming in close to shore on a regular basis through much of August. Focused counts during what seemed to be the peak of their presence yielded 173,500 streaming by Black Point

on August 12, and then 267,425 from the same location on August 13 (AR).

Only three sightings of

From Left:
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Alex Rinkert
Constance Vigno
Joshua Stacy

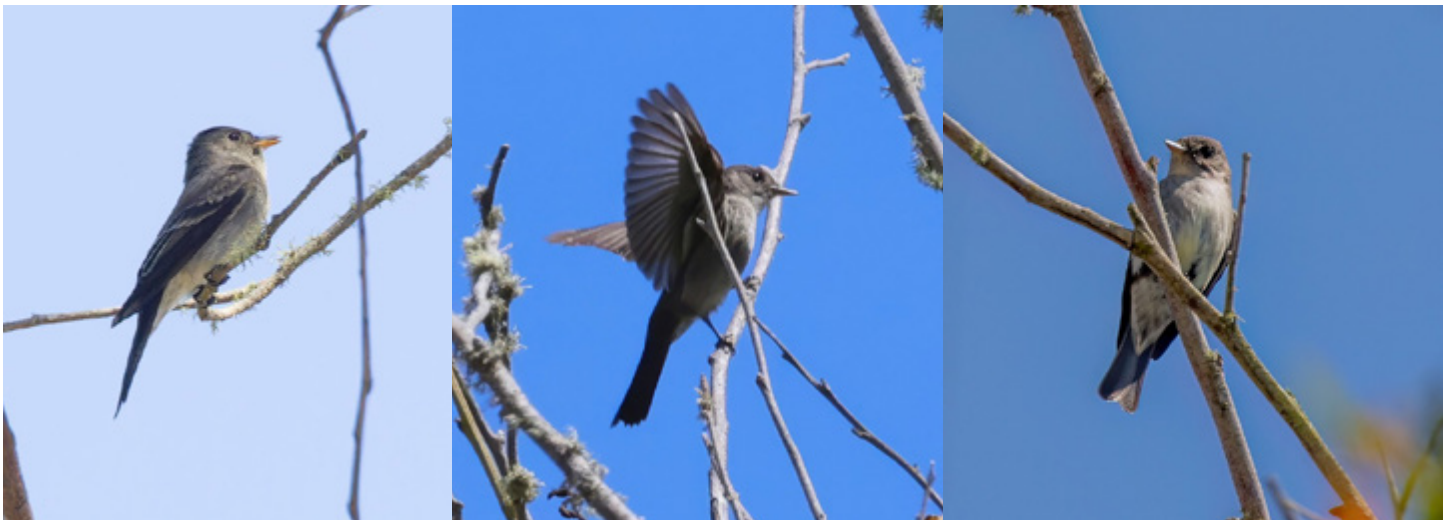


Common Loon
 - Norman Uyeda

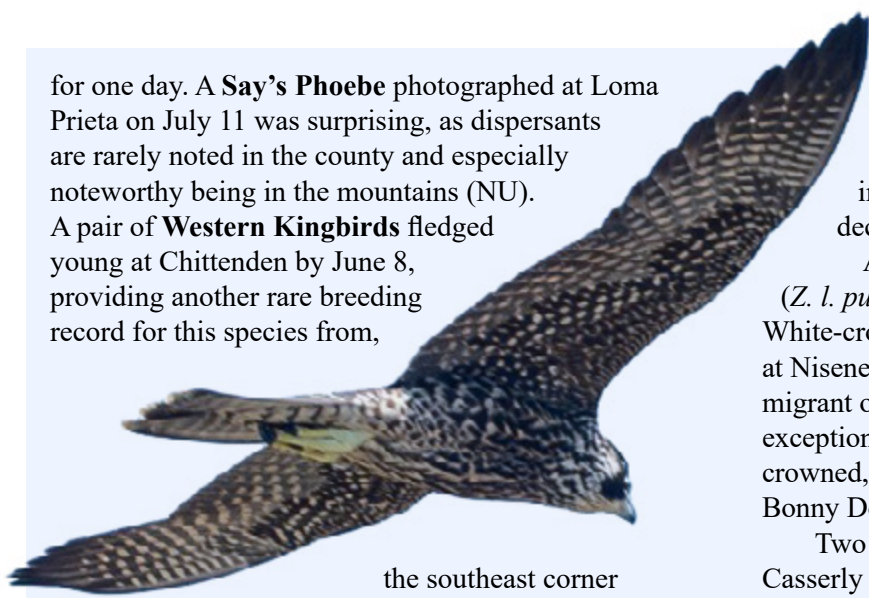
single **White-tailed Kites** in June was shockingly few (v.ob.), and it is possible that there were zero breeding pairs in the county this summer! Until just recently, they were an uncommon breeder and resident across much of the county. What has happened to them? Fledgling **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were being fed by adults from July 9–15 in the headwaters of Whitehouse Creek, which was the first breeding record for that watershed (AR). The **Bald Eagle** pair nesting in the Watsonville sloughs fledged one chick in June (GK).

Pileated Woodpeckers near the Aptos Creek mouth on August 15 and at Branciforte Dip on August 19 were a rare occurrence on the mid-county coast (SB, EMK, MMK). **Peregrine Falcons** suffered poor reproductive success on the north coast this breeding season, perhaps due to avian flu, which is strongly suspected of affecting them elsewhere in their range (SM, BL). A **Prairie Falcon** flew past Younger Lagoon on August 11 (AR).

An **Eastern Wood-Pewee** singing at Cement Plant Road near Davenport on June 29 was the first record for the county (GS, v.ob.). This bird was part of a surprising wave of seven Eastern Wood-Pewees reported in California between June 5–29; prior to this summer, there were only nineteen accepted records of this species in the state. Unfortunately, the bird in Santa Cruz only remained



for one day. A **Say's Phoebe** photographed at Loma Prieta on July 11 was surprising, as dispersants are rarely noted in the county and especially noteworthy being in the mountains (NU). A pair of **Western Kingbirds** fledged young at Chittenden by June 8, providing another rare breeding record for this species from,



the southeast corner of the county (NU).

A **Red-eyed Vireo** singing at Corralitos Lagoon and Scott County Park from August 16–20 was probably the most widely seen of all the previous records of this species in the county (GK, v.ob.). **Purple Martin** fledglings seen at Santa Rosalia Mountain from July 16–23 suggested they bred there this year (AR); they last bred in that region of the county in 2001. Other noteworthy news about martins this summer includes five active nests found at the Wilder Ranch colony (AR) and a total of two nests that successfully fledged young at Ponderosa Lodge (BS). Four **Cedar Waxwings** flying over DeAnza Mobile Home Park on August 10 were one of the earliest fall arrivals on record in the county (the earliest is August 2) (AR).



Red Crossbills were reported in small numbers in both the lowlands and the mountains in June, with some identified as type 2 and type 4 (ST, RW, DM, MM, AR). Up to six **Lawrence's Goldfinches** were found at Sunset State Beach beginning June 6 (CH, v.ob.), and a nest was located

on June 15 (EMK, MMK). This species was first noted breeding at Sunset State Beach in the 1950s and since then it has bred there irregularly, but more frequently within the past decade.

A "**Puget Sound**" **White-crowned Sparrow** (*Z. l. pugetensis*)—the most common subspecies of White-crowned during fall and winter—photographed at Nisene Marks on June 5 was either a late spring migrant or summering individual (JT). In either case, it is exceptionally rare at that time of year. As with that White-crowned, a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** summering at Bonny Doon from May 16–July 13 was exceptional (BT).

Two **Yellow-breasted Chats** in the riparian along Casserly Creek at College Lake remained on an apparent territory between June 23–July 23, but no strong evidence of breeding was observed (GK, v.ob.). At least one and possibly two pairs of **Great-tailed Grackles** bred at Westlake Pond for the fourth consecutive year; breeding was confirmed by June 14 when three fledglings were seen (AF). A **Nashville Warbler** at Pinto Lake on August 31 was the only rare warbler found this period (MH, RL)!

A mostly yellow, young male **Summer Tanager** was at New Brighton State Beach on July 17 (KDV), while another young male with mostly red plumage was at Natural Bridges State Beach from August 9–29 (ST, v.ob.). An adult male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at upper Empire Grade on June 23 was in the minority of records that do not come from backyards with bird feeders (BT).

Elsewhere, an adult male was at a feeder near Scotts Valley on July 10–11 (KB), and another adult male visited a feeder in La Selva from July 25–29 along with a young male on August 30–31 (both CR). One of the

more interesting locations were **Scaly-breasted Munias** were found this summer was at Swanton Road near Big Creek



From top:
 Peregrine Falcon
 - Tom Hambleton
 Red-eyed Vireo
 - Scott Terrill
 Red-eyed Vireo
 - Tom Hambleton
 Lawrence's Goldfinch
 - Elias McKown

(GC); there is little precedent for them occurring on the north coast.



Cited Observers:

Scott Bentall, Phil Brown, Kevin Bryant, George Chrisman, Kathy DeVoy, Mary Farr, Alex Fischer, Craig Fosdick, Mark Haywood, Caleb Helsel, Bryan Kett, Gary Kittleson, Robert Long, Bruce Lyon, Stephanie Martin, Elias McKown, Matthew McKown, Max Miller, Dominik Mosur, Megan Mosur, Liam Murphy, Leo O'Neill, Alex Rinkert, Lola Ross, Chris Rummel, Hampus Sandberg, Brian Scanlon, Gary Strachan, Jared HJ Tan, Scott Terrill, Tim Thompson, Breck Tyler, Norman Uyeda, Randy Wardle. "v.ob." means various observers. **Please enter interesting observations into eBird or report them to Alex Rinkert at arinkert@gmail.com**

From top left counter-clockwise:

*Great-tailed Grackles
- Kumaran Arul*



*Summer Tanager
- Michael Bolte
Lawrence's Goldfinches
- Cindy Cummings*

*Summer Tanager
- Pete Solé*

*Yellow-breasted Chat
- Gary Martindale*



What Are We Looking For?

-by Steve Gerow

Originally published in Volume 57, Number 5: May/Aug 2013

One of the most frequent questions I hear from interested passers-by who see me staring into a willow patch, searching the coastal rocks, or apparently aimlessly scanning an area is, “What are you looking for?” Occasionally I'll have an easy answer, “Oh, there was a report of a White-eyed Vireo, a very rare bird in this area, and I'm trying to find it”, etc. More often, though, it is difficult to come up with a reply beyond “uh... birds...whatever I can find”, or something similar. Reflecting further on the question, though, it seems that we approach birding at various times with two basically different modes of focus.

Sometimes we are looking for something, and other times we are just looking—and listening. (For the purposes of this article I'll temporarily expand the definition of “looking” to include searching by sound as well as sight.) When we go out looking for something, there is a specific goal. Maybe we are searching for a reported rare bird or some species that is known to be at a that location, or perhaps it is getting close to the time for a certain migrant to arrive. There is a goal, a challenge, and we either find that goal or we don't—our quest either succeeds or fails. Sometimes there is a “compensation prize”, which occasionally is better than the original goal (like looking for a Tropical Kingbird and finding a Common Cuckoo instead). Usually, though, what we are “looking for” remains primary, and we either win or lose.

Liam Murphy's SCBC Bird Walk, Corcoran Lagoon 9-2-24 - Lisa Larson



*Nancy Collins & ? Natural Bridges
- Lisa Larson*



*Sorry - I am not sure! Also Natural Bridges
- Lisa Larson*



*Lisa Larson on a Dickissel, Swanton Farms
- Randy Wardle*

While I sometimes enjoy the challenge of a search, more of my birding seems to be of the second sort—I just go out looking. I go someplace, start noting what birds are around and what they are doing and let it go from there. Whether it be at one of my most regular birding spots, or some place that is completely unfamiliar, it is almost inevitable that birding with this approach will result in one or more interesting discoveries. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that even after many years of birding, I learn something almost every time I go out. Sometimes it will be a bird out of place or out of season. There are interesting variations on behavior and habitat usage. Not all birds of a given species look alike, and no books show all the variations, so there is much to be learned by studying what different individuals look like. And even familiar species that I have been hearing for years sometimes will make a sound that is unfamiliar. Many of our local species really have quite large “vocabularies”, far beyond what is stored in any set of recordings or described in any field guide. (I sometimes wonder if anyone has managed to catalogue all the sounds uttered by Bewick's Wrens.) Plus, those rarities do show up from time to time, just to keep it even more interesting. (And there are endless interesting discoveries to be found in the natural world beyond birds...but that's another article.)

One of the things that keeps birding interesting is that birds are particularly dynamic subjects for study. They fly, they move around with changing conditions, some migrate long distances, some wander irregularly. Beyond seasonal migrations and beyond movements searching for the best berry crop or source of seeds, there are also long term changes in where birds live and what they do there. Some species decline, some increase, some leave



From left, Margaret Perham, ?, Pete Solé, David Eckdahl at Natural Bridges looking at Hooded Warbler - Lisa Larson

an area, and others will move in. With these changes come new adaptations to the environmental conditions that they encounter.

Oak Titmice, for example, are a common and familiar bird throughout almost all of the city of Santa Cruz, and anyone who has just been birding here the last four or five years would likely conclude that this resident species has always been common here. Until around 2002 or so, though, they were rather uncommon and localized. Some were resident in some neighborhoods, mostly in the more inland parts of the city, but they were absent over wide areas. There were none in Natural Bridges, or Neary Lagoon, or many other places where they are now easy to find. Then a few showed up in some places where they hadn't been before. I found a couple of nests, not in oak trees but in cypresses (at Garfield Park and Lighthouse Field, places without oaks). Then there were nests in a box elder by Neary Lagoon and a large planted acacia on Errett Circle. Obviously these birds



Steve Gerow with Birders, Moore Creek Preserve

didn't read the chapters in the books about where they are supposed to nest. A few years later California Thrashers moved into some coastal lowland areas on the west side of Santa Cruz where they did not occur before. Nuttall's Woodpeckers now nest over a much larger area of Santa Cruz County than they did fifteen years ago, and Cooper's Hawks seem to be nesting more frequently in residential areas. Exactly when, where, and how these changes happen are rather unpredictable, and they have generally been discovered first, not by birders looking for them, but by those who are just looking.

Other species have declined and no longer nest in many areas where they were once regular. Yellow Warblers, for example, used to nest in many riparian areas in the county (and in the region in general), but now they are absent in many spots and scarce in others where they formerly occurred. Western Bluebirds declined dramatically, but the past few years their populations have been coming back. Some of the areas they are re-colonizing may be different in some ways than they used to be. All of these things raise various questions, lots of hows and whys and whethers, that may be answered with enough careful looking. (And remember that your observations are valuable, so don't forget to report the really interesting stuff on MBB. Also, eBird is a great way to keep complete lists of whatever you find each time you go birding and to keep notes on anything interesting or important.) This looking becomes a habit after a while and sometimes leads to surprising observations when one is not really, formally, birding. I remember a few years ago, right after a strong but brief rainstorm had ended, I decided to walk a few blocks to a corner market near where I lived at the time. I did throw a pair of binoculars in my backpack (another habit), and on the way I noticed a lot of gulls circling, as they often do after a storm. One looked wrong, so I took out my binoculars and discovered that it was actually an adult Pomarine Jaeger, with the full "spoons" at the tail tip, circling with gulls over a residential neighborhood seven or eight blocks inland! One never knows...

*Steve Gerow teaching
Lisa Larson & Lisa Sheridan*



Sharon Hull dawn seawatch for CBC



Lisa Larson's SCBC Bird Walk at Brookwood Dr. SE DeLaveaga





**WELCOME
TO OUR NEW
EDITOR,
DEBBIE
DIERSCH!**

Growing up in the Pennsylvania countryside established Debbie's curiosity and love of nature from an early age. She was fortunate to be introduced to bird watching by a coworker when she moved to the Santa Clara Valley in the late 1970's. Decades later after moving to Aptos, she joined the Santa Cruz Bird Club, volunteered with Watsonville Wetlands Watch and the Monterey Bay Birding Festival, and took bird watching classes all of which significantly increased her awareness of the birds that abound here. She never tires of watching bird behavior and looks forward to every opportunity to learn and understand more about them.

**WELCOME TO OUR
NEW MEMBERSHIP
DIRECTOR,
BOB MEADS!**



Bob Meads has lived in Santa Cruz for 10 years, previously in Santa Clara County. He is still working as a Technical Director at small MicroChip company in Sunnyvale, but will be retiring soon. He started birding many years ago as a teenager, but was dormant until about 5 years ago. He feels very lucky to be in Santa Cruz with its biodiversity.

A "keen but average birder", Bob will have more time in the future to able to learn more about our local birds. His family cares passionately about the environment, and joining the Santa Cruz Bird Club Board gives him the opportunity to make a contribution.

*Top: Common Merganser
Red-winged Blackbird
- Lisa Larson*

Submission to the

ALBATROSS



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)

Guidelines



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
FEB 1st

Great Egret
- Parham Pourahmad



*Extended Family
by Tony Britton*

*Ancient stand of towering Redwoods.
Quiet observers. Complex. Undefeated.*

*Canopy crowns cradle weary sunbeams.
Below, carpets of Sorrel spread like rumors.*

*I stand before unparalleled beauty.
I stand before extended family.*

*This gracious place where exhausted
minds come to rest in the presence of gentle giants.*

*Silent lessons in serenity and patience are imparted.
Emotional. Restorative.*

*Life plays out on the grandest stage.
Flying squirrels and Leopard Lilies.*

*Avian acrobats and flower hopping honey bees
dance to private melodies.*

*Nature proceeds without consultation.
It knows its way. It always has.*

MARIA AMORETTE KLOS

Maria Amorette Klos is an artist and scientific illustrator living in Santa Cruz, California. She illustrates all things nature, and has a special interest in creating visuals that merge art with scientific information in support of environmental conservation efforts. Maria's commitment to merging art and science is showcased through the projects she's completed since graduating from the Science Illustration Master's Certificate program at **California State University (CSUMB)** in 2022. After graduating, Maria spent one year as the resident Bartels Scientific Illustrator at the **Cornell Lab of Ornithology**. Here, she undertook a multifaceted array of projects, including an installation piece, editorial illustrations for **Living Bird** magazine, illustrations to support Bird Academy courses, and figures and graphics for scientific papers. Since then, Maria has worked on freelance projects including a series of eight illustrations for a feature article in the May 2024 edition of **Scientific American**, exploring the evolution of bird feathers. During the summer, Maria collaborated with **Point Blue Conservation Science** to create an informational graphic depicting the fragile dune ecosystem and the federally threatened Western Snowy Plovers nesting in these dunes along the Monterey Coast. Her illustrations will be used to support and communicate ongoing conservation and restoration efforts of the dunes. Maria returned to CSUMB this Fall as an instructor for the Science Illustration program. She looks forward to continuing freelancing on the side and using her art to support important conservation work and to educate and inspire the public.



Website: makillustration.com
Instagram: [makillustration](https://www.instagram.com/makillustration)
Email: maklosillustration@gmail.com



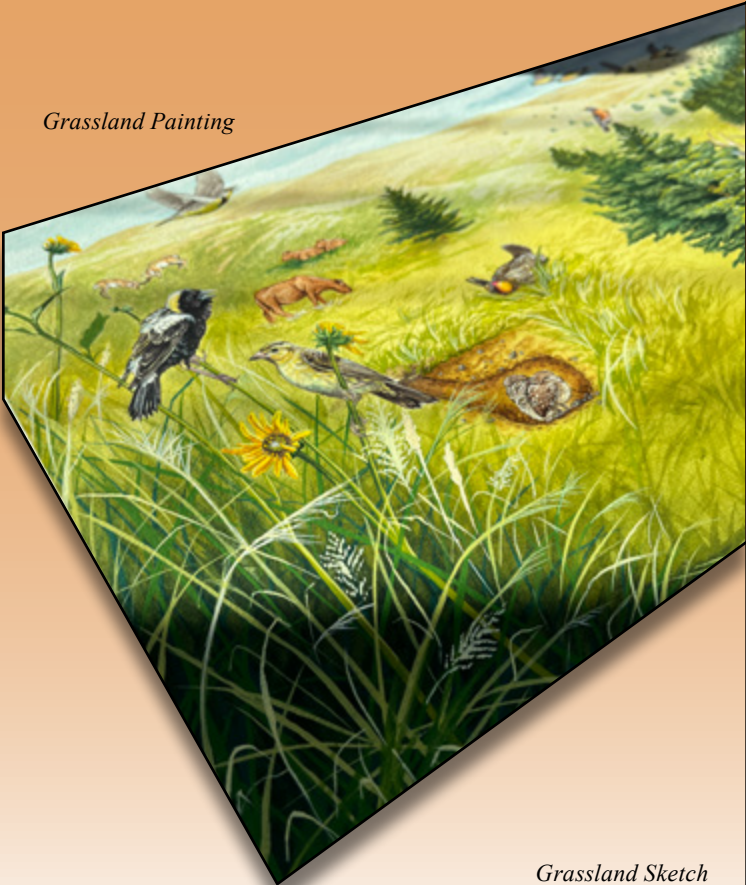
Counter-clockwise from top:
Snowy Plover nest with chicks
Downy Woodpecker and chick development
Atlantic Puffins



Golden-winged Warbler



Northern Flicker Wing



Grassland Painting



Grassland Sketch

Birder's Notebook cont'd

Black Skimmer



MARIA
AMORETTE
KLOS



European Starling

Bewick's Wren, Steller's Jay



*Common Yellowthroat, male and female
and Monarch Butterflies*



Barn Owl

Website: makillustration.com
Instagram: makillustration
Email: maklosillustration@gmail.com



*From left in sketch:
Anna's Hummingbird
Bullock's Oriole
Red-breasted Nuthatch*

Varied Thrush and Wood Thrush



Baltimore Oriole

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Karyn Skemp	Sep 2024
Dean Cutter	Sep 2024
Steve Ostrov	Sep 2024
Stephen Ely	Sep 2024
Lorrie Klosterman	Sep 2024
Kimberly Woodland	Sep 2024
Karen Casto	Sep 2024
Erin Nelson-Serrano	Oct 2024
Sam Ross	Oct 2024
Sharon Hardy	Oct 2024
Michelle Tomasko	Oct 2024



Chipping Sparrow - Arthur Macmillan

RECENT SCBC DONOR

Sue Dumler

Thank you!



*Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Michael Bolte*



*Red-tailed Hawk
David Lewit*

DEADLINE

**Submissions for the
MAR/MAY
Spring Issue**



FEB 1, 2025

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

Cooper's Hawk - Parham Pourahmad

SCBC OFFICERS

President

Lisa Sheridan:
trotrider@aol.com

Bird Records Keeper

Alex Rinkert
arinkert@gmail.com

Field Trips

Nick Levendosky
n.levendosky@gmail.com

Treasurer

Stephanie Singer
singersa@aol.com

Secretary

Larry Corridon
larry961357@sbcglobal.net

Editor

Lisa Fay Larson
sclubeditor@gmail.com

Webmaster

Phil Brown
pdpbrown@gmail.com

Program Director

Barbara Banfield
banfield@rattlebrain.com

Outreach Director

Ally Romanow
allyn.romanow@gmail.com

Conservation Director

Jane Orbuch
jorbuch@comcast.net

Membership Director

Brian Schnack
theschnack@gmail.com

Hospitality Director

Ann Chandler
annchandler6@gmail.com

Historian

Elisabeth Foster
elisabethif@gmail.com

Oak Titmouse - Lisa Larson

PARTING SHOT:

"Pssst - I Love You"

BRANDT'S CORMORANTS

- TONY BRITTON

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



Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club

Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club
Enjoy walks in and around Santa Cruz County,
a club pelagic trip, summer picnic, meetings
Sept-May featuring informative, illustrated
talks on wild birds and related topics,
and our newsletter, *Albatross*.

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

To pay with PayPal:

santacruzbirdclub.org/join-or-renew-online

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

Song Sparrow - Michael Bolte