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Albatross
PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

Santa Cruz Bird Club Newsletter
Vol. 69 No. 3 March 2025

Welcome to the new Albatross! We are trying out an eNewsletter format that can be viewed directly from your email on a computer or mobile device. We hope you like it and welcome your feedback and recommendations.

The Gray-crowned Rosy-finches of St. Paul Island

Presentation by Dr. Bruce Lyon on March 27th

Please join us at our next SCBC Bird Club meeting when Dr. Bruce Lyon presents a fascinating look into his work this past summer on St. Paul Island, Alaska.

Saint Paul Island, one of the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea, is famous among birders for both its rich seabird diversity and the incredible number of rare vagrants that show up from Asia. So of course, I went there to study a resident songbird! I will start by introducing the island, its people and history and then describe the results of our ongoing research on the gray-crowned rosy-finches of St. Paul. Rosy finches remain one of the most poorly studied group of birds in North America due to their remote alpine breeding habitat and inaccessible nests on high cliffs. On St. Paul Island, however, the birds are abundant, tame and even nest on human structures—and at double the body size of mainland finches they are an example of an island giant. We lucked upon an amazing study population where we can easily color band large numbers of finches breeding in a large nesting colony. I will discuss what we have learned so far from the banding and behavioral studies. I will then wrap up by briefly highlighting the other breeding birds of St. Paul and some of the incredible vagrants that show up from Asia.

Date: Thursday, March 27, 2025
Time: 7 PM
Place: Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History
1305 East Cliff Drive
Santa Cruz, CA

About Dr. Bruce Lyon: Dr. Bruce Lyon is a Professor of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology in the Physical & Biological Sciences Division of the University of California Santa Cruz. He seeks to understand the ecological and evolutionary basis of reproductive strategies and social behavior in animals, particularly reproductive parasitism, parental care and mating systems.

Join Us For March Field Trips

Members, family and friends are encouraged to join us for any of the following free field trips. Please register early for those that require it.

March 3, 2025 - Zayante Trail to Roaring Camp - 8:30 to 11:30 am
We will visit the Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park along the Zayante Creek Trail, then past the meadow, to the ponds at Roaring Camp, and back. Leader: Paul Miller

March 4, 2025 – Wilder Ranch State Park – 8am to11 am
The varied habitats of this park hold a good variety of birds and other wildlife. We will check along the coast for returning loons, grebes, and scoters. Expect a few miles of mostly easy walking. Leader: Nick Levendosky.

March 6, 2025 - East Glenwood Preserve - 8:30 to 11 am
This will be an easy 2-ish mile loop through the grasslands and oak woodland of the preserve with a stop at the pond. No bathrooms available. Leader: Paul Miller

March 8, 2025 – Antonelli Pond – 8am to 11am
Beginning bird walk. We'll check the immediate pond area and maybe stray toward either the Homeless Garden Project or Natural Bridges depending on time and circumstances. Leader Elisabeth Foster.

March 10, 2025 - Quail Hollow - 8:30 to 11 am
Quail Hollow Ranch County Park 800 Quail Hollow Rd, Felton, CA 95018
Meet at main lot, walk Discovery Loop as well as scoping the pond. White-breasted Nuthatch often heard and seen. We'll continue up the trail if time allows. Leader: Paul Miller

March 18, 2025 - Upper Struve Slough - 8:30 to 11:30 am
This is an easy 1 3/4 mile walk on gravel paths. We will walk along upper Struve Slough and check out the several new seasonal ponds/catch basins installed by the Watsonville Wetlands Watch. Leader: Larry Corridon

March 24, 2025 – Quail Hollow – 9am to 11am
Quail Hollow Ranch County Park, 800 Quail Hollow Road, Felton, CA, 95018. Meet at main lot and walk Discovery Loop. We often see and hear White-breasted Nuthatch.

Click **HERE** to stay current and for more details and directions.

Scarlet Tanager photo courtesy of Max Ferrero

Friends of the Norris Center for Natural History

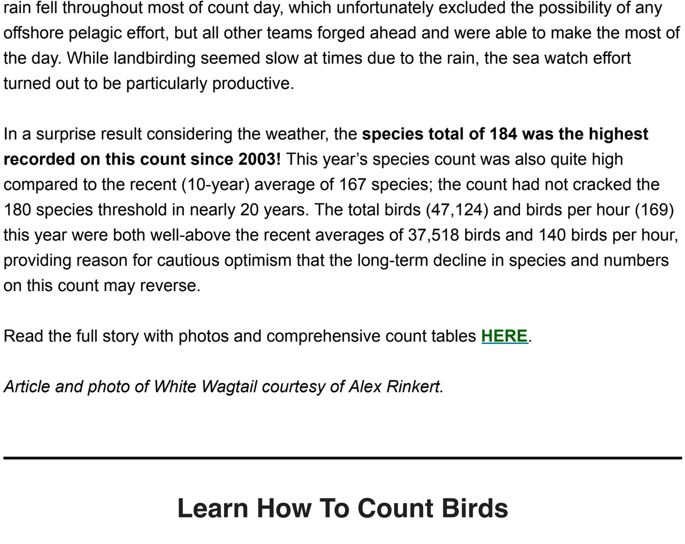
Preserving Our Natural World: Bird Specimen Collection Tour and Taxidermy Demonstration

Santa Cruz Bird Club members are invited to a free tour of **UC Santa Cruz's Norris Center** bird specimen collection and a demonstration of taxidermy techniques.

Saturday, April 5, 2025, 9:30 am - 11:30 am
Kenneth S. Norris Center for Natural HIstory, UC Santa Cruz campus
Register Here: ***Please register by Friday, March 21***

Natural history instructor Breck Tyler will talk about bird families, bird "topography," and the role of natural history collections in education and conservation. Maria Fernanda Viveros will demonstrate the way that bird "skins" are prepared and talk about how the Norris Center engages students and the community in its efforts to promote natural history education.

Learn more about UCSC's Norris Center for Natural History and the Friends of the Norris Center



The 68th Annual Santa Cruz Christmas Bird Count Final Results

The 68th Santa Cruz CBC was held on Saturday, December 21, 2024. Intermittent, light rain fell throughout most of count day, which unfortunately excluded the possibility of any offshore pelagic effort, but all other teams forged ahead and were able to make the most of the day. While landbirding seemed slow at times due to the rain, the sea watch effort turned out to be particularly productive.

In a surprise result considering the weather, the **species total of 184 was the highest recorded on this count since 2003!** This year's species count was also quite high compared to the recent (10-year) average of 167 species; the count had not cracked the 180 species threshold in nearly 20 years. The total birds (47,124) and birds per hour (169) this year were both well-above the recent averages of 37,518 birds and 140 birds per hour, providing reason for cautious optimism that the long-term decline in species and numbers on this count may reverse.

Read the full story with photos and comprehensive count tables **HERE**.

Article and photo of White Wagtail courtesy of Alex Rinkert.

Learn How To Count Birds

During the 2024 Christmas Bird Count I confessed to my co-counter, Jane Orbuch, that I wasn't very confident counting large numbers of birds. Jane pointed me to a support page on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website that has articles for how to count birds and why it is important. The articles are on the eBird Solution page, but you don't have to be a user of eBird to use these tips. Even if you are keeping your counts on paper these articles will come in handy.

According to the "How to Count Birds" introduction: "*By making your best estimate, you're providing valuable information on the abundance of birds around the world: not just where the species is, but also how many there are. This allows researchers to understand change in numbers over time, which is often one of the most important measures of how well a bird species is doing.*"

So if you've been hesitating to join the Christmas Bird Count because of lack of confidence on how to count then click **HERE** and read some of the tips then go and practice on your own or with a friend. We hope you'll consider joining us for the 2025 Christmas Bird Count when the time comes.

Contributed by Debbie Diersch and Jane Orbuch.

Bird Breeding Season is Here

From February 1 through September 15

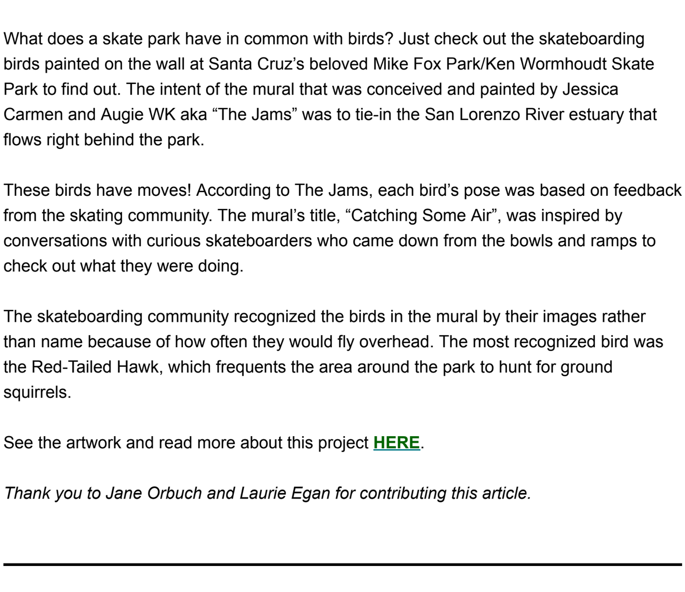
As we approach springtime, our hands start itching to rake, prune, sweep, and clip our gardens into shape, but did you know that your messy garden makes birds' hearts flutter with its abundant nest building supplies?

Here are some **tips** on how to help your feathered friends during breeding season:

- Hang a basket or suet container filled w/dog fur, human hair or straw in a tree, bush.
- Designate a spot under a bush or corner in your garden and toss twigs, stems, old leaves there.
- Robins, Swallows and Phoebes require a good amount of mud for their nests and they appreciate moist soil &/or a water source.
- By leaving some Spiderwebs you supply the essential nest material for Hummingbirds.
- You support the female birds by spreading boiled, crushed eggshells in your yard.
- Before you prune trees, bushes & clear ground area check carefully for well camouflaged nests such as:
- **Platform Nests -** relatively flat nests placed on the ground, in a tree, on the top of low vegetation.
- **Ground Nests** - build underneath bushes/shrubs with dense foliage.
- **Cavity Nests** - located in trees hallows, birdhouses, structure gaps.
- Watch & listen for the birds' "Back off!!" nest alarms ~ agitated birds flutter close to you, bomb-dive you, vocalize high pitch, rapid chatter/ruckus.

With your help resident and spring/summer migratory birds will have a better chance of a successful nesting season!

Special thanks to Jane Mio for providing the idea and content for this article.



Catching Some Air!

Skateboard Mural Features San Lorenzo River Birds

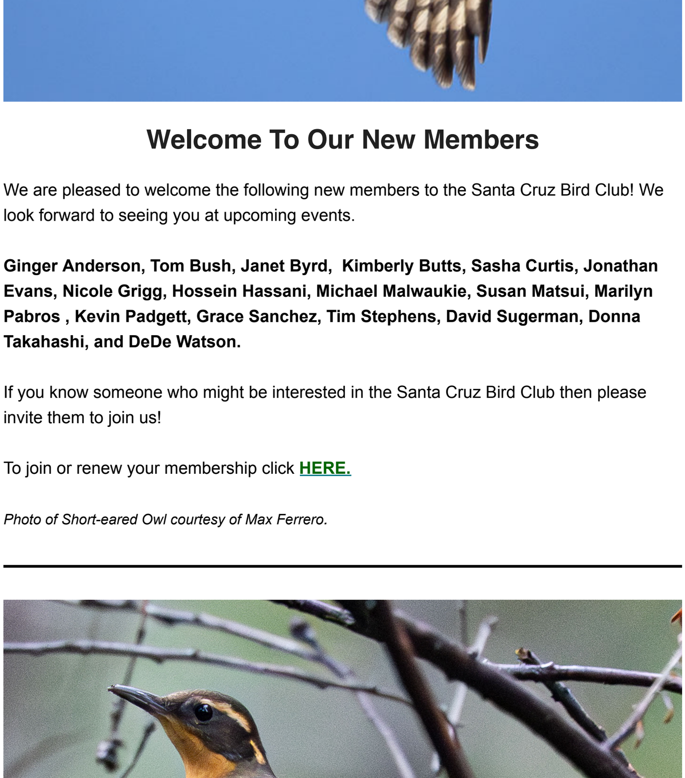
What does a skate park have in common with birds? Just check out the skateboarding birds painted on the wall at Santa Cruz's beloved Mike Fox Park/Ken Wormhoudt Skate Park to find out. The intent of the mural that was conceived and painted by Jessica Carmen and Augie WK aka "The Jams" was to tie-in the San Lorenzo River estuary that flows right behind the park.

These birds have moves! According to The Jams, each bird's pose was based on feedback from the skating community. The mural's title, "Catching Some Air", was inspired by conversations with curious skateboarders who came down from the bowls and ramps to check out what they were doing.

The skateboarding community recognized the birds in the mural by their images rather than name because of how often they would fly overhead. The most recognized bird was the Red-Tailed Hawk, which frequents the area around the park to hunt for ground squirrels.

See the artwork and read more about this project **HERE**.

Thank you to Jane Orbuch and Laurie Egan for contributing this article.



Welcome To Our New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the Santa Cruz Bird Club! We look forward to seeing you at upcoming events.

Ginger Anderson, Tom Bush, Janet Byrd, Kimberly Butts, Sasha Curtis, Jonathan Evans, Nicole Grigg, Hossein Hassani, Michael Malwaukie, Susan Matsui, Marilyn Pabros , Kevin Padgett, Grace Sanchez, Tim Stephens, David Sugerman, Donna Takahashi, and DeDe Watson.

If you know someone who might be interested in the Santa Cruz Bird Club then please invite them to join us!

To join or renew your membership click **HERE.**

Photo of Short-eared Owl courtesy of Max Ferrero.

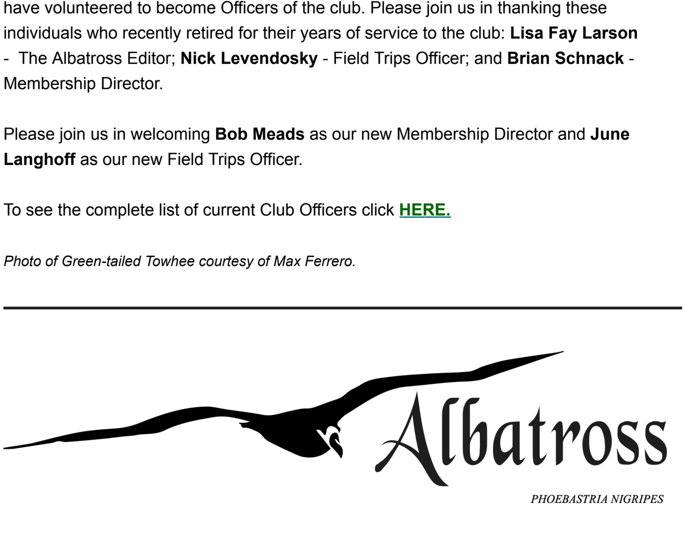
Thank You New Donors

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following new donors:

Robin Abu-Shumays, Jenny Anderson, Ann Chandler, Nancy Collins, Leonard Davis, Judith Donaldson, Susan Giddings, Julia Jackson, Barbara and James Kimball, Natasha Kowalski, Bobbie Mayer, Bill and Mary Farr Murphy, Samuel Rawlins, Kitty Stein, Robert Stephens, Mari Tustin, Claire Wilson, and Anonymous!

THANK YOU!

Photo of Varied Thrush courtesy of Max Ferrero.



SCBC Officers Update

Change is in the wind! There have been a few officers who have retired and new folks who have volunteered to become Officers of the club. Please join us in thanking these individuals who recently retired for their years of service to the club: **Lisa Fay Larson** - The Albatross Editor; **Nick Levendosky** - Field Trips Officer; and **Brian Schnack** - Membership Director.

Please join us in welcoming **Bob Meads** as our new Membership Director and **June Langhoff** as our new Field Trips Officer.

To see the complete list of current Club Officers click **HERE.**

Photo of Green-tailed Towhee courtesy of Max Ferrero.

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Want To Contribute To The Albatross?

We would love to receive your contributions to the Albatross. Articles, photos, illustrations are all welcome at any time. We also welcome comments and recommendations on what you would like to see covered in the Albatross going forward.

Please email scbirdclubeditor@gmail.com.

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