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Santa Cruz Bird Club Newsletter
Vol. 69 No. 7 July 2025

Welcome to The Albatross! A monthly eNewsletter that can be viewed directly in your email or on a computer or mobile device. You can also download a pdf version from our website. We hope that you enjoy it and encourage your feedback and recommendations.

CARE Park Birding Field Trip Report

On Saturday, June 8th, Alex Rinehart led a field trip for the Santa Cruz Bird Club to CARE Park Pajaro River Ponds Area and Riverwalk Treatment Center. He was attended by dozens of birding enthusiasts. Many attendees commented that they had never been to this location before and were surprised by what they saw. The focus of the day's outing was on nesting birds and in particular Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Alex noted that this was the first time ever in Santa Cruz County, and we were not disappointed!

Not long after starting down the trail, Alex alerted us to the presence of Yellow Warblers that he heard in the canopy. To our collective delight soon after hearing them he pointed out an adult feeding a fledgling in a tree not far from the trail! Although it was sometimes challenging to keep up with their flitting around in the trees, we were able to see and hear them again on several occasions during the walk.

This was just the beginning of a fruitful field trip as next on its agenda was the Yellow-headed Blackbird nesting! Alex pointed out a male and female in the tall grass and cattails. Many attendees commented that they had never been to this location before and were surprised by what they saw. The focus of the day's outing was on nesting birds and in particular Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Alex noted that this was the first time ever in Santa Cruz County, and we were not disappointed!

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Read the Full Article Here

Adult male Yellow Warbler feeding fledgling photo courtesy of Alex Rinehart

Member's Annual Steve Gerow Potluck Picnic Save the Date!

Join us for this fun annual event!

August 23, 2025 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
DeLavaga Park, 655 Branciforte Dr, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Members will receive an invitation with more information.

Pre-picnic bird walk

August 23, 2025 8:00 am - 10:30 am
DeLavaga Park (Park Way)

In addition to resident forest species (probably several types of woodpeckers, lots of Pygmy Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, etc.) summer residents will be present, including Olive-sided Flycatchers, Western Wood-Pewees, Swainson's Thrush, Warbling and Hutton's Vireos and Warblers, and others.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 am at the top of the hill at the north end of Park Way (the street that runs along the eastern boundary of DeLavaga Park. Street parking is limited in this area. There are a few parking spaces in a dirt lot by the park entrance, but these can be difficult for low-clearance vehicles. There is usually more on-street parking on Prospect Heights and nearby side streets.

Leader: Phil Brown

Upcoming July Field Trips

This month we are promoting birding field trips sponsored by other local organizations as well as the Santa Cruz Bird Club so please be sure to click on the link below each week to get the correct details related to the event.

July 3, 2025 - Henry Cowell State Park - 8 AM to 10 AM

Join the guides at Henry Cowell State Park to learn all about life histories, behaviors, and ecology of birds found in the park on this 1-mile walk. Bring binoculars and weather appropriate attire.

Directions: The address of the main unit of the park is Felton, 95018. The entrance to the main unit of the park is on Highway 9 about 3/4 mile south of the only intersection in Felton. A very large sign on Highway 9 reads "Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park" at the entrance road. The meeting place is in the main unit parking lot in front of the gift shop.

Get Details Here

July 9, 2025 - Pinto Lake County Park - 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM

161 Green Valley Road, Watsonville, CA, 95076

Pinto Lake has close to the south west end of Santa Cruz County in the Pajaro Valley. It is a small lake surrounded by a park. It is a stopover for migrant water birds on their way from the Central California Coast. There are trees surrounding the lake and we will be visiting the **County** Park that consists of 185 total acres of which 40 acres are water.

We should see and/or hear several species including Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, Acorn Woodpeckers, Brown Creepers, Swainson's Thrush, Wilson's Warblers, and many others. Possibly Osprey, and if we are very lucky, we'll hear and maybe see an elusive American Bittern.

Directions: Meet at 1:30 pm. Be sure to follow driving directions to 161 Green Valley Road, Watsonville, California. Once you get to the Pinto Lake Park, look for and the City Parks Drive to the entrance road on the right where we will gather. We will be walking approximately 1 mile on dirt trails that can be rough in some places so wear good walking shoes and bring a walking stick if you think you'll need it. This walk will be leisurely so that we can stop and enjoy listening and watching the birds in their element.

Leads: Debbie Denzler

Get Details Here

July 13, 2025 - Pinto Lake City Park - 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM

161 Green Valley Road, Watsonville, CA 95076

Join the Central Coast Birding Collective for a Sunday Funday Big 36 & Brunch at Pinto Lake City Park in Watsonville. We look forward to spending the morning with good company, good eats, and good birds!

Sponsored by the Central Coast Birding Collective

Get Details Here

July 27, 2025 - Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center – 10 AM

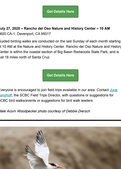
3600 CA-1, Davenport CA 95017

Guided birding walks are conducted on the last Sunday of each month starting at 10 AM. Meet at the Interpretive Center. Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center is within the coastal section of Big Basin Redwoods State Park, and is just 16 miles north of Santa Cruz.

Get Details Here

Everyone is encouraged to join field trips available in our area. Contact Jorie Lanyon@ the SCBC Field Trips Director, with questions or suggestions for SCBC bird walkers/events or suggestions for bird walk leaders.

Male Acorn Woodpecker photo courtesy of Debbie Denzler



Be On The Lookout for These Birds In July

By Randy Wardle

Watch for Lesser and Black Terns and Western Wood-pewees in area grasslands this month. Also keep an eye out for post-breeding dispersants such as Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Western Tanagers, Lazuli Buntings, Bullock's Orioles, and many others that may turn up in areas where they do not breed. Continue to watch for Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Pinto Lake, Elkhorn Slough National Ocean Ecological Reserve and Watsonville, and also for Black Swifts on the north coast at Moore Creek Preserve, Wilder Ranch and Sand Hill Bluff.

Sooty Shearwaters become more numerous as do Heermann's Gulls, Brown Pelicans, and Elegant Terns. Toward the end of the month be sure to start watching for Least and Common Terns at creek and river mouths in the county.

Randy's article, archived from previous year's, provides an informal list of birds that are leaving and those arriving as well as the most likely places to see them.

Read the Full Article Here

Elegant Tern photo courtesy of SCBC website

Native Animal Rescue Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Brown Pelican Crisis Update

Last year there was a crisis involving Brown Pelicans in which primarily juveniles aged a year or older were starving to death. Between April 10th and June 4th of 2024 the Native Animal Rescue (NAR) cared for 228 Brown Pelicans to help save them from starvation. The Santa Cruz Bird Club made a donation to support NAR during this crisis.

The year NAR is dealing with starving Pelicans again. The birds affected are this year's hatchlings. It is suspected that this crisis is due to domoic acid poisoning the parent Pelicans that then caused the hatchlings to be left alone in the nest. The hatchlings are now being cared for and are healthy and are eating on their own. As of June 16, 2025, NAR has received 90 Pelicans.

Although not as severe as last year, there are still many Pelicans and other at risk wildlife to support. SCBC will continue our support of this vital organization and we encourage your support if you are able.

Learn More About NAR

Juvenile Brown Pelican photo courtesy of Pete Sok

Good News For Burrowing Owls
in Santa Cruz County

Charismatic and adorable, burrowing owls are always a delight to see. Unfortunately, these opportunistic and burrowing owls have also frequent. The sobering truth about burrowing owls is that they're increasingly rare in our region. Back in 1979, California designated them a Bird Species of Special Concern, but by the late 1980s about 600 burrowing owls frequented 250 sites in California. Today, there are only 100 to 150 owls at 25 sites, and they continue, a rapidly growing human population caused urban areas to expand and suitable grassland habitat to shrink.

Ashley Jordan of Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) is excited to share that they are sewing encouraging results for burrowing owl conservation in their preserves. In the last two years, POST has installed 20 artificial nests, reinstituted 12 breeding pairs in 2022 and 2024, with an additional 10 pairs reintroduced this year.

While other burrowing owl sites in Santa Clara County are experiencing population declines due to lack of habitat management, predator control, and human disturbance, POST's preserves are bucking the trend and are thriving environment. Along with 70+ other conservation organizations, POST has also signed a statewide petition to list burrowing owls as threatened or endangered. The petition is currently under review, with a decision expected from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in fall of this year. They will then forward their recommendations and continuing their efforts to protect this special native bird species.

About POST: Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) protects open space on the Peninsula and in the South Bay for the benefit of all. Since its founding in 1977, POST has been responsible for saving more than 55,000 acres as permanently protected land in San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties.

Learn More About Burrowing Owls

Burrowing Owl parent and chicks photo courtesy of POST

Important Club Announcements

First Announcement - The Santa Cruz Bird Club monthly meetings and presentations will take a hiatus for the months of June, July, and August. Meetings will return on the first Thursday of the month with the September meeting. We will have more information about the next meeting presentation in the September Albatross.

Second Announcement - Welcome New Members! We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the Santa Cruz Bird Club!

Pamela King, Kevin Bryant, Catherine Carlstrom, Joan Elliott, Frank Grasso, Katherine Hall, Patricia McGuckin, Suzy Stevens

Third Announcement - It is easy to join as a new member or renew your membership. Current dues are as follows:

Individual membership: $25.00 per year
Family membership: $30.00 per year
Life membership: $450.00 one time fee

Join or Renew Your Membership Here

Fourth Announcement—Thank you Donors! We are grateful to the following donors!

Ann Chandler and Judith Donaldson

THANK YOU!

Common Merganser Chick photo courtesy of Heather Thein

Show Us Your Nests

It's the nesting season and many of us have nesting birds at our homes or have seen them at places we've visited. We would love to have you share what you've seen. Send photos and/or stories of your nests, chicks, fledglings, and we'll put them together into a document to share with our readers in the next issue of The Albatross. Let us know what kind of birds nest in it if you know, but don't worry if you don't know.

For tips on finding nests, check out this article published by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, but be sure to use ethical birding practices and not disturb the nests or nestlings.

Send your photos and stories to mailto:scbcnestcards@gmail.com

Dark-eyed Junco nest photo courtesy of Debbie Denzler

Want To Contribute Content To The Albatross?

We would love to share your articles, photos and illustrations. We also welcome comments and recommendations on what you would like to see covered in the Albatross going forward.

Please send marlin cosmo@gmail.com

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