



Albatross

PHOEBASTRIA NIGRIPES

BROWN PELICANS— LONG MAY YOU FLY!

by Stephen Suddjian, Age 8

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Member News

No longer are Brown Pelicans on the Endangered Species list! Yay! As a young boy I have already had some very interesting experiences with pelicans. One evening last August [2008], my family and I went to the bluffs above Capitola Beach. Many pelicans were out there, and suddenly a huge flock came right over our heads! It seemed to be an endless line of pelicans. My mother and brothers—who are not especially interested in birds—thought it was sort of interesting, but my father and I thought it was spectacular!

As we walked down to Capitola Wharf, I looked all around me, and pelicans were diving and flying everywhere! There must have been at least 200 to 300 just diving near the wharf. The sounds of splashing from their dives were coming from every direction. It was almost scary but very entertaining and exciting.

I first heard the good news about pelicans being taken off the Endangered Species list from my teacher at Main Street School, Mr. Takano. I was reading a book in my classroom about pelicans. Mr. Takano called me over and asked me, “Have you heard anything about pelicans lately?” Then I asked him if he meant the book I had been reading. He said, “No. In the newspaper I saw that Brown Pelicans were no longer on the Endangered Species list.”

I am glad that the pelicans were saved because I’d hate to imagine what it would be like if those humongous birds were not in our area. All we’d have is those quarter-of-a-pelican-sized gulls. I always look forward to seeing the great flocks of pelicans diving and splashing all over the place. It is one of the many reasons that I love summer...besides school being over.

*Some of the many hundreds
of Brown Pelicans that came to
Capitola in August 2008.
Photo by David Suddjian*



Brown Pelicans De-listed

Here are some interesting sections from the Department of Interior press release, November 11, 2009.

The brown pelican was first declared endangered in 1970 under the Endangered Species Preservation Act, a precursor to the current Endangered Species Act. Since then, thanks to a ban on DDT and efforts by states, conservation organizations, private citizens and many other partners, the bird has recovered.

Past efforts to protect the brown pelican actually led to the birth of the National Wildlife Refuge System more than a century ago in central Florida. German immigrant Paul Kroegel, appalled by the indiscriminate slaughter of pelicans for their feathers, approached President Theodore Roosevelt. This led Roosevelt to create the first National Wildlife Refuge at Pelican Island in 1903, when Kroegel was named the first refuge manager. Today, the system has grown to 550 national wildlife refuges, many of which have played key roles in the recovery of the brown pelican.

With removal of the brown pelican from the list of threatened and endangered species, federal agencies will no longer be required to consult with the Service to ensure any action they authorize, fund, or carry out will not harm the species. However, additional federal laws, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act, will continue to protect the brown pelican, its nests and its eggs.

The Service can relist the brown pelican if future monitoring or other information shows it is necessary to prevent a significant risk to the brown pelican.

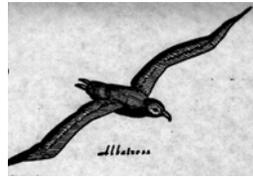
The entire press release can be seen here:

www.doi.gov/news/09_News_Releases/111109.html



Brown Pelican adult

Photo by Jeff Poklen



Brown Pelican notes from the Albatross archives

After reading that the Brown Pelican was declared endangered way back in 1970, I decided to look into the editor's archive—a large file box with issues of the Albatross going back to the 1960s—to see what the SCBC was saying about it then. In a quick scan of issues from 1969-1975, I didn't find a mention of the official declaration, but there were many allusions to declining bird populations and problems caused by DDT in the environment. Here are a few selections:

May-June 1969

Heavy concentrations of DDT emptying from rivers in farming areas of California are causing near disastrous nesting failures among brown pelicans.

October-November 1970

...not only the Pelican, but other coastal seabirds face extinction as a direct result of pollution of the ocean by DDT and other chlorinated hydrocarbons. Ingestion of those chemicals... leads to production of thin-shelled eggs, which cannot hatch.

Quoting an article in the Los Angeles Times:

We are not talking here only about the survival of the Pelican. We are talking literally about our own survival. We think that is a matter of some urgency.

January-February 1971

From a review of a photographic exhibit called The Oceans are Dying:

There is a picture of the ONLY baby brown pelican hatched on the entire west coastline during the past year!

The numbers for Brown Pelicans from the Christmas Bird Counts published in the Albatross are telling—13 in 1969, 3 in 1970, 4 in 1974. (Counts were not reported every year in the newsletter.)

Fast-forward to the present: As of the 2008 CBC, the average count of Brown Pelicans over the past 10 years was 309.6. I have to join Stephen Suddjian in saying, "Yay!"

~Judy Donaldson, Editor

Events Calendar

January - February 2010

Check the online SCBC Calendar of Events for any recent updates.

<http://www.santacruzbirdclub.org>

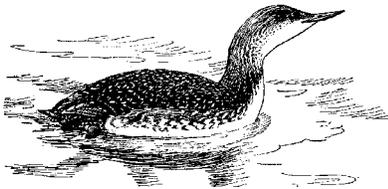


Sunday, January 3 Beginning Bird Walk at Natural Bridges

Our local birding hotspot is a great place to get an introduction to the birds of Santa Cruz County.

Directions: Meet at 8:30 AM at the Delaware Ave. entrance to Natural Bridges.

Leader: Matthew Strussis-Timmer, MStrusisTimmer@gmail.com



Red-throated
Loon



Wednesday, January 6 Mid-County Coast: Gulls and More

We'll hop and skip to a handful of spots along the coast from Aptos to Santa Cruz to scrutinize the gulls (Thayer's likely) and search for other birds of the shoreline and ocean, such as loons, grebes and shorebirds of the sandy beach and rocky shore. Half day trip, or slightly longer as weather and interest dictates. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at Rio Del Mar SB. From Highway 1, take Rio Del Mar Blvd toward the coast, all the way to its ending at the beach. We may stop at Capitola Beach with metered parking, so bring some quarters.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Saturday, 9 January South County Birding

This is a full day trip, and we will visit a variety of possible locations throughout the Pajaro Valley. Join us for as long as you can. The exact itinerary will be decided the day of the trip, based on location recommendations and desires of participants, local reports on MBB listserve, and weather. Possible locations include Hwy 129—out toward the county line, Pinto Lake, Merk Lake (pond), areas along Corralitos Creek, the slough trail system, Harkins Slough (Buena Vista Road), Watsonville Slough on out to Pajaro River mouth. We'll see just how much variety we can find of wintering and resident waterbirds and landbirds and may spend some time looking at gulls at the Pajaro River mouth.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 AM at the Aptos Wells Fargo Bank at the intersection of State Park Drive and Soquel Drive. Please call leader to obtain mobile number should a later meeting time and location be desired.

Leader: Eric Feuss, (831) 477-0280

Do you eBird?

Learn all about eBird and how to use it at the February 25 SCBC meeting. See the calendar listing for details.

Santa Cruz Bird Club programs and field trips are open to the public—non-members are welcome. People needing rides to field trip sites are advised to contact field trip leaders. Carpooling is encouraged. Dress in layers and bring liquids. Lunches are optional on half-day trips. Heavy rain cancels.

Field trips can pose hazards. Reluctantly, we have decided we must publish and implement this policy:

The Santa Cruz Bird Club or its field trip leaders cannot be responsible for damage, injury, or loss incurred by the acts or omissions of any member or visitor during Club field trips or during commutes to or from them.

Field trip participants must release the Club from any liability for such damage, injury, or loss.

Ordinarily, field trip participants sign a waiver releasing the Club from such liability, but in the absence of such a signed waiver, participation on a Club field trip in itself implies consent to and agreement with this waiver.



Wednesday, January 13
Late Afternoon for Gulls
at Rio Del Mar

We continue our explorations in the study of gull identification (worth 3 course credits). Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 2:45 PM at Rio Del Mar SB. From Highway 1, take Rio Del Mar Blvd toward the coast, all the way to its ending at the beach.
Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Friday, January 15
Natural Bridges & vicinity

There is almost always something interesting here.
Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the Delaware Ave. entrance to Natural Bridges State Beach.
Leader: Steve Gerow (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Sunday, January 17
Quail Hollow County Park

In the winter season, Sora and Wilson's Snipe are frequently found at the pond. Unusual sparrows may also appear in the surrounding grassland areas.
Directions: Meet in the Quail Hollow parking lot at 8:00 AM.
Leader: Alex Rinkert, arinkert12@comcast.net



White-tailed Kite



Wednesday, January 20
Wilder Ranch State Park

If weather is favorable, we'll trek a ways inland on a trail and also make the coastal loop on the Old Cove Landing Trail. Expect a few miles of easy walking. We'll seek a variety of birds of coastal fields, willows, beach, and rocky shore and hope for a nice variety of sparrows and raptors. Half day trip, but bring a snack. Rain cancels.
Directions: Meet for carpooling at 8:15 AM by the Homeless Garden at Shaffer Street, then at 8:30 AM at the main Wilder Ranch parking lot. \$8-10 day use fee.
Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Thursday January 21
SCBC Meeting @7:30 pm
Speaker: Danielle Frechett

Topic: Birds eat fish? Tracking avian predation on juvenile salmonids in central California

In central California, coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) are endangered and steelhead (*O. mykiss*) are listed as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Until recently, the role of bird predation in limiting recovery of coho and steelhead in central California has been overlooked. The NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center uses Passive Integrated Transponders (PIT tags) to monitor population biology and marine survival of these species. Since 2006, PIT tags have been recovered on breeding sites of Western Gulls. Danielle will present preliminary results from these tagging and tracking studies, results of PIT tag recoveries from Año Nuevo and Southeast Farallon islands, and implications for local populations of salmonids

Location: Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History
 1305 East Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, CA



Coho fry

**SPECIAL
 COUNT**

January 22-24
(Friday-Sunday)
Grassland Bird Roundup

Please join the Santa Cruz Bird Club in an effort to estimate winter population sizes of our grassland dependent birds. You can help during the weekend of January 22-24 by birding in any public access grassland area in Santa Cruz County and submitting your sightings to the MBB listserv or to Scott Smithson at wscottsmithson@gmail.com.

Directions: Similar to Christmas bird counts, please submit location, total species list, and numbers of individuals of the following focal species: American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, White-tailed Kite, Loggerhead Shrike, Western Bluebird, and Western Meadowlark.

Leader: Scott Smithson,
 wscottsmithson@gmail.com



Saturday, January 23
North County Grasslands
Shrikes and Kites

As part of the Grassland Bird Roundup, please join Scott Smithson along Swanton Road to count our Santa Cruz County wintering grassland birds. During the morning, we will be tallying numbers of kestrels, harriers, kites, meadowlarks, and shrikes, but we'll also keep our eyes open for other wintering raptors, as well as make a few stops in the riparian zone and Monterey pines. 8:00 AM-2:00 PM.

Directions: Meet at Coffeetopia on Mission Street at 8:00 AM.

Leader: Scott Smithson, wscottsmithson@gmail.com



Friday, January 29
Schwan Lake and vicinity

The woodlands, willows, and scrub in the northern portion of Twin Lakes State Beach often have a nice variety of passerines, and we'll also check the lake for any interesting waterbirds.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot of the Simpkins Family Swim Center, 979 17th Avenue.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Wednesday, February 3
Pajaro Valley

We'll visit a productive area, seeking a variety of ducks and other waterbirds, raptors and other land-birds, searching wetlands, pine groves, coastal scrub and the coastline. Stops will include Struve Slough, Sunset State Beach, and more. If weather is favorable we'll continue into the afternoon, so bring snacks and/or lunch. Rain cancels.

Directions: Gather at 8:00 AM in the Red Roof Inn parking lot in Watsonville, just off West Beach Road, immediately east of Lee Road. From there the first planned stop is Struve Slough near the warehouses off Lee Road (but plans might change). Sunset SB will have an \$8-10 day use fee.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com

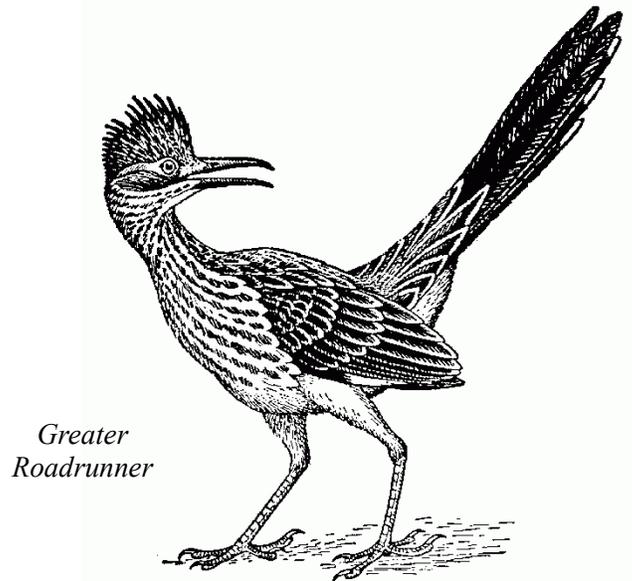


Saturday, February 6
Panoche Valley

Our annual trip to one of the pristine birding destinations in the state, first birded by departed SCBC members Carolyn Fredrickson and Steve Allison. We'll traverse through oak woodland and open grassland via back roads in search of a variety of California favorites. Targeted species include Phainopepla, Mountain Bluebird, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Bald and Golden Eagle; other possibilities include Mountain Plover, Lewis' Woodpecker, Vesper Sparrow, Greater Roadrunner, Long-eared Owl, and Chukar. This is a full day trip so bring lunch and a full tank of gas. Carpooling is strongly recommended due to limited parking on the narrow roads.

Directions: Meet the leader at 8:00 AM at the Paicines Store on Hwy 25, approx. 11 miles south of Hollister. People traveling from Santa Cruz who want to carpool should meet at Aptos Wells Fargo at 6:30 AM. The drive to Paicines will take about 1 hour 20 minutes.

Leader: Clay Kempf, (831) 761-8260



Greater Roadrunner



Sunday, February 7
Beginning Bird Walk
at Natural Bridges

Our local birding hotspot is a great place to get an introduction to the birds of Santa Cruz County.

Directions: Meet at 8:30 AM at the Delaware road entrance to Natural Bridges.

Leader: Kathy Kuyper, chswift@hotmail.com



Friday, February 12
San Lorenzo River

Winter in this area usually features a nice assortment of gulls, ducks, sparrows, and others, and occasionally the unexpected

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at San Lorenzo Park by the duck pond.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com



Saturday, February 13
Santa Cruz Seawatch

Are you looking to see some of the thousands of birds that live on the water like shearwaters, alcids, and even albatrosses but don't want to get on a boat? We'll explore the thrills and challenges and share tricks-of-the-trade in identifying birds over the ocean from shore. Let's see what birds we can find on the ocean.

Directions: Meet in front of Seymour Marine Discovery Center (at Terrace Point) on westside Santa Cruz at 8:00 AM, or at the front gate in case it is locked at that hour. Spotting scopes are highly recommended, but all are welcome regardless.

Leader: Rod Norden, (408) 656-4669, rod.norden@gmail.com



Wednesday, February 24
North Coast

Another outing on the lovely north Santa Cruz County coast, where we will search for birds in a variety of habitats. We'll study gulls as we find them and maybe encounter Marbled Murrelet, Western Bluebird, and Tricolored Blackbird. If the weather is nice we may continue into the afternoon, so bring snacks and/or lunch. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at Whale City Bakery in Davenport at 7:30 AM. The tentative plan for a first stop will be Waddell Creek Beach (or the bluffs just to the north), but new ideas may arise.

Leader: David Suddjian, dsuddjian@aol.com



Wednesday, February 24
Watsonville Wetlands Watch
Docent Training Program begins

See page 14 for details and registration information.



Thursday, February 25
eBird—
What's it all about?

The Santa Cruz Bird Club is encouraging local birders to use eBird to record their observations. But just what is this eBird, and why should you use it? How do you use it? What can eBird do for you? Join David Suddjian (Santa Cruz County's bird records compiler) and Steve Gerow (the county eBird reviewer) in a discussion of eBird—where it came from, how it works, and its value and potential. In the first part of the program, we will start with the basics of eBird, and how to get started using it. From there, we'll explore the many special features that make this both a versatile list-keeping tool, and a great source of bird information, whether for specific research, or just some enjoyable browsing. Finally, we'll look at some ways you can make your birding even more valuable for adding to the collective knowledge of our avifauna.

This will be an open and informal program, designed for audience participation, so bring your questions and comments and be prepared to be part of the discussion.

Location: Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History
1305 East Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, CA



Friday, February 26
Afternoon at the
Watsonville Sloughs

This late afternoon-to-sunset foray will seek waterbirds and others in the sloughs of Watsonville. Rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at 3:00 PM at parking lot behind the West Marine building along Struve slough, off Harkins Slough Road.

Leader: Rod Norden, (408) 656-4669, rod.norden@gmail.com



Saturday, February 27
Pogonip

We'll explore the varied forests and grasslands of this park. Good numbers of winter and resident species can be expected and we may find some early spring arrivals like Orange-crowned Warbler or Violet-green Swallow. This park also has an interesting variety of native plants, varied fungi, and other natural features. Expect about three miles of walking, with some hills.

Directions: Meet at 8:00 AM at the north end of Spring Street, off High Street in Santa Cruz.

Leader: Steve Gerow, (831) 426-2476, stephengerow@aol.com

Santa Cruz Birds

By David Suddjian & Steve Gerow
Including reports from
September 1 to October 31, 2009

We hit a birding “hot spell” from mid-September to mid-October, with a series of scorching birds that helped make this one of the most diverse seasons for the county. Among the greatest were the county’s first Blue-winged Warbler and second records for Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Flammulated Owl (a surprise!). Then toss in a flock of Mountain Bluebirds, a Lucy’s Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Least and Gray flycatchers, Sage Thrasher, Lesser Nighthawk, and Yellow-headed Blackbird, and it made for a pretty exciting time. And we must give a nod to our now elderly Rock Sandpiper, wisely choosing to continue to winter on our lovely stretch of coastline.

Greater **White-fronted Geese** had a nice showing from September 26 to October 27, with 10 reports from scattered locations (v.ob.). The largest flock was 32 over Wilder Ranch on September 26 (MO, JS). A flock of 63 **Cackling Geese** passed over Capitola on October 27 (DSu). The peak count of *moffetti* **Canada Geese** was 387 at Struve Slough on September 6—a high count for our county (DSu). Two **Wood Ducks** at Natural Bridges State Beach on September 9-13 were rare (SGe) and were the only ones reported away from Neary Lagoon or Big Basin State Park. A **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Struve Slough on October 28 (JM). All but two of 14 **Blue-winged Teal** reported from September 11 through October were at Struve Slough (SG, DSu, TN, JM). Six **Greater Scaup** at Harkins Slough on September 26 were the earliest fall arrivals for the county in a number of years, and they continue a recent trend of occurrence away from the immediate coast (TN et al).

An adult male **Long-tailed Duck** was seen during an aerial survey as it flew south near Pajaro Dunes on October 20 (JD). Two late season nesting efforts by **Pied-billed Grebe** were interesting: a family with three young chicks at the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz on September 22 and a family with just one chick leaving the nest by October 30 at Antonelli Pond (SG). High numbers of *Aechmophorus* grebes continued

along the coast into October, with a peak count of 1,260 **Western**, 775 **Clark’s**, and 2,075 unidentified grebes in Soquel Cove on October 8 (DSu). Reports of **Flesh-footed Shearwater** on Monterey Bay included one on September 26 (MS) and three on October 25 (SJ). **Wilson’s Storm-Petrels** were seen on September 9 and 27 (SJ). Peak estimates of **Ashy Storm-Petrels** were 2,500 on September 5 (MS) and 4,000 on September 27 (SJ).

Pied-billed Grebe



Very few **Black Storm-Petrels** were out there this season, with a high of just 15 on September 5 (MS), and only single digit tallies on other dates. One and two **Least Storm-Petrels** were reported on September 20 and 27 (MS). **American White Pelicans** were present through the period in the Pajaro Valley. The high reported count was 120 at Watsonville Slough on September 11 (BR). A **Brown Pelican** wandered inland to Harkins Slough on September 26 (TN) and one was up the San Lorenzo River in town on October 14 (SG, KK). The identity of a **Booby** hidden among roosting pelicans at Natural Bridges on September 2 could not be determined (WBT, MB). A nice concentration of 120 **Great Egrets** gathered at Struve Slough on September 12 (HS, BR, RR). A **Cattle Egret** at Pajaro Dunes on September 1-4 was exceptional for September (DSu, KK).

White-faced Ibis were noted regularly in the Watsonville Slough system from September 10 to October 2, with a high count of 17 at West Struve on September 20 (DSu). After a hiatus, two ibis were seen in the sloughs area from October 23 into November. There have been few fall records of White-faced Ibis away

from the Pajaro Valley, but this season one was at Antonelli Pond on September 21 (SG), with probably the same bird at Schwan Lake the next day (PD), and 10 flew up the coast past Baldwin Creek on October 6 (KK, LG, JW). A juvenile **Bald Eagle** moved down the coast from Davenport to Antonelli Pond on September 24 (AJ, SG). A juvenile **Broad-winged Hawk** was at Struve Slough on September 25 (HW, TB), and two flew south over the Pajaro River at Watsonville on October 23 (DSu). A young **Swainson's Hawk** flew over Capitola on September 13 (DSu), and an adult was at UCSC on September 30 (JL).

A juvenile and two adult **Golden Eagles** at UCSC on September 3 (JW) might have been from a nest in the nearby Rincon Gorge in Henry Cowell SP, but the whereabouts of any nest remains unconfirmed.

Another early **Merlin** was migrating by Pajaro Dunes on September 1 (DSu). Total reports included 16 in September and 17 in October. A family group of two adult and one juvenile **Sandhill Cranes** flew south over the Pajaro River at Watsonville on a windy October 27 (DSu). All of the few records from the recent decade have been from October days with strong winds out of the east or north. The season's second **Pacific Golden-Plover** was spotted at Waddell Creek mouth on September 21 (DM).

A **Black-necked Stilt** seen at Waddell that day was rare for the north county coast (GS). Similarly notable was an **American Avocet** at Natural Bridges on the same date (DM, DSi, LG). Then "a few" were at the San Lorenzo River mouth on October 2 (SB), and nine lingered there from October 9-14 (AG, SG, KK). The latter occurrence was an exceptional number for our county away from the Pajaro Valley. Three **Solitary Sandpipers** from September 1-15 brought the season's total to an impressive four birds (DSu, SG, LG). Eight **Lesser Yellowlegs** were noted in this reporting period (RW, HW, BR, DSu, SG), with one over Antonelli Pond on September 28 being the only one this fall found away from the Pajaro Valley (SG). A **Ruddy Turnstone** was near Black Point on October 17 (JW). A **Red Knot** visited the Pajaro River mouth on September 1 (DSu).

The season's fourth **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Monterey Bay Academy on September 6 (DSu). A few more reports of **Baird's Sandpipers** through October 5 brought the season's tally up to 8-12 indi-

viduals (v.ob.). After a few **Pectoral Sandpipers** in August, there was a strong showing in September and October with 25 reports through October 12 involving approximately 55 individuals (v.ob.). Two **Sharp-tailed Sandpipers** at West Struve Slough on September 29 (RW), with one on October 1 (DSu), provided just the 2nd county record; the first was way back in 1984. The **Rock Sandpiper** returned to West Cliff Drive for its 7th season by October 28 (SG), and was seen near Black Point the next day (DSu). A **Stilt Sandpiper** was at West Struve Slough on October 1-2 (DSu, JW, BR). An out-of-place **Wilson's Snipe** dropped in at Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on October 26 (SG).



Xantus's Murrelet on Monterey Bay, photographed October 24, by Jeff Poklen.

A juvenile **Sabine's Gull** came ashore to rest at Sunset State Beach on September 21 (DSu). A **Least Tern** was at Pajaro Dunes on September 1 (DSu). After we missed **Arctic Tern** in 2008, this season had singles reported in county waters from (only) two pelagic trips on August 6 and September 26 (SJ); one that came ashore at Aptos Creek mouth on October 8 was more unusual (DSu). **Forster's Tern**—a species that once had a regular fall presence in the county—went unreported after September 1. After a very slow summer, **Elegant Terns** remained sparse away from the Pajaro River mouth until a spike of numbers in early fall, with a peak of about 400 at Black Point on October 1 (JW). A **Xantus's Murrelet** photographed on the Bay on an October 24 pelagic trip (JP) appears to be the county's latest record for fall (MS). **Tufted Puffins** were reported from trips on September 26 (MS) and 27 (SJ), and October 25 (SJ).

A **White-winged Dove** appeared in the Porter-Sesson area of New Brighton State Beach on September 8, and two were near Struve Slough on September 20 (DSu). Extensive owl surveys in Big Basin Redwoods State Park this fall produced some interesting data, but an exceptional highlight was a migrant **Flammulated Owl** on Middle Ridge Road in Big Basin on September 29 (DSu), only the second ever found in Santa Cruz County (the other record was in August, 1962!). Seven **Northern Pygmy-Owls** were calling at Rancho Del Oso on October 6, all in a 1.5 mile stretch from Alder Camp to Waddell Forks (DSu), an impressive total for this small area. A **Burrowing Owl** had returned to the lower fields of the UCSC campus by October 6 (BM), with one at another spot October 10 (CS, SN, OJ). Another Burrowing Owl was on the Pajaro River levee near Murphy Crossing on October 26 (DSu). A **Short-eared Owl** near Swanton Pond on October 6 was the first reported in the county in almost three years (DSu). A migrant **Northern Saw-whet Owl** roosting in riparian trees at Antonelli Pond on October 17 was a very rare find away from its typical forest haunts (MD et al, DSi, KA).

A **Lesser Nighthawk** foraged over Highway 1 in Watsonville on September 13 (ST, LT). Single **Common Poorwills** were found in Big Basin State Park in the Berry, West Waddell, and Sempervirens watersheds from September 22 to October 9 (DSu). Migrant **Vaux's Swifts** were in better numbers this fall than in other recent seasons, peaking in late September (v.ob.). The high count reported was 120+ at Sempervirens Reservoir in Big Basin on September 28 (DSu), and 60+ over the Natural Bridges area on September 26 was the largest coastal count (SG). There were multiple reports of **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** in September, involving at least 17-19 individuals reported from August 18-September 30 and setting a new fall record (v.ob.). Most were in the mid-county coastal area, as usual, but there were three reports from south county which had few previous records. Then an immature male Black-chinned was carefully studied on October 31 as it fed at feeders in the mountains north of Soquel (ST, LT), a new late fall date for the county, three weeks past the previous record and at an unusual inland mountain location.

A female **Anna's Hummingbird** was gathering plant down at Ramsay Park in Watsonville on October 9

(SG et al), and a fledgling Anna's Hummer was begging from a female along Aptos Creek in Rio Del Mar on October 19 (DSu), confirming a late nesting there. There have been several reports in recent years indicating occasional fall nesting by Anna's in Santa Cruz County. A **Lewis's Woodpecker** was at Boulder Creek on October 10 (DSu). An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Slippery Rock in Big Basin on September 4 was the first record of a fall migrant for the Big Basin park interior (DSu). A quite late migrant **Western Wood-Pewee** stopped in Bethany Curve Park in Santa Cruz on October 17 (LG, SG). A dozen more **Willow Flycatchers** in September brought the season total up to a healthy 18 (v.ob.). A **Least Flycatcher** along Middle Ridge Road in Big Basin on October 12 (DSu) was the second record of this rarity in a montane setting in the county and about the 7th overall.

Hammond's Flycatchers were at Rancho Del Oso on September 25 (DSu) and Lighthouse Field on October 11 (SG). A rare fall migrant **Gray Flycatcher** was at Rancho Del Oso on September 22 (MT). Filling out the rare Empid list, a **Dusky Flycatcher** was near West Struve Slough on September 20 (DSu). An above-average five **Tropical Kingbirds** included birds at Watsonville Slough September 23 (DSu, KP), Lighthouse Field October 11 (SG), Struve Slough upstream from Hwy 1 on October 12 (DSu), San Lorenzo Park October 14 (LB), and Lee Road October 17 (KVV). A total of 11 **Western Kingbirds** were reported from August 10 to September 25 (v.ob.). **Eastern Kingbirds** were at Struve Slough September 5-6 (DSt, DSu), and along the San Lorenzo River near San Lorenzo Park September 15-23 (TM, CC, LC, v.ob.). Three **Loggerhead Shrikes**, now rare in the county, were along Highway 129 east of Watsonville on October 28 (SS), and single shrikes were at Swanton Road September 3 (DSu) and the mouth of Baldwin Creek October 6 (KK, LG, JW).

The second **Red-eyed Vireo** of the fall was at Aptos Creek County Park on September 14 (DSu). In keeping with this fall's trend of late nesting, a **Western Scrub-Jay** was carrying likely nesting material at Natural Bridges on September 24 (SG), and an adult was feeding a new fledgling in Capitola on October 5 (DSu). Late nesting **Pygmy Nuthatches** were feeding young in a nest at New Brighton State Beach on September 22 (DSu). Seven Pygmy Nuthatches in riparian habitat along the Pajaro River downstream from Highway 1

on September 23 were well away from expected habitats (DSu). An apparently just-fledged young **Winter Wren** was near Felton on October 6 (Paul Miller), for another case of very late nesting. Four **Western Bluebirds** were nice yard-list additions in Capitola on October 18 (DSu) and the first recent record from that city. Better than that, however, were the seven **Mountain Bluebirds** earlier that same day (!) in the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton State Beach (DSu), providing just the third modern record (5th overall) for Santa Cruz County and the first involving more than one bird.

A **Sage Thrasher** visited the Homeless Garden on Shaffer Road on September 26 (SG, KK, et al.)—the 7th for Santa Cruz County and the first in three years. Among the most notable finds this season was the first Santa Cruz County record of **Blue-winged Warbler**, well-photographed near the Manresa State Beach entrance on October 10 (TE) and refound a couple of times until October 15 (DSu, SR, RC, SM), although it was an elusive visitor, evading detection by most who searched for it. **Tennessee Warblers** were at Monterey Bay Academy on September 21 (DSu) and Sunset State Beach on September 27 (DE, CV, et al.). A **Lucy's Warbler** was enjoyed by many observers at Natural Bridges and was often seen feeding in nearby eucalyptus from September 19-27 (SG, JM, PB, OJ, WN, v.ob.). This was the earliest fall Lucy's in Santa Cruz County by far; previous records included two in November and four in winter.



Blue-winged Warbler photographed October 10 at Manresa State Beach by Todd Easterla.

A **Northern Parula** was at Natural Bridges on September 30 (OJ). **Chestnut-sided Warblers** were in Capitola on September 21 (DSu) and along Soquel Creek October 14 (JW). A **Magnolia Warbler** was in the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton on September 21 (DSu). Rancho Del Oso hosted a male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** on September 24 (DSu). A very rare **Black-throated Green Warbler**, just the 6th for the county, was at New Brighton State Beach on October 16 (DSu). **Blackburnian Warblers** stopped at Lighthouse Field on October 12 (LG, WG) and at New Brighton on October 16 (DSu). The second **Prairie Warbler** of the season was near the Seymour Center at Terrace Point on September 29-30 (DSi, v.ob.). Five **Palm Warblers** were found October 1-29 (DSu, LG), a sparse showing for this species. **Blackpoll Warblers** were slightly below average, with six between September 14 and 23 (DSu, KP).

Black-and-White Warblers were found along the Pajaro River September 10 (DSu) and at Lighthouse Field October 7 (JH, BC). Three **American Redstarts** appeared from September 1-October 8 (DSu, SG). A **Northern Waterthrush** bobbed its way around Antonelli Pond from September 21-29 (OJ, SG, v.ob.), and one was at Baldwin Creek Marsh on September 24 (DSu). **Yellow-breasted Chats** were along the Pajaro River September 10 (DSu) and at West Struve Slough October 5 (RS). Totals for other uncommon but regular western warblers included only three **Nashvilles** from September 22-27, an above-average 32 **Black-throated Grays** from August 8-October 23, 11 **Hermits** from September 4 to October 10, and 6 **MacGillivray's** from August 27-October 20 (v.ob.). An apparent **Hermit X Townsend's Warbler** hybrid was studied at Rancho Del Oso on September 26 (JR et al.).

Among the common migrant warblers, **Yellow Warblers** numbers were better than average, peaking in mid to late September, when counts of 50-90 birds were reported in several areas (v.ob). Two more **Chipping Sparrows**, September 2-16, brought the fall total up to 4 (SG, DSu). Three **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found September 29-October 28 (DSu). **Brewer's Sparrows** turned up at Pajaro Dunes on September 21 (DSu) and along Shaffer Road October 2 (SG et al.). Swanton Pond had a **Vesper Sparrow** on September 24 (DSu). Three migrant **Lark Sparrows**

were reported September 15-October 10 (JW, DSu, JH, BC), bringing the fall total up to four. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** in the Terrace Point field October 10 was among just a handful of reports of fall migrants in the county (TE, SR). **White-throated Sparrows** at Porter-Sesnon October 15 (DSu) and a Santa Cruz yard on October 27 (SS) were the first arrivals this fall.



Lark Sparrow

Summer Tanagers turned up north of Schwan Lake September 17, at Rancho Del Oso September 24-25, and at New Brighton October 2 (DSu). Six **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were found August 28-October 11 (SA, SG, DSu, CM, v.ob.). A late **Black-headed Grosbeak** was at Natural Bridges on October 30 (SG et al.). Female/immature type **Blue Grosbeaks** visited the Porter-Sesnon area of New Brighton on September 8 (DSu) and Natural Bridges September 15 (SG). Four **Indigo Buntings**, all immature males, appeared at various spots September 6-23 (DSu, KP, OJ). The first **Bobolinks** in the county since 2005 included birds in the Terrace Point field (at least one September 25-October 5, with two seen together September 29-30) (DSu, SG, OJ, v.ob) and one at West Struve Slough October 1 (DSu). Female **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were at Pajaro Dunes September 21 (DSu) and at Natural Bridges October 17 (MD et al.)

A female **Great-tailed Grackle** carried what seemed to be nesting material at Struve Slough on the late date of September 9 (DSu). Four **Orchard Orioles** were an exceptional showing: a female and an immature male found separately near Natural Bridges September 24 (JS, ADM), a female/immature type at the Homeless Garden on Shaffer Road September 30

(SG), and one at Aptos Creek mouth October 19 (DSu). A late **Hooded Oriole** was near Natural Bridges on September 21 (PB, SG). A female **Bull-ock's Oriole**, fairly rare in fall migration, was at Natural Bridges September 15 (SG, LGo). Three **Red Crossbills** flew over Rancho Del Oso September 24 (DSu). Thus far this fall there was no real indication of any irruptions by any of the irregular wintering species, though **American Goldfinches** seemed to be in above-average numbers in some spots.

Cited Observers: Sally Arnold, Kumaran Arul, Lion Baumgartner, Scott Benthall, Tony Brake, Martha Brown, Phil Brown, Roy Carlson, Lilian Carswell, Bob Cohen, Chris Cutler, Jeff Davis, Al DeMartini, Matthew Dodder, Patty Durkee, Todd Easterla, David Ekdahl, Alexander Gaguine, Steve Gerow, Lois Goldfrank, Wally Goldfrank, Jane Henderson, Alvaro Jaramillo, Oscar Johnson, Kathy Kuyper, Janet Leonard, Caitlin Madden, Paul Miller, Monterey Seabirds (fide Roger Wolfe), Bob Montgomerie, Tom Morell, Dominic Mosur, Shirley Murphy, Jean Myers, Wendy Naruo, Todd Newberry, Sam Novey, Meagan Oldfather, Kathy Parker, Jeff Poklen, Bernadette Ramer, Robert Ramer, Steve Rovell, Jennifer Rycenga, Heidi Sandkuhle, Richard Sandkuhle, Christian Schwarz, Shearwater Journeys (fide Debra Shearwater), David Sidle (DSi), Jherek Silber, Scott Smithson, John Sterling, Gary Strachan, David Styer (DSt), David Suddjian (DSu), Linda Terrill, Scott Terrill, W. Breck Tyler, Mike Tyner, Jeff Wall, Harvey Wilson, Kent Van Vuren, Connie Vigno

Please report interesting observations to the Monterey Bay Birds list server or to David Suddjian at dsuddjian@aol.com or (831) 479-9603.



Trip Reports & Photos

October 7, Rancho Del Oso

We began at Waddell Beach, where a returning Herring Gull was of interest among the gull flock. Noting the very calm ocean, we quickly went up the coast to Waddell Bluffs to scan the sea for murrelets and easily spotted 9 Marbled Murrelets, with some excellent views in the early morning light. Five Pigeon Guillemots in winter plumage were rare for us in fall.

At Rancho Del Oso, we walked up the canyon, making a loop of West Trail and Skyline To The Sea Trail. The lighting was fabulous, making everything look lovely, as we enjoyed nice looks at regular species and some returning migrants, such as Hermit Thrush. Migrants on the whole were not prominent (except for Townsend's Warbler). A Sora called from the Hoover Preserve. A Nuttall's Woodpecker near Horse Camp was seen in close proximity to Hairy and Downy woodpeckers, for a fun combo.

Along West Trail, south of Swing Hill we heard the first calls from a Pileated Woodpecker, which later sort of kept pace with us as we trekked along north of Swing Hill. Eventually, we managed to closely approach its location and watched carefully for it among the forest trees. I tried my imitation of one of its calls, to see what might happen. Margaret thought I sounded like a Rhode Island Red, but the woodpecker apparently appreciated my efforts, as it seemed to call in response. Soon we had good looks as it perched in a Douglas-fir, a new bird for some of the group. We heard at least two others as we continued on, with many calls and some drumming. Two Red-breasted Sapsuckers were in the orchard north of Swing Hill. A couple of people saw a Hermit Warbler along West Trail north of Swing Hill, and all saw another one south of Swing Hill. A Northern Pygmy-Owl (maybe two?) was calling near Twin Redwoods Camp. ~David Suddjian

October 30, Natural Bridges and Vicinity

A good start to this morning walk was provided by a singing California Thrasher in the willows just southeast of the Delaware Avenue gate to Natural Bridges, with a pair of American Kestrels in the pines nearby. We worked our way down to the "trail marker #5" area, where there was a notable flurry of activity involving dozens of birds in the eucalyptus, pines, and willows: Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Pygmy Nuthatches, and many of their usual associates, plus lots of finch and sparrow activity in the adjacent scrubby area. A little farther down the trail, an adult Red-shouldered Hawk rushing out of the eucalyptus pursued by an adult Red-tailed Hawk was an impressive site in the early morning light.

The rarest bird of the morning, for the season, was a very late female/immature Black-headed Grosbeak, calling in the eucalyptus grove near the bend in the entrance road. House Wrens were still in good numbers around the park, with at least 4-5 for the morning. As we moved westward toward Moore Creek, Kathy Kuyper spotted a Red-breasted Sapsucker in the eucalyptus near Delaware Avenue, which eventually came into clear view. We heard a Nuttall's Woodpecker in a couple of different spots., probably the same bird.

The beach added many expected species. Two Black Turnstones foraging among six Killdeer well up on dry sand near the lagoon seemed a little out of character, but there were especially large numbers of kelp flies around little patches of seaweed in this area. At least 20 Black-bellied Plovers were on the rocky shore west of the beach. Three Mew Gulls were among other gulls swimming just off the beach, but we didn't manage to find any Heerman's—another sign of changing seasons.

At Antonelli Pond a very recently-hatched young Pied-billed Grebe was riding around on the back of one of its parents, sheltered under its wing, then later was swimming around and receiving its share of a crayfish meal. One Sora called briefly. At the Homeless Garden it was late in the day for much passerine activity, but there were a couple of Turkey Vultures to the north and a White-tailed Kite and a more distant Northern Harrier to the west. We ended up with 81 species for the morning. ~Steve Gerow



*Birders explore the bluffs near Yellow Bank Creek on the North Coast Walk, October 21, 2009.
Photo by Wendy Naruo*

November 9 to December 2, Gulls, Gulls, Gulls

A slide lecture on November 9 presented an introduction to the identification of gulls aimed at beginning and intermediate gull watchers. Many thanks to St. Joseph's Church for providing a venue for the evening show. I was very interested to see that most of the 25 or so attendees were folks I have never or only seldom seen on Bird Club outings. So the topic was clearly of interest to a new set of birders. We focused on the idea of learning three common "reference species" (Western, California, and Ring-billed) well to help in working up to the less common species. And we learned about determining the ages of gulls, an important step in resolving identifications.

The evening program was followed by field outings on November 9 and 11 and December 2, focused on looking at gulls on local beaches. It was fun to see the technique bear fruit, as things began to fall into place while we scanned the birds in the flocks. It's not too late to join the fun. Look for more opportunities to become "gullable" on trips later this winter.

~David Suddjian

November 13, West Cliff Drive

Highlights on this Friday included good views of the continuing Rock Sandpiper on West Cliff Drive. We found it in the late morning foraging with a few Black Turnstones about halfway between Woodrow Avenue and Columbia Street. Back towards Woodrow, a Wandering Tattler appeared in the area below the corner in the railing just east of Woodrow, the first in the area since late September.

Otherwise, it was a nice morning for studying the behavior of regular species of the area. We had close views of three Black Oystercatchers, two of them doing a "piping" display. The early morning light shone through the pouch of a Brown Pelican, showing the outline of a large fish it had caught as it manipulated and finally swallowed it. (Later, waves of Brown Pelicans flew down the coast, almost at eye level.) Six gull species were around (Western, California, Mew, Heerman's, Glaucous-winged, and one Ring-billed), providing opportunities for comparison, as did mixed blackbird flocks with Brewer's, Red-wings, and cowbirds. A Western and a Clark's Grebe swimming close together close to shore was also a nice study opportunity. Lighthouse Field had a selection of expected species, including some good views of Townsend's Warblers and a very cooperative Downy Woodpecker, plus a mass of clustered Monarch Butterflies in the cypress and eucalyptus in the northeast corner of the park. Despite the date, it didn't seem like an unlucky morning at all.

~Steve Gerow



Jim Williams studies gulls at Rio del Mar. Photo by David Suddjian, December 2, 2009

December 9 – New Brighton SB

This morning began with temperatures in the 30s. Even so, big swells were drawing surfers out into the ocean at New Brighton. I was glad to be onshore, looking through the spotting scope. From the beach parking area we looked at Red-breasted Merganser, Horned Grebe, Red-throated Loon, and others. Then we meandered through the campground and down along Tannery Gulch. It was a good morning for enjoying great looks at Downy Woodpecker, Lincoln's Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Pygmy Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Acorn Woodpecker, and Northern Flicker. We were impressed with the number of California Towhees in the campground area, with the trip's tally reaching 57!

New Brighton is a good place to look at mushrooms in the fall and winter. On this trip we were wowed by several fine displays, with huge specimens of *Amanita muscaria* (fly agaric) and *Boletus edulis* (king bolete) being among the prizes.

~David Suddjian



Peregrine Falcon photographed on the October 21 North Coast walk, by Wendy Naruo.

Conservation Blueprint for Santa Cruz County

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County has recently embarked on the development of a significant conservation plan for Santa Cruz County. The Conservation Blueprint for Santa Cruz County will be used by the Land Trust and other conservation organizations to identify the highest priorities for conservation work in Santa Cruz County in the next twenty years. The project, funded in part by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, began in May 2009 and is expected to be completed in December 2010.

The Conservation Blueprint is a science-based project that relies on knowledgeable Technical Advisors to help synthesize information and provide expert opinion on resources in the region. The Santa Cruz Bird Club has been asked to participate in the Terrestrial Biodiversity Committee (the other committees are Water, Agriculture and Working Lands, and Recreation and Outdoor Education) and SCBC representatives have already participated in one workshop in October. Since then, we have been working on drafting an annotated list of bird species to be included as Conservation Targets. This list will be used to adjust the course filter vegetation maps that were produced using MARXAN, a computer software program designed for and used in conservation planning. The SCBC plans to continue to be involved in this project to ensure that our local bird populations are protected in this plan.

The Conservation Blueprint is also a community-supported project. In 2010, after all the data has been gathered and converted into maps and charts, a series of community workshops will be held where the public can comment on what they value most. If you are interested in learning more about the Conservation Blueprint for Santa Cruz County or receiving email updates about postings and community events, check out their website at:

<http://www.conservesantacruz.org>

Matthew Strusis-Timmer
Conservation Officer



Watsonville Wetlands Watch 2010 Docent Training Program

The Watsonville Wetlands Watch 2010 Docent Training Program will begin on February 24, 2010. Trainees will be treated to an inside look at the Pajaro Valley and its wide network of wetlands. During this 7-week program, which includes Wednesday evening presentations and Saturday morning field trips, local experts will share the ecology, wildlife (emphasis on birds), history, and restoration of the wetlands.

New docents will be prepared to lead walks and assist with field trips. Docent birders will also work with students to monitor bird populations. There are opportunities to help with community events, participate in wetlands restoration, work in the library or greenhouse at the Fitz Wetlands Education Resource Center, and work on special projects.

Birders are ideal candidates to become docents. When birders share their passion with others, they help inspire stewardship of the wetlands and bird populations.

To enroll, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Kathy Fieberling.

Phone: (831) 345-1226

Email: kathyfie@yahoo.com

The deadline for enrollment is February 10, 2010.

The Watsonville Wetlands Watch is a nonprofit, community-based organization dedicated to the protection, restoration, and appreciation of the wetlands of Pajaro Valley. For more information, visit our website at:

<http://www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org>

**New SCBC
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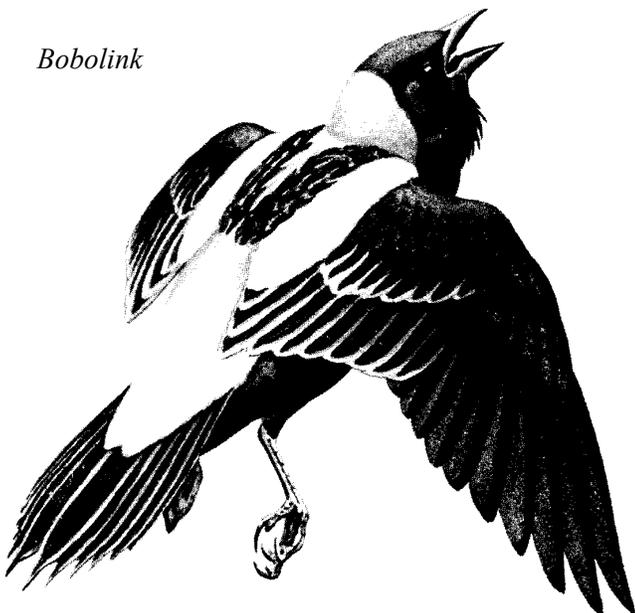
| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Michael A. Barnett | 11/09 |
| Jeb Henley | 11/09 |
| Paul Helen | 11/09 |
| Stephen Suddjian | 11/09 |
| Melinda M. Anderson | 12/09 |

“300 Club” has a new member

Roy Carlson, a longtime SCBC member (currently living in San Carlos), has recently reached a total of 303 species seen in Santa Cruz County, which automatically makes him a member of the 300 Club. His 300th bird was a Bobolink, which he saw near the Homeless Garden on September 30, 2009.

Congratulations to Roy! .

Bobolink



Submission for The

Assembling



Albatross

Albatross—Guidelines

In addition to regular features—calendar, Santa Cruz Birds, trip reports—the newsletter can include almost anything related to birding in general and to local birding in particular. Depending on space, submissions of any of the following are welcome:

- Feature articles
- Birding event announcements
- Stories about birders, serious or comic
- Reviews of birding literature or guides
- Conservation & outreach reports/stories
- Birding tips, descriptions of local sites
- Filler tidbits: Quotes or images
- Photos of people at our events (jpg, tif)

If you wish to submit a large article, please contact me about it before the submission deadline.

I accept plain text, Word, or PDF files. Send items by email to: calqua@sbcglobal.net

~Judy Donaldson, Editor

**Input deadline for
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of the Albatross—
February 1, 2010**

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Brown Pelican Ballet

*Photo by
Jeff Poklen*



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<http://santacruzbirdclub.org/>

Join the Santa Cruz Bird Club

Enjoy walks in and around the County of Santa Cruz, discounted boat trips on Monterey Bay, summer picnics and annual dinners, meetings September through May featuring informative, illustrated talks on wild birds and related topics, and receive the bimonthly newsletter, The Albatross. Memberships run June-May. Dues are \$20 Individual, \$25 Family, \$5 Youth, \$400 Life. Make checks payable to Santa Cruz Bird Club and mail to Box 1304, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, Attention: Membership Chairman.