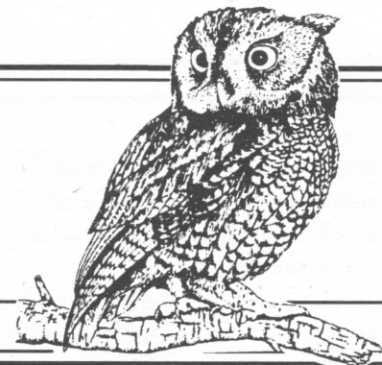


# El Tecolote

Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.

Volume 40, Issue 1

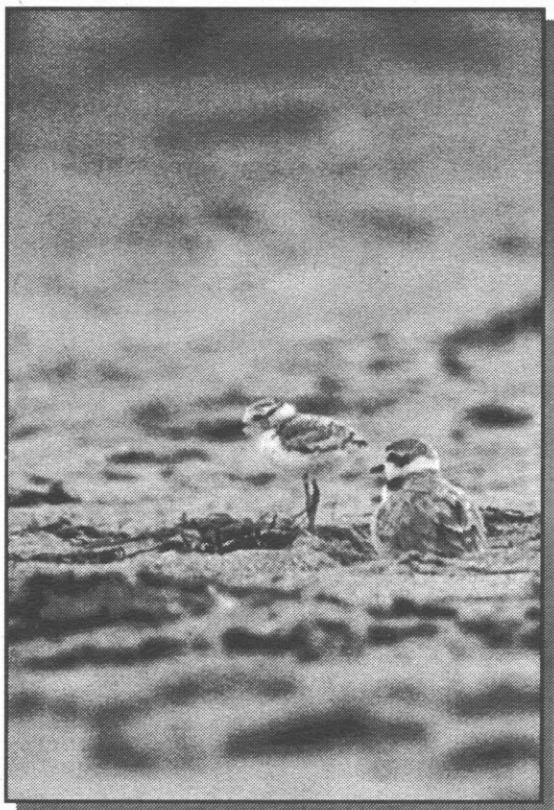
August/September 2001



## Western Snowy Plover

### "Chick Watcher"

By Elizabeth Price



Western Snowy Plover Dad and Baby

I'm not known for bird watching. In fact I've never really stopped to think about birds except to curse them for fouling my car, chase them from my food during a beach outing or be entertained by them in Disney films. However, a string of events including a wren nest above my doorway this spring—complete with five babies—and the honor of joining the **SBAS Board**, has led me to a new level in bird awareness.

A Western Snowy Plover chick clinched my new awareness. A threatened species, the chick (its sibling was lost to a crow) was discovered a few weeks ago by **Dr. Cristina Sandoval** on the shores of UCSB's Coal Oil Point Reserve (COPR). The importance of this discovery was that the Snowy Plover, although known to winter here, had not bred on this stretch of beach for over 30 years. The main reason is because of the increased use of the beach by the public and their pets.

**Dr. Sandoval** quickly spread word of her discovery and began a vigilant watch over the chick and father during daylight hours. Volunteers have since taken shifts to watch over the plovers and **Dr. Sandoval**, her husband **Kevin** and the COPR Volunteer Coordinator **Ed Easton** fill in the gaps. Although the chick's main caretaker is its father, it never hurts to have some help. Besides, the father raises its brood alone since mom goes in search for a new male to mate with. Her mating season is short. If the father can successfully raise the family she will return next year to mate with him again. What a reward for a single parent—to do it again!

I went to see the chick because I was interested in photographing it. It was barely visible to the naked eye. It took me about ten minutes to locate the baby and its father with binoculars.

I had no idea what I was looking for (remember I had never done this). At

(Continued on page 2)

## First Time in Santa Barbara County!

By Joan Lentz

On Saturday, July 14th, a juvenile Reddish Egret was seen at the outfall of Bell Creek (just southwest of Sandpiper Golf Course) by **John Storrer**. Congratulations, **John**, and thanks from all the excited local birders who rushed out to see the egret! It was the first sighting **ever** of a Reddish Egret in Santa Barbara County and brings the county total to 470 species.

The Reddish Egret is a striking bird—looking like a smaller version of a Great Blue Heron with touches of rust in the plumage. The juvenile is a unique pale chalky blue color with reddish-brown on the head and upper breast. When it feeds, the egret darts and jumps as it searches for prey in shallow water.

The Reddish Egret probably came from breeding grounds in Baja California and has wandered this far north as part of post-breeding dispersal.

For recent rare bird sightings call **Karen Bridgers** at 964-8240.

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first I thought the dad was the chick. This is how small the Snowy Plover really is. Imagine being so small that unless being looked for you are pretty much unnoticed.

If you watch the baby and father interact long enough, you will see that it takes a lot of energy and space to raise a baby plover. In spite of being small, fluffy and fat, the chick's long, scrawny legs take it over sand quickly and into the path of possible danger. Thus the reasoning for a closed-off stretch of beach to public access and the constant daylight vigilance by volunteers.

Volunteers ensure that the roped off area meant to help keep the Snowy Plover protected, is kept clear of humans, their activities and their pets. When visited, it is clear that the protected site leaves plenty of room for humans to participate in

their beach activities plus the plovers can feel comfortable enough to roam and roost. Sure I have heard complaints, but not viable ones, especially if you remember that the Snowy Plover used this beach first. The majority of beach goers, although sometimes detoured from their favorite beach spot, embrace the protection. Several people are interested in viewing and learning about the chick and the Snowy Plover in general. Perhaps this is why one mother and father Snowy Plover decided to give Coal Oil Point Reserve another chance. They saw the glimmer of possibility in sharing the beach. They gave us a special gift by educating and enlightening us, and we humans have yet to let those Snowy Plovers down.

I became a volunteer and have observed a tiny Snowy Plover chick mature into a juvenile. I have watched the baby as it tests its wing and feeds on sand bugs and kelp contents. I have had the luxury of both birds feeling comfortable enough to be within 10 feet of where I sit. In the mornings and late evenings, the father will puff up his wings and let his child rest, stay warm, and feel protected underneath him. Later as more plovers enter the area for the season, the father will often give warning chirps to the baby, and then fly to fend off the other plovers. Meanwhile, the baby reacts by crouching in pockets on the sand, sometimes for minutes, until dad returns and all is safe. During this time the baby is lost from view, since its top feathers blend with the colors and speckles on the sand. When dad returns, baby suddenly pops up. It is without hesitation that I say this father is one top-notch dad, because never have I seen him waiver from his parenting duties.

By the time you read this, all volunteer shifts will be over as human vigilance will be less critical. The baby will have spread its wings and flown into the world, independent of our protective watch. My mind flickers with images of a baby plover growing up before my eyes—its teeters turning to totters and then graceful strides. Baby Mohawk-like hair toning down to a mature buzz cut, and its wingspan growing wider in preparation for flight. (Note: Photos by **Elizabeth Price**)



**Note by Darlene Chirman, President:** The "Chick Watch" is over, but our Snowy Plover winter residents are arriving from their usual breeding grounds. These cryptic birds are easily overlooked and thus unintentionally disturbed. **SBAS** is initiating a Plover Docent Program, and we invite you to participate in the first docent training program. Our goal is to increase public awareness and accommodation of the plovers so we can all share the beach.

**SBAS** is supportive of the Plover Protection Plan that COPR has presented. The plan would include closing the Delta trail which exits into the plover roost on the beach, putting up symbolic fencing to reroute traffic around the roost site, signs to educate the public, and enforcement of the leash law for dogs. This plan will require Coastal Commission approval. **SBAS** has also retained the Environmental Defense Center to advise us on Plover issues, to ensure protection consistent with the Coastal Act and Endangered Species Act.

You can help protect the Snowy Plover. If you go to Sands Beach, at COPR, walk around the plover roost site at the mouth of the slough, along the wet sand. If you take your dog, be sure s/he is leashed. The leash law is now being enforced by the Campus Police. If you have the interest and time, become a Snowy Plover Docent!



More about the Snowy Plover  
Docent Program on page 3.



## Santa Barbara Audubon Programs

*All programs, unless otherwise noted, will take place at Farrand Hall, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Mission Canyon, Santa Barbara. Free on-site parking.*

*All programs, unless otherwise noted, will begin at 7:30 PM and doors will open at 7:00 PM.*

*All programs, unless otherwise noted, are free to the public. SBAS members are encouraged to bring guests.*



### "Butterflies and Moths of the Salt Marsh"

**Dr. Cristina Sandoval, Speaker**  
Wednesday, August 22nd

**D**r. Cristina Sandoval, Director of Coal Oil Point Reserve, part of the UC Natural Reserve System, will discuss local butterfly and moth species in the native marsh habitat. Her talk will also include results of a study of how local species use the resources of the Carpinteria Salt Marsh Reserve. Species that depend on the salt marsh plants to feed the caterpillars, such as the Western Pygmy Blue and Wandering Skipper, also depend on the plants growing at the upland edge of the marsh for adult nectaring. A trained entomologist, **Dr. Sandoval** will explain the significance of this study relative to local restoration projects.

**Special Note:** The Butterfly Pavilion will be open from 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM, so plan to arrive early and walk among the butterflies!



### Snowy Plover Docent Program

By Jennifer Stroh

**I**'m Jennifer Stroh, the new coordinator for the Snowy Plover Docent Program. I'd like to invite you to become a Docent for their wintering season, which lasts from September through April. There is training scheduled so that those interested may receive an overall presentation of the Program, information on their responsibilities as Docents, and also information on the basic biology of the Western Snowy Plover. The training consists of two Saturday mornings: August 11 & 18, from 9 AM to 12 PM. Anyone is welcome to attend the training. As a Docent we do ask you to commit to volunteering a minimum of 8 hours a month (we suggest four, 2 hour time slots or two, 4 hour time slots). At the first training you will receive a Docent Manual (AKA The Plover Docent bible) which will contain most of the information you will need to know. This will be used as a reference throughout your experience as a Snowy Plover Docent. I look forward to meeting you! To sign up or for more information, contact **Jennifer** at 968-0446 or [firefive55@hotmail.com](mailto:firefive55@hotmail.com).



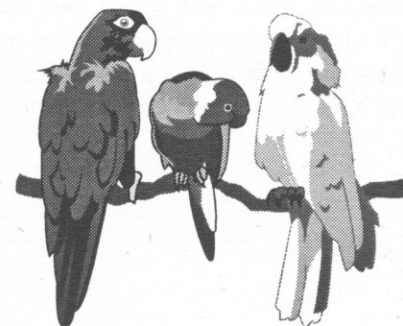
### "Birds and Wildlife of the Pantanal of Brazil"

**Muriel Horacek, Speaker**  
Wednesday, September 26th

**O**ne of the world's lushest and most diverse birding areas, the rarely visited Pantanal region of Brazil, its eco-systems increasingly at risk, will open its avian and travel secrets with over an hour of slides, observations, and anecdotes.

**Muriel Horacek** is southern California coordinator for Earthwatch Institute, and this transplanted Long Islander, with degrees from Syracuse, NYU and Columbia Universities, has packed more eco-travel into the last 15 years (over 26 trips) than many birders experience in a lifetime!

Widow of an international oil executive, **Muriel** is in stages, a fine hiker, an excellent birder, and a good photographer. Join her as she discusses her most recent trek into Brazil, with tidbits from recent trips to China, New Zealand, Namibia, Israel, Alaska and Hawaii.





## Santa Barbara Audubon Field Trips

*Everyone is welcome! These trips are fun for both beginning and expert bird lovers. Binoculars are useful for enjoyment of birds, but if you don't have a pair please call the trip leader and we'll lend you a spare. Trips are free unless noted.*



### Devereux Slough at UCSB West Campus, Goleta

**Saturday, September 15th, 5:00 PM**

**Target Birds:** Snowy Plover, shorebirds, Great Horned Owl

**Paul Keller, 968-7804, wrentit@gte.net**

**T**ake 101 to the Glen Annie, Storke exit. Take Storke Rd. south to its end and turn right onto the Slough Rd. Go 0.1 miles and turn left onto West Campus Lane. Drive 0.1 mi. to the University Children's Center and park between the Center and the horse stables. Time permitting, we'll walk around the slough, first going to the beach. Wear shoes for walking on trails, sand and maybe tar. If you're not up for a long walk, join us anyway and turn back whenever you've reach half of your limit. Bring water if it's warm. Scopes useful if you don't mind carrying them for the long walk; I'll bring mine. Trip over by 7:30.

Show your appreciation for the people who cleaned up this area this morning as part of the Coastal Clean-Up Day by joining us for this sunset bird walk. Last year birding was so good we barely made it to the beach.

### California Coastal Clean-Up Day Volunteer Work Day for the Environment Beach Clean-Up at Coal Oil Point Saturday, September 15th, 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM

**S**aturday, September 15th is Coastal Clean-Up Day throughout California. On the South Coast, **SBAS** members, friends, and volunteers pitch in each year to help clean the beaches around Coal Oil Point and Devereux Slough. We need volunteers.

Meet at 9:00 AM at the gate at the end of Devereux Drive, UCSB West Campus (at the traffic light where Storke ends, and El Colegio begins on the left, Devereux Drive is the narrow lane across the light bearing right). Parking passes provided.

Bring comfortable shoes for walking on sand. Bring sturdy gloves. Instructions, bags and prizes will be provided.

Our area generally covers the beaches from the middle of Isla Vista to the edge of Ellwood Mesa. For speed and efficiency, we work in teams of 2 to 4 people, which makes the cleanup easier, and more sociable.

Please help **SBAS** keep our beaches and inter-tidal areas clean. Volunteers should either leave their names and numbers at the office, 964-1468, or come on Saturday at 9:00 AM.



—Claude Edwards



### More Great Programs and Field Trips

**P**lanning a trip within California? Want to do some birding? Other **Audubon** chapters offer interesting field trips too. You can visit this **Audubon** site to schedule birding trips and find out about other interesting programs in California.

<http://www.audubon-ca.org/>



## Land Preservation Update

By Darlene Chirman



### San Marcos Foothills Coalition Rally

On July 1 the San Marcos Foothills Coalition held a "rally & release" event on the western edge of the 3777-acre property the Coalition is working to preserve. The Coalition, of which **SBAS** is a member, has been working on a Stewardship Plan over the past year, and officially released the Plan at the rally. The Plan highlights the nature resource values of the property and presents principles for management if the property can be preserved as public open space. Negotiations with the landowner and developer continue. **SBAS's** Birds of Prey with **Gabriele Drozdowski** and **Kendy Radasky** were there to demonstrate the educational value of the site as an outdoor classroom.

The rich habitat of oaks, native grasslands, riparian and wetlands support a diverse array of birds and other wildlife. 130 bird species have been observed on the property, including breeding Grasshopper Sparrows and White-tailed Kites, and overwintering Burrowing Owls. If you would like to help preserve the San Marcos Foothills or obtain a copy of the Stewardship Plan, for a donation, contact 964-4444. The plan is also on the website, or soon will be, at: [www.sanmarcosfoothills.org](http://www.sanmarcosfoothills.org).

### Arroyo Hondo Preserve

The Land Trust of Santa Barbara County continues the capital campaign to purchase the Arroyo Hondo Ranch on the Gaviota Coast. The **SBAS** Board of Directors voted in April to fund a Challenge Grant to our members for saving this unique canyon traversing from the National Forest to the ocean, matching donations up to a total of \$2000. **SBAS** members donated \$6,525 by late June. The \$8,525 including the match also helped the Land Trust meet the Goleta Valley Land Trust Challenge Grant of \$275,000. The deadline of October 15 is fast approaching, and you can send contributions to: Land Trust, P.O. Box 91830, Santa Barbara, CA 93190. Kudos to those who helped to preserve this gem of the Gaviota Coast!

## Volunteer Habitat Restoration Opportunities for August & September

Come out and make a positive contribution to improve our creeks and wetlands—great places to work with good company. For more information contact Volunteer Coordinator **Megan Snover** at [megansnover@hotmail.com](mailto:megansnover@hotmail.com) or **Darlene Chirman** at [dchirman@rain.org](mailto:dchirman@rain.org) or 692-2008.

Descriptions and directions are on the **SBAS** website: [www.rain.org/~audubon/](http://www.rain.org/~audubon/)

Date	Location	Contact
Sun Aug 5, 8:30 am-12:30	/Goleta Slough, end of Ward Drive at Atascadero Creek	/Megan or Darlene
Sun Aug 19, 8:30 am-12:30	/Tecolotito Creek, Goleta Beach County Park, west parking lot	/Megan or Darlene
Sat Aug 25, 8:30 am-12:00	/Coal Oil Point Reserve, Whittier Drive & Storke Rd	/Cris Sandoval, 893-5092
Sat Sep 1, 8:30 am-12:30	/Atascadero Creek Bikeway, Patterson Ave & Creek	/Megan or Darlene
Sun Sep 9, 8:30 am-12:30	/Goleta Slough, end of Ward Drive at Atascadero Creek	/Megan or Darlene
Sat Sep 15, 9:00 am-1:00	/Tecolotito Creek, Goleta Beach County Park, United Way Day of Caring	/Megan or Darlene

## National Audubon Society Membership Application



**Yes!**

I want to join Audubon and help protect wildlife and wildlife habitats.

Special new-member rate of \$20

Make check payable and send to:

National Audubon Society  
Membership Data Center  
P.O. Box 5100  
Boulder, CO 80321-1000

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Local Chapter - Santa Barbara Audubon Society C13 7XCH



**Calendar of Events**

Aug 22	"Salt Marsh Butterflies & Moths"
Sep 7	Thank Goodness It's Friday!
Sep 15	California Coastal Clean-Up Day
Sep 15	Devereux Slough Field Trip
Sep 26	"Birds & Wildlife of the Pantanal"

**Environmental Defense Center**  
**Thank Goodness It's Friday!**

Friday, September 7th, 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Sponsored by **Santa Barbara Audubon Society**

Please join **SBAS & EDC** board, staff & supporters  
 for an evening of live music, appetizers and drinks

\$8 at the door

For more information, call **EDC**, 963-1622

*El Tecolote* is published 6 times a year by the **Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.** Non-member price for an annual subscription is \$15 per year. Please make checks payable to **SBAS**. Audubon members are invited to send announcements, letters, articles, photos and drawings for consideration to:

Bill and Elaine Uomini, Editors  
**Santa Barbara Audubon Society**  
 5679 Hollister Avenue - Suite 5B  
 Goleta, CA 93117  
 or e-mail: [tecolotesb@aol.com](mailto:tecolotesb@aol.com)

Submission deadline is the 10th of the month.

**SBAS July 2001/June 2002**

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[www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/santabarbara](http://www.audubon.org/chapter/ca/santabarbara)

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At-Large-Outreach	Anna Nicholas	681-9141	<a href="mailto:rpcityfilms@earthlink.net">rpcityfilms@earthlink.net</a>

**Appointed Positions**

Eyes In The Sky	Gabriele Drozdowski	898-0347	<a href="mailto:gabriele-d@home.com">gabriele-d@home.com</a>
Hospitality	Don & Florence Stivers	967-3690	
Membership database	Patrick McNulty	967-9900	<a href="mailto:mcnulty@gte.net">mcnulty@gte.net</a>
Nominating Com.	Sally Walker	569-5388	<a href="mailto:walker@sprynet.com">walker@sprynet.com</a>
Rare Bird Alert	Recent rare bird sightings	964-8240	
Report Rare Bird	Karen Bridgers	964-1316	<a href="mailto:kbridgers@msn.com">kbridgers@msn.com</a>
Webmaster	Bobbie Offen	684-0160	<a href="mailto:bobbico@earthlink.net">bobbico@earthlink.net</a>

*Officers and Committee Chairs meet the second Wednesday of the month. Members are welcome to attend. Please call the Audubon office to verify dates and times. FAX: 967-7718. Cover art by Daryl Harrison.*

**El Tecolote**

Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.  
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*or current resident*

**In This Issue...**

**Find out what bird visited SB County for the first time!**