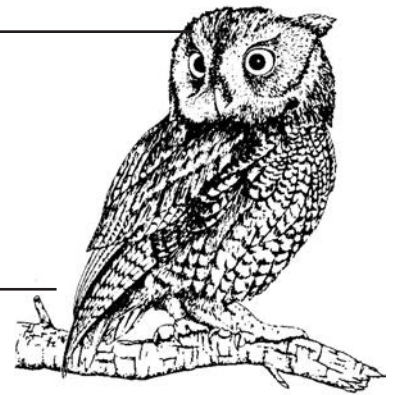


El Tecolote

Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.

Volume 44, Issue 5

April/May 2006



“Return of the Cormorants”

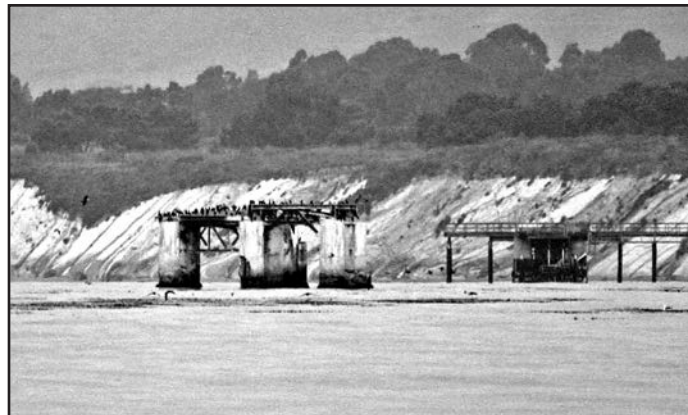
by Dave Compton

In late January, several pairs of Brandt’s Cormorants began to build nests on Bird Island, the four curious new structures off Haskell’s Beach in Ellwood that replaced the old oil company pier last fall. This was an exciting development, and along with the appearance of Brown Pelicans on the structures in the previous weeks, vindicated several years of effort and the many dollars spent to accommodate the birds using the old Bird Island while removing the remnant of a structure that had become regarded as a risk to public safety. The cormorant nesting colony has continued to grow since January, although for the time being at least, Brown Pelicans have abandoned the cormorant-crowded site as a roost.

By the time the remains of the old pier were destroyed last September and October, it had long gone out of use and had been reduced to a few concrete columns tightly clustered just offshore and connected by some rusty steel beams and part of an old wooden deck. Mostly a curiosity to humans (What is that old thing?), the old pier remnant was a boon to several species of seabirds. This was especially the case for the Brandt’s Cormorants that nested there and the endangered California Brown Pelicans that roosted there. These two species more than any other took advantage of the artificial habitat and its isolation from the mainland, taking up residence and crowding around on all the girders, planks, and odd protruberances of the structure.

But concerns grew about the dangers to the general public presented by the pier, and talk of taking it down began. The birds’ fortuitous use of this monument to human neglect was endangered.

The old pier had seen better days. It dated back to the early 1930s, when it was built as a service structure for the oil wells offshore. Its deterioration is described in the environmental impact report (EIR) prepared by the Ventura firm, Padre Associates, Inc, in 2004:



Old Bird Island and pier.



New nesting platforms.

“During the 1950s, as wells were permanently plugged and abandoned, portions of the pier were removed. The remaining offshore well service structure was substantially destroyed during a storm in 1980.” The report goes on to predict that the structure, or at least what was left of it, if not soon knocked down by a storm or an earthquake, would give way all on its own.

By the 1990s, the birds had discovered the old pier remnant. Awareness of the pier as a bird roost grew among biologists and birders in the late ’90s. A group from the U.S. Geological Survey, doing airplane surveys of seabirds along the coast, first photographed Brandt’s Cormorants nesting at that time. Meanwhile, in 1999 a Santa Barbara area birder discovered a Brown Booby here, very rare anywhere in California. Roosting Brown Pelicans by this time seemed a constant presence on the structure, and a few Western and other gulls could be seen there as well.

As concerns grew about the hazards presented by the pier and the liability to which its owner, the British Petroleum/Atlantic Richfield Oil Company (BP/ARCO), was exposed, plans were

made to take it down. But during environmental review in 2002, the California Fish and Game Department raised concerns about the loss of habitat for the pelicans and cormorants. Plans were forged to replace the old structure with several that would accommodate the nesting and roosting birds., **Santa Barbara Audubon Society** commented on the EIR that monitoring was needed to see if the seabirds used the new structure. The State Lands Commission requested that SBAS develop a monitoring protocol and administer the monitoring aspect of the project. For five years after the structures were erected, SBAS, with funds provided by British Petroleum, will watch the return of the birds to Bird Island.

The four new structures, in their way, are an even greater curiosity than the old pier remnant. Arranged in a line that runs diagonally from the coast just offshore, they each consist of a large column with three triangular platforms, each pointing in a different direction and at a slightly different height, near the top of the columns. A little below the platforms is a narrow circular ledge encompassing each column. An odd sight to be sure, but a welcome sight for the birds looking for a safe place to rest or build a nest.

The construction of the new Bird Island was completed in December 2005. While a few cormorants

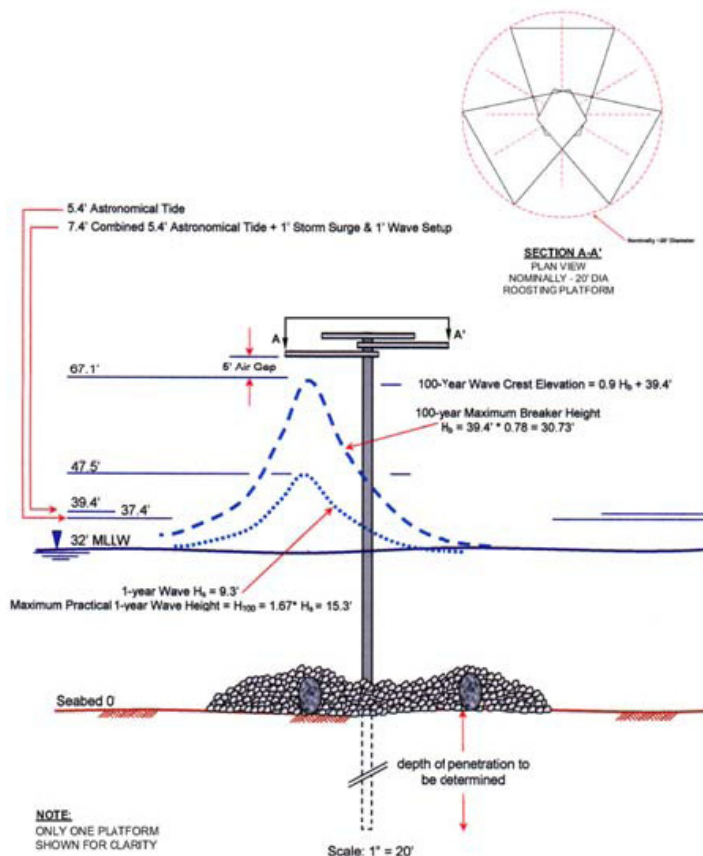


New nesting structures viewed from the beach.

were attracted to the structures right away, it was never certain whether birds would really take to them the way they had to the old Bird Island. By the end of December, as many as 79 cormorants had been counted on the structures at one time. This was well below the 200-plus that were sometimes recorded here before construction began in September, but was encouraging nonetheless. What's more, on most days, 15 to 20 endangered California Brown Pelicans were seen every day. At the same time, up to 20 Western and Heermann's Gulls could often be seen among the cormorants and pelicans.

Now, the question was whether or not the cormorants would find the new Bird Island a suitable place to build a nest and raise a brood of young. That question appears to have been answered. Cormorants began doing their bowing courtship displays in January, and they were carrying nesting material to Bird Island by the end of the month. As of 3 March, 2006, as many as 14 partial or complete nest structures could be seen on the triangular platforms perched high above the water. The cormorants undergo many false starts in nest building, as some nest structures appear and quickly disappear before ever reaching completion. But by early March, as many as five or six nests may have had eggs. This is still far from the roughly 40 Brandt's Cormorant nests counted at times on the old Bird Island, but it's a start, and there's a long way to go in cormorant breeding season.

At least now we know that while beach walkers may look out at Bird Island and wonder "What are those things?" the birds know very well what they're for. **Santa Barbara Audubon** is using science to conserve sensitive bird species along our coast.



*Roosting/Nesting Platform Design
California State Land Commission*

Photos courtesy of Callie Bowdish

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 p.m. and are free to the public. Doors open at 7:00 p.m.. SBAS members are encouraged to bring guests.

What Does The Sea Otter's Return Mean To Santa Barbara?

Steve Shimek

Executive Director of The Otter Project

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Not everyone is happy with the sea otter's return to Santa Barbara. Why is that? The ultimate in "charismatic megafauna" and a poster child for the Endangered Species Act, most people are delighted by the sea otter's reappearance after 150 years, along Santa Barbara's shore. But the otter catalyzes huge changes in the marine ecosystem: more kelp and more fish, higher diversity and productivity. But change is not welcomed by fishermen geared up for things-as-they-are.

This presentation will focus on the recovery of the California sea otter and the ecological consequences of the otter's return. We'll learn that by eating 15 to 20 pounds of food per day, the sea otter completely changes the near shore marine ecosystem. We'll discuss why sea otter recovery is so slow, and why the sea otter is a good indicator of ocean health. And, we'll discuss the major issues facing sea otter recovery and what is being done to overcome those obstacles.

Steve Shimek is Executive Director of The Otter Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the recovery of the California sea otter and near shore ocean health. Steve also serves on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sea Otter Recovery Implementation Team and is Co-Chair of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) Conservation Working Group. He is currently very involved with the creation of a network of marine parks and reserves spanning the entire coast of California. He regularly communicates with The Otter Project's 4000 members, members of Congress, other non-governmental organizations, and State Legislators. Steve graduated in 1975 from UC Santa Cruz with a BS in biology with an emphasis on marine studies.



Photograph courtesy of Jeff Foott

Santa Barbara Channel Marine Life

Fred Benko

Owner/Captain of the CONDOR Express

Wednesday, May 24, 2006



Humpback whale

The Santa Barbara channel is known as one of the best areas in the world to view ocean wildlife. Over 27 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises visit this area at various times of the year, along with seals, sea lions and many species of sea birds. The major draw is the

abundance of food in the channel as a result of its East-West orientation and the presence of the Channel Islands located 25 miles offshore.

If you have ever wanted to experience the wonders of our local Channel's marine life without the fear of getting sea sick, here is your chance to take a virtual tour with Captain Fred Benko of the CONDOR Express. The program will consist of a stunning slide presentation along with tales of the deep.

Captain Fred has been running fishing, whale watching and natural history trips into the Santa Barbara Channel since 1973. He currently owns and operates a high-speed jet powered catamaran, the CONDOR Express, on daily whale watching trips. He has received numerous awards including a Congressional Environmental Hero Award and a Stewardship Award from the National Marine Sanctuary program. Photos courtesy Condor Express.



The Condor Express



Oyster Catchers

Santa Barbara Audubon Field Trips

Everyone is welcome! These trips are fun for both beginning and expert bird watchers. 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. Please contact Jack Sanford (805) 566-2191 jacksanford@hotmail.com for details or questions.

Rancho La Vina
4455 Santa Rosa Road
(Between Buellton & Lompoc)
Saturday April 15, 9 a.m.-noon
(8 a.m. at car pool location)

Target Birds: Spring migrants, songbirds, etc.

Leader: **Paul Keller**

We will car pool at 8 a.m. from the parking lot near Carl's Jr. in the Five Points Shopping Center off State Street. (\$6 gas money to drivers.) We will take Hwy. 101 north to Santa Rosa Rd. off ramp just before Buellton. We will park and meet at 4455 Santa Rosa Road at 9 a.m.

Bring water and a snack, and wear shoes that are comfortable for some leisurely walking. Binoculars and spotting scopes are useful. Enjoy ranch owner Jose Baer's generous hospitality in allowing us to bird his ranch.

Nojoqui Falls County Park
Saturday May 20, 9 a.m.-noon
(8 a.m. at car pool location)

Target Birds: Yellow-billed Magpies, Purple Martins, Blue Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, Barn Owls, vireos, towhees, woodpeckers and orioles.

Leader: **Jim Greaves**

We will car pool at 8 a.m. from the parking lot near Carl's Jr in the Five Points Shopping Center off State Street. (\$6.00 gas money to drivers.) We will take Hwy. 101 north to the Nojoqui Falls turnoff (the obscure turnoff at the north end of the large truck parking area). We will hike to the falls (an easy walk) and then bird the entire park. If you plan on meeting us there, we will park and meet at the parking area nearest the falls at 9 a.m. Bring water and a snack or stay longer and bring lunch.



Great Blue Heron—Artist Steven D'Amato

Hollister Ranch, near Gaviota
Saturday May 27, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

(8:00 a.m. at mandatory car pool location)

Reservations are required due to a limited number of vehicles allowed on the Ranch.

Target Birds: Songbirds, ocean and pond waterfowl, raptors and perhaps an owl or two.

Leader: **Guy Tingos**

Reservations are required; we are limited to 25 people. Please call or email Jack Sanford (566-2191 or jacksanford@hotmail.com) before May 21st to reserve your place. Please tell Jack if you are willing to drive your vehicle and how many people it will hold.

We will car pool at 8 a.m. from the parking lot near Carl's Jr in the Five Points Shopping Center off State Street. (\$6.00 gas money to drivers.) We must car pool, as we are limited to 5 vehicles. Bring water and a snack or lunch, and wear comfortable shoes. Binoculars and spotting scopes are useful.

Don't miss out on this once a year opportunity to bird the private and unique Hollister Ranch.

Field Trips/Bird Walks

Do you have an idea?

We are always looking for suggestion for places to visit on our monthly field trips. If you have an idea and are not sure where or what to do next, or are interested in helping coordinate a field trip contact **Jack Sanford** (805) 566-2191.

Point Mugu Naval Air Weapons Station field trip report by Jeff Hanson

All photos by Jeff Hanson.



Arriving at Point Mugu NAWS,

It was drizzling pretty good as we headed for Mugu last Friday morning. Our guide and base biologist, **Carly Gocal**, greeted us with a smile as we arrived. By the time the 17 of us actually got in the base, we had lucked out and the rain stopped. Our first stop was at the Mugu Lagoon, which was rife with many hundreds of ducks, shorebirds, waders and a few gulls. Rarities included the Long-tailed Duck and the Black Scoter. After a lengthy stay, we then ventured out to the point, where we could look across to the harbor seal rookery, which had just produced the first

pup of the season. The Brown Pelican colony was looking very healthy as well.

The rest of the tour brought us over to the west side, against the Ventura Game Reserve (where we were last week). We enjoyed good long views of kingbirds, meadowlarks, blackbirds, swallows, sparrows, and several raptors to name a few. It seemed like only moments after we started to head back to the gate, as it started to drizzle again !

All together, we logged 60 species for the trip, not bad for a day that was bracketed by rain.

Our special thanks goes out to **Carly Gocal** for her friendly and professional guidance, and the staff of **Point Mugu Naval Air Weapons Station** for allowing us the privelidge of being on base.

Many thanks to **Jack Sanford** and **Peggy Kearns** for their untiring efforts !!



Brown pelicans inbound.



Female Long-tailed Duck,

— [What is the] extinction of a condor to a child who has never seen a wren?

Robert Michael Pyle

Friday Bird Walks

Join us on the second and fourth Fridays of each month at 8:30-10:30 a.m. Please call Bird Walk leader **Jack Sanford** 566-2191 or email at jacksanford@hotmail.com if you are interested in leading a future bird walk to your favorite birding location or have any questions.

Ennisbrook Nature Trail Friday, April 14

Target Birds: Nuthatches, Common Yellowthroats, Townsend's Warblers, Spotted Towhees, etc.

Directions: Take Hwy. 101 to the Sheffield Drive turn off. Follow Sheffield Drive and turn left on San Leandro Lane (first left). Nature trail is located on right side of road past white picket fence near a pump house. We will park and meet near the entrance gate.

Tucker's Grove and Kiwanis Meadow Friday, April 28

Target Birds: Cooper's Hawks, Towhees, American Robins, Lesser Goldfinches, etc.

Directions: Take Hwy. 101 and exit at Turnpike Road. Turn north towards the mountains on Turnpike Road. Cross Cathedral Oaks Rd and enter San Antonio County Park (Tucker's Grove). We will park and meet near the playground/rest room area.



Eared Grebe—Artist D. S. Kilby

UCSB Campus Lagoon Friday, May 12

Target Birds: Grebes, Herons, Dowitchers, Ducks, Godwits, Plovers, etc.

Directions: Coming from the south on Hwy. 101 take the Ward Memorial Blvd. exit. Take the Goleta Beach County Park exit, and park at the west end (nearest UCSB campus) of the Goleta Beach parking lot.

Coming from the north on Hwy. 101, take the Fairview Ave. off-ramp, and head towards the ocean. Follow Fairview Ave. which turns into Fowler Rd. Turn right into the Goleta Beach County Park. We will park and meet at the west end of the parking lot (nearest the UCSB campus).

San Jose Creek Friday, May 26

Target Birds: Hummingbirds, woodpeckers, songbirds, etc.

Directions: Take Hwy. 101 to the Patterson Ave. off-ramp and turn north towards the mountains. Turn left on Parejo Drive (second street from Hwy. 101). Follow Parejo Drive to the end (at Merida Drive and San Jose Creek). Turn right on Merida Drive. We will meet and park at the end of Merida Drive.

National Audubon Society Membership Application

(new members only)

Includes membership in **National Audubon & Santa Barbara Audubon Society** (C13 7XCH) and subscriptions to **Audubon** magazine & **El Tecolote**, the **SBAS** newsletter

\$20 Introductory Membership \$15 Senior (62+) or Student

Make check payable to:
National Audubon Society

Mail to:
Santa Barbara Audubon Society
5679 Hollister Ave., Suite 5B
Goleta, CA 93117

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State/Zip _____
Phone _____
E-mail _____

OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer Habitat Restoration

*Audubon helps recruit volunteers for habitat restoration at the Coal Oil Point Reserve and the Arroyo Hondo Preserve. Come help to restore a creek or estuary while spending a morning in a beautiful bird habitat. Contact the Land Trust, Arroyo Hondo Preserve Volunteer Coordinator **Jane Murray** at ltvolunteer@yahoo.com or 684-4405. For Coal Oil Point Reserve, contact **Julie Love** at jlove@lifesci.ucsb.edu or 453-4840 or **Darlene Chirman** at dchirman@rain.org or 692-2008.*

ARROYO HONDO

Contact: **Jane Murray**

Sunday	April 2	9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Sunday	May 7	9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

COAL OIL POINT RESERVE

Contact: **Julie Love**

Saturday	April 29	9 a.m.-12 noon
Saturday	May 20	9 a.m.-12 noon



Plover Project Docent Training

Training takes place at the Cliff House at Coal Oil Point Reserve, from 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Training dates:

April 8
May 6
June 3

Training Schedule:

Tour is 9-11 a.m.
Training is 11:30 a.m. -1:30 p.m.

Those interested should call **Jennifer Stroh** to register at 880-1195.

SBAS Needs Your E-mail Address

To be added to the **SBAS** e-mail list, just send an e-mail message with the subject line, "Add + your name" to sjferry@cox.net. The **SBAS** e-mail mailing list will only be used for **SBAS** business and will not be sold or shared with any other group.

Welcome!

SBAS extends a warm welcome to our newest members. We look forward to seeing you at our programs and field trips. Thanks for joining!

Dr. M. J. Angelis
 Delora B. Anthony
 Mr. Archie Bard
 Barbara Bertram
 Margaret Bischel
 Mr. Edward Blomfield
 Eliesa Bollinger
 Ms. Lisa A. Bookout
 Ms. Eva Carasso
 Ms. Barbara K. Chaney
 Mrs. Preston Cloud
 Mr. Allen Cohen
 Melissa Concha
 William R. Cowell
 Mary A. Cowell
 David Curry
 Ms. Marlene Debus

Ms. Alice Edwards
 Elizabeth Farrell
 Alice M. Finley
 Valori Fussell
 Mr. C. A. Gaines
 Mark Gardner
 Virginia Gardner
 C. Gault
 Ms. Tamara Geary
 Frances Goodwin
 Nicola Gordon
 James Gordon III
 Stu and Lori Haney
 Bree Hardcastle
 Ms. Elizabeth Hughey
 Mr. Jason Isaacs
 Helen Janson

C. L. Johnson Best
 Sylvia Kautz
 Nancy Kessler
 Elizabeth Kryder
 Louise Le Cam
 Ms. Anne N. Lowenkopf
 Sister Regina Marie
 John Mc Clellan
 Mr. Phillip Morlan
 Mary Muckey
 Bill Nicholson
 Sharon O. Reilly
 Ms. Janet Oetinger
 Debbie Patetzick
 Linda Robyn
 Mr. Charles Rock
 Dr. A. Salm

Dona and Tom Senning
 Sandra S. Sozanski
 Aaron Spechler
 Susan Teeter
 Leise Thomason
 Michael J. Treman
 Jan Tyler
 Mr. and Mrs. Michael
 Vendrasco
 Chris Vestuto
 Jill Wallerstedt
 Jean Weeks
 Janet Wingate
 Hubert J. Winner
 Brian Wrightman
 Michael Yorke

Calendar of Events

Check our website for any changes or late additions to our Bird Walks, Field Trips or Programs:

<http://www.rain.org/~audubon/>

Apr. 2	Restore Arroyo Hondo
Apr. 8	Plover Training
Apr. 14	Ennisbrook Nature Trail Bird Walk
Apr. 15	Rancho La Vina Field Trip
Apr. 26	Program Sea Otters Return
Apr. 28	Tucker's Grove Bird Walk
Apr. 29	Restore Coal Oil Point Reserve
May 6	Plover Training
May 7	Restore Arroyo Hondo
May 12	UCSB Lagoon Bird Walk
May 20	Nojoqui Falls Field Trip
May 20	Restore Coal Oil Point Reserve
May 24	Program Channel Islands
May 26	San Jose Creek Bird Walk
May 27	Hollister Ranch Field Trip

El Tecolote is published 6 times a year by the **Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.** Members are invited to send announcements, letters, articles, photos and drawings for consideration to:

SBAS, Andy Lentz, Editor
5679 Hollister Avenue, Suite 5B
Goleta, CA 93117

or email: sbasnews@cox.net
Submissions deadline is the 10th of the month before publication.

SBAS - July 2005/June 2006

(805) 964-1468, audubon@rain.org
<http://www.rain.org/~audubon/>

OFFICERS

President	Darlene Chirman	692-2008	dchirman@rain.org
Vice-President	Lee Moldaver	964-1468	audubon@rain.org
Secretary	Susan Lentz	968-6011	salentz@cox.net
Treasurer	Ginny Turner	964-6384	vturner10@cox.net

BOARD MEMBERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Field Trips Chair	Jack Sanford	566-2191	jacksanford@hotmail.com
Programs Chair	John O'Brien	962-7799	mlbm@cox.net
Conservation Chair	Julie Love	453-4840	jlove@lifesci.ucsb.edu
Education Chair	Patricia Malone	569-1993	pamalone@verizon.net
Science Chair	David Kisner	252-5036	d_kisner@cox.net
Membership Chair	Steve Ferry	967-5162	sjferry@cox.net
Newsletter Chair	Callie Bowdish	968-2857	cjbowdish@hotmail.com
Publicity Chair	Ben Shalant	448-4447	benjamin_shalant@antiochsb.edu
At Large-Outreach	John Walker	570-7864	johnlee@umail.ucsb.edu
At Large-Outreach	Julie Kummel	964-9444	jkummel@rain.org
At Large-Outreach	Natasha Carr	967-1383	tahi@cox.net

APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster: Bobbie Offen	684-0160	bobbieo@cox.net
Eyes In The Sky: Gabriele Drozdowski	898-0347	pelican7@cox.net
Snowy Plover Docent Prog: Jennifer Stroh	880-1195	stroh@lifesci.ucsb.edu
Hospitality: Don & Florence Stivers	967-3690	
Report Rare Birds: Karen Bridgers	964-1316	k.bridgers@cox.net
Hear Rare Bird Report	964-8240	

Officers and Chairs meet the 2nd Wednesday of the month. Members are welcomed to attend. Call **SBAS** office to verify dates and times. FAX: 967-7718. Cover art by Daryl Harrison.

Printed on recycled paper.



El Tecolote
Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.
5679 Hollister Avenue, Suite 5B
Goleta, CA 93117

**Dated material, please expedite
April 2006**

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SANTA BARBARA, CA.
PERMIT NO. 125

or current resident