

# EITecolote

Santa Barbara Audubon Society  
Winter 2023/24



**60 Years of SBAS:  
Celebrating Jan Hamber**

**Birders of SB:  
Alex Castelein**

**Nest Box Program  
Retrospective**



## From the desk of Katherine Emery, Executive Director

Through our Education and Conservation/ Science committees, Santa Barbara Audubon Society (SBAS) is actively working on several initiatives. This update provides an overview of selected current projects, goals, and opportunities for member engagement.

Dear SBAS Friends, Members, and Supporters,

SBAS protects area birdlife and habitat and connects people with birds through education, conservation, and science. This fall, the SBAS Board and staff came together at the beautiful Leading from Within Convening Space to review our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. It was uplifting to have so many knowledgeable and passionate SBAS leaders in one room share what excites them most about SBAS and prioritize actionable goals for the upcoming year, such as onboarding a Development Chair and Membership Chair to fill two very important seats on our Board. Please contact President Janice Levasheff if you're interested in one of these Chair positions.

Our educational outreach continued to soar. We created a new SBAS Feather Box exhibit to share at local schools, public events, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (SBMNH), and made plans to expand our Meet Your Wild Neighbor program to more kindergarten through grade three classrooms in the new year. We were honored to collaborate with three local partners—SBMNH, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, and UCSB Bren School of Environmental Science and Management—to present "Bird Conservation around the World and in Our Own Backyards: From Awe to Action" by Lynn Scarlett. At the end of the program, a particular moment captured the evening's optimism. Lynn was surrounded by a group of UCSB students listening intently to her words and one young woman remarked, "I want to be like her."

Our bird walks and field trips resumed in full force: popular, educational, and inclusive of novice and expert birders. Thank you to Peter Thompson, Rob Lindsay, Jeff Hanson, Peggy Kearns, Nick Lethaby and Guy Tingos for their knowledge and time leading these trips. Our Conservation/Science Committee remained steadfast in its commitment to protect local birdlife.

In our 60th anniversary *El Tecolote* issue, we looked at our past, present, and future. While we mourned the loss of a few longtime SBAS members, we were inspired to forge ahead in our conservation efforts. Gib Lentz wrote, "...It is heartening to see the number of people who fondly remember Joan and have benefited by her enthusiasm and knowledge. Now, it is up to you and the Audubon Society to carry on her work. Thank you, again."

Along those lines, we continue to highlight accomplishments of our young student birders. Recently, Lucy London, our high school SBAS Student Representative and a shining light in the birding community, gave her gift of art to SBAS with the design of a beautiful new Winter Bird Count for Kids T-shirt. We invite you to help bring kids into nature to learn about birds at our 10th annual WBC for Kids event on January 20, 2024. Learn more at [SantaBarbaraAudubon.org](http://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org).

With gratitude to our friends, members, volunteers, and grantors, thank you for all that you do to protect birds and their habitats. Wishing you peace.

*Katherine Emery, Executive Director  
Santa Barbara Audubon Society*

Special thanks to an anonymous donor who sponsored the color printing for this issue of *El Tecolote*.

## SBAS Member Highlights: Making a Difference for Birds

SBAS member **Hugh Ranson** published a 2024 calendar of his bird photos and is donating proceeds to SBAS. Calendars are available at Chaucer's Books or Tecolote Book Shop and would make great holiday gifts! Read more about Hugh on page 14.



SBAS Board President Janice Levasheff finds Hugh's calendar at Chaucer's. Photo by Dolores Pollock

SBAS Student Representative **Lucy London** (pictured) models her design for the Winter Bird Count for Kids T-shirt. Visit the SBAS table at the SBMNH Winter Festival on December 9 to preview the event shirts.



Photo by Devon London

Lucy also is presenting "Three Billion Birds," an exhibit tour at SBMNH, mid-days most Saturdays through December 16. For details, visit the calendar page at [sbnature.org](http://sbnature.org)

**Lynn Scarlett** talks with UCSB students after her SBAS program in the fall.



Photo by Katherine Emery

**SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY**

805-964-1468

SantaBarbaraAudubon.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Katherine Emery

EYES IN THE SKY DIRECTOR  
Hannah Atkinson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
**President**, Janice Levasheff  
**Vice-President**, Briana Sapp  
**Secretary**, Kathleen Boehm  
**Treasurer**, Christopher Mersey

**At Large**  
Sam Franz  
Ron Hirst  
**Communications**  
Kris Mainland White  
**Conservation/Science**  
Jessie Altstatt  
**Development**  
OPEN  
**Education**  
Jessica Prichard  
**Field Trips**  
Peter Thompson  
**Membership**  
OPEN  
**Programs**  
Roman Baratiak

BOARD-APPOINTED POSITIONS  
**Field Trips Coordinator**  
Dane St. George  
**Newsletter**  
Colette Becker  
Dennis Power  
**Webmaster**  
David Levasheff  
**Presidents Emeritae**  
Darlene Chirman  
Dolores Pollock

The Board meets the second Wednesday of each month, Sept-June. Members are welcome to attend.

Find SB County Birding Info:  
[sbcobirding.groups.io/g/main](http://sbcobirding.groups.io/g/main)

# El Tecolote

The magazine of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society

## CONTENTS

Vol 62 | Issue 2 | December 2023 – February 2024

- 4 ..... **Christmas Bird Count** LIBBY PATTEN
- 5 ..... **Winter Bird Count for Kids** KATHLEEN BOEHM
- 5 ..... **Eyes in the Sky** HANNAH ATKINSON
- 6 ..... **Birders of Santa Barbara** PEGGY KEARNS
- 7 ..... **Celebrating 60 Years with Jan Hamber**
- 7 ..... **Welcoming a New Board Member**
- 7 ..... **Bird Your Five-Mile Radius** NOAH GAINES
- 8 ..... **Tributes**
- 9 ..... **Nest Box Program** JESSIE ALTSTATT
- 9 ..... **Conservation and Science News** STEVE FERRY
- 11 ..... **Donor Recognition**
- 13 ..... **Programs** ROMAN BARATIAK
- 15 ..... **Bird Walks and Field Trips**  
PETER THOMPSON AND DANE ST. GEORGE

**On the Cover:** Townsend's Warbler at Douglas Family Preserve. Photo by Oscar Johnson. Oscar is a Santa Barbara City College alumnus, a post-doctoral fellow at University of Texas El Paso, and, in 2024, will be an Assistant Professor of Ornithology at Florida Gulf Coast University.



### Help Birds Soar!

**Join, Renew Your Membership, and/or Donate to Santa Barbara Audubon Society**

Please donate online, scan the QR code, or mail this form with your check to **SBAS** (address below).

I'll be a Chapter-Supporting Member!  New  Renewing

\$26 Basic  \$50 Sponsor  \$100 Sustaining  \$500 Patron  \$1,000 Benefactor  Other donation

Chapter memberships are separate from National Audubon memberships. 100% of your dues stay local and keep SBAS strong and sustainable, so we can protect birds and their habitat now and into the future.

Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your membership and any additional donations are tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail membership form or donation with check to:**  
**SBAS, P.O. Box 6737, Santa Barbara, CA 93160**  
**Or join or donate at: [SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/join-sbas](http://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/join-sbas)**  
**SBAS does not share personal information with other organizations. Thank you for your support.**

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

# The 124th Audubon Christmas Bird Count

By Libby Patten

This year's Santa Barbara Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on **Saturday, December 30, 2023**, and the coordination team is busy getting ready!

It was quite heartening to have historically high rainfall last winter (37 inches downtown and 81 inches on San Marcos Pass) that filled our reservoirs; indeed many creeks and ponds still have water. Oh my, it made for a very soggy CBC last year!



Members of the mountain crew brave the elements during the 2022 CBC.

It's unclear how that accumulated rainfall impacted bird numbers in recent months and how it might impact this year's CBC. Here and across California, many landbird migrants this fall showed low numbers (e.g., Wilson's Warbler, Warbling Vireo) and now wintering species' numbers seem down as well, or perhaps they're arriving late (e.g., White-crowned Sparrow). It's unclear what factors are causing these trends and many theories abound: rainfall distribution, fewer insects or food supply issues, wind patterns, climate change, etc.

After a slow fall migration, October was more exciting. We're seeing a significant "montane year" or irruption of mountain species coming south in search of food: Clark's Nutcracker, Cassin's Finch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, and Pine Siskin, as well as noisy Red-breasted Nuthatch found almost anywhere with trees. All of these trends mean that a careful CBC census of our bird species is more important than ever for taking the pulse of our bird populations. As always, the weather running up to the CBC can play a significant role in what shows up on count day—so fingers crossed for just enough rain to encourage the birds, but not enough to discourage the birders!

The Santa Barbara count circle's center point is the intersection of Cathedral Oaks Road and Highway 154, and radiates out 7.5 miles in all directions. Before Count Day, you can help by keeping eyes open and ears tuned during your outings within these boundaries. Let us know about the following interesting or unusual birds:

*Blue-winged Teal*  
*Greater Scaup*  
*Mountain Quail*  
*Virginia Rail*  
*Wilson's Snipe*  
*Greater Roadrunner*  
*Any owls other than Great Horned or Barn*  
*White-throated Swift*  
*Any hummingbird species other than Anna's or Allen's*  
*Sapsuckers other than Red-breasted Horned Lark*  
*Any swallows*



Clark's Nutcracker. Photo by Steve Colwell

*Rock or Pacific Wrens*  
*Common Raven*  
*Any warbler species except Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, Townsend's or Common Yellowthroat*  
*Any tanagers*  
*Any grosbeaks*  
*Lark Sparrow*  
*Any orioles*  
*Lawrence's Goldfinch*  
*PLUS, these montane species: Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire, Varied Thrush, Brown Creeper, and Cassin's Finch.*

After many years of inspiring leadership by Rebecca Coulter, our coordination team has been reconfigured with returning members Liz Muraoka, Libby Patten, Glenn Kincaid, Linus Blomqvist, and Conor McMahon, along with new team members Mark Holmgren and Steve Hovey. We look forward to another successful count thanks to our many dedicated field participants. Please check the CBC website for more information: [www.SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/santa-barbara-christmas-bird-count](http://www.SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/santa-barbara-christmas-bird-count).

## CBC Compilation Event

On December 30, the CBC night compilation will be a hybrid event: in-person countdown at the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara (use street parking), and on Zoom. The event will start at 7:00 p.m., and there will be no dinner this year. Please check the CBC website for all the latest updates at [SantaBarbaraAudubon.org](http://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org). We hope to see you in person or virtually!

# Winter Bird Count for Kids

By Kathleen Boehm

January 20, 2024 • 9:00 a.m.–Noon  
Meet in the Stow House parking lot • 304 N Los Carneros Road, Goleta  
Registration from 9:00–9:30 a.m. only

SBAS is celebrating 10 years of introducing youth to the birding world through the Winter Bird Count for Kids, open to ages 8-16 (accompanied by an adult). SBAS volunteers guide groups to find birds at Lake Los Carneros.



Each participant receives a checklist with bird pictures and a free T-shirt (limited to first 75 attendees) designed by Lucy London, SBAS student representative. Kids do not need their own binoculars; we lend out binoculars and provide tips and instruction on how to use them. This fun event plays an important role in helping spark curiosity and develop the next generation who will protect birds and their habitats.

Please help spread the word about this free event. Visit [SantaBarbaraAudubon.org](http://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org) for more details. Reach out to Kathleen Boehm via the Board directory link on the SBAS website if you would

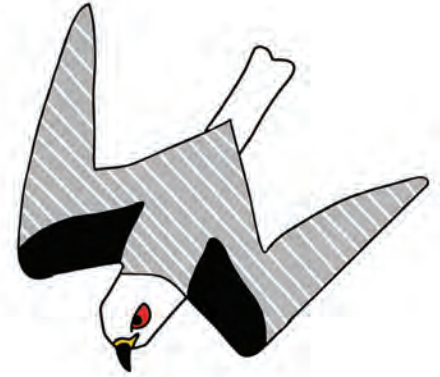


Illustration by Lucy London

like to get involved in promotion or volunteering for the event.

Thank you to all the volunteers and sponsors who make this event possible, and special thanks for support from the City of Goleta, Goleta Valley Historical Society/ Stow House, South Coast Railroad Museum, and Christ Lutheran Church.

---

## Farewell to Athena

By Hannah Atkinson, Eyes in the Sky Director

This year, Eyes in the Sky lost another beloved ambassador bird. Athena the Barn Owl, one of our most well-known and striking birds, passed away due to heart disease as a result of old age. Whereas most Barn Owls live fewer than five years in the wild, she lived to the age of 14. She spent most of her life as an ambassador for her species.

Athena came to our program more than a decade ago. As a young wild owl, she was struck by a car and blinded in one eye. After a long rehabilitation at South Bay Wildlife Center near Palos Verdes, it was determined that Athena was unable to hunt for herself and would need lifelong care. We were immensely lucky to offer her a new home at Eyes in the Sky.

Often, non-imprinted owls—those without early exposure to humans—do not acclimate well to captivity. But Athena was known as an incredibly serene presence to audiences throughout Santa Barbara. She touched the lives of thousands, children and adults alike, who might have otherwise never seen a beautiful live owl.

We are deeply saddened to see her go. With Athena's passing, the aviary has seen a shift from a long-standing team of birds—those who had been with us for a decade or more—to a team of new arrivals. The aviary now hosts three falcons, all arriving within the past year, and Max, the venerable Great Horned Owl who is now 26 years old.

To many volunteers and visitors who loved her, the loss of Athena



Athena the Barn Owl. Photo by Betsy Mooney

feels like the end of an era. With her passing, that aviary room is empty, and we stand ready to welcome a new bird in need. We are deeply grateful for the time we spent with Athena and look forward to what the future holds.

# Birders of Santa Barbara: Alex Castelein

By Peggy Kearns

*Alex Castelein is a UCSB undergraduate student majoring in Computer Science. He was interviewed by Peggy Kearns, SBAS field trip leader.*

## Early Memories

I started photographing birds as a high school senior, and then I inherited my grandpa's 40-year-old binoculars, which have since traveled with me to Belgium and Peru. Initially, I was a herper looking for reptiles and amphibians (which I still do frequently). Whereas there is a strong birding community, herping is more of a reserved hobby because you don't share spots for fear of poachers and habitat destruction. The birding community is more welcoming, and of course we get to enjoy the excitement of wide-scale migration and vagrants.

## Spark Bird

I didn't really have a spark bird, more of a spark birder. Right before starting at UCSB, I met Max Laubstein as a herper and he swiftly got me into hardcore birding. A few weeks later I found myself chasing a Thick-billed Kingbird in my hometown of Menlo Park. I got caught up in the excitement as dozens of far more experienced birders arrived and learned that the bird was the third record for NorCal. It was after that I started seriously chasing birds.

## Research

Last year, I spent two months in the Peruvian Amazon after Max recommended the research and conservation organization Fauna Forever. I spent every morning bird

banding with a master bander and every night taking data on snakes and frogs. My first week birding was quite challenging because dense jungle birding means you hear many birds but rarely see them. You have to quickly learn hundreds of vocalizations.

## Rare Bird

On September 21, I was biking along the Atascadero Creek bike path. I had been looking for Northern Waterthrush and I heard a call that piqued my interest. Sure enough, there it was! I snapped a couple photos, but something seemed off. I got on the phone with some experts, and confirmed my suspicion that it was actually the subtly different, and much rarer, Louisiana Waterthrush!



Louisiana Waterthrush. Photo by Alex Castelein

Over the next two days, dozens of birders from all over the state arrived to sash through the mud of Atascadero Creek in order to see this bird. This represents only the second county record for Santa Barbara and the 24th state record for California.

## Channel Islands

I was at Scorpion Anchorage, a high-potential vagrant location, on October 16, 2022, with Max



Alex Castelein with a Red-billed Scythebill, during bird banding research in Peru.

Laubstein, Jeremy Cowan, and Jeremy's parents. It was quite an amazing vagrant bonanza, with Black-and-white Warblers, Ovenbirds, Dickcissel, Green-tailed Towhee, Clay-colored Sparrows, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and last, but certainly not least, we found the second county record of Wood Thrush!

## County Listing

In the last year or so I have gotten more into county listing, especially if I can find those birds for myself. After two years birding in Santa Barbara County, I'm up to 337 county birds, and hoping to make it to at least 375 before I graduate!

## Life Goals

My overall goal is to find work I enjoy (not sure exactly what yet) and spend as much time as possible discovering birds, herps, and the other wonders nature holds. This winter Max and I plan to bird Costa Rica. Dream destinations include New Caledonia and Australia.

# 60 Years of SBAS: Celebrating Jan Hamber

Jan Hamber was part of the SBMNH Bird Study group that started the Santa Barbara Audubon Society.

Volume 1, Number 1 of the official bulletin of the SBAS was published in September 1963, with Jan Hamber as the editor. Suggested names for the bulletin were included, and members were asked to vote on their favorite.

Volume 1, Number 2 of the bulletin shows that members picked *El Tecolote* for the name. That issue also lists the officers and board of directors of the newly fledged Santa Barbara Audubon Society. It reflects Jan's passion for our mission: Jan was Board Secretary, *El Tecolote* editor, a member of both the Conservation

and Publicity committees, and was the lead for the local Rare Bird Alert, collecting reports people would phone in to an avian hotline. To read more about this type of early Rare Bird Alert system, a quick online search of "rare bird alert history" will reveal a fascinating article from the Winter 2021 national *Audubon Magazine*.

Jan was our editor during the January 1969 oil spill off the Santa Barbara coast. She also was an integral member of the team that captured the last wild California Condor in an effort to save the species (more on that in the fall 2020 *Audubon Magazine*). Currently she manages the Condor Archives at the



Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and is a fantastic role model for women in science. She is an inspiration, and we are honored that she has been part of our flock since the very beginning.

Thank you, Jan!



Jessica Prichard in Big Sur

Jessica Prichard recently joined the SBAS Board as Education Chair. With a background in education

## Jessica Prichard Joins SBAS Board

and art history, she is the School and Community Programs Specialist for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. She focuses on interdisciplinary, student-centered approaches to learning, with field trips and community outreach programs that inspire people to get outside and experience the joy of connecting to the natural world.

Jessica has a particular interest in birding and nature journaling as a way to connect with nature and to help people become more mindful of the biodiversity in Santa Barbara. Through her Board leadership, she

aims to learn about and grow the birding community, welcoming all to join the SBAS in protecting birds and their habitats.

Jessica is a certified climate steward, as well as a certified instructor for teaching others to communicate about climate change within their communities.

Birding is intertwined with conservation, notes Jessica: "The sparks of joy from birding build long-lasting connections with nature and people, which is the most important thing we can do right now to inspire people to care about the natural world."

## Birding a 5MR

by Noah Gaines

The Five Mile Radius (5MR) list is a list of birds that you have seen within a five-mile circle from your home. To find birding spots in your radius, just search online for 'map radius tool' and enter your address to calculate your radius.

To keep track of your list, it helps to start a patch list on eBird and



Noah Gaines at Lake Los Carneros

then add all the locations inside your 5MR. The benefit of a 5MR list is that

it narrows your focus to your local neighborhood. It is great motivation to search out new birds and new birding spots in your backyard.

My 5MR spans all the way from West Camino Cielo to Goleta Bay and offers a large variety of habitat. Maybe my best self-found 5MR birds were a Golden Eagle and Sabine's Gull at Lake Los Carneros. Get out to your local patch and see what you can find!

# REMEMBERING FRIENDS OF SBAS

## Teresa Fanucchi (1968-2023)

When Teresa Fanucchi joined Santa Barbara Audubon in 2010, she brought friendship to all, a gentle sense of humor, knowledge of food preparation, musical talent, boundless curiosity, and drive to support the SBAS mission.

Not long after joining SBAS, Teresa became the unofficial host of our monthly programs, bringing wholesome, homemade baked goods to share. She also became an Eyes in the Sky volunteer, landing in the Tuesday group, which had the distinction of taking some of the birds on field trips to Parma Park and other panoramic locations.

In 2017, she joined the SBAS Board, becoming the chair of the

Programs Committee. She made many contributions to meetings and occasionally shared a funny story about the birds of EITS. When the pandemic began, she undertook the intricacies of changing from in-person presentations to Zoom sessions, quickly becoming adept at the software and helping others who needed assistance.

Teresa was a member of the Threshold Choir, a group that uses song to ease and soothe seriously ill and dying patients. When our elderly American Kestrel, Kachina, was in failing health, Teresa would sometimes take her home on evenings when the group practiced their songs in her home. She



Teresa Fanucchi with EITS ambassador Kisa.

remarked that during the practice, Kachina appeared to be sleeping, apparently comforted. When we held a ceremony in Kachina's memory following her death, Teresa came with a friend from the group, and they sang for us, lifting our spirits.

Teresa Fanucchi's leadership and generous spirit leave an indelible legacy for our Audubon chapter.

—Joyce Carasa

## Charis Bratt (1932-2023)

Charis "Cherie" Bratt passed away in August, leaving a remarkable legacy as a community leader and an active member of SBAS. She participated in many Christmas Bird Counts over the years, and hosted the Rare Bird Alert telephone line. She was a volunteer in the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's California Condor recovery program, a volunteer research assistant for the museum, and a founding member of the California Lichen Society. She and others were instrumental in the successful efforts to save Lake Los Carneros from development, leading

the way for it to remain critical bird habitat and become the nature preserve it is today.

### John Deacon shared a tribute on sbcobirding:

I was just a budding birder in 1974 when friends and I decided to do a birding trip to the Central Coast. We were calling the Santa Barbara County Rare Bird Alert number to keep on top of what was going on; Charis' was the voice on the line keeping us updated prior to our trip. As our trip got closer, she stayed in touch to let us know

what was happening. At this point, I hadn't even seen a Peregrine Falcon. Charis graciously took us around Santa Barbara and Goleta looking for birds. I remember standing in some tall brush looking for one of our target birds. While scoping the area, I remember Charis yelling to me, "You're standing in poison oak!" I yelled back "I don't think I'm allergic to it!" A week later, back in Utah, I discovered that I was allergic to poison oak. Head to toe, I discovered it. Whenever I'm birding and I see poison oak, I remember Charis.

### Thank You To:

- An anonymous donor for sponsoring full-color printing for this issue of *El Tecolote*.
- Vanessa Delnavaz, who has done a fabulous job as data entry clerk for SBAS.
- Libby Patten and Liz Muraoka, who have been working hard on coordinating logistics for the Christmas Bird Count.
- Carl and Barbara Fanucchi and their family for giving people the opportunity to remember their daughter Teresa by donating to Eyes in the Sky in her memory.
- The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History for inviting SBAS to have a table at their Winter Festival on December 9.
- Owen Duncan, Content Specialist at SBMNH, for collaborating on social media content when SBMNH and SBAS have common themes (birds and programming).
- Mark Holmgren, Adrian O'Loughlen, and Glenn Kincaid for being part of the California Working Group monitoring our local population of Purple Martins in the Nojoqui Falls Park area, which is home to one of the very few nesting sites in California and is threatened by habitat degradation. Their research and work to advocate for Purple Martins is one of many efforts undertaken our hardworking Conservation/Science Committee in order to protect local birds.
- SBAS volunteers, members, grantors, and donors, for continued and generous support.



# CONSERVATION AND SCIENCE

## Nest Box Program Retrospective

By Jessie Altstatt, Conservation/Science Committee Chair

Tree Swallows migrate into our area to breed in spring, while Western Bluebirds are here year round. These species are both cavity nesters, which means they naturally build nests in tree cavities. Cavities, or holes, occur in older limbs or trunks, and are often initially made by woodpeckers. Cavities are a critical resource for dozens of bird species, and have declined due to impacts from human activity.

In the urban environment, older trees are often perceived as a hazard and may be removed for fear of falling, and those that remain are often routinely trimmed to minimize dead branches (those most appropriate for cavity nests). Removal of nesting habitat was likely a reason why Tree Swallows and some other cavity-nesting species dropped to “uncommon breeder” status in our area by the start of this century.

The SBAS Nest Box Program got started in 2005 as a way to increase the available local nesting habitat for Tree Swallows. Western Bluebirds also used the boxes and were added to

the monitoring program. Over time, the program’s focus was consolidated to 22 boxes installed around Lake Los Carneros in Goleta. Dozens of SBAS volunteers and UCSB students have been involved over the years. The program monitored boxes for a list of parameters such as species, breeding activity, and the timing and success of egg laying, hatching, and fledging. Other observations led to discoveries of bird preferences for nest box spacing, distance to the lake, mate fidelity, and much more.

From 2017-23, Don Schroeder created and led a banding program whereby the young produced in each nest could be tracked into the future. From his work, we learned much about the natural history of two beloved species, Tree Swallows and Western Bluebirds, that have different habits but share nesting habitat. A major report on the program was produced in 2022 by Don Schroeder and Steve Senesac. Visit [SantaBarbaraAudubon.org](http://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org) to find more details in the Science section.



Don Schroeder checking a nest box.  
Photo by Adam Lewis

Don is retiring from the program after a remarkable 14 years of dedication and service to ensure continuity of the research. We are sad to see him step away from the nest boxes but are very thankful for his leadership, his generosity, and all of the time he has spent mentoring and inspiring many others.

We are currently looking for someone to take the reins of this flagship program. Please reach out through the Contact link on the SBAS website if you are interested.

### Vegetation Trimming Reminder

Fall and winter months are the best time to cut back vegetation, before bird nesting activity begins in March. Always check for nests and watch for signs of nesting before trimming.

Find helpful resources and download the “Guide to Bird-friendly Vegetation Trimming” on the SBAS website: [SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/additional-resources](http://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/additional-resources)



## CONSERVATION AND SCIENCE

### SBAS Advocacy for Birds at Strauss Wind Farm

By Steve Ferry, Conservation/Science Committee member and SBAS President Emeritus

Santa Barbara Audubon has been working for two decades to minimize the environmental impact of the Strauss Wind Energy Project and the Lompoc Wind Farm before it. During the Strauss environmental review process, SBAS made a herculean effort to minimize the impact of the wind farm on birds. By the time the Strauss project received Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (BOS) approval in January 2020, we had made a significant difference in the project's design. Garry George, Senior Director for Climate Strategy for National Audubon, has stated that Strauss has the most protections for birds of any wind farm he has seen.

Early this year, the Strauss developer, BayWa, requested exception from the Condition of Approval requiring it to obtain an eagle incidental take permit (ITP) from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Despite the fact that BayWa had known for over three years it had to get the permit before Strauss could begin operation, BayWa did not apply for the permit until March 2023.

The Santa Barbara Planning Commission (PC) initially was critical of BayWa for neglecting to submit a timely permit application. In a Planning Commission hearing on July 12, 2023, on the question of whether BayWa would be allowed to start operation without the ITP, SBAS wrote a letter to the PC and testified at the hearing, recommending denial of BayWa's request. County planning



Golden Eagle. Photo by David Levasheff

staff also recommended denial. However, the PC decided to approve BayWa's request and directed staff to create language in a new staff report that would justify approval. The PC's reasoning was mainly that the County needs renewable energy—the County is way behind on its renewable energy goals.

A second PC hearing was held August 9, 2023. SBAS sent a second letter to the PC, met with the Chair of the PC, testified at the hearing, and negotiated intensively and extensively with BayWa. At the end of the hearing, the PC approved the project with two of the wildlife harm mitigation requests from SBAS incorporated into the Strauss project.

However, this PC approval was appealed to the BOS by the Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business (CO-LAB), a local pro-business advocacy group. A few days before the date of

the BOS hearing on that appeal, the USFWS sent a letter to the County indicating that the it was planning to issue an ITP. This satisfied the remaining County conditions on Strauss, allowing BayWa to begin operations without the ITP actually in place and without the mitigations that SBAS won at the PC hearings. They expect to start producing wind power by the end of 2023.

As before, SBAS fought the good fight this year to advocate for protections for birds at the Strauss wind farm. We were influential with the County and the developer. While the outcome was not all we'd advocated for, our voice proved to be effective. SBAS will continue work to protect birds and their habitats. Our hope now is that Strauss will produce renewable energy for years to come, with limited impact on birds.

The Strauss site has an exceptional bird diversity and one of the highest raptor concentrations in Santa Barbara County. While Audubon supports renewable energy production, wind energy that is not properly planned, sited, and operated can have a devastating effect on birds. SBAS will continue with strong science-based conservation actions to protect regional avifauna in our unique central California area. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our members in these conservation efforts. For more information on the conservation work by SBAS during this project, read: [SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/audubon-accomplishments-on-strauss](https://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/audubon-accomplishments-on-strauss)

**SBAS Thanks 2022/23  
Fiscal Year Donors**

**Great Horned Owl  
(\$25,000 and above)**  
Steinmetz Foundation

**Condor  
(\$10,000 to \$24,999)**

Susanne & Carroll  
Barrymore  
In the name of  
Gerald A. Van Vleet  
(Endowment)  
Hutton Parker Foundation  
May and Bill Allison  
Foundation  
Roger A. Clarke Classical  
Trust  
Mary D. Thompson

**Eagle  
(\$5,000 to \$9,999)**

Darlene Chirman  
Julie & Marc Kummel  
Nancy Miller  
Ann Steinmetz &  
Steve Senesac

**Falcon  
(\$1,000 to \$4,999)**

David & Aimee Buell in  
honor of Kieran Buell  
Alex & Joyce Carasa  
City of Goleta  
Scott Cooper &  
Sheila Wiseman  
Joel & Vasanti Fithian  
Lori Gaskin  
Sally & Brent Kitson  
David & Janice Levasheff  
Marla Mercer &  
Rick Herzog  
Gail Osherenko &  
Oran Young  
Patagonia  
Dolores & Bill Pollock  
Melissa Riparetti-Stepien  
Rudi Schulte Family  
Foundation  
Wendy Scott  
Geoffrey Slaff  
Elena Urschel  
Paula Whited

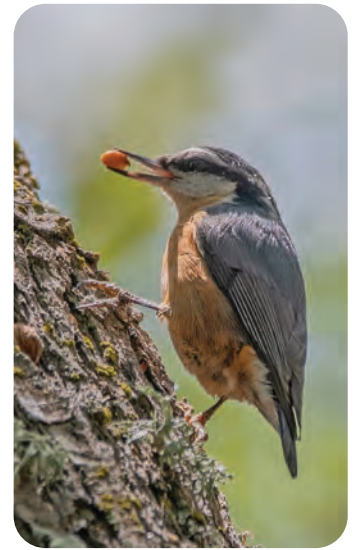
**Meadowlark  
(\$500 to \$999)**

Tanya Atwater  
Roslyn & Irwin Bendet  
Stephen Brillhart  
Doug & Patty Campbell  
Carpinteria Lions Club  
Lydia Deems & Bill Prothero  
Nancy Donaldson  
Steven Gaulin  
Mary Grace Kaljian  
Peggy Kearns &  
Jeff Hanson  
Eric Lassen  
Marilyn Love  
Laurel Luby &  
Thomas Beland  
Chris & Cheri Mersey  
Lisa Stratton & Peter Schuyler  
Janet Uribe

**Roadrunner  
(\$100 to \$499)**

Courtney Andelman  
Anonymous  
James Balsitis &  
Kathy Kalp  
Roman Baratiak  
Susan Basham  
Colette & Jeff Becker  
Gretchen Beckert  
John & Nan Bedford  
Ann Bermingham  
Linda Bernson  
Peter & Linda Beuret  
Donald & Diana Blackwill  
Kathleen Boehm  
Lynne Borderre  
Tara Brown  
Roland Bryan  
Meredith Byrne  
Otis Calef  
Jan Campbell  
Dave Carlberg  
Ana Citrin  
Cristine Crooks  
Susan & Jim Deacon  
Rick Doehring  
Dennis Doordan  
Coni Edick  
Ronald Ehmsen  
Robert Else &  
Ann Dundon  
Fred & Nancy Emerson  
Katherine Emery  
Sally & Steven Faulstich

Stephen & Betty Ferry  
Marcia Field  
Michael Fishbein  
Gloria Fletcher  
Barbara Gallisath &  
Christopher Seidman  
Joan & Tony Galvan  
Leslie Gascoigne &  
George Johnson  
Liz & Art Gaspar  
Leslie Griffin  
David Griggs  
Elisabeth Hall  
Jeff & Claudia Hamers  
Marilyn Harding  
Alice Henry  
Corinne Heyning Laverty  
Nancy Hull  
Karl & Nancy Hutterer  
Jeanette Iwatsuki  
James Kennett  
Joan Kent  
Bobbie Kinnear  
Karen & Doug Kirk  
Carolyn Koegler  
Peggy & Noel Langle  
Susan & Andy Lentz  
Joan Lentz in honor  
of David Levasheff  
Margaret Levine  
Susan LeVine  
Adam & Maureen Lewis  
Robert Lindsay  
Peggy Lubchenco &  
Steve Gaines  
Mike & Mary Lynn Mallen  
Laura Manning  
Robert & Siri Marshall  
Michael Marzolla  
Elizabeth Matthews  
Mark Matthias  
Kathleen McGuinness  
Cheryl Medow  
Patricia Mickelson  
Judith Muller  
Robert Musser  
Bobbie Offen  
Dotti Pak & Jordan Clark  
Lanette Perry  
Janet Pickthorn  
Scot Pipkin  
Jennifer Plana  
Hjalmar & Minie Pompe  
van Meerdervoort  
Dennis Power  
Spencer Price  
Ethan Reece



Red-breasted Nuthatch.  
Photo by Steve Hovey

Christine &  
Stefan Riesenfeld  
Anne Roediger  
Catherine Rose  
Steven Russell  
Paul & Sandy Russell  
Ann Sanders &  
Gerry Winant  
Lynn Scarlett  
Lindsay Straub  
Miki & Ron Swick  
David & Karen  
Telleen-Lawton  
Peter & Mary Thompson  
Donald & Marge  
Thornton  
Frances Tibbits  
Cherie Topper  
Michele Tornabene  
UCSB Emeriti Association  
Alice Van de Water  
Pamela Viale  
Jayne Wamsley in honor of  
Deby Laranjo  
Susie & Donnie Wells  
Thomas Whittemore  
Bruce & Sayoko Wilson  
Pat Woodruff  
Judith Writer  
Robert & Katy Zappala

*(continued)*

## 2023/24 Donor List (continued)

### Snowy Plover (\$1 to \$99)

Kelly Alexis  
John Anagnoson  
Jane Anderson  
Nancy Baron  
Cherie Baroni  
Janet Barr in honor of  
Satie Airame  
Bob Baum  
Roslyn & Irwin Bendet in  
honor of Ria Marsh  
Bonnie Bisoglio  
Donald Bleeck  
Beth Bornstein in honor  
of Phila Rogers  
Sharon & John Broberg  
Ann Bromfield  
Michelle Brown  
Steve Brown  
Jayne Burton  
Patricia Caird in honor of  
Judy Blue  
Carol Campbell  
Nancy Campbell  
Lynne Cantlay  
Lois Capps  
Twila Christensen  
Jean Clarke  
Lyda Clough

Sarah & Peter De Tagyos  
Sarah Degen  
Nancy Donahoe  
Kimberly Dwire  
Cinda Erdman  
Sam Franz  
Mary Freeman  
Marcy & Jack Friedlander  
Rebecca Garbett &  
Ronald Garber  
Carol Geer  
Jessica Wells in honor of  
Deby Laranjo  
Mary & Daniel Gosselin  
Leonard & Cathleen  
Grabowski  
Payne K. Green  
Ellen Hamilton  
Richard Hammond  
Rebecca Hardin  
Gregg Hart  
Deborah Holmes  
Shelley Hurst  
Kate Ingalls  
Line Jette &  
Rolf Christoffersen  
Terry Kleid  
Andrew Kroes in honor of  
Nicole Gee  
Wendie Kruthers  
Elizabeth and Phil Kryder  
Hildegard Lagerquist  
Don & Carol Lauer

Kathleen Laurain  
Joan Lentz  
Judith Long  
Lenore Los  
Kristie Maingot  
James Markham  
Katherine Martin  
Carolyn McCleskey  
Joanne Miles  
Jim Morris  
Alexandra Nygaard  
Yukari Okamoto  
Judith Orias  
Ken & Alex Palley  
John & Anita Peca  
Michael Powers &  
Robin Denny  
Nick Priester  
Catherine Quinn  
Henry Rangel  
Gregory Rassolov  
Patricia Reilly-Stark  
Florence Russell  
Lydia Russell in honor of  
Katy and Bob Zappala  
Phil Schlageter  
Patricia Schuette in honor  
of Judy Blue  
Robert Schwarz  
Carole Sebitts in honor of  
Judy Blue  
Karla Shelton  
Sheila & Kevin Snow

Eric Sonquist in memory of  
Lee Moldaver  
Gordon & Melba Sprague  
in honor of Judy Blue  
Rebecca Stebbins  
Michael & Beverly Steinfeld  
Debra Stewart  
Mary Suydam  
Carol Terry  
Nancy Tobin  
Trust of Robert Sollen  
Sarah & Philip Vedder  
Duane Walsh  
Jerry Watkins  
Jeffry Waxman  
Joe Wolfard  
Andrew & Molly Wooden  
Kay Woolsey  
Anna Ylvisaker  
Mary Zegers

*Thank you to these  
generous donors who  
made gifts to Santa  
Barbara Audubon Society  
between July 1, 2022, and  
June 30, 2023. If you have  
a correction to your listing,  
please contact us via the  
Contact link at the bottom  
of the SBAS website.*

This fall, the SBAS Eyes in the Sky program received a generous donation from American Riviera Bank. The bank's Employee Directed Donations Committee focused on the environment as its giving theme, and employees nominated local non-profits meaningful to them to receive donations. They selected the EITS live raptor educational program as one of the recipients. This was a delightful surprise and honor. Thank you, American Riviera Bank!



**Pictured, from left:** Vanesa Wendler and Nancy Estby from American Riviera Bank; Hannah Atkinson, SBAS Eyes in the Sky Director, and Katherine Emery, SBAS Executive Director. Photo taken at the Audubon Aviary at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History by Heather Watters of American Riviera Bank

## Community Giving

## Ways to Give

**Join the Board:** The SBAS Board is looking for a Membership Chair and a Development Chair. If you have expertise in either of these areas, please consider joining the SBAS Board.

**Make a Gift Online:** Just click the orange button at the top of the SBAS website to donate—or begin, renew, or gift a SBAS Chapter membership. You may also use the envelope provided in *El Tecolote* for mailing.

**Matching Gifts:** Ask whether your employer has a gift matching program that would double your gift to SBAS.

**Planned Giving:** Talk with your financial advisor about ways a planned gift to SBAS could offer tax advantages.

# Winter 2024 Programs

## Jennifer Ackerman

What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Bird (illustrated)

Tuesday, January 16 • Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Fleischmann Auditorium • 7:30 p.m. • Free

Presented by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Courtesy of Chaucer's, books by the author will be available for purchase and signing at the event.

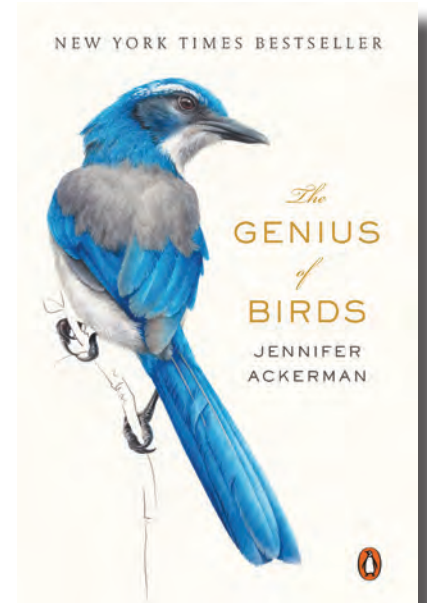
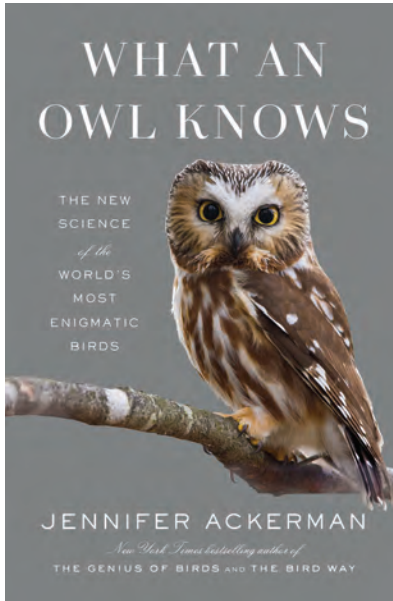
For millennia, owls have captivated and intrigued humans. Our fascination with these mysterious birds was first documented more than 30,000 years ago in the Chauvet Cave paintings in southern France. With their forward gaze and quiet flight, owls are often a symbol of wisdom, knowledge, and foresight. What does an owl really know? And what do we really know about owls?

Scientists have only recently begun to understand the complex nature of these extraordinary birds. Some 260 species of owls exist today. Though they reside on every continent except Antarctica, they are far more difficult to find and study than other birds because they are cryptic, camouflaged, and mostly active in the dark of night.

“[The] owl seemed like a messenger from another time and place, like starlight. Being near her somehow made me feel smaller in my body and bigger in my soul.”

—From *What an Owl Knows*

In this multimedia presentation, Jennifer Ackerman will explore the rich biology and natural history of owls and describe remarkable new scientific discoveries about their brains and behavior.



Jennifer Ackerman is an award-winning science writer and speaker, and author of *New York Times* bestselling books, *The Bird Way*, *The Genius of Birds*, and her latest, *What an Owl Knows*. A lover of birds since she was a child, Jennifer has been writing about nature and science for more than three decades. Her articles and essays have appeared in *National Geographic*, *The New York Times*, *Scientific American* and many other publications. Her presentations have drawn enthusiastic audiences at the National Book Festival, the Aspen Ideas Festival, the Vancouver International Bird Festival, and many other venues around the world.



Jennifer Ackerman with a Great Gray Owl. Photo by Sofia Runarsdotter

# Winter 2024 Programs

## Chris Jenkins

**Documenting Nature: Film Clips from GreenScreen and the Coastal Media Project (illustrated)**

**Tuesday, February 20** • Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Farrand Auditorium • 7:30 p.m. • Free

*Presented by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society*

This special evening features a curated selection of film clips by talented UCSB student filmmakers telling vital and timely stories about our local environment. Chris will introduce the film clips and describe how students with a range of backgrounds work in teams to leverage their collective production skills and environmental knowledge, creating exceptional films as part of the Coastal Media Project and the GreenScreen environmental media production program. While not specifically bird-focused, the collection reveals insights on wildlife habitat, conservation, and the next generation that will work to protect the natural world.



Student filmmakers in the field.  
Photo by Chris Jenkins

**Chris Jenkins** was exposed to exotic locales at an early age, shaping his love for cultural diversity, nature, and art. He followed a somewhat unconventional path, first through bronze

sculpture and oil painting before picking up a camera and dedicating himself to over two decades of international documentary filmmaking. His work has aired on Netflix, PBS, NHK, A&E, Discovery, The History Channel, Travel Channel, and Sundance Channel. For the past 13 years, Chris has been teaching filmmaking in the UCSB Department of Film & Media Studies. As Head of Production, he finds joy in helping students realize their potential as storytellers.



Photo by Dana Welch

---

## Hugh Ranson

**Bird Shorts: Made Up Stories about Birds and Birders**

**Wednesday, March 27** • Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Farrand Auditorium • 7:30 p.m. • Free

*Presented by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society*

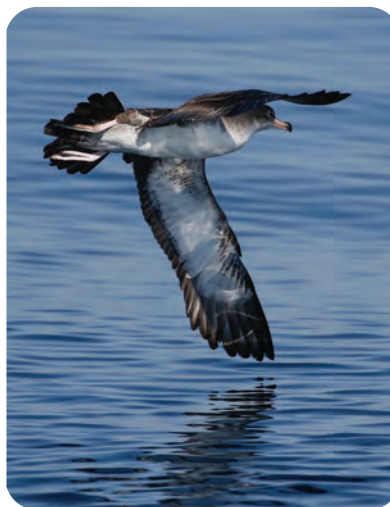
You are invited to a Santa Barbara Audubon first: a night of bird fiction! Join us for an evening of short stories about birders and the birds that fuel their passion, from the creative mind of Santa Barbara's favorite bird columnist, Hugh Ranson. Hugh's recent work focuses on finding new ways to write about the lives of birders, their relationships with one another, and the creatures that send them out into the field on those wild chases.

### Hugh Ranson

was born in England and lived in Wales before coming to California in 1981. He became a birder at the age of 12, and since retiring from his 32-year career as an elementary school teacher, gets out in the field every day to look for and photograph birds and bugs. He has had several short stories published and has written two novels for young adults. Hugh currently writes "Santa Barbara Birding," a monthly bird article for the *Santa Barbara Independent*.



Common Raven and Bald Eagle.  
Photo by Hugh Ranson



Pink-footed Shearwater.  
Photo by Hugh Ranson

# Winter 2024 Bird Walks and Field Trips

## FRIDAY BIRD WALKS

All Friday Bird Walks are 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Free and open to all; no reservation required

- **January 26:** Lake Los Carneros
- **February 9:** Andrée Clark Bird Refuge
- **February 23:** North Campus Open Space
- **March 15:** Carpinteria Salt Marsh
- **March 29:** UCSB Campus Lagoon



---

## SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS

### North Campus Open Space (UCSB)

Saturday, January 6 • 8–11 a.m.

**Habitat for:** Various shorebirds and waterbirds

**Leader:** Rob Lindsay

**Contact:** Dane St. George, [danestgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:danestgeorge@gmail.com)

Free and open to all. No reservation required.



### Cachuma Lake Eagle and Wildlife Cruise

Saturday, February 10 • 9:45 a.m. check in at dock for the 10–11:30 a.m. boat trip

**Habitat for:** Bald Eagle, American White Pelican, Common Loon, Osprey, Great-tailed Grackle, Peregrine Falcon, ducks, grebes, and various waterbirds

**Leader:** Rosey Bishop, park naturalist

**Reservation required** before February 3. Limited to 20 attendees.

**Contact:** Dane St. George, [danestgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:danestgeorge@gmail.com) to request a spot. Include name, e-mail address, and phone number for all people in your party.

**Cost:** \$18 per person. \$10 per vehicle to enter the county park.

**Note:** Wear sturdy shoes for the long walk to the dock. This site has no wheelchair access.

---

## MEMBER FIELD TRIPS

For SBAS or Goleta Coast Audubon Society members only

### Sand Point Road (Sandyland Cove, Carpinteria)

Friday, January 5 • 8 a.m.–Noon

**Habitat for:** Long-billed Curlew, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Osprey, White-tailed Kite, waterfowl, and sandpipers

**Leaders:** Jeff Hanson and Peggy Kearns

**Reservation required** (no cost). Limited to 20 attendees.

**Trip Coordinator/Contact:** Jeff Hanson, [jlh749@cox.net](mailto:jlh749@cox.net) or 805-964-8854.

### Sandhill Crane Overnight (Tulare and Kern Counties)

Saturday and Sunday, February 17 and 18

Meet at noon at the front gate of Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park (CASHP) on Saturday.

**Habitat for:** Sandhill Crane, White-faced Ibis, Burrowing Owl, Common Moorhen, Horned Lark, Loggerhead Shrike, Lark Sparrow, Blue-winged Teal, Marsh Wren, Great Horned Owl etc.

**Reservations:** You must arrange your own travel and overnight accommodations. CASHP Campground fees: \$20 per night, plus a \$7.99 online reservation fee. Motels are 20 minutes away in Lost Hills or Delano. You do not need to reserve a space on the field trip itself.

**Leaders:** Peggy Kearns and Jeff Hanson

**Contact:** Jeff Hanson, [jlh749@cox.net](mailto:jlh749@cox.net) or 805-964-8854

### Ventura Duck Ponds/Wetlands

Sunday, February 25 • 8:00 a.m. (sharp)–Noon

Free. No reservation required.

**Habitat for:** Raptors, waterfowl, shorebirds, marsh birds, songbirds, waders, and more. Birding on foot, three miles on flat roads, attendees must remain in the group. Bring layered clothing and plenty of water and snacks.

**Trip leaders:** Peggy Kearns and Jeff Hanson

**Contact:** Jeff Hanson, [jlh749@cox.net](mailto:jlh749@cox.net) or 805-964-8854

### Rancho Santa Barbara (Santa Ynez)

Saturday, March 16 • 8–11:30 a.m.

**Reservation required** (no cost).

**Habitat for:** Geese, Common Goldeneye, Wood Duck, Lewis's Woodpecker, Clark's Grebe, American White Pelican, and other waterbirds and passerines

**Contact:** Dane St. George, [danestgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:danestgeorge@gmail.com) to request a spot.

**NOTE:** Birding events will depend on weather. Be sure to check the SBAS website for updates prior to the event:  
[SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/activities](http://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/activities)



El Tecolote  
Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc.  
PO Box 6737  
Santa Barbara, CA 93160

**DATED MATERIAL  
PLEASE EXPEDITE**

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



White-tailed Kite, *Photo by Sue Cook*