

El Tecolote

Santa Barbara Audubon Society
Winter 2025/2026





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 Audubon Friends,

I write this update with gratitude. Thanks to you, members, donors, our hardworking Board, volunteers, and staff, SB Audubon Society continues to work wholeheartedly to protect area birdlife and habitat and connect people with birds through education, conservation, and science.

We thank Darlene Chirman and Julie and Marc Kummel for generously sparking a \$10,000 match for SBAS's Annual Campaign.

"I am so impressed with the work of the SB Audubon Conservation/Science Committee, protecting birds and habitats in the Santa Barbara area. I love the Eyes in the Sky Program (EITS) that gives school kids and Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History visitors up close and personal connections with birds of prey. I am proud to support this organization and all the volunteers that make the magic happen!" – Darlene Chirman, President Emerita

"SBAS has done so much over the years to preserve and support the health of the unique and complex

natural world around us. SBAS has long provided top-notch educational opportunities for our schools and community, and I am grateful to give my support!" – Julie Kummel, Board Emerita

SBAS is lively with evening programs, bird walks, and conservation/science work. We welcome Maeve O'Hara, Aviary Raptor Caretaker and Outreach Assistant, and Tango, a three-year-old female Red-tailed Hawk to SBAS's EITS program. We prepare for our winter Meet Your Wild Neighbor classrooms. Please note that we seek a Director for EITS. If you know of an experienced raptor handler with a heart for conservation outreach, please direct them our way.

With all the buzzing, I also appreciate access to our beautiful Santa Barbara open spaces. A bird walk by Campus Lagoon, a magical moment of quiet with likable people, seeing a striking Green Heron that actually looks green. What could be better?

Wishing you a healthy, peaceful holiday season.
Katherine Emery, PhD
Executive Director, Santa Barbara Audubon Society

Thank You to:

- Coni Edick for stepping up as Interim EITS Program Director and volunteer leads Tony Galvan, Deby Laranjo, and Dave Ledig for teaming with Coni in overseeing the aviary and volunteers while we search for an EITS Director.
- Vicki Gardner, local falconer, for volunteering time and expertise in raptor training.
- The Simpson House Inn for generously sponsoring accommodations for our monthly speaker.
- Chaucer's Books for supporting our author speakers.
- Greg Gorga, SB Maritime Museum Executive Director, for facilitating strategic discussions at our retreat and to Steve Windhager and the SB Botanic Garden for hosting us.
- The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History for their invaluable on-going support.
- Santa Barbara Beautiful for our Playa de Santa Barbara Award for Environmental Stewardship.
- Kerry Methner and *The Voice* for running our Bird of the Month column written by Rebecca Coulter.
- The SB CBC lead compilation team of Libby Patten, Glenn Kincaid, Steve Hovey, Wim Van Dam, Ben Byerly, and Judy Chen.
- Kris Mainland White and Gayle Hackamack for co-chairing our CBC Compilation Dinner.
- Nick Lethaby for leading his warbler class for SBAS members.
- Jeff Hanson, Peggy Kearns, Mark Holmgren, and David Levasheff for helping our September speaker, Nathan Pieplow, add to his Santa Barbara bird list.
- Karl Weis, Peter Thompson, David Levasheff, and Mark Holmgren for assisting with our popular birding events.
- Kathleen Boehm, Wendy Kanter, Hilary Peattie, Sue Ehrlich, Page Hiller-Adams, CeCe Borchardt, and Cherie Topper for organizing our 12th Winter Bird Count for Kids on January 24th, 2026.
- Lynn Scarlett and Dennis Power for their talented teamwork in producing this lovely *El Tecolote*.
- The anonymous donor who supports the cost to print *El Tecolote* in color.
- David Levasheff for maintaining our website.
- YOU - our volunteers, members, grantors, and donors, for your continued and generous support.

SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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BOARD-APPOINTED POSITIONS

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Tierrablanca

The Board meets the second Wednesday of the month September through June. Members are welcome to attend.

Santa Barbara County Birding:

sbcobirding.groups.io/g/main

El Tecolote

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On the cover: Red-tailed Hawks (*photo by Adrian O'Loughlen*)

MEMBERSHIP



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 Feathered Friends ☐ \$50 Plover Protector ☐ \$100 Songbird Stewards

☐ \$500 Heron Heroes ☐ \$1,000 Great Horned Owl Guardians

DONATION



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

Name

Street Address

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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

() Phone

Visit our website to receive your newsletter electronically and/or to gift a membership to someone. SBAS does not share personal information with other organizations. Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, EIN 23-7051362.

SBAS Annual Retreat 2025



Your chapter leadership at its annual retreat in early September at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden's Pritzlaff Conservation Center. Our deepest gratitude to our host, Steve Windhager, SBBG's Executive Director, and Greg Gorga, Executive Director of the SB Maritime Museum. Greg facilitated our strategic planning discussions. We were very pleased that Lynn Scarlett, our El Tecolote editor, attended as our special guest.

Save These Dates!

The Santa Barbara Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on January 3, 2026—and the CBC Compilation Dinner returns to Fleischmann Auditorium that evening! We will provide details closer to the end of the year.

Our 12th Annual Winter Bird Count for Kids returns to Stow House/Lake Los Carneros on the morning of January 24, 2026. Share the joy of birding with kids ages 8 through 16! If you are interested in helping at this event, either that day or even in advance, we eagerly welcome you! Please go to <https://SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/events/wbc4k/>, select the Volunteer tab, and follow the instructions. We will be reaching out to all volunteers in the coming months. Thank you!

SBAS Receives Santa Barbara Beautiful Award

Santa Barbara Beautiful (SBB) recognized Santa Barbara Audubon at its annual awards ceremony on September 28. SBB added that it was “... particularly impressed by the efforts of the SBAS Conservation and Science Committee to advocate for strong protections for birds and to increase knowledge of local wildlife and ecosystems with an emphasis on riparian areas and regional open spaces.”

Santa Barbara Beautiful honored SB Audubon with its 2025 Playa de Santa Barbara Award for Environmental Stewardship. A commemorative plaque has been installed at the base of a Red Flowering Eucalyptus near the Plaza del Mar Band Shell in Pershing Park. Like Santa Barbara Audubon, Santa Barbara Beautiful is in its sixth decade. Its mission to preserve the beauty of our community intersects with ours. We appreciate their efforts and are honored and deeply grateful for this award.



Receiving the 2025 Playa de Santa Barbara Award for Environmental Stewardship
(photo by Isaac Hernandez).



Board members Roman Baratiak, Page Hiller-Adams, and Marina Suh at the SBAS table's morning shift for International Vulture Awareness Day on September 26 at the Santa Barbara Zoo. Board members Page and Karl Weis and staff teacher Wendy Kanter volunteered for the afternoon shift. The event raised awareness of the ecological importance of and threats to the world's 23 vulture species, with nonprofit organization tables and a full lineup of educational presentations.

2025 State of the Bird Report—a Brief Look

Bird populations across nearly all habitat types are declining, sometimes at alarming rates

by Lynn Scarlett

Nationwide, birds grabbed headlines in 2019 with publication of a comprehensive assessment of net bird population changes across the United States and Canada. The news was not good. The report indicated a decline of nearly 3 billion birds since 1970—what some scientists called staggering losses. A 2025 updated report brings further bad news, with bird populations across nearly all habitat types declining, sometimes at alarming rates.

While the recent report does not single out details for Santa Barbara County, or even for California, specifically, many large losses nationwide have occurred in what have been common birds in Santa Barbara: meadowlarks, Red-winged Blackbirds, and many others. Eastern and Western Meadowlark populations have declined by a combined 139 million individuals. The Red-winged Blackbird, common in marshes across the continent, has experienced a population decline of 92 million birds, according to the Cornell Lab report.

Sounding the alarm was a starting point for the bird report researchers. In a September webinar, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology outlined what's next. Yes, we need more and continuing data. But, according to Lab researchers, we need data at more granular scales to inform conservation paths forward. For example, the recent reports show declining bird populations in grasslands, but there are differences among tall grass prairies, short grasses, and mixed grass ecosystems. Prioritizing conservation efforts benefits from targeting those areas most impacted and those specific threats driving bird population losses.

In part, this effort requires “gap filling” of areas with sparser data. But the Lab is also overlaying information about roads, water cover, land cover, land uses, elevation, topography, night lights, and more to better

understand how these and other features correlate to bird population trends.

Beyond the Cornell Lab efforts, Audubon California and other organizations monitor birds and underscore the role of birds as indicators of environmental health, habitat changes, and climate changes over time. Thus,

“Tipping Point Species have lost over half their populations since 1970 and require immediate conservation action.”

continued monitoring of birds, notes Audubon California, is important for understanding the state of California's ecosystems. Every

time Santa Barbara Audubon members and friends venture forth to watch birds and record what they see in eBird, they are helping these monitoring efforts—and are a part of the largest citizen science endeavor in the world!



Western Meadowlark (photo by Lynn Scarlett).

Winter Bird Count for Kids

January 24, 2026: 9:00 a.m.–Noon
Lake Los Carneros

Registration is on the Stow House grounds at 304 N. Los Carneros Road, Goleta, from 9:00 to 9:30 a.m.

Santa Barbara Audubon Society is celebrating 12 years of introducing youth to the birding world through the Winter Bird Count for Kids, open to ages 8-16 (must be accompanied by an adult).

The first 75 participants receive a free bird checklist and T-shirt. Binoculars are available for loan. After going through binocular boot camp, kids are led in birding groups around Lake Los Carneros. It's always a treat to hear about the birds they find! This fun event plays an important role in sparking curiosity and developing the next generation who will protect birds and their habitats.

Spread the word, bring the family, and come share the joy! Want to help? Your link for information and volunteering is santabarbaraaudubon.org/events/wbc4k/.

Thank you to all volunteers and special thanks to the City of Goleta, Goleta Valley Historical Society/Stow House, South Coast Railroad Museum, and Anthem Chapel. YOU make this a success!

Join our team!
Help us make a difference

Eyes in the Sky Director Needed!

Do you, or someone you know, have raptor handling experience and enjoy working with people? We are looking for a team player to oversee our aviary and its operations and outreach activities. The position is part time and available now.

Interested? The job description and on-line application are at: <https://tinyurl.com/3us5rnsy>.



Mouse, an American Kestrel and member of our Eyes in the Sky flock
(photo by Hannah Atkinson).

The 126th Audubon Christmas Bird Count

by Libby Patten

Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a venerable tradition that grew out of early efforts to protect birds and their habitats in this country. Santa Barbara hosted one of the first CBCs in California (1902). We are proud of that history. Our count often has been in the top five in the country in terms of total species tallied thanks to our diverse habitats and high number of participants. This year's Santa Barbara CBC will be held on **Saturday, January 3, 2026**. Our dedicated CBC coordination team is already busy preparing! This year's team has returning members Glenn Kincaid, Steve Hovey, Wim van Dam, and myself, along with new members Ben Byerly and Judy Chen.

We were delighted last year to have great weather for the CBC (i.e., no torrential downpours). Coupled with the efforts of nearly 200 birders, our CBC yielded a count of 214 species, the highest total in ten years. As CBC day approaches, many wonder about how the birds are doing and what we're seeing in terms of migrants and wintering species. Fall landbird migration has seemed a bit slow this year but perhaps is picking up as we head deeper into autumn. Some rarer birds

have arrived in our circle recently, raising our hopes for an interesting count. For example, a Lewis's Woodpecker arrived in October and has lingered with behavior that suggests it might stay for the winter.

In the weeks leading up to the count, we use a number of tools to track these rarities and communicate these "target species" for count day to our birding teams. The numbers of many species have declined in recent years, but this makes our CBC data even more important. As always, we enter the CBC season with anticipation about what we might find and hope that the weather gods will be good to us!

The Santa Barbara count circle, centered at the intersection of Cathedral Oaks Road and Highway 154, is 15 miles across. Before Count Day, you can help by keeping eyes open and ears tuned within these boundaries. Let us know about the following interesting or unusual birds:

Blue-winged Teal	Hummingbirds (except Anna's or Allen's)	Warbler species (except Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, Townsend's, or Common Yellowthroat)	Lawrence's Goldfinch
Greater Scaup	Sapsuckers (except Red-breasted)	Tanagers	PLUS, these montane species: Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire, Varied Thrush, Brown Creeper, and Cassin's Finch
Mountain Quail	Horned Lark	Grosbeaks	
Virginia Rail	Swallows	Lark Sparrow	
Wilson's Snipe	Rock or Pacific Wrens	Orioles	
Greater Roadrunner	Common Raven		
Owls (except Great Horned or Barn)			
White-throated Swift			

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. This also includes information about other CBC circles in our county.

You are all invited to the CBC species compilation event on Saturday, January 3, at Fleischmann Auditorium in the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. A parallel Zoom session of this event is also planned. Please check the CBC website for all the latest updates. Hope to see you there!



Lewis's Woodpecker (photo by Jennifer LeMay).



White-throated Sparrow (photo by Adrian O'Loughlen).

Christmas Bird Count Dinner Coming January 3

The Christmas Bird Count will be followed again with a lasagna dinner at Fleischmann Auditorium, Museum of Natural History, on Saturday, January 3. Doors open at 5:30 for social time, with dinner served at 6 p.m. Attendees are welcome to bring their own beverage to accompany the delicious Jack's lasagna (meat or veggie), salad, garlic bread, and a famous Joan Kent cookie. Price is \$29.50. Registration opens October 26. Go to Eventbrite to reserve yours!

- To order meat lasagna, go here: <https://tinyurl.com/4wyyvk32>
- To order vegetarian lasagna, go here: <https://tinyurl.com/4ax37xes>



Jeff Hanson (left) and David Levasheff (right) helped our September speaker, Nathan Pieplow, increase his Santa Barbara bird list.

Breeding Birds: Standout Breeding Observations from 2025

by Mark Holmgren

As we gear up for the start of a new breeding season, three remarkable observations from 2025 remind me of the ingenuity and adaptability of our local birds.

First, one of the earliest breeders of any species was a Great Horned Owl pair in Orcutt. On January 18, a nestling was knocked from its nest by a Red-tailed Hawk—yet it was already able to fly. Among 116 Great Horned Owl breeding records, this record marks the earliest by far, suggesting the adults began courtship perhaps earlier than November 2024.

<https://tinyurl.com/def68e3m>



Young Great Horned Owl (photo by John Deacon).

What species nest *below* ground? We know of just one: a Black Phoebe pair that has been nesting in a storm drain on the UC Santa Barbara campus since at least 2021—and they returned in 2025. Perched at an elevation of -0.1 meters, this subterranean nest site testifies to their resourcefulness.



Black Phoebe (photo by Glenn Kinkaid).

Finally, it's been known that Peregrine Falcons guide their fledglings to "continuing education" sites after nesting, where the young receive food and advance to independence under care of the parent. These mid-summer spots are chosen for their elevated perches to which the adult delivers prey. Some of those sites include Goleta Slough mouth (open this link <https://tinyurl.com/mrps2z5s> then click on the green dot), Gaviota State Beach, and Sands Beach at Coal Oil Point Reserve. In early July, one adult led two fledglings to a vacant property overlooking Sycamore Canyon, where the human residents were on vacation. The adult Peregrine parked the kids in a stand of tall, dead Eucalyptus where the fledglings stayed for about two weeks, with the adult visiting in between hunting forays. To read more about this Peregrine Falcon observation, open <https://tinyurl.com/4f77rzpy>. This story underscores the intent of the BBS: successfully raising young goes beyond the nesting event—it's about the full breeding journey.



Peregrine Falcons (photo by John Lewis).

Together, these glimpses into outstanding records from 2025 reveal the heart of the BBS: contributors have offered not just nesting evidence, but the before-and-after nesting behaviors that reveal the entire range of the breeding effort and that make bird behaviors during breeding so fascinating. Be on the lookout for Anna's Hummingbird, Allen's Hummingbird, and Great Horned Owl, our earliest breeding birds.

California Breeding Bird Atlas

by Mark Holmgren

Shortly after midnight on January 1, 2026, all users with a Cornell account will be able to visit a new site: www.ebird.org/atlascalifornia. Here, you can officially opt-in to “Join the Project.” The Project is the first-ever California-wide Breeding Bird Atlas effort. Forty-four other states have a Breeding Bird Atlas; in California, only 16 of 58 counties have produced an atlas-like effort. Santa Barbara has the Breeding Bird Study (BBS), which will wind down to make way for the state-wide effort. The new effort will use historical breeding bird data, which we presume will include BBS records gathered in the last eight years. There is a need to move our 13,800 records from Santa Barbara County into the state-wide effort. Please let Santa Barbara Audubon know if you have the expertise to help with this transition. Read more about the California Breeding Bird Atlas project here: <https://www.californiabirdatlas.org>.

BirdView and BirdTalk: Tools to Facilitate Birding Experiences

Many people have adopted BirdView (BV) as a simple but powerful way to access eBird data, to plan a birding trip, and to find birds. BirdTalk (BT) is a way to gather bird sightings hands free in the field. The inventor of both these new pieces of software, Santa Barbara’s Steve Colwell, gave a talk introducing BT and BV. Here’s a video presenting the fun parts of BirdTalk and BirdView to the San Diego Field Ornithologists on Sept 16, 2025 (<https://tinyurl.com/5bumaj7s>). Go to BirdView (<https://birdview.info/>) to obtain both BV and BT at no cost.



GIVE BIRDS A CHANCE

Trim trees in months ending with “BER”

January – August is when most birds breed and baby birds are vulnerable. Schedule your tree trimming during the non-nesting months of **September, October, November, and December.**

 **SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY**
SantaBarbaraAudubon.org



BER						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Graphic by Melanie Bélanger.

The Grub Theory

by Dr. Walt Koenig

One of the most pernicious myths about acorn woodpeckers is that they store acorns, not to eat the acorns, but to eat the “grubs” (usually filbert weevil larvae or, less commonly, wasp larvae) that frequently parasitize the acorns. This idea, known fondly as the “grub theory,” has an interesting history discussed by Michael MacRoberts in an entertaining paper entitled *Acorns, woodpeckers, grubs, and scientists* (MacRoberts 1974). In it, MacRoberts discusses the first published version of the grub theory in what he describes as “a rather disjointed article” by C. T. Jackson:

On the 4th of June, I made an examination of the acorns which the [acorn] woodpecker so abundantly inserts into holes made in the bark of the trees. Knowing that the bird is insectivorous I did not believe the common opinion that the acorns were eaten by woodpeckers. The acorns are always driven into the holes made to fit them, cup end foremost, so that the pointed end only is exposed to view. They are packed in so tightly that it is difficult to extract them without the aid of a knife. On getting out some of these acorns I found in them only the worm, which had eaten up the kernel of the nut. Thus it would appear that the woodpecker is able to select the infected acorn in which there is a minute and almost invisible egg and puts the acorn into a hole in such a manner as to prevent the escape of the worm when it comes to maturity; as the worm can only cut through the softer portion of the shell at its base and not through the hard pointed end, so it is securely imprisoned until the woodpecker calls for it. Since there must be a limit in time as to the procuring of the infected acorns, and to the existence of the worms in the nuts, and a sudden harvest of the worms

would be obtained at a particular time in the year, it seems probable that these birds lay up this store of food for their young, which must require a large supply of animal food, for it has been shown by Dr. Treadwell that a young robin eats about its weight of worms per diem. (Jackson 1866)

Jackson's inference that the woodpeckers don't eat the acorns but the grubs that parasitize them was repeated, with a few twists, over the next several years by other writers. It was, however, forcefully rejected by

the great North American ornithologist Charles Bendire in his *Life Histories of North American Birds* (1895), who stated in no uncertain terms “the supposition that [acorn woodpeckers] only store wormy ones, and allow the inhabitant to get fat before eating it, is nonsense; the meat of the acorn is the attraction....”

This unabashed rebuttal of the grub theory was subsequently confirmed empirically by

stomach contents analyses of Belding (1904) and, one would have thought once and for all, by Beal (1911) as part of his exhaustive survey of the diets of North American birds. Nonetheless, the grub theory was repeated by Ritter (1921) (he subsequently corrects himself). Although MacRoberts finds few references to it subsequent to Bendire, it lives on and resurfaced in none other than *National Geographic* magazine (Garrett 1989).



Acorns at various stages parasitized by filbert weevils (photo by W. Koenig).



Filbert Weevil (public domain photo).

Anyone can disprove the grub theory simply by watching an acorn woodpecker remove an acorn from a granary, move it to an “anvil” (the upper surface of a horizontal limb containing a crack or crevice providing a suitable hold-fast for the acorn) and subsequently consuming pieces of the acorn. Unsurprisingly, acorn woodpeckers eagerly eat an acorn “grub” if they come across it. Most grubs, however, are long gone by the time a woodpecker gets around to removing the acorn it inhabited from storage, having eaten their way out of their acorn and fallen to pupate in the ground.

Long after I’m gone, I have no doubt but that there will be people pointing to acorn woodpecker granaries and telling their friends the grub theory. All I can hope for is that you will not be one of them.

Beal, F. E. L. (1911) *Food of the Woodpeckers of the United States*. US Dept. of Agriculture, Biological Survey Bulletin 37, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.
Belding, L. (1904) *Explanatory*. Condor, 6, 74-76.
Bendire, C. (1895) *Life Histories of North American Birds, from the Parrots to the Grackles*. Smithsonian Institution,

US National Museum, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.

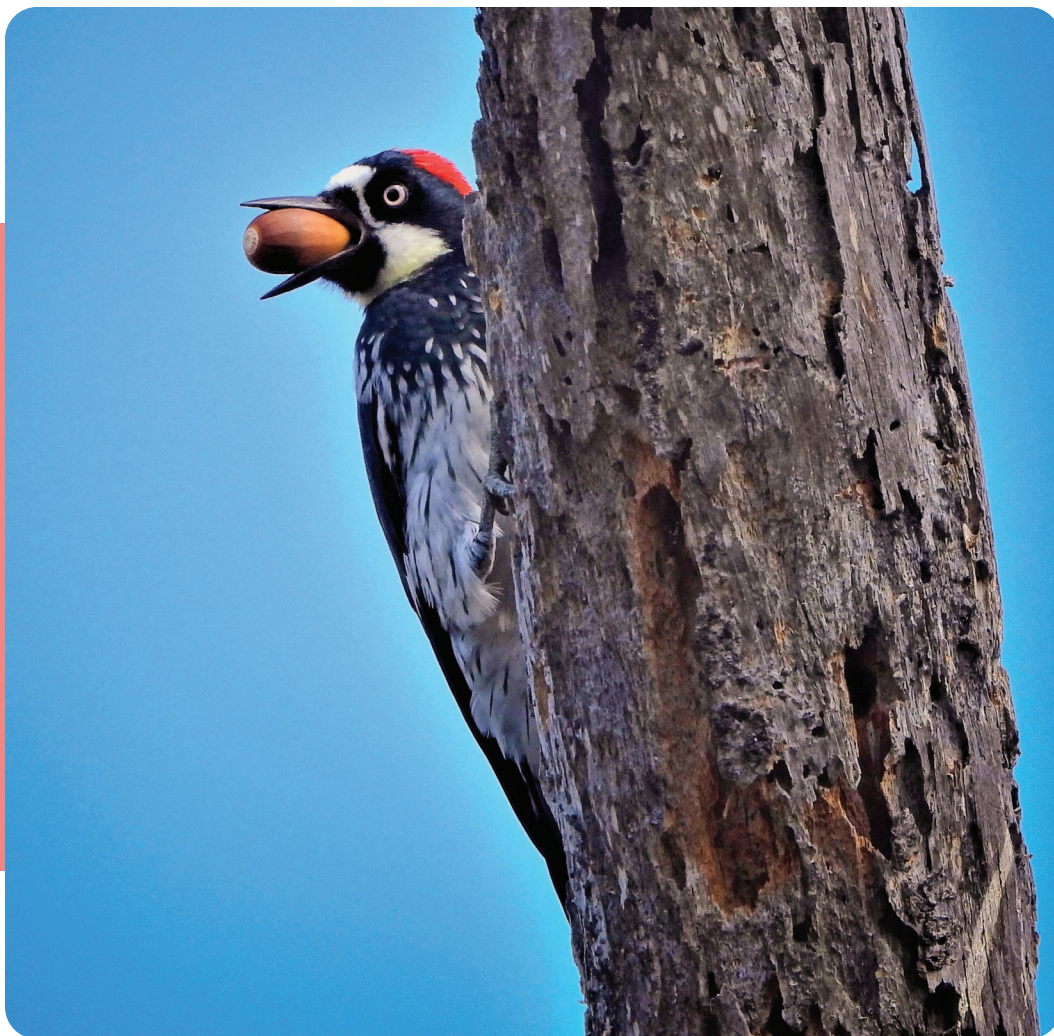
Garrett, W. D. (1989) *La ruta Maya*. National Geographic, 176(4), 456.

Jackson, C. T. (1866) *An account of a scientific journey through California and Nevada*. Proceedings of the Boston Natural History Society, 10, 227.

MacRoberts, M. H. (1974) *Acorns, woodpeckers, grubs, and scientists*. Pacific Discovery, 27(5), 9-15.

Ritter, W. E. (1921) *Acorn-storing by the California woodpecker*. Condor, 23, 3-14.

DR. WALT K. KOENIG IS A RETIRED PROFESSOR OF NEUROBIOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY AND A RESEARCH ZOOLOGIST EMERITUS AT UC BERKELEY. HE HAS STUDIED CALIFORNIA’S OAKS AND THE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND ECOLOGY OF ACORN WOODPECKERS FOR DECADES. AS AN ACKNOWLEDGED EXPERT ON THE BEHAVIOR OF ACORN WOODPECKERS, HE IS CLEARLY THE PERSON TO DEFINITELY ANSWER THE ONGOING BIRDERS’ DEBATED QUESTION, “DO ACORN WOODPECKERS EAT THEIR STORED ACORNS, OR ONLY THE ORGANISMS THAT BURROW INTO THEM?”



Acorn Woodpecker (photo by Lynn Scarlett).

Winter 2026 Programs

Benny Jacobs-Schwartz

Amazonia Untamed: Birds and Biodiversity (illustrated)



*Many thanks to our hotel sponsor,
Simpson House Inn.*

Tuesday, January 6 | Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Fleischmann Auditorium: 7:00 p.m.

\$5 general admission. Tickets available in advance on the museum website and at the door the evening of the event, if still available. Presented by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Spanning nine countries and over 2.7 million square miles, the Amazon Basin is the largest and most biodiverse rainforest on Earth. Fed by thousands of rivers, it forms a living mosaic of flooded forests, shifting islands, and towering canopy—home to jaguars, harpy eagles, and river dolphins. At its heart, this talk is about birds—and the rich lore woven into the Amazon's history of exploration and discovery. Benny will trace the path of epic expeditions and remarkable avian finds before homing in on Ecuador's Rio Napo and Yasuní National Park, where an astounding 600 species of birds have been identified, each playing a crucial role in the immense web of life. Along the way, he'll follow the trail of rare species as they were first described, meet the naturalists who brought them to light, and explore the mysteries still hidden in this extraordinary ecosystem. Benny will also highlight the role of Indigenous-led ecotourism, including community-owned projects where conservation, culture, and world-class birding converge. Step inside the Amazon's world of birds, biodiversity, and the remarkable stories that connect them.

Benny Isaac Jacobs-Schwartz owns and operates a bird-guiding business and lifestyle brand called BIRDS by BIJS (pronounced Bee-jus). With a background in biology, ecology, and outdoor education, He has worked for over 15 years as a naturalist guide, expedition trip leader, and international bird guide. Benny offers guided birding outings in Southern California and premier birding tours to top tropical locales. He is a passionate educator and photographer, specializing in birds! On social media, Benny creates fun, educational videos that inspire people to explore the natural world—encouraging them to trade their screens for binoculars.



Pete Dunne

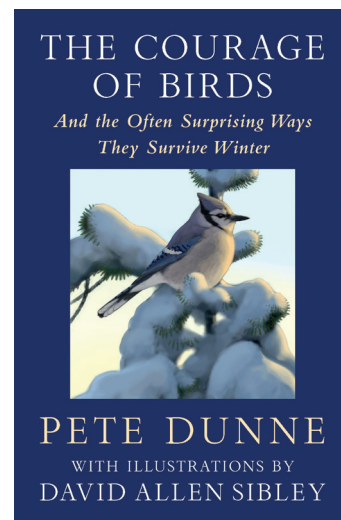
The Courage of Birds: And the Often Surprising Ways They Survive Winter

Tuesday, February 17 | Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Fleischmann Auditorium: 7:00 p.m.

\$5 general admission. Tickets available in advance on the museum website and at the door the evening of the event, if still available. Presented by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Courtesy of Chaucer's Bookstore, books by Pete Dunne will be available for purchase and signing at the event.

Pete Dunne, recipient of the American Birding Association's Roger Tory Peterson Award for lifetime achievement in promoting the cause of birds, will describe the various adaptations of North American birds that allow them to survive winter's hardships. Despite the seasonal life-sapping cold, birds have evolved strategies that meet winter's challenges head on, driven by the imperative to make it to spring and pass down their genes to the next generation. Dunne will discuss unique migration patterns and survival strategies of individual species, as well as address the impact of changing climatic conditions on avian longevity.

Pete Dunne is an author and founder of the World Series of Birding, former Director of Natural History Information for the New Jersey Audubon Society, and former director of the Cape May Bird Observatory. An experienced tour leader, he is well-known for his columns and contributions to publications such as *American Birds and Birding*. He is also the author of more than 20 books, including *Birds of Prey*, *Gulls Simplified*, *The Art of Pishing*, *The Wind Masters*, and most recently, *The Shorebirds of North America*.



Paul Bannick

Woodpecker: A Year in the Life of North American Woodpeckers (illustrated)

Tuesday, March 31 | Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Fleischmann Auditorium: 7:00 p.m.

\$5 general admission. Tickets available in advance on the museum website and at the door the evening of the event, if still available. Presented by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Courtesy of Chaucer's Bookstore, books by Paul Bannick will be available for purchase and signing at the event.

Back by popular demand following his outstanding presentation in May 2025 on North American Owls, acclaimed photographer Paul Bannick's new program will focus on the woodpeckers of North America. One of the most remarkable bird species found in the avian world, woodpeckers have evolved in ways that make them ecologically critical to forest health, serving as keystone species in a variety of wooded habitats across the continent. Their distinctive drumming produces a familiar rhythm, while their presence supports a myriad of birds and other animals making them catalysts of diversity in the places they inhabit. They are, in many ways, the heartbeat of the forest. Informed by his own experiences in the field as well as extensive research, Bannick will illustrate the often secret lives of North America's 41 woodpecker species. He'll show woodpeckers in every season: their courtship and nest selection in spring; life in the nest during summer; fledging and gaining independence in autumn; and the challenges of surviving the winter. Bannick will also take a closer look at the most important woodpecker habitats in North America and what we can do to protect them.

Paul Bannick is an award-winning author and wildlife photographer specializing in the natural history of North America with a focus on birds and habitat. He is the author of three books, including *The Owl and the Woodpecker: Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds*. His work can be found prominently in bird guides from Audubon, Peterson, The Smithsonian, Stokes, the National Wildlife Federation, and in several volumes of *The Handbook of the Birds of the World*.



Photo by Chris Rogers.

GET MORE INVOLVED WITH AUDUBON

Our active chapter depends on leadership by members who step up to work at the Board level. Many of you have done that over the years. We thank you and salute you. Right now, we have Board openings for Development Chair, Communications Chair, and Vice-President. Additionally, each of our Board chairs could always use help, so you could be part of a committee to help with various activities and events. For example, if you have graphic design experience, you could help with our campaign letters and flyers. You could be part of the excitement at one of our educational outreach events. Know your way around a website?

Let's plug you in!

If you're interested and/or have skills in other areas that you wish to share with us, please contact Janice Levasheff (janice@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org) or Katherine Emery (katherine@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org). Any assistance, no matter the size of the task, will help Santa Barbara Audubon grow even stronger. YOU can make a difference for our local birds.S



Townsend's Warbler (photo by Sue Cook).

FRIDAY BIRD WALKS

All Friday Bird Walks are 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Free and open to all; no reservation needed. Details at santabarbaraaudubon.org/field-trips/

December 19: San Marcos Foothills Preserve

January 23: Andrée Clark Bird Refuge

February 6: Lake Los Carneros

February 20: North Campus Open Space

March 6: Carpinteria Salt Marsh

SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS

Gull Workshop, Goleta Beach

Saturday, December 27, 9–11 a.m.

Leader: Ron Hirst (ron@santabarbaraaudubon.org)

Free. No reservation required

Have you ever wondered how to quickly identify an American Herring Gull? This outdoor workshop will focus on general education on gulls and highlight the differences in appearance between gull species typically found in Santa Barbara. Many of these may be seen at Goleta Beach in the winter. Meet near the restaurant. If there is light rain, the workshop will still take place.

North Campus Open Space

Saturday, January 10, 8–11 a.m.

Habitat for: Shorebirds and waterbirds.

Leader: Rob Lindsay (contact Dane St. George with questions: danestgeorge@gmail.com)

Directions: No reservations required and no cost. All are welcome. Parking and directions available on the SBAS activities web page (SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/activities)

Cachuma Lake Winter Wildlife (Eagle) Boat Cruise

Saturday, February 21, 9:45 a.m. check-in at boat dock.

Boat trip 10:00–11:30 a.m.

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

Leader: Park Naturalist

Cost: \$18 per person, payable on the boat (please bring exact change). \$10 per vehicle to enter Cachuma Lake County Park

Special Note: Bring sturdy shoes for the long walk between the meeting place and the dock. No wheelchair access.

Attendance Limit: 25 people

Reservations Required: Contact Dane St. George via e-mail (danestgeorge@gmail.com) before February 21 to reserve your spot. Include name, e-mail address, and phone number for all people in your party.

MEMBER FIELD TRIPS

Rancho Santa Barbara (Santa Ynez)

Saturday March 14, 8:00–11:30 a.m.

Habitat for: Geese, Common Goldeneye, Wood Duck,

Please check the website

SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/activities

BEFORE attending an event, as details may change. Due to registration/reservation requirements for some of our March birding events, their information, along with our early March bird walk, is presented in this issue. Information on our later March birding events will be in the Spring issue of El Tecolote, as usual.

Lewis's Woodpecker, Clark's Grebe, American White Pelican, and other waterbirds and passerines.

Leader: Rob Lindsay

Attendance Limit: 25 people

Reservations Required (no cost):

Contact Dane St. George via e-mail (danestgeorge@gmail.com) before February 27 to reserve your spot. Include name, e-mail address, and phone number for all people in your party

Sand Point Road (Sandyland Cove, Carpinteria)

Friday, January 9, 8:00 a.m.–Noon

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

Leaders: Jeff Hanson and Peggy Kearns

Reservations Required (no cost). Limited to 20 attendees
Trip Coordinator/Contact: Jeff Hanson, jlh749@cox.net or 805-964-8854

Sandhill Crane Overnight (Tulare and Kern Counties)

Saturday and Sunday, February 14 and 15

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

Habitat for: Sandhill Crane, White-faced Ibis, waders, raptors, shorebirds, ducks, songbirds, and more

Reservations: You must arrange your own travel and overnight accommodation. CASHP campground reservations can be made at:

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=583. Motels are 20 minutes away in Lost Hills or Delano. Registration with Jeff is required. Conditions can change and participant contact info is needed.

Leaders: Peggy Kearns and Jeff Hanson

Contact: Jeff Hanson, jlh749@cox.net or 805-964-8854

Ventura Duck Ponds/Wetlands (next to Point Mugu Naval Air Station)

Sunday, February 22, 8:00 a.m. (sharp)–noon

Free. No reservation required.

Habitat for: Raptors, waterfowl, shorebirds, marsh birds, songbirds, waders and more.

Notes: birding on foot, 3 miles on flat roads, attendees must remain in the group. Bring plenty of water, snacks, and layered clothing.

Leaders: Peggy Kearns and Jeff Hanson

Contact: Jeff Hanson, jlh749@cox.net or 805-964-8854

We are extremely grateful for your cumulative giving from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025! Through your grants, donations, memberships, and program support, you empower us to present our bird walks, field trips, monthly programs, presentations, and Winter Bird Count for Kids for free or at little cost. You help our Conservation/Science Committee give a voice to birds. Your contributions are vital to the care and enrichment of our Eyes in the Sky raptors. Our Meet Your Wild Neighbor Program can be offered to Title 1 schools at no cost. You help with the cost of printing this newsletter in color, and more. . . YOU keep Audubon soaring! THANK YOU!

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We are thankful to all of you and have made every effort to ensure accuracy in expressing our deepest appreciation. If we have made an error, our sincere apologies! Please let us know via the Contact link at the bottom of the SBAS website or by calling (805) 964-1468.



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