

EITecolote

Santa Barbara Audubon Society
Spring 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,

Happy New Year! As SBAS continues its work protecting birds and building community, we are delighted to welcome Piper French as the new Eyes in the Sky Director. Piper brings a passion for birds and conservation, bolstered by a Bachelor of Science degree from San Diego State University and a Master of Science in Biology, with an emphasis in Conservation Sciences from Miami University. Her professional background includes work with a variety of bird species—including local hawks, owls, eagles, and California Condors—at local organizations, where she gained extensive experience in animal handling, volunteer management, and public educational outreach. In her role, Piper will oversee the Audubon Aviary and train raptors for our “Meet Your Wild Neighbor” classroom visits.

On January 3, despite peak rain, Santa Barbara Audubon members showed up for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) with smiles on their faces and to persevere, get the job done, and have fun. One of my favorite events, it’s amazing to be part of a national community science tradition in its 126th year. Over 100 volunteers dug in and put their binoculars up and scopes out to count birds, record data, and study the change in numbers and diversity of birds over time. Thanks to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and fearless CBC Compilation Leaders and Dinner Event Coordinators, we then came together to share

a meal and recap the day’s sightings, shortfalls, and abundance. We honored trailblazers who led the CBC in the past and applauded young birders who will diligently protect birds and their habitats into the future. (Our youngest cheery birder, Stefan, was five months young!).

Three weeks later, SBAS hosted its 12th annual Winter Bird Count for Kids at Lake Los Carneros. With nearly 150 birders in attendance, the event passed birding traditions to the next generation, connected youth with nature, and promoted stewardship of our local environment and open spaces. Thank you to the City of Goleta, SBAS Board members, volunteers, and donors for contributing your time, skills, and resources. Your support is vital to protecting local birdlife and habitat and connecting people with birds through education, conservation, and science.

Intrigued about learning more? We invite you to join our bird walks, field trips, and evening programs this spring. Bring a friend or come make a new one. If you have a passion for board leadership and community development, please contact Janice Levasheff or myself about openings on the Board for Vice-President, At-Large, and chairs of Development and Membership.. Meetings are one Wednesday per month from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

With gratitude,
Katherine Emery, PhD

Thank You to:

- Santa Barbara CBC Compilation Coordinators Libby Patten, Glenn Kincaid, Steve Hovey, Judy Chen, Ben Byerly, Wim van Dam, and all birders who participated!
- CBC Compilation Dinner Chairs Kris Mainland White and Gayle Hackmack, aided by Joan Kent, Pat Woodruff, Bonnie Ray, Kathleen Boehm, Jayne Wamsley, and Carol Shulmistras.
- Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History for their tremendous support.
- Simpson House Inn for providing accommodations for our program speakers.
- Winter Bird Count for Kids Committee and volunteers for a successful 12th annual event.

- The City of Goleta for supporting Winter Bird Count for Kids.
- *The Voice* for publishing our Bird of the Month column.
- Our Conservation/Science Committee, which advocates tirelessly, professionally, and often behind the scenes for our local birds and habitat.
- Our dedicated Eyes in the Sky staff and volunteers who lovingly care for our raptors every day.
- Lynn Scarlett and Dennis Power, our editor and layout designer, respectively, for crafting this publication so professionally.
- The anonymous donor who makes this printed color issue possible.

SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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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: Purple Martin by Glenn Kincaid

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

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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.

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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.

Farewell and Thank You, Jessie Altstatt



After a decade of dedicated service, Jessie Altstatt steps down from the Board and from her role as our Conservation/Science Chair. Jessie joined the Santa Barbara Audubon Society in late 2016 and was co-chairing the committee by early 2017—a testament to her immediate commitment. We are profoundly grateful for the experience and passion she brought to leading this vital committee, which under her guidance has advocated for local birds against numerous challenges. While we will miss her leadership, we congratulate Jessie on her exciting new role as Reserve Director of the UC Santa Barbara Field Station on Santa Cruz Island! Her dedication to conservation continues, and we wish her every success. Thank you, Jessie, for a remarkable tenure.

Eyes in the Sky Update

by Piper French

At Eyes in the Sky, our flock has changed over the past few months. My name is Piper French. I have joined as the new Director of Eyes in the Sky. I have extensive animal care and training experience from working at zoos, wildlife rehabilitation centers, and other organizations. I have a Master's Degree in Biology, with an emphasis in Conservation Sciences. I have spent time working on various conservation initiatives as well as engaging with the local community. I love being able to share my passion for conservation. I am excited to help educate and engage our local community about nature.

As for the birds, sadly, the last of our legacy birds, Max, the Great Horned Owl, passed away at a very old age of 27. His last few weeks were filled with immense love as our aviary volunteers cared for him. While we are sad to see him go, we have a new bird in the aviary – Tango, the Red-tailed Hawk. She came to us after she was found to be blind in one eye and has made herself comfortable in her new home, already becoming a favorite to many visiting us at the aviary.



EIT Director Piper French and Red-tailed Hawk Tango, a member of our Eyes in the Sky flock (photo by Deby Laranjo).



Bird Trivia Evening

by Marina Suh

Photo taken at Bird Trivia Night at the Santa Barbara Wine Collective. The two-hour event was produced by Black Dog Trivia and sponsored by Santa Barbara Audubon Society. We provided prizes. Over 60 attendees participated in this fun evening.

The best way to spend a Monday night as a fervid fan of feathered friends? Bird trivia! Santa Barbara Audubon sponsored a Bird Trivia Night at the Santa Barbara Wine Collective, produced by the local team at Black Dog Trivia.

More than 60 attendees gathered for an evening of friendly competition, good humor, and an impressive command of avian knowledge. Teams competed for a first-place prize of a behind-the-scenes tour of our Eyes in the Sky Aviary, while speed-round winners were rewarded with classic Santa Barbara Audubon Society hats.

The room carried a lively energy throughout the

night, and it soon became apparent that the local nature-knowledgeable community came well prepared. Even our own board members found themselves challenged, coming in fourth behind local experts and enthusiasts. The event provided a warm and engaging opportunity to bring people together and celebrate a shared passion for birds.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, to Black Dog Trivia, and to the Santa Barbara Wine Collective for making the evening such a success. We look forward to more trivia, and next time we'll be back with more fun facts under our wings and with our ducks in a row!

Beauty as a Barometer: The Santa Barbara Butterfly Count Help Monitor Ecosystem Health on April 19, 2026

Butterflies are one of the most beautiful elements of the natural world. Scientists now recognize that they can also serve as an important indicator of ecosystem health. A dedicated group of local naturalists will soon be both enjoying their beauty and contributing to a nationwide program that conducts long-term monitoring of butterfly populations. They welcome public participation. While knowledge of butterflies is a plus, it is not necessary to take part. The first annual Santa Barbara North American Butterfly Association (NABA) Butterfly Count will be held on April 19, 2026. Please contact NoahGaines@gmail.com if you are interested in participating.

The NABA Count Program has been held annually since 1975, when only 29 counts were held. Volunteers around North America select a count area 15 miles in diameter and conduct a one-day census of all butterflies observed within that circle. The count program is intended to promote interest in butterflies and provide results useful for scientific monitoring of this beautiful and fascinating group of insects.

Purple Martins in Peril in Santa Barbara County

Story and photos by Glenn Kincaid

Last year marked the tenth year of an Audubon project to monitor Purple Martin breeding activity in and around Nojoqui Falls County Park. Unfortunately, this is now the only known breeding colony of Purple Martins remaining in Santa Barbara County. Each year during the breeding season, Adrian O’Loughlen and I, often accompanied by other Audubon members, visit the area weekly to check on the nesting progress of the Purple Martins. The trend for the number of Purple

In 2024, we began submitting our breeding observations to the California Purple Martin Working Group. This group is gathering breeding and population data from Purple Martin colonies throughout the state. The data will be essential for any attempts to acquire further protections for the Purple Martin.

Over the years, we have learned a great deal about “our” Purple Martins, but there are still many mysteries about their behavior. From time-to-time, curious people will stop along Alisal Road and ask what we are up to. Most of the people we speak to have not heard of Purple Martins and are often fascinated when we tell them a little bit about the Purple Martin’s habits and their annual migration between Santa Barbara County and Brazil.

Soon visitors and workers at the park will be able to learn about Purple Martins even when Adrian and I are not there. Two signs are being installed at the park in March that will provide information about Purple Martins and their nesting habits. These signs were designed by the Santa Barbara Audubon Conservation/Science Committee in collaboration with local artist Sabina Funk.

Thanks to the committee’s teamwork with Santa Barbara Audubon Society (SBAS), volunteer Julia Kelly, and Santa Barbara County Parks, the Santa Barbara Foundation awarded SBAS a Conservation, Environment, and Public Trails grant to cover the sign production costs.



Purple Martin pair.



Purple Martin chicks.

Martin nests in this area during this 10-year period has been downward. Furthermore, in each of the past two breeding seasons, we have confirmed just five successful nests, a number so low that it puts the future of the breeding colony in peril.

Informational signs being installed in March at Nojoqui Falls County Park

Where Do They Nest? ¿Dónde anidan?
Purple Martins nest in human-made bird houses. Our local Purple Martins only nest in cavities in Western Sycamore trees. Some of these cavities are natural, and some are created by Acorn Woodpeckers.

Who Are They? ¿Quiénes son?
Purple Martins are native songbirds in the Swallow Family. Adult male Purple Martins appear dark blue or purple overall with dark wings. Adult female and young Purple Martins are duller blue or grey with light underparts.

Special Place, Special Birds Lugar especial, aves especiales
Nojoqui Falls County Park and the surrounding area is the only known breeding location in Santa Barbara County for Purple Martins. The mature Sycamore trees here provide the cavities that are critical for breeding and the survival of these Purple Martins.

How Can I See Them? ¿Como puedo verlos?
Look for them high in old Sycamore trees or flying overhead in and around Nojoqui Falls Park during the Spring and Summer. Listen to the melodious, chattering song as they fly overhead.

Scan QR code for more info on the Purple Martin!

How Can I See Them? ¿Como puedo verlos?
Look for them high in old Sycamore trees or flying overhead in and around Nojoqui Falls Park during the Spring and Summer. Listen to the melodious, chattering song as they fly overhead.

When Are They Here ¿Cuándo están acá?
Purple Martins arrive in the Nojoqui Falls Park area as early as mid-March. They breed and raise their young here and leave in August on the long journey to their wintering habitat in Brazil.

What Do They Eat? ¿Qué comen?
Insects! Purple Martins are active aerial hunters, catching flying insects to eat and feed to their young.

Scan QR code for more info on the Purple Martin!

Winter Bird Count For Kids

Connecting Kids with Nature, One Bird at a Time

by Page Hiller-Adams



Photo by Betsy Mooney

On January 24, Goleta's Stow House lawn hosted 58 children from 23 schools along with their attending adults, all eager to experience the birding world at the 12th annual Winter Bird Count for Kids! It was a busy morning. After registration, participants learned how to use binoculars and how to "fox walk" ever so quietly, and then, wearing their new event T-shirts, headed out in small groups with experienced birding leaders to explore the wildlife around Lake Los Carneros. Spotting scopes on the dam provided up-close views of several local species, and trails around the lake provided sightings of many more. The final compilation, the "moment in time" account of an area's bird population, yielded 60 species. Ukulele music and bird songs by Wendy Kanter were an attraction before and after that traditional birding ritual, and beautiful kestrel Kiki from Eyes in the Sky, visiting with her experienced volunteer, drew an admiring and inquisitive crowd.

The accompanying adults enjoy it, too, and the event becomes a family-and-friend gathering that is uplifting to witness and provides hope for a healthy future for birds and their habitats.



Photo by Betsy Mooney



Photo by Betsy Mooney

The event also received important community help. Our special thanks to the City of Goleta for support of the event; to Lisa Potter, the Stow House caretaker, who again enthusiastically made sure we had what we needed; and to Anthem Chapel for the use of its lot for overflow parking.

Winter Bird Count for Kids will be back again next year! Join us with 8- to 16-year-old children for a free morning of memorable fun. Or to volunteer, contact a member of the 2026 Winter Bird Count for Kids committee: Page Hiller-Adams, Kathleen Boehm, CeCe Borchardt, Wendy Kanter, Janice Levasheff, Hilary Peattie, Marina Suh, and Cherie Topper.

<https://santabarbaraudubon.org/contact-us/>

The event ran smoothly thanks to 46 Santa Barbara Audubon volunteers and four Quasars from the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's "Quasars to Sea Stars" program. Many of this year's volunteers have helped with the event for years, drawn by the camaraderie and fun of seeing happy, excited young people enjoying their local outdoors and its bird life.

A Soaking Wet Success: The 126th Annual Bird Count

In Rain and Cold, Santa Barbara's Dedicated Birders Secure a Proud Tradition

by Libby Patten, Santa Barbara CBC Head Compiler



A CBC team at Tucker's Grove.

If you participated in our Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, January 3, 2026, it's likely a CBC you will never forget.

We fretted well in advance over the forecast and hoped for calmer moments when both birds and birders could happily be outside. But many commented it was the worst weather they'd ever seen for a CBC: very high winds, inches of rain on top of record-breaking rainfall in the preceding weeks, flooding, and road closures. Many mountain areas were completely inaccessible, and our boat for pelagic bird counting could not go out because of dangerous conditions. The poor weather made the birds hunker down as well and impacted the number of participants and time they spent birding. All these factors reduced our CBC total to 178 species, the lowest number in 50 years. Still, heroic efforts of many talented birders allowed us to count more species than seemed achievable under

these harsh conditions. Thank you to all our dedicated participants who braved the weather and numbered about 135 this year!

Starting at midnight, determined owlers strained for hours to hear despite the noise from high winds and rain. Eventually, they found American Barn Owl (2), Western Screech-Owl (3), Great Horned Owl (21), Northern Saw-whet, and Spotted Owls (2). Without a boat, we covered as many sea-watch locations on land as possible, including Coal Oil Point, UCSB Campus Point, Stearns Wharf, Santa Barbara Cemetery, and Butterfly Beach. These and other efforts yielded Brant; Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers; Black-legged Kittiwake; Red-throated, Pacific, and Common Loons; Surf Scoter; and Pelagic Cormorant.

As the weather cleared a bit in the afternoon, insectivores such as warblers became more active. Among the less-common warblers, we found one each of these five: Tennessee Warbler (at a Goleta residence suet feeder), Nashville Warbler (Hollister Tech Park), Black-throated Gray Warbler (Alice Keck Park Memorial Garden), Hermit Warbler (David Love Place) and Wilson's Warbler (Lake Los Carneros). The low diversity of warblers on CBC was similar to the trend seen locally for fall migration.

Only one oriole species was found: Bullock's (Santa Barbara residence feeder), but happily all three previously scouted tanagers were observed: Western (2), Summer (3), and Hepatic (Evergreen Open Space). Although not found for this CBC, an honorable mention goes to the Western Warbling Vireo which returned for an astounding 13th winter at Bohnett Park.



Fox Sparrow (photo by Satie Aramie).

While the official species total we report to National Audubon is only from the 24-hour period of CBC day, data for Count Week is also important as it gives a read on birds we might have missed because of weather or other variables. Count Week is the period of three days before and after CBC day. Some species seen in Count Week but not on CBC day were Cackling Goose, Red-naped Sapsucker, Lark Sparrow, Horned Grebe, Common Merganser, and Black-vented Shearwater. Some rarely seen or frequently missed species were found, however, on CBC day: Black-legged Kittiwake (1), Brant (20), Pomarine Jaeger, and Caspian Tern. This was not a montane year. Thus, unsurprisingly, we failed to find Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Pine Siskin, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Townsend's Solitaire.

The primary objective of the 24-hour CBC census is to assess bird species abundance and distribution. The extreme weather made the numbers this year more difficult to evaluate. Certainly, the number of individuals for many species was lower with the poor weather, although some had robust numbers. Indeed, some were higher than for many past CBCs, including American Robin (505), Cedar Waxwing (271), and American Crow (2,300). We have seen over time the relative abundance of many species in our CBC circle drop 40% or more from 50,000 in 1980 to about 30,000 in recent years. This year's total number of individual birds was about 21,000, similar to what we got in 2022 and 2023 when we also had very rainy



NCOS Team Barb Millet, Eunice Schroeder, Santiago Lupi (photo by Santiago Lupi).

weather. Besides having fewer participants, the hours and miles for this year's count were also down by about 30-50%.

As in recent years, those of us organizing this huge citizen science event are relying more and more on technology to help with CBC planning and execution. We continue to rely primarily on eBird checklists as the reporting tool for birds found. We also use several webtools previously discussed that were recently developed by local birders Steve Colwell and Linus Blomqvist. See our website for more information if interested. This year, we employed a new tool being developed by National Audubon called Mobilize, which we used to sign up many of our volunteers.

Thank you for your steadfast support of the CBC: Santa Barbara Audubon and the hard-working coordinating and compiling team—Glenn Kincaid, Ben Byerly, Judy Chen, Steve Hovey, and Wim van Dam. This smart and energetic team continues to bring fresh ideas for conducting our CBC. Also, many thanks for the efforts of our local and visiting birders who scout, mobilize, and inspire us to do it each year. Thanks to David Nimmons, who offered to pilot his boat for our pelagic count, although bad weather prevented this. As always, CBC data are so important to tracking the overall health of all our bird populations. The full list of species and numbers of birds recorded in CBC counts will be available on the SBAS website: <https://santabarbaraudubon.org/santa-barbara-christmas-bird-count/> We certainly hope for more hospitable weather for CBC127 on January 2, 2027!



Glenn Kincaid at Kinevan Rd. (photo by Glenn Kincaid).

continued

If you weren't out on our CBC day to experience the extreme weather, here are some comments from those who were:

- It was a miserable day in the mountains. The roads became unsafe with rocks and mud and running water everywhere.
- We had to leave NCOS in Goleta early as the streets were flooding and we wanted to be sure we could get out.
- The UCSB lagoon team arrived in the morning and decided not to get out of their car at first as it was rocking from buffeting by the high winds.
- "Sssssoggy" - a text from Lauro Canyon Reservoir. Their 30-year-old raingear turned out to be almost completely useless!
- Flash flood warnings were given for the 154, and the 101 became closed between Gaviota and Glen Annie.
- Debris everywhere in the ocean, including big logs that could be seen by sea watchers.
- Birders sent in their "soggy selfies," which gave them something to do while not finding birds!

Ben Byerly's CBC comments:

I started the day parking at UC Santa Barbara (UCSB) overlooking Goleta Bay. I opened the door to get out of my car, and it was immediately slammed shut in my face by the 30-mph wind gusts — NOT an auspicious start.



Bird sketch (Bird Sp.) ("art" and photo by Ben Byerly).

From there, I think we all put on our best meteorology hats as we zoomed in on weather maps trying to best time our excursions (spoiler: it JUST KEPT RAINING). A small consolation was that I could safely say "money well spent" on the fancy muck boots and rain jacket which I've acquired with birding in mind. Unfortunately, I was reminded the hard way that lens cloths don't help much when you keep dropping them in puddles.

I spent much of the morning visiting various spots near the airport hoping to find where the birds were hiding. Things began to turn around in the afternoon (on the coast at least). I'm sure many of us caught the nice rainbow when the sun finally came out. I revisited UCSB east beach and had a great time poring over shorebirds at low tide. The changing tides are another great example of how dynamic the environment can be. The levels ranged from +7 feet to -2 feet that day!

Ben Byerly at cliffs above Goleta Bay (photo by Ben Byerly).

The Breeding Bird Study – Users Might ask . . .

by Mark Holmgren

As we move from the Santa Barbara County Breeding Bird Study (BBS) to the California Bird Atlas (CBA) project to document breeding in Santa Barbara County, we recognize that both efforts have different capabilities and objectives. Both efforts get people out in the field, where they may exercise their awareness and advance their knowledge of breeding birds. The scale of the two projects is where the difference lies. Through BirdView (see winter issue), let's explore projects that different users might undertake using BBS data. The queries below are hypothetical questions a user might ask.

A birder mom might ask:

My daughter wants to know what bird species breed under bridges in the county and near our home.

First, find the species that use bridges for breeding throughout the County (<https://tinyurl.com/ya8rwz2t>). There are 410 observations. The list under Breakdown shows the number of breeding records in the county for each species. To see if there are any breeding records for the bridge near your home, navigate to your home by manipulating the aerial photo. If someone has found breeding in the bridge near you, there will be a green dot. Click on the green dot to display that record. If there is no green dot, and if your daughter witnesses some bird using the bridge in the breeding season, she may contribute that observation here (<https://tinyurl.com/2ert3j7m>). Perhaps your daughter will think of a way to adapt the bridge to accommodate other species.

A conservation organization might ask:

Which sites in the county should we support because it supports the most species of breeding birds?

One way to respond to this query is to ask eBird, not the BBS, which sites show more than 45 species in the period when breeding birds are most likely present (<https://tinyurl.com/mry4m3xp>) with the intent to breed? Under **Breakdown**, we ask for the names of those sites. The Point Conception Lighthouse area is by far the favored site where 94 of 96 checklists submitted show 45 or more species. But the Point Conception Lighthouse area is already preserved! The list of sites indicates a large proportion of checklists showing at least 45 species. Many of those are also preserved. Change the species number or the dates to suit your question.

A utility company might ask:

We have to do some tree trimming in Western Sycamores in the South County. Unfortunately, we have to do the work in June. What species breed in sycamores in June?

We return to the BBS data. Because breeders in June may start earlier, we ask for breeding species in Sycamores from April to June (<https://tinyurl.com/yvsr9m8>). Since we know the region in which the utility company intends to work, we can choose to restrict the ecoregion to the Santa Barbara coastal plain and terraces. This list of species under **Breakdown** may include the species that the alert tree trimmer must be on the lookout for.

A birdwatcher might ask:

Where can I find Cliff Swallows nesting on natural substrates instead of on buildings or bridges?

Of 349 observations of breeding Cliff Swallows, only 40 are on natural substrates (<https://tinyurl.com/3mb6e46x>) – cliffs. The aerial photo shows those locations. Change the species in question to Black Phoebe. Seven of 545 observations are on natural substrates (<https://tinyurl.com/3hawbn3p>). One of those is astounding—a nest on a Coast Live Oak! The observer has documented this observation with a video attached to this record.



Cliff Swallows (photo by David Levasheff).

Santa Barbara Audubon is proud of this rich database. We look forward to its continuation in the California Bird Atlas project. Learn how to sign up for the CBA here (<https://tinyurl.com/mtbww47j>). You may contribute Santa Barbara County breeding observations to either the BBS or to the CBA.

Four and Twenty Blackbirds: Tricolored Blackbird Survey Recap

by Peter Schneekloth

The Tricolored Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) is nearly a California endemic, with only small populations elsewhere. Historically, breeding occurred in very large colonies of up to 100,000 or more birds. Breeding locations require adequate nesting substrate and surrounding foraging areas rich in insect prey. The birds have suffered significant decline due to land use conversion and subsequent conflict with farming practices when nesting among grain crops such as triticale began.



Tricolored Blackbird male (photo by Peter Schneekloth).

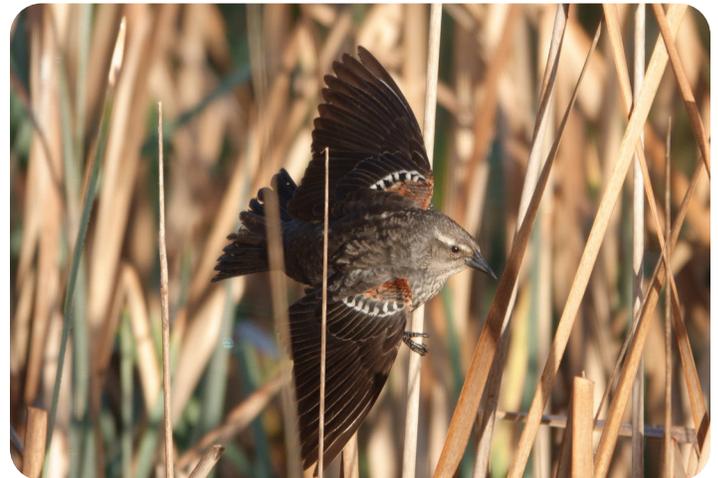
Statewide populations in the 1930s were estimated at two to three million birds. In the mid-1970s, scientists at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated a decline of at least 50%. Continued declines motivated scientists at UC Davis to establish the statewide, triennial Tricolored Blackbird Survey. The surveys are designed to detect both presence, including any new colonies, and absence at historically used breeding sites. The surveys take place in mid-April, a date selected to coincide with a maximum number of birds settled on colonies.

Santa Barbara County has never had a significant percentage of the Tricolored Blackbird population (less than 1%), but historically numbers were much higher than now, with Tricolored Blackbirds much more widespread than we have found in recent surveys. Survey work begins a month or so before actual survey dates as I line up volunteers, reach out to birding community members that have access to restricted

areas, and begin to visit areas throughout the county where colonies could occur. Tricolored Blackbirds are highly itinerant and can move to new areas or return to old areas that have been unused for years. For the actual survey, the statewide coordinator will provide a list of locations they want formally surveyed, but we also survey any new locations we have found. A table summarizing statewide and county counts follows.

Year	Survey Area	
	State	Santa Barbara Co.
2008	392,000	500
2011	257,000	--
2014	145,000	935
2017	177,600	75
2025	229,000	522

Significantly more information on the biology of Tricolored Blackbirds and Survey can be found at the Tricolored Blackbird Portal: (<https://tricolor.ice.ucdavis.edu/>)



Tricolored Blackbird female (photo by Peter Schneekloth).

References

- Colibri Ecological Consulting, LLC (Colibri).** 2025. 2025 Tricolored Blackbird Statewide Survey. September. Fresno, CA. Prepared for Audubon California, San Francisco, CA.
- Lehman, P. E.** "The Birds of Santa Barbara County, California", Revised edition, July 2024, available at <http://www.sbcobirding.com/lehmanbosbc.html>, 2024

Spring 2026 Programs

Paul Bannick

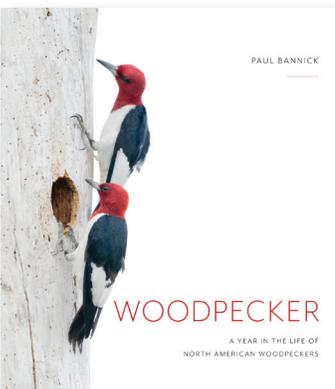
Woodpecker: A Year in the Life of North American Woodpeckers (illustrated)

Tuesday, March 31, 7:00 p.m. at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Fleischmann Auditorium. \$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.



Photo by Chris Rogers.

Back by popular demand after his outstanding May 2025 talk on North American Owls, acclaimed photographer Paul Bannick returns with a program on the continent's woodpeckers. These remarkable birds are ecologically critical to forest health, serving as keystone species across diverse wooded habitats. Their drumming offers a familiar rhythm, while their presence supports countless other species, making them catalysts of diversity. In many ways, they are the heartbeat of the forest.



Drawing on fieldwork and extensive research, Bannick will reveal the hidden lives of North America's 41 woodpecker species across the seasons: courtship and nest selection in spring, life in the summer nest, fledging and independence in autumn, and the challenges of winter. He will also highlight key woodpecker habitats and what we can do to protect them.

Paul Bannick is an award-winning author and wildlife photographer specializing in North American birds and habitat. He has written three books, including *The Owl and the Woodpecker: Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds*. His work appears in guides from Audubon, Peterson, the Smithsonian, Stokes, the National Wildlife Federation, and multiple volumes of *The Handbook of the Birds of the World*.

Dan Robinette

Observing and Conserving California Coastal Seabirds (illustrated)

Tuesday, April 28, 7:00 p.m. at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Fleischmann Auditorium. \$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.



Photo by Emily Rice.

July 3, 2026 marks the 10th annual World Seabird Day. July 3, 1844 was the last known sighting of the Great Auk before it went extinct, and scientists chose this date to raise awareness of the continuing conservation threats to seabird populations



Least Terns (photo by Pam Viale).

throughout the world. Coastal program biologist Dan Robinette will introduce the many seabird species dependent on California's coastal and nearshore habitats, discuss the threats they face, and highlight some of the conservation victories giving these birds hope. He will speak on current scientific studies and conservation efforts and discuss participatory science opportunities for coastal communities.

Dan Robinette is the Coastal Program Leader for Point Blue Conservation Science (www.pointblue.org). His research focuses on using marine birds as ecosystem indicators and investigating the impacts of human disturbance, climate change, and habitat restoration. He serves on several advisory groups, including for the California Least Tern and the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.

SPECIAL EVENT!!

Scott Weidensaul

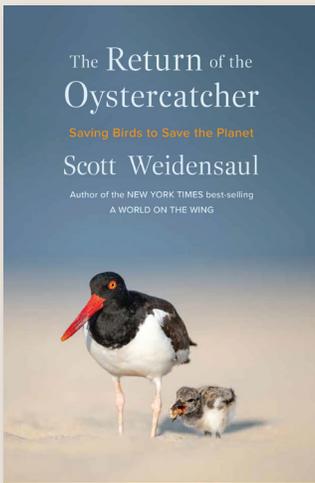
Saving Birds to Save the Planet (illustrated)

Tuesday, May 5, 7:00 p.m. at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Fleischmann Auditorium. \$10 general admission. Tickets available in advance on the museum website and at the door. Presented by the Santa Barbara Audubon Society and the Museum. Courtesy of Chaucer's Bookstore, books by Scott Weidensaul will be available for purchase and signing at the event.



(Photo © Bri Makso)

At a time when the news for birds—and the planet—seems grim, there is reason for hope. We have a history of restoring faltering bird populations, and today, people worldwide are reviving species, providing a roadmap for recovery. In his new book, *The Return of the Oystercatcher: Saving Birds to Save the Planet*, best-selling author and researcher Scott Weidensaul reveals the remarkable resiliency of birds, arguing that a world that works for birds works for all of us. He traces this inspiring story from a tiny Maine island to the war-torn Danube Delta; from vulture restoration in Bulgaria to seabird sanctuaries in Hawai'i; and to Canada's boreal forest, where Indigenous communities are permanently protecting hundreds of millions of acres of crucial migratory habitat—a victory for both birds and social justice. This is a dose of optimism we all need.



Scott Weidensaul is the author of nearly 30 books, including the Pulitzer finalist *Living on the Wind* and the NYT bestseller *A World on the Wing*. His latest book, coming in April 2026, showcases successful global conservation. A contributing editor for *Audubon* and columnist for *Bird Watcher's Digest*, he is a Fellow of the American Ornithological Society and an active researcher, co-founding Project SNOWstorm and studying saw-whet owl migration for 30 years.

Many thanks to our hotel sponsor,
Simpson House Inn.



Mark Your Calendar

- SBAS plans to be at the Santa Barbara Earth Day Festival on Saturday, April 25, at Alameda Park. Please stop by and see us!
- The SBAS Annual Membership Meeting and Celebration is planned for Saturday, June 13. Time and location to be announced. Watch for more details.

Get More Involved With Audubon!

Our active chapter depends on leadership by members who step up. Right now we have Board openings for Vice-President, At-Large, and chairs of Development and Membership. Please contact President Janice Levasheff (janice@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org) or Executive Director Katherine Emery (katherine@SantaBarbaraAudubon.org). **We welcome your talents!**

FRIDAY BIRD WALKS

All Friday Bird Walks are 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.
Free and open to all; no reservation needed
Details at SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/activities

- March 27: UCSB Lagoon
- April 10: Tucker's Grove
- April 24: Lake Los Carneros
- May 1: Goleta Beach/Atascadero Estuary
- May 8: Farren Road

SATURDAY FIELD TRIP

Nojoqui Falls County Park

Saturday, May 16, 8:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Habitat for: Yellow-billed Magpie, Purple Martin, Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Barn Owl, vireos, woodpeckers, and orioles

Leader: Rob Lindsay

Detailed directions to the meeting place can be found at SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/field-trips
Free and open to all. No reservation needed.

MEMBER FIELD TRIPS

For SBAS or GCA members.

Visit SantaBarbaraAudubon.org to become an SBAS member for just \$26 per household.

Rancho Santa Barbara (Santa Ynez)

Saturday, March 14, 8:45 a.m. to Noon

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

Leader: Rob Lindsay

Attendance Limit: 25 people

Reservation Required (no cost). Email Dane St. George, danestgeorge@gmail.com, to reserve your spot. Include name, email address, and phone number for all people in your party.

MEMBER FIELD TRIPS (continued)

Hollister Ranch

Saturday, April 18, 8:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Habitat for: Songbirds, ocean and pond waterfowl, raptors

Leader: Rob Lindsay

Attendance Limit: 17 people

Reservation required (no cost). Email Dane St. George, danestgeorge@gmail.com, to reserve your spot. Include name, email address, and phone number for all people in your party.

Rancho Tajiguas

Saturday, May 9, 8:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Habitat for: Songbirds, pond waterfowl, raptors, woodpeckers

Leader: Dane St. George

Attendance Limit: 20 people

Reservation required (no cost). Email Dane St. George, danestgeorge@gmail.com, to reserve your spot. Include name, email address, and phone number for all people in your party.

Breeding Bird Trips with Mark Holmgren

These special trips, led by one of our pre-eminent local ornithologists Mark Holmgren, will focus on how to recognize and document breeding evidence. These trips are scheduled for April 1, May 9, and June 14. If interested and for more information, contact Mark at Maholmgren33@gmail.com

Find more details at:

SantaBarbaraAudubon.org/activities.

Please check the website for any updates prior to the event.



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

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Black-necked Stilts (photo by Dennis Power).