



# SAN MATEO COUNTY BIRD ALLIANCE

Volume 76, No. 2  
April - June 2025

## 2024 Christmas Bird Counts

Sequoia Audubon Society completed two Christmas Bird Counts, the Crystal Springs CBC on Saturday, Dec. 14, and the Año Nuevo CBC on Saturday, Dec. 28. The results have been filed with the National Audubon Society, pending review by the California regional coordinator.

### Crystal Springs CBC

For the Crystal Springs CBC, 112 participants counted 64,033 individual birds, with 176 species identified. This is the lowest number of species reported in the past 35 years (I did not check further back), and the total number of birds is well short of the 93,000 birds tallied last year. Presumably, this is because of the stormy weather that we experienced on count day. It was extremely wet and windy, especially in the morning, altering the plans of many of the count teams.

Nevertheless, we identified several species that have never appeared on this count. These are a Leach's Storm-Petrel, found at the mouth of Pilarcitos Creek at Venice Beach in Half Moon Bay; an American Redstart, also in Half Moon Bay; a Dusky-capped Flycatcher in Montara; the continuing Scarlet Tanager at Coyote Point County Park; and the continuing Field Sparrow at Pillar Point Harbor. All are new to this count.

Other rare species for this count include a Lucy's Warbler, which hasn't been recorded since 1995, and a pair of Western Flycatchers, which we haven't had since 2013. Count week birds included a Golden Eagle, a Ferruginous Hawk, a Glaucous Gull, and a Tennessee Warbler.

We recorded all-time high counts for Wild Turkeys (a couple of decades ago, we could go consecutive counts without recording any Turkeys) and nine Bald Eagles.

### Año Nuevo CBC

The weather was much more pleasant for the Año Nuevo count. 77 birders identified 148 species, with a total of 20,528 birds. The number of species is down somewhat from the totals we have achieved recently, except for 2022, when terrible weather significantly dampened the entire count effort. No new species were reported for this count, nor were any rare species reported. However, we did record a rarely found Green-winged Teal (Eurasian) on this count, and count week birds included a Glaucous Gull and Barred Owl.

Like the Crystal Springs count, we also recorded an all-time high number of Wild Turkeys and all-time highs for Mallards, Virginia Rails, Soras, and Dark-eyed Juncos. Two Ospreys and two Black-and-White Warblers also represent count highs.

Thanks to all of the birders who made this year's counts a success, and a special thank you to Chris MacIntosh for all her organizing efforts. *Curt Bianchi, CBC Committee*

## Meeting Programs

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays at 7:00 pm  
(except as noted)

### April 10 - Zoom

A Rose by Any Other Name  
*JR Blair*

### May 8 - Zoom

Point Blue Conservation Science  
*Dr. Kristy Dybala*

Sat. June 14 - San Mateo Garden Center  
Annual General Membership  
Meeting and Potluck Picnic

## MEETING PROGRAMS

### April 10 - Zoom

A Rose by Any Other Name *J.R. Blair*

J.R. Blair will present a discussion of the complexities of scientific name changes. What are the rules of naming new species? Why are some species “split” and others “lumped” by taxonomists? How does the concept of subspecies apply to taxonomic decisions? Why are certain groups of organisms moved to a different genus or family? Indeed, why are brand new categories, such as families, established at all? J.R. also will briefly open the can of worms that are common (i.e., English) names and how they are affected by scientific name changes. However, please note we will not be discussing the controversy surrounding eponymous English names.

J.R. is the former Director of the San Francisco State University, Sierra Nevada Field Campus. He was a lecturer of Biology at SFSU for twenty years.



### May 8 – Zoom

Point Blue’s Palomarin Field Station *Dr. Kristy Dybala*

Dr. Kristy Dybala, Principal Scientist at Point Blue Conservation Science, will talk about the work at Point Blue’s Palomarin Field Station. She’ll highlight the station’s long-standing contributions to avian research, early career training, and conservation. As one of the longest-running avian field stations in North America, Palomarin has been monitoring bird populations and their responses to environmental changes for over 50 years. The station’s research includes tracking migration patterns, changes in bird body size, and the effects of climate variability on avian populations. Through long-term data collection, scientists at Palomarin provide valuable insights into how birds are adapting to climate change, and which species may require targeted conservation efforts. The station also serves as a training ground for early-career scientists, providing opportunities to develop skills in bird banding, field ecology, and data analysis. Hundreds of interns have participated in the program, many of whom go on to careers in conservation science. The training emphasizes rigorous data collection methods, contributing to the station’s extensive database, which is used to study long-term ecological trends. Point Blue Conservation Science is a nonprofit dedicated to using science to guide nature-based solutions to climate change and other ecological challenges. With a mission to conserve birds, other wildlife, and ecosystems through innovative research, partnerships, and outreach, Point Blue works across various habitats, from coastal wetlands to agricultural landscapes from California to Antarctica and beyond.



*Photo Credit Kaare Iverson*

### June 14 – San Mateo Garden Center

Annual General Membership Meeting and Potluck Picnic with Guest Speaker. Join us for an in-person lunchtime meeting to conduct chapter business and elect new board members. Register for the potluck here: <https://www.PerfectPotluck.com/QTRG2578>

## SMCBA Conservation Update

With the start of a new year, new and continuing conservation concerns are keeping us busy.

**If any topic is of interest to you and you'd like to help, please contact your Conservation Committee at [conservation@smcbirdalliance.org](mailto:conservation@smcbirdalliance.org)**

**Redwood City** has held webinars and a community meeting about the Redwood Life development. Unfortunately there is insufficient opportunity for environmentalists' voices to be heard. Even the "alternatives" presented are much larger developments than the current Westpoint Plan allows, and sea level rise is not being adequately addressed.

SMCBA had a table at Redwood Shores Community Association's annual meeting on February 5. We spoke about who we are and what we do, and had many interested residents stop to talk. Following that, we did a morning bird outing especially for these residents.

**Foster City** is presenting the goose mitigation implementation plan and costs to city council in February. SMCBA is actively following this and commenting to city staff. Currently no lethal measures are planned.

Dogs are being observed running off-leash at the Shell Bar, where threatened Snowy Plovers are found. We are working with city staff to get more signage installed to remind walkers of the rules and to educate them about the birds.

Our committee also responds to inquiries and concerns from our members, as much as we can.

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## BIRD ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL

Recently, we were contacted by Cassie Liu, Co-Founder and Volunteer Secretary of the Wild Bird Society of Hualien, Taiwan. This organization performs functions similar to those of local Audubon chapters in the USA. Ms. Liu was flying to spend three weeks birding in Columbia, with a several-hour layover at SFO.

She had been following our website and had questions about birding near SFO. We said we would happily pick her up and guide her in our County. Because time was limited, we birded at Millbrae Bayfront Park and Coyote Point. Our ambassadors were Douglas Brown, Ed Ching, and Davena Gentry.

Ms. Liu had done extensive homework on our winter shorebirds and ducks so she could name species almost as fast as we could. Her target birds were Chestnut-Backed Chickadee, Harlequin Duck, and Bufflehead. We saw 37 common species, including a Green Heron and a Hooded Merganser. We did get the Bufflehead. She was most excited about a lifer – Canada Goose!

It is incredible how small the world is; we never know who is perusing our website. Hopefully, we can always be prepared to be ambassadors to the world. ***Doug Brown, Outreach***



*Photo: Ed Ching, Cassie Liu, and Doug Brown*



## SMCBA Field Trips



Please note that rain or Air Quality Index over 150 cancels unless otherwise stated. Bring binoculars, water, snacks, sunscreen, and dress in layers as the weather can change.

**Tuesday April 1, UCSC Arboretum, Santa Cruz (9:00 – 12:00)** The Arboretum is a popular birding spot. We're on unpaved trails with some elevation changes. As we are visiting on the first Tuesday of the month the admission fee is waived. Directions: Approaching Santa Cruz from the north on SR 1, turn left on Bay Street and proceed east. Turn left at the High St. traffic light at the base of campus (don't go in the main entrance). Proceed on High Street for approx. 1/2 mile to the entrance. **Leader:** Nelle Lyons **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3XJtpT1>

**Wednesday April 2, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, Woodside (8:00 – 11:30)** Walk through the habitats of Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, including riparian, chaparral, lake, and oak woodland areas. It encompasses remarkable geologic, topographic, and biotic diversity within its 1,193 acres and provides a natural laboratory for researchers worldwide, educational experiences for students and docent-led visitors. We will cover ~ 4 miles on packed earth trails and roads, with mild to moderate elevation gain. This docent-led field trip is limited to 15 participants ages 14+. Participants must stay with the docent led group for the entire trip. Stanford University access requirements include signing Stanford's waiver of liability and proof of COVID-19 vaccination. Directions will be emailed to participants with approval of the reservation request. **Leader:** Emily Kim and **Co-leader:** Sonny Mencher. **Register:** [emailfieldtrips@smcbirdalliance.org](mailto:emailfieldtrips@smcbirdalliance.org)

**Sunday April 6, Coyote Point Recreational Area, San Mateo (8:30 – 11:30)** Meet us for a leisurely stroll around Coyote Point. With the variety of habitats, we should see a number of species. With luck we may see the resident Harlequin Duck. Directions: Exit Peninsula Ave. from US 101 and follow the signs 1701 Coyote Point Drive. Meet near the yacht club. \$6.00 Vehicle entry fee. **Leader:** Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4biBJOR>

**Friday April 11, Union Cemetery, Redwood City (10:00 – 11:00)** If you're short on time or haven't been to the Historic Union Cemetery, here's a terrific opportunity! This hour-long walk will introduce you to some of the year-round resident birds and SMCBA'S conservation efforts through the cavity nesters recovery program. **Leader:** Christin New **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4bkTygv>

**Wednesday April 16, Año Nuevo State Park, Pescadero, (8:30 – 12:30)** Año Nuevo State Park is one of the most picturesque and ecologically rich areas along the central California coast. The Park boasts sweeping dunes, sheer cliffs, and panoramic views of the Santa Cruz Mountains. It is a major seal and sea lion rookery with a variety of unique bird species. A moderate 3 to 4 miles on dirt and sand trails with some stairs. Requires State Parks Pass or \$10 fee. **Leader:** Nelle Lyons **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4hVNXj6>

**Friday April 18, Pinnacles National Park, San Benito County (8:00 – 3:00)** We will look for California Condors, Canyon Wren, Lawrence's Goldfinch, migrating warblers and more. Meet at the Pinnacles Campground and Visitor Center at 8:00 a.m. Entrance fee is \$30 per car unless you have a National Parks Pass. <https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm> Bring lunch, liquids, and a flashlight for walking through the caves. (Headlamps are best). Directions, including carpooling options, will be provided to confirmed reservations. Maximum 12 participants. **Leader:** JR Blair **Register:** [emailfieldtrips@smcbirdalliance.org](mailto:emailfieldtrips@smcbirdalliance.org)

**Sunday April 20, Burleigh H. Murray Ranch State Park, Half Moon Bay (8:00 – 12:00)** This is a leisurely 3-4 hour walk of ~3 miles in this bird-rich gem on a level, gravel, former ranch road leading to the historic barn. Migrating breeding birds will be arriving. Directions: Take SR1 south from Half Moon Bay and then turn east at Higgins Canyon Rd. **Leader:** Ginny Marshall **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4klNOqT>

**Wednesday April 23, Lower La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, La Honda (8:00 – 11:30)** Easy, mostly level 2-3 mile walk in scrub, grassland, and a small forest. We'll look for resident grassland species including Wild Turkey, California Quail, and raptors. A primitive restroom is available, water is not. Directions: Take SR 84 to La Honda, turn north on Sear Ranch Rd (opposite Applejacks bar) and follow it to the preserve parking lot, 900 Sears Ranch Rd. **Leader:** Donna Pomeroy **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4kgejOa>

**Sunday April 27, Bedwell Bayfront Park, Menlo Park (10:00 – 12:00)** Beginner and family-friendly bird walk on fairly level trails exploring the upland and wetland areas of the park. Raptors, egrets, and LBBs (little brown birds) can be seen. Loaner binoculars available. Directions: From US 101, take Marsh Road east (SR84 East), then continue straight into the park. **Leader:** Chris MacIntosh **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4iiEJNu>



## SMCBA Field Trips



**Sunday April 27, Wilder Ranch State Park, Santa Cruz (8:30 – 1:00)** Join us for a ~ 2.5 mile mostly level walk through a variety of habitats including Douglas-firs and coast redwoods while coastal prairie covers much of the flatter terrain. Drier areas include oak woodland, knobcone pines, and manzanitas. \$10. Directions: Wilder Ranch SP is located west of SR 1, north of Santa Cruz, 1842 Coast Road. State Parks Pass or \$10 fee. **Leader:** Nelle Lyons

**Register:** <https://bit.ly/4iij1t1>

**Sunday May 4, Año Nuevo State Park, Pescadero, (8:30 – 12:30)** See April 16 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3DkANN1>

**Tuesday May 6, Filoli: Estate Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00)** This is a 2–2.5 mile moderate walk. Habitats include mixed oak, redwood, madrone woodlands, riparian corridor, and historic horse pastures. Directions: from Hwy 280, exit at Edgewood Rd and head west. At the T intersection, turn right onto Canada Rd. In ½ mile, turn left into the property. Admission fee. **Leader:** Kimberlie Moutoux **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4khY7fq>

**Tuesday May 6, UC Santa Cruz Arboretum, Santa Cruz, (9:00 – 12:00)** See April 1 description **Register:** <https://bit.ly/43f3VQX>

**Saturday May 10, Bedwell Bayfront Park, Menlo Park (10:00 – 12:00)** See April 27 description. **Leader:** JR Blair **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4bgLUUj>

**Wednesday May 14, Wilder Ranch State Park, Santa Cruz (8:30 – 1:00 pm)** See April 27 description. **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4bgIZuR>

**Saturday May 17, Lower La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, La Honda (8:00 – 11:30)** See April 23 description. **Co-Leaders:** Troy Pittock and Christin New **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3D9XljU>

**Sunday May 18, Burleigh H. Murray Ranch State Park, Half Moon Bay (8:00 – 12:00)** See April 20 description. **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3QzM7Zh>

**Sunday May 18, San Bruno Mountain, Brisbane (8:30 – 11:30)** San Bruno Mountain Park is a landmark of local and regional significance, standing as a unique open-space island in the midst of the peninsula's urbanization on the border of San Mateo and San Francisco Counties. It is home to a wealth of wildlife, hidden pockets of woodland and sheltered canyons. We'll walk about 1 mile on most flat dirt and asphalt trails. \$6.00 Vehicle entry fee. 555 Guadalupe Canyon Parkway. **Leader:** Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/41zWVwO>

**Tuesday May 20, Filoli: Spring Creek Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00)** Join us for a 3 mile hike. This trail gains 100' elevation in ¼ mile on a dirt path - not recommended if you have mobility issues. We will spend most of the morning on the California Trail in the Oak and Madrone forest and the Spring Creek Trail through the Redwoods. The California Trail is over dirt paths with a slight incline and is one mile long. The Spring Creek Trail is ½ mile on a narrow dirt track with a 100' elevation gain. **Leader:** Kimberlie Moutoux **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4hgVNmp>

**Saturday May 31, Coyote Pt. Bird Photography (8:30 – 12:30)** Want some hints on capturing those beautiful birds in their habitats, in flight, or in other activities? Join this field trip with two experienced bird/wildlife photographers for tips on how to set up your camera to catch them in motion or still. We'll help with camera settings, using various automatic and manual settings to get the best results with the capabilities of modern digital (and film) cameras. Recommended equipment: telephoto lens (fixed or zoom) and tripod. **Co-Leaders:** Sonny Mencher and Marshall Dinowitz **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4kixgzJ>

**Wednesday June 4, Filoli: Estate Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00)** See May 6 description. **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4ihT0KA>

**Sunday June 15, Burleigh H. Murray Ranch State Park, Half Moon Bay (8:00 – 12:00)** See April 20 description. **Register:** <https://bit.ly/41gQUa>

**Wednesday June 18, Filoli: Spring Creek Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00)** See May 20 description. **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4iiSsnK>

**Wednesday June 18 – Sunday June 22, Sierra Valley for Beginning and Intermediate Birders – Multi-day field trip!** Sierra Valley is a year-round birding paradise. In summer it is home to breeding songbirds, waders, and waterbirds. Sierra Valley's habitats support the Sierra Nevada's greatest diversity and abundance of birds. We will also spend some time in the Yuba Pass area. Our trip leader, J.R. Blair is the former Director of the San Francisco State University, Sierra Nevada Field Campus. The trip will commence at 1:00 PM on Wed, June 18 at the Field Campus in Sierra City and end about 12 PM on Sun, June 22. Our days will begin at 8:30 am. Participants are responsible for their own food, lodging, and transportation. Carpooling may be an option. Limit 10 people. Accompanied young birders welcome. Email [fieldtrips@smcbirdalliance.org](mailto:fieldtrips@smcbirdalliance.org) for reservations.

**OFFICERS**

**Acting President:** John Epperson  
**Vice President:** Open  
**Secretary:** Melissa Hero  
**Treasurer:** Julie Dull  
**At Large:** Doug Brown, Joyce Courtney, Marshall Dinowitz, Nelle Lyons, Chris MacIntosh

**Consulting Biologist**

Alvaro Jaramillo

**COMMITTEES**

**Cavity Nesters Recovery Program**

Ronnie Eaton [cnrp@smcbirdalliance.org](mailto:cnrp@smcbirdalliance.org)

**Christmas Bird Count (CBC)**

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Curt Bianchi [curt@curtbianchi.com](mailto:curt@curtbianchi.com)

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**Field Trips**

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**Hospitality**

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**Administrative Assistant**

Davena Gentry [davena@smcbirdalliance.org](mailto:davena@smcbirdalliance.org)

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*San Mateo County Bird Alliance protects native birds and other wildlife and their ecosystems in San Mateo County by engaging people of all ages in conservation, education, advocacy and enjoyment.*

**Sequoia Audubon Society  
dba San Mateo County Bird Alliance**  
P.O. Box 620292  
Woodside, CA  
94062-0292

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PERMIT NO. 293

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The Annual General Meeting will be held  
Saturday, June 14 from 12:00 – 2:30  
Potluck Picnic and Presentation  
San Mateo Garden Center

Details to follow!

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**San Mateo County Bird Alliance Membership**

Senior or Student membership	\$20.00
Individual membership	\$25.00
Family membership	\$35.00
Supporter	\$100.00
Donation to SMCBA	\$ _____
	Total \$ _____

Yes, I am interested in volunteering \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter Preference:

\_\_\_\_\_ Mail and / or \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**P.O. Box 620292, Woodside, CA 94062-0292**

Contact us: [office@smcbirdalliance.org](mailto:office@smcbirdalliance.org)

Visit our website: [www.smcbirdalliance.org](http://www.smcbirdalliance.org)

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[www.birding.smcbirdalliance.org](http://www.birding.smcbirdalliance.org)

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Conservation: <http://conservation@smcbirdalliance.groups.io>

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