



Established 1949

SAN MATEO COUNTY BIRD ALLIANCE

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July - September 2025

Meet SMCBA Board Member, Joyce Courtney

As part of our continuing series “Meet the San Mateo County Bird Alliance Board Members,” I’m happy to introduce ... myself! My name is Joyce Courtney, and I joined the board as a Director at Large in 2024. Please allow me to tell you a little about myself!

Q: What brought me to the SMCBA board?

After volunteering on the Conservation Committee, the board members approached me to discuss my interest in an open position on the SMCBA board. I was grateful for the opportunity to step into an additional role and support the organization.

Q: When did I become interested in birds?

Growing up in Hawaii, I was exposed to birds incredibly early. I dreamed of becoming an ornithologist throughout my childhood, but sadly, that did not materialize. Thankfully, however, I would later realize that I could still make an impact in a meaningful way by helping rehabilitate local raptors, songbirds, and seabirds as a volunteer with the PHS Wildlife Care Center. My volunteer work soon led to an interest in birding, which was easy to develop due to the diverse habitat in my neighborhood, which provided nesting and food supply for birds year-round. I’ve been fortunate to document nearly 80 species within just a few blocks of my home!

Q: What keeps me excited and passionate about birds?

Even when I’m busy with work and exhausted from burning the midnight oil, I’m regularly treated to my local Great-horned Owls hooting away outside my bedroom window from dusk to dawn. I am honored to have a resident Osprey, who feasts on a lovely fish dinner before roosting in my Eucalyptus tree from September through April. I am blessed to have several very friendly and tame Townsend’s Warblers that return to my balcony without fail every September and spend the next 6-7 months in my yard feasting on berries and insects in my yard plus the live mealworms I set out every day. The joy they bring me is immeasurable, keeping my love for them alive.

Q: What can others do to help out?

You can help support SMCBA by attending Planning Commission or City Council meetings or discussing strategies to mitigate conservation issues in San Mateo County. Your voice and actions can make a significant difference. Connect with your city’s Parks department to share your support for the migrant birds that descend upon our county’s urban forests to feed during autumn and winter. Encourage your city to consider how the timing of the city’s pruning schedule can impact the development of seed clusters and berries that provide food supply during autumn and winter and impact nesting or roosting birds. Your involvement is crucial in our collective efforts for bird conservation.

Please consider volunteering with San Mateo County Bird Alliance; everyone, regardless of their background or experience, is welcome! Your unique perspective and skills can contribute to our mission of bird conservation.

Meeting Programs

2nd Thursdays at 7:00 pm

July 10 - Zoom
Wildlife Photography
Vishal Subramanyan

August 14 - Zoom
Building a Bird Friendly City
Glenn Phillips

September 11 - Zoom
Alvaro Jaramillo

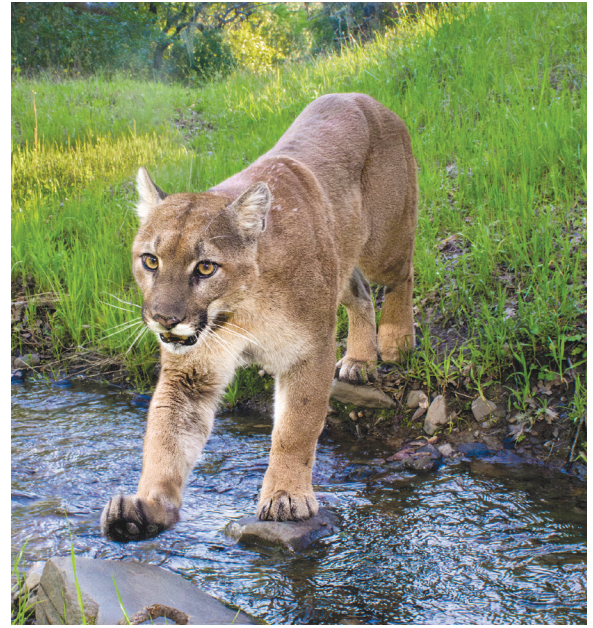
MEETING PROGRAMS

July 10 – Zoom

Wildlife Photography *Vishal Subramanyan*

Vishal Subramanyan will present about his journey as a wildlife photographer in the state of California, from the coasts to the mountains. He'll share stories of animals big and small, from shrews to mountain lions, and how he captured these incredible photos.

Subramanyan is an award-winning wildlife photographer, National Geographic Young Explorer, and public speaker. As a freelance storyteller, he partners with leading conservation organizations in California and beyond to create stories that inspire deeper connections between people and nature. He graduated from UC Berkeley in 2024 with degrees in ecology and statistics. His work has been featured by National Geographic, CNN, NPR, Smithsonian, and the LA Times, and has won prestigious awards, including Wildlife Photographer of the Year.



August 14 – Zoom

Building a Bird Friendly City *Glenn Phillips*

Collision with glass claims the lives of hundreds of millions of birds yearly in the United States. It is second only to domestic cats as a source of mortality linked directly to human action. Glenn Phillips, Golden Gate Bird Alliance's Executive Director, will speak about creating bird-friendly cities and how to make your home safer for birds. He holds a master's in Urban Sustainability and Science Education from the City University of New York. He co-authored the Bird Friendly Building Guide published by the American Bird Conservancy and has worked on Bird-safe Buildings since 2007.

September 11- Zoom

Alvaro Jaramillo

The topic is to be determined; however, you can always count on Alvaro to educate and entertain his viewers. He is known for his ability to explain complex biological concepts in accessible ways, and he has a talent for making birdwatching an enriching experience for everyone. His international travels allow him to observe various bird species in their natural habitats, giving him a broad perspective on bird migration patterns, behavior, and the threats birds face due to habitat loss and climate change.

SMCBA Conservation update

We continue to work on ongoing issues.

Redwood Life. Several people attended and commented at the April 14 RWC council meeting. Instead of being a "consent item," there was discussion. Comments were provided by several SMCBA members and others working to reduce this project size. Council approved Alternative 2 (14% smaller than the original) for evaluation in the Redwood Life Evolve Project Environmental Impact Report and the original proposal.

Nesting Cliff Swallows in Redwood City. Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge consulted with one of our committee members, who notified Blu Harbor management that the colony that used to nest at the now-demolished Syufy theatre complex adjacent to Bair Island is now nesting at Blu Harbor. The letter reminded Blu Harbor of their obligations under the MBTA, and they received a response that they were aware of and informed themselves of.

Foster City Geese. On April 21, the City Council voted for a new Request For Proposal (RFP) for seven problem parks to be written. At least two of our SMCBA members commented publicly, reinforcing the need for non-lethal means. If you're interested in any topic and would like to help, please get in touch with your Conservation Committee at conservation@smcbirdalliance.org.



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.

Thursday July 10, Central Park, San Mateo (9:00 – 10:00) A morning outing for those with limited time or mobility. This is a great opportunity if you've not been to Central Park. This 16.5 acre park was the first in San Mateo! The hour-long walk will introduce you to some year-round residents and SMCBA's Cavity Nesters Recovery Program. Directions: Meet in front of the Japanese Tea Garden. **Leader:** Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3SKvk6S>

Saturday July 19, Princeton Harbor, Half Moon Bay (8:00 – 11:00) Pillar Point Harbor (a.k.a. Princeton Harbor) is the only protected harbor between San Francisco and Santa Cruz and an eBird hotspot. We hope to see Morris, the only known Northern Gannet in the Pacific Ocean, who has taken up residence here since 2015! Directions: Located off Hwy 1 and Capistrano Rd, we'll meet near the restrooms across from the Harbormaster's Office. **Leader:** Tom Duncan **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3Hwg4YR>

Sunday July 20, Burleigh H. Murray State Park, Half Moon Bay (8:00 – 12:00) This is a leisurely 3-4 hour walk of ~3 miles in this bird-rich location on a level, gravel, former ranch road leading to the historic barn. Directions: Take Hwy 1 south from Half Moon Bay and then turn east at Higgins Canyon Rd. **Leader:** Ginny Marshall **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4mU7Jyi>

Sunday July 27, Nob Hill Pond, Redwood Shores (10:00 – 12:00) Perfect for beginners, this eBird hotspot is a great place to easily see many species and an excellent place if it's your first time joining us! Time permitting, we may check some other birding sites nearby. Restrooms are available in the nearby shopping center. Directions: From Hwy 101, take the Redwood Shores Parkway east. Turn right at the second traffic signal on Twin Dolphin Dr. Follow the road to parking at 1050 Twin Dolphin Dr. **Leader:** J.R. Blair **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3TgRtd0>

Thursday July 31, 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/43RkIrF>

Wednesday August 6, 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. Admission Fee. **Leader:** Kimberlie Moutoux **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3SIIP0o>

Wednesday August 13, Filoli: Estate Trail, Woodside (9:30 – 12:00) See July 31 description. **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3FLwHPH>

Friday August 15, Bedwell Bayfront Park, Menlo Park (5:30 – 6:30) TGIF! A first, unwind after the week with birds. We'll bring a scope and extra binoculars and walk along the slough to the tidal pond to look for early arriving migrants and resident birds. Meet in the first paved parking lot near the restrooms. **Leader:** Chris MacIntosh **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4dTRYgl>

Saturday August 16, Coyote Pt. Recreational Area, San Mateo (8:30 – 11:30) The diversity of habitats at Coyote Point offers the chance to see a number of species. With luck, we may see the resident Harlequin Duck. Directions: Exit Peninsula Ave. from Hwy 101 and follow the signs 1701 Coyote Point Drive—admission fee. Meet near the yacht club. **Leader:** Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3FUYn4y>

Sunday, August 17, Bair Island, Redwood City (10:00 – 12:00) Level dirt trails make this an easy outing for beginners. We should see a variety of ducks, shorebirds, and smaller songbirds. Directions: From Hwy 101, exit Whipple Ave. Heading east, it winds for 0.5 mile, becoming E. Bayshore Rd, then Bair Island Rd. Meet at the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge Bair Island Trail parking lot. **Leader:** J.R. Blair **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3FGBwK8>

Friday August 29, Bedwell Bayfront Park, Menlo Park (5:30 – 6:30) TGIF! See August 15th **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4jM1p9o>

Friday September 5, Filoli: Spring Creek Trail (9:30 – 12:00) See August 6th description. **Register:** <https://bit.ly/43U4sqc>

Sunday September 7, 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 amid 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. Directions: Meet at 555 Guadalupe Canyon Parkway. **Leader:** Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4mQo4E2>

Wednesday September 10, Filoli: Estate Trail (9:30 – 12:00) See August 13th **Register:** <https://bit.ly/459SOJY>



Wednesday September 10, Nob Hill Pond, Redwood Shores (5:30 – 6:30) Birds & Brews! Another first, join us to unwind after work to enjoy birding and a beer afterwards! **Leader:** Doug Brown **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4dQUoCK>

Saturday September 13, Palo Alto Baylands, Palo Alto (10:00 – 12:00) Perfect for a first outing, this is a beginner and family-friendly outing! Meet in the parking lot for the Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center, 2775 Embarcadero Rd. for a leisurely walk on level gravel trails where we will explore this San Francisco Bay treasure. Loaner binoculars are available. **Leader:** J.R. Blair **Register:** <https://bit.ly/3HLPo6i>

Sunday, September 14, Pillar Point, Half Moon Bay (8:00 – 11:00) Pillar Point is a hot spot for birding. Walking will be on a mostly level dirt trail and some sand. Scopes will be helpful here. Directions: Meet at the “West Shoreline Access,” popularly known as the parking lot to Mavericks, just below the radar station “golf ball”. **Leader:** Tom Duncan **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4kUtex1>

Sunday September 21, Wavecrest Open Space, Half Moon Bay (8:00 – 11:00) This is a 2-3 mile level walk through a vital hawk and raptor site, ending with an ocean scan for loons and other seabirds. Scopes are useful. Directions: Meet at 399 Wavecrest Rd by Smith Field, 1.5 miles south of SR 1 & 92. **Leader:** Ginny Marshall **Register:** <https://bit.ly/4jKvBSh>

Friday, September 26, Coyote Pt. Recreational Area, San Mateo (8:00 – 11:00) See August 16 description. **Leader:** Donna Pomeroy **Register:** <https://bit.ly/45LgcO2>

June 14 Annual General Meeting



Caption: John Epperson conducts the business meeting, addressing bylaws changes and board nominations. There was a good turnout and a lot of great food. Thank you to everyone who joined us, especially Keith Hansen, who mesmerized us with stories and good photography!



Remembering Rita Jennings

We lost a former Board member and long-time Plover volunteer. Rita Jennings was dedicated to helping birds, encouraging people to learn about and protect birds. Rita was interested in birds from a young age, seeing birds in Golden Gate Park and around San Francisco. She reminisced about seeing white-crowned sparrows in Golden Gate Park and a sound that reminded her and her mother of sprinklers. When Rita retired in 2001, she began numerous volunteer ventures. I was fortunate that one of those was joining the State Parks Plover Watch to protect snowy plovers.

We experienced some of our busiest years with our plover program soon after Rita started. She was very good at locating plovers, nests, and broods of chicks. She became one of our on-call volunteers to come out to the beach at a moment's notice when someone needed to manage work around plovers, such as installing protective fencing or nest enclosures. Rita became one of our snowy plover experts, attended management meetings for the Monterey Bay area, and even traveled to range-wide meetings as far away as Oregon and southern California. Rita mentored many of our local Plover Watch volunteers over the years. She helped with the plover protection and education in Pacifica, too.



But Rita didn't stop there. Rita volunteered in the Francis Beach visitor center, helped with Junior Ranger programs, tabled at events, and acted as beach captain for clean-up days. Rita never hesitated to be an ambassador for snowy plovers and State Parks. Her yellow VW bug was a regular sight in our coastside State Parks. She was a State Park volunteer for over two decades and an active volunteer with Sequoia Audubon. Rita served on the board for Sequoia Audubon from 2007 to 2010. Rita and other Sequoia members and State Park volunteers helped Ranger David Augustine revive the docent program at Pescadero Marsh. Rita was one of the docents who led walks there, focusing on birds and was an essential part of the docent team at the Marsh for many years. In addition to leading guided walks, she helped with the heron rookery monitoring and continued monitoring snowy plovers at numerous beaches along the coast.

I'm unsure if she wanted to, but early in her volunteer years, Rita agreed to help me with school group visits when I asked for her help. Eventually, Rita was helping with school field trips to Half Moon Bay State Beach and Pescadero Marsh. Rita began helping with pre-trip classroom visits for State Parks and Sequoia Audubon around San Mateo County. We made enough school visits that we even had to participate in one of the school lock-down drills at a school; I wondered, "What have I gotten Rita into now?" She was always willing. For many years, Rita helped lead birding programs at Half Moon Bay State Beach for AAUW STEM camp for local students and nature activities for a summer program for youth visiting from San Francisco. Many young people learned about birds, birding, and using binoculars from Rita.

Rita cared for birds at home, as well. On her way home from a volunteer event in Pescadero, she saw a bird on the road that turned out to be an escaped cage bird that she was able to capture. She ended up fostering it and becoming its forever home. A similar event occurred when someone turned in an escaped canary at Francis Beach over a busy holiday, and I asked her to take care of it. That was another bird that became a long-term foster care for her; she said that bird would sing along when she operated her shredder!

We traveled on several birding trips including adventuring to Panama. Rita loved birds near and far, whether watching her feeders at home or floating in a dug-out canoe on a Panamanian river. I appreciated Rita's birding expertise and her enthusiasm. I'm fortunate that Rita volunteered because that caused our paths to cross. I have many memories of Rita, which are fond and exciting. In an interview with June Baxter for the Half Moon Bay newspaper in 2004, which focused on Rita's volunteer work for Senior Coastsiders, Rita told June, "I believe with all my heart if you want to learn about and become part of your community, volunteer." Rita was a great volunteer and a great friend.

Nelle Lyons, Board Member and Education Committee

OFFICERS

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Treasurer: Julie Dull

At Large: Doug Brown, Ed Chig,
Joyce Courtney, Marshall Dinowitz,
Nelle Lyons, Chris MacIntosh

Consulting Biologist

Alvaro Jaramillo

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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.

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dba San Mateo County Bird Alliance**
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Woodside, CA
94062-0292

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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!

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 _____

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Contact us: office@smcbirdalliance.org

Visit our website: www.smcbirdalliance.org

Check out our Online Birding Guide:

www.birding.smcbirdalliance.org

Join our Discussion Group:

General: <http://smcbirdalliance@groups.io>

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

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