

Report From Camp Surfbird

By Adya Radcliffe



Thanks to the generosity of the Bird Alliance of Central New Mexico and the Ryan Beaulieu Scholarship, I had the remarkable opportunity to attend Camp Surfbird in San Diego in February of 2024. During the trip I not only made friendships with a number of other skilled, young birders and naturalists, but also had the opportunity to see a dozen life birds (mostly on a remarkable half-day pelagic).

The birding highlight of my trip was spying a Ridgeway Rail during our border outing near Tijuana. The rail remained conspicuous for minutes, screaming and pooping just a couple of dozen yards away in the middle of a dirt road. The rail's boldness allowed more serious photographers vivid, candid shots and even granted me a good enough look with my zoomless Polaroid to accurately capture the bird's essence.

The overall highlight of the trip was listening to Chris Cooper's keynote speech, in which he reflected on the need to replace bird names derived from people to avoid honoring figures with racist pasts. I also had the good fortune to speak with Cooper one-on-one for many minutes during the pelagic trip, and I am happy to report that he and I really hit it off.

I would like to give special thanks to former CNMAS president Sarah Jayne Cole, who has kindly and patiently encouraged me to apply for the Ryan Beaulieu Scholarship for many years. I'd also like to thank Bird Alliance treasurer Lee Hopwood, who worked long and hard hours to not only procure and transfer the scholarship funds but to seamlessly coordinate the finer details of the trip. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my debt to Ryan Beaulieu, whose life and legacy has long been an inspiration for me as a young birder growing up in the same birding circles he ran with in Albuquerque. Thank you, Ryan.