



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- February 2018

LARRY BRODERICK PRESENTS

Birds of Prey

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19 AT 7 P.M.

CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER



Bald eagle by Larry Broderick

Join us for this enthusiastic and informative presentation about the resident, migrant, and over-wintering birds of prey in Northern California. Larry Broderick's fascinating and visually-exciting presentation includes not only wonderful first-hand stories from the field, but also is packed with interesting information about raptor habits, identification and suggestions of where to spot them, as well as some interesting one-of-a-kind and rare special surprises.

Larry is a Sonoma County Birds of Prey Natural History and Interpretive Specialist, Jenner Headlands Hawk Watch Director and Certified California Naturalist. He has been working with birds of prey as an educational specialist for over 25 years. For the last 10 years he has led walks, hikes, and presentation with Solano and Sonoma Land Trusts, Madrone Audubon, Bird Rescue Center and Redwood Regional Ornithological Society. Larry conducts Bird and wildlife surveys for the Wildlands Conservancy, Sonoma Land Trust and Pepperwood Preserve. He also runs West Count Hawkwatch and manages dozens of docents, photographers and tour guides.



Bald eagle by Larry Broderick

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Northern spotted owl by Ron LeValley

Join us for the owling field trip next month. See page 5.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER**Dave Jensen**

The 118th Christmas Bird Count has ended. I was able to participate in each of the four events held in Mendocino County, including the first ever count in Willits. What made this year memorable was the fact that no rain fell on any of the count days. In fact, the weather was so good that swallows were reported on each of the counts. Ironically, I'm not sure if that is really such a good thing.

At the end of the count day, participants got together at a dinner to report their observations. A common theme at each gathering was the seemingly low number of birds seen during the day, despite the favorable conditions. I have participated in the Manchester, Ukiah, and Fort Bragg counts for several years now, always covering the same territories, and I agreed that the number of birds seemed low

this year. I could swear that the glass was half empty.

However, as I began to analyze the data from the Manchester count, the numbers contradicted my impressions. We had a total of 142 species, up from the 10-year average of 141. Similarly, Fort Bragg had a respectable total of 141 species. The Manchester count had three new species: Barred Owl (again, not necessarily a good thing), White-breasted Nuthatch, and Clay-colored Sparrow. Other unusual sightings included a Short-eared Owl, a Green Heron, American Bittern and Tropical Kingbird. Unusual sightings from the Fort Bragg count included a Redhead, Wandering Tattler, and Heermann's Gull. Tim Bray also reported that the total number of birds counted was 10% greater than last year's effort.

My gloomy impressions were further disputed by birds that had the highest number of individuals reported during the 44-year history of the Manchester count. These included Say's Phoebes (9), Great-horned Owls (12), Hairy Woodpeckers (16), Red-necked Grebes (34), Pygmy Nuthatches (81), and Pelagic Cormorants (220). However, we also had a record low number of Pacific Wrens (6) and failed to find any Wilson's Snipe or Mew Gulls.

My point in sharing all this is to stress the importance of long-term studies such as the Christmas Bird Count. It is most likely that many avian species are declining in numbers, and Christmas Count data has shown that winter ranges have crept northward with the warming climate. The world is definitely changing, and those changes will greatly impact birds and all other forms of life. But if we hope to understand the nature and scope of those impacts our impressions, no matter how strong they may seem, must be verified by reliable long-term data. That is why your chapter continues to support the Save-Our-Shorebirds surveys. That is why we continue to monitor Black Oystercatcher and Pelagic Cormorant reproduction. And that is why we conduct our Christmas Count surveys each year, rain or shine.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you who have participated in our Citizen Science projects. No state or federal agency can afford the valuable services that you provide for free, and your chapter could never accomplish what we have without your support. I would also like to invite the rest of you to join us. Those who have joined quickly learned that their fears of inadequacy were unfounded. You will make new friends and develop a deeper appreciation for the complex web that is life on the Mendocino coast.

WHY DO BIRDS MATTER?

In celebration of 2018 as the Year of the Bird, each issue of The Black Oystercatcher will reprint a response from one of the avian enthusiasts who were asked: "Why do birds matter?"

This month's answer is from:

Jacqui Bonomo, *Executive Director and Vice President of Audubon Maryland-DC.*

Accompanying photos by Ron LeValley

"Birds are the Fed Exes of the natural world.



They bring nature to people, wherever we are;

sitting on a front porch,
hiking a backcountry trail,
in a wheelchair sitting by a window.

Birds are with us nearly always and as such,

so is nature."



SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS**Becky Bowen****GETTING TO KNOW A ROCK SANDPIPER**

Photograph by Becky Bowen

Like magic, a Rock Sandpiper appeared on an onshore rock north of the Ward Avenue ramp in Inglenook Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Preserve in MacKerricher State Park. It was December 23, 2017 – the first Rock Sandpiper seen on Ten Mile Beach in the 11-year history of Save Our Shorebirds surveys. The elusive shorebird had been recorded on SOS surveys in 2013 and 2014 by surveyor Richard Hubacek on Virgin Creek Beach (he recorded high counts of 2 on January 11, 2013, and 2 on March 29, 2013). Dorothy Tobkin told us she has seen Rock Sandpipers occasionally on local beaches in the last several years – especially near Laguna Point in MacKerricher State Park. And we saw one on an SOS survey January 11, 2018, foraging with a group of Surfbirds, Black Turnstones, Sanderlings and Least Sandpipers on the onshore rocks on Ward Avenue beach.

Although the bird winters along the northern Pacific Coast, it is listed as rare here. Nesting grounds are along the West Coast of Alaska and some are year-round residents of the Aleutian Archipelago.

Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing MCAS citizen science program in partnership with State Parks. To learn more, please contact Angela Liebenberg at liebenbergs@mcn.org

MCAS FIELD TRIPS JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2018

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2018

“GULLING” with Ron LeValley

9:00 AM

Meet at Laguna Point, MacKerricher State Park.

There’s no reason to drive yourself crazy trying to work out gull identification on your own when we have a resident expert to help you. Ron LeValley will lead us on a field workshop to identify the various species of Gulls that winter here: Western, California, Glaucous-winged, Herring, Mew, Heermann’s, possibly Iceland, and maybe a Bonaparte’s if we’re really lucky. In case that isn’t exciting enough for you, Laguna Point is also a great spot for rocky shorebirds, seabirds, and marine mammals.

Dress warmly, bring binoculars and scope if you have one.



California gulls by Ron LeValley

SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 2018

“OWLING” with Mike Stephens

7:00 PM - 10:00 PM [note: DST begins March 11]

Meet in Elk, at Greenwood Beach SP parking lot.

We will carpool up the Philo-Greenwood Road, stopping at selected turnouts to listen and call for owls. Seven species of owls have been seen and/or heard along this route, and on last year’s field trip we heard six of them.

Owling involves standing very still in the darkness and listening intently. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight.



Great grey owl by Ron LeValley

SACRAMENTO VALLEY TRIP REPORT

By Tim Bray

High expectations for this ambitious trip were dampened, so to speak, when the dreaded Sacramento Valley “tule fog” materialized about an hour before we started the first leg. Nevertheless we had some exciting finds each day, starting with roosting Great-horned Owls at the Colusa NWR and ending with Greater Roadrunner on Leesville Road.

Highlights in between included a spectacular male Vermillion Flycatcher, Northern Shrike (and several Loggerheads), Common Gallinules, American Bitterns, Green Heron, Burrowing Owl (hat-tip to Tenaya), and Yellow-billed Magpie. Flocks of White-faced Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, and hundreds of Tundra Swans livened up the landscape, even in the fog. And of course there were the waterfowl, thousands of ducks and geese, although they seemed more dispersed around the Valley than last year.



*Vermillion Flycatcher
at the Maxwell Cemetery
photo by Catherine Keegan*

We tallied 92 species on Saturday, an amazing 101 on Sunday (in the fog!), and 58 on Monday morning. Seven people started out on Saturday morning, joined by four more at lunch. Two more showed up on Sunday morning, for a grand total of 13 participants, making quite a convoy around the Sutter Buttes and up the back roads of the Butte Sink. It was a grand adventure!



*American Bittern on the Colusa NWR auto tour route.
photo by Catherine Keegan*



*Burrowing Owl
photo by Catherine Keegan*

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2018

Saturday 3 - *Beginner Bird Walk* Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 9:00 AM-Noon* Leader: Dave Jensen

Saturday 10 - *Gulling* Laguna Point, MacKerricher State Park Fort Bragg, CA 9:00 AM-Noon Leader: Ron LeValley
Join us on a field workshop to identify the various species of gulls that winter here.

Monday 19 - *Meeting* Caspar Community Center 7:00 PM
Join us for Larry Broderick's enthusiastic and informative presentation about the resident, migrant, and over-wintering birds of prey in Northern California.

Wednesday 21 - *Bird Walk* Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 8:30 AM-Noon* Leader: Tim Bray

Sunday 25 - *Coastal Trail Bird Walk* - North Coastal Trail, Fort Bragg 10:00AM-Noon, Meet near restroom at east end of parking lot at foot of Elm Street, Fort Bragg. Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

MARCH 2018

Saturday 3 - *Beginner Bird Walk* Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 9:00 AM-Noon* Leader: Dave Jensen

Sunday 4 - *Whale Festival Bird Walk* Point Cabrillo Historic Park , upper parking lot. Caspar, CA 9:00 AM-Noon. Leader: Dave Jensen

Saturday 17 - *Owling* ****DATE CHANGE**** Greenwood Beach SP parking lot. Elk, CA 7:00 PM-10:00 PM Leader: Mike Stephens

Sunday 18 - *Whale Festival Bird Walk* Point Cabrillo Historic Park , upper parking lot. Caspar, CA 9:00 AM-Noon. Leader: Dave Jensen

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**These walks are free, but there is an entry charge for participants who are not Garden members*

**For complete calendar, updates, and useful links, visit: mendocinocoastaudubon.org
And please visit us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon**

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2016-2017

President	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	(707) 964-8163
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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society is to help people appreciate and enjoy native birds, and to conserve and restore local ecosystems for the benefit of native birds and other wildlife.

MENDOCINO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY
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