



Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter, January 2014

Monday, January 20, 2014

7 p.m.

Caspar Community Center



**Doug Forsell**  
**History and Wildlife**  
**Of Our Three Most Remote**  
**National Wildlife Refuges**



*Clockwise from top: Great Frigatebird photo by Mark MacDonald, Masked Boobies photo by Doug Forsell and Red-footed Booby chick photo courtesy of USFWS.*

Doug Forsell was manager of the National Wildlife Refuges at Howland, Baker and Jarvis Islands for four years in the 1980s. These tiny Central Pacific Ocean islands are United States territories and visited only by the educators and scientists who manage the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. Mr. Forsell's studies at Humboldt State University launched a 36-year career at USFWS. He is a nationally-recognized authority on seabirds that nest on the island refuges – a population of more than a million seabirds that have survived the Pacific guano wars of the 1800s, World War II military activities, and biological and chemical warfare testing in the 1960s.

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*Black Oystercatcher Masthead photo*  
*By Ron LeValley*

**PRESIDENT'S CORNER****Joleen Ossello**

*MCAS President Joleen Ossello and daughter, Autumn*

“What is beautiful is a joy for all seasons”. For me, this Oscar Wilde quote describes the miracles of family and of birds. Each season reveals a variety of birds. Some sightings we learn to count on, while others are a rare occurrence. In the winter we can expect the Anna’s Hummingbird, while the Bull-ock’s Oriole is a fulfilling surprise. Winter also provides an opportunity to celebrate family far and near.

Whether this winter is a time for you to expand your life list and/or spend time with your loved ones, both are a celebration. This holiday season my own life includes the best of both worlds. I will be traveling to Portland, Oregon to stay with the closest of my family. I will also have the chance to bird with longstanding colleagues. I look forward to a relaxing read of excerpts from *California Currents; An Exploration of the Ocean’s Pleasures, Mysteries, and Dilemmas* by Marie De Santis while listening to a Bluegrass Season’s Greetings. Joy to you, your family and to all birds in this New Year.

**HELP OUR COLLEAGUES – REPORT BANDED COOPER’S AND RED-TAILED HAWKS**

Golden Gate Raptor Observatory Director Alan Fish has asked for help. In 2013, the observatory began to band Red-tailed Hawks (purple bands) and Cooper’s Hawks (green bands) on the Marin Headlands. If you see these bands, please report it to the federal Bird Banding Lab at [www.reportbad.gov](http://www.reportbad.gov) and to GGRO at [ggro@parksconservancy.org](mailto:ggro@parksconservancy.org). Include all observations including date, time, location and the three-digit alphanumeric code on each side of the band.

## UNUSUAL BIRD SIGHTINGS ALONG THE COAST IN 2013



Brown Booby spotted by several birders on May 19 MCAS pelagic trip.

Photo by Richard Hubacek, Green Birding Mendocino



Black-capped Chickadee, photo by Adam Hutchins



Song Sparrow, Little River, photo by Ron LeValley

Unusual coastal bird sightings in 2013 included a Northern Parula spotted near Mendocino Village this summer by in-land birder Jerry White and photographed by Tim Bray (photo in our July newsletter). The

Song Sparrow (above) photographed by Ron LeValley last winter is a vagrant, probably from British Columbia or Alaska, one of the few records of this subspecies in California. If confirmed by the Mendocino County Bird Review Committee, the bird first spotted by Alison Cebula, identified by Dorothy Tobkin and photographed by Adam Hutchins November 15 at Lake Cleone will be the first recorded sighting of a Black-capped Chickadee in the county.



Hooded Oriole , Little River, photo by Ron LeValley



South Polar Skua found in Virgin Creek estuary by Karen Havlena June 5, photo by Ron LeValley



Burrowing Owl , Ward Avenue, photo by Ron LeValley

## RED-NECKED PHALAROPE Donald Shephard



*Red-necked Phalarope track and the bird  
in winter plumage, at Virgin Creek Beach*  
*Photos by Becky Bowen*

In my early twenties, when I worked in the fens in Norfolk, UK, a northeast wind would sometimes blow a few Red-necked Phalaropes onto the coast. Sadly, only thirty pairs breed in Britain on lochans – small lakes – in the Shetland Isles.

Fast forward twenty years to the Central Valley when my wife and I accompanied my mother to the Sugar Ponds outside Woodland. These are abandoned settling ponds for a sugar beet factory. We spotted a whirling dervish of a bird spinning in tight circles. When it finally ceased turning, we identified it as a Red-necked Phalarope. I found this behavior vertiginous and difficult to watch, but Becky Bowen gets excited by this dizzy action in the water. She uses the word phalarope as a verb meaning to lose control. More of this species than usual came ashore at Ten Mile Beach in the summer of 2012. I have also seen them on a vernal pool on the Mendocino Headlands, and Save Our Shorebirds volunteers have recorded them wading in Inglenook Fen. Pelagic birders see more of them because they primarily feed at sea in the non-breeding season.

If you are lucky enough to see a Red-necked Phalarope on the beach, look for footprints. You will notice what appears to be the imprint of triple-jointed toes. In fact, the toes are lobed which enables this species to spin in the water. This activity creates a whirlpool which brings small invertebrates to the surface where the spinning bird plucks them from the center of the eddy.

The Red-necked (formerly the Northern Phalarope) is the smallest of the three phalaropes and has the shortest bill. Ornithologists classify this sparrow-sized sandpiper as a small wader that breeds in the Arctic regions of North America and Eurasia. Unusual for a wader, it migrates to spend winters at sea on tropical oceans.

**continued**

Sexual dimorphism in this species reverses the usual arrangement of resplendent males and cryptically colored females. The breeding female appears predominantly dark gray above, with a chestnut neck and upper breast, black face and white throat. The breeding males present a duller version of the female plumage. Young birds sport gray and brown above, with bluff under-parts and a black patch through the eye. In winter, the plumage is gray above and white below, but the black eye-patch remains.

Behavior in these birds reflects sexual dimorphism. Females pursue and fight over males, and will defend their mates from other females until the clutch is complete and the males settle on the nests to incubate. Males perform all incubation and chick-rearing activities, while the females may attempt to find another mate. If a male loses his eggs to predation, he may re-pair with his original mate or with a new female to try again. When too little time remains in the breeding season to re-nest, females migrate south, leaving the males to rear the young. Chicks mainly feed themselves and fly within 20 days of hatch.

On the open ocean, they are often found where converging currents produce upwelling. During migration, some flocks stop over at river mouths and bays to take advantage of food stirred up by tidal action. Almost all of the non-breeding season is spent in open water. As this species rarely comes into contact with humans, it can be unusually tame.

Not surprisingly given their feeding strategy, a group of phalaropes has many collective nouns, including a "dopping", "swirl", "twirl", "whirl", and "whirligig" of phalaropes. As I write this article, wind swirls trees like grasses tracking a zephyr and whips the ocean into whitecaps. That harsh environment – cold, wet and windy – causes me to wonder how these one and a fifth ounce birds survive out there, while I bank the fire with another log.



*Red-necked Phalarope chick, photo by Elaine Rhodes*



*Red-necked Phalarope (right) in breeding plumage, photo by Andreas Trepte*

## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS RECORDS UNUSUAL 2013 SIGHTINGS



Laughing Gull photo by Becky Bowen



Curlew Sandpiper photo by Richard Hubacek, Green Birding Mendocino



Blue Morph Snow Goose (left) photo by Becky Bowen

SOS Surveyor Richard Hubacek spotted a rare Curlew Sandpiper near Ward Avenue September 19, 2013 – one day before the bird was reported by inland birder Jerry White at Virgin Creek. Richard was involved in helping

a shorebird in distress on Ten Mile Beach and was not able to report his sandpiper discovery (the first recorded county sighting other than Dorothy Tobkin's unofficial sighting March 30, 1997) until much later. Becky Bowen also observed a Laughing Gull July 10 and a dark morph "Blue Goose" Snow Goose November 23. Both birds were seen during SOS surveys on Ten Mile Beach.

*Save Our Shorebirds is a Mendocino Coast Audubon Society long term ongoing citizen science project in partnership with California State Parks and FLOCKworks. Volunteers monitor shorebirds on three Mackerricher State Park beaches.*

*To participate, contact Angela Liebenberg at [liebenbergs@mcn.org](mailto:liebenbergs@mcn.org)*

*and please visit us on facebook at [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)*

### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY

**Tim Bray**

The fun's not over yet. Saturday, January 4 is the Manchester CBC and it's not too late to sign up to participate (contact Dave Jensen at 964-8163).

At press time, the preliminary tally of our December 21 Fort Bragg CBC was 151 species including a Barred Owl, Eurasian Wigeon, Black-and-white Warbler, Bullock's Oriole, Green Heron and Black-footed Albatross. Also reported during count week: American Bittern, Redheads and Dunlin. A full story will be published in the February newsletter.

Big thanks to Angela Liebenberg and Judy Steele for putting on the best countdown dinner in history at the Caspar Community Center and more big thanks to our count leaders: Ron LeValley, Carolyn Kinet, Warren and Ginny Wade, Bob Keiffer, Art "Superman" Morley, Jim Havlena, Dave Jensen and Richard Hubacek.

## CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

### January 2014

**Saturday 4 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM\* **Cancelled**

**Saturday 4** [Manchester Christmas Bird Count](#) Contact Dave Jensen 707 964-8163

**Saturday 11 Field Trip** - Ten Mile River and Beach 9AM-Meet at parking area south of Ten Mile Bridge, Dave Jensen field trip leader

**Monday 20 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: Doug Forsell, History and Wildlife of U.S. Wildlife Refuges in Pacific Marine National Monument (see Page 1)

**Wednesday 22 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM\*

**Thursday, 23 MCAS Board Meeting** 7PM, contact J. Ossello for location

**Thurs-Sun 23-26** [Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway](#) Chico

### February 2014

**Saturday 1 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM\*

**Saturday 8 Field Trip** - Owling with Mike Stephens 5:30PM, meet on Caspar Little Lake Road (Road 409) where the pavement ends (for more information contact Tim Bray at 937-4422 or [tbray@wildblue.net](mailto:tbray@wildblue.net))

**Fri-Mon 14-17** [Great Backyard Bird Count](#)

**Monday 17 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: Ronnie James, Bird Rescues

**Wednesday 19 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM\*

### March 2014

**Saturday 1 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM\* **Cancelled**

**Sat-Sun 1-2 Bird Walk at Point Cabrillo** for the [Whale Festival](#) 9AM, meet at Lighthouse parking lot at entrance on Point Cabrillo Drive, bird walk leader TBA

**Saturday 8 Field Trip** - MacKerricher State Park (Lake Cleone and Laguna Point) 9 a.m., meet at Lake Cleone parking lot, field trip leader TBA

**Sat-Sun 15-16 Bird Walk at Point Cabrillo** for the [Whale Festival](#) 9AM, meet at Lighthouse parking lot at entrance on Point Cabrillo Drive, bird walk leader TBA

**Monday 17 Partnership Potluck** (MCAS, [MLT](#), [CNPS](#) and [MAPA](#)) -- date and time TBA

**Wednesday 19 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM\*

**Thursday, 20 MCAS Board Meeting** 7PM, contact J. Ossello for location

### April 2014

**Fridays 4, 11, 18, 25 Save Our Shorebirds in-field training** **Virgin Creek Beach** 9AM, contact Becky Bowen, [casparbeck@comcast.net](mailto:casparbeck@comcast.net) or 707 962-1602 for meeting place

**Saturday 5 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM\*

**Saturday 12 Field Trip** - Van Damme State Park 9 AM, meet at Van Damme Beach parking lot on Highway 1, field trip leader TBA

**Wednesday 16 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM\*

17-23 [Godwit Days](#), Arcata

**Monday 21 Meeting** Gualala: 7PM Program TBA

*\*These walks are free, but there is an entry charge for participants who are not members of the Gardens.*

For updates and useful links, visit the MCAS website: [www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

and please visit us on facebook: [www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon](http://www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon)

## **MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2013-2014**

<b>President</b>	<b>Joleen Ossello</b>	<b>391-7019</b>	<b><a href="mailto:j_ossello@earthlink.net">j_ossello@earthlink.net</a></b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>David Jensen</b>	<b>964-8163</b>	<b><a href="mailto:djensen@mcn.org">djensen@mcn.org</a></b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Cate Hawthorne</b>	<b>962-1623</b>	<b><a href="mailto:liquidfusionkayaking@gmail.com">liquidfusionkayaking@gmail.com</a></b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Angela Liebenberg</b>	<b>962-9267</b>	<b><a href="mailto:liebenbergs@mcn.org">liebenbergs@mcn.org</a></b>
<b>SOS Program</b>	<b>Angela Liebenberg</b>	<b>962-9267</b>	<b><a href="mailto:liebenbergs@mcn.org">liebenbergs@mcn.org</a></b>
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<b>Membership</b>	<b>Marybeth Arago</b>	<b>962-0764</b>	<b><a href="mailto:mbarago@mcn.org">mbarago@mcn.org</a></b>
<b>Programs</b>	<b>Charlene McAllister</b>	<b>937-4463</b>	<b><a href="mailto:charmac@mcn.org">charmac@mcn.org</a></b>
<b>Conservation</b>	<b>Linda Perkins</b>	<b>937-0903</b>	<b><a href="mailto:lperkins@mcn.org">lperkins@mcn.org</a></b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>Sarah Grimes</b>	<b>937-4322</b>	<b><a href="mailto:zewa@mcn.org">zewa@mcn.org</a></b>
<b>Newsletter</b>	<b>Charlene McAllister</b>	<b>937-4463</b>	<b><a href="mailto:charmac@mcn.org">charmac@mcn.org</a></b>
<b>Field Trips</b>	<b>Tim Bray</b>	<b>937-4422</b>	<b><a href="mailto:tbray@wildblue.net">tbray@wildblue.net</a></b>

**Mendocino Coast Audubon Society e-mail address: [audubon@mcn.org](mailto:audubon@mcn.org)**

### **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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