



# The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Newsletter January 2017

Photo by Ron LeValley



Black Bear Ron LeValley Photograph

**DR. GARY ALT PRESENTS**  
**BEARS**  
**Monday, January 16, 2017**  
**7 p.m.**  
**Caspar Community Center**

**Dr. Gary Alt** has more than 30 years of experience as a wildlife biologist in Pennsylvania. He established field studies on black bears and white-tailed deer that resulted in significant changes to bear and deer management policies in the state. He has coordinated research and management activities with state and federal government agencies, universities, and non-profit organizations. Dr. Alt also has testified as an expert witness about wildlife issues in state and federal court cases as well as legislative hearings. He is a widely-published author, educator, lecturer, wildlife conservation advocate, and writer-narrator-host of an award-winning documentary. His work has been featured on *Good Morning America*, *CBS Sunday Morning News*, *Time Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, *People Magazine*, and magazine and television programs sponsored by the National Geographic Society.



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***Please Join Us  
 At the Next  
 Christmas Bird Count***

***♦ Mon., Jan. 2, 2017  
 South Mendocino  
 Coast***

***Contact Dave Jensen  
 djensen@mcn.org  
 964-8163  
 (story on Page 4)***

**PRESIDENT'S CORNER****Dave Jensen**

"These are the good old days." I often repeat Carly Simon's refrain - with a sense of irony when times are hard or with an honest appreciation when life is truly good. Although 2016 will look even better after another ten years have elapsed, I don't want to wait that long. Like a big slice of cherry pie, I want to enjoy it now.

2016 was a very good year for the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society. The Save Our Shorebirds program completed its tenth year. Dedicated volunteers now have logged more than 9,000 hours and have counted more than 500,000 birds along the entire coastline of Mackerricher State Park, a remarkable feat that has gained national attention. Anne Harvey continued SOS outreach and education about shorebirds at Ten Mile Beach. Under the leadership of Ron LeValley, we completed another year of breeding surveys for Black Oystercatchers and Pelagic Cormorants, furthering our understanding of the population dynamics of both species. All these accomplishments were made possible by support from State Parks, the Bureau of Land Management, Audubon California, and volunteers.

Our education program again visited every grade school in coastal Mendocino County as well as Anderson Valley. Sarah Grimes held another Big October for older children. Pam Huntley delivered another series of radio programs that inspired listeners throughout Mendocino County and parts of Lake County.

Becky Bowen produced a wonderful series of newsletters this year, often graced with her remarkable photos. Dorothy Tobkin is our skilled newsletter fact checker and proofreader. Donald Shephard again warmed our hearts, fed our intellect, and made us laugh with his unique style of bird biographies. Catherine Keegan did a wonderful job managing our website and Facebook page. Both have greatly improved our communication and expanded our outreach efforts.

Charlene McAllister produced another enjoyable series of speakers for our monthly meetings. Mike Stephens shared his knowledge and passion for owls. We learned about the effect of "The Blob" on seabirds. We learned how to improve our landscaping to support the birds. There were dragonflies and spiders and bats. It was a very good year.

We were again blessed with a dedicated and collegial board of directors who worked hard to guide the successful operations of the chapter. They were supported by a remarkable set of off-board volunteers, such as Charlene McAllister, Judy Steele, Becky Bowen, Ron LeValley and others, whose efforts were critical to our success. Perhaps the administrative highlight of 2016 was the addition of Iana Porter, your new Chapter Secretary. It is a true pleasure to welcome her to the board.

And birds. We had lots of field trips and bird walks and birds. In 2016 I noticed that more out-of-town visitors from across the nation attended our walks at the Botanical Gardens, often

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*President's Corner continued from Page 2*

outnumbering local participants. Many of them joined us for the first time, demonstrating the effectiveness of our electronic and print outreach. Others had attended in previous years and were returning for another walk, demonstrating their appreciation and enjoyment of the experience. 2016 brought all this and so much more.

Despite all the pleasures of the past year, I am anxious to begin our journey through 2017. There will be more great field trips coordinated by Tim Bray, including our January expedition to the Sacramento Valley refuges. There will be programs about bears and owls and birds of the Columbian Andes and local shorebirds. There will be walks at the Botanical Gardens and along the Mill Site trail. There will be surveys, including the biannual Point Cabrillo effort. We will again visit local schools, helping students experience the natural world and instilling in them an appreciation for birds. And finally, we will be an active participant in local affairs, speaking out for responsible stewardship and the protection of values we hold dear.

## **SPOTLIGHT ON BLACK OYSTERCATCHER, CORMORANT VOLUNTEERS Ron LeValley**



*Pelagic Cormorant*



*Black Oystercatcher Photographs by Ron LeValley*

The Black Oystercatchers and Pelagic Cormorant surveys were done very well this year, in spite of the fact that there was little food in the ocean, so productivity was very low. I want to thank all the volunteers for documenting this fascinating year. I look forward to continuing this in the future.

Volunteers this year who did surveys were for either Black Oystercatchers or Pelagic Cormorants were: Roger Adamson, Carolyn Carnell, Alison Cebula, Luisa Finberg, Doug Forsell, Terra Fuller, Jim Gibson, Jamie Hall, Kathy Hall, Ellie Harris, Bill Heil, Diane Hichwa, Adam Hutchins, Dave Jensen, Dan Knowles, Robert Kunicki, Bob Maher, Jean Mann, Peggy Martin, Charlene McAllister, Bob Mitchell, Art Morley, Gail Nsetip, Christine Nybakken, Grant Nybakken, Jim Nybakken, Marcia Nybakken, Linda Perkins, Sonya Popow, Marcia Riwney, Judy Steele, Susan Tubbesing, Amy Van Syoc, Jim Weigand, David Yeomans, and Jesse Yeomans.

## PLEASE JOIN US AT THE MANCHESTER CBC Dave Jensen



Scenes of past Manchester CBCs photographed by participants.

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Manchester Christmas Bird Count will be held on Monday, January 2, 2017. The oldest Christmas Count in Mendocino County offers a great opportunity to shake off the post-holiday lethargy and get a good start on your 2017 species list.

The count circle, which is centered on Mallo Pass Creek just north of Irish Beach, extends from Cuffey's Cove above Elk all the way to Arena Point. Despite the narrow band of accessible access, the seven sectors offer a great variety of experiences to choose from. Some territories offer long hikes through grasslands and along beaches. Others can be birded from inside a vehicle. Most offer a series of short walks along some of the most beautiful coast in Mendocino County.

Of particular interest to many birders are the variety of raptors that can be found in the farming areas of the south coast. There is also the possibility of Tundra Swans and other waterfowl, especially in a wet season like we are having this year.

You can participate for as long as you want. Some leave early, some arrive late, others stay the entire day. Near sunset we will gather at Druids Hall in downtown Point Arena for a compilation dinner. The meal will be catered, but you can bring your own beverage of choice.

If you are interested, call Dave Jensen at 964-8163, or email him at [djensen@mcn.org](mailto:djensen@mcn.org). As is the case for all Christmas Counts, you do not need to be an expert to join. Everyone can contribute, regardless of their skill level. In fact, it is a good way to increase your birding skills by spending the day with knowledgeable leaders. So please, come join us if you can. You will be welcome.

## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen



## 2016

### IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR

When the last data sheet is submitted and the final numbers are compiled, we think the data will show 2016 was an extraordinary year.

For twelve months, our surveyors counted birds on the entire coast of Mackerricher State Park – from the south end of Glass Beach to Ten Mile River. Surveys take us through coastal strand, coastal bluffs, coastal prairies and Bishop Pine Forests. In addition to thousands of shorebirds, we've encountered Bald Eagles, Burrowing Owls, and river otters.

Here are some of our favorite shorebirds seen on SOS surveys in 2016, counter clockwise from the top: A Western Snowy Plover with distinctive red and orange bands that has been returning to Mackerricher State Park to winter for ten years. She was last seen on October 8 when this photo was taken, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper spotted on Fen Creek lagoon in August, Red Knots seen in late April at Virgin Creek (pictured with a dowitcher and a Western Sandpiper), and a Back Turnstone and Surfbird at Glass Beach in September.



*Save Our Shorebirds is an on-going Mendocino Coast Audubon Society citizen science program in partnership with California State Parks, now entering its 11th year. To learn more, please contact Angela Liebenberg [liebenbergs@mcn.org](mailto:liebenbergs@mcn.org) and please visit us at:*

[www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)

## SOME BIRDS OF ARGENTINA Donald Shephard

My wife and I recently returned from a trip to Iguazu Falls, Argentina, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and the Chilean Fjords. The adventure took us from tropical rainforest to sub-Antarctic rainforest covering a wide range of habitats and their avian residents. At Iguazu Falls, we reacquainted ourselves with the Great Kiskadee, a flycatcher we first met in Costa Rica. The Black-fronted Piping Guan provided a rare treat as we trekked along boardwalks above the cataracts. Great Dusky Swifts flitted in and out of the mist to their nests behind the cascading water. A Snail Kite perched on a bush above the falls and a Plush-crested Jay with its Boy George make-up, entertained us in the tree canopy. A Fork-tailed Flycatcher with its impossibly long rectrices, preened above our heads. When we stopped for lunch, a Giant Cowbird stunned with its elegant assurance. For me, the Toco Toucan provided the essential image of the jungle.



**Black-fronted Piping Guan photo by Donald Shephard**



**Toco Toucan, the largest species of toucan.  
Photo by Charles J. Sharp**



**Plush-crested Jay photo by David Monniaux**

Back in the big city of Buenos Aeries, we found unfamiliar species of familiar genera. The Austral Thrush is easily recognized as a relative of our American Robin. The song of the Chalk-browed Mockingbird leaves no doubt as to its affiliation.

## **SOME BIRDS OF ARGENTINA Donald Shephard**



**Austral Thrush photo Donald Shephard**

From the tropics of Iguazu Falls, we flew south to Ushaia in Tierra Del Fuego where palm-sized snowflakes fell. There we met the beautiful Black-faced Ibis but a scheduled visit to a Megellanic Penguin island was cancelled because of high winds. To compensate us, they swam alongside our ship while jumping out of the waves like porpoises.



**Chalk-browed Mockingbird  
photo by Charles J. Sharp**



**Black-faced Ibis photo by Frank Vassen**

Everywhere we travelled, one particular bird appeared. Although the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds (RSPB) is concerned about the decline of the English Sparrow in its native land, we can testify that it flourishes from Iguazu Falls to Tierra del Fuego and many other places on both the North and South American continents. Those Brits are everywhere.



**Megellanic Penguin  
photo by Michael Catanzariti**

*MCAS Field Trip January 14-15 to Sacramento Valley Wildlife Refuges and Nearby Areas*

## **JANUARY FIELD TRIP IS GOLDEN BIRDING OPPORTUNITY** Tim Bray

The January field trip will be divided into four segments, and you can choose to join any or all of them, depending on your schedule.

The first segment, for those who come over on Friday night, will be a Saturday morning trip to the western foothills. Oak savannah with rocky outcrops provide opportunities for a number of birds we rarely see here



*Sandhill Cranes*

*Photograph by Tim Bray*

on the coast, and some that are good finds anywhere. We will meet at dawn in Williams, carpooling to the field for about 3 hours of birding.

The second segment will begin at midday at the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge. We will spend some time at the observation platform getting familiar with the geese and ducks, and then carpool for the Auto Tour route. After that, we will search nearby fields for swans, cranes, curlews and ibises. At the end of the day we may return to the Colusa platform to experience "liftoff," and watch Black-crowned Night-herons and Great-horned Owls fly out from their daytime roosts. Sunday will begin with a walking tour at the Sacramento NWR, followed by the Auto Tour. This refuge is larger than the Colusa NWR, has a wider variety of birds, and the auto tour includes three places where we can stop and get out of the cars. We plan to spend the whole morning there.

Sunday afternoon we can tailor to find whichever birds we want more of: Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, Long-billed Curlews, Horned Larks, etc.

You will be responsible for your own lodgings. There are a number of motels in Williams, where Highway 20 meets I-5, about 10 miles from the Colusa NWR. Information, including phone numbers and links, can be found at [http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org/mcas\\_ft\\_cv.html](http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org/mcas_ft_cv.html) (the link also can be reached on our MCAS website).

We will arrange sandwich lunches each day, to be consumed in the field. You will be responsible for your own dinner.

Please **sign up in advance** for this trip, by e-mail to [tbray@mcn.org](mailto:tbray@mcn.org) or phone or text message to (707) 734-0791. We need to know which modules you plan to attend and how to reach you if plans change at the last minute. Heavy rain or tule fog may force us to cancel.



## CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

### January 2017

**Monday 2 [Manchester Christmas Bird Count](#)** This count circle includes areas from Elk to Point Arena. To join, contact Dave Jensen: [djensen@mcn.org](mailto:djensen@mcn.org) or 964-8163. The Count Dinner will be at Druids Hall, Point Arena, open at 4:30 PM with a catered meal at 5:30 PM. Bring your own beverage.

**Saturday 7 [Beginner Bird Walk Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#)** 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg. 9AM. Leader: Dave Jensen

13-16



**Saturday 14-15 [Field Trip Sacramento Valley refuges and fields.](#)** Please sign up Tim Bray in advance for this trip, and let him know which days you plan to attend. The trip may be cancelled if rain or tule fog are predicted, so we may need to contact everyone at the last minute. E-mail is best: [tbray@mcn.org](mailto:tbray@mcn.org) or (707) 734-0791.

**Monday 16 [Meeting Caspar Community Center](#)** 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar. 7 PM  
Speaker: Gary Alt will speak on bears (see story page 1 of this newsletter).

**Wednesday 18 [Bird Walk Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#)** 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg. 8:30AM-Noon.\* Leader: Tim Bray

**Sunday 29 [Coastal Trail Bird Walk - Coastal Trail](#)** 10AM-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, heavy rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

25-29 [Snow Goose Festival Of the Pacific Flyway](#) Chico

### February 2017

**Saturday 4 [Beginner Bird Walk Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#)** 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg. 9AM-Noon.\* Leader: Dave Jensen

**Monday 6 [MCAS Board of Directors Meeting](#)**-contact Dave Jensen for time, location.

**Saturday 11 [Field Trip South Coast estuaries - Alder Creek, Brush Creek, and mouth of Garcia River.](#)** Leader: TBA.

**Wednesday 15 [Bird Walk Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#)** 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg. 8:30AM-Noon.\* Leader: Tim Bray

17-19 [San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival](#) Mare Island/Vallejo

**Monday 20 [Meeting Caspar Community Center](#)** 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar. 7PM  
Speaker: Gordon Beebe. Birds of Southwest Columbia.

**[Coastal Trail Bird Walk - Coastal Trail](#)** 10AM-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, heavy rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

*\*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: [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 2015-2016**

President	David Jensen	<a href="mailto:djensen@mcn.org">djensen@mcn.org</a>	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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