



Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter, March 2013

**ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS POTLUCK**  
hosted by



**Caspar Community Center**  
**on Monday, March 18th**

**Doors open 5:00 p.m. Potluck at 6:00 p.m.**

**Brief organizational presentations at 7:00 p.m.**

**Presentation of the annual Matt Coleman**

**Environmental Achievement Award to David Jensen**  
**Program: Dr. Floyd Hayes' video of Grebes breeding**  
**on Clear Lake**



**Dorothy King Young Chapter**  
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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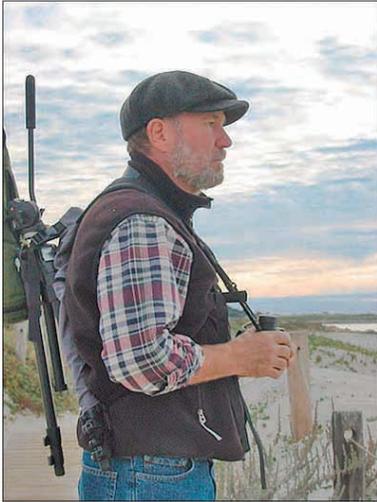
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Please mark your calendars for the MCAS pelagic trip: Sunday, 19 May. The TELSTAR has been chartered. The cost will be approximately \$105. This will be an all-day trip ( 7-am to 3:30-pm).

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

David Jensen



The introduction to the American Birding Association's Principles of Birding Ethics states: "Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first."

Like surfing, birding is a low-impact activity that enables us to experience nature in a way that, if carried out with sensitivity and respect, has minimal effect on the objects of our attention. However, if done improperly the effects of our actions can be disastrous.

Long-time birders know that birds are not all created equal. Some adapt well to the close presence of humans. Others are frustratingly shy and averse to disturbance. The Burrowing Owl that has spent the winter near Ward Avenue has been relatively tolerant of people, while the two that stopped at the mouth of Ten

Mile River are quick to flee from approaching hikers.

It is often tempting to chase after the seldom-seen species that avoids our gaze. On a recent Christmas Bird Count, one frustrated birder threw a stone at a bush in the hope of flushing a bird. I quickly educated that novice birder on the value of respect and patience, reminding him that we can not identify every bird.

Several years ago, the American Birding Association developed a Code of Birding Ethics with these basic tenets:

1. *Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.*
2. *Respect the law, and the rights of others.*
3. *Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.*
4. *Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.*

In addition to the ABA code, there are a few other less formalized rules that are loosely followed by most birders, such as: don't slam the car door when you get out; don't walk in front of another birder who is focused on a bird; schedule regular bathroom stops; try not to point; and my favorite, don't play a bird song on your Smart Phone when you are standing behind the leader - they may hurt their neck as they instinctively jerk around.

The Code of Ethics applies to more than bird watching. One of my worst field trip experiences occurred one spring day at MacKerricher State Park. A father and his young son stopped our group to show us a seal pup they had "rescued". I still remember the pitiful sound of that crying pup as they carried it through the woods. The painful memory of that day is softened only by an event that happened an hour later. Our group successfully rescued a Ring-necked Duck entangled in fishing line. The hands of man cause the balance of nature to rock back and forth.

Local members of the Marine Mammal Rescue Center deserve much credit for their efforts to educate the public about proper behavior around seals, sea lions and migrating whales. MCAS Board member Cate Hawthorne, owner of Liquid Fusion Kayaking in Fort Bragg, offers her customers a paddlers' code of etiquette to help protect seals, birds, whales, and other creatures.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

continued

This year, Board members will ask you to join us in a number of opportunities as we work to raise the level of awareness regarding responsible behavior in nature. For now, I'll simply introduce you to the ABA Code of Birding Ethics. Read them, question them, compare your personal birding habits to their expectations, incorporate them into your birding behavior, and share them with others.

You may read the full text of the ABA Principles of Birding Ethics at:

[www.aba.org/about/ethics.html](http://www.aba.org/about/ethics.html)

## DARK-EYED JUNCO Pam Huntley on KZYX FM 88.3, 90.7, & 91.5

Dark-eyed Juncos are definitely one for the taxonomy lumpers. These finches used to be four different species, but were found to interbreed and so were lumped together in 1973. The most common dark-eyed in our area is the subspecies called Oregon Junco. This five and a half inch bird has a large pink bill, black hood, brown back, white belly, and distinctive white outer tail feathers that flash scissor-like when it flies. It lives here year round.

Dark-eyed Juncos are seen on the forest floor and along mountain roadsides and trails. They forage by hopping back and forth in place on the ground, exposing seeds and insects. In the winter, they are join mixed flocks of chickadees, nuthatches, and sparrows. These winter flocks have distinctive social rankings and exclusive feeding territories. Speaking of feeding, John James Audubon noted that their flesh was extremely juicy.

Breeding season is the only time you see them in pairs. Their nest is normally on the ground in a shallow depression with an overhead protection. It is made of coarse grass, roots and moss, usually lined with fur. The female lays three to five eggs. The young are fed only insects. Nestlings' legs develop rapidly to allow them to run from danger before they are able fly.

So the next time you see a white scissor-like flash on the ground you'll know it's the Dark-eyed Junco.

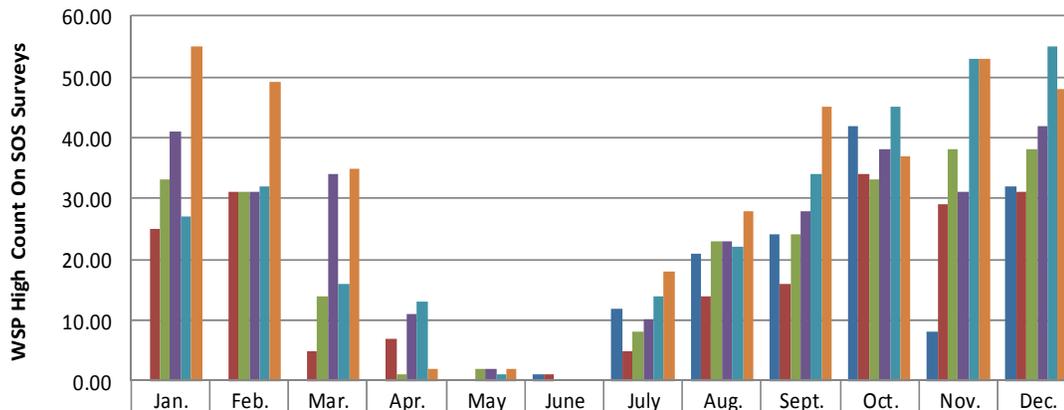
Dark-eyed  
Junco



## Save Our Shorebirds

**DATELINE – PLOVERDALE** Becky Bowen

Save Our Shorebirds Western Snowy Plover Year High Counts 2007-2012  
Virgin Creek, Ten Mile Beach-Combined  
MacKerricher State Park, Mendocino County, CA



Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
2007						1	12	21	24	42	8	32
2008	25	31	5	7	0	1	5	14	16	34	29	31
2009	33	31	14	1	2	0	8	23	24	33	38	38
2010	41	31	34	11	2	0	10	23	28	38	31	42
2011	27	32	16	13	1	0	14	22	34	45	53	55
2012	55	49	35	2	2	0	18	28	45	37	53	48

There is good news and bad news for our local Western Snowy Plovers. The good news: High counts show improvement since Save Our Shorebirds began in 2007. The bad news: We have not seen a nest on Ten Mile Beach or Virgin Creek Beach since 2005.

According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife, there are 28 major Western Snowy Plover nesting areas on the Pacific Coast—the only place in the world you can find the 2-ounce bird that at one time had a wide distribution of coastal nesting areas from southern Washington to southern Baja California. The reason for the severe decline is human development and disturbance, invasive non-native European beach grass that destroys nesting habitat, and increased predators. The current population estimate for the entire West Coast is some 2,100 breeding adults. Western Snowy Plovers we see here in winter, go somewhere else to raise chicks during the breeding season, from March 1-September 30.

Our job is to keep track of what we see on our beaches and make our data available to biologists who work with federal, state and local people to help this bird survive. We aim to keep on counting. If all goes according to plan, the projected date for recovery for the bird is 2047. Then the Western Snowy Plover can be taken off the endangered species list.

*Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing, long-term Mendocino Coast Audubon Society citizen science program in partnership with State Parks and FLOCKworks. Our volunteers survey three MacKerricher State Park beaches and monitor shorebirds. To help, please contact State Parks Environmental Scientist, Angela Liebenberg, at [Angela.Liebenberg@parks.ca.gov](mailto:Angela.Liebenberg@parks.ca.gov) and please visit us at [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)*

## BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

**March 9, Saturday.** Field trip to view birds of MacKerricher State Park. 9:00 a.m., meet at Lake Cleone parking lot.

**March 16, Saturday.** Whale Festival Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m. at Point Cabrillo SHP, meet at the Upper Parking Lot.

**March 17, Sunday.** Whale Festival Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m. at Point Cabrillo SHP, meet at the Upper Parking Lot.

**March 20, Wednesday.** Bird Walk: 8:30 a.m. at Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens.

**April 6, Saturday.** Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m. at Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens.

**April 14, Sunday.** Field trip to view birds of Van Damme Beach and State Park. 9:00 a.m., meet at Van Damme beach parking lot.

**Wednesday, April 17** Botanical Gardens Walk 8:00

**Saturday May 4** Beginners Walk at Botanical Gardens 9:00

**Saturday, May 11** Navarro River Field Trip 8:00 Meet at south end of Navarro River Bridge

**Wednesday, May 15** Botanical Gardens Walk 8:00

**Sunday, May 19** MCAS pelagic trip.

Field trip to Hendy Woods and Noyo Kayak trip dates TBD soon.

# GODWIT DAYS

## SPRING MIGRATION BIRD FESTIVAL

Come enjoy birds and wildlife from the redwoods to Humboldt Bay and beyond.

Festival dates: April 18-24, 2013

On-line Registration is OPEN

Visit [www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org) to sign up today.

New trips this year:

Shelter Cove; The Lagoons and Redwood National Park, Davidson Road; Blue Lake and Organic Farm for Wildlife; Dragonfly Workshop, Arcata Marsh; Bird Photography and Digiscoping; Warblers Workshop; Birding Trinidad; Sage Grouse and Eagle Lake.

Returning:

**Marbled  
Godwits  
and  
Willetts**



**DUNLIN****Donald Shephard**

**Dunlin and Black Turnstone at Ten Mile Beach. Note the difference in beak shape, chest color and leg color.**

**Photo by**

Save Our Shorebirds (SOS) volunteers recorded a lot of Dunlins migrating through in 2012. They wore their Sunday-best breeding plumage, pausing along Virgin Creek Beach and Ten Mile Beach in April and May on their northbound trip. In October, volunteers recorded more Dunlins in passage south here, than normally seen in either spring or fall. Becky Bowen, SOS volunteer coordinator, tells me she sees them with a variety of other shorebird species, especially Sanderlings. She wonders if they connect on the beaches or they travel together.

At Virgin Creek Beach, Becky once saw a squadron of Dunlin chasing or perhaps following a Black-bellied Plover over the water. Last September 29<sup>th</sup>, she spent a grand morning on the sand at Ten Mile Beach watching a Dunlin and a Black Turnstone in perfect companionship. They walked and ran together with matched steps as if dancing. Tellingly, Becky says she never met a shorebird she didn't like.

Join Becky or any other SOS volunteers hiking one of their three beaches – Glass, Virgin Creek, or Ten Mile – and you will likely see Dunlins. In breeding plumage, they are medium-sized round-shouldered sandpipers with black-streaked, red-brown upperparts, conspicuous black belly patches, and streaked breasts. When you study these birds through your binoculars, you will notice long and slightly decurved bills. You may spot them moving along the beaches and coastal mudflats they prefer, with a characteristic "sewing machine" feeding action, methodically picking small food. Their flight is swift and direct with rapid wing beats. Legs and feet are black. Sexes are similar.

Dunlins often form large flocks, and are most impressive when they display their coordinated aerial maneuvers to escape predation by Peregrine Falcons and Merlins, an exciting sight for bird and birder alike. Flocks suddenly take flight for no obvious reason, wheel around and drop again to feed. Flocks in flight twist and turn, often changing shape, but usually forming

## DUNLIN

**continued**

thick, tapering lines.

Circumpolar breeders in Arctic or subarctic regions, Dunlins breed in northern Europe and Asia, then migrate long distances, wintering in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The Dunlin you see on our beaches breed in Alaska and the Canadian Arctic then travel relatively short distances to the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of North America, although those nesting in Northern Alaska overwinter in Asia.

They scrape a shallow nest in a grass clump within a dry hummock on the open tundra. They line this nest with vegetation and lay four olive, blue-green or buff eggs marked with brown and gray. Both parents incubate from 20 to 23 days.

Adults brood the precocial chicks during early development. The male performs most brood care, as the female often leaves the breeding area. Chicks fly at approximately three weeks old. Males on the breeding ground have a beautiful song, a descending reedy trill which blends into the wild tundra winds.

Fortunately, current evaluation status of the Dunlin is Least Concern. Dunlins are collectively known as a "flight", "fling", and "trip." Have a fling, take a trip with an SOS volunteer and, sooner or later, you will see a flight of Dunlins gracing our shore.

### **Dunlin photo by Lajos Rozsa**



**YARD BIRDS****Rick Harris**

I live at The Woods, a small mobile-home community in Little River. When I first moved here some years ago, I used to tell people I lived in The Woods and a look of pity would come across their faces thinking I actually lived *in the woods*, sleeping under a huckleberry bush or something. I've since learned to say that I live *at* The Woods.

The Woods lies two miles inland from the coast and about 600 feet above sea level, on the fourth so-called "geological bench" created by a series of uplifted sea-beds. Ecologically speaking, the area is transitional with ecotones of mixed redwood, coniferous and hardwood forest transitioning to a coniferous forest of pines and ending with a classic pygmy forest of stunted Shore Pines and cypress.

Our population of birds is diverse, but sometimes oddly restricted. Birds that might be common on the coast, like the Western Scrub-Jay, create a lot of excitement when they appear here. Not only among birders, but among our resident Steller's Jays, who become alarmed. Steller's Jays reign at the birdfeeder around here and when the invading Western Scrub-Jay landed on the feeder, a new sheriff had arrived in town, time for the Steller's to mosey along. Otherwise, all is calm with our regulars.

Being so close to the Pygmy, I have a resident pair of male and female Wrentits which are perhaps my favorites. They arrive, always as a couple, for a swim in my birdbath at the same time each morning – between 10:00 A.M. and 10:30 A.M.. This routine provides a certain amount of comfort and I think that might be the charm of backyard birding – we know our regulars and we even begin to know them as individuals. Looking for rarities and the unexpected in the field is still fun to me, but returning home and seeing my regular yard birds satisfies me more.

**Wrentit**

**photo by Ron LeValley**  
**[www.LeValleyphoto.com](http://www.LeValleyphoto.com)**

**Western Scrub-Jay**

**photo by Ron LeValley**  
**[www.LeValleyphoto.com](http://www.LeValleyphoto.com)**



## THE CONSERVATION FUND **Donald Shephard**



**Remains of old logging boom, Big River**

Since 2004, the Conservation Fund has owned and managed more than 54,000 acres in Mendocino County, including forests along the Garcia River, Big River, Salmon Creek and Gualala River. In addition to restoring the forests' watersheds and supporting local economies, sustainable logging efforts fight climate change. Our forest properties were among the first and largest to receive verification as a source of greenhouse gas reductions under the protocols of the Climate Action Reserve.

The Conservation Fund's acquisition of 16,000 acres of redwood and Douglas

firs surrounding Big River and Salmon Creek ensures that these forests will be protected permanently from fragmentation, development and conversion to non-forest uses.

In 2004, when the Conservation Fund purchased the Garcia River Forest, a nearly 24,000-acre expanse of redwood and Douglas fir forests along the Garcia River, they created California's first large nonprofit-owned working forest. Garcia River Forest comprises one-third of the watershed of the Garcia River, and the redwood forest type that dominates there is remarkably resilient and productive: redwood trees sprout from stumps, few pests or diseases occur and the forest can produce beautiful, durable and valuable lumber.

Garcia River Forest had been owned by a succession of timber companies. This intensive industrial timber management left a legacy of depleted inventories, a network of fragile roads on steep slopes of eroding soils and miles of potential spawning habitat for salmon and steelhead clogged with sediment.

Next door to the Garcia River Forest, the 14,000-acre Gualala River Forest shares its remarkable canopy of redwoods and Douglas firs. Beneath these magnificent trees, the Gualala River courses across the property, providing important spawning habitat for coho salmon and steelhead trout. This land risked conversion and permanent loss. Neighboring owners planted five vineyards, with forests clear-cut to make way for wine grapes. To protect the Gualala River Forest, the Conservation Fund acquired the property in December, 2011, ensuring sustainable harvests to restore and maintain a healthy balance of trees, water quality and local jobs.

The Conservation Fund's work combines a passion for conservation with an entrepreneurial spirit to protect your favorite places before they become a memory. With your support, they can do so much more. For more information go to: [www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org)

## MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2011-2012

President	David Jensen	964-8163	djensen@mcn.org
Vice President	Tony Eppstein	937-1715	tonyepp@mcn.org
Secretary	Joleen Ossello	391-7019	j_ossello@earthlink.net
Treasurer	Judy Steele	937-2216	judys@mcn.org
SOS Program	Angela Liebenberg	962-9267	aliebenberg@parks.ca.gov
Membership	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@mcn.org
Programs	Adam Hutchins	962-9055	raptorous@mac.com
Conservation	Joleen Ossello	391-7019	j_ossello@earthlink.net
Education	Sarah Grimes	937-4322	zewa@mcn.org
Newsletter	Donald Shephard	962-0223	donshephard@comcast.net
At large	Tim Bray	937-4422	tbray@wildblue.net
At large	Cate Hawthorne	962-1623	thorn91@hotmail.com

## 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

P.O. BOX 2297

FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

