



Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter, April 2013

## RAPTOR CONSERVATION & THE TREE OF LIFE

Speaker David Mindell

Monday, April 15th at 7:00 p.m.

GUALALA ART CENTER

David Mindell will discuss his recent research with colleagues on the evolutionary development, history, and conservation, of accipiters and falcons. He will include studies of the Oriental White-backed Vulture, Hook-billed Kite, and Gyrfalcon. He will also place the evolutionary development, and history of raptors into the context of the centuries-long effort to understand significance of Earth's biological diversity and its importance.

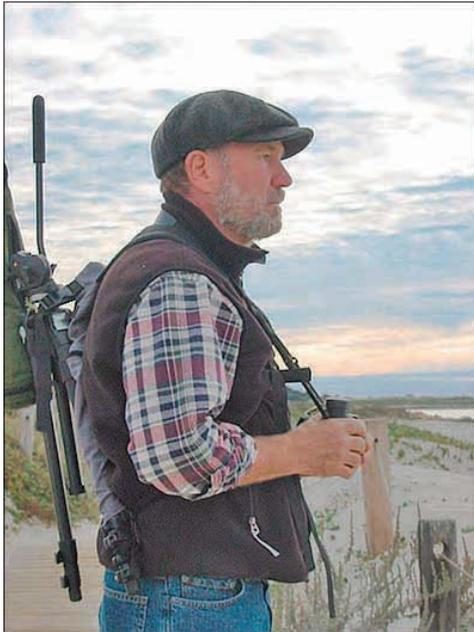
Professor Mindell authored *The Evolving World: Evolution in Everyday Life*, which won the 2007 Independent Publisher Gold Medal for Best Book in the science category.



**Gyrfalcon  
photo by  
Kurt  
Burnham**

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**PRESIDENT'S CORNER****David Jensen**

The signs of spring are here. The longer warmer days, the strong northwest winds off the ocean, the return of the Ospreys, the new yellow feathers of the male American Goldfinch. My signature event of spring is the return of several dozen Band-tailed Pigeons to my backyard sunflower smorgasbord – a welcome though expensive annual ritual. Another spring ritual is the annual appeal for volunteers to support your chapter's citizen science projects. This year is no exception.

We plan five citizen science projects. It is my hope that you will join us on at least one of them. Each project is unique. Some require more time than others. Some require more physical activity than others. Some can be performed alone or in pairs, while others are group activities. Some are conducted early with a minimum of human interaction; others occur later in the day and focus on public outreach and communication. Each of them can be enjoyed by persons

with any level of birding skill and experience.

**Save Our Shorebirds.** This is our best known survey and the one with the greatest number of volunteers. It is conducted on easily accessible beaches and involves moderate, slow paced walks. Participants can join with more experienced observers if they desire, thus enjoying an opportunity to learn how to identify local shorebirds. As it runs the longest of our surveys, it offers more opportunities to participate throughout the season.

**Point Cabrillo Breeding Bird Survey.** Your chapter has been conducting this breeding survey alternate years for about twenty years now. We survey on three Friday mornings in May and early June. We meet at the lower parking lot near the lighthouse before six in the morning and are usually finished around eight. The preserve is divided into three territories that run from the headlands to the old highway and back. This is a great project for those who like to hike.

**Big River Breeding Bird Survey.** This is the most adventurous and demanding of all our surveys. Participants meet at Big River before six and survey three different territories within the state park unit. There are ten stations on each route where surveyors record the birds that are seen and/or heard during a ten-minute period. Each session typically lasts until about 9:30. The variety of habitats and of birds is greater than the other surveys.

**Cormorant Breeding Survey.** The cormorant surveys are different from those described above in that we monitor the success of particular nests. Ron LeValley leads this project and provides each participant with a photographic map of numbered nests in areas that are easily accessible. Surveyors then can sit in a chair with their binoculars and spotting scope (which we can provide one if necessary) and observe the nests as they (hopefully) progress from eggs to naked chicks to downy young to full-sized fledglings. This project requires very limited walking and can typically be completed in less than an hour at most times of the day.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

continued

**Black Oystercatcher Breeding Survey.** This is our newest survey. It offers both personal satisfaction and useful scientific rewards. Like the cormorant survey, participants track the success of individual nests. It is worth the effort to see these downy gray chicks shortly after they hatch. Unlike the cormorants, which are born naked and helpless, these precocial chicks are soon active and leave the nest area after a few days. A word of warning: not all of them survive. Some disappear after they leave the nest and are never seen again. Others reappear with their parents along the water's edge, learning to feed on their own and nearly ready to fly. The scientific goal of this survey is to expand knowledge of the reproductive dynamics of this species, particularly along our coast. This year we have received additional grant funds to expand this project to include more public outreach and education. We especially need volunteers who are interested in helping achieve those goals.

We will be offering training sessions for most of these surveys in the coming weeks. Some of those sessions are announced elsewhere in this newsletter. Others have yet to be scheduled. If you need additional information, please email me at [djensen@mcn.org](mailto:djensen@mcn.org) or call me at 367-7609.

As you know, I represent the northern California chapters on the Audubon California Board of Directors. During my meetings with state and national leaders, I have repeatedly heard others praise the work that this one small chapter has undertaken with the help of our dedicated volunteers. Mendocino Coast Audubon is recognized as a leader, a model of what a small rural chapter can accomplish. Please join us this summer in whatever capacity you can. It will be an experience that you will cherish for years.

## OFFICIAL, BORING, BUREAUCRATIC NOTICE

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Board of Directors will meet at Vice President, Tony Eppstein's house at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 16th, 2013. Members are welcome. Call 937-1715 or email [tonyepp@mcn.org](mailto:tonyepp@mcn.org) for directions.

Common  
Cuckoo of  
Europe



## BOARD BUSINESS

Charlene McAllister

MCAS members will elect board directors and officers at the annual meeting held immediately before the program presentation at our regular meeting on May 20th.

Our by-laws provide for yearly elections to the MCAS board of directors based on staggered two-year terms. Charlene McAllister chairs the three-person nominating committee. Off-board members are Becky Bowen and Ron LeValley.

Anyone interested in serving on the board, please contact Charlene at 937-4463 or [charmac@mcn.org](mailto:charmac@mcn.org)

Save Our Shorebirds

Becky Bowen

## The ABCs of IDs



*Ever wonder how to tell Western Sandpipers from Sanderlings? Learn the difference and the answer to other vexing shorebird identification questions at a training session on Saturday, May 11, in the State Parks office at MacKerricher at 9:00 a.m. Ron LeValley will instruct the class.*

Major and minor league baseball will soon start spring training and so will we. The intrepid Save Our Shorebirds surveyors will brush up on shorebird identification skills in the field and in the classroom – and you are invited to attend.

Please join us. Field training sessions will meet at 9 a.m. every Friday in April and May at the Highway 1 pullout on the west side of the Highway 1 north of Three Rivers Charter School. The pullout is known as the Enchanted Trail trailhead.

Everybody is welcome. Training consists of an easy one-hour 1.5 mile hike (some climbing) during which we identify birds along the trail and on the beach. No obligation, but an invitation will be extended to join the SOS project, a long-term citizen science MCAS project conducted in partnership with State Parks. Summer surveys start July 1 and end September 15, 2013.

We'll discuss where to find birds at three MacKerricher State Park beaches surveyed by SOS observers: Glass Beach, Ten Mile and Virgin Creek (location of the in-field training hikes).

Also, please save the date for a shorebird training session by biologist and nature photographer Ron LeValley on Saturday, May 11. Space for this classroom training with Ron LeValley is limited, so please *R.S.V.P.* to Angela Liebenberg, State Parks Environmental Scientist at 937-4053 or [Angela.Liebenberg@parks.ca.gov](mailto:Angela.Liebenberg@parks.ca.gov)

*From left: Western Sandpiper, two Sanderlings. Photo by Becky Bowen in May, 2012, at Virgin Creek.*

## SHOREBIRD REFRESHER TRAINING

Angela Liebenberg

On Saturday, May 11, from 9:00 am to about 1:00 pm, Ron LeValley will be giving shorebird refresher training for Audubon SOS ("Save Our Shorebirds") volunteers, funded by our grant from CDFW. Other interested State Parks volunteers and staff are welcome.

Space is limited, so please RSVP (preferably by May 9) by sending an email to [Angela.Liebenberg@parks.ca.gov](mailto:Angela.Liebenberg@parks.ca.gov) or calling me at 707 937-4053. I will confirm by replying to you. Ron will hold the training in the State Parks office at MacKerricher; light morning refreshments will be provided. We hope to see you there.

## BLACK OYSTERCATCHER WORKSHOP

Joleen Ossello

On behalf of MCAS, Audubon CA, & California State Parks, you are cordially invited to attend an lively and informative workshop on the Black Oystercatcher.

More than twenty Mendocino outdoor enthusiasts banded together last spring, as citizen scientists, to conduct weekly population surveys along the rocky habitat favored by this shorebird. Anna Weinstein, of Audubon California, and Joleen Ossello of MCAS will share the results of the initial survey of breeding oystercatchers along the California coastline in 2012.

If you're fascinated by this bird's quirky behavior, enjoy learning, and enjoy being outdoors then join us for breakfast, tea, and shorebird conservation. Learn how to detect and track the breeding behavior of this ever present, year round resident. This workshop provides survey training, a short field trip, public outreach tools, and the opportunity to join a survey.



**When:** Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup> 9am - 2pm

**Where:** Russian Gulch State Park Recreation Hall

**Provided:** Light breakfast fare and beverages

**Bring:** Binoculars (scope if available), appropriate dress for weather, sack lunch.

**RSVP and questions:** Joleen Ossello, 707-962-0142, [j\\_ossello@earthlink.net](mailto:j_ossello@earthlink.net)

Please RSVP by April 25th.

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER****Donald Shephard**

**Baird's  
Sandpiper  
Photo by  
Omar  
Runolfsson**

Save Our Shorebirds (SOS) volunteers are not surprised when they spot a small number of Baird's Sandpipers on Virgin Creek Beach in late summer. Becky Bowen, SOS volunteer coordinator, sees at least ten every summer on Ten Mile Beach, where they forage in kelp on dry sand. "It's special to find either a Baird's or a Pectoral Sandpiper on our surveys. That makes it a day worth celebrating."

With fresh feathers, especially on the back with a pattern reminiscent of silk embroidery, this species is one of the most beautiful shorebirds that passes through our area. Unfortunately, they only migrate through, touching down briefly to refuel on their way to and from South America.

Birders refer to five sandpiper species as "peeps": the Semipalmated, Western, Least, White-rumped, and Baird's Sandpipers. To distinguish Baird's Sandpipers from similar species focus your binoculars on the long wings, which extend beyond the tail when the bird is on the ground. Next, train your optics on the black legs and feet. In flight, it shows white wing-stripes and a dark line down the middle of its tail, with white on either sides of the rump. As Becky noted, Baird's prefers drier areas to forage than do similar sandpipers.

Those long wings allow Baird's Sandpipers to migrate great distances at speed. After departing their high-arctic breeding grounds and staging in southern Canada and the northern United States, most individuals travel 3,700 miles or more directly to northern South America, where they feast on insect-rich grasslands. Some fly as far south as Tierra del Fuego. Many individuals complete the round trip 9,300 mile journey in as few as five weeks.

They nest on northern tundra from eastern Siberia to Greenland, scraping a depression on

## **BAIRD'S SANDPIPER**

**continued**

the ground or among rocks in dry locations with low vegetation. The female lays four dark brown-spotted, pink to olive eggs shortly after arriving in the Arctic. This production over four days equals up to 120% of her body mass, with essentially no stored fat. To replenish during and after this amazing feat they forage mudflats rich in high energy insects and small crustaceans, picking up food by sight. Both parents incubate, for twenty-two days.

The precocial chicks leave the nest and feed themselves shortly after hatching. Once they develop their back feathers capable of shedding rain or snow, they no longer require brooding. The female abandons them to migrate south. The male stays with them until they fledge at about three weeks. Males follow their partners south. Without competition for food from the adults, the young mature more quickly, and a month later, begin their first migration. Research shows that in the fall most adults fly along a narrow route through the Great Plains of North America, while young birds migrate over a broad front, and sometimes appear on both Pacific and Atlantic coasts. The ones we see are juvenile birds.

The Canadian Wildlife Service estimates the population of Baird's Sandpipers at 300,000 birds. Their use of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as well as major migration staging areas, makes them vulnerable to loss or degradation of these areas.

Baird's Sandpipers are named for Spencer Fullerton Baird, a nineteenth century professor of natural sciences and Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. He also headed the Bureau of Fisheries which later became the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Join Becky or any of the SOS volunteers on Glass Beach, Virgin Creek Beach, or Ten Mile Beach and sooner or later you will spy a Baird's Sandpiper. You will likely not discover a flock of them, but if you did, then call them a "bind", "contradiction", "fling", "hill", or "time-step" of sandpipers.



**Baird's Sandpiper  
chicks. Photo courtesy  
of USFW**

**Note the cryptic  
coloring.**

## PAM HUNTLEY ON KZYX FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5

### WESTERN AND CLARK'S GREBES

The long, white necked grebe with the red eye was recently split into two species: Western Grebe and Clark's Grebe. Both are seen along our coast in the fall and winter. In spring and summer they nest on large lakes inland. The bill of Clark's Grebe is brighter yellow and its plumage is paler over all with the white extending completely around the eye. The Western Grebe is darker with a greenish-yellow bill and dark gray around the eye.

Grebes are poor flyers. They migrate on moonlit nights. They are elegantly adapted for water. Their long neck is made for diving and their spear-like bill for catching small fish. The grebe's feet are not webbed but lobed and held open when the foot is paddling, which increases the surface area.

Grebes' courtship dances are renowned among bird watchers. They stand side-by-side then dash across the water with their heads bowed. They also stand breast-to-breast with pieces of water plants in their beaks like a tango dancer with a rose in her teeth. Western and Clark's Grebes breed in large colonies. They make floating nests that are attached to underwater plants.

When the young hatch, they climb on the backs of the parents where they are carried and fed. Grebes will eat hundreds of their own feathers and feed them to their young. It is thought that this pads the stomach against the undigested fish bones.

Grebes were killed by the thousands for feathers for hats. Now their large numbers at places like Clear Lake are another sign to give us hope.



Western Grebe (above) and Clark's Grebe (below) photo by Ron LeValley

[www.LeValleyphoto.com](http://www.LeValleyphoto.com)

### SPRING PELAGIC TRIP

Karen Havlena

MCAS will hold its spring pelagic trip on Sunday, 19th May, departing from Noyo harbor, Fort Bragg. Our scheduled leaders are Todd Easterla, Rob Fowler and John Sterling.

**Sign-up:** Please contact Karen Havlena before sending payment - [jkhavlena@yahoo.com](mailto:jkhavlena@yahoo.com)

**Cost:** \$105 per person, prepaid. You can pay by check or through PayPal. To pay by check: Make check payable to: MCAS \$105-each. Mail to: K. Havlena, P.O. Box 40, Fort Bragg, CA 95437. To use PayPal, look on the lower right for a yellow link to PayPal. The website address is [www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

**Time:** Meet at 7-a.m, returning approximately 3:30-p.m. Trip lasts eight plus hours.

**Boat:** TELSTAR, with Captain Randy Thornton (There is no galley, bring your lunch).

Limited spaces available.

## BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

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

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

**April 17, Wednesday.** Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m. at Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. Admission is free to Gardens members.

**May 4, Saturday.** Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m. at Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. Admission is free to Gardens members.

**May 11, Saturday.** Field trip to view birds of Navarro River. 8:00 a.m., meet at south end of Navarro River bridge on Highway One.

**May 15, Wednesday.** Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m. at Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. Admission is free to Gardens members.

**May 18, Saturday.** Field trip to view birds of Hendy Woods State Park. 9:00 a.m., meet at old bridge near the entrance to Hendy Woods State Park near Philo.



**Hendy Woods State Park photo  
by David Eppstein**

## YARD BIRDS

**Sarah Grimes**

I perch at the kitchen window with a cup of coffee and take in the birds in my yard. To some it may appear that I am just staring out the window... again.

The birds are always there, and always in a different array; sometimes apparently absent or still as stones when a hawk is about. In first and last light are the hummers, while a midmorning crescendo will include sparrows, chickadees, nuthatches, jays, and juncos, perhaps highlighted by a Red-Breasted Sapsucker, or a Downy or Hairy Woodpecker.

I recently added purpose to my ritual and joined Project Feeder Watch. Now I am doing some important work when perched. The species list is nothing to write the newsletter about. Twenty-five species including the usual suspects. My favorites are two White-throated Sparrows, Purple Finch, Varied Thrush, Red-Breasted Nuthatches and "Pierre", a third year returnee Fox Sparrow with an interesting topknot or "beret" that sets him apart. My feeders have attracted both a Cooper's and a Sharp-Shinned Hawk in the first hour of keeping track. The Red Crossbills however, prefer to adorn only the treetops and remain unassociated with my feeders, as do the Brown Creeper, Hutton's Vireo and Pileated Woodpecker. A Barred Owl calls from the Canyon, perhaps aware of nocturnal critters cleaning up what the birds have missed.

## **MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2011-2012**

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

## **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**

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