

# The Whistling Swan



NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDOCINO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY

May 2012

## THE BIRDS OF BRAZIL

Speaker: Matthew Mattheissen

TOWN HALL Main Street, Fort Bragg

May 21, 2012 – 7:00 p.m.

Peregrine Audubon refers to him as the "Incomparable Matthew Mattheissen". He's a member of the "Twitch Whiffers", a group that does a Big Sit Birding Circle. Each year he travels to locations around the world that most of us will never see. Matthew will share one of his unusual adventures with Mendocino Audubon. With nearly 1,700 species, Brazil is third in the world in



varieties of birds, after Colombia and Peru. While birds are always a feature, Matthew gives us a picture of the regions, the peoples and all the wildlife. Don't miss the opportunity to visit Brazil with Matthew this month.



Photos  
by Matthew Mattheissen  
Lettered Aracari (above)  
and Red-capped  
Cardinal

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### Annual Business Meeting May 21

Our chapter meeting May 21 will open with a brief annual business meeting. We will elect directors and officers and vote on revised chapter bylaws. To view proposed bylaws, please visit our website:

[www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

**David Jensen**

As chapter president, I receive many calls asking for information and assistance. By a wide margin, most callers report that they have found an injured bird and want to know where to send it for care. With several feeders in my backyard, I have personally cared for many birds that have collided with a window or have succumbed to disease. It is an unfortunate fact of life that if you are a bird-watcher, you will eventually find an injured bird.

Most injuries result from collisions. If you see or hear a bird collide with a window, quickly check to see if it has fallen to the ground. Immediately keep your dog or cat away from the injured bird. A stunned bird should be picked up carefully and held upright to help it breathe. Firmly cradle it in your hands, but do not squeeze it tightly. Often the bird will recover quickly, within one or two minutes. Keep the bird secure and shelter the eyes from direct sunlight, watching for the return of alertness. When the bird seems to regain focus, open your hands so it can fly, but do not toss it into the air. Some collisions require a longer recovery period. If the bird does not quickly recover, place it in a box lined with a soft cotton cloth or paper towel, close the lid and place the box in a dark, quiet, safe place for an hour or two. Do not place food or water in the box. After an hour or two, take the box to an open area facing trees, brush or other suitable habitat, and open the lid. If the bird still cannot fly, you will need to call a professional.

Broken wings or bleeding wounds are often fatal, especially for smaller birds. Successful rescue and rehabilitation in such cases are difficult even for larger breeds such as hawks and owls. If you have a bird with a broken (drooping) wing or a bleeding wound, call a veterinary or rescue center immediately. Sick birds present a different challenge. Wild birds are subject to many diseases, such as conjunctivitis (swollen eyes), avian pox (wart-like growths on featherless parts) or avian cholera (which has killed nearly 20,000 waterfowl this spring at Klamath NWR). Each winter I find sick Pine Siskins in my yard. They typically are lethargic and unresponsive, often standing in corners and unable to fly. Unfortunately there is little to do for these poor birds. I carefully place them in a lined box and put them in a warm, dark, quiet place to let them die in peace. Many bird diseases are spread at feeders, so carefully clean your feeders with soap and disinfectant, especially if you find sick birds near your home.

It is important to remember that it is illegal to possess eggs, feathers, nest, or birds, unless you have a valid scientific collection permit (European Starlings, House Sparrows, Pigeons, and all game birds killed during hunting season are exempted from that protection). It is illegal and unwise to attempt to raise young wild birds in your home. Orphaned birds must be sent to a rescue center.

It can be difficult to find someone to assist with an injured bird. We live in a large remote area with limited access to such resources, and those that are available are underfunded and short staffed. I have discovered a new directory of Mendocino coast animal welfare resources at [www.mendocoastanimals.com](http://www.mendocoastanimals.com). That site tells you where you can get help for injured, lost or found companion animals, wild birds, wild animals and sea mammals. It also lists Mendocino Coast animal welfare organizations, describes the services they offer and provides contact information.

I'm no Boy Scout, but I believe that we should all be prepared, not just for fires and earthquakes, but also for the everyday dramas in life such as finding an injured bird. The next time you visit a veterinarian, ask whether they examine injured birds so that they can be referred to a local rescue center. If they don't, ask who does. And above all, use appropriate caution, especially when dealing with injured raptors or distressed mammals.

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

### **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET**



Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
photo Donna Dewhurst  
UFWS

The name, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, is a bit misleading since only the male wears the crown and he rarely flashes the ruby-red crest, except during courtship in the mountains. Otherwise, these tiny, four-inch birds could be considered rather drab. They have a small bill, buffy underparts, dark wings and a short, dark tail. They have two white wing-bars and large, dark eyes outlined by a white ring that is broken at the top. A most distinguishing characteristic is its nervous wing flicking.

Some Ruby-crowned Kinglets winter as far south as Guatemala, but from mid-September through May, they are commonly seen in our area, feeding in mixed flocks with chickadees, creepers, nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets and warblers. These mixed flocks are called guilds. Their members feed in similar fashion, but eat different invertebrates with differently sized bills and foraging techniques. This can be an advantage over a flock of just one species competing for the exact same food.

Kinglets can be recognized by their behavior. They often hover at the tips of branches gleaning insects such as aphids, ants, butterflies, moths, and caterpillars as well as spiders.

In spring, Ruby-crowned Kinglets move to coniferous forests in the mountains above four-thousand feet. Here the males flare their crests into flame to compete for a mate or to defend a territory. The pair makes a semi-hanging nest that is open at the top. It's made of moss, lichen and twigs. The inside is lined with soft bark and feathers.

The female lays seven to nine cream-colored eggs, spotted with brown; she incubates the eggs for about two weeks before the young are hatched.



*A lone Whimbrel on the move at Ten Mile Beach. In MacKerricher State Park, headed north to summer nesting area in the Arctic tundra.*

If you are a shorebird, the train has left the station. For many shorebirds, May brings a mad rush to the Arctic tundra where breeding, nesting and chick-raising are quickly accomplished when food is plentiful and predators are not—and the summer days are long and warm.

Surveyor Richard Hubacek found a large mixed flock of shorebirds April 21 upriver from the mouth of the Navarro River. He saw 105 Long-billed Dowitchers, about 200 Western Sandpipers, 10 Dunlin, 2 Greater Yellowlegs and a Least Sandpiper. On the same day, volunteers on an SOS survey counted Black-bellied Plovers, Black Turnstones, Western Sandpipers and Dunlins in breeding plumage at Virgin Creek Beach. The birds are on a deeply serious mission to reach the North. They touch down on West Coast beaches to refuel and rest on journeys that take many of them from South America to the Arctic Circle. April and May are the time to see them moving along the Mendocino Coast. In July, the return trip starts. Save Our Shorebirds surveyors conduct frequent surveys between July 1 and September 15 on three MacKerricher State Park beaches.

If you would like to help with these surveys, you are surely welcome to join us. In-field training starts Friday, May 4 (meet at the Virgin Creek bridge at 9:30 a.m. and bring binoculars) and will be held every Friday through June 15 from 9:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m. at Virgin Creek.

*Save Our Shorebirds is a long term, ongoing Mendocino Coast Audubon Society citizen science project in partnership with California State Parks. Volunteers monitor shorebirds on Glass Beach, Virgin Creek Beach and Ten Mile Beach in MacKerricher State Park. To receive training and help, please contact State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg at [ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov](mailto:ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov) Please visit us on Facebook or at the Birds of a Feather Show at OddFellows Gallery, Mendocino, May 10-June 3, 2012.*

## BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

### May 2012:

- 5 Beginners Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens
- 5 Black Oystercatcher Workshop: 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Russian Gulch Recreation Hall, call for details 962-0142.
- 12 Field Trip: Saturday: 8:00 a.m., Navarro River and Beach  
Meet at south end of Navarro River bridge
- 16 Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m., Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
- 21 Chapter Meeting: 7:00 p.m., Fort Bragg Town Hall  
Birds of Brazil – Speaker Matthew Mattheissen  
Election of board members, officers and adoption of revised MCAS bylaws
- 26 Hendy Woods State Park: Carpool from Harvest Market parking lot at 8:00 a.m.  
or meet at Hendy Woods entrance at 9:00 a.m.

NOTE: Save Our Shorebirds Field Training at Virgin Creek Beach every Friday  
May 4-June 15. Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Virgin Creek Bridge (962-1602 for information)

### June 2012:

- 2 Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m.,  
Mendocino Botanical Gardens
- 17 Field Trip: Noyo River Kayaks 9:00 a.m.
- 18 Chapter Meeting: 7:00 p.m.  
Fort Bragg Town Hall  
Coast Wildlife Programs with Ron  
LeValley, Angela Liebenberg, Sarah  
Grimes, Ronnie James and more
- 20 Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m.,  
Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens



NOTE: The May 20th Pelagic Trip is full.  
Our next pelagic trip will be in September.  
Watch our website for details.

[www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

**Green Heron spotted recently**

**at Ten Mile River**

**Photo by Ron LeValley**

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

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER****Donald Shephard**

[Spotted Sandpiper photo from Wikimedia Commons](#)

In another century and on a different continent, my mother would have called the Spotted Sandpiper a "forward hussy" even though Arthur Cleveland Bent called it, "one of the prettiest and delicate, and trim of the shorebirds." The rapid swaying up and down of the hinder part of the body contrasts with the plover-like hitching movement or bob, as if hiccupping, of the somewhat similar Solitary Sandpiper.

Save Our Shorebirds volunteers do not see a lot of Spotted Sandpipers on the three beaches they survey. This bird prefers river beds over long stretches of sand, but Becky Bowen tells me of an exception. "Our State Parks Junior Rangers in the shorebird study program found a Spotted Sandpiper attempting to pass as a Black Turnstone on the beach near Lake Cleone a couple of years ago. It was foraging with the turnstones at the water's edge, but the disguise didn't work. The butt-bob gave it away, much to the delight of the 7-year-olds. Seven-year-olds can do a great imitation of Spotted Sandpipers."

One hypothesis is that dipping is a way for birds to deter attacks by demonstrating their physical fitness to potential predators, which would explain why human observers see so much of this behavior. Dipping may also be a technique for more accurately locating prey, or a way to communicate with conspecifics in a noisy environment. Newly hatched Spotted sandpipers, mere balls of fluff, also dip. If they are in danger, juveniles may lie motionless among pebbles. Its

## SPOTTED SANDPIPER

continued

repetative teetering motion has earned the Spotted Sandpiper many nicknames. Among them are teeter-peep, teeter-bob, jerk or perk bird, teeter-snipe, and tip-tail.

The chief enemies of the Spotted Sandpiper are swift-moving hawks, which young and adult alike sometimes evade by alighting on water and diving below the surface, remaining under for three or four seconds. The hawk, confused, usually gives up.

The breeding adult has an orange bill and bold chest spots, which account for its name. Poised on its slim drab-orange legs, it walks slowly and carefully along the shore, picking up a bit of food now on this side, now on that. It progresses with a switching motion, head reached well forward and a little lowered. The tail is almost continuously in motion up and down, but that is not why my mother would call them forward hussies.

No, the behavior which would shock my Scottish mother is polyandry. In polyandrous species – Northern Jacana, all three phalaropes, and Spotted Sandpiper – after the female lays her eggs in separate nests; different males take responsibility for incubation and rearing of each brood, leaving the female free to seek additional mates. Abundant food (such as annelid worms, fish, spiders, crustaceans, carrion, and insects) on a successful female's territory helps her attract males and lay extra clutches. Male parents of first clutches may father chicks in later male's clutches, probably due to sperm storage within female reproductive tracts, which is common in birds. Females that fail to find additional mates usually help incubate and rear chicks.

In most of the bird species which have a size difference, males are somewhat bigger than females, but in this species females are some 25% larger than males. Polyandry is rare because females invest more energy and nutrients in their eggs than males invest in their sperm.

Becky Bowen approves of this behavior saying, "With so little time and so few birds, it's a good thing, I guess, that the females can get around the track enough times to produce at least two clutches a year." This "forward hussy" behavior improves their chances of survival and is no longer judged by an anthropomorphizing moral stance, any more than we would chastise seven year olds mimicking Spotted Sandpipers on the shores of Lake Cleone.

A Spotted sandpiper in characteristic, tail-bobbing pose. Photo Ron LeValley

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



**FREE TRIPOD** Dorothy "Toby" Tobkin has a tripod that needs a good home. Call her at 964-6216

## **FAMILY BIRD WALK Sarah Grimes**

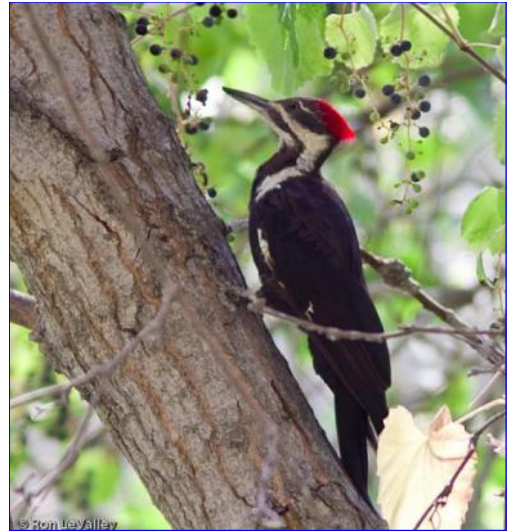
~Fun Family Event for Free~  
Spring Family Bird Walk Series

May 26. Lake Cleone  
June 23. Botanical Gardens

**With Sue "Magoo" Coulter & Sarah Grimes**

We will go over birding basics and explore habitats  
Binoculars, Bird Books and Checklists provided

Please R.S.V.P. to Sarah [zewa@mcn.org](mailto:zewa@mcn.org) or 937-4322



**Pilated Woodpecker photo  
Ron LeValley**

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

## **MCTV STAR JOLEEN OSSELLO**

Our own Conservation Chair, Joleen Ossello, taped a complimentary promotional piece at MCTV. Check it out at <http://www.mendocosttv.org/VOD18.html#featured>

Get your autographs now and tell your grandchildren you knew her before she rose to stardom.



**Mendocino Coast Audubon Society**





Catherine Murty (second from right) received the \$1,000 Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Scholarship at a ceremony April 26 at College of the Redwoods. Catherine is a 4.0 student in the Marine Science Technology program. She moved to Fort Bragg and began to study for a new career after earning a B.A. in Fine Arts at San Francisco Art Institute and working for 20 years as a motorcycle mechanic in the Bay Area. She is a Point Cabrillo Light Station docent, a volunteer diver for California Academy of Sciences and a Chamber of Commerce volunteer. The scholarship was awarded by MCAS board members (from left) Joleen Ossello, Charlene McAllister and Judy Steele.

## SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

The basic membership dues cover the cost of your subscription to the Whistling Swan. Please consider joining or renewing at a higher level to support the important environmental education and conservation projects critical to the protection of wildlife and the environment. *Note: membership in Mendocino Coast Audubon does not make you a member of National Audubon and joining NAS does not include membership in MCAS.*

I am a new member       I am a renewing member  
 Basic membership \$25.00     Low Income/Student \$15.00  
 Family \$30.00              \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Deductible Contribution Amount Tax ID #31-1578005

Please make your check payable to **Mendocino Coast Audubon Society (MCAS)** and mail to **P.O.Box 2297, Fort Bragg, CA 95437..** If you wish to pay by credit card, call 707-937-4463 or email [charmac@mcn.org](mailto:charmac@mcn.org).

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*OUR MEMBERSHIP YEAR IS JULY 1- JUNE 30. Renewals not received by 9/1 will result in your being dropped from our membership list. Don't let that happen!*

## 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	Becky Bowen	962-1602	casparbeck@comcast.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
Historian	Ginny Wade	964-6263	wwade@mcn.org
Newsletter	Donald Shephard	962-0223	donshephard@comcast.net

### Off-board chair:

Education	Sarah Grimes	937-4322	zewa@mcn.org
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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  
P.O. BOX 2297  
FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

