



Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter, May 2013

**BIRDS OF PERU**  
**MATTHEW MATTHEISSEN**  
**CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER**  
**Monday, May 20th, at 7:00 p.m.**

Matthew's engaging presentation and world-class photography will amuse, amaze, and astound you. Come and see his photographs of such Peruvian birds as the White-winged Guan, the Grey-bellied Comet, the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, and the spectacular Marvellous Spatuletail.

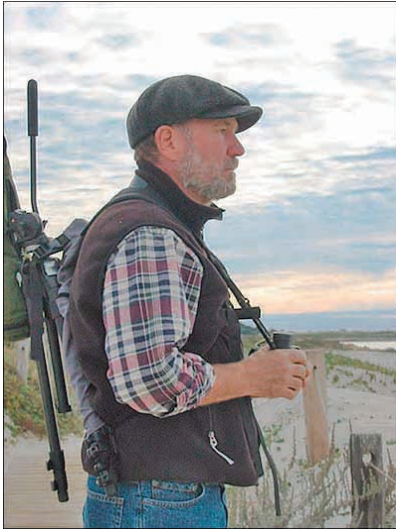


Marvellous Spatuletail, top right photo.

White-winged Guan, top-left photo. Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, bottom photo.

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

At my first meeting of the Audubon California board of directors last fall, we were asked to set the organization's legislative agenda for 2013. After much serious discussion, we decided to take on some of the most powerful forces in the state, let alone the U.S. and sponsor legislation that would ban the use of lead ammunition throughout the state of California.

Audubon California has joined with the Humane Society of the United States and Defenders of Wildlife to co-sponsor legislation that would require the use of non-lead ammunition for all hunting in California. Assembly Bill 711, introduced in March, already has the backing of several key members of the State Legislature, as well as a growing number of hunters; and conservation, animal protection, and public health organizations.

Our reasons are clear. The presence of lead from spent ammunition threatens the recovery of the California Condor; it causes the death of many Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles, Common Ravens, Turkey

Vultures, pumas, coyotes, and up to 125 other bird and animal species; and lead fragments pose a serious threat to the health of hunters and their families. Currently the leading cause of death in California Condors is not old age – they are dying from lead poisoning. Tons of lead waste do not belong in a healthy environment.

Despite what we see on TV or in the movies, lead ammunition usually shatters upon impact, spreading small bits of heavy metal shards throughout the target's tissues. While a bird or mammalian diner might detect and reject an intact slug, the small fragments can easily be ingested, often without notice. There is no safe level for lead ingestion. It attacks many of our vital organs, including the brain, nerves, kidneys, blood, heart and reproductive system.

We have successfully eliminated or reduced most uses of the common toxic heavy metals – mercury, arsenic and lead. In the US, lead has been removed from paint (1977), gasoline (1980s), food container solder (1995), piping and fixtures (2010), as well as from children's toys, jewelry and many other items. However, lead ammunition remains the second largest use of that toxin in this country, more than 60,000 metric tons per year – second only to lead acid batteries.

Effective non-lead ammunition exists and is widely used. Lead shot was banned from state and federal waterfowl refuges several years ago. As a result, the cases of avian lead poisoning declined and waterfowl populations increased. Big game hunters in Africa have rejected lead ammunition in favor of copper bullets and other alloys due to their superior performance in the field. Most of the larger ammunition manufacturers, including Remington and Winchester, currently offer non-lead products. The industry magnates understand that the use of lead ammunition is neither moral nor sustainable and they are prepared for the reasonable alternative.

AB 711 is not about restricting hunting rights. It is not about banning the use of firearms. It is about the protection of public health and the responsible stewardship of our environment. Despite all the medical evidence, we continue to spread about 60,000 tons of toxic lead waste throughout the landscape each year. And the damage continues to mount.

This is going to be an uphill battle, and we'll need your help to see it through. There are some well-funded, well connected forces hardset against us. Please, sign up for action alerts from Audubon California ([ca.audubon.org](http://ca.audubon.org)) and you will receive periodic emails letting you know how you can help. Much more will be printed about this effort as the legislative season progresses – some of it will be true. Please stay informed and give what support you can.

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

### WESTERN GULL

Western Gulls are the only gulls that nest here on the coast. One of the reasons birders don't call gulls seagulls, is that most of them nest inland far away from the sea. You can impress your friends in springtime by identifying the large gull with white head and pink feet as a Western Gull since they are the only ones here in any numbers.

Western Gulls are two feet tall. It takes four years to achieve the adult plumage. As adults they have a white head, dark gray back and wings. They have a thick, long, yellow bill and pink legs. I, and black wing tips showing a few white spots. In flight, the underside of the wings looks dark grayish with black at the tips.

Young gulls are dark brown all over and have a black beak. You can identify the first, second and third year gulls by the gradations of white on their heads and the reduction of black in the beak. Adults are known to live for over sixteen years.

Western Gulls used to be oceanic and intertidal feeders, but they have adapted to humans and are expert scavengers. They are said to feed on anything remotely edible. You can see them at waterfronts, parks and garbage dumps snatching scraps and waiting for handouts. They also steal other eggs and chicks from seabird colonies.

Western Gulls often nest on offshore islands and protected mainland cliffs. They will nest singly or colonially. The nest is a shallow scrape on the ground lined with plants. They typically lay three buff-colored, mottled eggs that are incubated for a month by both adults. The red spot on the parent's bill serves as a mark for the young to peck, stimulation the adult regurgitate its meal. The young stay with their parents for seven weeks.

Western Gull photo by Ron LeValley

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



## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRD VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Save Our Shorebirds Citizen Science Training



**Dunlin**

Saturday May 11th, 9 am-1 pm

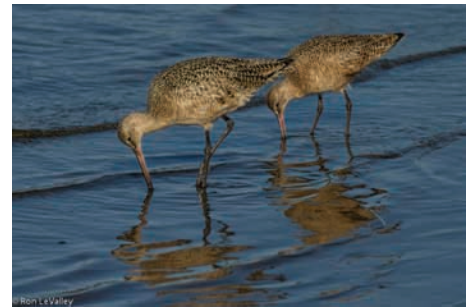
Trainer: Ron LeValley

MacKerricher State Park

Email [Angela.Liebenberg](mailto:Angela.Liebenberg@parks.ca.gov)

[@parks.ca.gov](mailto:@parks.ca.gov)

or call 937-4053 to RSVP no later than May 9th



**Marbled Godwit**



## Save Our Shorebirds

# The Path To Virgin Creek Beach

Becky Bowen



There is a way onto Virgin Creek Beach that is so magical we call it The Enchanted Trail. It takes surveyors through brush that includes tanoak, wax myrtle, Labrador tea, shore pines, mushroom patches, eucalyptus and Monterey pines that have been beetle-gnawed enough to create woodpecker and cavity nester paradise. The path takes you from a trailhead on Highway 1 through a wooded area, then out to prairie grassland where Northern Harriers and White-tailed Kites hunt, and on to the Haul Road that parallels Virgin Creek Beach.

Here, you may see Virginia Opossums, Blacktail Deer, brush rabbits, Red-shouldered Hawks, Merlins, Varied Thrushes, Hairy Woodpeckers with yellow outer tail feathers, Downy Woodpeckers, Acorn Woodpeckers, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Pygmy Nuthatches, Pileated Woodpeckers (above right), Spotted Towhees, Wilson's Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, sun-bathing Turkey Vultures, at least three kinds of sparrows and many more. A Chesnut-backed Chickadee has been busy nest building for two weeks in a snag cavity at the trail head. On rare occasions, a Rail sp. has surprised us in shallow standing water where the trail opens up to grassland. Sometimes, we see more than fifteen bird species before we arrive at the beach for a shorebird survey, and all this happens in a distance of some 500 meters as the Common Raven flies.

Please join us for this experience during Save Our Shorebirds in-field training. SOS volunteers will lead Virgin Creek surveys through May every Friday at 9 a.m. Meet at the parking turnout on the west side of Highway 1 just north of Three Rivers Charter School. The training is free and comes with no obligation except to appreciate the birds and all the things that come with them.

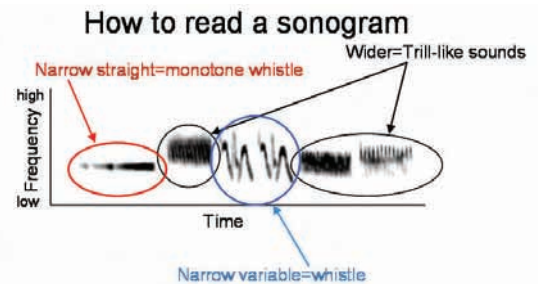
*Save Our Shorebirds is a long term on-going Mendocino Coast Audubon program in partnership with State Parks and FLOCKworks. To learn more, please contact State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg at [angela.liebenberg@parks.ca.gov](mailto:angela.liebenberg@parks.ca.gov) and please visit us at [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds).*

## BIRDS OF THE NORTH COAST



College of the Redwoods  
Mendocino Coast campus  
1211 Del Mar Drive  
Fort Bragg, CA 95437  
(707) 962-2600

Instructor: David Flaim Ph.D.  
Adjunct Faculty Biology



An introduction to the biology, evolution, anatomy, physiology, and behavior of birds. Visual and sound identification, natural history, and ecology of North Coast birds will be studied using a variety of methods, including photography and digital aids. This is a natural history course for the beginning and intermediate bird watcher. CSU; Biology 16; 3 units with Lecture and Laboratory. This is an eight week course starting May 20 and ending July 10. Two class meetings per week are scheduled (Mondays and Wednesdays). On both days, the class meets from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm – with breaks for lunch.

## CR Marine Science Student Receives MCAS \$1,000 2013 Scholarship



Brandon Pill, a first-year Marine Science Technology student at College of the Redwoods, is the recipient of the \$1,000 Mendocino Coast Audubon Society scholarship awarded during an April ceremony at the campus. Treasurer Judy Steele (right) presented the scholarship made possible by member donations.

Brandon, a 2012 graduate of Fort Bragg High School, plans to transfer to a four-year college when he completes an AA degree next spring. He plans to major in either science or math.

We invited him to our May 20 chapter meeting and look forward to introducing him to our MCAS members.

**WESTERN SANDPIPER****Donald Shephard**

**Western Sandpiper. Photo by Alan D. Wilson**

Jean Louis Cabanis, a German ornithologist, first described Western Sandpipers in 1857. One hundred and fifty four years later, Joleen Ossello, our president-to-be, walked Ten Mile Beach for the Save Our Shorebirds (SOS) program on July 18, 2011. She counted 3,850 Western Sandpipers, an SOS record. Becky Bowen, whose passion for shorebirds is unmatched, tells me they pass through here in large numbers. They are a source of entertainment for SOS volunteers, dancing around when their feet get caked in wet sand – sandpipers, that is, not volunteers. One handsome bird in breeding plumage amused Becky last July when it performed a fandango on the surface algae buildup of Virgin Creek.

Western Sandpipers have dark legs and a fairly short dark bill, slightly drooped at the tip. They are reddish-brown on the crown. The body is gray- brown on top and white underneath with a black center to the rump and tail. Look for a gray-brown head with some reddish and a lightly marked chest. SOS volunteers report Western Sandpipers in both breeding and winter plumage. In their courting splendor, they have chestnut on the back, crown, and face. Short webbing between toes may elude the birdwatcher. Juveniles appear similar to adults, but with more scaly pattern on their backs.

## WESTERN SANDPIPER

continued

Western Sandpipers usually feed in deeper water than the other "peeps" (small sandpipers) and sometimes immerse their bills completely. In most respects, these sandpipers are much alike in their behavior and can be difficult to distinguish in the field. Flocks spread out on mudflats during fall and winter and take flight readily when an intruder nears. When the tide covers their shallow feeding area, they move to higher ground; there they preen themselves, rest, and wait for the next low tide, when they can resume feeding.

This bird can be difficult to distinguish from the locally very rare Semipalmated Sandpiper, particularly in winter plumage, when both species are plain gray. Breeding plumage of the Western Sandpiper changes much earlier in autumn than the Semipalmated Sandpiper. If you bird by ear, you will notice the Western's voice, a soft cheep or kleep, that sounds higher and thinner than the Semipalmated.

The Western Sandpiper breeds in western Alaska and winters along the Pacific Coast from Oregon to Peru, along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey south to South America, and along the Gulf Coast. In migration, the Western Sandpiper stages in huge, spectacular flocks, particularly along the Pacific coast from San Francisco Bay to the Copper River Delta in Alaska. Estimates suggest that as many as 6,500,000 individuals pass through the Copper River Delta during a few weeks each spring. These birds forage on mudflats during migration and the non-breeding season by probing, or by picking up food by sight. Foraging occurs on tundra and wet meadows during the breeding season.

They breed in coastal sedge-dwarf tundra in eastern Siberia and Alaska. Males typically arrive first and establish territories. The male sings and flies over the nesting area to attract a mate. He may approach a female in a crouched position and make a trilling call. A monogamous pair bond forms. The male makes several scrapes in the ground and lines them with sedges, lichen and leaves. The female will chose one of the scrapes as her nesting site. She lays three to five cream-colored eggs, with red-brown spots. Both the male and the female incubate the eggs. Active chicks, covered with down, hatch in 20-22 days and are able feed themselves right away. If the female stays, both parents will care for the chicks. But she may depart shortly after the chicks hatch, leaving the male will care for them. He tends the young, and broods them in cold weather until they can fly, at 17 to 21 days.

On their breeding grounds, Western Sandpipers eat mostly flies and beetles as well as other insects, spiders and small crustaceans. During migration and in the winter, their diet varies depending on location. In coastal areas they eat crustaceans, small mollusks, marine worms and insects while inland migrants consume mostly insects.

Even though they pass through here in large numbers, they are on the Audubon and American Bird Conservancy watchlist. Western Sandpipers are vulnerable because a large percentage of the population gathers in a few locals during migration. Development, human disturbance, and oil spills near these stopover sites could dramatically affect the population.

A group of Western Sandpipers is called by many collective nouns, including a "bind", "contradiction", "fling", "hill", and "time-step". Perhaps Jean Louis Cabanis saw a contradiction of Western Sandpipers in 1857, but there is no doubt that Joleen Ossello witnessed a combined fling, hill and time-step of them in 2011 on Ten Mile Beach. What a sight. What a joy.

## BLACK OYSTERCATCHER SURVEY Joleen Ossello



Did you miss the **Black Oystercatcher** Workshop? Not to worry, you can still make a difference. Weekly nest monitoring begins May 6th at eight different public sites along the Mendocino Coast's rocky intertidal areas. Join a survey team to observe and learn firsthand how these feathered friends survive the exigencies of nature. Witness group flight, territorial displays, rock tossing, and copulation. You may even experience the heartwarming sight of a brand new

chick showing its cryptic downy feathers, short pink legs, and half red bill. Please phone or email Joleen Ossello at 707-962-0142 or [j\\_ossello@earthlink.net](mailto:j_ossello@earthlink.net) for more information.

## BOARD BUSINESS

The Nominating Committee for Mendocino Coast Audubon will present the following slate for the 2013-2014 Board of Directors at the regular May Audubon meeting, which doubles as our annual meeting of the membership.

After presentation of the slate, nominations from the floor will be accepted. In the event that the open slots are filled prior to the May meeting, those names will also be presented.

If you are interested in one of the open positions, please contact Charlene or Becky .

### OFFICERS

President: Joleen Ossello

Vice President: David Jensen

Secretary: Cate Hawthorne

**Treasurer: OPEN POSITION**

MCAS Board of Directors will meet at 14222 Point Cabrillo Drive, Mendocino on May 16th at 7:00 p.m. Members are welcome.

### BOARD MEMBERS

Conservation: Linda Perkins

Education: Sarah Grimes

Membership: Charlene McAllister

**Newsletter: OPEN POSITION**

Program: Adam Hutchins

SOS Coordinator: Angela Liebenberg

Web Master: Tim Bray

### Nominating Committee

Charlene McAllister  
charmac@mcn.org 937-4463

Becky Bowen  
casparbeck@comcast.net

Ron LeValley  
ron@madriverbio.com

Note: there are two board vacancies. Volunteer anyone?



## BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

- 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  
**Saturday, May 18** Hendy Woods Field Trip 9:00 Meet outside entrance to state park. Call Dave Jensen at 964-8163 to carpool from Harvest Market at 8:00  
**Saturday, June 1** Beginners Walk at Botanical Gardens 9:00  
**Saturday, June 8** (tentative) Noyo River kayak birding 9:00  
**Wednesday, June 19** Botanical Gardens Walk 8:00

Last month at the Botanical Gardens, Tim Bray and his group counted a record 65 species of birds including one new species addition to the master List for MCBG: Yellow-Headed Blackbird, seen from the parking lot just before the walk began.

**Allen's Hummingbird photo by Ron LeValley**  
[LeValleyphoto.com](http://LeValleyphoto.com)



## MCAS BOARD COMMENTS ON MRC PERMIT APPLICATION

In December 2012, CalFire and other public agencies released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and several related documents, including a Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan (HCP) for all of Mendocino Redwood Company's timberlands (213,000 acres) in Mendocino County. The "Proposed Action" addressed by the DEIS would grant MRC "incidental take" permits for several threatened or endangered species, good for a period of 80 years. The HCP, a large and complex document, describes MRC's plans for forest management, including wetland and riparian protections, threatened species conservation measures, monitoring programs, and contingency responses over the 80-year period of the permits. Many of the conservation measures, such as retaining standing dead trees and downed wood, are likely to result in long-term improvement of habitat for many bird species. Of most concern to MCAS, however, were the proposed actions with regard to the Northern Spotted Owl. MRC has proposed a tiered-protection strategy in order to redistribute the owls more evenly across their lands, without increasing the overall numbers until the final 20 years of the plan period. It appears likely that the proposed action might reduce the populations of spotted owls in some areas in the short- to medium-term, before the planned habitat improvements advance to the point where the owls are able to recover.

MCAS submitted a formal letter of comment, expressing our concerns over the proposed conservation strategy for Northern Spotted Owls and what we perceive to be weakness in the adaptive management proposals, asking for revisions and further opportunity for public input. Our letter, and other submitted responses, can be found at the CalFire Website for this project:

[http://calfire.ca.gov/resource\\_mgt/resource\\_mgt\\_EPRP\\_PTEIR\\_MendocinoRedwoodCo.php](http://calfire.ca.gov/resource_mgt/resource_mgt_EPRP_PTEIR_MendocinoRedwoodCo.php)

**TIM BRAY**

## 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

