

The Whistling Swan



NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDOCINO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY

July 2010

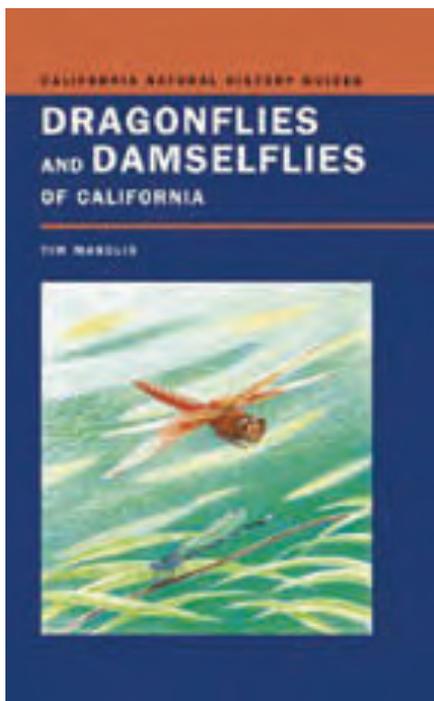
DRAGONFLIES OF THE MENDOCINO COAST

TIM MANOLIS

JULY 10, 2010

8:30-10:00 WORKSHOP- 344 N. MAIN ST. FORT BRAGG
(Photographers Guild and Gallery)

10:00 - ? FIELD TRIP TO VARIOUS LOCATIONS



Tim Manolis has been a longtime, native northern California birder and is now considered among the premier dragonfly experts on the continent. He comes from a family of naturalists, including mother, and brother, and sister, and is the author of "Dragonflies and Damselflies of California." Tim will lead this workshop and field trip here on the Mendocino Coast on Saturday July 10, 2010. Space is limited, so reserve now by sending your check for \$20.00 made out to MCAS to: C. McAllister, P.O. Box 332, Little River, CA 95456. Please include your phone number and email address if applicable. Remember to bring a sack lunch and snacks for the field trip.

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Cardinal Meadowhawk
photo Ron LeValley
www.LeValleyphoto.com



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

David Jensen



Several of you have called me to share your outrage and concern about the continuing BP Deepwater Horizon fiasco in the Gulf of Mexico. The photographs of dead and distressed birds shown on television and in print media are truly heartbreaking. The continuing release of oil promises that the threat will continue for months to come. Unfortunately, the imminent return of shorebirds from their breeding colonies in the north will certainly increase the impact of this disaster.

Despite the death and environmental degradation that unnatural disasters create, their greatest threat is the resultant sense of helplessness and despair. Watching this tragedy play out from a thousand miles away, many of us feel helpless, as victimized as the oiled seabirds that wash ashore. But our best hope for a better future is to turn that frustration into action.

Stay informed. There are times when we need to avert our eyes, but ignorance and denial are not successful solution strategies. It is important that you get your information from a reliable source. As is so often the case, there is a lot of misinformation about the impact of this spill and the efficacy of recovery efforts. For those of you with internet access, I suggest you visit the following sites to learn more: International Bird Rescue Research Center at www.ibrrc.org, American Birding Association at www.aba.org, and National Audubon Society at www.audubon.org.

Stay positive and stay involved. Learn as much as you can about our local shorebirds *before* they are threatened by a similar spill. Join us in our efforts to monitor the nesting success of local cormorants. Join us in the Save Our Shorebird project as we monitor the shorebirds that return from this year's breeding efforts in the Arctic. If you can't give us time, then please send a check. These monitoring projects provide valuable baseline data to help assess the impact of environmental changes and guide the development of recovery plans when, not if, they are needed.

Support local efforts. The International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) in Cordelia is an exceptional organization that deserves much credit, respect and support. They were responsible for the rescue and rehabilitation of many of the birds caught in the 2007 Cosco Busan spill as well as many other similar events around the world. Now they have sent many trained seabird rescue specialists to help with recovery efforts in the gulf. Last year they assisted with the rehabilitation of local Brown Pelicans. I support them and hope that you will join me (call them at 707-207-0380).

Finally, in a recent interview from Louisiana, the IBRRC Executive Director stated: "If you would like to send donations then please keep in mind that your local wildlife rehabilitation organization really needs your help also. They care for the same wild animals that are impacted by this spill. A pelican is a pelican whether is it tangled in fishing tackle or oiled! Please send support to your local wildlife rehabilitation organizations." Please read the notice of Ronnie James' new book "Touching Wings, Touching Wild" later in this newsletter, and please support her efforts in our community.

PAM HUNTLEY ON KXYZ FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5

WESTERN TANAGER

I will always remember the first morning I saw a Western Tanager. I could not believe it was real. This bird is bright yellow with black wings and a brilliant red head. The Western Tanager offers a taste of the tropics. The name Tanager is an anglicized version of Tangaras – given them by the Tupi Indians of the Amazon region. These brightly colored songbirds are from a family of 236 species including Euphonias. But only 5 make it up to North America for breeding.

The breeding male Western Tanager has a Yellow chest and rump, black wings and tail and a bright red head. On the wings there is one yellow and one white wing bar. The female is a dull yellow green with faint wing bars. They have a pale bill and are around 7 inches long.

Breeding pairs come to the foothills and mountain forests in spring and summer. They glean insects from plants or catch them in the air. These include wasps, ants and beetles. They also eat fruits such as Elderberries.

Their song sounds a lot like an American Robin's but is more hoarse and ends with a hiccup-like pit-ta-tik call.

They nest in tall conifers from sea level to 9,000 feet. They make their nests on branches, far from the trunk. The nest is made with loose twigs and grass, then lined with fine rootlets and hair. The female lays 3-5 blue eggs with brown markings. She incubates them for 2 weeks.

In April, May and August and September they can be attracted to back yards for baths and to feeders with cut oranges, bread and cake.

Western Tanagers can serve as ambassadors to the greater Americas. They can remind us that our choices for fast food beef, exotic fruits, and coffee, unless it is shade-grown, can have a harmful effect.



Save Our Shorebirds Invites You To Leap Into a Summer of Science

A Western Snowy Plover on
Ten Mile Beach--seen on an
SOS survey last winter.



What is it?

- On-foot shorebird censuses of Virgin Creek Beach, Ten Mile Beach and Glass Beach

Why do we do it?

- To complete year four of this long-term citizen science research in MacKerricher State Park
- Your data are input by SOS to Cornell University's e-bird database and are available to everybody
- Your data add to the changing picture of our ocean and shoreline, especially watchlisted birds like Western Snowy Plovers, Marbled Godwits, Black Turnstones, Surfbirds, Sanderlings, Western Sandpipers, Long-billed Curlews and others – "canaries" in the so-called marine coal mine

What would I do?

- Survey one day a week for approximately 1.5 hours, fill out a short data sheet, and place it in the envelope on the bulletin board in Cowlick's Ice Cream Parlor on Fort Bragg's Main Street. We need help at Virgin Creek Beach. Our schedule is flexible. Summer surveys end September 15

What's in it for me?

- Your gift of time and effort is for the birds – literally for the birds
- A volunteer appreciation celebration at a Caspar home September 25, 2010 from 4-6 p.m. with a wine called Marbled Goblet, blended in Anderson Valley especially for the Save Our Shorebirds surveyors

How do I start?

- Contact 962-1602 or casparbeck@comcast.net for in-the-field training

Save Our Shorebirds is Mendocino Coast Audubon Society's on-going long-term citizen science research program in partnership with California State Parks, College of the Redwoods and FLOCKworks. The coordinator is California State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg, ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov

IN MEMORIAM PATRICIA WINTERS: BATMAM

Patricia Winters, better known as Batmam for her efforts to dispel negative notions about bats, died June 1 at her home in Forestville. She was 70. She co-founded the California Bat Conservation Fund in Marin, committed to dispelling misconceptions about bats, treating injured and orphaned bats, and replenishing the state's bat population. She spread the word on the good qualities of bats through countless animated and entertaining presentations to school kids, garden clubs, Audubon chapters and government agencies. Memorial donations to the California Bat Conservation Fund may be sent to P.O. Box 837, Forestville, CA, 95436.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Jun 17. Two first-year BONAPARTE'S GULLS on Virgin Creek Beach. Richard Hubacek

June 12. West end of the Little River Airport I saw a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER doing its nuthatch thing on the south side of the first pond west of the airport. Richard Hubacek

June 9. I heard a COMMON NIGHTHAWK calling starting at about 8:40 PM from Road K, Albion Ridge. On Thursday at Mendocino Headlands eight HEERMANN'S GULLS. Also two late migrating BRANT. A NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD at the Botanical Gardens. Jerry White

June 6. An ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER at the back of our yard in Ocean Meadows, north of Ten Mile River. Most spring migrants look somewhat dull all over, including black and white wing bars. Jim and Karen Havlena

June 3. Early evening, I spotted a flock of VAUX'S SWIFTS over the field across Hwy 1 north of Virgin Creek and south of the MacKerricher State Park main entrance. A single BLACK SWIFT flying low. Also, the two BRANT were still west of Ten Mile R. bridge. Karen Havlena

Ash-throated Flycatcher photo Ron LeValley

www.LeValleyphoto.com



Jun 3 Big River Spring Bird Surveys have produced two new birds for the Big River Checklist this Spring. May 7 WHITE-FACED IBIS and this morning we found a coastally rare ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER nearest the gate to the haul road. We had a female BULLOCK'S ORIOLE, rare on the coast. Richard Hubacek

BLACK OYSTERCATCHER Donald Shephard



Note: black beak tip of immature.

Photo Don Shephard

Northern Sea Lions bask on rocks opposite the nests. Each visit, I hear Black Oystercatchers' shrill *whEEP-whEEP* carried above the sound of the surf and my attention wanders to these inhabitants of a narrow littoral niche, yards wide and several thousand miles long.

The black head and body, and stout pink legs of this crow-sized, short-tailed shorebird make it distinctive. Yellow eyes with a surrounding ring of red skin, and a large red bill produce a striking contrast with the back. Conspicuous and noisy, the Black Oystercatcher lives along rocky shores from Alaska to Baja California.

Their name is doubly misleading since no oysters grace local rocks and they are sedentary and do not form an important part of Oystercatcher diet. Mussels and limpets are their primary food, but Black Oystercatchers prey on a wide range of shellfish and other creatures. Bivalves, such as limpets and mussels, have a strong muscle that holds the two shells tightly together but oystercatchers pry them open with ease. The birds also sneak up on open mussels, quickly stab their beaks between the shells, sever the muscle, shake the mussel free and swallow it. With sharp jabs of their chisel-like bill, oystercatchers dislodge limpets and chitons from rocks, turn them over and eat the soft tissue.

Oystercatchers often forage in the wave zone, because mussels splashed by waves open more frequently. A local health official, who monitored mussel beds for disease, tells me oystercatchers probe their bills among bivalves to get the worms, amphipods and isopods that shelter there. They forage primarily at low tide and then rest at high tide.

Black Oystercatchers defend territories that encompass both nesting and feeding areas. Threats often begin with a piping call when a territorial bird first sights the approach of another oystercatcher. The neck is outstretched and the bill is lowered slightly. This rigid upright stance is interrupted by a forward lowering of the head and bill as the threat gains intensity. This display is often met with similar intensity by neighbouring pairs at the boundary of the territory. Oystercatchers that fly toward a territory are usually met in flight and escorted far away by

Black Oystercatcher (continued)

territorial pairs. The defending Oystercatchers will sometimes slow their wing beats to enhance the display.

Males and females form long-term pair bonds. Oystercatchers copulate following a long display of piping calls, prancing about the territory and raising and lowering of the head and bill. The male holds his neck erect with the bill pointed down while the female crouches and gives churring calls. He climbs on to her back, bends his legs and moves his tail until his cloaca touches hers. He then leaps from her back and the pair stands, wag their tails and preen.

Both male and female build a small scrape on the ground, well above the high tide mark, and line it sparsely with pebbles or shell pieces. The female lays 2-3 speckled and well camouflaged eggs, and both the male and the female incubate for about 3½ - 4 weeks.

Oystercatcher chicks hatch with downy salt and pepper colored feathers that they wear for the first few weeks until the juvenal feathers emerge. Their legs and bills are dark brown to black in color and the eye is dark. Juveniles have dark brown almost black feathers fringed with buff on the mantle and wing. The iris is brown and the legs are dark brown or yellowish. In their first winter, oystercatchers resemble a paler version of the parent. The bill is reddish or orange with a dark brown tip. It will carry this plumage until it is about 12-13 months of age when it will attain the full adult breeding plumage. Adults molt their feathers in late summer.

Predators include raccoons, river otters, Bald Eagles, Glaucous-winged Gulls, Northwestern Crows and Common Ravens. High wave action during storms devastates nests. The 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska, had a major impact on breeding oystercatchers in that location: 20% of the population in the spill area was directly killed by the spill; breeding activity was disrupted in 39% of the oystercatcher pairs attempting to nest on heavily-oiled shorelines; and the survival of chicks was reduced. Human activities also pose a threat to this species on a smaller scale. The presence of humans on potential nesting islands often inhibits breeding attempts by Black Oystercatchers.

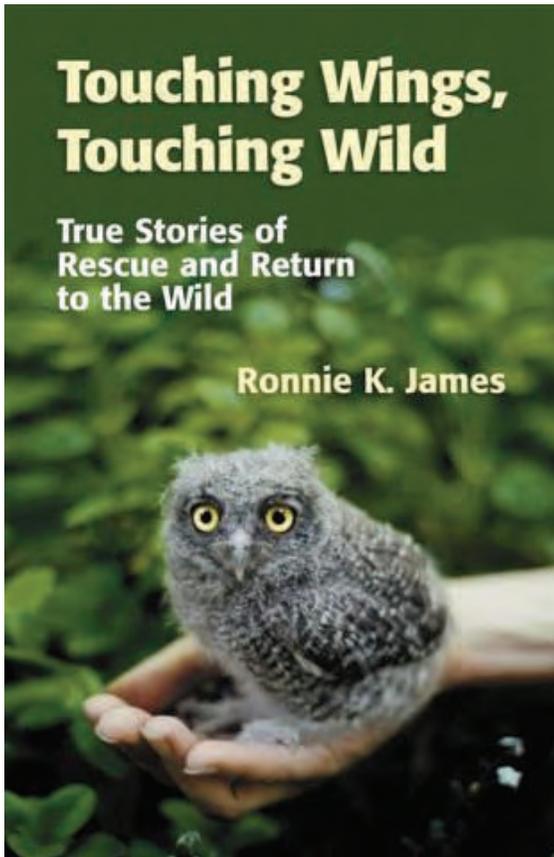
On your next walk along our rocky shore, listen for the shrill notes of Black Oystercatchers and consider that an estimated 10,000 of them occupy a narrow strip of land from Alaska to Baja where they merge with black and white American Oystercatchers.

Red beak tip of adult and look carefully for camouflaged chick. Photo LeValleyphoto.com

Black Oystercatcher nest and eggs



TOUCHING WINGS, TOUCHING WILD by RONNIE JAMES



Touching Wings, Touching Wild by local wildlife rehabilitator Ronnie James is now available. The book, part memoir and part wildlife adventure, takes the reader through Ronnie's years from the start of Woodlands Wildlife through 25 years of rescue, healing and returning injured and orphaned birds and small mammals to the wilds of the Mendocino coast. The book provides insights into wildlife behavior and personalities, as well as the process of wildlife rehab, that will change the way you interact and relate to our wild neighbors. There is information on how to exclude nuisance wildlife from your garden, attic, or crawl space humanely ; a color photo section; and woven throughout is Ronnie's experience of life in our coastal community. The proceeds will be shared by our local Audubon chapter and Woodlands Wildlife. The book can be ordered on-line through www.TouchingWings.org (just use 'Audubon' as your middle name), or you can mail a check to Woodlands Wildlife directly:

Audubon c/o Woodlands Wildlife
PO Box 1336

Mendocino CA. \$18.00 + \$1.48 tax + \$4.00 S&H. Questions? WoodlandsWildlife@mcn.org

BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society hosts the following walks this month at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. Our monthly beginners' bird walk was held on Saturday, July 3, at 9:00 A.M

The midweek bird walk will be held on the third Wednesday of the month, July 21, at 8:00 A.M. Field Trip. July 10 at 8:00 a.m. Lake Cleone and Laguna Point, MacKerricher State Park. Meet at Lake Cleone parking lot.

Birders with all levels of experience are invited to attend these walks. Binoculars will be available for those who need them. Admission is free for Botanical Garden members. For more information on these and other activities, please call 964-8163 or visit our website www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

SOUTHERN NOTES

Rich Trissel

After a long, wet winter and spring, summer has finally arrived. The **Pygmy Nuthatches** are bubbling away, the **Swallows** (mostly **Tree** and **Violet-green** with an occasional **Barn** and **Cliff**) chatter overhead and **California Quail** call. Beyond the meadow, a **Northern Flicker** sounds the alarm for an unknown local infraction and the **Wrentits** are 'Ping-Pong ball'-ing to each other.



Two generations of California Quail

Since we purchased our property two years ago, our yard list has entertained us. From world list to ABA list, Mendocino County list to yard list, they all fuel my passion for collecting without accumulating, and hunting without killing, while motivating me to get out and enjoy and diligently observe the world around me.

We're located 5 miles northeast of Gualala on 'The Ridge', about a mile (as the **Osprey** flies) from the ocean, and at an average elevation of 1100'. Our 40 acres

include woodlands of redwood, pine, firs, oaks, madrone, and a handful of others that my wife, Nancy, knows but I can never keep straight. Our house sits in the middle of a two acre meadow that is surrounded by trees and low scrub consisting of coyote bush, coffee berry, and several species of Manzanita and Ceanothus among others.

Our list includes birds seen (or heard) on, over and from the property. This is a bit contentious as many would consider only those observed on or over their yards, but our lists are of our own creation so, why not? We have 98 species and hope to break 100 this year.

The list includes a wide variety of common summer birds including: **Turkey Vulture**, **Osprey**, **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Band-tailed Pigeon**, **Mourning Dove**, **Vaux's Swift**, **Anna's & Allen's Hummingbird**, **Acorn, Hairy, & Downy Woodpeckers**, **Pacific-slope Flycatcher**, **Black Phoebe**, **Stellar's Jay**, **Western Scrub-Jay**, **Common Raven**, **Chestnut-backed Chickadee**, **Bushtit**, **Brown Creeper**, **Swainson's & Hermit Thrush**, **American Robin**, **Yellow & Wilson's Warblers**, **Spotted Towhee**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, **Purple Finch**, **American Goldfinch**, but it's the less common ones that are especially exciting to discover.

We've heard **Western Screech-Owl** from our bed, but have yet to see one - I've got to get myself out of bed next time. We've seen and heard **Northern Pygmy-owl**, always a treat. Three weeks ago we added **California Thrasher** (#98) when a couple used our property for a brief stop-over. No sign of them since. One of the first unusual summer appearances, back in 2008, was of a **Common Poorwill** that we initially saw as we drove down our driveway, and later noted hunting over the meadow. **Purple Martins** occur infrequently so we're pleased when they deem the property worthy of a sortie.

Who knows what the next yard bird will be? There are still a fair number of 'expected' species that we have not yet observed but the unexpected keep things exciting.

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2010-2011

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Not a board member:

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

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