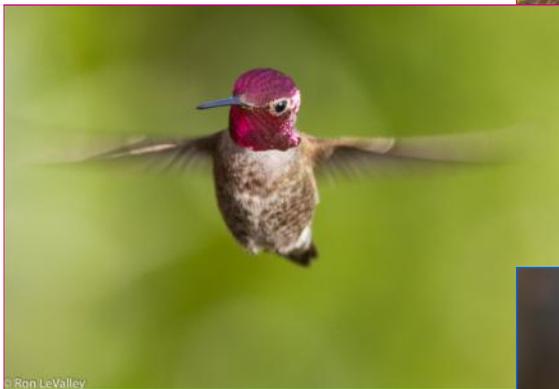


The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter, September 2013

**Ron LeValley
Presents**



Photos and masthead photo by Ron LeValley



**Backyard Birds
Monday, September 16, 2013
7 p.m.**

Caspar Community Center

Birds in our backyards are fun to watch and even more fun to learn about. Watching their behaviors, keeping track of when they come and go and when young birds show up is a learning experience. Ron will show some of his fine pictures of our common backyard birds here in coastal Mendocino and discuss their biology. He will talk about where they go when they are not here, when they nest, when they change plumage, what they eat and some identification challenges. Ron will also discuss population trends and some of the reasons for those changes.

Ron LeValley is a well-known birder and photographer. He has been studying and photographing birds since the 60's and is always an engaging speaker.

Inside this issue:

<i>President's Corner</i>	2
<i>Joleen Ossello</i>	
SOS	4
<i>Becky Bowen</i>	
<i>Pam Huntley</i>	5
<i>Creating Bird Yard Habitat</i>	
<i>Donald Shephard</i>	6
<i>Dowitchers</i>	
<i>MCAS Precision</i>	8
<i>Spotting Scope Drill Team at Elk</i>	
<i>Calendar</i>	9
<i>MCAS Board Of Directors</i>	10



Conservation Chair Linda Perkins marches with the MCAS Precision Spotting Scope Drill Team at Great Day in Elk Parade p. 8

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Joleen Ossello

Convergence of the Like-Minded



Joleen marched August 24 in the Great Day in Elk parade with the MCAS Precision Spotting Scope Drill Team.

An extended weekend of perfectly sunny, warm weather and a backdrop of the Columbia River Gorge set the stage for the National Audubon Society (NAS) Convention in July. For the first time in fifteen years, five hundred "Auduboners" from our nation's chapters along with state and national employees convened and dreamed together at Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, WA. We celebrated a renewed and upbeat energy level as we gathered along the Pacific Flyway.

CEO and NAS President David Yarnold recently shared this new vision with the *New York Times* by saying, "My first challenge was to find a unifying message for the society. After a month in which I listened to staff members, chapter leaders and our international partners, a story emerged. Birds' migratory routes are like four superhighways in the sky, and below them are their rest stops and homes. When you connect all these flyways and habitats, there's a web of biodiversity, and it's our job to protect that. I'm not a bird expert, but I'm skilled in figuring out a story. That vision became the basis of our new strategic plan."

Ground-breaking Audubon commercials were viewed, phenomenal speakers were heard, awards were given to outstanding members' accomplishments, and a unique presentation about North American owls was delivered by photographer Paul Bannick.

The excitement began for me on the chartered bus ride from Portland International Airport when I met Washington D.C. Office Vice President for Community Conservation & Education Chandra Taylor Smith. She shared her vision of a culturally based membership and board constituency. By the end of the conference, I had presented her with a story of our own chapter's road to board diversity about which she had inquired for one of her workshops. Once at the lodge, I met Sheila Shay, the Cumberland-Harpeth Audubon's newsletter editor, greeting me with birding trills as she added a Lazuli Bunting to her life list. Nelle Lyons, a board member of San Mateo County Audubon, introduced herself as a California State Parks employee who knows our new treasurer, Angela Liebenberg. It was a promising start to the unknown events ahead.

I attended a story-telling workshop by Mark Rovner and Alia McKee. Their specialty was the inclusion of Hollywood's best story-telling elements. MCAS can have a "sacred bundle of stories" that represent our organization. I enjoy reading articles written by our members and am interested in a story about the Osprey nest above the Caspar Cemetery. I'll share a few of my stories with you from the workshop in upcoming newsletters.

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

I met Jerry Davis,
Chairperson of Audubon in
Arkansas/Garland County
He says, "A place without
birds is not a good place for
people; they are trying to tell
us something." NAS Board
Chair, Holt Thrasher, spoke
the first evening stating, "In
flight together, Audubon as
One."



The first morning's address by David Yarnold, highlighted organization wide accomplishments interspersed with taglines:

Where Birds Thrive, People Prosper
Conservation is Second Nature
Boots on the Ground
Flyway Story
Conservation of Scale
Birds Take Us to Our Work

We heard from Peg Olson, Audubon's Chief Conservation Officer, who said that "Unpopular stands are sometimes taken," and Toby Ross, Audubon Science Manager in Seattle, who is leading the Puget Sound Seabird Survey for the seventh year. His committee works with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association, local universities, and 200 volunteers.

Flyway Workshop Sessions on Sunday directed participants to their migratory routes. At the Pacific Flyway Workshop, we were asked about our chapter's specific issues and current programming. We examined Flyway-wide initiatives such as *Barrow to Baja: Pacific Marine Birds Initiative*, *Creating Bird Friendly Communities*, *Healthy Climate & Clean Energy*, and *Making Working Lands Work for Birds*.

The most rewarding part of representing our Chapter came to light in a comment I made among new colleagues over dinner. Throughout the weekend, I heard conservationist cries of oil platforms, fracking, wind turbines, and urban development. These are issues many chapters face on a regular basis. I found myself saying, "Well, in Mendocino, we just don't let them in."

Dave Yarnold's firm words focused on the work of the strategic plan. He assured us that conservation is in the news. The Restore Act passed congress last year when few did. He says "Because of the flyways we are strong together, we do work the way birds travel now." He believes that Audubon is a Hemispheric Conservation NGO with a new organization that rebuilds our confidence. In closing the convention he hoped all of us heard the underlying message of his presentation which was "thank you" for the work that you do.

Coastal Cleanup Day September 21, 2013 9 a.m. – 12 noon

Some See Trash, But We See Cash

Save Our Shorebirds – Becky Bowen



Here's a shot of last year's MCAS coastal cleanup volunteers at Ten Mile Beach.

Cleanup Captain Art Morley has led the Audubon crew at Ten Mile since we began this statewide effort (and on his own before that).

We're getting pretty efficient at the yearly collection of trash and treasures.

For the first time last year, we found cash. Other items collected over the last several years include jewelry, toys, a mailbox attached to its post,

shoes, a piece of a dock (perhaps tsunami debris), empty cremation vessels, and for whatever reason, lots of underwear.

It's a jovial get-together. The volunteer who finds the best trash wins a prize. We have fun, but the mission is deeply serious: Taking trash from our beaches saves birds and mammals which feed and rest there and helps beautify beaches that attract coastal visitors.

Coastal Cleanup Day is sponsored by the California Coastal Commission and coordinated here by the Mendocino Land Trust on the coast and inland. There also is a collection by kayak led by our board member Cate Hawthorne, of Liquid Fusion Kayaking, out of Noyo Harbor.

To help gather trash, show up at the site of your choice at 9 a.m. and bring a bucket, work gloves and a smile. A list cleanup sites and captains as well as other details is at:

http://mendocinolandtrust.org/?Get_Involved:Volunteer:Coastal_Cleanup_Day

Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing long-term MCAS project in partnership with State Parks and FLOCKworks.

We monitor shorebirds on three Mackerricher State Park beaches. To help with surveys, please contact Angela Liebenberg at liebenbergs@mcn.org and please join us on facebook at www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

PAM HUNTLEY ON KZYX FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5

CREATING BIRD HABITAT

Spring is the time song birds return to our yards to breed and it's time to start planning for the spring of 2014.

While many of us enjoy birds at our feeders, we can also attract them to what we plant in our yards. By growing a variety of native shrubs and trees, we provide nesting sites and foraging areas.



Song Sparrow – photograph by Ron LeValley

Try to create structurally diverse habitat by growing native plants of different heights and groupings. The understory of shrubs and herbaceous plants is important for birds.

Try to leave dead standing trees and limbs. More than 50% of birds depend on these natural structures for nesting cavities. Leaving grass cuttings and brush piles provides shelter, nesting material, foraging grounds and even nest sites.

You can also help our feathered friends by reducing predators. The biggest impact is outdoor cats. Researchers estimate 100 million birds are killed daily in the United States by domestic outdoor cats.

Keep cats indoors, especially during breeding season when young birds are newly out of the nest. Discourage other predators such as ravens, jays, skunks and rats by eliminating outdoor food sources like pet food dishes, uncovered compost piles and open trash cans. Many songbirds nest close to the ground or in weedy areas. Create “no-mow” areas for nesting and important food sources.

SHORT-BILLED AND LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS

Donald Shephard

Short-billed Dowitcher



Photo by Michael L. Baird

Let us eavesdrop on Becky Bowen as she stands beside Inglenook Creek lagoon and pursues her passion – shorebirds. She has been standing at the water's edge taking shots of a Great Egret and a Spotted Sandpiper. When Becky looks at the water by her feet she sees a dowitcher – so hungry that he doesn't notice the SOS volunteer next to him. Dowitcher identification was a big part of Ron LeValley's training session for SOS volunteers this spring. It comforts Becky to know that even experts sometimes get confused between a short-billed Long-billed Dowitcher and a long-billed Short-billed Dowitcher, if that makes sense.

There is a good shorebird guide with a telling title, *The Shorebird Guide*, by Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson. You may consult it as you assist Becky in this tricky identification or you may prefer your trusty field guide. If you use Sibley's you will read: *Dowitchers are stocky long-billed sandpipers. Found in flocks that stay relatively tight together, they move methodically across ponds or mudflats, hunched over and probing erratically in the mud. All have an entirely white rump.*

You study the bird's sewing-machine-like probing as it stands up to its belly in water sometimes submerging its head. It is not in a tight flock, but it does have a white rump. Sibley gives statistics for both species: Long-billed Dowitcher length 11.5 inches, wingspan 19 inches, weight 4 ounces; Short-billed Dowitcher length 11 inches, wingspan 19 inches, weight 3.9 ounces. Even up close and personal, none of us can see the difference in length or weight. So far we have made no progress.

Sibley tells you these related species often mix, but goes on to give you a hint. The Short-billed Dowitcher is more often found around fresh water. Well, that's something, but is not conclusive. It would help if breeding plumage arrayed our specimen, but such finery is rarely seen here on the coast. The winter plumage is largely grey on adults and juveniles of both species.

continued

Long-billed Dowitcher



Source:
Creative Commons
Share Alike

The field guide describes the Long-billed Dowitcher neck as *dull rufous with dark streaks* and the Short-billed Dowitcher neck as *orange with dense spotting*. Depending on the light, the generosity of the bird in exposing its chest or, as is more likely, its fickle habit of hiding its chest while bending to feed, and your distance from it, you may not find these words illuminating. Your difficulty in differentiating between these two species is not surprising when you consider they were lumped together as one species until 1950.

Less helpful, perhaps, is the information that a flock of long-billed gives a constant soft chattering while short-billed flocks are silent. In my birding experience, this is when the bird flies off as if to let you know birds fly and humans do not. You despair. A call penetrates your sadness, *keek* or *pweek*, a sharp note. The Short-billed song is a lower, rapid, liquid *kew-tu-tu-tu*. Once more, the ears trump the eyes for the birdwatcher.

Becky tells me dowitchers are special. We don't see a great number of them here. At this time of year, SOS volunteers usually spot a few at Virgin Creek and at Ten Mile Beach at the Inglebrook Creek lagoon. Surveyors see them mostly in the water at the edge of a pond or creek, wading and foraging. Dowitchers are very quiet. These shorebirds get that way this time of year. When they drop down from the migration, they are famished and can't do anything but eat because Long-billed Dowitchers have flown from Quebec or Alaska and Short-billed Dowitchers may have traveled from eastern Siberia. In spring, they come from as far south as Chile and Brazil.

The insect-rich tundra provides them with ample food to raise their young. Dowitchers nest on the ground, usually near water, in shallow depressions in clumps of grasses or moss. They line their nests with fine grasses, twigs and leaves. The female lays four, sometimes three, olive-buff to brown eggs. Incubation, by both sexes, lasts for twenty-one days. Only the male takes care of the young once they hatch.

The downy juvenile birds leave the nest soon after hatching. Young find all their own food, and then, twenty to thirty days later, off they go to winter in the south. At four ounces and with a journey of several thousand miles, it is no wonder they gobble up every scrap of nourishment they can along the way. And if a SOS volunteer wants to record their passage so much the better, but don't interrupt the feeding frenzy.

MCAS Precision Spotting Scope Drill Team Puts Parade Boots on Ground for the Great Day in Elk



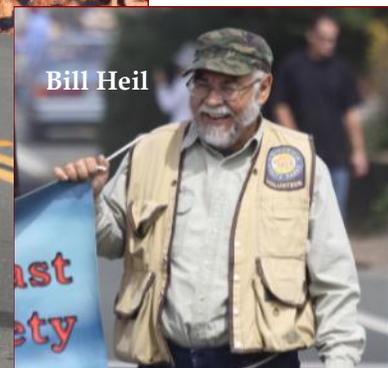
Tim Bray



Alison Cebula



Adam Hutchins



Bill Heil

MCAS FIELD TRIPS

Tim Bray

Our field trip on Saturday, September 14 will be at Virgin Creek Beach. Meet at 9 a.m. at the unpaved parking area on the east side of Highway 1 north of Baxman. Virgin Creek Beach is one of the best shorebird locations along our coast. Many species can be seen here during fall migration, including the Western Snowy Plover (listed as threatened on the endangered species list). We have had some terrific trips to Virgin Creek in previous years. Our field trip leader for the day is Becky Bowen, Save Our Shorebirds volunteer. We will walk the trail across the meadow to the Haul Road bridge, then go down to the beach at the creek mouth. Birders at any experience level will enjoy this trip. Join us and learn more about the feathered tourists who visit our beaches.

Our bird walk September 7 will be led by Dave Jensen at Lake Cleone in Mackerricher State Park. "Winesong" will be at the Botanical Gardens that day, but our Gardens walk will resume September 18 when Tim Bray will be the leader. We found 52 species on our August 21 gardens walk, a surprising tally for that time of year.

CALENDAR – BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

September

Saturday 9/7 Beginner Bird Walk 9 AM [Mackerricher Park - meet at parking lot by Lake Cleone](#)

9/12-9/15 [Monterey Bay Birding Festival](#)

Saturday 9/14 Field Trip Virgin Creek 9 AM - meet at pullout/parking area off Highway 1

Sunday 9/15 [Basic Seabird Identification Pelagic Trip 8AM](#) **SOLD OUT**

Monday 9/16 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM: Ron LeValley on Backyard Birds

Wednesday 9/18 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM*

Saturday 9/21 Coastal Cleanup Day 9AM-NOON [Mendocino Coastline](#)

Sunday 9/29 MCAS Pelagic Trip **SOLD OUT**

October

Saturday 10/5 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*

10/5-6 [Humboldt "Mini" Godwit Days](#) Arcata

Saturday 10/12 Field Trip - Glass Beach and Vicinity 9AM

Saturday 10/12, 10/13 Mackerricher [Lake Cleone Boardwalk Repair](#)

Wednesday 10/16 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM*

Thursday 10/17 MCAS Board Meeting 7PM

Friday/Saturday 10/17-18 [Northern California Council Meeting Chico](#)

Monday 10/21 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM: [John Muir Laws](#)

Thinking like a Naturalist: Reclaiming the Art of Natural History

Wednesday 10/23 John Muir Laws bird sketching workshop, Ukiah, details TBA

November

Saturday 11/2 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*

Saturday 11/9 Field Trip 9AM - South Coast Raptors - meet at Navarro River parking area

Monday 11/18 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: Greg Guisti on Coastal Pines

Wednesday 11/20 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM*

Thursday 11/21 MCAS Board Meeting 7PM

December

Saturday 12/7 Beginner Bird Walk at the [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*

Saturday 12/14 Field Trip - CBC Tune-up - Rose Memorial Park and Pudding Creek - meet at east end of Spruce Street 9AM

Monday 12/16 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM: Focusing on the Christmas Bird Count.

Wednesday 12/18 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM*

Saturday 12/21 [Fort Bragg Circle Christmas Bird Count](#)

Please note the Saturday 1/4/2014 Beginner Bird Walk in the Botanical Gardens is cancelled
Saturday 1/4/2014 is the MCAS [Manchester Circle Christmas Bird Count](#)

*These walks are free; however, the Gardens does charge a reduced entry admission for those who are not members of the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens.

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2013-2014

President	Joleen Ossello	391-7019	j_ossello@earthlink.net
Vice President	David Jensen	964-8163	djensen@mcn.org
Secretary	Cate Hawthorne	962-1623	liquidfusionkayaking@gmail.com
Treasurer	Angela Liebenberg	962-9267	liebenbergs@mcn.org
Webmaster	Catherine Keegan	937-4422	keegan@wildblue.net
Membership	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@mcn.org
SOS Program	Angela Liebenberg	962-9267	liebenbergs@mcn.org
Programs	Open		
Conservation	Linda Perkins	937-0903	lperkins@mcn.org
Education	Sarah Grimes	937-4322	zewa@mcn.org
Newsletter	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@mcn.org
Field Trips	Tim Bray	937-4422	tbray@wildblue.net

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

