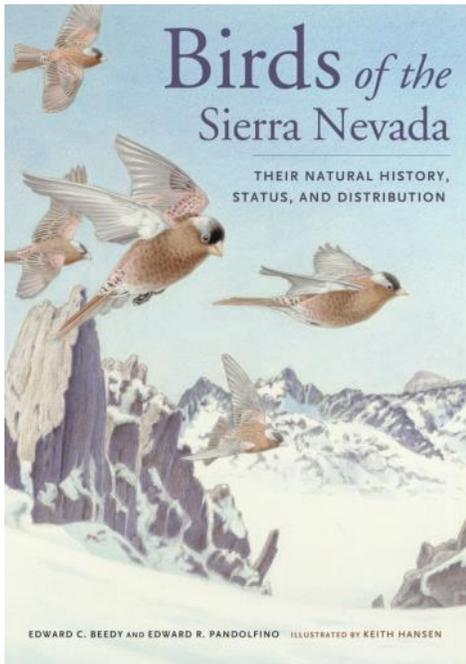


# The Black Oystercatcher

Photograph by Ron LeValley

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter September, 2014



ED PANDOLFINO PRESENTS  
**BIRDS  
 OF THE  
 SIERRA NEVADA**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2014  
 7 P.M.**

**CASPAR  
 COMMUNITY CENTER**

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Ed Pandolfino will take us to the Sierra Nevada range – from the oak savanna and conifer forests of the west side, up to alpine regions, and down the steep eastern escarpment to pinyon/juniper woodlands and open steppes of the Great Basin. We'll see and hear the stunning diversity of birds that make the Sierra their home. We'll learn about which birds are in decline and which are expanding and increasing. We'll address some mysteries surrounding some of those species and discuss how birders can help solve them.

Dr. Pandolfino is President of Western Field Ornithologists and a Northern California editor for *North American Birds*. He co-authored, with Ted Beedy, *Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution*. The book is illustrated by Keith Hansen and was published in 2013 by the University of California Press. It will be available for purchase at the meeting.



Becky Bowen photo

Coastal birders saw a plethora of Wandering Tattlers this summer. Story on P. 3

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

### **CLIFF SWALLOW**

If I glimpse a bird fly by that is a little more than 5 inches long, with a square tail, pale rump and white forehead, there's a good chance it's a Cliff Swallow.

Cliff Swallow wings are blue-gray, as are their crowns. The cheeks are rusty brown; their throats are dark.

These are the famous swallows of San Juan Capistrano whose return has been recorded around March 19 since 1775. They winter in Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina.

Cliff swallows eat insects, catching them in mid-flight with beaks that are surrounded by tiny bristles that help trap the bugs.

It's been suggested they could be renamed Bridge Swallows because so many nest on highway bridges.

Historically, these colonial nesters chose cliffs and bluffs to build their gourd-shaped nests. Each nest is built by a pair and it has a small opening at the bottom. They "mason" their home with bead-like bricks of mud carried to the nesting site in their beaks. Some 4-5 eggs are incubated for only about two weeks.

Interestingly, Cliff Swallows are parasitic nesters in their own colonies. Females have been known to carry an egg in their beaks to an empty nearby nest. When the neighbors return, they seem to accept them and raise the chicks as their own.



*UFWFS Photograph by Donna Dewhurst*



*National Park Service in public domain. Photographer unknown.*



## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS-A Tattler Tale

Everything about the SOS survey on Friday, August 15, was gray – water, sky, rocks, fog and light. And it was entirely too quiet along the bluffs north of Fort Bragg – until peace was shattered by the staccato chatter of two Wandering Tattlers.

When the data are complete at the end of the year, we think 2014 will break the SOS record of Wandering Tattler sightings. Surveyors recorded only 6 sightings of the bird for the entire year of 2013. On one summer day this year (August 8, 2014), our surveyor counted 3, and possibly 4, Wandering Tattlers on two pocket beaches south of Virgin Creek beach. And the sightings have continued since then.

According to the National Audubon Society, the global population is estimated at 15,000, though Wandering Tattlers are poorly researched, possibly because of their wide range and remoteness of their breeding habitat near streams in mountains of Alaska, Northwest Canadian Territories and on Siberia's Chukotski Peninsula. Migration takes the birds to wintering spots along the coast of North, Central and South America and Hawaii. Some fly as far as Australia and the Pacific Islands – an 8,000 mile one-way trip across open water.

On the Mendocino Coast, Wandering Tattlers are listed as uncommon most of the year and rare in summer. When we are lucky enough to see them, it usually is in July or August. The best way to identify them is to listen for the single-pitch high call (often repeated rapidly 6 times) that announces the birds' arrivals. They fly quickly between rock stacks and drop down to feed on invertebrates in "mungy" kelp deposits on pocket beaches. Many of the tattlers we spotted this year were foraging with Black Turnstones in beached kelp, a feeding arrangement that frequently led to temper tantrums and dustups.

Yellow legs and rapid butt bobs are striking identifying characteristics. The Audubon species report describes the bird as mysterious in many ways because it is full of surprises. For instance, just when our experience told us the bird would only be found here on rocky pocket beaches, up popped a Wandering Tattler on a log on a long open stretch of sand on Ten Mile Beach in Mackerricher State Park. If surprises trigger smiles, these birds give us plenty to smile about.



*The touchdown of a Wandering Tattler on a kelp bed sparks reaction from an angry Black Turnstone.*

*Photographs by B. Bowen*

**SOS is an ongoing long-term Mendocino Coast Audubon project in partnership with California State Parks. Volunteers conduct shoreline bird censuses from Ten Mile River south through Glass Beach. To help with surveys, contact Angela Liebenberg at [liebenbergs@mcn.org](mailto:liebenbergs@mcn.org) and visit us at: [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)**

## **WHAT IS "DAYLIGHTING?" By Michael Grady and Dave Jensen**

"Daylighting" is a term for projects that uncover creeks, streams, or rivers buried in culverts or pipes, or covered by decks, or otherwise removed from view. Historically, people covered waterways in developed areas to obtain solid ground surfaces for roadways or buildings, to prevent streams from being used as open sewers, and to move water from where they didn't want it. The costs and drawbacks of that practice are sometimes also hidden from view.

Daylighting can re-establish a waterway in its old channel. This is one form of natural restoration that results in a natural ecosystem with a porous streambed, riparian plants along its edges, and a complex community of aquatic animals and plants. Sometimes daylighting projects include restoring wetlands, ponds, or estuaries.

Daylighting a creek is not a minor project. The benefits of daylighting come with a cost. A general rule of thumb is \$1,000 per linear foot of stream daylighted; however, actual case studies have found a range from \$15 to \$5,000 per linear foot. Costs increase or decrease depending on factors such as the extent of urbanization at the site, whether volunteers or in-kind donations are used, whether the stream is on public or private land, and whether property must be purchased. But many communities have found that the costs of daylighting amount to less than repairing or replacing aging buried waterways.

Several historic creeks are buried under the streets of Fort Bragg. They run under Highway 1 and proceed underground to the vicinity of the central pond on the former Georgia-Pacific mill site. The local Noyo Headlands Unified Design Group (NHUDG) is studying the feasibility of daylighting Maple and Alder Creeks on the site as part of an environmentally healthy and beneficial development of Noyo Headlands. The benefits of two riparian habitats extending from Main Street to the ocean are many and varied.

In dozens of towns where creeks have been daylighted, the transformation promotes low key recreational activities, revitalizes unattractive urban areas, provides habitat for a variety of native species of plants and wildlife, naturally produces cleaner water, and actually reduces seasonal flooding.

The re-emergence of Alder and Maple Creeks would create ideal habitat for many local birds. During a winter's walk along those riparian corridors you would likely encounter thrushes, kinglets, chickadees, warblers and several species of sparrows. In late spring that same area would be alive with the sights and sounds of Warbling Vireos, Swainson's Thrushes, Wilson's Warblers and several species of flycatchers. All that life could return to an area that for the past 100 years has been buried under pavement.

Raising awareness of buried streams within the urban environment can engage people and galvanize interest in clean water, community health, and revitalization. This has happened with Strawberry Creek in Berkeley; Arcadia Creek in Kalamazoo, Michigan; and Cow Creek in Hutchinson, Kansas, where instead of declining property values and diminishing business activity in Hutchinson's downtown, property values increased by 10% in the area.

Daylighting projects have benefitted communities in Barrington and Urbana, Illinois; Rowley, Massachusetts; St. Paul, Minnesota; El Cerrito and San Luis Obispo, California; Yonkers, New York; Seattle and Port Angeles, Washington; and Traverse City, Michigan. More success has been recorded in Canada, Denmark, Britain, Germany and Switzerland. Perhaps some day Fort Bragg will join that list.

## INJURIES AND DISEASES Donald Shephard



**Injured Western Gull**

Recently, I have seen an injured Western Gull on the rock pinnacle just north of Point Cabrillo Lighthouse. At first, I thought it had a cooked shrimp hanging from its bill. Perhaps someone had dropped the morsel while picnicking. On closer inspection, I saw the bird had something sticking out of its throat below its beak. I imagined an emerging parasitic worm but no; inquiries among local experts suggest fish hook damage has pulled its tongue through its throat.

Other birds suffer from entanglement with fishing line.

The Brown Pelican photographed in La Jolla had lost its left foot.

Vehicles – cars, buses, trains and planes – all take their toll. Who among us has not hit a bird and watched in the rearview mirror as a bundle of feathers rolls lifeless to the road shoulder. In 1905, Orville Wright chased a flock of birds and killed one which lodged atop the upper wing surface before falling when he swung a sharp curve. Who can forget US Airways Flight 1549 captained by Chesley Sullenberger who landed his aircraft in the Hudson after hitting a formation of Canada Geese.



**Injured Brown Pelican**



**Red Crossbill collision victim**

A common cause of bird injury is collision with manmade structures including towers and wind turbines. House windows damage a lot of birds. When a raptor approaches at speed, songbirds at a feeder scatter in a spiral pattern, no two birds heading in the same direction. This confuses the predator, but often means one or two birds collide with

a window. Over the years, I have collected some bird-in-hand photos of such unfortunates.

A Black-headed Grosbeak recovered in my hands, but the Red Crossbill succumbed. You can mitigate these losses by placing your bird feeder far enough from your house to allow safe dispersal.



**Black-headed Grosbeak collision survivor**

DONALD SHEPHARD

Continued



**California Quail,  
prey of a Cooper's Hawk**

Predators may damage their prey without killing them outright or the dead prey may become inaccessible. I once observed a California Quail duck behind deer netting, but a Cooper's Hawk grabbed it. After a period of much wing flapping on the ground, I shooed the attacker away, retrieved the dead bird, and the hawk eventually carried it off.

Diseases also take their toll. House Finch eye disease first appeared in 1994 in Washington DC. It spread to the west coast in 2006. Symptoms include red, swollen, runny, or crusty eyes. In extreme cases the eyes become swollen shut blinding the bird. You might observe an infected finch sitting quietly in your yard, clumsily scratching an eye against its foot or a perch. While some infected birds recover, many die from starvation, exposure, or predation.

The causal bacterium has long affected domestic turkeys and chickens and has spread to American Goldfinches, Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches. Mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, as the disease is commonly called, is caused by a unique strain of *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, a parasitic bacterium previously known to infect only poultry.

Avian pox is another disease that affects House Finches. Infected birds show wart-like growths on the featherless areas of the body such as around the eye, the base of the beak, and on the legs and feet. Although visible symptoms suggest otherwise, this disease is primarily a respiratory infection. Avian pox can be mistaken for conjunctivitis when the eyes are affected. Typically, growths form around the eye in avian pox. Please clean your feeders regularly with a 10% solution of bleach and rinse afterwards.

While not yet recorded in Mendocino County, West Nile virus—a disease that occurs often in the crow family—occurs in the Central Valley. In order for people to get this disease, a mosquito that has bitten a bird with the virus must then bite a human.

Such is the wild life of birds, the agony of injury and disease along with the joy of flying and our joy at seeing, as Robinson Jeffers wrote, "...the throat of one bird that clings to twig, ruffled against white sky." I wonder what your grandchildren will see in future skies.



**Male House Finch with eye disease**  
This photograph by David Smith,  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
All other photos by the author

## CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

### September 2014

**Saturday 6 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM\*

**Saturday 13 Field Trip** 9AM [Virgin Creek Beach](#) Meet at Enchanted Trail pullout on west side of Highway 1 just north of Montessori Del Mar School – Leaders: Dorothy Tobkin, Becky Bowen

**Sunday 14 Beginning Pelagic Trip** **SOLD OUT**

**Monday 15 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM

Speaker: Ed Pandolfino Birds of the Sierras

**Wednesday 17 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM\*

**Saturday 20 California Coastal Cleanup day** 9AM-Noon\*

Local coordinator for this California Coastal Commission program is

Mendocino Land Trust (contact is [www.mendocinolandtrust.org](http://www.mendocinolandtrust.org) or 707 962-0470 for

list of volunteer opportunities at local beaches and watersheds). MCAS responsible for Ten Mile Beach with leader Art Morley 707 964-2541.

**Saturday 28 TALONS A Festival Celebrating Birds of Prey** Noon-3PM Marin Art

Garden Center, Ross, CA

### October 2014

**Saturday 4 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM\*

**Saturday 11 Field Trip** 9AM Caspar Beach, Cemetery, Pond- Meet at parking area at mouth of Doyle Creek, on west side of the road, just south of the campground store - Leader: Dave Jensen

**Wednesday 15 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM\*

**Monday 20 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: Kate Frey Landscape for Birds, Insects

### November 2014

**Saturday 1 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM\*

**Saturday 8 Field Trip** 9AM South Coast Raptors (Elk to Point Arena) - Leaders: T. Bray, D. Jensen

**Monday 17 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM

Speaker: Sara Guerrero

**Wednesday 19 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM\*

**Thursday 20-23 Central Valley Birding Symposium** Stockton

### December 2014

**Saturday 6 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM\*

**Saturday 13 Field Trip** 9AM [Rose Memorial Park & Pudding Creek](#) – Leader: Tim Bray

**Sunday 14 Ukiah Christmas Bird Count**

**Monday 15 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Topic: Christmas Bird Count

**Wednesday 17 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM\*

**Saturday 20 Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Count**

### January 2015

**Saturday 3 Manchester Christmas Bird Count**

**Saturday 3 Beginner Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) **Cancelled due to CBC**

**Saturday 10 Field Trip** 9AM Ten Mile River – Leader: Dave Jensen

**Monday 19 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM

Speakers Guisti/Keiffer on Turkey Vultures

**Wednesday 21 Bird Walk** [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM\*

**Wednesday 21-25 Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway** Chico

*These walks are free, but there is an entry charge for participants who are not members of the Gardens.*

For complete calendar, updates, and useful links, visit: [www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

And please visit us on facebook: [www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon](http://www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon)

## **MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2013-2014**

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**Mendocino Coast Audubon Society e-mail address: [audubon@mcn.org](mailto:audubon@mcn.org)**

### **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**

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