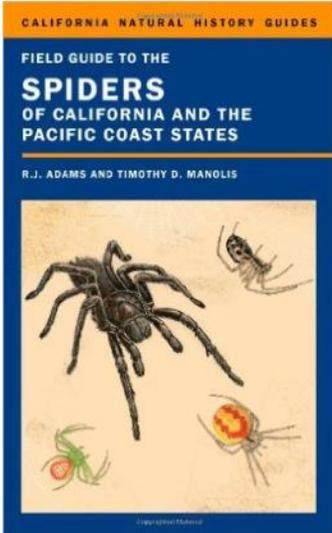




Photo by Ron LeValley

The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Newsletter September 2016



MCAS PRESENTS

TIM MANOLIS + SPIDERS

7 P.M.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER

If you don't know much about jumping spiders, be warned - learning more about them can become an addictive pleasure. Jumping spiders are not your average spiders. They stalk prey (insects and other spiders) like cats, using vision that rivals that of many birds and mammals. Male jumpers can be brilliantly colored, with courtship displays rivaling those of birds-of-paradise.

Please join us at our spider program, featuring Tim Manolis, to learn more about spider biology, California species, and jumping spiders. Salticidae, the family of jumping spiders, is the largest family of spiders worldwide, with around 5000 described species. Though most numerous in the tropics, they are found just about everywhere, from the highest peaks of the Himalaya to the arid depths of Death Valley. Some species hop around in trees and bushes like little monkeys. Others stalk prey on the ground, walls, and fences, and very small ones crawl through leaf litter. Over 100 described species live in California, and you can probably find five to ten of these in your back yard.

Tim Manolis will present photos of these extraordinary creatures and answer all your spider questions at our September meeting. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado and is an artist, writer, and field biologist who has lived in Sacramento for many years. He is author of *Dragonflies and Damselflies of California*, and the illustrator of *Field Guides to Butterflies of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento Valley Regions* and the *Field Guide to Spiders of California and the Pacific Coast States*.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER**Dave Jensen**

Welcome back, everyone, for what promises to be another memorable season of programs, bird walks, field trips, conservation efforts and educational opportunities. Since this is my first column in a few months, I will start by reviewing some of our accomplishments from the past summer with an eye to what is ahead.

Working together with Audubon California, chapter volunteers conducted another successful effort to monitor the reproductive success of Black Oystercatchers along our coast. This was the fifth consecutive year for this survey.

It was sobering to see how few nests were successful, but thrilling to see the freshly hatched chicks clamber among the rocks they so closely resemble. When they survive the perils that claim so many, you feel a sense of joy and vicarious pride as the smudgy-billed fledglings follow their parents to join that Greek chorus of the mussel beds.

This summer we also continued our surveys of breeding Pelagic Cormorants, and 2016 proved to be a very tough year for this species. In my survey area (the Mendocino headlands along Heeser Drive) nearly all the nests were abandoned, often soon after construction. Nevertheless, we gathered important data that, when combined with the observations from colonies in other coastal regions and supplemented with data about ocean conditions and food availability, will help further our understanding of the dynamics that shape seabird populations.

Although there were no regular field trips this summer, our bird walks at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens were well attended by residents and visitors alike. The fourth Sunday walks along the northern Mill Site trail were also well attended, and participants enjoyed close views of Pigeon Guillemots and Black Oystercatchers as well as nesting gulls and cormorants.

Save Our Shorebirds, an MCAS program in partnership with California State Parks, completes its tenth year in December. Dedicated volunteers have worked more than 9,000 hours in the field and in classrooms. More than 500,000 birds have been counted on year-round census surveys along the entire 15-kilometer coastline of Mackerricher State Park. SOS data are available to schools, agencies and the public at no charge. New goals achieved in the last two years are outreach and shorebird conservation education in the field by Anne Harvey (funded by grants), and completion of annual reports that examine disturbances that contribute to shorebird decline.

There were several notable successes and challenges outside our coastal area this summer. Audubon California was able to work with Central Valley farmers to save 100% of the Tricolored Blackbird colonies - a feat never before accomplished. Bay Area voters approved measure AA, which will facilitate the restoration of saltwater marshes and other important bird habitats. There were a few promising developments in the effort to restore water to the Salton Sea, thereby saving the most important migratory refuge in southern California and preventing the creation of the largest point source of air pollution in the nation. Finally, the protective powers of the California Coastal Commission continue to be threatened by pro-development efforts to restructure its board of directors.

COASTAL CLEANUP DAY SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2016



Inglennook Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Preserve, Mackerricher State Park

Let's talk trash. Last year, on the California Coastal Commission's Coastal Cleanup Day, Mendocino County volunteers picked up more than two tons of trash from local beaches, according to the Mendocino Land Trust. Once again, the Land Trust will coordinate more than 400 volunteers, who will pick up trash Saturday, September 17 from 9 a.m. – noon. It's a way to do something good for wildlife habitat—and for the birds. A Mendocino Coast Audubon team, led by Art Morley, historically cleans north Ten Mile Beach. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Ten Mile River parking lot on the west side of Highway 1 just south of Ten Mile River. Interested in helping out at other beaches in the county? Contact the Land Trust at 707-962-0470 admin@mendocinolandtrust.org Land Trust staff members will coordinate cleanups along some 80 miles of shoreline and coastal watersheds.

WELCOME TO IANA PORTER, OUR NEW MCAS SECRETARY

Iana Porter was born in Victoria, BC, Canada and raised mostly on the Mendocino Coast. After high school, she studied film and liberal arts at Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA. For the past 20 years, Iana helped produce and write television documentaries, including nature and environmental programs such as National Geographic Channel's *Six Degrees Could Change the World* and *Moment of Impact* for PBS/Nature.



Recently, her enthusiasm for communication and learning has evolved into a desire to become an educator. She says she loves to meander through the forest on the Van Damme State Park trail near her home in Little River, where she lives with her husband and daughter. A bird enthusiast, Iana says she finds "the complex, beautiful world of birds a source of endless fascination. Catching sight of an Osprey hunting along our local beaches or rivers, wows me every time," she says.

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION TO SUSAN SMITH AND THE ESTATE OF JOAN CURRY

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society thanks Susan Smith and the Estate of Joan Curry for their gift of books about birds and birding. Joan was deeply interested in birds and enjoyed flora and fauna on world travels. We hope some day to exhibit these gifts in a coastal nature center teaching library. *Dave Jensen*

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS Daniela Aguirre and Kenly Reyes
LOCAL STUDENTS JOIN US ON A SUMMER SOS VIRGIN CREEK SURVEY



Fort Bragg students Daniela Aguirre (left) and Kenly Reyes B. Bowen Photo

Dr. Glenn Langer, former head of cardiology at UCLA Medical School, and his wife, Mariane, founded the non-profit Partnership Scholars Program in Southern California shortly after his retirement in the late 1990s. The program pairs adult mentors with economically disadvantaged, academically promising middle school students to guide them toward attending and graduating from a four year college or university. When the Langers moved to the Mendocino Coast, the program expanded to include Fort Bragg and Mendocino students. The program endeavors to expand their world with a broad range of cultural and educational experiences. In keeping with that principle, Becky Bowen accompanied SOS volunteer Jeanette Boyer and her two scholars, Daniela Aguirre and Kenly Reyes, on a shorebird survey August 10.

"The bird survey was great. It was an amazing experience. The first birds we saw were ducks; they were in a bunch. Then we saw a Peregrine Falcon, which is rare so I felt lucky. My favorite bird was the Black Oystercatcher because of its beautiful beak that was a bright orange color. I would definitely go again. I would like to thank Becky for coming with us and for the amazing experience." Daniela Aguirre

"My impression was great because I learned that there is more than just ducks at our shores. It was a very fun and interesting thing to do." Kenly Reyes

To learn more about Partnership Scholars Program, please visit www.partnershipscholarsprogram.org

Save Our Shorebirds in an on-going citizen science conservation program. To learn more, please contact SOS Chair Angela Liebenberg: liebenbergs@mcn.org. We currently are posting daily shorebird sightings during fall migration on facebook : www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

MENDOCINO COAST AUDUBON EDUCATION Sarah Grimes

YOUNG CAMPERS INCLUDE SHOREBIRDS IN MARINE SCIENCE ADVENTURE

Editor's Note: MCAS Education Chair Sarah Grimes also is Stranding Coordinator for marine mammals at Fort Bragg's Noyo Center for Marine Science. If you find a dead marine mammal on a local beach, please call Sarah at (707) 813-7925. She will inform the appropriate agencies. To report a live animal that is stranded, call The Marine Mammal Center (415) 289-7350.



Last year's Noyo Science Center's Coastin' It Camp participants get a decapod crustacean lesson from Alison Cebula, of State Parks.

Photograph by Sarah Grimes

The Noyo Center for Marine Science recently completed this year's "Coastin' It Camp" during which youths, ages 11-15 "escaped to their coast."

This three day marine-focused adventure included hiking 15 miles of coastal trails and immersing participants in marine science. The first 5 miles of the coastal hike were in Mackerricher State Park's Inglenook Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Preserve, where Western Snowy Plovers rest and nest. For that reason, special precautions were taken to avoid disturbing these shorebirds, that are classified as threatened on the federal Endangered Species List. Each hiker was loaned a pair of MCAS binoculars and introduced to the area and its fragile ecosystems by Alison Cebula, California State Parks Environmental Services Intern, who monitors Western Snowy Plovers in Macherricher and Manchester State Parks.

The walk along the wet sand was beautiful and hikers showed a great deal of respect towards Western Snowy Plovers and other resting shorebirds. Some of the migrating shorebirds that drop down to rest and refuel on Ten Mile Beach are on journeys that span two hemispheres.

This experience instills a sense of hope that future generations will connect with and development an understanding of places like Ten Mile Beach – and grow up to be thoughtful stewards of the earth.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW Donald Shephard

Violet-green Swallows, male left, female right. Photos by Alan Vernon

On April 18th this year, a richness of Violet-green Swallows returned to our patio. Last year for the first time, a pair raised five chicks in one of three nest boxes. Chestnut-backed Chickadees competed for a suitable site again this year and again the swallows fussed over where to nest until their smaller neighbors fledged their young. For a month, swallows swooped around our house, twittering in pairs, inspecting nest boxes, sconces and other nooks and crannies. By mid-May, two of the flock settled into a neighbor's house which is under construction. Two others moved into our nest box and the remainder scattered to the winds.

As with all nature observations, more questions arise than answers. Were our avian guests the same pair as last year? Were they one of the young and its mate? Absent any leg bands, it is impossible to identify individuals. These aerial insectivores zip through the air swooping and soaring, sometimes to great heights, making identification on the wing difficult. But what a splendid sight when they alight. Our male would stand sentinel on a pole guarding the nest against usurpers, his head and back a soft velvety green with a faint violet band at the nape and violet upper tail coverts. White extends from the cheek to above the eye, in contrast to the Tree Swallow, which has no white above the eye. The female shows similar markings but is duller above.

Violet-green swallows will usually arrive in their breeding area weeks prior to the start of reproduction. Copulation takes place mid-May and the female lays eggs by the start of June, followed by a couple of weeks of incubation before hatching. The average clutch size is five eggs, with females laying approximately one per day. During the weeks post-hatching, their parents feed the young as they slowly begin to grow their feathers.

This busy period fascinates me. At first one parent supplied a modest quantity of insects while the other tended the nest, sometimes sunbathing on a nearby fencepost. As the youngsters grew and their begging cheeps became constant, both parents swept the air over local gardens and grass fields in a never-ending search for food. Delivery took no more than ten seconds, the adult sticking its head into the nest box and immediately withdrawing. The only change in the routine came when an adult disappeared inside to retrieve and remove a fecal sac.

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In 2015, I watched as each of the juveniles fledged and managed to video the moment the last one left the nest, but no such luck this time. On July 6th, 2016, with the appearance of their first flight feathers, juveniles perched in the nest box hole and searched the sky for an incoming parent. Chicks have a yellow throat and white around the mouth as if a clown had daubed it with white lipstick. This gives the harried parent a target that is difficult to miss, although I saw several insects escape at the point of exchange. Once satiated by food the chick often fell backwards into the nest only to be replaced by the next sibling in line.

When fledging time arrives, a parent flies up to the begging chick, but does not feed it. After three or four dry runs, junior takes the hint and flies after its parent. That is it. No flight training. No first toddling steps. No teenage awkwardness with shifting gears. The only difference I spotted was that juveniles rest more frequently.

On the morning of July 17th, the parents zipped in and out feeding their young. When I came in from gardening at lunchtime, they had all left the coop. I spotted two adults and two juveniles flying around the nest leaving me wondering if there had been more chicks. I suspect so, but again questions outnumbered answers.

There are some indications that the brood this year was less than last year's five. The latest brood fledged quickly. The nest box swarmed with mites last year. These nasty ectoparasites did not bother the swallows this year suggesting less crowded conditions. I identified three or four different markings, but I am not sure whether they represented different chicks or various stages in their development, or both.



Violet-green Swallow male feeding chick.
Photo by Donald Shephard

Occasionally, I see young ones perched on a telephone wire, constantly calling to their parents who still feed them from time to time. Frequently one launches itself into the air to meet its parent and take its food while on the wing, an elegant performance from this dapper bird. Soon they will all group together on a wire before setting off for their winter sojourn in Mexico.

Watch for one of these handsome birds sitting on a post and heating their feathers to discourage mites or perhaps simply resting after the frenzy of rearing young in a nest box near you.

FIELD TRIPS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



Black-footed Albatross
Photograph by Ron LeValley

MCAS PELAGIC TRIP SET FOR SEPTEMBER 24

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society fall pelagic trip will be on Saturday, September 24, to view seabirds of the Noyo Canyon.

We will gather at the dock behind the Sea Pal Restaurant off North Harbor Drive at 7:45AM, departing on the *Telstar* at 8AM and returning to the dock around 1PM. Dave Jensen and Ron LeValley will help us find and identify some of the many seabirds that are rarely seen from shore, including Black-footed Albatross, Northern Fulmar, various species of Shearwater, Storm-petrels, Skuas, and Jaegers. Noyo Canyon is a submarine feature that brings deep-water species relatively close to shore, providing us the opportunity to get out and back in a half-day excursion.

Space is limited and reservations are required. Please contact Ron LeValley at 707-937-1742 or email ron@levalleyphoto.com and details, including cost, will be sent to you. *Tim Bray*

Your Invitation to Join Audubon California for the 2016 Assembly



Bridalveil Falls, Yosemite

Photograph by Shelly Prevost

Chapter leaders, members, and friends are invited to join Audubon California on November 4th through 6th at Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite for the 2016 Audubon Assembly.

This will be an opportunity for you to meet with chapter leaders, members, and partners from all over the state to enjoy birding the iconic sierra, explore conservation opportunities and practices, share stories with leaders from various regions, and establish peer-to-peer collaborations and partnerships. This program will offer multiple interactive presentations and breakout sessions that focus on topics from climate and energy to diversity and inclusion. The Friday night keynote speaker is David Sibley.

Please visit the Audubon California website at <http://ca.audubon.org/about/chapters/audubon-california-assembly> to register, reserve lodging, and see the agenda. Early bird registration before August 31 is \$75 per person. General registration starts September 1 (\$100 per person). Cost does not include lodging. If you have any questions, please email chapternetworkca@audubon.org. We hope to see you in Yosemite. *Audubon California Chapter Network*

THE CHAPTERS ARE COMING! THE CHAPTERS ARE COMING! SAVE THE DATE!

You are invited to attend the Northern California Council Meeting in Fort Bragg October 14-15. The Friday session will include an evening dinner. The Council Meeting will be held on Saturday after an early bird walk. Our chapter is hosting this event in partnership with Audubon California. These annual programs are meant to be an enjoyable and educational gathering that fosters connection between chapter leaders. Attendees get to know their regional peers, learn from one another, and share resources. All chapter members are welcome. Details will be in your October newsletter. *Dave Jensen*

CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

August 2016

Sunday 28 Coastal Trail Bird Walk [Coastal Trail](#) 10AM-Noon. Meet near restroom at east end of parking lot at foot of Elm Street, Fort Bragg, CA. Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

September 2016

Saturday 3 Beginner Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 9AM-Noon.* Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

Saturday 10 Field Trip Lake Cleone and Laguna Point, Mackerricher State Park. Woods around the lake are rich habitat for songbirds, and often attract unusual migrants. Migratory waterfowl rest and feed in the lake, and Bald Eagles have been seen there. Time permitting, we will proceed to the viewing platform at Laguna Point to look for birds of the rocky shore and oceanic migrants. 9AM-Noon. Meet at the Lake Cleone parking lot. Leader: MCAS Education Chair Sarah Grimes

Saturday 17 Coastal Clean Up Day www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/ccd.html (see story on page 3 of this newsletter) 9AM-Noon

Monday 19 Chapter Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar, CA 7PM
Program: Tim Manolis + Spiders (see story page 1 of this newsletter)

Wednesday 21 Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 8AM-Noon.* Leader: Tim Bray

Saturday 24 MCAS Pelagic Trip Aboard the *Telstar* (see story page 8 of this newsletter)
7:45 AM-1 PM Meet at dock behind Sea Pal Restaurant, Noyo Harbor. Space limited. Reservations required. Contact Ron LeValley at (707) 937-1742 or ron@levalleyphoto.com to reserve space and get cost of trip. Leaders: Ron LeValley, Dave Jensen.

Sunday 25 Coastal Trail Bird Walk [Coastal Trail](#) 10-Noon. Meet near restroom at east end of parking lot at foot of Elm Street, Fort Bragg. Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: David Jensen

Wednesday 28-October 2 [The Western Field Ornithologists 2016 Conference](#) Fortuna River Lodge Conference Center, Fortuna, CA

October 2016

Thursday 6 MCAS Board Meeting Contact Dave Jensen for time, location

**These walks are free, but there is an entry charge for participants who are not Garden members*
For complete calendar, updates, and useful links, visit: www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org
And please visit us on facebook: www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2015-2016

President	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	964-8163
VP, Field Trips	Tim Bray	tbray@mcn.org	937-4422
Secretary	Iana Porter	ianate@mcn.org	
Treasurer	Jim Havlena	havlenas@fix.net	964-1280
SOS, Conservation	Angela Liebenberg	liebenbergs@mcn.org	962-9267
Webmaster	Catherine Keegan	keegan@mcn.org	
Education	Sarah Grimes	zewa@mcn.org	
At-large	Terra Fuller	fullerterra@hotmail.com	964-4675
Off-board Chairs:			
Programs, Membership	Charlene McAllister	charmac@mcn.org	937-4463
Newsletter Editor	Becky Bowen	casparbeck@comcast.net	962-1602

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society e-mail address: 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

P.O. BOX 2297

FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

