



Photo by Ron LeValley

# The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Newsletter September 2017

ROBERT TIMM PRESENTS  
**THE COYOTE**  
**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18**  
**7 P.M.**  
**CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER**



Photo by Ron LeValley

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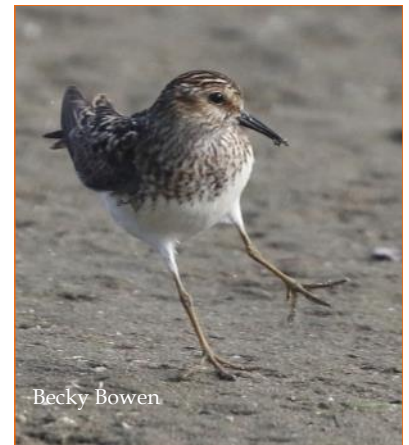
Robert Timm, retired director of UC Hopland Research & Extension Center and UC Cooperative Extension wildlife specialist, will open the 2017-2018 MCAS program series Monday, September 18 with a presentation on the coyote.

Dr. Timm will talk about the natural history of coyotes, coyote management and control methods, coyote conflicts with the livestock industry, the spread of coyotes throughout North America, the increase in "urban coyotes," and modern coyote management. His 27-year career with the University of California focused on wildlife management and providing science-based solutions to conflicts between humans and wildlife.

He earned a bachelor of science degree at the University of Redlands and a master's and Ph.D. in ecology at University of California at Davis.

## Inside This Issue

<i>President's Corner</i>	2
<i>By Dave Jensen</i>	
<i>CA Coastal Cleanup Day</i>	3
<i>Save Our Shorebirds</i>	4
<i>By Becky Bowen</i>	
<i>MCAS Fall Pelagic Trip</i>	5
<i>By Tim Bray</i>	
<i>Hawk Hill Expedition</i>	5
<i>By Haley Ross</i>	
<i>Birding Bytes</i>	6
<i>By P.C. MacTwitcher</i>	
<i>September/October MCAS Calendar</i>	7
<i>MCAS Board Of Directors</i>	8



Becky Bowen

Get a peek at some of the shorebirds (like this Least Sandpiper) we currently are seeing on Save Our Shorebirds summer surveys in MacKerricher State Park. Story p. 4.

**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.

First the bad news. This summer we continued our breeding surveys of Pelagic Cormorants. Like last year, 2017 proved to be a very tough year for this species. In my survey area (the Mendocino headlands along Heeser Drive) all the nests were abandoned, often only a few days after they were built. No chicks hatched. Ron LeValley's final project report is not due until October, but preliminary reports from other survey areas also are disappointing. Although we did not monitor the success of specific nests, Brandt's Cormorants, Common Murres, and Western Gulls along Heeser Drive similarly produced few chicks.

Are cormorants the canary of the coastline? Were the past two seasons a typical dip in the ebb and flow of nature's cycle, or are they a harbinger of more serious ecological problems? This question demonstrates the need for large-scale long-term studies and the coordination of citizen science efforts. Your board of directors, in conjunction with Audubon California and other coastal chapters, is working to harness the strength of the Audubon network, up and down the Pacific flyway, to monitor the health of our oceans, and improve our understanding of the dynamics that shape seabird populations.

Now for some better news. Your chapter's Save Our Shorebirds program is enjoying its eleventh successful year. Please read Becky Bowen's article in this newsletter for more details about this year's effort. At this summer's Audubon Convention in Park City, Utah, I had the honor to speak about this long-term project in two different sessions. I want you to understand that Becky and Angela Liebenberg and all the volunteers have created a program that is recognized as one of the finest citizen science projects in the nation. The work of this small chapter equals and often exceeds that of the largest and wealthiest on either coast, thanks to the tireless efforts of our volunteers. We should all be proud.

Chapter volunteers conducted another successful effort to monitor the reproductive success of Black Oystercatchers along our coast. This was the sixth consecutive year for this survey. Again, 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 are able to 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.

In May and early June we conducted another of our biennial breeding bird surveys at Point Cabrillo. What made this year's count so special was the participation of three students from

*Continued on Page 3*

*Continued from Page 2*

Mendocino High School's SONAR (School of Natural Resources) program. Think about it – three teenage boys, getting up in the dark on a school day, to hike through tall wet grass, before breakfast, to count sparrows, before they go to class. And then coming back to do it again. These successes don't just happen on their own. I want to give special thanks to our dedicated education team - Sarah Grimes, Pam Huntley, and Sue Coulter – for all the work they do in our schools.

In more good news, I want to welcome the new members of your chapter's board of directors. Nicolet Houtz and Haley Ross have joined us for the first time. Judy Steele and Adam Hutchins have agreed to rejoin the board. At the convention in Park City, there were several discussions about how to recruit new board members, especially younger board members. Many chapters struggle with succession and sustainability. I am so grateful and proud to be part of this vibrant organization.

I will close by saying that in the coming year, we at Mendocino Coast Audubon will rededicate ourselves to do what we can to help make a difference. We will keep the passion for birds alive in our members and expand that interest in the community by offering educational and enjoyable programs and field trips. We will help our neighbors realize what we all have learned: it is fun to watch the birds, even more fun when you know their names and understand how they live. We will continue to raise the next generation of birders through educational programs in local schools. We will help young people realize what we already learned: it is fun to be outdoors and part of nature. And we will do what we can to protect those species that are struggling to survive along our coast. We help decision-makers at all levels learn what we already have learned: birds matter. So welcome back for another year with Mendocino Coast Audubon.



Our beaches and watersheds need help. Please join us on September 16. This state-wide effort is organized by the California Coastal Commission and coordinated locally by the Mendocino Land Trust. Bring work gloves, water, and a garbage receptacle. To learn more, contact the land trust at <http://mendocinolandtrust.org> or call 707 962-0470. Above photo taken on Ten Mile Beach where Art Morley leads many Audubon volunteers on this yearly event.

## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen

**THE WESTERNS ARE COMING! THE WESTERNS ARE COMING!  
AND THE PLOVERS AND SANDPIPERS AND TATTLERS, TOO!**



Western Sandpipers in foreground July 15, 2017



Virginia Rail June 29, 2017

Shorebirds are migrating along local beaches and now is the perfect time to get a good look at them.

Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing Mendocino Coast Audubon Society citizen science project in partnership with State Parks. Volunteers count birds along the entire coastline of MacKerricher State Park and make data available to schools, agencies, and researchers at no charge.

We will keep posting bird-of-the-day photos of what surveyors are seeing until the first fall Dunlins arrive.

[www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)



Ruddy Turnstones and Black-bellied Plover July 29, 2017

Photos by Becky Bowen, all taken in MacKerricher State Park

## MCAS FIELD TRIPS SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 2017

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2017

**PELAGIC TRIP** – The marine ecosystem off the Mendocino coast is one of the wonders of the world, concentrating a large number and variety of species into a relatively small area, reachable with a short boat ride. Pelagic birding is an exciting adventure - you never know what might show up out there! David 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, etc. We will be on the fastest charter boat in Noyo Harbor, so we can get to the birds quickly and spend the maximum time off-shore.

Cost is \$65 per person (less than half what most pelagic trips cost). Reservations are required. Contact David Jensen, (707) 964-8163 or [djensen@mcn.org](mailto:djensen@mcn.org) to get details and reserve your spot. We will meet at 7:30 AM and return to the dock around 1 PM.

**Tim Bray**



*Flesh-footed Shearwater, 2012 MCAS Pelagic Trip out of Noyo Harbor. Photo by Ron LeValley*

### MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2017 HAWK

**HILL EXPEDITION** – Battery Point on the Marin Headlands is one of the premier hawk-watching sites in North America. Every fall, tens of thousands of raptors fly past this spot, many at eye level.

It's a spectacle every West Coast birder should experience, and we're going to make it easy for you by arranging transportation down and back in one day. Space is limited, so reservations are required. Contact Hayley Ross, [hayleyhross@gmail.com](mailto:hayleyhross@gmail.com) to reserve your seat.

**Haley Ross**



*Red-tailed Hawk, Hawk Hill, 2012. Photo by Ron LeValley*

**Please Hold these dates for our Audubon Christmas Bird Counts:  
Saturday, December 30, 2017 Fort Bragg Circle  
Tuesday, January 2, 2018 Manchester Circle**

**BIRD BYTES****P.C. MacTwitcher**

My name is P.C. MacTwitcher and I want to welcome you to Bird Bytes – a new feature of this fine publication dedicated to exploring the brave new world of twenty-first century birding. In our busy lives, few of us stop to appreciate how rapidly the world of birding has changed. A few years ago I studied ornithology from a professor who had collected birds with a shotgun ala J.J. Audubon. My first field guide was illustrated by a set of color plates located in the middle of the book. As my interest in birding increased, I would call a recorded phone message each Tuesday to learn what unusual sightings had been reported the previous week.



In one of the great ironies of this or any time, the concurrent rise in popularity of two seemingly conflicting activities – the outdoor pursuit of birdwatching and the indoor pursuit of websurfing – has created a new and gratifying activity – online birding. Online birding is not a substitute for going out into the field, but rather helps improve your birding skills and increase your appreciation of the natural world.

In future articles we will explore topics such as birding apps, on-line education resources, bird blogs, webcams, sound libraries, out-of-town birding buddies (guides), and, of course, how to use e-bird. Given the pace in which things are changing, we may even talk about things that haven't been invented yet.

For now, let's start with a few local resources that some of you may already know. Your chapter has a website that provides lots of good local information. At [mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org) you will find a wealth of information, including a schedule of field trips and programs, copies of new and old newsletters, educational opportunities, reports from citizen science projects, and a description of local birding spots. There is also a link to join or renew your membership online with PayPal.

Your chapter also has an active Facebook page. If you do not already follow the page, simply go to Facebook and search for Mendocino Coast Audubon. There you will find more information about chapter activities as well as photos links to other interesting bird-related articles.

The Save Our Shorebirds project also has an active Facebook page that you will enjoy. Again, simply go to Facebook and search for Save Our Shorebirds. During the peak survey season you will find daily reports and high quality photos of our local shorebirds. This site is educational and inspiring.

Finally, I hope that you all know about Mendobirds, the best place to learn of and share unusual bird observations. Mendobirds is a Yahoo group that was established in February of 2001. You can join the group by going to [mendobirds-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:mendobirds-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). I receive an email notification whenever an observation is posted. This is an efficient way to stay informed of unusual sightings in our area. You can also search the Mendobirds Yahoogroup site for historical information. For instance, if you click on Search Conversations and enter a species name, such as Crested Caracara, you will see all reported reports for or about that species.

That's a good start – chapter website, the chapter Facebook page, the Save Our Shorebirds Facebook page, and Mendobirds. Those four will keep you informed and inspired on the local level. Next month we will expand our horizons. Until then, happy birding and keep on clickin'.

## CALENDAR

### September 2017

**Saturday 2 Beginner Bird Walk** [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 9AM-Noon\* Leader: Dave Jensen

**Saturday 16 California Coastal Cleanup Day**, Sponsored by California Coastal Commission 9AM-Noon. Local program coordinated by Mendocino Land Trust To learn more, please call the land trust at 707 962-0470 or visit the Mendocino Land Trust website. Each volunteer picks up trash at a site of his/her choice. Bring work gloves, water, and a small garbage receptacle (bucket or bag).

**Saturday 16 MCAS Half-day Pelagic Trip out of Noyo Harbor** 7:30AM-1PM  
Cost is \$65 per person. Reservations required.  
Contact Dave Jensen, (707) 964-8163 or [djensen@mcn.org](mailto:djensen@mcn.org)

**Monday 18 Meeting - Caspar Community Center** 7PM  
Speaker: Robert Timm. Subject: Coyotes (see story, Page 1)

**Wednesday 20 Bird Walk** [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 8AM-Noon\* Leader: Tim Bray

**Sunday 24 Coastal Trail Bird Walk - North Coastal Trail, Fort Bragg** 10-AM-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, rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

### October 2017

**Saturday 7 Beginner Bird Walk** [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 9AM-Noon\* Leader: Dave Jensen

**Monday 9 Field Expedition to Hawk Hill, Marin Headlands** To learn more and reserve transportation, contact Hayley Ross, [hayleyhross@gmail.com](mailto:hayleyhross@gmail.com)

**Monday 16 Meeting - Caspar Community Center** 7PM  
Speaker: **George Wuerthner**, photographer and author of more than two dozen books on natural history. Subject: Healthy Forests.

**Wednesday 18 Bird Walk** [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 95437 8AM-Noon\* Leader: Tim Bray

**Sunday 22 Coastal Trail Bird Walk - North Coastal Trail, Fort Bragg** 10AM-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, rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

*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: <http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org/>  
And please visit us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon/>

## MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2016-2017

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Off-board Chairs:			
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Newsletter Editor			

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

P.O. BOX 2297

FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

