

# The Black Oystercatcher

Photograph by Ron LeValley

*Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter November-December 2015*

**GEORGE REINHARDT AND MICHAEL GRADY  
DAYLIGHTING FORT BRAGG CREEKS FOR WILDLIFE  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2015  
7 P.M.  
CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER**



*Great Blue Heron-Photograph by Ron LeValley*

Preserving and protecting small streams is the best approach to ensure such environmental and community benefits as clean water and flood reduction. In urbanized areas, however, where small, headwater streams often are buried, hidden, and forgotten, protecting headwater streams

is not possible. Stream daylighting is a relatively new approach that brings these buried waterways back to life by physically uncovering and restoring them. Daylighting is a technique which assists communities in diminishing polluted runoff and reducing flash floods.

George Reinhardt and Michael Grady, representing the Noyo Headlands Unified Design Group, will show us how creeks once ran to the sea through Fort Bragg. Learn where they are and what are the plans for daylighting them.

The Noyo Headlands Unified Design Group is affiliated with the non-profit Coastal Land Trust according to its website. The design group encourages community members to participate in discussions about planning sustainable development of the Georgia Pacific mill site in Fort Bragg after the site is sold.

**ANNUAL MCAS  
CHRISTMAS BIRD  
COUNT  
SLIDESHOW**

**MONDAY,  
DECEMBER 14, 2015  
7 P.M.**

**CASPAR  
COMMUNITY  
CENTER**

**PLEASE JOIN US  
TO PREPARE  
FOR BOTH OF OUR  
FAMOUS, FABULOUS  
CHRISTMAS BIRD  
COUNTS**

**FORT BRAGG CBC  
LEADER: TIM BRAY  
SUN., DEC. 27, 2015**

**MANCHESTER CBC  
LEADER: DAVE JENSEN  
SAT., JAN. 2, 2016**



*Photograph by Ron LeValley*

**FORT BRAGG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT\*****Tim Bray***Baltimore Oriole, David Brezinski, USFWS*

On the first "official" Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Count, a visiting birder found the first Baltimore Oriole ever recorded in Mendocino County. We don't set records like that every year, but we do find rare or unusual birds on every Count, as a consequence of

the intensive day-long effort. Even in terrible conditions (like last year) oddities like Swamp Sparrow and Eurasian Wigeon can be found, as well as the more-or-less-expected rarities like Rock Sandpiper and Bullock's Oriole.

The more we look, the more we see, and more looking happens on the CBC than any other day of the year. Usually, around 70 people take part in the Fort Bragg Count. Some of them spend more than twelve hours in the field, starting with predawn "owling" and ending only when darkness or hunger drive them to the Count Dinner. Others just loaf around at home, counting birds at their feeders for an hour or so. All that looking adds up to a massive tally, averaging around 15,000 individual birds counted, and an impressive list of 193 species identified over the five years we have run this Count.

There is nothing else like this event. Those who participate know the feeling of camaraderie that comes from shared experience in a worthwhile effort. The Christmas Bird Count is the longest-running citizen science project in the world, and it provides a hugely important pool of data for researchers studying the ongoing status and ranges of bird populations across the Americas. Nevertheless, the real reason why tens of thousands of people spend a winter's day outside counting birds is simply because the experience itself is so rewarding. (As Richard Feynman said about physics, "[It] is like sex: sure, it may give some practical results, but that's not why we do it.")

Many means of locomotion are employed on this Count. Just in the Fort Bragg circle, we have teams that go out by kayak, bicycle, boat, car, and on foot, as well as the feeder-watchers who stay at home. Most of them converge on the Count Dinner as the daylight wanes, enjoying a hot meal and refreshing adult beverages while tallying up the results. This is always an exciting moment, as the compiler shouts out names of birds and the area leaders respond with cries of "Yes," eliciting murmurs of appreciation or outright cheering for particularly hard-to-find birds. The general merriment is occasionally punctuated by poignant silence, when one of the expected species has escaped detection. The big moment comes at the end, as the total species tally is announced. Will we break the coveted 150-species mark? Maybe - if you help!

To sign up or find out more about the Fort Bragg Count, contact the compiler: [tbray@mcn.org](mailto:tbray@mcn.org) or call 937-4422. Birders of all experience levels are welcome. We have teams led by experts who are happy to have extra eyes, and every team needs someone to keep track of the counts.

**\*Coming in the next issue: Dave Jensen's stories about the Manchester Christmas Bird Count**

*Tim Bray, Victoria Rideneur on the Skunk Train tracks in the rain, Fort Bragg CBC, December, 2012-Catherine Keegan photo*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

**Dave Jensen**



As chapter president, I receive many calls asking for information and assistance. By a wide margin, most callers report that they have found an injured bird and want to know where to send it for care. With several feeders in my backyard, I have personally cared for many birds that have collided with a window. It is an unfortunate fact of life that if you are a birdwatcher, you will eventually find an injured bird.

Most injuries result from collisions. This is true all year, but especially in the fall when many birds arrive at their winter residence for the first time. If you see or hear a bird collide with a window, quickly check to see if it has fallen to the ground. Immediately keep your dog or cat away from the injured bird. A stunned bird should be picked up carefully and held upright to help it breathe.

Firmly cradle it in your hands, but do not squeeze it tightly. Often the bird will recover quickly, within one or two minutes. Keep the bird secure and shelter its eyes from direct sunlight, watching for the return of alertness. When the bird seems to regain focus, open your hands so it can fly, but do not toss it into the air.

Some collisions require a longer recovery period. If the bird does not quickly recover, place it in a box lined with a soft cotton cloth or paper towel, close the lid and make some airholes in it, and place the box in a dark, quiet, safe place. Do not place food or water in the box. After an hour or two, take the box to an open area facing trees, brush or other suitable habitat, and open the lid. If the bird still cannot fly, you will need to call a professional.

Broken wings or bleeding wounds are often fatal, especially for smaller birds. Successful rescue and rehabilitation in such cases are difficult even for larger breeds such as hawks and owls. If you have a bird with a broken (drooping) wing or a bleeding wound, call a veterinary or rescue center immediately.

Sick birds present a different challenge. Wild birds are subject to many diseases, such as conjunctivitis (swollen eyes), avian pox (wart-like growths on featherless parts) or avian cholera, which can kill great numbers of ducks and other waterfowl. Many winters I find sick Pine Siskins in my yard. They typically are lethargic and unresponsive, often standing in corners and unable to fly. Unfortunately there is little to do for these poor birds. I carefully place them in a lined box and put them in a warm, dark, quiet place to let them die in peace. Many bird diseases are spread at feeders, so carefully clean your feeders with soap and disinfectant, especially if you find sick birds near your home.

It can be difficult to find someone to assist with an injured bird. We live in a remote area with limited access to such resources, and those that are available are underfunded and short staffed. There is a link to a directory of Mendocino coast animal welfare resources on the chapter website and at [www.mendocoastanimals.com](http://www.mendocoastanimals.com). That site tells you where you can get help for injured birds, wild animals and sea mammals. It also lists Mendocino Coast animal welfare organizations, describes the services they offer, and provides contact information.

I'm no Boy Scout, but I believe that we should all be prepared, not just for fires and earthquakes, but also for the everyday dramas in life such as finding an injured bird. Remember to use appropriate caution, especially when dealing with injured raptors or distressed mammals.

## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen



*This feisty female Western Snowy Plover appears to be observing the "Ten" celebration on Ten Mile Beach by going ten rounds with a competitor for a coveted footprint. Plovers often get into dustups over footprints that provide warm roosting spots. Competition is fierce, but spats last only about a tenth of a second.*

### CELEBRATING 10 YEARS AT TEN MILE BEACH

When we were asked to create a shorebird photo exhibit at Fort Bragg's C.V. Starr Community Center, we needed a show title. We picked "Ten," and here's why:

◆ In 2016, MCAS Save Our Shorebirds will complete ten years of citizen science bird surveys. Volunteers conduct bird censuses on the entire 15.7-kilometer coast of Mackerricher State Park – from

Glass Beach north to Ten Mile River. More than 450,000 birds have been counted in the year-round program under the guidance of biologists at California State Parks, our program partner.

◆ On October 1, surveyors recorded the return of OR:RO, a banded Western Snowy Plover that has come back to Ten Mile Beach for the tenth winter in a row. Her return to the beach makes her a star bird in the Western Snowy Plover recovery program. The Western Snowy Plover is classified as threatened on the federal Endangered Species List.

◆ Ten Mile Beach is part of the 1285-acre Inglenook Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Natural Preserve. The beach is part of the California Coastal Trail where people can enjoy and appreciate wildlife at the water's edge. For shorebirds, it's a home and a refuge for migrators. For both humans and wildlife, it's special.

Audubon's Anne Harvey, who works on SOS outreach and education, is coordinating an exhibit of ten photos of the more than 30 shorebird species monitored by SOS volunteers on Ten Mile Beach. The free exhibit will be in the main hall of Fort Bragg's C.V. Starr Community Center beginning in December. "I've always liked birds, but after spending the summer out at Ten Mile, those feelings are stronger. Infatuation? Love? Only time will tell," Anne says.

For information and updates, please visit us at [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)

*Save Our Shorebirds is an on-going long term Mendocino Coast Audubon citizen science program in partnership with California State Parks. Volunteers survey Mackerricher State Park beaches on foot and record bird numbers. Public outreach and education is an important part of our shorebird protection mission. To participate, please contact Angela M. Liebenberg, Save Our Shorebirds Chair on the MCAS Board of Directors at [liebenbergs@mcn.org](mailto:liebenbergs@mcn.org)*

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



Virgin Creek, Mackerricher State Park Becky Bowen Photo

### **CANADA GOOSE, PART 2**

This is the second of two essays about the Canada Goose.

We described Canada Geese as easily recognizable by long black necks and white chinstraps. But it's important to look closely, because there is more to the identification. There are at least six subspecies of Canada Geese. The Giant Canada Goose, for instance, weighs 24 pounds, is 4 feet tall, and has a wingspan of 6 feet. On the other hand, the Cackling Goose is 2 feet tall with a shorter neck and much smaller beak. The average weight is 3 or 4 lbs. The smallest Canada Geese nest farthest north in the Arctic; the largest nest farthest south.

The Giant Canada Goose was thought to be extinct for decades before being sighted in Minnesota. The geese were introduced in Canada for hunting, but the project backfired because geese left hunting the grounds to forage on preferred well-tended lawns in residential areas where hunting wasn't allowed.

"Resident" Canada Geese do not migrate. Some have become a nuisance in urban areas. Males aggressively defend breeding territories; also excessive goose droppings are unwelcome on lawns, sidewalks and ponds. The number of resident geese has increased dramatically. They once were only 18% of the Canada Geese population; now they are more than 67%.

Controversy over management of resident geese continues. Some people form groups to save them while others propose limiting the resident goose population.

The small migratory Aleutian subspecies winters in California's Central Valley. They were threatened with extinction after furriers released foxes on the breeding grounds in the Aleutian Islands. They have been successfully protected and were removed from the endangered species list in 2001.

**ROCK DOVE****Donald Shephard****Rock Dove Photo by George McNeil**

Almost all islands and rocks along our coast constitute the California Coastal National Monument. One such rock on the south side of Frolic Cove, opposite the grave site of the eponymous ship, harbors the nests of three species – Western Gull, Black Oystercatcher, and Rock Dove. You may know the latter species as Rock Pigeon or Feral Pigeon because the North American Classification Committee of the American Ornithological Union has waffled on the subject in recent years. Not that it matters a jot to our birds, billing and cooing on a Frolic Cove rock.

You must forgive me if I consider the local species as identical to the Rock Doves nesting on the White Cliffs of Dover. They share the same binomial – *Columba livia*. True Rock Doves nest on cliffs in Europe where natives domesticated them thousands of years ago. Europeans introduced them to North America whereupon they escaped domestication (rather like my three sons) and became the familiar city-dwelling pigeon. Although four distinct plumage

variants developed, local birds nesting on our bluffs have reverted to type.

We must not judge negatively the avid birder who ignores this feral immigrant. Take a closer look and you will see a gray body, dark blue-gray head, neck, breast, with glossy yellowish, greenish, and reddish-purple iridescence along its neck and wing feathers. The white rump serves as a species indicator. Two black bars grace the wings and a dark terminal band highlights the gray rounded tail. Note the orange, red or golden iris with a paler inner ring, and the bluish-gray skin around the eye. Observe pink or red legs.

Natural predators include Peregrine Falcons, opossums, raccoons, Red-tailed Hawks, Great Horned Owls, and everyone's least favorite, Common Ravens. Man hunts them for food in their native lands. They also came under fire during both World Wars. Carrier pigeons played significant roles during wartime, with many birds receiving bravery awards and medals for their services in saving hundreds of human lives.

The most notable example of pigeon courage occurred at the battle for Verdun in France in

## Donald Shephard

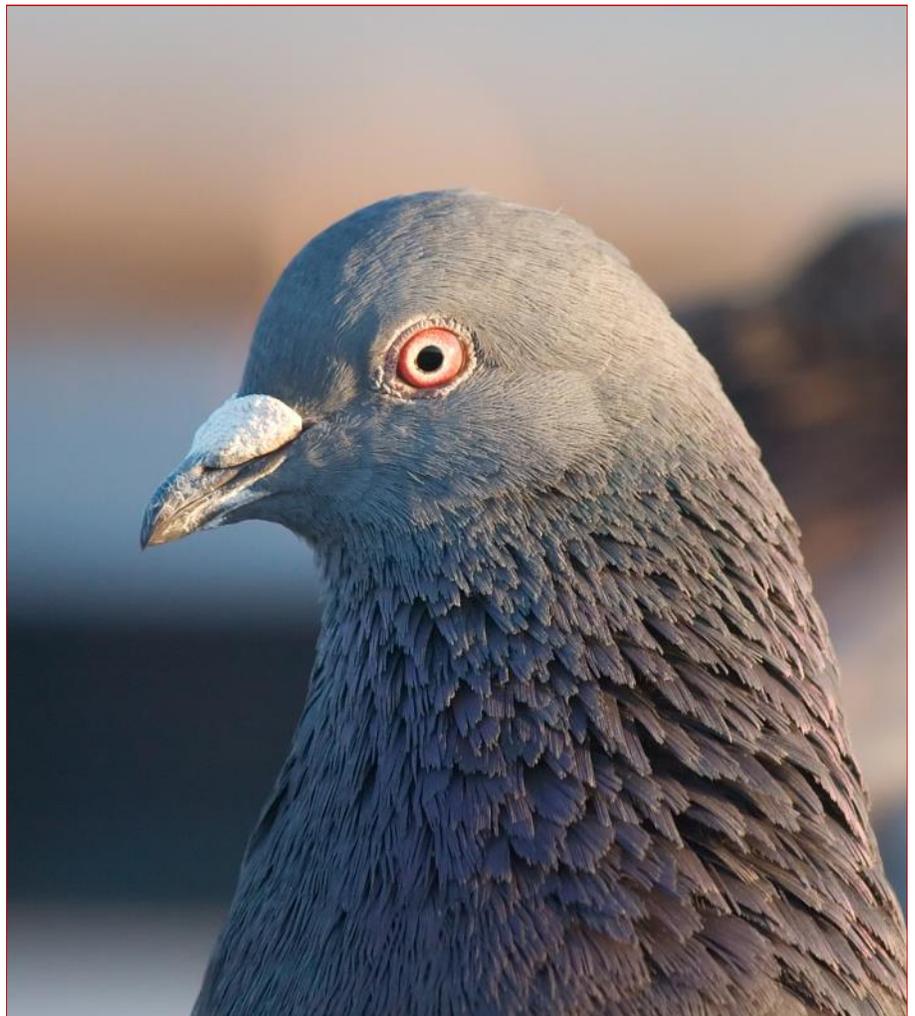
World War I ("the war to end all wars" that did not.) A British pigeon named *Cher Ami* earned the unenviable task of flying a message for 194 Americans trapped behind enemy lines with little ammunition, or supplies. The men faced slaughter. Distraught soldiers witnessed two previous carrier pigeons shot from the sky. Indeed, a sniper shot at *Cher Ami* leaving only a tendon attached to the thigh to which the message strapped. A bullet blinded one eye. Yet *Cher Ami* delivered the message to headquarters before he died. Reinforcements rescued the trapped men.

French General Petain awarded the Croix de Guerre to the dead British carrier pigeon for saving American soldiers. *Cher Ami*, who certainly no longer cared, was stuffed and acquired by the Smithsonian Institute. I cannot fathom the purpose of any of these incongruous actions.

In World War II, *G.I. Joe*, a bird in the United States Army Pigeon Service, flew twenty miles in as many minutes delivering a message that prevented the slaughter of more than one hundred men by "friendly fire." He became

the twenty-fifth of thirty-eight pigeons to receive the Dickin Medal for bravery in that war. Maria Dickin, founder of the U.K. charity People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, created this quintessentially English award specifically for animals. In addition to thirty-eight pigeons, other recipients of the Dickin Medal include twenty-nine dogs, four horses and one cat. I wonder what to conclude from all this nonsense. Does it indicate the relative courage of birds, dogs, horses and cats? Does it illustrate the inane vagaries of war? Or is it yet another indicator for the eccentricity gene in the English?

No doubt the Rock Pigeons at Frolic Cove care not at all about these questions. Next time you walk along the bluffs and your binoculars focus on one of these brave birds, pause for a while and consider its beauty here on the peaceful northern California coast.



**A distinctive operculum is located on top of the beak  
"Pigeon portrait 4861" by Dori - Own Work**

## WILDLIFE HOT SPOT BUZZ

## Reader's Corner



Becky Bowen Photo

## Heigh-ho, Odonatin' We Will Go

The best birdwatchers start with a passion for birds that expands to every aspect of wildlife behavior. Which animals are bird predators? Do birds sleep in flight? Do birds have taste buds? And speaking of taste buds, what do birds eat?

Insects are on the menu. The quest for knowledge led us on a memorable June 13, 2013 MCAS local field trip (booked by Program Chair Charlene McAllister) to find dragonflies and damselflies with field biologist, artist and author Dr. Tim Manolis.

It turns out we are not alone in our quest for knowledge about insects. On a trip to New Mexico, a short hike at the Randall Davey Audubon Center and Sanctuary in Santa Fe introduced us to the Eight-spotted Skimmer pictured above and identified by a sanctuary naturalist. We learned the perfect dragon/damselfly experience may be had at the annual fall Dragonfly Festival at Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge on the Pecos River, a biologically significant wetlands and a place to expand a life list of Odonates (Order *Odonata*). According to USFWS, more than 100 species of dragonflies and damselflies have been documented at the refuge, constituting one of the most diverse Odonate populations of North America. Information is at [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Bitter\\_Lake/about.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Bitter_Lake/about.html)

Please let us know about your favorite wildlife "hotspot" – local, national or international. Drop Becky Bowen a note at [casparbeck@comcast.net](mailto:casparbeck@comcast.net) and we'll share your story.

### **Mendocino Coast Audubon Society**

P.O. Box 2297 • Fort Bragg • CA 95437

[audubon@mcn.org](mailto:audubon@mcn.org) [www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

#### **IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME**

The basic membership dues cover the cost of your subscription to the *Black Oystercatcher*. Please consider joining or renewing at a higher level to support the important environmental education and conservation projects critical to the protection of wildlife and the environment. *Note: Membership in Mendocino Coast Audubon does not make you a member of National Audubon and joining NAS does not include membership in MCAS.*

I am a new member       I am a renewing member  
 Basic membership \$25.00       Low Income/Student \$15.00  
 Family \$30.00      \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Deductible Contribution Amount

Please make your check payable to **Mendocino Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) and mail to P.O. Box 2297, Fort Bragg, CA 95437**. If you wish to pay by credit card, you may use the Pay Pal button on the web site [www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**OUR MEMBERSHIP YEAR IS JULY 1- JUNE 30. IF YOU HAVEN'T RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2015-2016, PLEASE RENEW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO AVOID BEING DROPPED FROM THE MEMBERSHIP LIST.**

## CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

### November, 2015

**Saturday 7 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 14 Field Trip** South Coast Raptor Trip 9AM-Late Afternoon Meet at the Navarro Beach turnout on Highway 1. Carpooling required. Bring lunch, water. Wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

**Monday 16 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar, CA 7PM  
Speakers Michael Grady and George Reinhardt, Noyo Headlands Unified Design Group ([NHUDG](#))  
Topic: Daylighting Creeks for Wildlife in Fort Bragg

**Wednesday 18 Bird Walk** [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#)\* 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 8:30AM-Noon **Note Time Change** Leader: Tim Bray

**Thursday-Sunday 19-22** 19th Annual Central Valley Birding Symposium-Stockton, CA  
<http://www.cvbsreg.org>

### December 2015

**Saturday 5 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

**Thursday 10** MCAS Board Meeting tentative—Contact D. Jensen for time and place

**Saturday 12 Field Trip** CBC Tune-up at [Rose Memorial Cemetery](#) 9AM-Noon Leader: Tim Bray

**Monday 14 Meeting** [Caspar Community Center](#) 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar, CA 7PM  
The Annual Christmas Bird Count Slideshow **Note Date Change from the 21st**

**Wednesday 16 Bird Walk** [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#)\* 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 8:30AM-Noon Leader: Tim Bray

**Saturday 19** [Ukiah Christmas Bird Count](#)

**Sunday 27** [Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Count](#) Coordinator: Tim Bray (please see story, page 2)

### January, 2016

**Saturday 2** [Manchester Christmas Bird Count](#) Coordinator 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: [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 2015-2016

President	David Jensen	964-8163	djensen@mcn.org
VP, Field Trips	Tim Bray	937-4422	tbray@mcn.org
Secretary	Diane Rubin	(413) 658-7105	dianerubin12@gmail.com
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SOS, Conservation	Angela Liebenberg	962-9267	liebenbergs@mcn.org
Webmaster	Catherine Keegan	937-4422	keegan@mcn.org
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Off-board Chairs:			
Programs	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@mcn.org
Newsletter	Becky Bowen	962-1602	casparbeck@comcast.net

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

