



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter, December, 2013

Monday, December 16, 2013

7 P.M

**Caspar Community Center
MCAS Christmas Bird Counts
Tim Bray and Dave Jensen**



From left: Nature, Tim Bray, Chris Bing on 2012 Bird Count, Elk Beach. Above right: Dave Jensen. Staff Photos

Jensen, local count leaders, will briefly discuss the fascinating history of the counts, and show how you can participate, even if you don't leave your house. They will describe a few "target species" (birds that are either rare or easily overlooked) and offer tips to find and identify them by sight or sound. Whether or not you join in the Count, this will be a fun and informative presentation.

The birding event of the season is just around the corner, so it's time to get ready: Christmas Bird Counts are coming to a territory near you.

On the evening of December 16, Tim Bray and Dave

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Photo by Ginny Wade

Point Arena hosted a celebration in November when U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell came to visit and talk with the community about proposed inclusion of the Stornetta Public Lands in the California Coastal National Monument. Read about the MCAS connection with this property on Pages 2 and 3.

To download MCAS Stornetta Public Lands bird list prepared by Dorothy Tobkin and Richard Kuehn on Earth Day, April 22, 2007, click on:

www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/ukiah.Par.31444.File.dat/Mendocino%20County%20Coastal%20Birds.pdf

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Joleen Ossello

Approach with me, if you will, the edge of a continent. As we stand on a windswept bluff, we feel minute. A state of meditation overcomes us as we gaze into ocean waters. A light and consistent coolness brushes our faces as warmth cleanses our minds, bodies, and souls.

We anticipate many generations will have the opportunity to experience this feeling at the Stornetta Public Lands on the south Mendocino Coast. For the past decade, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has worked with many organizations, including the Trust for Public Land, the Conservation Lands Foundation, California Natural Resources Agency, California Coastal Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Mendocino Coast Audubon Society plus private land owners, to preserve the coastal bluffs and meadows of the Stornetta and Point Arena properties.



MCAS President Joleen Ossello speaks in support of including Stornetta Public Lands in the CCNM Nov. 8 at Point Arena City Hall. To her right, U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, Rep. Jared Huffman, National BLM Director Neil Kornze and CA BLM Director Jim Kenna. Staff Photos

U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell recently accepted an invitation by Rep. Jared Huffman to explore the 1200-acre Stornetta Public Lands – proposed as the first mainland extension to the California Coast National Monument. Inclusion of this land in the national monument would permanently protect and preserve it as well as provide for additional stewardship funding.

Secretary Jewell was accompanied by national, state, and regional BLM directors, public officials, and conservationists on a hike through the property, where she saw huckleberries and breaching humpback whales. “Today I had a chance to hike this spectacular coastline and to see first-hand how important this area is for the community and for its economy – from tourism to outdoor recreation,” she said.



More than 300 community members (including a dozen MCAS members) attended an afternoon public meeting. They eagerly supported requesting that President Obama, under the Antiquities Act, approve the national monument designation immediately. Secretary Jewel said, “We have an opportunity here not only to support the community’s vision to conserve this land, but also to create a world-class destination for outdoor recreation and the study of coastal resources, and to strengthen the local economies.”

Thank you Congressman Huffman for introducing the legislation, approved by the House, to expand the national monument onto this extraordinary part of the mainland. We thank Secretary Jewel, for her attention to our community and her commitment to conservation. We also thank community members for their overwhelming support, their compassion for the earth, and for their mission to preserve this land for future generations.

THE MCAS CONNECTION TO STORNETTA LANDS Ginny Wade

On Nov. 8, 2013, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell came to Point Arena to learn first-hand about the Stornetta Public Lands. Congressman Jared Huffman, our Representative, had spear-headed a drive to add this land to the California Coastal National Monument. In this time of political deadlock, Rep. Huffman obtained House passage of a bill to make this possible. The legislation designates Stornetta as the first on-shore parcel in a national monument that includes more than 22,000 rocks that lie above mean high tide level off the coast of California.



Secretary Jewell hiked the Stornetta lands in the morning. That afternoon, Mendocino Land Trust Executive Director Ann Cole coordinated a public comment meeting at Point Arena City Hall. Secretary Jewell clearly enjoyed the Pomo Indian presentation that opened the meeting, especially the children, who danced and sang to celebrate the land of their forbearers.

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society has been involved with the protection of this land from the day it came up for sale, in 2001. When two of the owners of the Stornetta Brothers' Coastal Ranch expressed interest in conserving the land, their realtor, Kevin Knowles, of the Conservation

Land Group, contacted MCAS. MCAS has a long history of involvement in the area as we sponsor an annual south coast birding field trip, hold our April chapter meeting in Gualala, and coordinate the Manchester Christmas Bird Count. On receiving the call from Mr. Knowles, MCAS officers Warren Wade and myself, recognized the importance of preserving this land and offered to garner public support. Louise Mariana, our Conservation Chair, set out to involve the community. She spent countless hours at the post office and at meetings, encouraging locals to send letters. MCAS members also supported the purchase by conducting bird surveys of the Stornetta property. Dorothy Tobkin provided information about diverse habitats of the property. Louise's efforts allowed Sam Schuchat, Executive



U.S. Interior Sec. Sally Jewell (top), Rep. Jared Huffman, members of Pomo tribe at the opening of the public comment meeting Nov. 8 at Point Arena City Hall.

Photos by B. Bowen

Director of the California Coastal Conservancy, to point to a "stack" of support letters (most of the 350 letters came from our coastal communities) when the agency met to commit \$6.4 million to purchase the land. Other major supporters were US Fish and Wildlife Service at \$1 million, Wildlife Conservation Board, and The Nature Conservancy. MCAS joined in the purchase by donating \$1000, a significant part of our total assets at that time. When the purchase was finalized, responsibility for managing the property was given to the Bureau of Land Management. After completion of the purchase on May 14, 2005, participating agencies and organizations held a dedication, and MCAS was listed as a Partner in the Stornetta Public Lands.

Secretary Jewell promised to put approval of the national monument designation on the fast track by taking the proposal directly to President Obama for his approval, under presidential powers granted by the National Antiquities Act.

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS Becky Bowen

HONORING OUR MISSION OF HABITAT RESTORATION AT TEN MILE



53 Western Snowy Plovers were recorded at Ten Mile Beach on the November 9 SOS survey *B. Bowen Photo*

Seventeen years of planning and research are finished and California State Parks is ready to begin habitat restoration of Inglewood Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Preserve in the north portion of Mackerricher State Park (north of Ward Avenue). Save Our Shorebirds supports this project, primarily because it will benefit migrating birds as well as year-round and seasonal shorebird residents on Ten Mile Beach – especially Western Snowy Plovers.

Here's what the restoration will mean for wildlife – and for people:

- More than 200 acres of Snowy Plover habitat will be restored. The birds have been squeezed between rising high tides (caused by an increase in ocean level) and a barrier of asphalt and non-native invasive European beach grass. Adult birds can fly to a safe place, but chicks can't fly for about 28 days after hatching. Removal (by hand) of invasive beach grass will encourage natural dune processes in the Preserve. The beach will become broader with more gently sloped fore dunes, allowing shorebirds to forage safely. Newly-hatched chicks will be able to escape from high waters and disturbance on the beach.
- The seriously deteriorated haul road will be removed and recycled. Popular access points to the Preserve will remain open and efforts will be made to provide a safe bicycle route along Highway 1 between Ward Avenue and Ten Mile Bridge. Contrary to rumors, the 1,285-acre Preserve will not be closed to the public during Snowy Plover nesting season.
- The popular stretch of haul road south of Ward Avenue will remain intact. Under separate funding, State Parks already has begun to improve the paved path that will eventually be part of more than 7 miles of all-access trail from the bluffs of Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg north to Ward Avenue in Cleone.

We thank our members who supported this project by sending letters to the Board of Supervisors and the California Coastal Commission. We were joined by members of several local, state and national organizations. Coastal community members, some of whom have quietly volunteered in the Preserve for more than 20 years, shared first-hand knowledge of their experience in the Preserve with Supervisors and Commissioners. The Coastal Commission voted unanimously to support the project and deny an appeal. The state's last remaining coastal fen and two streams will be restored to the natural state that existed before the arrival of modern man. Extremely rare plants, some of which are found only in Mackerricher State Park, will be restored and protected. Thank you for making this a story we think has a good ending.

PAM HUNTLEY ON KZYX FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5 – White-throated Swift

White-throated swifts spend their life on the wing – literally. A White-throated Swift eats, drinks, bathes and even mates while flying, stopping only to rest and nest. During its lifetime, this bird that weighs one ounce, is likely to fly more than a million miles. That's 40 times around the world. White-throated Swifts are slender and black with a white throat patch that tapers down to the black belly. There are white patches on their flanks.



Photo by Michael Woodruff

These birds are 7 inches long and have a 15-inch wing span. The long, tapered wings are held angled back and the forked tail comes to a point. White-throated Swifts, often described as the fastest avian flyers, have been clocked at 200 miles per hour. They have been observed in flight escaping the stoop of a Peregrine falcon (which also has been called the fastest bird in the air).

Mating is a dramatic aerial coupling that includes a pin wheeled downspin of several hundred feet. Nests are built on canyon cliff walls, bridges and overpasses and in crevices. They are saucer-shaped and constructed with twigs and pine needles that are glued together with saliva. Four or five eggs are incubated by the male and female.

White-throated Swifts feed on flying insects, flies, beetles, bees, winged ants, wasps and leaf hoppers. You can see their expanded throat pouches when they carry food to the young. There is a record of one White-throated Swift carrying 600 bugs in its mouth.

BLACK OYSTERCATCHER CONSERVATION Joleen Ossello

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society recently completed the third season of surveys designed to acquire baseline population and reproductive information on a well-known and key intertidal species of shorebird, the Black Oystercatcher. An end-of-season meeting in October brought local volunteers, agency scientists, and local biologists together to compare observations and make recommendations for next year's study. This ongoing project is possible with the continued support of our local caring and committed volunteers. Thank you.

A report on the 2013 Black Oystercatcher Conservation Project is available at www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org under the conservation link/Black Oystercatcher Breeding Survey. Or visit www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon (click on the 'Rock Star Birds' button under the cover photo).



Black Oystercatcher surveyors at the October meeting. From left, Anna Weinstein (California Audubon Seabird and Marine Program Manager); MCAS President and Black Oystercatcher Coordinator Joleen Ossello; Art Morley (kneeling); Dan Knowles, Marcia Rivney, Donald Shephard, Linda Perkins and Bill Heil. Photo by Bessie Citrin

DONALD SHEPHARD**DOVE**

May you find peace in the coming year. As peace symbols, the dove and olive branch derive from two sources, Greek thought and the story of Noah and the Flood. The white dove has become an international symbol of peace, thanks in good part to the fame of Pablo Picasso's 1949 lithograph for the International Peace Congress in Paris.

The dove family, Columbidae, consists of pigeons and doves. On our coast we have both native and introduced species. The much maligned non-native Rock Dove or Feral

Pigeon blankets the United States and we see it here nesting on coastal rocks. The Eurasian Collared-Dove has expanded its range naturally. The largest representative of the family here, the Band-tailed Pigeon, inhabits mixed woods of conifers and oaks. The Mourning Dove, so-called because of its plaintive cooing, has become a representation of peace.

One of the most abundant and widespread of all North American birds, it is also the leading game bird, with 20 to 70 million birds shot for sport and meat annually in the U.S. The ability to sustain its population under such pressure stems from prolific breeding: in warm areas, one pair may raise up to six broods a year.

The Mourning Dove is a medium-sized, slender bird with elliptical wings and rounded head. Three toes point forward and one back. The legs are short and reddish colored, the beak short and usually a brown-black hue. Plumage is generally light gray-brown and lighter and pinkish below. At a distance with the naked eye, they appear to be light brown birds, but take a closer look through your binoculars and they amaze with iridescent pink patches, blue and flesh tones, and a light blue eye ring. Below the eye is a distinctive crescent-shaped area of dark feathers. The adult male has bright purple-pink patches on the neck sides, with light pink coloring reaching the breast. The crown of the adult male is a distinctly bluish-grey color. Females are a little smaller than males and similar in appearance, but with more brown coloring overall.

The wings have black spotting, and the outer tail feathers are white, contrasting with the black inner bands. Wings produce an unusual whistling sound upon take-off and landing. The bird is a strong flier, capable of speeds of 55 miles per hour.

Courtship begins with a noisy flight by the male, followed by a graceful, circular glide with outstretched wings and head down. After landing, the male approaches the female with a puffed out breast, bobbing head, and loud calls. Mated pairs often preen each other. The male then leads

continued

the female to potential nest sites, and the female chooses one. The male gathers nesting material; then he stands on the female's back and gives her the material, which she builds it into the nest. After constructing the flimsy nest of twigs, conifer needles and/or grass blades she lays two eggs. Both sexes incubate for two weeks: the male for the day shift and the female for the swing and night shifts.

Monogamous parents feed the helpless, down-covered squabs. Both adults produce crop milk and feed it exclusively for the first 3–4 days, an ability shared only with flamingos. Thereafter, the crop milk is gradually augmented by seeds. Fledging occurs at 11–15 days. They stay nearby to be fed by their father for up to two weeks after fledging. The large population (estimated at 475 million) and vast range explain why the Mourning Dove is not at immediate risk.

Mourning Doves feed on dry seeds and grains which they store in their crop along with grit for grinding; they drink water up to 10% - 15% of their bodyweight. Like other columbids, the Mourning Dove drinks by suction, without lifting or tilting its head. This practice reduces the time spent exposed in the open to predators such as falcons, other hawks and corvids. It often gathers at drinking spots around dawn and dusk.

When I was a child in post World War II London, government propaganda and media euphoria informed me I lived in peacetime, but search as I may, no such thing exists in this world. Now, I find my peace in my garden, along the bluffs, or hiking through the fern-decked redwoods. One must make ones own peace. Although man cannot yet claim Peace on Earth, let the Mourning Dove remind you our National Seal portrays an eagle holding an olive branch, that other symbol of peace, and to enjoy what peace we have here on the beautiful Mendocino coast.



Mourning Dove photo by Don DeBold

COAST CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS Dave Jensen and Tim Bray

The longest running citizen science survey in the world, Audubon's Christmas Count provides valuable data on population trends. Tens of thousands of participants know it is also a lot of fun. The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society conducts two Christmas Bird Counts: Fort Bragg on Saturday, December 21, 2013, and Manchester on Saturday, January 4, 2014. Teams of birders will fan out to identify and count every bird they can find, beginning with owling in the pre-dawn darkness and finishing with an exciting tally at the Countdown Dinner, where we all gather to find out which rare species were sighted and which common ones weren't. There is nothing else like this event, and those who participate know the feeling of camaraderie that comes from shared experience in a worthwhile effort. We hope you will join us.

To join the Fort Bragg Count, contact Tim Bray: tbray@wildblue.net or 937-4422
For the Manchester Count, contact David Jensen: djensen@mcn.org or 964-8163

You can also find more information about the nation CBC program at Audubon's website:
<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>

SOUTH COAST MCAS RAPTOR FIELD TRIP NOTES Tim Bray

Fifteen people enjoyed the fine weather and found plenty of birds on the annual MCAS November field trip to view wintering raptors from Elk to Point Arena. The very dry fall left fields desolate, with almost no green vegetation nor dead groundcover to provide habitat for voles. So the usual places where we find Ferruginous Hawks were mostly empty. We finally found some at Kinney Road, where we saw one perched in a tree next to the road. The hawk then sailed out and circled overhead for a while, giving us terrific views. Another Ferruginous soared over the town of Manchester, and a third was standing out in the field south of Stoneboro Road.

We found two Rough-Legged Hawks: One was soared over Brush Creek and the other was viewable from the picnic area at Manchester State Beach. A possible third Rough-leg flapped over the fields south of Kinney Lane. There were plenty of Red-tailed Hawks (41 different individuals, including most of the color variations). One interesting sight was a male and female sitting side-by-side on a power pole crossbar, the size difference obvious even at a distance. We saw 4 Red-Shouldered Hawks, providing nice lessons in identifying by size, shape, and posture (rather than field marks). Kestrels were less abundant than usual along most of the route, though there were plenty along Lighthouse Road. I lost count after 22, but I believe we ended up seeing at least 30 of the little falcons. There were no certain Merlin sightings; they always seem to be in a great hurry to get out of sight. One Peregrine Falcon was barely visible from the Vista Point north of Irish Beach, but another sitting near the mouth of the Garcia River provided spectacular views from the bluff north of the Lighthouse. Other notable birds were a Say's Phoebe at the Manchester State Park picnic area, and a Clay-colored Sparrow on the fence next to Stoneboro Road. The weather was amazing, completely calm and sunny, provoking some complaints about the excessive heat. We also had some good-natured ribbing after a few *faux pas*, such as the "Ferruginous Cat" and the "Winged Mammals." It was a great day.

CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

December

Saturday 7 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*

Saturday 14 Field Trip 9AM - CBC Tune-up - Rose Memorial Park and Pudding Creek - meet at east end of Spruce Street, Tim Bray, field trip leader

Saturday 14 Peregrine Audubon CBC (Ukiah)

Monday 16 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Focus on the Christmas Bird Counts

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

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

January 2014

Saturday 4 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) **Cancelled**

Saturday 4 [Manchester Christmas Bird Count](#)

Saturday 11 Field Trip - Ten Mile River and Beach 9AM-meet at parking area south of Ten Mile Bridge, Dave Jensen, field trip leader

Monday 20 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: Doug Forsell on Seabirds

Wednesday 22 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM*

Thursday 23 MCAS Board Meeting 7PM (contact J. Ossello for location)

January 23-26 [Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway](#) Chico

February 2014

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

Saturday 8 Field Trip - Owling (details TBA)

Fri-Mon 14-17 [Great Backyard Bird Count](#)

Monday 17 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: Ronnie James – Bird Rescues

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

March 2014

Saturday 1 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) **Cancelled**

Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 Bird Walk at Point Cabrillo for the [Whale Festival](#) 9AM

Saturday 8 Field Trip - Mackerricher State Park (Lake Cleone and Laguna Point – Meet at Lake Cleone parking lot 9AM

Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 Bird Walk at Point Cabrillo for the [Whale Festival](#) 9AM

Partnership Potluck (MCAS, [MLT](#), [CNPS](#) and [MAPA](#)) -- date and time TBA

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

Thursday 20 MCAS Board Meeting 7PM

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

For updates and useful links, visit the MCAS website:

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

and please visit us on facebook:

www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon



Ron LeValley Photograph

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2013-2014

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Field Trips	Tim Bray	937-4422	tbray@wildblue.net

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

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