

The Whistling Swan



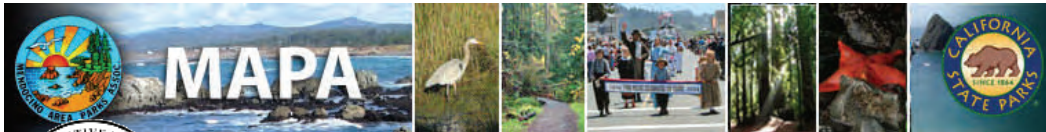
NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDOCINO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY

March 2012

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS POTLUCK hosted by



at
St. Anthony's Hall
top of Lansing Street in Mendocino
on Tuesday, March 27
Doors open at 5:00 p.m.
Potluck at 6:00 p.m.
Brief organizational presentations at 7:00 p.m.
Presentation of the annual Matt Coleman
Environmental Achievement Award



Dorothy King Young Chapter
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



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Peregrine Falcon photo
Ron LeValley
www.LeValleyphoto.com

PRESIDENT'S CORNER**David Jensen**

Last month I briefly introduced National Audubon Society's new strategic plan. I reported that NAS president David Yarnold had brought together a group of leaders from all levels of the various Audubon organizations to formulate a plan that will reshape the way the national organization does business. The core principles can be summed up by the following themes: "Let the birds lead us to our work" and "One Audubon."

Last month I discussed how the plan to "let the birds lead us to our work" has resulted in a strategy to refocus conservation efforts and organizational relationships along to the four major flyways. It is hoped that this strategy will allow the chapters and other Audubon organizations located near each flyway better coordination of efforts to protect the critical breeding, resting and wintering areas along that route. Although it seems to offer greater efficiencies in the long term, most of this national restructuring will have little if any effect on our chapter for quite some time. I will continue to monitor the developments to identify any opportunities that might assist this chapter in our local conservation work.

It is the second major theme, "One Audubon," that I find more exciting. The history of the Audubon Society is an interesting and complicated affair. Ironically, the organization, despite its readily recognized name and widely respected reputation, remains a rather loosely knit assembly of independent organizations bound together by a common goal: the protection of birds. Someday I will trace the development of the Audubon Society for those of you who are unfamiliar with the history of the larger organization. Ginny Wade is currently developing a history of our own chapter, an interesting and poorly understood story itself. But I digress.

David Yarnold states that there are 450,000 members in the "Audubon network," although the real number is difficult to determine due to overlapping memberships and proprietary lists. He also reports that there are 456 Audubon chapters, and that Audubon Magazine has 1.8 million readers. This last number surprises me a bit, since there are only 450,000 members and many of us do not receive the magazine. I have to assume that he is counting those readers waiting to see their doctor or dentist. The world looks at us as one Audubon Society. Unfortunately, we have often failed to support one another.

For a while it seemed that the national organization was focused on building a network of Audubon Centers at the expense of the local chapters. I am pleased to say that in recent years Audubon California, the state-level arm of NAS, has done an excellent job of supporting local chapters, including ours. Not only have they provided fiscal and political support, they have also facilitated the regional coordination of local chapters. We regularly meet with the chapter leaders from Ukiah, Eureka, Lake County, Redding and Chico to share experiences, voice concerns, and offer support and advice when needed.

continued

PRESIDENT'S CORNER**continued**

Under Yarnold's leadership, the new strategic plan offers to provide increased assistance for local chapters such as support by NAS marketing, membership and media staff; conservation planning support; the creation of new training opportunities through an online Audubon campus; and a more active voice in regional (flyway) conservation goals.

PAM HUNTLEY ON KZYX FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5

Purple Martins are actually a gorgeous dark blue-black. In our area they are usually heard chortling high over open fields or water, as they fly catching bugs. They are considered to be rare or uncommon breeders here because their population has declined drastically. This is thought to be due to their need for multiple cavities as they are colonial cavity nesters. They formerly nested in dead snags but, due to fire suppression and logging, dead standing trees are hard to come by. Also, the introduced European Starlings and House Sparrows out-compete the Purple Martin for those holes.

At eight inches the Purple Martin is the largest swallow. The male is glossy dark-blue all over. The female and juveniles are sooty-gray underneath. They have a slightly forked tail and broad, pointy wings. They feed mostly in flight, catching bugs such as flies, mosquitoes, butterflies and, one of their favorites, dragonflies. They also drink and bathe on the wing. Historically, Native Americans hung dry gourds and calabash for them to nest in. On the east coast they nest in huge birdhouses with some houses holding over two hundred pairs. Along our coast, they have adapted to nest in the drain holes under bridges (*Caltrans cooperated with a local birder's request that the new drain holes be designed to accommodate the martins. Ed.*). They have been found nesting under the bridges over Gualala, Greenwood Creek, Noyo and Juan Creek and even the newly constructed Ten Mile Bridge.

Purple Martins are occasionally polygamous with males having more than one mate. It is thought that males choose and defend a nesting hole and the females later choose the best site and the male goes along with it. They both construct the nest, using grass, feathers, plants and occasionally crayfish legs. Sometimes a mud rim is added to stop the eggs from rolling out. The female incubates four to five eggs for two weeks. The young fledge in about a month.

Before migration, Purple Martins collect in enormous roosts, sometimes numbering up to one hundred thousand, before leaving for places like Bolivia, Venezuela and Brazil for the winter.



Purple Martin adult male
photo J. J. Cadiz

Save Our Shorebirds

Rolling Out the Numbers

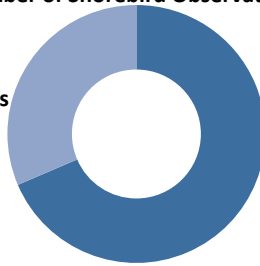
SOS Total Shorebird Observations June, 2007-December, 2011

June, 2007-December, 2011

Glass Beach, Virgin Creek, Ten Mile-MacKerricher State Park

Total Number of Shorebird Observations—100,563

Total Non-watchlisted
Shorebird Observations
31,629



Total Watchlisted
Shorebird Observations
68,934

Five years and more than 4,000 hours in the field are under the belts of Save Our Shorebirds volunteers and the numbers tell the story about shorebirds on our local beaches. A significant number (69%) of the total shorebirds observed by SOS surveyors on three MacKerricher State Parks beaches are watchlisted shorebirds – described by National Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy as birds in serious decline. This includes Western Snowy Plovers, Wandering Tattlers, Long-billed Curlews, Hudsonian Godwits, Marbled Godwits, Black Turnstones, Surf-birds, Red Knots, Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Western Sandpipers, Rock Sandpipers, and Buff-breasted Sandpipers. The watchlisted American Golden-Plovers are rare and not likely to be seen here. Our most recent report is on the MCAS website. We'll continue to tell the story and take pictures – like this magical moment on Ten Mile Beach August 31, 2009, when a surveyor photographed three watchlisted species: Hudsonian Godwit (left), Western Sandpiper and Marbled Godwit. *Story and photo by Becky Bowen*



Save Our Shorebirds is a long term on-going Mendocino Coast Audubon citizen science project in partnership with California State Parks. Volunteers monitor shorebirds on three MacKerricher State Park beaches. To participate, contact Angela Liebenberg at ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov and visit us on Facebook.

BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

March 2012:

- 3 Whale Festival Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Point Cabrillo.
- 4 Whale Festival Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Point Cabrillo.
- 10 Field Trip: 9:00 am, Lake Cleone and Laguna Point, MacKerricker State Park. Meet at the Lake Cleone parking lot.
- 21 Bird Walk: 8:00 am, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
- 27 Environmental Groups Partnership Potluck and awards presentation. Doors open at 5:00 p.m. dinner at 6:00 p.m.

April 2012:

- 7 Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.
- 8 Field Trip: 9:00 am, Van Damme Beach and State Park
- 18 Bird Walk: 8:00 am, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
- 30 Chapter Meeting: 7:00 pm, Gualala Art Center, Gualala. Dr. Rich Kuehn "The Birds of Ethiopia." Doors open at 6:30 p.m., program at 7:00 p.m.

May 2012:

- 5 Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.
- 12 Field Trip: Saturday 8:00 am, Navarro River and Beach. Meet at south end of Navarro River bridge.
- 16 Bird Walk: 8:00 am, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
- 21 Chapter Meeting: 7:00 pm, TBA
- 26 Field Trip to Hendy Woods State Park. Carpool from Harvest Market parking lot at 8:00 am. or meet at Hendy Woods entrance at 9:00 am.



Western Meadowlark
Photo Kevin Cole

FAMILY BIRD WALKS

Sarah Grimes



On the fourth Saturdays of April, May and June.

- 4/28 Stanford Inn
- 5/26 Lake Cleone
- 6/30 Botanical Gardens

9-11 a.m.

Join Sue "Magoo" Coulter and Sarah Grimes as we explore some local birding hot spots. We will supply binoculars, check lists, and bird books. For more info contact Sarah

zewa@mcn.org or (707) 937-4322

SANDPIPERS**Donald Shephard**

Lesser Yellowlegs Photo
Ron LeValley
www.LeValleyphoto.com

My wife and I recently visited her cousin in the Bay Area to share two kinds of music, birdsong and Camille Saint-Saens' Organ Concerto. We heard the man-made music in San Francisco and the more natural sounds along Alameda Creek in Fremont. Along with the joy of listening to birds came a visit from an old friend from our days of bird-watching around vernal pools in the Sierra foothills. The old friend was a Lesser Yellowlegs - a sandpiper.

Many species of sandpiper - some common, some rare - grace our shores. This family of relatively thin-billed, long-legged birds was formerly considered closely related to plovers, oystercatchers, stilts and avocets but recent DNA studies indicate painted snipes and jacanas are closer relatives. Sandpipers can present an identification challenge. You'll find them foraging by picking and probing on open shoreline habitats such as mudflats and beaches. Noting the particular habitat and foraging motion will help in your identification. If you segregate birds by habitat from high, dry mudflats with grassy vegetation to relatively

deep water, you will most likely find Least Sandpipers and Western Sandpiper higher up than Dunlin which, in turn, forage in shallower water than Short-billed Dowitchers. So observe the location of the bird and its foraging habits to aid your identification.

Yellowlegs are in the genus *Tringa*, while Spotted Sandpipers belong in the *Actitis* genus. Of the three species of down-curved-bill sandpipers that make up the *Numenius* genus, the Whimbrel is the one you'll likely see locally. The Long-billed Curlew also occurs here in migration. You might spot an up-curved bill on a member of the genus *Limosa* which includes the Marbled Godwit and, rarely seen here, the Hudsonian Godwit.

Besides yellowlegs, other sandpipers hide behind such common names as Wandering Tattler, Surf-bird, Ruddy Turnstone and Black Turnstone. The genus *Limnodromus*, comprising Long-billed Dowitchers and Short-billed Dowitchers, forms another group of sandpipers.

The genus with the largest number of species locally is *Calidris*. You may spot members of seven species within this genus along our shores. Two of them, Red Knot and Dunlin, do not admit to being sandpipers, while five others wear the name sandpiper proudly. These are Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Rock Sandpiper.

SANDPIPERS

continued

Most sandpipers form roosting and foraging flocks. Join a volunteer of the Save Our Shorebirds program (SOS) and you will thrill to the sudden changes in flight direction of sandpiper flocks maneuvering on powerful and narrow pointed wings. How is it they never collide? Each bird takes its cue from its neighbors whose reaction time puts mine to shame.

These birds all belong to the Scolopacid family which have relatively long legs and slender toes with little or no webbing. Curiously the hind toe of Scolopacids is reduced and raised so that it barely scrapes the ground, although this feature is hard to see.

Sandpiper plumage is generally a mixture of browns, grays and white. Feathers abrade in a sand and salt environment with pale portions wearing more than dark areas, which have more melanin. This causes the darker appearance of worn birds. Pick up a feather along the beach and you may find it has a scalloped edge which follows the contours of the dark markings.

You may sometimes see a “one-legged” sandpiper hopping about awkwardly. Don’t let that concern you, as these birds tuck one leg up against the belly to conserve heat. Fooled by this behavior or not, this is a difficult family to identify. Volunteers who walk one of our three SOS beaches soon hone their skills and get the pleasure of visits from old friends just as I did when I encountered Lesser Yellowlegs last week.



Dunlin photo Wikipedia

THANK YOU FORT BRAGG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT VOLUNTEERS

Area Leaders:

Ron LeValley, Dorothy Tobkin, Warren Wade, Virginia Wade, Robert Keiffer, Arthur Morley, Jim Havlena, David Jensen, Richard Hubacek, Joleen Ossello

Field Participants:

Allison Cebula, Adam Hutchins, Charlene McAllister, Karen Havlena, Becky Stenberg, Terra Fuller, Carolyn Kinet, Trudy Jensen, Linda Perkins, Catherine Keegan, John Wade, Christine Fleming, Al DeMartini, Ryan Keiffer, Maggie Bertolino, Daniel Haley, Geoff Heiniecken, Cheryl Watson, Dave Bengston, Mike Curry, Erica Fielder, Larry Knowles, K. Schubek, Monroe Robinson, Joleen Ossello, Greg Byers, Jim Bogue, Caroline Bonfeld, Rich Trissel, Nancy Trissel, Joel Franks, Pete Gealy, Jessica Morton, Roger Foote, Jennifer Wildman, Stephanie Steinback, Rick Hewett, Craig Chaffin, Kathleen Chaffin, Penny Lancaster, Sara Grimes, Pam Huntley, Peter Steel, Chuck Vaughn, Jeanne Coleman, Sue Coulter, Roger Adamson and Mike Stephens.

Feeder Watchers:

Jean Morley, Paul Reiber, Marcia Riwney, Bill & Linda Rohr, Ginny Rorby, Loie Rosenkrantz, Caroline Schooley, Colleen Shephard, Virginia Siewert, Judy Steele, Michael Stewart, Susan Tubbesing, Mitchell Zucker.

FORT BRAGG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1/2/2012

Species Observed	Count	Species Observed	Count
Greater White-fronted Goose	5	Double-crested Cormorant	41
Snow Goose	1	Pelagic Cormorant	248
Ross's Goose	2	Great Blue Heron	17
Cackling Goose	17	Green Heron	1
Canada Goose	124	Great Egret	3
Wood Duck	6	Black-crowned Night Heron	1
Gadwall	1	Turkey Vulture	169
American Wigeon	2	Osprey	7
Mallard	289	White-tailed Kite	1
Northern Shoveler	9	Northern Harrier	6
Northern Pintail	1	Sharp-shinned Hawk	2
American Green-winged Teal	4	Cooper's Hawk	4
Ring-necked Duck	17	Red-shouldered Hawk	22
Greater Scaup	1	Red-tailed Hawk	24
Harlequin Duck	1	American Kestrel	25
Long-tailed Duck	1	Merlin	2
Surf Scoter	79	Peregrine Falcon	5
White-winged Scoter	3	Virginia Rail	11
Black Scoter	10	Sora	5
Bufflehead	84	American Coot	460
Common Goldeneye	4	Black-bellied Plover	52
Hooded Merganser	10	Killdeer	62
Common Merganser	32	Black Oystercatcher	88
Red-breasted Merganser	17	Greater Yellowlegs	2
Ruddy Duck	36	Willet	1
Wild Turkey	91	Spotted Sandpiper	9
California Quail	59	Whimbrel	3
Red-throated Loon	13	Black Turnstone	253
Pacific Loon	51	Surfbird	44
Common Loon	11	Sanderling	158
Pied-billed Grebe	35	Western Sandpiper	1
Horned Grebe	157	Least Sandpiper	13
Red-necked Grebe	10	Wilson's Snipe	4
Eared Grebe	330	Mew Gull	30
Western Grebe	117	California Gull	1,029
Clark's Grebe	2	Herring Gull	221
Brown Pelican	225	Thayer's Gull	79
Brandt's Cormorant	126	Western Gull	985

FORT BRAGG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Species Observed	Count	Species Observed	Count
Glaucous-winged Gull	272	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	134
Common Murre	71	Western Bluebird	55
Pigeon Guillemot	1	Hermit Thrush	56
Rhinoceros Auklet	12	American Robin	1,877
Cassin's Auklet	6	Varied Thrush	204
Rock Pigeon	91	Wrentit	56
Band-tailed Pigeon	3	Northern Mockingbird	4
Eurasian Collared-Dove	41	European Starling	486
Mourning Dove	144	American Pipit	2
Northern Pygmy Owl	1	Orange-crowned Warbler	2
Spotted Owl	2	Nashville Warbler	2
Barred Owl	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	984
Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	Townsend's Warbler	42
Anna's Hummingbird	141	Summer Tanager	1
Allen's Hummingbird	1	Spotted Towhee	63
Belted Kingfisher	15	California Towhee	1
Acorn Woodpecker	41	Savannah Sparrow	34
Red-breasted Sapsucker	3	Fox Sparrow	121
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Song Sparrow	174
Downy Woodpecker	14	Lincoln's Sparrow	4
Hairy Woodpecker	14	White-throated Sparrow	10
Northern Flicker	60	Golden-crowned Sparrow	121
Pileated Woodpecker	5	White-crowned Sparrow	658
Black Phoebe	116	Dark-eyed Junco	375
Say's Phoebe	1	Bullock's Oriole	1
Hutton's Vireo	13	Baltimore Oriole	1
Steller's Jay	229	Red-winged Blackbird	88
Western Scrub-Jay	63	Western Meadowlark	51
Common Raven	361	Brewer's Blackbird	249
Barn Swallow	1	Purple Finch	80
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	253	House Finch	101
Bushtit	21	Pine Siskin	88
Pygmy Nuthatch	114	Lesser Goldfinch	30
Brown Creeper	17	American Goldfinch	66
Bewick's Wren	1	House Sparrow	27
Pacific Wren	44		
Marsh Wren	13	Total Species	150
Golden-crowned Kinglet	42	Individuals counted	14,554
		Total Participants	78

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2011-2012

President	David Jensen	964-8163	djensen@mcn.org
Vice President	Tony Eppstein	937-1715	tonyepp@mcn.org
Secretary	Becky Bowen	962-1602	casparbeck@comcast.net
Treasurer	Judy Steele	937-2216	judys@mcn.org
SOS Program	Angela Liebenberg	962-9267	aliebenberg@parks.ca.gov
Membership	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@mcn.org
Programs	Adam Hutchins	962-9055	raptorous@mac.com
Conservation	Joleen Ossello	391-7019	j_ossello@earthlink.net
Historian	Ginny Wade	964-6263	wwade@mcn.org
Newsletter	Donald Shephard	962-0223	donshephard@comcast.net

Off-board chair:

Education	Sarah Grimes	937-4322	zewa@mcn.org
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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

