



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- February 2020

SCOTT KOLLER PRESENTS:

THE MOUNTAIN LION MYTH, MYSTERY AND NATURAL HISTORY OF MENDOCINO'S APEX PREDATOR



photo by Scott Koller

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17 AT 7:00 P.M.
CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER**

Scott Koller is a Wildlife Biologist earning his Wildlife Management degree from Humboldt State University in 1983 with an emphasis in Forestry.

His career embraces 38 years as a State of California Field Biologist. The diversity of work assignments through the years took him, with his wife and children in tow, to many of California's geographical regions and varied landscapes overseeing the management and conservation of listed, sensitive, game and non-game wildlife, and their habitats.

He recently retired after twenty years as the Mendocino Wildlife Unit Manager for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife where he worked with all wildlife - fur and feathers- in what he considers is the best Unit in California for satisfying his passion for wildlife management.

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*Bush-tit with Attitude
by Shannon Underhill*

FORT BRAGG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**Tim Bray**

Once again the weather sucker-punched us:

Thu 12/26	Fri 12/27	Sat 12/28	Sun 12/29	Mon 12/30	Tue 12/31	Wed 1/1
53° 34°F	53° 36°F	52° 41°F	51° 41°F	55° 39°F	56° 45°F	55° 45°F
						
Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Rain	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy
0 in	0 in	0 in	0.14 in	0 in	0 in	0 in

In spite of the dismal forecast, a total of sixty-nine people ventured out for at least part of the day. We got in a solid two hours of birding before the rain commenced, and there was a nice break in the early afternoon before the serious rain started. Bird activity was predictably low and a lot of us ended our day a little earlier than usual.

The bright, warm Caspar Community Center was a welcome haven. As birders began filing in, mostly wet but some suspiciously dry, the hall filled with the cheerful buzz of friends greeting each other and exchanging stories. Angela and Matt Liebenberg timed the arrival of hot lasagna perfectly, serving the exhausted birders early. It's hard to imagine a more perfect meal on such a day.

Once the meal had been consumed and the soggy, barely decipherable field sheets had been transcribed by the team leaders, we got down to the business of tallying up the day's work. As always, there were notable misses and unexpected finds. Perhaps the strangest miss was Killdeer, which was also not found on either the Ukiah or Lake County Counts. Less surprising was a shortage of seabirds, as we did not get a team out to sea and efforts to sea-watch from shore were cut short by the weather; remarkably, Sooty Shearwater and Black-footed Albatross were seen. Waterfowl diversity was also lower than usual.

Unexpected finds included California Towhee, Tree Swallow, Hermit Warbler, and perhaps the best bird of the day, a Black-and-White Warbler found two miles up the Skunk Train tracks.

Our tally for the day came to 132 species, a substantial drop from our previous low of 138 and far below our average of 142. Of course several more species were found during the lovely weather before and after the Count, bringing the Count Week total up to 138. Notable among those finds was a continuing Black-capped Chickadee that has been hanging around a Fort Bragg neighborhood for a month and is only the second Mendocino County record.



The Birders photo by Rachel Lahn

The next Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Count will take place on Sunday December 27, 2020. Mark your calendar and watch the forecast - I predict dry weather, calm seas, and a great day of birding.

Central Valley Field Trip Report

David Jensen



White Faced Ibis by Shannon Underhill

Our 2020 field trip to the Central Valley was blessed with good weather and better birds. From Friday, January 17, through Monday, January 20, we visited many of the prime birding locations in Colusa, Glenn and Butte counties. Ten chapter members and their guests carpooled throughout the valley, linked by walkie-talkies. A total of 116 species were observed. A list of special sightings included Bald Eagles of every plumage and age group, Tundra Swans, Sandhill Cranes, Green Heron, American Bittern, Great Horned Owls, Mountain Bluebirds, Burrowing Owl, and former governor Jerry Brown with his dog Colusa. A good time was had by all.



American Bittern by Shannon Underhill



American Coot by Shannon Underhill



Western Meadowlark by Shannon Underhill

Manchester CBC Recap

David Jensen

The 46 th Manchester Circle Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, January 4. As if to atone for past injustices, the CBC gods sent a clear and windless day. With 37 observers in the field, 127 avian species were tallied, with a total of 9821 individual birds. Brewer's Blackbird were again the most common bird (1225 total), followed by Common Murre (780), White-Crowned Sparrows (526), Western Gulls (410), Eurasian Starlings (375) and Western Meadowlarks (243). Conspicuous no-shows included American Wigeon, Canada (Gray) Jay and Tundra Swan. Mark your calendars today - the 2021 Manchester count will be held on Saturday, January 2. I hope to see you there.

AUDUBON: CONGRESS MUST PASS NEW BIRD PROTECTION BILL OUR BIRD EMERGENCY REQUIRES URGENT ACTION.

“Congress has the opportunity to spread its wings and protect America’s birds. More than half of our birds make heroic migrations, traveling thousands of miles from the tropics to Ohio or Maine, but they can’t tell an oil waste pit from a lake full of food. For more than a century, low-cost laws protected these birds. And an overwhelming majority of Americans – including 500 conservation organizations from every state – say it’s time to reinstate those protections,” said David Yarnold, president and CEO, National Audubon Society (@david_yarnold).

“If you’ve been watching the news this fall you know that we’re in the middle of a full-blown bird emergency. We’ve lost three billion birds in the last 50 years and the future is even more grim – Audubon science shows that two-thirds of North American bird species are at risk of extinction due to climate change. This new legislation comes at a critical time and will protect the Migratory Bird Treaty Act – a law that has saved birds Americans love, the Snowy Egret, the Sandhill Crane, and the Wood Duck. We did all that while our energy industry and broader economy flourished over the last century.”

In an effort to strengthen the 100-year-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a bipartisan group of co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives, led by Rep. Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), introduced H.R. 5552, the Migratory Bird Protection Act on January 8, 2020. The new bill will reaffirm current law while creating more certainty for business and creating incentives for innovation to protect birds.

“America’s 46 million bipartisan bird lovers don’t ask a lot of Congress on behalf of birds – but this is a bedrock law and a vote that every legislator can take – and it’s a win for birds and for legislators across the aisle,” said Yarnold.

In December 2017, the Administration issued a legal opinion on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that reverses the position of previous Republican and Democratic Administrations and gives a free pass to bird killing from industrial hazards, also known by a term few people recognize: “incidental take.” This bill will once again, in plain language, require industry to take proactive measures to reduce bird deaths.

“If the administration’s current policy were in place in 2010, BP would have faced no consequences under the MBTA for the more than one million birds killed in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.”

The new legislation also directs the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to develop a permitting process for “incidental take” through which relevant businesses would implement best management practices and document compliance, further driving innovation in how to best prevent bird deaths.

If passed, the MBPA would establish a new fee paid by industry that will increase funding for the conservation of birds impacted by these industrial hazards and an additional fund to establish a new federal research program that will study industry impacts on birds and best management practices.

Audubon is one of more than 500 conservation groups and other organizations from all 50 states that have joined to urge Congress to defend the MBTA, our country’s most important bird conservation law in the United States.

Please contact Rep. Jared Huffman and let him know we support H.R. 5552. Rep. Huffman represents our district and he chairs the House Committee on Natural Resources where the bill currently is being considered. His field representative is Sheba Brown and his local office is at 430 North Franklin Street (962-0933). To contact him by e-mail, visit his website at <https://huffman.house.gov/contact>

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen

LOOKING BACK AT 2019

2019 was just too short. Now is the time to pull back and reflect on the year that flashed right past us. And just because we love to count, we'll start with a number: 1.

When we added up the total number of shorebirds counted on SOS surveys in 2019, four lonely "ones" popped out of the data and onto our I-wonder-what-that-means? list. Of the 22,679 shorebirds counted by surveyors in 2019, there was 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, 1 Semipalmated Sandpiper, 1 Pacific Golden-Plover and 1 Rock Sandpiper. All four were observed at Virgin Creek Beach in summer. Our annual reports are finished now and will be uploaded to the MCAS website. You can take a look at all our SOS shorebird census numbers since our beginning of this MCAS conservation program in 2007.

Every year is different for many reasons, including weather, fires, all manner of disturbances to wildlife, and just plain luck. We keep on counting – because the more we see, the more we know. And the more we know, the more we learn.



Pacific Golden-Plover June 14, 2019-Virgin Creek Beach



Semipalmated Sandpiper, July 22, 2019-Virgin Creek



Pectoral Sandpiper, Sept. 5, 2019-Virgin Creek Beach



Rock Sandpiper (right) Dec. 16, 2019-Virgin Creek Beach

FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

BIG RIVER FIELD TRIP SATURDAY 8, FEBRUARY 2020 9:00AM - 12:00PM

Meet us at 9am at the Big River Parking Lot Entrance to the Big River Haul Road Trail (east end of the parking area near the restrooms) and join us for a short walk up the Big River trail to see what birds are hanging out in the estuary and along the trailside brush. After our perusal, we travel to bird the Bishop Pine forests overlooking the ocean on the south side of Russian Gulch trying to get a glimpse of the mythical Pelagic Woodpecker.



Blue Heron by Ron LeValley

OWLING FIELD TRIP SATURDAY 7, MARCH 2020 5:00PM - 9:00PM

Meet in Elk at the parking lot across from The Elk Store at 5:45pm. We will carpool and head up the ridge, returning around 9pm. The variety of habitats along Philo-Greenwood Road hold several species of owls and in March they can be quite vocal.



Barred Owl by Ron LeValley

Our programs are brought to you with the support of Harbor Lite Lodge, offering discount lodging for Mendocino Coast Audubon Society guest presenters.

www.HarborLiteLodge.com

**Harbor Lite
LODGE**



(707) 964-0221

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Fort Bragg, CA 95437

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2020

Saturday 1 - *Beginner's Bird Walk 9:00 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA
Meet in the parking lot. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a hat and water.

Saturday 8 - *Field Trip - Big River Field Trip* 9:00 a.m. - Noon
Meet at the Big River Parking Lot Entrance to the Big River Haul Road Trail (east end of the parking area near the restrooms) See more on page 6.

Wednesday 12 - *Audubon Board Meeting* 6:00 p.m.
Contact Tim Bray for more information: tbray@mcn.org (707) 734-0791

Monday 17 - *Audubon Society Meeting* 7:00 p.m. Caspar Community Center
Scott Koller presents: Mountain Lions in Mendocino County

Wednesday 19 - *Early Bird Walk 8:30 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

MARCH 2020

Saturday 7 - *Beginner's Bird Walk 9:00 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA
Meet in the parking lot. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a hat and water.

Saturday 7 - *Owling Field Trip* 5:30pm - 9:00pm
Meet in Elk at the parking lot across from the Elk Store. We will carpool.

Monday 16 - *Environmental Partnership Potluck* 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday 18 - *Early Bird Walk 8:30 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

**These walks are free, but there is an entry charge for participants who are not Garden members.
Those who are not MCBG members can request a "Guest of Audubon" discount.*

**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 2018-2019

President	Tim Bray	tbray@mcn.org	(707) 734-0791
Vice President, Field Trips	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	(707) 964-8163
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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
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