



# The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- January 2021

SHAUN THOMPSON PRESENTS:

## THE WILD SALMON OF MENDOCINO:

Exploring the Current Population Trends and Future Prospects for These Iconic Fish



Eel River summer run steelhead with fisheries technician Nadia El Adli.  
Photo by Shaun Thompson

**MONDAY, JANUARY 25 AT 7:00 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM**

During the 20th century poor land use practices and over harvest pushed many of California's north coast salmon populations to the brink of extirpation. Now, two decades into the 21st century, large scale restoration of freshwater salmon habitat and regulations designed to increase populations of these imperiled fish have been underway for more than a generation. How are the salmon doing now?

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*Northern Pygmy-Owl on Big River Trail photo by Roger Adamson*

**Who did you see this CBC?  
Check out the recap on page 4.**

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How will these fish fare with expected climate challenges in addition to anthropogenic stressors? Shaun Thompson leverages fisheries data from CA Department of Fish and Wildlife population monitoring programs that spans several decades to provide an overview of the status and trend of Mendocino County salmon and steelhead and future challenges for recovery.

Shaun Thompson is a 6th generation Californian born and raised in coastal Mendocino County. Shaun earned a BS studying Biological Sciences at University of California at Davis in 2003 and has spent the past 14 years with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as an Environmental Scientist monitoring wild salmon and steelhead populations in Mendocino County.

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## ZOOM MEETINGS: HOW TO CONNECT

**To join our Zoom Meeting via desktop, laptop, tablet, or smart phone:**

At 6:45 PM, go to the [MCAS website](#), or click the zoom link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85919959908?pwd=Ry8wNE9wOTB4amhNclh6MmtGcWxvOT09>

**Meeting ID:** 859 1995 9908 **Passcode:** 220011

We are requesting that you to click on the link 15 minutes prior to the start of the event, so that you can make sure that your audio and video are working properly.

If you have never used Zoom before, you might need to download and install [the Zoom app](#). If there are still problems, check which release of Zoom you have installed. You may need to upgrade to the latest version.

Want to see past meetings? Now you can. Check them out on the [MCAS YouTube Channel](#).

### **Direct Links to Past Zoom Meetings:**

**September 2020 - Intertidal Marine Life: It's Tough Between the Tides**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLb4v1mGfF4&feature=youtu.be>

**October 2020 - Confessions of a Shorebird Nut**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGdxuOu5w4I&feature=youtu.be>

**November 2020 - Fire, Grazing, and Wintering Bird Communities in Oak Woodlands**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SCYc017SPc&feature=youtu.be>

**December 2020 - CBC Presentation**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnoahrI0xYI>

**SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS**

**Becky Bowen**

**BEFORE AND AFTER-- RED PHALAROPE STYLE**



The morning of December 26 was cold and clear on Ten Mile River—and full of surprises. There on the south bank of the river just west of the bridge and under the watchful eye of a Bald Eagle on a treetop on the opposite shore, was a lone Red Phalarope. According to the county list, the small shorebird is rare here in winter.

The photograph at left is the bird (in winter plumage) spotted on the SOS survey that day in MacKerricher State Park's Inglenook Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Preserve. At right is the bird on breeding grounds in breeding plumage in Utquigvik (formerly Barrow), Alaska on June 26, 2016.

Red Phalaropes spend 11 months a year at sea. Breeding and nesting are on coastal tundra at the top of the earth—some 350 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Females are larger than males, actively pursue males during courtship, and are aggressive defenders of their nests and protectors of their mates. The female's breeding plumage is much more colorful than the male's.

One of the most interesting behaviors of a phalarope is spinning in a circle while swimming. Field guides tell us this may be involved in bringing food toward the water's surface, and most likely the reason for the name of a group of the birds: a "whirligig of phalaropes."

*Save Our Shorebirds is a year-round long term MCAS conservation program in cooperation with CA State Parks. To learn more, contact B. Bowen at [casparbeck@comcast.net](mailto:casparbeck@comcast.net)  
And please visit us at [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)*

## Preliminary Results for the 2020 Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Count

Breaking with tradition, it did not rain on Count Day. There was a gray dawn, with some threatening-looking low clouds and a chilly breeze, but by mid-morning the sun broke through and even the wind died down. On the other hand, the seas were rough, making seabirds difficult to find, and waterfowl were scarce. Pandemic limitations reduced the number of people we could send out into the field, and the preliminary tally of 135 species is the lowest recorded for this Count.

Everyone really missed the Count Dinner, but we did have a lively and enjoyable discussion via Zoom as we tallied up the finds. As always, there were a few surprise finds and unexpected misses. Good finds for this Count included a Tennessee Warbler and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, both “stakeout” birds found by Chris Lamoureux at Rose Memorial Cemetery. Holly Madrigal spotted a Rock Wren (first recorded on this Count) while I was ogling a Burrowing Owl at the Noyo Headlands Trail. Tess McGuire found Cinnamon Teal, another first for this Count, on the pond at Ocean Lake Senior Park.

Misses include Wood Duck, Gadwall, and Pintail; White-winged and Black Scoter; Cassin’s and Rhinoceros Auklet. We didn’t have many people owling in the deep woods and so missed Saw-whet, Screech, and Barred Owls.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Rose Memorial  
Photo by Roger Adamson



Rock Wren on Soldier Point. Photo by Roger Adamson

Peggy Martin found a Barn Swallow the next day near the Pudding Creek Trestle, increasing our Count Week total and continuing a recent trend of sporadic winter appearances by this species.

Some species appear to be increasing in abundance here, and it will be interesting to see if long-term trends become evident. Say’s Phoebe was rare anywhere on the coast a few years ago, and this year several were found all over the Circle. Lesser Goldfinches likewise were formerly quite hard to find here, but they were seen in multiple locations this year, even as American Goldfinch numbers remain low. Black-crowned Night-herons have become regular on the Noyo River, and this year, one was also found at the Caspar pond. Northern Mockingbirds are resident in the towns of Mendocino and Fort Bragg and may be increasing in number.

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Speaking of abundance, Sarah Grimes and her sister Havana found an enormous flock of Pine Siskins. Havana took a quick photo with her phone, and Sarah painstakingly counted little dots - five hundred and eighty of them. Many of you have probably seen articles about the irruption of Pine Siskins this winter, an event that has received national attention, and we are clearly seeing it here.

Raptors were well represented. Several people saw Ferruginous Hawks, always a treat. A few Ospreys appeared, as usual for this Count. Merlin seemed unusually abundant - Roger Adamson counted four in his area, and several were seen elsewhere.

As always, my heartfelt thanks go to everyone who participated, and especially to the area leaders who figured out ways to get the Circle birded this year despite the COVID-19 limitations. In a time of such great turmoil, it's great to have one almost-normal activity.



Ferruginous Hawk, dark morph, Garcia River. *Photo by Roger Adamson*

**Attention MCAS Members:**

Do you have copies of the Whistling Swan newsletter prior to 2008? Be it PDF or paper, they would be welcomed as part of an ongoing project to put all of our newsletters onto the website.

Email me at: [keegan@mcn.org](mailto:keegan@mcn.org)



## **MCAS Conservation Committee Recap of Action in 2020**

We have found ways to continue to be advocates for birds even if we spent much of 2020 sheltering in place and social distancing in a crowd. We wrote letters, attended zoom meetings, and got on the phone. Here is a summary of our year of conservation action and activity.

**Avalon Hotel Project:** In response to an invitation to make public comments about the Avalon hotel/restaurant/conference center proposed to be built along Highway 1 north of Fort Bragg, MCAS sent letters to the City of Fort Bragg April 23 and August 21, 2020 requesting the city to prepare an Environmental Impact Report on the proposal. The proposed hotel property is on the haul road adjacent to part of MacKerricher State Park. Letters cited concerns about negative impacts on wildlife and cumulative significant environmental impacts on coastal development, including this project. We were joined in our request by letters from the Dorothy King Young Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. On October 22, 2020, the City of Fort Bragg informed us that the city is “seeking proposals from qualified firms to prepare an EIR for the proposed Avalon Project.”

**Jackson Demonstration State Forest Proposed Timber Harvest Plans:** MCAS submitted public comments November 22, 2020, to Cal Fire requesting withdrawal of the Mitchell Creek timber harvest scheduled for the summer of 2021, if approved. It is one of several timber harvests proposed for a large portion of the western side of the demonstration forest. We cited cumulative negative environmental impacts to sensitive plant species, and wildlife—specifically concerns about Northern Spotted Owl surveys and evidence of suitable Marbled Murrelet habitat. Mendocino Trail Stewards is one of several local groups that oppose various timber harvest projects planned in the forest, all within a relatively short time span. There also is an effort by environmental and recreational groups to transform part of Jackson Demonstration State Forest into a redwood preserve.

**Proposed Wireless Communications Tower at AT&T Facility Adjacent to Manchester State Park:** MCAS submitted public comments about the 76 foot tower disguised as a faux water tank proposed at the company’s facility at the foot of Kinney Road near Manchester. We expressed concerns about the negative impact on the resident Western Snowy Plover flock, nesting Bank Swallows, and Point Arena Mountain Beavers. The plovers are found along Manchester State Park beach, at times within 600 feet of the proposed facility. Bank Swallows nest in the vicinity and forage over surrounding property. Mountain beaver burrows have been identified near the facility and would be impacted by building of an access road/turnaround area and installation of underground fiber optic cable. There also are concerns about the impact on night bird migration and nocturnal owl activity. Comments were sent to the Mendocino County planning department and the California Coastal Commission staff.

We continue to follow national litigation and legislation regarding the Migratory Bird Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Protection Treaty, and proposed oil and gas drilling on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

On the international level, we have connected with bird groups in other countries and it’s no surprise that we share the same conservation concerns with birdwatchers in other parts of the world. MCAS members participated in a Wader (Shorebird) Conservation World Watch on October 31 and November 1, 2020. Some 489 volunteers from 6 continents and 53 countries participated in the event where 167 species of shorebirds were recorded. The 2021 Wader World Watch will be November 6-7, 2021.

## CALENDAR

Although the strict Shelter-In-Place order has been relaxed to allow some group activities, the risk of contracting COVID-19 remains high and we remain extremely cautious. The Early Bird walks are continuing with restrictions. Our monthly Chapter meetings and presentations will be conducted remotely via Zoom. We will notify you of any changes via e-mail, our Facebook page and our website.

### JANUARY 2021

**Tuesday 6 - Manchester CBC Tally 6:00 p.m.** via Zoom meeting link below.

There will be no Count Dinner this year. Instead, we will conduct the tally-up via Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85442839301?pwd=Sy83RjBzMEdma0ZyeFVHY2JlZzM3Zz09nn>

**Meeting ID:** 854 4283 9301    **Passcode:** 819431

**Wednesday 20 - Early Bird Walk\*\* 8:30 a.m. - Noon**

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, 18220 CA-1, Fort Bragg, CA 95437

**Monday 25 - Salmonid Monitoring 7:00 p.m.** - Zoom meeting

See cover story and zoom meeting information on pages 1 and 2.

### FEBRUARY 2021

**Wednesday 10 - Audubon Society Board Meeting 6:00 p.m. via Zoom**

Are being conducted remotely on Zoom. Contact Tim Bray for more information.

**Wednesday 17 - Early Bird Walk\*\* 8:30 a.m. - Noon**

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, 18220 CA-1, Fort Bragg, CA 95437

**Monday 22 - California Waterfowl Association 7:00 p.m.** via Zoom

**\*\*Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens (18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA)**

The following safety precautions will be required::

- Leave 6 feet of space between you and others not in your party. If passing another visitor on a trail, please announce yourself and provide space for fellow guests to pass.
- All visitors must wear face masks that cover the nose and mouth in accordance with the Mendocino County Health Order at all times to protect yourself, other guests, and our staff.
- There will be limited access to restrooms. The interior Display House restrooms are the only available restroom facilities onsite.
- Bring your own water and binoculars.

**For complete and current calendar, updates, and useful links, visit:**

[www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

[www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon](https://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
Secretary & Zoom Czar	Nicolet Houtz	nicolethoutz@gmail.com	
Treasurer	Jim Havlena	havlenas@fix.net	
SOS, Conservation	Becky Bowen	casparbeck@comcast.net	(707) 962-1602
Education	Pam Huntley	pjhuntley@hotmail.com	
Membership	Adam Hutchins	raptorous@me.com	(707) 734-3470
Programs	Terra Fuller	terrafuller74@gmail.com	(707) 964-4675
Programs	Hayley Ross	hayleyhross@gmail.com	

Off-Board Chairs:

Scholarship Chair	Judy Steele	judys@mcn.org	
Webmaster	Catherine Keegan	keegan@mcn.org	
Newsletter Editor	Megan Smithyman	mesmithy@gmail.com	

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

