



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- March 2020

MILL BEND ACQUISITION BY DAVE JENSEN



March is the month when we honor our fellow environmental organizations and acknowledge the power of partnerships. There may be no better example of that power than the recent purchase and preservation of Mill Bend property near the mouth of the Gualala River.

In June of 2019, your chapter joined the Mendocino Land Trust, Madrone Audubon Society, Sonoma Land Trust, California Native Plant Society, Sonoma County Regional Parks, and other organizations and individuals in support of the acquisition of Mill Bend- 112 acres of sensitive watershed and riparian habitat. The property was purchased by the Redwood Coast Land Conservancy (RCLC) in partnership with the Allemall Foundation, a conservation buyer from Maryland.

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*Bald Eagle at Mill Bend
by Craig Tooley*

MILL BEND ACQUISITION

Dave Jensen



Photo by Craig Tooley

Mill Bend is situated where the Gualala River makes its final curve before flowing into the ocean. West of Highway One it straddles both sides of the Gualala river, abutting the Sonoma County Regional Park on the south side. East of the highway, it extends north from the river to the Gualala Arts Center.

The Gualala River estuary provides an especially important freshwater environment for young steelhead, a small Coho salmon population, the Gualala roach and other fish. Red-legged frogs, Harbor seals, river otters, Osprey, Bald Eagles, Green Heron, wintering ducks and other birds are among the many wildlife species that may be spotted along the river.



Photo of fishing Osprey by Craig Tooley

“The acquisition of Mill Bend is a once in a lifetime opportunity that will preserve the scenic beauty and critical habitat of the Gualala River estuary forever and will open the way for other future acquisitions to protect the Gualala River watershed,” said Kathleen Chasey, Mill Bend Conservation Project Manager for RCLC. “As a result of our purchase, the National Marine Fisheries Service has now added the Gualala River to their Salmon Recovery Program for California. Planning work will begin in early 2020 with goals to enhance steelhead habitat and to bring back the Coho salmon to the Gualala River Watershed. It’s very exciting!”

This newly preserved property will also provide many educational opportunities. Diane Hichwa, Madrone Audubon’s Conservation Chair, stated “Our Coastal Stewardship group has been studying nesting birds of the islands and rocky coast. We plan to host several public bird walks and talks at the [adjacent] County Park.”

More information about RCLC and about the Mill Bend acquisition can be found on the RCLC website at www.rclc.org. We would like to thank Diane Hichwa and Cheryl Harris for their assistance in the development of this article.

HELP NESTING BIRDS

Tim Bray

Our annual false-Spring bout of balmy weather, which normally lasts a week or two, extended for most of February this year. Gardeners often get suckered into planting too early when that happens, leading to sorrow when the storms and winds return in March and April. Birds can also get lured into early nesting, and sometimes that doesn't work out either. We're already getting reports of Pelagic Cormorants laying eggs - weeks earlier than normal - and you've probably seen courtship displays or birds carrying nest material around. Each year birds try to time their nesting so there will be plenty of food available when the chicks hatch; if adults have to forage too far or spend too much time hunting, the chicks will not thrive. Early nesting can provide an opportunity for a second try, and many species will regularly "double-clutch" if conditions are good. Others however expend so much energy in nesting and egg-laying that they basically have one shot to get it right. The stakes are high for those birds, and we can help them succeed by scheduling activities like brush-pulling or tree-trimming to avoid peak breeding season. In our area, that is generally from late April to early June.



photo by Megan Smithyman

We can also help certain species, called "cavity nesters," who depend entirely upon standing dead or senescent trees for their nest sites. There are a number of such species and many of them rely on Woodpeckers to create nest cavities for them. Most Woodpecker species will create a new cavity for themselves every year, and a wide variety of other birds - Swallows, Chickadees, Bluebirds, even Pygmy-owls - will reuse old Woodpecker nest holes for many years. We humans tend to see standing dead trees ("snags") as unsightly nuisances to be removed, and this has greatly affected populations of several cavity-nesting species. We can build and install nest-boxes to simulate natural cavities, but even better is to protect the standing dead trees that are their natural habitat wherever possible. One example is the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, where the abundance of snags contributes to the amazing diversity of insect and bird life that makes our monthly birdwalks so productive.

ISO PHOTOGRAPHS OF NESTING SONGBIRDS

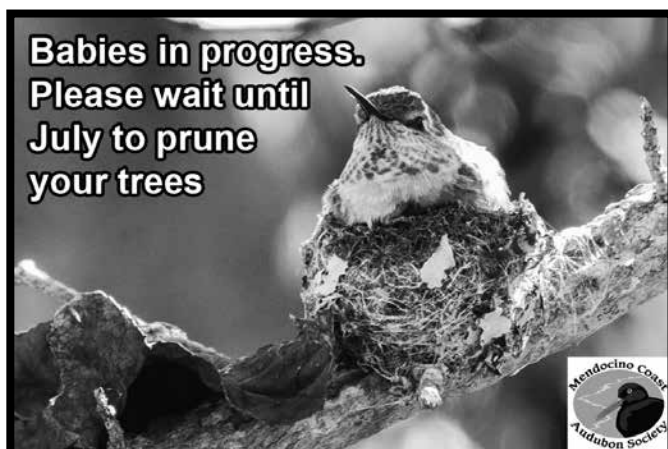


photo by Roger Adamson

Do you have high resolution images of nesting songbirds? How about eggs in a nest? Fledglings? Would you be willing to let them be used in an ad campaign? Nesting season will soon be here, and, unfortunately, tree-trimming season as well. Our plan is to run a series of ads in the local newspapers, as well as on the MCAS website and Facebook page from mid May through June.

For more information or to submit images, please contact Catherine Keegan: keegan@mcn.org

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen



Ward Avenue Beach May 20, 2019 B. Bowen

MUSSELS AND LIMPETS AND SNAILS AND TAILS

MCAS Save Our Shorebirds volunteers counted 15,329 Black Oystercatchers in MacKerricher State Park from the beginning of the program in 2007 through December, 2019 – and every surveyor has a tale or two about this restless, noisy, brassy, fearless bird.

A few favorite observations involve eating habits, which include the ability to pry enough of an opening in a mussel to insert a beak and snip the muscle that snaps the shell shut. This is a skill Common Ravens haven't mastered, even though they have tirelessly tried to imitate BLOYs. Snails and limpets also are on the bird's favorite food list, although we still haven't identified the orange creature about to go down the hatch in the photo above. Another behavior observed and reported is the straight-up tail tilt when the bird is highly excited or deeply focused on a noisy courtship dance.

These birds are talking to us in more ways than one. Data gathered by volunteers give us even more of their story. To see all our shorebird data, go to our Mendocino Coast Audubon Society website and click on the conservation tab. And please visit us at

www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

SOS Yearly BLOY Avg. 2007-2019

	Avg.# BLOY Per Survey	# Surveys When BLOY Observed	Total BLOY Sightings
2007	2.86	187	534
2008	4.28	176	753
2009	4.91	190	933
2010	4.73	139	657
2011	4.47	244	1,091
2012	4.34	215	933
2013	4.07	159	647
2014	5.71	221	1,261
2015	6.06	281	1,702
2016	7.58	229	1,736
2017	7.25	223	1,617
2018	7.88	236	1,860
2019	7.23	222	1,605
Yr.Avg.	5.63	2,722	15,329

FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS



photo by Save Our Shorebirds

2020 OYSTERCATCHER SURVEY TRAINING

Are you interested in learning more about Mendocino Coast Audubon's Black Oystercatcher surveys? Would you enjoy watching the circle of life for these iconic birds as they raise their young along our coast? You are invited to attend our brief survey training session on Saturday, April 25, at the Russian Gulch State Park recreation hall. There will be several important changes to the survey protocol this year, so all volunteers are encouraged to attend. For more information, contact Terra Fuller or Dave Jensen.

21ST ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERS POTLUCK DINNER & AWARD CEREMONY

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020

6:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

St. Anthony's Hall

10700 Lansing St. Mendocino

Come celebrate the recipients of the Matt Coleman Environmental Service Award with our fellow environmental partners at this year's potluck dinner and award ceremony. Please bring a beverage and a dish to share. Make it zero waste by bringing your own plate, cup, and utensils.

A flyer for the Mendocino Environmental Partners 21st Annual Potluck Dinner & Award Ceremony. The flyer has a decorative border with green leaves and yellow flowers. The text is centered and includes the event title, date, time, location, and a list of award recipients. At the bottom, there are logos for Mendocino State Park, Mendocino Land Trust, and Mendocino Coast Audubon Society, along with contact information for Mendocino Land Trust.

MENDOCINO ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERS
21st Annual
POTLUCK DINNER & AWARD CEREMONY

Help us celebrate this year's
Matt Coleman Environmental Service Award recipients:
Betty Stechmeyer, Lenny Noack & Tom Wodetzki

6 - 8 P.M. MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020
ST. ANTHONY'S HALL
10700 LANSING STREET, MENDOCINO

Please bring a beverage and a potluck dish to share.
We encourage you to bring your own plate, cup and utensils
to cut down on waste.

Contact Mendocino Land Trust for more information 707-962-0470

FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

OWLING FIELD TRIP SATURDAY 7, MARCH 2020 5:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

Meet in Elk at the parking lot across from The Elk Store at 5:45 p.m. We will carpool and head up the ridge, returning around 9 p.m. 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

ARCATA MARSH & HUMBOLDT BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SATURDAY & SUNDAY APRIL 11 + 12, 2020

Now is the time to start planning for our April field trip to see the birds of Arcata Marsh and Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Tentative plans are to leave Fort Bragg on the morning of Saturday, April 11, and carpool to the Arcata Marsh, where we can observe shorebirds during the afternoon high tide.



Blue Heron by Ron LeValley

Sunday morning we will tour the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife refuge before birding our way back home. Overnight options include an affordable VRBO if there is sufficient interest. This field trip will occur only a few days prior to the famed Godwit Days Festival, so we expect to encounter plenty of shorebirds.

Contact Dave Jensen at 326-8815 or djensen@mcn.org for more information.

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

120 N. Harbor Drive
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

CALENDAR

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 Dinner and Awards* 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

St. Anthony's Hall, 10700 Lansing St. Mendocino. See page 3 for more information.

Wednesday 18 - *Early Bird Walk 8:30 a.m. - Noon**

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA.

APRIL 2020

Saturday 4 - *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.

Wednesday 8 - *Audubon Society Board Meeting* 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Contact Tim Bray for more information.

Saturday 11 + Sunday 12 *Field Trip to Arcata Marsh and Humboldt Bay*

For more information see page 6 or contact Dave Jensen at 326-8815 or djensen@mcn.org.

Wednesday 15 - *Early Bird Walk 8:30 a.m. - Noon**

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

Monday 20 - *Audubon Society Meeting* 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Caspar Community Center

Presentation by Terra Fuller "Birds, Plants, and Streams: Surveys and Restoration in Mendocino State Parks"

Saturday 25 - *Oystercatcher Survey Training* Russian Gulch State Park recreation hall.

Contact Terra Fuller for more information.

**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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Newsletter Editor	Megan Smithyman	mesmithy@gmail.com	

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
P.O. BOX 2297
FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

