



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- May 2020



State Parks closed all beaches in mid-March and Save Our Shorebirds surveys in MacKerricher State Park were suspended. Pictured are 9 of a flock, or “tangle,” of 10 Red Knots recorded on an SOS survey May 13, 2019 on the rocks near the Ward Avenue ramp. B. Bowen Photo

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

TIM BRAY

The news, it seems, is all bad lately. Caught up in a global pandemic more severe than any of us have experienced before, we are all obsessing over “the virus” and its ramifications, to the point where we sometimes forget we are only a part of this world. But then we glance outside and see the birds we love so much, going on about their business according to the eternal cycles of migration and breeding, and are reminded once again of how much life there is beyond our own experience.

How many migrant birds have you seen in your yard this past month? The winter birds have departed and the summer breeders are arriving daily. Our latest arrival was Black-headed Grosbeak, who are now taking their turns at the sunflower seeds along with the Jays, Finches, and Acorn Woodpeckers. Accipiters have been moving through, hungry as ever, providing magnificent views as they perch in the garden and watch for unwary songbirds. Allen’s Hummingbirds arrived in force early in April, and I think the females are already

Continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

<i>President’s Corner</i> <i>By Tim Bray</i>	1-2
<i>Conservation Action</i>	3
<i>MCAS Board</i> <i>Appointments 2020</i>	3
<i>Save Our Shorebirds</i> <i>By Becky Bowen</i>	4
<i>Global Big Day</i> <i>The Cornell Lab</i>	5
<i>Book Nook</i>	6
<i>Audubon Scholarship</i> <i>Award Winner</i>	7-8
<i>MCAS Calendar</i>	9
<i>MCAS Board</i> <i>of Directors</i>	10

Continued from page 1

nesting. Bluebirds are not nesting yet, but they are vigorously (and hilariously) defending their nest-box against the recently-arrived Violet-green Swallows. Barn Swallows also just arrived, and are already inspecting last year's nesting places, talking to each other all the while. Purple Finches are singing, along with Hutton's Vireo (you call that a song?) and the Pacific Wren occasionally belts one out (now THAT's a song). All this magic is happening so close you can see and hear it without even going outside.

Did you try Adam's yard-birding game, as described in our last newsletter? It's been a fun new way to think about what you're seeing, more than just tallying species. Birding sometimes gets too simplified, reduced to identification - as complex and difficult as that may be - with less emphasis on just watching and noticing all the other details that make birds so endlessly fascinating. Being forced to look at the same birds every day for a month can help you observe more closely. Try to distinguish individuals of the same species, using their voice, movements, habits, and plumage details. The closer you look, the more you might see. Developing the habit of looking closely at each individual bird will improve your birding skills and make you better prepared when we are once again able to go on birdwalks and field trips. Perhaps the best part though, is that it can help you see and appreciate the birds on their own terms, as individual beings with their own lives, not just names on a checklist.



*Tree Swallow from 2019 Navarro field trip
Photo by Adam Hutchins*

May is a fantastic time for such careful observation. The birds have established their breeding territories (though there are still many disputed areas) and are thereby somewhat more restricted in their movements. They are now getting down to the serious business of wooing mates, breeding, and nest-building. Males are displaying and singing and doing all the things one must do when the females are choosy. Some have it a little easier; they only have to rendezvous with the same mate as last year, if that pairing succeeded. Females meanwhile are inspecting potential nest sites, and by the end of the month they will be incubating or even feeding newly-hatched young. That triggers a frenzy of food-gathering, as she (with or without the male's help) must suddenly procure much more food than her own requirements. Watch carefully and you may notice when that occurs.

When you can take your eyes off the birds, be sure to let us know what you're seeing. Comments are welcome on our Facebook page, where content is added almost every day. You can send questions or observations to me at audubon@mcn.org. The Mendobirds e-mail list is a good place to share particularly interesting observations, or get answers from expert birders; to join, go to <https://groups.io/g/Mendobirds>. You will always find the latest information about MCAS activities at: mendocinocoastaudubon.org and www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon

AUDUBON CONSERVATION ACTION

Becky Bowen

In late April, the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society sent a letter to the City of Fort Bragg citing significant environmental impacts of a proposed hotel north of the city.

Plans for the new Avalon Hotel include three buildings, 65 rooms, a 63-seat restaurant, a 28-seat bar/lounge, an event center where guests can hold conferences or weddings, parking for some 70 vehicles, and a public access trail from Highway 1 across the hotel property to the haul road in MacKerricher State Park. The city Planning Commission has scheduled a public hearing about the project on May 13, 2020 at Town Hall. Commissioners will recommend action to the City Council on the Coastal Development Permit, design review, use permit, and merger of two parcels at the site west of Highway 1 between Ocean View Lodge and Geo Aggregates (the former Baxman Gravel Company).

The MCAS letter says the Mitigated Negative Declaration has not adequately considered the cumulative impacts of this project to the existing and potential future hotel developments in the same general area west of Highway 1 in the city limits of Fort Bragg.

Among recommendations to the commission are installation of a view-friendly barrier between the proposed hotel and State Park property that will discourage use of numerous social trails across parkland to the water's edge, a request for an Environmental Impact Report, and use of bird-safe glass for the hotel windows.



*Pectoral Sandpiper, September, 2018, on the SOS Trestle Loop Trail near the Avalon Hotel site.
B. Bowen photograph*

The letter cites a significant decrease in the average number of sightings of watchlisted shorebirds in the last three years in MacKerricher State Park. Shorebirds active in the area near the proposed hotel property include Wandering Tattlers, Marbled Godwits, Surfbirds, and Black Turnstones as well as nesting Black Oystercatchers. The Dorothy King Young Chapter of the California Native Plant Society also submitted a letter addressing concerns about the impact of the project on coastal and bluff habitat. The city of Fort Bragg has initial jurisdiction for approval of Coastal Development Permits within city limits.

MCAS BOARD APPOINTMENTS FOR 2020

Tim Bray

In the April newsletter we published the report of the Nominations Committee recommending Pam Huntley as the new Education chair, and Becky Bowen (incumbent) as Conservation and SOS chairs. Our by-laws require Board members be elected at a regularly-scheduled meeting of the membership, typically in May. Current circumstances prevent us from conducting such meetings in the foreseeable future. The by-laws do allow for temporary appointments by the President for up to one year. Therefore, I am appointing Pam Huntley and Becky Bowen to the Board, with the Committee assignments as recommended. When we are able to conduct scheduled meetings again, we will provide notice and conduct a vote in accordance with our by-laws.

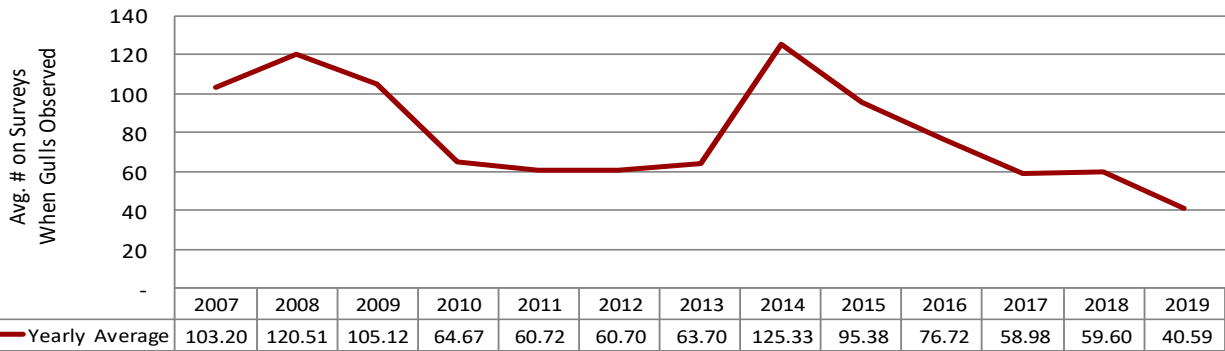
Please join me in welcoming Pam and Becky to the Board, with gratitude. I would also like to personally thank Sarah Grimes for her years of dedication to our Education program and to the Board. Enjoy "retirement" and I hope to see you on the beaches

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen

WHERE HAVE ALL THE YOUNG GULLS GONE?

Save Our Shorebirds Observations - All Gulls Yearly Average 2007-2019*
 Glass Beach, Virgin Creek, Ten Mile Beach, Trestle Loop, Lighthouse Loop
 MacKerricher State Park, Mendocino County, CA



Shelter in place has given us a chance to mine Save Our Shorebirds data and we've dug up some facts that we have overlooked for 13 years. SOS surveyors are encouraged to count all birds and our gull observations are usually gathered in a "gull sp." tally (with the exception of Bonaparte's and Heermann's Gulls). At right is a summary of gull sp. data. A quick look at the North American Bird Conservation Initiative 2016 Watchlist indicates the Western Gull (a familiar and year-round resident) has a numerical designation of 13 (a designation of 20 is a bird in critical decline). A 13 does not put the Western Gull on the watchlist, but it puts the gull into a category of birds with small populations (an estimated 77,000 breeding birds) with a limited range. Scientists indicate birds given a 13 should be carefully monitored. According to Cornell University's All About Birds website, Western Gull populations declined from 1966-2015. Our counts started in 2007 and they reflect a similar pattern with an uptick in 2014, followed by steady decline

*Note: Trestle Loop and Lighthouse Loop added to SOS survey routes in 2014. Does not include Heermann's, Bonaparte's Gulls. Source: SOS Data Sheets, SOS eBird Species Totals

SOS Observations-All Gulls*

Yearly Average 2007-2019

Source: SOS Data Sheets, SOS eBird Species Totals

	Yearly Average	Total Gull Sightings	Total # Surveys
2007	103.20	28,586	277
2008	120.51	33,622	279
2009	105.12	29,644	282
2010	64.67	13,711	212
2011	60.72	19,370	319
2012	60.70	17,482	288
2013	63.70	15,543	244
2014	125.33	43,239	345
2015	95.38	34,624	363
2016	76.72	21,175	276
2017	58.98	17,399	295
2018	59.60	19,012	319
2019	40.59	14,045	346
Total	79.96	307,452	3845

* Does not include Heermann's, Bonaparte's Gulls

through 2019. The Heermann's Gull, with a 16 designation, is on the watchlist. We'll be following these stories, and others, when we resume our surveys—as soon as MacKerricher State Park is open to the public.



Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you, and this year is no different. While not everyone may be able to leave home to bird this year, Global Big Day is still an opportunity to check in with the birds in and around where you live. Join us on 9 May and be a part of a global birding community by sharing what birds you see around you with eBird.

Participating is easy. Wherever you are, you can be a part of the global community of birders on 9 May. Please remember to always put safety first and follow all local safety guidelines and closures. You can enjoy birds from inside your home and still be part of Global Big Day.

If you can spare at least 5 or 10 minutes, report your observations to eBird online or with our free eBird Mobile app. If you have more time, submit checklists of birds throughout the day at different times. Can you find more birds in the morning, or the evening? You never know what you might spot. Your observations help us better understand global bird populations through products like these animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science.

How to participate

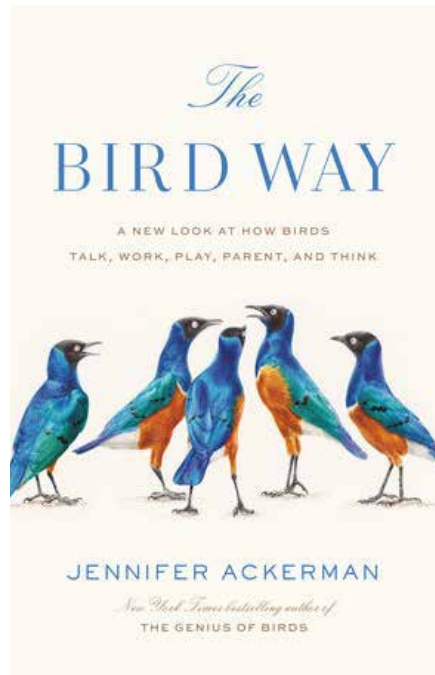
Get an eBird account: eBird is a world-wide bird checklist program used by millions of birders. It's what allows us to compile everyone's sightings into a single massive Global Big Day list—while at the same time collecting the data to help scientists better understand birds. Sign up here. It's 100% free from start to finish.



Watch birds on 9 May: It's that simple. You don't need to be a bird expert or go out all day long, even 10 minutes in your backyard counts. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone. You can report what you find from anywhere in the world.

Enter what you see and hear in eBird: You can enter your sightings via our website or download the free eBird Mobile app, which makes adding what you see even easier. You can enter and submit lists while out birding, and the app tracks how far you've walked so you can focus on enjoying the birds. While you're downloading free apps, try out the Cornell Lab's Merlin Bird ID app for help with identification. Please enter sightings before 13 May to be included in our initial results announcement.

BOOK NOOK



Penguin Random House Press release for *The Bird Way* by Jennifer Ackerman

From the New York Times bestselling author of *The Genius of Birds*, a radical investigation into the bird way of being, and the recent scientific research that is dramatically shifting our understanding of birds – how they live and how they think.

“There is the mammal way and there is the bird way.” But the bird way is much more than a unique pattern of brain wiring, and lately, scientists have taken a new look at bird behaviors they have, for years, dismissed as anomalies or mysteries -- What they are finding is upending the traditional view of how birds conduct their lives, how they communicate, forage, court, breed, survive. They are also revealing the remarkable intelligence underlying these activities, abilities we once considered uniquely our own: deception, manipulation, cheating, kidnapping, infanticide, but also ingenious communication between species, cooperation, collaboration, altruism, culture, and play.

Some of these extraordinary behaviors are biological conundrums that seem to push the edges of, well, birdness: a mother bird that kills her own infant sons, and another that selflessly tends to the young of other birds as if they were her own; a bird that collaborates in an extraordinary way with one species – ours – but parasitizes another in gruesome fashion; birds that give gifts and birds that steal; birds that dance or drum, that paint their creations or paint themselves; birds that build walls of sound to keep out intruders and birds that summon playmates with a special call – and may hold the secret to our own penchant for playfulness and the evolution of laughter.

In these dispatches from the bird world, there are lessons for us humans as our world adjusts to startling new circumstances. Birds, it turns out, can be masters at cooperation and collaboration. They prove adaptable to circumstances like food shortages and invasive predators, and some show signs of adapting to the conditions of climate change. *THE BIRD WAY* invites us to slow down, look out the window, and learn from the flurry of activity and intelligence that surrounds us in the avian world.”

Local Review:

“In her new book, Jennifer Ackerman showcases various aspects of what we think of as typical bird activities. She re-examines these behaviors to show the remarkable strategies and intelligence underlying these activities. We learn that birds can deceive, will kidnap, collaborate and even can be altruistic. The anecdotes she adds are engaging. I found this book to be a delightful read and my appreciation for our feathered friends increased more than I ever thought it would.”

~ Charlene McAllister

**MENDOCINO COLLEGE BIOLOGY STUDENT
TAYLOR WOODRUFF
RECEIVES AUDUBON SCHOLARSHIP**

If all goes according to plan in these wildly unpredictable times, Taylor Woodruff will soon pack her bags and head to California State University Long Beach to study marine biology. Ms. Woodruff is the recipient of the 2020 Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Brandon Pill Memorial Scholarship, a \$1,000 annual award to a Mendocino College science student.

Like many college students in this time of covid-19, she has adjusted and changed gears in order to stay the course. For one thing, she is learning how to learn again by “attending” classes – and probably graduation – in a virtual setting.

It’s not the first time she has changed her academic plans. Her parents encouraged her to pick a science major when she graduated from Clear Lake High School in 2015.

“Realizing that Mendocino College had a nursing program and the college is close to home, I immediately starting taking classes in the fall and continued until I finished the prerequisite courses for the Registered Nursing program.

“I applied for the program, knowing it was a slim lottery chance to be accepted. While waiting, I took an extra class working towards the rest of the college’s required classes for graduation or transferring. I also thought it might be a good idea to take a couple of online nursing classes through Woodland/Yuba Community College. I quickly realized nursing wasn’t my passion.

“I started thinking about a field that had to do with science and conservation...but what? I have always loved animals above all others and I feel like I need to protect them. That’s when I realized I need to be a biology major and help animals. So I started thinking more. What’s my favorite animal? It has always been sharks!”

Shifting gears again, Ms. Woodruff entered the biology program at Mendocino College. The new classwork sent her in yet another direction – straight to the south Mendocino Coast to conduct in-field studies at the college Field Station, an ocean bluff research facility surrounded by the California Coastal National Monument Point Arena-Stornetta Unit. The Brandon Pill Memorial Scholarship is funded by MCAS and presented to the student by Friends of the Mendocino College Coastal Field Station and Natural Sciences, an affiliate of Mendocino College Foundation.

“I absolutely love the field station.,” she says. “I have been out there for my environmental science, zoology, and botany courses...and now I am heading in the right direction.”

Taylor was accepted to admission to Cal State Long Beach, home of a well-respected Shark Lab, where researchers study physiological and behavioral ecology of marine animals and the impact of human activity on the ocean. Their mission is to work toward conservation and restoration of depleted populations.



MCAS scholarship recipient Taylor Woodruff with her dog, Link, who turned four on Earth Day.



"All sharks are special and extremely important to the marine ecosystem. This is why I will be happy studying any type of shark."

Ms. Woodruff is quick to thank her Mendocino College professors for her accomplishments. "One professor has helped me more than anyone. My biology teacher, Brianna Zuber, has gone above and beyond. She has helped me perfect my resume, encouraged me to apply to specific internships and scholarships, taught me about the beauty of biology, and has been the best resource and reference. With her support and encouragement, I know I am heading into the right field. I must also give thanks to Sue Blundell, Steve Cardimona, Gregory Allen, Marcus Frederickson, and Rachel Donham, for being amazing professors."

"Taylor has a cumulative GPA of 3.869," Dr. Cardimona says. She has had numerous field excursions to our Field Station near Point Arena and recently took it upon herself to become a certified open water scuba diver in order to follow her dream to do under-water research and help in shark conservation."

Dr. Cardimona says Ms. Woodruff is the first member of her family to attend a four-year college. She is a native of Lakeport. After graduation from an architectural trade school, her mother worked at the Lake County Courthouse and a local contracting firm. Her father has taken some college courses as well. He currently works as a caregiver. She has a younger sister and an older half-sister.

Her pursuit of a college education pivoted away from campus suddenly this spring when covid-19 sent all California college students into a virtual campus. "I'm doing alright. I miss being on campus...I am in the second semester of organic chemistry...and am saddened knowing we have to switch to online lab simulations, but they seem to be pretty educational so far. It's just not quite the same. Some classes are continuing lectures online using Zoom, while other teachers post all the information into modules where...we teach ourselves. I try to pretend I am sitting in the classroom, and I stick to the same lecture schedules to stay on top of note taking and self learning. This helps me stay motivated so I don't fall behind."

We don't think Taylor Woodruff will fall behind. And we think she is done with all her academic gear-changing. We asked her what she thought she would be doing in 2030 "In ten years, I hope to be done with school and in the water studying sharks and helping to conserve them....This is what I want to do."

Judy Steele is chair of the MCAS Scholarship Committee. Committee members in 2020 were Charlene McAllister, Sarah Grimes, and Becky Bowen.

CALENDAR

Due to the Shelter-in-place Orders enacted in response to the COVID-19 virus, all public events, meetings, and group gatherings are suspended. State and County restrictions on movement and gatherings currently preclude scheduling any field trips, birdwalks, or other group activities in May. The rules are being revised, but we do not have enough information to make plans at this time, so all May activities have been canceled.

June activities will depend entirely on what the new County orders allow. We will try to notify you through the e-mail list, Facebook page, and the Mendobirds list as soon as we are able to schedule events again.

JUNE 2020

Saturday 6 - *Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 a.m. - Noon**

Wednesday 10 - *Audubon Society Board Meeting* T.B.D.

Will be conducted remotely on Zoom. Contact Tim Bray for more information.

Saturday 13 - *Kayak Birding the Noyo River with Liquid Fusion Kayaking*

9:00 am - 12 noon. Pending resolution of County Health orders.

Contact Liquid Fusion at (707) 357-0081 to verify and make a reservation.

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

JULY 2020

Sunday 5 - *Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 a.m. - Noon**

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

AUGUST 2020

Sunday 2 - *Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 a.m. - Noon**

Saturday 8 - *Bird Walk* 9:00 a.m. - Noon**

Wednesday 12 - *Audubon Society Board Meeting* T.B.D. Contact Tim Bray for information.

Wednesday 19 - *Early Bird Walk* 8:30 a.m. - Noon**

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

Walks will only proceed if the Gardens are open to the public at the time of the event and all safety precautions are followed. These walks are free, but there is an entry charge for participants who are not Garden members. Non-members can request a "Guest of Audubon" discount. Meet in the parking lot. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a hat and water.

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

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

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	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	fullerterra@hotmail.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

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

