



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- December 2022

RECENT SIGHTINGS

by Roger Adamson



*Snow Bunting found by Chris Lamoureux on Noyo Headlands Park.
Photo by Roger Adamson.*

On October 28 a Rose-breasted Grosbeak was found at the Stanford Inn just outside Mendocino Village (SM, DY, JP, TU). The females are so similar to Black-headed Grosbeak that I suspect many Rose-breasted go undetected. Also on 10/28, yet another Tropical Kingbird was reported, possibly the eighth one this season (AR, ES). A Snow Bunting was sighted on 11/01 at Noyo Headlands Park by Chris Lamoureux (CL). This was only the fourth of this species seen in Mendocino County reported on eBird. It stayed several days in the same location giving good views to numerous birders. Incredibly, Chris refound the (same?) bird about a week later just north of Ward Avenue in Cleone. A Red-necked Grebe found on Lake Mendocino 11/03 was notable for being inland (GG). Rachel Lawrence from San Francisco who had come to Fort Bragg to find the Snow Bunting (successfully) reported a Tennessee Warbler in Rose Memorial Cemetery on 11/04 (RL). Rachel is doing a California Big Year and currently has seen 438

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Peregrine Falcon photographed on the "Raptor Run" field trip by Joanne Abramson. More on page 4.

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species across the state. Perhaps the weirdest sighting of the month was on 11/09; a Short-eared Owl was seen from Arena Point out over the ocean, apparently being harassed by a Peregrine (TB, CK). A Pigeon Guillemot in winter plumage was seen from Laguna Point on 11/10 (RA); these birds are mostly well offshore and north of here by November. Late on 11/12 during the Raptor Run field trip to the south coast, we found a Long-tailed Duck in the Garcia River (TB, RA, TM, CL). A Slate-colored form of Dark-eyed Junco came to a home feeder in Willits on 11/14 (MC). Laguna Point held a Rock Sandpiper among numerous Surfbirds at high tide on 11/14 (CL). A Chipping Sparrow and a Black-throated Gray Warbler, both notably late in the year but not terribly unusual, were reported at Ukiah Water Treatment Plant 11/15 (GG). However, in the same report was an excellent find, a Blackburnian Warbler (GG). Only the second county report for Blackburnian, it was well-photographed by George Gibbs but not refound by other birders.

Thanks to the following for their reports: Suga Moriwaki (SM), David Yee (DY), Janet Petsche (JP), Tom Uslan (TU), Alex Rinkert (AR), Elena Scott (ES), Chris Lamoureux (CL), George Gibbs (GG), Rachel Lawrence (RL), Tim Bray (TB), Catherine Keegan (CK), Roger Adamson (RA), Tess McGuire (TM), and Mike Curry (MC).

RECAP OF 2022 BLACK OYSTERCATCHER SURVEYS

By Dave Jensen

For the twelfth year in a row, volunteers from your chapter monitored the breeding success of Black Oystercatchers along our coast. Fifteen volunteers covered ten territories from Laguna Point to the Navarro River. The first survey began on May 4 and the last observations were collected on September 21.

Surveyors monitored 59 nesting sites, some of them historic nesting locations and some of them new to the survey. This year we found 39 nesting pairs. Nine pairs renested after their initial effort failed. A total of 38 chicks successfully hatched. However, young Oystercatchers face many perils including Ravens, Peregrine Falcons, River Otters, human disturbance, waves, and the treacherous terrain of their rocky islands. Of the 38 chicks that hatched, only 16 survived long enough to fly.

It is important to note that this is not just a local study of Black Oystercatcher reproduction. Our volunteers follow a specific protocol and their results are entered into an Audubon sponsored database, along with those from other groups in Oregon and throughout coastal California. Similar to the Christmas Bird Count results, this data is available to academic researchers and others who study avian and coastal dynamics.

We would like to thank the following volunteers for their invaluable assistance: Roger Adamson, Alison Cebula, Terra Fuller, Jim Gibson, Bill Heil, David Jensen, Marissa Johnston, Peggy Martin, Charlene McAllister, Tess McGuire, Art Morley, Gail Nsentip, Linda Perkins, Sonya Popow, and Marcy Snyder. And finally, a very special note of thanks goes to Amelia Schall, who again served as Volunteer Coordinator and Organizer Extraordinaire for this year's effort.

	2020	2021	2022
Nesting Pairs	53	51	48
Chicks	46	47	38
Fledged	13	24	16

COUNTING BIRDS FOR SCIENCE AND FUN

By *Tim Bray*

Audubon's Christmas Bird Count is the largest and longest-running citizen-science effort in the world. Started by Frank Chapman in 1900, it quickly became a popular alternative to the "side hunt" of the 19th century. Last year almost eighty thousand people participated in the Count.

Participants join field teams, or bird their own yards, within a defined circle 15 miles in diameter. The goal is to identify and count every bird you see within the circle in a 24-hour period. Some of us start in the early morning darkness, calling and listening for owls, and sometimes linger after dark hoping for just one more. Others just pop out for a couple of hours in the morning, or even stay indoors and count birds through the window. It's all good and it all counts!

We conduct two Counts on the Mendocino coast. The Manchester count, now in its 47th year, includes the coast from Elk south to Lighthouse Point. It will be held on Monday, January 2, 2023. Contact David Jensen, djensen@mcn.org to participate.

The 11th Fort Bragg Count will be held on Monday December 19, 2022 from the south bank of Big River north to Little Valley Road. If you live anywhere within that region, you can participate simply by counting birds in your yard. Or you can join a team birding in the field – walking, driving, bicycling, kayaking, and possibly taking a boat out to sea. At the end of the day we will meet for a Count Dinner and tally up the finds. Contact the Compiler: Tim Bray, tbray@mcn.org for team assignment, checklist and protocols, or the location for the Count Dinner.

Using eBird for the Fort Bragg CBC

eBird is an online database of user-submitted bird observations. It is a convenient way to record your personal observations and turn them into data for scientific study. Find out more about it: <https://ebird.org/about>

If you use eBird to record your sightings, you can easily add them to the Count by joining the CAFB Trip Report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/86072>

You can join the Trip Report at any time before, during, or after Count Day, but it's best done in advance. Once you join, any checklist you submit for December 19 (midnight to midnight) will automatically be added – you don't have to remember to share it.

Some tips on using eBird for the CBC:

1. One person on a team should submit a checklist for all the birds counted by the team. Make sure the team leader knows who is keeping the checklist, and if possible review it with the whole team before submitting. Make separate checklists for each different route or spot.
2. Please enter the level-of-effort data (number in party, hours, distances, methods) as "Comments" in each checklist. I need this information to complete the data entry for Audubon, so if you don't include it I will track you down. Alternatively, you can fill out the field data form with the required information and give it to me at the Count Dinner.
3. The mobile app uses the GPS in your phone (if it has one), which will use a lot of battery power. If you are planning to use it in the field all day, you can either turn off the "Record Track" feature when you first open the app, or plan to recharge your phone. You can get a pocket-size battery pack that will recharge your phone in the field.

FIELD TRIP REPORT "RAPTOR RUN" By Tess McGuire

Nov. 12, 2022

Nine intrepid birders gathered at the top of Navarro Beach Road Saturday morning despite the rainy weather forecast. Our first stop south of Navarro Point netted two Peregrine Falcons, several Red-tailed Hawks, two American Kestrels and a brief look at a Cooper's Hawk as it flew past us. Off to a great start!

Our next stop was the mouth of Elk Creek. There we found a female Hooded Merganser, three Spotted Sandpipers, and about 25 Brown Pelicans on the offshore rocks, but no Bald Eagles. Somewhat disappointed, we moved on - only to be surprised by a gorgeous adult Baldy as it came up right in front of us around the next curve in the road. From there we worked our way down the coast, stopping at turnouts to find hawks in the fields. At one stop we counted sixteen Red-tailed Hawks, and watched as one bullied a Ferruginous Hawk for the vole it had just caught.



*Bald Eagle, second year plumage.
Photo Roger Adamson.*

After a brief lunch stop at the end of Kinney Road, we walked out to Manchester State Beach to find 30 Snowy Plovers and about 250 Sanderlings below us on the sand. Mixed in were a few Dunlins. Still no rain, so we kept going. All along the way, there were plenty of Red-tailed Hawks (fifty total for the day), American Kestrels (16 total), and three more Peregrine Falcons. Ferruginous Hawks were somewhat sparse, we saw only three, and, unlike last year, we couldn't find a Rough-legged Hawk.

We went out Stoneboro Road where we stopped to admire a beautiful male Northern Harrier. Near the end of the road, a second-year Bald Eagle flew right over us (see photo). Hunters Lagoon had a nice selection of waterfowl: Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, one Ring-necked Duck, a beautiful Red-necked Grebe still in breeding plumage, a Western Grebe, and Pied-billed Grebes. We also found two more adult Bald Eagles perched in a tree. At this point, it really looked like we might get rained on but then the clouds moved off to the east and we were spared.

Our last stop was the Garcia River mouth at Lighthouse Point. Ducks everywhere: Cinnamon and Green-winged Teals, Northern Shovelers, Pintails, a Ring-necked Duck, Surf Scoters and 15 Greater Scaups, also Buffleheads, a few Common Goldeneyes, as well as Common and Red-breasted Mergansers that were hanging out together. Shorebirds in the form of 30 Least Sandpipers, Killdeer,

Greater Yellowlegs and Dowitchers were also present. We were all admiring the huge size difference between a Common Loon and some nearby ducks when up popped a small diving bird with a white face around a dark eye, dark cap, and dark patch below its cheek - a Long-tailed Duck! A surprising find and a great ending to a fabulous day of birding.

Actually, we weren't quite done yet. At sunset, back at our starting point at the Navarro River, we heard two Great-horned owls hooting a duet off in the distance. That brought our tally to 80 species of birds for the day.

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS*By Becky Bowen***Little Things, Big Hearts, Good Memories, Deep Gratitude**

A favorite aunt taught me that the greatest gift is a smile. Her favorite “things” included the color of leaves, rainbows, the mockingbird’s love song, the taste of rain, pecans, and lady bugs.

I thought about Aunt Earlyne when we sat down to make a list of our favorite memories of the MCAS Save Our Shorebirds program. There are 16 years of memories. Our story starts and ends with Western Snowy Plover. The little birds were the focus of a local effort of the federal recovery program for this threatened species. Early on, we learned there were other shorebird species in decline, so we added them to our data sheets. We counted all shorebirds on our surveys. More than 60 per cent of the shorebirds counted in the field were on the National Audubon/American Bird Conservancy Watchlist produced in 2007, the first year of our SOS program.

This program made us crazy about counting. We counted the number of birds, the number of surveys, the total number of miles hiked, the number of shorebird predators, and the number of disturbances (most of them human) that threatened shorebirds in MacKerricher State Park. But the most important SOS list is at the beginning of all our annual reports: the names of more than 100 volunteers who have tirelessly and cheerfully gathered and reported data.

Our volunteers are the backbone and the soul of our work. So we’ll be proposing a toast at year’s end to all the volunteer surveyors who have contributed their time and skill to our research. That research is available to schools, agencies, and the public at no charge. The 2022 SOS volunteers are Peggy Martin, Charlene McAllister, Sandy Schmidt, Jeanette Boyer, Tess McGuire, Linda Perkins, Bill Heil, Shannon Underhill, and Win Bowen.

We came a long way. We learned to input our shorebird counts into Cornell University’s international database, so our observations will continue to count whenever we go birdwatching in the future. Our work is done. The last SOS survey will be December 31. Thank you to all the volunteer surveyors from 2007-2022. You are the best people I know.

REMEMBERING WARREN WADE

*Ginny and Warren Wade receive the Matthew Coleman Environmental Service Award in 2014.
Photo by Keith Wyner.*

Warren Wade laughed just the way he claimed (with a wink) to vote: “early and often.” His laugh was loud and contagious. So it is most appropriate that we remember him with a smile and gratitude for his contributions to our community.

Warren was born September 16, 1930 in Minneapolis and died October 28, 2022 on the Mendocino Coast. His father, Warren B. Wade, was a chemist and plant manager for General Mills and his mother, Helen Freyschlag, was a school teacher.

He held five academic degrees. After earning a Doctorate of Science in Liquid Mechanics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology he went to work for TRW Inc., in Cleveland. There, he designed a fuel pump for the CFM56 engine, described by aircraft equipment manufacturer Safran as the best-selling engine in commercial aviation history. The engines were installed the Airbus (A320 family) and Boeing (737 family). When he retired from TRW Inc., he established his own engineering firm, FluidDesign Inc., where he designed or invented everything from a human heart assist pump to an oversized ravioli-making machine.

But we know him as a family man who loved his wife, his children, his home, his orchids, his church, and his books – a maker of sturdy owl boxes, the bass singer in his church choir, and a guy who loved to travel with his wife to Portal, Arizona to watch hummingbirds. His “work” here involved public service in his South Caspar community. His passions involved wildlife habitat conservation and birdwatching.

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His wife, Ginny, told us the couple first visited Mendocino in the 1980s on vacation from their home in Orange Village, Ohio. "It was love at first sight," she said.

"After that, we were really northern Californians living in Ohio," Warren said. After a stay at a Mendocino Village B&B owned by Sue and Tom Allen, Ginny and Warren asked for a trash bag to pick up refuse dumped on the Mendocino headlands after a Fourth of July celebration. Sue Allen told them no B&B guest had ever done that. She said, "You're the kind of people we'd like to see move here." Which is exactly what they did in 1994.

When they arrived, Warren and Ginny quickly became active volunteers for the Mendocino Presbyterian Church, Point Cabrillo Light Station Historic Park, the Mendocino Land Trust, the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society and other non-profit organizations.

Ginny was an Audubon Society board member for 17 years and Warren served 15 years on the same board. The couple got things done and did the hard work, often remaining in office when no one answered the invitation of the society's Nominating Committee. Warren was elected society president or "acting" president so many times that he teased the Nominating Committee (with a wink) that he was "getting dangerously close to being nominated as president for life."

Ginny and Warren were among Audubon leaders who supported public acquisition of Stornetta Public Lands on the southern Mendocino Coast as early as 2001, a movement that resulted in inclusion of those lands in the California Coastal National Monument. They actively participated in the startup of Save Our Shorebirds, a long-term MCAS conservation program in cooperation with California State Parks. They tirelessly wrote letters to support habitat conservation, progressive ideas for waste water treatment in the City of Fort Bragg, protection of Cliff Swallow nesting season during construction of Ten Mile Bridge, and protection of seabirds from Fourth of July fireworks disturbance on the south county coast.

Ginny and Warren were a team in every way. So it was fitting that the couple received the Matthew Coleman Environmental Service Award in March, 2014 in honor of their volunteer work together in habitat and bird conservation.

The honor is awarded once a year at a potluck sponsored by Mendocino Coast Audubon, The Dorothy King Young Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, Mendocino Parks, and the Mendocino Land Trust. It was an acknowledgement of the Wades' work as well as a touching tribute to Matt Coleman, a Mendocino Land Trust project manager who was murdered on the job in August, 2011.

Warren Wade taught Matt Coleman how to bird by ear at Big River until Matt "got very good and didn't need to be taught any more," Warren said.

Warren is survived by his wife of 62 years, Ginny; four children; and seven grandchildren.

EVENTS

David Jensen and Tim Bray Present:

WINTER BIRDS OF THE MENDOCINO COAST

**Slide show, Quiz, and Drinking Game
Monday, December 12 at 7:00 PM**

Via Zoom

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org



Fox Sparrow in foliage. Photo by Tim Bray.

The Mendocino coast is a winter birding hotspot, with more than 130 species regularly found on each of our Christmas Bird Counts. Instead of trying to review all of them in one presentation, and wearing everyone out, we have created a series of video tutorials on the Mendocino Audubon YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@mendocinoaudubon6053/videos> Look under "Playlists" for "Birding Tutorials." There you will find a recording of the last time we tried, and failed, to get through a slide show in under two hours. You will also find ten shorter, focused videos focused on certain taxonomic groups, providing more detail on what to look for when trying to identify these birds in the field. These let us spend the extra time to really get into the weeds on some of the more challenging aspects of birding: Raptors, Owls, Woodpeckers, Sparrows and Finches, Grebes, Cormorants, and Gulls. You can go through those at your own pace, skipping through the stuff you already know and slowing down to let the new information soak in.

Having created all that educational material, we now want to find out how well it worked, so we are going to run a photo-quiz via Zoom. We did this last year and it was a lot of fun, but the slides were too good, so everyone easily identified the birds. We all know they don't pose for us in the field like they do in those glamor photos, so this year we will throw in some slides that are a little more like real birding! Don't worry, it won't be too tough, and we grade on a curve anyway. It should be fun, informative, and a good tune-up for winter birding season.

David and Tim are the compilers of the Manchester and Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Counts, and past and current Presidents of the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society.



CALENDAR

Our field trips and birdwalks are open to anyone who is fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The Beginner's Birdwalk and the Early Birdwalk at the Gardens are continuing on the regular schedule. Our monthly Chapter presentations continue via Zoom. As always, check our website for the most up-to-date information, and keep up with the postings on our Facebook page.

DECEMBER 2022

Saturday 3 - *Beginner's Bird Walk 9:00 AM - Noon**

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

Monday 12 - *Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Chapter Meeting* 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Christmas Bird Count Preparation

Monday 19 - *Christmas Bird Count*, Fort Bragg circle (contact Tim Bray for details)

Wednesday 21 - *Early Bird Walk* 8:30 AM - Noon**

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

JANUARY 2023

Monday January 2 - *Christmas Bird Count, Manchester circle*

(contact David Jensen for details)

Saturday 7 - *Beginner's Bird Walk 9:00 AM - Noon**

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

Saturday 14 - *Field Trip* - Location TBA. Check the January newsletter for details.

Wednesday 18 - *Early Bird Walk* 8:30 AM - Noon**

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

Monday 23 - *Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Chapter Meeting* 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Corvid research presentation by Janelle Chojnacki. Join us for an in-person at the Jughandle Farm bunkhouse in Caspar. 15501 CA-1, Caspar, CA 95420

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

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon

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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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