



# The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- December 2017

DAVID JENSEN AND TIM BRAY PRESENT  
**WINTER BIRDING THE MENDOCINO COAST**

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 18  
7 P.M.**

**CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER**

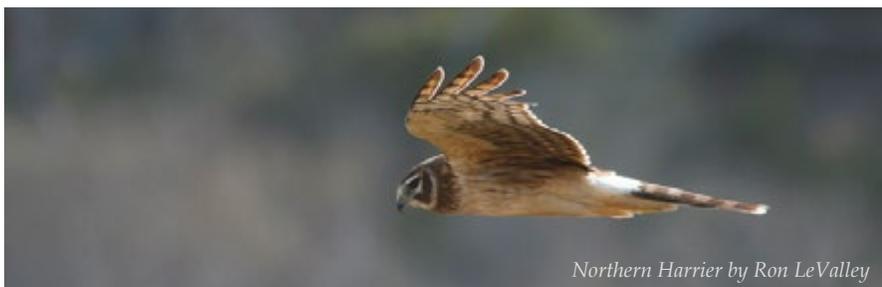


*Lincoln's Sparrow*  
Photo: Tim Bray

Our mild winters and varied habitats mean we get to enjoy a wide variety of birds all winter long. Some of them are familiar and obvious, others are furtive and tricky to identify. David and Tim will present a visual and audio guide to some of the birds they want you to find for the Christmas Bird Counts, focusing on those that can be difficult to distinguish or are easily missed. Learn to identify those

mysterious sounds in the treetops, how to quickly distinguish which "little brown job" is hopping through the bushes, and what to look for when a raptor flies past you.

This is always a fun and informative presentation that helps us all get ready for the Count season. Even if you don't take part in the Counts, you are sure to learn something that will help you enjoy the birds around us.



*Northern Harrier* by Ron LeValley

## *Inside This Issue*

<i>President's Corner</i> <i>By Dave Jensen</i>	2
<i>Christmas Bird Count</i> <i>By Tim Bray</i>	3
<i>Save Our Shorebirds</i> <i>By Becky Bowen</i>	4
<i>December/January</i> <i>MCAS Field Trips</i>	5
<i>South Coast Raptors</i> <i>By Tim Bray</i>	6
<i>December/January</i> <i>MCAS Calendar</i>	7
<i>MCAS Board</i> <i>of Directors</i>	8



*Sharp-shinned Hawk*  
Photo: Tim Bray

*The Christmas Bird Count is coming up. See page 3.*

**PRESIDENT'S CORNER****Dave Jensen**

As you read through this edition of our newsletter, you will learn that your chapter is hosting two Christmas Bird Counts again this year. The details of when, where, who, and how are clearly spelled out. Some of us will also join Peregrine Audubon's count in Ukiah on December 16. I want to explore the more interesting question: why?

Adventure. Like all bird walks, a Christmas count is a treasure hunt. On a good day you find something special; on a bad day you have a great time. Some of my best birding memories are from count days: ducks and geese in the afternoon sun on Suisun Bay, woodpeckers in the snow on Mount Hamilton, owls calling in the dark, a bobcat hunting ground squirrels in Manchester, a stormy afternoon when the Garcia River kept rising over the highway

while we watched. How well do you remember what you did last Saturday? If you join us on either count, I promise it will be a memorable day.

Exercise. If you want to burn some holiday calories, grab your hat and coat and join us. Although most territories are surveyed via short walks from multiple starting points, both local counts have territories that involve longer hikes. Those of us with limited mobility can join a team that counts from a vehicle. If you are unable to leave your house, you can still participate by keeping a feeder list. Just count the birds in your yard and send us the results. Please contact me at 964-8163 and I will send you the form.

Education. You do not need to be a master birder to join the counts. Everyone has a chance to be a productive team member. We go out in teams, and each team will have at least one experienced birder, who can identify the difficult species. If you are a beginning birder, you may want to count in the territory that includes your home or your favorite local birding spot in order to become more familiar with the species you regularly see. If you are an experienced birder, you already know that you still have a lot to learn by being in the field. If you want a refresher, come to our special pre-count program on December 18 at 7 p.m.

Fellowship. Christmas counts are social events. There is a strong feeling of camaraderie during a count day, from the time you get out of the car, sip on a hot cup of coffee and meet your teammates in the dim light of a winter morning, until the end of the compilation dinner when the last rare bird sighting is revealed. You sense that you are sharing a special experience not only with the persons on your team, but also with the others in your count circle and beyond. On that day, in the same hour, there are thousands of like-minded folk walking through woods and grasslands and city parks looking for birds and tabulating what they find.

Meaningful Scientific Contribution. Participating in a Christmas Bird Count truly contributes to our knowledge of the natural world. Professional scientists and environmental policymakers recognize the value of Audubon's database of annual CBC observations collected over a span of decades. As one example, the Manchester Count results document how the number of Whistling Swans in the Garcia River valley has decreased dramatically since 1977. On a larger scale, CBC results clearly show the gradual but undeniable effects of climate change on

*Continued on Page 3*

*Continued from Page 2*

populations of wintering birds across the continent.

In short, the Christmas counts are more than just another bird walk. Each one provides a unique opportunity to get outside, get active, learn, make friends, contribute to the common good and, especially, to have fun. So come join us.

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS ON THE MENDOCINO COAST**

**Tim Bray**

This will be the 118th annual Christmas Bird Count conducted by the National Audubon Society. There are now several thousand Count circles across the Western Hemisphere, and two of them are right here on the Mendocino coast. Teams of birders go out and count every bird they can find and identify within a circle 15 miles in diameter, within a 24-hour period. In addition, we keep track of unusual sightings during "Count Week" - three days before and three days after the actual Count Day. If you see or hear any unusual birds during the Count Week periods, please report them on Mendobirds (Yahoo! group), or on our Facebook page, or to the Compiler. All Counts



*Chestnut-backed Chickadee*  
*WikiCommons Photo: Kersti Nebelsiek*

are conducted between December 15 through January 5. Peregrine Audubon Society always holds its Ukiah CBC on the first Saturday of count season; the Manchester count is generally held in the last week; and we pick the best remaining date for the Fort Bragg count.

**The Fort Bragg Count will be held on Saturday, December 30.** The circle can be seen at [http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org/mcas\\_xmas\\_fb.html](http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org/mcas_xmas_fb.html) To participate, contact Tim Bray: [tbray@mcn.org](mailto:tbray@mcn.org) or 734-0791. There are opportunities for every kind of birding: by car, on foot, bicycle, kayak, boat, owling or feeder-watching at home. If the seas permit, we will take a charter boat out in the afternoon to find pelagic seabirds; contact Tim in advance to sign up.

Count Dinner for participants will be held at the Caspar Community Center, which will be open from 4 p.m. Tim's home-brewed beer and cider will be on tap; bring anything else you want to drink. MCAS is providing lasagna (meat and vegetarian), salads and bread, starting at 5 p.m. Please contact Tim if you're planning on attending, so we know how much food we need to provide.

**The Manchester Count will be held on Tuesday, January 2, 2018.** This circle includes areas from Elk to Point Arena. To join, contact David Jensen: [djensen@mcn.org](mailto:djensen@mcn.org) or 964-8163. The catered Count Dinner will be at Druids Hall, Point Arena, open from 4:30 with dinner available after 5:00 pm. BYOB.

You can find much more information about the coastal Counts - including slide shows of winter birds - at our website: [mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen

### THE WINTER OF OUR MALCONTENT

Shorebirds often drop down on our beaches to rest and refuel on fall migrations from the Arctic Circle to points as far south at Tierra del Fuego. Some small flocks winter here.

You'd think the birds would enjoy the open beaches and rocky perches. There is plenty of food and time to relax and fatten up before the arduous springtime flight north. Up north are breeding grounds, but here in the winter, there is no demand for macho competition (unless youngsters want to hold dress rehearsals). This should be the perfect winter getaway. But it seems shorebirds can get restless and cranky. And sometimes their feathers are not just ruffled – they're downright flying.

At right are observations recently recorded by SOS surveyors from the top down: Black Turnstones go for the eyes in a rocktop fight on Ward Avenue beach. On nearby rocks, Back-bellied Plovers fight over a saltwater bathing pool. Western Snowy Plovers have a dustup over a human footprint on Ten Mile Beach. Horse and human prints are prized as warm shelters from winter winds.

It seems life is never easy for shorebirds, even on the welcoming winter shores of the Mendocino Coast. And as my friend, Charlene tells me, there is not always peace in paradise.

*Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing year-round Mendocino Coast Audubon citizen science program in partnership with California State Parks. Volunteers conduct surveys along the entire coast of MacKerricher State Park. To learn more, contact Angela Liebenberg at [liebenbergs@mcn.org](mailto:liebenbergs@mcn.org) And please visit us at :*

[www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)



Photographs by Becky Bowen

## MCAS FIELD TRIPS DECEMBER, 2017 AND JANUARY 2018

### **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2017 ROSE MEMORIAL & PUDDING CREEK**

9 AM - Noon.

Meet at east end of Spruce Street in Fort Bragg.

The Banksia trees in the cemetery attract winter rarities, including Orioles, Sapsuckers, Warblers, and astonishing numbers of Anna's Hummingbirds. Along Pudding Creek we may hear Virginia Rail and Sora; Lincoln's Sparrow or White-throated Sparrow are also possible.

**Leader: Tim Bray**



*Red-breasted Sapsucker by Ron LeValley*

### **JANUARY 13-15, 2018 (SAT.-MON.) CENTRAL VALLEY MULTI-DAY TRIP**

Multi-day, multi-part tour through the Sacramento Valley National Wildlife Refuges, agricultural backroads, and western foothills. Spectacular views of wintering waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, and many other species.

We will divide the trip into 4 or 5 discrete tours, and you can join us at any time. Carpooling will be necessary for some of the tours. Our preliminary plans take us to the Colusa, Sacramento, and Llano Seco units; Gray Lodge; and into the western hills.

**Leader: Tim Bray**



*Sandhill Crane by Ron LeValley*

Sign up in advance to receive details and notifications if weather forces us to change plans:  
tbray@mcn.org or text (707) 734-0791

**Audubon Christmas Bird Counts:  
Saturday, December 30, 2017 Fort Bragg Circle  
Tuesday, January 2, 2018 Manchester Circle**

**FIELD TRIP REPORT - SOUTH COAST RAPTORS****Tim Bray**

This is always a good trip, but this year was extraordinary. After two days of rain, the skies cleared, the air warmed up and the raptors put on a show. At some stops we had a dozen (or more) hawks in sight at one time. Red-tailed Hawks were of course the most abundant; we tried to keep track, but after about 50 hawks we kind of lost count. American Kestrels were also plentiful, and aggressive - several times we watched them harassing Red-tails, and one even drove off a Cooper's Hawk.



*Cooper's Hawk, chased off its perch by a dive-bombing American Kestrel. Photo by Catherine Keegan*

The highlight for me was a hunting Prairie Falcon, only the second time I've seen that species here on the coast. One group also saw a Merlin streak past them, making this a four-Falcon day. At least three Ferruginous Hawks put on a show at one location, parading back and forth in full view.



*Red-tailed Hawk photo by Catherine Keegan*

Altogether we had 10 species of raptors: Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, White-tailed Kite, American Kestrel, Merlin, Prairie Falcon and Peregrine Falcon. (Eleven, if you count Turkey Vulture as a raptor; there were huge kettles of them riding thermals in the afternoon.)

When we could pull our eyes off the raptor show, we found some other interesting birds: a lone Snow Goose hanging out with some Canadas, three Say's Phoebes, a lone Brant and a flock of at least 50 Cackling Geese grazing in the Garcia bottoms.

It was a great group of birders as well, 18 of us packed into four cars so we would fit into the pullouts. Thanks to everyone for making it so much fun, and especially to Adam and David for their expertise and patience with all of us.

## CALENDAR

### December 2017

**Saturday 2 Beginner Bird Walk** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 9AM-Noon\* Leader: Dave Jensen

**Saturday 9 Rose Memorial & Pudding Creek** Rose Memorial Park 9 AM - Noon.  
Meet at east end of Spruce Street in Fort Bragg. Perfect Christmas Bird Count tune-up. Bring binoculars, wear warm clothing and walking shoes.  
Leader: Tim Bray

**Monday 18 Meeting - Caspar Community Center** 7PM  
The Christmas Bird Count(s) - Join David Jensen and Tim Bray for their multi-media refresher course on our local birds. This is a great time to ask questions and sign up for the Fort Bragg or Manchester count.

**Wednesday 20 Bird Walk** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 8:30 AM-Noon\* Leader: Tim Bray

**Saturday 30 Christmas Bird Count - Fort Bragg Circle** 9AM-Noon,  
Join fellow bird-watchers and nature enthusiasts as we try to count all the birds we can identify from Little Valley Road to Big River as part of the 117th annual Christmas Bird Count.

### January 2018

**Tuesday 2 Christmas Bird Count - Manchester Circle** 9AM-Noon

**Saturday 6 Beginner Bird Walk** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 9AM-Noon\* Leader: Dave Jensen

**Saturday 13 - Monday 15 Central Valley Refuges Field Trip**  
Multi-day, multi-part tour through the Sacramento Valley National Wildlife Refuges, agricultural backroads, and western foothills. Sign up in advance to receive details and notifications if weather forces us to change plans. Leader: Tim Bray  
tbray@mcn.org or text (707) 734-0791

**Monday 15 Meeting - Caspar Community Center** 7PM

**Wednesday 17 Bird Walk** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 8:30 AM-Noon\* Leader: Tim Bray

**Sunday 28 Coastal Trail Bird Walk - North Coastal Trail, Fort Bragg** 10AM-Noon,  
Meet near restroom at east end of parking lot at foot of Elm Street, Fort Bragg.  
Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, rain cancels.  
Leader: Dave Jensen

*\*These walks are free, but there is an entry charge for participants who are not Garden members*

**For complete calendar, updates, and useful links, visit: [mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org)  
And please visit us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon](http://www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon)**

### MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2016-2017

President	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	(707) 964-8163
Vice President, Field Trips	Tim Bray	tbray@mcn.org	(707) 734-0791
Secretary	Nicolet Houtz	nicolethoutz@gmail.com	
Treasurer	Jim Havlena	havlenas@fix.net	(707) 964-1280
Conservation, SOS	Angela Liebenberg	liebenbergs@mcn.org	(707) 962-9267
Education	Sarah Grimes	zewa@mcn.org	
Member-at-large	Terra Fuller	fullerterra@hotmail.com	(707) 964-4675
Member-at-large	Hayley Ross	hayleyhross@gmail.com	
Member-at-large	Adam Hutchins	raptorous@me.com	(707) 734-3470
Member-at-large	Judy Steele	judys@mcn.org	(707) 937-2216
Off-Board Chairs:			
Programs, Membership	Charlene McAllister	charmac@mcn.org	(707) 937-4463
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

