



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- December 2019

DAVID JENSEN AND TIM BRAY PRESENT: CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTING ON THE MENDOCINO COAST



White-crowned Sparrow

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9 AT 7:00 P.M.
GUALALA COMMUNITY CENTER
&
MONDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT 7:00 P.M.
CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER

Our two Christmas Bird Counts highlight the great diversity of habitats and bird life we enjoy here. We typically find around 140 species of birds in a single day. That's a remarkable achievement, and it takes some preparation.

David and Tim, compilers for the Manchester and Fort Bragg counts, will present a visual and audio guide to some of the birds you are likely to see, and some you might have missed if you weren't looking or listening for them. Identification is only part of the job though, and this year they will also provide some tips and slides to help you count birds.

They will also share some of the population trends that have occurred in the Manchester circle since that count began in 1976, and a few notes from the much-younger Fort Bragg count.

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

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Lincoln Sparrow by Ron LeValley

Brush up on your winter birding before the Christmas bird count. See page 3.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER**Tim Bray**

Birding and gardening - two of my favorite activities - have some things in common. Both are done outdoors, and both make you feel the changing seasons, an awareness and understanding much deeper than you get from looking at a calendar. The shift from Standard Time to Daylight Savings Time goes unnoticed by either birds or plants, both of which have already changed their behavior in response to the changing day length. You don't need a calendar to know it's Autumn when the Swallows disappear, apples and winter squash ripen, and the first Yellow-rumped Warblers arrive in your garden. When you start seeing mixed flocks of Chickadees, Kinglets, Warblers, Creepers and Vireos, you can be pretty sure it's Winter on the Mendocino Coast - even if it's sunny and warm.

So it's a bit incongruous that the great birding event of the winter season is fixed by calendar dates. The Christmas Bird Count period starts on December 14 and ends on January 5. Sometimes, this causes problems, because there are either four or five weekends during the Count period, and the fixed-date holiday (Christmas) can land on one of them. Nevertheless we persevere, and pick the date that inconveniences the least number of people. We don't even bother worrying about the weather... there's no point.

This is shaping up to be an interesting Count year. Many of you have already noticed the irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatches, a welcome addition to the woodland and backyard bird lists. Red Crossbills also seem to be showing up more than usual, and Bald Eagles are being reported almost every week. Snow Geese are at the Noyo Headlands and a Costa's Hummingbird has taken up residence in a flowery front yard. Will Orioles return to Rose Memorial, Ferruginous Hawks to Bald Hill, or Summer Tanager to Boice Lane? Or maybe you will find something unexpected, something you might never have seen if you weren't out counting birds on a cold winter's day. It's that sense of possibilities that fires me up about these Counts.

Scientifically, those rarities and vagrants are almost irrelevant. The real utility of the Christmas Bird Count is in the numbers. It can feel tedious to keep counting American Robins all day long, but those numbers are more useful to researchers than the odd warbler out of its range. The common birds provide a sort of index against which the abundance of other species can be compared, and can themselves reveal long-term changes. You have probably read of the alarming decline in total bird populations across North America, a finding that came in part from analysis of CBC data. Closer to home, data from the Manchester and Fort Bragg CBCs helped guide a journalist writing about Common Ravens on the Mendocino coast. We never know how our numbers might end up helping someone answer a question about birds.

The best and final reason to participate in a Christmas Bird Count is simply the pure joy of shared experience with your fellow birders. The Count Dinners are the culmination of that experience. I look at all the familiar faces in the room, and realize thousands of others are doing the same thing all over this continent. It's an amazing effort and I'm proud to be part of it. I hope you will join us.

Mendocino Coast Audubon Presents: **Winter Birds of the Mendocino Coast**

By David Jensen and Tim Bray

Monday, December 9th at 7 P.M. Gualala Community Center and
Monday, December 16th at 7 P.M. Caspar Community Center

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 during 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, or what to look for when a raptor flies past you.



Red-tailed Hawk, by Ron LeValley



Song Sparrow, by Ron LeValley

This is always a fun and informative presentation that helps us all get ready for the Count season. This year we will offer a special program in Gualala to highlight the Manchester Circle, Mendocino County’s original Christmas Bird Count. This year will be the 45th survey, and David will share some of the population trends that have occurred in that area since the count began in 1976. Please join us for either of these programs. Even if you don’t participate in the Counts, you are sure to learn something that will help you enjoy the birds around us.

There are three Christmas Bird Counts in the area, December 29 in Fort Bragg, January 4 in the Manchester Area, and January 11 at the Sea Ranch.

This talk is for everyone from beginners to long time bird watchers.



Photo by Becky Bowen

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS ON THE MENDOCINO COAST

This will be the 120th 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 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 or on our Facebook page, or to one of the Count Leaders.

The Fort Bragg Count will be held on Sunday, December 29.

The circle can be seen at: http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org/mcas_xmas_fb.html

To participate, contact Tim Bray: 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.

Feeder-watching will be coordinated by Johanna Jensen; contact her directly for checklist and instructions: johanna@mcn.org or 964-8163.

If the seas permit, we will take a charter boat out in the afternoon to find pelagic seabirds (and probably whales); contact Tim to sign up. This trip is open to anyone.

Count Dinner for participants will be held at the Caspar Community Center, which will be open from 4:00 pm.

Homebrewed 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 5:00 pm. Please contact Tim if you're planning on attending, so we know how much food we need to provide. Those who have dietary restrictions should be prepared to bring their own meal.

The Manchester Count will be held on Saturday, January 4, 2020. This circle includes areas from Elk to Point Arena. To join, contact David Jensen: 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



Stornetta Lands field trip photo by Jessica Morton

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen



Here are some shorebirds we hope to see on our 2019 Audubon Christmas Bird Counts: At Top, Black Oystercatchers (seen Dec. 10, 2018 at Laguna Point). Middle left, a Rock Sandpiper on the left compared to a Surf Scuppers on the right. Note the difference in size, beaks, and leg color. Rock Sandpipers are unusual here, most likely seen in winter and often in the company of Surf Scuppers and Black Turnstones (seen Jan. 11, 2018 on Ward Avenue beach). Middle right are Whimbrels. Bottom left are Black-bellied Plovers. Bottom Right is a Black Turnstone. All photos taken on SOS surveys in December/January in MacKerricher State Park. Follow what we are seeing this winter at www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

SOUTH COAST HAWKS SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 9:00 A.M. - 4 P.M.

Meet at 9:00 A.M. in the Navarro River parking area (just south of the bridge) to carpool. This is an all-day trip; bring lunch. We drive along Highway 1 and stop at a number of pullouts to scan the fields between Elk and Point Arena. These are wintering grounds for a large number of raptors, including the spectacular Ferruginous Hawk.



Ferruginous Hawk by Ron LeValley

CENTRAL VALLEY REFUGES JANUARY 2020 SATURDAY 18 - MONDAY 20

We are going back to the Central Valley again this January to enjoy the great gathering of winter waterfowl. When you've selected your 2020 calendar, mark the weekend of January 18-20. You can join us for any or all of the three-day experience. We will be staying in Williams and visiting as many of the refuges as time allows. We may also leave the valley floor to search for Roadrunners and Rock Wrens.



Sandhill Cranes by Ron LeValley

For more information, please call Dave Jensen at 326-8815.

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

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LODGE**



(707) 964-0221

120 N. Harbor Drive
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2019

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.

Monday 9 - *Southcoast Christmas Bird Count Meeting* 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.
Gualala Community Center, 47950 Center St, Gualala, CA 95445

Wednesday 11 - *Audubon Board Meeting* 6:00 p.m - 8:00 p.m.
Contact Tim Bray for more information: tbray@mcn.org (707) 734-0791

Saturday 14- *South Coast Hawks* 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Meet in the Navarro River parking area (just south of the bridge) to carpool.
This is an all-day trip; bring lunch.

Monday 16 - *Christmas Bird Count Meeting* 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.
Caspar Community Center, 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar, CA 95420

Wednesday 18 - *Early Bird Walk 8:30 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.

Sunday 29 - *Christmas Bird Count* - Fort Bragg Circle 9AM-Noon,
Join fellow bird-watchers and nature enthusiasts from Little Valley Road to Big
River as part of the 117th annual Christmas Bird Count.

JANUARY 2020

Saturday 4 - *Christmas Bird Count* - Manchester 9AM-Noon

Saturday 11 - *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 15 - *Early Bird Walk 8:30 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

Saturday 18 - Monday 20 *Central Valley Refuges Field Trip*
7:00 p.m. Caspar Community Center

Monday 27 - *Audubon Society Meeting* 7:00 p.m. Caspar Community Center
Trout Unlimited Restoration in Mendocino County

**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
Secretary	Nicolet Houtz	nicolethoutz@gmail.com	
Treasurer	Jim Havlena	havlenas@fix.net	
SOS, Conservation	Becky Bowen	casparbeck@comcast.net	(707) 962-1602
Education	Sarah Grimes	zewa@mcn.org	
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:			
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

