



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- February 2023

2023 MANCHESTER CBC RECAP

by Dave Jensen



White-crowned Sparrows on a fence. Photo by Roger Adamson.

The forty-ninth Manchester Christmas Bird Count was held on Monday, January 2. The count day weather forecast for Manchester was pretty threatening: high winds and heavy rain. Nevertheless, thirty-one volunteers grabbed their rain gear, bundled up in warm clothing and headed out to cover their assigned territories. Between the squalls, some heavy, some light, they tallied 130 species that day, along with 1 more count week bird- about average for a wet-weather count.

The notable highlights of this year's count include a Long-tailed Duck near the mouth of the Garcia River, a White-breasted Nuthatch (very uncommon along our coast) observed by Rich Trissel's team, a lone Red Phalarope, three Bonaparte's Gulls and five Tundra Swans. The teams also reported six Bald Eagles, matching last year's record total for the count.

A total of 14,606 birds were counted, with the usual suspects leading list. There were 1125 Brewer's Blackbirds, 1195 Robins, 1425 European Starlings, 1397 California Gulls, and 3850 more gulls that could not be identified to the species level.

Continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

Manchester CBC Recap 1-2
By Dave Jensen

Recent Sightings 2-3
By Roger Adamson

Central Valley Trip Recap 3-5
By Tess McGuire

Ode to Coyote Brush 5
By Becky Bowen

Global Backyard Count 6
By Esmeralda Plascencia

Programs 7

Events 8

MCAS Calendar 9

MCAS Board of Directors 10



Sandhill Cranes by Catherine Keegan. More on page 4.

Continued from page 1

Like many others, the Manchester count is a regional affair. Birders came from San Francisco, Lake County, Santa Rosa, Ukiah, and The Sea Ranch to join the hosting members of your chapter. It is this "fellowship of the field glasses" that makes these events not only possible, but so enjoyable.

Please note: The 50th Manchester Count will be held on Friday, January 5, 2024. A special celebration is planned for the compilation dinner, so please, mark your calendars and plan to attend this event. Again, my sincerest hope is that the weather will be cool, the dinner warm, and the birding hot.



RECENT SIGHTINGS

by Roger Adamson

Few rare birds appeared this month. This is not surprising because most birds have found their wintering grounds by late December and are not moving around. Several of the following reports are simply uncommon but nonetheless worthy of reporting.

A striking Rough-legged Hawk was reported on the Garcia Flats 12/28 (TB). Tennessee Warblers continue to be reported this winter with one seen at a home on Middle Ridge (TB & CK) and one on the hospital grounds in Fort Bragg (Sarah), both on 12/31. A Great-tailed Grackle appeared at the Ukiah Water Treatment Plant 12/31 (CV). A single Mountain Bluebird was spotted along Pine Ave in Potter Valley on 01/01 (KL). Rock Sandpipers are more prevalent this winter than typically, and one was seen with a large group of Black Turnstones at Glass Beach on 01/05 (LW).

Our recurring Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, three years now, has continued into the new year at the Rose Memorial Cemetery in Fort Bragg, reported 10/09 (RA). A Slate-colored variety of Dark-eyed Junco has been a reliable visitor to feeders in Willits over several weeks (MC). An unusual sighting was a mid-winter Barn Swallow on 01/14 at the Willits Water Treatment Plant (Md). Similarly, a House Wren seen at Riverside Park in Ukiah on 01/15 was unexpected for this time of year (CV).

A dark morph Ferruginous Hawk was found on Bald Hill Road on 01/24 (CL). Finally, an American Crow was recorded on the headlands at Fort Bragg on 01/18 (GG). Crows are so common as to be ignored inland, but they are extremely unusual on the coast. If you think you see one, get an audio recording or a good photo, because there are many, many mis-identifications of Common Ravens as crows.

Thanks to these birders for their reports. Tim Bray (TB), Catherine Keegan (CK), Mike Curry (MC), Chuck Vaughn (CV), Kent Leland (KL), Lisa Walker-Roseman (LW), Roger Adamson (RA), Marisela de Santa Anna (Md), Chris Lamoureux (CL), and Greg Guisti (GG).

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

Ferruginous Hawks, both dark and light morphs, have a distinctive comma at the “wrist.” Also, note that only the very tips of the first few outer primary feathers are dark for both the light and dark morph. For the dark morph Red-tail (most similar in our area to the dark Ferruginous) the dark part of the outer primaries is much longer. Photos Roger Adamson.



CENTRAL VALLEY FIELD TRIP REPORT

JANUARY 20-22, 2023

by Tess McGuire

Three intrepid birders met on Saturday morning at Granzella’s restaurant in Williams for a weekend of somewhat unsettled birding conditions. After weeks of rain and flooding, we weren’t quite sure what refuges would be open and what we would find there.

Undeterred, we headed for Colusa National Wildlife Refuge where, according to the reports posted on their website, the platform but not the auto tour route was supposed to be open. Indeed it was open, but the wind was blowing hard and the birds were widely dispersed. Only a few Greater White-fronted Geese and some American Coots, Gadwalls and Northern Pintails were braving the open water. We had more luck in the parking area where we found White and Golden-crowned Sparrows, Western Meadowlarks, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, House Sparrows, and a Belted Kingfisher.

In order to warm up we decided to cruise down Lone Star Road to see if we could find some shorebirds in the flooded fields along the way. We weren’t disappointed; Long-billed Curlews, Killdeer, a few Least Sandpipers, more meadowlarks and a lone Horned Lark were poking around in the stubble. We also drove along Two Mile Road between Maxwell and Lurline, usually a productive area for Black-bellied Plovers etc. but found nothing.

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

By then it was time to head back to Granzella's to meet up with anyone who was driving over from the coast that morning. No one showed up and so we went on to Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. Again, the birds had many wet places to choose from and didn't need to concentrate on the refuge. Particularly of note was the absence of Snow Geese. With only a few small groups of them present it was eerily quiet. We did find a Cinnamon Teal and a handful of Ring-necked Ducks, also several Common Gallinules and lots of Black-necked Stilts. Gadwalls seemed to be the duck of the year this season, but we also saw lots of Northern Pintails. A Peregrine Falcon was sitting on the telephone pole eyeing dinner. As soon as it took off all the ducks flew up as well.

Saturday morning the wind had dropped and we started out on Pass Road to pleasantly sunny conditions. A large flock of Snow and Ross's geese was grazing in the field below the dike, which made for easy viewing. We found four dark morph Blue geese in the flock. After a quick detour around the closed bridge across Butte Slough, we caught up with a group of birders from the Bay Area who'd spotted a Lewis's Woodpecker that had flown into a large oak tree. Unfortunately, we never found it. Moving on, we came across several flooded fields full of Tundra Swans, well over 500 of them. Again, gadwalls and pintails were everywhere with small groups of Sandhill Cranes grazing in the distance.



Snow Geese by Catherine Keegan.

Lunch was at Gray Lodge Wildlife Area overlooking the pond with Blue-winged, Cinnamon and Green-winged Teals and the usual assortment of ducks and geese. Across the road, from the new platform, we had a Green Heron and a Black-crowned Night-Heron, two Common Gallinules and two Hooded Mergansers. Lots of Snow Geese were at the platform at the end of the walking trail. On the way back we found our old friend the male Phainopepla flying around and vocalizing.

On to Llano Seco Unit we went, with more Tundra Swans, ducks and Sandhill Cranes along the way. Again, the ducks were thin on the ground at the refuge, but we saw a large flock of shorebirds, probably Least Sandpipers, circling in the distance, and a lone Eurasian Wigeon in a sizable flock of American Wigeons grazing on the dike. Several Northern Harriers were hunting in the fields across the road and the Sandhill Cranes were putting on a real show flying around and vocalizing. Driving back to Williams we saw one of the most gorgeous sunsets that went on and on.

Sunday morning it was just Doug Forsell and I and we decided to meet by the fruit stand at the beginning of King Road. We saw several American Kestrels hunting over the hills, crowned and Savannah Sparrows and Lesser Goldfinches, but couldn't scare up a Lark Sparrow no matter how hard we tried. The same went for the usually reliable Rock Wren at the intersection with Leesville Road even though it had been seen there just days before. We had a nice chat with former governor Gerry Brown who still remembered us from the years before and invited us to camp on his property next time. Once again, the wind had picked up and few birds were out and about. We found flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos and Western Bluebirds, but all the raptors were hunkered down somewhere. Our best find was a Loggerhead Shrike on the fence line near the turn around where we started to head back.

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

After lunch in Clearlake, we decided to try our luck at Anderson Marsh State Historic Park. No Lewis's Woodpeckers here either, but we had a pair of Wood Ducks, a Say's Phoebe, Red-breasted Sapsucker and a White-tailed Kite.

We also stopped at Clear Lake State Park. It was nice to see that the water level was high enough to make the boat ramp usable once again. We found a Black-crowned Night-Heron, more Hooded Mergansers. Despite the unsettled conditions we were pleasantly surprised at the diversity of birds we found.

ODE TO A COYOTE BRUSH

by Becky Bowen



Coyote Brush illustration by Becky Bowen

For reasons I don't quite understand, my husband and I made a decision to let Mother Nature landscape our yard when we moved to the coast and built a home twenty years ago.

It wasn't very easy. Before we could let the natural habitat take over, we had to remove non-native invasive plants. This required on-hands-and-knees weeding that brought me pleasantly close to the world of soil – where the bumblebees and ensatinas hide and American Robins find worms with deadly precision (how do they do that?).

It took a few years but we were rewarded with a wondrous mixture of blooms that spontaneously popped up. What didn't emerge from the soil was delivered free of charge by the wind. There were sundrops, brodiaea, gum plant, blue-eyed grass, pearly everlasting, native dandelions, Douglas iris, lupin, California poppies, checker mallow, red maids, lotus, sea thrift, beach strawberries, and more.

But the shining performer in this profusion of color was the good old native coyote brush. Here was the perfect provider of food, shelter, and protection for all manner of small mammals, reptiles, birds, a few amphibians, and a lot of insects. One study by S.A. Steffan, published in the *Pan-Pacific Entomologist* in 2002 described the identification of 54 insect species on male and female flowering coyote brush in the fall – ants, bees, butterflies, moths, and wasps.

Baccharis pilularis has male plants (pollen producers) and female plants (seed producers). In summer and late fall, the evergreen bush's white blooms throb with insects. Birds love it, too.

House Sparrows dart in and out of the foliage and White-crowned Sparrows nest on interior branches. California Quails take dirt baths under the bushes and at certain times of the year, we see Hermit Thrushes, Spotted Towhees, Dark-eyed Juncos, Song Sparrows, and Fox Sparrows scratching around in the leaf litter. When they arrive in town, Yellow-rumped Warblers head straight for the seeds still on the coyote brush.

What's not to love about this plant? It is green year-round, drought tolerant, deer resistant, survives in almost any kind of soil, and recovers quickly from wildfires. The only things it needs to survive and thrive are sun, rainwater, and a little judicious pruning (outside of the sparrow nesting season).

THE GLOBAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

by Esmeralda Plascencia



Snow Geese spotted during the Fort Bragg CBC on 12/19/2022. Photo by Esmeralda Plascencia.

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society and Latino Outdoors North Coast Chapter invite you to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count from February 17th to the 20th. We encourage you to participate in this four-day citizen science activity. We will be partnering for a beginner's birdwatching outing on Sunday, February 19th, 2023 from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. We will gather at Noyo Headlands Park from the W Elm St and Glass Beach entrance. This will be an easy walk for people who are interested in beginner bird watching on a family-friendly accessible trail. We will be walking along the headlands looking for birds, learning about the e-bird app, and using bird field guides. People will have the opportunity to learn about the basics of identifying birds and how to spot them. We will gladly lend some binoculars during the trip to those who need them. Space is limited, and RSVP is required: e.plascencia@latinoutdoors.org

Participating is easy, fun to do alone or with others, and can be done anywhere you find birds.

Step 1: Decide where you will watch birds.

Step 2: Watch birds for 15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days, February 17-20.

Step 3: Identify all the birds you see or hear within your planned time/location and use the best tool for sharing your bird sightings: If you are a beginning bird admirer and new to bird identification, try using the Merlin Bird ID app to tell us what birds you are seeing or hearing.

If you have participated in the count before and want to record the number of birds, try the eBird Mobile app or enter your bird list on the eBird website <https://www.birdcount.org/participate>

If you'd like to receive a paper bird checklist and submit it manually instead of online tools, then send an email to follow up with Esmeralda Plascencia (e.plascencia@latinoutdoors.org) and receive an electronic bird checklist to print and use during your birdwatching trip.

Join the Mendocino Coast GBBC 2023 trip report here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/104296>

PROGRAMS

NATHAN PIEPLOW PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS



Mendocino Coast Audubon welcomes Nathan Pieplow, professor and author of the Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds, published in two volumes, Eastern (2017) and Western (2019) to the Mendocino Coast for two workshops and programs in Caspar and Gualala.

Nathan, an avid bird sound recordist and videographer, is the author of the bird sound blog Farbirding.com, a board member of the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, an author of the Colorado Birding Trail, and former editor of the journal Colorado Birds. Nathan teaches writing and rhetoric at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Workshop: A Shared Vocabulary for Bird Sounds

In this half-day workshop you will work on advanced listening skills: paying attention to the fine details of a sound. Just as beginning birders learn the different parts of the bird and how to distinguish colors like “buff” and “rufous,” you will learn the different parts of a sound and how to distinguish tone qualities like “burry” and “polyphonic.” In the process, you will learn a common vocabulary for describing bird sounds. You will also study how to visualize sounds and read spectrograms, and what smartphone apps can best facilitate the process. No matter what your level of experience, this workshop will help you listen to sounds more analytically, describe them more accurately, and use them more effectively in identifying birds. The first half of this half-day workshop will be an indoor presentation, and the second half will be at a nearby outdoor venue.

Workshop Fee: \$36. Registration is limited to 15 and is closed once filled!

Two Mendocino County Venues:

South Coast - Saturday May 13, 2023, at 7:00AM
Mill Bend house, 46902 Old Stage Rd, Gualala 95445
Please contact Cheryl Harris cheryleharris@sbcglobal.net

North Coast - Sunday May 14, 2023, at 7:00AM
Russian Gulch State Park CA-1, Mendocino
Please contact Hayley Ross hayleyhross@gmail.com

In-Person Presentations:

South Coast - Friday May 12, 2023 at 7:00PM
Gualala Community Center 47950 Center St, Gualala 95445

North Coast - Monday May 15, 2023 at 7:00PM
Lions Club 430 East Redwood, Fort Bragg 95437

EVENTS

Robert B. Douglas Presents:

JDSF PARTICIPATION IN A BARRED OWL REMOVAL STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL

**Monday, February 13 at 7:00 PM
Lions Club hall, 430 East Redwood Street, FB.**



Robert B. Douglas is currently the State Forest Biologist for Jackson Demonstration State Forest. He has a B.S. degree in Environmental Biology from Humboldt State University and a M.A. degree in Ecology and Systematics from San Francisco State University. He has spent the past 22 years studying a variety of species and processes on timberlands for regulatory compliance, research and monitoring, and the development of long-term management plans. Robert has a broad interest in natural history, conservation biology, and forest ecology which has led him to work on diverse array of projects to better understand how disturbance influences plants, fungi, and animal populations. Over his career he has studied the belowground ectomycorrhizal fungal community in Yellowstone National Park, spotted owl nest-site characteristics, songbird habitat associations,

carnivore distribution, amphibian distribution and population genetics, and the post-fire response of redwood. His current focus is facilitating research on spotted owl-barred owl interactions on JDSF and other timberlands while navigating landowner ambivalence concerning lethal barred owl removal.

Robert will discuss JDSF participation in a barred owl removal study in the context of regional northern spotted owl population trends, societal views, conservation implications, and the future of barred owl management.



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. As always, check our website for the most up-to-date information, and keep up with the postings on our Facebook page.

FEBRUARY 2023

Saturday 4 - *Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 AM - Noon

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

Wednesday 8 - *Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Board Meeting* 6:00 PM

Monday 13 - *Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Chapter Meeting* 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Join us for an in-person presentation of JDSF Research Projects. See page 8.
Fort Bragg Lions Club Hall, 430 East Redwood Street, Fort Bragg.

Wednesday 15 - *Early Bird Walk* 8:30 AM - Noon

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

Friday 17 - Monday 20: *The Global Great Backyard Bird Count*

See page 6 for more information.

MARCH 2023

Saturday 4 - *Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 AM - Noon

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

Wednesday 8 - *Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Board Meeting* 6:00 PM

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

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

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

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2022-2023

President	Tim Bray	tbray@mcn.org	(707) 734-0791
Vice President	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	(707) 964-8163
Secretary	Roger Adamson	radamson@mcn.org	
Treasurer	Jim Havlena	havlenas@fix.net	
Education	Pam Huntley	pjhuntley@hotmail.com	
Membership	Adam Hutchins	raptorous@me.com	(707) 734-3470
Zoom Czar	Nicolet Houtz	nicolethoutz@gmail.com	
Programs	Terra Fuller	terrafuller74@gmail.com	(707) 964-4675
Programs	Hayley Ross	hayleyhross@gmail.com	
Off-Board Chairs:			
Scholarship Chair	Judy Steele	judys@mcn.org	
Field Trips	Tess McGuire	tmcguire9130@gmail.com	
Newsletter Editor	Megan Smithyman	mesmithy@gmail.com	
Social Media	Catherine Keegan	keegan@mcn.org	

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

