



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- May 2019

RON LEVALLEY PRESENTS SHOREBIRDS OF MENDOCINO COUNTY



MONDAY, MAY 20 AT 7 P.M.
CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER

In this presentation Ron LeValley will review the shorebirds that come through Mendocino County, the ones that are resident here as well as the annual migration of the birds and the identification.

Ron LeValley has been photographing nature for over forty years. He is a founding member of the Mendocino Coast Photographer Guild and Gallery at 357 North Franklin Street in Fort Bragg where his work can be seen. As a professional photographer, Ron has compiled an impressive collection (over 70,000 images) of wildlife photographs that he uses for presentations and publications. Ron's photography started back in the 1960's and has evolved with the technology of the time.

Best known for the identification and distribution of birds along the Pacific Coast, he also has an extensive understanding of a natural history subjects. He serves as an Associate Editor of Western Birds, the journal of the Western Field Ornithologists. One of Ron's outstanding attributes is sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with others.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNERby **Dave Jensen**

This will be my final opportunity to speak to you from the President's Corner. God willing, Tim Bray will relieve me as chapter president after the annual meeting in May, and for the next two years I will support him as vice-president.

I hope you will allow me an opportunity to look back over the past few years and share some of my fondest memories from the Mendocino Coast Audubon archives. One word of warning – I am currently in the juniper forests outside of Monument Valley, far from my Audubon files, so I will be relying on my aging memory for some of the following timeline. But I should be close.

There was no local chapter when I arrived in Mendocino in the fall of 1971. No programs, no bird walks, no experienced leaders to learn from. In about 1974 I purchased my first pair of binoculars from a shop in the strip mall on South Franklin near the Savings Bank. My first formal training was series of C/R weekend workshops with Sharon Johnson and the late, great David Gaines. I've told this story to many of you before, but I learned the value of patient teaching from David on our walks around Lake Cleone. We were fascinated that he could identify so many birds by their song alone and would excitedly ask, "What's that bird?" almost as if David were our new toy – an app in the days before apps. "That's a Marsh Wren" he would reply. "What's that bird?" With no hint of impatience or frustration, he would reply "That's still a Marsh Wren." Over the years, the strength of his grace has made me a much better teacher.

By the time of my first Christmas Bird Count in December of 1980, a young chapter had begun to form on the coast, but without the type of advertising we now enjoy, I missed the opportunity to become fully engaged. I left the coast in 1982 to complete my college education and became involved with chapters in Santa Rosa, Oakland, and Cincinnati.

When Johanna and I returned in 2001, I was pleased to find a strong and vibrant chapter here on the coast. I joined the walks at the Botanical Gardens led by Toby and Art Morley. I began to attend programs. I visited the bird store at the gardens and spent time with Ellen Bushansky. I met Warren and Ginny Wade, who were so gracious to me. I joined Art on the Manchester CBC. We installed a bird board at Cowlick's to announce recent sightings and birding events. The hook was set.

In 2003 I began to attend MCAS board meetings as a guest. In 2004 I was formally elected to the board. I then served as Warren's vice-president from 2005-2007 and served my first six-year tenure as chapter president from 2007-2013. I served as Joleen Osselo's vice-president for two years, then became president again from 2015 to the present.

I am so proud of what we - not me, but we- have accomplished during those years. We are fiscally secure. Our newsletter has grown and gone digital. We have increased the number of

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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regularly scheduled educational bird walks that draw locals and visitors alike. Pam Huntley's programs are broadcast across Mendocino county and into Lake County. Our education program has expanded throughout the coastal classrooms and into Anderson Valley and beyond. Becky Bowen and Angela Liebenberg turned an initial grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the National Audubon Society into our longest-running independent citizen science project, as well as an innovative bilingual educational tool distributed to classrooms throughout the area. We also have established important long-term breeding surveys for Black Oystercatchers and Pelagic Cormorants, surveys that have gained importance as the local marine environment has started to undergo unprecedented changes that affect these species. Thanks to the work of Charlene McAllister and others, we have consistently presented informative and timely programs. All these and our other activities have greatly elevated your chapter's stature in this community and throughout the entire Audubon organization.

I served on my first board of directors at the Cincinnati Nature Center in 1994 and have been on several other boards since then. Without a doubt, your chapter has had the finest, most collegial board that I have had the pleasure to work with. All credit for what this organization has achieved and has become is due solely to those board members, to the ones who came before us, and to your unwavering support of them. I wish that I could recognize each of the MCAS board members I have had the pleasure to serve with by name. Each one deserves special recognition, but I fear that I would offend one or two by failing to remember their service. Instead, I want to ensure each of them that I am humbly grateful for the help and leadership they have offered.

I have worn many hats since I returned to the coast in 2001 - ice cream maker, health inspector, Environmental Health Director, Interim Public Health Director, Marine Life Protection Act Regional Stakeholder, Northern California Chapter Representative to Audubon California Board of Directors. But my proudest title, the one I usually use to identify who I really am as a person, the one that gives me the greatest pride, is President of the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society. I want to thank you for granting me the opportunity to carry that title for ten of the past fifteen years, and I look forward to remaining a part of this wonderful team as Tim and my fellow board members bring new ideas and new energy to the organization. On their behalf, I thank you for your continuing support.





SAVE OUR SHORE BIRDS

Becky Bowen

B. Bowen Photographs

Denali Borough, Alaska June 20, 2016

What's wrong with this picture and why is the Whimbrel sitting in the shrubs? We're happy to say nothing is wrong and the Whimbrel is doing what any good parent does: s/he is guarding a nest. This photo was taken with a long lens from a distance and we didn't get close, because Whimbrels are fierce protectors of their young. Nests are on the ground – the ground in this case being the inland tundra near Alaska's Denali Highway. Food here includes insects and berries, not at all like the Whimbrel fare of sand crabs that we see consumed at the water's edge on local beaches.

Climate change has altered habitat and food sources on fragile subarctic nesting grounds. An April story in the *New York Times* says the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released data that show March temperatures in Alaska were as much as 20 degrees F. above the historical March average. For birds that time arrivals at breeding grounds to coincide with availability of insect and plant food, this kind of change can be real trouble. In March, the story says, temperatures in Alaska were so high that there was almost no ice in the Bering Sea.

Whimbrels are a shorebird of least concern according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. There is a total estimated global population of 1 to 2.3 million but the population trend is decreasing, in large part because of habitat changes in the delicate subarctic nesting areas. Wintering grounds are on six continents. So Whimbrels (there are seven subspecies) have the widest global range of any curlews.



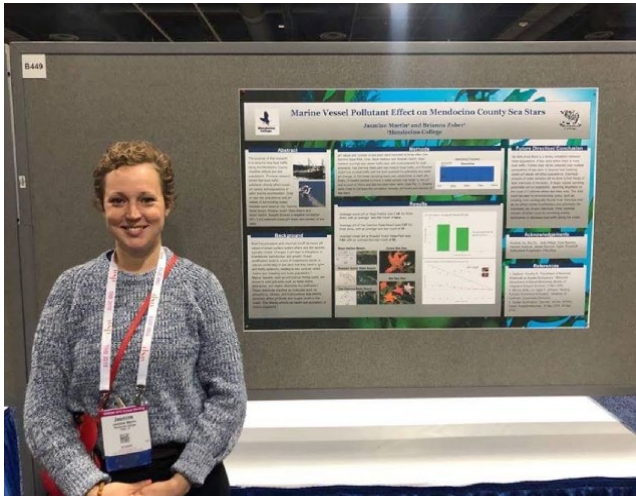
Virgin Creek Beach, MacKerricher State Park April 4, 2019

The Whimbrels we are seeing now (like the four at left counted on the April 4 SOS survey) are migrating north in fairly good numbers, sometimes in flocks of 20 or more. They are resting and refueling on journeys that take some of them more than 4,000 miles one way.

During the first 12 years of Save Our Shorebirds, surveyors recorded 15,709 sightings of Whimbrels. A few winter here, so the chances of seeing Whimbrels all year are good. The high count for one survey was July 11, 2014 on Ten Mile Beach. That count was 260.

Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing year-round Mendocino Coast Audubon conservation program in cooperation with California State Parks. Data are gathered in MacKerricher State Park and published annually on the MCAS website under the conservation tab. To see what our volunteers are observing on SOS surveys, please visit www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

Introducing 2019 MCAS Brandon Pill Memorial Scholarship Recipient



Jasmine O'Neill-Martin, of Fort Bragg, is the recipient of the 2019 Brandon Pill Memorial Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Scholarship awarded to a Mendocino College student who has completed science projects at the school's coastal Field Station near Point Arena. The \$1,000 award will be presented by the Friends of the Mendocino College Coastal Field Station and Natural Sciences.

This fall, Ms. Martin will enter Humboldt State University to study marine fisheries management. Her studies of marine organisms and plant life at Mendocino College included field work at the college Field Station. She also has participated in research at the Noyo Center for Marine Science, Fort Bragg. Last

year, she received a U.S. Department of Transportation Dwight D. Eisenhower fellowship to conduct dive research and sea star studies along the Mendocino County coastline.

The college Field Station has laboratory and overnight facilities for students who conduct coastal marine, natural science, and geological research. The ocean bluff property is surrounded by the California Coastal National Monument Point Arena-Stornetta Unit. It is supported by Friends of the Mendocino College Coastal Field Station and Natural Sciences, an affiliate of Mendocino College Foundation. A college committee coordinates educational programs and recommends facility and maintenance upgrades. Committee members are Professors Steve Cardimona, Sue Blundell, Brianna Zuber and a science student. This is the first MCAS scholarship awarded to a Mendocino College student who has participated in lab work at the Field Station. Ms. Martin has been invited to our MCAS program meeting on Monday, May 20, at 7 p.m. at the Caspar Community Center. Please come meet her and shake her hand. The MCAS Scholarship Chair is Judy Steele. Committee members are Charlene McAllister, Sarah Grimes, and Becky Bowen.



Humpback Whale— Colored pencil and black micron ink drawing by Jasmine O'Neill-Martin

FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

SATURDAY, MAY 11 NAVARRO RIVER & BEACH SP

Meet at 9:00 A.M. at the park-and-ride area just south of the bridge.

Leader: Roger Adamson

We usually bird the area around the bridge first, then go to the beach and work our way back, depending on weather. Good variety of waterfowl and seabirds from the beach, and songbirds along the road (Wilson's and Orange-crowned Warblers, Warbling Vireo, Black-headed Grosbeak and Bullock's Oriole). On previous trips we have found Canada Jays and, once, Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Bald Eagles have been seen fairly regularly here in the last year.



Photo by Adam Hutchins

Tree Swallow flying low along the Navarro River during our April field trip.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10 VIRGIN CREEK BEACH

Meet at 9:00 A.M. in the unmarked parking area on the west side of Highway 1 just north of Montessori Del Mar.

Leader: Becky Bowen

We will walk out the "enchanted trail" through snag-forest and understory habitat, then head out to the beach to find shorebirds returning from their Arctic breeding grounds. On their southward migration, many birds linger on this beach and some are still in breeding plumage. This is the best time to find birds like Ruddy Turnstone or Red Knot, Pacific Golden-Plover, the rare American Golden-Plover and (possibly) the threatened Western Snowy Plover.



Pacific Golden-Plover by Ron LeValley

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

Harbor Lite
LODGE

120 North Harbor Drive
Fort Bragg, California 95437

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CALENDAR

MAY 2019

Saturday 11 - Field Trip 9:00 a.m. - Noon Navarro River & Beach - Leader: Roger Adamson
9:00 AM meet up at the park-and-ride area just south of the bridge

Wednesday 15 - Early Bird Walk* 8:00 a.m. - Noon Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA Leader: Tim Bray

Monday 20 - Audubon Society Meeting - 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Caspar Community Center
Shorebirds of Mendocino County Presentation by Ron LeValley.

Sunday 26 - Coastal Trail Bird Walk 10a.m. - Noon North Coastal Trail, Fort Bragg
Meet near the rest room at east end of parking lot at the foot of Elm Street.

JUNE 2019

Saturday 1- Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 a.m. - Noon Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

Wednesday 12 - Audubon Society Board Meeting - 6:00 p.m. Contact Tim Bray for more.

Sunday 16 - Kayak Field Trip on the Albion River- Leaders: Mary Ellen Campbell & Tim Bray
Meet at the Pacific Union College Albion Field Station at 8:30 for a 9:00 departure.

Wednesday 19 - Early Bird Walk* 8:00 a.m. - Noon Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA Leader: Tim Bray

Sunday 23 - Coastal Trail Bird Walk 10a.m. - Noon North Coastal Trail, Fort Bragg
Meet near the rest room at east end of parking lot at the foot of Elm Street.

JULY 2019

Saturday 13 - Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 a.m. - Noon Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

Wednesday 17 - Early Bird Walk* 8:00 a.m. - Noon Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA Leader: Tim Bray

AUGUST 2019

Saturday 10 - Field Trip 9:00 a.m. Virgin Creek Beach- Leader: Becky Bowen
9:00 a.m. Meet in unmarked parking area on the west side of Highway 1 just north
of Montessori Del Mar. See page 6 for more information.

Wednesday 14 - Audubon Society Board Meeting - 6:00 p.m. Contact Tim Bray for more.

Wednesday 21 - Early Bird Walk* 8:00 a.m. - Noon Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA Leader: Tim Bray

**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

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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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