



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter - November 2022

I SEE WINTER

by Tim Bray



Fox Sparrow by Roger Adamson

The wind is shaking duff out of the redwoods, turning my driveway orange. This wind feels different; it has a bite to it, and it's dry, not like the damp fog-driven winds of summer. It feels like the first winter wind. Stepping outside it smells like winter, a smoky tang from wood stoves in the clear air. A distant roar signals the first big winter swells on the ocean. I can hear winter, smell it, feel it – and see it, in the birds. Fox Sparrows are kicking away the leaves in my garden, Ruby-crowned Kinglets are twinkling in the brush, and everywhere there are Yellow-rumped Warblers. These three seem to me the most prominent and reliable harbingers of winter. I know I will be seeing them every day for the next five or six months, along with the resident Song Sparrows, Anna's Hummingbirds, and many other winter birds.

We have it good here on the Mendocino coast, with a relatively high diversity of birds all winter long. Our winter bird checklist

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Raptor Run field trip, learn more on page 6. Ferruginous hawk photograph by Ron LeValley.

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Yellow-rumped Warbler by Roger Adamson

includes more than 140 species. This is home for a lot of birds, not just a place to go to raise young. As Scott Weidensaul points out in "Living on the Wind," most migratory songbirds spend far more of their lives on their wintering grounds than in their breeding territories. Many Warblers leave their home ranges in Central and South America just long enough to fly to the breeding grounds, build a nest, raise a clutch, and see the young fledge before heading back to the warm tropics. These Yellow-rumped Warblers are a notable exception, becoming one of the commonest and most abundant birds where they winter in North America. There are often so many of them it makes finding other birds difficult, as our eyes are constantly drawn to their movements.

Out on the ocean the Surf Scoters are passing by in large flocks, sometimes more than a hundred birds in a line. Tens of thousands will continue south, but a few hundred will stay here to cheer me up after the last Brown Pelicans depart. A few Eared Grebes returned here a while ago, and now the first Horned Grebe has appeared, so once again I have to re-learn how to tell those two apart. (David's video tutorial on our YouTube channel will help: <https://youtu.be/QkSuzlmdXT8>.)

In an interesting development, Northern Fulmars have also returned, sometimes coming in close enough to be identified with a scope. These are true pelagic seabirds, roaming the wide ocean and seldom seen from shore, but last winter they were seen regularly along the Mendocino coast for several weeks. We only saw two all day on the offshore pelagic trip October 1, and only three weeks later Sarah Grimes encountered a large flock less than a mile from shore. Those birds may have been drawn by oil from a sunken Sperm Whale carcass, which is being monitored by the Noyo Center for Marine Science.

Back on land, we also notice flocks of American Robins and increasing numbers of Northern (Red-shafted) Flickers foraging in the orchards. These are year-round residents, but they disperse during breeding season and then congregate in flocks during winter. In the woods we are starting to see mixed flocks, or "guilds" as they are called, consisting of Chickadees and Kinglets and often with a Downy Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, or Townsend's Warbler loosely associating. It is thought that birds form these associations to help each other avoid predators, such as the Sharp-shinned Hawks that have also returned to the coast. The woods in winter often seem quiet and empty until you encounter such a guild.

I hope you enjoy the birds of winter as much as I do. To brush up on them, check out the videos on our YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5ed_Hf2HVRnU5DwcvKp-dg or just search for "Mendocino Audubon" on YouTube.

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Yellow-rumped Warbler by Roger Adamson

Chí mi'n geamhradh – song in Scottish Gaelic by Runrig

Chi mi'n Geamhradh anns a' ghaoith / *I see winter in the wind*
Chan eil an sneachd' fada bhuainn. / *the snow is not far off.*
Sgothan dorch 's na craobhan rùisgt' / *Dark clouds and the trees bare,*
Tha an oidhche nochd fuer. / *tonight the night is cold.*

FIELD TRIP REPORT

By Tess McGuire

October 8, 2022

On a foggy Saturday morning three birders met at Pacific Star Winery north of Fort Bragg for a leisurely Big Day. Things started out fairly quiet, but we scared up three Fox Sparrows, two Wandering Tattlers, and a Chipping Sparrow among the usual coastal suspects.

From there we moved on to the Ten Mile River mouth where a couple more folks joined us. Two Ospreys were patrolling the river and lots of Yellow-rumped Warblers popped in and out of the bushes along the way. Because of the fog we didn't find any Snowy Plovers but came across a large flock of about two hundred gulls, mostly Californias.

After a quick stop for lunch at Ward Avenue where it was still foggy, and a huge wedding party was setting up a feast we moved on to Lake Cleone where things were more interesting. Among the ducks on the water, we found a Gadwall, ten Wood Ducks, two American Wigeons, a Cinnamon and a possible Blue-winged Teal. Also seen was a Sora that was feeding in the duck weed seemingly unafraid of us, and we heard a Virginia Rail calling in the reeds.

As we lingered in the warmth and sunshine of Bald Hill Road we were treated to an American Kestrel, a Merlin, a Peregrine Falcon and a White-tailed Kite doing aerial combat over the tree tops. But the best bird came late in the day at an impromptu stop at Caspar Pond where a Tropical Kingbird was perched in the willows. It was a great ending to round off a pleasant way to spend a Saturday.

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

By Becky Bowen



Red Knot May 8, 2021

Ten Mile Beach

Did You Know?

- 48% of known shorebird populations in the world are in decline.
- 6 shorebird species are already extinct.
- 8 shorebird species are critically endangered.
- 10 shorebird species are endangered.
- 11 shorebird species are vulnerable.
- 35 shorebird species are near-threatened.
- Thousands of shorebirds are still hunted.

Sources: International Union for Conservation of Nature, Wader Quest, Wader Conservation World Watch

Here's One Easy Way to Raise Awareness and Help Save Shorebirds

9th Wader Conservation World Watch

November 5 and/or 6, 2022

Why not join in? It's simple to take part: no registration, no counting (unless you wish to).

1) Simply go out and see shorebirds (birds of the suborder *Charadrii*).

2) Tell us what you saw, where and with whom, (send us photos if you have them) by

email: wcww@waderquest.net

OR

share your eBird list(s) with user name *WaderQuestTeam*

We will then prepare a newsletter special with the list of species seen, and where, plus a roll of honour of all those who took part.

Please join us to celebrate shorebird conservation around the world.

Stand up for shorebirds and show you care.

Remember

Caring is the first step to conservation.

World Watch organizer Wader Quest <https://waderquest.net> is a registered British charitable organization that supports worldwide shorebird conservation. Shorebirds in many parts of the world are known as waders. Last year, 582 birdwatchers (including MCAS members) from 65 countries and 6 continents participated in World Watch. Some 176 species were observed on 9 flyways. To join the watch, contact Becky Bowen at caspabekc@comcast.net to pick your location for the world watch. Near-threatened shorebird species that have been observed on local beaches include: Western Snowy Plover, Red Knot, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Mountain Plover, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Many other species often seen here are on National Audubon's watchlist.



Tropical Kingbird by Roger Adamson

RECENT SIGHTINGS

by Roger Adamson

We have seen several “rare” but expected birds this month (9/29-10/23), with only a couple being highly rare. We begin with a Hermit Warbler, notable for being later than seen in most years, found 29 Sep just outside Willits (MC). An Orchard Oriole, the “best bird” of this month, was reported 10/03 near Anchor Bay, and it was only the eighth ever recorded on eBird for this county (RT). A Ross’s Goose flying over Ukiah 10/09 was rare for this early in the season (CV). Notably unusual on 10/10 was a Red-necked Grebe (RNGR) on the Gielow Pond just south of Talmadge (RK). Although common on coastal waters, RNGR are seen much less often inland. On 10/10 three rarities were reported by several observers on the Eurodam cruise ship as it passed by Mendocino County; they saw a Brown Booby, a Magnolia Warbler, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. I imagine the latter two were happy to rest a while on the ship. An American x Black Oystercatcher hybrid was photographed 10/12 on Virgin Creek Beach (BM). This was probably the same bird first seen in January this year. Also previously seen (probably!) was a Yellow-bellied

Sapsucker 10/17 in Rose Memorial Cemetery (CL). This is the third winter this bird has been at this location. We will watch to learn if it stays through the season. Somewhat later in the year than typical a Caspian Tern was found 10/18 at the Pomo Day Use area of Lake Mendocino (MS). On 10/20 a Clay-colored Sparrow made itself known at the Gualala River mouth (RT).

This has been an exceptional year for Tropical Kingbird (TK) in Mendocino. We received single reports from Usal 9/25 (CV), Kinney Rd 10/02 (CV & JW), Caspar Pond 10/08 (TM, TB, & CL), and MacKerricher State Park 10/18 (RM); on 10/19 at Caspar Pond there were THREE seen together (RA & CL). While the only breeding population of TKs in the US is in s.e. Arizona, they are widely distributed from northern Mexico to Argentina. TKs are highly conspicuous due to their habit of using prominent perches from which to sally after large flying insects. Post-breeding dispersal finds TKs all along the west coast as far north as Vancouver Island. With bright yellow on the upper breast, unlike the gray of Cassin’s Kingbird, and a slightly notched tail lacking the white edging seen in Western Kingbird or the white tip seen on Cassin’s, TKs are usually easy to identify.

Thanks to the following for their reports: Mike Curry (MC), Rich Trissel (RT), Chuck Vaughn (CV), Robert Keiffer (RK), Becky Matsubara (BM), Chris Lamoureux (CL), Michael Spencer (MS), Jerry White (JW), Tess McGuire (TM), Tim Bray (TB), Roberto Macay (RM), Roger Adamson (RA).

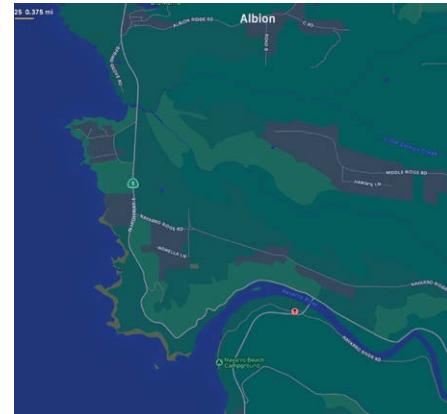
EVENTS

Field Trip - Raptor Run

Saturday, Nov. 12, 2022

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Meet at the top of Navarro Beach Rd. just south of the Hwy. 1 bridge. We will drive down Highway 1 as far as Point Arena and stop at pullouts along the way to scan for raptors and anything else that looks interesting. These are the wintering grounds for Ferruginous hawks, kestrels and White-tailed kites. Bald eagles are a good possibility as well and Peregrine falcons. This is mostly a driving trip with some walking. Bring lunch, water, binoculars and good shoes.



Grant Sizemore Presents:

DOMESTIC CAT MANAGEMENT IN MENDOCINO COUNTY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Monday, November 14 at 7:00 PM

Via Zoom

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org



wikicommons photo

Domestic cats (*Felis catus*) can make wonderful pets but are also instinctive predators whose introduction to new environments around the globe has resulted in tremendous harm to natural systems. Furthermore, domestic cats may pose serious risks to the health and welfare of other domestic animals, wildlife, and people through the transmission of a variety of infectious parasites and diseases. Effective management of domestic cats, however, is complicated by the species' close association with people, which often affords them privileges not experienced by other animals, even dogs. This talk will explore the ecological consequences of domestic cats that roam outdoors, review existing local domestic cat control policies, and identify personal and legislative solutions that could be enacted to benefit cats, wildlife, and people.

Grant Sizemore has degrees in Zoology and Environmental Science from Miami University in Ohio and an M.S. in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from the University of Florida. He has worked in wildlife conservation research, education, and policy for over 15 years and is a certified wildlife biologist. Grant is currently the Director of Invasive Species Programs at American Bird Conservancy, where he runs the Cats Indoors program. Outside of work, Grant enjoys hiking, birding, and taking care of his (indoor) cat.

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.

NOVEMBER 2022

Saturday 5 - Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 AM - Noon

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

Saturday 12 - Raptor Run - 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Meet at the top of Navarro Beach Road. More information on page 6.

Monday 14 - Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Chapter Meeting 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

American Bird Observatory - Cats and Birds

Wednesday 16 - Early Bird Walk 8:00 AM - Noon**

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

Wednesday 30 - Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Board Meeting 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Via Zoom. Contact Nicolet Houtz for link.

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 8:00 AM - Noon**

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

Monday January 2, 2023 - Christmas Bird Count, Manchester circle

(contact David Jensen for details)

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

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2021-2022

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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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