



# The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter - November 2017

DOUG FORSELL PRESENTS  
**FOUR SUMMERS IN THE  
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS**  
OR  
**WHY TUFTED PUFFINS ARE THE  
COOLEST SEABIRDS**

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13  
7 P.M.

CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER



*Tufted Puffin by Doug Forsell*

Doug Forsell is a retired migratory bird biologist who has studied seabirds for 40 years. He spent 10 years in Alaska, primarily studying the at-sea distribution and abundance of marine birds, but he also studied their food habits, colony surveys and mortality rates.

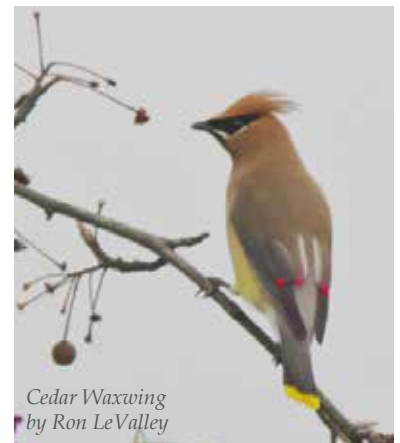
During the summers of 1980 to 1983, he was in the Aleutian Islands working on several studies, including Tufted Puffins and the then-endangered Aleutian Canada Goose.

The Aleutian Islands are a chain of 14 large volcanic islands and 55 smaller ones stretching westward from the Alaska Peninsula toward the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia, marking a dividing line between the Bering Sea to the north and the Paci-

*Continued on page 2*

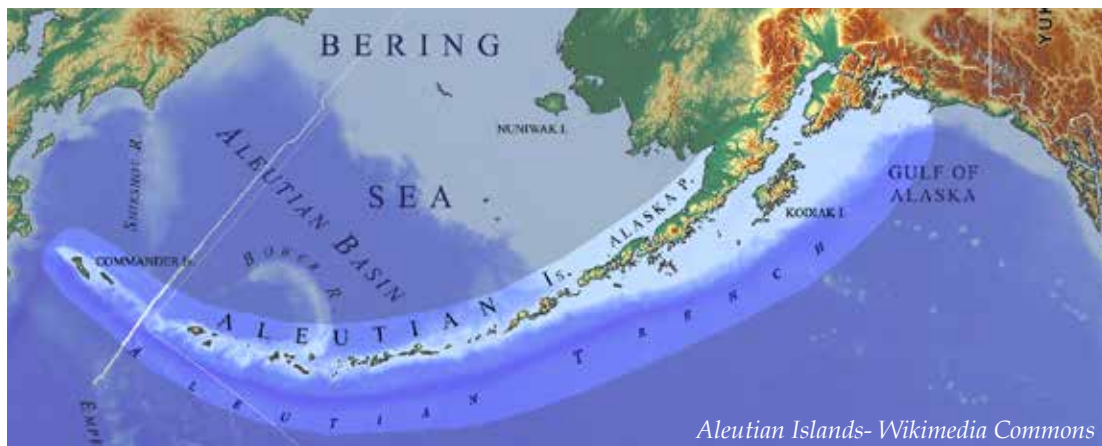
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*Cedar Waxwing*  
*by Ron LeValley*

*Are you looking forward to the Christmas Bird Count?*



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-fic Ocean to the south. These islands, extending more than 1,200 miles, are home to many large colonies of seabirds, nearly all of which are protected as part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge and the Aleutian Islands Wilderness.



*Tufted Puffin by Doug Forsell*

Before his work in Alaska, Doug received bachelor's and master's degrees from Humboldt State University where he studied the predatory efficiency and energetics of wintering Belted Kingfishers. He then worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from 1976 until his retirement in 2012. Ten of those years were spent in Alaska, primarily studying the at-sea distribution and abundance of marine birds, but also their food habits, colony surveys and mortality in high seas gillnet fisheries.

For two summers Doug was part of a team of four biologists surveying the Eastern Aleutians (the Fox Islands) by Zodiac. Their mission was to accurately estimate the distribution and abundance of nesting seabirds in order to prioritize acquisition of islands for incorporation into the Aleutian National Wildlife Refuge. They were also to identify large seabird colonies so the areas surrounding them could be excluded from planned offshore oil leases. Together, they estimated almost 2 million seabirds nested there, including three of the four largest colonies of Tufted Puffins, representing more than one third of the world population.



*Field camp on Kigul Island with Mount Vsevidof on Umnak Island in the background.  
Photo submitted by Doug Forsell*

Doug's presentation on Monday, November 13 at 7 p.m. at the Caspar Community Center, will explore the incredible wildlife and scenery of the Aleutians, the trials and tribulations of working there, and the secret nightlife of Tufted Puffins.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

**Dave Jensen**



As I write this column, it is October 15 and the wildfires are still burning out of control. Each day brings additional evacuations and stories of painful loss as well as miraculous rescue. I hope that by the time you receive this newsletter the fires have subsided, the air has cleared, and that a sense of peace and normalcy has begun to return for each of us.

Prior to my retirement last June, I was a member of the county's emergency response team. I helped set up evacuation shelters for humans and their pets in response to the fires near Leggett and in Lake County. I witnessed the psychological impact that comes with the smoke, fire, noise, isolation and confusion. This time around I have added the names of friends and Audubon leaders who were forced to flee and some who have lost everything. It's not a job this time - it's personal.

We who live close to the coast have been blessed this time around. The fires have been kept at bay and the breezes off the ocean have largely shielded us from the smoke and smell. Despite having escaped the physical damage, I recognize that these fires have taken an emotional toll on many of us. This latest set of calamities occurred at a particularly bad time, coming on the heels of threatened war with North Korea, the flooding of Houston, the devastation of Puerto Rico and the shootings in Las Vegas. It reminds me of November 1978 when the horrors of Jonestown were quickly followed by the devastating murders of Milk and Moscone. You wonder how much you can take.

I believe that we Audubon members are both vulnerable and resilient in such stressful times. We are vulnerable because we care. We care for life in all its many forms. We care for the health of the environment. We care for one another. We are offended by hurt, abuse and injustice. We care.

But we also speak out and stand up for what we believe. We are quick to answer a call for help. We work together to preserve those things that are dear to us, be they birds in a threatened landscape or neighbors under attack. We share a vision of a better world where birds survive and people thrive. We care for the world that we will leave to our children. We care.

So as we transition from October, Northern California's unofficial month of natural disasters - Loma Prieta earthquake, Oakland Hills fire, and now this - and enter November, our designated month for giving thanks, please take a few minutes to step outside, relax and reflect. The loons, the scoters, the sparrows have returned again this fall as they have for more than a million years. Through volcanoes and ice ages and earthquakes and wars and every catastrophe known or imagined, the heartbeat of life goes on. This year will be no different.

We are truly blessed to live in this beautiful area. With that blessing comes the responsibility to do all we can to protect and preserve its resources for the future. And to love and help one another. Thank you for being a part of the Audubon family. Thank you for supporting one another.

**SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS****Becky Bowen****WHERE THE BLOYS ARE****AND THE PLOVERS, TURNSTONES, SURFBIRDS AND KILLDEER, TOO**

Fall migration is over, but some of the best beach bird-watching happens between now and March. Here are suggestions from our surveyors about where to find some of our favorite shorebirds in the next few months. All areas are located in MacKerricher State Park.



**BLACK OYSTERCATCHERS**—Often gather in large social groups on rocks at Laguna Point (south observation platform).

**KILLDEER**—Recently, we have seen or heard up to 12 Killdeer on Virgin Creek Beach, especially on the small rocky cove at the north end of the main beach next to the creek.

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS**—For the past several years, a large wintering flock has foraged either on Virgin Creek Beach or the high beach between the Ward Avenue ramp and the seal rookery.



**SURFBIRDS AND BLACK TURNSTONES**—Glass Beach is the best place to find these birds, either on the nearshore rocks or the kelp deposits on the main beach.



**WESTERN SNOWY PLOVERS AND SANDERLINGS**—Good-sized wintering flocks forage up and down Ten Mile Beach in Inglenook Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Preserve. For information or State Parks permission to take groups into the preserve, contact Senior Specialist Environmental Scientist Terra Fuller at District Headquarters: (707) 937-3689.

No dogs are allowed on Virgin Creek Beach or in Inglenook Fen-Ten Mile Dunes Preserve. Please help our shorebirds by respecting the posted dog signs in the park.

Pictured from top: Black Oystercatchers, Black-bellied Plovers, Killdeer, Surf-bird. Photographs by B. Bowen

*Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing MCAS citizen science program in partnership with State Parks. To learn more about our surveys in MacKerricher State Park, please contact Angela Liebenberg at [liebenbergs@mcn.org](mailto:liebenbergs@mcn.org) and please visit:*

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

## MCAS FIELD TRIPS NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 2017

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2017**

### **SOUTH COAST RAPTORS -**

Meet at 9 AM in the Navarro River parking area (just south of the bridge) to carpool. This is an all-day trip; bring lunch.

We will drive along Highway 1 and stop at a number of pullouts to scan the fields between Elk and Point Arena, wintering grounds for a large number of raptors, including Ferruginous Hawk.

**Leaders: Tim Bray, Adam Hutchins, and David Jensen**



*Ferruginous Hawk photo by Ron LeValley*

**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**



*Anna's Hummingbird - Wikimedia Commons*

**Please hold these dates for our Audubon Christmas Bird Counts:**

**Saturday, December 30, 2017 - Fort Bragg Circle**

**Tuesday, January 2, 2018 - Manchester Circle**

**FIELD TRIP REPORT****Tim Bray**

October 9, 2017

Plans for the Hawk Hill field trip began falling apart even while we were assembling for the van ride, as we got snippets of news about fires and highway closures. Information was sparse and there was much uncertainty, so we headed out Highway 128, but by the time we reached Boonville it was clear we would not be going anywhere on Highway 101.

We decided to try going over 253 to Ukiah and birding the wastewater treatment plant. That turned out to be a good call – there was actually very little smoke down on the valley floor, and the birding was good. Ryan Keiffer was just finishing up his tour as we got there, and he pointed us to some good birds, including a Blue-winged Teal. A pair of adult Peregrine Falcons put on a nice show nearby.



*Peregrine Falcons spotted on 10/9  
photo by Terra Fuller and Tim Bray*



*Blue-winged Teal photo by Alan D. Wilson*

After lunch we tried for Rock Wren at Lake Mendocino, but we found no Wrens and were distracted by the spectacular view of Cal Fire borate-bombing the Redwood fire. It was a surreal experience.

On the way home, we made perhaps the best decision of the day, stopping at Anderson Valley Brewing Company for some much-needed refreshment. We shared the bar with a group of people who had barely evacuated from north Santa Rosa as the Tubbs fire bore down on their homes.

It was certainly the craziest Audubon field trip I've ever been involved with, and I am grateful to the participants for making a good day of it, in spite of our anxiety over the events happening to the north and south of us.



*A DC-10 tanker jet drops a load of fire retardant. Photo by Alan Rogers*

## CALENDAR

### November 2017

**Saturday 4 Beginner Bird Walk** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 9AM-Noon\* Leader: Dave Jensen

**Saturday 11 South Coast Raptors Meet** at 9 AM in the Navarro River parking area (just south of the bridge) to carpool. This is an all-day trip; bring lunch.

Leaders: Tim Bray, Adam Hutchins, David Jensen

**Monday 13 Meeting** - Caspar Community Center 7PM

Speaker: **Doug Forsell**, a retired USFWS biologist will be sharing his tales of working in the Aleutians.

**Wednesday 15 Bird Walk** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA 8AM-Noon\* Leader: Tim Bray

**Sunday 26 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

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

*\*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 |
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| 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 |
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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  
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