



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- November 2018

DANIEL POLESCHOOK, JR. & GINGER POLESCHOOK PRESENT STATUS AND CONSERVATION OF COMMON LOONS IN WASHINGTON



Image by Daniel Poleschook, Jr. and Ginger Poleschook

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12 AT 7 P.M.
CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER**

Common Loons are a charismatic species of high intrigue to many people. Like so many other birds, their reproductive success is challenged by many factors, some being natural, while many others are from anthropogenic sources. Common Loons have had their breeding range retracted from northern California to northern Washington in the previous 50 years.

The location of the small population of nesting Common Loons in northeast Washington is the area where we have studied the reproductive stressors for the species at the present southwestern edge of their breeding range in North America. What subsequently turned into a large-scale conservation effort for Common Loons in northern Washington began for us as a photographic quest in 1996.

Our presentation will focus on the determinations we have made of the status of Common Loons in Washington, the conservation efforts that were applied there for the species, and the results – all of which were successful – of that work.

Continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

Cover Article 1-2
By Daniel & Ginger Poleschook

Bob the Loon 2
By Becky Bowen

*President's Corner &
Why Birds Matter* 3-4
By Dave Jensen

Save Our Shorebirds 5
By Becky Bowen

November / December 6
MCAS Field Trips and Events

November / December 7
MCAS Calendar

MCAS Board 8
of Directors



Bird-friendly beef? Learn more in this month's President's Corner on page 3.

STATUS AND CONSERVATION OF COMMON LOONS IN WASHINGTON*Continued from page 1*

Daniel Poleschook, Jr. and Ginger Poleschook are a team that has been studying Common Loons in Washington for more than two decades. In addition to their Common Loon work, they photograph other waterbird species and provide their images to scientific journals and book publications. They have previously presented their work over 40 times to nearly all of the Audubon Societies and other conservation groups in the Pacific Northwest and in other regions.

Migration of Common Loons to and from our study area is a special interest of the species, as the optimum modeling of conservation efforts for the species needs to consider the inclusion of breeding, wintering and migration regions. Knowledge of migrations of Common Loons that breed



Image by Daniel Poleschook, Jr. and Ginger Poleschook

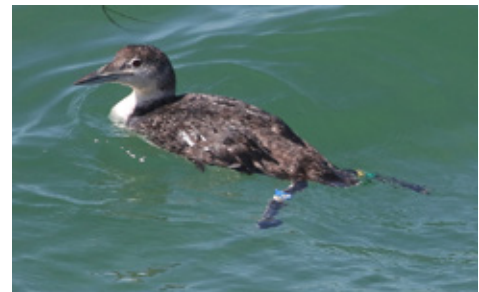
in northeast Washington has recently been enhanced by observations made of a juvenile Common Loon we assisted with banding at Swan Lake, WA on July 19, 2016 (see image left).

Notice the yellow / green legbands on the right leg that that were emplaced as a conservation measure about six weeks earlier. The same bird was observed following its migration by MCAS member Becky Bowen along the Mendocino Coast of northern California on June 30, 2017. Banding, by providing positive identity, has been the most important conservation tool for acquiring knowledge of Common Loons in western North America.

BOB THE LOON

It's not every day that you meet a Common Loon named Bob, but that's exactly what happened to me on the June 30, 2017 Save Our Shorebirds survey on MacKerricher State Park's Trestle Loop trail. It was a perfect day with perfect light and clear water. At the top of a bluff north of Pudding Creek Beach in Fort Bragg, I photographed a Common Loon banded in Okanogan County, Washington.

I'm looking forward to meeting the people who banded Bob and learning more about him. I've had the pleasure of corresponding with Daniel and Ginger Poleschook since the Bob sighting and have come to appreciate the story--and desperate plight--of the Common Loon in North America. Hope to see you at our November program meeting in Caspar when Daniel and Ginger share their stories and their knowledge about these special birds.

Becky Bowen

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dave Jensen

Bird-friendly beef? At our fall meeting in Modesto, the Audubon California Board of Directors received the following information that I would like to share with you. This program heralds a viable solution to the historic tension between cattle and birds:

Birds are an important indicator of overall ecosystem health, and grassland bird population trends show that our grasslands are in trouble. Grassland obligate birds have declined more severely than any other suite of North American birds. Population estimates for 24 species have decreased by more than 40% since 1968.

Here in California, many of our remaining grassland habitats are part of 41 million acres of rangelands provide habitat, food production, carbon sequestration, as well as water infiltration and storage. However, this historic California land use is under threat with an average of 20,000 acres a year being lost to development or crop conversion. Climate change, invasive species, aquifer depletion, and poor grazing practices also degrade large portions of these grasslands, increasing ecological vulnerability. To address the decline in grassland bird species, Audubon must work to stop the conversion of rangelands, while also partnering with land managers to improve the management of these grasslands for birds and other wildlife.

Audubon has created its Conservation Ranching program in response to this urgent need to stem the loss of grassland ecosystems and improve the ecological functions of rangelands by assisting rancher transition to more regenerative grazing approaches via a ranch certification program. Regenerative grazing is a method of raising livestock that is focused on increasing biodiversity, improving soil health, protecting watersheds and restoring ecosystem function by managing the density, rotation and timing that animals graze. Studies have shown that regenerative grazing practices increase grassland drought resiliency, rebuild soil organic matter, enhance plant diversity and cover, increase water infiltration and carbon sequestration, and increase overall biodiversity - all of which benefit bird populations.

To expand the pace, scale, and permanence of adoption of regenerative grazing practices by ranchers, Audubon created a market-based incentive for producers. The Audubon Conservation Ranching (ACR) is designed to reward land managers who implement and maintain regenerative grazing practices through the development of robust self-sustaining markets. ACR program includes the development of ranch-specific Habitat Management Plans and a third-party certified set of regenerative grazing practices to create ecological resilience. This can translate into economic resilience, as participating producers will then be able to use the Audubon Bird-friendly Beef certification logo on their product - providing a market incentive to landowners to enroll in this program through increased sales or revenue.

Ranches that enroll in the ACR program follow regional protocols that include standardized rules and expectations that must be met for ranch certification. Principle among these is adherence to an Audubon-approved Habitat Management Plan (HMP). An HMP is created in partnership with the land manager for each ranch and tailored to each grazing operation. These protocols provide a framework for participating producers to sustainably manage farms and ranches by meeting specified practices for forage consumption, animal health & welfare, and environmental sustainability for the benefit of grassland bird species. An annual third party verification process will assure consumers that products from Audubon-certified ranches meet program protocols.

To date, this program has been focused on the Great Plains, with 42 participating ranches representing over 600,000 acres of private ranchlands enrolled across 9 states in the Central Flyway. The ecological results from the ACR pilot are promising. Sites in Missouri had three times more biodiversity after enrollment in the program and a fivefold increase in bird density. These early findings demonstrate the potential positive impacts of this program.

We know that grassland bird conservation is inextricably linked to management practices on millions of acres of rangelands, the vast majority of which are privately owned or operated in California. Significant grassland habitat enhancement can only be achieved through cooperative approaches that work with

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

the ranchers that live and work on these lands. This strategy is the foundation of Audubon California's decade long Working Lands Program and we have significant expertise on staff. Additionally, the practices promoted through the ACR program have been strongly linked to carbon sequestration and increasing climate resiliency. Recent research identifies California grasslands as more reliable and resilient carbon sinks than forests and encourages California to lead the way in using grassland management and preservation as a tool to meeting our climate goals.

There is tremendous opportunity in California. We are the fourth largest cattle producing state in the country, we have ambitious statewide climate goals, we are in dire need of land management that increases resiliency to drought and fire, and we have one of the largest markets for conservation-minded consumers who are likely to pay a premium for sustainably raised and labeled products. All of these factors create a need and opportunity to bring the ACR program to California. In the next year, we will be starting the program using Bobcat Ranch (a few miles east of Lake Berryessa) as the first pilot demonstration site and are actively fundraising to build program capacity.

A final note: this program excludes cattle that are "finished" in the crowded feedlots that we see along Interstate 5. Audubon California hopes that this cooperative effort with ranchers will become as beneficial to grassland birds as our partnership with rice farmers and dairy farmers have been for waterfowl and Tri-colored Blackbirds.

In celebration of 2018 as the Year of the Bird, each issue of *The Black Oystercatcher* will reprint a response from one of the avian enthusiasts who were asked:



Cedar Waxwings.

Photo: Phyllis Burchett/Audubon Photography Awards

"Birds connect me to the rhythm of the natural world. Flocks of cedar waxwings announce winter in a way no calendar can. The meteorologist declares autumn's arrival, but I wait for goldfinch and junco to confirm it. Purple martin scouts arrive, chirping from the telephone wire, their oily feathers shine in the sun – spring is here, again."

– *Ben Jones, Director, Trinity River Audubon Center*

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen

A FEW UNUSUAL AND FRIENDLY BIRDS PASS THROUGH ON FALL MIGRATIONS



Photograph by Becky Bowen

For us, October was the month of the Pectoral Sandpiper. The bird is listed as unusual here in fall and extremely rare in summer. In 12 years of SOS surveys, volunteers recorded only 118 sightings – all but one of them in August, September, and October. We have a sense that some migrating shorebirds are traveling south a little later than usual this year, so there is a chance we'll see more Pectoral Sandpipers at the beginning of November.

Pectoral Sandpipers are migrating from breeding areas on the high Arctic tundra in North America and Siberia to wintering grounds primarily in South America and Oceania. Our SOS surveyors have never seen them migrate north in spring. Field guide range maps indicate this northward journey is through the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways.

Many of the Pectoral Sandpipers we currently are seeing on MacKerricher State Park beaches are fearless young birds. They don't seem to know what human beings are, so they may walk right up to you. Look for them foraging on bull kelp that recently has been deposited in large piles on our beaches. Six birds have been spotted on various dates on the Trestle Loop, Virgin Creek, and trails near Laguna Point. In other years, they were counted on the main beach at Glass Beach. They are medium-sized sandpipers with yellow legs and a distinct streaked breast that ends almost in a straight line right above a white belly. The dark beak has a yellowish base that may be difficult to see at first because the bird often feeds by poking its beak as far as it can poke into the sand that leaves behind a crumb-covered bill. These birds are not much in the table manners department, but Pectoral Sandpipers are handsome and fearlessly out-going shorebirds.

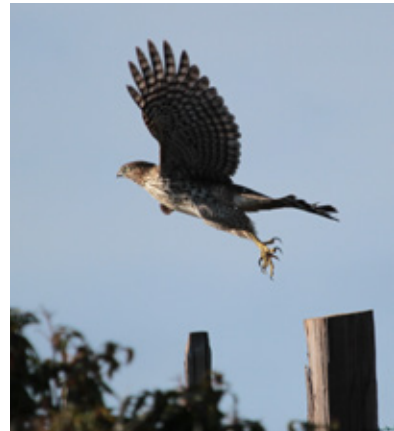
Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing Mendocino Coast Audubon conservation program founded in 2007. To learn more, contact B. Bowen at casparbeck@comcast.net And please visit us at www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

MCAS FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10 9:00 A.M. **SOUTH COAST RAPTORS** **with David, Tim, and Adam**

Meet at 9 AM Greenwood Beach State Park parking lot in Elk to carpool. Carpooling is required for this trip, as the areas we pull out to view hawks are small and only a few cars can fit.

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 Ferruginous Hawk.



Coopers Hawk by Catherine Keegan

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8 9:00 A.M. **UKIAH WASTEWATER FIELD TRIP** **300 Plant Rd, Ukiah, CA 95482**

Meet at the main building, where we will check in before birding the numerous ponds at this facility. Wastewater treatment plants often provide rich habitat in otherwise dry landscapes, attracting and holding many species of birds, and the Ukiah plant is well-known as a birding hotspot.



Lincoln's Sparrow by Ron LeValley

Please hold these dates for our Audubon Christmas Bird Counts:
Sunday, December 30, 2018 - Fort Bragg Circle
Wednesday, January 2, 2019 - Manchester Circle

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

1-800-643-2700

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2018

Saturday 3 - *Beginner's Bird Walk 9:00 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

Saturday 10 - *South Coast Raptor Field Trip* All-day trip to from Elk to Point Arena
Meet at 9 AM Greenwood Beach State Park parking lot in Elk, carpooling is required.

Monday 12 - *Meeting* 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m. Caspar Community Center
Daniel Poleschook, Jr. and Ginger Poleschook on Status and Conservation of
Common Loons in Washington.

Wednesday 21 - *Early Bird Walk 8:30 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA Leader: Tim Bray
Meet in the parking lot. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a hat and water.

Sunday 25 - *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.

DECEMBER 2018

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

Saturday 8 - *Ukiah Wastewater Field Trip* 9:00 a.m - 12:00 p.m.
Meet at 9 AM at the main building, 300 Plant Rd, Ukiah, CA 95482.

Tuesday 11 - *Audubon Board Meeting* 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.
Contact David Jensen for more information: djensen@mcn.org (707) 964-8163

Wednesday 12 - *Southcoast Christmas Bird Count Meeting* 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.
Gualala Community Center, 47950 Center St, Gualala, CA 95445

Monday 17 - *Christmas Bird Count Meeting* 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.
Caspar Community Center, 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar, CA 95420

Wednesday 19 - *Early Bird Walk 8:30 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA Leader: Tim Bray
Meet in the parking lot. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a hat and water.

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.

Sunday 30 - *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 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. 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	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	(707) 964-8163
Vice President, Field Trips	Tim Bray	tbray@mcn.org	(707) 734-0791
Secretary	Nicolet Houtz	nicolethoutz@gmail.com	
Treasurer	Jim Havlena	havlenas@fix.net	(707) 964-1280
SOS, Conservation Chair	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

