



NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDOCINO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY

“Ivory-billed Woodpecker: To Be or Not To Be”

Speaker: Robert Keiffer

Monday, January 21, 2007 7:00 p.m.

College of the Redwoods, Room 300 - Follow the Signs

Mendocino County resident Bob Keiffer volunteered, at his own expense, to be part of the Cornell University sponsored Arkansas Ivory-



billed Woodpecker 2006-07 volunteer search team and was one of nine volunteers during February of 2007 to search the bottomland forests of the White River National Wildlife Refuge. He will share a photo presentation which portrays his experience, the search methodology, the team’s finding and many other wildlife encounters. A trained wildlife biologist, Bob says “I was intrigued and amazed at the variety of habitat types and wildlife within the search area. He suggests that folks review the Cornell University IBWO website at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/ivory/> prior to the presentation.

Bob is currently the superintendent at the UC Hopland Research and Extension Center. He has been the compiler of Mendocino County bird records and county editor for seasonal reports to North American Birds for 20 years.

Table of Contents:

Monthly Meeting Notice	1	Class Schedule	3	MCAS 2007-08 Programs	6
Board Member List	2	Up and Coming Bird Festivals	3	Christmas Bird Count 2007	7
Up Date on the Point Arena		Featured Article: “A Closer Look		Bird Sightings	8
Laysan Albatross	2	At a Barn Owl!”	4	Immature Frigatebird Rescued	8
Thanksgiving Bird Count	3	Wave Energy Forum	5	Did You Know . . .	9
Report of the Nov. Field Trip	3	News from MCAS Education		Bird Walks, Field Trip	10
College of the Redwoods Spring		Committee	6		

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Up Date on the Point Arena Laysan Albatross

"Al B. Tross" as s/he is known to Point Arena residents has been visiting the Point Arena Cove since 1994. The bird was first spotted by T. Esteriala and J. Booker on Feb 28th 1994. Bob Keiffer has kept the arrival and departure record dates since then. Here is a the list of first reported arrival dates and last reported season's dates (assumed near departure) for the subsequent years:

November 30, 1994 to March 27 1995 (report of two birds in synchronized courtship flight during this period)

December 5, 1995 to March 14, 1996

December 3, 1996 to March 26, 1997

November 27, 1997 to March 8, 1998

December 12, 1998 March 21, 1999

December 4, 1999 to February 12, 2000 with a "fly by the cove" on April 2, 2000 as observed by George Chaniot (possibly same bird)

November 26, 2000 to February 26, 2001

November 28, 2001 to March 24, 2002

November 21, 2002 to March 12, 2003

November 25, 2003 to February 28, 2004

November 28, 2004 to February 21, 2005

November 26-30 2005 to March 19, 2006

November 25, 2006 to March 16, 2007

November 26, 2007 to "time will tell"

From a visitor to Point Arena Cove: Last winter, my wife and I were at Point Arena enjoying Big Al. We ended up speaking with one of the surfers, who told us that the bird was very friendly and would approach the surfers as they paddled by. Naturally, we were a bit incredulous. So he paddled on out, heading in a line that would take him by Big Al, but still about 20 yards or so away. Big Al looked over and saw the surfer, and swam right over, emitting several bizarre-sounding squawks as s/he did. The surfer then stroked Big Al's bill for a minute or two before continuing out to the waves. Amazing!

Sometimes because of really bad weather or whatever reason Al will disappear for a few days; rumor has it that Al flies up the coast to a protected cove off the Stornetta public lands, south of the light house.

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.

The Whistling Swan

Thanksgiving Bird Count:

Thanks to all of you who participated in the Thanksgiving Bird Count. A report will be published in the Whistling Swan as soon as we hear from Dr. Huston.

Report from the November Field Trip to the South Coast

It was a rainy day on November 10th but the hawks were there for us to see. The highlight was seeing 5 Ferruginous Hawks.

Osprey	1
White-tailed Kite	1
Northern Harrier	3
Red-tailed Hawk	4
Coopers's Hawk	1
Ferruginous Hawk	5
American Kestrel	15
Peregrine Falcon	1

College of the Redwoods Spring Classes

Classes run from 1/22/08-5/17/08

Trees, Shrubs, and Wildflowers, Instructor: Teresa Sholars - Mondays

Natural History, Instructor Teresa Sholars - Fridays

Environmental Oceanography, Instructor Greg Gratham. Tuesday Afternoons

Environmental Ethics, Instructor Tanya Smart Thursdays Evenings

For additional information go to:

www.redwoods.edu/Mendocino/schedule/Spring-2008

Up and Coming Bird Festivals

Snow Goose Festival

January 25-27 2008

Chico CA

www.snowgoosefestival.org



CRESCENT CITY/DEL NORTE CA.

online registration at

www.aleutiangoosefestival.org or

call 1-707-465-0888

Come join the "Celebration of Wildness" on the extreme coast of northern California. Experience an in-depth extended weekend MARCH 28-30, 2008 in the home of Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area, by choosing amongst the sixty (60+) workshops/fieldtrips led by experienced, qualified guides. Outstanding birding, geology, Native American Heritage and more. Keynote speaker for this year's celebration is Humboldt State University's Professor Stephen Sillett, the leading researcher in the study of the canopy of the towering redwoods. Recently featured in Richard Preston's best selling book "The Wild Trees" . Professor Sillett will share his passion for his work in the fog-shrouded tops of the world's tallest trees.

Godwit Days

April 17-21 2008 Arcata, CA

Join the flock at the 13th annual Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival April 18-20, 2008 at the Arcata Community Center in Arcata, CA. Pre-and post-festival events are offered to extend your birding enjoyment. Choose from over 100 field trips and workshops and browse the vendors at the bird fair. An extraordinary birding adventure awaits you between the redwoods and Humboldt Bay! Go to www.godwitdays.com for more details and to register on-line www.godwitdays.com

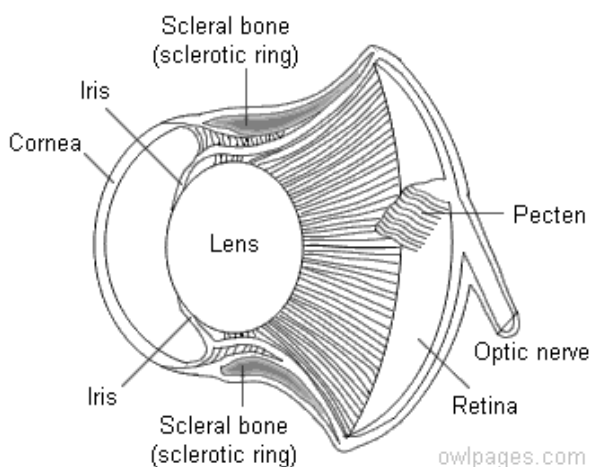
A Closer Look at the Barn Owl

By Don Shephard

Arthur Cleveland Bent called the Barn Owl “a most efficient living mousetrap” and quoted Mrs. Irene Wheelock who wrote of her observations of a Barn Owl nest in 1904, “...sixteen mice have been carried to the brood in twenty-five minutes, besides three gophers, a squirrel, and a good-sized rat.” I took a closer look at the exceptional vision and acute hearing that give the Barn Owl such success in hunting. Couple the sight and hearing with powerful talons and beak, plus the ability to fly silently, and you have a formidable, stealthy predator.

The forward facing aspect of the eyes gives a Barn Owl a wide range of "binocular" vision. This means the owl can see objects in three dimensions (height, width, and depth), a talent not available to birds with side-mounted eyes. The field of view for an owl is about 110 degrees, with about 70 degrees being binocular vision. By comparison, humans have a field of view that covers 180 degrees, with 140 degrees being binocular. A Barn Owl's eyes are large in order to improve their efficiency, especially under low light conditions. In fact, the eyes are so well developed, that they are not eye *balls* as such, but elongated tubes.

Cross-section of an owl's eye



They are held in place by bony structures in the skull called Sclerotic Rings.



For this reason, a Barn Owl can only look straight ahead. But it has fourteen vertebrae in its neck while you and I have seven. This allows the owl to turn its head through a range of 270 degrees something I envy while backing up my car. The retina of an owl's eye has an abundance of rod cells that are sensitive to light and movement, but do not react well to color, and few color-sensitive cone cells so they see mostly in monochrome.

Because Barn Owls are generally active at night, they have highly developed hearing. The ears are located at the sides of the head, behind the eyes, and are covered by the feathers of the facial disc. The Barn Owl's range of audible sounds is not unlike that of humans, but its hearing is much more acute enabling it to detect even the slightest movement of their prey in leaves or undergrowth. Barn Owls have one ear higher than the other. Their pronounced facial disc acts like a "radar dish", guiding sounds into the ear openings. The shape of the disc can be altered at will, using special muscles. When a Barn Owl hears a noise, it is able to tell the direction because of the minute time difference in which the sound is perceived in the left and right ear. The Owl then turns its head so the sound arrives at both ears simultaneously - then it knows the prey is right in front of it. Owls can detect a left to right time difference of 30 millionths of a second.

A Barn Owl can also tell if the sound is higher or lower by using the asymmetrical or uneven ear openings. The left ear opening is higher than the right - so a sound coming from below the line of sight will be louder in the right ear. The translation of left, right, up and down signals are combined instantly in the Barn Owl's brain, and create a mental image of the space where the sound source is located. Once the Barn Owl has

The Whistling Swan

determined the direction of its next victim, it will fly toward it, keeping its head in line with the latest sound the prey creates and making corrections mid-flight. When about two feet from the prey, the Barn Owl will bring its feet forward and spread its talons in an oval pattern to increase the chance of a successful strike.

Unlike other birds, the comb-like feather edge effectively muffles the sound of the air rushing over the wing surface and allows the owl to fly silently, stealthily and to use its hearing to locate potential prey.

As Mrs. Wheelock wrote in 1904 and Arthur Cleveland Bent noted in his "Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey", once seen or heard, a mouse has little chance of escape from such a well equipped hunter. Bent's book first published in 1938, and its companions, are favorites on my book shelf to this day.

MCAS received the following invitation from the City of Fort Bragg and we urge you attend to learn about this important issue.

**PUBLIC INVITED TO ATTEND
WAVE ENERGY FORUM
IN FORT BRAGG ON
SATURDAY, JANUARY 19TH**

"The City of Fort Bragg and Mendocino County are hosting a free, day-long Wave Energy Forum on Saturday, January 19, 2008 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Dana Gray Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room located at 1197 Chestnut Street in Fort Bragg. The Wave Energy Forum is intended to provide information to the community about wave energy from a variety of stakeholder perspectives. Speakers include: Industry representatives (wave energy technology developers and PG&E), State and Federal agencies entrusted with protecting marine resources, State and Federal regulatory agencies with permitting jurisdiction for wave energy projects.

Representatives of the commercial and recreational fishing industry, and other local community interest groups, Representatives from the State of Oregon and Lincoln County, Oregon where the wave energy development review process has advanced further than in California. The Wave Energy Forum is an opportunity for people to ask questions and get answers on a wide range of topics relating to wave energy. A buffet lunch will be provided at no cost.

Warren Wade, Chair of MCAS's Conservation Committee, will participate in the panel discussion, and other members of MCAS are planning to attend. Ocean wave energy extraction is predicted to be a significant part of our quest to reverse global warming – individuals and companies all over the world are looking to find solutions to provide non-carbon based energy. MCAS is studying the issue. Our particular concern is the effect of ocean wave energy extraction on pelagic birds and marine mammals that depend on the ocean upwelling to renew their food sources.

For more information on wave energy extraction methods and devices, please consult the following web-based references:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wave_power

[http://index.php/PowerPedia:
Ocean_Wave_Energy](http://index.php/PowerPedia:Ocean_Wave_Energy)

[http://peswiki.com/energy/Directory:
Ocean_Wave_Energy](http://peswiki.com/energy/Directory:Ocean_Wave_Energy)

<http://oscenergy.anal.gov>

News from MCAS Education Committee

Snowy Plover Program:

Angela Martin Leibenberg of CA State Parks will be conducting Snowy Plover training for Bill Lemos’s SONAR students at Mendocino High School this spring.

Aububon Story-time:

Shawn Estes is offering a story-time called “Birds Have Teeth”, focusing on birds and habitat conservation, at the Mendocino Village and Fort Bragg Community libraries that began on Saturday, December 15th and will continue on Saturdays until January 16th.

Everyone’s welcome
5 and under, please bring your parent

Times: 1:00 pm to 1:45 pm at the Mendocino Community Library

3:00 pm to 3:45 pm at the Fort Bragg Library



Radio Spots (Field Notes) on KZYX:

Pam Huntley has completed 17 bird spots on behalf of MCAS, including an Introduction spot. She can be heard on Mondays, sometime between 6:30 and 6:50 PM during the community news program. The station is looking for another time to air the spots, possibly during “All Things Considered”. KZYX is updating their website. This will include a photo of the week’s bird and a spot to select to hear Pam’s talk. There will also be a link to the MCAS website. Comments about the spots have been extremely positive.

The following is a list of the highlighted birds;

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Tundra Swan | White-crowned Sparrow |
| Red Crossbill | Belted Kingfisher |
| Acorn Woodpecker | California Quail |
| American Goldfinch | Cedar Waxwing |
| American Robin | Dark-eyed Junco |
| Osprey | Northern Flicker |
| Turkey Vulture | Steller’s Jay |
| Snowy Plover | |

The board has reviewed Pam’s radio spots and is thrilled with what she has accomplished. The spots are delightfully informative. Our hats are off to Pam for a job well done and a big thank you to KZYX for including them in their programming.

ANNOUNCING 2007-2008 Programs

- Feb 18 Pete and Judy Haggard “Insects of The Pacific Northwest”
- Mar 17 TBA – Environmental Joint Meeting, Mendocino Land Trust will host the meeting.
- Apr 21 Rich Kuehn “Birding India and Bhutan”
- May 19 Kathy Biggs “Dragonflies”

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In this issue MCAS is introducing our new newsletter banner designed by Don Shephard. Photos of Tundra (formerly Whistling) Swans by Don Shephard and Ron LeValley.

2007 Christmas Bird Count

December 29th dawned overcast and cloudy in the morning with mist and drizzle in the late morning and afternoon, but 35 intrepid CBCer's traveled to the Manchester area to count birds. Following the count the group met to compile the list and to eat the dinner prepared by Warren Wade with the help of Ginny Wade and Charlene McAllister. Unofficially we listed 131 species. A full report of the 2007 Christmas Bird Count will be included in our February newsletter. Highlights included 110 Tundra Swans, many White-Winged Scoters, Marbled Murrelets and Ancient Murrelets off Lighthouse Road, 1 Cattle Egret (mixed with many Greats and 1 Snowy) on the flats, 1 Pacific Golden-Plover, Ferruginous Hawks, 1 Merlin, Gray Jays on Cameron Road and an American Dipper that was in its usual place for Chris Bing to find. A big thank you to David Jensen for organizing the count and to Art Morley our compiler.

**A special thank you to David Jensen for organizing the count
and to Art Morley our compiler and a huge**



Photo by Ron VeValley

**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO PARTICIPATED
IN THE 108TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Chris Bing, Becky Bowen, George Chaniot, Erica Fielder, Roger Foote, Pete Joel Franks, Pete Gealey, Jim and Karen Havlena, Geoff Heinecken, Bryant and Diane Hitchwa, Richard Hubacek, David Jensen, Trudy Jensen, Ryan Keiffer, Bob Keiffer, Larry Knowles, Charlene McAllister, Monroe Robinson, Art Morley, Grace Steurer, Ron LeValley, Julie Rumble, Connie and Richard Schimbor; K. Schubeck, Marcy Snyder, Toby Tobkin, Chuck Vaughn, Warren and Ginny Wade, Cheryl Watson, and Diane Wickstrom,

In addition MCAS would like to thank the property owners who let us on their lands for the count – . . . Pauline Zamboni of Victoria Gardens, Rae Radtkey, and Dean and Patty Woffe.



Bird Sightings

12/9/07 **Marbled Murrelets** (5), **Ancient Murrelets** (3) at Little River headlands

12/25/08 **Magnificent Frigatebird?** at the bluffs at the Point Arena, (See additional information below)

1/1/08 **Redhead, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Common Goldeneyes** (2) at Ten Mile River

1/1/08 **Long-tailed Duck** (See picture next page) at Ward Avenue

1/3/08 **Black-legged Kittiwake** (5), **Rock Sandpiper** at Laguna Point

1/1/08 **White-winged Scooter** at Pudding Creek

1/9/08 **Ferruginous Hawk, Snow Geese** (4), **Cackling Geese** (125), **Canada Geese** (50+) and **Turkeys** (35) at Bald Hill Road

1/9/08 **Redhead**, female, Pudding Creek and Ten Mile

Immature Frigatebird Rescued

January 7th. “Last week’s storms have again filled the cages and pools at International Bird Rescue Research Center (IBRRC) ... and a very rare visitor – a juvenile Magnificent Frigatebird rescued from a tree in Healdsburg. The bird had apparently been blown into a tall pine tree at the Russian River Bridge over Highway 101, become entangled and unable to free itself. The rescue was perilous for both the local animal control and the bird, who was eventually freed by a local window washer with a 40 foot ladder. The rehabilitation staff and a UC Davis veterinarian determined the bird was in critical condition with a temperature far below normal and very poor blood values. It is in ICU receiving IV nutrition and antibiotics and resting.” See <http://ibrcc.org> for updates. A report on 1/10/09 stated that the bird is improving and Point Reyes Bird Observatory plans to examine this juvenile bird to make a positive identification.

Frigatebirds are large, dark water birds with long pointed wings and forked-tails and long hooked beaks. Agile fliers favoring tropical oceans, the Magnificent Frigatebird breeds mostly south of the United States, but wanders northward along the coasts during non-breeding season. It spends most of its life flying over the ocean but it rarely if ever lands on the water. It snatches food off the surface of the ocean but is also well known for stealing food from other birds.”

From Bob Keiffer, “This is most probably the bird that was seen off the bluffs at the Point Arena Lighthouse Road on Christmas Day ...and thus the pertinence to Mendocino County.”



Information and pictures from the International Bird Rescue and Research Center and the Press Democrat

Did You Know . . .

Outside My Window By Ron LeValley



Long-tailed Duck

To sign up for a free natural history Picture of the Day contact Ron at:

ron@LeValleyPhoto.com^[L]_[SEP]OR

<http://www.LeValleyphoto.com/> --

Also check this site out for archived OMW photos!

This photograph was taken on December 25, 2007 in Crescent City Harbor, Del Norte County, California. Ron's photos are amazing as you can see and will start your day off with a sense of wonder and a smile!

Mendo Birds

To receive the latest information on the internet about birds in our area subscribe to Mendo Birds. Learn about "Al's" arrival and departure, the whereabouts of rare bird sightings, i.e. the juvenile Harris's Sparrow (Pictured below)

mailto:MENDOBIRDS-
subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Website:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MENDOBIRDS>

Listowners:

mailto:MENDOBIRDS-
owner@yahoogroups.com



Photo by Matthew Matteissen

Karen Havlena reported on November 15 a juvenile Harris's Sparrow (this is an extremely rare bird for our area, its normal winter range is the Great Plains) in her yard. The bird stayed for well over a month – last seen on 12/28/07.

Burrowing Owl

A Burrowing Owl was first spotted in Karen and Jim Havlena's yard on November 14, 2007. It was found again two days later standing by a culvert at Seaside Beach. Several Audubon members observed the bird and it was determined that the bird's behavior wasn't normal. The Havlena's captured the bird and took it to Woodlands Wildlife. We are pleased to report that the bird recovered. On November 25th a group accompanied Ronnie James of Woodlands Wildlife to Bald Hill Road in North Fort Bragg where the bird was released. The group was hoping that the owl would land on fence posts in the pasture but it kept flying out of sight into cypress trees. This area of Fort Bragg is the site of sightings of Burrowing Owls.

Bird Walks

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society will host two walks this month at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. Our monthly beginners' bird walk is always held on the first Saturday of the month, Jan 5 and Feb 2, at 9:00 a.m. Our midweek bird walk is held on the third Wednesday of the month, January 16 and February 20, at 8:00 a.m.

Birders with all levels of experience are invited to attend these walks. Binoculars will be available for those who need them. Admission is free for Botanical Gardens members. For more information on these and other activities, please call 964-8163 visit our website:

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

Field Trips

On Saturday, January 12, the Audubon Society hosted a field trip to Ten Mile Beach. On Saturday February 9, at 9:00 a.m. the field trip will be at Lake Cleone and Laguna Point, MacKerricher State Park. Meet at lake parking lot. Binoculars will be available for those who need them.

May Pelagic Trip

Sunday, May 18th the MCAS Pelagic Trip will embark from Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg! Two of our leaders will be Ron LeValley and George Chanot. Both are excellent birders, well acquainted with the seabirds offshore of Mendocino County.

Details of the cost, mailing instructions, and directions will follow in future newsletters.