

# The Whistling Swan



NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDOCINO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY

February 2011

Monday, February 21st

7:00 Pm

Fort Bragg Town Hall

**Watching the World Melt Away:  
Northern Alaska Seabirds Respond to a  
Rapidly Melting Arctic**

**Dr. George Divoky**

**Friends of Cooper Island**



For nearly 30 years Dr. George Divoky has traveled to remote Cooper Island in the Arctic. Braving the elements and the occasional polar bear, his mission is to study the Black Guillemots – research which is contributing to understanding the effects of climate change on wildlife in the Arctic.



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**Black Guillemots**

**PRESIDENT'S CORNER****David Jensen****MEMBERSHIP  
MATTERS**

Very few of our members realize how Mendocino Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) pays for the various services that this chapter provides to our community. Like almost all chapters, we are an independently incorporated non-profit, separate from the National Audubon Society (NAS). While our chapter serves

about 237 paid members of NAS, we have only about 107 separate MCAS members, which includes about 22 who are members of both organizations.

We keep every cent of your \$25 MCAS paid memberships. However, for NAS members we receive about \$4 per paid membership, the remainder being kept by NAS. We extend the same services to all of you: meetings, field trips, newsletters, in addition to other services such as education in the local schools.

The MCAS Board of Directors will soon publish an annual report that will clearly show how much the chapter receives from memberships, donations and other sources, as well as how those funds are used. For now, I offer this brief preview: despite our best efforts to contain costs, expenses continue to exceed income. In fact, fixed costs exceed membership dues and MCAS members are subsidizing NAS members. Fortunately, we have been able to cover this deficit through the generous donations of our members, but the current situation is not sustainable.

Other chapters are facing the same financial squeeze that we are. Many of them have decided to send newsletters only to local chapter members. We have chosen not to do this. Instead, we urge you to join our chapter as a paid member. Your money will be used locally to support the wide variety of programs offered by MCAS.

I have reviewed the list of members who belong to National Audubon but not the local chapter. I know that you enjoy our programs, participate in our field trips, and support our educational efforts in the schools. I also know that this unfortunate dual membership arrangement can be confusing. So please, if you are not sure whether you are an active member of MCAS, call me at 964-8163 or send an email to [djensen@mcn.org](mailto:djensen@mcn.org). I will be glad to answer your questions, listen to your suggestions for improvement, or to simply hear why you have decided not to join our chapter. As always, we thank you for your support as we strive to meet your needs and expectations.

## **PAM HUNTLEY ON KZYX FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5 ALBATROSS**

You might not know that Point Arena Cove is a destination point for birders from around the country. I met a couple from Wisconsin at the end of the pier with their spotting scope. They were looking for Alby, the Laysan Albatross, who has spent his or her winters there since 1994. Many birders keep a life list of all the species of birds they have seen in their lives. Alby provides a rare opportunity for birders because albatrosses are rarely seen from shore.

They are huge birds with wingspans of six and a half feet which spend most of their lives gliding over the ocean. They even sleep while gliding. They feed mainly on squid that come to the surface at night.

The albatrosses come to land only every other year, to nest on remote islands. They are thought to mate for life. She lays only one egg; they care for their young for at least five months. They are known to live for over forty years. So Alby, or Big Al, as it's also called, is definitely its own bird.



Donald Shephard

Records of his or her arrival and departure dates have been kept since 1994. This albatross usually showing up at the end of November and departing by mid-March. Big Al is super friendly. As surfers paddle out to the point, Big Al will paddle over to them squawking and allow them to pet him or her. So head on out to the cove to add a Laysan Albatross to your list.

### **WHAT IS IT THAT BIRDS DO THAT WE WISH WE COULD?**

"Fly! Fly! Fly!"

The kids always know the answer to this question. They shout it out excitedly, sometimes before we finish asking. They explain to us how they have all tried it. "Yeah like the time I jumped from the top bunk with a blanket for wings". The stories are great and I know by the looks on their faces that they are true. We ask, "Did it work?". The answer ..... a collective "No, we are too heavy"

We go on to talk about those things that make a bird lightweight and able to fly. Eggs, feathers, hollow bones ...

We encourage children to use their vivid imaginations to soar high above the school. "Close your eyes take nice deep breaths, relax ....." And off they go, flying high, unless of course a neighbor bops them in the head with new found "wings". They do "fly". They tell us all about where they went and what they saw when they have their solid bones again.

On occasion, I have noticed that a particular child falls asleep during the 15 minute flight. Sweet. But more than that, I believe that some of these kids really are that tired. I was touched on a recent visit when a weary looking child fell asleep. I later learned that the stories she shared with us were about the birds she was seeing around the campsite where she lives. I know they bring her joy and I'm pretty sure she is witness to a dawn chorus that I miss on most days.

**Sarah Winter Grimes, Audubon Educator**

## A FRIEND OF SHOREBIRDS – AND SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS RETURNS TO THE COAST Becky Bowen

Alison Cebula came home to the Mendocino Coast in January and gave Save Our Shorebirds volunteers something to celebrate.

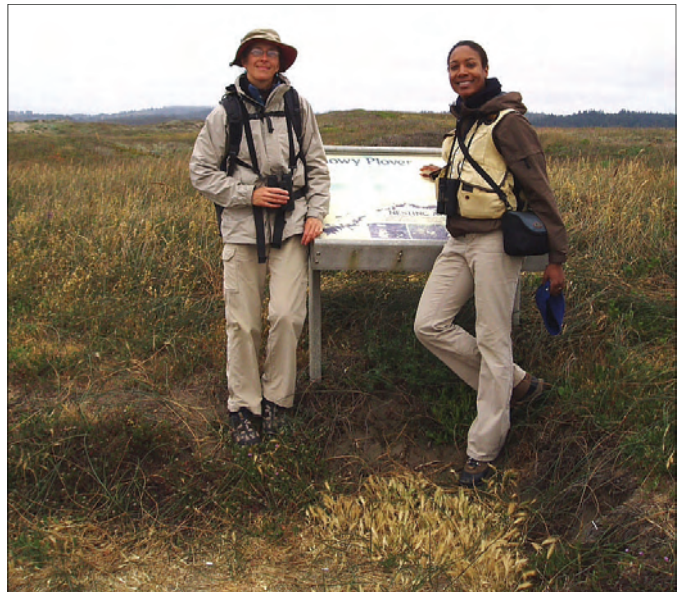
Shortly after she earned a Natural History Certificate from College of the Redwoods in 1998, Alison went to work for California State Parks and began a local cooperative effort to monitor Western Snowy Plovers with Dorothy Tobkin. That collaboration (which included submission of Snowy Plover information to Point Reyes Bird Observatory's database) was the genesis of the partnership that launched Save Our Shorebirds in 2007. Alison taught many of us how to conduct shorebird surveys.

Fast forward to 2011: Alison, who has spent the last four years as a wildlife technician and naturalist/park interpreter in Utah, returned here to work in the Natural Resources office of California State Parks. She will once again work with Audubon's education and protection program for the threatened Western Snowy Plovers and all our shorebirds (many watchlisted by Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy as species in decline).

Alison earned a B.A. in German from the University of California, Berkeley, and studied at Germany's Universitaat Goettingen as well as Columbia University, New York.

Her love of North Coast birds led her to College of the Redwoods and it also introduced her to husband, raptor biologist Adam Hutchins. Reports that a Harris's Hawk attended her wedding in Arizona at the Sonora-Desert Museum are true. And if pictures don't lie, the hawk's behavior was worthy of a wink of approval from Miss Manners.

*Mendocino Coast Audubon Society's Save Our Shorebirds, an on-going long-term citizen science program, is a partnership between California State Parks, College of the Redwoods and FLOCKworks. To help with surveys or learn more, contact State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg at [ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov](mailto:ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov)*



*Alison Cebula (left) and State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg, who supervises Save Our Shorebirds surveys at MacKerricher State Park.*

## SOUTHERN NOTES

Rich Trissel

### HIDDEN WINTER TREASURES

Certainly winter can, on first blush, seem less “birdy” than other seasons but there are often hidden wonders mixed in with the usual suspects. One of my favorite winter birding activities is filtering through large flocks of **American Robins** looking for a **Varied Thrush**. For a bit more of a challenge, picking out a **White-throated Sparrow** from a flock of **White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows** is always rewarding. Good spots on the South Coast for sparrow-sleuthing are along Stoneboro Road in Manchester or the Point Arena Lighthouse access road.

With the arrival of large groups of waterfowl comes the challenge of spying a rare **Eurasian Wigeon** hiding out with our much more common **American Wigeons** (and the females are an added challenge). A couple of fine locations in the area are the flooded fields in the Garcia Flats or the mouth of the Garcia River.

Sea watching also holds the opportunity to find **Black or White-winged Scoters** that winter with the **Surf Scoters** just off shore. The White-wingeds can be easy in flight with the flash of their wings. Again, the females can be challenging but with just a little time in the field they become more apparent.

And the list goes on: **Cattle Egrets** in with **Great and Snowy Egrets**, **Glaucous Gulls** in with large flocks of gulls, **Cackling Geese** in with **Canada Geese**. And who knows? Perhaps a mega-rarity is hidden out there. A perfect example is the **Taiga Bean-Goose** that was discovered at the Salton Sea in with **Greater White-fronted Geese**. Diligent birders consistently pick through ALL of the more common species to find rarities. Winter is a great opportunity to make new (and rarer) feathered friends while hanging out with familiar ones.



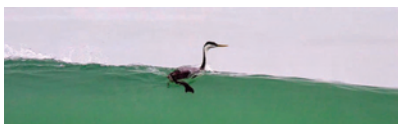
Varied  
Thrush

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

March 12 10 a.m. will be a workshop on ID and Natural History of Coastal Birds for those interested in helping with monitoring activities on the South Coast. Contact Diane Hichwa for details [dhichwa@earthlink.net](mailto:dhichwa@earthlink.net)

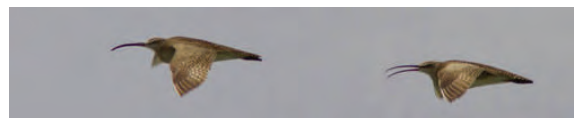
## FORT BRAGG & MANCHESTER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Species Observed	FB	Man	Species Observed	FB	Man
Greater White-fronted Goose		3	Pied-billed Grebe	11	18
Cackling Goose	5		Horned Grebe	17	
Canada Goose	238	35	Red-necked Grebe	2	1
Tundra Swan		78	Eared Grebe	145	9
Wood Duck	5		Western Grebe	47	10
Gadwall	4	2	<i>Aechmophorus sp.</i>	9	
Eurasian Wigeon		3	Sooty Shearwater	1	
American Wigeon	2	42	Brown Pelican	34	12
Mallard	182	167	Brandt's Cormorant	193	49
Northern Shoveler	1	1	Double-crested Cormorant	33	11
Northern Pintail		17	Pelagic Cormorant	151	45
American Green-winged Teal	14	12	cormorant sp.	123	3
Ring-necked Duck	41	27	Great Blue Heron	18	23
Greater Scaup		2	Great Egret		51
Lesser Scaup	1	3	Snowy Egret	1	
Harlequin Duck	1		Cattle Egret		1
Surf Scoter	52	38	Green Heron		1
White-winged Scoter	7	8	Black-crowned Night Heron	8	
Black Scoter	5		Turkey Vulture	106	135
scoter sp.	2		Osprey	1	1
Bufflehead	76	85	White-tailed Kite	3	20
Common Goldeneye	3	2	Northern Harrier	5	18
Hooded Merganser	6		Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	4
Common Merganser	19	7	Cooper's Hawk	11	3
Red-breasted Merganser	31	3	Accipiter sp.	1	1
Ruddy Duck	7	3	Red-shouldered Hawk	30	9
duck sp.	1		Red-tailed Hawk	23	92
Wild Turkey	85	42	Ferruginous Hawk	1	16
California Quail	122	236	Rough-legged Hawk		CW 1
Red-throated Loon	15	4	American Kestrel	25	64
Pacific Loon	278	27	Merlin	2	1
Common Loon	6	4	Peregrine Falcon	8	7
loon sp.	108		Virginia Rail	18	3



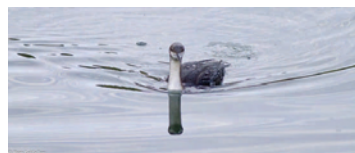
Western Grebe

Whimbrel



**FORT BRAGG & MANCHESTER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS**

Species Observed	FB	Man	Species Observed	FB	Man
Sora	1		Rock Pigeon	156	11
American Coot	99	68	Band-tailed Pigeon		6
Sandhill Crane		2	Eurasian Collared-Dove	44	79
Black-bellied Plover	1	7	Mourning Dove	128	22
Pacific Golden Plover		3	Barn Owl		11
Snowy Plover	CW	1	Western Screech Owl	2	3
Killdeer	33	37	Great Horned Owl	1	8
Black Oystercatcher	120	17	Northern Pygmy Owl	2	
Spotted Sandpiper	13	1	Burrowing Owl		2
Whimbrel	7	6	Spotted Owl	1	
Marbled Godwit		1	Barred Owl	1	
Black Turnstone	422	21	Long-eared Owl		1
Surfbird	112	3	Northern Saw-whet Owl		1
Sanderling	85	102	Anna's Hummingbird	117	42
Western Sandpiper		6	Belted Kingfisher	16	4
Least Sandpiper	11	38	Acorn Woodpecker	43	5
Rock Sandpiper	1		Red-breasted Sapsucker	5	2
Dunlin		1	Nuttall's Woodpecker	1	
Long-billed Dowitcher		5	Downy Woodpecker	12	4
Wilson's Snipe	11	23	Hairy Woodpecker	27	7
Mew Gull	6	69	Northern Flicker	63	56
California Gull	52	335	N (red-shafted) Flicker	18	14
Herring Gull	38	396	N (Yellow-shafted)	1	
Thayer's Gull	7	1	N (red x yellow-shafted)	1	1
Western Gull	714	281	Pileated Woodpecker	3	2
Glaucous-winged Gull	73	71	Black Phoebe	87	57
Black-legged Kittiwake		2	Say's Phoebe	2	4
gull sp.	215	287	Hutton's Vireo	12	3
Common Murre	182	9	Gray Jay		7
Marbled Murrelet		1	Steller's Jay	203	72
Ancient Murrelet	31	6	Western Scrub-Jay	74	24
Rhinoceros Auklet	3	2	Common Raven	487	129
alcid sp.	28		Chestnut-backed Chickadee	267	81

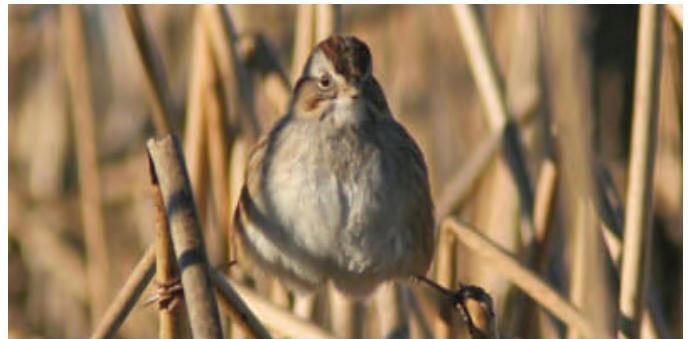


Pacific Loon

## FORT BRAGG & MANCHESTER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Species Observed	FB	Man	Species Observed	FB	Man
Oak Titmouse	1		Swamp Sparrow	1	2
Bushtit	106	122	White-throated Sparrow	5	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8	3	Golden-crowned Sparrow	140	186
White-breasted Nuthatch		1	White-crowned Sparrow	622	588
Pygmy Nuthatch	88	34	sparrow sp.	30	48
Brown Creeper	24	7	Dark-eyed Junco	367	322
Bewick's Wren	1	3	Red-winged Blackbird	127	171
Pacific Wren	53	12	Tricolored Blackbird	1	33
Marsh Wren	19	26	Western Meadowlark	52	174
Golden-crowned Kinglet	56	54	Brewer's Blackbird	399	1306
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	151	106	Brown-headed Cowbird	4	11
Western Bluebird	20	37	blackbird sp.	22	470
Hermit Thrush	85	43	Purple Finch	12	12
American Robin	1162	1104	House Finch	55	37
Varied Thrush	92	44	Red Crossbills		31
Wrentit	66	59	Pine Siskin	9	111
Northern Mockingbird	7	1	Lesser Goldfinch	2	
European Starling	479	1257	American Goldfinch	13	
American Pipit	10	19	Evening Grosbeak	1	
Cedar Waxwing	6	11	House Sparrow	46	26
Orange-crowned Warbler	2	1	<b>Total Individuals</b>	<b>12911</b>	<b>10112</b>
Nashville Warbler		CW 1	<b>Total Species</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>149</b>
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1266	258	<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>30</b>
Yellow-rumped (Audubon's)	41	59			
Yellow-rumped (Myrtle's)	340	23			
Townsend's Warbler	54	44			
Common Yellowthroat		1			
Spotted Towhee	77	16			
California Towhee	1	5			
Savannah Sparrow	22	35			
Fox Sparrow	153	52			
Song Sparrow	225	157			
Lincoln's Sparrow	4	5			

cw = count week



Swamp Sparrow photo Ron LeValley



## BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

**Bird Walks.** The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society will host two walks at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens during the month of February. Our monthly beginners' bird walk will be held on the first Saturday of the month, February 5, at 9:00 A.M. Our early birders walk will be held on the third Wednesday of the month, February 16, at 8:30 A.M. Admission is free for Botanical Garden members.

**February Field Trips: Winter Birds of Mendocino and Coastal Owls** On Saturday, February 12, the Audubon Society will host a field trip to view the winter birds of Mendocino village and nearby locales. This field trip will visit several areas not covered by other field trips. Our goal will be to observe the variety of birds that winter along our coast. Participants with all levels of experience are invited to meet at 9 A.M. at the Big River parking lot (first parking area at the bottom of the road). This field trip should end around noon.

On February 12 we will also offer an evening field trip to look for owls along our coast. This trip is for MCAS member only and will be limited to 16 persons. Carpooling will be mandatory. To register, please call 964-8163 or send an email to [djensen@mcn.org](mailto:djensen@mcn.org).

Birders with all levels of experience are invited to attend these walks and field trips. Binoculars will be available for those who need them. For more information on these and other activities, please call 964-8163 visit our website [mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://mendocinocoastaudubon.org).

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

Jan 20 A **Rock Sandpiper** at Laguna Point. A **Merlin** patrolling the shoreline.  
A **Bullock's Oriole** at Rose Memorial Cemetery. Richard Hubacek

Jan 18 Two adult **Thayer's Gulls** on the beach at the mouth of the Navarro River,  
Karen Havlena, Chuck Vaughn & Jerry White

Jan 17 About 100 **Common Murres** northeast of Bird Rock.  
Rick Harris

Jan 15 **Sandhill Cranes** at the Garcia River mouth. A **Black-legged Kittiwake** at the mouth of the Garcia. **Pacific Golden Plovers** at the Point Arena Lighthouse. 36 **Tundra Swans** off Bristol Road. **Red Crossbills** at Barnegat Drive and on Stornetta Property south of Lighthouse Rd. **Brants** flying north. Richard Hubacek

Jan 16 Several hundred **Brant** flying north. Rich Kuehn

Jan 7 An **Osprey** over Caspar Bay. Cate Hawthorne

Jan 3 A **Nashville Warbler** along the Skunk Train tracks a quarter mile east of Rose Memorial Cemetery. Cheryl Watson

**Nashville Warbler**



## MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2010-2011

President	David Jensen	964-8163	djensen@mcn.org
Vice President	Tony Eppstein	937-1715	tonyepp@mcn.org
Secretary	Becky Bowen	962-1602	casparbeck@comcast.net
Treasurer	Judy Steele	937-2216	judys@mcn.org
SOS Program	Angela Liebenberg	962-9267	aliebenberg@parks.ca.gov
Membership	Ginny Wade	964-6362	wwade@mcn.org
Programs	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@mcn.org
Conservation	Joleen Ossello	391-7019	j_ossello@earthlink.net
Newsletter	Donald Shephard	962-0223	donshephard@comcast.net

### Off-board chair:

Education	Sarah Grimes	937-4322	zewa@mcn.org
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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  
P.O. BOX 2297  
FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

