



Ron LeValley Presents

Shorebirds of the Mendocino Coast

Monday, April 17, 2017 – 7 PM

Caspar Community Center

Some head north, some head south, some stick around all year, and at times, identifying them can be a challenge. Biologist and photographer Ron LeValley will share his photos and talk about identifying the common visitors as well as how to identify the rare ones that drop by now and again. Ron is knowledgeable about the identification and distribution of birds along the Pacific Coast, and has an extensive understanding of natural history subjects. A lifelong interest in coastal birds and mammals was enhanced by his involvement with Point Reyes Bird Observatory beginning in 1966, including serving as a biologist at the Farallon Island research station. Ron enjoys sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with others.

He graduated from Sacramento State College in 1969 with a B.A. degree in Biology and received his M.A in Biology from Humboldt State University in 1980. His affiliations include American Ornithologists Union (Life Member), The Pacific Seabird Group, National Audubon Society, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (Life Member), and Western Field Ornithologists. He also is an Associate Editor for *Western Birds*.

Ron has been enamored of photography for the past 40 years. He specializes in photographs of wildlife of all kinds, from whales and birds to insects and natural scenes. As a professional photographer, Ron has compiled a collection of more than 90,000 images that he uses for presentations and publications. He is a founding member of the Mendocino Coast Photographers Gallery in Fort Bragg.



Shorebirds observed on North Mendocino Coast beaches. From top: Black-bellied Plover, Dunlins, Whimbrels. Photographs by Ron LeValley

PRESIDENT'S CORNER**Dave Jensen**

I just returned from San Diego where I attended the spring Audubon California Board of Directors meeting. Warm weather, great birding, inspirational presentations about progress in the Salton Sea and Mission Bay, examples of success in reaching out to minority communities, encouraging budgetary news, good fellowship. It was a wonderful set of meetings. Unfortunately, the dark clouds of national politics were always present. So this month I want to share some thoughts about how Audubon is working to protect birds, the people who appreciate them, and the environment that supports them all.

Let's be clear - Audubon is a bipartisan organization. In a recent survey of members, 52% identified themselves as progressive while 48% claimed to be moderate or conservative. That level of political diversity is rare in today's environment and demonstrates our universal fas-

ination with birds. Birds have the power to bring people together. We can disagree about climate change, oil leases, and land development, but nearly everyone agrees that eagles should be protected, that pelicans were worth saving, that this world would be a darker place if hummingbirds should disappear or mockingbirds were silenced. Change the conversation to birds and people can find common ground.

Let me be very clear about one more thing - Audubon's political efforts are directed towards policy - not persons. We have existed through every president since Benjamin Harrison, Democrat and Republican alike. Audubon has worked with each administration and with each congress, regardless of the personalities involved, to develop and support those policies that protect birds and the environment.

Today Audubon is working hard on the state and federal levels to achieve our conservation goals. We are strengthening our relationships with federal natural resource agencies. We are forging stronger alliances with organizations such as Trout Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited that share our concerns for environmental safeguards. We are lobbying key senators and representatives to stand up for the hard-won environmental protections. And we are in statehouses, working with governors and legislators to protect those areas that are critical for birds.

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Today Audubon is mobilizing its network to prevent policy decisions that threaten the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Antiquities Act. We are asking our members to speak out against policy changes that would reverse our chances to slow the effects of climate change or weaken the protection of our coastal areas. We are fortunate to live in a state where the political leaders support policies that protect clean air, that mitigate against climate change, that protect our coastline. Yet even here there is more that needs to be done. We need to work for policies that better protect our water, our wetlands, our natural areas.

Harmful policy changes that threaten birds seem to be coming at an unprecedented pace. Like many of you, I cannot keep up with them. I rely on the dedicated staff at Audubon to track them for me. If you haven't done so already, please join me as a member of Audubon's Action Network. I regularly log on to the state website (ca.audubon.org) and the national website (audubon.org). They have great graphics and interesting information. While you are there, click on "Take Action." You'll find it's so easy to make your voice be heard. These are important things that need to be done. Please stand up for the birds now, because people thrive where birds survive.

POINT CABRILLO BREEDING SURVEYS PLANNED TO BEGIN IN MAY

It is now 2017, a very odd year, which means two things: the Giants won't win the World Series, but there will be a Point Cabrillo Breeding Bird Survey. Although dates have not yet been set, the surveys, three in all, will occur in May and, probably, the first week of June. Like most Audubon events, this is a great opportunity to make new friends, to learn more about birds, and to explore one of the great properties along our coast. You do not need to be a great birder to participate, but you do have to get up early. Surveys start at 6 AM, a special time to be at Cabrillo. To participate, please contact Dave Jensen at djensen@mcn.org or 964-8163.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES SLATE FOR ELECTION OF MCAS BOARD AND OFFICERS

The Nominating Committee has reported the proposed slate of officers and board of directors for election by membership at the May 15 regular society meeting.

President: Dave Jensen (two-year term)

Conservation Chair Terra Fuller (two-year term)

New member at large: Nicolet Houtz (two-year term)

New member at large: Hayley Ross (two-year term)

New member at large: Adam Hutchins (two-year term)

Member at large: Judy Steele (one-year term to fill vacancy)

The committee and our board thank Catherine Keegan, who will continue her service as MCAS webmaster as the off-board chair.

Charlene McAllister, Nominating Committee Chair

NEST BOXES**Donald Shephard**

My education in another century and on another continent taught me to be wary of claims made about inventors and their inventions. In this century and on this continent, I have reaffirmed my skepticism. So with a pinch of salt, I give you Wikipedia's version of the invention of birdhouses. The nest box was invented by the British conservationist Charles Waterton (1782-1865), in the early 19th century, to encourage more birdlife and wildfowl on the nature reserve he set up on his estate. If it is true and no Russian or Chinese naturalist preceded him, I am tickled by the Yorkshire man, but the story that he "liked to dress as a scarecrow and sit in trees," makes me inordinately proud.



Male Violet-green Swallow
photograph Alan Vernon

No matter who first built a nest box, you will garner many rewards if you construct your own. Six bird houses grace our garden here at Caspar Knoll. My talents as a carpenter align more with "wood butcher" than the late James Krenov, but I managed to construct five of the six. Their size, shape, diameter of entrance and height above the ground all impact the effectiveness of the project.

Plans for species-specific birdhouses are readily available online. Finding box plans especially designed for a local species presents the best option for meeting their needs with an appropriate house. Construct your nest box with untreated wood. Give it an overhanging, sloped roof, a recessed floor, drainage and ventilation holes, and a way to access the interior for monitoring and cleaning. Avoid outside perches which could assist predators. Some nest boxes, like the ones annually available at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, can be highly decorated and complex, mimicking human houses or whimsical structures. They may also contain nest box cameras so that use of, and activity within, the box can be monitored.

The diameter of the opening determines the species of birds that will use the box. Many small birds select boxes with a hole barely large enough to allow passage of an adult, perhaps to prevent predators entering.

The size of the nest box also affects the bird species likely to use the box. Small boxes attract wrens and creepers and large ones attract ducks and owls. The first time Violet-green Swallows raised young in one of my birdhouses, they left it crawling with mites. Seasonally removing old nest material and parasites is important if you want birds to re-use your offering.

My niece, who has years of experience with Western Bluebird boxes in Tehachapi, informs

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DONALD SHEPHARD Continued

me that a nearby supply of water improves occupancy rates. A birdbath close to your bird hotels will suffice.

Most nesting songbirds will not reuse old nests. As a bird landlord, you will not receive a cleaning fee, but don rubber gloves and clean out bird houses after every brood has fledged, making it ready for another pair to use.

Violet-green Swallows have nested in one of my birdhouses on my patio for the past two years. Six of them returned on March 11. Soon, my beloved Ospreys will fly overhead on their way to their fishing grounds around Caspar Cove. Next Chestnut-backed Chickadees will sneak among the roses that climb our patio fence and slip into the nest box closest to my tool shed. They will build their nest, lay eggs, incubate and fledge their young while the Violet-green Swallows squabble noisily about who occupies which house. I have provided three new houses in hopes of attracting more pairs to my garden.

The first year the swallows reared their young in one of my boxes, I managed to video the last youngster fledging. The parent flew up to the opening with a mouthful of insects, but did not alight despite the begging youngster's gaping beak. I recall when my boys entered their teenage years they each perfected their "Why me?" face whenever they felt slighted. I recognized the same look on the immature swallow. It edged farther out of the nest box opening. The parent circled by again and almost stopped, but again teased its offspring. The young one pushed farther into the outside world. For the last time, the adult flew up to the nest and swerved away. The juvenile, having spent its life cooped up in a nest box with three siblings, flew for the first time. I manage to capture the moment of fledging.

It reminded me of the moment my son, the newly licensed driver, drove away from our house for the first time. The car turned the corner at the end of the block and disappeared from view. At least the parent Violet-green Swallows can fly alongside their young and teach them the joys of aerial feeding, roosting and migration.

I look forward to observing the swallows again this year to see what I can learn. Yet surely spring will turn to summer and thence to fall when the swallows will gather on utility wires before they head south again. The great Chinese poet, Li Po, wrote: 'The birds have vanished into the sky and now the last cloud drains away. We sit together the mountain and me, until only the mountain remains.' Here, he would say, "...until only the ocean remains."



Male Western Bluebird Courtesy of Blalonde

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen



READY OR NOT—HERE THEY COME

Zugunruhe— A wonderful addition to your crossword puzzle repertoire. The German compound word describes premigratory restlessness. Migrating shorebirds we see here are on single-minded flights that take many of them to the Arctic, where they breed and raise chicks in as little as eight weeks before *zugenruhe* triggers return flights to points as far south as Tierra del Fuego.

The agitated behavior is caused mostly by changes in the length of daylight. Many shorebirds fly mindboggling distances. Bartailed Godwits, for instance, have been tracked by international survey teams. One radio-tracked flight recorded in 2009 took the bird nonstop from a Yukon river delta over the Pacific Ocean to the north tip of New Zealand—7,250 miles.

Breeding areas as far north as Barrow, Alaska, are the destination of many migrating shorebirds, and we will start to see them soon. They rush north from wintering grounds in South and Central America in April and May. We see them again on return trips from July through October. Migrators we see do not try nonstop flights like Bartailed Godwits. They must drop down to feed and rest.

For 11 years Mendocino Coast Audubon's Save Our Shorebirds surveyors have recorded sightings of more than 230,000 shorebirds—migrators as well as the four species that are here year-round: Black Oystercatcher, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpipers and Western Snowy Plover. California State Parks is our partner. We are learning about our shorebirds—about their habitat, diet, predators, and disturbances that threaten their survival.

Data compiled and made available at no charge to schools, agencies and organizations, are viewable on the conservation tab of the MCAS website www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org Infield surveys are conducted year round along the entire coast of Mackerricher State Park. To learn more, please contact SOS chair Angela Liebenberg at liebenbergs@mcn.org To take part in an SOS training in April and May, please contact B. Bowen at casparbeck@comcast.net or 707 962-1602. And please visit us at www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds Ruddy Turnstone photographed at Ten Mile Beach May 1, 2016, by B. Bowen

CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

April 2017

Saturday 1 Beginner Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA
9AM-Noon* Leader: Tim Bray

Monday 3 Board Meeting contact Dave Jensen for time and location

Friday 7, 21, 28 Save Our Shorebirds (SOS) Training [Virgin Creek 9AM](#) Contact B. Bowen for meeting place, details. 962-1602 casparbeck@comcast.net

Saturday 8 Field Trip Hendy Woods State Park, near Philo. 9 AM - Noon. Meet at the bridge on Philo-Greenwood Road. We will bird from the bridge, then go into the park and walk a loop trail. Swallows and Purple Martins, Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Black-throated Gray Warblers are regularly seen; sometimes Western Tanager, Hermit Warbler, and Green Heron. Cassin's Vireo and Barred Owl can also be heard here. Please note that Hendy Woods State Park charges an entrance fee. Leader: Dave Jensen

Monday 17 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar, CA 7PM
Speaker: Ron LeValley-Shorebirds. Ron's website: www.levalleyphoto.com

Wednesday 19 Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA
8AM-Noon* Leader: Tim Bray

Sunday 23 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. Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

Saturday 29, Sunday 30 Heron Days - Lakeside County Park, Kelseyville [Redbud Audubon Heron Days](#)

May 2017

Saturday 6, Sunday 7 Heron Days Shady Acres Campground, Clearlake [Redbud Audubon Heron Days](#)

Saturday 6 Beginner Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA
9AM-Noon* Leader: Dave Jensen

Friday 12, 19, 26 Save Our Shorebirds (SOS) Training [Virgin Creek 9AM](#) Contact B. Bowen for meeting place, details. 962-1602 casparbeck@comcast.net

Saturday 13 Field Trip Navarro River and beach. 9AM-Noon. Meet at park-and-ride just south of the bridge. We will bird the area around the bridge, then go to the beach and work our way back. Good variety of waterfowl. Birds are feeding young, so they are very active and easy to find. Black-headed Grosbeak and Bullock's Oriole are possible. Leader: Dave Jensen

Monday 15 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar, CA 7PM
What MCAS Does: Save Our Shorebirds, Black Oystercatcher Surveys, Pelagic Cormorant Surveys, Education, and more. Election of Board Members and Officers.

Wednesday 17 Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA
8AM-Noon* Leader: Dave Jensen

Sunday 28 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. Bring water, wear walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

**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: www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

And please visit us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2016-2017

President	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	964-8163
Vice-President, Field Trips	Tim Bray	tbray@mcn.org	937-4422
Secretary	Iana Porter	ianate@mcn.org	
Treasurer	Jim Havlena	havlenas@fix.net	964-1280
Save Our Shorebirds	Angela Liebenberg	liebenbergs@mcn.org	962-9267
Webmaster	Catherine Keegan	keegan@mcn.org	
Education	Sarah Grimes	zewa@mcn.org	
Conservation	Terra Fuller	fullerterra@hotmail.com	964-4675
Off-board Chairs:			
Programs, Membership	Charlene McAllister	charmac@mcn.org	937-4463
Newsletter Editor	Becky Bowen	casparbeck@comcast.net	962-1602

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

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