



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter, July 2013

Precision Spotting Scope Drill Team Gets Ready For 4th of July Parade in Downtown Mendocino



The Continental Congress adopted a design for the Great Seal of the United States June 20, 1782. The design included an American Bald Eagle with 13 arrows and a 13-leaf olive branch in its talons. The bird is a national symbol of freedom and peace and while the Bald Eagle is a rare sight in Mendocino County, its spirit will be with us during the 4th of July Parade in Mendocino. Ron LeValley photo.

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society's Precision Spotting Scope Drill Team is entered in the Mendocino Fourth of July Parade and we want you to be part of the fun. No experience is necessary and the only required skill is the ability to laugh out loud.

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and so on. But here on the Northern California coast, we have the one and only Fourth of July Parade in downtown Mendocino where the sky's no limit on the celebration, patriotism, peace, freedom, humor and originality.

Adam Hutchins is drill leader. Don't have a scope and tripod? No problem, we can get you equipped for our choreographed jaunt through town. To know when and where to meet, to get more information, and to sign up to march with us, please contact Adam at 707 962-9055 (raptorus@mac.com).

The parade starts July 4 at 11:30 a.m. on Main Street and the drill team will have a brief dress rehearsal at 10:45 a.m. (call Adam for details and directions).

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Please Follow Our Black Oystercatcher Survey Stories Click On Facebook On Our Website

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

Black Oystercatcher Masthead photo by Ron LeValley

PRESIDENT'S CORNER**Joleen Ossello**

Photograph by Donald Shephard

Our recent chapter meeting introduced our new directorship and showcased the multitude of projects MCAS conducts throughout the year. If you missed the project updates and hilarity, here is a brief review of your chapter happenings. Visit our website or contact a leader for additional information.

As an Audubon chapter, MCAS selects and promotes avian studies. **Breeding song birds** flew in this spring, nesting along Big River and Point Cabrillo; their presence monitored through volunteer ears led by David Jensen. Migrating shorebirds will soon arrive here to eat and rest

along our shorelines under the gaze of **Save Our Shorebirds** volunteers and director Angela Liebenberg. A resident shorebird, the **Black Oystercatcher**, is currently under weekly watch by volunteers directed by me during its breeding season. The program has support of Audubon California. A breeding seabird, the **Pelagic Cormorant**, may have a successful year after last year's disheartening reproductive season. Monitoring volunteers, led by local wildlife biologist Ron LeValley, will keep us informed.

As a dedicated team, MCAS addresses wildlife preservation issues and undertakes public outreach. Conservation actions will be introduced this year by director, Linda Perkins. Our website has been re-launched by director Catherine Keegan to offer members and supporters worldwide a detailed glimpse into Mendocino Coast birding. Our education team, led by director Sarah Grimes, completes the end of a successful year spreading the "bird word" to hundreds of Mendocino grade school students. Public field trips to birding hotspots are ongoing and led by director Tim Bray. He will again lead our Christmas Bird Count for an exciting, intensive day of species counts.

MCAS is a successful non-profit. Director Charlene McAllister patiently awaits incoming yearly dues while keeping the board on its toes and organized. Cate Hawthorne placed the secretarial books under her wing. We currently have openings for treasurer and program chair.

The backbone of our organization is of course you, the membership. While some of our projects receive grant funding, it is not guaranteed. Some of our volunteers have given years of service that can no longer be sustained. If you are interested in supporting our causes in any way, we gratefully accept your support. We invite you to become part of a growing and evolving team of dedicated bird loving folks. Come take a walk with us on the wild side.

BASICS OF SEABIRD IDENTIFICATION INTRODUCING THE SHORT PELAGIC TRIP

Karen Havlena

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society will introduce a short pelagic trip on Sunday, September 15 for beginners and for those who have been reluctant to go on all-day trips. Please consider this new, special boat trip on which to learn about seabirds and ocean mammals. We hope you will sign up for this 3½ to 4-hour morning trip that will take participants just a few miles off shore from Fort Bragg. Seas are usually calm in September.

Your expert biologist/leader/instructor will be Ron LeValley. Ron is entertaining and knowledgeable about life at sea. He looks forward to helping you with facts and will share his wonderful stories about the ocean birds and mammals we may encounter.

The trip is by reservation only. Please contact Karen Havlena jkhavlena@yahoo.com or 707-972-5440 (cel) before sending payment. Sorry, but the boat does not have handicap facilities and children must be at least 11 years old.



Black-footed Albatross, Mendocino Coast Audubon Pelagic Trip, May, 2010. Photo by Becky Bowen.

Meeting time: 8 a.m., Sunday, September 15, 2013

Meeting place: Noyo Harbor, Fort Bragg at the TELSTAR dock

Return time: Around 12 noon

Cost: \$55 per person. Call Karen to reserve a space. She will provide directions and payment information (payment will be by check only).

A detailed confirmation will be sent outlining tips for snacks, clothing, and for Karen's trusty seasickness prevention (it works). Space is limited on the TELSTAR.

We look forward to escorting you on a fun-filled, educational trip. Karen can attest to the fact that 3 ½ to 4 hours is quite safe for feeling good on the ocean. Follow her instructions for a carefree morning and you can't go wrong. We will be back to the dock in time for you to have a nice lunch, then go to the botanical gardens, go shore birding, or go shopping in the afternoon.

We look forward to welcoming you aboard.

Save Our Shorebirds – Becky Bowen

SUCCESS, THEN TRAGEDY AT TEN MILE BEACH

The news on May 14, 2013 electrified us: State Parks' Adam Hutchins discovered a Western Snowy Plover nest on Ten Mile Beach that morning and reported it to park biologists and U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

Western Snowy Plovers are classified as threatened on the federal Endangered Species List and the last successful nest on Ten Mile Beach was in 2004. Save Our Shorebirds volunteers, working under the supervision of State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg, participate in a federal West Coast recovery effort. A major local goal is to see Western Snowy Plover nests return to Ten Mile Beach. While the number of wintering Western Snowy Plovers has gradually increased over the last seven years, the birds have disappeared from Ten Mile Beach during spring and summer nesting seasons.



Western Snowy Plover nest, Ten Mile Beach, May 14. Ron LeValley photo

Mad River Biologists' Sean McAllister and Ron LeValley (who are certified to monitor Western Snowy Plover nests) came to the Ten Mile nest site to work with State Parks Resources personnel. LeValley examined the eggs and discovered they were about to hatch.

Three chicks hatched Saturday, May 18. LeValley described what happened next on his *Outside My Window* website: "Mendocino Snowy Plover nests are the most artistic of any I have seen. This is the first Snowy Plover nest to be found [on Ten Mile Beach] in eight years. The chicks hatched a few days after this picture was taken. Unfortunately, they disappeared after about three days. Two people with a dog (dogs are not allowed on this beach) walked through the area where the chicks had roosted the night before. There were also numerous raven tracks. Our guess is that the dog disturbed them and the ravens ate them. Hopefully we'll see another nest soon."

Both of the Western Snowy Plover parents were attentive. The male has not been seen since a few days after the nest failed. The female flew to Humboldt County where she has been observed at Mad River and Clam Beach.

Save Our Shorebirds is a long-term ongoing Mendocino Coast Audubon Society program in partnership with California State Parks and FLOCKworks. To learn more, contact State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg angela.liebenberg@parks.ca.gov and please visit us for updates at www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES, THE SURVEYS AND THE SIGHTINGS

Thank you David, Tony, Don and Adam – As we start a new Audubon year for MCAS, our board has some new faces as well as some that are staying around. We are grateful outgoing President Dave Jensen will remain. His years as our leader brought us recognition state-wide for our work on environmental issues. He currently serves on the board of Audubon California, a position he earned through the respect not only of his local chapter, but of chapters throughout Northern California. Tony Eppstein, who guided us into the world of email and web pages has stepped down as our Web Master. Without Tony, we would still be in the snail mail business. And our beloved *Black Oystercatcher* Editor, Don Shephard has also stepped down. While we search for someone to step into the position, we recognize the standard he set is high. We hope to continue to have his wonderful bird articles for future editions. We are sorry his commitments have made it necessary for Adam Hutchins to step down as Program Chair and Charlene will take his place for the time being. If you would like to take on this position, please let her know. We guarantee it will be pleasant – and fun. **Charlene McAllister**

Thank you to the Point Cabrillo Breeding Bird Survey Volunteers – The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society offers a heart-felt “Thank You” to the intrepid counters of breeding birds at Point Cabrillo Light Station. This year marked our twentieth survey at the preserve, and it was a fine set of surveys: Dry trails, two calm mornings, one of them with a beautiful sunrise through light wispy fog, and the unforgettable sight of the Point Cabrillo light as it sliced through the pre-dawn darkness.



White-crowned Sparrows were active at Point Cabrillo surveys. Photograph by Becky Bowen.

We will return for another set of surveys in May, 2015, so please consider joining us then. You will be welcome, and I think you’ll enjoy it.

Thanks to this year’s participants: Becky Bowen, Sarah Grimes, Cate Hawthorne, Pam Huntley, David Jensen, Jeff Laxier, Ron LeValley, Charlene McAllister, Joleen Ossello, and Linda Perkins. **David Jensen**

Thank you, Jerry White – Jerry White, an experienced birder from Lake County, spotted a Northern Parula during his visit to the Stanford Inn south of Mendocino Village. The bird is listed in county records as “extremely rare.” Its breeding range is east of the Mississippi River; its winter range runs along the east coast of Mexico, the tip of Florida, the Bahamas and Greater Antilles. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Northern Parula has nested several times along the Northern California coast (north of Mendocino County) since the 1950s – somewhat beyond its established range. During the breeding season, these birds normally are found on canopy trees in epiphytic growth. **Becky Bowen**



Northern Parula photograph by Tim Bray.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER**Donald Shephard**

My trusty *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* defines pectoral as pertaining to the chest. You will distinguish Pectoral Sandpipers by their breast markings. The Pectoral Sandpiper has a gray breast, sharply demarcated at its lower edge; this clear dividing line is particularly conspicuous if the birds are turned toward you. Look for a gray-brown back, brownest in the summer male, and grayest in winter. They are one of the most common North American wading birds.

The legs are yellowish green; the bill is olive with a darker tip. Juveniles are more brightly patterned above with rufous coloration and white mantle stripes. Found most commonly on mudflats with short grass or weedy vegetation this sandpiper appears more at ease in the grass than in water.

Ask Becky Bowen, Save Our Shorebirds volunteer coordinator, and she will tell you Pectoral Sandpipers are the best. She first spotted one on Ten Mile Beach eight years ago. The bird was fearless. He walked right up to Becky and stood staring at her, turning sideways and tilting his head. That bird stood there and never moved. Becky had to walk around it. Since then, volunteers have had several encounters with Pectoral Sandpipers, especially in September when they pass through on their migration south. Becky speculates because Pectoral Sandpipers we see here are young (recently hatched at their remote arctic nest locations) they don't have the same kind of fear of humans as the Whimbrels or Black-bellied Plovers we see on our beaches.



Pectoral Sandpiper photograph by Andreas Trepte

During migration, you will find them in fresh- and saltwater marshes, on mudflats, or drying lakes and wet meadows. On your trips inland, look for them visiting moist grassy places, grass-lined pools, golf courses and airports after heavy rains, and salt creeks and meadows. They winter in South American grasslands where they move along steadily with their heads down, picking up prey on the surface and probing lightly into the sand or mud. They usually forage in vegetation, and when they are disturbed, they stand upright with their necks extended, peering over the grass. The most common North American wading bird to occur in the UK, Pectoral Sandpipers have recently bred in Scotland.

During the breeding season, Pectoral Sandpipers eat flies and fly larvae, spiders, and seeds. During migration, they eat small crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates, although insects may still be the major food.

Pectoral Sandpipers are promiscuous: males mate with multiple females; and females mate with multiple males. Males arrive on the breeding grounds before females and establish territories.

continued

When females arrive, the male's courtship display involves puffing up his breast. He inflates a fat throat sac which expands and contracts rhythmically during display flights. The accompanying vocalization consists of a series of hollow hoots, and is one of the most unusual sounds heard in summer on the arctic tundra (the bird's name is based on this phenomenon). The female builds a nest in a well-hidden scrape lined with grass and leaves, sometimes under low shrubs. The nest is so deep that when she lays her four eggs, they are an inch below ground level, which helps to minimize heat loss from the cool breezes whistling across the tundra. Eggs are white to olive buff and blotched with dark brown.

She provides all the parental care, incubating for about three weeks. The four chicks leave the nest and feed themselves soon after hatching. The female stays with the young for 10 to 20 days. The young fly at around 21 days, and have become capable flyers by 30 days. During the short Arctic breeding season food is at a premium. To ensure an adequate supply for the young, male Pectoral Sandpipers depart for the south before the eggs hatch, so they don't compete for food with the mothers and their chicks. Then the adult females leave, too, and in the last few weeks the young have the tundra to themselves. How do they know the way to Mendocino and on their way to South America?

Extreme long-distance migrants, some Pectoral Sandpipers make an 18,000-mile round-trip journey between breeding and wintering grounds. The birds that migrate through Mendocino most likely breed in Siberia and migrate across the Bering Strait and down the Pacific Coast. They winter in southern South America, Australia, and New Zealand.

The Canadian Wildlife Service estimates the population of Pectoral Sandpipers at 400,000 birds, with about half that number breeding in North America. Other estimates are lower. Historical reports of enormous numbers along migratory corridors indicate that the population has declined. While hunting had an impact in the late 1800s and early 1900s, habitat destruction currently poses the most significant threat. The Pectoral Sandpiper is not classified as a species in need of high-priority conservation.



Pectoral Sandpiper photograph by Andreas Trepte

As with other shorebirds, we do not know enough about Pectoral Sandpipers. What are the real numbers of this species? Is the population declining? Is it shifting its range? The volunteers who walk Glass Beach, Virgin Creek Beach, and Ten Mile Beach are helping to fill these gaps in our knowledge. Consider a stroll along our beaches to watch and record birds. What a pleasant way to do a good deed.

MOVIE REVIEW

David Jensen

I've finally discovered a film that effectively conveys the pleasures that we experience as birders. "Birders: The Central Park Effect" is a memorable 60-minute film produced by HBO Films. You can view it on-line at HBO, YouTube, or other similar sites. My young bride ordered it from Netflix.

New York's Central Park, an attractive haven for many birds, especially during migration seasons, provided the setting for this documentary which follows the ebb and flow of bird activity through the seasons as seen through the eyes of a diverse group of birders. The human characters are varied - from age 15 to 72, male and female, black and white - but they are all united by their love of birds and their attraction to Central Park. The photography is bright and sharp. The sound is crisp and clear. The birds, especially the fresh spring migrating warblers, are fantastic. The film offers close-ups of 117 different bird species, including the famous Red-Tail Hawk named Pale Male. It made me miss the springs I spent in Ohio.

The best thing about this all too-brief film is the way it conveys what draws us to the seemingly peculiar pastime of birding. I want to share this film with friends and coworkers who give me that skeptical look when I excitedly explain I spent my weekend counting birds in the woods or bouncing across a turbulent ocean to see a Brown Booby.

I seldom recommend movies and never try to arrange dates for friends. Everyone's tastes are unpredictably different. But I encourage you to give this short film a try. If you enjoy it, Google "Starr Saphir," the remarkable matriarch of the film. It will provide a poignant post script.

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society

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IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

The basic membership dues cover the cost of your subscription to the *Black Oystercatcher*. Please consider joining or renewing at a higher level to support the important environmental education and conservation projects critical to the protection of wildlife and the environment. *Note: membership in Mendocino Coast Audubon does not make you a member of National Audubon and joining NAS does not include membership in MCAS.*

I am a new member I am a renewing member
 Basic membership \$25.00 Low Income/Student \$15.00
 Family \$30.00 \$ _____ Tax Deductible Contribution Amount

Please make your check payable to **Mendocino Coast Audubon Society (MCAS)** and mail to **P.O.Box 2297, Fort Bragg, CA 95437**. If you wish to pay by credit card, you may use the Pay Pal button on the web site www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

OUR MEMBERSHIP YEAR IS JULY 1- JUNE 30. Renewals not received by 9/1 will result in your being dropped from our membership list. Don't let that happen!

BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS, and PROGRAMS

for a 2013-2014 calendar updates and helpful links, visit www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

July, 2013

- Thursday 7/4 Come watch the MCAS Precision Spotting Scope Drill Team at the [4th of July Parade](#) 11:30AM.
- Saturday 7/6 Beginners' Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM *
- Wednesday 7/17 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM*

August, 2013

- Saturday 8/3 Beginners' Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*
- Monday 8/19 MCAS Board Meeting 3 PM Contact C. McAllister for information
- Wednesday 8/21 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM *

September, 2013

- Saturday 9/7 Beginners' Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*
- Saturday 9/14 Field Trip 9AM
- Sunday 9/15 [Pelagic Trip for Basic Seabird Identification 8AM](#), TELSTAR Dock, Noyo Harbor (reservations required: Karen Havlena jkhavlena@yahoo.com 707-972-5440 (cel)
- Monday 9/16 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: Ron LeValley
- Wednesday 9/18 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM*

October, 2013

- Saturday, 10/5 Beginners' Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*
- Saturday, 10/12 Field Trip 9AM
- Wednesday, 10/16 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8AM*
- Monday, 10/21 MCAS Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: [John Muir Laws](#)

November, 2013

- Saturday, 11/2 Beginners' Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*
- Saturday, 11/9 Field Trip 9AM
- Monday 11/18 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: Greg Guisti on the topic of coastal pines.
- Wednesday 11/20 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM*

December, 2013 – please check MCAS website for updates

- Saturday 12/7 Beginners' Bird Walk at the [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM*
- Monday 12/16 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Focus on the Christmas Bird Count
- Wednesday 12/18 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM*
- Saturday 12/21 Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Count

***Our MCAS Bird Walks in the Botanical Gardens are free, but there is an admission fee charged by the Gardens for non-Gardens members. The Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens phone is 964-4352.**

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2013-2014

President	Joleen Ossello	391-7019	j_ossello@earthlink.net
Vice President	David Jensen	964-8163	djensen@mcn.org
Secretary	Cate Hawthorne	962-1623	thorn91@hotmail.com
Acting Treasurer	Judy Steele	937-2216	judys@mcn.org
SOS Program	Angela Liebenberg	962-9267	aliebenberg@parks.ca.gov
Webmaster	Catherine Keegan	937-4422	keegan@wildblue.net
Membership	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@mcn.org
Field Trips	Tim Bray	937-4422	tbray@wildblue.net
Conservation	Linda Perkins	937-0903	lperkins@mcn.org
Education	Sarah Grimes	937-4322	zewa@mcn.org
Newsletter	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@mcn.org
Programs	Charlene McAllister	937-4463	charmac@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

