



RACHEL LONG PRESENTS
NATURAL HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA BATS
7 P.M.
MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2016
CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER



Bats soon will be migrating south for the winter, just like ducks and geese. There are 25 species of bats in our state and most all are insectivorous. Some bats also feed on pollen and nectar and are important pollinators of plants. A voracious appetite for bugs makes them superb predators of insect pests in croplands.

Bats are interesting mammals, but because of their nocturnal habits, they are not well understood. Contrary to popular beliefs, bats are not blind, do not get tangled in your hair, and are not aggressive. They echolocate to see in the dark, they're very shy and cute, and live for more than 30 years. While bats can carry rabies, this disease is preventable. Never pick up a bat with bare hands (they will bite in self-defense), and always vaccinate pets. Some threats to bats include wind turbines and white-nose syndrome (a fungal disease that attacks bats).

Rachael Long, Farm Advisor with the UC Cooperative Extension Service in the Sacramento Valley, has been studying bats and their impacts on agricultural pest control for nearly 25-years. She is a graduate of UC Berkeley and UC Davis and currently lives on a farm with her husband, two dogs, and a family of bats. She is the author of the *Black Rock Desert Trilogy*, a children's book about bats.

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Join us on our field trip to Mackerricher State Park to learn about migratory water fowl. Dave Jensen leads trip on Saturday, October 8, from 9AM-Noon. See calendar listing on Page 8.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dave Jensen



It's been called "the fellowship of the field glasses" and it's one of the greatest benefits that we can enjoy as birders. We meet and bond at evening programs, on local field trips, on Christmas Bird Counts, and especially when we are out in the field and happen to come upon another person with binoculars or a spotting scope. We share not only recent sightings, but also that spirit of appreciation and passion for birds and the world in which we live. For more than ten years, Audubon chapters from Northern California have come together for a weekend to hear about recent state-wide developments, to learn from one another, and to share resources and insights. Members

come from Redwood Region Audubon in Arcata; Altacal Audubon in Chico; Wintu Audubon in Redding; Plumas Audubon in Quincy; Redbud Audubon in Lake County; Peregrine Audubon in Ukiah, and Mt. Shasta Audubon.

On Saturday, October 15, it is again our pleasure to host all these chapters, and you are invited to participate. We will meet at the Van Damme beach parking lot at 7:30AM for some early morning birding. The actual meeting will begin at 9:00AM in the Abalone Room at the Little River Inn. In addition to the updates from each chapter, Audubon California Chapter Outreach Coordinator and Alternate Energy Guru, Garry George, will give a video presentation on the efforts to save the Salton Sea. He will also give a presentation on the Western River Action Network. Other items for discussion will include an update on efforts to block the proposed expansion of oyster farms in Humboldt Bay that threaten the eelgrass beds in that area. Over the years, I have attended all but one of these regional meetings and have always enjoyed meeting chapter members from the host organization. I hope that you will be able to join us this year. Although the Little River Inn does not serve lunch, we will order sandwiches from Mendocino at a price of \$10 per person, or you can bring your own picnic. The fellowship of the field glasses will be flowing freely. So come out and catch the spirit.

ACTION

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Audubon California recently actively supported Senate Bill 1363, authored by Bill Monning (D), of Carmel. The bill adds the Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Reduction Program to the mission of the California Ocean Protection

Act, a law enacted in 2004 to provide ways and means to conserve ocean ecosystems. The new legislation was passed this summer by the Assembly and Senate and was delivered to the governor's office, where it awaits action. Assembly Member Jim Wood and Senator Mike McGuire voted in favor.

The bill cites an urgent need to protect and restore marine eelgrass. According to the National Marine Fisheries Service, since the 1850s, more than 90 percent of the state's coastal eelgrass has been wiped out, primarily because of carbon dioxide emissions that increase ocean acidity hypoxia (oxygen deficiency). This critical need to protect marine eelgrass led to Audubon's recent call to action to support sustainable aquaculture projects in Humboldt Bay where local business plans propose to expand oyster farming in the bay.

Several varieties of eelgrass grow in marine beds, where crabs, fish and other wildlife thrive, including foraging water fowl. For instance, eelgrass is the only food source for migrating Pacific Black Brant, according to Andrea Jones, Audubon California's Director of Bird Conservation. The plant is important to humans, too, because it filters polluted runoff by absorbing nitrogen and phosphorus.

Black Oystercatcher staff

PAM HUNTLEY ON KZYX FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5

WOOD DUCK

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Photograph by Olaf Oliviero Riemer

The male Wood Duck is a thing of splendor. His glossy green head sports a slicked-backed crest. His bright red eye is the largest eye of all ducks and the color matches the color of his bill. His wings and long tail are dark blue. The female is gray with a white tear drop around the eye. In flight, the head is held high with the bill pointed downwards. A Wood Duck is about half the size of a Mallard.

Wood Ducks are found in ponds, marshes and rivers near dense woods. They are a dabbling duck. Around 90 per cent of their diet is plants (they love duckweed). They also will eat aquatic insects, snails and tadpoles, and will wander inland to forage for acorns.

Courtship can begin as early as fall. In spring, the bonded pair return the female's previous nesting grounds. "Woodies" have the ability to clutch branches with their toes and claws, and can perch in trees. They nest in a tree cavity 30 to 50 feet above ground. The female lines the nest with her downy feathers and lays 8-14 creamy white eggs. A day after hatching, the female calls to chicks from the ground. The chicks respond by jumping out of the tree cavity and floating like puffballs down to the ground, where they follow the female to the safety of the water.

The Wood Duck nearly went extinct in the early 1900's, the victim of habitat destruction and hunting. Protective measures were put in place, and it now is listed as a species of least concern, according to Cornell University's All About Birds website.

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen



Western Snowy Plover



Spotted Sandpiper



Black Oystercatcher



Killdeer

**MEET OUR YEAR-ROUND
SHOREBIRD RESIDENTS**

When it comes to shorebirds, there are only four species that live on the Mendocino coast year-round.

Our SOS surveys have taught us the Spotted Sandpiper is more likely to live up rivers and creeks, but surveyors have found them on coastal beaches and rocky bluffs, usually north of Virgin Creek Beach. Mackericher State Park, which stretches from Glass Beach north to Ten Mile River, is a good place to find the other three year-round residents: Killdeer, Western Snowy Plover and Black Oystercatcher.

All other shorebirds we observe are either migrating through or preparing to winter here. Fall migration gets under way in July and lasts through October.

Save Our Shorebirds is an MCAS year-round ongoing citizen science program in partnership with California State Parks. To participate, contact Angela Liebenberg at liebenbergs@mcn.org And please visit us on Facebook where we posting daily photos of what our surveyors are seeing during the current fall migration:

Photographs by Becky Bowen

www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

BARN SWALLOW

Donald Shephard

When I drove down to Southampton fifty-two years ago to emigrate to the US, I remember a classic autumn sighting of swallows gathering on wires, nature's musical notation of its own symphony. Known throughout Eurasia as the Swallow, here we call them Barn Swallows. About the year 350 BCE, Aristotle wrote his *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which he says: "For as one swallow or one day does not make a spring, so one day or a short time does not make a fortunate or happy man." Modern man has rendered his words to "One swallow does not a summer make."



Adult male Barn Swallow
Photo by Maureen Eppstein

The number of classical references to swallows does not surprise me considering the barn swallow has an enormous range, with an estimated global extent of 20,000,000 square miles and a population of 190 million individuals. The Barn Swallow is the most abundant and widely distributed swallow species in the world. It breeds throughout the Northern Hemisphere and winters in much of the Southern Hemisphere avoiding only deserts and the coldest areas.

Of course, the number and range have changed since Shakespeare wrote in *The Winter's Tale*, Act 4: "Daffodils that come before the swallow dares, and take the winds of March with beauty". This species has greatly benefited historically from forest clearance, which has created the open habitats it prefers, and from human habitation, which have given it an abundance of safe man-made nest sites.

Among those safe sites is a spot under the eaves of MCAS members Maureen and Tony Eppstein. For several years now they have hosted Violet-green Swallows, which they welcome under their front eaves, and Barn Swallows, which they attempt to deter from nesting by their back door. The difference in their attitude results from the general lack of housekeeping skills of the Barn Swallow. Tony strung up shiny bunting to discourage the messy birds, but the feathered ingrates incorporated the shiny material as mud stabilizer around the nest brim. (See Tony's photo.) Nests may be occupied several years in succession by the same birds, a tribute to their amazing navigation skills.

Mud nests have an advantage over cavity nests in availability. Whereas tree and cliff cavities are limited, mud nests may be constructed wherever mud and

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DONALD SHEPHARD

man-made structures appear together, enabling swallows to invade otherwise inhospitable, but food-rich habitats.

Their long tails give them great maneuverability near ground or water or around obstacles such as grazing animals, or people mowing grass stirring up crickets. The distinctive tail makes it the easiest North American swallow to identify, but the long tail requires more energy for flight and increases vulnerability to predators.

Stanley W. Harris in his book *Northern California Birds*, writes, "This species surely must have increased as the landscape was settled by man." Certainly it has adapted well to man. I recall standing atop the Cal EPA building, 372 feet above 10th Street, Sacramento, and looking down on a Cooper's Hawk circling ever higher in pursuit of a flock of Barn Swallows which flew with fluid wing beats in bursts of straight flight, rarely gliding, and executed quick, tight turns and dives. At the time I thought the hawk had no chance but perhaps I was optimistic.

To avoid predator attacks on their nests, in North America at least, Barn Swallows frequently engage in a mutualist relationship with Ospreys. Barn Swallows will build their nest below an Osprey nest, receiving protection from other birds of prey that are repelled by the exclusively fish-eating Ospreys. The Ospreys are alerted to the presence of these predators by the alarm calls of the swallows. Another example of mutual aid comes from within the species. They sometimes receive help from other birds to feed their young. These "helpers at the nest" are usually older siblings from previous clutches, but unrelated juveniles may

help as well. Further cooperation occurs when aquatic insects hatch: Barn Swallows may join other swallow species in mixed foraging flocks.

As Members of MCAS, we are indebted to Barn Swallows for their role in the creation of the national Audubon Society. Although the killing of egrets is often cited for inspiring the U.S. conservation movement, it was the millinery trade's impact on Barn Swallows that prompted naturalist George Bird Grinnell's 1886 *Forest & Stream* editorial decrying the waste of bird life. His essay led to the founding of the first Audubon Society.



Barn Swallow Chicks
Photo by Tony Eppstein

MAKE YOUR SIGHTINGS COUNT

Tim Bray

A scientific revolution is under way, and you can (and should) be part of it. It's called "citizen science" and it is providing vast amounts of observational data, far more than could be collected by traditional methods. Birders started it, with the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, and are continuing to lead the way with eBird. A real-time online checklist program, eBird has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, it is now one of the largest and fastest growing data resources in existence, with more than 350 million recorded observations.

The Mendocino Coast, however, is under-represented in eBird, as only a few people are entering observations. This makes the database less useful than it could be to anyone studying population distributions in our area. You can help, by entering your observations whenever you can. Cornell has made entering data easy and intuitive. You can do it from a computer or using an app for your mobile device. You don't have to be a super-birder; you just have to be able to identify and count the birds you are familiar with.

All you do is enter when, where, and how you went birding, then fill out a checklist of all the birds seen and heard during the outing. eBird provides various options for data gathering, including point counts, transects, and area searches. Automated data quality filters developed by regional bird experts review all submissions before they enter the database, and local experts review unusual records that are flagged by the filters.

What's in it for you? eBird provides a lot of benefits to birders, as well as scientists. First, it's an easy and useful way to keep track of your personal "life list" - and you can set it to notify you whenever a bird you haven't seen before is reported in your area. This of course works best after you have been using it for a while, so eBird knows what you have already seen. If you have kept records of past sightings, it's easy to enter them as well. When planning a birding trip, a few minutes with eBird will show you what other birders have seen in the area. Frequently, there are photo links, which can help improve your identification skills and are often simply beautiful images. Many birders include comments documenting the specific features that led them to identify a particular bird. This too can help you learn what to look for.

An interesting thing happens when you start counting individuals instead of just checking off a species: you look more closely at the birds, which can lead you to notice details that you might have missed, and even to identify a rare species hiding among the "ordinary" birds. Last winter, for example, while counting Tundra Swans in flight at Manchester, we noticed that one of them was larger than the others - this turned out to be the first verified record of Trumpeter Swan in Mendocino County.

So go to ebird.org to learn more, sign up, and be part of the massive new army of scientific observers. Count birds and make the birds count.

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Trumpeter Swan at the Calgary Zoo - Photograph by Sasata

CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

October 2016

Saturday 1 Beginner Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg. 9AM-Noon.* Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

Monday 3 MCAS Board Meeting contact Dave Jensen for time, place

Saturday 8 Field Trip Migratory Seabirds and Waterfowl Meet at parking area at the end of Ward Avenue (Cleone). 9 AM-Noon. This field trip will also include stops at Lake Cleone and Laguna Point. October is the peak month for migrating waterfowl. On good days, thousands can be seen flying south over nearshore waters. This is a great time to learn how to distinguish different species of Scoters, Loons, Grebes, and other waterfowl. The mass migration also brings the chance of finding something unusual, like Tufted Puffin, or a flight of Shearwaters. We will also practice estimating numbers for eBird entries. Leader: Dave Jensen

Saturday 15 Annual Meeting Northern California Audubon Chapters hosted by MCAS. Meet at Van Damme Beach parking 7:30AM for pre-meeting bird walk. Meeting 9AM-5PM in Abalone Room, Little River Inn, Little River. Bring sack lunch or purchase sandwich to be delivered for \$10. See President's Message in this newsletter, Page 2. MCAS members welcome.

Monday 17 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar 7PM
Speaker: Rachael Freeman Long Subject: The Natural History of Bats in California

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

Sunday 23 Coastal Trail Bird Walk - [Coastal Trail](#) 10AM-Noon. Meet near restroom at east end of parking lot at foot of Elm Street, Fort Bragg. Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: David Jensen

November 2016

4-6 [Audubon Assembly](#) Tenaya Lodge, Yosemite

Saturday 5 Beginner Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg. 9AM-Noon.* Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: David Jensen

Saturday 12 Field Trip South Coast Raptor Trip. 9AM-Late Afternoon. Meet at the Navarro Beach turnout on Highway 1. **Carpooling required.** Bring a lunch and water. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: David Jensen

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Monday 14 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar. 7PM
Speaker: David Rice Subject: Why We Bird More information at whywebird.com

Wednesday 16 Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg.
8:30AM-Noon* **Note Time Change!** Leader: Tim Bray

December 2016

Saturday 3 Beginner Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg. 9AM-Noon* Bring water, wear comfortable walking shoes, binoculars available, heavy rain cancels. Leader: David Jensen

Monday 5 Board Meeting contact Dave Jensen for time/place.

Saturday 10 Field Trip Christmas Bird Count Tune-up at [Rose Memorial Cemetery](#)
9AM-Noon. Meet at the east end of Spruce Street, Fort Bragg. The Banksia trees in the cemetery attract winter rarities, including Orioles, Sapsuckers, and Warblers, as well as an astonishing number of Anna's Hummingbirds. Along Pudding Creek, we may hear Virginia Rail and Sora. The brushy habitat alongside the tracks is a good place to find Lincoln's Sparrow. Leader: Tim Bray

Monday 12 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 15051 Caspar Rd, Caspar. 7PM
The annual Christmas Bird Count slideshow **Note Date Change from the 21st**

Saturday 17 Ukiah Christmas Bird Count

Wednesday 21 Bird Walk [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) 18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg.
8:30AM-Noon* Leader: Tim Bray

Monday 26 Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Count There will be a dinner for the participants at the Caspar Community Center. The hall will open around 4PM, and dinner (lasagne and salad) will be at 5PM. Please RSVP so we have an idea of how much food to prepare. Bring your own beverage.

January 2016

Monday 2 Manchester Christmas Bird Count Details to be announced.

**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 2015-2016

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|--|----------|
| President | David Jensen | djensen@mcn.org | 964-8163 |
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| Conservation | Terra Fuller | fullerterra@hotmail.com | 964-4675 |
| Off-board Chairs: | | | |
| Programs, Membership | Charlene McAllister | charmacc@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

P.O. BOX 2297

FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

