

# The Whistling Swan



NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDOCINO COAST AUDUBON SOCIETY

November 2011



## GRIZZLY BEARS, WOLVES, AND CONDORS IN MENDOCINO?

Speaker **BOB KEIFFER**  
**FORT BRAGG TOWN HALL**  
**7:00 P.M.**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21**

Was Mendocino really the home of grizzly bears, wolves and condors? Bob Keiffer is fascinated by the prospect that the Pomo lived for thousands of years with these legendary beasts in the beautiful hills and valleys of Lake and Mendocino Counties. Keiffer is a man of facts, who has gathered them for us to tell the story of wildlife in our community. Come see how this wildlife biologist turned historian tracks down the evidence for the fauna of Mendocino county before the intrusion of Europeans. Learn how Native Americans lived with these animals and how they used many common species: Northern Flicker, California Quail, Mallard, Jackrabbit, and Turkey Vulture.

A few years after his birth in Hopland, Keiffer's interest in animals awakened. That has grown into 25 years of helping to manage the UC Hopland Field Station. He will share interesting stories about the species that once roamed our local environs and paint a picture of what the local fauna were like two hundred years ago. Then Keiffer will guide us through more recent times and introduce us to species that are still represented in Pomo culture and art.

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### Photo Credits:

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## CALENDAR

### November 2011

- 5 Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 am, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
- 12 Field Trip: 9:00 am, Hawks of the South Coast. Meet at south end of Navarro River Bridge to caravan south
- 16 Bird Walk: 8:30 am, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
- 21 Chapter Meeting: 7:00 pm, Town Hall, Fort Bragg

### December 2011

- 3 Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 am, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
- 11 Sunday Field Trip: 9:00 am, Point Arena and Manchester. Meet at Hwy 1 and Miner Hole Road, Mile Post 17.54
- 19 Chapter Meeting Preparation for Manchester and Fort Bragg Christmas Bird Counts: 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, Fort Bragg
- 21 Bird Walk: 8:30 am, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
- 30 Manchester Christmas Bird Count

### January 2012

- 2 Christmas Bird Count in Fort Bragg: Call 937-4050 or 964-6215 to sign up or for more information.
- 7 Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.
- 14 Field Trip: 9:00 am, Ten Mile River and Beach. Meet at south end of Ten Mile Bridge.
- 16 Chapter Meeting: 7:00 pm, Town Hall, Fort Bragg
- 18 Bird Walk: 8:30 am, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens



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Photo by Mike Peters

*Editor's Note—MCAS President David Jensen is birding in Africa. His column returns next month.*

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

### NORTHERN FLICKER

The Northern Flicker is rewardingly easy to identify with its undulating flight and its white rump patch and flashes of salmon-red on its wings and tail. This woodpecker is divided: In the west, the red-shafted occurs, and in the east and far north the yellow-shafted is seen.. In the Great Plains you get some interesting mixes of the two.

Both the male and female have red under their wings and tail feathers, barred brown backs, and spotted chests with a black crescent bib. Only the male has the bright red moustache line.



**Northern Flicker female: photo Alan D. Wilson** [www.Naturespicsonline.com](http://www.Naturespicsonline.com)



**Northern Flicker male: photo Ron LeValley**  
[www.LeValleyphoto.com](http://www.LeValleyphoto.com)

The couple mates for life and returns to the same area to breed, often to the same dead snag where they make a nest hole and line it with wood chips. They will use other cavities, if need be, such as those in poles, posts, houses, banks, haystacks or boxes. You can often hear the male doing its territorial drumming, rapidly pounding its bill on a tree, utility pole, metal roof, etc.

The Northern Flicker often feeds on the ground where it hunts for its favourite food – ants. Flickers eat more ants than any other North American bird. Their tongue is exceptionally long. It can stick out three inches past its bill and is stored behind the back of the skull. It's coated with sticky saliva and has a barbed tip for catching the tasty morsels.

## A FEW NEW ZEALAND BIRDS Tony Eppstein

Photographs copyright Craig McKenzie ([www.flickr.com/photos/craigmckenzie](http://www.flickr.com/photos/craigmckenzie))

Following Don Shephard's article in the October *Whistling Swan*, "Three British Birds", he asked me to write a similar piece on New Zealand birds. Like Don, I came to the U.S.A. as an adult, but I came from New Zealand.

New Zealand had no native mammals until the early Polynesian settlers brought the rat and dog. European settlers brought many other mammals, including stoats and the Australian possum, that have devastated many N.Z. bird species by feasting on eggs and young.

Fortunately the several native birds described in this article seem to be survivors. In each case I give the indigenous Maori name and its pronunciation, followed by the common English one.



**Piwakawaka** (pee/wa/ka/wa/ka): The Fantail is about 6 inches long with the tail about half this length and is quite common. Similar in habits to the Black Phoebe, the Fantail uses its tail to greater effect, with brisk fan strokes like those of a 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> Century Grande Dame. The Piwakawaka is quite tolerant of human habitation, often flying into houses to catch insects and sometimes to shelter from a bad storm.



**Hoiho** (Ho/ee/ho): The Hoiho or Yellow-Eyed Penguin (about 30 inches) nests in the southern part of the New Zealand South Island. I have vivid memories of watching from a hide on an Otago Peninsula beach at dawn, as a line of these little penguins marched down in a line to jump off a low cliff one by one to go fishing. Once in the ocean they needed to dodge a Hooker's Sea Lion waiting for breakfast.



**Kereru** (ke/re/roo): The NZ Wood Pigeon (20 inches) is often seen in small flocks in the NZ bush. They have prominent beautiful iridescent green/blue throats and red eyes. The Kereru can be fairly noisy with loud swishing and wing clapping as they fly and move about on the trees in the quiet NZ bush. Their call is a sonorous and penetrating 'ku'. Their diet consists of leaves and fruits of native vegetation.



**Tui** (too/ee): Early English settlers called the Tui the Parson Bird, because the white throat feathers look like a priest's cravat. The Tui, about 12 inches long, is a honey eater with a bristled tongue, which eats nectar from flowers. It has a melodious song, with bell-like tones and loud guttural 'toks'. With its cousin specie, the Bellbird, the Tui made the dawn choruses I have heard in the NZ bush – a wonderful auditory experience.

**PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER Donald Shephard**



**Pacific Golden-Plover breeding plumage. Photo O. W. Johnson USFWS**

Imagine you are the first-hatched chick of Pacific Golden-Plover parents along the shore of the Bering Sea. You are able to run soon after hatching. You regularly forage near the nest while your adult continues to incubate late-hatching siblings. Abundant high-protein insects and some seeds and berries fatten you almost to five ounces. You are ten inches long with a two-foot wingspan. It is an idyllic life without human disturbances.

In August, your mother leaves for Hawaii followed shortly after by your father. Now in October the weather turns cold, the days short and the food supply diminishes. Your assignment is to fly non-stop for fifty hours over 2,000 miles of the Pacific Ocean. You will make the return trip in a few months.

It does not surprise me that some Pacific Golden-Plovers migrate an alternate route down the coast and rest on our beaches where volunteers for the Save Our Shorebirds program monitor their numbers. The winter range of this species is spread over half of the world's circumference. It occupies upland and coastal habitats ranging from Hawaii to Japan, from the South Pacific, including Australia and New Zealand, through southern Asia and the Middle East to northeast Africa. It also winters along our coast and probably in Baja California, the Revillagigedo and Galapagos Islands, and Chile as well.

## **PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER**

**continued**

This uncommon species and the locally rarer American Golden-Plover, were previously considered subspecies of the Lesser Golden-Plover. Hawaiians call them kolea. The name plover comes from the French word meaning "the rain bird" (pleuvoir - to rain). In Europe, flocks of migratory plovers historically arrived at the beginning of the autumn rainy season.

Let us suppose you survived the trip from the Bering Sea to Hawaii. You hang out during the day on the many golf courses there and at night on city rooftops, not unlike other visitors. You will recognize others of your kind. Pacific Golden-Plovers are medium-sized shorebirds with moderately long legs, short necks, short bills and relatively large rounded heads. Their backs are speckled golden and black. Your fellow juveniles have a yellow wash on the face. Most adults molt into breeding plumage showing black under-parts. Although the white neck stripe is narrower on Pacific Golden-Plovers than on American Golden-Plovers, more white shows on the under-tail coverts.

They feed in short vegetation or open areas using the typical plover stop-run-stop, scanning, and then capturing prey with one or a series of pecks.

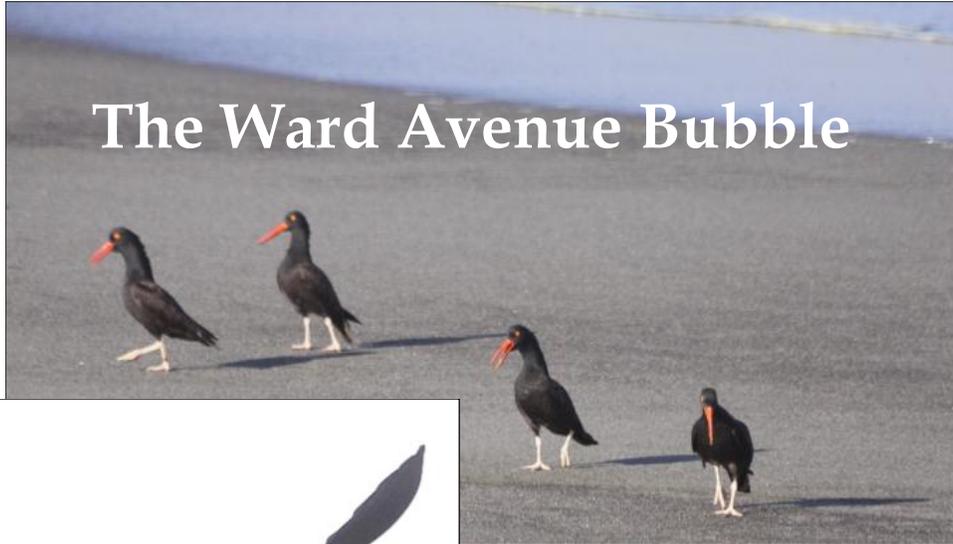
Enjoy your good life in Hawaii, fatten up there, because come April you will gather with a small group of friends one evening, fly high into the tropical air, circle a few times to orient yourself then fly non-stop two thousand miles again to the breeding grounds in Alaska. With luck, you will live to make this round trip fifteen times.

**Pacific  
Golden-  
Plover non-  
breeding  
plumage  
Photo by  
Aviceda**



**Save Our Shorebirds**     **Becky Bowen**

## The Ward Avenue Bubble



Perhaps it's the lay of the land or the ripple pattern of waves. The corner of MacKerricher State Park's Ten Mile Beach at the foot of Ward Avenue is a place where magical bird incidents happen at the water edge – usually in mornings in the fog. Save Our Shorebirds volunteers have seen the shrill courtship dance of two Black Oystercatcher couples (June, 2011), a White-faced Ibis (September, 2011) and at first light in August, 2009, a chorus line of 29 Great Egrets (part of the line is below).



*Save Our Shorebirds is a long term on-going Mendocino Coast Audubon citizen science project in partnership with California State Parks. Volunteers monitor shorebirds on three MacKerricher State Parks beaches. To participate, contact Angela Liebenberg at [ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov](mailto:ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov) and visit us on Facebook.*

**Becky Bowen photos**

## Thanksgiving Window Watch Bird Count

Dr. John G. Hewston of Humboldt State University runs an annual Thanksgiving Day Bird Count.

Follow this procedure: Select a circular area on the ground (may include water area), 15 feet in diameter, to include feeders, bird baths, shrubs, etc., as you wish. Imagine the circle extending upward as a cylinder. Count the numbers of individual birds of each species which come into this circle (or cylinder) during exactly ONE HOUR. Try to judge as best you can the actual number of individuals which are making visits to the Circle, or which fly through the imaginary cylinder. Try NOT to count the same individual bird over and over again. Please print clearly the number for each species in the In Circle column. If you wish to report any, seen outside the Circle, list them in the "Outside" column.

Pick any ONE-HOUR period during the day and make the count on Thanksgiving Day!

**To download a Thanksgiving Bird Count Form, click on this site:**

<http://www.utahbirds.org/cbc/ThanksgBCForm.htm>

Please send your count results (even if you see no birds at all) to:

Dr. John G. Hewston  
Natural Resources Building  
Humboldt State University  
Arcata, CA 95521

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**PO Box 2297**

**Fort Bragg, CA 95437**



*Becky Bowen*

## MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2011-2012

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### 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

