

Save Our Shorebirds 2010-2011

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society

Local birders and biologists in this remote area of Northern California noticed declines in shorebirds five years ago and formed a partnership with California State Parks that has grown into a long-term citizen science research project on the Mendocino Coast. The mission was to find facts and contribute to research connected with sharp declines in coastal birds. The hope was to increase the number of resident and migrating shorebirds.

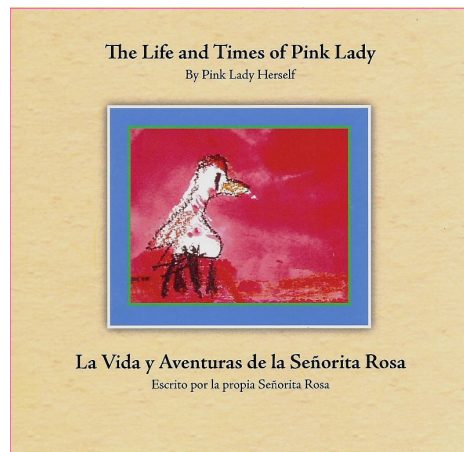
Mendocino Coast Audubon Society's Save Our Shorebirds program recently added educational outreach and shorebird protection to the program where surveyors observe effects of intensive wildlife habitat restoration on three MacKerricher State Park beaches north of Fort Bragg, CA. More than a million people visit MacKerricher State Park every year and so do thousands of migrating shorebirds. Beaches also are year-round homes to four species of shorebirds including the Western Snowy Plover, classified as a "threatened" shorebird on the federal endangered species list



Black Turnstone (left) and Ruddy Turnstone, Ten Mile Beach, MacKerricher State Park, north of Fort Bragg, CA, July, 2011

Save Our Shorebirds Highlights for 2010-2011:

- Volunteers continue shorebird surveys on Ten Mile Beach, Virgin Creek Beach and Glass Beach under the supervision of State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg. Surveyors monitor shorebirds in an area where California State Parks crews work to remove more than 75 acres of invasive non-native *Ammophila arenaria* (European beach grass) in critical habitat of Western Snowy Plovers. Data also are collected on the number of other birds on the Audubon and American Bird Conservancy Watchlist, including Wandering Tattler, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Black Turnstone, Surfbird, Red Knot, Sanderling, Western Sandpiper, Rock Sandpiper and Heermann's Gull.
- All data are entered into Cornell University's international bird database and volunteers have logged more than 3500 hours on foot in the field since the June, 2007.
- Innovative projects connected to the program during the last two years include publication of a bilingual storybook about Western Snowy Plovers that was illustrated by local school children and given to every elementary school pupil on the Mendocino County coast. SOS leaders also made an arrangement with the local court system where people cited for or convicted of non-violent or non-sex crimes can serve community service time by assisting in Save Our Shorebirds surveys. Because this is a small community and word-of-mouth is a powerful form of communication, we found this part of the SOS program helps reduce human disturbance to shorebirds.



- Publication of “The Life and Times of Pink Lady,” the children’s book about Western Snowy Plovers, was funded by a grant from the Cantus Foundation and awarded to the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society by the Community Foundation of Mendocino County. All books were given to school children or donated to non-profit organizations in the community.
- In 2011, Save Our Shorebirds was funded by the California State Parks and Audubon California Partnership Endowment Grant awarded in January. Grant funds contribute to an independent contract with an SOS director who compiles data from July-September. The director also teaches basic shorebird identification and conservation to local State Parks Junior Ranger participants.

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society is home-based in an Audubon Important Bird Area and some 20 volunteers conduct Save Our Shorebirds census surveys.



SOS surveyors actively participated in a major new study of Black Oystercatchers in June, 2011, under direction of researchers from Audubon California. SOS Director Joleen Ossello coordinated the local effort with Ron LeValley, Mad River Biologists, Humboldt County, CA. Above: Black Oystercatchers at Virgin Creek Beach..



SOS surveyors who have been trained by permitted biologists, monitor Western Snowy Plovers in MacKerricher State Park under the supervision of State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg in cooperation with U.S. Fish & Wildlife. Above: Western Snowy Plovers on Ten Mile Beach in MacKerricher State Park.



Heermann's Gull, July, 2011, Ten Mile Beach.

All data and reports available at the SOS listserv <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/AudubonSOS/>
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