



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- November 2020

DR. FRANK FOGARTY PRESENTS:

FIRE, GRAZING, AND WINTERING BIRD COMMUNITIES IN CALIFORNIA OAK WOODLANDS



Bobcat Ranch is a 6,800 acre working cattle ranch dedicated to conservation of blue oak woodland natural communities, and maintaining California's rich pastoral heritage. *Photo by Rachelle House of wildfire approaching Audubon California's Bobcat Ranch on July 2, 2018. Credit to Audubon California website.*

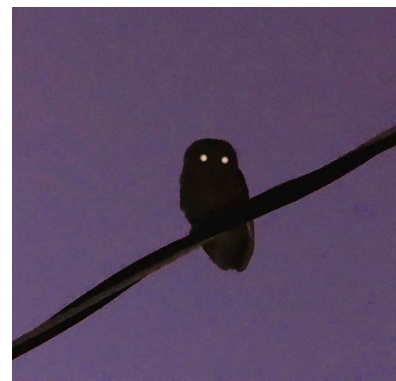
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16 AT 7:00 P.M.
LIVE VIA ZOOM

Despite wildfire being a major force for change in California's landscapes, there are many unanswered questions about how it affects wildlife. In particular, little is known about the impacts of these fires on birds and their habitat. Audubon California's Bobcat Ranch, located west of Winters, presented a fascinating natural laboratory to study the responses of birds and their winter habitat to two potential disturbances: wildfire and cattle grazing.

Continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

Cover Story	1-2
Zoom Meeting Links	2
Oystercatcher Project Update By Dave Jensen	3
On the Wing - Photographs By Roger Adamson	4
Save Our Shorebirds By Becky Bowen	5
Christmas Bird Count By Tim Bray	6
MCAS Calendar	7
MCAS Board of Directors	8



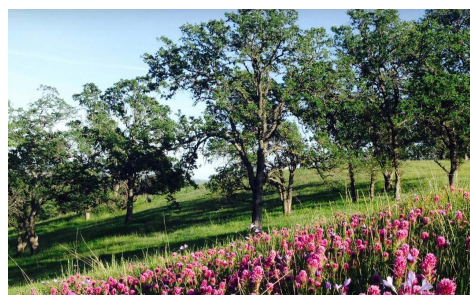
Owl at Night photo by Erin B via Flickr

Continued from page 1



Dr. Frank Fogarty, a faculty member at Humboldt State University, will be presenting his research from 2016-2018 in the oak woodlands of Bobcat Ranch. His work focused on whether these potential disturbances affected both the presence of individual species and the total number of species across the Ranch. Given projections that the annual area burned in California will continue to increase in coming years, understanding the impact of fire on wildlife habitat is a priority for managing our important wildlife resources.

Bobcat Ranch hosts a rich blend of important habitats, including Blue Oak Woodland, native perennial grassland, annual grassland, seasonal wetland and Chaparral. The Ranch is home to a variety of bird species, including Lark Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Golden Eagle, Lewis's Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, Burrowing Owl, Nuttall's Woodpecker and Yellow-billed Magpie. Learn more [here](#).



Zoom Meeting Links: How to Connect

To join our [Zoom Meeting](#) via desktop, laptop, tablet, or smart phone:

At 6:45 PM, click the [Zoom link here](#). We are requesting that you to click on the link 15 minutes prior to the start of the event, so that you can make sure that your audio and video are working properly.

If you have never used Zoom before, you might need to download and install [the Zoom app](#). If there are still problems, check which release of Zoom you have installed. You may need to upgrade to the latest version.

If you cannot join by computer, tablet, or smart phone, you can dial the number below from any telephone and listen to the presentation:

1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose) or
1 253-215-8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 889 0452 0594
Passcode: 485752



2020 BLACK OYSTERCATCHER PROJECT UPDATE

David Jensen



*An adult Black Oystercatcher gives a youngster (on right) a lesson in how to find food on the rocks at Glass Beach, MacKerricher State Park.
B. Bowen Photograph*

In 2020, 25 State Parks/MCAS volunteers covered 11 territories from Laguna Point in MacKerricher State Park south to the Navarro River. The first survey began on April 27 (territories on California State Parks properties started later due to covid 19 closures) and the last observations were collected nearly 20 weeks later on September 18.

Surveyors identified and mapped 53 nests. Seven pairs re-nested after their initial efforts failed, and one pair laid a third set of eggs. Unfortunately, that nest met the same fate as the first two.

A total of 46 chicks successfully hatched. However, young oystercatchers face many perils including ravens, Peregrine Falcons, river otters, human disturbance, waves, and the rough terrain of rocky islands. Of the 46 chicks, 13 survived long enough to fly.

It is important to note that our local efforts are part of an ongoing West Coast citizen science Black Oystercatcher breeding productivity study managed by Audubon California. Volunteers from organizations along the California and Oregon coasts follow a specific protocol and observations are entered into an Audubon California database. Like observations from Christmas Bird Counts, these data are available to academic researchers and others who study avian and coastal dynamics.

We thank our volunteers: Roger Adamson, Alison Cebula, Sue Coulter, Terra Fuller, Jim Gibson, Heather Glefke, Zach Gordon (age 14), Bill Heil, Dave Jensen, Beverly Karkruff, Dan Knowles, Lorrie Lagasse, Ron LeValley, Jean Mann, Peggy Martin, Charlene McAllister, Tess McGuire, Art Morley, Gail Nsentip, Linda Perkins, Esme Plascencia, Sonya Popow, Marcia Riwny, Les Rohssler, and Judy Steele. We also thank State Parks' Volunteer Coordinator Amelia Schall, who organized and managed volunteer training and scheduling.

Information about the Audubon California study and research sources about Black Oystercatchers can be found at <https://ca.audubon.org/westernsnowyplover/black-oystercatcher>

ON THE WING

Photographs by Roger Adamson



Yellow-rumped Warbler “hawking” for insects



Slaty-backed Gull found by Todd Easterla, refound by Roger, the first Mendocino County record for this species.



Pectoral Sandpiper, an uncommon migrant that is only occasionally seen on the Mendocino Coast

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen



Mountain Plover found on Ten Mile Beach about 2 miles north of Ward Avenue

Photograph by Roger Adamson

ONE SURPRISE AFTER ANOTHER COMES OUR WAY IN OCTOBER

When is a shorebird not a shorebird? This handsome drop-in at MacKerricher State Park, a Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) does not live in mountains and cannot be found near water—like every other plover in the world. It appeared suddenly in Mendocino County on Ten Mile Beach on October 18, 2020. Lucas Stephenson, of Napa, spotted the bird, and MCAS member Roger Adamson located the plover and photographed it at 10 a.m. the next day.

Mountain Plovers are extremely rare here. This is the 4th recorded county sighting. Dorothy Tobkin has found two and Kevin Guisti found one on Ten Mile Beach in 2017.

According to US Fish & Wildlife, there are some 20,000 Mountain Plovers in the United States. Breeding grounds are in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain States. Wintering grounds are in Arizona, Texas, Mexico, and in California's Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Imperial Valleys.

USFWS has not listed the bird as endangered, but the International Union for Conservation of Nature lists Mountain Plover as near-threatened because of habitat loss and agricultural practices that degrade the grasslands and native plants where the birds forage.

Save Our Shorebirds surveyors are recording a handful of intriguing surprises this fall on Ten Mile Beach, including a Horned Lark feeding in shell hash on the wave slope and a Pacific Golden-Plover tucked into a mixed flock of Black-bellied Plovers and Dunlins. As we prepare to enter our 15th year of Save Our Shorebirds surveys, we love to find incidental and accidental arrivals on our beaches and happily have learned to expect the unexpected.

Save Our Shorebirds is an MCAS Conservation Program in cooperation with California State Parks. Please visit us to see what we are finding on surveys:

Please visit us at www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2020

Tim Bray

The Board of Directors of the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society considered the question of whether to conduct Christmas Bird Counts this year, and decided we would attempt to carry on as best we can.

The Fort Bragg Count is scheduled for Sunday December 27 and the Manchester count is on Saturday January 2, 2021. (Never has a New Year been so eagerly anticipated.)

Consistent with National Audubon Society guidance, we will not host a Count Dinner this year for either Count. Instead, we will conduct a virtual tally-up a day or two after Count Day, via Zoom.

We will not be doing much public outreach or recruitment, as team sizes will be much more limited. For the Fort Bragg Count, we will emphasize the Yard/Feeder Watch aspect. Yard-birding has become much more popular this year and we are hoping this will be a way for many of you to safely participate in the Count.

It will be necessary for everyone to sign up well in advance, as I will not be able to assign people to teams on late notice. Those of you who have been part of teams in the past should contact your Area Leaders directly. Feel free to contact me if you would like to participate but are not sure how. Above all, take no risks with other people's health and safety: follow the guidelines for masking, distancing, and hygiene, and stay home if you feel even a little unwell.

Beginners' Bird Walks Are Starting Again

After an extended Covid delay, your chapter will host the Beginners' Bird Walks again on the first Saturdays of November and December. The Manchester Christmas Count will be held on Saturday, January 2, so watch the newsletter and MCAS website for the schedule of 2021 Beginners' Walks. The November walk will begin at 9:00, before the Gardens are open to the public. MCBG has requested that we limit these walks to a small number of people, and only to those who are members of the Gardens.

****Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens (18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA)**

The following safety precautions will be required::

- Leave 6 feet of space between you and others not in your party. If passing another visitor on a trail, please announce yourself and provide space for fellow guests to pass.
- All visitors must wear face masks that cover the nose and mouth in accordance with the Mendocino County Health Order at all times to protect yourself, other guests, and our staff.
- There will be limited access to restrooms. The interior Display House restrooms are the only available restroom facilities onsite.
- Bring your own water and binoculars.

CALENDAR

Although the strict Shelter-In-Place order has been relaxed to allow some group activities, the risk of contracting COVID-19 remains high and we remain extremely cautious. The Early Bird walks are continuing with restrictions. Our monthly Chapter meetings and presentations will be conducted remotely via Zoom. We will notify you of any changes via e-mail, our Facebook page and our website.

NOVEMBER 2020

Saturday 7 - *Beginners Bird Walk 9:00 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
You must be a member of the Gardens to go on this bird walk. Bring binoculars.

Monday 16 - *Audubon Society Meeting* 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom
Join us for a presentation: Fire, grazing, and wintering bird communities in California oak woodlands

Wednesday 18 - *Early Bird Walk* 8:30 a.m. - Noon**
Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, 18220 CA-1, Fort Bragg, CA 95437

DECEMBER 2020

Saturday 5 - *Beginners Bird Walk 9:00 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
You must be a member of the Gardens to go on this bird walk. Bring binoculars.

Wednesday 9 - *Audubon Society Board Meeting* 6:00 p.m. via Zoom
Will be conducted remotely on Zoom. Contact Tim Bray for more information.

Wednesday 16 - *Early Bird Walk* 8:30 a.m. - Noon**
Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, 18220 CA-1, Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Sunday 27 - *Christmas Bird Count* - Fort Bragg Circle
Count birds in your yard or neighborhood, from Little Valley to Big River.
Details in the December issue.

For complete and current calendar, updates, and useful links, visit:

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2018-2019

President	Tim Bray	tbray@mcn.org	(707) 734-0791
Vice President, Field Trips	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	(707) 964-8163
Secretary	Nicolet Houtz	nicolethoutz@gmail.com	
Treasurer	Jim Havlena	havlenas@fix.net	
SOS, Conservation	Becky Bowen	casparbeck@comcast.net	(707) 962-1602
Education	Pam Huntley	pjhuntley@hotmail.com	
Membership	Adam Hutchins	raptorous@me.com	(707) 734-3470
Programs	Terra Fuller	fullerterra@hotmail.com	(707) 964-4675
Programs	Hayley Ross	hayleyhross@gmail.com	

Off-Board Chairs:

Scholarship Chair	Judy Steele	judys@mcn.org
Webmaster	Catherine Keegan	keegan@mcn.org
Newsletter Editor	Megan Smithyman	mesmithy@gmail.com

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

