



# The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- October 2020

BECKY BOWEN PRESENTS:

## CONFESSIONS OF A SHOREBIRD NUT:

The Ins and Outs and Ups and Downs of Mendocino Coast Audubon's Save Our Shorebirds Program



*The architects of Save Our Shorebirds – from left: Angela Martin Liebenberg, Dorothy Tobkin, and Becky Bowen in May, 2007, at Ten Mile Beach. Photo by Andrea Jones.*

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 19 AT 7:00 P.M.  
LIVE VIA ZOOM**

"Isn't always easy and isn't always simple, but it's nearly always fun," Becky Bowen says about Save Our Shorebirds. She will tell the story of the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society's shorebird conservation program at the chapter program meeting at 7 p.m., October 19 on zoom.

Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing long-term Mendocino Coast Audubon citizen science program in cooperation with California State Parks. It grew out of a friendship between State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Liebenberg and Becky in 2006. The two came up with the idea during long in-field surveys in MacKerricher State Park where Angela organized local Western Snowy Plover volunteer monitors.

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**WADER CONSERVATION**

**WORLD WATCH**

**31<sup>st</sup> October & 1<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2020**

**A** Go out and see waders wherever you are in the world.

**B** Send us an email telling us what you have seen and where.

**C** Find your sightings on the species list and roll of honour.

STAND UP FOR WADER CONSERVATION AND SAY:

I CARE

THE NATURAL HOME FOR WADER LOVERS  
WADERS NEED LOVE TOO!  
waderquest@gmail.com / info@waderquest.net

*Wader Conservation World Watch. Learn more on page 5.*

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The Western Snowy Plover is listed as threatened on the federal Endangered Species List. Local birding legend Dorothy Tobkin talked them into making the program about all shorebirds, since so many shorebirds were listed as birds in decline by National Audubon Society and American Bird Conservancy.

Angela now is a Senior Environmental Scientist at California Fish & Wildlife. Becky, a retired production manager at ABC-TV in Hollywood, lives in Caspar and is the volunteer SOS data compiler and surveyor coordinator. "Running the SOS program is not that different than working on an Academy Awards telecast," she says. "You plan it, budget it, put it on, follow the numbers, and pay the bills. Always have a backup generator, and take good care of the crew and, oh yes, the stars."

The stars of SOS are the shorebirds of MacKerricher State Park and the volunteer surveyors who have gathered data about the birds since June of 2007. Please tune in to see photographs, listen to the SOS story, and hear what the birds have been telling us for 14 years.

Have questions about shorebirds? Send them to Becky at [casparbeck@comcast.net](mailto:casparbeck@comcast.net). If you miss the live Zoom presentation, look for a recording on the MCAS website and YouTube.

## 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



## MCAS GOES VIRTUAL

Tim Bray

We conducted our first virtual Chapter program meeting via Zoom last month with Dr. Brianna Zuber. It was well attended, with over 40 people joining from as far afield as Sacramento, San Francisco, and Monterey. Our “Zoom Czar” Nicolet Houtz did a great job running the tech, and Dr. Zuber gave an excellent presentation. We were able to have a good Q&A session at the end as well. The Chat function proved to be a popular way to carry on side-conversations without disturbing either the speaker or the participants. All in all we were pleased with our first effort, and received several compliments.

The entire presentation, including the Q&A, was recorded and uploaded to our new YouTube channel. It can be found at: <https://youtu.be/kLb4v1mGfF4>. We plan to do this for all our programs now, and hope to develop new content as well, including educational videos. Nothing takes the place of in-person meetings and field trips, but until those become feasible again, we will be making extra effort to communicate through these new-to-us media.

Our Black Oystercatcher breeding survey wrapped up the season and we hope to have some findings to share with you soon. This year we want to thank Amelia Schall of California State Parks for coordinating our volunteers, and as always, many thanks to the volunteers for dedicating so much time to this effort.

In other news, it's full-on migration season and people are reporting unusual birds almost daily. Already this year, three new birds have been added to the Mendocino County species list: White-eyed Vireo at Usal Campground, Slaty-backed Gull on Ten Mile Beach, and Cassin's Sparrow at Big River (right next to the parking lot).

All three birds were originally found and reported by visiting birders. Warbler migration is continuing, with rarities like Northern Waterthrush (not actually a thrush), Tennessee Warbler and Northern Parula appearing in various places. This is an exciting time of year for “twitchers” - the British parlance for birders who chase rarities. Even if that's not your cup of tea, it's still exciting to go birding with the knowledge that you could find something rare.



*White-eyed Vireo photo by Nate Steiner via Flickr*

It's also the time when we say farewell to some of our summer breeding birds, like Allen's Hummingbird and Swainson's Thrush - and welcome back some of our winter friends, like Golden-crowned Sparrow and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. If you have Goldfinches in your yard, look closely. While the American Goldfinches have already molted into their (relatively) drab winter plumage, this year we seem to have more Lesser Goldfinches than usual, and they stay bright all year. Don't take sparrows for granted either. Migrant birds often drop down and join a small flock to rest and feed before moving on, and it's possible to find something like a Clay-colored Sparrow in among your regular yard birds.

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Seabirds are migrating as well, and long lines of Brown Pelicans have been seen moving south, perhaps already heading to their winter nesting grounds in southern California and Mexico. Surf Scoters and Grebes are beginning to move in as the Pelicans move out. Black-bellied Plovers are returning to the beaches, just as the first big swells have deposited big piles of seaweed for them to forage in.

I hope you are able to safely get out and observe the ceaseless activity of the natural world.

**If you find anything interesting, tell us about it:**

on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon>

or the Mendobirds group: <https://groups.io/g/Mendobirds>

or just send me an e-mail: [audubon@mcn.org](mailto:audubon@mcn.org).

See you out there.

## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen

### BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS ARRIVE RIGHT ON SCHEDULE IN SEPTEMBER, 2020



*Photo by B. Bowen*

Baird's Sandpipers are extremely rare on the Mendocino Coast in spring and summer, and unusual in fall. Right on cue, these beautiful sandpipers began to appear on local beaches in September. The bird breeds in the upper Arctic and migrates to wintering grounds in South America. Adults migrate mostly along the central corridor of North America, but young birds may travel along the Pacific or Atlantic Coasts.

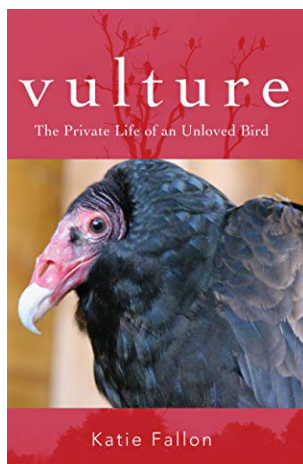
This photograph was taken September 5, 2020, on Ten Mile Beach. It was one of 10 Baird's Sandpipers recorded that morning on the SOS survey. We reported the sightings to our Cornell University eBird filter and learned a Berkeley student reported a total of 11 Baird's Sandpipers on the same beach later that day. Baird's Sandpipers we see usually are young birds with distinctive white fringes on the upper parts. A striking field mark is the projection of folded wings well beyond the tip of the tail.

The bird's common name honors an American naturalist who began work as a curator in 1850 at the Smithsonian Institution. Spencer Fullerton Baird was later named the Second Secretary of the institution. From 1850 until his death in 1887, he expanded the Smithsonian's scientific collection from 6,000 to 2 million. Various species in the animal kingdom were named in his honor, including a drum fish, a sparrow, a beaked whale, a trogon, a crab, a rat snake, a tapir, and a Cuban Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Please visit us at [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)

## BOOK NOOK

Charlene McAllister

**Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird**

by Katie Fallon

Katie Fallon, co-founder of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia has written a natural history of a much maligned bird, along with a personal memoir. Each chapter starts with an imagined musing from a female TUVU as she leaves her nest in an attic of an abandoned house to begin her round trip migration, returning to wait for her mate. I will admit that I came to this book already enamored with vultures, and am even more so after reading this informative and easy to read book.

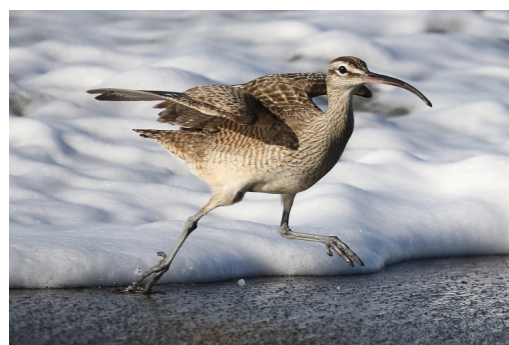
Here is an excerpt from the book *"A turkey vulture is neither prey nor predator. It exists outside the typical food chain, beyond the kill-or-be-killed law of nature, although without death it would starve. The vulture transforms deaths into life. It wastes nothing. It does not kill. It is not a murderer, and it is not often murdered."*

I recommend this book to anyone who wants to learn more about this "unloved bird".

## YOUR INVITATION TO JOIN A WADER CONSERVATION WORLD WATCH OCTOBER 31 AND NOVEMBER 1, 2020

You are cordially invited to join a shorebird Wader Conservation World Watch October 31 and November 1, 2020. Shorebirds (known as "waders" in many countries) are in trouble: 48 percent of the known wader populations are in decline (six species are extinct).

For the past six years, our local Save Our Shorebirds Audubon members have participated in an international weekend program to raise awareness of shorebird conservation. Taking part is simple. Contact B. Bowen for assignment to a local beach (we will respect all county covid 19 regulations). Then go out and see shorebirds. Make a note of your assigned beach and the shorebirds you see. Then email your shorebird list to [waderquest@gmail.com](mailto:waderquest@gmail.com). You can either send a list of species observed or a count of each species.



Whimbrel--Ward Avenue Beach, photo by B. Bowen

Last year, 252 observers from 32 countries and 6 continents participated in this global event sponsored by Wader Quest, an international non-profit charitable organization headquartered in Great Britain and dedicated to shorebird conservation around the world. For more details, see the poster on the cover page or visit [waderquest.net](http://waderquest.net)

**REMEMBERING BETTY STECHMEYER****Becky Bowen**

Betty Stechmeyer's spirit lives over the land she loved and protected. She died August 6. She was 72.

For many years, Betty has led a group of fellow volunteers that cleans up trash and restores wildlife habitat on the beach and on the trail at Hare Creek, just south of Fort Bragg. She took on the responsibility after Matt Coleman's tragic death in August, 2011. One of Matt's jobs was to organize volunteer stewards at the mouth of Hare Creek for the Mendocino Land Trust, owner of the beach and trail. Her dedication to Hare Creek went beyond volunteer work with a shovel. She donated matching funds that paved the way for the land trust to acquire the property in 2008 and open it to the public.

So it was fitting and right that Betty received the 2020 Matthew Coleman Environmental Service Award, along with land trust volunteers Lenny Noack and Tom Wodetzki. The award is given every year by the environmental community represented by the Mendocino Land Trust,

Mendocino Area Parks Association (MendoParks), the Dorothy King Young Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and Mendocino Coast Audubon Society. The land trust also installed a bench in July on the organization's new Old Smith Ranch Trail to honor Betty. It was placed on a shady site that overlooks the Ten Mile River estuary.

"I met her through the Mendocino Land Trust," land trust Conservation Project Manager Nicolet Houtz says. "She became a good friend and mentor." Nicolet also serves as an officer on the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Board of Directors.

Betty said her passion for the outdoors began when she was very young. She was born in Cleveland, and has always been a hiker and birdwatcher. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1975 at the University of Michigan where she met her future husband, botanist Gordon McBride. Gordon died in 2003. When the couple moved to Fort Bragg in 1980, Gordon worked as a botanical consultant. They established a business that produced food cultures, some of which were plant-based. They also collected and sold insect and plant specimens to colleges and universities for research.

This may have contributed to Betty's fascination with all wildlife including insects and arachnids. She was a member of our Audubon society and enjoyed coming to program meetings. Betty was so excited a few years ago about a local Audubon program that featured spiders, that she stopped me in the produce aisle of Harvest Market the morning after the spider presentation—and gave me a imitation of a jumping spider that lasted about 10 minutes. It put a smile on my face for a week. I don't know anybody who loved to tell a good story more than Betty—always delivered with humor and joyous animated body language.

Her own story is simple and modest, filled with good giving and love for her family. Her gifts to the community were big and worthy—from donation of funds to the land trust for computers; to the donation of a forklift to the Fort Bragg Food Bank; to sharing her knowledge of mushrooms with friends; to the support of music in the coastal community; to the spontaneous, generous sharing of garden produce, homemade kefir, eggs, salmon, and other local bounty to friends and those in need. She gave something to us all—freely and quietly.

She made the earth a better place.

We miss her.

## 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. Field trips and the Beginner's Bird walks have been canceled. 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.

### OCTOBER 2020

**Wednesday 14 - Audubon Society Board Meeting 6:00 p.m. via Zoom**

Will be conducted remotely on Zoom. Contact Tim Bray for more information.

**Monday 19 - Audubon Society Meeting 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom**

Join us for a presentation Confessions of a Shorebird Nut: The Ins and Outs and Ups and Downs Of Mendocino Coast Audubon's Save Our Shorebirds Program

**Wednesday 21 - Early Bird Walk\*\* 8:00 a.m. - Noon**

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, 18220 CA-1, Fort Bragg, CA 95437

### NOVEMBER 2020

**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

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

The Early Bird walks will continue starting 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 MCBG. 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 as all water fountains will be turned off.

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

[www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)

[www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon](https://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](mailto: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

