



# The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- February 2019

## STEVE EVANS PRESENTS 50 YEARS OF RIVER PROTECTION



**Eel River-English Ridge:** Legislation introduced by Rep. Jared Huffman and Senator Kamala Harris would protect the proposed English Ridge Wilderness located along the Eel Wild & Scenic River in Mendocino County

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18 AT 7 P.M.**  
**CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER**

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the passage of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the landmark law that has protected nearly 2,000 miles of rivers and streams in California. Steve Evans, the Wild Rivers Director for the California Wilderness Coalition (CalWild), has spent decades working to protect the state's waterways.

Steve will present a historical overview of both the state and federal wild and scenic rivers systems and how they protect free flowing streams and endangered fish and wildlife throughout the state. He will also explore the opportunities in 2019 for river protection in Congress, including Rep. Jared Huffman's Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act, which proposes to protect nearly

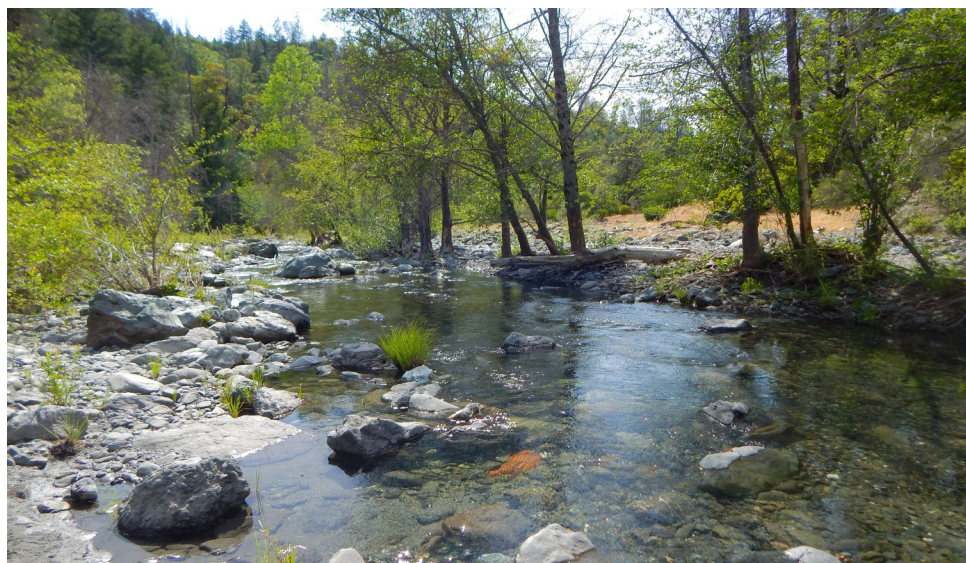
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American Robins were a big hit at the 2018 CBC. Learn more on page 4.



**Elk Creek:** Legislation introduced by Rep. Jared Huffman and Senator Kamala Harris would protect the proposed Elk Creek Wild & Scenic River in Mendocino County.

## 50 YEARS OF RIVER PROTECTION

*Continued from page 1*

480 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers and more than 313,000 acres of Wilderness in Mendocino, Humboldt, Trinity and Del Norte Counties.

Senator Kamala Harris has introduced companion legislation in the U.S. Senate for this bill and others that propose protection for more than 1.6 million acres of federal public lands in Northwest California, Central Coast region, San Gabriel Mountains, and the California Desert.

In addition, Evans will discuss current threats to rivers, including the proposed raise of Shasta Dam on the McCloud River and the proposed Sites Offstream Storage Reservoir, which will divert significant amounts of water from the Sacramento River. His presentation includes more than 30 high quality pictures of existing and proposed wild and scenic rivers throughout California.

Born and raised in southern California, Evans has lived in northern California for more than 40 years and was the former General Manager of the Butte Environmental Council in Chico from 1984 to 1988 and the former Conservation Director of Friends of the River in Sacramento from 1988 to 2011.

Our programs are brought to you with the support of Harbor Lite Lodge, offering discount lodging for Mendocino Coast Audubon Society guest presenters.

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## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER: A RECAP OF THE 44<sup>TH</sup> MANCHESTER CBC**

**Dave Jensen**



There is one immutable rule for all Christmas Bird Counts: “You count them on Count Day – come hail or high water.” Or, as Tim Bray has observed, even if there’s hail AND high water. So, on Saturday, January 5, 28 hardy souls met on the south coast from Elk to Point Arena, donned their best rain gear, and ventured out into the gusting winds and rain to count those birds that likewise had forsaken the comforts of their shelter.

It was not the worst weather on record for that count. The Garcia River did not flood over the highway, like it did in 2005. Nor was this the lowest species total in the past 20 years. That distinction belongs to the counts in 2002 and 2005, when only 104 species were reported. Nevertheless, the number of species and the total number of birds were relatively low this year. There were only 118 species, compared to the 20-year average of 133, or the high of 149 in 2010.

The biggest surprise of the day was an adult Brown Booby that was found by Jerry White of Kelseyville near the mouth of Elk Creek. This bird typically inhabits the warmer ocean waters off southern California and Mexico, but is known to be an “accidental” visitor to our coast – usually during late summer or fall. Unfortunately, the bird did not remain in that location for long and could not be re-found. Other notable sightings included a Bald Eagle, two Sandhill Cranes, and a Red Phalarope.

There were a number of disappointments as well. [Note: “Disappointments” is not an objective scientific term. We report the facts observed in the field. But a key component of a Christmas Bird Count is the pleasure that participants share when an unusual bird is seen, and the true sense of disappointment when others are found in low numbers or are missing.] Only three Tundra Swans were found this year. In 1987, 427 were reported. As recently as 2006 there were 271 in the count circle. Since then they have largely forsaken the Garcia River flats in favor of wetter areas in the central valley and Sacramento delta. Several common species were not found on count day, including Cooper’s Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Spotted Towhee. Most likely, these birds were present in the count circle, but hiding from the weather when observers passed by.

As count compiler, I owe a debt of gratitude to Diane Hichwa and friends, to Tim Steurer, to Bob and Ryan Keiffer, and to any others who went out on the days before and after January 5 to record “count week” species (birds that were absent on count day, but were observed on the three days before and after count day). These teams added Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Fulmar, Brown Pelican, dowitchers, and Northern Mockingbird to this year’s list.

Finally, I want to recognize the special group of volunteers that have supported this count for the past 44 years. The Manchester count is sponsored by your chapter, but it could not survive without the steadfast commitment of birders from inland Mendocino, Sonoma County and Lake County. The Manchester count is a regional effort that exemplifies “the fellowship of the field glasses,” whatever the weather may bring. I hope that you will join us next January for the 45th rendition of this wonderful event, and thank you for your support.

## FORT BRAGG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY

Tim Bray

Despite the poor weather, we counted a respectable 13,510 individual birds. This is much better than the low of 10,994 we found in 2016, but well below our high of 16,615 from 2013. Diversity remained near the low range for this Count, at 138 species identified. We had 76 field participants and 7 yard/feeder counts, adding up to 185 total person-hours of effort.

Most abundant species was, once again, American Robin with 2,268 individuals counted. Yellow-rumped Warbler was second for the third year in a row, at 1,602 birds, which would have been enough for first place the last two years.

The Common Raven numbers jumped to 712, up from 512 the previous year. Canada Goose numbers were also up significantly at 412 this year versus 240 last year.

Notable misses included Cedar Waxwing and Western Screech-owl. Orioles failed to appear in the Banksia trees at Rose Memorial Park for only the second time on this Count. Waterfowl diversity and numbers were very low, other than the ubiquitous Canada Geese and Mallards.

### FORT BRAGG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DECEMBER 30, 2018

SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL
Greater White-fronted Goose	2	Red-necked Grebe	12	Black Oystercatcher	139	Barn Owl	1	Wren	61
Snow Goose	0	Eared Grebe	27	Greater Yellowlegs	0	Western Screech Owl	0	Northern Mockingbird	5
Ross's Goose	0	Western Grebe	71	Willet	0	Great Horned Owl	3	European Starling	264
Cackling Goose	20	Clark's Grebe	1	Wandering Tattler	0	Northern Pygmy Owl	1	American Pipit	5
Canada Goose	412	<i>Aechmophorus sp.</i>	10	Spotted Sandpiper	24	Burrowing Owl	2	Cedar Waxwing	0
Tundra Swan	0	Northern Fulmar	0	Whimbrel	0	Spotted Owl	0	Orange-crowned Warbler	2
Wood Duck	0	Sooty Shearwater	0	Marbled Godwit	0	Barred Owl	0	Nashville Warbler	0
Gadwall	0	Shearwater sp	1	Ruddy Turnstone	0	Northern Saw-whet Owl	0	Tennessee Warbler	1
American Wigeon	8	Black-vented Shearwater	0	Black Turnstone	130	Anna's Hummingbird	210	Yellow-rumped Warbler	1602
Eurasian Wigeon	0	Black-footed Albatross	7	Surfbird	3	Belted Kingfisher	17	<i>Audubon's</i>	40
Mallard	200	Brown Pelican	1	Sanderling	144	Acorn Woodpecker	47	<i>Myrtle</i>	19
Cinnamon Teal	0	Brandt's Cormorant	60	Western Sandpiper	0	Red-breasted Sapsucker	5	Townsend's Warbler	38
Northern Shoveler	1	Double-crested Cormorant	56	Least Sandpiper	5	Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker	0	Palm Warbler	1
Northern Pintail	0	Pelagic Cormorant	198	Rock Sandpiper	0	Red-naped Sapsucker	2	Spotted Towhee	26
Green-winged Teal	0	<i>Cormorant sp.</i>	49	Dunlin	2	Downy Woodpecker	23	California Towhee	0
Canvasback	0	Great Blue Heron	21	Short-billed Dowitcher	0	Hairy Woodpecker	33	Savannah Sparrow	54
Redhead	0	Green Heron	0	Long-billed Dowitcher	0	Northern Flicker	69	Fox Sparrow	62
Ring-necked Duck	1	Great Egret	6	Dowitcher sp.	0	Pileated Woodpecker	3	Song Sparrow	152
<i>Duck sp.</i>	1	Snowy Egret	4	Wilson's Snipe	2	Black Phoebe	147	Lincoln's Sparrow	2
Ruddy Duck	0	Black-crowned Night Heron	1	Red Phalarope	1	Say's Phoebe	3	Swamp Sparrow	0
Greater Scaup	0	American Bittern	0	Bonaparte's Gull	0	Hutton's Vireo	19	White-throated Sparrow	17
Lesser Scaup	0	Turkey Vulture	271	Mew Gull	59	Gray Jay	0	Golden-crowned Sparrow	134
<i>Scaup Sp.</i>	0	Bald Eagle	0	Ring-billed Gull	0	Steller's Jay	149	White-crowned Sparrow	658
Harlequin Duck	0	Osprey	3	California Gull	211	California Scrub-Jay	57	Dark-eyed Junco	240
Long-Tailed Duck	0	White-tailed Kite	19	Herring Gull	50	American Crow	0	Bullock's Oriole	0
Surf Scoter	38	Northern Harrier	7	Thayer's Gull	4	Common Raven	712	Red-winged Blackbird	20
White-winged Scoter	1	Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Western Gull	600	Barn Swallow	2	Tricolored Blackbird	0
Black Scoter	1	Cooper's Hawk	3	Glaucous-winged Gull	57	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	272	Western Meadowlark	181
Bufflehead	102	Red-shouldered Hawk	24	Black-legged Kittiwake	0	Bush-tit	7	Brewer's Blackbird	736
Common Goldeneye	4	Red-tailed Hawk	22	Heermann's Gull	0	Red-breasted Nuthatch	4	Brown-headed Cowbird	2
Hooded Merganser	16	Ferruginous Hawk	7	<i>Gull sp.</i>	329	Pygmy Nuthatch	83	Yellow-Headed Blackbird	0
Common Merganser	40	American Kestrel	16	Common Murre	32	Brown Creeper	13	Purple Finch	17
Red-breasted Merganser	28	Merlin	3	Pigeon Guillemot	2	Bewick's Wren	2	House Finch	75
Wild Turkey	55	Peregrine Falcon	10	Marbled Murrelet	0	Pacific Wren	45	Red Crossbill	3
California Quail	78	Virginia Rail	11	Ancient Murrelet	14	Marsh Wren	35	Black-Headed Grosbeak	0
Red-throated Loon	7	Sora	2	Rhinoceros Auklet	7	Golden-crowned Kinglet	83	Pine Siskin	40
Pacific Loon	5	American Coot	66	Cassin's Auklet	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	243	Lesser Goldfinch	0
Common Loon	10	Black-bellied Plover	5	Rock Pigeon	281	Western Bluebird	62	American Goldfinch	20
<i>Loon sp.</i>	2	Snowy Plover	0	Band-tailed Pigeon	2	Hermit Thrush	32	House Sparrow	39
Pied-billed Grebe	14	Semipalmated Plover	0	Eurasian Collared-Dove	95	American Robin	2268		
Horned Grebe	13	Killdeer	6	Mourning Dove	66	Varied Thrush	19		

## SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

Becky Bowen



Virgin Creek, MacKerricher State Park Photograph by B. Bowen

We all know numbers don't lie, but that doesn't mean we like what they tell us. It's annual report time for Save Our Shorebirds when we roll out the numbers based on a year of shorebird surveys along the coastline of MacKerricher State Park from Glass Beach north to Ten Mile River. The 2018 data revealed a shocking drop in the number of Willets.

In 2017, SOS surveyors counted 150 Willets (most of them coming through on migration in July and August). In 2018, Willets were observed on only 9 surveys and the total number of sightings was 13.

In 2014, the Willet was one of several species moved to a Watchlist by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. The watchlist goal is to let the world know which species may face extinction. In the continental U.S., more than half of all shorebird species are now on that list.

Here are questions: Where does the Western Willet start migration? When? What is happening on breeding grounds (in this case, interior grasslands in lower Canada and Northern U.S. states where the Willet is a ground nester)? What is now so different in the Willet's world? We aim to learn more and let you know what we find.

## SOS Willet Average Totals 2007-2018

Source: SOS Data Sheets, SOS eBird Species Totals

	Avg. #	# Surveys	Total
	Willets	When Willets	Willet
	Per Survey	Observed	Sightings
<b>2007</b>	2.29	31	71
<b>2008</b>	2.04	24	49
<b>2009</b>	2.47	47	116
<b>2010</b>	2.11	36	76
<b>2011</b>	2.64	66	174
<b>2012</b>	1.37	43	59
<b>2013</b>	1.13	31	35
<b>2014</b>	2.20	49	108
<b>2015</b>	1.36	22	30
<b>2016</b>	3.48	27	94
<b>2017</b>	3.85	39	150
<b>2018</b>	1.44	9	13
<b>Total Yr. Avg.</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>975</b>

Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing MCAS conservation program in cooperation with California State Parks. To learn more about our research, please visit SOS at:

[www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)



## MCAS FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

### NEST-BOX BUILDING WORKSHOP

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10<sup>TH</sup>

9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

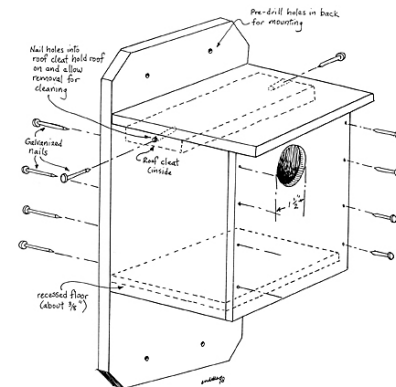
Fortunate Farm, Caspar

Tim Bray & Julie Rumble

In lieu of a field trip this month, we are hosting a workshop on building and installing nest boxes for songbirds. Many species of birds nest in cavities, which are naturally found in senescent trees or are created by woodpeckers in standing dead trees. In urban and suburban residential areas, such trees are often perceived as unsightly or hazardous and are removed. This creates a shortage of suitable cavities and forces birds to go elsewhere to nest. Fortunately, many species will readily use artificial cavities, which are as simple as a small wooden box with an entrance hole. Construction is simple, but the dimensions of the box and in particular the entrance hole are critical to success. We will share some information about design and the importance of the entrance-hole diameter, and then construct boxes you can take home and install.

We will have precut parts and will help you assemble them to make your own nest boxes, suitable for Bluebirds, Swallows, or Chickadees. In order to make sure we have enough materials, please contact Tim in advance. The workshop is free and open to anyone, though we may ask for donations to reimburse the cost of materials.

E-mail contact: [tbray@mcn.org](mailto:tbray@mcn.org) Text: 734-0791



Nest box plans - Gene Endres

### SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2018 OWLING with Mike Stephens

5:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Meet in Elk, at Greenwood Beach SP parking lot, across from the Elk Store.

We will carpool up the Philo-Greenwood Road, stopping at selected turnouts to listen and call for owls. The variety of habitats along Philo-Greenwood Road hold several species of owls and in March they can be quite vocal.

Owling involves standing very still in the darkness and listening intently. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight.



Great grey owl by Ron LeValley

## CALENDAR

### FEBRUARY 2019

**Saturday 2- *Beginner's Bird Walk*\* 9:00 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens  
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

**Sunday 9 - *Nest Box Building Workshop* 9:00 a.m. - Noon.**

We will have precut parts and will help you assemble. See page 6 for more details.

E-mail contact: tbray@mcn.org

**Wednesday 13 - *Audubon Board Meeting* 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.**

Contact David Jensen for more information: djensen@mcn.org (707) 964-8163

**Monday 18 - *Meeting* 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.** Caspar Community Center

**Wednesday 20 - *Early Bird Walk*\* 8:30 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens  
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA Leader: Tim Bray

Meet in the parking lot. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a hat and water.

**Sunday 24 - *Coastal Trail Bird Walk* 10a.m. - Noon** North Coastal Trail, Fort Bragg

Meet near the rest room at east end of parking lot at the foot of Elm Street.

### MARCH 2019

**Saturday 2- *Beginner's Bird Walk*\* 9:00 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens  
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA

**Saturday 9 - *Owling Field Trip* 5:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.** Elk - Greenwood Beach SP

We will carpool up the Philo-Greenwood Road, stopping at selected turnouts to listen and call for owls.

**Monday 18 - *Environmental Partners Potluck* 6:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.**

Pacific Union College Albion Field Station. Additional details TBA

**Wednesday 20 - *Early Bird Walk*\* 8:30 a.m. - Noon** Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens  
18220 Highway 1, Fort Bragg, CA Leader: Tim Bray

Meet in the parking lot. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a hat and water.

**Sunday 24 - *Coastal Trail Bird Walk* 10a.m. - Noon** North Coastal Trail, Fort Bragg

Meet near the rest room at east end of parking lot at the foot of Elm Street.

*\*These walks are free, but there is an entry charge for participants who are not Garden members.*

*Those who are not MCBG members can request a "Guest of Audubon" discount.*

**For complete calendar, updates, and useful links, visit: [www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org](http://www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org)**

**And please visit us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon)**

## MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2018-2019

President	David Jensen	djensen@mcn.org	(707) 964-8163
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Programs	Hayley Ross	hayleyhross@gmail.com	

### Off-Board Chairs:

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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

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