



# The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- March 2022

## MINI-PELAGIC TRIP REPORT

by Tim Bray



*Northern Fulmar. Photo by Tim Bray*

On a 3-hour cruise on the Royal Sea Hawk out of Noyo Harbor, twelve people enjoyed mild weather and a great show of Northern Fulmars and Black-footed Albatrosses. We encountered very few birds until we got about 4 miles offshore, where we began seeing small flocks of Common Murres and a few Rhinoceros Auklets. Soon after that the first Northern Fulmar flew past the boat, zipping past the bow only inches away from the hull. The Captain had spotted a "drag-boat" (trawler) and took us out to see if it had a "fan club" (birds following the boat). Sure enough, as we approached we could see a lot of bird activity in the wake of the trawler, including a couple of big dark birds: the first Black-footed Albatrosses of the morning. We put out a fish-oil slick while the deckhand threw popcorn out to attract Gulls. Both tricks worked and we soon had an enthusiastic following of our own, including five Black-footed Albatrosses, uncountable numbers

*Continued on page 2*

## Inside This Issue

<b>Cover Story</b> <i>By Tim Bray</i>	<b>1-2</b>
<b>February Sightings</b> <i>By Roger Adamson</i>	<b>2-3</b>
<b>Save Our Shorebirds</b> <i>By Becky Bowen</i>	<b>4</b>
<b>March Events</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>MCAS Calendar</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>MCAS Board of Directors</b>	<b>8</b>



*Adult female Allen's Hummingbird  
17 July, 2015, Mendocino Coast  
Botanical Gardens. Look for them  
nesting near the large Grevillea at  
the edge of the succulent garden.  
Photo Roger Adamson.*

*Continued from page 1*

of Northern Fulmars, and many Western and Glaucous-winged Gulls. The Fulmars put on a show, repeatedly whizzing past the boat so close we could look straight down onto their backs. The Albatrosses likewise gave us a great show, landing to snatch up some popcorn and then laboriously running across the water to regain flight, circling the boat, and showing off their amazing ability to soar with their wingtips barely above water.



*Black-footed Albatross Photo by Tim Bray*

We stayed around the slick for a while, hoping to draw in some more species of tubenoses, and enjoying the show. Eventually we moved off toward the upper end of the Noyo Canyon, but there were very few birds to be seen there. Turning back we encountered the drag-boat again, farther offshore, so we set out another slick and got another fantastic show of Fulmars, Albatrosses, and Gulls. We kept hoping for a Laysan Albatross like the February 4 trip, but no such luck this time.

As we began heading back toward the harbor, we spied another drag-boat a couple of miles to the south, and the Captain obligingly took us to it. This one turned out to be the Miss Kelly II, and she had a "fan club" too - including no less than fourteen (14) Black-footed Albatrosses, all sitting on the water along with numerous Gulls and Fulmars. Apparently these birds had just gorged on scraps from the trawl, because they were content to sit there on the water and let us get pretty close.

After that we were content to return to the harbor, but the ocean had one more gift: a pod of three Gray Whales moving north. Once again the Captain obliged us and took us toward them for great views. We were a half-hour late getting back to the dock but it was totally worth it.

In the three weeks since the last "mini-pelagic," the hundreds of Kittiwakes have all disappeared, along with the Short-billed Gulls and nearly all of the California Gulls. We saw no Shearwaters at all today. Rhinoceros Auklets are still present and sporting nice facial plumes. Common Murres are present in both adult breeding and non-breeding plumages.

I will continue to look for opportunities for short trips like this when the weather forecast looks promising. Send me an e-mail to get notified the next time.

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## FEBRUARY SIGHTINGS

*By Roger Adamson*

We have a few notable sightings since our last report. On Jan 30 an Evening Grosbeak was near the Pioneer Bridge on the Eel River (MC). During a pelagic birding outing on Feb 4 hundreds of Black-legged Kittiwakes were seen. On that trip the outstanding report was of two Laysan Albatrosses (not seen in Mendocino County since 2017) (CV and many others). An out-of-season Black-bellied Plover made a brief appearance at the Ukiah water treatment plant on Feb 16 (CV). Although not unexpected, it is always good to hear about the early return of both Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds. The first Rufous report was on Jan 20 in the Mendocino Coast Botanical

*Continued on page 3*



*Continued from page 2*



Botanical Gardens (CL), and the first Allen's arrived on Middle Ridge near Albion on Feb 8 (TB). A few House Wrens have been reported this winter, including one on Feb 17 at Riverside Park in Ukiah (CV). The appearance of House Wrens through February is not expected and well worth noting. A Rough-legged Hawk was seen on Feb 18 in the Newport Rangelands (HG)-possibly a bird continuing from the previous month. A Common Poorwill was found at the Usal campground on Feb 21 (CB). Last, a Palm Warbler was noted at Riverside Park in Ukiah also on Feb 21 (DB).

Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds are closely related species in genus *Selasphorus*. Adult male Rufous pass through our area early in the year on their way to the breeding range from Oregon to southeast Alaska; Allen's hummingbirds, found primarily along coastal California, follow soon after. Despite their small size, both species can exhibit very aggressive behavior defending their "turf." The adult males are readily differentiated (almost!) with the green back on the Allen's and the complete orange on the Rufous. However, about 2% of Rufous males have some amount of green feathering on their backs. There are distinct structural differences in the tail feathers that enable definite ID. Adult females of the two species are nearly indistinguishable. In our area during breeding season, March through June, we can be (nearly) certain an adult female is an Allen's Hummingbird because Rufous are not known to breed south of extreme northwest California.

Thanks to the following for their reports: Mike Curry (MC), Chuck Vaughn (CV), Chris Lamoureux (CL), Tim Bray (TB), Helen George (HG), Claire Bernd (CB), and Dave Bengston (DB). I glean notable sightings from eBird reports and the Mendobirds listserv; you can also contact me by email at [radamson@mcn.org](mailto:radamson@mcn.org).

*Photo Top: Adult male Allen's Hummingbird  
17 March, 2019, at Caspar Pond.*

*Photo Right: Laysan Albatross skimming the  
ocean surface with wing tip just touching the  
water, 15 May, 2016, off-shore Mendocino  
County. Photos by Roger Adamson*





**SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS***Becky Bowen***For Beach Birds, All the Dining is Outdoor Dining on the Mendocino Coast**

All food is fresh for our coastal shorebirds and sea-birds, whether it's served in the water or on the rocks. Clockwise from the top is a young gull with a sea star (Glass Beach), a Willet that stole a sand crab from a Red Knot in winter plumage (Ten Mile Beach), a Ruddy Turnstone on left and a Sanderling fencing for a sand crab (Ten Mile Beach), a Black Oystercatcher with mussel and kelp salad combo (Ward Avenue beach) and a Greater Yellowlegs in Pudding Creek with a fish-on.

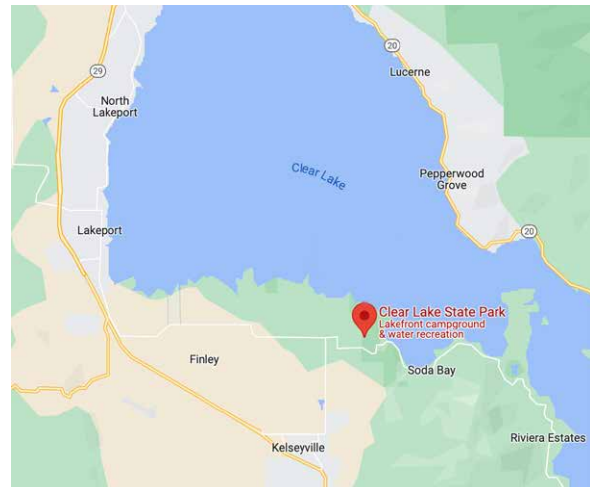
Photographs by B. Bowen

*Save Our Shorebirds is an ongoing MCAS conservation program in cooperation with California State Parks. To learn more, please visit [www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds)*

## MARCH EVENTS

### CLEAR LAKE CAMPING AND KAYAKING AND SOME BIRDING TOO Friday and Saturday, March 11 & 12

**Meet:** Friday at 9:00 AM at the entrance to Clear Lake State Park. Those that are camping can purchase their camp sites (*advance reservations are not available at this time of the year*) which includes the day use fee. For those staying elsewhere or who are joining us for the day the cost is approx. \$6.00. We'll bird the park and get settled in. Options for the afternoon are kayaking the lake, Anderson Marsh State Historic Park or Cobb Mountain and Boggs Lake.



Kayak rentals are NOT available, you'll need to bring your own. The lake is full of ducks, grebes and White pelicans at this time of the year. I'll do some scouting beforehand and we'll go wherever the birds are. Saturday we'll visit Rodman Slough Preserve and one or more of the locations we didn't go to on Friday.

Drive time from Fort Bragg is about 2 hours. Bring firewood if you have any, your favorite beverage and a dish to share for the Friday night potluck dinner. Breakfast and lunches on your own. There are a couple of outdoor eateries that are a possibility, but to be safe plan on bringing own your food.

Email me at [tmcguire9130@gmail.com](mailto:tmcguire9130@gmail.com) to let me know if you're camping, kayaking or coming for one day only. If it rains we'll reschedule for the following weekend if that works for most.

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### POINT CABRILLO WHALE CELEBRATION BIRD WALKS Saturday, March 12, 19, 26, and April 2 & 9

Your chapter will participate in the Point Cabrillo Whale Celebrations again this year. Come join us for one (or more) of our guided bird walks on **Saturday, March 12, 19, 26, and April 2 and 9**. We will meet at the upper parking lot of the Point Cabrillo State Historic Park at 9:00 before proceeding down to the lighthouse by way of Frolic Cove. In past years we have witnessed the passage from winter into spring on these walks as Red-necked Grebes and Red-breasted Mergansers depart, swallows reappear, Red-shouldered Hawks begin their incessant territorial cries, and Pelagic Cormorants claim their perilous nesting perches. If we are lucky, one of these walks will be canceled due to rain, but with five dates to choose from we hope you will join us for what should be a pleasant morning stroll. And yes, we will look for whales, dolphins and seabirds when we reach the lighthouse.



## MARCH EVENTS

*Sarah Gallagher Presents:*  
**THE SALMON AND STEELHEAD  
OF COASTAL MENDOCINO COUNTY  
Monday, March 21 at 7:00 PM**

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



Salmon and steelhead are a connection between the land and the sea and indicators of ecosystem health. The three species that call coastal Mendocino home are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act and their populations are at risk of extinction. A community of partners, landowners, scientists, and restorationists work together to monitor them, and repair degraded watersheds to create healthy, freshwater habitat. During this presentation, I will provide an overview of our local coastal watersheds, describe the life history of these highly migratory species, explain how we monitor populations, and discuss current strategies that we are working on to help recover these fish.

Sarah Gallagher is a Senior Environmental Scientist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in Fort Bragg, California. Her work focuses on monitoring the freshwater life stages of our native salmon and steelhead in Coastal Mendocino watersheds from Usal Creek south to the Garcia River. After proclaiming her love of fish at the age of three (her mother is convinced it was the fish mobile in the crib) and spending childhood tromping around in the swamps and lakes of upstate NY in their pursuit, she happily chose to make her passion a career. Sarah completed her degree in Fisheries Biology and Management from Frostburg State University in Maryland and has spent the last 22 years in California working with salmon and steelhead. Prior to her move to the department working with salmon on the Mendocino Coast, she worked for both the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service in the California's Central Valley.

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### ENVIRONMENTAL POTLUCK ON THE MOVE *By Dave Jensen*

For many years I have shared with you my enthusiasm for the annual Environmental Awards Potluck dinner. For as long as I have been a member of your chapter, each March we have gathered with members of the Mendocino Land Trust, the Dorothy King Young Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, and the Mendocino Area Parks Association, now known simply as MendoParks. Each year we have come together to meet old friends, to share the trials and victories of each organization, to recognize a person or persons who have given something extra to help protect and improve our coastal environment, and to simply eat some real good food.

Then along came Covid to disrupt many valued traditions. Zoom meetings are a poor substitute for sitting alongside old friends while sharing stories and a meal. This March the Covid cloud seems to slowly be lifting, but as I write this there is still an indoor mask mandate and a general sense of vulnerability, especially among those of us who remember where we were when JFK was killed.

Therefore, your chapter's board, with the consent of the other organizations, has decided to use this situation to fulfill a long-time dream that many of us have shared. At least for this year, we will hold the first ever Environmental Awards Potluck PICNIC on the afternoon of Sunday, June 12. We will announce the precise time and location at a future date, but please mark your calendar now and plan to join us for what promises to be an enjoyable afternoon of food and friendship.

## CALENDAR

Our field trips and birdwalks are open to anyone who is fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The Beginner's Birdwalk and the Early Birdwalk at the Gardens are continuing on the regular schedule. Our monthly Chapter presentations continue via Zoom. As always, check our website for the most up-to-date information, and keep up with the postings on our Facebook page.

### MARCH 2022

**Saturday 5 - Beginner's Bird Walk\* 9:00 a.m. - Noon**

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

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

**Friday & Saturday, March 11+12 - Clear Lake Camping and Kayaking**

See details on page 5.

**Wednesday 16 - Early Bird Walk\* 8:30 a.m. - Noon**

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

**Monday 21 - Audubon Society Meeting 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.**

Join us for a presentation via Zoom by Sarah Gallagher. See page 6.

### APRIL 2022

**Saturday 2 - Beginner's Bird Walk\* 9:00 a.m. - Noon**

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

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

**Monday 18 - Audubon Society Meeting 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.**

**Wednesday 20 - Early Bird Walk\* 8:00 a.m. - Noon**

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

**\*\*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.
- Bring your own water and binoculars.

**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 2021-2022

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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

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FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

