



The Black Oystercatcher

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter- October 2022

RECENT SIGHTINGS

by Roger Adamson



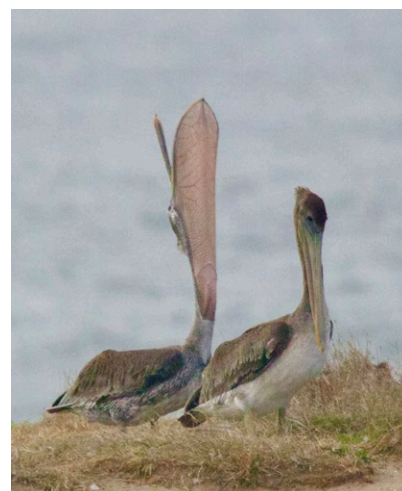
White-winged Dove in Westport by Roger Adamson

With Fall migration over the last month, we have many good birds to review. A White-winged Dove visited Westport on Aug 27 (LK) and a second White-winged Dove was found at the Ukiah Waste-Water Treatment Plant (UWTP) Sep 13 (MS). There are only about ten WWDO records in the county. During a fishing trip a Hawaiian Petrel was observed well offshore (KL)-this was an excellent find by the lone birder on the fishing trip. Five (!) Chestnut-sided Warblers have been seen including those on Windy Hollow Rd Aug 31 (LK), Fort Bragg Sep 3 (FH), Usal Campground Sep 14 (LK & DS), Cottaneva Cr, also Sep 14, (LK & DS), and at a home about two miles south of Little River on Sep 20 (CH). A few other notable warblers have been reported. An American Redstart was seen on the south side of the Garcia River along Windy Hollow Rd on Aug 31 (LK) and a second American Redstart was found on Miner Hole Rd on Sep 19 (TS). At the same site on Windy Hollow Rd, also on Aug 31, a Black-and-White Warbler was spotted (LK).

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Good news! The return of the pelicans and other success stories. Learn more on page 4.

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Baird's Sandpiper on Virgin Creek Beach by Roger Adamson.

On Sep 9 in the Navarro River riparian area a Tennessee Warbler was found (FH). Another Tennessee Warbler arrived just north of Fort Bragg Sep 20 on the Virgin Creek trail (LWR). Two excellent shorebirds were seen recently. A Ruff was found at the UWTP Aug 31 (GG) and on Sep 2 a Stilt Sandpiper joined the Ruff at the same location (CV). This is only the third county record for Stilt Sandpiper on eBird. Clay-colored Sparrows were reported Sep 14 at the Usal Campground (LK & DS) and on Sep 24 just south of Albion (TB). A Vesper Sparrow made an appearance in Elk on Sep 19 (TS). A Summer Tanager visited a home in Ukiah on Sep 21 (DB). Also on the 21st, a Yellow-breasted Chat was found on our monthly trip to the Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden (TB). YBCH is a common bird across the continent in riparian areas, but they are relatively uncommon here on the coast due to lack of appropriate habitat. A Phainopepla was observed at the UWTP on Sep 21 (GG). Right at the end of the month we have an Eastern Kingbird on Sep 24 south of Lighthouse Rd on Point Arena (KW) and on the 25th another Tennessee Warbler and a Hermit Warbler in the Navarro River Riparian area (PG). Finally, another Hermit Warbler was spotted in the Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden on Sep 25 (RK).

We should also note several observations that were not “rare birds” but were unusual for the time of year. There was an American Wigeon at the UWTP on Aug 30 (CV). Another unexpected waterfowl was a Common Goldeneye in the bay at Little River Aug 31 (CL). A Short-billed Gull joined the large gull flock at Virgin Creek Beach on Sep 4 (SU) and a Herring Gull was reported near Elk on Sep 7 (RR). A Western Kingbird, unusual on the coast, was seen on the Virgin Creek Trail on Sep 9 (CL). An early White-throated Sparrow visited Middle Ridge above Albion (TB).

Thanks to the following for their reports:

Logan Kahle (LK), Michael Spencer (MS), Keith Leland (KL), Frank Hall (FH), Dessi Sieburth (DS), Cliff Hawley (CH), Tim Steurer (TS), Lisa Walker-Roseman (LWR), George Gibbs (GG), Chuck Vaughn (CV), Tim Bray (TB), Dave Bengston (DB), Karen Wilkinson (KW), Phil Georgakakos (PG), Chris Lamoureux (CL), Shannon Underhill (SU), Rajan Rao (RR), and Ryan Keiffer (RK).

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS

By Becky Bowen

Pectoral Sandpipers Drop In For a Visit, a Rest, and a Buggy Bite to Eat



Photographs taken on Virgin Creek Beach north of Fort Bragg, CA in late September.

Becky Bowen

On Labor Day every year, we start to look for Pectoral Sandpipers, listed as uncommon in the county and seen usually only in September. The stately sandpipers drop down during long migrations from breeding grounds at the top of the Arctic tundra to wintering grounds as far as South America and Australia—19,000 round trip miles a year.

They are here to rest and refuel when tasty bugs explode out of the damp warmth of thick muggy fall kelp deposits.

Like so many shorebirds, Pectoral Sandpipers breed in the Arctic, so few people see the over-the-top display of courtship behavior. Males have an inflatable throat air sac that puffs up on cue and sounds like the otherworldly oscillation of a UFO lift-off. Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology Macaulay Library recording by Andrew Spencer has an example:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pectoral_Sandpiper/sounds

SOS is an MCAS Conservation Program in cooperation with California State Parks. To learn more, please visit www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

What female could resist the loud hooting songs and swooping aerial displays as they watch from a comfortable tundra perch? But the show doesn't stop with one performance. After a female makes her choice, her partner moves on to the next mark—no waiting around to build a nest, incubate, or raise chicks. Youngsters learn how to fend for themselves and start migrating in small flocks after adults have flown south. Maybe that's why the young birds we see migrating through our beaches are so approachable; They're fearless because they don't know what humans are—yet.



FIELD TRIP REPORT*By Tess McGuire***Virgin Beach and Ward Avenue – Sept. 10, 2022**

A surprisingly large group of birders showed up for an early start at 7:30 AM on an overcast but pleasantly warm morning. A flock of European Starlings in various stages of molt greeted us as we walked down the Enchanted Forest Trail. One late Swainson's Thrush was still calling quietly in the bushes. The male Mallards on Virgin Creek were starting look like males again, all shiny and new, instead of impostor females. Once on the beach Roger found a female Green-winged Teal in the lagoon and a Wandering Tattler between the offshore rocks. A few Sooty Shearwaters were still feeding far offshore, and flocks of Pelicans flew by. Shorebird season was definitely coming to an end with only one Least Sandpiper and one Semipalmated Plover still present.

Ward Avenue was much busier with large flocks of Surf Scoters, Sooty Shearwaters, Brandt's cormorants and Brown Pelicans out on the water, and 50 Sanderlings, 30 Western and a few Least Sandpipers on the beach below. As we walked north on the sand, we found 10 Snowy Plovers doing their typical plover thing: running from one depression to the next and hunkering down in them so they practically disappeared. Of note were the large numbers of Turkey Vultures and Common Ravens that were feeding on a seal carcass that had washed up on the beach. Also, large numbers of Red-necked Grebes (7), and Pacific Loons (12) stood out. When the wind started to pick up, we turned around and called it a day.

WE DON'T ALWAYS LOSE*By Tim Bray*

As a conservation organization, the Audubon Society is constantly drawing our attention to the plight of birds whose lives are threatened by habitat loss, climate change, resource depletion, et cetera. Combine that with the unrelenting parade of disasters presented to us by the news media and it's easy to believe everything is falling apart. This may actually be true, but conservationists also have some victories to celebrate.

Here on the Mendocino coast we get daily reminders of perhaps the greatest success of the late 20th century conservation movement: removing DDT from the avian food web. The hundreds of California Brown Pelicans currently decorating the rocks from Mendocino to Westport, in numbers comparable to the entire population of 1972, are the most visible reminders. We birders also notice the abundant Peregrine Falcons nesting all along the coast, and the more recent establishment of Bald Eagles in some watersheds. All three are enduring symbols of our power to make positive changes.

We also enjoy large tracts of publicly accessible lands, most notably the magnificent State Parks all along the coastline. A lot of that landscape was set aside in the last century, but conservation organizations large and small are continuing to protect additional lands.

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For example, the Westport Village Society applied to the California State Coastal Conservancy for grant funding to purchase and conserve a parcel of land at the mouth of DeHaven creek west of Highway One. MCAS provided a letter in support of that application, which was recently approved. We congratulate the WVS on their success.



Brown Pelicans on the Mendocino Headlands 9/29/2022 by Megan Smithyman

In 2019, we wrote letters in support of the Redwood Coast Land Conservancy (RCLC) applications for grant funding to purchase the 113-acre Mill Bend property near Gualala. They succeeded and have acquired the property. On September 17 of this year, they held an event to celebrate the release of the Conservation Plan that will guide their work. We are working with RCLC to bring an expert on ear-birding to conduct a workshop at Mill Bend next spring and will look for more opportunities to work with them on bird-related projects.

MCAS provided letters to the Mendocino County Planning Commission objecting to a proposed cell tower adjacent to Manchester Beach State Park. Our objections were based on the location of the tower and potential negative impacts on shorebirds, including the threatened Snowy Plover, on the nearby beach. Planning Commission staff had recommended approval, so we were pleasantly surprised when the Commission voted against it and directed the applicant to seek an alternative location.

Save the Redwoods League is working to conserve the Lost Coast Redwoods property, the longest privately-owned stretch of California coastline in the coast redwood range. MCAS has written letters to several agencies in support of that project, and we hope to report good news in a future issue of *The Black Oystercatcher*.

Thank you for helping us assist all these organizations with their hard work in the vital effort of conserving habitat along our coastline.

IN MEMORY OF RON LEVALLEY

Ronald Reid LeValley passed away on June 4, 2022 in Fort Bragg, California. Born January 1, 1947, in Sacramento, to Ray and LaVohn LeValley, Ron lived a big and beautiful life sharing his love for the natural world with everyone he touched.

Ron attended El Camino High School, joined the US Coast Guard, and was fortuitously assigned to a dental unit working out of a trailer up and down the West Coast. During these trips Ron discovered his life's passion: the natural world, and the wildlife that fills it.

Upon leaving the Coast Guard, Ron received his B.A. in biology from Sacramento State College in 1969. He began his professional biological career with the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, where he was fortunate to spend much of his time conducting research on the Farallon Islands off of the coast of California.

In the 1970s, he migrated to Humboldt County, where he received his M.A. in Biology from Humboldt State University in 1980, authoring a master's thesis on gulls. In 1981, he founded Biological Journeys, a travel company that allowed Ron and a dedicated group of tour guides to shepherd seasoned adventurers and first-time vacationers alike throughout Alaska, Mexico, South America, the high Arctic, and even ranging as far afield as Africa and Australia. These tours highlighted Ron's greatest gifts: an insatiable curiosity about animals and plants and they way they interact, an unending desire to share anything and everything he learned, and a deep respect and admiration for anyone who shared those passions.



When not traveling, Ron led Audubon hikes, pelagic boat trips, and other local adventures, organized and informal alike. Ron was an avid photographer on these trips, and regularly gave talks and presentations sharing his adventures (and the pictures he took along the way). His local adventures (most often chasing down a rare bird) led him all over Northern California, for which he developed a deep knowledge and love.

Ron met Linda Doerflinger in 1978 at a garbage dump looking for a rare gull. They were married in their backyard on Ocean Drive in McKinleyville, overlooking the Mad River and the Pacific Ocean, in 1982. The next year, they welcomed their first son, Dylan. The family was complete upon adopting Harvey, a year younger than Dylan, in 1989. Dylan and Harvey's childhoods were filled with adventures, both big and small, whether on trips half-

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way around the world or just outside their back door on the Mad River, often accompanied by one of Ron's favorite expressions: "never let school get in the way of your education." Somehow, Ron found time to coach Dylan and Harvey's little league teams and tend to a life-long love of the San Francisco Giants.

Ron's second company, Mad River Biologists, provided environmental and wildlife consulting services throughout Northern California, focusing primarily on identifying and delineating populations of endangered species, particularly the Spotted Owl, the Marbled Murrelet, and the Snowy Plover. Ron's scientific contributions extended to the community of wildlife science. He was one of the founding members of the Pacific Seabird Group, an international organization dedicated to the conservation of seabirds, and volunteered for the organization extensively.

He was an active and constant member of the Humboldt and Mendocino County Audubon Societies, and was a reliable source of presentations, donated photographs, or general advice for countless local, regional, and international bird and wildlife organizations.

Ron migrated to Mendocino in the early-2000s, where he met Charlene McAllister, his second life partner. In Mendocino, Ron was a co-founder of the Mendocino Coast Photography Gallery, where he exhibited his impressive portfolio. Ron and Charlene's adventures ranged from traveling countrywide in Ron's RV to sailing from Mexico to Tahiti in the South Pacific. At home, Ron served as a scientific advisor to the Noyo Center for Science and Education, of which he was endlessly proud. Ron spent his final years focusing on what he loved: his photography, citizen science projects, the Giants, and Charlene.



Black Oystercatcher by Ron LeValley

Ron was predeceased by his father, Ray, and his brother, Bruce. He is survived by his mother, LaVohn, his sisters Sandy, Nancy, and Patti, his sons Dylan and Harvey, his partner Charlene, his grandson Jude (who was born on the same day as Ron!) and the thousands of people who will see a bird or butterfly or chipmunk this week and, because of Ron, will stop and appreciate that we share the world with it.

A Memorial Celebration of Ron's life will be held on October 22nd at 11 am at the Caspar Community Center, Caspar, CA

Donations in his name can be made to the Noyo Center for Marine Science, or any environmental organization of your choice.

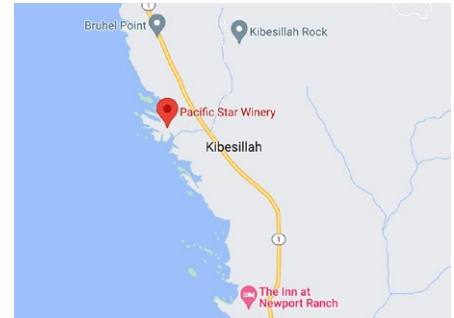
EVENTS

October 8 Big Day

9:00 AM @ Pacific Star Winery: 33000 CA-1, Fort Bragg

10:30 AM @ Ten Mile River

Big Days are 24-hour events with teams of birders trying to see as many birds as they can find. We won't be quite as ambitious and limit ourselves to daylight hours. Join us for all or part of birding the Mendocino coast.



We'll meet at 9 AM at Pacific Star Winery. Please be on time as the gate will be closed after we go through. Don't want to start that early? We should arrive at the Ten Mile River parking area (south side of the bridge) at approximately 10:30 AM. From there will go wherever the birds are. I'll be doing some scouting in advance. Call me at 707-533-7381 if you can't find us. Bring water, lunch and good shoes.

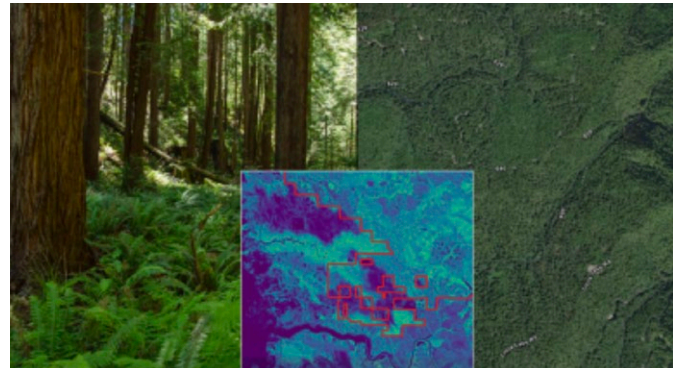
Dr. John P. O'Brien Presents:

A HISTORY OF THE FOREST, MANAGEMENT, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Monday, October 17 at 7:00 PM

Via Zoom

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org



Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) is the largest of the nine forests in the State forest system. In this talk, Dr. O'Brien will give a brief history of the forest, from the first indigenous peoples of the area, the first logging around 1858, becoming a publicly-owned state forest, to present. He will discuss the various management regimes over the years and how those have affected the forest structure we see today, showcasing various datasets, including both airborne and space-based LiDAR to quantify the outcomes of the varying styles of management. He will summarize the future prospects of the forest in light of a rapidly changing climate and how forest management affects climate change, as well as the converse: how climate change affects the forest and the management needed to mitigate such effects. To conclude, he will briefly discuss how forest management and climate change may interact to affect the Marbled Murrelet.

JP is a Northern California native (Trinity County) and a current resident of the Mendocino Coast. He holds a Bachelor of Science in applied physics, a graduate certificate in applied spatial statistics, and a Ph.D. in climate and atmospheric science. JP is a climate scientist and currently has dual affiliate scientist positions at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, CO and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, CA.

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.

OCTOBER 2022

Saturday 1 - Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 AM - Noon

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

Saturday 8 - October Big Day 5:30 AM - Noon (see page 8)

Go to <https://ebird.org/octoberbigday> to learn more.

Wednesday 12 - Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Board Meeting 6:00 PM

Contact Tim Bray for more information.

Monday 17 - Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Chapter Meeting 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Dr. John P. O'Brien: A history of the forest, management, and future prospects.

Wednesday 19 - Early Bird Walk 8:00 AM - Noon**

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

NOVEMBER 2022

Saturday 5 - Beginner's Bird Walk* 9:00 AM - Noon

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

Monday 14 - Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Chapter Meeting 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

American Bird Observatory - Cats and Birds

Wednesday 16 - Early Bird Walk 8:00 AM - 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

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

P.O. BOX 2297

FORT BRAGG, CA, 95437

