



November

2007

“Long Term Ecological Changes in the Gulf of Alaska”

Speaker: Dr. Robert Spies

Monday, November 19, 2007 7:00 p.m.

NEW LOCATION College of the Redwoods, Room 110 NEW LOCATION



Dr. Robert Spies has served as Chief Science Advisor to governments on the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Restoration Program and will speak on the ecological changes to Alaska following the historical oil spill that occurred in 1989.

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President's Corner

I have a couple of confessions to make.

True Confession Number 1: I've never really cared for the National Audubon Society. I'm sorry, but it is true. You see, I have always had a love for birds, even as a boy. When I began to get serious about studying birds over 30 years ago, I joined the National Audubon Society to learn all I could. I faithfully read each copy of their magazine but soon realized they wanted to talk about habitat and conservation, not feather patterns and field notes. I didn't care about grasslands in the Dakotas or swamps in the Carolinas, so I threw their renewal notices in the trash and instead joined what might be called a birding club. I enjoyed birds and wanted to be the best birder I could be.

True Confession Number 2: I didn't miss being part of Audubon for over 30 years. I was happy watching the birds in my back yard. I studied bird songs. I visited the birding "hotspots." I joined lots of Christmas Bird Counts. I slowly developed a modest set of skills and a humble life list. Birding was a personal pleasure for me, devoid of politics and conflict. Meanwhile, grasslands were converted to housing tracts, marshes turned to shopping malls, and the birds became scarcer and scarcer. Still, I enjoyed birds and simply wanted to be the best birder I could be.

True Confession Number 3: I may have learned how to identify many birds with only the slightest glimpse of feather, beat of wing or phrase of song, but I have not been a very good birder. Good birders truly care about the future of the species they enjoy and act to ensure that all birds are protected. Good birders speak out and support efforts to preserve habitats that are necessary for avian survival. Good birders not only enjoy the beauty of wild birds, but repay them with time, talent and treasure. A selfish birder will never be the best birder they can be.

So please join with me and all the best birders around. Help save what we have left so that there is something to leave for future generations. You don't need to write a big

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.

The Whistling Swan

check. You don't need to quit your day job. You don't even need to put a bumper sticker on your car! Simply show your support and concern in any way possible. If you have internet access, check the Issues and Actions page of the California Audubon website at "audubon-ca.org". Write or call your elected officials – city, county, state, national, any and all of them. Let them know that you care about birds and that you vote. Write letters to the local newspaper. Conservation doesn't just happen in the Arctic Refuge, it happens at home as well – at the mouth of the Garcia River and on the beaches of Ten Mile.

Each of us has different talents and interests, but we are all bound by a common interest in birds. Your Mendocino Coast Audubon Society is more than a birding club. We are also a conservation organization that speaks out for and takes action in the interest of birds. I ask you to learn from the youthful mistakes of the person I knew thirty-some years ago. Support us in our efforts to preserve and protect the wild things we love. You will become the best birder you can be.

Christmas Bird Count

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society invites interested persons with all levels of birding skill to join in our annual Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 29. Small groups will survey assigned areas throughout the day. Those who are able to stay will then meet for dinner at Druid's Hall in Point Arena to report their findings.

The count area, which is centered near Manchester, stretches from Cuffey's Cove near Elk to the northern edge of Point Arena and contains some of the best birding habitat along our coast. The first Christmas Count in this area was held on December 15, 1974. Nine observers reported a total of 60 different species. The number of participants, as well as of reported species, has continued to grow since then. Last year thirty-eight observers reported a total of 147 species. If you are interested in participating in this year's count, please contact David Jensen at djensen@mcn.org or leave him a phone message at 964-8163. Even if you are not an

expert in the identification of gulls or sparrows, you can still be a productive member of this effort and will certainly have an enjoyable day in a beautiful part of our coast.

Thanksgiving Bird Count:

Thanksgiving is just around the corner and the time for the **Thanksgiving Bird Count** is fast approaching. Dr. John Hewston from Humboldt State University has been coordinating this survey since 1992 and MCAS members have participated since 2002. The survey form with instructions is attached. The time required is one hour on Thanksgiving Day. These non-scientific surveys provide valuable information on the movement of bird populations. Please join in the effort.

Report from the October Field Trip to Glass Beach

On Saturday, October 13, the Audubon Society hosted a field trip to view the birds of Glass Beach in Fort Bragg. Sixteen enjoyed a beautiful morning with bright sunshine and light winds. Highlights of the day included eight Harlequin Ducks, hundreds of migrating Surf Scoters, four White-winged Scoters, a Peregrine Falcon and a Lincoln's Sparrow. A complete list of the forty-six species observed is posted on our website "mendocinocoastaudubon.org."

MCAS Welcomes New Members:

Elizabeth and David Alden	
Harriet Gere	Ronnie James
Linda Mercurio	Agnes Woolsey

Note on Organic Coffee: We refer you to the September edition of *Birding*, the journal of the American Birding Association, for a short article about the Cerulean Warbler and its loss of both wintering and breeding habitat. Shade-grown coffee plantations are playing an important role in saving some of the wintering habitat. The Thanksgiving Coffee Company is given special mention for its part in these efforts. It has developed a "Cerulean Warbler Coffee". Proceeds from the sale of this coffee are used to maintain needed habitat as well as to sustain shade-grown coffee plantations.

A Closer Look at Woodpeckers

Several times this spring an Acorn Woodpecker woke me by drumming on a piece of metal on our roof. I hoped it would get a headache and cease, but it only gave up when it turned its attention to nest-hole drilling.

I took a closer look at the adaptations of this woodpecker to its feeding and nesting habits. Most woodpecker species have a chisel-shaped bill for digging into wood while the Northern Flicker has a slightly curved one for removing ants from the soil surface or cavities in the ground. Woodpeckers have barbed, sticky, extremely long tongues, which reduce the amount of excavation required for foraging and reach deep inside crevices and insect tunnels.

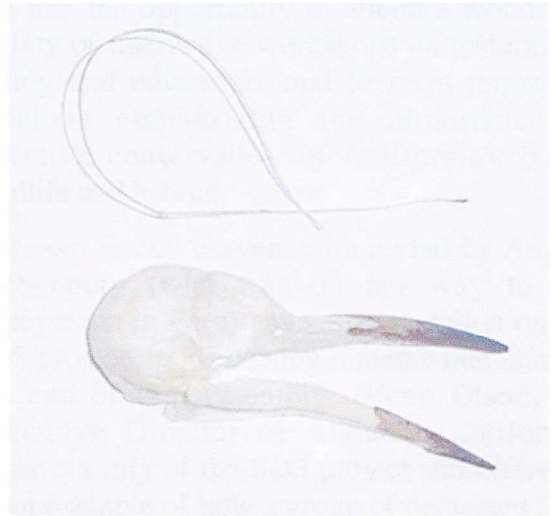


Notice the thick, strong shafts of the Northern Flicker's central tail feathers

Tree-feeding woodpeckers have prominent nasal tufts to protect the nostrils from wood chips but, since the Northern Flicker rarely chips wood (usually to dig its nest hole), it has reduced nasal tufts.

The long extensive tongue of woodpeckers, like that of hummingbirds, is made possible by the greatly elongated hyoid apparatus, a set of bones and muscles that controls tongue movements.

In the Hairy Woodpecker this hyoid apparatus wraps around the entire skull and coils around the eyes. When extended, the tongue of this species can reach five inches.



Skull and tongue of the Northern Flicker
courtesy of kidswings.com

Woodpeckers have two toes forward and two back but in many instances as the bird is climbing the outer rear toe rotates to the side allowing them to securely grip bark. The central tail feathers are curved and stiffened with rigid points that flex when the tail is pressed on the trunk giving a spring-like anchor as the third point of a strong triangular base for leverage to hammer into the wood. The bird uses this base to rock back and forth rapidly beating its beak against wood bark in the familiar staccato. The molt pattern of the tail is adapted to maintain the climbing function: the all-important central feathers are not dropped until the other feathers have grown to full length; then the outer feathers can support the bird during climbing while the central feathers re-grow.

The brain case is enlarged and the frontal bones are folded at the base of the bill to act as shock absorbers and muscles behind the bill do similar work, hence no headache.

It did not help to discover that my self-appointed alarm was pulling his punches. He used only his head and neck muscles to drum on the roof metal to attract a mate, if he had used his whole body and springy tail, as when drilling into a tree, I would have had a much ruder awakening.

Up and Coming Bird Festivals

Central Valley Birding Symposium

November 15-18, 2007

Stockton, CA

Hosted by the Central Valley Bird Club

Contact Phone Number 209-369-2010

Email address: hummer52@sbcglobal.net

Snow Goose Festival

January 25-27 2008

Chico CA

www.snowgoosefestival.org

Aleutian Goose Festival

March 28-30, 2008

Crescent City CA

www.aleutiangoosefestival.org

Godwit Days

April 17-21 2008

Arcata, CA

www.godwitdays.com

Audubon California Meeting

In early October, Becky Bowen, David Jensen, Johanna Jensen, Ron LeValley and Charlene McAllister, joining with Audubon chapters from throughout the state, attended the "Audubon Assembly" at Asilomar Conference Center.

The 2007 Assembly examined the problems of global warming from a wildlife and ecosystem perspective and helped us understand how global warming should affect our land management decisions. The Assembly identified many workable solutions for conserving energy with simple changes around the home, and emphasized that the predictions of doom and gloom are not inevitable. By making achievable improvements now, we can embark on a course of 2 percent reduction in carbon emissions each

year, with a goal of eventually reaching an 80 percent national reduction of greenhouse gases by 2050.

We had the opportunity to attend a wonderful variety of interactive workshops on restoration, policy and education, and to meet renowned speakers emphasizing the importance of effective conservation of California's birds, wildlife and habitat.

Our own Becky Bowen, with a visit by Angela Liebenberg (who was on her way to her honeymoon in Peru) gave a presentation on the SOS project. In his closing remarks that marked the end of the Assembly, Glenn Olson, the Executive Director of Audubon California, spoke warmly of the SOS project and offered it as an example of how a group of dedicated SOS project volunteers from a small chapter can achieve significant results.

For further information on the Audubon Assembly and to see the various workshops that we attended go to

http://ca.audubon.org/audubon_assembly.html

Feel free to ask us what we learned and we will be happy to share!

ANNOUNCING 2007-2008 Programs

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Jan 21 | Robert Keiffer "To Be or Not To Be: The search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker" |
| Feb 18 | Pete and Judy Haggard "Insects of The Pacific Northwest" |
| Mar 17 | TBA – Environmental Joint Meeting, Mendocino Land Trust will Host the meeting. |
| Apr 21 | Rich Kuehn "Birding India and Bhutan" |
| May 19 | Kathy Biggs "Dragonflies" |

Volunteers Total Up SOS Halftime Statistics

Save Our Shorebirds has finished year one of two. Here are some half-time reports:

June 21, 2007 – Volunteers report first sighting of Western Sandpipers (Ten Mile)

June—SOS Director Nathan Cooley communicates with the Federal Aviation Administration about a private airplane buzzing Ten Mile Beach, causing a significant bird disturbance. If FAA regional personnel have private plane tail numbers and witness descriptions, they will contact pilots for further action

Buff-breasted Sandpipers (rare for this area) are observed almost every day from August 24 – September 14 on Virgin Creek and Ten Mile

A Long-Billed Curlew flies over Ten Mile on Coastal Cleanup Day (September 15)

A banded Caspian Tern is spotted by Nathan Cooley June 19. The bird was seen again at Ten Mile on June 24. Oregon State University Researchers tell us the bird hatched in 2004 on the Columbia River

The first migrating Dowitcher is seen July 4 at Ten Mile

The first summer migrating Sanderlings are seen July 3 at Ten Mile

The first migrating Black Turnstone is seen at Virgin Creek on July 8, the same day that 15 newly-arrived Surfbirds are observed

The first Black-bellied Plover is seen on Ten Mile July 5

The first Marbled Godwit is observed June 18 at Ten Mile

More than a thousand Whimbrels are counted by volunteers between July 1 – July 24 (almost all of them at Virgin Creek and Ten Mile). After that, the number tapers off significantly

Loose dogs continue to disturb shorebirds on all three beaches and enforcement of dog and horse regulations will be an important part of the protection plan

The number of Common Ravens on the beaches has made the bird part of every shorebird count. Based on the first year of observation, volunteers will serve some 1,000 hours on this project

A Western Snowy Plover was seen on Ten Mile during a survey with State Parks and California State

Audubon Important Bird Area Program Coordinator Andrea Jones on May 22. The next time a Snowy Plover was observed was June 30. Since then, the Plovers have begun to return to Ten Mile and Virgin Creek. On October 14, volunteers counted 28 Snowy Plovers on Ten Mile.

Banded Snowy Plovers have included a bird hatched this year at Oceano Dunes, San Louis Obispo County, a fledging from Moss Landing Salt Ponds, and an Oregon bird hatched in 2006.

State Parks Environmental Scientist Angela Martin Liebenberg is communicating with a researcher in Canada about a banded Western Sandpiper observed by Nathan Cooley.

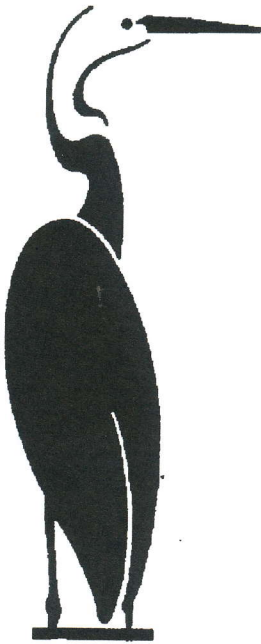
One volunteer reports she lost 15 pounds this summer after conducting several SOS surveys on Virgin Creek and Ten Mile Beaches

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society partnered with State Parks to study shorebirds on three MacKerricher State Parks beaches (Glass Beach, Virgin Creek and Ten Mile Beach). In the fall of 2008, our information will form the basis of a shorebird protection plan. Our goal is to work toward a reduction in disturbance to shorebirds that migrate through our designated Important Bird Areas. There are some 145 IBAs in California and each one is considered a prime conservation area.

Virgin Creek and Ten Mile Beach were named IBAs in large part because of more than 20 years of observation and reporting by Dorothy Tobkin. The beaches are considered important stop-over spots for migrating shorebirds as well as critical habitat for the Western Snowy Plover, a federally threatened bird.

The project is funded by a grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and awarded to MCAS by Audubon California. A report on our progress was made to the Audubon California at the October Assembly in Monterey. All SOS bird count observations will be made available through our MCAS website.

If you are interested in serving as a volunteer next summer, please contact Becky Bowen at casparbeck@comcast.net. We appreciate your help and support and we promise that the experience will be pleasant. We also will help you brush up your shorebird identification skills. Our surveys will begin again in June, 2008.



Bird Sightings

10/6 **Vaux's Swift** (9), Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens

10/10 **Greater and Lesser Scaups**, Lake Cleone

10/13 **Lincoln's Sparrow**, Glass Beach

10/13 **Common Snipe** (3), Pudding Creek Lagoon

10/14 **Canvasbacks**, MacKerricher State Park

10/20 **Osprey**, Lake Cleone

10/20 **Snow Bunting** Coastal Bluff just north of Pudding Creek

10/20 **Ferruginous Hawk**, Bald Hill Road

10/21 **American Pipit** (flock of 30+) north of Pudding Creek

10/22 **Bufflehead** (5), Ten Mile River: **Horned Lark** (4),
Mendocino Headlands

10/23 **Pacific Golden-plover** (4) G-P Mill Site south of path to
Glass Beach (continuing on 10/25 and 10/27)

10/28 **American Bittern**, Lake Cleone

10/28 **Lapland Longspur**, Mendocino Headlands

11/1 Sightings: Mendocino South Coast (Hawk Field Trip area):
Peregrine (2), **Merlin** (1), numerous **Kestrels**, **Red-tail**
Hawks, and **Northern Harriers**, **Osprey** (2)
and 1 immature **Bald Eagle**

Throughout the month: Large numbers of **Surf Scoters** have been seen migrating down the coast, with a few **White-winged Scoters** mixed in. Other wintering ducks have arrived, including **American Widgeon** (check Pudding Creek Lagoon), **Lesser Scaup** (Lake Cleone) and **Bufflehead** (Ten Mile River). Virtually all **Osprey** have left for the winter. **Black Phoebe**s, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, **Fox Sparrows**, and **Golden-crowned Sparrows** have returned.

Be on the lookout in November: Returning birds should include **White-throated Sparrows** (uncommon) **American Pipits** and **Varied Thrush**.

Bird Walks

The Mendocino Coast Audubon Society will host two walks this month at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens. Our monthly beginners' bird walk will be held on the first Saturday of the month, November 3, at 9:00 a.m. Our midweek bird walk will be held on the third Wednesday of the month, November 21, at 8:00 a.m.

Birders with all levels of experience are invited to attend these walks. Binoculars will be available for those who need them. Admission is free for Botanical Garden members. For more information on these and other activities, please call 964-8163 visit our website:

www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

November Field Trip to View Hawks of the South Coast

On Saturday, November 10, the Audubon Society will host a field trip to view the hawks of the south coast. Participants with all levels of experience are invited to meet at 9 a.m. at the south end of the Navarro River bridge on Highway One. From there we will caravan south to Point Arena, stopping to scan the skies and fields along the way. This is an exciting time of year to look for returning raptors. Possible sightings include Peregrine Falcons and Ferruginous Hawks. Binoculars will be available for those who need them. This field trip should end in the early afternoon, so bring water and a bag lunch.

Thank You, SOS Volunteers

