

The Black Oystercatcher

Photograph by Ron LeValley

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society Newsletter February 2015

HELPING CITIZEN SCIENCE TAKE FLIGHT

STUDIES, RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES
TO IMPROVE THE UTILITY AND UPTAKE
OF CITIZEN SCIENCE

A PRESENTATION BY DR. JOHN GALLO

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2015

7 P.M.

CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER

Dr. John Gallo joined the Conservation Biology Institute as a Senior Scientist in the fall of 2013. The institute, headquartered in Corvallis, Oregon, provides scientific expertise to support conservation and biological diversity through research, education, planning, and community service. He describes his current work as "...researching and developing enhanced decision support systems for stakeholders and policymakers, developing projects, and cultivating partnerships."



Dr. Gallo also is a former Senior Landscape Ecologist for The Wilderness Society, a Washington, D.C. non-profit dedicated to wild-life conservation since 1935.

He earned a bachelor of science in ecology, a bachelor of arts in environmental science and a Ph.D. in geography at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

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A Bald Eagle was recorded on the Manchester CBC Jan. 3, 2015. See Karen Havlena's story, Page 6.

Photograph by Susan Rachlin taken at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, Philadelphia, PA

PAM HUNTLEY ON KZYX FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5

BARRED OWL

“Who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all” is the vocalization of the Barred Owl. It is very similar to our Spotted Owl, but larger and more aggressive.

The Barred Owl can be more than two feet tall and have a wing span of up to 49 inches. It has a round head, yellow beak and large dark eyes. The brown back is spotted; the front has horizontal bars on the upper chest and vertical bars on the belly.



Photograph by Terren, wikimedia commons

Barred Owls are nocturnal hunters. Their exceptional hearing allows them to pick up squeaks from 50 yards away. They eat mostly mice but also chipmunks, flying squirrels, rabbits, opossums and gray foxes.

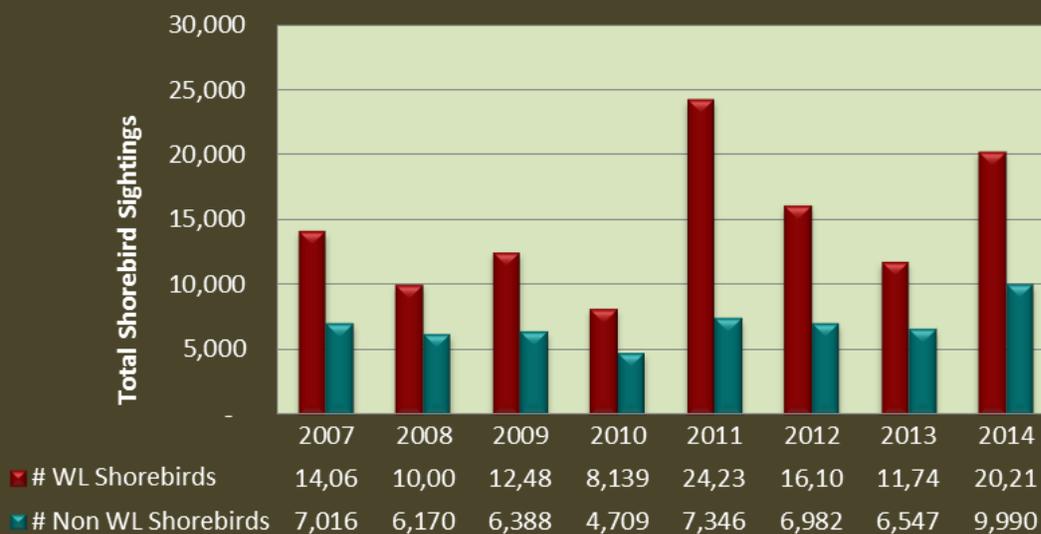
They nest in cavities or broken tree tops, but also will use abandoned raven and hawk nests. The male feeds the female while she incubates 2 or 3 eggs for about a month. They usually nest every other year. Parents will care for the young for more than four months.

Barred Owls are not native to local forests, having arrived here from the East, as a result of development and increased logging, in the last part of the 20th century. They nest in parks and in neighborhoods with tall trees. Barred Owls compete for habitat with native Spotted Owls. Interbreeding with Spotted Owls has produced hybrids called “Sparred Owls” or “Botted Owls.” The hybrids are sterile, thus further threatening Spotted Owls.

A controversial four-year experiment, in which scientists are killing Barred Owls in 2 per cent of the Spotted Owl habitat in Washington, Oregon and Northern California, is under way.

SAVE OUR SHOREBIRDS – 2014 BY THE NUMBERS Becky Bowen

SOS Comparison of Total Yearly Sightings of Watchlisted and Non-Watchlisted Shorebirds
Glass Beach, Virgin Creek, Ten Mile Beach, Trestle Loop, Lighthouse Loop *- Combined
June, 2007-December, 2014 Mackerricher State Park, Mendocino County, CA



*Trestle Loop, Lighthouse Loop added to surveys in 2014

Save Our Shorebirds has entered its ninth year. Volunteer surveyors conduct census surveys on five segments of the Mackerricher State Park coast. The on-foot surveys are carried out under the supervision of biologists at State Parks and the data are submitted to State Parks, USFWS and Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology, where the international e-bird database experts help us organize our numbers. Our information is available at no charge to schools, scientists, organizations and agencies. The new annual SOS report currently is on the MCAS website www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org (click on the Conservation tab). The goal is to monitor and protect birds listed as being in decline. Local shorebirds in decline ("watchlisted species" identified by National Audubon and American Bird Conservancy) are: American Golden-Plover, Western Snowy Plover, Wandering Tattler, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Black Turnstone, Surf-bird, Red Knot, Sanderling, Western Sandpiper and Rock Sandpiper. Rare sightings of Hudsonian Godwit and Buff-breasted Sandpiper also have been noted.

We look forward to sharing information about the latest data in future newsletters. More than 60 per cent of shorebirds we survey are watchlisted birds. In the March newsletter, we'll look at some 2014 observations that surprised and tickled us.

Save Our Shorebirds is an on-going long-term volunteer citizen science MCAS program in partnership with State Parks and FLOCKworks. For information, please contact Angela Liebenberg at liebenbergs@mcn.org In-field training will be given on three days in April. Please visit us at:

www.facebook.com/SaveOurShorebirds

EUROPEAN ROBIN

Donald Shephard



European Robin photo by Francis C. Franklin

Before you receive this newsletter, my wife and I travel to Denby Dale in West Yorkshire to attend the wedding of a grand-niece. My family promises cold weather and short days – the sun rising at 8:30 and setting at 4:30 – probably marked by low total cloud cover. This image contrasts with the cheery snow-clad village scenes on the cards you may have received from family and friends in England. They frequently feature holly berries and Robins.

The European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), most commonly known in Anglophone Europe simply as the Robin, is a small insectivorous

passerine bird, specifically a chat, that ornithologists formerly classified as a member of the thrush family (Turdidae), but which is now considered to be an Old World flycatcher.

Robins have taken a starring role on many Christmas cards since the mid 19th century when English postmen (mail persons) were called robins. Mistakenly, Robins also starred in a film. The larger American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), named for its similarity to the European Robin though not closely related, was incorrectly shown "feathering its nest" in London in the film *Mary Poppins*, but it rarely occurs in the UK.

The Robin features prominently in British folklore, and that of northwestern France, but much less so in other parts of Europe. Norse mythology holds it to be a storm-cloud bird which is sacred to Thor, the god of thunder. Robins also feature in the traditional children's tale, *Babes in the Wood*; the birds cover the dead bodies of the children. Another story suggests it scorched its breast fetching water for souls in Purgatory. This legend may soon become verifiable since we already have data floating above us in "the Cloud."

As I wait for the modern day mail delivery I shall watch my sister's garden for this feisty little bird. I'll likely see a lone Robin since not more than one will occupy a cottage garden in winter. This small bird with upright stance hops along the ground. When alarmed, it bobs and raises its tail. Its brown back and orange-red breast make it easily identified. Young birds show only brown with golden spots at first; red patches appear later.

When their food source becomes scarce in winter they will eat just about anything put out for

Donald Shephard

them on a bird table, especially fatty foods such as bacon rind, cheese and seed mixtures. Females will leave their territory, some emigrating to southern Europe, for a better supplied pantry, but males stay put.

Britain's Robins are mostly resident. They are joined by paler Northern European immigrants in winter. These European birds are less confiding and more skulking than native birds, perhaps due to the continuing massacre of migrant birds in southern Europe. Robins may live to the ripe old age of ten, but only a quarter manage to survive their first birthday, their greatest enemies being domestic cats and traffic. A spell of very low temperatures in winter may also result in significant mortality. This species is parasitized by the moorhen flea, *Dasypsyllus gallinulae*. When nesting, the male defends his territory and responds to almost any small patch of red. A red flag to a Robin would be a better saying than a red flag to a bull, as the latter are color blind. Fights between males can be vicious and sometimes even to death. The perky little chap waiting on the spade handle is really quite a nasty piece of work.

In spring males sing loudly a rich rambling warble with wistful notes, to attract a mate. Robins pair up from late December to early March. The female chases the male until he accepts her. When the male Robin has found a mate, he will strengthen their bond by bringing her food, such as worms and caterpillars, which she begs for noisily while quivering her wings. He is often mistaken by the observer to be the mother feeding the young.

They conceal their nests in a bank or hole under a hedge, in an old flower pot, watering can or discarded gardener's boot. They build a domed structure of leaves and moss lined with hair, where she lays five to seven white eggs spotted with red. She stays in the nest up to two weeks, crouching low over them, well concealed with only her brown back visible. The male brings her food, sometimes as often as three times an hour. Both parents feed and look after their chicks for two weeks, until they fly and become fully independent.

Curiously, *Lego* released a birds set on January 1, 2015, which includes a European Robin. That set would make a good gift for my many great-grand nieces and nephews as we huddle around a fire playing on the floor, creating a splash of cheer in the drear gray landscape. The toddlers' red cheeks are reminiscent of a Robin Redbreast perched on a spade handle watching for a gardener to turn up earthworms.



Juvenile European Robin photo by David Iliff

MANCHESTER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT Karen Havlena

The weather on Saturday, January 3, was the best in years for the Manchester Christmas Bird Count, with high overcast skies, very little wind, and no fog or rain to hinder the counters. It was a little chilly for the owlers, but it warmed up nicely during the rest of the day. The grand total of species seen or heard this year was 140.

The most important species encountered on count day was a huge flight of hundreds of Black-vented Shearwater, part of thousands seen on CBC's along California's coast. We were ready for the arrival of these seabirds, since Jerry White had seen approximately 700+ in Gualala the day before count day. They have a distinctive flight pattern, similar to Red-shouldered Hawks – flap, flap, flap, glide. Other highlights on the count were: Black Scoter, Northern Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Prairie Falcon, and Hermit Warbler. During count week (the three days on either side of the actual count), a Black-crowned Night-Heron was seen. Species usually seen on the Manchester count but missed this year were Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup. Other birds seen only during count week were Snowy Plover and Western Sandpiper.

Many thanks to Dave Jensen for organizing the count and providing yet another delicious dinner at the end of the day. Also, a big thank you to the 36 participants, who drove from as far away as San Francisco, Kelseyville, Potter Valley, Ukiah and Willits to help us out in this remote part of Mendocino County.



Male Surf Scoter – Photograph by Linda Tanner

BAY AREA BIRD DEATH TOLL CLIMBS AFTER DISCOVERY OF MYSTERY “GOO”

More than 150 bay birds died last week after their feathers were coated by an unidentified gooey substance that prevents them from feeding in the bay waters that are a major stop-over spot for migrating waterfowl.

Some 300 additional birds also were washed and cared for by staff and volunteers at the International Bird Rescue

(<http://bird-rescue.org> 707 207-0380) facility in Fairfield while California Fish & Wildlife conducted tests to identify the substance. Surf Scoters and scaup appear to be seriously threatened by the substance.

Jordan Wellwood, Director of the Richardson Bay Audubon Center & Sanctuary, wrote in the California Audubon blog that the plight of the birds is similar to incidents in the English Channel in February and May, 2013. Spillage of a chemical additive released when boats clean tanks or flush ballast water was the cause and the substance was subsequently banned from being discharged into open waters in the area by the International Maritime Organization. More than 3,000 birds were killed or injured during the May, 2013, English Channel incident.

The San Francisco “goo” has not been identified as an oil spill, so no legally-required emergency response is operating. Total cost of the rescue effort, estimated at \$9,500 a day, is being borne by the rescue center, according to a January 25 story in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The area where birds are being rescued is near Hayward and San Leandro Marina.

Becky Bowen

CALENDAR, BIRD WALKS, FIELD TRIPS

February 2015

Saturday 7 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM* Leader: Dave Jensen

Thursday 12 - 15 Winter Wings Festival Klamath Falls, OR

Friday 13 - 15 San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival Vallejo

Friday 13 - 16 18th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday 14 Field Trip Owling Road 409 - 5:30PM Meet on Road 409 at the end of the pavement, 3.3 miles east from Highway 1. Parking is limited. Dress warmly, bring a light. Please contact Tim Bray tbray@wildblue.net and let him know you are coming so he can alert you if we have to cancel. Rain cancels. Leader: Mike Stephens

Monday 16 Meeting [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM Speaker: John Gallo, Citizen Science

Wednesday 18 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM* Leader: Tim Bray

March 2015

Saturday 7 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) **Cancelled due to Whale Festival**

Saturday 7-8 Whale Festival Point Cabrillo Light Station Birdwalks 9AM Saturday and Sunday. Meet at upper parking lot off Point Cabrillo Drive. Rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

Saturday 14 Field Trip [MacKerricher State Park](#) 9AM Meet at Lake Cleone parking lot. Heavy wind, rain cancels. Leader: TBA

Monday 16 Environmental Partnership Potluck - Time and place TBA. This year's host: CNPS

Wednesday 18 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM* Leader: Tim Bray

Saturday 21-22 Whale Festival Point Cabrillo Light Station Birdwalks 9AM Saturday and Sunday. Meet at upper parking lot off Point Cabrillo Drive. Rain cancels. Leader: Dave Jensen

Thursday 26 MCAS Board of Directors Meeting - Contact J. Ossello for time and place

April 2015

Friday 3, 10, 24 In-field Training Save Our Shorebirds Contact **B. Bowen 962-1602 for details**

Saturday 4 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM* Leader: Dave Jensen

Saturday 11 Field Trip Hendy Woods 9AM - Meeting place TBA. Leader: Dave Jensen

Wednesday 15-24 Godwit Days Arcata

Wednesday 15 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM* Leader: Tim Bray

Monday 20 Meeting at Gualala - Details TBA

May 2015

Saturday 2 Beginner Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 9AM* Leader: Dave Jensen

Saturday 9 Field Trip Navarro River and Beach 9AM - Meeting place and leader TBA

Monday 18 Meeting and MCAS Board of Directors Election [Caspar Community Center](#) 7PM
Speaker: Floyd Hayes – Adventures in Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil

Wednesday 20 Bird Walk [Botanical Gardens](#) 8:30AM* Leader: Tim Bray

Thursday 28 MCAS Board of Directors Meeting - Time, place TBA

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

For complete calendar, updates, and useful links, visit: www.mendocinocoastaudubon.org

And please visit us on facebook: www.facebook.com/mendocinocoastaudubon

MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2013-2014

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Field Trips	Tim Bray	937-4422	tbray@wildblue.net

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society e-mail address: 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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