



**April**

**2008**

*There is still time to make a reservation*

## **“Birding Western and Northern India”**

**Speaker: Rich Kuehn**

**Monday, April 14, 2008**

**Dinner 6:00 p.m., Program 7:00 p.m.**

**Gualala Art Center, Gualala, CA**

**Dinner \$30.00 Reservations required**

**Donation Program only \$5.00**

Experience Western and Northern India – the cuisine and the natural beauty – at our April meeting in Gualala. In August of 2006, Richard Kuehn and his domestic partner, Dean Schuler, both MCAS members, departed on a trip around the world to fulfill a boyhood dream and celebrate their first 25 years together: 84 days and 31,000 miles later, they returned. As part of this adventure, they flew from Doha, Qatar on the Persian Gulf into Mumbai (Bombay) India on the Arabian Sea. There they began a 24 day guided tour through the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal in search of new bird species, Bengal tigers and Asian elephants in the wild, along with the cultural experience that is Incredible India. You may join them when the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society holds their annual South Coast meeting at the Gualala Arts Center beginning at 6 p.m. on April 14, 2008.

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India has an extraordinary diversity of landscapes and vegetation, which support a rich variety of wildlife. The country is bounded to the north by the majestic Himalayas. Along their foothills, where Rich and Dean traveled are the fertile, densely populated Indo-Gangetic Plains that sweep across the breadth of Central India. To the west, the sand dunes of Rajasthan give way to the barren salt-flats and marshes of the Rann of Kutch. Here one finds the wild Asiatic asses and a multitude of water birds, including the endangered Painted Stork and the national bird of India, the Indian Peacock, as well as ancient Hindu shrines and nomads in camel carts.

The Indian-themed dinner promises to be a culinary delight, catered by Leslie Bates of Savory Coast. The 6:00 p.m. dinner is \$30.00. The program begins at 7 p.m. and a donation of \$5.00 is requested for those who attend the program only. As always, tea and coffee will be served. Beer and wine will be available for a donation. Though payment may be made at the door, **reservations and cancellations must be made by April 6th.** Call 964-6362 to make your reservation now or for further information.



Taj Mahal



Ambert Fort

## Flicker

Beak to the metal,  
flicker on the chimney pot  
jackhammers desire.

Withered leaf, sodden  
with spring rain, lies unnoticed  
under the willow.

Storm wind, transmute me,  
whirl me up to the rooftop,  
the flicker's new mate.

Maureen Eppstein (from *Quickening*)

## A Closer Look at Feathers (1)

*By Don Shephard*

A Mourning Dove smashed into my window, flew off and left this feather. I took a closer look at its structure.



Keratins are a group of fibrous proteins found in mammalian hair, horns and hooves, the baleen of whales, and the feathers, beaks and claws of birds. Feathers consist of beta-keratins, which makes them tougher than mammalian hair made of alpha-keratins. A socket in the skin holds the calamus or quill, the naked portion of the shaft. The remainder of the shaft, the rachis, the central hollow part, supports the vane.

Our ancestors used the hollow feature of large bird feathers, usually geese, to make quill pens, which held ink in the stem. The Latin for feather is penna, hence our words “pen” and, the knife used to trim the quill, the “penknife”. No doubt, those same ancestors noticed that grooves on the undersides of the calamus and rachis give the quill feathers greater rigidity than simple tubes.

The two sides of the vane each consist of a number of fine branches. These in turn have even finer sub-branches. A kind of natural Velcro mechanism holds the barbs and barbules together. The upper barbules have a series of hooks that catch the lower convex ones. This interlocking system allows a feather to act as one unit as air flows over it. The water repellency of contour feathers derives mainly from the interlocking structure of the barbules, but a film of oil gland secretion also helps.

As a boy, I often tested the strength of feather barbules and tried to reattach them. Nature unzipped the outer ends of owl feathers, which lack barbules, making the edges softer to render their flight silent and deadly.

Though durable, feathers require daily maintenance to keep them clean, properly aligned, and free of parasites but the need for wings to fly deprives birds of hands. Their 14 neck vertebrae, compared to our six, enable them to reach each feather with their beaks. Despite the incredible lightness of feathers, a bird's plumage weighs two or three times more than its skeleton, since many bones are hollow and contain air sacs. In terms of numbers of feathers, the champions are the Tundra Swans, once called Whistling Swans, which visit the Stornetta Ranch in winter. They each carry 25,000 compared to the 940 much smaller feathers of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, the bird with the lowest number.

Feathers are instrumental in temperature regulation, flying, display and camouflage. Insulation is very important in a warm-blooded animal. Most birds maintain a body temperature at around 104°F. Current scientific thinking has flight evolving in birds after they developed feathers for insulation, and the ability to fly added selective pressure to make feathers larger, stronger and refine their structure.

The third function of feathers is to control appearance. Your Thanksgiving turkey looks very different to one in full plumage. Color in feathers contributes secondary sexual

characteristics and attraction during display. Consider the tail of male Wild Turkeys. It also allows for camouflage of predator and prey.

Perhaps a well-camouflaged hawk startled and scattered the doves below my feeder. Unfortunately, the one that headed south smashed into my house leaving a feather memento and a powder ring on my window. In the next newsletter, we will take a closer look at types of feathers and discover the source of that powder.

## **Help with the Environment and Participate in Earth Day by Cleaning Up Glass Beach on April 19, 2008**

California State Parks is leading a clean up at Glass Beach, part of MacKerricher State Park. On April 19, 2008, the public is invited to help pick up trash at Glass Beach from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Help remove waste from the natural environment that could otherwise be ingested by wildlife. Waste Management Incorporated is donating the use of a large dumpster for trash collection. Volunteers can pick up latex gloves, plastic bags and maps at the corner of Elm Street and Glass Beach Drive in Fort Bragg. The waste dumpster will be at the same location.

Glass Beach is named for the smooth pieces of glass that are found along the shore in this area. The site was used as a waste dump until 1967. Over the years, powerful wave action has smoothed over countless pieces of sharp glass.

On April 22, 1970, millions of people across America celebrated the first Earth Day. Now Earth Day is celebrated annually around the globe. Through the combined efforts of the U.S. government, state and local governments, grassroots organizations, and people like you, what started as a day of national environmental recognition has evolved into a world-wide campaign to protect our global environment. For additional information, call California State Parks at (707) 961-0471.

## **BIRD SIGHTINGS – Spring Migration has begun**

From Toby Tobkin: two Long-tailed Ducks, along with six Harlequin Ducks and Scoters seen from the bluff west of the Haul Road parking lot. Many Warblers are singing and the swallows have returned.

From Karen Havlena: Calliope Hummingbird, Allen's Hummingbird

From Becky Bowen: The Whimbrels are back. Yesterday, four were spotted at Virgin Creek – the first confirmed ones we've seen since November 24, 2007. They were foraging at the water edge with two Black-bellied Plovers (one male in near breeding plumage). Also 25 Black Turnstones, 1 Sanderling, and 5 Harlequin Ducks bobbing in the water (4 male, one female) near "Spaghetti Rock" along with 6 Surf Scoters and a lone Common Merganser. The beach habitat at Virgin Creek has changed dramatically over the last few weeks.



## MCAS Pelagic Trip – SUNDAY, May 18

The MCAS spring pelagic trip will be held on Sunday, May 18th. The cost is a very good deal at \$95.00 per person. We will sail from Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg aboard the Trek II, departing at 8:00 a.m. and returning about 3:00 p.m. Trip leaders are Ron LeValley, Kerry Ross and George Chaniot. To reserve your spot, please mail a check, payable to MCAS, for \$95 each to: K. Havlena – Pelagic Trip, P.O. Box 40, Fort Bragg, CA 95437-0040

Important: Please include name(s) of participants, a mailing address, telephone number and email address.

Confirmations will be sent out at a later date. Contact will be made with you prior to sending the confirmations. To repeat, please make your check payable to MCAS. Thanks very much!  
Karen Havlena, 707-964-1280

**\*\* SPECIAL NOTE:** Due to very high fuel costs and the shutdown of salmon season, we may have to ask for a fuel surcharge prior to boarding at the dock. Please bring a little cash with you (\$15-20). Captain Jason has been so generous over the years to MCAS. We DO NOT want to have to cancel this trip. He and the Trek II need our support this year (both the May and September trips).

Please send your checks NOW to reserve a spot and save this trip! Thank you very much.

Karen Havlena jkhavlena@yahoo.com 707-964-1280

## **BIRD SURVEY TRAINING**

Join the Big River Stewards program of the Mendocino Land Trust and the Mendocino Coast Chapter of the Audubon Society for a free two-day bird survey training workshop on May 3rd and 4th.

The classroom portion of the workshop will be held at the Stanford Inn on May 3rd from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. Power point presentations and audio recordings will help attendees hone their bird identification skills. The workshop will be led by expert birder and endangered species consultant Ron LeValley. LeValley, founder of the avian consulting firm Mad River Biologists, will train participants in identifying birds by visual and audio cues, as well as bird surveying methodology.

On May 4th, participants will meet at 7 a.m. at Big River Beach to further practice field identification skills on a guided hike up the haul road with the training leader and other experienced birders from the Mendocino Coast Chapter of the Audubon Society. The training will conclude around 11 a.m.

After completing the training, participants will have the opportunity to put their new skills to work by signing up for the annual Big River Bird Survey, an ambitious project, begun in 2003, that is cosponsored by California State Parks, the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society and the Mendocino Land Trust. The survey seeks to document bird species present at the Big River property and track changes in their populations over time. The survey involves 30 stations at various locations on Big River park lands and another eight stations on the Conservation Fund's Big River property, which are each surveyed three times during the Spring breeding season and twice during the Fall migration.

For more information about the surveys, a report entitled "Report on 2005 Big River Breeding Season and Fall Bird Surveys Conducted by the Big River Stewards" is available on the Mendocino Land Trust's website, [www.mendocinolandtrust.org](http://www.mendocinolandtrust.org).

To attend the workshop, please RSVP to Big River Stewards Volunteer Coordinator Matt Coleman at 962-0470 or, by e-mail, at

[mcoleman@mendocinolandtrust.org](mailto:mcoleman@mendocinolandtrust.org).

## **Public Meeting on the Georgia-Pacific Mill Site**

California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Public Meeting  
regarding Georgia-Pacific Mill Site Draft Interim Action Remedial Action Plan  
and Draft Operable Unit A Remedial Action Plan

Last meeting for Public Comment on clean up options at the G-P Millsite

Friday, April 11

7:00 p.m. at Redwood Elementary School

324 South Lincoln Street, Fort Bragg



You're invited on

# The ten-mile Ten Mile Walk

Please join Save Our Shorebirds Mendocino Coast Audubon Society  
and State Parks Volunteers

On a coastal walk from Ten Mile River south to Glass Beach

We will explore the shore and shorebirds including Snowy Plovers,  
Marbled Godwits, Turnstones, Surfbirds, Black Oystercatchers, Sandpipers  
and more

Sunday, May 25, 2008

Meet at The Pudding Creek Trestle at 9 a.m.

(Turn west off Highway 1 on Elm Street,  
then turn right on Glass Beach Drive

and proceed to the end of the street to the trestle entrance)

We will shuttle up to Ten Mile River (north of Inglenook)  
and walk back to Glass Beach on the beach and haul road

Bring a lunch, water and binoculars

Lunch at Lake Cleone (at about noon)

Hike ends about 3 p.m. (almost ten miles)

Sorry, no dogs are allowed in the Ten Mile Preserve

Sponsored by the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society and State Parks

Please sign up with Becky Bowen at [casparbeck@comcast.net](mailto:casparbeck@comcast.net)

so we can set up shuttles

## **Bird Walks**

Saturday, April 5, Beginners' Bird Walk at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens at 9:00 a.m.

Wednesday, April 16, Bird Walk at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 3, Beginners' Bird Walk at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens at 9:00 a.m.

Birders with all levels of experience are invited to attend these walks. Binoculars will be available. Admission is free for MCBG members.

## **Field Trip**

Saturday, April 12, Annual South Coast Field Trip, Meet at the Knipp-Stengel Barn, west side of Highway 1, mile post 53.71