FIFTEEN YEARS IN THE LITTLE YELLOW SUBMARINE: NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

DR. MILTON LOVE

(May 24)

CV STARR CENTER

Dr. Love has conducted research on the marine fishes of California for over 40 years. He is the author or co-author of over 80 publications on the fishes of the Pacific Coast and has written the books *Probably More Than You Want to Know About the Fishes of the Pacific Coast* and *The Rockfishes of the Northeast Pacific*. For the past 15 years, using a manned research submersible, he has carried out surveys of the fish populations living around natural and artificial reefs throughout the southern California Bight. Dr. Love has been a recreational angler since 1955 and was briefly a commercial fisherman in Santa Barbara. He has written over 100 articles for the general public on various aspects of marine biology. In 2007, the American Fisheries Society awarded Dr. Love the Carl R. Sullivan Award for Conservation Resources.
PLEASE RENEW YOUR MCAS MEMBERSHIP TODAY

Ginny Wade

The membership year for MCAS runs from September to August in keeping with our program year. MCAS holds its annual membership drive in May and September. We believe in sending renewal solicitations only at this time (not six or more months in advance). You will receive a membership form in the same way you get this newsletter, by mail or email. If renewing from the electronic version, you can print out the form and mail it to MCAS, P.O. Box 2297, Fort Bragg, CA 94537. Or write out the requested information (name, address, email address, etc) on a slip of paper and send it with your payment. Don’t forget you can rejoin by credit card. MCAS does not keep credit card information so your payment is secure.

MCAS has not raised its dues for 6 years. Our expenses have increased substantially in recent years. We now pay speaker fees, higher rental fees for meeting space, and of course, higher postage costs for those of you who receive the Whistling Swan by mail. We have expanded our education program in the schools and still offer bird walks and field trips to the public without cost. We continue to conduct bird surveys for the city of Fort Bragg, for the Mendocino Land Trust, and for the Point Cabrillo Light Station Historic State Park.

WE VALUE YOUR SUPPORT – THANK YOU

This has been an exciting year for your organization. Volunteers and board members have accomplished a great deal – from the completion of our third year of citizen science in the Save Our Shorebirds project, to providing Pelagic Trips and informative programs. We joined with other environmental groups for our annual Partners Potluck and held another successful meeting in Gualala. Our newsletter now contains feature articles, and for those receiving it electronically, pictures in color. We continue to offer two bird walks at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens each month and eight field trips during the year. We are looking forward to a productive future.

The new membership categories are as follows: $15.00 Limited Income/Student, $25.00 Individual, and $30.00 Family. Many members over the years have added a donation to their annual dues and we are most appreciative of their generosity. Please remember that all donations to MCAS are TAX DEDUCTIBLE.
The Black Phoebe is a year-round resident and is often seen on a fence post or low branch. From there, it sallies up to snatch an insect from the air and returns to the same perch. This seven-inch flycatcher is all black except for its white belly and thin white lines down the outside of its tail. It has a peaked forehead and thin, flattened bill.

Juveniles are dark-brown underneath and have cinnamon wing bars. The species characteristically pumps or dips of their tail while perched. Black Phoebes are seldom seen far from water. This could be a creek, river, marshy pond or irrigation ditch.

From their low perch, they dart out with soft and silent flight then, with an audible click of the bill, snap up a wild bee, ant, wasp, beetle, fly or moth. They feed almost exclusively on insects but have been seen to snatch a small fish now and then. They spit up pellets containing the indigestible parts of insects.

In courtship, the male performs a fluttering flight, singing and calling, and slowly descends. Black Phoebes make a cup nest under an eave, cave, or bridge. This semi-circular nest is strongly attached to the surface and is made with mud, plants and hair. The female lays four white eggs and incubates them for a little over two weeks. Both parents feed the young. They usually have two broods in a season and, if successful, will use the nest again next year.

**NEW BIRD LIST FOR MACKERRICHER STATE PARK NOW AVAILABLE**

Dorothy Tobkin

The bird list for MacKerricher State Park has just been revised and now contains 289 species. Thanks to Ginny Wade's competent, unstinting labors, the list is now in print and will be available, for a modest fee, at the Ford House and MacKerricher and Van Damme visitor centers. While it is limited to birds observed at MacKerricher, it should serve well for the entire Mendocino coast, lacking only a few species found elsewhere on the coast.
Pink Lady is a bird whose life is full of surprises, drama, and wisdom. She is a real Western Snowy Plover who visited MacKerricher State Park beaches in 2005 and 2006.

She tells her story in a new bi-lingual book for children of all ages soon to be published, thanks to a generous grant by the Cantus Foundation Fund and private donors of the Community Foundation of Mendocino County. The $4,000 Community Enrichment Grant will be awarded May 20 to MCAS Treasurer Judy Steele, who wrote the proposal.

The book is not for sale. Our goal is to give it to every elementary school child on the Mendocino Coast in September, 2010.

Nothing happens without help and here are people who made the dream real:

- Ginny and Warren Wade, who managed a 2007 shorebird poster contest in local schools. Ginny currently creates shorebird protection beach signs with the children’s art.
- The children of the Mendocino Coast whose 2007 poster art illustrates the book.
- The dedicated coastal teachers, who shared our Western Snowy Plover lesson plan with students.
- FLOCKworks, a non-profit organization led by artist Janet Self, a long-time supporter.
- State Parks Environmental Scientist, Angela Liebenberg, who manages the federal and state Western Snowy Plover recovery efforts in MacKerricher and Manchester State Parks.
- Save Our Shorebird (SOS) volunteer surveyors, who gather shorebird research data.
- Loreto Rojas and Pam Huntley, who translated and made audio recordings of the book.
- Graphic book designer and SOS volunteer Kathy Carl.
- Members of the MCAS board of directors, who continue to support the four-year-old SOS program.
- Dorothy “Toby” Tobkin, one of the first birders to spot Pink Lady in the field (and named her for one of the bird’s bright pink leg bands).

Look for more news about “The Life and Times of Pink Lady” this summer under Save Our Shorebirds on Facebook.

Save Our Shorebirds is an on-going citizen science project of the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society in partnership with California State Parks, College of the Redwoods, and FLOCKworks. To participate in surveys or learn more, contact MendocinoShorebirds@gmail.com.
NAVARRO VINEYARD BIRD WALK SATURDAY, MAY 22 at 10:00 a.m.

This trip is a behind-the-scenes hike to look for birds and learn about vineyard management practices at Navarro Vineyards and Winery in Anderson Valley. Family-owned Navarro has an innovative and habitat-friendly management program that maintains grasses and wildflowers in their vineyard operations. They have also conducted stream habitat improvement for steelhead and erected a variety of nesting boxes to attract bluebirds, swallows, and even (someday) Purple Martins. The 2-3 hour walk will pass through vineyards, along several productive farm ponds, through grassland, and oak-Douglas-fir forest in areas not generally accessible to the public. A nice ornamental garden around the tasting room can also be productive for hummingbirds and sparrows. To date, limited surveys have recorded 73 bird species, but this trip will surely add more. After birding, the tasting room awaits....

Leaders: Dan Airola, Sarah Grimes, David Harr.

Meet: at tasting room parking lot at Navarro Vineyards, 5601 Highway 128, between Philo and the town of Navarro, located 20 miles east of the junction of Highways 1 and 128,

Bring: sturdy hiking shoes, sun protection, lunch (picnic after walk at the tasting room)

If you plan to attend, please RSVP David Harr at Navarro Winery, 800-537-9463.

ANDERSON VALLEY CLASSROOM VISIT

Here are two of the letters from Pam Huntley and Sarah Grimes' Anderson Valley classroom visit. The children saw many wonderful birds including a Red-tailed Hawk, a "butter butt", Anna's Hummingbird, Stellar's Jay, Spotted Towhee, Scrub Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse to mention a few.
We frequently see White-crowned Sparrows singing atop coyote brush as we take our evening walk to Point Cabrillo, but it surprised me to learn they sometimes sing at night. The distinctive song and appearance make it one of the surest sparrow identifications. The smart black-and-white head, yellowish beak, and clean gray throat and breast combine for a dashing look.

Our local birds do not migrate and experts regard them as a separate subspecies, *Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli*, one of five in North America, and the only one found exclusively in California. It inhabits a narrow band, not east of the redwood fog zone, along the coast from northwestern California to Santa Barbara County. Two other subspecies visit us in winter, *Z. l. pugetensis*, which breeds from Campbell River, Vancouver Island through northwestern California, and *Z. l. gambelii*, which breeds Alaska, the northern mainland of Canada, eastern British Columbia, and southwestern Alberta.

Local pairs stay near one another throughout the winter on or near their established territories while immature members of the three subspecies flock in groups of 3-10 individuals, mixed with a few Golden-crowned Sparrows. Immature birds in fall and winter look similar to adults but with brown and gray head stripes. In summer, juvenile birds display duller plumage with streaked breasts.

Typical habitat includes grass for rapid protective covering while foraging, adjacent bare ground, shrubbery to shelter a nest or provide a roost, and a source of salt or fresh water. The combination of these elements works best when in a patchy array maximizing suitability. Within coastal chaparral habitat, the shrubs most commonly used for nesting include coyote brush, sage, poison oak, bush monkey flower, and berry brambles. In urban areas they nest in exotic shrubs. They build nests with small sticks, grasses, dead leaves, pine needles, and moss, and line the cup with soft grasses, flower heads, hair, duff, and leaves. The pair takes a circuitous route when coming and going from the nest.

Males sing weakly and sporadically throughout the winter, but in January, depending upon the weather, the male’s singing becomes more vigorous and prolonged, accompanied by chasing and fighting of rival males to remove them from its territory. Females trill and posture by fluttering their wings. As early as 18 days prior to the first copulation, sometime in March, the
male will sporadically chase his mate and jab her with his bill. About 3 weeks before coition, he also sings quietly between foraging sorties, in the half-hour before dark. The female initiates copulation with a "Copulation-solicitation Display" assuming a slight crouch, tail held nearly vertical, bill pointed upward, wings extended, quivering while trilling. The male advances, his crown raised and bill lowered and agape. Unlike the migratory subspecies, which start later, courtships can last up to 6-8 weeks because early on their reproductive organs are not fully developed.

Inclement weather may delay the nesting season as much as 41 days. Generally, egg laying begins in mid-March and is completed by late June. Weather also dictates the number of broods, varying from 2 to 4.

The female incubates for periods of 20 minutes at a time so that the eggs to reach a temperature of 38° C. She then leaves the nest to forage for 10 minutes or less before going back to incubate. The male follows the female when she leaves the nest and does not stay behind to protect it. Hatching occurs after about 12 days of incubation. Nestlings hatch almost naked with little tufts of down along the feather tracts exposing transparent pink skin. They are helpless, with their eyes closed, and can make only feeble body movements. Hatchlings gape when the nest is jarred within 10 minutes of having hatched.

Both parents continue to feed the young past the time of fledging. The male may take over the job if the female works on a new nest. The male will continue to feed until the young are about 30 days old: he ignores them and even chases or fights them.

Adult pairs that remain together continue to inhabit their territory, patrolling and singing, albeit with far less fervor and jealousy, to the extent that flocks of immatures and even mateless adults can be included within their territory throughout the fall and winter.

*Z. l. nuttalli*, seem to have their territories enhanced to a degree when human disturbance affects their natural habitat. The presence of roads or fences increases habitat patchiness, creating the matrix of grass, bare ground, and nearby shrubbery that these birds prefer.

Predators include Common Barn Owl, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Western Scrub-Jays and American Kestrels.

Take a careful look, next time you spot this large sparrow, and see if you can identify the subspecies.
PELAGIC TRIP

The next MCAS pelagic trip will be Sunday, 16 May, 2010, from Fort Bragg. We are happy to have Todd Easterla, Ron LeValley, John Sterling and Rob Fowler as our leaders. The meeting time is 7:30 a.m. for an 8:00 a.m. departure from Noyo harbor aboard the Trek II. There is plenty of free parking near the dock at the Wharf Restaurant on NORTH Harbor Drive.

The cost will be $105 per person. ($95 for Mendocino and Lake County residents) Pay by check or credit card.

To pay by check, make it payable to MCAS with full names and contact information of your party (email, phone and mailing addresses). Mail your envelope addressed as follows:

C. McAllister - Pelagic
PO Box 332
Little River, CA 95456

Payment by credit card: Please contact Charlene by email with your phone number and your availability, so she can call you. NOTE: credit card approval must be made several days before the trip. Confirmations will be sent out later with directions, food to bring, attire, and preventive measures for seasickness.

BIRD WALKS AND FIELD TRIPS

May 1 Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens.
May 8 Field Trip: 8:00 a.m., Navarro River and Beach. Meet at south end of Navarro River bridge.
May 19 Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m., Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens.
May 22 Navarro Vineyards Bird Walk 10:00 a.m.
May 23 Field Trip: New Hendy Woods. Carpool from Harvest Market (FB) parking lot at 7:30 a.m. or meet at Hendy Woods entrance at 8:30 am.
May 24 7:00 p.m., 'Fifteen Years in the Little Yellow Submarine – Now it Can be Told', Speaker: Dr Milton Love at the CV Starr Center.
June 5 Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens.
BIRD SIGHTINGS

April 22 At least 250 Brants on the beach at Virgin Creek and over 100 at Van Damme. Richard Hubacek

April 20 A Western Kingbird in our yard. They are scarce on our immediate coast, according to Toby Tobkin. Karen and Jim Havlena

April 19 Last night we had a Barred Owl calling away until the rain. Rich Trissel

April 19 We saw 2 Long-billed Curlews on Virgin Creek Beach and a pair of Harlequin Ducks off Ward Avenue. Chuck Vaughn and Jerry White

April 18 The Common Moorhen is still at Lake Cleone in MacKerricher SP paddling around out in the open. A small flock of Least Sandpipers fed in the flooded parking lot, and a female Northern Harrier flew by. A male Orange-crowned Warbler tried to impress another by raising his crown. Karen Havlena

April 18 A beautifully-plumaged Tropical Kingbird was seen at the intersection of Creamery Lane and Highway 1 in Manchester. Rich Trissel

April 16 Purple Martins returned to the Ten Mile R. bridge. Karen Havlena

April 16 Nancy and I had 2 Northern Goshawks fly over our property on Gualala Ridge, one a large female and the other a juvenile. A Common Raven harassed the adult even though it is smaller by at least 10%. Rich Trissel

April 13 A huge flock of Brant Geese were at Virgin Creek today. Present with them were Black Oystercatchers, Surfbirds and turning-to-breeding plumage Black Turnstones. Lisa Walker

April 9 I found a Long-billed Curlew at Virgin Creek with about 13 Whimbrels and 1 Marbled Godwit. Also saw a flock of Sanderlings and 2 Western Sandpipers. There were lots of Long-billed Dowitchers at both Lake Cleone and Pudding Creek. Richard Hubacek

April 3 A breeding-plumaged male Hooded Oriole in our yard in Albion Tim Bray

April 3 The female Long-tailed Duck was still with the male Surf Scoter and Buffleheads west of the Ten Mile River bridge. Karen Havlena
**MCAS BOARD MEMBERS 2009-2010**

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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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