October’s program will be a photographic review of our closest relatives, the primates. Apes, monkeys, prosimians and humans comprise the 234 species of our family tree. Indulge in an enjoyable evening of spotting family resemblances, but be reminded that we are also the family scoundrel, that threaten 40% of our family tree with extinction.

Dr. Wan, is a successful entrepreneur and founder of high tech companies, who shows his pride and passion in being a naturalist and long time environmental activist by means of his nature photography. He specializes in photographing the wild in extreme places of the earth.
PAM HUNTLEY ON KXYZ FM 88.3, 90.7, AND 91.5

ANNA’S HUMMINGBIRD

In some native-American cultures the hummingbird represents joy. On cold winter mornings, hearing this 4½ inch bird that weighs less than 4.5 grams, singing its heart out in iridescent pink, definitely brings me joy. If you see a hummingbird in December and January, it is very likely an Anna’s Hummingbird since they are the only ones who hang out here all year.

Anna’s are identified by their all-green back and gray flanks. The dark head and throat of males, when reflected in sunlight, become brilliant rose red. Females also have a green back and gray flanks, and a patch of streaked red on their throat. Males aggressively defend territories of flowers. They will chase everyone including other hummers, other birds, moths and bees.

While feeding, they have an amazing ability to hover in one place by moving their wings in a figure eight. Anna’s have spectacular territorial and courtship displays. The male zooms straight up, almost out of sight then speeds down towards the female. At the last moment, he spreads his wings and tail to make an explosive pop and buzzing sound. The pair will sometimes mate while in the air. Then the rest is up to the female, who builds the tiny nest by weaving and securing it with saliva and spider web. She lays two tiny, white eggs, incubates them and rears the young. Nesting can start as early as December but generally runs from February to mid-March.

FOR SALE

Tripod—model 3130 Bogen-Manfrotto. Excellent for birding or photography $100
Heavy Duty cloth cover for Leica 77 Televid priced at $200 when new, now only $100
Both items in perfect condition. Call Louise at 937-4837
For us, Long-billed Curlews are superlative. They are the continent’s largest shorebird, have the longest shorebird beaks, fly one of the shortest migration routes and belt out the most recognizable call: ker-LEW ker-LEW—surely a phonetic fanatic name this bird. The Spanish translation is so much more lyrical: Zarapito pico largo.

We haven’t finished the input of our Save Our Shorebirds 2010 survey data, but we have the sense that we have seen an increase during the last three years in the number of Long-billed Curlews that visit local beaches, starting with the seven that touched down at Virgin Creek Beach in May, 2009.

The latest multiple sighting was September 1 at Ward Avenue on Ten Mile Beach when our surveyor was startled to hear a racket overhead. The howling group flew north and the surveyor called Audubon member Karen Havlena who lives some 5 miles north of Ward Avenue. After a few minutes, Karen heard the crowd circling above her home and later counted 7 Long-billed Curlews on the Ten Mile River mudflats foraging with 4 Marbled Godwits. She called colleague George Chaniot and they calculated the flight speed of the noisy travelers at approximately 7.5 miles per hour. Pretty good for a Zarapito.

Becky Bowen

Mendocino Coast Audubon Society’s Save Our Shorebirds is an on-going long-term citizen science monitoring program in partnership with California State Parks. To help with SOS shorebird surveys in MacKerricher State Park, please contact State Parks Environmental Scientist, Angela Liebenberg, at ALIEBENBERG@parks.ca.gov or (707) 937-4053.
For the non-birder the arrival of fall is perhaps only duly noted because of a subtle change in weather or the shortening of the day or, worst case, by a glance at the calendar. But for us the change of season is heralded, and eagerly welcomed, by the appearance of our reliable avian friends – SHOREBIRDS!

Although the south Mendocino coast does not offer extensive shorebird habitat, there are several enjoyable and productive spots to check out starting a few weeks before the autumnal equinox: Manchester Beach and the mouth of the Garcia River, which is easily accessed from the end of Stoneboro; the mouth of the Gualala River, which can be productive but always looks like it should have more diversity; Alder Creek Beach, accessed via a ¾ - mile walk on the closed-to-traffic Alder Creek Beach Road; and various rocky beaches and overlooks between Gualala and Point Arena accessed from Highway 1.

A majority of the usual suspects (Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, Black Oystercatcher, Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet, Wandering Tattler, Spotted Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Black Turnstone, Surfbird, Sanderling, Western & Least Sandpipers, Dunlin, Short-billed & Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe) can often be found in a half-day outing and with a bit of extra time (and luck) a few of the less common species like Snowy Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Baird's Sandpiper, or Red-necked Phalarope can be found.

An added appeal of a fall shorebirding trip is the chance to find a rare visitor like American Avocet, Solitary Sandpiper, or Red Knot, or a very rare species such as Black-necked Stilt or Buff-breasted Sandpiper which have all been recorded in the county and are possibly out there right now. Hmm, if I leave immediately …
NEW FORT BRAGG CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Christmas Bird Counts (CBC’s) have been conducted nationwide for over 100 years. We established the Mendocino South Coast count more than 30 years ago. Art Morley coordinated a Fort Bragg CBC on a visit here once in the 1960’s. Aside from that, no Fort Bragg CBCs has taken place. We intend to correct this grievous situation on January 2nd, 2011, the date set for a trial run of the Fort Bragg CBC, a first step in establishing a new count. We expect this count to continue annually as long as there are birders and birds. The trial run will conform to official CBC protocols.

This means that teams of counters, each led by an experienced birder, will cover a designated segment of a circle with a fifteen-mile diameter, during any or all hours of a specified day (midnight to midnight) within the fixed two-week count period. The teams will count every bird seen and/or heard. At the end of the day, participants will gather for a compilation dinner.

The Fort Bragg count circle runs from Little Valley Road on the north to a short distance south of Big River; east to about Parlin Fork, and west to about five miles out on the ocean. The area offers access to an impressive variety of habitats: ocean, sandy beaches, mudflats, coastal scrub, grassland, mixed woodland, pygmy and transitional forest, coniferous forest, riparian woodland, ponds, marshes, city streets and parks. Over the years the Fort Bragg CBC may well become one of the top dozen or so in the state for total number of species.

It is the chapter’s intention to continue to sponsor and promote the South Coast CBC, which this year will take place on Thursday, December 30th.

Like any sport, CBCs provide serious fun. They are characterized by a lot of pressure to cover ground and record high numbers of species. Rarities are secret treasures to be disclosed at the compilation dinner. All levels of skill can be accommodated. Organizers will pair beginners with experienced birders. If you are interested in participating in the new Fort Bragg count, contact Richard Hubacek at 937-4050, or Dorothy Tobkin at 964-6216. Richard is setting up a dedicated email address for the count, which will be published next month. For the South Coast count, contact David Jensen at 964-8163; djensen@mcn.org

Dorothy “Toby” Tobkin

Dorothy Tobkin
In the bad old days of that four-letter word, work, a grape grower came into the Lodi office of the Agricultural Commissioner and asked me about a brown bird with a long curved bill. He thought it must be exotic because he had not seen one before. As it happens, I had passed his vineyard earlier that day and seen six Long-billed Curlews feeding in the cover crop between his vines. They usually migrated through the grassland on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley where dairy pastures predominate.

Now we live in the good new days of retirement, and Long-billed Curlews, North America's largest shorebirds, delight us still as they travel up and down the shore. You will easily recognize this species by its two-foot body length and long, downward curving beak, much longer in the female (see the second bird from the left on page 3). Look for the cinnamon-colored underwings. Curiously, these waders sometimes swim thanks to webbed front toes. You may see a head pattern which is less pronounced than that of the Whimbrel. Size, shape, and color resembled the Marbled Godwit, but the curlew's decurved bill distinguishes it.

During the summer, this species breeds in open grasslands, including some agricultural fields (especially in the Great Basin) from central Oregon and northeastern California east to the mid-western states as well as in the grassland regions of southern British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. They often nest in loose colonies.

Long-billed Curlews court with an elaborate dance followed by looping display flights while calling noisily. They line a small hollow with weeds and grasses; she then lays four
greenish or buff-colored, pear-shaped eggs with brown spots. Curlews frequently build nests near cow patties or bushes to help hide them from predators.

Its deceptive coloration helps it to blend in with its surroundings and thus avoid enemies. When predatory birds are in the area, the incubating curlew crouches low on its nest. Other predators include badgers, coyotes, weasels, and snakes.

The female incubates the eggs during the day and the male at night. Shortly after birth, parents will lead their chicks to the feeding ground to hunt for invertebrates like grasshoppers. Both parents care for the chicks, but the female will leave after two to three weeks, delegating further chick care to the male. Despite this abandonment of her young, the male will reunite with her the next year.

Although the Long-billed Curlew’s diet includes many species of invertebrates and some vertebrates, its bill is best adapted for capturing shrimp and crabs living in deep burrows on tidal mudflats (its wintering grounds) or burrowing earthworms in pastures. It forages by walking quickly with its long bill extended forward and probing. On their breeding grounds, curlews feed on grasshoppers and beetles. This species sometimes eats bird eggs and chicks. Opportunistic feeders, they also consume seeds and berries. They fly in formation and feed in flocks.

Relative to other curlews and godwits, these are short distance migrants, occasionally making it from breeding grounds to wintering areas in less than two days. They tend to migrate in flocks of less than 50 birds and family units may travel together. Some birds stage in certain agricultural areas like the Central Valley and Imperial Valley of California, before continuing on to final winter destinations.

People call the Long-billed Curlew by several names. Ornithologists use Numenius americanus; old-timers referred to it as "sicklebird" and "candlestick bird". Locals called Candlestick Point in San Francisco after the thousands of this once locally common bird they hunted there, and subsequently Candlestick Park stadium inherited the name. Ironically, the species had already dramatically declined in the San Francisco area by the early 20th century, being "practically extinct" in San Mateo county in 1916. By the time Horace Stoneham oversaw construction of the Giant's stadium in the 1950s, the last remnants of the flocks of "candlestick birds" had disappeared.

Now protected from hunting, Long-billed Curlews and other species have recovered from nineteenth century lows. You can watch these easily identifiable birds foraging in the Central Valley or, closer to hand, walking our beaches or roosting on rocks in mixed flocks with Marbled Godwits.
PELAGIC TRIP SPECIES LIST

Location: Offshore pelagic (Mendocino County)  Observation date: 9/19/10
Leaders: Rob Fowler, Bob Keiffer and John Sterling

Notes: Mendocino Coast Audubon fall pelagic trip. Seas were calm so we headed southwest towards Navarro Canyon. We went 21 miles offshore to a location where the water temperature shot up to 59 degrees. Many albacore were present here but few birds. We had heavy drizzle to rain in the morning, shifting to partly cloudy sunny skies in the afternoon. Overall we enjoyed an interesting trip, which was especially notable for the large number of the jaegers.

Mammals & Fish: Northern Fur Seal-3, Dall's Porpoise-16 (1 melanistic individual), Pacific White-sided Dolphin- 10, Northern Right Whale Dolphin-5, Ocean Sunfish-10, Blue Shark-5.

BIRD species: ...22

Brant (Black)…. 55  Two flocks migrating over open ocean.
Black-footed Albatross….15
Northern Fulmar….10
Pink-footed Shearwater…. 55
Flesh-footed Shearwater ....1
Buller's Shearwater ....12
Sooty Shearwater ....20
Ashy Storm-Petrel…. 1
Pelagic Cormorant ....1
Red-necked Phalarope ....12
Red Phalarope ....63   Mostly seen on return trip.
Sabine's Gull ....94  Many flying south on the return trip.
Western Gull ....60
California Gull.... 30
Common Tern ....7
Arctic Tern ....3
Common/Arctic Tern.... 4
South Polar Skua ....9  Very good number!
Pomarine Jaeger ....8
Parasitic Jaeger ....20
Long-tailed Jaeger ....70  Most common jaeger, with most ages seen and some groups sitting on the water. jaeger sp..... 25
Common Murre ....8
Rhinoceros Auklet ....110

MCAS thanks leaders Rob Fowler, Bob Keiffer and John Sterling for their help and dedication.
**2010-2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Oct 10, 2010, Sunday. Field Trip 8:00 a.m. Glass Beach. Meet at west end of Elm Street in Fort Bragg.

Oct 13, 2010, Third Wednesday Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.

Nov 6, 2010, Beginners' Bird Walk: 9:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.

Nov 13, 2010, Saturday. Field Trip 9:00 a.m. Hawks of the South Coast. Meet at south end of Navarro River Bridge on Highway One to caravan south.

Nov 17, 2010, Third Wednesday Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.


Dec 12, 2010, Sunday. Field Trip 9:00 am. Manchester and Point Arena. Meet at Hwy 1 and Miner Hole Rd. north of Arena Point, mile post 17.54.

Dec 15, 2010, Third Wednesday Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.


Jan 8, 2011, Saturday. 9:00 a.m. Ten Mile River and Beach. Meet at south end of Ten Mile Bridge.

Jan 19 2011 Third Wednesday Bird Walk: 8:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.

We have extra binoculars available. There is a modest entrance fee for the Botanical Gardens. Bird walks continue on this schedule:

Beginners' Bird Walks: First Saturday of each month, 9:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.

Midweek Bird Walks: Third Wednesday of each month, 8:00 a.m., Mendocino Botanical Gardens.

**BIRD SIGHTINGS**

Sep 18 A Sage Thrasher at Little River Airport. Richard Hubacek

Sep 17 A Yellow-headed Blackbird at the Caspar pond. Jerry White

Sept 14 A female Indigo Bunting off Rd 500B/Brewery Gulch Drive. Jerry White

Sept 13 A female Mac Gillivray’s Warbler at Chadbourne Gulch. Karen Havlena

Sept 8 A Willow Flycatcher at Howard Creek. At Glass Beach a female Bullock’s Oriole and 2 singing Fox Sparrows. A very bright Cassin's Vireo at the Botanical Gardens. Jerry White

Sept 6 A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Yellow and Townsend’s Warblers on Miner Hole Road. Richard Hubacek

Sept 5 A Dusky Flycatcher at Ocean Meadows. Karen Havlena

Sept 2 Seven Long-billed Curlews with 4 Marbled Godwits heading north- not south- at approximately 7.5 mph. Becky Bowen
MCAS BOARD MEMBERS AND PROGRAM CHAIRS 2010-2011

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Vice President     Tony Eppstein     937-1715          tonyepp@mcn.org
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Education          Sarah Grimes       937-4322          zewa@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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